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With a special focus on the human sculpture in the round

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1. Introduction

My affinity for flying and for traveling has taken me accross numerous parts of the world. Rather going to tropical places, for the sake of the abundance of fruit, sun, flowers, birds, maritime habitat and life in general I found the desert has this richness, I am not talking about the oil, too, in another way, not so obvious at the first glance. The variety of colour, landscape and wildlife is wide in the desert, the picture the eye catches changes quickly. Man made forms of Arabian art show a very own character, which was new and therefore interesting to my 'Western eye' at the first glance. In studying the forms of architecture and art I got the chance to meet people who live in the Arabian countries, the warmth of the heart I was bestowed upon and the conversation during the friendly receptions let me understand better what the ideas behind the art are.
Christiane Kothe, who was teaching Islamic art in Vienna in the winter term of 2009, inspired me to find out more about the Umayyad Desert Castles. In the course of my research I got fascinated particularly by the human sculpture in the round found at the excavation site of the eighth century palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar. Professor Ebba Koch kindly agreed to accept me as a member of her Privatissimum (Diploma- and PHD circle). So I started off visiting the excavation site of Khirbet al-Majfar a few kilometres to the North of Jericho, in present-day Palestine and examined the sculptures which are housed in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem. I concentrated on the figure of the Caliph and the female sculptures in the round. The figure of the Caliph is fully dressed whereas the female sculptures do only wear a skirt. I drew some of them and realized that they show distinct features on the surface, but follow general principles in posture and adornment. The static posture of both, the Caliph and the female figures is determined by frontality and centrality. But the adornment of the Caliph seems to follow completely different principles than the one of the female figures. The purpose of my research is to find out more about these principles that determined the formation of the sculptures in the round at Khirbet al-Mafjar which are dating from the first half of the eighth century CE. This early period of Islamic art has been in the centre of research recently but there are numerous questions that remain. One of them certainly is the meaning of the sculptures in the round from Khirbet al-Mafjar. The method I choose in answering this question is a visual approach based on an examination of literary sources describing the circumstances under which the sculptures were formed. In the Arab world trade has always played a significant role. Along with commercial goods, ideas and objects of art traveled long distances. So I will follow, after describing the geographic, political and spiritual environment, the trade routes to the east and to the west of the Umayyad Empire to see if there had been sculptures showing similarities to the ones from Khirbet al-Mafjar and the message they convey.

The Umayyads – the first dynasty (661-750 CE) in the course of the Islamic Expansion started by Mohammed (about 570-632 CE), a Meccan tradesman, continued by the first four Caliphs[1] till the year 661 CE, the end of the first Islamic Civil War and the beginning of the Umayyad Caliphate – and their use of sculpture in the round in the first half of the 8th

[1] 'The Caliph (Arabic: خليفة ḫalīfah/khalīfah) is the head of state in a Caliphate, and the title for the ruler of the Islamic Ummah, an Islamic community ruled by the Shari'ah. The word derives from the Arabic خ ل ي ف ة Khalīfah, which means 'successor' or 'representative'. Following Muhammad's death in 632, the early leaders of the Muslim nation were called *Khalifat Rasul Allah*, the political successors to the messenger of God (referring to Muhammad).' Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliph

century CE, especially female depictions, are the subject of the following analysis. The partialities of the Umayyad Caliphs, particularly Caliph al-Walid II's, and the impact of these tastes on the decoration of the desert palaces will be examined as well as female depictions along the trade routes.

The Umayyad caliphs

Umayyah
Banū Umayya, 'Sons of Umayya'

	Abu 'l-'As		Harb
	Al-Hakam		Abu Sufyan
	4. Marwan I		**1. Mu'awiyah I**
			2. Yazid I
Muhammad	**5.'Abd al-Malik**	'Abd al-'Aziz	
14. Marwan II		**8. 'Umar II**	**3. Mu'awiyah II**
6. Al-Walid I	**7. Sulayman**	**9. Yazid II**	**<u>10. Hisham</u>**
11. Yazid III	**13. Ibrahim**	**<u>11. Al-Walid II</u> (r.743-744 CE)**	**(r.724-743 CE)**
Mu'awiyah			
			Umayyads of Spain

(modified table, source: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983, p.XV)

The Palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar,[2] or Hisham's Palace - as it is called by local people in Jericho - is dated around the reign of the Caliphs Hisham (r. 724-743 CE) and al-Walid II. (r. 743-744 CE), toward the end of the Umayyad Caliphate in Syria[3].

When I visited the site in 2010 some questions arose, why are the ruins of al-Mafjar called Hisham's Palace at the place of origin, whereas we find the expression Khirbet al-Mafjar frequently in the rest of the world and I asked myself who the builder of the palace was, was it al-Walid II or Hisham, maybe both?

R.W. Hamilton explains in his excavation report as follows: 'During the excavation of 1936-7, as related by Mr. Baramki in Q.D.A.P.[4] viii, p.53, there was discovered, in a context which seemed contemporary with the actual construction of the palace, a small broken slab of white marble on which a scribe, named 'Ubayd Allah, of quite humble attainments, had indicted in ink a loyal message to the Caliph Hisham.
The message itself was of no significance and was in any case incomplete, a mere fragment. But for the chronology of the palace it is of first-rate interest. For we may safely assume that in such a context no other sovereign would have been named than the reigning one; and we may conclude that the palace was under construction between the years A.D. 724 and 743,

[2] 'The spelling is that adopted for the *Schedule of Historical Sites and Monuments*, published by the Department of Antiquities in 1945.', Hamilton, 1959, p.I
[3] The Umayyad Abd ar-Rahman I survived the Battle of the Zab in 750 where nearly all members of the Umayyad familiy were killed. He managed to escape and established a kingdom in Al-Andalus.
[4] Quaterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine.

when Hisham was Caliph. We cannot, I think, infer any more than that; in particular it would not be permissible on the strength of that graffito, or of others like it, to insist that Hisham himself was the owner or the builder of the palace.' [5]

Hamilton also mentions the statement of Theophanes[6], who tells us that Hisham built palaces and irrigation systems. We definitely know from inscriptions found at the excavation sites of Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi that Hisham was the awarding authority. But we do not have such a prove for Khirbet al-Mafjar and it might be wrong to ascribe Khirbet al-Mafjar to Hisham on account of the 'parsimony attributed to Hisham by Arabic historians' in contrast to the 'extravagance in the architecture and ornament of the bath', as mentioned by Hamilton.[7] Al-Walid II has been governor of the region, and would fit, regarding his extravagant taste and temperament, much better into the role of the builder owner. Creswell writes of the 'dissolute and extravagant Walid II'.[8]
There does not seem to be a final answer to the question who the builder of the palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar was up to now, no sources have been found yet that could give us more information in this regard.
Donald Whitcomb gives an answer to my first question: 'The site is anepigraphic, without inscriptions except for a number of ostraca in Arabic. Two of these scraps of marble provide a clue with the name of the Caliph Hisham. Thus, the site became Qasr Hisham (Hisham's palace) for Baramki and indeed this remains the popular name in Palestine until today'.[9]

Still, there is an extensive discussion taking place about how Islamic Art is to be defined. What can be taken as decisive criteria, is it religion, the Arabic language or geographic boundaries, countries where we can find either religion or Arabic language or both?

This question is of relevance to the topic of my research since the Umayyad period is a time of adaption and transformation of the arts.

Terry Allen examines the development of the arabesque and the beveled style and argues that 'early Islamic art is still a branch of the art of Late Antiquity, coordinate in its aesthetic logic with Byzantine art and with Western medieval art from the Merovingians to the Gothic age'[10].
The scope within this context is wider though. In order to learn more about the human sculpture in the round a comprehensive approach will be chosen.
The influence of the mentioned art of Late Antiquity is obvious in many forms - see the mosaic floor of the bath at Khirbet al-Mafjar, the elements of the capitals, the stucco and even the rondos with the heads follow earlier examples. A striking similarity can be viewed

[5] Hamilton 1959, pp. 7, 44.
[6] Theophanes (lived around 758 - 818 CE) was a Byzantine Chronicler whose writings are an important source also for the early Islamic time, he defended the veneration of icons in the Council of Nicaea in 787. Hamilton, 1959, p. 7.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Creswell 1932, Part two, p.1: 'We have seen that Hisham reigned nineteen years and died 2 or 6 Rabi'II, 125 (2nd or 6th Feb. 743). He was succeeded by the dissolute and extravagant Walid II to whom I attribute Mshatta and Qasr at-Tuba. His abandoned life, and the very great indignation aroused by his treatment of Khalid al-Qasri, resulted in his cousin Yazid (son of Walid I) raising a rebellion'.
[9] http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/project/overview.
[10] Allen 1989, p. 209.

in the stucco cap of the diwan's dome and a philae from the Rogozen treasure, unearthed in Bulgaria, (figs. 8b and 8c).
Allen notes: 'No development in material culture is entirely without precedent'.[11]
Concerning the human figures there are clear indications of not only Sasanian, Byzantine, Coptic and Western medieval art, Asian Art seems to be of significant relevance.
Mehmet Aga-Oglu's view establishes an extended horizon, he sees Islamic civilization as an 'integral part of the mediaeval oriental world. Without knowledge of that world in its entirety, it is impossible to comprehend manifold factors operative in the formation of Islamic art, as it is impossible to understand Islam as a religious and social institution without knowledge of preceding religious systems. Survival of ancient oriental civilization, Iran with its Zoroastrian past, the Hellenistic legacy, Judaic and Christian ideals, Indian-Buddhistic contributions, Central Asian elements, and Far Eastern modes must be taken into consideration if the true character of Islamic art is sought'.[12]

Only a few people will be capable of knowing 'the mediaeval oriental world in its entirety' and thus I will not try to find an ultimate answer - as there are no such answers in the process of continuity - to the question of formation of Islamic art at this point, but will stress a few remarks by advanced scholars and follow the track along the trade routes, some of them are also known as 'Silk Route' in order to learn more about the circumstances under which the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar and its elaborate sculpture, especially the human figures, were created.
Thus I agree with Mehmet Aga-Oglu's approach of considering a wide range of influences, trade has been far reaching for centuries and not only goods in materialized form traveled along the trade routes but also ideas, which adapted their very characteristic form in the places they were finally materialised. With human kind cultural exchange seems to be a never ending process.
Other relevant topics are the political and social environment, the natural habitat around the palace, which is located to the north of Jericho in the Jordan Valley, and the spiritual situation generating that particular kind of architecture and sculpture.

[11] Allen 1989, p.210.
[12] Aga-Oglu 1954, p.175.

2. Research

Research is based largely on archaeology. For this reason excerpts of the excavation report by Hamilton will be cited for better understanding and to convey an immediate impression. Relevant research is grouped into several topics, the following closely related fields are presented at this point.

2.1 The Umayyad desert castles (qasr, pl: qusur in Arabic[13])

As far as the Umayyad desert castles in general are concerned the historian Heinz Gaube reports that, 'the Umayyad Desert Castles were, until the 1930's thought to be country-residences or pleasure-seats of the Umayyads, where the caliph and the members of his household lived a life of princely pleasures in the fresh air of the desert, far away from the cities' [14].
This assumption is based on views of 19th century travelers, eager to explore the palaces in the desert. They are often called 'Orientalists'. One of them, the Belgian-born Jesuit and 'Orientalist' Henri Lammens (1862-1937), noticed a longing for the life in the desert of the Umayyad princes. Anna Ballian interprets his approach as follows: 'In his opinion it was a quasi-atavistic yearning for the desert that led the first caliphs to abandon the cities for the freedom of the boundless desert, where they built the grand villas whose fortified appearance inspired the name 'castles in the desert.'[15]
Robert W. Hamilton had the following vision: 'A similar enclosure wall, identical in construction with the wall at Qasr al-Hayr, existed at the western site of the same name. At both places the lands enclosed were partly irrigated, and served no doubt as gardens or parks for the victualling or pleasure of the owners of palaces similar to ours (Khirbet al-Mafjar). There is every reason to assume that the enclosure Khirbat al-Mafjar was designed for the same purpose; partly irrigated and partly, perhaps, a grazing ground or covert for domestic animals of game.'[16]
The French archaeologist Jean Sauvaget (1901-1950) interpreted the Umayyad desert castles as a combination of latifundium and villa rustica, as landed estates in the Roman tradition.[17]
He opposed the theory of the longing for the life in the desert and the pleasure seat interpretation. Gaube describes as follows: 'Sauvaget, who based his arguments on about 30 buildings in the Syro-Jordanian desert considered by him to be of Umayyad origin, came to the conclusion that the desert castles were centers of huge demesnes, through which the Umayyads had inaugurated a systematic agrarian colonization of Syria.'[18]

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[13] 'In Arabic the desert castles are called qasr (pl: qusur), a word that can also refer to a large estate, a smaller settlement, an agricultural compound, a bathhouse, of an administrative center.'Ballian 2012, p. 200.
[14] Gaube 2011, p. 94.
[15] Ballian 2012, p. 201.
[16] Hamilton 1959, p. 6.
[17] Ballian 2012, p. 201.
[18] Gaube 2011, p. 94.

Rami G. Khouri cites Dr. Gazi Bisheh[19] who suggests that the 'desert complexes may have been designed to maintain close contacts with the tribes of the Jordanian desert […] who were fervent supporters of the Damascus - based Umayyads' [20].

I agree with Gaube when he further states that Sauvaget's theory does not exclude entertainment and the pleasures of princely and courtly life in the desert: 'Both interpretations are not as contradictory as Sauvaget believed. They are - at least as far as a certain number of these buildings are concerned - equally valid'[21].
Alois Musil (1868 -1944) describes in his report on Qusayr 'Amra, dating from 1902, a vivid scenery of Umayyad princely life.[22]
Oleg Grabar (1929-2011) chose Sauvaget's theory as the basis of his interpretation[23] and as we will see, the results of recent research are consistent with their assumption. Grabar is convinced that Khirbet al-Mafjar and Khirbet al-Minyah 'were surrounded by agricultural exploitations in the past just as they are today'.[24]

[19] Dr. Ghazi Bisheh who is an archaeologist and former director of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, has been studying Jordan's desert castles for more than a decade. http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=1608.
[20] Khouri 1990, p. 32.
[21] Gaube 2011, p. 94.
[22] Musil 1902.
[23] See also Khouri 1990, p. 32.
[24] Grabar 1963, p. 10.

2.2 The Palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar and the 'Jericho Mafjar Project'

Regarding the palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar the earliest documented excavation took place in the 19th century on behalf of the Palestinian Exploration Fund.[25] In the 20th century CE Baramiki and R.W. Hamilton carried on the excavation work in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities in Palestine, which was in charge of the protection of the monuments in Palestine during the British Mandate. The results of research were published in the journal called 'Quaterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine (Q.D.A.P.)'. There exists a short description of the site by Baramki and an elaborate monograph by Hamilton from the end of the 1950s which still forms the basis of research according to Donald Whitcomb who is part of the excavation team there now: 'This monograph, and Creswell's repetition of its information, remain the scholarly basis for the fame of these monuments.'[26]

The site is currently examined by 'The Jericho Mafjar Project' which is a Palestinian-American joint venture with 'the general goal of being an integrated archaeological reassessment of the original excavations and architectural studies by Baramki and Hamilton with new archaeological research, based on excavations by Hamdan Taha and studies by Donald Whitcomb'[27].

The results of the research by the end of 2012 show that the northern part - the north gate has been excavated in 2011 - was an integral part of the palace, (fig. 4). This northern part includes a grape press and stables as well as a residential building and an Abbasid house. Donald Whitcomb puts it as follows: 'One may consider the Northern Area to have been an agricultural estate (day'a) during the Umayyad and Abbasid historical periods, the economic foundation for support of the palace complex. Not only is the size of Qasr Hisham now twice as large, but it now has two different parts: the elite palace, mosque, and bath, and, on the other hand, a complex agricultural estate. This line of research opens a dramatically new and more nuanced understanding of early Islamic settlement.'[28]
This is, concerning the agricultural aspect, in line with Sauvaget's theory mentioned above.

[25] Hamilton 1959, p. 1.
[26] Whitcomb 2013, http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Whitcomb 2013, http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/project/2012-results.

2.3 The sculpture in the round from Khirbet al-Mafjar

My research is focused on the female sculpture in the round and the statue of the Caliph found at the excavation site by Baramki and Hamilton.
The subject has been marginally discussed by several scholars. I mention but a few who recently engaged in the field.

Eva Baer wrote an article on 'The Human Figure in Early Islamic Art' in 1999 which covers an extended period of time from the Umayyad period to the 16th century. Depictions of human sculptures in various regions are briefly discussed.[29]

Rina Talgam presents in her dissertation on the 'Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration'[30] a systematization of styles by visually classifying three 'stylistic groups' in Umayyad sculpture and decoration. Talgam sees a preference of Sasanian motifs over Byzantine symbols and suggests a Coptic influence in the execution of the stylistic elements.[31] She states at one point: 'Depictions of human figures have not yet been studied stylistically in a satisfactory manner, although they have great scientific potential'.[32]

Myriam Rosen-Ayalon has written an article about the 'Depictions of female in the earliest phase of Islam' in which she states that they 'are unique, for there is nothing even remotely comparable in later Islamic society'[33]. Rosen-Ayalon speaks of a symbiosis occuring in the early Islamic period: 'The Umayyad depictions of women remain close to their artistic sources, but they appear in entirely different contexts.[34] Who could have served as the models for these female depictions in the Umayyad period? There is not even a clue.'[35]

There have not been any new finds of sculpture since the excavation by Hamilton, according to the information Donald Whitcomb provided me with, he wrote on the 26th of July 2012 the following email to me:
'I appreciate your interest in Khirbet al-Mafjar. As you can see from our website, we have many new discoveries but no new human figures. The source of these figures remains a puzzle and I hope you find some new ideas. Hamilton is the best source of photos but his interpretation seems wrong to me. I attach an article by Soucek, which I find more interesting.'
The article will be mentioned later on, in connection with the owner of the palace.

[29] Baer 1999.
[30] Talgam 2004.
[31] Talgam 2004, p. 89.
[32] Talgam 2004, p. 79.
[33] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 306.
[34] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 304.
[35] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 300.

3. Khirbet al-Mafjar and the Umayyads in the second quarter of the 8th century CE

'Theophanes describes Hisham's (r. 724-743 CE) accession, reign and death. He achieved several successes through the commanders of the army sent by him against Asia Minor by land and sea. In the western regions he accomplished almost nothing of note.
In the 23rd year of the rule of Leo[36], 125 of the Arabs (743 CE), Walid the Rair[37] (Alulit pulcher), commander of the faithful (amir almuminim, this is the earliest occurrence of this term in a non-Muslim text) was raised by all upon the throne in the required place. It remained his for a year and three quarters, whereupon the kingdom was snatched away by Yazid (Izit) without delay.'[38]

3.1. Literary sources

The discussion about literary sources concerning the Umayyads is very often determined by looking at literature dating from the Abbasid period, and is by nature considered to be hostile. Hillenbrand refers to the post-Umayyad literary sources and considers them 'bitterly hostile'.[39] A more recent article is also determined by this idea: 'The Arabic sources that mention the qusur are all late, written during the caliphate of the Umayyads' enemies and successors, the Abbasids, who were trying to undermine and tarnish their predecessors' reputation in every possible way. The hard-drinking, womanizing, playboy-poet and bon viveur al-Walid II and his dolce vita in richly decorated qusur are often mentioned in Abbasid literature.'[40]
Probably not all literary sources from the Abbasid era that mention the Umayyads are 'hostile'. Hillenbrand further argues that the illustration of court life in the Kitab al-Aghani (or 'Book of Songs' by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, written around 960 CE) 'needs to be understood in view of the respective architecture'.[41] I agree with Hillenbrand in this respect - it is essential to pursue a combined research as archaeological finds are plenty.

On the one hand, it is not only literary figures from post-Umayyad times who focus on Umayyad data as there are e.g. the multitalented Syrian priest Saint John of Damascus (645 – 749 CE)[42], the Greek scholar Theophilus of Edessa (695–785 CE), Hisham's court poets al-Farazdaq (641-730 CE) and Jarir (650-729 CE), the royal poet al-Walid II and many more.

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[36] The Byzantine Emperor Leo III the Isaurian.
[37] Al-Walid II.
[38] Hoyland 1997, pp. 627, 628.
[39] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 1.
[40] Ballian 2012, p. 200.
[41] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 1.
[42] http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/305049/Saint-John-of-Damascus, lived in Damascus, his fields of interest and contribution included law, theology, philosophy, and music, he is said by some sources to have served as a Chief Administrator to the Muslim caliph of Damascus before his ordination. He is known for his strong defense of icons.

On the other hand, Peter Wandel[43] takes a completely different approach by emphasizing on the everlasting principle of beauty[44] which prevails in Arabian literature, as described by Doris Behrens-Abouseif in 'Beauty in Arabic Culture' [45].
Arab Poetry has been believed since Pre-Islamic times to be of transcendend value, still, based on a profound study of techniques. Poetry and the arts in general, in mastering the required technical skill combined with inspiration and talent, have ever been considered to be the right media to unveil feelings hidden deeply in the soul.[46] According to Ibn Tabataba (d. 934 CE) harmonious poetry 'touches the soul, deeper than magic and more fascinating than a song, feeling soft and mysterious as wine'.[47]

Finally, one must not forget that orality has played a significant role in Arab tradition from the beginning. Chase F. Robinson puts it as follows: 'Orality, put very crudely, suited the pre-Islamic Arabs of the Hijaz. Stored in one's head and delivered in the form of sound, poetry and other forms of oral communication are effortless to transport […] unlike history books that have to be banned, destroyed or otherwise suppressed, oral history is as dynamic as a society wants it to be.[48] Orality's highest register was apparently occupied by poetry, particularly the ode'[49].

