The vast palaces of Samarra are well known for their architectural ornament. The Abbasid dynasty of Iraq (750–1258) founded Samarra on the banks of the Tigris in 836 and used it as an imperial capital for a number of decades, returning to Baghdad in 892. The city shrank after the departure of the court, leaving a large area open to archaeological exploration. Surveys and excavations at the site during the first two decades of the twentieth century revealed that many of its palaces and smaller domestic structures had extensive interior decorations, the most common form of embellishment being dadoes made of stucco carved with repeating vegetal patterns.

Several early publications introduced the art and architecture of Samarra to the scholarly world. Most influential were the publications of Ernst Herzfeld, a German archaeologist who conducted the first major excavation at the site in 1911–13. Herzfeld found hundreds of panels of carved stucco as well as more fragmentary samples of marble, wood, glass, and ceramic decorative elements. Many of these finds were published in a series of catalogues during the 1920s, and a sample was put on display in Berlin at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (fig. 1). The material from Herzfeld’s excavations is currently dispersed among a number of museum collections, and some has been lost.

Samarra’s architectural ornament has received a great deal of attention since then, especially the carved stucco wall panels, whose abstract designs quickly caught the attention of art historians. In his publications, Herzfeld approached this material in terms of style: he identified three styles of carved ornament at Samarra, naming them the First Style (also known as the Beveled Style), the Second Style, and the Third Style according to the relative frequency of their occurrence in his finds. His immediate successors adopted his tripartite typology, and a number of studies have appeared debating the origins and relative chronology of these three styles. More recently, scholars have shifted attention toward the possible cultural resonances of Samarra’s architectural ornament, relating the tendencies toward abstraction and complexity so indicative of this material to contemporary aesthetic interests. The other types of architectural ornament found at the site have received less attention.

One problem that scholarship on Samarra’s ornament has not fully addressed is that the fragments of doors, walls, and ceilings excavated from the site are usually studied as individual pieces, with little reference to their original context as parts of buildings. In both museum displays and scholarly articles, single examples tend to stand alone as a masterpiece or serve as indicative examples of a style or other artistic phenomenon. As Marcus Milwright has argued, however, the experience of a viewer entering an extensively ornamented space must have been one of the key factors determining the design of Samarra’s decorations, in addition to costs, resources, and manpower. The implication is that to fully appreciate the ornament of Samarra, it is necessary to understand how its designers intended their original audience to see it. I want to push this idea further here: where, exactly, were these fragments of walls, floors, and ceilings located within Samarra’s monuments? Who got to see them, and under what circumstances? How might these factors affect our understanding of them?

This article utilizes archaeological evidence and textual sources to imagine the ornament of Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace, known in Arabic as the Dār al-Khilāfa, from the vantage point of a hypothetical viewer, a guest...
to the palace during its period of occupancy in the mid-ninth century. I focus on the ornament of just one section of this monument, its main Audience Hall Complex. This investigation requires two distinct steps undertaken in two parts. Because the findings from Herzfeld’s excavation of the Main Caliphal Palace were never fully published, I first present his documentation of the complex preserved in archival collections to make an argument for the placement of various types of ornament and specific patterns within its rooms. Herzfeld’s notes, photographs, and sketches made during and after his excavations at the site make it possible to understand the original locations of the carved panels that once covered the lower half of the complex’s walls and to hazard guesses about the decorations in the upper reaches of the rooms. Analyses of Herzfeld’s other excavations undertaken by Thomas Leisten and Trudy S. Kawami serve as methodological models for this discussion.10 These studies also draw on Herzfeld’s archive to reconstruct ornament programs at their respective sites.

In the second part of the article, I turn to the context in which the ornamented Audience Hall Complex would have been experienced: the official audience. I revisit a group of celebrated texts describing official audiences under the Abbasids along with interpretations of these texts by other scholars to highlight the protocol used during these events. It is clear from such accounts that movements within the palace were strictly controlled, and what individuals could see depended very much on their rank. One implication is that the carefully designed ornament program presented in the first part of the article would have been only partly visible to most palace guests.

I conclude by pointing to the ideology of a “restricted gaze” facilitated by this decorative program, whose visibility would have depended on the status of the viewer.
The Plan and Ornament of Samarra’s Audience Hall Complex

Herzfeld excavated part of Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace during his second season at Samarra, which began during the first week of December 1912 and ran for nearly seven months, until July 18, 1913. The findings of the excavation were briefly summarized in a preliminary report, which described the plan and ornamentation of the Main Caliphal Palace in general terms. Many but not all of the artifacts excavated were later published in the Ausgrabungen von Samarra catalogues, with information on dimensions, findspots, and physical descriptions. K. A. C. Creswell quoted Herzfeld’s preliminary report at length in translation in the second part of his Early Muslim Architecture, which also provided illustrations of indicative finds. These reports were meant to serve as an overview but were never followed up by a synthetic presentation of the architecture. A full publication of the architecture is still under way. Thus, while a great deal of finds information is published, it is difficult to connect finds to locations within excavated buildings on the site without consulting a number of sources, including unpublished archival materials.

Documentation related to Herzfeld’s excavation of the Main Caliphal Palace is preserved in the Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Of particular importance is Herzfeld’s Second Campaign Diary, now housed in the Freer and Sackler Archives, in which he recorded the progress of the Main Caliphal Palace’s excavation. Also critical to understanding the excavation are Herzfeld’s sketchbooks and Finds Journal, the latter a handwritten inventory of finds from the excavations with sketches, findspot information, and brief descriptions of the objects. The information in these resources ranges from synthetic statements to disconnected descriptions of specific finds, however, and certain data are available only in the form of sketches or photographs. It has thus been necessary at times to draw conclusions not explicitly stated in but rather implied by Herzfeld’s records. In the following, I have tried to distinguish between my conclusions drawn from Herzfeld’s documentation and Herzfeld’s own conclusions that, due to the vicissitudes of history, were never articulated in print.

The Palace Plan

Among the notable features that scholars have identified for the palaces at Samarra are their immense scale, their restricted access, and their sprawling plans. Situated on bluffs along the Tigris that afforded vistas over the surrounding plains, these palaces took full advantage of the space and landscape available in Samarra to effectively represent the caliph’s sovereignty. Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace embodies many of these traits. It was a massive complex that spanned 125 hectares and included gardens, game parks, and living quarters in addition to its audience halls and courtyards (fig. 2). The palace was built at the foundation of Samarra in 836 by the Abbasid caliph al-Mu’tasim bi’llah (r. 833–42). It was probably inhabited for most of the period of the city’s occupation by the court until 892. Alastair Northedge has interpreted the plan as divided into two major portions. According to his interpretation, the southern portion of the complex, centered on a row of axially arranged gardens, courtyards, and halls, constitutes the public portion of the palace, referred to as the Dār al-ʿĀmma (Public Palace) in texts. This portion of the palace is shown in figure 2. Northedge interprets the rectangular double-walled enclosure just to the north of this complex as private quarters, possibly to be identified with the toponym al-Jawsaq al-Khāqānī.

All excavations at this site to date have taken place in the southern, public portion of the complex. The plan of its main axis is thus well established. From west to east, first came a monumental, three-arched gate facing the floodplain of the Tigris River, usually identified in scholarly literature as the Bāb al-ʿĀmma (Public Gate) but which I will refer to as the Western Gate. Immediately behind this gate comes a block of halls and courts, dubbed “the Reception-Hall Block” by Northedge. This block, in turn, opens on its east to a large open courtyard usually called the Great Courtyard or Great Esplanade in scholarly descriptions. Farther east still is a complex whose form suggests that it served as leisure grounds. At its center is a sardāb, or pool of water sunk below ground level surrounded by rooms opening onto it. To its north...
Fig. 2. Plan of the Main Caliphal Palace of Samarra. (Plan: Samarra Archaeological Survey, after Ernst Herzfeld)
The original use of this space remains enigmatic, but halls of private audience (majlis al-khāṣṣa) are one possibility.

This article is concerned with the cruciform Audience Hall Complex (fig. 3). The identification of this space as an audience hall, first articulated by Herzfeld in his notes, rests on its sophisticated architectural form.26 One enters the complex on all four sides from open courtyards through a portico, which in turn gives onto a long covered hall. Clear traces of column foundations and shards of broken window glass found in these halls led Herzfeld to conclude that each had columns, four per side, which supported a central bay higher than the surrounding rooms with clerestory windows.27 Flanking these halls were a series of smaller side rooms.

At the center of the complex was a square chamber that Herzfeld believed held a wooden dome due to its shape and the noticeable lack of debris from a plaster ceiling.28

and south are two courtyards with pavilions in the form of iwans, and to its east are a polo grounds and stables. Northedge has argued that this entire recreational complex was possibly a later addition to the palace, for it is aligned with a racecourse that clearly overlays an older course.23 It is possible that the area south of the Great Courtyard also contained an important entrance to the palace, given its communication with one of the city’s major avenues.24

The Reception-Hall Block at the western end of the palace is composed of a series of entry halls, followed by a courtyard and then by a group of covered halls forming a cross, traditionally identified as an audience hall. Immediately south of this cruciform Audience Hall Complex is another group of richly decorated rooms centered on a domed hall surrounded by an ambulatory. Herzfeld called this space the “Harem,” given his finds of figural wall paintings in the debris around the domed hall.25
This architectural form (a long covered hall preceded by a courtyard) has several immediate historical precedents, for example at Ukhaydir and Mshatta, also interpreted by scholars as audience halls.\textsuperscript{29} The structure at Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace is notably more complex, however, with four identical oblong halls situated on the axis of the Central Square Chamber. Because each of its modules is roughly aligned with the cardinal directions, I will refer to the various components of the complex with the associated cardinal direction, for example, West Columned Hall, East Portico, South Courtyard, and Central Square Chamber (see the labeled plan in fig. 3).

Figure 4 shows the area just described after Herzfeld’s 1913 excavation. The photograph was taken from the eastern end of the Audience Hall Complex. In the foreground lies the East Columned Hall. Immediately behind it is the Central Square Chamber. The figure in the center of the photograph is standing at the western side of the Central Square Chamber. Beyond him, one can see the area cleared by Herzfeld’s team stretching to the back of the Western Gate. This space included the five axially aligned entry halls and two courtyards immediately behind the Western Gate.

