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The Dome of the Rock has been — and still is — a major concern in Oleg Grabar’s scholarship. His interpretations of the monument, its decoration, and various aspects of its history first appeared in the “Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem” in 1959. In a more recent lecture, later published as “The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock,” he modified some of his views on the monument, pushing back its date of conception and emphasizing an early Islamic dialogue between the Jerusalemite Dome and the Meccan Ka’ba. The same article concluded with a comment on the “elusive” nature of great monuments, implying that the more important a monument or work of art, the more receptive it is to — or suggestive of — a variety of interpretations. Yet another interpretation of the Dome of the Rock is, then, a fitting tribute to a great monument of Arab-Islamic culture and to Oleg Grabar’s achievements in studying this culture.

The Dome of the Rock is built upon layers of interwoven historical meanings, memories, and associations. It falls within a sequence of centrally designed buildings, but is unique within that sequence. Its archaeology and iconography relate it to various events in Biblical and Christian history, and its mosaics and inscriptions have been variously interpreted according to those events and beliefs. Byzantine and Iranian stylistic elements and decorative motifs can be noted and extracted from within the Dome of the Rock’s architectural and decorative matrix. Yet all these considerations are secondary to the motives underlying its conception and execution; they do not necessarily bear on the monument’s original intent and meaning, nor do they fully explain it.

Islamists consider both the Iranian and the Byzantine impact to be essential to the unfolding of early Islamic architecture and in particular, the Dome of the Rock. As Grabar has pointed out in perceiving a link between the Dome of the Rock and the Ka’ba, the all-but-forgotten Arab heritage may be more critical to this early phase of Islamic architecture than has hitherto been suggested or accepted. Furthermore, scholars perceive Iranian and Byzantine effects on Islamic architecture as resulting from the early Islamic conquests that brought the fledgling Islamic empire into direct contact with these cultures in their native lands. But Persian, Jewish, and Christian-Byzantine elements were present in Arabia itself prior to the appearance of Islam, and were integrated into Arab history, tradition, and culture to become part of the collective heritage and memories that were recorded in the Islamic historical writings of later years. A particularly rich repertoire of Arab myths and memories, as well as architecture, thus preceded the appearance of the first Islamic monument. Yet this monument has always been approached as the product of non-Arab traditions and intentions.

This study does not seek to reinterpret the Dome of the Rock so much as to widen the scope of its conceptual and artistic inspirations and echoes — what Grabar has termed its “esthetic culture.” The participation of Arabia in the creation of this aesthetic can be found by exploring three areas: the Dome of the Rock’s overriding physical qualities and features, historical descriptive passages in which these qualities appear and the type of architecture they describe, and, finally, the pertinence of these source descriptions to Umayyad perceptions, ambitions, and history.

The Dome of the Rock will here be shown to belong to a general architectural type that includes a number of mythologized pre-Dome structures located not only on the Temple Mount but also in South Arabia. The early sources frequently refer to these structures as “mihrabs.” These mihrabs must be integrated into the pre-history of the Dome of the Rock; they and their surrounding events are as important to understanding the Umayyad cultural personality as are the Biblical traditions that are accepted as major forces behind the building of the Dome of the Rock on its particular site.

The Dome of the Rock is dated by inscription to the year 72 (690–91). This date in the reign of the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik (685–705) is the pivot around which the complex that includes the Dome of the Rock was planned, executed, and later modified and expanded. Less than one hundred and fifty years after the Dome’s
construction different views were offered about its significance.

In 831, the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun replaced Abd al-Malik’s name in the foundation inscription with his own, thereby transforming the Dome of the Rock into a monument of Abbasid rule.11 The Abbasid historian al-Ya’qubi (d. 874) accused Abd al-Malik of attempting to divert the pilgrimage from Mecca to Jerusalem, thus characterizing the Umayyad Dome of the Rock as a rival to the Ka'ba.12 In 985 Muqaddasi explained the Dome of the Rock as a rival to the great churches of the Christian east, seeing it as both a great work of architecture and an emphatic statement in an architectural dialogue between the Islamic and Byzantine empires.13 All three statements acknowledge the greatness of the Dome of the Rock as a work of architecture, yet disagree on its raison d’être.