The Umayyad poets in the era of Hisham (r. 724-743 CE) speak of the characteristics of the caliph and describe him as parsimonious character. Both, positive and negative habits are mentioned. He is said to have been a good, acquisitive tradesman, who owned vast estates and built far reaching irrigation systems.[50] Hamilton reports on the basis of al-Tabari's (838-923 CE) historical chronicle that, 'under Hisham the state became as rich as himself. It was related that from Khurasan there came to him, either as revenue or as spoils of war, treasure beyond computation'[51]. Theophilus of Edessa writes in his chronicle: 'Hisham ruled over the Arabs. He built palaces in every place, diverted the waters of the Euphrates above Callinicum (the Latin name of the Syrian city Al-Raqqah on the north bank of the Euphrates) for irrigation, created many plantations and estates, and his revenues exceeded the taxes which he received from the whole empire'.[52]
Hisham cared for his people in a correct, lawful manner and was concerned with religious matters.[53] The complicated relationship between Hisham and al-Walid II is a topic of Umayyad poetry as well.[54]

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[43] Dr. Peter Wandel wrote his dissertation on the palace of Mshatta, he is an archaeologist and researcher working on the topic of Islamic Art. He is head of educational resources at The David Collection in Copenhagen and expressed his view during a conversation on the Umayyads in Copenhagen in April 2012.
[44] Which is also true in the view of Reginald Le May regarding art in a global sense: 'In the East art is bound up with religion […]. The natural reason, forgotten in modern Europe, is that art and religion spring from the same source, the worship of beauty, truth and goodness, under whatever guise they may be found'. Le May, 1954, p. 95.
[45] Behrens-Abouseif 1999.
[46] Behrens-Abouseif 1999, p. 104.
[47] Ibid.; Necipoglu 2009, p. 125.
[48] Robinson 2003, p. 9.
[49] Robinson 2003, p. 8.
[50] Nadler 1990, p. 259.
[51] Hamilton 1988, p. 75.
[52] Hoyland 1997, p. 55.
[53] Nadler 1990, p. 262.
[54] Nadler 1990, p. 258.

Most of the poems about al-Walid II were composed by his relative Turay at-Taqafiyy. Al-Farazdaq devoted a few poems to al-Walid II pointing out the Caliph's largesse, praising the royal family and showing him as heir appearent.[55]

The Yemenite poets obviously abused al-Walid II on account of his order to kill the former governor of Iraq, Khalid al-Qasriyy, executed by the later Iraqi governor Yusuf Ibn Umar.[56] Al-Walid II obviously did not search long for compromises. He banned an Umayyad prince to the citadel in Amman (an Umayyad building is situated at the citadel) who returned to Damascus with the treasury from the citadel after the death of al-Walid II.[57]
Al-Tabari reports on the excesses of the Caliph, the love of wine and music and his sometimes violent nature.[58]

Heinz Gaube characterises the late Umayyads, probably keeping in mind the desert castles of Khirbet al-Mafjar and Mshatta, as competing with the 'proverbial splendor and luxury of the Sassanian Shahanshahs, erecting buildings appropriate to the successors of the Khosrous and suitable to kings of the same standing as the Byzantine emperor'.[59] And Richard Ettinghausen notes that the 'Umayyad caliphs had usurped not only the power of the Iranian rulers but their ceremonial trappings as well'.[60]

[55] Nadler 1990, p. 265.
[56] Nadler 1990, p. 266.
[57] Schick 2010, p. 107.
[58] Nadler 1990, p. 266.
[59] Gaube 2011, p. 108.
[60] Ettinghausen 1972, p. 1.

3.2 Environment

3.2.1 Geographical position

Khirbet al-Mafjar is located to the north of Jericho, on the northern bank of Wadi Nu`aymah which extends down from the nearby mountains to the Jordan, today's 'Westbank' belonging to Palestinian territories. Hamilton speaks of 'a number of springs, 'Ain as Sultan, two kilometers to the south-west of the palace; and the double springs of 'Ain an Nuway'imah and 'Ain ad Duyuk nearly 4 kilometers west-north-west. [...] About 700m north-west of the palace the waters were gathered in a reservoir or birkah, between which and the palace the fall of some 80 feet in the land was used to turn three or more water mills, one of these, known as tahunat al Mafjar, stood on the line of the modern road from Jericho to Beisan'.[61]
More recently Cornelis H.J. De Geus mentions that 'Jerusalem and Jericho are good examples of towns that were originally built near a strong spring. Jerusalem possesses a powerful and clear spring, the spring 'Gihon'. It produces up to 1200m³ of clear drinking water a day'.[62]

According to current research Jericho is the oldest city on earth.[63] The earliest traces of settlement are going back to the 10th Millennium before Christ. Around 7000 BCE Jericho has already been a town with stone walls and a moat. Its location to the west of the Jordan River in an extremely water-rich oasis, on one of the main caravan routes of antiquity, 36 km from Jerusalem, and 250 feet below sea level, allowed the control of the fords of the Jordan, and thus granted economic success. The residents had gained prosperity by trading in salt, sulphur, asphalt, and the sale of agricultural produce.

The Jordan River is still the most important freshwater resource in the area. The distribution of water extraction rights among neighboring countries has high potential for conflict.
The headwaters of the Jordan River originate in the area of Mount Hermon, which lies at the border between Syria, Lebanon and Israel. In the north the Jordan River flows along the Golan Heights, most of the southern Jordan River forms the border between Israel and Jordan. South of the Sea of Galilee the Jordan enters the Jordan Rift Valley and flows south-east of Jericho into the Dead Sea.
Even in the bible, the Jordan Valley is described as very fertile with lush flora and fauna. We read in the Book of Jeremiah: 'Behold, like a lion comes up out of the Jordan thicket of evergreen pastures'. (Jeremiah, 49:19)

For the period in question though, Jürgen Zangenberg observes - in his research of 'the region in the early Islamic era' - an increase in Chenopodiaceae, which are indicators for dry

[61] Hamilton 1959, p. 6.
[62] De Geus 2003, pp. 120, 121.
[63] http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/umay/hd_umay.htm.

conditions, as well as a dramatic drop in the sea level, caused mainly by decreased precipitation.[64]

Mark Antony gave the rich Jericho oasis to his lover, the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. She leased the city to Herod, who rebuilt it after her death to a luxurious cultural center with huge parks, artificial ponds, amphitheater and hippodrome. He established on both sides of the Wadi Kelt a winter palace of monumental size.[65] Jericho was, because of its mild climate, a favorite retreat of the Jerusalem population in winter.

Under the Umayyads Jericho served as district capital, which relied mainly on trade in indigo and sugar. In the Abbasid period, the city lost its importance. Saladin conquered the city in the 12th century CE and had the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar partially restored.

The land from the Jordan Rift Valley to the Dead Sea is a geological depression that is at high risk of earthquakes. The palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar was, without much doubt, hit by many earthquakes, devastating ones are said to have occurred in the years 746 CE and 749 CE. The construction has not been finished at the time of the destructive earthquake. Due to the strength of the earthquake the damage was considerable and could not be repaired till 750 CE, the year of the seizure of power by the Abbasids.

The landscape around Jericho is characterized by multiple rock formations. (fig.1) The availability of rock in all kinds of qualitiy has not been a prevailing argument regarding the use of building material for the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar (fig.2), as Hamilton observes: 'The extensive use of brick vaulting and of gypsum plaster, both materials better adapted to the mud or rubble architecture of alluvial lands than to the rocky landscape of Palestine, must be classified as foreign to local traditions of building'[66].

Concerning the land comprising the Umayyad desert castles and Umayyad realm various terms - 'Levant, Fertile Crescent, Transjordan and Hijaz' - are regularly employed. I will, but shortly, define the area they denote.

Cornelis H.J. de Geus states, 'I have indicated how difficult it is to choose a general accepted name for the region'.[67]

'Levant' defines an area that includes[68] Cyprus, Iraq, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

'Transjordan' is synonymous with what is today the 'Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan'.

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[64] Zangenberg 2009, p. 25.
[65] Georges Tchalenko provides a detailed study of the settlement pattern in the area. Tchalenko 1958.
[66] Hamilton 1959, p. 41.
[67] De Geus 2003, p. 6.
[68] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levant.

The definition of 'Fertile Crescent' refers to 'an ancient area of fertile soil and important rivers stretching in an arc from the Nile to the Tigris and Euphrates. It covers parts of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq'[69].

'Hijaz' denotes a region comprising the cities of Mecca and Medina in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia.

'Al-Jazirah' is an Arab word for 'Peninsula', e.g. 'shibh al-jazīrah al-'arabīyah', the 'Arabian Peninsula'.

[69] http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/babylonia/g/FertileCrescent.htm

3.2.2 Political situation

The three major empires at the time of Hisham and al-Walid II were the Tang dynasty in China, the Byzantine Empire and the Umayyad realm.
The long reign of the Byzantine Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (r. 717–741 CE) marked a period of stability in the Byzantine realm. He defeated the Arab armies at Constantinople in 718 CE and solidified the Western borders of the empire.[70]
With the Tang, having reached a climax of prosperity by the middle of the 8th century CE – also after a long period of stability granted by the reign of 43 years of the emperor Xuangzong (r. 713-756 CE) - a sophisticated court culture had been established in the Chinese empire.
Luce Boulnois provides the following information: 'The reign of Xuanzong is considered the peak of Tang civilization in all fields. At the high point of the dynasty, in 750, China was probably the greatest power in the world'.[71] Another statement by Holledge: 'The emperor presided over a brilliant, extravagant court, patronizing the greatest concentration of literary and artistic genius in Chinese history. Xuangzong's contemporaries included the paramount poets of China, Du Fu (Tu Fu, 712-770) and Li Bai (Li Po, 699-762) and the greatest of painters Wu Doazi (Wu Tao-tzu, 700-760)'.[72]
The Tang 'Agency of Palace Buildings' (Jingzuo Jian) e.g. managed a vast number of craftsmen (there were 34,850 registered) who served the empire.[73]

Another, more profane part of court culture, was the ceremonial consumption of wine, rice wine (ale) in this case. 'Custom dictated that the host of a drinking party supplies his guests with more than enough brew. In one case a prominent official of the early eighth century had a serpentine structure built for drinking that he called the Ale Grotto. On each of the bricks, some 50000, in the structure's floor he placed a bowl of ale to completely satisfy the thirst of his friends when they came to visit.'[74]

The Tang used silk and other textiles to establish a dress code which represented a hierarchy in the administrative system. Yellow was the colour of the emperors. Purple was reserved for the highest officials.[75]
Al-Walid II and Hisham wore fine 'yellow' silk garment as mentioned below, see p. 42.

The Arabian 'robes of honor', the 'Tiraz' (literally 'embroidered') were luxurious garments worn particularly by the Caliphs of the first Islamic dynasties. The textiles were embroidered with Arabic, respectively Persian inscriptions rendering the place of manufacture, good wishes, praises of Allah and name and date of the rulers. Their production had been strictly regulated. Many of them have been unearthed from tombs in Egypt.[76]

[70] Hatlie 2007, p. 258.
[71] Boulnois 2004, p. 255.
[72] Holledge 1984, p. 52.
[73] Guo 1998, pp. 1-13.
[74] Benn 2004, p. 143.
[75] Liu 1995, pp. 28, 29.
[76] Liu 1995, p. 28.

The existance of a developed Umayyad court culture in the era of Hisham and al-Walid II has been mentioned above in connection with the studies by Richard Ettinghausen and Heinz Gaube, see p. 15. Oleg Grabar devoted his dissertation to the topic.
The parallels concerning courtly pleasures and habits, like the emphathic consumption of wine are obvious and are by no means new or singular in the late antique world, as Sasanian courtly habits demonstrate.

In regions that formerly belonged to the Byzantine realm and succeedingly formed part of the Umayyad Caliphate, namely Syria, Palestine and Egypt, the gold dinar was in circulation.[77] In Iran and Irak, the former Persian Empire, the silver dirham was used.
The 'copper fils' was the third of the three denominations of coins in circulation in the Umayyad Empire.[78]
Gold stemmed from the Arabian Peninsula where the mines soon were exploited and from Africa, where the Umayyads followed the old African salt route to the West - from Sudan via Chad to the area where the Tinkisso River runs into the River Niger, in present-day Guinea. They mined the metal finally in Bambuk and Bure, on the upper reaches of the Niger.[79]

The legendary mines of King Solomon are said to have been situated in Arabia as well. Indeed, Gene W. Heck's study puts light on gold and silver mining activity in Arabia in ancient and early Islamic times: 'Radiocarbon datings of residual charcoal in slags from Mahd al-Dhahab suggest that in situ gold and silver mining and smelting activities were carried out approximately 3,000 years ago - in an era exactly corresponding to the reigns of biblical Kings David and Solomon (circa 1000 B.C. to 922 B.C.) and again from A.D. 430 to A.D. 830'[80]. Too, there exist a large number of contemporary literary sources reporting on an abundance of the precious metals on the Arabian Peninsula.[81]

The Arabic script, which sprouted in the early Islamic era, facilitated the work of the Umayyad administration.[82] The Arabic language has been introduced as single administrative language around 700 CE. Nevertheless, the Greek language was still widespread throughout the Umayyad Empire in the 8th century CE.[83]
Regarding the 'admission to high office' Robert Hoyland cites from Theophanes' Chronographia[84]: 'Administrative and medical professions were dominated by non-Muslims. At least in the first two or three centuries of Islam, one's religious persuasion was generally no bar'.[85]

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[77] The Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan (d. 705 CE) introduced the Umayyad Gold Dinar, large quantities were issued.
[78] Foss 1997, p. 95, 'The fundamental study of coins in the Umayyad period is that by Walker (1956), who first systematically organized the information about the Umayyad mints and their coin issues'.
[79] Haussig 1988, p. 104.
[80] Heck 1999, p. 381.
[81] Heck 1967, p. 367.
[82] Wilson 1988, p. 11.
[83] Palme 2012, p. 23.
[84] See also Theophanes' Chronographia, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1886), I, 430-31, as cited by Hoyland.
[85] Hoyland 2004, p. 12.

Oleg Grabar speaks of a 'tremendous growth of Christian sanctuaries and pilgrimage routes; a multitude of travelers and settlers in the Holy Land'[86] which is an indication of a brisk economy. Daniel J. Sahas stresses that in the times of the Umayyad empire monasticism 'was flourishing as a way of high spiritual and intellectual life in the Syro-Palestinian region'[87]. The Greek Orthodox monasteries of Mar Sabba, of St. Catherine's at Sinai and of Mar Hariton in the area of Jerusalem were educational and scholarly hubs. St. John of Damascus (676 – 749 CE) lived at the monastery of Mar Sabba which is located in the vicinity of Bethlehem and was founded in the 5th century CE.

Elisabeth Key Fowden describes the landscape of Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham) as 'monasteries and residences being the most conspicuous features in the steppe and desert as it stretches eastward from the densely populated coastal regions toward Mesopotamia'[88]. An incident in this context is reported by the historian Al-Baladhuri: 'Hisham fled from the plague and finally came to a monastery (dayr)'[89].
Not only monasteries were widespread beyond Palestine. Churches continued to be built in Transjordan during the first centuries of Islamic expansion, obviously throughout the seventh and eighth centuries. Leah Di Segni notes that, 'the list of ecclesiastical buildings erected or renovated in Transjordan during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods is forever growing'.[90]

At the opening speech of the conference, held in Amman in 1997, on the Madaba Map, which is a 6th century mosaic map forming part of the floor of the Byzantine church of St. George in Jordan, H.R.H. the Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal stresses the continuity between the Byzantine and Umayyad period, the Church of Saint George being one example that was 'used as a place of worship throughout the Umayyad period. In this respect Saint George's Church was not an exception, for I am told that the archaeological research in the last fifteen years has shown that no less than forty-six Byzantine churches in Jordan alone continued to be used as such well into the mid eighth-century and beyond, and no fewer than five churches were constructed and paved with colored mosaics in the Umayyad period. These discoveries show that the essence of Islam was distinguished by a broad liberal attitude and an openness of mind which shunned narrow sectarianism and religious bigotry'[91].

In the Umayyad realm conquests were taking place till the fall of the dynasty. Sindh, present-day North and North Western Pakistan, has been conquered between 664 and 712 CE. In 738 CE the Umayyad armies lost the Battle of Radjasthan against the Hindu kings of India.

The fall of the dynasty was caused by the caliphs Hisham and al-Walid II, according to Heinz Gaube. He criticizes them in their political decisions, as 'incompetent successors of Abdalmalik and Walid I that gave away what their predecessors had built up. […] The Umayyad caliphs who followed Walid I inherited such a stable state that they must have had the impression they did not need to do anything for its preservation. […] They lived very

[86] Grabar 1963, p. 12.
[87] Sahas 1994, p. 53.
[88] Key Fowden 2004, p. 566.
[89] Al-Baladhuri 1993.
[90] Di Segni 2009, p. 357.
[91] Piccirillo 1999, p. 10.

rarely in Damascus and had their more or less permanent residences at Rusafa, at Ramla and in other places. […] The penchant for building of Hisham and Wallid II had such a disastrous effect on the state treasury that the successor of Walid II had to promise, in his accession address, to abstain from any building activites'.[92]
This conclusion is contradictory to the above mentioned statements of Theophilus of Edessa and of al-Tabari, they render a prolific picture of Hisham's economic activities.

Regarding the latitude of the conquered lands, reaching from Egypt to Central Asia and beyond, internal borders had been eliminated, thus facilitating economic, social, ethnic and religious interaction.[93]
The residents in the conquered lands, who did not convert to Islam, had to pay the 'Jizya' a special tax, but were free to adhere to their own laws and faith.[94]

Several thousands of Arabic, Coptic and Greek papyri dating from the 8th century CE have been found which report, besides Arab narrative history which has been passed down orally, on the Muslim armies' arrival in Egypt in 639 CE. Petra M. Sijpesteijn notes in her research on the 'The Arab conquest of Egypt and the beginning of Muslim rule': 'Muhajirun, Arab conquerors, and mawali, converts or clients of Muslims, continue to be distinguished in the papyri of the eighth century'.[95]
As far as the attitude towards the Coptic population in Egypt is concerned, the new landlords were open-minded towards the Copts, which is particularly true of Caliph Hisham, who revoked unfavourable policies and abolished the taxation of monks.[96]

Khalil 'Athamina cites al-Kindi[97] (801-873 CE) who reports that the military system (diwan) in Egypt relied on various ethnic groups. Besides Palestinian tribesmen people of non-Arab ethnic origin, e.g. Greeks (Byzantines) and Persians were part of the early Muslim troops.[98] Sijpesteijn stresses this issue as well: 'The Muslim army that invaded Egypt, for example, consisted of a range of ethnic and religious components, with a majority of Arab tribesmen mostly from the settled communities of the Northern Hijaz and Yemen'.[99]

Yazid III, the successor of al-Walid II is reported to have 'ordered his representatives in Egypt to add thirty thousand new soldiers to the military system' in search of support concerning 'the internal rift which divided the Umayyad ruling family during the rule of al-Walid II'[100]. The heavy discrepancies within the Umayyad family during the rule of Hisham and al-Walid II were obviously weakening the entire regime. This probably poses the main reason for the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. The statement of Maurice Chehab in his study on the Umayyad complex of buildings at Anjar in present-day Lebanon is another indication for the seriousness of the situation within the Umayyad clan: 'Toward the end of the Umayyad era 'Anjar was the scene of fratricidal battles which bloodied the last of the dynasty. Ibrahim,

[92] Gaube 2007, p. 108.
[93] Hoyland 2004, Introduction Conclusion.
[94] Hoyland 2004, p. 1.
[95] Sijpesteijn 2007, p. 454.
[96] Athamina 1997, p. 112.
[97] Al-Kindi is a 9th century Arab philosopher, mathematician, physician and musician from Iraq.
[98] Athamina 1997, p. 106.
[99] Sijpesteijn 2007, p. 439.
[100] Athamina 1997, p. 105.

son of al-Walid I, used his forces (commanded by Sulayman, son of Hisham) as a barrier against the troops of Marwan II who came from the north claiming to be the avengers of al-Walid II'[101].

Iconoclasm

The first Iconoclastic period, centered in the Byzantine Empire, occurred in the 8th century CE. As far as the Arabs are concerned, the advancement by Yazid II (687 - 724 CE) certainly is exceptional in Arab history.
In 721 CE Yazid II ordered that 'the crosses should be broken in every place and that the pictures which were in the church should be removed'.[102] The Byzantine emperor Leo III issued a series of Iconoclastic edicts in the late 720s CE. Robert Hoyland finds 'on the Arab side it was rather an aberrant measure. Public displays of Christian worship had come increasingly under attack, but generally the private domain was one's own affair for Muslims and non-muslims alike, as was stated by Yazid's successor Hisham, when he abolished Yazid's edict'.[103] Hisham revoked Yazid's Iconoclastic edict in 724 CE, the year he seized the throne.[104]

[101] Chehab 1963, p. 20.
[102] Hoyland 1997, p. 104; See Hist. Patriarchs XVII, PO 5, 72-73; See Vasiliev, 'The Iconclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II'.
[103] Ibid.; See King, 'Islam, Iconoclasm and the Declaration of Doctrine,' 268-71.
[104] Vasiliev 1956, p. 40.