There is evidence that the plan of the Audience Hall Complex was modified over time. These changes mainly had to do with the Central Square Chamber itself. Herzfeld noted that openings had been pierced into the short stretches of wall located between the Central Square Chamber and the spaces behind the arcades of the columned halls, two being refilled again at a later date, indicating multiple building phases (fig. 5). In addition, Herzfeld mentioned that he found evidence of the basin of a fountain that was originally set into the floor but was later bricked over or blocked up (\textit{zuge- setzt}).\textsuperscript{30} No such basin is readily identifiable in photographs taken of the Central Square Chamber, although the pavement is sketched and labeled in his notebooks.\textsuperscript{31} More significant, Herzfeld mentioned evidence for the remains of a floor some 70 centimeters below the level...
of the top floor in the Central Square Chamber, on top of which was a backfill layer. There was no evidence, however, for lower floors in the surrounding rooms or for steps leading from the doorsills into the Central Square Chamber, so Herzfeld concluded that this lower floor was a mistake quickly repaired during the foundation phase of the palace and not evidence that the Audience Hall Complex was part of a renovation. Another possibility is that this earlier floor pre-dated the Samarra period. Textual sources do mention that the public palace of al-Mu‘tasim was founded on the site of a monastery. Other than these changes, Northedge has noted evidence of modification to the portico leading from the East Columned Hall onto the Great Courtyard. Namely, the piers and walls of this structure are substantially larger than those surrounding it, indicating that it might be part of a separate building phase.

The wall ornament of the Audience Hall Complex

The surface ornament in the Audience Hall Complex echoes the sense of gravity achieved through the ground plan. Herzfeld’s findings demonstrate that the transition from the block of halls to the west is marked by a notable improvement in the quality of materials used for surface cladding and the complexity of their arrangement as part of a cohesive decorative program.

First, let us address the question of building materials. Herzfeld stated in his Second Campaign Diary that the columns of the columned halls were made of marble, although he never supported the point with evidence, and photographs of the space show that the columns had been removed long before the excavation. Supporting his statement, however, is the fact that he also found column shafts made of white marble in a room southwest of the Audience Hall Complex and a large stone column base just north of this room, demonstrating the use of these materials for columns in the palace. The fact that no marble columns were found in situ does not contradict Herzfeld’s theory, as such items would surely have been taken from the site and reused elsewhere after the court abandoned the palace in or around 892.

Herzfeld also advanced the theory in his preliminary report that the dadoes of the columned halls and their porticoes were clad with marble slabs carved with various repeat patterns. This theory has been assumed to be true since then, but the argument for it has never been articulated. I will take time to present that evidence here, as it also allows for further arguments made or implied in Herzfeld’s Second Campaign Diary regarding the specific character and arrangement of the marble dadoes in these halls.

Scarcely any marble paneling was found in situ in the Audience Hall Complex, but the architectural remains strongly support the idea that the bottom half of the side walls in all four columned halls and adjoining porticoes were indeed clad in white marble with blue veins. A photograph taken in the West Portico makes the archaeological situation clear (fig. 6). It shows a section of the south wall about 2 meters long where the layer of
plaster that coated the baked brick wall is exposed. The photograph shows concave impressions in the plaster marked by irregularly spaced vertical ridges. To the left, a marble baseboard element with a beaded pattern is preserved in situ just below floor level, with part of a panel still attached above it, demonstrating conclusively that these impressions were made from marble panels. To the right is an impression in the plaster made by another rectangular panel, this time with a carved design, placed horizontally into the wall. Herzfeld attributed this impression to a “Byzantine panel.”\(^{40}\) While Herzfeld’s specific attribution to Byzantium is debatable, this imprint is clearly from a carved panel taken from another monument and reused here.

From Herzfeld’s photographs and drawings, it is possible to deduce that marble paneling of this sort covered at least three and, in all likelihood, all four of the columned halls of the Audience Hall Complex. In addition to the spot on the south wall of the West Portico just described, I have identified photographs and drawings in Herzfeld’s archive that document concave impressions of irregularly sized marble slabs on the south and east walls of the West Columned Hall,\(^{41}\) the north and east walls of the South Columned Hall,\(^{42}\) and the south wall of the East Columned Hall (fig. 7).\(^{43}\)

It is also possible to propose the specific character of these marble dadoes because a large number of marble fragments used for wall facings were found in the rubble of the Audience Hall Complex as well as elsewhere in the palace. These fragments are identifiable as pieces of wall facing by their flat, rectilinear shape as well as by the presence of holes drilled in their sides ranging from...
Fig. 7. Page 25 from Ernst Herzfeld’s Samarra Ornament Sketchbook. Sketches depict a corner fragment of carved and blue-painted stucco from a collapsed arcade element found in one of the columned halls (top), and impressions made by marble slabs in plaster bedding found in situ on east wall of the South Columned Hall in the Audience Hall Complex (center and bottom). Herzfeld’s caption for top sketch reads: Eckstück im (?) T-Raum Ostreihe blau bemalt. The caption for bottom sketch reads: Thürrahmen; südl. T-Zimmer. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, eeh1500. (Photo: courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
.8 to 1.2 centimeters in diameter (figs. 8 and 9), like those in marble wall panels excavated from other early Islamic sites in Syria-Palestine.44 These may have been holes for metal clamps used to hold the panels in place, examples of which were found in the excavations.45 As for decoration, the vast majority of the many fragments from marble wall panels excavated by Herzfeld are carved with one of just four patterns.46 This observation convinced Herzfeld that the dadoes of the Audience Hall Complex bore these same patterns. I will review the four patterns here, all of which appear in Herzfeld's Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik (1923).

The first pattern that appears on fragments of marble wall facings excavated from the Audience Hall Complex consists of horseshoe shapes in alternating rows (fig. 10).47 Among the pieces found are slabs large enough to show that this pattern was repeated to cover substantial surfaces.48 Several pieces had bits of beaded border patterns attached, oriented both vertically (to be used as a side border) and horizontally (as a baseboard or top border).49 This evidence suggests that the palace contained one or more dadoes of marble carved with the horseshoe pattern, framed on all four sides by beaded borders.

The second pattern found on the fragments of marble wall panels was composed of trefoil motifs interlocking in alternation with vase-shaped motifs. The trefoil motifs were joined together at their bases by arched bands (fig. 11).50 For simplicity’s sake, I will call this the “vase-trefoil” motif. As was the case with the marble fragments bearing the horseshoe pattern, the vase-trefoil fragments were found in large enough slabs with and without border elements attached to suggest that they, too, were joined together horizontally to form large dadoes framed by beaded borders.51

The third pattern found on the marble fragments consists of petal-shaped forms alternating with elongated stems rising from large, circular bases (fig. 12). Due to the appearance of this pattern in various media at the site, Herzfeld called it the “Samarra Frieze.”52 Marble fragments carved with this pattern in museum collections include both molding elements and wall panels, providing evidence for different uses.53 In at least one instance the pattern appears on a flat wall panel fragment with part of a beaded border.54 Based on this evidence, Herzfeld reconstructed a full dado decorated with this pattern and framed by a beaded border.55

The fourth and final pattern is composed of a five-lobed leaf motif (oriented upside down) attached by a clasp to a five-pronged fan. At the clasp are two rounded knobs. The spaces in between these “palmette-fans” are shaped as double-pointed spades (fig. 13).56 This pattern is the most complex of the four. Like the previous two patterns, the palmette-fan is found on panels with beaded border elements attached.57 Unlike the others, there is no example of a marble fragment in which the pattern is repeated side to side, although it does appear in stucco as a repeat pattern (as seen in fig. 15). Two further anomalies should be mentioned: both Herzfeld and the Iraqi excavations in the 1930s uncovered examples of a marble slab with this motif in which the palmette-fan is repeated up and down and another with a beaded border on either side of just one motif.58 Thus, in addition to being used part of a repeat pattern for a long dado as Herzfeld suggested in Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik,59 marble slabs carved with the palmette-fan motif must have also been mounted individually as door frames, possibly in conjunction with dadoes that had other patterns.

The marble panels of these dadoes, then, were carved in one of four patterns in the Beveled Style. In one instance, Herzfeld’s notes indicate “traces of red color” on a panel.60 While virtually no traces of these pigments remain visible on the fragments I examined, the idea of painted marble dadoes is not far-fetched. Carved marble wall facings employed at other early and medieval Islamic sites had color.61 However, the fact that Herzfeld does not mention any other traces of paint on these marbles (at least to my knowledge) is cautionary: this may be a case in which a piece of marble was colored at a later date, and until further analysis is undertaken on the marble fragments from Samarra the possibility of coloration must be considered a hypothesis only.

To summarize the argument presented above: archaeological evidence supports Herzfeld’s claim that all four columned halls and their porticoes had facings on the lower halves of their walls composed of slabs of white marble with blue striations. These slabs were carved in one of four patterns in the Beveled Style. Two
Figs. 8 and 9. Fragment of a marble wall panel with vase-trefoil motif found at Samarra, views of front and side with pin hole, exact findspot unknown (Herzfeld IN 256), 18.8 cm (height) × 17.2 (width) × 6.5 cm (max. depth). Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, acc. no. Sam. I. 477. (Photo: courtesy of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

Fig. 10. Fragment of a marble wall panel with horseshoe motif found in the Audience Hall Complex (Herzfeld IN 911). Current location of fragment unknown. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 PF.04.19.128 (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
Fig. 11. Fragments of a marble wall panel with vase-trefoil motif found in an area south of the Audience Hall Complex (Herzfeld IN 791). Current location of fragments unknown. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 04.PF.19.118. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)

Fig. 12. Fragment of marble wall panel with what Ernst Herzfeld called the “Samarra Frieze” motif, found in an area south of the Audience Hall Complex (Herzfeld IN 883). Current location of fragment unknown. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 04.PF.22.178. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
annotated maps in Herzfeld’s notebooks allow for further speculation regarding the placement of specific patterns in the four marble-clad halls as well as the other rooms in the complex. The first is preserved in his Second Campaign Diary (fig. 14). Each room is labeled with a letter (f–k). Corresponding notes in the diary indicate that the letter f signifies dadoes made of marble slabs carved in one of the four patterns identified above, letter i stands for stucco dadoes carved with the palmette-fan pattern, and letter k stands for stucco dadoes carved in the vase-trefoil pattern. Photographs confirm Herzfeld’s map, showing that these two patterns dominated the complex’s wall ornament, alternating between rooms (fig. 15).

The two other letters, g and h, signify two new patterns. Letter g, which appears in the two rooms southwest and southeast of the Central Square Chamber, indicates a pattern of shaped marble slabs. As is clear in photographs taken on-site, this pattern consisted of confronted pencil-tips in pink and gray marble with a row of diamonds in white in between (fig. 16). The beaded borders carved in white marble with blue veins that we have come to expect surrounded the dado. Letter h, which appears in the two rooms northwest and northeast of the Central Square Chamber, stands for a door frame motif closely related to the palmette-fan pattern (fig. 17).

In a later version of this same map, Herzfeld labeled each room with the name of the specific pattern (fig. 18). This version places the patterns in the same order, except that Herzfeld further suggested specific patterns for each of the columned halls with marble dadoes: the horseshoe pattern (Hufeisen) for the West Columned Hall, the vase-trefoil pattern (Vasen) for the East Columned Hall, and the palmette-fan (Palmetten) for the South Columned Hall. Because the marble slabs were all removed, there is no way to be sure that these specific attributions are correct, but the idea that each columned hall had just one pattern, and each was different, is plausible given that in all of the other rooms only one pattern was used.