Of these three statements, one, al-Ma'mun’s, looks to the future. Whether al-Ma'mun’s recording of his name on the Dome of the Rock was motivated by piety or by politics, it implies a recognition of the monument’s cultural value and a belief in its longevity. Muqaddasi and Ya’qubi refer to the past. Muqaddasi recognizes the power of impressive architecture and so is able to present the Dome of the Rock as a potent psychological tool in the hands of the Umayyad caliph. Ya’qubi also sees the building as a tool by which to achieve an immediate goal. His explanation places the Dome of the Rock in direct competition with the Ka’ba. This statement, which has been shown to belong to an anti-Umayyad polemic,14 reflects a larger dialogue between Mecca and Jerusalem.

Ya’qubi’s discredited statement on Abd al-Malik’s intention to divert the pilgrimage establishes a political link between Jerusalem and Mecca. Later pietistic and missionary literature, partly on the basis of the presence of a rock and on the tawaf ritual, amplifies the cosmological connections between the two locales.15 Architectural (physical and visual) links between the Dome of the Rock and the Ka’ba are far more difficult to establish in the original sources.

The Dome of the Rock is a high, colorful, and symmetrical structure that conveys distinct interior and exterior messages. Grabar has focused on the same basic qualities as notable features of the Ka’ba, another geometric building with restricted access and distinct internal and external content, and with colorful textiles substituting for the mosaics and tiles of the Dome of the Rock.16 According to the hypothesis accompanying this correlation, these features, the Ka’ba’s most distinctive qualities, were transferred to the Dome of the Rock in an attempt to create a visually and architecturally compatible monument.

The early and medieval chronicles do not mention these similarities between the Dome of the Rock and the Ka’ba directly, suggesting that the connections they made were religious, pietistic, and mytho-historical rather than architectural. The terms used to designate the two structures — qibba (dome) in the case of Jerusalem’s monument, and ka’ba (cube) for Mecca’s shrine — signify formal differences and put the two structures in apposition. Any recorded architectural affiliations between the Dome of the Rock and the Ka’ba must then be found outside direct descriptions and within descriptions of a larger typological class that includes shrines or monumental structures regardless of their specific configurations. A clue to some sort of connection between the Ka’ba and the Dome of the Rock can be found in Tha’alibi when he speaks of a third structure, a mihrab built for Mary by Zakariyya.17

Tha’alibi’s narrative locates Mary’s mihrab in Jerusalem and associates it with the Temple, later the site of the Dome of the Rock. According to the portion of the narrative that parallels the Qur’anic account, Zakariyya, leader and prophet of the Jewish scholars (ra’is al-abbâri wa nabiyyyihum) of the House of Aaron, hereditary caretakers of the Temple, took charge of the daughter of Imran and placed her in a high and inaccessible location: a mihrab built expressly for her in the Temple (masjid).18 He designed the mihrab so that its entrance was in its center. The door could be reached only by climbing a stairway or ladder (sullam) “just like the door of the Ka’ba.”19

Since Tha’alibi was concerned with religious personages and prophets, he provides an appropriate Islamic parallel to Mary’s mihrab by referring to the religious monument at Mecca. He strengthens the parallel, however, by equating the Temple’s family of abbâr with the Ka’ba’s Qurayshi high priests, the ḥajaba, who alone were allowed to enter the structure.20 Height and restricted access, as well as a reference to hereditary or dynastic rights of guardianship, appear to be the basic operational principles that allow Tha’alibi to compare the two structures. The same principles reappear in descriptions of a number of other structures designated as mihrabs, a term that acts as a textual signal of their special nature or import.

The Qur’an mentions a number of mihrabs. Apart from that associated with Mary, another (mentioned twice) belongs to Zakariyya and is also a spatial unit.21
Qur'anic commentators indicate that a third mihrab, that of the prophet-king David, had a doorway. References to mihrab Dawūd in Wahb ibn Munabbih's eighth-century history characterize it as a structure of some height in which David recited psalms and prayers in seclusion, thus reiterating the twin criteria of height and limited access. Finally, the Qur'anic reference to Solomon's mahārīb (the only plural mihrab designation in the Qur'an) seems to correspond to a final phase in the history of the Temple initiated by David but constructed by his son Solomon. As noted by Soucek, the Islamic sources focus on the Temple's elaborate multicolored decoration.

