SABRA AL-MANSURIYYA AND HER NEIGHBORS DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY: INVESTIGATIONS INTO STUCCO DECORATION

This article was edited by Avinoam Shalem and Jean-Pierre Van Staëvel in honor and memory of Marianne Barrucand.

Editors’ note: Professor Marianne Barrucand was invited by the Department of Art History of the University of Munich and the Society of the Friends of Islamic Art and Culture in Munich to give a public talk at the University on the 12th of June 2008. Unfortunately, she was too ill to travel, and a few weeks later, on the 25th of July 2008, she passed away. A day before she was due to deliver her lecture in Munich, Barrucand sent her paper along with some of the relevant images to Avinoam Shalem, hoping that it could be read by him in her absence. This article is based on her last text. The important material presented here is a preliminary report on the excavations in Sabra al-Mansuriyya (in Tunisia), which are due to be published at the end of 2009 as part of a comprehensive volume. The excavated evidence in Sabra al-Mansuriyya sheds new light on the visual expression of the Fatimids and, more importantly, might provide medieval art historians with the “missing link” for the emergence of the Romanesque style of South Italy in the eleventh century.

SABRA AL-MANSURIYYA

In the fifth decade of the tenth century, al-Mansur (r. 946–53), the third of the Fatimid caliphs, founded a new royal city south of Kairouan. After his victory over the insurrection of Abu Yazid (d. 947)—“the man with the donkey”—he wanted to leave Mahdiyya, the first Fatimid foundation with a royal official character. Construction of the new city near Kairouan seems to have begun around 946. It was not yet finished at the time of al-Mansur’s death in 953, but his successor, al-Mu’izz (r. 953–75), was an active builder and the mosque was completed that year. The suqs of Kairouan were transferred to Sabra al-Mansuriyya, and the aqueduct of Shirishara, other water systems, and palaces were constructed concomitantly. When he left the city in the summer of 972 in order to establish the caliphate in Egypt, al-Mu’izz transferred the administration of Ifriqiya to Buluqqin b. Ziri, a Sanhaja Berber whose base was in Ashir (now in Algeria). He and his successors settled in Sabra al-Mansuriyya and continued construction there. In 986, the Zirid ruler al-Mansur b. Buluqqin (r. 984–96) built his personal palace. His grandson, al-Mu’izz b. Badis (r. 1015–62), seems to have renewed the city wall of Kairouan and to have connected Kairouan to Sabra al-Mansuriyya by a street flanked by two walls. Building activities ceased in the middle of the eleventh century: in 1057, pressure from nomadic Arab tribes forced the Zirid family to leave Sabra al-Mansuriyya and take refuge in Mahdiyya.1 Thus, the time of prosperity and construction in Sabra al-Mansuriyya scarcely exceeded a century, and the town was never again inhabited. Excavations have revealed layers upon layers, indicating numerous building periods, but very few vertical structures have been found.2

THE EXCAVATIONS

Today, Sabra al-Mansuriyya is a huge wasteland with many ditches, encircled by housing for the poor. For centuries, the inhabitants of Kairouan have scavenged in the ruins for materials that could be recycled and other usable items. The principal building materials were earth (tūb and tabiyya) and a local kind of concrete used in the medieval period. However, the looters took all the stones, marble, burnt bricks, glazed ceramics, metal and glass objects, and other remnants they could find and reuse. Although most of these objects vanished and have not been recovered, many stucco fragments regarded as
useless escaped this fate, allowing us to appreciate the particular and important role of stucco decoration in Sabra al-Mansuriyya. It should be emphasized that the stone fragments are modest in quantity and quality.