Figure 19 combines Herzfeld’s notes and photographs and the subsequent work undertaken by Iraqi teams published in 1982 in the northeastern corner of the Audience Hall Complex, where the same patterns were
Fig. 14. Plan of areas of the Reception Hall Block in Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace excavated by Ernst Herzfeld, foldout preserved in his Second Campaign Diary. Each room is labeled with a letter (a–o and x) representing the room’s wall ornament. The Audience Hall Complex is labeled with letters f–k. In this case, f signifies marble dadoes carved in one of four repeat patterns, and g–k signify specific patterns. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 07.09. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
Fig 15: View of stucco and marble dadoes found in the southwestern quadrant of the Audience Hall Complex. Three rooms are visible here, each with a different dado pattern. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A6 64 P4-91-19. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
Fig. 16. View of the south and west walls of corner room between the South Columned Hall and the West Columned Hall in the Audience Hall Complex, decorated with a dado made of shaped marble pieces arranged in a repeat pattern. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 04.PF.22.052. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)

Fig. 17. View of the west wall and doorway of the corner room between the East Columned Hall and the North Columned Hall in the Audience Hall Complex, decorated with carved stucco door frames only. Note also the “field train” visible in the background. The field train ran through the palace’s central axis and was used to clear debris and transport finds from the site. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 04.PF.22.051. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
Fig. 18. Page 9 from Ernst Herzfeld’s Samarra Architectural Studies Sketchbook with plan of the Audience Hall Complex. Each room is labeled with the name of the carved pattern used on its dado. Labels include: Palmetten, Vasen, Palm, Türrahm, Marmor Hufeisen, Marmor Vasen, Marmor Palmetten, and a symbol representing the marble dadoes made of shaped pieces. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 07.29. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
material, marble, was strategically clustered in the spaces that were architecturally most important—the four columned halls and two adjoining corner rooms. The wall ornament of the entire complex is dominated by a few patterns, rendered in two different media, all in the same style and at the same scale. Moreover, the dado patterns repeat in predetermined ways. For example, the room in the southeastern quadrant with a prayer niche that Herzfeld called the “Kalifenmoschee” (labeled with $B^*$ on the map in fig. 19) has an identical match in

recorded in three additional rooms. Each dado pattern has been given a letter, $A$–$F$, and the rooms decorated with marble dadoes are signified by blue type. A question mark has been placed after the letters in the four columned halls to indicate the fact that the panels had been removed before Herzfeld’s documentation. The point that this plan suggests and that I would like to emphasize here is that the ornamentation of the dadoes in the Audience Hall Complex was planned as a program in conjunction with the architecture. The best material, marble, was strategically clustered in the spaces that were architecturally most important—the four columned halls and two adjoining corner rooms. The wall ornament of the entire complex is dominated by a few patterns, rendered in two different media, all in the same style and at the same scale. Moreover, the dado patterns repeat in predetermined ways. For example, the room in the southeastern quadrant with a prayer niche that Herzfeld called the “Kalifenmoschee” (labeled with $B^*$ on the map in fig. 19) has an identical match in

---

**Fig. 19.** Plan of the Audience Hall Complex with each room labeled with a letter signifying the carved pattern used on its dado. This plan is reconstructed based on Ernst Herzfeld’s excavation notes and the published report from subsequent excavations made by the Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities in the northeastern quadrant. Key (black letters signify stucco decoration, blue letters signify marble): $A =$ palmette-fan motif; $B =$ vase-trefoil motif; $B^*$ = vase-trefoil motif on dadoes, version of “Samarra Frieze” motif in mihrab; $C =$ horseshoe motif; $D =$ Samarra Frieze motif; $E =$ frieze of shaped marble slabs arranged as repeat pattern; $F =$ palmette doorframe motif only. (Plan: Samarra Archaeological Survey, with my additions).
the northeastern quadrant, also decorated with precisely the same dado: a vase-trefoil pattern surrounds the room and is replaced by a more complex version of the Samarra Friese within the niche itself. There is no apparent reason for these duplications other than an underlying desire to maintain a sense of symmetry in the design.

A note on the date of the dadoes

Herzfeld stated emphatically in his notes and later publications that he believed the marble and stucco dadoes dated to the period of the palace’s foundation under al-Mu’tasim.70 If correct, this dating would have significant implications regarding the history of the Beveled Style of Samarra because it would demonstrate conclusively that the style existed from the beginning of the site’s foundation in both marble and stucco.

The fact that Herzfeld documented several changes to the building, including the floor underneath the Central Square Chamber, means that the dating of these ornaments must be approached with caution until more research can be undertaken. However, whether they date to the period of al-Mu’tasim as Herzfeld suggested or, less likely, to a later renovation, it is clear at least that they are contemporaneous with the construction of the cruciform Audience Hall Complex itself. Herzfeld noted that the baseboards of dadoes found in situ are either flush with or just slightly underlie the level of the floor in the columned halls, as is visible in photographs.71 Herzfeld also demonstrated that these baseboards were contemporaneous with the column foundations and doorsills of the rooms they adorned, as they were set at the same level.72 Furthermore, Herzfeld found no evidence that the stucco or marble dadoes in the outer rooms surrounding the columned halls had been renovated. This was not the case in other parts of the palace, where clear layers of carved and painted ornament were visible on fragments of wall ornament. His conclusion that the carved dadoes of the Audience Hall Complex represent the original ornament of that structure must be correct.73

To Herzfeld’s conclusions I would add that the distribution of findspots for marble panels at the site suggests that the marble ornament of the Audience Hall Complex may have been partly dismantled at some point during the Abbasids’ occupation of the palace. As I mentioned above, while Herzfeld only recorded impressions made from marble panels in the Audience Hall Complex, fragments of carved marble dadoes were found throughout the palace.74 For example, Herzfeld found a number of panels carved with the same motifs described above in the area to the south of the Audience Hall Complex (Herzfeld’s “Harem”) but recorded no extensive impressions there. This situation suggests to me that the marble dadoes of the Audience Hall Complex were partially dismantled and repurposed, either in a phase of renovation or after the Abbasid court abandoned Samarra. The area to the south of the Audience Hall Complex was renovated extensively, for example.75 Marble, being scarce in Iraq, may well have been repurposed within a site during its occupation period and was certainly one of the first materials to be harvested after a site was abandoned.

Ceilings and upper elevations: Wood and glass ornaments

The carved stucco and marble dadoes were only part of the Audience Hall Complex’s decorative program, albeit a significant one in terms of surface area. Herzfeld briefly summarized the evidence for other types of architectural ornament in his preliminary report as follows: “In the halls, a decoration of rhombic mother-of-pearl pieces and convex glass in various patterns was found that has otherwise never been researched. All of the woodwork (doors, beams, ceilings) was carved from teak, some pieces were painted and others not, and some were gilded. Decorative nails in gilded bronze heightened the effect.”76

More information is available regarding these finds in the Ausgrabungen von Samarra catalogues and the reports from later excavations, and others are documented in Herzfeld’s sketchbooks and finds journal. These sources suggest that in addition to the wood and glass inlay mentioned above, the palace’s ornament also included revetments of monochrome luster tiles decorated with vegetal patterns, animals, and Arabic inscriptions,77 revetments of shaped polychrome luster tiles,78 monochrome-glazed tile pavements or revetments,79 and fragments from opus sectile pavements of some complexity (fig. 20).80 Several types of glass tile were
found, including millefiori tiles and a glossy, opaque black type, whose polished surfaces and rough backs led C. J. Lamm to believe they were used on walls.\(^8\)\(^1\) Herzfeld recorded one tantalizing fragment from an aquamarine glass floor panel of the type known from the glass-paved audience hall of Raqqa’s “Palace B,” a decorative technique that is otherwise unique to my knowledge.\(^\)\(^8\)\(^2\) The Iraqi excavations of the 1930s even uncovered fragments from a glass inscription whose specific findspot is unfortunately not recorded.\(^\)\(^8\)\(^3\) The reception area just south of the Audience Hall Complex (Herzfeld’s “Harem”) appears to have been extensively decorated with glass fixtures as well as wall paintings above the level of the dado.\(^\)\(^8\)\(^4\)

Given the wide range of these finds, one can be sure that the palace had a number of opulent, glossy surfaces employing innovative glass and ceramic techniques. It is far more difficult to reconstruct the original locations of these elements than it was for the stucco and marble dadoes because none were found in situ. In this case, findspots do not necessarily indicate the place in which the fragment was originally employed. Because the *Ausgrabungen von Samarra* volumes are organized according to medium and style, it is difficult to get a clear understanding of what was actually found in the Audience Hall Complex and what can actually be attributed to its original ornament program. I will thus summarize Herzfeld’s findings here, supplementing them with additional information that has come to light since the 1920s, in order to provide a snapshot of other important ornamented surfaces in the Audience Hall Complex.

First, there is the matter of the shaped glass inlay pieces mentioned in Herzfeld’s report above. Dozens of these pieces were found in the rubble of the Audience Hall Complex and the surrounding areas, often along with shaped pieces of mother-of-pearl, strongly suggesting that they were used there in decorative compositions (fig. 21).\(^8\)\(^5\) The rounded manner in which the glass pieces are formed recall the beveled surfaces that dominate the carved dadoes, as does the vocabulary of
shapes represented, including roundels, rounded rectangles, diamonds, and tongue shapes. It is known from other examples at Samarra and elsewhere that mother-of-pearl was used as part of mosaic wall decorations, but the shaped glass pieces are more difficult to understand.\(^8^6\) Herzfeld’s finds journal and sketchbooks record examples of the shaped glass pieces still embedded in detached pieces of stucco, however, supporting his initial conclusion that they were arranged in patterns as wall decorations (fig. 22).\(^8^7\) These intriguing elements, apparently unique to the Main Caliphal Palace of Samarra, are discussed in Lamm’s *Glas von Samarra* (1928), where the various possibilities of patterns are presented.\(^8^8\) Two points can be added to Lamm’s otherwise detailed overview. That these elements were used high on the wall seems fairly certain as they were found in a fragmentary state, suggesting a fall from a height, and as none were found on the many dados that did remain intact. Second, an interesting comparison can be made between these pieces and the marble columns inlaid with shaped glass pieces excavated from the Byzantine Church of St. Polyeuctus (Hagios Polyeuktos) in Istanbul, constructed circa 525. In the church, the glass was colored, and shapes included squares and rhombi.\(^8^9\) This tradition of jewel-like, inlaid marble columns might be a precedent for this intriguing form of decoration.