Built by Solomon's jinn, this Temple is described in Islamic accounts in terms that match the physical appearance of the Dome of the Rock. Whether these descriptions preceded the Dome of the Rock or are a response to its existence is a question that cannot be fully resolved given the nature of the early sources. However, it is clear that the more elaborate accounts borrow certain features of the Dome of the Rock.

Solomon's structure was a colorful building sheathed inside and out with white, yellow, and green marble. Parts of it were coated and inlaid with gold and precious jewels. Solomon had his throne at the end of a monumental audience hall (majlis) where he received the queen of Sheba who was, as is necessarily the intention of the structure and its mythologizing description, left in awe of Solomon's apparent power and wealth. The formula used for Solomon's mihrab reappears whenever monumental buildings are described.

These Qur'anic mihrabs, particularly the ones associated with the Temple of the prophet-kings David and Solomon, can be — and have been — used to justify the choice of the Dome of the Rock's site on Mount Moriah. The histories and para-Qur'anic accounts present mihrabs as architecturally affiliated structures. Although their exact configurations are not described, their height, their inaccessibility, and, in the case of Solomon's mihrabs, their grandeur and opulence are always emphasized. These descriptions combine to define a general architectural type that often appears under the term mihrab. The term does not refer to particular forms and functions (those being designated by words such as qarṣ, dār, majlis, or ghurfa), but to a number of inherent qualities. These qualities indicate that in certain contexts mihrab is synonymous with monument.

The Dome of the Rock can be associated with mihrab qualities through a number of features: it is an opulent elevated monument that forms the focal point of an enceinte located upon a high platform. It is accessible only to the practitioners of the new faith and is a monumental creation of the victorious Umayyad state whose ideologies it embodies. It is also a monument of striking external visual impact, emphasized by its elevation and by its colorful decoration. It is a missionary monument that is meant to impress and convince, perhaps in a manner not unlike the effect Solomon's palatial structure had on Bilqis and her followers. Furthermore, like the mihrabs which preceded it, the Dome of the Rock, by virtue of its site, is a monument within a larger and significant history. Taken together, these associations and connections indicate that the Dome of the Rock itself belongs to the same architectural type known as "mihrab."

The semi-mythical character of mihrabs in the sources is a primary factor in their identification as culturally important monuments. The descriptions imply not only that mihrabs are important or imposing structures, but also that they play significant historical roles. Mihrab descriptions are embedded in accounts that speak of the pre-Islamic past, such as the siyar of prophets preceding Muhammad. The body of material known as irsā'īyyāt, collections of pre-Islamic Jewish history and knowledge, is a primary source for descriptions of these structures and their surrounding events. Among the most important purveyors of irsā'īyyāt is Ka'b al-Ahbar (d. 655), a Jewish convert to Islam whose name appears in contexts that require traditional knowledge or proofs. Jewish perceptions are then considered to have had a decisive effect on the Umayyad choice of Jerusalem as a primary shrine city. However, Ka'b himself was a Yemeni Jew and a primary source of information on pre-Islamic Arabia in general. His knowledge of Jewish and pre-Islamic Arabian lore must therefore be understood as that of an Arab.

As is the case with Ka'b al-Ahbar, Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. ca. 732), who is often cited as the final authority in matters that deal with pre-Islamic history, was also a Yemeni; he spent a portion of his life as governor of San'a. Significantly, Ibn Hisham, who transmitted Wahb's Kitāb al-tijān on the history of pre-Islamic Arabian kings, often uses al-Yamānī to designate his final authority in his major Sira of the Prophet. Similarly, Ubayd ibn Sharyah al-Jurhumi (d. 686), who reputedly narrated pre-Islamic Arab history to the Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiya, was also a Yemeni Arab. Ibn Ishaq (d. ca. 767), a chief collector of Islamic traditions and of irsā'īyyāt used, among other sources, the accounts of Mediterranean women whom he encountered in the mosque.
that way, he transmitted Arab traditions to Egypt and Iraq.\textsuperscript{43} The introduction of Judeo-Christian material into Islam did not, therefore, amount to introducing foreign material into a new culture. Hodgson has pointed out that native knowledge of these traditions was largely responsible for the acceptance and entry of isvāʿīn iylāt literature into Islam.\textsuperscript{44}