French travelers began mentioning the site in the eighteenth century. Georges Marçais conducted a small excavation in the 1920s, and in the 1950s Slimane Mostafa Zbiss did more intensive archaeological work, excavating the palace in the southeast quadrant. In the late 1970s and until 1982, a Franco-Tunisian team under the direction of Brahim Chabbouh and Michel Terrasse excavated this site, working most of the time in and around the southeastern palace. None of these various archaeological activities has been published—other than in small, elusive notes—and none of the stucco finds was stratigraphically located. Excavation began again in 2003 under the direction of Mourad Rammah and Patrice Cressier, with Marianne Barrucand in charge of the stucco finds. The new project was planned and financially assured for five years.

THE STUCCO FRAGMENTS

Most of the known stucco fragments have been found in a pit near the northwestern side of the southeastern palace. We do not know precisely when this building was erected. Zbiss called it “the Fatimid palace,” an attribution that has generally been accepted and confirmed by later digs. But the numerous layers of flooring indicate different periods of building, and the architectural decoration thus may have been renewed at later times, reflecting new ideas and tastes concerning ornamental beauty. The dimensions of this structure, the only one yet known, are modest (figs. 1a and 1b), and do not conform to the image provided by the written sources on Fatimid caliphal palaces. For this reason, the building was probably not the palace erected in 986 by the Zirid governor al-Mansur b. Buluqqin. Near its northwestern façade, Chabbouh and Terrasse discovered a pit with a great quantity of stucco fragments, which they both argued, as has everyone since, came from the southeastern palace. Since these pieces were discovered, they have been stored in boxes in the Museum of Islamic Art of Raqqada. In April 2003, we counted more than 2,500 fragments, but when we include the stuccos discovered in 2007 and add some older findings now in the archaeological museums of Tunis (the Bardo Museum), Mahdiyya, and Monastir, there are actually around 3,000 stucco fragments from Sabra-al-Mansuriyya.

In 2005, Sandra Aube and Florence Cicotto created a data bank of the fragments using filemaster software, which has proven very valuable for their study. The vividly colored stucco fragments discovered in sector 2 during the most recent excavations—in April and October 2007—were located stratigraphically, but since they were treated as rubbish from an undetermined (but medieval) time, they were neither in their original location, nor lying beneath it. The archaeological environment of this group is Zirid. The fragments, which will be entered into the database, have also been stored in the Museum of Islamic Art of Raqqada.

The decoration of the fragments can be divided into four categories: vegetal ornament, geometric ornament, epigraphy, and figural representations, among which human and animal reliefs can be distinguished. Differences in the fragments suggest different datings. The oldest group (figs. 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, and the lower surface of the fragment depicted in fig. 8) consists of tendrils with leaves (half-palmettes with two distinct and diverging lobes) in a technique that we have tentatively defined as effet de champlevé, since the pattern appears to have been cut out of a plane field with an engraver’s tool. This type of ornament is flat, without any surface modelling. The cuts are vertical and the uniform blue ground and delicate white tendrils and leaves are strikingly elegant. These graceful but rather monotonous scrolls are found on the surface of larger flat bands and palmettes, which were attached on the back directly to the plaster of the mud brick masonry. No bolts, nails, pegs, or bones used to fix these larger elements onto the walls have been found, but some of the mortar fragments underneath show zigzag engravings intended to allow the stucco to adhere to the wall. Some of these band fragments clearly show arcade forms (figs. 3a and 3b) and belong to a decorative repertoire that may be compared to Andalusian wall paneling from the caliphal period (fig. 4). Nevertheless, this style of architectural decoration can be also found in pre-Islamic Tunisia (figs. 5a and 5b) and seems to go back to claustra (a latticework screen or window panel, resembling a cancellum in a church or a maqsura in a mosque) designs in
Byzantine art, as well as in Umayyad palace architecture of the Near East.\textsuperscript{12} At a later period—though we do not know how much later—these delicate tendrils and leaves were covered by a voluminous, roughly modulated, stucco vegetal decoration, which hides the blue and white scrolls but adopts the shape of the bands and palmettes that form their base (fig. 8). Thus, the arcaded scheme of the underlying pattern seems to have survived in this later style. This type of decoration is called “bulgy” (figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 7a, 7b, 8, 9a, 9b, and 9c). The large, bulky, and simple ornaments have maintained slight but interesting traces of their original polychrome decor: many of them have kept hints of the blue and white ornaments that they once covered, although these remains were hidden since they were located underneath the outer level of the ornaments. On the top surface (defined in the data bank as “face”), other colors are visible: blue, red, yellow, and even gold.