Both Herzfeld and Henri Viollet found fragments of carved stucco with rounded undersides in the four columnn halls, suggesting that these halls had decorative arcades.\(^9^0\) Herzfeld reconstructed and illustrated the patterns, but the archaeological evidence for them should be clarified here.\(^9^1\) The flat, outward facing sides of the fragments excavated by Viollet and Herzfeld (the exterior face of the arch) had repeating pairs of winged palmette leaves, while the curved, downward facing sides (the soffits of the arches) had a more complex pattern consisting of a band of vase-shaped forms with trefoil blossoms that sprout pairs of the same winged palmettes (fig. 23).\(^9^2\) Notably, their undersides were also painted with blue pigment.\(^9^3\)
Fig. 22. Page 42 from Ernst Herzfeld’s Samarra Finds Sketchbook 8 with sketches of fragments of glass found in the Main Caliphal Palace of Samarra. In the center is a “stucco edge” (Gipsrand) with shaped glass inlay pieces still attached (Herzfeld IN 827). Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 07.19. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)

Fig. 23. Ink drawing of carved stucco fragments from a collapsed arcade found by Ernst Herzfeld and Henri Viollet in the Audience Hall Complex, and a reconstruction of the pattern on the exterior face. Herzfeld’s caption reads: “B. al-Khalīfah. Arkaden d. basilikalen Säle. Bogenreihung von 2 Elemente.” Current locations of fragments unknown. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, MMA eeh1383. (Photo: courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
Several door panel components and an intact wooden door were found in and around the Audience Hall Complex, providing evidence for carved wooden doors in this portion of the palace, though not necessarily in the large halls themselves. The intact door was composed of two leaves, each with four panels bearing knob motifs (fig. 24). Similar knob motifs occur on other examples of panels excavated at the site that may have been used as part of doors, and on a door in the Benaki Museum, Athens, suggesting that this motif was popular. Several intact leaves from wooden doors in museum collections bearing palmette-fans have traditionally been attributed to the Main Caliphal Palace on the basis of this motif, although more research is required to justify that attribution. One door panel with the palmette-fan motif was actually excavated on-site, but its findspot is not recorded.

A large number of fragments from other architectural surfaces or portable furnishings made of carved and painted wood were found in the palace. The array of morphological types is striking and speaks to the many uses to which this costly material was put, and the assemblage deserves more attention than can be given here. In addition to the door components mentioned above, the types of ornamental wooden fixtures found in the palace include flat panels with carved and/or painted decoration; composite "coffered" panels; strips with slanted fronts and painted decoration; large ornamental bosses or knobs; stepped merlons; turned legs, possibly for furniture; sockets; inlay pieces; and a large frame, possibly for a window or door.

In the four columned halls of the Audience Hall Complex there is specific evidence for the use of wooden ceilings, as a number fragments that clearly belonged to ceilings were found in the rubble. These include fragments of the strips with slanted fronts mentioned above, whose shape suggests use as crown moldings (fig. 25), and a number of long rectilinear panels carved with nondirectional patterns in the Beveled Style (fig. 26). As Herzfeld noted, there are close comparisons to the form and decoration of this later type on several door soffits in the Mosque of Ibn Tulun at Cairo, strongly suggesting a similar use as ceiling elements at Samarra.

Two other decorative wooden pieces found in the Audience Hall Complex should be mentioned. One is a flat panel carved with a version of the Samarra Frieze motif in the Beveled Style painted in blue and red (fig. 27). At nearly a meter wide and more than half a meter high as is, this would have been a conspicuous piece. Its original use is difficult to determine, but given its shape, the presence of nail holes, and the lack of tongue-and-groove joins, it may have been part of a frieze. Second is a thick beam carved on two sides in the Beveled Style (fig. 28). Creswell suggested that it was a tie beam, but the fact that it has a tenon on one side suggests otherwise. Herzfeld’s suggestion that it was part of an “anchor” for a column (part of an entablature?) is more convincing. A lintel for a door might be another possibility.

As mentioned above, fragments of broken glass panes found in the four columned halls suggested to Herzfeld that clerestory windows above the arcades illuminated these spaces. The form of window for which Herzfeld found the most conclusive evidence is similar to the type known today as qamariyya or shamsiyya, that is, stucco grills carved in patterns into which pieces of colorful glass were inserted. Herzfeld found part of a grill with a row of small round apertures in the South columned Hall that still had glass panes inserted (fig. 29). A similar piece was found during the Iraqi excavations of the 1930s, although no findspot was recorded. In this case, it is clear that the row of circular apertures bordered a larger, central grill. Stucco window fragments found in the Abbasid “palaces” at Raqqa provide a close parallel in both form and construction. There, large stucco windows were composed of central grills carved with geometric patterns bordered by rows of small circular apertures. Pieces of the panes of glass were found in several colors at the site, ranging from amber yellow to aquamarine blue. Thus the windows in the clerestories of the four columned halls would have admitted filtered, multicolored light through patterned grills, bathing the marble and stucco decorations in a layer of color.

Conclusions from Herzfeld’s documentation

In conclusion, Herzfeld’s documentation suggests that the walls of the Audience Hall Complex were clad with
Fig. 24. Carved wooden doors found in a corridor leading from what Ernst Herzfeld called the “Harem” (area south of the Audience Hall Complex) to the bath located to the west (Herzfeld IN 965). Current location of doors unknown. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 04.FF.22.036. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
A RESTRICTED GAZE: THE ORNAMENT OF THE MAIN CALIPHAL PALACE OF SAMARRA

Dadoes decorated with a select number of repeat patterns, marble replacing stucco in the columned halls and in two of the corner rooms, and that the higher elevations of these rooms bore glass and wooden fixtures. The previously unarticulated reasons for accepting these suggestions include extensive marble impressions found in situ and the relatively large amount of wood, marble, and glass fragments found in the rubble of the complex. It is possible that the marble panels were eventually repurposed, and one can assume the same for the wooden fixtures given their fragmentary state. Herzfeld’s notes further demonstrate that these decorations are contemporaneous with the construction of this part of the palace, which he suggests fell under the reign of al-Mu’tasim, during the foundation period of the site. The precise date of the Audience Hall Complex’s construction is a question that requires more research and will be left open for the moment, but the archaeological evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the carved marble and stucco panels represent this structure’s original decorations, whatever its date.

Cumulatively, these points reveal that the Audience Hall Complex was planned with an elaborate decorative program that included a set of dadoes rendered in two media placed according to a decisive pattern. Architecture and architectural ornament were planned together as a cohesive unit.

THE OFFICIAL AUDIENCE

The planning evident in the decorative program of the Audience Hall Complex raises the question of who was intended to see the space and under what circumstances. There is little reason to doubt the long-standing assumption that the complex of four columned halls and adjoining rooms served as an audience hall, but it is worth examining the mechanics of official audiences under the Abbasids in detail to ascertain what parts of the complex were in use during these events and what was visible to whom. Previous studies of the palace’s ornament have not addressed these questions, and yet they are vital to understanding its design.

Several scholars have pointed to the importance of ceremonial at the Abbasid court and its potential relationship to the development of Abbasid palace
Fig. 26. Composite ceiling panel with painted border decorations found in the Audience Hall Complex, approximately 1 meter long (Herzfeld IN 925). Current location of panel unknown. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 04.PF.19.098. (Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)
fig. 27. Carved and painted wooden panel found in the Audience Hall Complex (Herzfeld 925), 61 cm (height) × 92.4 cm (width) × 4.8 cm (max. depth). Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, no acc. no. (Photo: courtesy of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)
architecture. I wish to explore this relationship further in the context of the official audience. Descriptions of official audiences under the Abbasids make clear that these events were governed by a strict set of rules that informed where various parties stood, how they behaved, and how much they were permitted to see. I will quote one description of an audience at length here, as it contains a great amount of detail and strongly echoes other, less precise accounts of similar events. The description recounts the investiture ceremony of the commander in chief ‘Adud al-Dawla (d. 983) in 977 preserved in the Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa (Rules of the Dar al-Khilafa), a manual of court ceremonial penned by the secretary Hilal al-Sabi’ (d. 1056). ‘Adud al-Dawla was a member of the Buyid dynasty, a family of military commanders originally from the Daylam region of Iran, just south of the Caspian Sea, who rose to power as mercenaries in the Abbasid army. By this time the Buyids effectively governed Baghdad and the adjoining provinces of Iraq and Iran but depended on the Abbasid caliphs for a sense of political legitimacy. The requisite investiture ceremonies that took place within the Abbasid palace were thus an important opportunity for the caliphs to present themselves in a position of authority.

The Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa relates that ‘Adud al-Dawla’s investiture took place in Baghdad during the reign of Abbasid caliph al-Ṭa’līʾ li-Amr Allah (r. 974–91), in a space called the Dār al-Salām (Abode of Peace):

Al-Ṭa’līʾ li-Amr Allah, God have mercy on him, sat on a raised seat [sarīr] in the center of the sidillā of the Dar al-Salām on a cushion made of black silk woven with gold. Some hundred servants from his personal entourage surrounded him there.... A brocade curtain sent by ‘Adud al-Dawla to screen al-Ṭa’līʾ so that no soldier’s eye would fall upon the caliph before his did was hung on the middle columns [al-asāṭīn al-wustā]. In the Courtyard of Peace [Ṣaḥn al-Salām], ropes were tied to the columns [aʿmida]. The Daylamites and the Turks were the first to enter, without so much as a piece of iron. The Daylamites stood on the left and the Turks on the right. The nobles, judges, and others of high rank were in the courtyard before the columns [dūna al-asāṭīn] on either side, arranged according to rank, while the chamberlains of the Caliph, Mu’nis al-Fadli, Wasif and Ahmad ibn Nasr al-ʿAbbasi, and their twenty-eight lieutenants ... stood before the ropes on both sides.
Fig. 29. Page 16 from Ernst Herzfeld's Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7. Sketches depict various fragments of glass and wood found within the Main Caliphal Palace of Samarra. The sketch at far right depicts a fragment of a stucco window grill with glass panes still inserted, found near South Columned Hall (Herzfeld IN 893). Current location of fragment unknown, possibly London, British Museum. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., FSA A.6 07.18. (Photo: courtesy of Smithsonian Institution)
Al-Sabī’s account describes three distinct, hierarchically coded spaces: the *sidillā* where the caliph and his entourage sat, the *Ṣaḥn al-Salām* where the military and officials stood in rows according to rank, and the hall beyond the *sidillā* where ‘Adud al-Dawla was robed. Adud al-Dawla proceeded across a courtyard to the *sidillā* and then to the hall behind it. The Sahn al-Salām was certainly an open courtyard (*saḥn* consistently means “courtyard” in medieval texts). The term *sidillā* refers to either a baldachin throne or possibly a room flanked by two side rooms. Either way, it was a covered space. The hall behind the *sidillā*, described here as a *riwāq*, must also have been a covered area: the term *riwāq* usually means a space supported by columns. It is of note that the distinction between interior and exterior space clearly corresponds to distinctions in rank and that much of the audience was stationed in an open courtyard outside the covered audience hall. Access to the interior was granted only to the guest of honor.

