In recent decades, the question of how content and meaning were conveyed through symbols and signs in Islamic art and architecture has been the center of considerable attention. In this process, the form, decoration, inscriptions, and literary evidence have been studied using various methods. From these art historical studies it has become obvious that — at least in the formative phase of Islamic art — a well-defined iconographic system of forms, decorative patterns, calligraphy, and even inscriptive formulas bear a common symbolic meaning throughout the Islamic world never existed. For that reason Islamic architecture has been judged as generally "low-charged" in symbolic content, aside from a few major monuments, compared with, for example, "highly charged" Christian or Hindu architecture. Islamic architecture was thought to convey its meaning, not by a formal or typological structure that could be read by the viewer, but rather by specific decoration applied to the building to communicate its expressive intent. Aware that numerous problems entwined in this discussion are still far from being resolved, I would like to focus on one particular aspect of the problem — medieval Islamic war and victory monuments — with the aim of casting light on the nature of medieval Islamic architectural symbolism.

It is impossible to determine where and when in history the idea of a commemorative victory monument came into being, but we can say with some certainty that social and political factors that developed the perception of historical processes were essential to its rise. From a certain moment in history, the claim to power and leadership of individuals or groups required authentication by the past, an imposing representation in the present, and a lasting tradition for the future. Particularly in the case of commemorative structures, a distinct set of lasting symbolic and iconic values is expected to have been assigned automatically, because their purpose lay in establishing ready recollection and memory of a person, a place, or even an event, sometimes long after the person to be commemorated had lived or after the place had lost every trace of what should have been remembered about it. For this reason the existence of a complete system of signs that communicated the message intended by the patron of the monument — at least in a defined region — would be essential.

It has been evident, however, that such a model of a monument might be too simplistic, or at least not the only possible one, ever since the art historian Alois Riegl extended the concept of what can be categorized under the label "monument" in a famous article published at the beginning of this century. Today any discussion of commemorative monuments immediately invokes a much broader range of ideas than it would have in the nineteenth century, the time of the "pedestal monument". The basic definition of a monument today involves distinguishing between objects or buildings of the past that are meant to create memories and those that are able to evoke them. The difference between intended and non-intended, between "pre-conscious" and "post-conscious," monuments means that one can differentiate between objects or buildings which were created as monuments from the outset, like a triumphal arch, and those that gained this character because of their substantial or formal importance in retrospect, as, for instance, ruins preserved in cities to recall the horrors of war. Consequently, modern art history and social sciences find monumental qualities in former industrial areas in our everyday environment and conservationists even point to "monuments of nature." These examples represent an inflation of the term according to which virtually any object, building or even landscapes of all kinds can qualify as "monuments". The value of collective memory embodied in these monuments inevitably seems to be of secondary importance. This is due to the multiple ways in which the remembrance of that which is to be remembered is conveyed, and, finally, what specific social group is the target of its presence. To avoid all the complications now categorized under the term monument, we will here restrict the discussion to a limited definition of a monument as something deliberately constructed to commemorate a historical event. We will also eliminate from our discussion the huge number of
memorials that mark the burial sites, whether of ordinary people, rulers, or saints, and by which the faithful of all religions have demonstrated their piety, and restrict ourselves to monuments designed for the recollection of a historical, often military event, or of political or religious achievements and cataclysms, or of persons who acted as protagonists in these events.

A SURVEY OF THE PRE-ISLAMIC TRADITION OF WAR AND VICTORY MEMORIALS

In most pre-Islamic cultures along the Mediterranean and in western Asia the idea of commemorating historical or military events can be found in all kinds of structures or objects, but they all employed a system for conveying information that everyone could understand. In the ancient Middle East, the kings of Akkad, Babylonia, and Assyria erected stelas and reliefs as symbols of their omnipresence and power wherever their military expeditions went, frequently celebrating both the king and his victory over his enemy by a combination of a narrative depiction and explanatory inscription (fig. 1). The same was true in later times for Greece and Rome. In addition to monuments like altars and temples dedicated to specific deities after a successful campaign, the site of a military victory would be marked by a tropaion, a trophy, originally consisting of captured weapons or enemy equipment erected right on the battlefield. These ephemeral structures were meant to stand there only for a short time, but some were made as lasting monuments, though still bearing the iconography of the tropaion. The wide circulation of the representation of tropaia on late antique coins, often in combination with Nike (the goddess of victory), certainly can be explained as a tool of propaganda (fig. 2).

Another kind of victory memorial served purposes of propaganda on both the visual and the literary level by summarizing and celebrating the achievements of the ruler in a report of activities or — to be more precise — of campaigns, set up at a place that would be seen by many people. The Achaemenid relief at Bisutun and the Sasanian reliefs at Naqsh-i Rustam are examples of this kind of memorial in the east. At Bisutun the relief with its trilingual inscription (Babylonian, Elamite, and Greek) commands the main route between the low lands of modern Iraq and the Iranian high plateau until this day. The relief shows Darius I (r. second half of the 6th century B.C.) greeting his god Ahuramazda and, in front of him, a row of fettered rebels in their ethnic dress whom he had killed or captured in the course of, as he claims, a one year’s campaign in different parts of Iran and Mesopotamia (fig. 3). Copies of the text, otherwise unreadable due to its high position on the rock, were dispatched all over the empire as far as Egypt, describing how Darius came to power by fighting and eventually killing nine pretenders to the throne. Some 750 years later in western Iran the same method of summing up historical events over a long period on one tableau was used to demonstrate the triumph of a ruler over his defeated enemies: one of four relief versions made about 269 C.E. near Bishapur in southwestern Iran (fig. 4), depicts the victorious Sasanian king Shapur I grasping the forearm of the Roman emperor Valerian (r. 253–259 C.E.) whom he had captured along with several thousand
Fig. 2. Nike embellishing a *tropaion*. Coin reverse of Seleukos I Nika- tor (c. 321–281 B.C.).

Fig. 3. Bisutun. Relief of the Achaemenid Darius I. After 519 B.C.

Fig. 4. Bishapur. Relief of Shapur I. After 260 A.D.
 legionnaires near Edessa in 259. The corpse of the emperor Gordian III (r. 238–244), killed during a campaign against Iran several years earlier, in 244,\(^6\) lies beneath the hoofs of the king’s horse. In front of the king, Valerian’s successor, the emperor Philip the Arabian (r. 244–249) asks humbly for the release of the Roman prisoners. The written record, the _res gestae_, of the king’s campaign and other events, written in Greek and Middle Persian, were inscribed nearby on the so-called Kaṭa-ye Zardusht.\(^7\) As in the case of Bisutun, the bilingual text suggests that copies were meant to circulate both inside and outside the empire.

