Ashkhen Davtyan

THE IMPERIAL PROJECTION OF THE UMAYYADS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST TO THE UMAYYAD MOSQUE OF DAMASCUS

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with the specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University
Budapest
May 2013

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by

Ashkhen Davtyan

(Armenia)

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Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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I, the undersigned, **Ashkhen Davtyan**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exactly my own work, based on my research and only such information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest 28 May 2013

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Signature

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANSMN   American Numismatic Society Museum Notes

ARAM   Aram Periodical

DOP   Dumbarton Oaks papers

EI^2 Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition, Leiden: Brill, 1960-2005

IJMES   International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies

JAOS   Journal for American Oriental Society

JECS   Journal of Early Christian Studies

*JESHO*Journal for the Economic and Social History of the Orient

JNES   Journal of Near Eastern Studies

JQS   Journal of Qur'anic Studies

JRAS   Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society

JRS   Journal for Roman Studies

JSAI   Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam

JSAI   Journal for Studies in Arabic and Islam

REMMM   Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée

INTRODUCTION

Topics and Aim

The thesis seeks to discuss the history of the transformation of the Church of St. John the Baptist into the Umayyad Mosque and present it in the context of the Umayyad political agenda. The examination of this transformation is not easy to grasp while it is separate from the historical context and without taking into account the peculiarities of the particular period of time. The investigation of this or of any subject related to the Umayyad period overlaps with several interrelated topics. In fact, an examination of these themes shows a clearer and wider picture of early Umayyad politics. Thus, the thesis will address not only the actual event of the transformation of the church into a mosque, but will discuss a number of interrelated topics in order to gain a wider perspective on early Islamic Syria and the ideology and policies of its new rulers. These topics include the conception of the sacred space, the religious and social components of early Islamic society, monetary reforms, the construction of the Dome of the Rock and its symbolism, the imperial projection of the Umayyads. This will provide a wider perspective on early Islamic Syria and the policies of its rulers.

The site of the mosque itself has a long history: First it served as a sanctuary of the Aramaean deity Hadad,[1] and then it became the Temple of Jupiter. After the spread of Christianity in the region, it was turned into the church of St. John the Baptist in the fourth century, where the head of the saint was reputedly kept as a relic since the time of Theodosius (379-395).[2] Following the Arab conquest, according to the surrender treaty of the people of

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[1] Jean Sauvaget, *Les monuments Historique de Damas* (Beirut: Imprimeire catholique, 1932), 5.
[2] René Dussaud, "Le temple de Jupiter Damascène et ses transformations aux époques Chrétienne et Musulmane," *Syria* 3 (1922): 234.

Damascus,[3] the Christian population of the city was given the right to keep its sanctuaries including the Church of St. John the Baptist. Yet, in the southeastern part of the sanctuary, a *muṣallā*, or "prayer room", was constructed as early as the reign of Muʿāwiya (who was at that time the governor of Syria), or already right after the Arab conquest.[4] Thus, the sacred space of this church served both communities for about seventy years, until the final transformation occurred during the reign of al-Walīd Ibn ʿAbd al-Malīk in 705. In this way the sanctuary that had existed for more than a millennium took on its final shape and became a mosque. The transformation of the Church of St. John the Baptist into an Umayyad Mosque is only one event that exemplifies the gradual development of the Umayyad imperial projection and imperial policy. These policies aimed both to address the internal problems that were the result of revolts, and the outer relations with the Byzantine Empire.

In order to describe the ideological policies of the Umayyads, I will argue for an overall imperial agenda that can be broadly reconstructed through the initiatives taken by the latter Umayyad rulers such as the monetary policies as well as the sharing of the sacred enclosure both by the Muslims and by the Christians. These undertakings demonstrate the gradual change of the policy of the Umayyads ʿAbd al-Malik and his son, al-Walīd. In each case, one can observe, at first, a transitional phase that portrays an accommodating attitude towards what was before the Umayyad era. Each case is called a "transitional phase" in monetary policy and in the usage of sacred space, and shows a switch from what was before the Umayyad era, the transitional period, which was renowned for having a mixed, shared character, and the final stage, when the Umayyads make a step toward establishing their power and authority. These two cases make visible the gradual policy of the Umayyads, oriented to the expression of power and sovereignty

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[3] The Arab conquest is discussed in chapter 1.
[4] Al-Yaʿqūbī Aḥmad Ibn Abī Yaʿqūb, *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutūb al-ʿIlmiya, 1999), 238.

and a policy against the rival state, the Byzantine Empire. With regards to the attempts by the Umayyad Empire to establish a process for Islamization and centralization, one must look also at the Dome of the Rock (the meaning of its construction, the motives used in the visual arts and in the style of the building, as well as the message contained in the inscriptions and the mosaics). Broadly speaking, the mission of the structure can be interpreted as an opposition to, and an attempt to surpass, the Byzantine Empire. The same can be said about some of the motifs in the Mosque of Damascus, which features elements first borrowed from Byzantine models that had already been adapted in other Umayyad structures.

This thesis will address and put together different expressions of the Umayyad imperial projection and will argue that the gradual adaptation of Byzantine models/prototypes by the Umayyads was later implemented as a display of Umayyad power, financially as well as culturally. It will become apparent also that in addition to glorifying the Umayyad Empire, these adapted models were also designed to oppose the rivaling Byzantine Empire.

Structure

The thesis consists of an introduction and two chapters. The introductory chapter will focus on the pre-Islamic history of Damascus, discussing the Temple of Jupiter before presenting its assimilation into a major Christian cultic space, namely the Church of St. John the Baptist. The chapter will further discuss the Arab conquest of Damascus. I will present the highlights of the Arab conquest of Syria as well as the main problems of the chronology of the Arab conquest. Here I will discuss the information found in the Arabic sources regarding the date of the conquest, the duration of the siege, and the manner of the conquest (there is still some debate as to whether the city was taken by force or by an agreement given to the people of Damascus).

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The second chapter will discuss the phenomenon of the shared sanctuary I will also bring up other cases of sharing sacred space practiced in Syria, in Rusafa, Mamre, and Jerusalem at different times. I will compare these cases of the sharing sacred space with the phenomenon of the sacred enclosure in Damascus.

I compare the phenomenon of the shared sanctuary with the use of Arab-Sassanid and Arab-Byzantine mixed coinage and the use of the Greek as the administrative language. This period will be called the transitional phase, the end of which saw the implementation of the new political agenda of al-Walīd. The policy of the Umayyads was oriented against the other world-dominating power, the Byzantine Empire. This policy used a technique that can be characterized as an imitation through adaptation, which can be seen in the visual architectural features of the most ambitious Umayyad buildings, the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus. I will discuss the visual representations of the Dome of the Rock, such as the mosaics and the inscriptions of the Qur'ānic passages. I will also discuss the purpose and significance of its constructions and put it in the context of the policies of ʿAbd al-Malik, the anti-Marwānid rebel al-Zubayr, and the rivaling Byzantine Empire. The same policy gave way to the monetary policy of the Umayyads after the creation of pure epigraphic Arabic money. In the second chapter I discuss the gradual change from the mixed Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Sassanid coinage to pure Arabic epigraphic coins as a result of the reform of ʿAbd al-Malik.

Previous Research

The academic interest on Syrian history, and particularly on Damascus and its sanctuary, emerged in late nineteenth to early twentieth century among French and German orientalists and

travelers.[5]In this early period of research the focus of interest was more on the antique history of the city and in this light, the history of the pagan temple, too[6]. The first scholarly works are mainly based on archeological evidence and on the authors' own observations. It is also evident that the interests of these scholars had more to do with archeology, art history, and architecture, than with history. Until recently, the majority of scholars had only rarely discussed the actual history of the sanctuary. Instead, research had focused on the framework of the mosaics of the mosque in an attempt to identify their origins.[7]

With regards to the architectural analysis of the mosque and its transformation K.A.C. Creswell's monumental monograph presents an excellent contribution to the previous research. It discusses almost all of the details of the mosque, relying on architectural materials, reconstructing some patterns and also using the descriptions of literary sources to reconstruct the plan and the layout of the mosque[8]. The most prominent scholar in the sphere of Islamic art and its relationship with Byzantine iconographic motives is Oleg Grabar. He presents penetrating analyses of a number of Islamic monuments such as Dome of the Rock, the Great Mosque of

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[5] The pioneers of this research and reconstruction of the layout of Damascus were K. Wulzinger, and C. Watzinger. They introduced a detailed and comprehensible reconstruction of the physical topology of the city, see: Wulzinger K., and C. Watzinger, *Damaskus, Die Islamische Stadt* in 2 vol., (Leipzig, 1921-24), *Die antike Stadt*, (Leipzig, 1921). From the scholars of the early period of research of the city, Jean Sauvaget is the most famous. He produced books and articles covering the history of both Hellenistic and Islamic periods of the city and its monuments. His works concerning Damascus are: "Le Plan Antique de Damas", *Syria* 26 (1949): 314-58, *Les monuments historique de Damas*, (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique.1932),"Remarque sur les monuments Omeyyades", *Journal Asiatique* 231 (1939), 1-59, "Notes de topographie Omeyyade," *Syria* 24, 1/2 (1944-1945): 96-112, "Notes sur quelques monuments musulmans de Syrie: a propos d'une étude récente," *Syria* 24, 3/4 (1944-1945): 211-231.
[6] Other authors, dealing with the Antique period of Syria and Damascus are M. Dodinet, J. Leblanc, J.Vallat, F. Villeneuve,. "Le paysage antique en Syrie: l'exemple de Damas." *Syria* 67, 2 (1990): 339-367., Will, Ernest. "Damas antique." *Syria* 71 (1994): 1-43
[7] The archeological material was analyzed by: Rene Dussaud, "Le temple de Jupiter Damascénien et ses transformations aux époques Chrétien et Musulmane", *Syria*, 3, (1922) : 219-50, Alan Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria, An Archeological Assessment. Duckworth Debates in Archeology*. (London: Duckworth, 2007),.Jeremy Johns, "Archeology and the History of Early Islam: the first seventy years." *JESHO*, 4 (2003): 411-436.
[8] Archibald Creswell, *Early Islamic Architecture: Umayyad, Early Abbasids, Tulunids*, vol 1, (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979).

Damascus, the Byzantine influence on Islamic art and architecture and more.[9] However, the most outstanding book in this field is F.B. Flood's *Great Mosque of Damascus*[10]. This monograph presents an art historian's viewpoint while paying due attention to the written source material. In essence, the book demonstrates that the monumental Damascene mosaics expressed a vision of heaven on the earth.

The topic of the change and transformation in late antique Syria was discussed thoroughly in Hugh Kennedy's[11] "From Polis to Madina". Also one should mention the contributions of Clive Foss[12] and Alan Walmsley[13] in this regard. The shift from the late Roman to the Islamic phases of the sanctuary, in light of the Cult of Saints, is described in E. K. Fowden's *The Barbarian Plain*, focusing on the case of Rusafa.[14] The transformation of the Byzantine Damascus to the Islamic Damascus is brilliantly shown Shboul's "Change and Continuity in Early Islamic Damascus".[15] The topic of transformation was researched by N. Khalek in her book *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam*.[16] The features of the mosque of Damascus, its role in the first years of the Arab reign in Damascus became an object of scholarly research only in recent years. Its architectural and symbolic importance has been emphasized.

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[9] Oleg Grabar, *Early Islamic Art 650-1100*. (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 200), "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", *Ars Orientalis*, 3, ,(1959), 33-62, *Shape of the Holy. Early Islamic Jerusalem*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996), "Islamic Art and Byzantium." *DOP* 18 (1964), 69-88.

[10] Finbarr Barry Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Making of an Umayyad Visual Culture*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2001)

[11] Hugh Kennedy, "From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique Early Islamic Syria", *Past & Present*, 106, (1985), 3-27. "Change and Continuity in Syria and Palestine at the Time of the Muslim Conquest," *ARAM,* 1/2, (1989), 258-67

[12] Clive Foss "Life in City and Country", *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ed. Cyril Mango (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71-95. "The Near Eastern Countryside in late Antiquity: A Review Article" *The Roman and Byzantine Near East* ed. J. Humphrey1, (1995), 213-234, *Byzantine cities of Western Asia Minor* (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University 1997).

[13] Alan Walmsley, Alan. *Early Islamic Syria, An Archeological Assessment. Duckworth Debates in Archeology*.(London: Duckworth, 2007), "The Umayyad congregational mosque of Jarash in Jordan and its relationship to early mosques" *Antiquity* 79, (2005), 362-378.

[14] Elisabeth K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, (Berkely: University of California Press:1999).

[15] Ahmad Shboul, "Change and Continuity in Early Islamic Damascus." *ARAM,* 6 (1994).67-102.

[16] Nancy Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam*, (Oxford: University Press: 2001).

However, there has been done little work on addressing and analyzing the mosque of Damascus as a reflection of general Umayyad policies, situating the mosque into the context of political and ideological agenda.

It is furthermore worth to briefly refer to the most eminent scholars who worked on one of the most investigated monuments in the Islamic world, namely the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem[17]. The monetary system during the Umayyad reign with a discussion of the mixed coinage and the importance of the monetary reform has been extensively discussed by Luke Treadwell[18] and Stephan Heidemann[19] and others[20]. The thesis significantly profited from these studies which provide essential comparative material when discussing the phenomenon of shared sacred space.[21]

[17] Jeremy Johns, Julian Raby eds. *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem* (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX, Oxford University Press, 1992), Peters Francis, "Who built the Dome of the Rock?," in *Graeco-Arabica: First International Congress on Greek and Arabic Studies*, 2 (1983), 119-138.

[18] Luke Treadwell, "Miḥrāb and 'Anaza" or "Sacrum and Spear"? A Reconsideration of an Early Marwanid Silver Drachm," *Muqarnas* 22 (2005): 1-28. "'Abd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms: the Role of the Damascus Mint," *Revue Numismatique* (2009), 357-81. Van Ess Joseph, 'Vision and ascension: Sürat al-Najm and its relationship with Muhammad's Mi'raj,*' JQS*, 1/1(1999), 47-62. "Le Mi'raj el la vision de Dieu dans les premières spéculations théologique en Islam," *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam. Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi , (Louvain/Paris, Peeters : 1996)27-56.

[19] Stephan Heidemann, "Numismatics," in *The Formation of the Islamic World: Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase Robinson, vol. 1, *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 648–663, "The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery,"in *The Qur'an in Context* eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai and Michael Marx, (Leiden, Brill,2010), The Standing Caliph-Type-The Object of the Reverse", in *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East*, ed. Andrew Oddy, (Cambridge 2009).

[20] Clive Foss, "The coinage of the first century of Islam," *JRS,* 16 (2003): 748-760. "Syrian coinage of Mu'āwiyah?", *Revue Numismatique,* 353-365. Jeremy Johns, "Archaeology and the history of early Islam: the first seventy years," *JESHO* 46, 4 (2003): 414-424, Philip Grierson "The Monetary Reforms of 'Abd al-Malik", *JESHO*, 3, (1960), 241-261.

[21] Rina Avner, "Architecture and Architectural Iconography." *Muqarnas* 27 (2011), 31-50.Idem "The Dome of the Rock in Light of the Development of Concentric Martyria in Jerusalem:Architecture and Architectural Iconography."*Muqarnas* 27 (2011), 31-50. S. Shoemaker "The(Re)Discovery of the Kathisma Church and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antique Palestine", *Maria* 2 (2001), 21-72., Elisabeth Fowden "Sharing Holy Places."Common Knowledge 8, 1(2002), 124-146, Aryeh Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?", *Sharing the Sacred*, ed. Aryeh Kofsky, Guy Stroumsa (Jerusalem, Ben Zvi Institute, 1989), 19-30, Depret Isabelle, Dye Guillaume ed. *Partage du Sacre*:*Transferts, devotions mixtes, rivalities interconfessionnelle* (Fernelmont : E.M.E., 2012).

Sources

This thesis is primarily based on the information found in medieval Arabic sources. Also, in the third chapter I am discussing the coinage usage and change by the Umayyads. For this the imagery and the inscriptions of the coins serve as primary sources.

The source I used the most frequently is *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, by Abū Kasīm Ibn ʿAsākir. He was born in Damascus in 1105 to a Sunnī family of the *shāfʿī* school.[22] At that time, the Banū ʿAsākir had occupied important positions in a number of political and administrative spheres for already two hundred years; his father was a prominent sheikh and mother was from the honorable Banū Quraysh[23].

Ibn ʿAsākir's voluminous collection of accounts is the result of his many travels. In 1126 he journeyed to Baghdad, Mosul, and Kufa, before embarking on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He made his second journey in 1134 to Khorasan, Ispahan, Merw, Nushapur, and Harat. During these journeys he attended lectures and collected *aḥādīth* of local scholars. After returning to Damascus he gained the title of *ḥāfiz*[24]. Not long after his return to Damascus, Nūr ad-Dīn Zankī (1118-1174) occupied the city.[25] The new ruler needed supporters in the city. Ibn ʿAsākir was a great candidate as the relationship was profitable for both of them.[26]. Soon Ibn ʿAsākir started to compose works which express the political intentions of Nūr ad-Dīn and which were to provide a proper ground of the latter's political propaganda. The *Tārīkh Dimashq* was created using the model of the Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Tārīkh al-Baghdād*, a bibliographical work about the most

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[22] EL² see *Damascus*, N. Elisseeff.
[23] His sister was married with notable as-Sulamī family and this is not the only tie how these famous damascene families are connected, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* ed., ʿUmar b. Gḥaram al-ʿAmrawī, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 11.
[24] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest,* 10.
[25] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 17.
[26] James Lindsay, "Ibn ʿAsākir, his *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, and Its Usefulness for Understanding Early Islamic History," in *Ibn ʿAsākir and Early Islamic History, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, ed. Lindsay, James (Princeton, Darwin Press, 2001), 4.

prominent people of Baghdad.[27] Inspired by this model, *The History of Damascus* incorporates information about the most famous Damascenes, the *ʿulamāʾ,* and scholars who had contributed to the history of the city. The bulk of the work is made up of biographical narratives. That being said, it includes all genres of Arabic early historical writing, such as genealogy, *futūḥ,* i.e., the literature on Arab conquest and *faḍāʾil,* that is, the merits of the city.[28]

For his massive work Ibn ʿAsākir drew upon numerous sources. The most important one was Aḥmad Ibn al-Muʿallā, (d. 899AD), an often-quoted scholar who described the construction of the Great Mosque of Damascus and the disagreement between Christians and Muslims over the confiscation of the church. Ibn al-Muʿallā was a *qāḍī* in Damascus and although his famous work *Khabar al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿa* is now lost, fragments of it can be found in Ibn ʿAsākir. He is the first author who spoke about the division of Great Mosque of Damascus, and the *aḥādīth* collected by him are an important source for this thesis. Ibn al-Muʿallā is also credited to have related various details about the churches of Damascus, which he had learned from Abū Mushir. (d. 838 AD).[29] It is noteworthy that Ibn ʿAsākir does not cite Ibn al-Muʿallā directly, but only through other transmitters, such as Tammām (d. 1023), Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 1139) and ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibn Ḥamza al-Sulamī (1138-1139).[30] Of most importance and significance in the history of Ibn ʿAsākir is the fact that the majority of the sources used by him are now lost and that they can be reconstructed primarily on the basis of Ibn ʿAsākir's accounts.

There are various views on the trustworthiness of Ibn ʿAsākir and his sources. James Lindsay states that his reports and his transmitters can be considered as trustworthy. While F. Donner and S. Mourad argue that Ibn Asākir's political and sectarian biases are visible in his

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[27] Antrim Zayde, "Ibn ʿAsākir's Represenations of Syria and Damascus in the Introduction of the *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimash.*" *IJMES*, 38, (2006), 109-110.
[28] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 11.
[29] Ibid, 143.
[30] Elisseeff, *La description de Damas d'Ibn ʾAsākir* , XL.

account. It has been argued that the account of Ibn 'Asākir is specifically important for the transitional period of the early Abbasid rule in Syria. Stephen Judd is one of the scholars who support the notion of Ibn 'Asākir's reliability. He argues that Ibn 'Asākir "meticulously and accurately" transmitted the material examined in his work, though he omitted the reports of Iraqi sources, as his main aim was to incorporate as many Syrian sources as possible[31]. I am inclined to agree with this benevolent reading and to assume Ibn 'Asākir to be a reliable transmitter of the earliest sources, such as those written by Ibn al-Mu'allā. The history of Damascus written on the order of Nūr ad-Dīn, the ruler of Syria and Ibn 'Asākir's patron does have a particular bias that would affect your present investigation. Accordingly, I will assume that the reports about the Muslim-Christian relations and most reports on the early Islamic period can be taken as comparatively reliable.

Ibn al-Mu'allā was also used as a major source by the traveler Ibn Jubayr. He consulted al-Mu'allā's work, although referring to it as the *Tārīkh Ibn al-Mu'allā al-Asadī*.[32] The *Riḥla*[33] or *Journey* of this Andalusian traveler and the *muḥaddith* served as a model to many other pilgrims. In 1183, he left Granada for the first of three journeys that he made during his lifetime. This is the only documented and described journey (of his), or at least the only one that has survived. It took him two years to travel to Egypt and Sicily, to perform *ḥajj* at Mecca, go to Iraq, Mosul, Aleppo, Damascus and many other places, which he recorded on a daily basis. He described all the countries he passed through and gives detailed information about their inhabitants. His description of Damascus presents the best account of the city from the twelfth century. [34]

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[31] Discussed in: James Lindsay, James "Ibn 'Asākir, his *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, and Its Usefulness for Understanding Early Islamic History," in *Ibn 'Asākir and Early Islamic History, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, ed. Lindsay, James (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 2001), 17-20.