Such hierarchical arrangements are attested to for other audiences held in the Abbasids’ palaces. The description of a feast held by the caliph al-Mutawakkil ʿala ‘llah (r. 847–61) on the occasion of his son’s circumcision is a good example. The event is described in several sources, the most detailed description coming in *Kitāb al-Diyārāt* (Book of Monasteries) by ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Shabushti (d. ca. 990). According to al-Shabushti’s account, the feast took place in the Balkuwara Palace at Samarra. Al-Mutawakkil was seated in the...
A RESTRICTED GAZE: THE ORNAMENT OF THE MAIN CALIPHAL PALACE OF SAMARRA

heart of the palace’s main iwan (fi ṣadr al-īwān) surrounded by one hundred members of his entourage.124 A large carpet was chosen from the treasuries to cover the interior of the iwan. In front of al-Mutawakkil’s throne, thousands of seats were arranged for the many guests invited to the event, who were seated in rows according to rank. These place settings, al-Shabushti relates, “themselves formed an outstretched carpet.”125

The fact that hierarchical seating schemes were so important to audiences at the Abbasid court has significant implications for understanding Samarra’s Audience Hall Complex and its decorative program. Al-Sabi’s description dates much later than the foundation of Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace, but it is striking that one can apply the pathway he describes to the plan of this complex, which is composed of precisely the same architectural elements in the same configuration: visitors must first cross an open courtyard, then walk through a portico into a deep, covered hall. During official audiences in Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace, the caliph may have sat in one of the four columned halls or in one of the porticoes with his entourage, while the majority of the palace officials and military stood outside in the adjoining courtyard. Access to the covered halls would have been restricted to most. Movements would have been carefully controlled, and gazes guided by the elaborate rules and regulations enforced within the space.

The analysis of the evidence cited above implies that most guests would have had only a fleeting glimpse of the complex’s surface decoration. In fact, most of the rooms in the complex would have been completely invisible, even to those seated closest to the caliph within the covered hall who, like those in the courtyard, were expected to maintain their position throughout the ceremony. The intricate decorative program of the Audience Hall Complex, the elaborate design of which requires that one examine it in detail to fully appreciate it, would have in all probability gone largely unseen and would certainly not have been examined in detail.

While this proposition may at first appear to undermine the effect of such a decorative program, further consideration suggests that the idea of restricted visibility may have been the very principle informing its design. Indeed, the experience of not seeing has been identified by Avinoam Shalem as an aspect in the design of a range of ceremonial spaces during the early Islamic period.126 The idea is particularly prevalent in Abbasid ceremonies. In al-Sabi’s account, for example, it is clear that several elements of the investiture ceremony were designed to limit or otherwise control the audience’s ability to see what was in front of them. Hanging a curtain in front of the caliph’s throne was one strategy. This device is documented under the Umayyads (661–750), where the caliph al-Walid II and the governor al-Hajjaj are said to have had a ṣāḥib al-sitr, or “curtain master,” in charge of opening and closing the curtain during official ceremonies.127 The Umayyads, in turn, probably adopted this practice from the Sasanians.128 Another strategy was the seating arrangement itself. Those who had lower rank were relegated to exterior spaces, while those of higher rank stood under a roof, protected from the glare of the sun and thus more able to see clearly.

Similar ideas are expressed in rules concerning eye contact developed at the Abbasid court. The ninth-century Kitāb al-Tāj (Book of the Crown), for example, states that those in the presence of the ruler should lower their eyes, never looking at him directly, even if they are among his intimates or inner circle. This act, the author explains, should be done in consideration of the ruler’s ḥurma, a word that could be translated as “sacredness.”129 The caliph, on the other hand, should never have to look upon a person’s back. The Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa specifies that when leaving an audience, the vizier should walk backwards, facing the caliph, as long as he is in the caliph’s sight.130 In this concept of court protocol, the gaze of the caliph actually dictates the behaviors of his inferiors whose sight is, in turn, restricted.

As a final example, I call attention to one of the most famous descriptions of an Abbasid palace: the account of a trip made to Baghdad by a Byzantine embassy in the year 917 during the reign of al-Muqtadir bi’llah (r. 908–32).131 Several scholars have discussed the resonances between this description and other evidence for the design of Abbasid palace architecture,132 so I will only briefly reiterate the highlights here. The narrative relates that the Byzantine embassy came to Baghdad to reclaim captives taken during battle. Upon arrival in Iraq, the envoys were not initially permitted into the city of Baghdad but were housed outside in a suburb. After being let into the city, they were then housed in a
secluded mansion for weeks until an audience with the caliph was finally granted. The court created a theatrical event out of this visit. The sources report that the envoys were taken through a series of gardens, pavilions, and audience halls in which they were shown displays of rarities and treasures until they became overwhelmed. Included in the list of items mentioned in accounts of the event are a stable of horses fitted with gold and silver saddles, a hall with four elephants and two giraffes, a hall with one hundred lions, a pool filled with polished lead, a grove of four hundred palm trees, a palace filled with rare fabrics and coats of armor, and many courtyards and audience halls filled with eye-catching items from the treasuries. The actual audience with the caliph, who sat in a majlis (audience hall) near the Tigris, was quite brief, only a matter of minutes.

The details of this account may well be exaggerated, but that is not important. The account serves as evidence of an idea that permeates many descriptions of Abbasid palaces—the idea that to restrict sensory experience is to wield power. The design of the Byzantine embassy’s reception, at least as it is recorded for posterity, is based on withholding access to the palace’s interior and then granting it in a rushed, overwhelming manner. It is a case of sensory deprivation followed by sensory inundation, an uneven but very much manipulated experience designed to impress a sense of the court’s power on the visitor by making it impossible for him or her to grasp the profundity of wealth accumulated within the palace walls.

It is important to note that while the Byzantine envoys were the main focus of this strategy, its effect also applies to the hundreds of palace personnel who attended the audiences. Like the foreign envoys, the servants and members of the military attached to the Abbasid palace may have seen such a configuration of objects and people only once in their lives. It is from the experience of this population that the tantalizing accounts preserved in Arabic texts must have originated. For the majority of Samarra’s and Baghdad’s population, such accounts were the only available form of access to the palace’s ornamented and lavishly furnished interiors.

The decorative program of the Audience Hall Complex of Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace reinforces the concept of restricted or controlled visibility that underlies the design of official audiences at the Abbasid court. This series of continuously decorated surfaces is designed to elicit the interest of viewers but is never fully visible, especially if one assumes that the circumstances of viewing were similar to those described in the accounts cited above. Like the rules and regulations governing official events within the space, the decorative program itself shows the viewer the limits of his or her ability to see.

Consider once more the defining aspects of the program. Those who designed the complex’s walls and ceilings clustered together costly materials such as marble and decorative wood, further embellished by finishing techniques such as polishing, painting, and carving, in order to create a visually seductive space. Yet there seems to have been no single point of focus. While some of the dado patterns are more intricate than others, their distribution is kaleidoscopic rather than directional. The only thing that distinguishes the columned audience halls from the surrounding chambers is the change from stucco to marble, but the two media echo each other through the use of a standard set of patterns. There is clearly a scheme governing this layout, but to fully grasp it requires a bird’s-eye view like Herzfeld’s ornament map, or the ability to walk freely within the complex for an extended period of time. These vantage points and access privileges would not have been available to the vast majority of people in ninth-century Samarra who saw the space.

In this way, the decorative program of the Audience Hall Complex reflects the design of the palace as a whole. The palace’s plan consists of a seemingly endless web of rooms, courtyards, pools, gates, and pavilions. These units are bound together by the logic of axial arrangement and symmetry, and yet due to its massive scale, the plan would be difficult to understand on the ground without a map. In both cases, the design allows the viewer only a fragmented experience of the whole.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to shift the scholarly gaze from the close analysis of individual fragments to the
perspective of a hypothetical viewer in ninth-century Samarra. To imagine this perspective, I used the archaeological and related contextual evidence available to speculate on the arrangement of the surface decorations in the Audience Hall Complex of Samarra’s Main Caliphal Palace. Information from Herzfeld’s excavation archives proved useful for reconstructing the layout of the complex’s carved stucco and marble dados and allowed for more tentative hypotheses regarding the other types of architectural ornament that enlivened the space. Herzfeld’s findings were important to present in detail because they confirm that the ornament of the complex’s many rooms was planned together as a program, with careful attention given to the choice of media and placement of patterns.

A survey of some texts describing official audiences under the Abbasids sheds light on the possible positions of audience members at such events, suggesting that in a space such as Samarra’s Audience Hall Complex, many would not have been able to catch more than a glimpse of the audience hall’s opulent decorations. These descriptions make clear that other measures were taken during these ceremonies to restrict visibility, an idea that previous research has shown was a key aspect in the development of other audience halls in early Islamic architecture. I argued that the design of the Audience Hall Complex’s ornament program, which requires a privileged view to fully comprehend, reinforces and intensifies the ideology of restriction that seems to have pervaded the design of Abbasid architecture and ceremonial.

Central to the idea of the “restricted gaze” proposed here is the notion of a codified hierarchy. Depending on one’s status within the Abbasid court, more or less of the palace was made visible. At the top of the hierarchy was the caliph himself. The caliph, one assumes, had the most direct line of sight through the audience hall and adjoining courtyard during official ceremonies. At the other end of the scale was the majority of Samarra’s civilian population, people who may have never set foot within the palace’s interior and seen its grounds only from afar. Somewhere in the middle were palace guests: foreign dignitaries, princes such as ‘Adud al-Dawla, court poets, and other members of the caliph’s entourage. These guests were offered alluring glimpses of the palace’s interior spaces, but their experience was likely mediated through rules and regulations specifying when and where they were allowed. It is the experience of this latter category that I have attempted to imagine in this article.

Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York, N.Y.

NOTES

Author’s note: This article is based on research undertaken in London, Berlin, and New York as part of my doctoral dissertation. Travel to collections was made possible with support from The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII), the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art Fellowships Program. Many individuals facilitated access to objects and helped me form ideas along the way. Special thanks go to Mariam Rosser-Owen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Ladan Akbarnia and Seth Priestman at the British Museum, Julia Gonnela, Jens Kröger, and Stefan Weber at the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, and Sheila Canby at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I also thank Xavier Courouble and David Hogge at the Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution, for their efforts to make their portion of Ernst Herzfeld’s archive available online and for alerting me to the existence of several documents that would become pivotal in my studies of the site. I thank Alastair Northedge and Persis Berlekamp for reading and commenting on drafts of this paper, and Richard Neer and Lamia Balafrej for talking through ideas at various stages. Petra Raschkewitz kindly checked the accuracy of my German transcriptions from Herzfeld’s Second Campaign Diary, but any remaining inaccuracies are solely my own. Last but not least, thanks go to Olga Bush and Avinoam Shalem for organizing the “Gazing Otherwise” conference and for their comments and edits to my contribution in preparation for publication.