In Rome, the Column of Trajan (r. 53–117) uses a comparable concept: 155 narrative scenes on a spiral band on a socle designed as a _tropaeum_ depict crucial moments in battles or incidents of related importance that summarize the campaigns against the Dacians\(^8\) and at the same time celebrate the _virtus_, _pietas_, _clementia_, and _justitia_ of the emperor, whose statue stood on top of the column, a successful concept even after almost two millennia, for it was copied by Napoleon I for the Place Vendôme in Paris.

Another typical memorial of the pre-Islamic period found all over the former Roman empire is the _fornix_ or
arcus triumphalis erected for a person of high rank, to commemorate events of importance to the Roman Republic and later the Roman Empire. Triumphal arches for Roman military leaders quickly established a distinct pattern of form and function. They frequently featured a statue, either a god or the triumphant military leader on a chariot, in a commanding position, in the attic of the arch and inscriptions which record the occasion for which the arch was erected. At the same time reliefs depicting the events and the whole repertoire of symbols of victory and peace, such as tropaia, fettered barbarians, and genies of victory transmitted the message on a visual level. Triumphal arches erected in the center of imperial Rome and in the provinces also show scenes of victorious military campaigns, the resulting booty, and prisoners, with festoons of fruit and cornucopias to suggest the prosperity that Romanization could guarantee (figs. 5, 6).

As in the case of the Column of Trajan, this simple but impressive code of architectural and decorative language was still understood long after the Roman Empire had collapsed. Einhard (ca. 740–840), the chancellor of Charlemagne, for example, is credited with having designed a triumphal arch for his sovereign according to the Roman model (fig. 7). The triumphal arches raised in Europe between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century revived types of victory monuments that conveyed their message through the ages by the same well-developed, firmly established, and widely accepted symbolic code.

A final type of victory monument used before the advent of Islam in western Asia, both in the Graeco-Roman period and later in Byzantium and Iran, was the foundation of a city. As in the case of the tropaion, some of them were situated on the very site of the battle. The usual name given these cities leaves no doubt as to their origin: Nicopolis, the “City of Victory,” is a standard name for such foundations in the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander III’s Nicopolis that celebrated the battle at Issos and ending with a city of the same name built in 629 on the Danube by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius. In Iran, cities with similar programmatic names like the Antioch of Khusrav near Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia or Bishapur in southwestern Fars became the new home for Roman deportees after successful Persian raids against Greater Syria.

Even this short and admittedly incomplete survey of pre-Islamic war and victory monuments makes clear the elements that came to be used to convey the commemorative message. The standard model — a linguist would use the term code — generally combines four essential elements. The first is site, that is, the monument has either to be placed to mark the very spot where the event of historical importance occurred or where it can function as a tool of propaganda, that is, in a central location visited by many people. A second element is the narrative or summarized depiction of the event that is to be remembered by portraying the triumphant person and his vanquished enemies. Instead of, or in addition to, this are symbols of victory like tropaia or figures like genies and goddesses.

The third essential element is a documentary account, written, of course, from the victor’s point of view, in an inscription that explains to the viewer the background and the historical situation and mentions persons and
dates that should be remembered. Obviously, inscriptions were the best guarantee that the intention of the patron would be understood and that the building's function as a memorial would persist in the future.

Finally, there is the form of the monument. The pre-Islamic world used a number of different types of structures and visual means that seemed to be more or less specific to a certain region or defined sphere of political influence. However, it is not clear why one structure would be favored over another. For victory columns, _tropaeum_, reliefs, and triumphal arches all conveyed their message clearly, either by the form to which the connotation of a victory memorial was attached in the first place, or by their specific decorative program. Altars, chapels, and temples, however, which were related to a cult by function and phenotype revealed a secondary character as victory monuments only if they were in a particular location or dedicated to particular divinities associated with war like Mars, or with abstract virtues in the case of Fidelitas, or if they used particular decorations or inscriptions. One might suggest that in these cases the aspect of thanksgiving embedded in periodical rituals called for a form of monument which was attached more closely to religion and cult.

IN SEARCH OF ISLAMIC VICTORY MONUMENTS

Having established the criteria for identifying a victory monument and how it functioned, we can ask two questions in our search for comparable Islamic memorials. First, how did Muslim patrons show their intention of commemorating historical events through the visual arts? Second, did Islamic culture develop a kind of architecture or decorative code to express the function of a memorial and, if so, did this code use the same or similar signs as those used in pre-Islamic victory monuments?

If one perceives the early phase of Islamic culture in the Mediterranean and Iranian region and its expression on the visual level as a continuation — though modified — of late antiquity one should a priori expect a positive answer at least regarding the latter question. But there are some major differences between, for instance, the Roman-Byzantine or the Iranian empires, with their awareness of a long history that called for being represented by victory memorials, and the nascent Islamic state, which had no historical past to look back upon. That brings up additional questions at the outset. The first has to do with the conception of the Islamic state itself: how soon would a political entity like the young Islamic state, with only a very short period of history to refer to, begin to use memorials? For it seems to lie in the nature of this subject that between the installation of a preliminary memorial structure serving as a simple ad-hoc documentation of an event (for instance, a quickly assembled _tropaeum_), and elaborate memorial monuments like triumphal arches or reliefs with their sophisticated, differentiated and far-reaching transmitters of a message, must be a period of selection during which those events and places which turned out to be of crucial importance for the fate of an empire or person in the outcome are considered. A question related to this problem is why supposed Islamic victory memorials were erected. Were they used as visual landmarks by which the extension of the Dar al-Islam into the Dar al-Harb could be gauged? Or were they erected rather as monuments to celebrate individuals and their accomplishments?

Another problem that creates a difference between pre-Islamic and supposed Islamic memorials lies in a well-known peculiarity of Islamic art. The aversion of early Islam to the depiction of living creatures, at least in an official urban context, excludes one of the "essential signs" of a pre-Islamic victory monument — the pictorial narration of the event and the portrayal of those involved in it — right from the start. From this observation the question immediately arises how an Islamic monument could cope with this serious inability to communicate on the visual level.