The third group of this stucco decoration is less homogeneous, consisting mostly of vegetal ornaments, but also including some geometrical designs. It may belong to the same period as the first group: the technique of some of the geometrical fragments closely resembles that of group 1, and blue and white coloring predominates (figs. 13a, 13b, and 13c). At any rate, the third group is earlier than the bulgy style, since it often appears beneath the bulgy-decorated fragments. Palmette leaves with more than two or three lobes are common in this group, although their surface is less flat and more modulated than those done in the \textit{effet de champlevé} style (figs. 10a, 10b, 10c, 11a, and 11b). The outline is usually framed by bands of perforations (figs. 10b, 11a, and 11b). This specific detail and the general character of the vegetal motifs are frequently found on the carved ivories of al-Andalus in the caliphal period (fig. 12). Numerous geometrical rosettes (fig. 13a) and some fragments with motifs of geometrical recticurvilinear plaits (fig. 13b and, to some extent, fig. 13c), all of them done in the \textit{effet de champlevé} style, belong to group 3; they have also been found in a pit near the southeast palace. This kind of geometrical stucco decoration frequently appears in the context of Tunisia’s Christian period, but it probably goes back to more ancient times.

Some rather rough palmettes with perforations may evoke simplified vine leaves of the so-called style A of Samarra (fig. 13d).\textsuperscript{13} There is also a remarkably homogeneous series of brackets and fragments of brackets (figs. 14a and 14b) of about forty pieces, each with a pair of hooves beneath a five-lobed palmette leaf. The use of brackets recalls not only the wall coronae of the pre-Islamic Christian basilicas of Tunisia, but also those of the caliphal era in Spain. While the Sabra al-Mansuriyya brackets seem closer in style to the nearly contemporary Andalusian brackets than to those of the older Tunisian basilicas, the iconography of the Sabra al-Mansuriyya group is distinct, and, one must also add, unusual.

The approximately seventy stucco fragments found in 2007 are striking, especially in their vivid polychromy dominated by blue, red, yellow, and white (figs. 15a, 15b, and 15c). Their forms and technique, however, are reminiscent of the previously discovered fragments of groups 2 and 3.

As far as epigraphic motifs are concerned, at the moment there are only a few fragments of this type, which cannot be directly associated with other epigraphic finds. Lotfi Abdeljaouad is preparing these for publication in the final report on the excavation. On stylistic grounds, they seem to belong to the end of the tenth or the first half of the eleventh century; to some extent, a comparable material can be found at Qal’a Banu Hammad (1007–88).\textsuperscript{14}

The material and technique of the figurative fragments are close to those of the bulgy group. Their iconography is striking: warriors (fig. 16), some heads of young men (figs. 17a, 17b, 17c, 17d, 18, 19, and 20), torsos (figs. 21a and 21b), and a horn in the hands of a trumpeter (fig. 22), a rather frequent motif in Andalusian ivories. The head of an old man (fig. 23), with a curly beard with drill holes and one remaining blue eye,\textsuperscript{15} is rather surprising. As parallels in Fatimid or Berber contexts are not known, it might be suggested that these examples follow some late antique or early medieval models.