Seen in the light of a native Arab knowledge of pre-Islamic history, descriptions of Solomon’s mhrabs and of the Temple can be understood as part of the cultural koine of early Islam. This is significantly underlined by the fact that descriptions of Solomonic structures were transmitted alongside accounts pertaining to the non-Jewish history of the region. The same historical narratives that describe Solomon’s Temple include descriptions of a number of pre-Islamic South Arabian structures that were absorbed into Islamic history and became sources of pride and symbols of Arab kingship.\textsuperscript{45} Primary among these is Ghumdan Palace in San’a.

Ghumdan’s descriptions undergo an elaboration process in the medieval Islamic accounts similar to those of the Temple and mhrabs of Solomon. Like Solomon’s buildings, Ghumdan is also designated by the plural mahrāb. The plural proper noun Mahārāb Ghumdan appears frequently in discussions of the term mhrab in medieval dictionaries,\textsuperscript{46} and mhrb is found in connection with royalty in pre-Islamic Yemeni inscriptions.\textsuperscript{47}

While Ghumdan is not the only structure to survive in Yemeni and Arabic lore, it is the one characterized in Hamdani’s tenth-century account as the oldest and foremost among the palaces (qasr) of Yemen.\textsuperscript{48} Hamdani cites Ibn Sharyah in attributing Ghumdan’s construction to Iśšahar Yadhīb (ca. 240–60).\textsuperscript{49} A Sabean structure, Ghumdan belongs to a period when San’a was eminent in the region’s political and architectural history, and is to be seen as a reflection of past glory.\textsuperscript{50}

The mythical characteristics with which the historians endow Ghumdan are important indicators of the structure’s primacy in memories of the pre-Islamic past. Thus, according to Hamdani, Ghumdan was built under auspicious circumstances, with Taurus in the ascendant and Venus and Mars, signs of constancy and permanence, in the constellation.\textsuperscript{51}

In addition to the Sabean king Iśšahar Yadhīb,\textsuperscript{52} Ghumdan is also sometimes attributed to Sa’īd ibn Nuh, the progenitor of the Arabs.\textsuperscript{53} Yaqūt even provides an account that credits its foundation to Solomon.\textsuperscript{54} The accounts therefore sometimes position Ghumdan at the beginning of Arab history following the Flood and sometimes in a period when its region, particularly Yemen but all locations in Arabia made wealthy by the incense trade, was admired and coveted by other kingdoms.\textsuperscript{55} Ghumdan’s attribution to Solomon further emphasizes its status as a monumental structure, an artifact of a royal builder of legendary proportions.

Similarly, Ghumdan’s destruction is variously ascribed to the Abyssinian invader Abraha in the sixth century,\textsuperscript{56} signaling the end of Sabaean-Himyarite rule and the beginning of Abyssinian-Byzantine domination, and sometimes to the Caliph ʿUthman.\textsuperscript{57} When Hamdani described Ghumdan, its mounds were still visible opposite the eastern doors of San’a’s Great Mosque.\textsuperscript{58} Ibn Hawqal also identified these ruins with Ghumdan, describing them as “traces of a great building now in ruins, so that what remains is a big mound known as Ghumdan, a palace of the kings of Yemen. Even in its ruined state, there is no higher building in Yemen.”\textsuperscript{59}

Geographers and travelers who describe Ghumdan, including Hamdani, Yaqūt, Ibn Rustah, Ibn Hawqal, Nasir-i Khusraw, and Ibn Jubyar, all emphasize its height. In its original state, the palace is described as a tall structure several stories high. Yaqūt, basing his account on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 819),\textsuperscript{60} explains that the palace (qasr) had four sides each of a different color, white, green, yellow, and red. Within this was another qasr at the summit of seven stories (suqūf) each forty cubits (dhīn) high,\textsuperscript{61} so that Ghumdan’s shadow was visible three miles away. The highest chamber (majlis) in Ghumdan was of polychrome marble, and its roof was a single slab of marble. Statues of lions at each of Ghumdan’s four corners roared as the wind blew through them.