3.3 Trade

Benjamin Rowland mentions what I am also convinced of, that commercial and political ties provided a strong background for the spread of artistic elements over centuries which military penetration could have never affected.[105] Since the environment of military action is accompanied by a destructive process, whereas the arts rather flourish in a creative atmosphere. Of course many objects of art have been seized as booty and have thus traveled long distances to places far away from their origin. This happened, and unfortunately still happens to many pieces of art via numerous channels, simply for materialistic reasons.
Reginald Le May expresses a similar thought in his study of the influence of Indian culture on the vast number of countries in South-East Asia: 'The beginnings of Indian colonization overseas eastward go back a very long way in time and it is almost certain that the results seen today, were, in main, not achieved by military expeditions, but by peaceful trading and religious teaching - and thereby all the more permanent'.[106]
Oleg Grabar is of different opinion: '[…] for the formation of early Islamic palace art, the conquest of a large world with an immense wealth of styles and objects was as important as - if not more important than - the location of the palaces in an area formerly ruled by Byzantium'.[107]

Trade has ever been an integral part of Arab society. Various precious materials had been in demand in ancient and Umayyad times, especially silk, which was produced not only in China but in the Arab world as well, e.g. Sasanian cities along the East coast of the Mediterranean were famous for silk weaving.

The Sasanian rulers controlled the trade routes that passed through their territory and gained enormous wealth. David Whitehouse notes: 'Indeed, the wealth of Sasanian rulers excited comment in China and Constantinople alike, and Byzantine historians praised the splendour of Dastgird, the Sasanian palace plundered by Heraclius in 628 CE'.[108] Sasanian silverware with Dionysiac imagery traveled along the Silk Road (figs. 16a and 16b). These depictions have influenced symbolism without boundaries, which will be mentioned again later on.

Xinru Liu speaks in her study on the 'Cultural Exchange on the Silk Roads' of an increase in long-distance trade in the early centuries of the Islamic expansion.[109]
Arabic speaking traders were placed in parts of the world where Muslim conquests never had taken place, especially in parts of Africa and Asia. The spread of the Islamic faith occurred not only in the course of conquests and the word 'Arab' is not necessarily coherent with the Muslim religion, it refers, according to Xinru Liu, to 'an ethno-linguistic group, essentially those people who are native speakers of Arabic and various closely related

[105] Rowland 1967, p. viii.
[106] Le May 1954, p. 25.
[107] Grabar 1964, p. 78.
[108] Whitehouse 1973, p. 26.
[109] Liu 2007, p. 148.

languages, all of which are Semitic languages that originated on or near the Arabian Peninsula'. [110]
Literary evidence of the various forms of economic exchange is manifold from the beginning of the Common Era - Periplus and Ptolemy's Geographies display trade routes connecting the western, Mediterranean markets with the eastern parts of the world.[111]
The Islamic 'Book of Gifts and Rarities' (Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf) and the Roman 'Book of the Popes' (Liber Pontificalis) render a picture of endowment in diplomatic exchange and of donation during the first Millenum of the Common Era.
Luce Boulnois reports that by the turn of the 9th century CE al-Jahiz wrote the 'Book of Discernment in Commerce' on the same subject. And of course there are the objects of trade and luxury themselves, which are spot on the network of trade routes.[112] Roman coins and various items of different late antique materials as gold, glass (Umayyad glass objects are of unique finish) and bronze were found all over India and other parts of Asia.
Archaeological evidence is furthermore stemming from building activity at locations of merchant interchange connected with strategic maintenance and protection of the frontiers.

From a political point of view the extraction of precious metals in the Umayyad Empire has fostered the Islamic expansion in the first centuries.

Trade, particularly maritime trade, has been a vital part of Umayyad economy. From the very beginning of the Islamic conquests and even before that, merchants from all across the Empire, especially from trade hubs like Alexandria, traveled along the coast of Africa, passing by the territories of India, to South East Asia and China. Egyptian Copts were highly esteemed as sailors and navigators[113].

Luce Boulnois provides the information that 'the Chinese court and the caliphate had gone through a period of good relations in 741-742 CE. An Arab embassy had been welcomed in Chang'an and had left with a purple robe, a gold belt and an official Chinese title; these were ritual gifts'.[114]

The Chinese cities of Changan as well as Yangzhou and Guangzhou were major trade centers of the Tang Empire. Merchants from all across the continent stayed in the Chinese cities for trade. There was an entire district with foreign residents in the city of Canton.
For more details Jian Zhen's report in the 'Yue Jue Shu' (Lost Records of the State of Yue) dating from 748 CE may be consulted.[115]

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[110] Liu 2007, p. 149.
[111] Rowland 1967, p. Viii.
[112] Thomas 2012, pp. 126,127.
[113] Athamina 1997, p.106.
[114] Boulnois 2004, p. 267.
[115] […]'many big ships came from Borneo, Persia, Qunglun (Indonesia/Java)[...]with spices, pearls, and jade piled up mountain high'. […] The geographer Jia Dan (730–805 CE) wrote of 'two common sea trade routes in his day: ‚One from the coast of the Bohai Sea towards Korea and another from Guangzhou through Malacca towards the Nicobar Islands, Sri Lanka and India, the eastern and northern shores of the Arabian Sea to the Euphrates River'.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_Dynasty.

It is reported by travelers along the Silk Roads, like the Japanese monk Ennin, the Arab merchant Suleyman, the pilgrim Xuanzang and other Chinese monks that ships from Persia, South-East Asia and India embarked at the ports of Canton, where they allegedly had to pay an import tax of about a third of their chargo. A special commissar was in charge of the subject matters concerning the foreign traders.
Great numbers of Arab merchants have been temporary residents of Yangzhou and in particular of Canton, which was amongst the largest trading hubs of aromatic and other plants in Asia, silks and porcelain could be found there as well.[116]

Whereas maritime trade was favoured by the Arabs, the Chinese preferred the overland routes. Boulnois provides the following information: 'There appears to be no Chinese equivalent in the Tang to the Arab accounts of sea journeys such as that of the merchant Suleyman. Arab travelers have described Canton, one of the largest ports in the world at the time, but no Chinese merchant or traveler has described Siraf or Alexandria.
In order to understand the position foreign trade occupied in the Muslim civilization, and the reverberations it set up in the minds of an entire people, one has only to read the Thousands and One Nights. These tales are thought to have been first written down in the 10th century, although Harun al-Rashid and his famous vizier Jafar as well as the beautiful Zobeya, who is often mentioned in the tales of Scheherazade, were contemporaries of Charlemagne (742-814)'.[117]
Anna Ballian notes that 'most qusur were built on or near one of the trade and pilgrimage roads that linked various parts of the Middle East with the northern Arabian Peninsula and the Hijaz'.[118]

The oldest existent Arabic map of the Silk Road dates from the 11th century CE and was written by a scholar from Central Asia, named Al-Kashgari. The Arabic maps are defined primarily by color and shape. The dots mark cities whereas the lines are used for streets and rivers. Al-Muqaddasi, a 19th century geographer for example used 'red for roads, yellow for deserts, green for seas, blue for rivers, and grey for mountains'.[119]
This seems to be in accordance with Al-Kashgharis's legends, according to Andreas Kaplony.

At least some of the traders, pilgrims, diplomats and artisans got in touch with the paintings and sculptures from the ancient markets, monuments, temples and caves along the trade routes. Various forms of art and culture were transmitted.

[116] Boulnois 2004, pp. 264, 265.
[117] Boulnois 2004, p. 179.
[118] Ballian 2012, p. 203.
[119] Kapolny 2007, pp. 139, 140.

4. Khirbat al Mafjar or Hisham's Palace – The Site

Hamilton describes the excavation site as follows: 'The state of the ruins as we found them revealed that the whole establishment had collapsed in an earthquake. Wherever modern quarriers had not disturbed them, columns and arches lay fanned out on the ground as they had fallen, often in the order of their construction. Here was clearly the result not of gradual decay or of willed demolition, but of sudden overthrow in one catastrophic moment'.[120]

Baramki speaks of window glass, marble, uncompleted balustrade panels and unused roof tiles in connection with the palace and concludes as well as Hamilton that the way the items were placed indicates a sudden overthraw by an earthquake, he further quotes that due to the unused building material and builders' waste found at the palace, the latter had never been completed.[121]

There were no dead found in the ruins which could have been expected in connection with an earthquake, this motivates Hamilton to the statement that 'the palace had been abandoned for other reasons, perhaps the death of the owner'[122].

More recently, Donald Whithcomb specifies: 'The excavations by Baramki and Hamilton revealed a palace and a great bath, both of which were elaborately decorated with fine mosaics and unique stucco figures, as well as stone sculpture and frescoes, placing Mafjar as one of the most important monuments in the history of Islamic Archaeology'.[123]

The craftsmen obviously were local people, 'Greek- or Arabic-speaking Christians'.[124] Hamilton draws this conclusion on the basis of 'graffiti found in the construction debris'.[125] 'We may be confident that the exotic elements which recur in the design and ornament of the buildings at al Mafjar were features which had been fully assimilated, by this late stage of the Umayyad Caliphate, in the common practice of native Syrian and Palestinian craftsmen.'[126]

[120] Hamilton 1959, p. 8.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/.
[124] Hamilton 1959, p. 44.
[125] Mietke 2012, p. 176.
[126] Hamilton 1959, p. 42.

4.1 Architecture

Archaeological excavations by F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld suggest that the Umayyads in Syria and Palestine have adopted existing landforms, Oleg Grabar says: 'The fact that there has already been a local infrastructure before the advent of Islam is a fact that all Umayyad palaces have in common.'[127]
Dressed stone foundations of pre-Islamic origin were found in many places. It may also be significant that the archaeologists who discovered the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar had not dug for the complex, they did not search for architecture from the Umayyad period.
Hisham's palace was initially solely supposed to be at Rusafah, the capital at the time. Rusafa is described as a 'thriving pilgrimage center', chosen by Hisham to strengthen the ties with the Arab Christian tribes.[128]

S. Gulzar Haider presents in his study 'On what makes Architecture Islamic' certain standards that architecture has to comply with. He distinguishes between the 'Dwelling imperative, the Functional imperative, the Constructive imperative and the Aesthetic imperative'.
The 'Functional imperative' describes the purpose of the construction, the primary task is a protective one – it serves as 'umbrella' from the forces of nature, in the course of evolution the focus is laid mainly on quality in the sense of creating a comfortable atmosphere.
There is no doubt that the castles in the desert served such needs, they were not just 'symbols' in terms of Haider's definition: 'Some architecture may have purely symbolic intent with no requirement of enclosure but in that case the functional imperative is that of a symbol, a marker, an icon, or a monument essential to maintain the shared memories and meanings of a society'[129].
The striving for the 'creation of a comfortable atmosphere' leads to the Aesthetic imperative, which is described as 'the restoration of things to their rightful place with the aim of achieving a transcendent sense of pleasure, harmony, well-being, positive excitation, evocation to deeper or higher realizations about God, man, nature and time. […] It is in this sense that beauty is neither a fashion nor a style but pursuit of the rightful'[130].
If we consider all the architectural and decorative elements of the desert castle at Khirbet al-Mafjar the Aesthetic imperative has been developed to a high standard at the time.

Robert Hillenbrand states the distinctive quality of Islamic architecture in decoration: 'In the interplay of various elements – contrasting stone, brick, wood, plaster and tilework; development of endless colour harmonies; complexity of abstract geometrical and vegetal themes; inscriptions, executed in many different styles – must be sought the distinguishing mark of Islamic architecture'[131].

The main residential building, also called 'palace' - I tend to use this term rather for the whole complex, a castle-like construction with semi-circular towers, is surrounded by a wall which is 160 by 130 metres. This 'castle-like', 'military- aspect' in the architecture is apparent only in a diluted mode, for it is the ornamental, scattered form which is predominant at

[127] Grabar 2006, p. 138.
[128] Ballian 2012, p. 205.
[129] Haider 2002, p. 20.
[130] Haider 2002, p. 21.
[131] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 8.

Khirbet al-Mafjar. Hamilton puts it as follows: 'By a sort of perversity, Walid chose to hide the military aspect of a castle by ranges of graceful arcaded galleries in two stories, […] which masked the round towers behind them'[132].

The arches to the left and to the right of the main southern entrance gate, the delicate, detailed finish and the numerous varieties of architectural sculpture represent art that requires time in production and that must have been created under stable conditions. This is moreover an indication that Hisham managed during his long reign to grant stability in the Umayyad realm.
Hamilton points out the openness of the architecture, 'the palace at al-Mafjar, with its wide porch, outward-facing rooms, and gracious, open arcades, seemed to extend to all customers an invitation to admire and to enter'[133].

The building material is largely sandstone mixed with a few burnt bricks. The interior consisted of stucco plaster.
Based on the existing debris it is accurate to assume that the upper part of the building, especially the roof, was made of brick. Because of the disintegration of the mortar hardly any contiguous pieces of the wall were found.[134]

When entering the palace through the south gate, which is flanked by two round towers, one arrives in the central courtyard. It is 300 meters long and 40 meters wide and is surrounded by arched architecture. Here we encounter the monumental fountain. Adjoining to the west, the main residential building is situated with a prominent porch.

This lobby (fig.3), called 'waiting room' by Hamilton, has nine columns on each side. Columns and walls were covered with plaster, figures of geometric shape as well as male heads with turbans and depictions of women were found. Even heads of birds and other animals were added.
On both sides of the lobby we find stone seats, it has been suggested that guards were positioned in this area. Above the seats leaves and flowers and statues enshrined by niches were presented. Hamilton delineates: 'Entering here the newcomer encountered a further surprise, being greeted from niches in the walls by colourful sculptured girls proffering posies […] they were worked in gypsum plaster, the girl's statues like those in the music room porch being painted, with posies of yellow and red flowers on red stalks in their hands.'[135]
A bath for the private use of the Caliph has been annexed to this main residential building. A reservoir, fed by the main channel, supplied the bath with water.

Hamilton attests a 'structural continuity in the whole range of buildings'[136] (fig. 4) but doubts on the basis of archaeological evidence 'whether the structure was indeed a unity and not the composite product of successive phases'[137]. 'The parts of the residence are not arranged

[132] Hamilton 1988, p. 49.
[133] Hamilton 1959, p. 9.
[134] Hamilton 1959, p. 46.
[135] Hamilton 1988, p. 53.
[136] Hamilton 1959, p. 4.
[137] Hamilton 1959, p. 39.

symmetrically, there is no mathematical order to the conjunction of the whole complex, the central porch is not even close to be located at the centre of the eastern main façade'.[138] This is a special feature of the palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar compared to the desert castles of Qasr al-Hayr and Mshatta, which are not composed of added architectural parts, but constitute a single entity, enclosed by a monumental wall.
Archaeological finds have indicated that the complex of the bath at Khirbet al-Mafjar was the only part of the building in use during Umayyad rule.

Hamilton attributes the elements of design in the façade of the palace and the enclosing wall of the mansion to the architecture of pre-Islamic Persia and Iraq. He considers not only the architecture but also the carved ornament in stone and plaster, as well as the paintings, as being derived from pre-Islamic Persia and Iraq, 'in every department of the building trade, as it seems, the common idiom of masons and other craftsmen reveals a familiarity with forms and fashions established before Islam in the 'Iraqi and Persian provinces of the Sasanian kingdom'.[139]

[138] Hamilton 1959, p. 41.
[139] Ibid.

4.2. The Bath

The building of the bath is located to the north of the main residential building. It was finished first and used as a single entity. The monumental frigidarium hall (fig.5), also called 'music room' by Hamilton[140] due to the performances held there, is almost square in plan, each side has three niches, a plunge pool is attached to the southern wall.
The mosaic of this central room abounds in geometrical forms, it covers the floor like a 'carpet', as mentioned so often in this context. It is amongst the largest known ancient mosaics. Particularly striking is the mosaic design of the central apse of the western wall with the sole figurative form within the floor mosaic of the frigidarium hall. (fig.6)
This apse, I suppose, was for al-Walid II. Its central location on the axis of the main dome and the door at the other end back this assumption.
Bowersock points in this context to the large number of mosaics in late antiquity: 'There were many mosaics in the late antique Mediterranean world. Representative mosaics enjoyed great popularity in the Roman Empire, they were abundant in all areas. [...] Their exceptionally high occurrence in the Middle East gives an insight into the former religion and way of life of the multicultural society of the region. [...] Mosaics are the main source regarding the development of a peaceful coexistence between Jews, Christians, Arabs and Greek Polytheists in this period'[141].

While the mosaics and paintings of the bathing tract contain no human figures – probably in this context the figure on the floor of the apse, although reminiscent of the Venus of Willendorf, is rather a fruit than a female form – there are numerous sculptures in human and animal form.

The main entrance to the bath is located in the east wing and attracts in its splendid shape the visitor's attention (fig. 7). The size and the lavish decoration of the portal emphasize the special significance of this part of the palace. It was rectangular in shape, 3.91m x 2.55 m and had two windows on each side wall which were in notches 60 cm from the floor.
The doorposts and the lintel of the arc just before the frigidarium hall were covered with niches in which we see palmette design. The bathroom was, as I mentioned earlier, finished first and remained the only completed component.

The north-western room of the bath building is frequently referred to in literature as 'throne hall' or 'diwan'. (fig. 8) Its isolated location suggests a place of rest and retreat. Here we find the famous mosaic with the pomegranate tree. To the right of the tree are two gazelles, which feast on the fruit of the tree and to the left is another one, attacked by a lion. This representation allows for multiple interpretations, one of them says that those who follow the rules, under the auspices of the Umayyads, live in peace and prosperity, while those who are disobedient will be hunted and succumb to the enemy.[142] Perhaps it was also the place where al-Walid II took his meals or possibly an intimate place.

[140] Hamilton 1988, p. 48.
[141] Bowersock 2006, pp. 113-115.
[142] Creswell 1989, pp. 179-200.

4.2.1 Dimension

Within the whole complex of the bath, the frigidarium hall is the central building, to which the other rooms just seem to be 'annexed', like the relatively small diwan or 'audience hall'. Creswell cites Herzfeld and provides the information that the 'combination of a bath-house with a hall of audience is a novelty which has not been found in the pre-Muslim baths of Syria' and considers this development as 'quite natural' due to the location in the 'open desert, where the Caliph could hold his desert court'.[143]

Dimension and decoration of the nearly square frigidarium hall are unusual in size and elaboration, compared to the baths of the other Umayyad palaces. Measuring around 30 x 30 metres, the roof is supported by sixteen massive columns which are stylistically very close to the ones I have seen at Petra, the Nabatean site in Jordan (fig.9).

Hamilton points out that the 'construction of the bath preceded that of the palace' and compares the bath at Khirbet al-Mafjar to two other Umayyad baths: 'Hammam as Sarakh and Qusayr'Amrah stood isolated, as this must have done for a time, with no near residential building to serve. [...]The ground-plan of the building was perfectly preserved; and the outer walls in places stood, or were capable of re-erection, up to more than 2m in height' [144]. Ettinghausen comes to the conclusion in his study of the 'Throne and Banquet Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar' that the structure of the bath is Byzantine with 'symbolic Sasanian decorations'.[145]

The shape of the architecture and its decoration are frequently compared to Sasanian models. The use of stucco is considered one of the main indications. Hamilton attributes the introduction of stucco to Hisham or al-Walid II: 'We cannot say which of them was the first to exploit the virtues of this versatile material previously neglected by builders of Palestine and Syria'[146].
He attests a special contribution of the Umayyad craftsmen in the creation of new modes in plaster: 'It was for the later Umayyads in Syria and Palestine, by handing the material to their native sculptors, to employ it with a brilliance of effect and in a variety of contexts never apparently attempted before their time in the countries of its origin (Persia and Iraq)'[147].
Regarding the size of the palace and the number of desert castles erected during the reign of Hisham and al-Walid, a material that allows for quick production, like stucco, obviously was in high demand.

[143] Creswell 1932, Part One, p. 278.
[144] Hamilton 1959, p. 45.
[145] Ettinghausen 1972, p. 65.
[146] Hamilton 1988, p. 54.
[147] Ibid.

4.2.2 Form

The building of the bath at Khirbet al-Mafjar, located to the north of the main residential building, is unique in its form.

What may be true for the origin of sculpture and architectural decoration (the Sasanian connotation), does not apply to the origins of the ground plan, the rising masonry, or the function of the bath tract.

Let us go back in time and look at comparable architectural forms and compounds of already existing buildings. Several options can be considered.

The basic language of the form of the bath tract, the three aisled hall, in Khirbet al-Mafjar allows a comparison with Roman 'hunting baths', such as the one in Leptis Magna, and with Roman thermal facilities (fig. 5).
This impression of a three aisled hall exists at least from the outside, Creswell mentiones an anology by Strzygowski who connected the audience hall of Qusayr 'Amra to a 'three-aisled church with apse and flanking rooms' and concludes that 'this impression, which the plan certainly gives, is erroneous, for one does not get any impression whatever of three aisles when standing in the hall'. The same is the case at Khirbet al-Mafjar, the frigidarium hall is one room with sixteen massive columns, but no aisles. It does not resemble the interior of the audience hall at Qusayr 'Amra though.

Creswell sees the 'Hypocausts of Qusayr 'Amra constructed on exactly the same principle as in the Baths of Caracalla'[148].

The ground plan of the 'frigidarium hall', the large reception hall of the bath complex at Khirbet al-Mafjar which is almost square, and the bulk masonry of the 'diwan', the audience room, allow a comparison with central-plan buildings such as the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.[149]
The Hagia Sophia in its present-day form is a domed basilica dating from the 6th century CE. The most striking element of the Hagia Sophia is the monumental dome that dominates the whole interior. Similarities of the Hagia Sophia and Khirbet al-Mafjar can be seen in the additivity of the structural parts.
One has to keep in mind that the size and proportions differ strongly and that the three dimensional depiction of the bath from Khirbet al-Mafjar is only based on a model.