2. Ernst Herzfeld’s excavation of Samarra took place over two seasons. During the first (January–October 1911), he excavated parts of the Congregational Mosque of al-Mutawakkil at Samarra, the Mosque of al-Mutawakkil at al-Mutawakkiliyya (Abu Dulaf), the Balkuwar Palace, the Qasr al-ʿAshiq, and Qubbat al-Sulaybiyya on the west bank of the Tigris, and sixteen private houses and two baths. His findings from the first campaign are discussed in detail in Thomas Leisten, *Excavation of Samarra*, vol. 1, *Architecture: Final Report of the First Campaign* (Mainz am Rhein, 2003). The second campaign (December 1912–July 1913) was mostly devoted to excavations in the Main Caliphal Palace, but a topographical survey was also undertaken and supplementary excavations made at Abu Dulaf. A comprehensive overview of Herzfeld’s excavations at Samarra is available in Jens Kröger, “Chronik der Ausgrabungen von Samarra, 1911–1913: Eine kulturhistorische Studie zur Forschungs- und Förderungsgeschichte der Islamischen Archäologie im 20. Jahrhundert,” *Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie* 4, ed. Julia Gonnella with Rania Abdellatif and Simone Struth (Wiesbaden, 2014), 234–346.

3. Finds from Herzfeld’s excavations were published in a series of six catalogues under the volume title *Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra*. Volumes 1–6 are: Ernst Herzfeld, *Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik* (Berlin, 1923); Friedrich Sarre, *Die Keramik von Samarra* (Berlin, 1925); Ernst Herzfeld, *Die Malereien von Samarra* (Berlin, 1927); C. J. Lam, *Das Glas von Samarra* (Berlin, 1928); Ernst Herzfeld, *Die vorgeschichtlichen Topfereien* (Berlin, 1930); and Ernst Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra* (Hamburg, 1948). Elements of architectural ornament are discussed in volumes 1–4 and 6.

4. The division of finds from Samarra has been discussed in detail elsewhere. Although originally intended to be split between Berlin and Istanbul, the finds packed in crates at the site were seized by the British during World War I and shipped to London in 1921. At this point, they were divided (unevenly) among the U.K. and Germany, and smaller portions known as “type-sets” were sold to a number of museums. A number of stucco panels packed at the site were lost, as well as a number of crates containing small finds. See Sheila Canby, “Islamic Archaeology: By Accident or Design?,” in *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, ed. Stephen Vernoit (London, 2000), 128–37; Magnus T. Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past: Archaeology and Nation Building in Modern Iraq* (Austin, Tex., 2005), 75–84; Christoph Konrad, “Die Funde der Grabung Ernst Herzfelds 1911–1913 aus Samarra,” *Beiträge zur islamischen Kunst und Archäologie* 1 (Wiesbaden, 2008), 51–54; Kröger, “Chronik der Ausgrabungen von Samarra,” 288–309.


8. See, for example, Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (Santa Monica, Calif., 1995), 93–96.


has been published: Alastair Northedge, *The Historical Topography of Samarra*, Samarra Studies 1 (London, 2005).

16. The Ernst Herzfeld Papers at the Smithsonian Institution are housed in the Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (FSA). The FSA has circa 30,000 items spanning Herzfeld’s scholarly career, including excavation diaries, photographs, and sketchbooks from the Samarra campaigns. This material was originally catalogued by Joseph M. Upton and has recently been digitized and catalogued online by Xavier Courouble. All documents cited in this article are available online through Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Smithsonian Institution, www.asia.si.edu/research/archives/HerzfeldTop.asp (accessed May 10, 2015). The Ernst Herzfeld Papers at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA), New York, are divided between two curatorial departments, the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Department of Islamic Art. The archive consists of several thousand documents altogether. The material in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art is mostly related to Herzfeld’s work on pre-Islamic subjects but includes a photograph album from the Samarra excavations. For an inventory description, see Margaret Cool Root, “The Herzfeld Archive of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *Metropolitan Museum Bulletin* 11 (1976): 119–24. The documents housed in the Department of Islamic Art contain additional material related to the Samarra excavations, including three sketchbooks and a series of preparatory drawings and notes for Herzfeld’s *Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik* and *Die Malereien von Samarra*. These documents have been catalogued by the author and are in the process of being digitized. For documents available online, see Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16028coll11 (accessed July 24, 2014). The archive at the Museum für Islamische Kunst (MIK), Berlin, includes correspondence between Herzfeld and Friedrich Sarre, several sketchbooks, and a number of glass plate negatives taken on-site. These papers are discussed in Kröger, “Chronik der Ausgrabungen von Samarra.” In subsequent notes, I refer to archival materials by their collection abbreviation (FSA, MMA, and MIK) in the first citation, followed by their repository identification number and page number. Herzfeld’s excavation inventory numbers assigned to small finds (important for searching the online archives for specific artifacts) are preceded with the abbreviation “Herzfeld IN” here. Museum accession numbers (acc. no.) later assigned to the Samarra finds are preceded by the name of the museum.

17. Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, FSA A.6 07.09.

18. Herzfeld's Samarra sketchbooks referenced in this article include three main groups: the Samarra Finds Sketchbooks 1–9 (FSA A.6 07.12–FSA A.6 07.20), which contain drawings of finds from the excavations; the Samarra Architectural Studies Sketchbooks 1–9 (FSA A.6 07.21–FSA A.6 07.29), which contain architectural plans; and the Samarra Ornament Sketchbook (MMA eeh1500), which contains drawings of architectural ornament from the Main Caliphal Palace. Herzfeld's Samarra Finds Journal is catalogued as FSA A.6 07.01.


22. Northedge, “Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph,” 146.


24. Northedge, “Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph,” 147. Herzfeld was at first convinced that this area contained a large gate but, after having made several unsuccessful soundings there, gave up the search. Herzfeld explained his lack of success in finding a gate on the southern side of the complex in a letter to Friedrich Sarre, dated January 20, 1913, MIK: “2 Züge waren kurz am Südtor tätig, welches kein Tor, jedenfalls nicht das Tor des Palastes war. Die Untersuchung ist schon abgeschlossen. 2 Züge waren in 29 v/w tätig, wo ebenfalls kein Tor vorhanden ist.” The coordinates “29 v/w” to which Herzfeld refers are located on the southern side of the Great Courtyard, along the retaining wall. See Herzfeld’s gridded map of the palace, FSA A.6 05.1018. For a general description of these finds, see Herzfeld, *Male- reien von Samarra*, viii–ix.

25. Herzfeld saw the Main Caliphal Palace’s Audience Hall Complex as part of a long evolution in the form of basilica–canopied halls that he traced from ancient Iran through to Mshatta. He expressed this theory in his Second Campaign Diary, 79–80.

26. Column foundations are clearly visible in Herzfeld’s photographs. See FSA A.6 04.22.039, for example. The purpose of the rows of columns in the columned halls is discussed in a letter from Ernst Herzfeld to Friedrich Sarre, June 22, 1913, MIK.

27. That the Central Square Chamber was domed was clear to Herzfeld based on the architecture itself. The fact that there were no finds of plaster or brick vaulting led further to the conclusion that the dome was constructed of wood. See Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 81: “Dass der centrale

29. For Ukhaydir, see Gertrude Bell, Palace and Mosque at Ukhaidir: A Study in Early Mohammedan Architecture (Oxford, 1914), 26; Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, pt. 2, 63–70. For Mshatta, see Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, pt. 1, 255–64. The connection between the Islamic audience hall and the Late Antique basilica (an elongated room with rows of columns on the long sides) is argued most thoroughly in Jean Sauvaget, La Mosquée omeyyade de Médine: Étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique (Paris, 1947), 124–29, 158–85.

30. Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 88. The explanatory text accompanying figure 5 reads: "Hier fand sich zuerst im Centrum eine Zusetzung eines Pfostenniveaus vertiefen halbkugeligen Springbrunnenbecken, also 2 Perioden. Dazu kam, dass allerdings der centrale Saal zuerst folgende Bildung hatte: [my figure 5, left], jetzt aber [my figure 5, right]. Außerdem an 2 Stellen eine 3te Periode (sehr dichtig die zwei Durchbrüche wieder zusetzt)." This last remark also indicates that two of these apertures were reclosed in a third phase of renovation.

31. The bricked-over basin is perhaps indicated in Herzfeld, Samarra Architectural Studies Sketchbook 8, 40, where a sketch of a pavement is labeled "Mitte des Thronsälen zugesetzter Springbrunnen" and is attributed to "III Periode."

32. Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 88: "Neu fand sich das Merkwürdigste, 70 cm unter dem Pflaster ein älteres Pflaster, wenigstens Reste davon, u. darüber (?) 70 cm Abschüttung (sicher)." Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 97: "Die Untersuchung im Centralraum hat auch ein schnelles Resultat gehabt: die Fundamente der Türschwellen laufen hoch durch, entsprechend der Höhe des jetzigen Pfostens der T-Säle. Keine Spur von Treppenstufen. In den T-Sälen laufen die Fundamentbänke der Säulenhöhe hoch durch (10 cm unter Pfaster) also lag das Pfaster von Anfang an unbedingt hoch. Damit ist bewiesen, dass das untere Pfaster im Centralraum bedeutungslos ist. So lange der Raum benutzt war, lag niemals der Fußboden so tief wie das untere Pfaster. Irgendwie Marotte beim Bau oder eine Änderung während des Bauens."

33. Northedge, Historical Topography, appendix A, p. 267 (par. 2) and p. 268 (par. 8).

34. Northedge, "Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph," 146.

35. Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 87: "Es hat sich Heute herausgestellt, dass die Basilikalen Säle (alle 4) Marmorsäulen hatten, keine Pfeiler, u. zwar je 2 × 4: also ganz Mshattā."

36. The column shafts are photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.028, and the base in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.043. The column base is also photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.043 and sketched in Herzfeld, Samarra Ornament Sketchbook, 16. The current whereabouts of these column parts is unknown. A similar example is housed in the MK (acc. no. Sam. I. 484). Stone column capitals were also excavated from the private houses at Samarra. Two examples are now housed in the MK: acc. no. Sam. I. 485 (Herzfeld IN 185) and acc. no. Sam. I. 492 (Herzfeld IN 186).


39. This attribution is evident in his descriptions of this impression in Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 70.

40. Photographs FSA A.6 04.PF.22.043 and FSA A.6 04.PF.22.044 show impressions on the south wall. FSA A.6 04.PF.22.038 shows a baseboard made of carved marble with bead motif at the threshold of what used to be an open passage between the West Colonnaded Hall and the Central Square Chamber behind the columns.

41. Fragments of a carved marble baseboard and impressions in the plaster above are visible in photograph FSA A.6 04.PF.22.046 and in the background of photograph FSA A.6 04.PF.22.050. See also Herzfeld’s detailed sketch of these impressions in his Samarra Ornament Sketchbook, 25.