[32] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 39n2

[33] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla Ibn Jubayr* [The Journey of Ibn Jubayr] (Beirut: Dār Sader: 1959)

[34] EI[2] see *Ibn Jubayr*, Pellat.

Some of the accounts by Ibn ʿAsākir are also given in Ibn al-Fayḍ al-Ghassānī's *Kitāb akhbār wa-ḥikāyāt*[35] as well as by another member of the famous family of scholars, Yaḥyā Ibn Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī (d. 927 AD). The *aḥādīth* collected by him are specifically concerned with recording Christian-Muslim encounters and describing their common cultural milieu.[36] The *Kitāb akhbār wa-ḥikāyāt* can be considered as the notes of al-Ghassānī family on a number of insightful anecdotes dating to the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods.[37]

The second important source here is the universal history by al-Ṭabarī *Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk.* [38] This, and the *Tafsīr* (commentaries of Qur'ān), are the most famous works by al-Ṭabarī that have come down to us.[39] The *Tārīkh* was a chronological work starts from the creation of the world and continues with the history of the ancient nations, the history of the prophets, of Iran, the rise of Islam, the life of the Prophet and his companions, the Arab conquest, the history of the Umayyad and the Abbasid caliphate up to the year 915.[40] His work is well-known for being comparably objective. Al-Ṭabarī is persistent in avoiding adding his own interpretations of the material. His work is mainly a compilation of the existing material, which he collected and compiled. In his accounts he used the method of *isnād*, the chain of transmitters, for he argues that the knowledge cannot be deduced or inferred but only transmitted.[41] Often he presents several different accounts of the very same event, leaving the reader alone to choose the most authentic one.[42]

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[35]Ibn al-Fayḍ al-Ghassānī, *Kitāb akhbār wa-ḥikāyāt "Book of Accounts and Anecdotes"* (Damascus: Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīyah, 1994), 40; Ibn Asakir *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 252

[36] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 44-45.

[37] Ibid, 52.

[38] Al-Ṭabarī Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk* [History of the Prophets and Kings], vol. 3, ed. Muḥammad Abu Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Māʻarif, 1960-1969/ 1967).

[39] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period: Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization,*(Cambridge University Press: 1994), 73.

[40] S. Judd, "al-Ṭabarī*",* in *Medieval Islamic civilization: an Encyclopedia*, ed. J. Meri, (New York:2006), 792.

[41] Ibid, 74.

[42] D.Morray "Ibn Jubayr*",* in *Medieval Islamic civilization: an Encyclopedia*, ed. J. Meri, (New York:2006), 358.

I have also used accounts of the famous traveler Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1179-1229).[43] He traveled to many countries and benefited from numerous scholars whom he met with during that time. One of his monumental works, the *Kitāb Muʿjam al-Buldān/Dictionary of countries,* is a geographical dictionary. It not only contains geographical information, but also historical data and lists prominent inhabitants of the particular place.[44]

For the Arab conquest of Syria and of Damascus I use, first of all, Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥya Al-Balādhurī's[45] *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān.* A representative of the Baghdad school of historiography, his *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* is in the same line with Ṭabarī's history and is considered to be among the most reliable medieval Arabic sources. The *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* is a relative short narrative of the Arab conquests. It is divided into two parts. The first one deals with the wars of Muḥammad, so-called Ridda wars, and with the events following the conquest of Syria, the Jazira, Egypt, Iraq and Iran[46]. The other par speaks about the conquest further east and northeastwards.

I also consulted the *Tārīkh* of al-Yaʿqūbī, a ninth-century historian and geographer. The *Tārīkh* is one of the three surviving works that present an Arabic world history. However, for his history he does not use *isnād*. Some of his information comes from Abbasid family sources, (he himself was a *mawlā* of the Abbasids), yet, he also used sources that had links to Alīd circles. The *Tarīkh* has two main parts: The first covers the history of Adam and his descendants, the second tells about Muḥammad, the birth of Islam, the Arab dynasties, including the Umayyads and the Abbasids.[47]

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[43] al-Yaʿqūbī, Aḥmad Ibn Abī Yaʿqūb *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī,[History of al-Yaʿqūbī]* vol. 2, ed. ʿAbd al-Amīr al-Muhannā (Beirut, 1970).
[44] C. Gilliot, "*Yaqut",* in *Medieval Islamic civilization: an Encyclopedia*, ed. J. Meri, (New York:2006), 869-870
[45] Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥya Al-Balādhurī , *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* [Book on the Conquests of Lands], vol. 3, ed. ʿAbdallah and 'Umar al-Tabba' (Beirut: Mu'assas al-Mā'arif, 1987).
[46] El[2] see *al-Balādhurī* Becker.
[47] El[2] see *al-Yaʿqūbī,* Zaman

I will also use historical information provided by one of the earliest sources for *futūḥ* historiography, namely by Aḥmad Al-Azdī al-Baṣrī. His *Futūḥ al-Shām (Conquest of Syria)*[48] is arguably a late eighth-century compilation based on a work by the same title by Abū Mikhnaf al-Azdī (d. 774 AD), who originated from Kufa. Thus, it is noteworthy that the accounts related by al-Azdī are originally derived from material that was in circulation in Kufa.[49]

Methodological note

It is important to note that any investigation of the early Islamic period can be challenged in regard to the usage of the primary sources. Researchers often encounter problems with the choice of the sources and their reliability. The approach of the sources is directly connected with the perception and the reliability of their sources, as the most of the sources transmit earlier accounts that have been validated through the *isnād*, the chain of the transmitter, which has correctly been called an "ancient critical apparatus"[50].

The reliability of the literary source material depends of the trustworthiness of the account/*kabar*/*ḥadīth* given by the chain of transmitters. In modern scholarship several groups of scholars have emerged who continue to disagree on the methods and the approaches to early Islamic historiography. One group of scholars assures that there is no chance for us for deriving trustworthy information from the surviving sources[51]. Another "skeptical but hopeful" group suggests that with the help of the remaining sources modern scholars are able to reveal some

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[48] Al-Azdī al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdūllah Abū Ismāʿīl, *Tārīkh Futūḥ al-Shām* [History of the conquest of Syria] (Cairo: Muʾassasat Sijil al-ʿArab, 1970).

[49]Suleiman Mourad, "On Early Islamic Historiography: Abū Isma'īl al-Azdī and His Futūḥ al-Sham" *JAOS,* 120, 4 (2000): 577.

[50] Chase Robinson, "The Study of Islamic Historiography"*, JRAS* 3, 7, (1997), 205. For more about the discussion of the reliability of *isnād* and *ḥadīth*. Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period: Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization,*(Cambridge University Press: 1994), 17-83. Chase Robinson, *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D.S. Richards*. (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[51] Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, (Princeton, Darwin Press, 1998), 24-25.

parts of the historical events, while the most apologetic scholars argue that the information given in the primary sources allows us to reliably reconstruct historical events[52]. In this thesis I subscribe to the middle way or the moderate approach for it is the most constructive: the sources can reliably reveal a number of historical events and phenomena of past while cautioning against any uncritical reverberation of the sources. In fact, scholarly opinions of the last years tend to avoid the extreme positions just mentioned. Thus, this thesis presupposes that it is possible to derive reliable information from the primary sources.

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[52] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 13.

1. Introductory chapter - Historical Background

1.1. Pre-Islamic Damascus

On the place where today the Great Mosque of Damascus (Fig 1) stands once stood the temple of Hadad, the Aramean god of storms, whose cult was spread throughout the Damascus region starting from the tenth century BC. After the Romans took control of the city, the cult of Jupiter was substituted for that of Hadad[53].The temple was partially rebuilt several times, especially in the second and third centuries AD. The enclosure (*peribolus*) and two of the corner towers remained later re-used as bases for minarets. The towers stand on the outer wall of the mosque. In general, the life of Damascus during the Roman period saw no great changes or reforms: the city continued to function as the capital of the region[54] (Fig. 2).

In Roman times, additional canals to supply extra water and rectangular walls on the banks of the Barada River were added to the city. The Romans made changes in the city layout as well; the second colonnaded street was the ancient road joining the temple and the *agora*, which in Roman times was transformed into a *forum*. The city is known to have had a circus, which replaced the stadium; located in the vicinity of the Farādīs gate. In keeping with Roman cemetery practices, it is here where Roman sarcophagi were clustered. Here were located also luxurious villas of the elite[55].The houses of Roman Damascus were arranged in "quarters on both sides of the main street, with small alleys and paths leading them[56]". After the death of Theodosius in 395, Syria became part of the Eastern Empire. As in any Byzantine city, new

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[53] Sauvaget, *Les Monuments Historique,* 5.

[54] Will, "Damas Antique" 41. For more about Pre-Islamic history of Syria and Damascus see "Le Plan Antique de Damas", *Syria* 26 (1949): 314-58, M. Dodinet, J. Leblanc, J.,Vallat, F. Villeneuve,. "Le paysage antique en Syrie: l'exemple de Damas." *Syria* 67, 2 (1990) : 339-367.

[55] Joseph Nasrallah, "De la cathédrale de Damas à la mosquée Omeyyade". *La Syrie de Byzance a l'Islam VIIe-VIIIe siècle* (Damascus : 1992), 140.

[56]Mourad Suleiman, "Damascus," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef Meri (London: Routledge, 2006), 190.

urban elements were introduced also in Damascus; most notably, the Temple of Jupiter was transformed into a cathedral dedicated to St. John the Baptist.

The Arab conquest of Syria (which ended in AD 636) and the setting up of the new Islamic Arab rule marked a significant turning point in the history of the region. The results of these events were apparent for the Damascene populace, for they experienced at first hand the change in the political rulership. In addition, there were a few other changes that immediately affected the quotidian life in Damascus[57]. One needs to be cautious not to overstate the immediate effects of the conquest. For instance, the city planning of Syrian cities did not show the elements associated with classical urbanism even on the eve of the Arabic conquest, and their disappearance cannot be connected with the Arab conquest[58]. Thus, one can argue that social changes (as, for instance, in urban planning) that became apparent after the Arab conquest had already started generations earlier and should be explained with reference to regional phenomena and conditions.

1.2. The conquest of Syria

The Arabic word for the conquest is *futūḥ*, which is a noun derived from the verb *fatḥ*.[59] The sources for the *futūḥ* were systemized and completed much later, which is the reason for uncertainties regarding the chronology and other details of the conquest. The Islamic *futūḥ* of Syria can be divided into three main phases. The first phase included the early military campaigning in southern Syria from the dispatch of the first troops in 633 until the arrival of groups of reinforcements from Iraq. During this phase a few minor encounters occurred in

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[57] Shboul "Change and Continuity in Early Islamic Damascus," *ARAM,* 6 (1994): 80.
[58] Kennedy Hugh, "From Polis to Madina: Urban Changes in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria," *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 13.
[59] James Howard-Johnston, *Witness to World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 370.

southern Syria, but no major confrontations with the Byzantines took place. It was a phase in which the Muslims came to dominate the open countryside of southern Syria, but in which the large towns remained outside their control. The second phase began with Khālid's arrival in Syria in 634, when he was met with more substantial Byzantine resistance[60]. In this phase the Muslims began to extend their control in southern Syria from the tribal countryside to major towns; selected towns were besieged and occupied[61]. After the second phase in central Syria there were cities that had been conquered once but had slipped out of the Muslims' control or been abandoned by them during the final Byzantine attacks. Damascus was among these cities. These cities were occupied once again[62]. This provoked a strong reaction from the Byzantine authorities; the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, realizing that local Byzantine city garrisons were inadequate to repel attacks, sent reinforcements against the Muslim troops. This in turn resulted in major encounters between the Byzantine and Islamic armies at Ajnādayn, Faḥl, al-Ṣuffar, and the Yarmūk river. These battles saw the decisive defeat of the Byzantine army in Syria and although many towns in southern Syria and all of northern Syria still remained outside Muslim control, the defeats broke the ability of the Byzantines to offer organized resistance to the Muslim advance. The third phase of the conquest of Syria, lasting from 637 until roughly 647-648, was one of consolidation in the aftermath of the victory at the Yarmūk.[63]

There was a gap of approximately fifty years between these events and their first systematic recording.[64] In these first historical records scholars of a later generation compiled the recollection of the relevant stories of the authentic memories of thousands of and arranged the

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[60] Donner Fred, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1983), 111.
[61] Ibid., 118.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Howard-Johnston, *Witness to World Crisis,* 379.

transmitted traditions into some sort of coherent narrative[65]. Yet these scholarly efforts had their limitations, as can be grasped from a certain lack of coherence in the narrative sources. Noth connects the confusion in the sources regarding the conquest with the psychological experience which the Arabs had during the *futūḥ*. He argues that for them the *futūḥ* was not taken as a chronological sequence, but as a general collective movement; even shortly after the actual events participants were unable to bring their personal experiences into chronological order[66].

The historiography of the conquest raises a number of questions. To mention only a few: the exact dates of the events, the chronological sequence of the battles and conquests, the strategy of the Muslim conquerors, the actual commanders and the leaders of the Muslim armies, and the political and administrative consequences of the conquests. These questions arise not only in *futūḥ* historiography in general, but are relevant to the conquest of Damascus in particular. Among conflicting or ambiguous information given about the siege and the conquest of Damascus are: the date of the conquest of the city and therefore a difference in the duration of the siege, the position of the besieging armies, and the encounters of the Muslim and Byzantine armies. In the latter regard the main question is the date of the battle at the Yarmūk and also the identity of the commander-in-chief of the Muslim troops: Abū ʿUbayda or Khālid? It is also uncertain who defended and finally surrendered the city: the monks or the *partikios/baṭrīq*. Moreover, it is debated how actually the city was conquered, that is, from which gate the Muslim army entered the city. Finally, there are different versions of the conditions of surrender, which vary from a simple *aman,* which granted protection of Christian lives, possessions, and churches

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[65] Ibid., 372
[66] Albrecht Noth, "Futūḥ – History and Futūḥ – Historiography: The Muslim conquest of Damascus", *Al-Qantara* 10 (1989): 461.

to an *aman/* treaty which demanded the sharing of all movable and immovable possessions between the Muslims and the conquered population[67].

1.3. The conquest of Damascus

The Muslim and Byzantine armies met in the vicinity of Damascus. After the victory of the army of the Arabs, the Greeks went inside Damascus and closed the gates. The Muslims besieged the city until it was conquered and the people of Damascus were subjected to paying the *al-jiziya*, the poll-tax[68].

In 635, after the battles of Faḥl and Marj al-Ṣuffar, the Muslim troops advanced on Damascus[69], where the remnants of the Byzantine army had taken refuge. The Byzantine commander was a certain Bāhān[70]. When the Muslims besieged the city, each of the generals took up a position at one of the gates: Khālid Ibn al-Walīd[71] was at the eastern gate, Shuraḥbīl Ibn Ḥasana at the Farādīs Gate, ʿAmr Ibn al-Aṣ at the Bāb Tūmā, Abū ʿUbayda at the Jābiya Gate, and Yazīd Ibn Abū Sufyān at the Bāb al-Ṣaghīr and Kīsān Gate (Fig. 3). Abū Dardā' is mentioned as the leader of the military camp (*maslaḥah*) in Barza near Damascus.[72] The defenders of Damascus asked for reinforcements from the Byzantine emperor, but the reinforcements were defeated by the Muslims[73]. Most accounts agree that the Muslims

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[67] Ibid., 454-455.
[68] al-Ṭabarī Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk* [History of the Prophets and Kings], vol. 3, ed. Muḥammad Abu'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Cairo: Dār al-Māʿarif, 1962), 435. 435.
[69] One of few complete reconstructions is by Ibn Isḥāq, which is reflected in the account of al-Ṭabarī; al-Waqīdī's account forms the basis of the accounts of Al-Yaʿqūbī, see: Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 128-129.
[70] al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk*, 435.
[71] al-Azdī tells that Khālid camped at a monastery which is now called *dayr Khālid*, meaning Khālid's monastery. al-Azdī al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdūllah Abū Ismāʿīl, *Tārīkh Futūḥ al-Shām* [History of the conquest of Syria] (Cairo: Mu'assasat Sijil al-ʿArab, 1970), 179.
[72] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* [History of Damascus], ed. ʿUmar b. Gharam al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 116; Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥya Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* [Book on the Conquests of Lands], vol. 3, ed. 'Abdallah and 'Umar al-Tabba' (Beirut: Mu'assas al-Māʿarif, 1987), 165.
[73] al-Azdī al-Baṣrī, *Tārīkh Futūḥ al-Shām*, 180-181; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 116.

conquered the city when one of the Muslim commanders succeeded in breaking one of the city gates just at the moment when the people of Damascus were negotiating a treaty with another commander at a different gate. The story of the Arab success in conquering the city is told in an anecdote by al-Ṭabarī. He relates that a child had been born to the *patrikios* who was in charge of the troops in Damascus. He was celebrating this and the people ate and drank, ignoring their posts. Khālid was informed through his agents about this and he equipped his men with ropes and ladders. He and other Muslims climbed the walls of the gate and killed the gatekeepers. The people were terrified and offered a peace treaty. All the troops besieging Damascus entered the city under the treaty -- all the troops except those commanded by Khālid. The Muslims met in the middle of the city and considered the part conquered by Khālid also under *ṣulḥ/*treaty[74]. Ibn ʿAsākīr gives a different account. According to him, a monk came out of the city and asked Khālid for a treaty.[75] Al- Balādhurī relates yet another version of the fall of Damascus. He relates that a Damascene bishop came to Khālid and informed him that there was a feast [Easter] in the city and the guards were busy. They had closed the Bāb Sharkī with stones and left it. At sunrise the Muslims brought ladders, climbed the wall and killed the guardians[76].

The combination of the gates, commanders, and the narrative versions of the capture are numerous; for instance, according to some accounts the city was conquered under the *ṣulḥ* made by Khālid at the Bāb al-Sharkī, while Abū ʿUbayda took Bāb al-Jābiya by force. Another account has it that Khālid conquered the city from the Bāb al-Jābiya *anwatan*, i.e., took by force, while Abū ʿUbayda entered Bāb al-Sharkī *ṣulḥan*, i.e., taken upon an agreement[77].

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[74] al-Ṭabarī *Tārīkh al-Rusul wal-Mulūk,* 439-440.
[75] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 116.
[76] al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 166.
[77] Noth, "Futūḥ – History", 455.

Regarding the question of which commander gave the treaty to the Damascenes, al-Ṭabarī reports that a letter came to Abū ʿUbayda from ʿUmar about appointing him and replacing Khālid. Abū ʿUbayda did not read the letter to Khālid until Damascus was conquered, so the document of the peace treaty/ṣulḥ was given and signed by Khālid. Abū ʿUbayda revealed that he should replace Khālid when the Muslims again met the Greeks in a town called ʿAyn Fiḥl, which was between Palestine and al-Urdunn. They fought a fierce battle there, after which the Greeks again withdrew to Damascus[78]. Al-Azdī relates that the commander was Khālid, but the people of Damascus preferred Abū ʿUbayda as he was kind to them and asked that the treaty come from him[79].

There are conflicting reports about which commander played which role and whether the entire city was conquered by ṣulḥan or only one part was taken with ṣulḥ and the other part was taken by force (anwatan)[80]. Noth states that in the eyes of the chronicles the fighting and the conquest by treaty were mutually exclusive. Therefore, the Muslim chroniclers had to look for a solution to this contradiction. The solution, which one finds in the narrative traditions, was as follows: Damascus was besieged from two sides, by two groups of Muslims under two different commanders, who were acting independently[81].

What is more, the duration of the siege is not established exactly either; it varies from seventy days to one year and six months.[82] The Muslim troops entering from different gates met at a place called *al-muqasallāṭ*[83], which was situated in the district of the coppersmiths.[84] The

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[78] Ibid.
[79] al-Azdī al-Baṣrī, *Tārīkh Futūḥ al-Shām*, 185.
[80] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 117n2.
[81] Noth, "Futūḥ – History", 457.
[82] Ibid., 454.
[83] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 117.
[84] al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*, 166.

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name is plausibly derived from Greek/Latin *maccellum*[85] and may have meant a covered market[86]. Sauvaget argues that it was located at one of the crossroads of the main road, where an imposing statue stood[87]. Although Sauvaget places *al-muqasallāṭ* at Straight Street,[88] he indentifies it with *al-barīṣ,* which is mentioned in al-Balādhurī[89] and which, according to him, is derived from the Greek word for palace. However, as far as is known, the palace was not situated on the main road, but next to the church.[90]

1.4. The treaty

After the conquest the Muslims made a treaty with the population of Damascus[91]. The text of *ṣulḥ/aman* repeats the main points in different accounts, but the detailed versions of it are later additions[92]. The text of the treaty varies from simple *aman*, guaranteeing rudimentary rights to Shurūt al-ʿUmariyya all the way to notion of the treaty of Damascus[93]. The versions of the treaty vary[94]: Ibn ʿAsakīr alone gives five different versions of the ʿ*ahd*[95].

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[85] Sauvaget states that the word *al-muqasallāṭ* is not Arabic and is derived from the Latin *maxilla*, meaning "the one having a big jaw" in "Le plan antique de Damas," *Syria* 26 (1949): 352.

[86] Noth, "Futūḥ – History", 458.