[148] Creswell 1932, Part One, p.278
[149] Ettinghausen speaks of a 'Byzantine structure' as well, see above p. 32.

4.2.3 Function

For Hillenbrand Caliph al-Walid II is 'generally accepted as the builder of the finest Umayyad palaces'.[150] Keeping an eye on the elaborate gate of the bath and stressing that the rich decoration represents leadership Hillenbrand points to the ceremonial functions of the building.[151] As does Hamilton by stressing the presence of the audience chamber and the vastly inflated frigidarium, 'The baths of al Mafjar had ceremonial character while the others were just baths'.[152]

In Hamilton's view the building of the bath had multiple functions, it was not only designed for bathing, 'The monumental scale and elaboration of the frigidarium hall, of the porch, and of the chamber I have called the diwan, each rising to a lofty dome, and each embellished with splendid ornament in sculpture or mosaic, consort strangely with a bath building whose actual bathing accommodation, though comfortable enough and adequate in quality, was distinctly modest in scale. Another puzzling fact is the apparition of what appear to be princely insignia, and of an official-looking audience chamber, in a building which was clearly designed for bathing. […] If architectural evidence can sustain any deduction at all, it is in this case that bath and business were one; and bathing was never an affair of state.'[153]

The idea of creating a warm bath originated from Greece, and has been adopted in the 3rd century BCE in Rome. However, the Roman and the Greek baths did not have much in common. The enormous size and the connection with other sporting and cultural events has been a Roman invention.

The basic equipment of a Roman bath included a changing room and all kinds of bathrooms: a cold (frigidarium), a warm (tepidarium) and a hot bath (caldarium), a vapor or steam bath (laconicum), the ensemble corresponds to a modern sauna.
A Roman bath was a center of recreation and communication. Large gardens and parks were created around the bathhouses. Even prostitutes offered their services. 'Wine Women and Song' have already been present in Roman Baths.
The baths were decorated magnificently. Floors and walls carried rich figurative mosaics, from the ceilings shone golden ornamentation. Besides granite columns and bathtubs made of basalt and porphyry, one could even find famous artworks at the Roman bath, such as the Laocoon group in the Baths of Trajan.
Wealthy citizens had their own bathrooms with facilities and decoration comparable to the public baths.[154]

[150] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 1.
[151] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 7.
[152] Hamilton 1959, p. 104.
[153] Hamilton 1959, p. 103.
[154] Weeber, 1998

The similarities concerning the function of the Roman bath and the bath at Khirbet al-Mafjar are obvious, social gatherings and communication formed a vital part besides the cleaning of the body.

Literary evidence shows that pleasure had played a significant role at Khirbet Al-Mafjar. Hamilton indicates that the bathroom was, because of its size and the opulent luxury facilities, a place where social and artistic gatherings of dignified manner took place.[155] He considers the architecture of the bath as new, in its time - I guess, and traces it back to its founder's eccentric characteristics.

[155] Hamilton 1988, p. 9.

5. One of numerous Early Islamic 'Desert Castles'

In the course of Muslim conquest most landowners abandoned their property which has been adopted subsequently by the new landlords to their needs and tastes. Various predilections of the new owners gave the desert castles their distinctive differing forms. Some of them were embellished on a grand scale, Oleg Grabar notes: 'The new landlords changed the character of some of the settlements by introducing into them not only mosques, but, more interestingly, baths, richly decorated palaces and houses, in short, elements of gracious living', and points out the short period of time in which a vast number of castles were erected.[156]

Donald Whitcomb defines as standard elements of the 'landed estates': 'At least one towered enclosure, a mosque, a bath-house, residential units, and both fresco and stucco decorative embellishments'[157].

Stating a distinct opulence and underlining the manifold variation, Donald Whitcomb characterizes the settlement patterns of the desert castles as follows: 'Some are cities such as Anjar, others a single building like Karanis or Qusayr 'Amrah; some are planned complexes (Khirbet al-Mafjar), others scatters of buildings (Jebel Says). While some are truly remote (Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi), many other examples are adjacent to towns (Khirbat al-Mafjar) and some actually part of the town (the Umayyad building at the Amman Citadel). This type of settlement may best be considered an aspect of the development of landed estates (diya') under the Umayyads'[158].

The dating of the Umayyad desert castles is not clear, and recent archaeological finds call for an adaption of scholarly opinion. For instance Heinz Gaube stated a few years ago that 'Hisham had combined his two Qasr al-Hayr with huge farms' whereas al-Walid II's buildings, he mentions Qasr Tuba and Mshatta, 'aimed at nothing more than presentation of authority'[159]. We know in the meantime that agricultural facilities were an integral part of the palaces of al-Walid II. 'Presentation of authority' was only one, even though essential, part of a complex structure.

On the basis of Hillenbrand's listing the following chronological order of the most discussed Umayyad secular builings in Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham) can be regarded as 'generally' accepted: Khirbat al-Minya, the Palace at Amman and the Umayyad complex at Anjar were built at the beginning of the reign of al-Walid I, (r.705-715 CE); Qusayr 'Amra, Qasr al-Hair al-Sharqi and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi are attributed to the era of Hisham, (r.724-743 CE); Khirbat al-Mafjar and Mshatta are seen as works of al-Walid II, (706 - 744 CE, either as caliph or as heir-apparent).[160] However, al-Walid II is often considered as patron of Qusayr 'Amra, Creswell dates it to the era of al-Walid I.

[156] Grabar 1963, pp. 12, 13.
[157] Withcomb 1994, p. 19.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Gaube 2011, p. 109.
[160] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 1.

From my visit to the site and the impression I got from the architecture - it represents the three aisled building in its basic form, there is no sophisticated stucco decoration - and from the style of the paintings, especially the depiction of the 'seated' ruler, I can only say that the tiny complex at Qusayr 'Amra is highly different - in overall style, size and decoration - to the 'late Umayyad' landed estates of Khirbet al-Mafjar and Mshatta. Hamilton suggests that in pre-Islamic times 'any figured mural decoration would inevitably have been done in mosaic or fresco'[161], I see a much closer proximity of Qusayr 'Amra's design to these 'pre-Islamic times' than to the castles of the era of Hisham, when elaborate stucco decoration was introduced.
Thus I follow Creswell in the dating of Qusayr 'Amra to the reign of al-Walid I.

A significant influence on the design of the estate at Khirbet al-Mafjar is attributed to al-Walid II, Hisham's nephew and successor.
The palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar was surrounded by gardens and parks that stretched over two kilometers. A Roman aqueduct brought water to the palace.[162] Khirbet al-Mafjar was situated, as mentioned, in a fertile area, water had to be collected but not distributed.
As Sauvaget and latest research have shown, it was not merely a place of pleasure, the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar and other Umayyad palaces were rather nodes in agriculturally productive areas. Irrigation systems have not only supplied the palace but also the surrounding fields and meadows with water.

Oleg Grabar speaks of a 'search for some kind of formal entity that would tie together functions which had not, until then, been organized'. He stresses the fort-like character of the Umayyad desert castle at Khirbet Al-Minya which is dated to the beginning of the 8th century CE and defines a process of 'form finding' which he sees fulfilled in the palace of Mshatta attributed to al-Walid II, 'unfinished but superbly planned as a single entity'. In his view there is no model for the Umayyad desert castle, 'it appears as an original creation' which is based on 'a highly developed agricultural infrastructure created several centuries earlier; the emigration of large landowners; the existence of an aristocratic ruling group; and the availability of themes, ideas, tastes, and modes of behavior drawn from the entire breadth of the newly conquered world and amalgamated with older Arabian habits. But, and this point is crucial, what was thus created resembled in many aspects Roman and late antique palace architecture rather than Byzantine'.[163] This complies with Ettinghausen's suggestion, see above, p.30.

Grabar sees similarities in concept to earlier Roman villas like the Villa Urbana, as described by Pliny the Elder, or the Villa Romana del Casale in the vicinity of Piazza Armerina, Sicily, which is on the World heritage list of UNESCO: 'This building, which merits the title of 'palace' rather than villa, is designed in the tradition of the Roman villa but on a scale and to a level of luxury with no parallels in the Roman Empire[…] rooms, all of them decorated with floor mosaics of superlative quality.'[164]

[161] Hamilton 1953, p. 47.
[162] Grabar 2006, p. 134.
[163] Grabar 1964, p. 77.
[164] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/832/.

The Villa Romana del Casale is dated to the 4th century CE. It is a suburban estate of huge dimension, which was used throughout Late Antiquity.
The Liber Pontificalis renders a picture of 'sustained agricultural activity, and even investment, for the late occupation of villa sites in Italy and for the movement of Italian wine amphorae to major urban centres during the 5th and 6th centuries'[165]. They obviously served as models to the Sasanian ewers (fig. 16a).

[165] Rossiter 2007, pp. 111, 112.

5.1 The Owner

At the top of the facade to the bath's portal a sculpture, representing the princely owner, was set in the central niche.
Hamilton believes that this figure of al-Walid II was made after the other sculptures in the round that were found in the bathroom. The reason for this interpretation is, possibly, of political-diplomatic character, al-Walid II did not want to expose himself too much during the rule of his unloved uncle Hisham. Stylistically, as far as frontality, centrality and handicraft are concerned, it does, in my view, not differ from the other sculptures in the round (figs. 10a and 10b).

In the archaeological documentation of the excavation of the bath porch Hamilton describes as follows: 'Fragments of a male figure and a pedestal, recovered from the area before the porch, proved that the niches once contained statues. Both the figure and its pedestal were made of plaster modelled round a core of bricks and rough stone fragment. On the backs of both were the impressions of an ornament composed of overlapping circles, which was identical with a stucco ornament still adhering in fragments to some of the stones of the larger niche. The majestic figure must, consequently, have stood in that niche, uplifted by the two lions that guarded his pedestal, on the axis of the façade. […] It is clear that the presence of the lion pedestal and of the ibexes, both attributes of Sasanian royalty, are implying an owner of princely rank'.[166]
Anna Ballian asserts that 'a niche setting was de riguer for imperial statues in late Antiquity, and lions, usually flying, were a necessary part of an apotheosis scene, which through the ages in both East and West has connoted the glorification of a ruler'.[167]

Hillenbrandt points to al-Walid II's physical strength, the love for open air life, horses, acrobatic feasts and hunting and quotes a wish al-Walid II expresses in his poetry, 'I wish that women were lionesses so that only the brave could approach them'. He further concludes that 'in this general context it is entirely appropriate that the plinth of his statue at Khirbet al-Mafjar should be formed by a pair of snarling lions, the very emblem of royalty […]'[168].

Moreover, there was a lively connex to the subject. Al-Balhaduri reports: 'In the first half of the 2nd/8th century the caliphs Walid II and Yazid III brought the gipsy tribe of the Zutt who had been deported to Basra by Mu'awiya in 50/670, and settled them with great heards of buffalo in the region of al-Massisa in order to fight the plague of lions in the district of the Djabal al-Lukkam'.[169]

The lion symbolizes strength, energy and protection. This seems to be of universal relevance, whenever these values are chosen for representation by whomever the lion motive is very popular.

[166] Hamilton 1959, p. 102.
[167] Ballian 2012, p. 207.
[168] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 16.
[169] Al-Baladhuri 1989, p. 774.

The lion is said to be 'the archetypal Middle Eastern symbol of royalty'. Obviously the Kushans adopted the idea of a lion throne from Western images and introduced it to the Indian tradition.[170]
Roger Goepper attaches a global stance to the 'lion throne', and characterizes the Buddha sitting on the back of two lions as 'ruler of the world'. This concept was known in China as well, 'shizi-zuo' is the Chinese word for 'lion throne'. [171]

This 'universal relevance' or 'globyal stance' of the 'lion throne' is evident by looking at the pieces of art, e.g. the lions in the lion statue from Sarnath, dating from the reign of King Asoka-the beginning of the development of Buddhist sculpture, is stylistically very close to the Achemenidian, the Sasanian and the representation of lions at Khirbet al-Mafjar. Apart from the stylistic features, the symbolism shows throughout connotations of power and rulership.

Francine Tissot suggests, in connection with Gandharan art, that the 'Lion throne of the Buddha' - representing only one form of the thrones of the Buddha - with the depiction of two lions symbolizes that the Buddha belongs to the 'Cakya' familiy whose heraldic animal was the lion.[172] Other proposals in this context are that the royal attributes simply have been transferred to the Buddha.

Further South, at the Indian rock cut caves of Ajanta, which are dating from the 5th century CE, thrones decorated with the cakra (wheel)[173] and deer as well as lions are depicted. Sheila L. Weiner describes the meaning of the lion in a Buddhist context: 'The symbol of the lion signifies the overwhelming power and authority of the Buddha. Buddhist scriptures describe the king or emperor as a lion; at his accession, he roars like a lion; he sits on a lion throne, and dies on a lion couch'.[174]

At Khirbet al-Mafjar the figure of the caliph 'stood on a pedestal, the front of which was carved in relief with two squatting lions looking to the front and glaring fiercely. Their tails, passing between their hind legs, were held aloft and framed an eight-pointed medallion of split palmettes round a central daisy', as described by Hamilton.[175] One could interpret this medallion as 'wheel', the number 'eight' is of great symbolic value in the iconography of Indian beliefs.
In Islam it is found in the octagon which connects the world, often displayed in square ground plans, to the heaven, symbolised by the octagonal dome. The 'eight pointed star' is oftentimes interpreted as the eight angels carrying the throne of god in heaven.[176]

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[170] Srinivasan 1997, p. 298.
[171] Brinker/Goepper 1980, p. 198.
[172] Tissot 1985, p. 102.
[173] In Buddhist iconography the Wheel of the Law symbolizes Buddha's first sermon, it is often depicted with antelopes and ibexes which stand for the deer park, where the initial teaching took place. In the early stages of Buddhism, Buddha was not displayed in the form of a human being, his presence was indicated by the imprints of his feet or the wheel of the law, the tree of wisdom and the stupa.
[174] Weiner 1977, p. 71.
[175] Hamilton 1959, p. 229.
[176] http://archnet.org/forum/view.jsp?message_id=107815.

Not only the mines of Solomon are legendary but his baths are as well. Priscilla P. Soucek has written an article on 'Solomon's Throne/Solomon's Bath: Model or Metaphor?'[177] Solomon has been mentioned repeatedly in Arabian literature, al-Tabari, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Asi b. Abijah, Mutahhar ibn Tahir al-Maqdisi and Tha'alibi report on his role as model ruler and judge and his affinity to baths.[178] The hot springs in the area of the Roman city of Tiberias on the shore of the Sea of Galilee have been reknowned for their curative powers since ancient times. They were even regarded as world 'marvels' due to the hot water that emerged from the ground. Around the springs, bath buildings and spas were constructed. They were attributed to Solomon by Islamic authors.
Priscilla Soucek now connects, on the basis of geographical vicinity and literary evidence, the Solomonic baths at Tiberias on the shore of the Sea of Galilee to the bath of Khirbet al-Mafjar as far as imperial symbolism is concerned.[179]
Even later rulers are mentioned in this context[180], the Mughal ruler Jahangir (r. 1605-1627 CE) erected a residence at Lahore (the Lahore Fort in present-day Paksitan) which can be traced back to Salomonic vocabularly, from the architectural and decorative langue and moreover from architectural inscriptions and comparisons by his court poets.[181]

This Solomonic imagery applies particularly to the depiction of the caliph from Khirbet al-Mafjar, standing on a base with two lions squatting back to back.

Solomon's throne is described as 'lion-protected', surrounded by birds and flowers, thus showing a paradisical connotation apart from imperial symbolism.
Birds appear as symbols of power and are related to the vault, and thus to the pleasures of heaven, Sylvia Auld mentions that 'in Arabic they are 'salwa' – consolation, comfort and fun.[182]

Al-Walid II obviously has been acquainted with the content of the Solomonic legend. Soucek mentions that 'he refers to himself as the son of David in a poem composed on the eve of his marriage to Salma' and further states that 'the exterior figure of the caliph can be read as Solomon on his lion-protected throne which rests on the larger platform occupied by his concubines, male attendants, and various animals'.[183] Hillenbrand notes that, 'al-Walid had besides his wives, several concubines. It is reported that he tried in vain to have his son by such a concubine recognised as his heir'.[184]
One of the women is central, al-Walid II obviously had fallen in love with her, it seems that his heart belonged to Salma, she is the subject of his tender poems.

In the young days of al-Walid II, in the second quarter of the 8th century CE, a special form of love poem developed, the 'Umayyad ghazal'. The poems of al-Walid II devoted to Salma, are likely to represent the Bedouin variant, the 'Udhri ghazal', which conveys an intense longing for a unique beloved.

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[177] Soucek 1993.
[178] Soucek 1993, pp. 114, 115.
[179] Soucek 1993, p. 116.
[180] Koch 1983.
[181] Soucek 1993, p. 119.
[182] Auld 2005, p. 10.
[183] Soucek 1993, pp. 122, 123.
[184] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 16.

In the 'Udhri ghazal' various refinements of love are stated, from 'passionate love to ideal love and finally love for love's sake. Each of these 'stages' constitutes a micro story, which may develop its own complex structure'.[185]

In Solomon's love poem, the Song of Songs, his beloved is compared to 'an orchard of pomegranates, an orchard full of rare fruits; spikenard and saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon with every incensebearing tree, myrrh and aloes with all the choicest spices'.[186]

Soucek is of the opinion that: 'In the end, the Umayyad owner of Khirbet al-Mafjar, the Persian ruler Fath Ali Shah, and the Mughal emperor Jahangir each shaped the Solomonic tradition according to his own selfimage, using the legacy of Solomon to enhance his personal prestige'.[187]
Anna Ballian states in this context that, 'it is in the desert castles that the iconography in the Islamic world for centuries was closely associated with the ruler and the propagation of his power'.[188]

Another characteristic of courtly ceremony and personal taste is the dress code imposed by the ruler. Hisham is described as 'dandy' regarding his dressing habit, he wore cloths made of most precious materials and exquiste perfumes.

In the Kitab al-Taj, the Kitab al-Uyun and the Kitab al-Aghani reference is made to the dress of al-Walid II as mentioned by Hillenbrand who describes on the basis of this information that the cloth of al-Walid II was very exclusive, 'he loved luxurious materials; On one occasion he appeared dressed entirely in gold brocade. He preferred colourful patterned garments especially in the shade of saffron and yellow. He is recorded as wearing footwear of gold brocade, while on the day of his murder he wore a tunic of gold brocade and wide pantalons of heavy damask. Such trousers can be glimpsed in the statue at Khirbat al-Mafjar (as well as in the Kushan figure from Surkh Kotal in present-day Afghanistan, fig. 10d). On his head he wore a gold stiched sugar-loaf hat which is memorialised in stone at Khirbet al-Mafjar where it hung from a stone chain in the royal apse' .[189]

Hillenbrand as well as Ettinghausen and Hamilton refer within this context to the great iwan at Ctesiphon, the imperial capital of the Sasanians located on the east bank of the Tigris, 'where Khusrau of the Immortal Soul kept his court there was suspended from a golden chain, directly above the throne, the great crown of the King of the Kings, so heavy that its weight would have broken the royal neck'[190].
In the Shahnameh, the Persian 'Book of Kings', in which courtly ceremonies of the Sasanian kings are vividly rendered, we read that 'Khusrau's crown was hung up on a golden chain above the throne when he ascended it'[191].

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[185] Jacobi 2004, pp. 106, 138.
[186] Boulnois 2004, p. 125.
[187] Soucek 1993, p. 124.
[188] Ballian 2012, p. 207.
[189] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 12, (Al-Jahiz, Kitab al -Taj, 154, 9-11; Aghani II, 65, 23-4; Aghani VI, 144, 27; Kitab al-Uyun, 143 13).
[190] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 12, (Kitab al-Uyun).
[191] Gray 1961, p. 11.

Furthermore, there is another parallel, according to al-Jahiz 'all the Sasanian kings drank once every three days, except three who drank daily'[192].
Al-Walid II was fond of the taste and the effect of wine, Hillenbrand describes the following scene: 'The singer Abu Harun 'Atarrad was invited to perform in front of al-Walid, he narrates on this occasion: I was brought in to him and he was sitting in his palace on the edge of a small pool [...] lined with lead and filled with wine. I had hardly time to give him the greeting when he said 'Are you 'Atarrad?' 'Yes, Commander of the Faithful,' said I. 'I have been longing to hear you' said he [...] So I sang to him. I had barely finished when, by God, he tore apart an embroidered robe that was on him, worth I know not what, flung it down in two pieces, and plunged naked as his mother bore him into that pool; thence he drank, I swear, until the level was distinctly lowered. Then he was pulled out, laid down dead to the world, and covered up. So I got up and took the robe; and no-one, by God, said to me 'take it' or 'leave it'[...]'[193].