As for animal motifs, there are several hares (figs. 24a and 24b), one gazelle (fig. 25), a quadruped that may represent a cow (fig. 26), two lions (figs. 27a and 27b), and one griffon (fig. 28). There are also riders on horseback (figs. 29a, 29b, and 30) and on dromedaries
The gallery of various eagles found at the site must have been most impressive (figs. 31, 32a, and 32b). Twenty-one eagles’ bodies (without heads) have been found, some with wings fully extended, others with wings next to their bodies. At any rate, the eagle motif strongly recalls the hieratical, frontal, and notorious one of classical antiquity. A ceramic panel used as a wall decoration, which was found by Mostafa Zbiss in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, shows a similar use of the eagle motif; another eagle of this type, though made out of stone, was recently discovered in sector 2. Are these eagles related to the well-known examples produced in al-Andalus at the end of the Umayyad caliphate? They are certainly related to the eagles found on the basins of al-Mansur and his son ‘Abd al-Malik (dating from around 988), but the eagles of the slightly later “basin of King Badis” in Granada present a different conception of this royal predator, one that is more abstract in form and possessing an apotropaic function. The rather classical representation of an eagle sculpted on a stone corbel, probably made for the Christian basilica of Ouled Agla in western Algeria, is closer to those of Sabra al-Mansuriyya. These birds must have been beheaded before falling to the earth, as the stumps of the necks show rain corrosion. The eagles were painted and must have been rather ostentatious; nevertheless, we have not yet found any literary mention of them in the medieval evocations of Sabra al-Mansuriyya. They remind us of the eagle gallery of Nero’s Domus Aurea or of the eagles of Domus Tiberiana, both made of painted stucco. But these buildings were not known during the Middle Ages. The missing links may perhaps be found in the Byzantine realm, though we have not yet encountered this specific concept of a whole arrangement of eagles as part of a visual program. Surely the eagles at Sabra al-Mansuriyya were meant as an expressive and even ostentatious symbol of power and triumph, particularly in the iconography of imperial apotheosis, as were those decorating the private domains of Nero and Hadrian.

The social, political, economic, and cultural relations between Sabra al-Mansuriyya and her neighbors were intense, and not always peaceful. The city’s most regular ties were with Qal’a Banu Hammad (in Algeria). The Zirid cousins—the Badisids in Kairouan and the Hammadids in the Qal’a—were usually in conflict with one another; nevertheless, the relations between them were close, and the architectural decoration of Sabra al-Mansuriyya and the Qal’a has numerous rather comparable features, as far as material and techniques, as well as iconography and form, are concerned.

The Banu Qalb family, which came from Ifriqiya, reigned more or less successfully in Sicily from 947 until the Norman conquest in the second half of the eleventh century, most of the time in the name of the Fatimid caliph. Although their political, intellectual, and economic contacts with the Zirids in Sabra al-Mansuriyya have been historically documented, little is known about the possible artistic ties between the two. The Torre Pisana in Palermo and the Qur’an that was copied in Palermo in 372 (982–83) are both particularly interesting and serve as visual evidence for the artistic interaction between Sicily under the Banu Qalb and Zirid Ifriqiya. Nevertheless, the whole field would benefit from further investigation into these histories. The sites of Adjabiyya and Madina Sultan in Libya have preserved some fragments of architectural decoration, particularly of stucco work, which have some similarities to Sabra al-Mansuriyya pieces of the second and the third stylistic group. The artistic relations with Fatimid Egypt, at least until the middle of the eleventh century, were dense and complex, but at the same time far from as evident as one might have expected. Despite the attraction of the Tunisians and the Egyptian Fatimids to figural imagery, it is rather the detailed rendering of palmettes, plaiters, and even epigraphy that reveals the closeness of the artistic relationship between the two.

Despite the permanent state of war between the Fatimids and the Zirids on the one hand and the Umayyads and their allies on the other, al-Andalus seems to have played a rather obvious and active part as an artistic center from the end of the tenth until the middle of
The quantity of “Ifrīqiyan” coins found in al-Andalus is the best testimony for the frequent economic and cultural contacts between these populations. Finally, the local heritage should not be overlooked. Stucco was in use in North Africa in the pre-Roman and Roman periods, and the technique continued to be employed in this region during the following centuries, namely, after the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Islam. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that no spectacular visual evidence of stucco dating from the end of the pre-Islamic period is known to us, and, even if the material and the technique were then current in Tunisia, a new artistic impulse may have come to the Maghreb from the Near East during the first centuries of Islam. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that no spectacular visual evidence of stucco dating from the end of the pre-Islamic period is known to us, and, even if the material and the technique were then current in Tunisia, a new artistic impulse may have come to the Maghreb from the Near East during the first centuries of Islam.