Hamdani’s account, based on Wahb ibn Munabbih and Ibn Sharyah al-Jurhumi, differs from Yaqūt’s only in details.\textsuperscript{62} Hamdani’s sources give Ghumdan twenty stories of ten cubits each, and describe it as a square structure with a door on each of its red, white, black and green sides.\textsuperscript{63} At its summit Ghumdan had a chamber with marble windowpanes set in ebony and teak, and a roof that was either one marble slab or a dome composed of eight pieces of marble. It had statues of eagles and lions.\textsuperscript{64} When its lamps were lit, Ghumdan was as bright as lightening.\textsuperscript{65}

Ghumdan figured in the region’s turbulent history in the centuries preceding Islam as the residence of Arabia’s legitimate dynastic rulers. According to Ibn Hisham’s narration of Kitāb al-tijān on the authority of Wahb, only the supreme ruler, “he who deserved the title Tuba’ī among the kings of Himyar,” was allowed to stay at Ghumdan.\textsuperscript{66} In later years, Ghumdan continued to be
the prototype by which medieval authors measured nobility and power in both architecture and kingship. Turtushi used Ghumdan in his *Siraj al-Muluk* to illustrate the destruction of even the greatest kings and accomplishments. In al-Khaṣraji’s *al-Uqūd al-Luṭu’īyya*, Ghumdan is used exclusively as a metaphor for wealth and grandeur in panegyric poetry.

Ghumdan’s physical and functional characteristics relate it to the Temple, the Dome of the Rock, and the Ka’ba. Ghumdan’s descriptions concentrate on its exterior, implying an external value or content. This value is emphasized by Ghumdan’s great height, the equal importance given to its four façades, and its polychromatic, permanent, and expensive building materials. These features project a message of power, wealth, and dominance, and identify Ghumdan as a monument.

Ghumdan appears in historical accounts as a prototypical monument of kingship and power. As a royal residence, it is an exclusive or restricted structure, a shrine to kingship that expresses the Arab concept of *mulk*. Much like Solomon’s mihrabs and the Dome of the Rock, Ghumdan impresses by its very presence. Its descriptions encapsulate and exemplify qualities that pertain to the architectural mihrab type mentioned by early Arab historians and lexicographers.

Information about Ghumdan was as available to the Umayyads as that for Maharib Sulayman. Descriptions of it appear in many of the same sources that describe Qur’anic mihrabs. The value of Ghumdan’s descriptions does not rest on their historical validity so much as on the fact that they were part of Umayyad aesthetic and cultural consciousness. Ubayd ibn Sharyah’s book on the history of pre-Islamic Arab kings is presented as a dialogue between him and Mu’awiyah. The Marwanids are reputed to have possessed a book on the histories of ancient kings. And the chronicles report early Islamic archaeological discoveries in Yemen as late as the caliphate of Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik (715–17). The historians, therefore, report that the Umayyads possessed a store of knowledge which preserved the basic features of monumental architecture. This architecture is signified by the term mihrab, and is elevated, exclusive, opulent, and imposing. These are the Dome of the Rock’s basic qualities.

The idea behind the Dome of the Rock’s design is not a projection of vague memories of the Ka’ba. By the time the Dome of the Rock was completed in 691, the Ka’ba had been besieged by Umayyad troops fighting the counter-caliph Ibn al-Zubayr. The structure was burned during the siege of 683, and was rebuilt by Ibn al-Zubayr in a manner that, he maintained on *Aṣba’i’s* authority, followed the Prophet’s specifications of its Abrahamic form. Three Umayyad caliphs and almost ten years later, in 692, Ibn al-Zubayr was killed and the Ka’ba was quickly torn down and restored to the form it had had during the Prophet’s lifetime.

These reconstructions assume a debate on the Ka’ba’s nature and appearance, and the debate itself requires a detailed knowledge of the Ka’ba’s configurations. The Ka’ba could not have been a distant memory at the time the Dome of the Rock was built. Rather than being based on a description of the Ka’ba model, the Dome of the Rock and the Ka’ba belong to a more basic architectural paradigm exemplified by Ghumdan.