Extensive consumption of wine was not only favoured by Sasanian kings and al-Walid II.
Li Bai (701-762 CE), a renowned poet from the Tang period was fond of drinking wine, he formed part of the group of the 'Eight Immortals[194] of the Wine Cup' while he stayed in the Tang capital of Chang'an (today's Xi'an and surrounding area) and devoted some of his more than thousand poems to the wine: [195]

'One of Li Bai's most famous titles is '*Waking From Drunkenness on a Spring Day*'(春日醉起言志. A translation by Arthur Waley):

Waking From Drunkenness on a Spring Day (春日醉起言志)

處世若大夢, *Life in the world is but a big dream;*
胡爲勞其生. *I will not spoil it by any labour or care.*
所以終日醉, *so saying, I was drunk all the day,*
頹然臥前楹. *lying helpless at the porch in front of my door.*
覺來盼庭前, *when I awoke, I blinked at the garden-lawn;*
一鳥花間鳴. *a lonely bird was singing amid the flowers.*
借問此何時, *I asked myself, had the day been wet or fine?*
春風語流鶯. *the Spring wind was telling the mango-bird.*
感之欲嘆息, *moved by its song I soon began to sigh,*
對酒還自傾. *and, as wine was there, I filled my own cup.*
浩歌待明月, *wildly singing I waited for the moon to rise;*
曲盡已忘情. *when my song was over, all my senses had gone.'*

[192] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 13, (footnote 122, Kitab al-Taj, 151, 8-9;).
[193] Hillenbrand 1994, p. 12.
[194] The ‚Eight Immortals' are eight powers in Chinese mythology of the Song and Tang dynasties that can bestow life.
[195] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Bai.

5.1.1 Sculpture

The presentation of the caliph at Khirbet al-Mafjar resembles depictions of rulers known from coins and sculptures of earlier centuries.
The frontality of the dynastic cult images, the upright posture, the sword, and elaborately decorated garment demand respect. All these characteristics can be attributed to the statue of al-Walid II at Khirbet al-Mafjar. (fig. 10a)
Hamilton provides the information that 'the statue was of a man standing erect, looking to the front, and clad in a long full bottomed coat, which reached nearly to the ankles and was girded at the waist with a belt studded with square and diamond jewels. The coat was edged with pearls, which were attached to the hem by a ribbon, here represented as two narrow fillets. Below the edge of the coat appeared the bottoms of trousers, falling full over the ankles; and on the feet, which are broken away in front, the remnants of boots.
The figure wore a short sword, with his left hand resting on the hilt'.[196]
By describing the head of the statue of the caliph, Hamilton reports that the nose was lost, he places emphasis on the deeply drilled eyes and the abruptly projecting beard. Regarding the eyes Hamilton speaks of 'slightly deepened and accentuated corners of the eyes which gave an almost Mongolian cast to the face'[197]. The beard is seen as derivation of Indian art. Concerning the execution of the work, Hamilton attests a 'remarkable crudeness displayed in the modelling of parts of the statue', which is attributed by him 'to the influence of some lost model or tradition of portraiture of a higher technical order'[198].

The depiction of the caliph is close to the one from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi but completely different to the ruler image at Qusayr 'Amra. There the caliph is seated and flanked by two servants. This illustration is based, according to Anna Ballian 'on a Late Roman image of a seated emperor that was turned into an Enthroned Christ or prophet-king - that figure has been transformed into an emir'[199].

The the composition of the statue of the Caliph in Khirbet al-Mafjar does not follow the Roman tradition mentioned by Ballian, but can be traced back to illustrations from Surkh Kotal, a Kushan city in present-day Afghanistan, Sasanian and 7th century Umayyad models. Hamilton suggests that the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty called for the creation of an official style of Umayyad portraiture and refers to the coinage of Mu'awiya (r. 661-80 CE) and of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (r. 685-705 CE), where a standing caliph is depicted showing a close similarity to coins of previous eras, e.g. the Kushan coins of Kanishka I.[200] (figs. 10f to 10h)

[196] Hamilton 1959, p. 228.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Hamilton 1959, p. 229.
[199] Ballian 2012, p. 207.
[200] Hamilton 1959, p. 230.

Rowland sees the fragmentary sculptural depictions of Kanishka I from Surkh Kotal, a Kushan city in present-day Afghanistan, beyond the tradition of India and Gandhara.[201] He views similarities in 'frontality and centrality, the upright posture, the sword and elaborately decorated garment' to the Parthian bronze statue of the duke of Shami and the portraits of the kings from Hatra.[202] Hamilton compares the depiction of the ruler at Khirbet al-Mafjar to the statue of 'King Uthal of Hatra' as well.[203] (fig. 10e)

Actually, it could be compared to a large number of antique statues and faces. The dress and the posture are very close to Kushan and Sasanian prototypes, the face and the headdress though are completely different (figs. 10g and 10h).
I agree with Hamilton in that 'it probably is in the tradition of portraiture of a higher technical order'[204] and tend to relate the image of the face to the antique type of depictions of philosophers. Which reappear frequently over the span of centuries in religious depictions (Apa Schenute) as well as secular portraits like the head of a Greek Philosopher from the National Museum in Athens (fig. 10c).

[201] Rowland 1970, p. 81.
[202] Ibid.
[203] http://www.artehistoria.jcyl.es/v2/obras/14220.htm.
[204] Hamilton 1959, p. 229.

5.2 Simply A question of style? Architecture and Desire

Mohammed Hamdouni Alami relies on a story by al-Tabari about patrons and masons. The crucial point is the question about the two parties' extent of influence on the creative process, started by a desire of the owner who needs support in expressing his imagination. Alami mentiones that a poem by Ibn al-Jahm (around 804 – 863 CE) 'about the perception and the function of architecture' introduces the 'notion of desire for architecture, and compares it with the desire for women and wine'.[205]
We may apply these thoughts to the patron and craftsmen of Khirbet al-Mafjar. Hamilton finds a demand for certain detailed patterns by the Arab nobility unlikely he is of the opinion that it was the 'craftsmen themselves whose more perceptive sense appraised and adopted, in their various spheres, the commonplace of Iranian ornament'. The Umayyad patron only intermingled 'where art touched on fashion, on the dignity of state, the renown of arms or the glory of religion'.[206] It is very likely that craftsmen from a wide area worked at Khirbet al-Mafjar, remains of inscribed stones have shown that they spoke Greek and Arabic and probably other languages. The patron of Khirbet al-Mafjar most likely requested the production of a princely statue in Sasanian style, with its very own characteristics, no copy. Let us assume the sculptor of the statue of the Caliph was Greek speaking and trained in Greek philosophy and art, it is not unlikely that he formed the Caliph's head in the shape of the Greek Philosophers' heads (fig. 10c).

Hillenbrand assumes basically local Christians executing 'the old-established, hereditary crafts'.[207] On a special occasion he cites al-Tabari who reports that al-Walid II sent to eastern Persia for sculptures of mountain goats, gazelles, deer and lions.[208]

Beckwith and Creswell mention Copts, Syrians and Mesopotamians in the service of the Umayyads, they 'even asked the Emperor at Constantinople for workmen and materials'[209].

The Sasanian influence is widely mentioned. Rina Talgam stresses the use of stucco in the Umayyad palaces, which obviously was a novelty in Palestine. No stucco had been used there in pre-Islamic building.[210]
Hamilton says the same: 'As a medium for sculpture plaster was a material which had never before found favour with Palestinian builders. In a country which abounded in fine building stone, available in all degrees of hardness, and with timber readily brought from Lebanon or Cyprus, if not still abundant in the mountains further south, plaster offered no advantage but that of cheapness and speed of production, qualities not necessarily attractive to craftsmen working in an ancient tradition' [211].

[205] Alami 2011, p. 31.
[206] Hamilton 1953, p. 53.
[207] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 43.
[208] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 8.
[209] Beckwith 1963, p. 28.
[210] Talgam 2004, p. 52.
[211] Hamilton 1959, p. 156.

Hamilton traces the use of stucco back to Sasanian Iraq and Persia, he generally views the use of stucco reliefs and sculptures in the round as substitution of earlier flat paintings.

Rina Talgam speaks of the chemical structure of the sculpture at Khirbat al-Minya and points out the difference to that of the late Umayyad sculpture, in that the first one is of a lighter hue, suggesting that it is 'pure plaster of Paris' - the hemihydrate of gypsum, it obviously has been used in Palestine and Syria in the early Islamic period. In the late Umayyad desert castles Sasanian-type stucco has been used.[212]

[212] Talgam 2004, p. 34.

6. Female sculpture and painting, similarities to the stucco figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar

6.1 Archaeological evidence

Emphasis is put on the female sculptures from Khirbet al-Mafjar (fig. 11). The question is - what happened around them? Where do we find figures with similar features and what was the context, what kind of ideas do they materialize?
The approach is in the first place a visual one. Eventhough the main point of interest lies in the sculptures, paintings, foremost the female mural or floor depictions existent at that time have to be mentioned as well.

By looking beyond Khirbet al-Mafjar, to the sculpture that was found along the trade routes, we will find a large number of illustrations dating from the 8th century CE showing similar features in adornment and/or posture.

During my research I did not find female figures in the round in Byzantine art with stylistic features of the figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar, and I agree with Myriam Rosen-Ayalon that Byzantine secular art is 'not widely preserved'[213]. The impact of the iconoclastic period (730-787 CE) has to be taken into consideration. Cyril Mango points out that the prevailing idea of the role of religion in Byzantium was 'One God, one empire, one religion'[214]. Given the strengh of the church, there was no need for what might have been considered 'pagan sculpture', not even in a secular context. This environment would hardly have welcomed an iconography of fecundity and joy. Doris Behrens-Abuseif points out the illustration of the unveiled physical charms of the Umayyad female figures of the 8th century CE, they are not to be found in Western countries at the time.[215]
Due to this partial result of my research there will not be any further examination of Byzantine sculpture within this paper.

To the far east of the Umayyad realm the 8th century Tang female depictions predominantly do not have anything in common with the style and iconography of the female sculptures at Khirbet al-Mafjar. So they won't be examined neither. Obviously the Tang had soon developed their own distintictive artistic style which penetrated life in their realm. The female figures are depicted solidly dressed, hardly showing parts of uncovered skin.

The Indian influence on sculpture's 'realism' during the reign of Emperor Xuan Zong (r. 713-756 CE), as noted in connection with the Tianlongshan Grottoes, does mainly apply to the depictions of Boddhisatvas.[216] (fig. 12) The emperor obviously favoured Taoism.

[213] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 304.
[214] Ibid., Mango 2007.
[215] Behrens 1999, p. 73.
[216] Brinker/Goepper, 1980, p. 194.

There is a statue of uncertain date depicting an 8th century imperial consort, Yang Guifei (fig. 12a), with stylistc features at least showing basic similarities to the statues from Khirbet al-Mafjar. Yang Guifei is known as one of the four most beautiful women of ancient China. These consorts allegedly were full-figured in appearance and wellknown singers and poets who were acquainted with the rules to the drinking games and had excellent table manners.[217]

The style of the figure is reduced in adornment and can be considered in the spirit of the 'Tang' sculptural mode. This may be seen as a consequence of the Tang court's initiative of minimizing the power of the predominat position of Buddhistic monasteries located in the empire.[218]

There had been numerous Buddhistic establishments along the major trade routes within the Tang realm, Chanton alone has been counting for 91 Buddhistic monasteries. Some of them were in the size of parts of the city.

[217] Charles 2002.

[218] Rosenfield 1967, p.229, 'In China , the numerous Maitreya images at Yün Kang and Lung Men give graphic evidence that he was among the most attractive of the Buddhist deities before the Tang period'.

6.2 Sculpture

6.2.1 Umayyad female depictions

As far as Umayyad female depictions are concerned, we have sculptures that were found at Qasyr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, Mshatta and Khirbet al-Mafjar as well as paintings from Quasyr ‘Amra. Qasyr al-Hayr al-Gharbi is dated to the reign of Hisham and Quasyr ‘Amra is in any case earlier than Khirbet al Mafjar. Mshatta is seen, as well as Khirbet al-Mafjar, as a product of al-Walid II. Given this chronology is true, if we now compare the earlier depictions to the later ones, we will see that they generally differ from each other in style but show some attributes that are alike.

The female sculpture from the castles to the West (Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi) and to the East (Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi) of Palmyra resembles in general the Roman style of the Palmyrenean human depictions, which is, possibly, indicated by the geographical proximity of both sites. As far as the stylistic features of the female figures from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi are concerned, I don’t see them connected to the ones at Khirbet al-Mafjar. E.g. the female bust (fig. 13a) from the façade wears a crown, earrings and has long braids, as we find them in depictions of Aphrodite Andyromene, as described below. She does not expose her breasts, they are partly covered by her hands and the objects she holds - a bird in the left and one of her braids in the right hand.

Around 170 sculptures and fragments have been found at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi. On the exterior façade of the main entrance to the palace ten high relief women figures, almost completely in the round were displayed at various heights. Diana Bakour sees them as far as iconography is concerned as ‘a continuity of Classical civilization’[219] – of Greek and Roman styles. For Myriam Rosen-Ayalon ‘such prominent positioning surely reflects a pre-Islamic tradition, but the figural repertoire clearly indicates a new and quite different interpretation - the female figure is depicted in a fuller, ‘fleshier’ manner.[220]

In Grabar’s view the sculpture from Qasr al-Hayr is an ‘imitation of Palmyrene sculpture’[221]. (fig. 13c)

Rosen-Ayalon argues that artistic depictions of women in Umayyad palaces are represented at Qusayr 'Amra in Jordan, Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi in Syria and at Khirbet al-Mafjar in Palestine. Not only though, in addition there are the female sculptures in the round found at Mshatta, which are currently in Berlin (Museum für Islamische Kunst) and Amman (Citadel, Archaeological Museum), (figs. 14a and 14b).
I agree when Myriam Rosen-Ayalon sees ‘the female depictions at the ‘three’ Umayyad desert palaces as quite different from one another’[222].

[219] Bakour 2006, p. 289.
[220] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 294.
[221] Grabar 1964, p. 78.
[222] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 302.

The origin of the iconography originates in her view in 'Byzantine civilization, the legacy of Western culture up to that time, and Sasanian civilization, the custodian of the legacy of Mesopotamian-Iranian culture in the period of the rise of Islam'.[223]
The paintings of women at Qusayr 'Amra (fig. 15) will be discussed later on.

As far as the shape of the fragments of the sculptures from Mshatta is concerned, they are preserved basically from the navel to the knees. The basic run of lines it is similar to the one in the paintings at Qusayr 'Amra. The hips, pubic region and buttocks are full, round and defined by distinctly carved lines. A small piece of drapery is loosely hanging from the thighs. On the left side a small basket is held in the hand (fig. 14a).

[223] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 302.

6.2.2 Khirbet al-Mafjar

Donald Whitcomb noted that the most reliable source for the female sculpture in the round at Khirbet al-Mafjar to this day is the excavation report by R.W. Hamilton.
I have vistited the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, which houses the majority of sculptures from Khirbet al-Mafjar and got some impression of the sculptures in the round from the half day visit. Thus I rely on the description by Hamilton as he renders a representation of the figures found by him, freshly unearthed from the sands of the desert and will add what I see now, at a much later stage.

Hamilton distinguished, as far as their location is concerned, between the 'palace girl' and the 'girls from the bath'.
The female figures in the lobby of the main residential building (the palace) were displayed at an elevated position enshrined by decorated niches, they are around on metre high, one of them has been preserved (figs. 11b-d).
In the drum-wall of the atrium to the bathhouse, female sculptures in the round of the same size have been found (figs. 11a,e,f). They show slightly different features on the surface, the texture, the form and the posture are in principal identical. These figures and male sculptures occupied the niches of the drum-wall alternately (fig. 7c).

According to Hamilton the palace girl has 'the same bulging eyelids' as the Caliph and eyebrows incised like his.[224] He suggests that the Caliph and the palace girl were carved by the same hand. Whereas the 'bath girls' were carved by a different hand, they show 'no marked difference in style except in the modelling of the eyes - the girls show a more natural merging of the eyelids in the contours of the face. Their eyebrows were painted but not incised'.[225]
With regard to the style of the female sculpture he sees literally, 'no essential difference between the flower-girl or dancer or courtesan recovered from the palace entrance hall and the four or five similar girls, or fragments of them, found in the bath porch'.[226]

From top down the female sculptures show following features:

The hair was painted black, it 'was dressed, with slight variations, in three twists descending on each side of a parting covered by a rosette'.[227]

Hamilton seems to be certain that the headdress of the female statues made of their own hair. Be it their own hair or a kind of cap, we do not find such a headdress with the other figures at Khirbet al-Mafjar.

'The eyebrows, eyelids, pupils, and inside of the nostrils were also black.
Each figure wore big globular yellow earrings, bangles on the wrists and anklets.
The lips were red.

[224] Hamilton 1959, p. 234.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Hamilton 1959, P. 233.
[227] Ibid.

Each figure had a crescent-shaped necklace of black and red flowers or beads painted on the chest.
Folds of fat on the throat added to the plumpness most pleasing to the eastern eyes.
Three creases marked the muscles or fat about the midriffs of these figures;' [228]

Stephen Zwirn observes regarding the crescent shape of the necklace that the crescent, an important symbol in Islam, 'had had a long history throughout western Asia; worn on a necklace it survived into this period as an apotropaion, an object to avert evil'[229].

The female figures wear long skirts with a distinct hem encircling the hips and a diminutive one running from the navel straight down to the ankles, thus dividing the skirt optically into two vertical parts. To the left and to the right of that central hem the textile shows incised waves.
The wavy lines in the skirts might be a representation of the sea or of water in general. They may refer to the world ocean or signify the sea over which al-Walid II rules.
The female figures at Khirbet al-Mafjar might be attributes to the influence and power of the caliph.

The figure's surface is not smooth or polished, it has an uneven appearance. The neck is wide and the different parts of their bodies are not connected in a flow. But a stiffness of their limbs can be assessed.

Hamilton concludes: 'The figures of all the girls were unnaturally squat and bulky; but as they were to be seen at a great hight that defect would not have been so obvious to an observer on the ground, content probably to note the opulent hair-style, bright colours, confident breasts and well-appointed bellies'.[230]
Myriam Rosen-Ayalon and Richard Ettinghausen detect that 'this naturalistic style in the nude, in all probability with roots in the Classical tradition, reflects a well-defined taste for plump women, as are admired in Jahiliyyah poetry'.[231]

The condition of the sculptures at the time of excavation was quite good, they were not complete though.
The palace girl 'had lost her left wrist and hand and whatever she held in it. […] One of the bath girls carried a basket of flowers in the crook of her left arm; they had yellow petals with a crimson background, and her basket was painted red over a yellow-ochre ground with dark-crimson herring-bone rom'[232] (fig. 11e).

Hillenbrandt suggests on the basis of the cup-bearer figures mentioned in the anecdotes told about al-Walid II that 'the statues of semi-nude girls at Khirbet al-Mafjar bore flagons of wine in their outstreched hands, as do their Sasanian predecessors on many a gilded ewer'[233] and points out the possible Dionysiac context.
There is no archaeological evidence for this.

[228] Hamilton 1959, p. 234.
[229] Zwirn 2012, p. 189.
[230] Hamilton 1959, p. 234.
[231] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 293.
[232] Hamilton 1959, p. 234.
[233] Hillenbrand 1982, p. 13.

Rosen-Ayalon ties in with Hillenbrand's statement: 'Such an iconography directly reflects Sasanian prototypes. This general comparison has led to the suggestion that the Khirbat al-Mafjar ladies originally held a cup of wine in their second hand (for various arms are missing from the Mafjar sculptures), as did their Sasanian counterparts'. [234]

Rosen-Ayalon stresses that the shape of the body of the Sasanian female depiction is more delicate, 'lithe women, often sinuously dancing'. [235]
Rina Talgam sees a close link to Sassanian sculpture as well, concerning the type and the large number of statues. A comparison to the figurative sculpture in Hajiabad is given by her at this point, and she points out the incongruity of dimension with the sculpture in the round at Khirbat al-Mafjar and the Sasanian low relief depictions. [236]
Apart from the outstretched hands and the smooth and flexible appearance of the female depictions on Sasanian Silverware, similar dress and jewelry is found (fig. 16a).

Basically, the three-dimensional figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar have a tendency to stand free in the room.
The niches serve less as standing aid, but accentuate the three-dimensional shape of the presented. The figure fills the recess and exits therefrom into the room. Although the sculptures have enough space around them, they don't use it for movement. Rigid and unemotional they stand in their place. Any individual dynamic is missing, the exemplary bearing, which their creator intended for them, remains. This implicates that it is not the depiction of individuality which is in demand, but figures with standardized features, that were reproduced by a model.
Nevertheless they show a certain presence or charisma, as if they had a soul, given to them by their creator (fig. 11e).

Their bouffant form is not singular in the early 8th century CE as will see shortly. Asian, e.g. Cambodian female sculptures, of the same period, begin to show the aforementioned stiffness and opulence.

What do the female depictions from Khirbet al-Mafjar symbolize? Are the slave girls, donors, goddesses or simply attendants without function?
Doris Behrens-Abuseif quotes, in connection with the female depictions from Khirbet al-Mafjar, al-Jahiz concerning the reason for choosing beautiful slave girls as musicians and singers. The reason is that the singing female beauty appeals to three senses, which are sight, sound and touch. Behrens-Abuseif thus sees the 'slave girls' as incarnation of 'perfect seduction'.[237]
One of the great works of Arabic prose is al-Jahiz's 'Epistle on singing Girls', he narrates as follows[238]: 'A caliph, or someone else in a comparable position of power and influence, used never to be without a slave-girl standing behind him to wave fly-whisk and fan, and another to hand him things, in a public audience in the presence of other men'.[239]

[234] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 300.
[235] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 301.
[236] Talgam 2004, p. 59.
[237] Behrens-Abuseif 1999, p. 73.
[238] Translated by A.F.L. Beeston.
[239] Al-Jahiz 1980, p. 20.