Hence, although Sedrata (Algeria), founded in the early tenth century, offers beautiful examples of non-figurative stucco panels, most of which are decorated with geometric ornaments, those panels are entirely different from the Sabra al-Mansuriyya fragments, both in their iconographic program and in their technique.

CONCLUSIONS

The particular technical possibilities of stucco seem to have been well understood by artisans, who, aware that they were working with a cheap material, did not try—most of the time—to imitate stonework. The specific qualities of the stucco technique, namely, its quick execution, the spontaneous impression it confers, and even the acceptance of neglecting some details for the sake of the whole decorative and impressive impact, were emphasized by artisans in the realization of the huge and ambitious program of Sabra al-Mansuriyya. In addition, stucco surfaces were vividly colored.

Ornamental wall panels were usually decorated with vegetal motifs, with only a few displaying purely geometrical and interlaced designs. We find palmettes in various forms, as well as with different types of lobes, but we almost never find in this stucco the so-called palmette digitée (a fan-shaped palmette), which originated earlier in Umayyad al-Andalus and was very popular in the later, post-Fatimid period in the Maghreb. While these palmettes digitées were still in vogue in later Andalusian decorative art, they seem to have been replaced during the second half of the tenth century by another type of palmette characterized by a string of holes that surrounds its leaves—the type of palmette of the so-called style 3 in Sabra al-Mansuriyya.

In the rather “abstract” stucco vegetation found in Sabra al-Mansuriyya we have discovered neither pomegranate nor grape motifs, and even if each five-lobed palmette could generally be defined as a vine leaf, there are in fact very few examples of this motif among the fragments and none of them is clearly characterized as such. When compared to other stucco ornamentation, group 1 appears as the most abstract of all and is probably the earliest, recalling the Zirid painted woodwork of the Sidi ‘Oqba Mosque in Kairouan, now kept in the Museum of Islamic Art of Raqqada. It is beyond the scope of this article to go into detail about the connections between the stucco decoration of Sabra al-Mansuriyya and Zirid painted woodwork. However, since the specimens of Zirid painted woodwork are better dated, and since the stylistic influence between the two is noticeable, we might suggest a Zirid dating for the first group of stucco wall panels—those of the blue-and-white effet de champlevé style. Thus, a slightly later date may be suggested for the ornamental group that is applied over them, namely, group 2—the bulgy style—as well as for the figural stuccos. If we accept this hypothesis, the ornamental stuccos of group 1, the somewhat heterogeneous group 3, and the bulgy group 2, as well as of the figural group, might be tentatively associated with the Zirid period. Of course, a better and more precise knowledge of Zirid art should precede such a conclusion.

It also seems that contemporary Andalusian art played a considerable role in the elaboration of some of the vegetal stucco ornaments; this could be detected mainly in the choice of images, that is, the iconography, of the figural group. It is likely that this artistic influence was transmitted to North Africa through the import of...
portable luxury artifacts from Muslim Spain, such as textiles and ivories.

As far as figural architectural decoration is concerned, the artistic heritage of late antiquity is remarkable. This particular pre-Islamic artistic tradition is well represented in Fatimid art. For example, the Fatimid mosque of Mahdiyya clearly illustrates the admiration that the Fatimids had for this particular heritage. It must be noted, though, that this notion seems to be less evident in the Qal’a and is better represented in the Zirid palace of Achir. The dependence of the stucco decoration of Sabra al-Mansuriyya on stucco ornaments of the Islamic world, especially those of the Syrian Umayyad castles and early Abbasid monuments like Raqqa, is generally accepted by scholars but awaits more differentiated study and accurate evaluation.