The history of pre-Islamic Arabia which appears in the chronicles of the final years preceding Islam in Arabia is encapsulated in accounts of Ghumdan as a symbol of Arab rule. The area was then subject to a series of invasions and changing political and religious affiliations reflecting the interests of various factions and their backing powers. The Abyssinian retaliation against the Jewish king Dhu Nuwas (Yusuf As’ar) in 523 led to the conquest of Yemen and the installation of Abyssinian governors. Abraha, general and viceroy of Yemen, had styled himself king by 547. His mythologized attack on the northern regions some years later with the intention of destroying the Ka’ba is preserved in the Qur’anic account of *waq’at al-fil*. Following Abraha’s failure to take Mecca, Yemeni groups led by Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan began a revolt that, with military help from the Sasanian shah, successfully ousted the Abyssinians from the region. Although Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan ruled as a vassal of the Sasanian king, and although Yemen itself continued to be a Sasanian province until the death of Khusrav II Perwiz in 628, these events are remembered in Arabic historical accounts as constituting liberation from foreign domination.

The semi-legendary Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan is presented in the accounts as the last great king before the final disintegration of the South Arabian kingdom. He is transformed into an Arab hero who paves the way for Arabia’s unification under Islam. His victory against the Abyssinians is dated two years after the birth of the Prophet. Following his installation, a Meccan congratulatory delegation finds him seated “at Ghumdan’s summit” (†a’s *Ghumdan*). A panegyric reportedly composed for the occasion makes Ghumdan the appropriate reward of the new Arab king. Ghumdan enters Islamic history when Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan, a monotheist, recognizes Abd al-Muttalib, addresses him as his maternal cousin, and informs him of the new era that will be initiated by Abd al-Mutta-
lib’s grandson, Muhammad.\(^2\) While certain parts of the account doubtless have a basis in fact, its pseudo-historical prophetic portion sets Ghudmand as the point of transfer of an old world order into a new one dominated by a new religion.

These accounts contain the historians’ own interpretations of Ghudmand. Ghudmand is a power monument. It is a dynastic Arab shrine that expresses liberation and sends a message of victory. It belongs to an aristocratic elite, and its architecture is an expression of this elite’s ordained right to rule. Ghudmand is too important in Arab memory not to be incorporated into Islamic history. Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan’s recognition of the onset of a new era sets the scene for the Prophet’s appearance. It also sends a message of historical continuity whereby the Arab past is absorbed into a new Arab system of leadership and religion. The same sense of historical continuity is reflected in a frequently repeated pseudo-prophetic formula, “For whom the kingdom of Dhamar? For the chosen Himyarites; for the evil Abyssinians; for the free Persians; for Quraysh the merchants.”\(^3\)

Toward the end of Ubayd’s book on ancient Arabian kingdoms Mu’dawiya proclaims that Himyar’s rule had been removed and transferred, through the agency of the Prophet, to a new victorious dynasty (“fa qad aswath-anā allāhu dhālīka min mulkihin”).\(^4\) With this statement, Mu’dawiya identifies himself — or is consciously made to identify himself — as heir to the older Sabean-Himyarite kingdom and member of an elite that was chosen to continue Arab history as initiated by the Prophet. Mu’dawiya’s self-definition is particularly appropriate for a ruler attempting to establish a new Arab Islamic dynasty in the face of opposition from the equally Arab Quraysh factions.\(^5\) The historical scene is primed for the construction of an Arab Umayyad monument that expresses these ideals.

In the years just before Mu’dawiya’s death in 680 and the completion of the Dome of the Rock in 691, tribal confederacies and allegiances were realigned in accordance with newly reformulated genealogies.\(^6\) Various groups arose in support of ‘Ali and his descendants, a number of revolts (the most important of which was the fitna of Ibn al-Zubayr) occurred, territories were lost and regained, the Ka’bah was destroyed and rebuilt twice, and Umayyad rule was transferred from the house of Abu Sufyan to that of Marwan.\(^7\) By the time stability was restored the Dome of the Rock was complete, and Abū Malik had initiated a series of reforms that Arabized administration and centralized the government.