This would not be the case with the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar though. At least one of them carries flowers in a rather stiff, bent forward bearing. This posture and the position of the female sculptures high above the entrance do not seem to be deemed to evoke sexual appetite but rather support the idea of offering flowers and fruits of the earth in general, which shall always be abundant in the Caliph's realm. The firm breasts indicate that the women were young and thus symbolize fertility.
They could be seen as representatives of a grand ceremony receiving the guests. Large, wide-open eyes invite us to participate in the banquet. The occasion may be manifold - hunting, diplomacy and pure pleasure were part of courtly ceremony. Rosen-Ayalon attributes a mythological association to the Sasanian figures: 'Such roles, however, are entirely out of place under Islam, and here their role was clearly to extend a pleasing welcome to those entering the palace or bathhouse. Whether courtesans, concubines, 'filles des joie', or otherwise, they are surely to be associated with the pleasures of the Umayyad court-a life, as described by Hamilton.[240] There is no evidence to assume any 'divine' interpretation of the figures.[241] A taste for a new sort of female figure can clearly be distinguished, in comparison with that found in Sasanian art'.[242]

The female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar are not identical, on the other hand, they do not demonstrate a certain individual character either. It is hard to tell whom the sculptors had in mind in the execution of their work. I see a strong parallel in the Kushan figures as described by Rosenfield: 'In only a few instances did the sculptors of these images attempt a true portrait. They were much more concerned with symbolizing the act of devotion - with exalting the object of devotion – rather than with the individuality of the devotee or the minutiae of his dress. Artist and patron alike were usually satisfied with a generalized type of both male and female figure'.[243]
I am speaking only of the 'formation process', the stylistic features of the body and dress of the two groups of donors are different. Male and female Kushan donors are often depicted in densely populated reliefs. They are sometimes royals, dedicated laymen, monks and are generally dressed in Indo-Scythian style. They all have one thing in common - they carry flowers and, most likely, other gifts.

What donors as well as fertility goddesses symbolize is the principle of abundance. Donors do this in another light - in veneration, presenting what has been formed by another creator - whereas abundance emanates from the fertility goddess herself.

The elevated position and the size of the female figures indicate that they are not attendants but images symbolizing prosperity in the Umayyad realm, thus underlining the legitimacy of the ruler.

[240] Hamilton 1988.
[241] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 302.
[242] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p.300.
[243] Rosenfield 1967, p. 215.

6.2.3 Pre Islamic Models

Robert Hoyland cites Herodotus: 'The Arabs deem none other to be gods save Dionysus and the heavenly Aphrodite'.[244]
However, pre-Islamic society on the Arabian Peninsula was not isolated, according to Robert Irwin: 'The culture was distinctive and well developed, and the peninsula saw the rise of a number of kingdoms, major cities, and artistic styles'.[245] This is confirmed by recent archaeological investigation.[246]
Beyond the Arabian Peninsula, the cities of Petra and Palmyra were Arabian centers of trade and cultural exchange next to the main trade routes leading from China and India to the Mediterranean.
At the Synagogue of Dura Europos, not far from Palmyra in present-day Syria, an Egyptian princess standing naked in the Nile is shown in one of the wall paintings. She is bejewelled by a necklace, earrings, armlets and bracelets and graced by the little Moses in her arm. This decoration is again very close to the adornment of the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafar. Erwin R. Goodenough, who has studied the 'Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue', sees a goddess of love - the Anahita-Venus, symbolizing the renewal of life, fertility and the female principle, in her.[247]
The Citadel of Amman, where an Umayyad complex is situated, shows traces of settlement extending over several thousand years.
Some of the portraits from the 8th century BCE that have been found at the Jebel al-Qala (Citadel), the highest hill in Amman, they represent kings and gods, who are again adorned with hair-band, earrings and armlets in the already mentioned way.[248]

A depiction of an Egyptian King of Tanis, offering wine, shows a posture similar to the figures of Khirbet al-Mafjar. The torso is slightly bent forward, the upper arm(s)-one is missing-touch the torso and the forearm(s) are outstreched at a 90 degree angle to the body. The King of Tanis holds a winecup in his hand, one of the women at Khirbet al-Mafjar holds flowers in the crook of her arm and what else we don't know. Hillenbrand and Rosen-Ayalon have suggested that they held wine jars. It is more than interesting though, that the Kings of Tanis were closely related to Palestine through marriage, trade and war.

Female depictions on the floor have been known in various forms, in mosaic or painted, and occurred again at the desert castle of Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi. For Rosen-Ayalon, 'these floor paintings draw on both the Classical and the Sasanian traditions'.[249] There is a depiction of 'India' suggesting abundance in the mosaic floor of the Villa Romana del Casale, Sicily. Her attributes are plants and animals. 'India' is a beautiful young woman with opulent hair and sinuous forms. She wears earrings, a necklace, armlets, and bracelets (fig. 17).

Pre-Islamic figures of women from Asia, in particular from India, show features that are very close to Umayyad forms, as we will see later on.

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[244] Hoyland 1997, p.107, '… and this is noted by subsequent Greek authors (Herodotus, Histories, 3.VIII; other authors quoted by Segal, 'Arabs in Syriac Literature', 112-13.)'.
[245] Irwin 1997 p. 30.
[246] Ballian 2012, p. 202.
[247] Bickermann 1965, pp. 131-134.
[248] Schick 2010, p. 44.
[249] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 294.

Aphrodite

The ancient Inanna (Sumerian) and the Accadian Ishtar were both symbols of love and fertility. The goddesses appeared as Aphrodite in Greece and as Venus in Rome. 'Venus' obviously derives from the Sanskrit 'vanas' meaning 'beauty, grace and charm' as suggested by Miroslav Marcovich.[250]
Aphrodite took many forms over the centuries but the main symbolic values - beauty, love and abundance - are associated with each type.
More over, the goddess of love is often adorned by rich jewelry and accompanied by attributes like the dove as love bird, fruits and flowers. She is usually depicted in connection with a shell symbolizing the ocean, very often in a niche setting.

Be it Venus rising from the sea showing the charms of her body and wringing her wet hair- 'Aphrodite Anadyomene', or the 'Ashtoret-Aphrodite' with an Oriental garden full of fruits and roses,[251] the attributes originally accompanying Aphrodite were widespread with female depictions of the 8th century.
One of the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar is depicted with flowers in the crook of her arm, Helen C. Evans compares the gesture to Venus who 'extends an anemone to Adonis'[252].

There is a beautiful depiction of 'Aphrodite Anadyomene' in an Eastern Mediterranean pendant which dates from the 7th century CE. The goddess is surrounded by a deeply blue shell (fig. 18a). She wears long braids as the female figure from Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi does (fig. 13a). A drapery is loosely arranged below the pubic region comparable to the sculpture from Mshatta (fig. 14a).

Obviously many such models, acting as symbols of fertility and abundance, were in circulation in the late antique world as stated by Marcovich: 'The significant point is that it was this type of the nude Venus, caught in her private boudoir, greatly influenced the iconography of the goddess in late antiquity. This type of the goddess of love and fertility was extremely popular along the Oriental periphery of the Roman Empire and was meant to ensure love, happiness, and many children to every family keeping such a statuette in its household.'[253]

The late antique mosaic of the Three Graces in the Graeco-Roman bathhouse of Korykos (Narlikuyu), Turkey, shows the goddesses wearing necklaces, armlets, bracelets and anklets[254], just as the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar do. They are completely naked apart from the jewelry, doves and flowers are at their sides.

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[250] Zwirn 2012, p. 198: 'Her gesture, the shell, and the dark blue color refer to the legend of the goddess's birth from the ocean's depths. The figure's pose and the drapery over one leg imitate Greco-Roman statues of the popular Anadyomene type.' compare segall 1938.
[251] Marcovich 1996, pp.45, 47: 'As it happened, during the second millennium B.C. the cult of the mighty goddess Ishtar spread rapidly throughout the Middle East-from Mesopotamia to Canaan, Syria, Palestine, Phoenicia, and Arabia.'
[252] Evans 2012, p. 22.
[253] Marcovich 1996, p. 55, 'as can be seen from an Oriental beauty from Amman dressed only in her jewelry and from a number of similar ones; LIMC, Aphrodite in peripheria orientali, 111, and also 22, 24, 44, 100, 107, and 112'.
[254] Bingöl 1997, p. 136.

One of them wears a breast girdle, probably a chastity belt, which is sometimes seen with female depictions of goddesses, apart from the crossed cords on the torso, which appear frequently, indicating that the depicted is a goddess. Examples are to be found e.g. at Qusayr 'Amra or Heracleopolis Magna.

A small golden badge (6,3 x 2,7 cm), showing Aphrodite, has been found around the city of Taxila, an archaeological site in the North of Pakistan (fig. 18b). It resembles the ones from Tillya Tepe, an archaeological site in northern Afghanistan.
Gandhara's territory was heavily frequented by traders and all kinds of travellers. The main overland trade routes, connecting the West with the Far East passed through the area.[255]
Jewelry from Taxila was found in the South of India and in Sri Lanka. The pieces of jewelry include forms and motives from western Antiquity which were regionally modified.[256]

Dionysos

Al-Jahiz reports in the Kitab al-Taj that the consumption of wine by the Sasanian King Bahram Gur was part of the court ceremony.[257] Such a predilection for wine in the Sasanian realm is attested as well in Firdawsi's Shahnameh, the book of the kings.[258]
Richard Ettinghausen analyses the manifold Dionysiac motifs on Sassanian silver ware. These motifs are found on ewers and bottles, used for pouring wine, as well as on plates and depict airy clothed figures, male and female. They wear 'rich jewelry and a hold a wide range of vegetal offerings in both hands'.[259] (fig. 19)
Ettinghausen suggests due to the presence of birds, vines, grapes, vine leaves and other plants and animals 'a specific connection with more general Iranian fertility beliefs'.[260] The female Dionysiac entourage, the maenads, are seen as Iranian reinterpretation, as transformation 'into figures of fertility cult, possibly priestresses or devotees connected with the main Iranian goddess Anahita. […] Thus while the iconographic and conceptual connections with an iconographic Dionysiac type are clear, the ultimate meaning of these images remains hypothetical'.[261]
This transformation did only take place with the female figures, the basic Dionysiac group remained all the same.[262]
Ettinghausen refers to the female figures of the bath hall as 'the slave girls high up in the Porch' who are 'part of the courtly setting' and 'resemble remarkably the female figures of Dionysiac origin'.[263]

[255] Rosen Stone 2008, p. 81.
[256] Rosen Stone 2008, p. 82
[257] Ettinghausen 1972, p. 7.
[258] Yarshater Shahnameh, p. 45.
[259] Ettinghausen 1972, p. 6.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ettinghausen 1972, p. 65.

Meands, besides musicians and other figures, perform different activities, they are dancing as well as offering flowers. In these Dionysiac scenes the grapevine is an essential component.
Helen C. Evans suggests that: 'Figures associated with the realm of Dionysos, god of wine, are found in various media. Many Early Islamic works continued the tradition of displaying his grapevines growing from pots or alone, probably to represent a general sense of prosperity and plenty'.[264]

It is interesting to see that the 'Female Dancer' in the Silver plate (fig. 16b) wears a necklace, armlets, two bracelets on each side, earrings, anklets and full hair like the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar do. She obviously is surrounded by a grapevine and does, in contrast to the female sculptures in Khirbet al-Mafjar, not have full breasts but reminds one, concerning the shape of her body, of the Qusayr Amra paintings and the sculptures of Mshatta. She seems to be undressed and the hair next to the ear is formed in the same way – that is to say in horizontal circles - as with the female sculpture of Khirbet al-Mafjar. This style of hair can also be observed with 'Anahita' (fig. 16a) who wears a diaphanous skirt with a hem and the Coptic depiction of the nymph on a seamonster (fig. 23a).
Concerning the posture, I share Rosen-Ayalon's perception, these Sasanian female depictions are lithesome compared to the ones from Khirbet al-Mafjar. In the view of Anna Ballian the 'half-naked dancing girls still recall classical Maenads'[265].
Ines Bogensberger accentuates the frequency of depictions of dancers in dionysiac context on late antique textiles.[266]

The female figure on the Sasanian Ewer from the Cleveland Museum of Art may be connected to the 'fertility cult of the goddess Anahita as well as a symbol for the renewal of life and the power of the king. This iconography was often found on ewers used in Roman and Zoroastrian seasonal festivals'[267]. The ewer itself is said to derive from Roman-Byzantine forms.

Late Roman braziers have been the model to an 8th century brazier found in an Umayyad storeageroom at al-Fudayn, Jordan. It is of rectangular shape with arcaded sides, which are composed of six niches respectively. The decoration consists of miniature pomegranates and small figures holding various objects in their hands, they are bejeweled like the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar.[268] (fig. 20)
Oleg Grabar suggests paralles between the bronze brazier excavated at al-Fudayn and 'Khirbat al-Mafjar', leaving open what exactly he refers to at Khirbet al-Mafjar.[269]

In Central Asia Dionysiac motifs are widespread. They can be found in Gandharan art, e.g. jewelry found at Taxila or in Buddhistic reliefs.[270]

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[264] Evans 2012, p. 9.
[265] Ballian 2012, p. 207.
[266] Bogensberger 2012, p. 96.
[267] Evans 2012, p. 31.
[268] Ballian 2012, p. 212.
[269] Grabar 2006, p. 3.
[270] Rosen Stone 2008, p. 83.

Martha Carter points out that there has existed an ancient regional tradition of growing wine in the Hindu Kush. The wine ritual has been devoted to the Hindu deity Indra.[271] Carter insists that the Indian wine ritual does not go back to the cult of Dionysos but solely has been visualized by western Dionysiac motives at certain times and regions.
In a Buddhist context a story of worldly desires may be referred to. The subject of the Sanskrit epic, composed by the Buddhist monk Asvaghosa, is Buddha's half brother Nanda.[272]
Nanda was obsessed by mundane pleasures and thus taken to Indra's heaven by Buddha, where he saw the heavenly virgins. In anticipation of sensual adventures he turns to Buddhism and thus, ironically, looses his desire.[273] Nanda may be viewed as a parallel to al-Walid II concerning the favoring of worldly treats. But is there any way of interpreting the female sculptures from Khirbet al-Mafjar as heavenly virgins? Apart from their elevated position I do not see any indication for such a construction.

[271] Rosen Stone 2008, p. 84.
[272] Young 2004, p. 97.
[273] Rosen Stone 2008, p. 84.

6.2.4 Along the trade routes

6.2.4.1 Cambodia

Along the Mekong River new states emerged, the Kings of the Pre-Angkor period (7th and early 8th centuries CE) presented themselves as devine, universal kings, based on the idea of rulership as described by Sanskrit texts (chakravartin). Hindu and Buddhist traditions have been transmitted through trade.

The Pre-Angkor period is regarded as a time of search for new forms of expression in relief as well as in three dimensional forms. Various modes of depiction were present. The female figures though tended to loose their sinuous, lively touch and sense of movement in the 7th and 8th centuries CE.[274] (figs. 21a and 21b)

The revaluation of Khmer sculpture is a challenge due to the fact that the heads of the 'divine' figures were regularly captured in the course of hostile actions with the intention of depriving them of their protective powers.[275] Useful in this context is the material at hand in the respective location, sandstone in various colours and forms is available in many parts of Cambodia. Figures made of bronze and clay have been detected as well.

The quality of Khmer sculpture lies in austerity and functionality.[276] Frontality and clarity in alignment are other central features. The earliest female sculptures in the round date from the 7th century CE. They frequently represent the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, symbolizing luck, love, fertility and prosperity.
Rybakowa finds that there is nothing Indian in these depictions anymore. After the adaption of Indian elements an autonomous creative process had taken place in Cambodian sculpture.[277]

Two distinct qualities in Cambodian sculpture may be defined. One group shows characteristics stemming from India whereas other figures are determined by their very own typical features. Of course, as noted above, there always is some kind of tradition and exchange of ideas, be it Greek or Indian or else.

As mentioned above, the appearance of stiffness and opulence in Cambodian female sculpture is particularly striking when considering the lissome shape of their 'immediate' predecessors.

This tendency of sculpture in the round towards frontality and straight lines, the appearance of stiffness and volume occurring in the 7th and 8th centuries in parts of Cambodia, may also be observed with the sculptures in the round from Khirbet al-Mafjar.

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[274] Rybykowa 1985, p. 93.
[275] Rybykowa 1985, p. 78.
[276] Rybykowa 1985, pp. 80, 81.
[277] Rybykowa, 1985, p. 88.

6.2.4.2 Central Asia - Gandhara

Gandhara denotes a geographical region which is part of today's Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as a cultural area, determined by a certain artistic style, which extends beyond the geographical boundary. Various influences can be observed in the art of Gandhara, which are due to an open minded attitude towards other cultures and religions.
The Achaemenids found their way into the region around the 6th century BCE. Following the invasions of Alexander the Great in 327 BCE and the Indian King Chandragupta Maurya in 305 BCE, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Greek, and Kushan kings ruled over the Gandharan territories. 'Under their patronage emerged a distinct style of sculpture, popularly known as the Greco-Roman, Buddhist or Gandhara art. It was a product of the combination of Hellenistic, West Asiatic and native elements. Greek and Roman techniques, modified according to Indian requirements, were employed in fashioning the Gandhara sculpture which truly represents Indian culture in a Western garb.'[278]
In the 5th century CE Gandhara was seized by the Huns who revived Hinduism. The Arabs did not manage to capture Gandhara which existed till the 11th century CE.

Rowland sees a considerable influence of the arts of Gandhara on the various styles that developed along the trade routes.[279] Hellenistic, Roman and Indian artistic styles amalgamate in the sculpture of Gandhara. The early Gandharan depiction of the Buddha shows transformed Roman garment combined with Indian iconography.
Gandharan images of the Bodhisattva, seen as predecessors of numerous buddhistic saints in Central Asia by Benjamin Rowland, show the dress of Indian Rajahs of the Kushan period.[280]

The early Kushan period is marked by the reign of king Kanishka I (127-150 CE) who had considerable influence on the development of art and culture. Gandharan art prospered, finely worked sculpture has been created. Mahayana, Buddhism's Greater Vehicle, penetrated the Kushan realm and Buddhist sculpture workshops flourished. Kanishka I is mentioned as important sponsor of Buddhism in the Rajatarangini, a 12th century chronicle from Kashmir, as well as in Chinese texts.[281]

Christian Luczanits suggests that the population of Gandhara was Indian, since the region was part of the Mauryan Empire in the 3rd century BCE and Vedic culture was traded through this realm in the 2nd century BCE. The Dynasty of the Kushans, especially at the time of king Kanishka I had established an environment that allowed Gandharan art to prosper. Kanishka's words in the Rabatak-Inscription refer to the religion of state, Zoroastrism, and the extension of his realm, far into the north of India. Alfred Foucher speaks in 1905 of the strong Greek influence on Gandharan art.[282]

[278] http://ccrtindia.gov.in/buddhist%20sculp.htm.
[279] Rowland 1970, p. 24.
[280] Ibid., Luczanits 2008, p. 77.
[281] Cribb Joe 2008.
[282] Luczanits 2009, p. 16.

The Religion of the Kushans comprised a pantheon of Greek, Iranian, Hindu and Buddhist deities, which appear on the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka.[283] Rowland sees the 'picture language' of the Hellenistic world as 'completely appropriate to their needs of creating an impressive dynastic state portraiture'.[284]
Zoroastrism with the main deity Oresho was widespread in the Kushan realm and became the dominant faith in the westerly succeeding Sasanian Empire.

Vima Kadphises, the father of Kanishka I,[285] introduced gold coins following the Roman tradition. The Graeco-Iranian deites were replaced by the Zoroastrian deity Oesho, decpicted in the style of the Hindu god Shiva.[286] Vasudeva I was the last of the 'Great Kushan Kings' (fig. 10g).
The royal Kushan portraits of Kanishka I and Vima Kadphises were carved in stone in contrast to the stucco portrait of the caliph at Khirbet al-Mafjar.
A remarkable similarity exists, Rosenfield observes that 'the entire series of Kushan sculptured portraits is detemined by the effects of a symmetrical, almost heraldic frontality, static and at times awesome, mitigating most of the sense of three-dimensional depth in the statues'[287].
This is also true of the statue of the caliph from Khirbet al-Mafjar whose Sasanian influence has already been described. Concerning the Iranian touch, Rosenfield further suggests relating to the Kushan royal portraits that 'on the one hand, they share the vitality of the early colossal Yaksha and Bodhisattva figures; on the other, they show the effects of the wide-open path of cultural influence from Iran and Southwest Asia'.[288]

Lenzen views the 'central composition, the turn toward frontality, and symmetry of arrangement' as development of the first and second centuries CE, 'in Occident as well as Orient'. These principles are illustrated on the coins of the Kushan and Sasanian kings and are represented in the sculpture of the seventh and eight centuries CE.[289]

As documented in the decoration of the stupas at Sanchi and Barhut in the 2nd century BCE pictorial storytelling was en vogue. Artisans based their work mainly on the tales about Buddha's previous lives (Jataka tales). The Yakshas and Nagas, ancient nature spirits, were taken as model, inspiring not only the visualistion of female depiction but images of the Buddha and Bodhisattavas as well.