[87] Ibn ʿAsākir tells about this statue, which plausibly represented the Byzantine emperor. "When the Muslims entered Damascus they found on a column which is in *al-muqasallāṭ*. It was placed in the iron axe and it was on the column. It had its hands stretched and one hand was in a tight fist. They [the Muslims] broke the hand and found a grain of wheat inside it. The Muslims made inquiries about it and someone told that 'These grains of wheat are put inside the hand of the statue by the Greek command". The column was removed in 1178/1179, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* 280.

[88] In this case the meeting of the two major streets would mark the very center of the city, and the meeting of the commanders arriving from the Bāb al-Jābiya and the Bāb al-Sharkī would have carried symbolic associations.

[89] al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 166.

[90] Sauvaget, "Le plan antique de Damas", 352-353.

[91] al-Balādhurī transmits the reports of al-Waqīdī saying that the latter saw the text of the treaty and there is no mention of Damascene houses and churches, see: al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 168.

[92] Noth, "Futūḥ – History", 458; Voobus Arthur, *History of Asceticism in Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East* (Louven: Secretariat du CSCO, 1988), 311.

[93] Noth, "Futūḥ – History", 455.

[94] For more on treaty see: Chase Robinson *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2000). 6-15.

[95] Levy-Rubin argues, "So Ibn ʿAsākir included both the most moderate and radical versions of the treaty". He states that at the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth there were several versions of the treaty between the Muslim and the *dhimmī*, which reflect, in fact different positions on the subject. It seems that at this time there was no consensus concerning this question and that the question was being debated. The original ʿ*ahd* seem to have

The shortest *'ahd* is said to have been given in the name of Khālid to the inhabitants of Damascus and it was a guarantee for their lives and for the churches, which were not to be occupied or ruined.[96] Furthermore, the treaty stipulated that the inhabitants gained the status of *dhimmī*[97], thus their lives were protected until they paid *al-jiziya*[98]. In Ibn ʿAsakīr's account appears one of the earliest versions of the treaty, which he transmits on the authority of Ibn Ibn al-Muʿallā:

> In the name of God the merciful and compassionate: this is what Khālid Ibn al-Walīd gives to the people of Damascus in the day of its conquest. It gives them the guarantee for their lives, for their belongings, their churches: we will not destroy them and will not inhabit them. They have the protection of God, protection of the prophet, protection of the caliphs, protection of the believers; they will not be hurt and will be treated well if they pay their part from the *jiziya*. ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAṣ, Iyaḍ Ibn Ghanam, Yazīd Ibn Abū Sufyān, Abū ʿUbayda Ibn al-Jarrāḥ, Muʿammar Ibn Ghiyāt, Shuraḥbīl Ibn Ḥasana, Umayr Ibn Saʿad, Yazīd Ibn Nubaysha, ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Hārith, Quḍāʿī Ibn ʿĀmir witnessed the document in the day when it was written. It was on the month on Rabi'a al-Awal in the fifteenth year[99].

Ibn ʿAsakīr dedicated an entire chapter to the *'ahd*/treaty given to the people of Syria. His account is much more detailed than the version of the *'ahd* mentioned by him in the chapter on the church of Damascus and plausibly presents a later version. The text of the *aman* mentioned by Ibn ʿAsakīr presents texts with conditions of *aman* presented by the Chrisitans to ʿUmar, which the latter verified:

> We [Christians] are asking an *aman* for our men, from our people, our belongings and from the people of our community in return we will pay *al-jiziya*. In return we do not prevent any Muslim to enter our churches at daytime or at night, and we

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lost their validity and were replaced with *Shurūt ʿUmar*, see: Levy-Ruibin Milka, "Shurūt ʿUmar and its Alternatives: Legal Debate on the Status of the *Dhimmī*s," *JSAI,* 30 (2005): 170-204.

[96] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 117-118.

[97] For the description of the conditions of life of the Christians under the Muslim rule, the state of their churches, conversion to Islam, also Arab-Christian dialogues and the Arabic Christians literature of the early Islamic period see: Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study.* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995), Sidney, Griffith. *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

[98] al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 166.

[99] It corresponds to AD 635/636, see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʿrīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 354-355

will host the Muslims for three days and will provide them with food and will open for them our doors. We will ring our bells quietly, and will not raise our voices while reading and we will not host agents of our enemies, but will treat them as our enemies, we would not renovate our churches, or monasteries and monastic towers or cells, and would not reconstruct none of them when they will ruin. We will wear a belt which is obliged by our faith. We will not resemble the Muslims neither in their clothing, nor in their way of life, nor in their right to ride a horse or have rings with Arabic letters, and not in their right of having *kunye* names; will we not show up in their roads and in their houses. We will not keep weapons or swords, not only here but also in other Muslim lands. We will not sell wine and will not expose it; we will not make funerals in Muslims streets, and will not raise our voices during the funerals. We will never hit a Muslim, and would not enter the house, where the arrow has reached[100].

Another version of Ibn ʿAsakīr's account differs from this one in putting more obligations on the Christians and granting fewer rights. The amount of *al-jiziya* is specified here as forty *dīnār* from poor and four *dinars* from the rich. Also they had to provide the Muslims with wheat, three loads of oil per person monthly, furthermore with fat, honey, and clothes[101].

Al-Balādhurī reports that the Christians agreed to share their churches and possessions with the Muslims. However, besides this report al-Balādhurī presents an account by ʿAbd Allāh al-Waqīdī, relating that he had read the text of the agreement and that there was no mention of Christian churches[102]. Instead, he reports that many Greeks left the city and joined Heraclius in Antioch. As a result, many vacant houses were populated by Arabs[103]. Ibn ʿAsakīr also reports that twelve Byzantine patricians/*baṭāriqat* remained in their residences after the Arab invasion[104]. Shboul asserts that it is clear that the majority of the population remained in the city, as there was no pressure on them to convert[105].

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[100] Ibid., 174-175.
[101] Ibid., 182.
[102] Antoine Fattal, *Les Statut légal de Non-Musulman dans les pays d'Islam* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1958), 43.; al- Balādhurī , *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān,* 168.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 353.
[105] Shboul, "Change and Continuity," 81.

One can assume that the details of the *aman* were added later, by later compilers. Presumably the Christians of Damascus, like the inhabitants of other conquered cities, were given the simplest rights, for their lives, possessions, and churches. However, these rights were kept only during the first years of Muslim rule in Damascus. By that time, many local Christians had converted to Islam and they did not need these privileges. Also, when the Islamic caliphate established itself as one of world-dominating powers, the Christians' right to keep their churches was neglected. Nevertheless, various accounts tell anecdotic stories related to caliphs al-Walīd and 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. According to these stories, Christians were given compensation and the right to build other churches as a replacement for the church of St. John the Baptist in Damascus[106]. Also, it is related that during the reign of 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, the Christians reminded him about the capture of the church of St. John and asked for the church back. 'Umar agreed that it was taken against their rights and provided them with compensation. Presumably these and the other anecdotal accounts related to Christians' discontent about the construction of the mosque and the received compensation were added later; possibly this was connected with the perception of the compilers of the Abbasid period. They tried to show Umayyad caliphs, especially 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, as models of generous and pious caliphs.[107]

1.5. Damascus after the Arab conquest

Not only were the belongings of the inhabitants, but also the city itself not significantly damaged during the siege. The city's seven gates, as well as the markets, churches, and other buildings remained essentially intact[108]. However, by the time of Arab conquest, the city was suffering a breakdown of its regular city planning, a phenomenon that was common in Late

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[106] Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* 253.
[107] Tayeb El-Hibri, "The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the Abbasids", *JNES,* 61, 4 (2002): 243.
[108] Ibid.

Antique cities. By the seventh century Damascus' orthogonal plan began to disappear. Several structures changed their functions or even disappeared. The ancient *castrum* of the city became a citadel. The theater, which was probably abandoned already prior to the conquest, was turned into a mill by the Muslims, while the agora became an open square[109].

Following the capture the Damascus, the Umayyads did not order any major construction for quite some time. Later Umayyad caliphs usually preferred to move out of the city and spend most of their time in luxurious desert residences/*quṣūr*[110]. The importance of Damascus became eminent, however. The choice of the Umayyads concerning their capital was a natural decision made by Muʿāwiya, since he had built a strong political base there during his years as governor of Syria. Besides, it was close to the critical Byzantine frontier and centrally located between Iraq, Egypt, the Ḥijāz, and the Mediterranean ports which provided the city with vital lines of communication[111].

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[109] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest,* 88.
[110] Ibid. For more see: Elizabeth Key Fowden, "Christian Monasteries and Umayyad Residences in Late Antique Syria," *Sacralidad y Arqueología* 21 (2004): 565-581.
[111] Stephan Humphreys, *Muawiya Ibn Abi Sufyan: From Arabia to Empire, Makers of the Muslim World* (London: One world, 2006), 111.

2. Sharing the Sacred

2.1. Sharing the sacred space in Damascus

After the Arab conquest, as it was mentioned in the *aman* given to the people of Damascus,[112] the Christian population of the city had the right to keep their sanctuaries. However, as already mentioned, in the southeastern part of the sacred enclosure a *muṣallā* was constructed for the Muslims[113]. The final stage in the long history of the sacred space occurred in 705[114], during the reign of al-Walīd Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik[115]. It was then that the sanctuary, existing for more than a millennium, took on the shape it preserves until today. The period in between the Arab conquest and the consolidation of the Umayyad dynasty, when the Umayyads had not yet taken firm steps to achieve their imperial ambitions, is the transitional phase for the Umayyad caliphate. It is marked by sharing and adapting policies of the Umayyads, which led to innovation. The end of the transitional phase was marked with the reforms carried out by ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd: this was the period of establishing the self-confidence of the empire. This chapter discusses one of the major expressions of the sharing and adapting policies of the Umayyad, i.e., the sharing of the sacred enclosure in the church of St. John the Baptist between the Muslims and Christians.

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[112] The Arab conquest is discussed in chapter 1.

[113] al-Yaʿqūbī ,*Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, 238.

[114] The thesis does not discuss the mosque from the architectural point of view. For discussion about architectural and solutions of the mosque see: Robert Hillenbrand, "Studying Islamic Architecture: Challenges and Perspectives." *Architectural History* 46 (2003): 1-18.

[115] Other building activities of the Umayyads are discussed in Jere Bacharach, "Marwanid Umayyad Building Activities: Speculations on Patronage." *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 27-44, Jonathan Bloom, "On the Transmission of Designs in Early Islamic Architecture." *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 21-28

2.1.1. Sources about the division

The sources do not say much about the division of the sacred enclosure in Damascus. Yet this little information is enough to understand the situation of the sacred place in a general way. Although some scholars argue that there is no particular information about the Muslim *muṣallā* or about Muslims and Christians praying alongside each other, I would like to present several texts, including eye-witness reports, which do refer to this explicitly.

A Frankish bishop, Arculf, who passed through Damascus on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, describes: "a large royal city, where a king of the Saracens seized power and reigns" where "a kind of church" (*quaedam ecclesia*) is built for "the unbelieving Saracen."[116] Thus, this *quaedam ecclesia* cannot be the basilica of John the Baptist (because it was not constructed for the Muslims); rather, "church" may signify here the shared space of a sanctuary. This reading is also supported by the fact that the scarce information related by the bishop mentions that he made his pilgrimages in 670-690, when the initiator of the construction of the *muṣallā*, Mu'āwiya, was already the governor of Syria.

The most evident account/*khabar*[117] that mentions the division is Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*:

> I was told by Tammām/ Yaḥyā Ibn 'Abdallāh, 'Abd al-Raḥīm/ Ibn Aḥmad al-Māzinī/Ibn al-Mu'allā, Aḥmad Ibn Abū al-'Abbās/ Ḍamra/Alī/ Ibn Abū Ḥamala that the mosque of Damascus was the site of one of the foreign/barbarian [*al-'ajm*] churches [*kanāi's*]. The Muslims were praying in one side and the Christians in another. This was the situation since the conquest: it did not change until al-Walīd Ibn 'Abd al-Malik became caliph. He told them "What if you [Christians] give [to Muslims] one part of the church [*kanīsa*] and build for you [Christians] a building wherever you would like within Damascus".[118]

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[116] *Adomnan, De locis Sanctis 2.XXVIII, 220,* cited in Hoyland Robert, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 223-224.

[117] *Khabar* (pl. *akhbār*) report, piece of information of historical, biographical or even anecdotal nature, corresponds with *ḥikāyā*. El² see *Khabar,* H. Fleisch.

[118] Ibn 'Asākir*, Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq, 253***.**

The report was transmitted by Aḥmad Ibn al-Muʿallā, who was one of Ibn ʿAsākir's early sources from the ninth century[119]. He was a *qāḍī* in Damascus and left a small work entitled *Juzʾ fī Khabar al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿa*, which is now lost except for some fragments found in Ibn ʿAsākir.[120] Ibn ʿAsākir's source is the first to mention the division of the sanctuary. He also transmitted the information given about the churches of Damascus in Abū Mushir al-Ghassānī, a transmitter and *muḥaddith* from famous al-Ghassānī family.

Some of the *aḥādīth* traditions by Ibn ʿAsākir are also given in Ibn al-Fayḍ al-Ghassānī's *Kitāb akhbār wa-ḥikāyāt.* They are on the authority of another member of the famous family of transmitters, Yaḥyā Ibn Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī (d. 927). The *aḥādīth* transmitted by him are specifically include reports about Christian-Muslim encounters and showing their common cultural milieu.[121] Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī describes the scene when al-Walīd wanted to pull down the church and build a mosque in its place. Al-Walīd is said to have been the one who took an axe to start demolition. After that, the Muslims climbed on ladders and started to destroy it. The *ḥadīth* reports that Al-Walīd "gave a place for a church [*kanīsa*] which was inside the mosque/*masjid*".[122]

The lines "*kanīsa* which was inside the *masjid*" can be translated as "the church which was inside the mosque". This may simply mean that the mosque replaced the church, but the Arabic word *masjid* can also be read as any place where a person performs an act of devotion or worship. Thus, in the case of reading *masjid* as a place of worship, the account may also refer to

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[119] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 143.
[120] Ibid,10; Nikita Elisseeff, La Description de Damas d'Ibn ʿAsākir: Historien Mort a Damas en 571/1176 (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1959), XXXIV-XXXVI; Shboul, "Change and Continuity", 71-75. Ibn Jubayr in his Riḥla also refers to al-Muʿallā, which is why in both account the same reports can be found.
[121] Ibid., 44-45.
[122] Ibn al-Fayḍ al-Ghassānī, Kitāb akhbār wa-ḥikāyāt [Book of Accounts and Anecdotes] (Damascus: Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīyah, 1994), 40; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 252.

the *temenos*[123]. It is worth mentioning that the word *kanīsa* mentioned in the sources and meaning "church" also has other meanings. It can equally refer to a general cultic place such as a synagogue, church, or pagan temple.[124] Thus, by *kanīsa* the sources could equally refer to the *temenos*[125]. In this case, dividing the *kanīsa* takes on another meaning and corresponds to Creswell's theory of the existence of two different parts: the Christian church and a structure or simply a space for Muslim cult practices inside the former *temenos*.

There are other possible references to *temenos*/sanctuary in the sources. Ibn ʿAsākir presents a list of the fifteen churches included in the *ṣulḥ*, retained by the population of Damascus after the conquest. When mentioning the church of St. John the Baptist Ibn ʿAsākir relates: "The church [*kanīsa*] of John is very much visited today. Half of the church [*kanīsa*] was left to them [Christians] until al-Walīd took it from them as it was mentioned before."[126] The ninth-century Arabian geographer and historian al-Yaʿqūbī also mentions the division of the *temenos*:

> Al-Walīd was the one who took the part of the left church [*kanīsa*] from the hands of the Christians and incorporated it into the mosque, because there were two parts: one part for the Muslims which was the eastern one and a part for the Christians which was the western one. As ʿUbayda Ibn al-Jarrāḥ entered the city from the western side and stopped in the middle of the *kanīsa*. The agreement of the *ṣulḥ* was made between him and the Christians. Khalid Ibn al-Walīd conquered the city [*anwatan*] from the eastern side and stopped at the second part [of the *kanīsa*] which was the eastern one. The Muslims possessed it and made it a mosque and on the other part on which peace was made and which was the western part of the church, was left in the hands of the Christians.[127]

The author of the universal history, al-Ṭabarī, talking about the events in the years of 714-715 AD, mentions that al-Walīd wished to build the mosque of Damascus, but there was a

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[123] An enclosed area, derived from Greek *temein*, cutting off. *Temenos* is to be dedicated to a god and hence it and everything within it is "sacred", being the property of the deity, see: Mikalson Jonathan, *Ancient Greek Religion,* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 7.
[124] EI[2] see *Kanisa* G. Troupeau
[125] In the text, I am using t*emenos* and sanctuary interchangeably.
[126] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* 257.
[127] *Al-Yaʿqūbī*, Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī, 236.

church "inside it" (*fīḥi*)[128], which can be read to mean that: "the church was situated inside the *temenos*," so again *fīḥi* refers to *temenos*.

Although the sources mention the location of the Muslim and Christian sanctuaries, they do not define the exact location of the sanctuaries. Be that as it may, the architectural features are not as essential here as the symbolic meaning of the veneration performed by different religious groups. Both Christians and Muslims visited the *temenos* over seventy years; the cults of both communities were centralized there. In this respect, the space of the *temenos* became neither exclusively Christian nor Muslim, but rather both cults shared a single space. It became a space where each group could venerate in its own "sanctuary," while they would also visit the holy place of the other group. For the adaptation of one part of the space by the Muslims and using it as a space of shared cult it was crucial that both of these communities were venerating One God[129].

2.1.2. Scholarly theories about the division

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the theory about the division of the Damascus church into Christian and Muslim parts has provoked much discussion in the scholarship on early Islam. Among the first scholars to advance the theory about the division were German scholars, K. Watzinger and C. Wulzinger. According to them, there were two temples in the *temenos* prior the Arab conquest. The temple of Jupiter, which Theodosius turned into the church, was situated in the center of it. The same monument was later converted into an Umayyad mosque and a dome was added over the transept by al-Walīd. Earlier, in 629,

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[128] al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wal-Mulūk*, 499.
[129] Elizabeth Key Fowden "Sharing Holy Places," *Common Knowledge* 8, no. 1 (2002): 130.

Heraclius had built another church inside the same *temenos*, which was destroyed by the Persian campaigns or by an earthquake.[130]

Scholars disagree whether the above-mentioned accounts are reliable and thus whether there had been an initial division according to which the Christians were praying in the western part of the church and the Muslims in the east. R. Dussaud, for example, considers this information to be dubious at best because it contradicts the Christian ritual of worship. He relies on the information given by the Arab traveler Ibn Jubayr and proposes that the Muslims were praying in the eastern part of the church where the *maqṣura/ muṣallā*[131] mentioned by Ibn Jubayr was built by Muʿāwiyah[132]. In Ibn Jubayr's account there is a mention of Christians using the western part of the church. Similarly, J. Sauvaget, as most scholars before him[133], argues that the story about sharing the *temenos* is a mere legend.[134]

K. A. C. Creswell discusses this phenomenon in detail. First he rejects the opinion of above-mentioned scholars who hold that it was against the Christian tradition to have an altar facing west and gives a list of early Christian churches with the altar located on the west side. He also rejects the hypothesis of Watzinger and Wulzinger that the church was constructed right on the sacred enclosure, *temenos*. According to their theory, the church was over 136 meters long, which would qualify it as a uniquely huge construction. Next, he argues that although the Muslim and Christian parts were separate, they were included in the former *temenos*. The sources are explicit that the Muslims were praying on the eastern side and the Christians on the western side, however, as already mentioned, the separated cults do not need to have been located within the church itself, but within the former *temenos*. In this case the shared cult space

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[130] Dussaud, "Le temple de Jupiter", 240.
[131] More on *qibla*, *muṣallā* and *miḥrāb* see Khoury Nuha, "The Mihrab: from Text to Form", *IJMES* 30 (1998):1-27.
[132] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlā Ibn Jubayr*, 183.
[133] Caetani Leone, *Annali dell' Islam* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1910), cited in Henri Lammens, *Etudes sur le siècle des Omeyyades* (Beirut, 1930), 269-270.
[134] Sauvaget, *Les monuments Historique,* 14.

did not mean two structures in one, but two structures separate from one another, yet covering the same sacred space. When al-Walīd became caliph he demolished the church and the colonnade around the *temenos* and only when the four enclosing walls were left standing did he start the construction of the sanctuary.[135]

The most prominent figure in recent scholarship dealing with the mosque of Damascus, F. B. Flood, upholds the theory of the shared *temenos*. He relates that since Muʿāwiya's reign both Christians and Muslims entered their sanctuaries in the area of the divided *temenos* by the monumental triple entrance at the center of the southern wall. Muslims turned right, to the southern-eastern part of the *temenos*, and Christians turned left. With the construction of al-Walīd, the prayer-hall was extended to occupy both the eastern and western halves of the south wall[136]. He argues that the *miḥrāb* of the Companions constructed in the southeastern part of the former *temenos* had more political and religious importance in the early Islamic period than the central *maqṣura* built by al-Walīd[137]. I assume that the hypothesis of Creswell, later taken up by Flood, about the division about the existence of the Christian church on the northern part of the sacred enclosure and a Muslim *miḥrāb/muṣallā* in the southeastern part seems to be the most plausible as it incorporates both architectural and written evidence.