The best way to approach these problems is to turn first to those Islamic structures to which the designation "victory monument" has been applied by art historians. The term first appears in literature on Islamic architecture in Diez's _Churassamische Bautenkmäler_, published at the beginning of this century, and was applied from then until the 1970's to a small group of either Khurasanian minarets of the Ghaznavid or Seljuk period situated either in remote areas of the Iranian desert or in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan. Among them figure the minarets of Khosrawjird (dated 505/1111-12) near Sabzawar, Kerat in the region of Torbat-i Shaykh Jam, and Firuzabad in the Turshiz area. In Afghanistan, the minarets of Mas'ud III (fig. 8) and Bahram Shah at Ghazna, as well as the one of Ghiyath al-Din in the Ghurid capital hidden in the valley of Jam (fig. 9), were identified as possibly monuments to military victories. Later the Qarakhanid minaret of the Kalan mosque at Bukhara and the Qrib Minar next to the Quwat al-Islam mosque at Delhi were added to this group.

The reason for identifying them as victory monuments was not based on their being erected at a place of significance in the collective historical memory, and they did
not communicate a historical message by one of the “essential elements” established above. Their identification as victory monuments instead rested solely on their isolated presence, apparently unrelated to a mosque, a madrasa or a caravanserai, which seemed to require an explanation other than the normal use of a minaret. Both requirements were, of course, not met either by the Kalan minaret or by the Qutb Minar. Although in more than one case the inscriptions are preserved only in fragments, the contents of the remaining inscriptions do not provide sufficient evidence to support the assumption that these minarets commemorated victories. Aside from enumerating the patron’s titles, no specific terminology or historical detail hinting at such a function can be detected. In addition no material, artistic, or literary reference has ever been cited to back up the theory that these were “victory minarets” to begin with. Aware of the problem that a group of buildings had been referred to by a term that had not been given any kind of definition,
J. Sourdel-Thomine used the designation *tour de victoire* as a generic term, together with *tour de guet* (watchtower), for "cylindrical minarets of the Iranian plateau standing apart from mosques," but ascribed no certain function to them. The uncertainty that apparently existed over labeling the minarets "victory monuments" was reflected in the fact that almost every scholar who identified them as such mentioned other possible, totally different functions for those minarets as well: they could be watchtowers or—as in the case of the flanged towers at Ghazna—eight-sided pictures of the world.

Thus, the idea that minarets could be commemorative landmarks and carriers of information about Islamic historical events and places was never really confirmed, and seems to have been abandoned completely when at least some of these minarets were found through excavations and soundings to have been not isolated towers at all, but part of larger contemporary architectural complexes, probably mosques, which had vanished in the course of time, leaving only the forlorn minaret at the site.

From these unsatisfying results one might conclude that the idea that minarets were a type of Islamic victory monument was a product solely of Western scholarly imagination. However, some literary as well as material evidence does exist to connect towers with the idea of a war or victory monument, though it was never cited—probably on account of its gruesome details—by those seeking to prove that minarets had such a function. In Firdawsi's *Shāhnāma*, the Sassanian king Bahram Chobin is credited with having erected a victory tower by piling up the skulls of beheaded enemies after he won a battle. This macabre custom was apparently emulated by Muslim rulers and generals on several occasions as a warning to insurgent cities. The only literary evidence known to me mention Timur, in Sistan, at Takrit and Isfahan, and at various other sites, his son Miranshah at Herat, and as late as the seventeenth century, Mun'sim Khan, a general of the Mughal emperor Akbar, all credited with having erected such "skull-minarets". Though they of course were not minarets *strictu sensu*, painters of the Safavid period depicted the gruesome structures in illuminated manuscripts as minaret-shaped towers of absolutely elegant proportions, from which not even the balcony for the muezzin was omitted (fig. 10). The artist took quite literally the literary topos, *as sarhā-ye koshtegan manārēh sāhkhtān* ("they build minarets from the heads of the ones killed"), used in these historical accounts when he depicted the skull piles as regular minarets. Though it would be very tempting to connect those piles of skulls and their artistically aesthetized version in illuminations with the above-mentioned brick minarets of Khurasan, comparable to the temporary and persistent versions of *tropaia* in the classical age, the missing link is an inscription or a literary description that tells us we should perceive such a minaret as a tower of victory. As long as no such evidence is forthcoming, there is no reason to believe that minarets were ever used on specific occasions to signify an important event in Islamic history.

The interpretation by Oleg Grabar, in an article published in 1959, of the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem (dated 72 [691–92]) as a victory monument has had a great and long-lasting impact on the discussion of Islamic buildings as carriers of political and religious messages. In an attempt to assess the religious and polit-
cal function of its site, form, and decoration, Grabar explained the Dome of the Rock as a victory monument marking the superiority of Islam over the two other predominant religions — Judaism and Christianity — linked to Jerusalem. He argued that building the Dome of the Rock on Mount Moriah, an area which had been abandoned during the Roman and Byzantine period, not only took over the tradition of the ancient sanctuary, but ended any hope the Jewish community might have harbored of restoring the temple, since the site would be occupied by an Islamic building. Its actual shape and the ground plan, moreover, bear a strong resemblance to martyria, which were built as commemorative structures par excellence in the Byzantine Empire. In Jerusalem, they were represented by the Church of the Ascension and the Holy Sepulchre, both in existence when the Dome of the Rock was built. The obvious and measurable relationship between those three buildings was interpreted by Oleg Grabar as the ostentatious appropriation of the conquered country by using its religious symbols for one’s own purposes.