Early Yaksas were found in Parkham, Mathura and Pataliputra in the Ganges valleys.[290]

The yaksa couple Hariti and Pancika from Sahri Bahlol as well as the Hariti from Skarah Dheri (both in Northern Pakistan close to the Landul/Kabul river) wear diaphanous cloth in contrast to the yaksi from Sonkh in Mathura (on the banks of the Yamuna river, India). They are all dating from the 2nd century CE and are over one meter in hight. The yaksis from the

[283] Rowland 1970, p.81
[284] Rowland 1970, p.viii
[285] As mentioned in the religious inscription of the Kushans found at the Afghan city of Rabatak.
[286] Callieri 2008, p.67
[287] Rosenfield 1967, p.208
[288] Rosenfield 1967, p.214
[289] Lenzen 1960, p.15
[290] Louis Frederic, Buddhism, Paris, 1995, p.22

north are made of grey schist, whereas the one from Sonkh is made of reddish sandstone, the material prevailing in the region.[291]

The Gandharan female sculptures from the north of the Kushan Empire are completely different to the ones from Mathura in the South (figs. 22a and 22b).
Whereas Hellenistic influence and a tendency towards formalism can be viewed in the stucco sculpture from the north, the stone sculpture of Mathura is of strong Indian character.
Rosenfield states the hostile attitude of Indian Brahmanical society, in the southern area around Mathura, towards the invading Kushans.[292] The workshops in Mathura were thus pushing forward their own regional style.
Stucco obviously was seldom used in the workshpos of Mathura due to the abundance of stone in the region.
Rowland sees the Gandharan stucco technique in connection with the one applied in Hadda, Afghanistan and Pakistan. [293]
Roman juvenile personifications of the four seasons with curls framing the face have been popular in the region of Gandhara. Still, drawn-out earlobes and almond-shaped eyes show an Indian influence.
Slightly extended earlobes and almond-shaped eyes can also be observed with the female figures at Khirbet al-Mafjar. Another feature similar to Gandharan forms is the asymmetry of the two halfs of the face, which allows a more lively expression of the face, as mentioned by Rowland.[294]
The Gandharan sculpture from Buthkara (fig. 22a) is depicted in a similar posture as a female figure from Khirbet al-Mafjar (fig. 11e), the head is slightly bent, both are determined by frontality and offer flowers. The former is a goddess, the latter of a profane background, still, they both offer flowers and may be seen as symbols of abundance and fertility.

Late Kushan artistic styles intermingle with the ensuing early Gupta artistic forms. The Gupta period is marked by the reign of five salient kings from 320 CE to 467 CE and existed till the middle of the 6th century. Gupta art has influenced artistic styles for centuries beyond that date.[295]
The Gupta king Chandragupta I (r.320 – 335 CE) married Kumaradevi, a Lichchavi[296] princess. They are both portrayed on coins. Kumaradevi shows the same features in adornment as the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafar do.

Hans Wilhelm Haussig notes that in Asia Minor an unbroken tradition of Hellenistic, Archemenidic and Indian elements can be observed up to the 9th century CE.[297]

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[291] http://dcmsme.gov.in/dips/15%20DIPS%20Mathura.pdf: 'During the ancient period, Mathura was an economic hub, located at the junction of important caravan routes. The soil of Mathura is mainly sandy'.
[292] Rosenfield 1967, p. 2.
[293] Rowland 1970, p. 40.
[294] Rowland 1970, p. 42.
[295] Harle 1974, p. 6.
[296] The Licchavis were the most famous clan amongst the ruling confederate clans of ancient India, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licchavi_(clan).
[297] Haussig 1988, p. 118.

6.2.4.3 Egypt/Coptic

A few remarks on the etymology of the term 'Coptic' on the basis of Muhammed Fathi Attia Khorshid's studies shall be given initially.
The word 'Coptic' is identical with the word 'Egyptian' in meaning, both are derivations from the ancient Greek 'aigypros', which is synonymous with 'Egypt' and the 'Nile'. Khorshid suggests that the terms 'Coptic Muslim', 'Muslim Egyptian' and 'Coptic Christian' are equivalent. The term 'Coptic art' is obviously a creation of seventeenth century Europe and 'does not exist in the Coptic language'.[298]

Regarding the treatment of the Copts, Khorshid cites the Egyptian Coptic historian John of Nikiu (appointed administrator of the Upper Egyptian monasteries in 696 CE) who remarkes 'that the Muslims in Egypt agreed not to seize any churches and not to interfere in any way with the Christians'.[299] As mentioned above, this liberal attitude towards the Christians was pursued in particular by the Caliph Hisham.

Copts were asked for as craftsmen. Creswell cites al-Baladhuri who relates that al-Walid I wrote to his Governor at Madina ordering him to 'demolish the mosque and to reconstruct it; He had money, mosaics and marble sent to him and eighty Rumi and Coptic craftsmen, inhabitants of Syria and Egypt'[300].

Bernhard Palme speaks of a continuity regarding the social, economic and cultural circumstances between the Justinian Period and the early Islamic time in Egypt. According to him, 'the traditions and the choice of motives and techniques were pretty much the same between the 6th and the 9th century CE, this similarity can also be observed in the Papyri'[301].

Thomas attests in her studies of 'Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture' Hellenistic forms within local traditions: 'Hellenism did not disappear in late antiquity but endured and was transformed within an international arena, even as Christianity spread at a rapid pace throughout the empire and beyond'.[302]

The Graeco-Roman influence on Coptic art is evident by looking at late Antique Egyptian sculpture and textiles. We find nymphs, river gods, goddesses, representations of Gaia, Dionysiac scenery and pomegranate trees. The pomegranate has been known as symbol for immortality since antiquity. There is a connotation of immortality in the mosaic of the diwan at Khirbet al-Mafar as well.
Motifs representing fecundity and joy were frequently used in early Muslim Egypt as they were in Late Antiquity in general. Khorshid defines 'pagan, mythological scenes drawn from the old Greek and Roman myths and cults'.[303]

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[298] Khorshid 1989, pp. 1, 3.
[299] Khorshid 1989, p. 28.
[300] Creswell 1932, Part One, pp. 156, 496, see also al-Baladhuri, Furuh al-Buldan, p. 6.1. 18-p.7,12.2.
[301] Palme 2012, p.24
[302] Thomas 2000, p. xxiv.
[303] Khorshid 1989, p. 34.

Reliefs of the Nile as river god and of Gaia/Earth were depicted in niches on the walls of large freestanding Egyptian mausolea. Thelma K. Thomas cites a 'mutal responsibility for abundance'[304] of the river god and Gaia.

The shape of the nymphs' bodies (figs. 23a and 23b), the continuous alignment, resemble the remains of the Mshatta female figures and the paintings of the Quasyr 'Amra women, who are undressed apart from their jewelry. Their bodies' shape is formed by clear lines. This run of the lines, especially in the belly, pubic and buttock region, is very characteristic of the depictions of women at Mshatta, Qusayr 'Amra, the nymph Daphne, Aphrodite and a Nereid from Herakleopolis Magna ('Ahnas' in medival Arabic).

[304] Thomas 2000, p. 66.

6.2.4.4 India

Indian female sculpture is often characterized by sensuous figures showing full breasts, a slim waist, projecting hips, an immersed navel, a clearly defined pubic region, full thighs and slim lower legs.[305]
All this is frequently inscribed in an S-shaped movement of the female depiction.
The figure usually is richly adorned, wearing earrings, bracelets, armlets and anklets.
The pinned up hair is carefully arranged.
This description of basic features is true for the female figures in various iconographic contexts, e.g 'yaksis', nature goddesses, deities of earth and fertility as well as female attendants are depicted this way.

Stella Kamrisch compares the shape of the Indian female figures to the 'proportions of the Mother-goddess' when she specifies the depiction of a woman embracing a tree, the posture is called 'Salabhanjika'. This act of touching a plant by a young woman, the Dohada rite, makes the 'asoka tree flower and the creeper priyangu put forth new blossom' [306] as lauded by the Indian Sanskrit poet Kalidasa (4th to 5th century CE).
Kamrisch clarifies: 'Her natural beauty lies in her youth and, at the same time, in her destiny of motherhood, shown by the amplitude of her hips and the rotundities of her breasts, for the figure of woman in Indian sculpture has inherited some of its attributes from Palaeolithic visions of the Great Mother'.[307]

Fertility deities, in male and female form, the tree gods - yakshis and yakshas and the serpent gods of lakes and rivers - naginis and nagas, have been venerated since ancient times. The cult can be traced back to the Indus valley civilization (3000 BCE).[308]

Besides the round curves, Kramrisch points out, that the 'navel is always clearly shown' and refers to Yoga principles (Trisikhi Brahmana Upanisad, 62-64) which state that the 'universal life force that regulates the movement of the breath is coiled around the navel'.[309]
What we see in (fig. 24b) is the 'trivali', the three delicate folds on the stomach of a beautiful young girl. In the verses of the Gatha Saptashati, on romance of folk life collected by King Hal Satavahana at the beginning of the Common Era, the trivali are considered as signs of beauty.[310] The female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar show these three folds on the stomach, they might indicate that the women are young and thus act as symbols of fertility.

The majority of Indian sculpture is in relief, forming part of a larger composition, as decoration of a stupa or a temple.

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[305] Andreae 2008, p. 54.
[306] Kramrisch 1960, p. 15.
[307] Kramrisch 1960, p. 16.
[308] Lippe 1970, p. 1.
[309] Kramrisch 1960, p. 73, 'Upanishads are the end part of the Vedas which briefly expound the philosophic principles of the Vedas and are considered the essence of the Vedas', http://www.astrojyoti.com/chandogyaupanishad.htm.
[310] Varadpande 2009, p. 50.

The Indian sculptor does, according to Stella Kramrisch, 'in his concern with the sensible universe' reach out 'not for any particular aspect of the natural objects but for the process that makes them. The Indian sculptor sees in their shape nature at work'.[311] Regarding the anonymity of the Indian artist and craftsman she states: 'As vehicles of cosmic rhythms which they communicate to their works, artists have fulfilled their function once the work is completed'.[312] The artist is described as selfless being who gives his 'best as a humble offering to God or to his patron, the king, who was an image of God'. [313]

The earliest Indian sculpture is of the Mauryan age. A striking example of craftsmanship during the Mauryan period is the 'Chauri-bearer (Yakshi) from Didarganj' (3rd-2nd century BCE). She shows a lustrous polish of the surface which is typical of the period (fig. 25).

The Allahabad Museum in India[314] possesses a lot of secular female sculptures dating from the 3rd century BCE to the modern period. The ones showing features of the female sculptures from Khirbet al-Mafjar are dating from the 6th, the 7th and the 9th century CE, the place of discovery is often unknown, still, plenty of them were found at Kausambi and Mathura.
The ruins of Kausambi are situated on the left bank of the Yamuna River. Secular female sculptures dating from the 2nd century BCE to the late mediaeval period have been recovered at the site. These sculptures, many yaksa figures among them, reflect the three faiths that were popular in the area - Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina religions.[315]
On the right bank of the Yamuna numerous sculptures have been found in the region of Mathura, again with symbols of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina religions. These sculptures, showing the characteristic features of the Mathura sandstone figures, have been excavated at far-flung archaeological sites.[316] Thus a vital activity in the production of stone sculpture is attested to the region of Mathura.

Nina Rybakowa focuses on the criterion of movement and states harmony as well as entity of form and spirit in the Greek sculpture, whereas Indian sculpture does not have a 'functional logic', it does not represent objects of desire either, but sensous regenerative energies.
In India the images are 'formed in an awareness of the spirit or breath of life, of its flux and pulsations, by the creative command under which the artist works. Form is the result of the rhythm of this activity'.[317]
Ancient Indian philosophers regarded clothes as 'insignificant; the mortal body was thought to be worthless like an old cloth, which could easily be discarded by the soul'.[318] The body was determined by 'prana' the breath of life and vitality of the spirit.[319]

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[311] Kramrisch 1960, p. 19.
[312] Kramrisch 1960, p. 22, 23.
[313] http://ccrtindia.gov.in/buddhist%20sculp.htm.
[314] The city of Allahabad is located in the southern part of the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, at the point of confluence of the rivers Yamuna and Ganges.
[315] Devi 1996, p. 19.
[316] Devi 1996, p. 20.
[317] Kramrisch 1960, p. 24.
[318] Ayyar 1987, p. 1.
[319] Rosen 2008, p. 80.

Darielle Mason's observation in connection with the placement of sculptures adorning Indian temples, from the beginning of the 6th century CE, is also true for the positioning of the sculpture in round from Khirbet al-Mafjar: 'As the human figure became an element in a larger programm, however, the tendancy to make figures simultaneously readable from a distance and in harmony with the whole, i.e., to enhance and promote the unified design, superseded the aim of naturalistic portrayal'[320].

The time of the erection of the palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar, the second quarter of the 8th century CE, coincides with the Indian Post-Gupta Period which was marked by many regional kingdoms.
The female figure of the period is characterized by Darielle Mason as follows: 'Despite a variety of idiom, there is a certain commonality of treatment of the body that links eighth-century images across the regions of northern Rajasthan, southern Uttar Pradesh, northern Madhya Pradesh, Surasena, Gopadri and Madhyadesa. This may represent the continuity of Gupta norms. […] A downward concentration of weight predominates, with the major body mass sunken into the hips so that the figures appear well grounded'[321].
The opulence of the Indian sculptures in the eighth century noticed by Darielle Mason, this 'downward concentration of weight and body mass' may be observed with the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar as well.

Buddhism

Buddhism has been founded in India in the 6th century BCE. Since then a rich sculptural program showing various manifestations of the Buddha and his escort has developed. A short account on the spread of Buddhism by Louis Frederic is given in this place: 'On the impetus of a number of powerful kings, such as the famous Mauryan King Asoka in the third century BCE, it began to spread beyond the Indian subcontinent – to the Indo-Greek borderlands in the north-west, and to the island of Sri Lanka in the south-east. From the earliest years of our era, Buddhism crossed mountains and seas to spread along the trade routes into the countries of South-East Asia and Malaysia, and through the deserts of Central Asia into Persia and China'.[322]

There is no single Buddhist orthodoxy, teachings vary and doctrines are in movement, adaptable to the needs of men and the temper of the times, nothing is ever fixed.[323]
The Buddhist pantheon comprises more than three thousand divinities.

'The Buddhas in the innumerable Buddhist kingdoms
Are nothing more than the Unique Buddha in the depth of our soul;
And the lotuses of gold, as many as the drops of water in the ocean,
Are our body.'

Kobo Daishi (774-835 CE)

[320] Mason 1993, p. 121.
[321] Mason 1993, p. 123.
[322] Frederic 1995, p. 17.
[323] Frederic 1995, p. 8.

Buddhism in its various regional forms has not only unifying character in religious matters[324] but also in art. As Buddhism spread across Asia foremost along the trade routes, there are many similarities in painting, architecture and sculpture to be observed at places of Buddhist veneration. Hyecho, a Korean Buddhist monk from the Korean Kingdom of Silla has traveled to India by sea and continued his journey via Bamiyan to the 'Arabs' returning overland along the Silk road to China in 729 CE.[325]

Not only iconography strictly following religious conception was wide spread but all kinds of artistic models and ideas had found acceptance. This is true in particular of the female depictions along the northern trade routes.
Sir Aurel Stein and Albert Le Coq have uncovered many of them in the course of their Expeditions to the Central Asian desert in the early 20th century. Along the fringes of the Taklamakan desert, close to the main trade routes, running to the North and to the South of the Taklamakan, leading to Tun-huang, the cave temples of Tun-huang, Miran and Kucha were centres of Buddhist sculpture and painting by the 7th-8th centuries CE.[326]

Louis Frederic points out that in the sixth and seventh centuries CE the human figure and deities in human form or attractive women, became infinitely gracious, like the Guptan frescoes of the caves at Bagh in western India and the fifth-century frescoes at Sigiriya, Sri Lanka.

Attributes connected to fertility and rulership, commonly used in Buddhist depictions, are as follows:

Lotuses are symbols of purity and 'spontaneous' generation and hence symbolize divine birth. In esoteric Buddhism, the heart of the beings is like an unopened lotus, when the virues of the Buddha develop therein, the lotus blossoms; this is why the Buddha sits on a lotus in bloom. In Tantrism, it is the symbol of the feminine principle, and, in Saktism, it represents the female sex organ'.[327]

The flower vase is of very ancient origin, it is found in India from the beginnings of Buddhist art, as the base or capital of a pillar, or in decoration, symbolizing the earth and its riches.[328]

The fly-whisk, or camara, represents obedience to the Buddhist Law. In India it was the insignia of courtesans. In Indian Buddhist art, the effigy of the Buddha is often accompanied by two carriers of camar.[329] Al-Jahiz mentions that slave-girls with fly-whisks accompanied the Caliphs, as mentioned above, p.56.

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[324] Rowland 1970, p. 17.
[325] Rowland 1970, p. 18, As described in Hyecho's travelogue, Yang, Han-sung *et al.* (1984). *The Hye Cho's Diary: Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India* (1984). Translation, text and editing by Yang, Han-sung et al. Religions of Asia series (Berkeley, Calif.).
[326] Bhattacharyya 1999, p. 11.
[327] Frederic 1995, p. 62.
[328] Frederic 1995, p. 68.
[329] Frederic 1995, p. 71.

The wheel, or cakra, symbolizes the wheel of Buddhist law and the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. They are round, with four spokes, symbolizing the four Jinas or the four 'moments' in the life of the Buddha; or eight spokes, or octagonal, symbolizing the Noble Eightfold Path. The spokes sometimes extend beyond the circle, in points. These wheels, represented in Indian art even before the period of King Asoka (r. 272-232 BCE), were generally placed on four lions, back to back, and facing the four cardinal points.[330]

In his study of 'Elements of Buddhist Iconography' Ananda K. Coomaraswamy examines the development of symbols in Buddhism such as the World Wheel showing that the Tree of Life, the Earth-Lotus, the World-Wheel, the Lotus-Throne and the Fiery Pillar originate from times before the development of Buddhism and represent a universal symbolism.[331]

There is of course a deeper meaning behind these elements which is in many parts not coherent with the ideas of al-Walid II. He might have favoured some thoughts and applied them and translated them, guided by what he or his artists had observed, into specific forms in his desert castle e.g. the svastika, which is a tantric symbol of auspiciousness, is displayed in the stucco wall panels of the palace entrance hall.

Cave Temples

Rock-cut architecture is to be found in various, sometimes distant parts of India, on the Deccan Plateau in the South, on the East Coast and on the West Coast. The caves or rock-cut complexes were cut out of solid rock.

To work with the rock does not allow many mistakes, due to the close resemblance to the designs and devices used by carpenters it is suggested that master-masons imitated wooden structures. A cave at Ellora is known as the Carpenter's Cave, which indicates the high esteem of the profession amongst the community.
As Kail puts it: 'Casements, covered balconies, curved 'wooden' ribs to support the arched roof, the latticed chaitya window and other technical and artistic devices of the ancient carpenters are here seen[…]'.[332]

A considerable influence of the artistic style of Ajanta in South East Asia, in particular Sri Lanka and Java is attested. One part of the 29 caves of Ajanta was cut into volcanic lava in the 2nd century BCE, a second group was created in the 5th and 6th centuries CE they were abandoned in 650 CE in favour of the caves at Ellora. The 'lightness' of the feminine figures depicted at the caves is considered 'among the major achievements of the Gupta and post-Gupta style'.[333]
The caves at Ellora date from the 7th to the 9th century CE. The sanctuaries were devoted to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. Twelve Buddhist caves are dated between 600 and 800 CE. They comprise monasteries and a single large temple.[334]

[330] Frederic 1995, p. 66.
[331] Coomaraswamy 1935.
[332] Kail 1975, pp. 1, 2.
[333] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/242.
[334] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/243.

The Elephanta Caves are dating from the same time, around the 6th to 8th century CE. They are located on an island of the same name close to Mumbai (Bombay). The Hindu God Shiva is the main deity venerated at Elephanta. The style is considered to be 'still close to that of the Gupta period'.[335]
Most of the caves in India and Sri Lanka were situated near major trade routes. They served as retreats, palaces, monasteries, banking houses and supply depots for the caravans.[336] The iconographical concept is based on Buddhist, Hindu and Jain beliefs.

The tantric Vajrayana-Buddhism, a derivation of the Mahayana-Buddhism, appeared in the 7th and 8th centuries CE presenting a well-defined Buddhist pantheon. This can be viewed as 'reaction to the dynamic universal forces of the Hindu deities', according to Rowland.[337]

The female consorts (the 'sakti') of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Hindu gods represent the force or potency of the males. Saktis, who were believed to have a close bond to the divine, played an important part in Tantric Buddhism. They were approached by certain rites, described in the 'Tantras', with the aim of 'compelling the gods to bestow special powers on the worshipper'.[338]

The Taras, hinduistic symbols[339], were attributed as Shaktis (companions) to the deities of the Vajrayana pantheon, emphasizing the tantric sexsymbolism.[340]
At the temples of Bhubaneswar Saivism, Saktism and Tantrism seem to have been inseparably mixed together at this time.[341]

Stella Kramrisch speaks of two schools of Indian art in the early centuries of our era, Mathura and Gandhara, followed by the 'Eastern Schools'. Orissa is regarded as one of them with 'successive styles of sculpture' starting from the 8th century CE and a 'preponderance of Deccan form in the same century'.[342]

The early Orissan temples are dating from the 8th century. They are situated along an alluvial belt on the northeast coast of India. The state of Orissa was known as Kalinga in ancient times.