The workmanship in the stuccos of Sabra al-Mansuriyya is often rough, particularly in style 2, the bulgy style, and in the group with figural representations. This less careful work is inconsistent with the often lavish and elaborate iconographic program of the décor. Did the demand for the rapid production of the architectural decoration at Sabra al-Mansuriyya dictate the less careful style of the stuccos? This and many other questions remain unresolved, a challenge for the future study of this site.
Fig. 1a. Plan of the southeast palace, Sabra al-Mansuriyya. (After Patrice Cressier and Mourad Rammah, “Sabra al-Mansûriya: Une autre ville califale,” Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahrâ’ 4 [2004]: 255, fig. 3)

Fig. 1b. Reconstitution of the southeast palace at Sabra al-Mansuriyya proposed by Eugenio Galdieri.
Fig. 2a. Stucco, group 1. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 2b. Stucco, group 1. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 3a. Stucco, group 1. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 3b. Stucco, group 1. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 4. Panel from the Palacio del Alcaide, Spain. (After Christian Ewert, “Die Dekorelemente des spätumayyadischen Fundkomplexes aus dem Cortijo del Alcaide (Prov. Córdoba),” Madrider Mitteilungen 39 [1998]: pl. 53)

Fig. 5a. Drawing of a stucco panel from Tebessa. (After Jürgen Christern, Das frühchristliche Pilgerheiligtum von Tebessa: Architektur und Ornamentik [Wiesbaden, 1976], 311, pl. 62)

Fig. 5b. Stucco panel from Tebessa. (After Christern, Pilgerheiligtum, 311, pl. 62)
Fig. 6a. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 6b. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 6c. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 6d. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 7a. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 7b. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 8. Stucco, group 2; found on a fragment of a stucco of group 1. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 9a. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 9b. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 9c. Stucco, group 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 10a. Stucco, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Bar-rucand)

Fig. 10b. Stucco, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Bar-rucand)

Fig. 10c. Stucco, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Bar-rucand)
Fig. 11a. Stucco, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 11b. Stucco, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 12. Carved ivory pyxis. The caliphal period, al-Andalus, 965–70, New York, American Hispanic Society, inv. no. D752. (After Ernst Kühnel, Die islamischen Elfenbeinskulpturen, 8.–13. Jh. [Berlin, 1971], cat. no. 28)
Fig. 13a. Stucco, geometrical pattern, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 13b. Stucco, geometrical pattern, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 13c. Stucco, geometrical pattern with half-palmettes, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 13d. Stucco, vine leaf, group 3. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 14a. Stucco brackets. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 14b. Stucco brackets. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 15a. Stucco fragment found in 2007, sector 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 15b. Stucco fragments found in 2007, sector 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 15c. Stucco fragments found in 2007, sector 2. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 16. Stucco, head of a warrior. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Figs. 17 a, b, c, and d. Stucco, reconstitution of the head of a young man. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 18. Stucco, head of a young man. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 19. Stucco, head of a young bearded man in profile. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 21a. Stucco, torso. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 21b. Stucco, torso. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 22. Stucco, horn held by a human hand. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 23. Stucco, head of a bearded man. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 24a. Stucco, hare. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 24b. Stucco, head of a hare. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 25. Stucco, fragment of an ibex. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 26. Stucco, quadruped (a cow?). Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 27a. Stucco, fragment of the mane of a lion. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 27b. Stucco, fragment of the head of a lion. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 28. Stucco, head of a griffon. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 29a. Stucco, rider with stirrup on horseback. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 29b. Stucco, rider with stirrup on horseback. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 30. Stucco, reconstitution of a rider. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 31. Stucco, fragment of a dromedary with rider. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 32a. Stucco, fragment of a dromedary with rider. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 32b. Stucco, fragment of the head of a dromedary. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 33. Stucco, reconstitution of an eagle. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
Fig. 34a. Stucco, fragment of an eagle. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 34b. Stucco, fragment of an eagle. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 35a. Stucco, fragment of an eagle. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)