The decoration inside the Dome of the Rock gave further clues to the building’s function. Of the three mosaic inscriptions contemporary to the Umayyad building, all except the date on both sides of the inner octagonal arcade contain quotations — or, more precisely paraphrases — of the Qur’an. They refer to the omnipotence, the power of God, and the outstanding position of the Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of God’s last revelation to mankind. The most interesting quotations, however, are the lengthy passages in which the Christian Trinity is repeatedly refuted and the divinity of Jesus is denied. Grabar interpreted these texts as a direct rebuke addressed to the overwhelmingly Christian population of Jerusalem. Finally, the glass mosaics on the innermost arcade and in the dome with their artistic allusions to Byzantine and Sassanian jewelry and crowns were conceived as another part of the message expressed by the Dome of the Rock. Since it was reported in various sources that real jewelry from the booty captured by Muslim armies was displayed in the sanctuary of the Ka’ba in Mecca and in the Dome of the Rock as well, one could argue that depicting these insignia of the two main antagonists of the Muslims as part of the booty must be understood as a symbolic appropriation and the symbolic submission of both these empires. The patron of the Dome of the Rock might have tried to use the pre-Islamic code of victory monuments by taking over the shape of a religious Byzantine building for this very purpose and then decou-
instead of a conveniently placed account of the Umayyads’ achievements of the last thirty years of their rule as well as — admittedly ornate — pieces of Sassanian and Byzantine insignia masked by vegetal scrolls and blending into ornaments with a possible different meaning.\textsuperscript{52} The second option would be to interpret the Dome of the Rock as a monumental declaration geared to the present situation of the Umayyad state, hence serving as a statement of victory. The complex patchwork of its allusions and quotations on the literary, decorative, and architectural level would then need no further elaborate explanations because we must assume that a project as pretentious as this one was being discussed and interpreted throughout the country, and this immediate impact would have already fulfilled parts of its propaganda purpose.

There is more than one indication that in the early Islamic period another kind of building was used to mark the site of a historical event. As early as the eighth century, historians mention a mosque (\textit{masjid}) on the outskirts of Medina at a place called Uhud which every Muslim recognizes as the site of a battle which took place in the year 626, in the earliest days of Islam, when a small group of Muslims led by the Prophet himself fought an army from Mecca, which at that time had not yet embraced Islam. The destruction of the young Muslim community was narrowly averted at great sacrifice.\textsuperscript{53} At the site where Hamza b. \textasciitilde{A}bd al-Muttalib, the uncle of Muhammad, died in that battle, a mosque is likely to have been erected by the second century A.H.\textsuperscript{54} Whether the mosque was built primarily to recall the events at Uhud or was meant to serve as a memorial for the Muslim martyrs buried within is not clear,\textsuperscript{55} but since the battle and the circumstances of Hamza’s death are substantial parts of the literary collective memory it probably served both purposes.\textsuperscript{56} The mosque of Uhud is also referred to by the geographer al-Maqdisi in the tenth century,\textsuperscript{57} but he only mentions a tomb and not the battle. Characteristically none of the pilgrim manuals of later epochs, which describe every place of possible interest for the pious believer on his pilgrimage, mentions this particular mosque or the events surrounding it. The site was finally rebuilt at the end of the twelfth century by the mother of the caliph al-Nasir as a shrine to the martyr Hamza.\textsuperscript{58}

A similar fate was met by a mosque at ‘Aqraba’, at a site called Khadiqat al-Maut (Garden of the Dead), in
the Yamama. According to the ninth-century historian al-Baladhuri, it was built during the time of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–33). The mosque had been erected at a site where, two hundred years earlier, Muslim forces under their generalissimus Khalid b. al-Walid had won the final victory over the tribe of Banu Hanifa which was led by the “false prophet” Musailima during the caliphate of Abu Bakr. The patron, possibly a pious descendant of one of the fighters, endowed the mosque as a memorial on the site of Islam’s final victory on the Arabian peninsula, but again, expressly for the Muslims killed in this battle. It seems also in this case that the approach to such a historically significant site even after such a passage of time was not to celebrate the heroic achievement that brought about the final breakthrough for Islam but to commemorate the dead. This brief passage in al-Baladhuri is both the first and last mention of this special structure: although both the ridda wars and the encounter at Uhud figure among the famous battles fought by the young Muslim community and are recorded many times in historical records, in the Prophet’s biographies, and sung by poets, the monuments built to commemorate them and to honor the Muslims killed in these events played no important part in the Muslim collective memory and did not survive.

The special historical-religious circumstances leading to the erection of these mosques — namely the fight between Muslims and infidels — might give one the idea that the mosque was considered a distinct material expression of the new faith used as a symbol of victorious Islam. Because of the profound lack of sources we, of course, have no idea what these mosques looked like or whether they possessed any features that distinguished them from mosques serving solely as places for prayer or in what specific way they commemorated the event. The very fact that historians and geographers used the term “mosque”, however, suggests that these buildings were generally not unlike any normal mosque used for prayer at that time. There could be confirmation of this assumption in a third “victory mosque”, the Yevli Cami in Antalya (fig. 11), separated both by time and distance from the examples cited above. A number of features of this rather unassuming mosque, which has two naves covered by six domes, suggest that it was built on the site of a pre-existing Byzantine church which had been converted into a mosque by the Seljuqs in the thirteenth century. The inscription over the entrance reads:

Basnala. Through the grace of God the sublime, and by his accomplished favor he obtained. what God — may he be praised and exalted! — permitted him to obtain in his high endeavour, Conquered the city of Antalya and constructed and renovated this blessed mosque as a thanksgiving for the gift of the giving King [i.e., God], the great amir, the sultan of the littoral, Mubariz al-Din wa-l-Din Muhammad b. Yâmus Bey — may God make his rule eternal — on the 21st of Dhul-Qa’dâ of the year 774 [May 14, 1373]. Its architect was Bâl(a)han, the eunuch.

In the inscription (fig. 12) Mubariz al-Din, the Karamanid dynast of the Tekke province in southwestern Anatolia is probably referring to the reconquest of his own capital from the hands of the Lusignans of Cyprus who had occupied the important harbor in 1361. It might be surprising that this important event, which after all meant the reinstatement of a ruler in his former capital, did not result in more than the rebuilding and renovation (bâna wa-jaddada) of the mosque. Unfortunately the sources do not tell us whether the old Seljuq mosque had been destroyed or had fallen into disrepair during the time of the

Fig. 12. Antalya, Yevli Minare Mosque. Dedication inscription above the entrance. (Photo: from R.M. Riefenstahl, Turkish Architecture in Southwestern Anatolia [Cambridge, Mass., 1991], pl. 205)
the Christian occupation, or if it had been turned into a Christian church. In fact, this would explain some substantial work that would have had to be done to convert the building into the mosque again.

What we can conclude from this example is, first, that “victory mosques” could be built as functional oratories. Their purpose seems not to have been primarily their commemorative function as victory monuments, nor embedded in periodical rituals on the anniversaries of the event inspiring their foundation. This means, depending on the clarity by which their original function was expressed to the beholder — and this was probably only mentioned in the foundation inscription — that such buildings could very easily lose their commemorative contents. The second conclusion we can draw from the mosque is that the type of building used (in one case we even know the rather modest dimensions) bears characteristics of personal piety rather than of an official governmental manifestation as in the Dome of the Rock, although members of the ruling elite were involved as patrons. The aspect of personal gratitude toward God as expressed in Mubartiz al-Din’s inscription corroborates this interpretation.