2.2. The city in transition

The phenomenon of the shared sanctuary reveals also the gradual nature of the transformation in Damascus after the Arab conquest. After the Arab conquest there were but gradual changes in the cultural and social life of Damascus. The local culture and its transformations were not dependent on the political changes and occurred through social

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[135] Creswell, *Early Islamic Architecture*, 180-196.
[136] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, 123.
[137] Ibid., 169.

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relationships and cultural practice. The social and cultural practice had a strong impact on the transformation; the Arab conquerors were not unknown to the local Damascenes, for Syria and the Ḥijāz were well connected by longstanding commercial interests[138]. Through the adopted cultural features within only two or three generations new Arab elite, the so-called "people of Damascus," advanced to the political forefront. They had their own "urban attributes, their own traditions and circles of learning and their damascene regional identity."[139] And they distinguished themselves through their loyalty to the Umayyad dynasty[140].

It is well known that following the Arab conquest many Greeks from among the population of Syria left their homes and followed Emperor Heraclius.[141] As a result, "the abandoned properties of these Greek-speaking elites are filled literary and figuratively by a new-elite, speaking a new language, following a new system of beliefs"[142]. However, it is difficult to define the origins and later destiny of the people who remained and did not leave Syria with Heraclius. Presumably, many of them were neither Byzantines nor Arabs.[143] In essence, they could be described as mostly Hellenised Aramaean Christians. A small number of them were Chalcedonian, but the majority was Syrian Miaphysite. The history and the geographical position of Damascus would point to distinct connections with the Arabs of southern Syria. In the Byzantine period this part of Syria included a majority of Arabs among its population. These were represented by several Christianized Arab clans of whom the Miaphysite Ghassānīds, the

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[138]Shboul, "Change and Continuity", 83.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., 80.
[141] al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 168.
[142] Victor Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak". Ph.D. dissertation. (Princeton: Princeton University, 2000), 485.
[143] Ibid., 489.

well known *foederati* of Byzantium, were particularly prominent[144]. The Byzantine influence covered also the Christian Arab and Jewish population of Damascus."[145]

In both cultural and political respects, the Damascenes differed in their identity from the people of other Umayyad provinces.[146] A. Shboul proposes that the transformation of Damascus after the Arab conquest occurred in three stages. The first stage was the settling of Arab clans in Damascus and its surroundings. Although the center of the city was inhabited only by the Muslim governor, some Byzantine buildings were used to house leading Muslim figures. The second stage was characterized by substantial building activities, or in some cases rebuilding, of official and religious structures as well as dwellings and commercial establishments.[147] The third stage consisted of a number of changes and transformations which are less well documented and should be detected by taking the long view. This is the stage which is of most interest to my investigation. It shows that specific cultural features of the population were the result of mutual interaction between the new Arab Muslim elite and the local populace, as well as between the newly-established and steadily growing Muslim faction and the Christian community[148].

The cultural transformation was a gradual process resulting from the interactions of these groups. Islamic Arab values together with their cultural attributes interacted with "existing elements of a complex Aramaean, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Christian urban cultural legacy".[149] The territory of Syria, being a borderland, was a seedbed for cultural fusion, and in this arena, signs and symbols made up a marketplace of diverse ideas and values in which truth

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[144] Shboul, "Change and Continuity," 79.
[145] Ibid, 80.
[146] As Shboul argues that the name of Damascus continued to be associated with a significant role in a common eastern Christian thought-world: one might even say a common Eastern Christian-Islamic thought world. Ibid. 89-90. It is seen in the case of the trilingual Arabised Syrian Greek Yuḥannā Ibn Manṣūr al-Dimashqī.
[147] Ibid., 89.
[148] Ibid., 90.
[149] Ibid.

claims were elaborated and negotiated. In the result of this there was more diversity[150] in this early period of the Muslim community than in other later periods of Islamic history. The reason for this was in part due to the fact that the majority of Muslims converted through group conversion and possessed only basic knowledge about the new religion. Often the converts kept their rituals or social habits associated with Christianity and practiced them after having adopted Islam[151]. There is some evidence brought forth by Tannous showing that it was common for Muslims to frequent Christian churches[152]. Moreover, there are a number of accounts talking about Muslims visiting Christian churches[153] as well as making pilgrimages to Christian holy men[154].

Right after the conquest the Muslim community was small. The majority of later converts were brought to Islam through mass conversion, not through "intensely personal and highly-interiorized religious experience".[155] Therefore, many Muslim converts did not have a clear idea of what "Islam" meant. Also, a number of Christians adopted Islam only for reasons of expediency and in order to avoid economic hardship[156], since the *dhimmīs* were obliged to pay the *al-jiziya*, which became increasingly burdensome, particularly under the reign of 'Abd al-

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[150] According to Tannous, the diverse character of the society was strongly influenced by mixed marriages, see more in: Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 460-507.
[151] Ibid, 445-446.
[152] Tannous presents several reports according to which there were several Christian buildings constructed or renovated by Umayyad caliphs, as the renovation of the church of Edessa/Ruha by Muʿāwiya (another example is that the Syrian monk, John the Daylam, was awarded permission by ʿAbd al-Malik to build churches and monasteries wherever the monk would like. The expenses of the constructions were covered from royal resources. There were so many cases of Umayyad patronage of Christian churches that during the construction of the Dome of the Rock the Christians of Jerusalem believed that it was a construction of a Christian church, see: Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam", 464.
[153] Ibid., 465.
[154] Ibid., 721.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid., 507.

Malik.[157] Thus, an additional reason for the Christians to convert to Islam was to avoid paying the *dhimmī* tax[158].

2.3. The transitional phase

Before 'Abd al-Malik's reforms the administrative language of the caliphate was Greek. Only by the year 700 had the language of the administration changed from Greek to Arabic. This means that there were a number of non-Arabs with knowledge of Arabic as they continued to be in charge of the bureaucracy. The change of the language certainly was a gradual process and it was a step towards the centralization of the state.[159] A parallel action was initiated at the end of 690s, when 'Abd al-Malik initiated minting purely epigraphic coins. Previously, the Arabs had adapted the existing Byzantine and Sassanid coins and continued to circulate them. These coins had short Arabic inscriptions. The gold denarius, silver drachma, and copper follies took on new designations: they were referred to as *dīnār*, *dirham*, and *fils*. After 'Abd al-Malik's reform the coinage became purely epigraphic; this was one of the important features of the new coinage, which will be discussed in the next chapter. They were inscribed only with Muslim religious formulae, rejecting the previous practice using pictorial representations of Byzantine and Sassanid rulers.[160] This was a decisive break in the numismatic tradition and together with the innovations in administration it was a policy aiming to strengthen the centralization and Islamization/Arabization of the caliphate.

These changes suggest not only a shift in the political self-identification of the caliphate, but also broader transformations which occurred in the social and cultural life of the population.

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[157] Daniel Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 46-47.
[158] Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 441.
[159] Gerland Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750* (New York; London: Routledge, 2000), 10.
[160] Ibid., 64-65.

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The administrative and numismatic innovations illustrate that building upon the ongoing process of cultural interactions the Islamic caliphate could now create its "own" traditions and features. These innovations were one of the first steps towards a policy of Islamization/Arabization.

The phenomenon of shared sacred space, i.e., the shared sanctuary, bringing both Muslims and Christians together to pray side by side was a transitional phase that paved the way for 'Abd al-Malik's reforms, which were designed to facilitate the establishment of one centralized religious culture that would be applicable to entire territory of the caliphate. These reforms were a result of the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate as the dominating sovereignty in the region. The transitional phase was the interim period between the Arab conquest and the consolidation of the Umayyad dynasty, when the Umayyads had not yet taken firm steps to establish their imperial ambitions.

2.4. The phenomenon of adaptation of the sacred space

The common cultural milieu of Damascus at the end of the seventh and beginning of eighth century as well as the transitional period of the caliphate can be compared with the third transmission period as articulated by A. Shboul. This was the time when the Umayyads started to view themselves as the uncontested masters of the region. One needs to keep in mind that the local population and the Umayyad elite were each the holding on to a mixture of symbolic, cultural, and social values, as the Arab newcomers adopted the cultural features of the local, already mixed and bilingual, population. Thus, in terms of policy making (as well as in other areas) the Umayyad elite had to include motifs that were understandable and acceptable to the population; these motifs were not purely "Islamic", but rather they were articulated through an "Islamic" perspective. This policy was often carried out by adapting existing models for its implementation in Umayyad policy. One such adaptation was that of the sacred space and the

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cult in the former enclosure of Damascus. As mentioned above, some scholars are suspicious of the existence of a shared sacred space. However, the case of Damascus was not unique;[161] Rusafa and Mamre exemplify further cases of shared sanctuaries. The existence of comparative cases increases the likelihood that such a phenomenon could also have existed in Damascus. It furthermore shows a common tendency in Umayyad practices and policies as far as the use of sacred spaces is concerned.

These are not the first cases of sharing of sacred space in the Islamic Middle East. It is important to note that shared sacred also existed in Ka'ba from Pre-Islamic times until the triumph of Muḥammad. Ka'ba was shared sacred space for various nomadic Arabic tribes[162]. They made annual pilgrimages to the site to honor tribal and ancestral deities[163]. The sacred space in Ka'ba was first associated with pagan god Hubal, and later the cult was associated with Abraham.[164]

2.4.1. Mamre

One example of a "collective" cult is the veneration of the oak tree in Mamre. Over the course of time, several cults were associated with this particular location. Archeologists have argued that they had discovered a tomb built to worship two ancient deities, established by King Herod (74 BC – 4 BC). Their conclusion was that the site had been a religious center since prehistoric times. It was suggested that before the third century AD the site was a place of veneration of the god Hermes. However, originally the sacred space of Mamre was associated

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[161] Other cases of this phenomenon are mentioned in the secondary literature, such as Emesa (today Homs) and Cordoba (mentioned by Dussaud in "Le temple de Jupiter Damascénien," 238, n.2 and Dabil (Dvin, Armenia), mentioned in Sauvaget, "Les Monuments Historiques" 14.

[162] Fred McGraw Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010), 35

[163] Azim Nanji, "Ka'ba" in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef Meri (London: Routledge, 2006), 429.

[164] Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers,* 36.

with Abraham. It was believed that Abraham lived there, built an altar, and received the angelic mission under the oak tree[165]. It was in this tree's shade that Yahweh and two angels, taking the form of humans, came to Abraham and Sara. After they offered hospitality to the strangers, Yahweh foretold Sara's conception of a son, despite her age[166]. In Constantine's time, a church was constructed on the sacred location of the cult of the Mamre tree. The cult of the sacred space associated with Abraham kept the status of sacred space, but now it was adapted and "Christianized"[167]. In the Constantinian age, the existing marketplace became a place for informal panegyrus festivals. Kofsky raises the idea that in the Constantinian age the cult of Mamre moved from regional to "international and commercial": the sacred space of Mamre became "an international holy place"[168]. The sacred space in Mamre, as in Rusafa, was an important trade center as the fair and the cult attracted numerous pilgrims.[169]

Mamre was frequented not only by Christians and Jews; "the worshippers reflected the diverse religious population of Palestine."[170] The sacred space, the *ḥaram*, in both Mamre and Rusafa was a meeting point for people and often markets emerged in the vicinity. E. K. Fowden argues that in the case of the previously pagan worship site at Mamre, the Christians would have been able to adapt this holy place. Sharing the cult at Mamre was part of a larger complex of social interactions.[171]

The example of Mamre shows that, certainly, this practice was not specific to the Umayyad period, but was a feature of political tendencies in general. Mamre, Rusafa, and Damascus show the political intention of the ruling elites to keep the veneration of local cults

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[165] Aryeh Kofsky, *"*Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?" *Sharing the Sacred*, ed. Aryeh Kofsky and Gedaliahu Stroumsa, (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1989), 19.
[166] Fowden, *Sharing the Holy Space*, 126.
[167] Ibid., 129.
[168] Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult," 27.
[169] Ibid.,19-30.
[170] Fowden, *Sharing the Holy Space*, 126.
[171] Ibid.

and to encourage pilgrims to continue visiting the shrines. Not only had previous believers made pilgrimages to this site, but also Christians joined in, who started to frequent the sacred space for similar pious reasons. One also needs to keep in mind the economic interests that lay behind encouraging pilgrimage, for pilgrims mean revenue and the adaptation of a previous cult could only be beneficial from this point of view.

2.4.2. Rusafa

A prominent example of a shared sacred space is that of the church in Rusafa (also known as Sergiopolis, situated southwest of the city of Al-Raquel on the Euphrates). The site of Rusafa had been a major pilgrimage site before it adopted the cult of St. Sergius, a Roman military officer and a martyr of the Christian faith[172]. Initially, the site was associated with the cult of the Arab warrior deity 'Azīz. Later, the cult of St. Sergius emerged and even increased the popularity of the site. It became a major pilgrimage and trade center. After the Arab conquest a mosque was constructed adjacent to the church, which was still functioning. The initiator of the construction of the mosque was Caliph al-Hishām (691-743): the site is often called Rusafa al-Hishām after him. The major scholar of the site, E. K. Fowden, has suggested that in the case of Rusafa there was no attempt to compete with the church. Moreover, with the mosque nearby pilgrims could even participate in the worship of the saint's cult. This can be explained also by the Muslims' attempt to "ease Christians into Islam."[173] Moreover, she suggests that it is possible that the mosque was called Mar Sarjis, so that the saint took patronage over both communities. The construction of the mosque is unusual, too. The entrance to the courtyard led through the

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[172] Woods David, "The Emperor Julian and the Passion of Sergius and Bacchus," *JECS,* 5, no. 3 (1997): 4-5.
[173] Fowden, "Sharing the Holy Space," 135.

qibla wall. It seems that this construction was made to ease the traffic of believers from the mosque to the church. (Fig. 6)[174]

The cult of St. Sergius is not only a case of adapting a cult and the associated sacred space, but also the identification and harmonization of the space with various deities or saints already known to the new political authorities. The cult of the Christian saint, St. Sergius, was identified with the deity 'Azīz, a warrior god on a horse (as St. Sergius was usually depicted on a house). Later, the cult of St. Sergius in Rusafa was also associated with the cult of Khiḍr based on their healing abilities. The identification of St. Sergius with Khiḍr is explained by Fowden as "shared aspirations for supernatural healing and protection of both groups[175]". However, one can also argue that in the case of Rusafa the identification and association of sacred space and cult through the reattribution of the hero's or deity's characteristics had a political intention. The identification of deities and their association with one another was a technique that facilitated the process of switching from one religious form to another by adopting the previous cult or the sacred place. As a result of the adaptation of the cult a shared sacred space was formed; it expressed the policy of the Umayyads of adapting the previous cult and creating a shared cult or sacred space venerated by both communities.

The cases of the shared sacred space in Damascus and Rusafa certainly have similar features, but the most important one is that they all represent the same phenomenon of serving as a place of worship for various religions systems. Thus, one can assume that promoting common Muslim-Christian sanctuaries or sacred places was motivated by the same political agenda that had been in practice for centuries in the wider Syrian region. The existence of the shared sanctuaries in other locations of the empire supports this scholarly assumption.

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[174] Fowden Elizabeth Key, *The Barbarian Plain, Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 181.

[175] Idem., "Sharing the Holy Space," 190.

2.4.3. Jerusalem

Another example of a holy place where different groups worshipped in one place was the temple of Jerusalem. In this chapter the sacred space of Jerusalem is only presented as a location, venerated by different religious groups at different times. A more elaborated discussion is presented in the next chapter. The location of the sacred space in Jerusalem was never shared between different groups as in the sacred enclosure of Damascus in the same period in time: the sharing of the sacred place in Jerusalem was purely notional and symbolic.

The temple incorporated the Judaic idea that God was present there. The Christians adopted this idea, but they connected it with Jesus, his prophecy about the temple's destruction, and his resurrection. The temple was regarded as the center of the world, from where God communicated with the people. It was considered the *omphalos*, the navel of the world,[176] and the foundation stone was believed to be the center of creation; it is the altar, the point of entry to heaven, the burial site of Adam. The foundation stone, over which the Dome of the Rock was later built, was considered to mark the place where the Ark of the Covenant had stood and where, after the ark's forced removal, Jewish prayer remained focused. Muslims referred to the stone as the Jewish *qibla*. It stood in that place as a reminder of God's presence in the world. With the Christianization of the site these meanings were transferred to the Christians.[177] This shows the symbolic nature of sharing sacred space in Jerusalem. The old symbolism was absorbed into the new topography of Jerusalem[178].

The power of the old symbols of Jerusalem was again transformed into new directions after the Muslims occupied the city. In the early 690s the Umayyad caliph, 'Abd al-Malik, constructed the foundation stone which became the foremost Muslim sanctuary in Jerusalem.

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[176] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 8-9.
[177] Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," 139-140.
[178] Ibid.

(Fig 7)[179] As argued by E. Fowden, it was designed to upstage the Church of the Resurrection and expressed the Muslim sovereignty over the holy city[180]. In Jerusalem, which was the holy city of Judaism and Christianity, a symbol of Muslim hegemony was constructed. The message is powerfully conveyed by the monument's position and the Qur'ānic texts denying the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Traditions associating Muḥammad with the Temple Mount gradually appeared. The Jewish temple in its Muslim understanding became not just the sanctuary which Solomon had built and which Muslims still considered to a holy place, but it was also a sacred place where the community gathered to invoke the presence of the one God of Muḥammad.[181]

The similarity of the cases of Jerusalem and Damascus is that both cases are examples of sacred space venerated by different religious groups in different times. Both in the case of the Jerusalem sacred space and the former *temenos* in Damascus, previously Christian (in the case of the Jerusalem, also Jewish) sacred place was replaced with Muslim structures which expressed the sovereignty and indicated the gradual process of Islamization. Having a rich symbolic past, the sacred spaces in both Damascus and Jerusalem were converted into mosques in order to proclaim the superiority of Islam over the Christian/Judaic past of these sacred places. They express the imperial ambitions of the Umayyads and show, at the same time, the continuation of the "cults" in these sacred places. The previous cults were not rejected outright; rather, they were adapted, incorporated, and merged with the Islamic understanding of the sacred. It is important to stress again that these changes suggest a shift in the political self-identification of the caliphate. The Umayyad rulers became increasingly self-confident in introducing their "own" traditions and features.

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[179] Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 51.
[180] Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," 142.
[181] Ibid., 140-142.

2.5. The meaning of the shared sacred space

The increasing self-confidence was expressed in the construction of the mosque of Damascus, which was only one component of the Umayyad expression of their world-ruling power (Fig 8).This demonstration was expressed also through the adaptation of the space of the former church of St. John the Baptist and the partial adaptation of its cult, as the mosque became a pilgrimage place for the relics of St. John.[182] The fact of installing the relics in the Umayyad mosque was a turning point in claiming a relic of an important Christian saint exclusively for the sake of vindicating one's political authority.[183] The veneration of St. John[184] was a significant part of the sacred landscape of Byzantine Damascus.[185] The adaptation of the cult of this Byzantine saint and the discovery of his relics, which was later attributed to al-Walīd, manifests the recognition of the past of the sacred place and also shows its intended Islamization[186].

In the introduction to the book *Partage du Sacré*, I. Depret and G. Dye present the definition and the usage of sacred space as a part of a political agenda. First, it has been argued that shared sanctuaries or sacred space is one of the stages in the process of conversion from one religion to another[187]. Religious tolerance in the shared sacred space was possible only in case when the dominance of one of the groups is evident[188]. The shared spaces space can be shaped due to similar associations of different groups regarding the same sacred space. However, it can

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[182] Several churches in Syria claimed to possess the relic of St. John or were dedicated to him (Aleppo, Gaza, Baalbek, Beirut, Emesa, Bostra, Jerash). The abundance of churches affiliated with his name shows that starting from the fifth century Syria was an active center for his cult, see: Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 110. The relic of the church of Damascus was translated from Emesa, see: Dussaud, "Le temple de Jupiter", 23.
[183] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 86.
[184] More for the relic of St. John the Baptist see: Josef Meri *The Cult of Saints Among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 200-201. Mouton discusses other relics kept in the mosque of Damascus in the twelfth century. See : Jean-Michel Mouton, "De quelques reliques conservées à Damas au Moyen Ages." *Annales Islamologiques* 27 (1993): 245-46.
[185] Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 93-95.
[186] Paul Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality: Making Muslim Syria Sacred Before the Crusades." *Medieval Encounters* 8, no.1 (2002): 50.
[187] Isabelle Depret, Guillaume Dye, eds. *Partage du Sacré : Transferts, dévotions mixtes, rivalités interconfessionnelle (Fernelont : E. M. E., 2012), 8.*
[188] Ibid, 11.

also be promoted and invested by the political or religious authorities. The patronage of the shared space could be regarded as a means of legitimization for the authority[189]. They would be regarded as mediators between the sacred and supernatural and the pilgrims/visitors to the sacred space[190]. This hypothesis can be applied to the sacred space of Damascus. The sacred enclosure, frequented by both Muslims and Christians led both to Christians converting to Islam and to the legitimization and promotion of Umayyad power.

The phenomenon of shared sacred spaces endorsed by the Umayyads expresses and goes concurrently with the diverse nature of Syrian society in the first decades after the Muslim conquest. For seventy years, the space in the former Damascene *temenos* became a shared place of two cults. This was not the only case of a shared sacred place; the case of Rusafa demonstrates that both cases were part of an Umayyad agenda. The other cases mentioned in the chapter (Mamre and Jerusalem) show that further occurrences of sharing a sacred place, or continuing and adapting the existing cult, was common in Syria even before the arrival of Islam. The phenomenon of shared space should be considered belonging to a transitional period. So far this term has been applied only to the monetary history of the Islamic caliphate, when Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Sassanid coins were still in circulation. I propose to apply this notion also to the history of religious practices in the early caliphate. A case in point is the shared sacred space in the enclosure of the former church of St. John in Damascus. The transitional period came to end with the policies of the Umayyads 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd; they promoted a policy of centralizing the Islamic state and creating a world-dominant power.