42. Photograph FSA A.6 04.PF.22.048.

43. I have seen such holes in two fragments of marble wall facings in the MK (acc. nos. Sam. II. 476 and Sam I. 489) and in Herzfeld IN 966, current location unknown but documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 8, 14. In terms of the holes, one can compare Samarra’s marble slabs to the marble slabs used for a wall facing excavated from Khirbet al-Minya, which also had small holes for clamps bored in their sides. Unlike Samarra, however, Khirbet al-Minya’s marble revetments attached to a stone wall that bore no trace of plaster backing. Like other monuments in Syria-Palestine, the marble panels were attached solely with clamps. This material is described in detail by Markus Ritter in "Spätantike Kunst: Die Baudekoration des frühislamischen palastes Kirbat al-Minya bei Tiberias am See Genezareth" (master’s thesis, Bamberg Colloquium on Oriental Studies, 1994), 183–85. The detailed research on the marble wall panels excavated at Ghazni in Afghanistan provides an interesting point of comparison. At Ghazni, such pin or clamp holes are not evident, as the panels seem to have been attached to the brick walls with plaster and further secured by being partly submerged under the floor where they rested on a wooden foundation, as is suggested by the blank registers at the bottom of the panels. Martina Rugiadi, personal communication, April 2013, and see also Martina Rugiadi, Decorazione architettonica in marmo da Ghazni (Afghanistan): Tesi Dottorale (Bologna, 2012), 1065.

The fact that the Samarra marble, made for brick walls and plaster, came with pin holes comparable to those used in the stone architecture of Syria-Palestine could be an
argument in support of the information given by the Arab historian and geographer Ahmad ibn Abi Yaʿqub al-Yaʿqubi (d. after 905) that the marble for Samarra was sourced from a Syrian context or worked by Syrian craftsmen. For the Yaʿqubi reference, see Northedge, *Historical Topography*, 268.

45. Examples of metal clamps, possibly used for attaching marble panels to walls, include Herzfeld IN 600, documented in Herzfeld, *Samarra Finds Sketchbook* 7, 5; Herzfeld IN 972, MIK, no acc. no., documented in Herzfeld, *Samarra Finds Sketchbook* 7, 22; and Herzfeld IN 995, documented in Herzfeld, *Samarra Finds Sketchbook* 7, 47.

46. The pieces found not carved in these four patterns are so few and so inconsistent that they might be interpreted as spolia recycled at Samarra for other structural elements. If they were employed as decorations, no more than one frieze or an isolated panel could be reconstructed based on the current evidence. For these, see Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik*, 224–25.

47. E.g., Herzfeld IN 915, drawn in Herzfeld, *Samarra Finds Sketchbook* 8, 8. Two pieces with this pattern are preserved in the collection of the MIK (acc. no. Sam. I. 101 and 102), both with undocumented findspots. This pattern is published as Orn. 145 in Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik*, 98.

48. A large slab housed in the National Museum in Baghdad has six rows of horseshoe motifs (the bottom row is barely visible) and a beaded border on its left side. I thank Martina Rugiadi for bringing this piece to my attention. See also a piece published in Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, *Excavations at Samarra*, 1936–1939, 2 vols. (Baghdad, 1940), 2: pl. CXXXIII.

49. E.g., Herzfeld IN 966, documented in Herzfeld, *Samarra Finds Sketchbook* 8, 14.

50. E.g., Herzfeld IN 80 (MIK acc. no. Sam I. 490), IN 256 (MIK acc. no. Sam I. 477), IN 517 (MIK acc. no. Sam I. 476), and IN 629, photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.117 and published as Orn. 135 in Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik*, 91–92.

51. Herzfeld IN 966 (two fragments, one photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.19.047 and the other documented in Herzfeld, *Samarra Finds Sketchbook* 8, p. 7), as well as two large pieces found in the Iraqi excavations of the 1930s, have beaded border elements attached along their sides. See Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, *Excavations at Samarra*, 2: pl. CXXXIII.


53. Fragments of moldings can be distinguished from wall panel fragments (dadoes or door frames) by their shape. The surfaces of these fragments are usually rounded at the bottom and canted outward at the top to form a ledge. Examples include Victoria and Albert Museum acc. no. A.65-1922 (Herzfeld IN 36), and MIK acc nos. I. 7741 (Herzfeld IN 38), Sam I. 487 (Herzfeld IN 59), and Sam I. 488 (Herzfeld IN 37).


57. For example, Herzfeld IN 803 (photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.171) has a beaded border element attached above.


60. A sketch made by Herzfeld of a marble fragment now in the MIK (acc. no. Sam I. 490, Herzfeld IN 80) is glossed "Spuren roter Farbe," suggesting that he found traces of red pigment on its surface. The sketch is preserved in MMA eeh407.


62. See transcribed text from Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary in p. 66 below.


64. In his diary, Herzfeld questioned whether both of these corner rooms had dadoes made of shaped marble slabs or the room in the southeastern corner had ceramic tiles substituted for marble slabs. This question was based on the fact that, in the southeastern corner room, the impressions were flat (rather than concave like those left by marble slabs) and were of a different size. See Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 85: "Für das westliche Zimmer ist Marmer durch originale Stücke absolut sicher. Bei dem östlichen dachte ich zuerst an Kashi. Und das ist immer noch nicht ganz unmöglich, wenn auch fraglich (die Maße sind verschieden in beiden Zimmern, u. runde Abdrücke, d. h. von alten Säulenoberflächen giebt es nur im westlichen Zimmer)." The question of the use of ceramic tiles in lieu of shaped marble pieces is of great interest. If accurate, Herzfeld’s theory could explain one use for the shaped ceramic tiles painted in polychrome luster to resemble stippled stone found in what was possibly a storage area near the circular pool that Herzfeld called the “large sardāb,” examples of which are now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum (acc. no. C.620-1922), the MIK (many fragments, e.g., acc. no. Sam I. 235), and the MMA (acc. no.
65. The facing was not found still intact but rather its impression was clearly visible in the plaster bed, as seen in photographs FSA A.6 04.PF.19.073, FSA A.6 04.PF.22.050, FSA A.6 04.PF.22.052, and FSA A.6 04.PF.22.053. The pattern is sketched in Herzfeld, Samarra Ornament Sketchbook, 24, 26.

66. The key to the map is glossed in Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 84–86: “f) Die 4 Kreuzsäle mit ihren T-Queren haben sämtlich Sockel aus Marmorplatten, u. ich vermute mit Sicherheit, dass hier die Sockel sculptiert waren. Wir haben en masse Fragmente der Muster. 2) Palmettenmotiv ©, Vasenmotiv © ©, Hufeisennmotiv. Außer tuluid. Friesen (die Samarra Frieze) kommt sonst in Massen nichts vor, u. diese 3 Arten stammen sämtlich aus diesen 4 Zimmern... g) Marmorsockel ohne Sculptur, oben u. unten Knopfreihen aus weißem, blaugefärbtem Marmor. Die zentralen Rauten aus schnuermäßigem Marmor, teils von schwarzbraunem... h) Die 2 nördlich gegenüberliegenden Zimmern sind einfacher, es scheint als ob die zum Harem führende Seite üppiger geschmückt. Jene haben nur Türrahmen in der Form, die zu den mit dem Palmettenmotiv geschmückten Sockeln gehört. i) 4 an diese 4 Räume (g. u. h.) anschließende kleinere Zimmer, u. 2 nach dem Harem zu gelegene (ohne strenge Symmetrie[]) haben das schöne Palmetten-Motiv, dass in Marmor vorkommt, in Gips... k) Nach dem Harem hin liegen noch 3 kleinere Räume, von denen einer eine Moschee ist (mit hübschem quadrat. Mibrab), die mit dem Vasenmotiv auf ihren Sockeln decoriert sind.”

67. Note that Herzfeld did not excavate the North Columned Hall and thus simply wrote “Marmor.”


69. A comparison between a stucco panel with the palmette-fan motif housed in the MIK (acc. no. I. 3476) and Herzfeld IN 913, a piece of a marble wall panel carved with the same motif, shows that the scale at which the motifs were rendered is nearly the same. The palmette motif (the five-lobed leaf at the bottom) in the MIK measured 25 cm in height, while Herzfeld’s sketches indicate that it measured 27 cm on the marble slab. For the measured sketch, see Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Journal, entries for in 718, 729, 732, 738.

70. See, for example, Herzfeld’s statement in the concluding remarks to the excavation of the palace in Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 97: “Alle Ornamente u. Marmorverkleidungen in den Thronsälen sind also alt, erste Periode von Mu‘tasim.”

71. E.g., photograph FSA A.6 04.PF.22.042.

72. Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 96: “In Bezug auf die Ornamente der Thronsäle ist zu constatieren, dass in den Räumen der Kreuzwinkel alle Decorationen haarscharf zu den gut erhaltenen Pflastern stimmen. Da ist durchaus eine Änderung nicht zu bemerken. In dem nach S gerichteten T-Saal […] könnte eine Erhöhung um 4½ bis 5 cm stattgefunden haben, da der Marmor etwas eingesenkt ist [sketch of marble baseboard below level of floor]. Das scheint mir zu beweisen, dass auf jeden Fall der Marmor in situ original ist. Dafür spricht auch unbedingt, dass die Fundamente der breiten Südtür (Axle u. der kleinen Türen, die später z. T. zugesetzt sind (zwischen den Arkaden, am Centralraum) ihr durchlaufendes Fundament so hoch wie die Unterkante der Marmorsockel haben.”

73. Herzfeld, however, did find renovations to the stucco ornament of what he called the “Harem,” which he compared to the situation in the Audience Hall Complex. See Herzfeld, Second Campaign Diary, 91, 95.

74. Herzfeld, Second campaign Diary, 91, 95. See also northedge, “interpretation of the situation in the Audience Hall Complex.”

75. Sarre, Keramik von Samarra, 53–54. Inventoried fragments of monochrome luster tiles found in the Audience Hall Complex include Herzfeld IN 891 (two fragments, one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no. C.622–1922, and another photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.20.056) and IN 993 (MIK acc. nos. Sam. 1. 246 and Sam. 1. 248). Other examples were found during the Iraqi excavations of the 1930s. See Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, Excavations at Samarra, 2: pls. CIV, CV.


77. Sarre, Keramik von Samarra, 53–54. Inventoried fragments of monochrome luster tiles found in the Audience Hall Complex include Herzfeld IN 891 (two fragments, one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no. C.622–1922, and another photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.20.056) and IN 993 (MIK acc. nos. Sam. 1. 246 and Sam. 1. 248). Other examples were found during the Iraqi excavations of the 1930s. See Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, Excavations at Samarra, 2: pls. CIV, CV.

78. Sarre, Keramik von Samarra, 50–52; Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, Excavations at Samarra, 2: pl. CIII. Herzfeld found none of these tiles in Audience Hall Complex.

79. Sarre, Keramik von Samarra, 50. These tiles come in two colors, green and amber yellow. Sarre refers to them as “rectilinear,” but some were clearly shaped, as they come to pointed edges, e.g., Herzfeld IN 956 (British Museum, London, acc. no. OA+10843). There are approximately one hundred fragments of these tiles in the British Museum.