It would be incorrect to assume that these presumed victory mosques were built only when Muslims were victorious over non-Muslims; a fourth medieval building, though attested only in the thirteenth century by literary evidence, was erected on the site of a battle at Siffin in central Syria to mark the ground where two Muslim armies led by the Prophet’s son-in-law, ʿAli b. Abi Talib, on one side, and the Umayyad Muḥammad b. Abi Ṣufyan, on the other, fought a fierce battle in the year 657. In Muslim history, this event has always been considered a disaster for the whole Muslim community, because it finally led to schism in the Muslim world. Nonetheless no medieval traveler or geographer describing the town of Siffin ever mentions the building at the site of the battle. Here again it is possible that the site never gained importance and the structure built there soon lost its character as a memorial monument. The monument is designated by the thirteenth-century historian Ibn Khalikan as a “mashhad”, a term that gives no clear indication as to its outer appearance or to its exact function, since in this period the word is used for complex burial shrines, comprising domed structures as well as mosque-like complexes. Ibn Khalikan’s awareness of the building “on the site of the famous battle between ʿAli b. Abi Talib and Muḥammad” as a building commemorating a historic event does not exclude the possibility that the mashhad also served as a funerary monument similar to the ones in Uhud and Qabrā mentioned above.

Based on these buildings, which possibly shared a couple of common conceptional features, it is safe to conclude that mosques were considered to be the proper structure by which to represent and maintain the memory of a moment in the history of Islam. One has to underscore, however, the point that these perceptions can be gained predominantly through literary traditions, since the material carriers — the memorial mosques — soon fell into oblivion and played no important role in the collective memory of the Muslim community as places signifying an event.

In medieval Bilad al-Sham another structure existed that expressed historical memories and whose description has preserved some clues to its architectural features. In the late twelfth century a building was erected at Hattin, a place west of Lake Tiberias where Saladin dealt the Crusaders the decisive blow that led to the end of the Crusader states in the Levant. Contemporary sources and modern historiography both view the battle of Hattin as the turning point in the Crusader wars. With both sides fully aware of the encounter’s consequences, Muslim sources celebrate the victory owing to the grace of God just as Christian documents deplore the catastrophe as divine punishment. According to Muslim and Christian sources Saladin ordered a structure erected on the southermmost of the two “horns” of Hattin where the routed knights had withdrawn to attempt a last stand around the tent of Guy de Lusignan, the king of Jerusalem, but were finally forced to capitulate and to hand over the Holy Cross. Only recently, the foundations of a small and rather unimpressive building on the hilltop of the southern “horn” were rediscovered: built of rubble laid in mortar are the walls of an oblong building (8.6×10 m) which had been divided down the middle by a wall to make two compartments (fig. 13). One can interpret these remains as substructures for a now completely lost building, but since no erect walls have been preserved, reconstructing the site is impossible. In spite of this there is no good reason to doubt that these remnants might be identical with the structure described in the old French chronicle, L’Etoile de Eracles, as the mahomere built by Saladin, according to the source, “in gratitude to God” and in remembrance of his victory, on the very spot where Guy de Lusignan had been captured. The account is confirmed by at least one Muslim source. The historian al-Dimashqī states that Saladin built a qubba on the horn of Hattin which was called Qubbat al-Nasr, the Dome of Victory. Here, for the first time, we have evidence of an
Islamic monument that expressly displayed its function in what seems to have been an official name or title. The fate of this monument, built to celebrate the downfall of the Christian forces, however, is characteristic of this type of Islamic architecture: only thirty years after the encounter, the Christian pilgrim Thietmar passed the site and remarked in belated triumph:

Here I crossed the field where the army of the Christians was defeated and the Holy Cross taken as booty by the enemies of the Cross. At this place in the open field and on a certain high ground, Saladin built a temple to his gods for the victory gained. It is still there today, but it is neglected [literally: without honor] and fallen into ruins — no wonder, since it has not been founded on the strong rock that is Jesus Christ.  

The building on top of the horn of Hattin has never been rebuilt. In fact, the pilgrim’s account and the short note in al-Dimashqi are the only indications that there had ever been a victory memorial on this important site. Even though every single detail of the battle has been handed down in several literary accounts, the material symbol of the event had already ceased to exist after one generation. For this reason, we have to ask whether the building was ever incorporated into the program of one of the pious endowments Saladin had established during his lifetime to keep up the mosques, tombs, and schools he founded. Since the revenue from these endowments would have ensured the maintenance and the upkeep of this building in the future, one has to assume that Saladin’s victory memorial was not intended to play a role beyond the immediate events that happened at the site, let alone to be used as a place of periodical ceremony in connection with the memory of the battle of Hattin. In this sense the qubba would have functioned in the way of a pre-Islamic trophy of only temporary character.

What this building looked like is again unclear. The designations used by Christian authors, maqomeric and templum suggest a mosque, an assumption supported by the bipartite ground plan of the structure which appears to have been a prayer room with a small courtyard in front of it. The Arab term qubba used by al-Dimashqi, however, points to a single-domed building rather than a mosque-like structure. Whatever the form and appearance of this building were in its brief life, its dimensions were hardly designed to inspire awe or express patriotism, or pride in the accomplishment of the Muslim armies and gratitude for God’s help — in short, it hardly demonstrated everything which is normally expressed by official memorials.

In later times, buildings in the form of a single domed structure erected to commemorate battles and victories are mentioned more frequently. In Shawwal 658 (September 1261), exactly one year after the routing of a Mongol army, Sultan al-Zahir Baybars ordered a “Mashhad al-Nasr” built at ʿAin Jalut, the site of the encounter. For the first time we are informed more completely of what inspired the recently enthroned sultan to build this victory memorial. In his biography of Sultan Baybars, the Qadi Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Zahir notes:

When God had granted him victory over the Tatars at ʿAin Jalut, the sultan ordered the erection of the Mashhad al-Nasr to make plain the importance of this gift of God and the spilled blood of the enemy. He did this furthermore, because the place was emblazoned since God already had mentioned it in the story of Tahun and Jalut in his exalted book and the sultan acknowledged the rank of this site for which God had had this extraordinary victory in store.