This policy change can be witnessed in administrative and numismatic innovations as well as in the construction of the mosque of Damascus. These initiatives were not only motivated

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[189] Ibid, 15.
[190] Ibid.

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by the need for fiscal changes in the monetary or taxation system or by the growth of the Muslim population, which might have resulted from mass conversions, but they were motivated by an ideological shift towards Islamization. A policy of adaptation and sharing, along with the new ideological policy of the Umayyads, led to reforms and innovation. ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd took steps to strengthen and centralize the caliphate, considering their internal and external enemies. The construction of the Umayyad mosque by al-Walīd should be considered the culmination of this program. The consolidation of the caliphate and its transformation into centralized empire started with the above-mentioned reforms and building activities of ʿAbd al-Malik.

3. The Imperial Projection of the Umayyads

3.1. The monetary circulation under the Umayyads

The previous chapter argued that the case of shared sacred space in the Damascene church of St. John the Baptist can be compared to the adaptive usage of the mixed Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Sassanid coinage. Both phenomena represent the political program of a transitional stage. Furthermore, in the previous chapter it was shown that the end of this stage was inaugurated by a shift in the policy of the Umayyads. The coinage reform and the construction of the mosque of Damascus were important political initiatives carried out by ʿAbd al-Malik and his son al-Walīd that were intended to centralize and streamline the caliphal administration and demonstrate its hegemony and authority[191]. However, one needs to bear in mind that these initiatives did not occur simultaneously; the coinage reform occurred several years prior to the construction of the mosque of Damascus. Nevertheless, it can be argued that these two cases are similar in their overall purpose and direction and were products of the same political agenda.

Surely, monetary reform was one of the major achievements of the Marwānid dynasty[192]. For centuries the minting of gold coins was a Byzantine imperial tradition, while silver coinage was preferred in Sassanid Persia. The Arab-conquered territories of the Byzantine as well as the former Sassanid Empire kept these traditions: gold coins continued to be minted and the taxes reckoned in the former Byzantine territories of the Islamic empire, while silver mostly remained

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[191] Robert Hillenbrand, "For God, Empire and Mammon: Some Art-Historical Aspects of the Reformed Dīnārs of ʿAbd al-Malik." in *Al-Andalus und Europa. ZwischenOrient und Okzident*, ed. Martina Müller-Wiener, Christiane Kothe, Karl-Heinz Golzio, and Joachim Gierlichs, (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2004), 34.
[192] The catalogues and types of Islamic coins are discussed by George Miles "The iconography of Umayyad coinage", *Ars Orientalis*, 3 (1959), 207-213.

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the preferred precious metal in the Eastern provinces[193]. The pre-conquest gold *solidus*, silver *drachma* and copper *follies* were changed to the Arab *dīnār, dirham* and *fils*[194].

The Umayyad monetary reform began after ʿAbd al-Malik had defeated his opponent, Ibn al-Zubayr. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Zubayr was proclaimed caliph in Mecca in 683-684 and maintained control of Arabia and the former Iranian territories until his defeat and death in 692. He attempted to create a polity conspicuously religion-based, which is why his coins bore inscriptions of a religious character, including the first appearance of the Muslim profession of faith, the *Shahada* [195]. In the aftermath of this civil war, the central mint of the caliphate, the mint of Damascus, started to produce several new types of coins; among them were the gold "Shahada" solidus and the "Standing Caliph" type. Also, silver Arab-Sassanid *drachma* started to carry the motif of the "Standing Caliph." Furthermore, so-called *Miḥrāb and ʿAnaza* coins[196] appeared which will be discussed in some detail below. Thus, one can argue that ʿAbd al-Malik's monetary reform was, at least in part, stimulated by events that had occurred during the Second Islamic Civil War, the Second Fitna, which lasted from about 680 to 692, and by the consequences of these events.

3.1.1. Arab-Byzantine mixed coinage

The first type of the coin issued by ʿAbd al-Malik (691/2 AD) was the golden solidus (Fig. 9) carrying the formula of *Shahada* (Islamic profession of faith). These coins were thus Islamic in script, yet, at the same time, they still continued to use the Byzantine custom of

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[193] Philip Grierson "The Monetary Reforms of ʿAbd al-Malik", *JESHO*, 3, (1960): 242.
[194] Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam,* 65.
[195] Clive Foss, "The Coinage of the First Century of Islam," *JRS* 16 (2003): 759.
[196] Luke Treadwell, "*Miḥrāb* and *Anaza*" or "Sacrum and Spear"? A Reconsideration of an Early Marwanid Silver Drachm," *Muqarnas* 22 (2005): 1.

depicting standing figures of rulers, such as the coin of Heraclius with his sons.[197](Fig.10) One likely reason for choosing this model was that these figures could be understood as universal symbols of power. The Cross-on-steps on the reverse was changed into so-called "Pole on Steps". Treadwell asserts that the *shahada* type of coin with the images of three rulers with tiny crosses on top of their crowns and a step-pole were coins that imitated Late Antique models, which were altered to the minimal extent necessary to allow them to be struck in a caliphal mint and "branded" with the *shahada*.[198]

Imitation coins bearing the "cross-on-steps" existed even before 'Abd al-Malik. These imitations existed in the last years of Mu'āwiya's reign. On these earlier types of coin the depiction of the cross on the reverse was replaced with a "stick" with a small pellet on the top. Heidemann suggests that probably already at this time the stick was regarded as a mutilated cross. He proposes to consider it a "de-Byzantinized" cross[199].

C. Foss has suggested that on these first coins minted during the reign of Mu'āwiya Muslim name appeared, for the first time on coinage[200]. Mu'āwiya's coins bear inscriptions in Pahlawi mentioning the "commander of the faithful"/ *amīr al-muʾminīn,* emphasizing his role as the leader of the Islamic polity[201].

The cross on top of a pole has provoked discussions among scholars. Its meaning has not been fully established. Miles suggested that it is a representation of a *qaḍīb*, a ceremonial staff of

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[197] George Miles, "The Earliest Arab Gold Coinage", *ANSMN*, 13 (1967). 210.

[198] Luke Treadwell, "'Abd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms: The Role of the Damascus Mint," *Revue Numismatique* 165, (2009): 20

[199]Stephan Heidemann, "The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery," in *The Qur'ānic in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu* ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai and Michael Marx (Leiden, Brill, 2010), 160.

[200] Jeremy Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years," *JESHO* 46, 4 (2003): 418-19. According to Foss, Mu'āwiya had a highly organized state with a sophisticated system of administration and taxation employing coinage, see: Clive Foss, "Syrian Coinage of Mu'āwiyah?" *Revue Numismatique* 158 (2002): 360-364. However, Johns argues that he failed to prove the sophisticated and bureaucratic nature of Mu'āwiya's reign. For more, see: Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam", 417-421.

[201] Heidemann, "The Evolving Representation", 160-165.

the prophet, which became part of the Umayyad's royal insignia. N. Jamil suggests that it was a representation of *quṭb* or *omphalos*, the navel of the world, which signified a parallel with the cross of Golgotha depicted on the Byzantine *solidus*. Heidemann suggests that the pole on the coin could hint at Jerusalem[202], "as a place of the imperial cult under 'Abd al-Malik"[203].

Establishing a mint in Damascus also had political implications. First of all, one needs to remember that minting gold coins was the privilege of imperial rulers in Late Antiquity. The production of gold coins in Damascus was, thus, a message sent both to the rival Byzantine emperor and to 'Abd al-Malik's own subjects. With it 'Abd al-Malik was claiming imperial status for the Umayyad Empire[204]. Moreover, the solidus of 'Abd al-Malik also carried an inscription with the profession of the Islamic faith. It demonstrates the Umayyad triumph over al-Zubayr in the second civil war. As al-Zubayr's coinage professes, he was eager to style himself as a pious ruler[205]. (Fig. 11) Ibn al-Zubayr was a member of the clan of the Prophet, stressed the religious character of the caliphate, and wanted to establish a state that emphasized the role of Islam. After Mu'āwiyah's death, he opposed the claim of the Sufyānīds to the caliphate and was supported by the eastern provinces of the caliphate206. Ultimately, he was defeated by the governor of the eastern provinces, al-Ḥajjāj, in 692[207]. As a result, 'Abd al-Malik put the *shahada* inscription on his golden coins in order to signify his triumph in the civil war and thus to make clear that it was his prerogative to uphold and spread the Islamic faith.

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[202] Heidemann also suggests that the pole-step on the coin may be related to a column in front of the Bab al-Amūd/Gate of the Column depicted on the famous Madaba mosaic. He asserts that the pole could have had no religious implications, but was merely a recognizable sign of value; as such poles on columns/capitals were symbols of urban and civic pride and a common *topos* in the representation of Late Antique cities. Ibid, 179-180.

[203] Stephan Heidemann, "The Standing Caliph-Type-The Object of the Reverse", *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East*, vol. 2, ed. Andrew Oddy (Cambridge, 2009): 30.

[204] Treadwell, "'Abd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms", 9.

[205] On a coin by one of his governors the Arabic legend "Muḥammad is the messenger of God" appears for the first time, see: Heidemann, "The Evolving Representation", 167. As mentioned above, Ibn al-Zubayr's coinage was the first to mention the *Shahada*, see: Foss, "The Coinage of the First Century of Islam," 752.

[206] Heidemann,"The Evolving Representation", 166.

[207] al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk,* 174.

In spite of the issue of the first *solidus* coins, the first truly regalian issue of a solidus is considered to be the coins struck in 694/695. The "standing caliph" motif proclaims the primacy of the caliphal office; in monetary terms, the policy of ʿAbd al-Malik was an ambitious innovation that had no precedents in Islam. (Fig. 12) These coins were minted in all three metals: gold, silver, and copper[208]. The image of the "standing caliph" is the first and only image on a precious metal coin to illustrate the portrait of the Islamic ruler[209] and, as Treadwell argues, it is the first and only truly regalian gold coin issued by the Umayyads[210].

The "standing caliph" coin pictured ʿAbd al-Malik on the obverse side in a standing posture holding onto the hilt of a long sword in a scabbard[211]. On the reverse of the coin is the depiction of a step-pole. Treadwell states that the origins of the "standing caliph" go back to a Byzantine prototype of the depiction of an imperial figure. He assumes that it is possible that the model of a standing ʿAbd al-Malik was taken from the model of Justinian II that was issued in the last years of his reign[212].

Another type of coin was issued after the "standing caliph" type and before the purely epigraphic model was introduced. This transitional type is called *Miḥrāb and ʿAnaza*[213].(Fig. 13) Its name was derived from the image on the reserve that depicted a niche (*miḥrāb*) and a

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[208] The copper *fils* depicting the "standing caliph" was similar to the golden issue. The silver type of the coin depicted the Sassanid *shāhānshāh* on the obverse side and the "standing caliph" on the reverse, replacing the traditional fire altar.The silver issue of the standing caliph bore the inscription *amīr al-muʾminīn* (commander of the believers) and *khalīfat Allāh*, (deputy of God). Donner argues that the usage of this term in the coins was simplest step taken by ʿAbd al-Malik for establishing legitimacy. Fred Donner "Umayyad Efforts at Legitimation: The Silent Heritage of the Umayyads" in *Umayyad Legacies: Medieval Memories from Syria to Spain* eds Antoine Borrut, Paul Cobb, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 205. For an elaborate discussion of the term *khalīfat Allāh* see Patricia Crone, Martin Hinds *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4-23. Two images of a ruler were portrayed on the coin -- the bust of *shāhānshāh* and ʿAbd al-Malik, see: Treadwell, "ʿAbd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms,"14.

[209] Idem., "*Miḥrāb* and ʿ*Anaza*," 21.

[210] Idem.,"ʿAbd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms,"13.

[211] Heidemann,"The Evolving Representation", 175.

[212] Treadwell, "ʿAbd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms," 13.

[213] One more type of coins provokes discussions in the scholarly milieu. It represents three standing figures. The middle one is depicted larger and with raised hands. This type of coin is called "Caliph orans". Plausibly, it represents an image of *khaṭīb*, either ʿAbd al-Malik or his brother Bishr, delivering the Friday *khuṭba*, see: Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam", 430.

"structure between the columns of the *miḥrāb* as the prophet's *'anaza*, or spear.[214] Scholars have suggested that the *miḥrāb* appeared on the coin only after the introduction of the *miḥrāb* as an architectural structure, as it would be comprehensible for the user only in that case. Thus, according to Treadwell, the coin provides the earliest secure date for the introduction of the *miḥrāb*.[215] On its obverse side the coin bears the depiction of the *shāhānshāh*. Judging from its form the coin belongs to the Arab-Sassanid type, but when put into its historical context it becomes clear that it also reveals the political program of 'Abd al-Malik.

The *Miḥrāb and 'Anaza* coinage was the first silver coinage which tried to include both Byzantine and Persian imagery. Treadwell argues that the use of *'anaza* referring to the absent cross also served to integrate the *Miḥrāb and 'Anaza* coins into the iconographic program of 'Abd al-Malik, preceding issues of transitional coinage[216]. As stated above, coins with the "standing caliph" motif, issued prior to the *Miḥrāb and 'Anaza*, employed the Byzantine-type depiction of the cross-on-steps although without the horizontal bar of the Christian cross. For *Miḥrāb and 'Anaza* the Muslim designers could not fully abandon this pattern, as the visual link between the shape and the prototype to which it referred would have been lost. Thus, the coinage issued next bore an analogous image, the spear. Naturally, the cross present in the Byzantine pattern of images of that type is the symbol of the resurrection and one of the central bones of contention for Christianity. The introduction of a *miḥrāb* instead of a cross on *Miḥrāb* and *'Anaza and* coinage was designed to reiterate the triumphal declaration of the Muslim victory over the Byzantine Empire and the appropriation of its territories. Treadwell also suggests that the arch/*miḥrāb* can be understood as a reference to the Dome of the Rock, the monumental construction in Jerusalem going back to an initiative of 'Abd al-Malik that was meant to

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[214] Treadwell,"*Miḥrāb* and *'Anaza*," 1.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid,. 21.

demonstrative Umayyad superior authority.[217] Even if one agrees with Creswell's assumption that the *miḥrāb* on the southern wall of the cavern in the rock is the earliest extant *miḥrāb*, the *miḥrāb* on the coin could still not be the representation of the Dome of the Rock, as the date of the issue of the coin is earlier (694/694 AD) than the date of the installation of the *miḥrāb* mentioned by Creswell (700/7001 AD)[218]. Moreover, Eva Baer, considering the ornaments and the style of the Kufic letters in the Dome's inscription, asserts that they are characteristic of much later period. Furthermore, she suggests that the sponsor of the *miḥrāb* was a member of the Ikhshīdī or the Fāṭimid family. Baer dates the ornaments to tenth to twelfth centuries[219].

According to Treadwell, with the production of the *Miḥrāb and 'Anaza*, Umayyad coinage faced the challenge of integrating two of the iconographic traditions of late antique coinage, namely, the Byzantine and the Sassanid types. With the adaptation of the image of the "standing caliph," all the other forms of imperial imagery became obsolete. The original intention was to circulate coins that were based on Byzantine models and, thus, could have been distributed across former Byzantine territories while promoting an Umayyad ideology that was understandable to the local populations due to the familiar Byzantine iconography. This iconography was incomprehensible to the population of the former Sassanid territories, however[220]. This was probably the reason why the "standing caliph" coins were taken out of circulation soon after their introduction.

3.1.2. Arab-Sassanid mixed coinage

The Arab-Sassanid coinage consisted of silver coins struck in the former Sassanid territories of Iraq and Iran. Arab-Sassanid coinage was produced from the mid-seventh until the

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Creswell, *Early Islamic Architecture,* 100.
[219] Eva Baer, "The Miḥrāb in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock." *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 16-18.
[220] Ibid., 22

late eighth century. The main difference in the Arab-Byzantine coins is that the first groups almost always bears information about the mint, date, and, from the beginning of the 660s, even the names of caliphs and governors in written in Pahlavi script[221]. (Fig. 15)

Even after the Arab conquest of Iranian cities the circulation of local coins did not cease[222]. The earliest drachms had some mark of the Arab authorities added to the coins with short Arabic religious expressions in the margin. The short Arabic inscription would mark the name of the conqueror and the governor of the Iranian provinces ʿAbdallāh Ibn ʿĀmir as well as the phrase *Bism Allāh* (in the name of God). However, the coins still bore the names of Sassanid rulers until the final reunification of the former Sassanid Empire under a single governor in the years 670-675. Then any Sassanid name was replaced with the name of the caliph and governor as well as with Islamic religious phrases. As noted above, the Arab-Sassanid mixed coinage also incorporated the "standing caliph" motif and the *shahada* confession. These coins were struck in the former Iranian provinces of the caliphate[223].

3.1.3. Monetary reform

Although these new types of coins started to be produced, a major coinage reform did not occur until 696/697. (Fig. 15) This reform marked the beginning of imageless, an-iconic, purely epigraphic coins, which constituted a break with the past. The portrait of the caliph disappeared and the image of the step-cross was replaced with Qurʾānic quotations taken from *sūra al-Ikhlāṣ* (112. 1-4): "God is one, God is eternal, he was not born and did not give birth, nor is there an equal to him".[224] Surely, these words were opposed to the divinity of Christ. Furthermore, if one considers the circumstance that this quotation replaces the step-cross motif symbolizing the

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[221] Foss,"The Coinage of the First Century of Islam," 748.
[222] Heidemann,"The Evolving Representation", 161.
[223] EI² see *Arab-Sassanian Coins*, G. Bates.
[224] Treadwell, "'Abd al-Malik's coinage reforms,"17.

resurrection, the polemic edge of the reform becomes apparent[225]. On the reverse of the coin stands the profession of faith, the *shahada*.

The Qur'ānic words on this new coinage were a clear expression of political as well as religious sovereignty[226]. What is more, 'Abd al-Malik removed his own portrait from the coinage, replacing the figure of the caliph's image with theocratic notions; the new iconography asserted that the ruler was defined as God's deputy on earth[227]. Surveying the development of the Arabic coins in the transitional period and the images and inscriptions they bear, it becomes clear that they were an outcome of a series of deliberate decisions that were made in order to meet the needs of an emergent state[228].

While the existing stock of the Byzantine coins in circulation was gradually replaced by new, epigraphic coinage, the traditional Sassanid *drachms* – with minor modifications – remained in circulation. In fact, for more than sixty years after the obliteration of the Sassanid Empire, coins virtually identical to Iranian coins were still struck.[229] Such Arab-Sassanid coinage was even found in hoards of the Abbasid period[230]. One likely reason for this was the fact that monetary production was retained for a long time by local Persian officials.[231] This was possible because the Arabs obliterated the Sassanid Empire and laid claim to their heritage and legacy.

Thus, there was no need for the Umayyads to change the Sassanid coins and to replace them with new coinage which would demonstrate the Umayyad hegemony, as they had already defeated the Sassanid Empire. In contrast, the Umayyad strife with Byzantium motivated a monetary reform that was intended to replace the use of the rival Byzantine *solidus* in order to

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[225] Ibid.
[226] Heidemann, "The Evolving Representation", 186.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Treadwell, "Miḥrāb and 'Anaza," 21.
[229] Stephan Heidemann, "The Merger of Two Currency Zones in Early Islam. The Byzantine and Sassanian Impact on the Circulation in Former Byzantine Syria and Northern Mesopotamia," *Iran* 36 (1998): 96, 105.
[230] Foss,"The Coinage of the First Century of Islam", 749.
[231] Ibid., 752.

demonstrate the caliphate's superiority. Thus, 'Abd al-Malik initiated a process of melting down the Byzantine-type coins in circulation and introducing religiously sound an-iconic coinage in its stead.

3.2. The Dome of the Rock

3.2.1. The Umayyad Dome of the Rock

The historical context of the late seventh century and the political agenda of the Umayyads are impossible to understand fully without a discussion of the construction of the Dome of the Rock, its mission, and its symbolic visual and architectural solutions. The Dome of the Rock was constructed in 691-692 and was part of an ambitious building program on the temple mount; it included the al-Aqṣā mosque, the walls, gates, several minor buildings, the palace complex, and a network of roads leading to Jerusalem[232]. Together with the Mount of Olives it is one of the holiest places in Jerusalem for both Christians and Muslims. Both places were considered as sacred and had *martyria* constructed around and above them. The Dome of the Rock is today considered one of the earliest religious buildings of Islam. (Fig. 16) Moreover, its inscriptions carry the first clear and detailed proclamation of Islam and the role of Muḥammad[233].

The Dome of the Rock is probably the most widely discussed and investigated Islamic monument. There are numerous speculations about the reason for its construction, the message contained in its inscriptions and portrayed in its mosaics as well as the reason for choosing this particular location. The most commonly held opinion about the reason for its construction is

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[232]Robert Hillenbrand "For God, Empire, and Mammon:Some Art-Historical Aspects of the Reformed Dīnārs of 'Abd al-Malik" in Al-Andalus und Europa. Zwischen Orient und Okzident, ed. Martina Muller-Wiener, Christiane Kothe, Karl-Heinz Golzio (Petersberg: Micgael Imhof Verlag, 2004), 34.
[233] Johns, "Archaeology and the History", 416.

based on the report by al-Yaʿqūbī.[234] He brings in the notion that 'Abd al-Malik constructed the Dome of the Rock in order to divert pilgrims from Mecca to Jerusalem[235], as the Ḥijāz was occupied by his main opponent during the second civil war, namely, Ibn al-Zubayr. As an argument supporting this account, Creswell notes that the ground plan of the Rock resembles the requirements of *ṭawāf*, according to which believers should circumambulate the Kaʿaba seven times[236]. Two ambulatories around the Dome itself suggest, according to Creswell, that the building was planned to host the same ritual feature[237].