80. Herzfeld found several pieces in the central domed chamber and a piece in the southwest corner room with polished marble wall facings, including fragments of what look to be figural motifs. For example, Herzfeld IN 917 and 918 (photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.059), IN 983 (drawn
in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 42), and IN 916 (drawn in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 8, 10–11). Other pieces in pink, white, and black marble were picked up in the surrounding area, but findspot information is vague and it is impossible to reconstruct their original location (e.g., Herzfeld IN 556 and IN 620–622, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 5).


84. All examples of the millefiori and opaque black glass tiles mentioned above were found in this area. Herzfeld also uncovered an extensive amount of shaped glass inlay pieces there, e.g., Herzfeld IN 602, a large piece shaped in the form of a *vesica piscis*, pictured in Lammt, *Glas von Samarra*, pl. XII, cat. no. 355.

85. Herzfeld IN 934, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 8, 41, and IN 986 (British Museum, acc. nos. OA+.1764, OA+.1765, OA+.1766, OA+.1768).

86. Several fragments of stucco with mosaic tesserae and mother-of-pearl inlay were found at Samarra, demonstrating the use of this type of wall ornament there, though not in the Main Caliphal Palace itself. For examples, see Lammt, *Glas von Samarra*, 115–18, esp. cat. nos. 324 (Herzfeld IN 5) and 325 (Herzfeld IN 45).

87. Herzfeld IN 827 and 856, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 8, 42–43.


90. Fragments from these arcades were found by Henri Viollet in his *fouille 7*, just south of the West Portico. See caption in Viollet, *Fouilles à Samara*, pl. XVI, and compare to plan in pl. I. Herzfeld indicated in his notes that he found fragments in the East Columned Hall near the East Portico and in the South Columned Hall. These findspots are recorded in Herzfeld, Samarra Ornament Sketchbook, 24–26.


92. For fragments of exterior faces, see Herzfeld, Samarra Ornament Sketchbook, 20; Viollet, *Fouilles à Samara*, pl. XVI, 1. For pieces of soffits, see Herzfeld, Samarra Ornament Sketchbook, 16–17; Viollet, *Fouilles à Samara*, pl. XVI, 2.

93. Herzfeld IN 919 had traces of blue color. This piece is documented in a colored pencil drawing (MMA 641405). See also Viollet, *Fouilles à Samara*, 26.

94. The intact wooden door was found in the area just south of the Audience Hall Complex: Herzfeld IN 965, photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.036 and sketched in FSA A.6 07.11.27. The size of the door can be approximated through sketches with measurements that indicate that the fragmentary leaves reach a maximum height of 130 cm, meaning that the original height of the door would be somewhat taller. Two pieces that appear to be from hexagonal frames of the type used between rectangular panels in composite wooden doors were found in the audience halls. One was carved in a deep-cut style (Herzfeld IN 923, MIK no acc. no., documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 18, and published as Orn. 278 in Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik*, 223), and the other had a simple bead motif (Herzfeld IN 924, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 20). See also a sketch of several of these elements in FSA A.6 07.11.36. The Iraqi excavations in the 1930s uncovered two such panels. See Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, *Excavations at Samarra*, 2: pl. CXXXVI, top. A leaf from a double-leaved door with the same motif is in the Benaki Museum, Athens (acc. no. 9130). It is said to come from Tikrit. The door has recently been published in Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff, ed., *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven, 2012), 231, cat. no. 164.

95. Single leaves from two such doors are housed in the Benaki Museum (acc. nos. 9128, 9129). The partner of one of these now resides in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (acc. no. AA 267). See Elise Anglade, *Catalogue des boiseries de la section islamique* (Paris, 1988), 18–20, cat. no. 5; Sophie Makariou, ed., *Islamic Art at the Musée du Louvre*, trans. Susan Wise (Paris, 2012), 85–86. A separate door (two leaves) is now in the British Museum (acc. no. 1944.5.13.1). Also included in this group is a single door panel with the palmette-fan motif purchased by Herzfeld in Tikrit and now housed in the MIK (no acc. no., published as Orn. 102 in Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik*, 72–73, and Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, pt. 2, 238). Two pairs of doors with panels bearing other Beveled Style motifs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art are also said to be from Tikrit (acc. nos. 31.119.1–2, and 31.119.3–4). See Maryam Ekhtiar, Priscilla Soucek, Sheila Canby, and Navina Najat Haidar, ed., *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven, 2011), 45–46, cat. no. 23. For a recent discussion of this group of doors, see Evans and Ratliff, ed., *Byzantium and Islam*, 231–32, cat. no. 165.
97. Shown in Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities, Excavations at Samarra, 2: pl. CXXXIV.
98. Among many examples are Herzfeld in 797 (MIK acc. no. Sam I. 354), published as Orn. 74 in Herzfeld, Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 55.
99. Herzfeld IN 874 (MIK no acc no.), published as Orn. 110 in ibid., 76.
100. Among many examples, see illustrations published in ibid., 139–42 (e.g., Orn. 197).
101. Herzfeld IN 793 c and Herzfeld IN 809 (both MIK no acc nos., documented in Herzfeld's sketch FSA A.6 07.11.26).
102. Herzfeld IN 793 b and Herzfeld IN 872 a (both MIK no acc nos., drawn in Herzfeld's sketch FSA A.6 07.11.34 and photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.22.09b, respectively).
103. Herzfeld IN 702 and Herzfeld IN 786 a (both MIK no acc nos., photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.23.124).
104. Herzfeld IN 923 (Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no. A.133-1922).
105. Herzfeld IN 886 (British Museum, acc. no. OA+.13618) and Herzfeld IN 796 (MIK acc. no. Sam I. 350). See also photograph FSA A.6 04.PF.22.147.
106. No Herzfeld inventory number, and current location unknown. This is a large arch-shaped frame constructed of several panels of wood carved in the Beveled Style documented in sketches and photographs. See photograph FSA A.6 04.PF.22.037 and Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 8, 46.
107. Examples found in the Audience Hall Complex include Herzfeld IN 889 (MIK no acc no.), Herzfeld IN 922 (Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. nos. A.130-1922 and A.131-1922, and MIK no acc no.), Herzfeld IN 964 (Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no. A.129-1922, and MIK no acc no.).
108. Examples from the Audience Hall Complex include Herzfeld IN 925 (photographed in FSA A.6 04.PF.19.098 and drawn in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 30, published as Orn. 109 in Herzfeld, Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 76), and Herzfeld IN 975 (MIK no acc no., published as Orn. 17 in ibid., 23).
109. For the comparative soffit in the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, see Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, pt. 2, pl. 11b.
110. Herzfeld IN 925 (MIK no acc no., published as Orn. 90 in Herzfeld, Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 64, and Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, pt. 2, pl. 55c).
111. Herzfeld IN 890 (MIK no acc no.). Herzfeld classified this piece as Second Style based on the leaf-shaped motif carved in the center. Herzfeld, Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 134.
112. Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, pt. 2, pl. 55d.
113. Herzfeld refers to it as "von den Ankern über den Säulen der Thronsäle" in Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 134.
114. Herzfeld IN 893, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 16; Lamm, Glas von Samarra, 128, cat. no. 377.
116. Many fragments of these windows are housed in the MIK. For an illustration, see Andrea Becker, "Das Glas von Samarra: unter Berücksichtigung neuerer Glasfunde aus Syrien," in Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie, ed. Gonnella et al., 4, 143–55, fig. 8. An article on the subject is forthcoming by Barry Flood in Raqqa V, volume 5 of the Raqqa excavation reports published by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Mainz am Rhein, 1999–). I thank Barry Flood and Andrea Becker for alerting me to these windows.
117. Herzfeld IN 889 and Herzfeld IN 970. Two aquamarine-blue fragments are in MIK Berlin (no acc nos.). See Lamm, Glas von Samarra, 128, cat. nos. 375–376. Other colors were found here and elsewhere on-site, for example, those represented by MMA acc. no. 23.75.134–g, which include red, yellow, and brown pieces. See ibid., 127–28, cat. nos. 372, 374.
121. Al-Ṣābiʾ, Rusām Dār al-Khilāfa, 84; English translation in Rules and Regulations, trans. Salem, 68.
122. Sidillā is a curious word and merits discussion here. Herzfeld traced it to the Latin sedīlia, meaning a "recessed chair" or "throne." Herzfeld, Geschichte der Stadt Samarra, 122. Others trace its roots to a Persian phrase sīh dīlāh, which suggested to Dominique Sourdel a baldachin throne with three (sīh) domes or some other tripartite division that would be placed indoors. Sourdel, "Questions de cérémonial 'Abbaside," 129–30. It is significant that the Arabic lexicographer Ismaʿil ibn Hammad al-Jawhari connects the term sidillā to the architectural plan known as ḥārī waṭ-kummayn, well known at Samarra, which is characterized by a large hall flanked by two side rooms. See Ismaʿil ibn Hammad al-Jawhari, Kītāb Tāj al-lūgha wa-siḥaḥ fi ṣidillā, which is a curious word and merits discussion here. Herzfeld, Architecture, pt. 2, pl. 55d. Herzfeld refers to it as "von den Ankern über den Säulen der Thronsäle" in Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 134. Herzfeld IN 931, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 16; Lamm, Glas von Samarra, 128, cat. no. 377.
123. Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, pt. 2, pl. 55d.
124. Herzfeld refers to it as "von den Ankern über den Säulen der Thronsäle" in Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, 134.
125. Herzfeld IN 893, documented in Herzfeld, Samarra Finds Sketchbook 7, 16; Lamm, Glas von Samarra, 128, cat. no. 377.
126. Many fragments of these windows are housed in the MIK. For an illustration, see Andrea Becker, "Das Glas von Samarra: unter Berücksichtigung neuerer Glasfunde aus Syrien," in Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie, ed. Gonnella et al., 4, 143–55, fig. 8. An article on the subject is forthcoming by Barry Flood in Raqqa V, volume 5 of the Raqqa excavation reports published by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Mainz am Rhein, 1999–). I thank Barry Flood and Andrea Becker for alerting me to these windows.
127. Herzfeld IN 889 and Herzfeld IN 970. Two aquamarine-blue fragments are in MIK Berlin (no acc nos.). See Lamm, Glas von Samarra, 128, cat. nos. 375–376. Other colors were found here and elsewhere on-site, for example, those represented by MMA acc. no. 23.75.134–g, which include red, yellow, and brown pieces. See ibid., 127–28, cat. nos. 372, 374.

124. The plan of the Balkuwara, excavated by Herzfeld in 1911, shows that its largest iwan measured approximately 26 × 13 meters and that it was extended approximately 5 meters in length with a wooden frame. Leisten, *Excavation of Samarra*, 96. The iwan, however, adjoined a much larger courtyard, which measured approximately 107 m. long. Ibid., 88.


128. A Sasanian equivalent to the Umayyad sāḥib al-sitr may have been the khurrām bāsh. See Grabar, “Ceremonial and Art,” 53.


131. The event is described in several sources, including ibid., 16–18; *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, ed. and trans. Qaddūmī, 148–55.


133. ibid., 151–53.