Ya’qubi’s characterization of the Dome of the Rock as the Ka’bah’s rival reflects a struggle for dominance between two Arab Muslim groups. The Umayyads did not hold the edge in this struggle. Ibn al-Zubayr was a member of Quraysh and the first Muslim born after the hijra to Medina. He refused the caliphate in favor of Mecca, styled himself al-‘ā’id bi’l-bayt,\(^8\) and so identified himself with the Meccan sanctuary.

In countering these attacks the Umayyads needed to emphasize their Arab identity, their place at the head of the old Qurayshi aristocracy, and, consequently, their right to rule. This message had to be relayed in a language familiar to their Arab enemies. A primary constituent of this language was a system of dynastic rule that prompted later, anti-Umayyad historians to accuse the Umayyads of being kings (mulūk) as opposed to the Umayyads’ own self-designation as khulafa’ Allāh (God-ordained caliphs).\(^9\) A title that imparts a sense of destiny. Another constituent was the Dome of the Rock, a monument that projected images of ancient dynastic shrines such as Maharib Ghudmand and Maharib Suleyman and stood as an emphatic point of transfer from the old Islamic caliphate to a new Umayyad dynastic regime.

The inscriptions and representations within the Dome of the Rock also make references to the Arab past. Its inscriptions bear the oldest dated designation of the new Arab religion as Islam.\(^10\) They begin with the primary statement of the Islamic faith, the Unity of God as expressed in the Surat al-Ikhlas. These statements define Arab monotheism, in Umayyad terms, by what it is; then they follow, in the Christological verses that refer to the Trinity, by what it is not.

The representations of crowns and jewels in the Dome of the Rock’s mosaics also have affinities with Arab imagery. Crowns are symbols of dynastic rule in Kūthāb al-tijān where they not only appear in the title but also form the organizing headings throughout the book where each ruler is listed as “crowned king” (al-mulūk al-mutawwaf). Ibn al-Zubayr describes a cache of crowns discovered by Tariq ibn Ziyad during his 711 conquest of Spain in similar terms.\(^11\) At a fort two days’ march from Tulaytica, Tariq found “twenty-four priceless crowns, [corresponding to] the number of their kings. The owner’s name, age, and regnal years were [inscribed] on each crown.” Neither Ibn al-Zubayr nor al-Biruni, who copied the account,\(^12\) mentions the fate of these crowns that conjure up the mosaic images in the Dome of the Rock. Did Tariq ibn Ziyad find such crowns in al-Andalus, or had they become, only a few years after the Dome of the Rock’s completion, essential elements in myths of conquest and dynastic symbolism?
The intermingling of history and myth is an important part of understanding the Dome of the Rock. The Dome of the Rock exemplifies the definition of high architecture as it appears in historical and pseudo-historical accounts. This definition is incorporated in descriptions of Maharib Sulayman and Maharib Ghumdan, which become architectural formulas for monumentality. Like the Dome of the Rock and the Ka'ba, they are externalized, restricted, elevated, visible, colorful, and opulent structures. They are also dynastic shrines with semi-mythologized histories and culturally sensitive roles. They are prototypes of power and monumentality. The Dome of the Rock is synonymous with these Arab ideals of monumentality; it is a mihrab. It is not surprising then that the Dome of the Rock's immediate intentions were quickly forgotten, while its value as a monumental lives on.

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NOTES

9. Arabia is here used to indicate the peninsula from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf.
12. Quoted and accepted by Creswell, Origin of the Plan, pp.2-3, and EMA 1, p.66.
13. Ibid., and Origin of the Plan, pp.3-4.
18. The Qur’anic passage most closely connected to Tha‘alibī’s is 3:37, where Zakariyya enters Mary’s mihrab, indicating an enclosed space.
19. Tha‘alibī, Qisas, p.335, on the authority of Ibn Ishaq.
20. Ibid., p.334.
21. Qur’ān 3:39 and 19:11, in the latter of which Zakariyya "goes out" to his people from the mihrab, again indicating a space.
23. This mihrab prefigures David’s initial construction of the Jerusalem Temple. Wahh ibn Munabbih, a major source for Ibn Ishaq’s famous Sira and Tabari’s Tafsir, is discussed in Newby, Making of the Last Prophet, pp.10f., and Raif Georges Khoury, Wahh b. Munabbih, vol. 1, Der Heidelberger Papirus PRP Heid Arab 23 (Wiesbaden, 1972), pp.190-98, for his dates.
24. Khoury, Wahh b. Munabbih, p.68. The mihrab (translated Gehetsnische) overlooked Uriiah’s orchards and had window openings from which David “looked down” (pp.72f.). In two instances (p.86). David’s structure is a dar that includes a large number of mihrabs. Newby, Making of the Last Prophet, p.159 (also on Wahh’s authority), gives “tower”.
27. Soucek, "Temple of Solomon," pp.84-90, citing Dinawari and Tabarsi who use Wahh as their final authority. The same descriptions are in Ibn Hisham’s/Wahh ibn Munabbih’s Kitāb al-tījān (Hyderabad, 1547), p.159 (hereafter Kitāb al-tījān), as-