Another theory that attempts to explain the motivation behind the Dome's construction stresses the historical context and the significance of the chosen location. It has been well argued that the construction of the Dome of the Rock by 'Abd al-Malik had, first of all, polemic and political significance directed against Jews and Christians, as the mosque was built on a location that was associated with Abraham, a person important for all three monotheistic religions[238]. Thus, this construction was designed to present a monumental structure that signified the Muslim triumph over the "preceding" religions, which regarded the site as a sacred space. According to Peters' hypothesis, the construction of the Dome of the Rock was an adaptation of not only previous Jewish sacred space, but also Christian, as, according to him, Emperor Heraclius (610-

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[234] al-Yaʿqūbī *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, ed. M. T. Houtsma, vol 2 (Leiden, 1883), 311, cited in Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 35. Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Jerusalem or Jerusalem under Muslim Rule" in The city in the Islamic world ed. Jayyusi Salma, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 319.

[235] The idea about 'Abd al-Malik changing the place of the *ḥajj* is rejected by Goitein; he argues that this report is a result of anti-Umayyad propaganda. Discussed in Johns, "Archaeology and the History", 425. The opposite idea is presented by Amikan Elad, who argues that the construction of the Dome of the Rock should be seen as an ideological contest against his political opponents, see: Amikam Elad, "Why did 'Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-examination of the Muslim Sources," in *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, ed. James Johns, Julian Raby, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 33-58.

[236] This theory has been criticized due to al-Yaʿqūbī's anti-Umayyad sentiments, see: Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock", 36.

[237] Creswell, *Islamic Architecture*, 69.

[238] Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock", 44.

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641AD) intended to build an octagonal church on the Temple Mount.[239] Peters argues that that was why the emperor renovated The Golden Gate of Jerusalem, which was as entry into the former Temple district, today's Ḥaram.[240]

3.2.2. The Dome of the Rock and the night journey of Muḥammad

Although the miraculous night journey of Muḥammad had not reached its final form at the time of 'Abd al-Malik[241], for the later traditionalists it served as a legitimating cause to lay claim to the Temple Mount. This sacred space in Jerusalem is believed to be mentioned in Qur'ān as Muḥammad's Night Journey (*'isrā'*) and Ascension (*mi'rāj*). The night journey of Muḥammad tells about a miraculous journey which the prophet made one night from the holy mosque of Mecca to the most distant mosque *(al-masjid al-Aqṣā)*[242]. Here, God's signs (*āyāt*) were revealed to him. Islamic tradition identified this place with the Ḥaram al-Sharīf (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem[243].

The Dome of the Rock was constructed on this mythological site. They associate Muḥammad with the sacred space of Jerusalem, not also with the Garden of Eden. Moreover, with the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Ḥaram al-Sharīf, the Umayyads linked themselves to the legacy of Solomon and his temple.[244] Later traditions present that Muḥammad

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[239] Peters Francis, "Who Built the Dome of the Rock?," in *Graeco-Arabica: First International Congress on Greek and Arabic Studies* 2 (1983), 128
[240] Ibid., 122, 127.
[241] Joseph Van Ess, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: An Analysis of Some Texts," in *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, ed. James Johns, Julian Raby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 90-91.
[242] Busse discusses the Night Journey of Muḥammad in the context of apocalyptic literature. See Heribert Busse "Jerusalem in the Story of Muḥammad's Night Journey and Ascension." *JSAI*, (1991): 1-40.
[243] Carolynne Mekeel-Matteson, "The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock," *The Islamic Quarterly* 43 (1999): 158.
[244] Khoury links the Dome of the Rock to the imagery descriptions of Solomon's *miḥrāb* and his Temple. According to her the Dome of the Rock should be shown in the context of a general architectural type which includes several pre-Dome structures situated not only in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, but also in South Arabia. These structures are often referred to "*miḥrāb*", which has given semi-mythical character. She argues that the idea about these *miḥrāb*s was based on the pre-history of the Dome of the Rock. The idea of the *miḥrāb* of Solomon was common: the description corresponds to the descriptive features of the Dome of the Rock. She asserts that the choice

met God in a garden on the ancient Temple Mount in the middle of the Herodian walls or, as people commonly held, in the vicinity of Solomon's temple. Here Muḥammad saw God sitting on a throne, in the shape of a youth wearing a crown of light[245].

The night journey of Muḥammad or *'isrā'* is discussed by J. Van Ess based on the exegesis of Qur'ānic *sūras*. He argues convincingly that in later exegeses the notion was promoted that during his night journey Muḥammad saw God sitting on His throne. He asserts that it is also possible to combine the events of *sūra* 53 with those of 81 in a simple event. Muḥammad would have seen God on the higher horizon and then again, or at the same time, in the "Garden of Refuge" by the Lote-Tree of the Boundary". God Van Ess argues that the location where Muḥammad made his journey (Ḥaram al-Sharīf and *al-masjid al-Aqṣā)* and where the terrestrial throne of God could be located in later traditional Islamic exegesis was identified with Jerusalem[246]. This is the throne from which God had created the world and where he would return to assist in the judgment of all mankind at the end of times[247]. So "further Places of Worship"/*al-masjid al-Aqṣā* can be identified with the mosque of al-Aqṣa[248]. The created associations of the Night Journey to the Dome of the Rock were due to the community's emerging self-confidence and probably also for polemical reasons.[249]

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of the location of the Dome of the Rock could be associated with the ideas of Qur'ānic *miḥrāb*s, particularly *miḥrāb*s associated with prophet kings, David and Solomon. The description of Solomon's *miḥrāb*s and the Temple is part of the cultural *koine* of early Islam. Such descriptions and identifications of specific locations included not only the Dome of the Rock, but also the Ka'ba and Ghumdan Palace in Sana. For more see: Nuha Khoury, "The Dome of the Rock, the Ka'aba, and Ghumdan: Arab Myths and Umayyad Monuments," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 59.

[245] Joseph Van Ess, 'Vision and Ascension: Sürat al-Najm and its Relationship with Muhammad's Mi'raj,*' JQS*, 1, no. 1(1999): 56; Idem."Le Mi'raj el la vision de Dieu dans les premières spéculations théologique en Islam," *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam. Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi , (Louvain, Peeters: 1996), 54-56.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid, 48.

[248] Anwarul Islam, Zaid al-Hamad "The Dome of the Rock: Origin of its Octagonal Plan", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 139 (2007): 118.

[249] Peters Francis, "Who Built the Dome of the Rock?," 132.

3.2.3. The mosaics and the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock

A preeminent issue in examining the Dome of the Rock is surely its mosaics and inscriptions, which were inspired by clearly Byzantine motifs[250]: diadems with hanging and encrusted precious stones, in many cases topped with triangular, oval, or arched forms or diadems surmounted by wings and a crescent. It has been suggested that these ornaments can be interpreted as royal or imperial ornaments of Byzantine and Persian rulers[251]. (Fig. 17) O. Grabar also argues that the representations on the mosaic are trophies of defeats over rival empires[252]. It can be argued that the example of the Dome of the Rock is similar to that of Damascus with respect to the adaptation and the demonstration of Umayyad power. Yet, in the case of the Damascus mosque the gradual transformation from a Byzantine sanctuary to an exclusively Umayyad mosque is even more evident.

Besides the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, its inscriptions have also provoked great interest. The inscriptions in blue-and-gold glass mosaics running in the inner and outer facades of the octagonal arcade on the Dome of the Rock may be primary witnesses for the early version of the Qur'ānic text. The text is preserved completely, except for the name 'Abd al-Malik, which was replaced with the name of the Abbasid caliph, al-Ma'mūn (813-833). The inscriptions include monotheistic and anti-Trinitarian verses from the Qur'ān[253]. They proclaim the oneness of God, assert God's and his angels' blessings on the Prophet. One of the mosaic sections contains historical information about the building, namely, the founder's name and the date of construction. It ends with a "formulaic response typical of liturgical practice in Christianity:

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[250] Mekeel-Matteson discusses three figures depicted on the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock: the vine, crown, and tree. She argues that these motifs, adapted from Byzantine imagery, have eschatological and apocalyptic implications, see: Mekeel-Matteson, "The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock", 161.

[251] Ibid, 48.

[252] The Ka'ba and Mecca were used for such offerings until the early tenth century, besides there are many similar examples in late antique art for crowns and jewellery hanging over or around a sacred palace, see: Oleg Grabar, *Shape of the Holy. Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996),73.

[253] Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam", 429.

"Amen, Lord of the worlds, praise to God"[254]. O. Grabar argues that the sequence of themes of text in the inscription is similar to the liturgy of the Christian mass[255].

The inscriptions include invocations of God combined with a series of passages from what are now various parts of the Qur'ān. E. Whelan argues that the inscriptions of the Dome "should not be viewed as evidence of precise deviation from the 'literary form' of the Qur'ānic text: rather they are sermons or parts of a single sermon."[256] These would have been addressed to an audience which would have understood the references the inscriptions contain.[257] Whelan's main proposition is that it is unlikely that the selection and coherent arrangement of passages in the times of 'Abd al-Malik would have influenced the "canonical" arrangement of the text, which took place during his reign or even later[258]. Wellan argues that this attempt to codify the aspects of Muslim religious practice started from the rule of Mu'āwiya and continued through the reign of al-Walīd. 'Abd al-Malik's usage of Qur'ānic quotations on coinage and public monuments was a part of this policy and was meant to announce the new Islamic power. She asserts that these attempts would have included efforts to codify the text.[259]

Besides the visual representations of the Dome of the Rock, it is also important to discuss its location and the style of the building[260]. 'Abd al-Malik initiated a building campaign on the Temple Mount, which was regarded – as noted above –as of great importance for the Jewish community. Furthermore, the Dome was designed to rival Christian legitimacy for it was to

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[254] Grabar, *The Shape of Holy,* 67.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ester Wellan, "Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qurʾān", *JAOS* 118, no. 1 (1998): 9.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid, 14.
[259]Ibid.
[260] R. Grafman and M. Rosen-Ayalon discuss the plan and the structure of the Dome of the Rock with its correspondence with the style of the mosque of Damascus trying to argue about the influence of Dome on the Damascus mosque. For more see R. Grafman and M. Rosen-Ayalon. "The Two Great Syrian Umayyad Mosques: Jerusalem and Damascus." *Muqarnas* 16 (1999):1-15.

eclipse the church of Holy Sepulcher[261]. The style of the building bore Persian, Greco-Roman, and Sassanid elements, but the meaning it wanted to express was generic. The source of the repertory was late antique, Mediterranean and Iranian. Among its various antique and classical elements are, for example, the shape of the *toloi*[262] and *Martyroin*[263].

The Dome of the Rock is a good example of how Byzantine models were adopted and adapted in order to articulate the political agenda of the later Umayyad caliphate. As already shown, the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock and its structure utilized Byzantine motifs and forms while changing their meaning. In essence, the creation of the Dome was an expression of Umayyad imperial projection, which was oriented to opposing the rival Byzantines. This agenda can be brought out from a number of examples, such as the mosaics from the Dome of the Rock, which are appropriations of Byzantine models that were used in support of Umayyad claims of artistic but also political supremacy. The octagonal structure of the building, too, might have been inspired by Byzantine archetypes.[264] (Fig. 18) Moreover; the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock contain polemic messages that negate the main tenets of the Christian faith.

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[261]Gulru Necipoglu, "The Dome of the Rock as Palimpsest: 'Abd al-Malik's Grand Narrative and Sultan Suleyman's Glosses," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008):36.

[262]Mekeel-Matteson, "The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock", 159.

[263] Rina Avner connected the construction of the Dome of the Rock with the cult of *martyroin* of St. Mary, the church of Kathisma. The plan of the church resembles that of the Dome of the Rock. She also ascribes to the Umayyads an "adaptation" of the cult of St. Mary. Her arguments are vague; for example, she argues that during the archeological excavations in the church of Kathisma, on the layer of the eighth century, a structure was found which can be indentified with an Islamic *miḥrāb*. In her opinion, the Christian presence in the church continued from the seventh to ninth centuries. Also she connects a mosaic of a palm from the Umayyad phase of the church to the birth of Mary (as it is described in Qur'ān) and to her salvation by God, who provided the miraculous palm tree. She brings in the idea that the cult of Mary in Umayyad period was elucidated by their intentions to construct a monument that transmitted an anti-Christian statement. It meant to reject the basic Christian ideology of the divinity of Christ and the veneration of St. Mary as a "God bearer", see: Rina Avner. "The Dome of the Rock in Light of the Development of Concentric Martyria in Jerusalem: Architecture and Architectural Iconography." *Muqarnas* 27 (2011): 40-44.

[264] Grabar argues that similar octagonal plans of baptisteries were common in the Christian world, especially in the case of commemorative churches. The most prominent examples are the rotunda around the Holy Sepulcher, the octagonal church of the Ascension, the so-called Tomb of the Virgin in the Kedreon valley, also the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, the octagonal church of the Kathisma, and Caesarea Maritima, both in Palestine, see: Grabar, *Shape of the Holy,* 107-108.

3.3. The policy of adaptation of the Byzantine motifs

3.3.1 Adapted Byzantine motifs in mosaics

It is certain that many features in the mosque of Damascus were modeled on Byzantine models as well. The general iconography of the mosaics, for instance, reflects Byzantine influence. One common feature in the ornamentation of both the mosque of Damascus and the Dome of the Rock is the so-called "mother of pearl" that is depicted on the mosaics[265]. (Fig. 19) This motif was often used in the Byzantine imagery tradition[266]. Moreover, in both places there are depictions of palaces and houses standing near a river and in gardens. It has been argued that the structures and rural villas depicted on the mosaics represent the *quṣūr* described in various Qur'ānic verses. These descriptions are similar to the images of the mosaics.[267] (Fig. 20) As mentioned, the gem of the "mother-of-pearl" in the Dome of the Rock is placed in "diadems with hanging and encrusted precious stones, which probably express royal or imperial ornaments of Byzantine and Persian rulers"[268]. All these ornaments were intended to demonstrate power and sovereignty in the "official art of the Byzantine and Persian empires[269]". Adopted by the Umayyads, these motifs were used to uphold Umayyad royal sovereignty. Other representations

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[265] Idem., "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock", 78. Discussed in detail in Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*,15-16.
[266] van Berchem brings in the idea that certain buildings depicted on the mosaics of the mosque of Damascus resemble those in the mosaic of Ravenna. Especially the motif of pearls handing from the edges of curtains with golden rings are similar, see: Margaritte van Berchem, "Mosaics," in Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 358.
[267] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus,* 16.
,[268] Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock," 48.
[269] Ibid.

like images of golden chains[270] with handing pearl-like lamps[271] have been argued, for instance by Flood, to be representations of the heavenly realm[272].

3.3.2. *al-Karma decoration*

Among the decorative ornaments adopted by the Umayyads was the so-called *al-karma*, a carved decoration. It was located in the southern part of the mosque of Damascus and existed until the fire of 1892. Photographs show that the *al-karma* consisted of vegetal ornaments and was located above the *qibla* wall[273]. Ibn ʿAsākir reports that al-Walīd spent seventy thousand dinars on its construction[274], which is surely an exaggerated sum. Possibly the *al-karma* was used in or around the *miḥrāb. Al-Karma* is usually translated as vine, but in the context of the architectural solutions of the mosque of Damascus it consists of a composition not only of grapes but also of pomegranates.[275] Acanthus scrolls with vines and pomegranates appear in the architectural monuments of late antique Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and later also in Umayyad Syria. Such decorations were also found at ʿAnjar, Qaṣr al-Hayr al-Gharbī, and Rusafa[276]. This motif was commonly used in Byzantine ornamentation. For example, there are iconographic parallels of the usage of a vine frieze at Hagia Sophia and the St. Polyeuktos' church[277].

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[270] Golden chains were used also in the interior of the mosque. Yāqūt tells that during the construction seven hundred gold chains were used, see: Yāqūt Ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥamawī, *Kitāb Muʿjam al-Buldān* [Dictionary of Countries] (Beirut, Dār Sādr, 1996), 466. The gold chains are also mentioned among the material sent by the Byzantine emperor, along with marble and manpower.
[271] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*: 15-16, 20.
[272] Ibid., 33.
[273] Ibid., 57-59.
[274] Ibid., 268-9.
[275] Ibid., 61.
[276] Ibid., 69-72.
[277] Ibid., 76-79.

3.3.3 Similar layouts of the capitals

The Umayyads used Byzantine models in visual representations, but also in city planning. Such usage of Byzantine, more specifically Constantinopolitan, style, is seen in the urban layout of Damascus, including the connection and position of the mosque with the imperial palace and the market. This observation is based on Flood's elaboration of the layout of Damascus and its similarities with Constantinople regarding the location of the main religious building with the palace on the one side (with the automata clock next to it) and the market square connected through a colonnade on the other side.

The first element in the layout was the connection of the mosque with the automata clock, built in Bāb al-Ziyāda (Bāb al-Sā'at),[278] in the in the southern wall of the *temenos.* It was probably constructed during the reign of al-Walīd and was situated next to the royal palace, al-Khaḍra'.[279] The location of the clock next to the palace, as Flood suggests, shows conceptual and ideological links between medieval monarchy, cosmology, and horology[280]. The Bāb al-Sā'at, no less than the mosque itself, provided a spectacular public vehicle for the proclamation of Muslim hegemony and a demonstration of Umayyad sovereignty on the urban landscape. The other component in the complex of the mosque and the nearby palace was the colonnade. This

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[278] Ibn ʿAsākir transmits reports about the clock [*barqār*] situated in the Bāb al-Sā'at. The gate derived its name from the automata clock located there. A copper bird, a serpent, and a raven were installed on it. Every hour the serpent came out, the bird whistled, the crow squawked and a stone felt down into a basin, see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 280. Ibn ʿAsākir's description of the automata clock in Damascus is the earliest description of such a kind of clock, popular in the eastern Mediterranean, see: Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus,*119.

[279] Not a great deal is known about the nature and the date of construction of the Umayyad palace of Khaḍra. Ibn ʿAsākir tells that the palace of Muʿāwīya predates the Islamic conquest and was built in pre-Islamic times. According to other evidence it was built when Muʿāwīya became the governor of Syria. It was reported that the palace was constructed of baked bricks and timber. There is a story about a remark of a Byzantine ambassador calling the upper part of the palace suitable for birds and the lower part for rats, see: Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, 147 In the Khaḍra the prison, the mint "and a place of punishment and executing people and a place of army and soldiers and a place against the calamity and revolt" were also located, see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 257.

[280] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus,* 138.

colonnade, leading to the royal palace, survived until the nineteenth century[281]. The use of colonnaded approaches in royal residences went back at least to the place of Diocletian at Antioch and the great palace of the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople[282]. The colonnade connected the palace to the *sūq*/market. Flood suggests that taking into account the palace's role as the main imperial residence of the capital and the extensive building work undertaken in and around the ancient *temenos*, it is more than likely that al-Walīd rebuilt al-Khaḍra' as part of his building program.[283].

This layout was used in many Mediterranean cities, including Constantinople, where the colonnaded street, the *Mesē*, led through the metropolis all the way to the *Chalkē* Gate, the entrance of the imperial palace. Another route serving for ceremonies led from the *Mesē*, which preceded Chalke before entering the church through a gateway at the southwestern corner, known as the Horologion. The parallels with the urban planning of Damascus are striking. Surely Damascus was modeled on Roman/Byzantine models even before the Muslim conquest; however, the addition of the palace and the water clock in locations corresponding to those of Constantinople shows the attempts of the Umayyads to keep the planning of Damascus with the layout of the capital of the Byzantine Empire[284]. Flood suggests that al-Walīd, through architectural patronage and visual citations was making an attempt to relate Umayyad Damascus to Constantinople, and possibly also to take it over[285].

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[281] Ibn Jubayr *Riḥla Jubayr,* 269.

[282] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus,* 146.

[283] Talking about the conquest of the city, al-Balādhurī mentions that the forces met in the center of the city (presumably in the vicinity of the church) called *al-muqasallāṭ*, see: al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al Buldān,* 122. Ibn 'Asākir gives a description of a mysterious statue standing on a column, see: Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 280. Possibly *al-muqasallāṭ* was the name of the colonnaded street or was a part of it.

[284] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, 158-159.

[285] Ibid., 172.

3.4. The correspondence between al-Walīd and Justinian II

The clear adoption and use of Byzantine motifs by the Umayyads opened a discussion about the origins of the craftsmen, particularly of the craftsmen who made the mosaics. Scholarly opinions concerning the origin of the craftsmen can be classified in three main groups: (1) the artisans were local craftsmen and had no connection with the Byzantine Empire, (2) they were local craftsmen influenced by Byzantine prototypes, and (3) they were workers who had come from the Byzantine Empire[286].