To remember a victory over the infidels granted by God and a place already named in the Qurʾān thus destined
for this event are the reasons given for Baybars to build the mashhad. Gratitude towards God is a motif already met at the Yivli Cami and Saladin’s Qubbat al-Nasr at Hattin. It would be tempting again, therefore, to interpret the erection of these buildings as a sign of personal, non-official piety. But if Baybars espouses himself as a tool of God and compares himself with victorious David fighting Goliath, the structure gains the quality of official propaganda for the sultan. Otherwise, the phenomenon already observed is also true here: the monument is known only from literary accounts, since no trace has come down to us, i.e., the mashhad apparently did not serve as an important memorial to legitimize the newly established Mamluk dynasty thrown into prominence by averting the Mongol threat.

If we can assume that the structures called Qubbat al-Nasr at Hattin and the Mashhad al-Nasr at Ain Jalut had domes, we can definitely say this of a building not far from the main road between the Syrian cities of Damascus and Hims which the local people called the “Qubbat al-Asafir,” the Dome of Sparrows (figs. 14, 15). This little structure features no architectural peculiarity. Its plan, proportions, and construction material — rough stone masonry — are familiar from, and typical of, for instance, fourteenth-century mausolea in Damascus. The structure in question is a square building almost five meters on each side. A door in its northern wall which gave access to a small room is situated at an unusual height of about one meter off the ground, as if it was never meant to be used. A niche, the mihrab, with a hemispherical border in the opposite wall, indicates the qibla. As in many similar domed buildings of Syria, squinches of hemispherical shape allow an octagonal tambour with four small windows to sit on the four walls of the chamber beneath. A dome with no trace of decoration completes the building. The qubba could have been taken for one of the numerous mausolea built over the tomb of a Mamluk amir or a local saint, if its inscription engraved on the lintel above the entrance had not been preserved. Written in a rustic naskhi, it reads:
In the name of God, the most gracious and most merciful. This blessed dome has been [one word destroyed: sc. built or restored] on the occasion of the victory under the reign of our master, the sultan al-Malik al-Nasir [three words missing] Nasir al-Dunya wa-Din Muhammad — may his victory be glorious on the initiative of His Highness Saif al-Daula, our master, the king of amirs [two words missing]. In the month of Shawwal of the year 741 [March-April 1341].

The persons mentioned here are known to us: the Mamluk Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad died one month after the building was inaugurated or completed, as is indicated in the inscription. The patron of the building, the "king of amirs" as he boasts himself, can be identified as the sultan's former governor of Syria, Saif al-Daula Tan-kiz al-Husami al-Nasiri, who had fallen into disgrace in 1340. Perhaps as an attempt to find favor again in the eyes of the ruler, Saif al-Daula built or restored a commemorative building on the occasion of a victory which was won by his master himself or a third person.

The inscription identifies the building as a Qubbat al-Nasr, a victory monument; it mentions names, i.e., states the dedication to the sultan by one of his amirs. The inscription, however, does not mention whether the sultan or the amir had taken part in this event and — what is even more telling — for what occasion the qubba has been erected. Only the site of the building adjacent to the strategically important road that runs across western Syria can be taken as a sign that it was meant to commemorate a military event that occurred in this lonely region. According to Jean Sauvaget, who recorded the Qubbat al-Asafir, the only event that can be linked to this one and traced in the sources is the routing of a Mongol army by Egyptian troops led by Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad around 1305. Such a victory would have been important enough to warrant a monument, since it marked the end of the Mongol threat to Mamluk Egypt. There are, however, two major flaws in this theory: the first is that the erection or renovation of a victory memorial in a remote place thirty-eight years after the battle was fought makes no sense at all, but a more substantial flaw is that the battle at Marj al-Suffar was fought south of Damascus and the qubba is situated north of the city, which makes it even harder, if not impossible, to link the monument with this special event.

Even here, where an inscription refers to an unspecified victory of the sultan, the structure's original meaning lasted for only a brief period. A tombstone inside with an early-Ottoman-style inscription on it testifies that the building was used some time later in a totally different way, viz., as a tomb structure. This change of function can in this case be ascribed to the fact that its shape as a domed building clearly evoked the same form found in every cemetery in the region. Since the person who used the interior as a burial place paid no notice to the information conveyed by the inscription, he either simply did not care about its memorial character or he did not know that it had one. In either case we again are faced with an example of the reinterpretation and reuse of an Islamic memorial monument for purposes alien to its original meaning, and thereby the loss of its function.

In every respect comparable to this example is the Qubbat al-Nasr which was built in 1472–73 by the Mamluk amir Barquq al-Zahiri al-Kausadji of Syria after he had captured the amir Suwar of the Dhu'l-Qadr dynasty, an Ottoman vassal. It was prominently placed on top of the Qasrjum mountain overlooking Damascus. The remnants of this victory dome were cleared away only at the beginning of this century, but it had already collapsed in an earthquake in 1759–60. Interestingly this qubba had also been used as a mausoleum in the meantime.

We now have collected enough examples to attempt a preliminary conclusion: Muslim patrons clearly had some interest in marking places of historical interest to them or to the Muslim community by architectural means. But the architectural code used for these Islamic memorials, as in the case of domed buildings and mosques, caused a number of problems: the moment the flow of information regarding the original meaning or function of the structure commemorating an event had ended or was no longer available, either the building's outstanding position and shape — as in the case of the Dome of the Rock — was given a new meaning, which itself could be replaced after a period of time, or the building was reinterpreted and reused according to the most likely function suggested by its formal structure. Memorial buildings in the form of an oratory were used after a while simply as a mosque, with no regard for any former commemorative character. In the same way, a single-domed building would be conceived as a tomb because its formal appearance usually identified it with a mausoleum. Victory monuments at isolated sites far away from possible viewers were bound simply to decay and disappear.