30. Ibid., p. 420;1; Kitāb al-tijān, pp. 159 f.

31. Particularly in the cases of Yemeni palaces reputed to have been built by Solomon for Bilqis and conflated with the Temple's descriptions, Dinawari, al-Akhbar al-fu'âl, p. 24.


34. Much of this material was excised from Ibn Hisham's Abbasid Sūra version, Newby, Making of the Last Prophet, pp. 1–92.


38. EI, 2nd ed., "considered to have possessed a profound knowledge of Arabia and southern Arabian tradition."

39. G. Khoury, Wabi b. Munabbih, pp. 196–98. Wabi was descended from a Herati father, but was born and lived in Yemen.


42. Newby, Making of the Last Prophet, p. 6.

43. For Ibn Ishaq's move out of Medina, see ibid., pp. 6–8; EI, 2nd ed. Except for one case, transmitters of his traditions are non-Medinese.


45. Tabari refers to three "unique" Yemeni palaces, Silhin, Baynun, and Ghumdan; Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Tārikh al-rusul wa al-mustūlak, 5 vols. (Beirut reprint, 1965), vol. 1, part 2, p. 298.


51. Hamdani, Ilīli, 8:7.


54. Yaqut, Mu'jam, 4:311.


57. Yaqut, Mu'jam, 4:211.

58. Hamdani, Ilīli, 8:15.


60. Abu al-Mundhir Hisham ibn al-Sab' ibn al-Kalbi (d. 819), a known genealogist and authority on pre-Islamic religions and history, al-Kalbi, Kitāb al-asnam, ed. Ahmad Zaki (Cairo, 1924), pp. 12–19.

61. Yaqut, Mu'jam, 4:910.


63. Ibid., p. 25.

64. Ibid., pp. 16, 22–23.


66. Kitāb al-tijān, p. 60.


68. ibid., p. 69.


70. Malîk (in the dual form mîkh) appears in the inscriptions listed in n. 49 above. Mu’awiyah is usually credited with (or accused of) creating a monarchical system (mulk); for example Abu al-Abbas Ahmad al-Qalqashandi, Nihâyat al-ārâb fi ma’rifat ansâb al-‘Arab, ed. Ibrahim al-Abayri (Cairo, 1950), pp. 83–84.


74. Al-Azraqi, Akhbar Makka, pp. 204–10. The first destruction and rebuilding of the Ka’ba during the Prophet’s lifetime is in Ibn


79. *Kitāb al-tijān*, p. 306 and n. 3.


82. Ibid., pp. 307–10, significantly the final passages of the account.


84. *Akhbār Ūyahd*, p. 472.


86. Particularly important is the shift of the Qudā’a confederacy, headed by the Kalb clan, from a northern to a southern genealogy identifying them as descendants of Qahtan (hence Himyar and Saba’i) as opposed to Isma’ili; Hawting, *First Dynasty*, pp. 36 f., and table 2. References to this shift are recorded in Qalqashandi, *Nīhāyat al-arab*, p. 400.


88. "He who seeks refuge in the House [of God]," ibid., p. 49. These particulars make Ibn al-Zubayr especially relevant to the Dome of the Rock, although primacy in Islam was argued by other factions.

89. Ibid., pp. 12–13, or "God’s regents."

90. As noted elsewhere, for example, ibid., p. 61.


Fig. 1. Aerial view of the Dome of the Rock, the Aqsa Mosque, and the newly excavated Umayyad structures west and south of the Haram. (Photo: T. Rosen.)