The last opinion is more widely held in recent scholarship, as it is directly related to the issue of Umayyad-Byzantine relations or rather with the notion of how the Umayyads perceived those relations. According to some reports, there was correspondence between the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II and Caliph al-Walīd. This correspondence was addressed to the "Tyrant" [al-Ṭāghiya]:

> Send me two hundred Greek [*rūmī*] workers as I want to build a mosque, which was never built before in any capital and will not have alike after it. If you will not send, I will attack you with my forces; will ruin the church of my country among them the church of Jerusalem, the church of Ruha (Edessa) and the rest of the Greek [*rūmī*] monuments in my country.

The emperor wanted to dissuade him from the construction and to weaken his intention, so al-Walīd is said to have replied:

> By god if your father would understand [the importance of the construction of the mosque] he would not neglect it, so it is disgrace upon him. And if you

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[286] Ibid., 20, n. 29. N. Elisseeff suggests that the *rūmī* workers mentioned as having taken part in the construction were Melkite Christians and not Greek, see:. Elisseeff, *La description de Damas* 40 n. 3; de Lorey connects the origins of the craftsmen with the Greco-Syrian school of mosaic production in Antioch which developed after the sixth century. He assumes that similar schools could also have been found in Damascus and Jerusalem and al-Walīd would rather have used local manpower in making the mosaics, see: Eustache de Lorey, "Les mosaïques de la Mosquée des Omayyades à Damas," *Syria* 12 (1931): 344. Oleg Grabar suggests that the craftsmen could have originally been from Constantinople and that is the main reason why the mosaics resemble the Byzantine ones, see: Grabar, *Shape of the Holy,* 72. Flood asserts that in pre-Islamic Syria imperial commissions were generally executed by local artisans and it is worth considering the possibility that the mosaics are a product of a small number of Byzantine mosaicists working with local craftsmen, see: Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, 24

understand the necessity [of the construction] and it escaped from your father, so it is a disgrace upon you. Nevertheless I am sending what you asked.[287]

Similar correspondence is reported to have happened concerning the construction of the mosques in Medina and Damascus. Al-Balādhurī reports a letter of al-Walīd to ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz[288] (who at that time was the governor of Medina) ordering him to pull down the mosque and reconstruct it. He writes that he has money, mosaics, and marble which had been sent to him. Also he has eighty Greek and Coptic craftsmen who were inhabitants of Syria and Egypt. In the account of al-Balādhurī there is no mention of the source of this aid[289]. Yāqūt mentions that it was the Byzantine emperor who sent the required aid, consisting of 100 000 *mithqāl*[290] of gold, one hundred workmen, and forty loads of mosaic to al-Walīd for the construction of the mosque in Medina[291]. This information is surely exaggerated.

What is more, one could also doubt the reliability of the correspondence between al-Walīd and Justinian II, as Creswell persuasively did. He draws attention to another similar story with the same motif. This story relates to the Abyssinian general, Abraha. After his victory over the Yemeni army, Abraha decided to construct a church in Sana. In order to do so he sent a letter to the Byzantine emperor: he supported al-Walīd with workmen, mosaics, and marble.[292]

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[287] There is another version, in which the Byzantine emperor wrote to al-Walīd first. It is reported that the emperor wrote:"You are destroying a church which your father saw and left, if it was wrong [the construction] you are going against our father, and if it is right [the construction] than your father was wrong." See: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 257-259.

[288] Gibb presents another early source addressing this subject. A certain scholar from Medina, Ibn Zabāla, composed a history of Medina (in 814 AD) which is known only from surviving fragments. This work, composed only a century after the actual events, presents a passage about the correspondence, extracts of which are preserved in al-Samhūdī. It tells that al-Walīd wrote to the king of the Greeks suggesting that they would restore the Great Mosque of the Prophet and asking assistance with sending workers and mosaic cubes. The emperor sent loads of mosaic cubes, 80 000 *dinars*, and twenty or ten workmen, adding that he had sent ten who were equal to a hundred, see: Hamilton Gibb,. "Arab-Byzantine Relations under the Umayyad Caliphate," in *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. Michael Bonner (London: Ashgate Variorium, 2005), 228-229.

[289] al-Balādhurī , *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān,* 13

[290] One *mithqāl* equals one golden dinar, approx 5 gramm.

[291] Yāqūt *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 466.

[292] Keppel Creswell "The Legend that al-Walīd Asked for and Obtained Help from the Byzantine Emperor. A Suggested Explanation," in *Islamic Architecture: The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus: Text and Studies* (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 2008), 142-143. Lindsey argues that the fact that the

Creswell emphasizes the similarities of these two stories noting that the material sent by the Byzantine emperor is absolutely the same, namely, workmen, mosaics, and marble. Also, in Abraha's times the Byzantine emperor was Justinian I, while during the reign of al-Walīd the emperor was Justinian II. Creswell proposes that the similar names might have caused confusion in the sources[293]. Accordingly, he connects the monument in Sana with the mosque in Medina. Creswell argues that it is not likely that al-Walīd would have demanded aid from Justinian II and, moreover, that the latter would have supported the construction of a mosque.[294] He holds that the story of the church in Sana was gradually changed and applied to al-Walīd's building programs in Medina and Damascus[295].

Flood challenged Creswell's theory and defended the veracity of the correspondence. He argues that the existing diplomatic exchange between al-Walīd and the Byzantine emperor as early as the ninth century indicates that later reports were not altered embellishments of the tradition presented by Creswell; on the contrary, the later reports transmit an account of an earlier source, i.e., Ibn al-Muʿallā, quoted by Ibn ʿAsākir.[296] Flood asserts that the hypothesis brought in by Creswell ignores numerous analogous accounts of diplomatic exchanges where men and material were exchanged. The tradition of furthering diplomatic objectives by artistic exchange, even between political and military rivals, provides a wider context within which to situate accounts of Byzantine assistance to Damascus and Medina[297]. It has been argued that the

emperor is said to have "submissively obeyed" and sent the assistance to al-Walīd and also other details are highly debated, see: James Lindsey, *Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World* (Indianapolis, Hackett: 2008), 94.
[293] Creswell "The Legend that al-Walīd", 144.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid., 145.
[296] Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, 22.
[297] Ibid., 24.

social, commercial, and diplomatic relations between the Byzantine and Arab societies never ceased despite the rival sentiments[298].

The authenticity of the correspondence is surely debatable; it is difficult to imagine the Umayyad caliphate writing to the Byzantine emperor with threats and the latter obeying and sending the needed material for the construction. The trustworthiness of the correspondence cannot be confirmed by the continuity of the diplomatic relations and the fact that there are reports of such assistance for other constructions. Finally, even if part of al-Walīd's letter is authentic, it is not probable that the emperor would give assistance to al-Walīd, taking into account the policy of expression and projection of the imperial nature and world-dominating power of the Umayyads. I assume there was no need for al-Walīd to invite/demand craftsmen from the Byzantine Empire. The local workers, including the Muslims, presumably had knowledge of Byzantine models.

3.5. The Family of Kings

I would like to make another comparison with the iconographic peculiarities and the proclamation of Umayyad sovereignty. The famous fresco in the Umayyad desert castle of Quṣayr al-ʿAmra built by al-Walīd presents the portrait of six standing figures, known as "six kings" or "family of kings". Although the panel is damaged, scholars have identified the portrayed persons: Chosroes/Kisrā and Caesar/Qayṣar represent the Byzantine and the Sassanid empires, Negus embodies India and al-Sudan, Roderic represents North Africa and Spain, and the caliph Arabia. Finally, the Turkic lands and China are represented by a ruler whose image

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[298] Marius Canard, "Les relations Politique et Social entre Byzance et les Arabes," *DOP* 18 (1964): 35.

has disappeared from the panel[299]. The figure of Qayṣar is presented in imperial dress, decorated with a pattern of small circles, while Kisrā is presented as a beardless young person; he wears long robe and a cloak. His crown resembles the usual crown of the Sassanids with crescent wings[300].

The kings are shown paying homage to the Umayyad ruler. The subject of the family of kings is part of the Iranian literary tradition. It promotes the notion of an international hierarchy of sovereigns who gather to give homage to first among equals[301]. O. Grabar proposes that on the panel al-Walīd "celebrated his accession to universal power."[302]

G. Fowden relates the image of the kings to Persian royal portraits with the royal representations on Arab-Sassanid mixed coinage[303]. Fowden also argues for Sassanid influence on the depiction of the Kisrā. Moreover, it has been argued that panel has striking similarities with the East Roman, i.e., Byzantine visual vocabulary. Some of the similarities Fowden brings in are sixth-century Constantinopolitan icons that have been preserved on Mount Sinai, the mosaics in Ravenna and Thessalonica, as well as the coins of Heraclius with his two sons in a standing posture[304]. He states that the individual elements and decorations are of either Iranian or Byzantine character, while the overall artistic impression is, generally speaking, Roman[305].

It has been assumed that the panel of the six kings in Quṣayr al-ʿAmra can be used in the line of argument with the above mentioned monuments and visual media. The fresco is yet another example of an Umayyad adaptation of Byzantine and Sassanid values and furthers the aim of creating a new hybrid phenomenon which would be triumphant over the existing rival

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[299] Garth Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra: Art and the Umayyad elite in late Antique Syria* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 214-215.
[300] Ibid., 200-203.
[301] Ibid., 215.
[302] Oleg Grabar "Islamic Art and Byzantium." *DOP* 18 (1964), 83.
[303] Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra* 218.
[304] Ibid., 219.
[305] Ibid., 333.

political regimes. The panel in Quṣayr al-ʿAmra is one further expression of the Umayyad policy of adapting both Byzantine and Sassanid motifs and designs. This adaptation of these motifs can be related to the Umayyad perception of triumph over Sassanid and Byzantine empires. The claim of triumph permitted the Umayyads to adapt and appropriate Byzantine and Sassanid models.

<div align="center">****</div>

This chapter has aimed to represent examples of the Umayyad policy of adaptations. The adaptations applied both to the space and motifs. In some cases the shift from the adaptation to innovation is clearly visible. For instance, this is the case with the monetary reform: First, the Byzantine coinage was continued in circulation with only minor changes before the imagery of the coins was changed and a new innovative coinage was introduced which proclaimed Umayyad sovereignty and opposed religious dogmas of the Christian faith. Other cases show in an even more paradigmatic fashion how the Umayyads directed their artistic adaptations to ultimately oppose the Byzantine Empire in the case of the mosque of Damascus and in the Dome of the Rock of Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION

The thesis seeks to discuss the transformation of the Great Mosque of Damascus within the context of the political agenda of the Umayyad Dynasty at its peak that is under the reign of caliph ʿAbd al-Malik and his son al-Walīd. As it has been discussed in the thesis, the Umayyads carried out a policy of adapting existing Byzantine and Sassanid models in order to create new innovative expressions of Umayyad imperial power that were also intended to oppose the rival (the legitimacy claims of the) Byzantine Empire. The transformation of the mosque of Damascus is the emblematic of this policy of the Umayyads.

The establishment of entirely new models of expression was preceded by a transitional phase. The phenomena associated with this phase, such as the sharing of the sacred space, and the use of Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Sassanid mixed coinage, has been discussed in the thesis. First, the case of the shared sacred space of the former *temenos* of Damascus is presented. For seventy years after the conquest of Damascus, the sacred enclosure of Damascus served both Christians and Muslims. This meant in practice that after having entered through a shared monumental gate, the Christians turned to the church of St. John the Baptist on the northwestern part of the enclosure and the Muslims to southeastern part to *maqṣura/miḥrāb*. The subsequent gradual appropriation of the Christian sacred space by the Umayyads reflects their attempts to establish legitimacy as well as to promote a means for conversion of local Christians to Islam. The case of Rusafa proves that both of these aims were part of an Umayyad agenda. Moreover, in the case of Rusafa, we see the acquisition of the sacred space through an adaptation of the existing cult. In addition to the cases of Damascus and Rusafa, I also mentioned other cases of shared cultic space, including Mamre and Jerusalem. Most certainly the phenomenon of shared sacred space is not restricted to the Umayyad period. Yet, it is remarkable how frequently and

widespread this first Muslim dynasty promoted the sharing the sacred place. Further examples have shown that the policy of adaptation and appropriation of cultic elements and spatial dimensions was common in Syria already before the rise of Islam. Put into the historical context of the seventh century, the adaptation policy of the Umayyads demonstrates the transitional period of the caliphate; it expresses the diverse nature of the Syrian society in the first decades after the Muslim conquest. The transitional period came to end with the policies of the Umayyads 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd, who promoted a policy of centralizing the Islamic state and creating a world-dominant power.

Apart from the phenomenon of the shared sanctuary, the term transitional phase was also used in this thesis in order to define the period during which the Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Sassanid coinage was used. The Arab-Byzantine coins were produced in gold and were based on Byzantine models. The most well-known of these was referred to as "standing caliph" coinage. It carried the standing portrait of 'Abd al-Malik, which closely resembled the Byzantine model of Justinian II. The mixed-type of coins carried the *Shadaha*, the Muslim profession of faith, while still being artistically modeled on Byzantine patterns. The transitional phase in the monetary system ended with 'Abd al-Malik's coinage reform in 696 and 697. This marked the beginning of aniconic, purely Arabic epigraphic coins. The coinage reform signified a significant break with the past. In this thesis, the coinage reform is compared with the construction of the Great Mosque of Damascus: both innovations emerged as a result of the transitional period and both cases show the Umayyad policy of adaptation and appropriation.

The thesis provides further examples of the adaptation of Byzantine models by the Umayyads and the realization of these models in Umayyad policies. These models were adapted in order to demonstrate the political agenda of the Umayyad caliphate. Another example

discussed in thesis is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The mosaics of the Dome of the Rock and its structure utilized/made use of Byzantine motifs and forms, while redefining their meaning. In essence, the creation of the Dome was an expression of Umayyad imperial power, which was (above all) aimed at opposing the rival Byzantines.

This agenda can be brought out from a number of examples, such as the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, which are appropriation of Byzantine models that were used in support of Umayyad claims of artistic but also political supremacy. The architectural structure of the building might also have been inspired by Byzantine archetypes. Moreover, the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock contain polemical messages that negate the main tenets of the Christian faith. The thesis discusses Byzantine models of visual expression as they were implemented in the Mosque of Damascus, such as the mosaics and the carved decorations (*al-karma*). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the similar planning of Damascus and Constantinople as well as the layout of the symbolic buildings were attempts to relate Damascus to the capital of the Byzantine Empire and to emulate it.

Finally, the thesis argues that the later Umayyad policies of the adaptation, appropriation and sharing, , led to reforms as well as innovation. The gradual adaptation of Byzantine models and prototypes by the Umayyads was later implemented as a part of imperial projection of Umayyad power. In addition to proclamations of Umayyad imperial and world-dominating power, these adapted models were also meant to oppose the rivaling Byzantine Empire. ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd took a number of steps to strengthen and centralize the caliphate which was realized, above all, by means of addressing their domestic and foreign enemies through the adaptation and gradual appropriation of sacred spaces, artistic and political expressions of

legitimacy as well as of economic and administrative policies. The construction of the Umayyad

Mosque by al-Walīd can be considered the culmination of this program.

APPENDIX

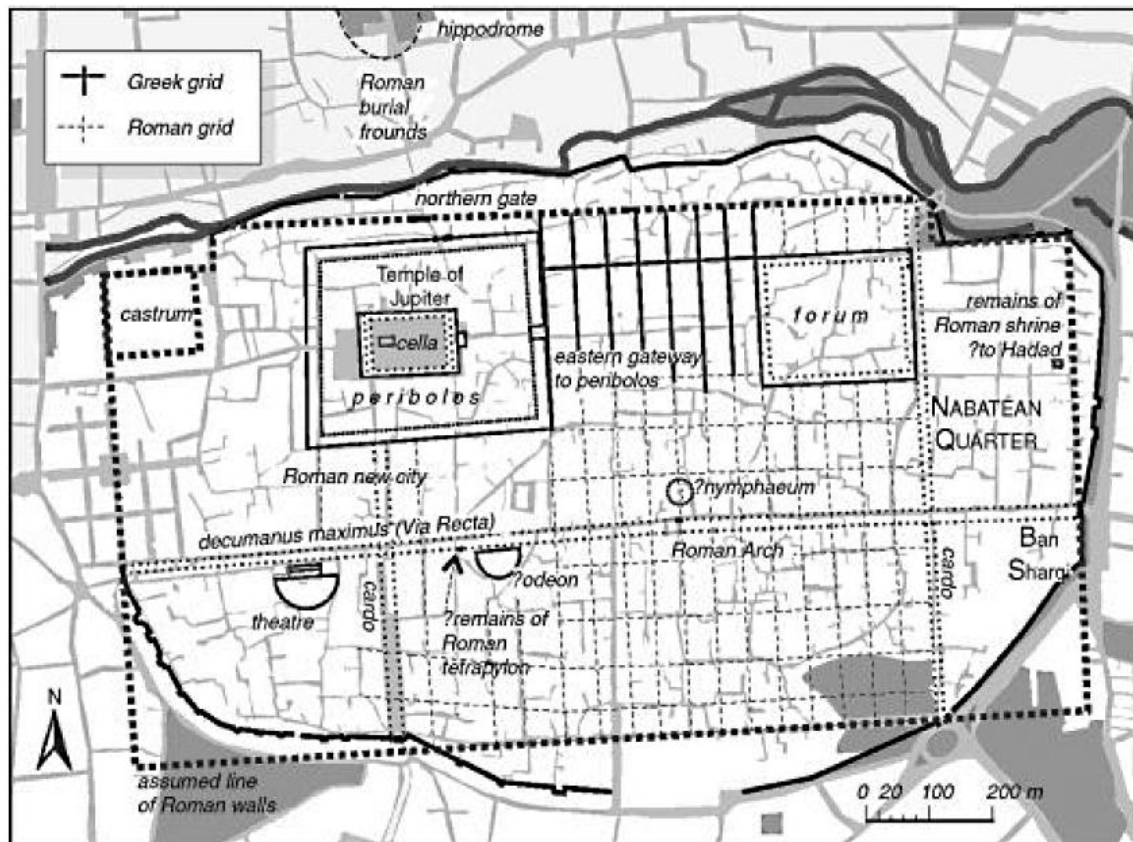## Figures:

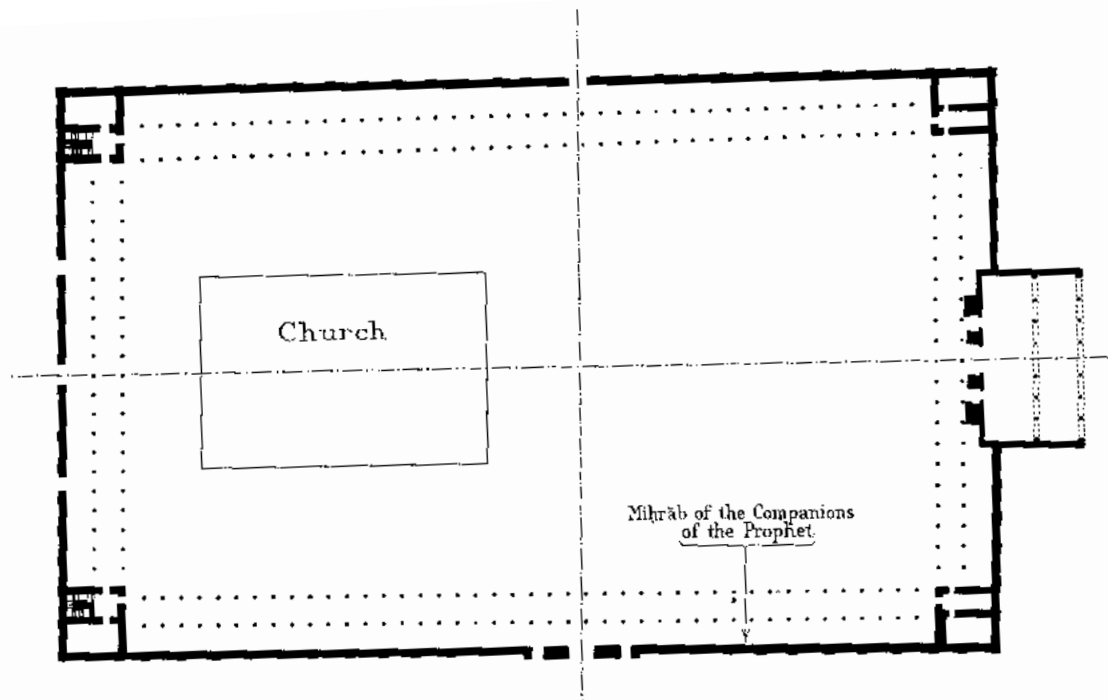**Fig. 1. The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus**

Fig. 2. The plan of Greek-Roman Damascus

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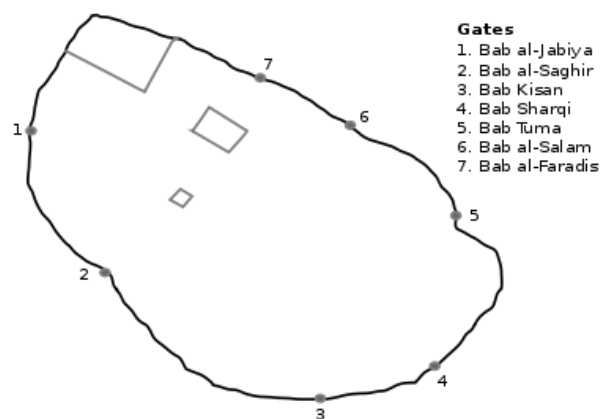**Fig. 4. Shared Temenos in Damascus between 635-705**

Gates
1. Bab al-Jabiya
2. Bab al-Saghir
3. Bab Kisan
4. Bab Sharqi
5. Bab Tuma
6. Bab al-Salam
7. Bab al-Faradis