Fig. 35b. Stucco, fragment of an eagle. Excavation in Sabra al-Mansuriyya, 2003–8. (Photo: photographic collection of Marianne Barrucand)
NOTES


3. At present, more than 3,000 fragments have been found. We do not use the term “stucco” as Vitruvius (d. ca. 25 B.C.) did, and as is often found in publications intended for specialists of classical antiquity. For us, it means the lime of the coating of walls (with or without plaster), which dries slowly and can be used as a flat wall coating, as well as for relief decoration. Exact analyses of the quality of the stuccos in Sabra al-Mansuriyya are in progress and will soon be established thanks to Alain Dandrau. For stucco materials and technique, see Hermann Kühn, “Was ist Stuck? Arten—Zusammensetzung—Geschichtliches,” in Stuck des frühen und hohen Mittelalters: Geschichte, Technologie, Konserverung, Tagung Hildesheim, Juni 1995, ed. Matthias Exner (Munich, 1996) (= Hefte der deutschen Nationalkomitees / ICOMOS 19), 17–24; Alain Dandrau, “La peinture murale minoenne: Matériaux et techniques de production,” Bulletin de correspondance hellénique 123 (2003): 1–30; Alain Dandrau, “La peinture murale minoenne, Il: La production des enduits: matériaux et typologie,” Bulletin de correspondance hellénique 124 (2004): 1–27; Bénédicte Palazzo-Bertholon, “La nature des stucs entre le Ve et le XIIe siècle dans l’Europe médiévale: Confrontation de la caractérisation physico-chimique des matériaux aux contextes géologiques, techniques et artistiques de la production,” in Stucs et décors de la fin de l’antiquité au moyen âge (Ve–XIIe siècles): Actes du colloque international tenu à Poitiers du 16 au 19 septembre 2004, ed. Christian Sapin (Turnhout, 2006): 13–48.


7. Only a few of them have ever been published: Michel Terrasse, “L’Islam,” in Le grand atlas de l’archéologie, ed. Jacques Bersani (Paris, 1985), 155; Mourad Rammah, “Sabra al-Mansûriya, cité fatimide,” in Tunisie, un patrimoine inédit (exhibition catalogue, Institut du monde arabe) (Paris, 1995), 86–90; Mourad Rammah, Tiinez, tierra de culturas (Barcelona, 2004). We would here like to thank Antonio Vallejo-Triano and Salvador Escobar for their collaboration and help with the stuccos, particularly in recognizing the relations between apparently isolated fragments, thus allowing for reconstructions and possible locations of significant forms.

8. All figures are located at the end of the article.

9. This database includes more than 3,000 stucco fragments, classified in a catalogue according to their forms and motifs.

10. This schema has been used for the organization of the data bank.

11. We would like to thank Madame Bénédicte Palazzo-Bertholon for her knowledge and for her patience in showing us the stuccos, and the elements used to fix them to walls, in Vouneuil. See Palazzo-Bertholon, “La nature des stucs,” 13–48.


15. In fact, the glass used is transparent and not blue. Probably a fragment of a bottle, it is rather carelessly fixed on the hole marking the eye. The slight blue is only an effect of the hole behind the glass. This issue will be discussed in Cressier and Rammah, *Sabra al-Mansûriyya: Capitale fatimide*, forthcoming in 2009.


17. See Cressier and Rammah, “Chronique de fouille 2007.”


22. We present here only the general direction of our research, the results of which will be published in Cressier and Rammah, *Sabra al-Mansûriyya: Capitale fatimide*, forthcoming in 2009.


30. See n. 12 above. I would like to thank François Baratte for his interest in Sabra al-Mansuriyya and for his very efficient bibliographical help.


35. Earlier publications on the pre-Islamic stuccos of Ifriqiya insist on their dependence on East Mediterranean and Near Eastern art, but recent research tends to reject this hypo­thesis.