If we take the lack of a developed and distinct type of structure for memorial purposes in medieval Islamic architecture as one result characteristic of our survey, we have to consider another substantial factor. One of the reasons these structures lost their function as memorials so quickly is implied by the way in which historical infor-
mation stayed generally unrecorded and undocumented by them. This is true even in the case of the Dome of the Rock, the only structure of this type we know of that possesses an elaborate decorative program: once the building is separated from this tradition in time, it gives no clue as to its original meaning, a striking and decisive difference between these and the memorial buildings in the pre-Islamic world. Muslim architects and their patrons must have been aware that the public’s reception of these structures without explanatory depictions and inscriptions could easily lead to misunderstanding, or even worse, to ignoring the building’s meaning altogether. But this is exactly what happened with a number of the so-called victory or battle memorials cited. Since one of the most important qualities or aspects of a memorial structure — the ability to evoke memories of a past event in a far distant future — is generally lacking in most Islamic structures of that kind, they were able to perform their function among the contemporary public only for the short time during which the event remained fresh in the collective memory. The impact of an Islamic memorial building upon its surroundings was therefore distinctly “short-term” and we must assume that the type of ephemeral victory memorial was given preference deliberately since it does not appear as if Islamic victory monuments were erected with form and decorative as well as inscriptive material that was geared to guarantee a kind of commemoration which was permanent.

In connection with the problem of how the message of an Islamic victory monument was transmitted we have to address once again one of the most distinctive characteristics of pre-Islamic victory monuments — the figural, even though sometimes only allegoric, narration of the event and the portrayal of the persons involved. As mentioned above, it was probably precluded from being used in this context because of the Islamic aversion to depicting living creatures in an official context, and this contributed considerably to the loss of the commemorative character of an otherwise generic structure like a mosque or a domed building. In a semi-official environ-
ment, however, for instance the court, representations of the victorious ruler might have existed. The famous wall painting of the six kings in the bath of Qusayr ‘Amra in the Jordan desert paying homage to the enthroned ruler in the alcove could be interpreted as one of them (fig. 16).66 The way the painter assembled the kings — or, at least the representatives of a number of empires that had been attacked or subdued by the Muslim armies in the first century after the rise of Islam — in one group and identified them by bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Arabic resembles strikingly the motif of “campaign summaries” on Achaemenid and Sasanian reliefs. Although the fresco of the six kings might have been produced in a stereotyped manner according to pre-Islamic victory reliefs, its more modest size and its context among other paintings on the same wall which depict bathing scenes and dramatic hunts leads to the conclusion that it was far from being meant to serve as a memorial, that is, to function conspicuously as a manifestation of Umayyad power in the eyes of the viewer.

The devaluation of the pre-Islamic system of signs that had carried the message of a victory monument can be shown in another example as well. A description of a painting in one of al-Mutanabbi’s (915–55) poems makes clear that representations of the victorious ruler and the subdued enemy still prevailed in Islamic times to glorify the ruler, but they did not, and could not, serve as memorials. Mutanabbi, the court poet of the Hamdanid Saif al-Daula, composed his verses in 948 shortly after the amir’s conquest of the Byzantine fortress of al-Barzuya north of Antioch. Among other things he describes a painting on a tent67 that depicted Saif al-Daula enthroned, receiving the homage of the Byzantine emperor and his noblemen. In the background, groups of fighting animals repeated the struggle of the Muslims against the Byzantines on an allegoric level. It seems clear that the painting was executed right after the fall of the fortress to commemorate the historical event, although the picture of the Byzantine emperor on his knees kissing the carpet on which the Hamdanid amir was seated included quite a fair amount of wishful thinking and was not oriented towards the historical course of events. The motif of the prostrated enemy before the victor together with the fighting animals drew on pre-Islamic models. The fact, however, that the scene was fixed on a tent which at best might have been exhibited temporarily in public implies that its impact on the viewers — the subjects of the Hamdanid amirate or the former Byzantine population of the Antioch area, for instance — was expected to be rather limited in time. It is obviously not designed to last into the future as a memorial of Hamdanid power and to recall the victory at al-Barzuya for generations to come.

The question of how Islamic victory memorials transmitted their message or, more precisely, whether they were supposed after all to transmit the message of eternal triumph as pre-Islamic victory memorials did, thus remains enigmatic. There was certainly no particular urge on the government’s part in the Islamic Middle Ages to promote its image by referring to its military achievements. Victory monuments were not used to serve as lasting public records and permanent, “eternal” visual landmarks of the history of a ruler, a dynasty, or an empire. In contrast, public buildings like mosques, madrasas, caravanserais and, on another level, mausolea played a much more important role in the relationship and communication between the Islamic sovereign and his subjects. It appears that monuments that were created in late antiquity to bring about an identification with the state or even to stir feelings as a nation simply did not work in the cosmopolitan Islamic society. To judge from the impact of the Islamic victory memorials mentioned above on their environment, their character must have been predominantly a private one — a token of personal gratitude and piety offered to God or a very humane remembrance of the casualties of war, rather than a monument with the purpose of public exaltation of the victor.

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NOTES

5. Scharf, Kleine Kunstgeschichte, p.11.
7. Without doubt “post-concious” monuments also existed in the perception of the Islamic Middle Ages. The most prominent example is the Taq-i Kisra, the ruin of the Sasanian palace at Ctesiphon/al-Mada’in. Lauded by poets and described by
historians and geographers, the Taq-i Kisra became a symbol of the former glory and power of Iranian rule.


12. Ibid., pp. 302 f.

13. Georgina Herrmann, "The Sassanian Rock Relief at Bishapur: Part 3. Bishapur II," *Iranische Denkmäler*, no. 11, series II (Berlin, 1983), pl. 10. Gordian was killed in a conspiracy by his Praetorians near Dura Europos in eastern Syria near the border and not, as the relief boasts, by the Iranian king.


15. Frank Lepper and Sheperd Freve, *Trajan's Column* (Wolfboro, 1988), L. Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars* (London, 1971). On a literary level, the scenes on the column were without doubt elaborated in Trajan's *Commentarii de bello dacico*, which are lost today.


18. Scharf, *Kleine Kunstgeschichte*, pp. 30 f. It formed the socle of a reliquary cross, formerly in the convent of St. Servatius at Maastricht, but was destroyed in the eighteenth century.


22. Ibid., p. 108.


31. The same is true for the Qur'anic quotations; compare the enigmatic use of the whole sura 19 (Maryam) at the minaret at Jam or suras 118, 131, 100 and 62–9–10 at the Qub Minâr. None of them can be used to interpret the minaret as a victory tower. The later verses underscore clearly the minaret’s function as a mi‘âma for the congregational mosque of Delhi.