Fig. 3. The gates of Damascus
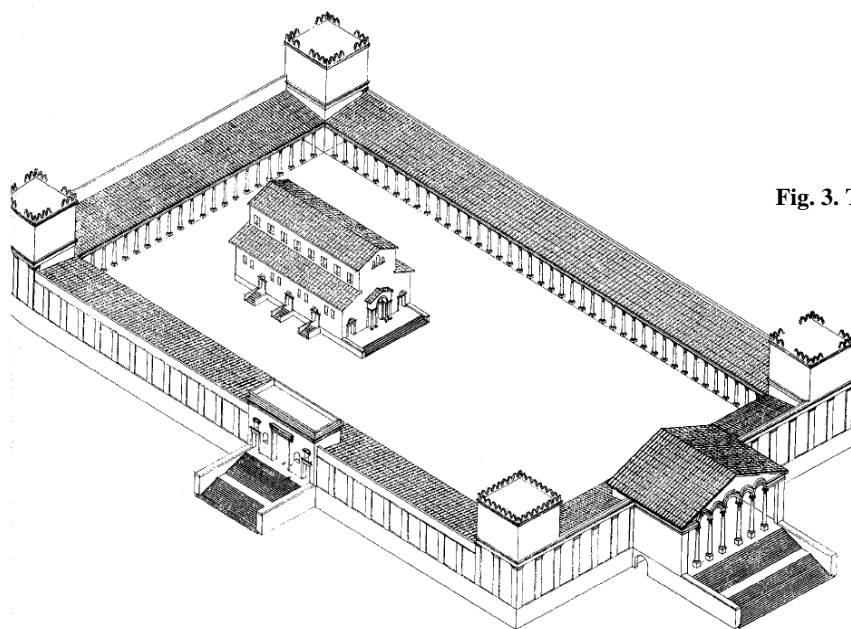
Fig. 5. The Temenos of Damascus before the Arab conquest
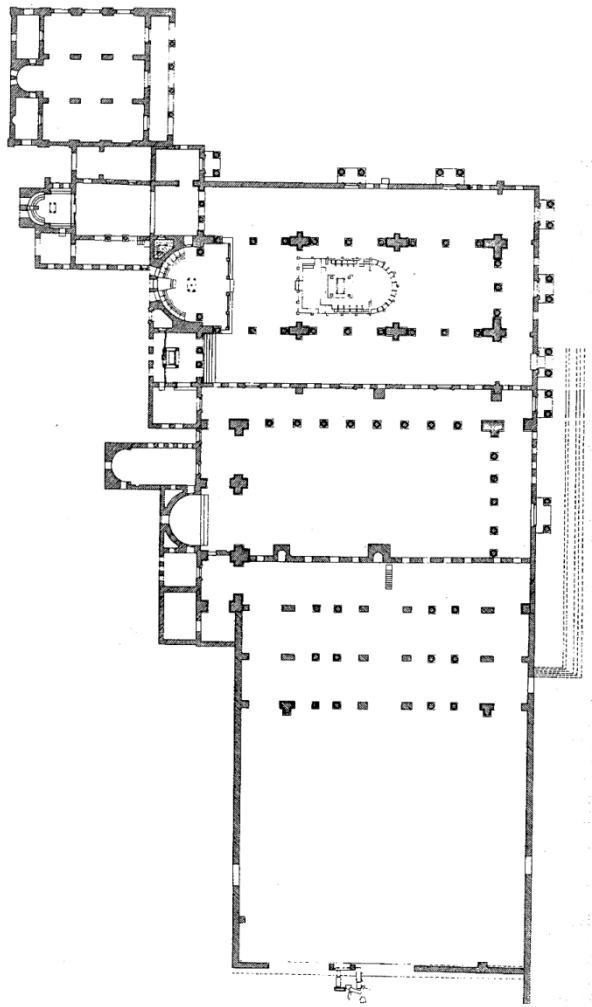
Fig. 6. The Basilica church and the mosque in Rusafa

AL-ḤARAM AL-SHARIF

Dome of the Rock

Al-Aqṣā
Mosque

Solomon's
Stables

Fig. 7. Ḥaram al-Sharīf / the Temple Mount in Jerusalem

Tomb of
Sallaheddine

Tower of the Bride   Bab al-Amara

ablutions
fountian

"Dome of
the Clocks"

Treasury

Bab
al-Barid

Courtyard

Bab
Jairun

ablutions
hall

Prayer Hall

transept

St. John
the Babtist

Mirhab

Tower of
Qait Bey

Bab al-Ziadeh

Tower
of Jesus
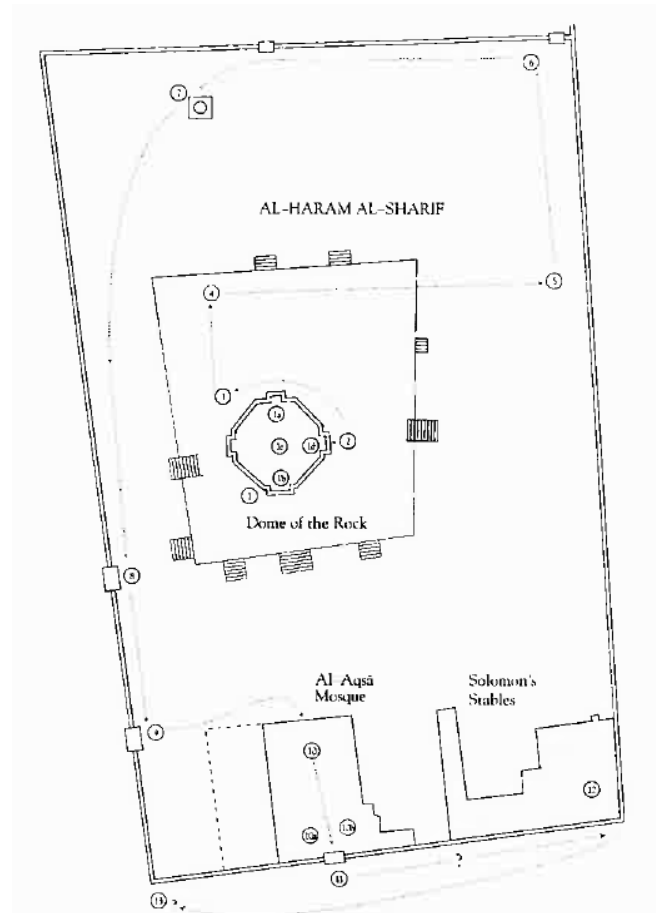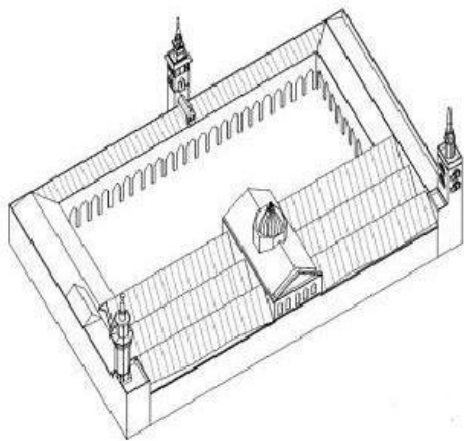
Fig. 8. The plan of the Mosque of Damascus
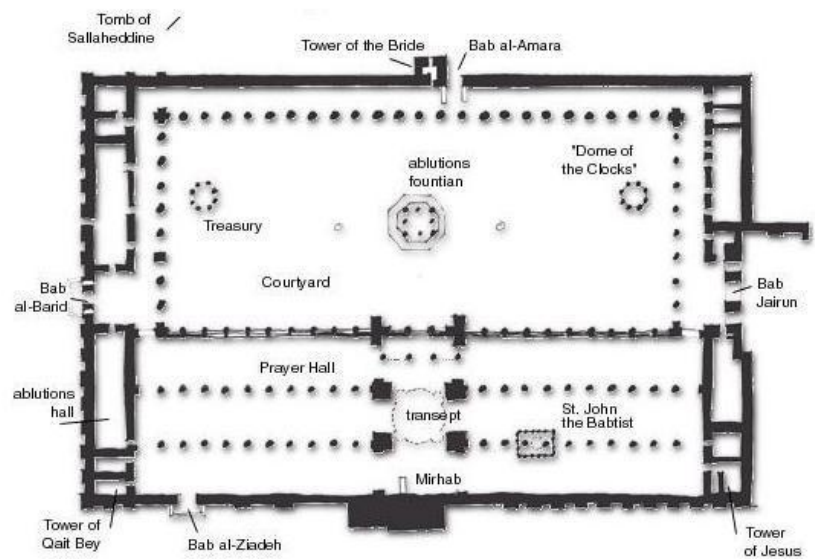
Fig. 9. 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān (685-705), Solidus, Damascus (without specification of the mint), 691-692

Fig. 10. Heraklius (610-641) with his sons Heraklius Constantin and Heraklonas (632-641), Solidus, Constantinople, 636/7

Fig. 11. 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zubayr, Drachm, Darabjird-Jahrum, 692

Fig. 12. Standing Caliph, Dinar (no mint), struck in Damascus, 696-697

Fig. 13. Miḥrāb and 'Anaza, Drachm (no mint or date), Damascus, 694-695? – 696-697?

Fig. 14. Arab-Sassanian drachm Bishapur, 656-657

Fig. 15. Umayyad Dinar, Damascus, 711-712
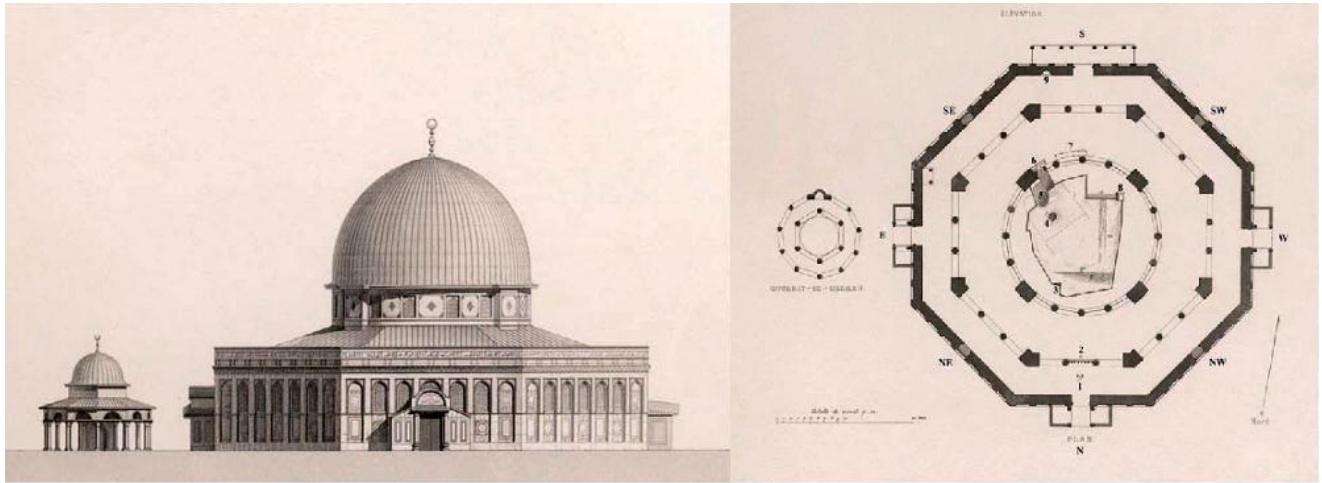
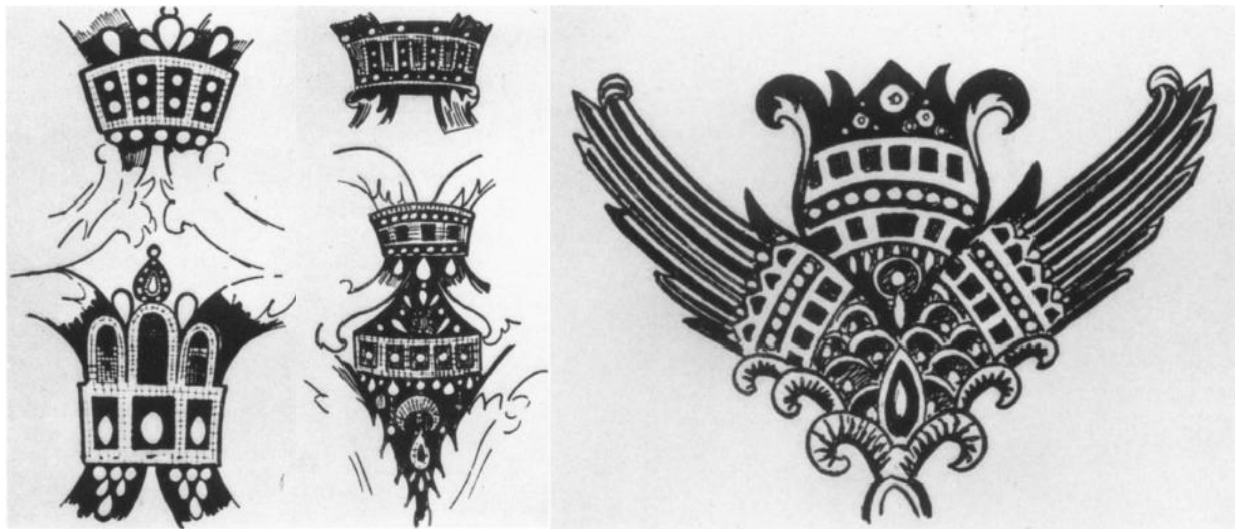**Fig. 16. The Dome of the Rock**

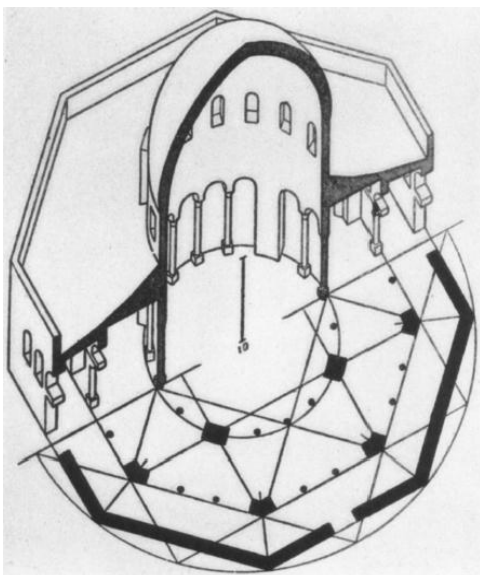**Fig. 17. Details of the mosaic of the Dome of the Rock**

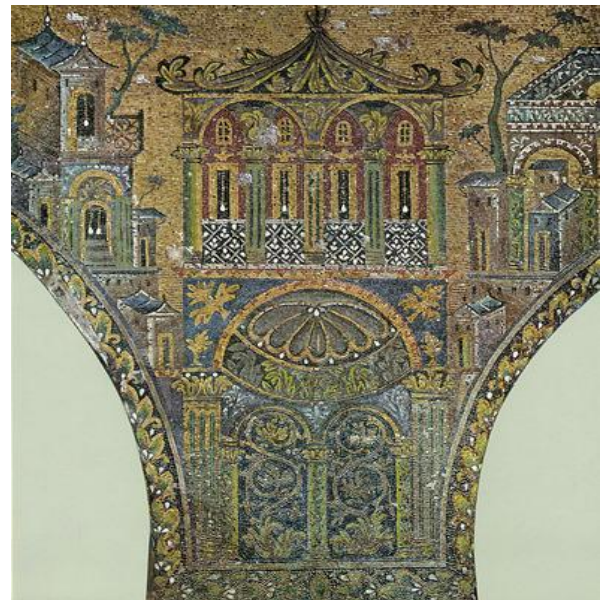**Fig. 18. The Dome of the Rock: Plan and Elevation**
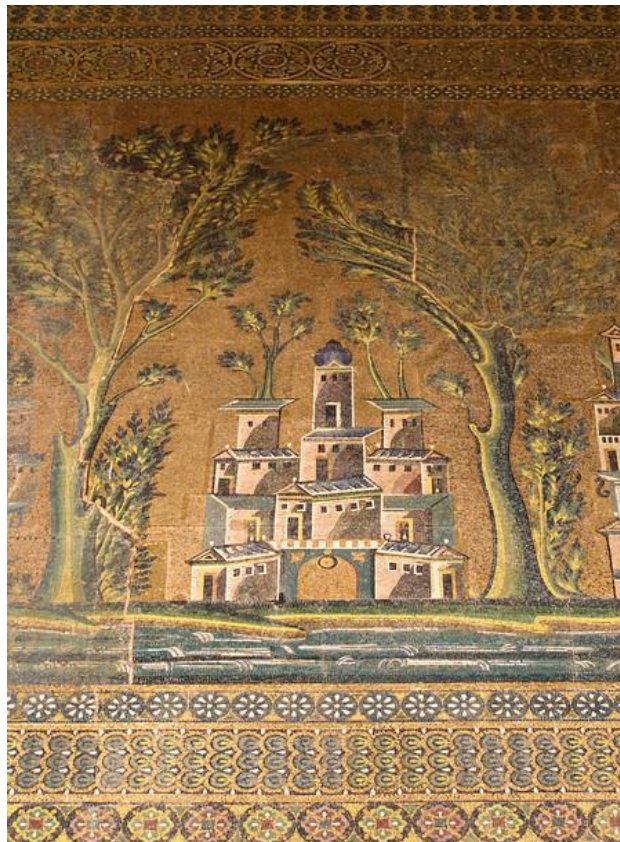

Fig. 19. The mosaics of the mosque of Damascus

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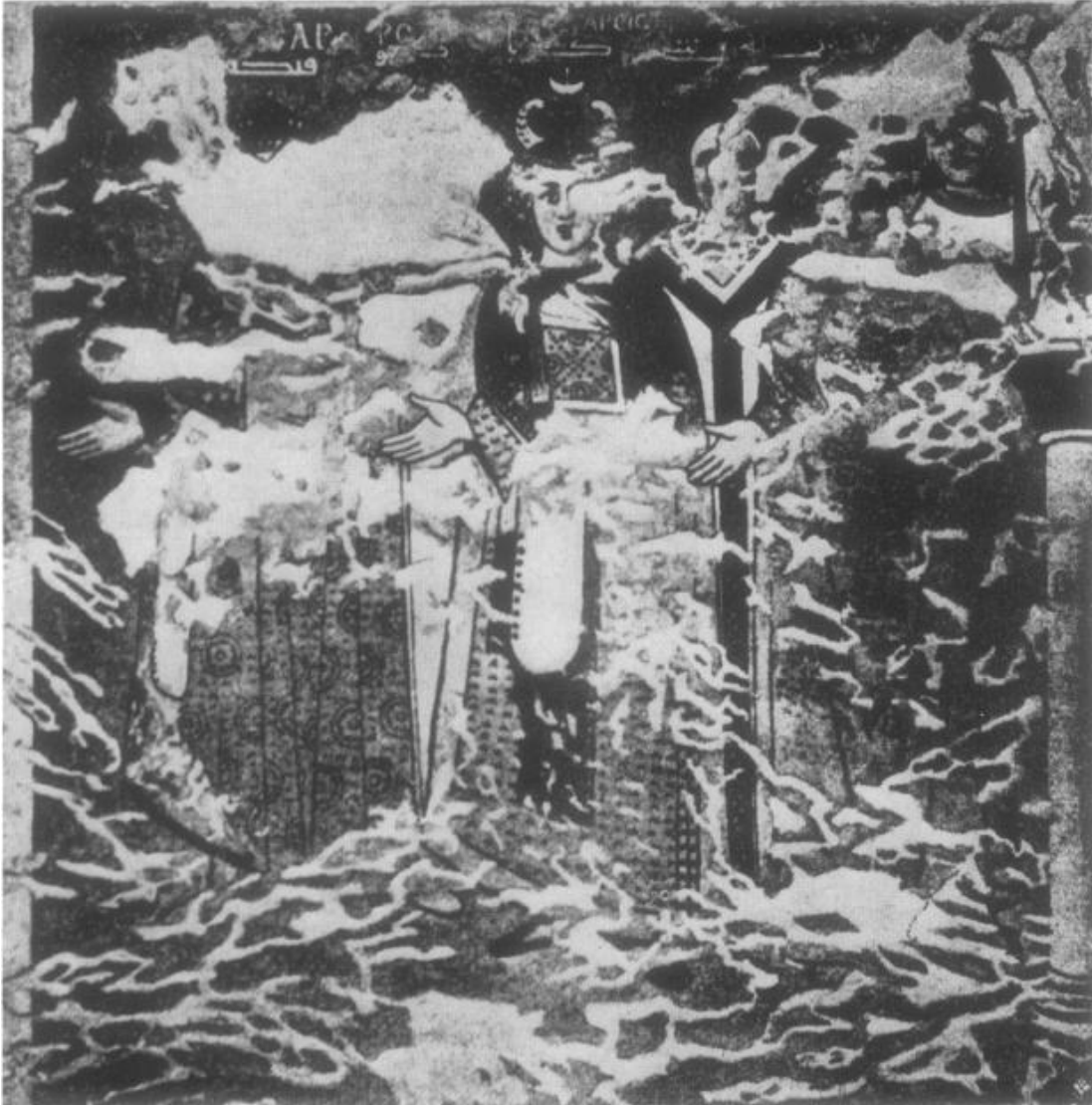**Fig. 20. The mosaics of the mosque of Damascus**

Fig. 21. Quṣayr al-'Amra. Fresco of the family of kings

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