33. Diez, "Siegestürme," p. 40, refers to Mahmod’s tower in Ghazna as a ‘cryptic victory tower.”

34. Diez, *Churazansische Denkmäler*, p. 48 ("Wach- und Siegestürme.") Diez referred to a planned second volume, in which he promised to elaborate on the topic, but unfortunately it was never published. Some years before Diez, the British Sykes identified the minaret of Firuzabad as a watchtower, and does not even mention that it could have been a victory monument; see "A Sixth Journey in Persia," in *Geographical Journal* 19 (1911): 160. Sourdrel-Thomine, "Deux minarets," n. 2. Similarly Robert Hillenbrand, *EI*, 2nd ed. 6: 365, prefers the guidepost and watchtower theory, according to which caravans were led through desert areas using these minarets as landmarks, though he remarks, referring to the minaret of Jam, "Clearly, there is a notion here of prestige and victoriousness, with the Qur’anic text perhaps emphasizing the Islamic faith in a land which had not long before emerged from paganism.”


36. Diez complained that his theories about the two minarets in Ghazna published in *Islamische Baukunst in Churasan* (Hagen in Westfalen, 1925), pp. 152, 162, were ignored and apparently also were never discussed later.

37. This is true for the minarets in Ghazna and Jam; cf. Sourdrel-Thomine and Spuler, *Die Kunst des Islam*, p. 277.

38. E.E. Bertels, *Salamaye-Erdenais: Kritiçilik tekst. Pamjatnikhi literaturno narodno vozhdo* (Moscow, 1960–71), 8: 370. There is no way to decide whether Firdawsí’s account echoes the barbarian way his contemporaries celebrated a victory or a graphic imagination as to how his ancestors might have done so.


42. See Sheila Blair, “What is the Date of the Dome of Rock?”, in Boyt al-Muqaddas: ‘Abd al-Malik’s Jerusalem, ed. Julian Raby and J. Johns, pt. 1, pp. 59–85. She argues convincingly that the inscription date refers only to the date of the building’s commission by the caliph.


44. Ibid., p. 53.

45. Ibid., pp. 48 f.

46. Ibid., pp. 50 f.


57. Al-Maqdisî, Ahsan al-taqasîm, p. 82.

58. Al-Samhûdî, Wafâyât al-wafîa, 2: 105. RCEA IX, 3395, however, gives the text of a stela, dated 590/1194 as “Hadha masra’ Hamza b. ‘Abd al-Mu’talib . . .” (This is the place [on the battlefield] where Hamza b. ‘Abd al-Mu’talib fell . . .). It might be taken as evidence for an awareness of the significance of the site.


61. Rudolf M. Riefstahl, Turkish Architecture in Southwestern Anatolia (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), pp. 47 ff. In fact, the only remnant of this mosque is the Yâlî Minâre dated by an inscription to the reign of Kaykobad b. Kaykhosraw (1219–36).

62. Ibidem, p. 85, pl. 250. Unfortunately, the measurements of the inscription were not documented.


64. Franz G. Maier, Epitom (Munich, 1982), p. 119. What is proudly called conquest (fatâb) in the inscription was largely the result of the war between Cyprus and Genoa, which compelled the young king Peter II (1369–82) to evacuate the place (ibidem, pp. 122 f.).


67. The medieval Christian and Islamic sources on Hattin have recently been collected by B.Z. Kedar, “The Battle of Hattin Revisited”, in idem, ed., The Horns of Hattin (Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 190–207. I owe this reference to L. Korn, Tübingen.


71. From the context in other contemporary sources it is sufficiently clear that the term mahometica was used to mean “mosque” by medieval Christian authors, cf. Alfred Tobler and Erhard Lemmatsch, Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, vol. 1 ff. (Berlin-Wiesbaden, 1925 ff.), 5: cols. 783 ff.

72. “en l’ange et en remembrance de sa victoire.”


75. Magistri Thiemoi peregriatio, ed. J.C.M. v. Laurent (Hamburg, 1857), p. 4 ff.: “Hinc transit per campum ubi exercitus christianaorum victus fuit et crux sancta ab inimicis crucis capta. Ubi in medio campi in eminencia quadam Saladinus pro habita victo-
ria di sui templum edificavit, quod usque ad hodierum
diem ibi est, sine honorem tamen et desolatum. Nec mirum,
quia non est solidatum supra firmam petram, qui est Jesus
Christus."

76. A new list of structures erected by Saladin is provided by
Lorenz Korn, "An-Naf" wwt-tak-harin: die Bauten des Sultan Saladin,

77. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al- Zaḥīr, al-Rauḍ al-zāhir fi sirat al-Malik
p.91. Also Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Maqrizi, Kitāb al-Suluk b-maʿrifat
1, pt.2, pp. 446, 465.

78. Qurʿān 2: 249–51.

79. Jean Sauvaget, "Un monument commémoratif d'époque
mamelouke," in Mélanges Maspero, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1935–1940),
3: 15–18.

80. Ibid., pp.15 ff.

81. Ibid., p.18; sources collected in CIA Égypte 2: 114, no. 7.


83. I owe this information to the late Michael Meinecke.

84. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dimashqī Ibn Tūlūn, Flīm al-
waṣrā bi-mān sulṭa nāʾiḥān min al-asrār bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-
Meinecke, Die muslimische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien

85. K. Wulzinger and C. Watzinger, Damascus. Die islamische Stadt
(Berlin-Leipzig, 1924), p.129, no. DN XVI.2; and Jean Sauva-
get, Monuments historiques de Damas (Beirut, 1932), nos. 106 and
107.

86. M. Almagro et al., Qusayr ʿAmra (Madrid, 1975), pl. XVI–XVII.
This interpretation goes back to Max van Berchem, "Au pays
de Moab," in Journal des Savants (July-September 1909),
pp.301–9, 363–82, 401 f., 406 ff. and was supported by Ernst
Oleg Grabar proposed to see the group of the six kings as an
assembly of the "royal" ancestry of the Umayyads; cf. "The
Painting of the Six Kings at Qusayr ʿAmra," in Ars Orientalis 1
(1954): 185–87. His interpretation, however, does not rule out
the idea that the rulers were depicted either as subdued, even
killed, and their empires as hard pressed by the enemy at least.
Especially the only representation identified by a name rather
than by a title, of the Visigothic king Roderick who was killed
by the advancing Muslim armies in 711 in the battle of Guada-
lajara, that is, probably not long before Qusayr ʿAmra was
built, does not quite fit the idea of a simple picture of Umay-
yad ancestry.

87. Josef Horovitz, "Die Beschreibung eines Gemäldes bei Mutab-