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[335] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/244.
[336] Kail 1975, p. 5.
[337] Rowland 1970, p. 103.
[338] Kail 1975, p. 36.
[339] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tara_(Buddhism), Tārā became a very popular Vajrayana deity with the rise of Tantric Buddhism in 8th-century Pala India and, with the movement of Indian Buddhism into Tibet via Padmasambhava. She eventually came to be considered the 'Mother of all Buddhas', which usually refers to the enlightened wisdom of the Buddhas, while simultaneously echoing the ancient concept of the Mother Goddess in India.
It may be true that goddesses entered Buddhism from Shaktism (i.e. the worship of local or folk goddesses prior to the more institutionalized Hinduism which had developed by the early medieval period (i.e. Middle Kingdoms of India).
The earliest, solidly identifiable image of Tārā is most likely that which is still found today at cave 6 within the rock-cut Buddhist monastic complex of the Ellora Caves in Maharashtra (around 7th century CE).
[340] Rowland 1970, p. 105.
[341] Donaldson 1985, p. 72.
[342] Kramrisch 1960, pp. 55, 56.

A rediscovery of the 'mystery of woman' is connected to the emergence of Saktism and Tantrism, along with 'a return to the indigenous spirituality, to the belief in fertility worship and, above all, a return to the worship of the female principle'.[343] (fig. 26)

The adornment of the Boddhisatva shows many similarities to the Umayyad female depictions. The Boddhisatva is an aristocratic figure who originated according to an analysis by Alfred Foucher from the deity Brahma.
The deities Indra and Brahma appear in Gandharan reliefs of the 1st century CE as worshiper of Siddartha-Sakyamuni, 'bearing testimony to his superior sancity. The long chignon of Brahma and his water vessel are adapted to the Bodhisattva by the addition of jewels and strings of pearls, converting the ascetic type into an aristocratic figure'.[344]
Rosenfield suggests that the Bodhisattva Maitreya wearing princely necklace and earrings 'fits in the concept of the sambhogakaya (refulgent body of enjoyment) by which the literature of this period describes the manusha Buddhas who dwell in Paradises'[345].

There are some Bodhisattva sculptures assigned to the eighth century CE which show similar features to the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar.
A nearly life-size statue of Bodhisattva Padmapani from Nalanda wears a necklace, earrings, armlets and bracelets. The 'skirt', the dhoti, is diaphanous but still shows an engraved wavy form.
Nalanda in eastern India was a place were Buddhist art flourished in the 8th century CE. Debjani Paul speaks of the great concern of the royal dynasties of northern India for the Buddhist monastic establishment at Nalanda regarding patronage.[346]

The Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar, traveler, and translator who described the interaction between China and India in the early Tang Dynasty Xuanzang[347] (Hiuan-tsang in French) was shocked when he arrived in India and saw that people were barefooted, only the Bodhisattvas wore Sandals.[348]

[343] Donaldson 1985, p. 73.
[344] Rosenfield 1967, p. 232.
[345] Rosenfield 1967, p.233, Dutt, Aspects of Mahayana, pp.96-128; Mus, Barabudur, pp. 643-662; Foucher, AGB, Vol. II, p.232; Banerjea, Development of Hindu Iconography pp.230-231, 286.
[346] Paul 1995, p. xix.
[347] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xuanzang, In 'The Great Tang Records on the Western Region' the nineteen-year journey of Xuanzang through Central and South Asia is narrated, the book was compiled in 646 by a disciple of Xuanzang's, through his dictation.
[348] Tissot 1985, p.94.

6.2.4.5 Indonesia

The seventh and eighth centuries CE are called the 'golden age of the Avatmasaka school of Buddhism' in Indonesia. The temple of Borobudur on the Indonesian Island of Java has been erected in accordance with universal principles and harmony. Spiritual and meditative elements occupied a central position. At Borobudur the sun was regarded as the 'overflowing bounty of the Divine, it is enshrined in the deep silence of the Borobudur as Vairocana (sun) of the Diamond Realm (vajradhatu). The Vajradhatu, which is a methaphysical space, embodying the principle of enlightenment, is immense and in us it is as deep as the oceas'.[349]

Not only the sun but water as well held a special place in Javanese culture. Various architectural elements contain water-related structures as fountains, bathing places or moats around the temples symbolizing the ocean.[350]
The goddess 'Sri', has been venerated as symbol of fertility, prosperity and glory in ancient beliefs. Le May states a strong Indian influence on Javanese art and dates the earliest temples, made of stone, to the 8th century.[351] Two bronze figures, Shiva and Parvati from the Dieng plateau in Central Java, are seen as bearing South-Indian inspiration[352] and show features of adornment comparable to the ones of the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar. These pieces of art can be seen in connection with the eight Hindu temples dating from the middle of the 8th century that have been found on the Dieng ('Abode of the Gods') plateau.

The Strait of Malacca (between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra) and the Sunda Strait (connects the Java Sea to the Indian Ocean between the islands of Java and Sumatra) were the two main maritime trade routes controlled by the kings of Srivijaya from the 7th through the 13th century CE. This information goes back to inscriptions that were found at Sumatra and on the Malay Peninsula and have been decoded by the French Historian George Coedès by the beginning of the 20th century. Srivijaya 'the kingdom of the seas' has allegedly been known from Arabian and Chinese accounts before the decipherment by George Coedès. The kingdom obviously belonged to the Sailendra dynasty which emerged from Java in the 8th century CE.
A regular exchange of diplomatic gifts and commodities took place between the people of Indonesia (7th-13th century CE) and the rest of the world. The court ceremony was derived from Indian models.[353] Buddhism and Hinduism were the prevailing faiths. Islam, the religion, spread on the Indonesian Archipelago from the 13th century CE.

The Indian influence on Indonesian sculpture of the 8th to the 10th century CE has been particularly strong. In the early phase Hindu princilples of iconography have been adhered to accurately in the region of Kedu, the 8th /9th century Buddhist temple of Borobudur is located in the area of Kedu.

[349] Voute 2008, p.7,8
[350] Voute 2008, p.100
[351] Le May 1954, p.95
[352] Le May 1954, p.96
[353] Kluke 1995, p.46

‘Prambanan’ is another temple compound of this period that is located not far from the Borobudur complex on the Southern Cost of Java. It is considered the largest Hindu temple on Central Java.

The second largest Buddhist temple (after Borobudur) on Central Java, the Candi Sewu[354] (dating from the 8th century CE) is located around 800 meters to the North of Prambanan. Approximately 240 guardian temples (Perwara) are placed along the lines of the, nearly square (185 m by 165 m), rectangles which encircle the main temple. This ground plan is often seen as ‘mandala’[355], with four gates at each cardinal direction.

The sculpture of these two largest Buddhist temples on Central Java, the compounds of Borobudur and Sewu, do show many similar features in adornment to the female sculpture from Khirbet al-Mafjar. Particularly striking is the common use of the rosette as central decoration of the pinned up hair. The figures wear disc-like earrings, armlets and bracelets, necklaces, skirts and their upper torso is undraped. (fig. 27)

A static character is attributed to the depiction of early Central Javanese sculpture, dating from the 8th century.

The sculptures of Shiwa and Parwati carved from stone are almost one meter in height. They are attached to a plate in the back and strictly adhere to frontalitiy and static cast. Parvati, the female consort of Shiva, shows the adornment of the figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar in a more elaborate manner. Still, the stated basic similarities in decoration and posture are to be found. Additional items of decoration are the interlacing cords on the chest of the female depiction which are typical in the adornment of goddesses and thus lacking in the female sculptures at Khirbet Al-Mafjar.[356]

There are small human sculptures in the round which are cast in bronze, gold or silver. They are dating from this early period and stem from Central Java as well. E.g. sculptures in the round of Shiva and Parwati, from the Seplawan caves on Central Java, are cast in Gold and are 20 cm in height. Objects of this size are easily transported and could have been gifts in diplomatic exchange.

Tara is the name of a star by which sailors navigated. Especially Indian seafarers venerated the Goddess of the same name and prayed for protection and a safe cruise. The cult of the Goddess spread to Java and beyond in the 8th century.[357]
A depiction of Tara is rendered as Bronze sculpture, 6 cm in height. Again she shows the same principles of adornment and dress as the female figures from Khirbet Al-Mafjar.

[354] ‚Candi’ is the Indonesian word for ‚ancient temple’.
[355] E.g. one definition of ‘mandala’ can be: ‘The physical structure of the mandala is a beautiful mirror of the landscape of our conscious and subconscious awareness. In its traditional representation, the mandala contains a series of concentric rings, emanating outward and inward just as our mental awareness radiates in all directions at once.’ http://www.mandalazone.com/essay_mandala-structure.html.
[356] Kieven 1995. Plate 53.
[357] Kieven 1995. Plate 25.

6.3 Painting

One would not find anything special about scantily dressed women in the area of the bath. The painted female figures at Quasyr 'Amra are seen in various postures, they seem to move their body quite naturally, according to the activity they carry on. Rosen-Ayalon suggests that in the female depictions at Quasyr 'Amra 'no two scenes are alike'.[358]

The shape of the women's body and the way they are dressed, resemble the female sculptures from Mshatta rather than the ones from Khirbet al-Mafjar.
This then would not be an indication to follow the view of Creswell in the dating of Qusayr 'Amra to the reign of Walid I (705-715 CE) but as Hillenbrand suggests to the period of Walid II (743-744 CE) (Hillenbrand 1982) as both castles are attributed to al-Walid II. On the other hand, if we attribute Mshatta and Khirbet al-Mafjar to al-Walid II we have to stress the stylistic differences of the female sculptures from Mshatta and the ones from Khirbet al-Mafjar. This criterion does not seem to be a valid one regarding the dating of the buildings, since the time of creation of the sculptures in the round does not have to coincide with the construction date of the desert castles.

Oleg Grabar interprets the paintings of Qusayr 'Amra in Jordan as scenes of nomadic life.[359]

Creswell sees in the Fresco paintings - according to the Austrian chemists, Pollak and Wenzel, they are to be regarded as fresco and not as tempera[360] - of Qasr Amra the range of colours limited to blue, deep brown, light brown, dull yellow, and bluish-green, he describes the essence of the colour as follows:

Bright blue – natural ultramarine
Deep brown – a red, apparently produced from oxide of iron, overlaid with a thin coat of ultramarine
Light brown – orcheous compositions containing iron
Dull yellow – the same, mixed with chalk
Bluish–green – yellow which has received a light coating of ultramarine.[361]

Similar colors are to be found at the rock cut architecture of Sigiriya in the centre of the island of Sri Lanka.
The complex of the palace at Sigiriya ('Lion's rock' in Sinhalese) was built by King Kashyapa towards the end of the 5th century CE. Later on it was used as monastery. It is surrounded by gardens and lakes. The paintings of 22 female figures are preserved on the rock summit's western face. They cover an area of 140 metres long and 40 metres high and can be seen from the distance.

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[358] Rosen-Ayalon 2002, p. 291.
[359] Grabar 1996, p. 20.
[360] See as well Musil 1907, pp. 200-202.
[361] Creswell 1932, pp. 258,259, (Strzygowski, Amra und seine Malereien, in the Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst, n.F., XVIII, Abb.I;).

The secular female depictions are dated to the 5th century CE, they are often compared to the paintings in the Ajanta caves. The accentued dark lines and bright colour applied in sweeping stokes enhance plasticity. These dark lines and bright colours can also be observed with the Umayyad paintings of figures at Qusayr 'Amra. Musil speaks of dark brown clearly defined contour lines.[362] The identity of the female figures has not been clarified yet.[363]

[362] Musil 1907, p. V.
[363] http://lankapura.com/2008/08/rock-art-at-lion-rock-sigiriya-ceylon/.

7. Conclusion

Symbols showing the same iconography, like the fruit tree, the acanthus and the grapevine were used in various materials throughout numerous regions and periods. The pomegranate tree and other fruit trees, symbolizing paradise and immortality, have been widespread motives. Large numbers of textiles showing stylized trees in late antiquity have been found in Egypt. We find fruit trees in the mosaics of the Great Mosque in Damascus as well as in the mosaics of the Roman Empire. The pomegranate tree e.g. from Egyptian textiles is reflected in the mosaics of the diwan at Khirbet al-Mafjar.

The basic stylistic features in adornment of the female sculptures in the round from Khirbet al-Mafjar are seen in the Coptic female sculptures - particularly the nymphs, the depictions of gaia - the earth, Aphrodite, the frescoes depicting females at Quasyr 'Amra and Sigiriya as well as in the female figure 'India' in the mosaics of the Villa Romana del Casale.
Iconography is different, solely the nature bound aspects of fertility and abdunce are common to all of them, they present the same decorative features presumably traded from ancient symbols of fertility.

It seems that there exists a global language of symbolism in the Late Antique world, the symbols form part of a pool of knowledge and are called upon by whomever and wherever needed. A preponderance of human figures with the above mentioned characteristic adornment in and around the 8th century CE is due to a vivid cultural exchange, based on commercial activity, pilgrimage and the Islamic expansion, which has not only occurred by means of war.

Were the female figures from Khirbet al-Mafjar means of 'imperial propaganda'?- as Ebba Koch suggests in connection with the abundance of floral motifs of the Taj Mahal, symbolizing paradisical bloom, thus serving as 'metaphor of Shah Jahan's imperial symbolism'.[364]

Let us consider the connection of the human figures of the Hindu temples and the ones from Khirbet al-Mafjar. What they have in common is their incorporation into an architectural program. Being simply part of a bigger picture, with the aim of underlining the symbolic character of the whole building, a naturalistic rendering of the figures' dress and anatomical articulation was not required.
In this light the female sculptures in the round from Khirbet al-Mafjar were most likely not objects of worship, nor were they dancers or courtesans. They represent fertility and abdunce in the Umayyad realm and thus served as attributes to the supremacy of the caliph.

The sensuous appearance of the figures from India and Indonesia is vested in a spiritual cloth. They are more than mere symbols of fertility and abundance. 'They are royal in their dignity and human in their tenderness,' as Stella Kramrisch puts it when describing the primordial generative power of the Nagas.[365]
The haptic, perceptible world, the surface of architecture and sculpture alike are determined by a universal flow of breath, by the individual soul which is part of a 'universal' soul. The

[364] Koch 2006, p. 224.
[365] Kramrisch 1960, p. 19.

human figures and all the other elements form part of an entity which depends on the action of each single part.

There is a tendency to static posture during the 7th and 8th centuries in several countries along the trade routes. Human sculptures that are determined by the principles of centrality and strict frontalitiy may not only be found at Khirbet al-Mafjar, but can be observed particularly in India and South East Asia, e.g. in certain regions of Cambodia or with the female figures from the Allahabad museum. The sinuous lines typical for Indian female figures and the ones influenced by them through the spread of religion and/or trade turn into straight lines which define the assembly of the parts of the body.

As far as imperial representation is concerned, the depiction of the Caliph is clearly derived from Kushan, respectively Sasanian models. Khorshid brings here a comparison with Indian art, regarding the design of the face and the shape of the Caliph's beard.[366]
One would expect, given the spirit of al-Walid II, a representation of Dionysos in Hellenistic style as illustrated on the Sasanian silver plate or the textiles of late antique Egypt.[367] Such a vocabulary would also be in line with the female depicitons who fit in the Dionysiac scheme of a symbolism of abundance.
Barbara Finster interprets the vine in late antiquity, which frequently occurs in Umayyad architectural decoration, as part of the 'iconography of princely power' and the vine-scrolls as 'symbols of claims to rulership'.[368]
Obviously, a sculpture of Dionysos in conventional style was not regarded as an appropriate means of representation for Umayyad rulership.

The ruling figure is devoid of features that show special characteristics of the person portrayed. Again, it is only an idealized picture a naturalistic representation is not intended. Nonetheless, the prominent presentation of the princely owner makes clear to everybody: 'Here I am, al-Walid II, this is my kingdom.' In this sense, one can certainly understand the sculpture as an element of stately representation.
The sculptures in the round stand prototypically for certain purposes, such as the warning of unwanted newcomers in the case of the 'Caliph'.

The elements of architectural structure and architectural decoration stem from Roman (the ground plan), Hellenistic (e.g. the vines), Solomonic (e.g. the birds) and possibly Indian (the 'wheel window' and the 'svastika') ideology.

Clearly, if we put the pieces of the jigsaw together, we can say that the Umayyad palace at Khirbet-al Mafjar was a representative estate based on agricultural production and commercial activity, its construction had taken place in times of prosperity. The rich decorative finish is another indication. Any military aspect is lacking, a 'defense character' towards the outside has not been the goal. More likely intended was a presentation of continuity and - if we adhere to the application of Solomonic principles – of justice in rulership.

[366] Khorshid 1989, p. 36.
[367] Lenzen 1960, p.4, plate 4.
[368] Finster 2005, p. 155.

Visionary, but still, the concept of the Chakravartin, the 'ideal universal ruler' in Indian beliefs is present as well. The central wheel with six[369] spokes of the upper floor of the main residential building, which Hamilton calls a 'window', could be interpreted as wheel belonging to the ruler of the world who keeps the wheel of the world in motion and defines the law.
A universal connotation of rulership in the mind of the royal Umayyad patron lies whitin the scope of imperial symbolism present at the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar.
The dynamic sculpture at the cultural village in Doha, Qatar, whose action is described as 'harnessing the world' might be seen as tradition and translation of those ancient ideas of rulership into high quality artistic forms of today.

[369] In the light of iconography, 'six' though, is found in the Vedic corpus only in the form of a mathematical number, it does not have a symbolic value – e.g. 'six can refer to the directions when the zenith and nadir are added unto the four terrestrial directions'. The Quran mentions the number 'six' in connection with the days of God's Creation. In mathematics it is the first perfect number - the sum and the product of its factors (1,2,3) are equal.

Abstract

Initially, research on a subject that lies more than thousand years in the past seems to be a major task. But the female sculpture in the round from Khirbet al-Mafjar or Hisham's palace, located just a few kilometres to the North of Jericho is not singular. Eventhough the first impression from looking at today's Palestine territory may suggest it is.

The desert castle of Khirbet al-Mafjar is dated to the second quarter of the 8th century CE, the late Umayyad period. By then a sophisticated court culture had been established in the Umayyad realm. A question of debate is the ownership. According to an inscription which has been found at the site, the palace has been worked on during Hisham's reign. Still, literary and archeological evidence point to the extravagant bon viveur al-Walid II.

Elaborate stucco decoration and the castle's enormous size are typical of the desert castles of the late Umayyad period. Recent archaeological finds approve earlier assumptions that the 'palace' - residential building, mosque and bath were connected to an agricultural complex.

Yet, the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar is special in terms of the manifoldness of architectural form and decoration. The building of the bath is in the tradition of the Roman thermae and hunting baths. In the niches of the drum-wall of the monumental bath porch, human sculptures in the round – male and female – were arranged. They are of static posture and bouffant form, determined by frontality and centrality.

The female figures wear a skirt, their torso is uncovered. A central rosette graces the finely twisted hair, disc-like earrings, a necklace, armlets, bracelets and anklets is the jewelry they wear. By taking an extended approach, comprising various countries and periods along the main trade routes, numerous figures with similar features in adornment and posture can be found.

But do they all tell the same story?
The adornment and attributes of all the figures suggest fertility and abundance. These are the basic similarities, which were used in various contexts.

Abstract (German)

Zunächst scheint die Forschung zu einem Thema, das mehr als tausend Jahre in der Vergangenheit liegt, eine besondere Herausforderung zu sein. Aber die weibliche Skulptur des Omaijaden Palastes von Khirbet al-Mafjar, auch Hisham's Palast genannt, nur wenige Kilometer nördlich von Jericho gelegen, steht nicht allein im Raum. Obwohl der erste Eindruck dies vermuten lässt.
Das Wüsten Schloss von Khirbet al-Mafjar wird dem zweiten Viertel des 8. Jhdt. n. Chr., der Spätzeit der Omaijaden Dynastie in Bilad al-Sham (Großsyrien), zugeschrieben. Es hatte sich eine ausgeprägte höfische Kultur im Omaijaden Reich entwickelt. Die Patronanz ist nach wie vor ungeklärt. Laut einer Inschrift, welche vor Ort gefunden wurde, hat man während der Regierungszeit des Kaliphen Hisham (724-743 n.Chr.) am Palast gearbeitet. Dennoch, literarische Quellen und archäologische Funde weisen auf den extravaganten Lebemann Al-Walid II hin.
Aufwendige Stuckverzierungen und die enorme Größe des Palastes sind typisch für die Wüstenschlösser der späten Omaijadenzeit. Neuere archäologische Funde bestätigen frühere Annahmen, dass der "Palast" - Wohngebäude, Moschee und Bad - mit einem landwirtschaftlichen Areal verbunden waren.
Trotzdem ist das Wüsten Schloss von Khirbet al-Mafjar im Hinblick auf die Vielfältigkeit der architektonischen Form und Dekoration bemerkenswert. Das Gebäude des Bades steht in der Tradition der römischen Thermen und Jagdbäder. In den Nischen der Tambour Wand des monumentalen Eingangstores zum Bad waren abwechselnd menschliche Skulpturen - männlicher und weiblicher Natur - angeordnet. Ihre statische Körperhaltung und voluminöse Form werden durch Frontalität und Zentralität bestimmt.
Die weiblichen Figuren tragen einen Rock, ihr Oberkörper ist unbedeckt. Eine zentrale Rosette ziert das fein geflochtene Haar. Scheibenförmige Ohrringe, eine Halskette, Arm - und Fußreifen schmücken die Skulptur.
Wählt man einen größeren Blickwinkel so findet man in verschiedenen Ländern und Epochen entlang der wichtigsten Handelsrouten zahlreiche Abbildungen mit ähnlichen Merkmalen in Schmuck und Haltung.
Aber erzählen sie alle die gleiche Geschichte?

Der Schmuck und die Attribute all dieser Figuren deuten auf Fruchtbarkeit und Fülle. Dies sind die grundlegenden Ähnlichkeiten, welche in verschiedenen Zusammenhängen verwendet wurden.

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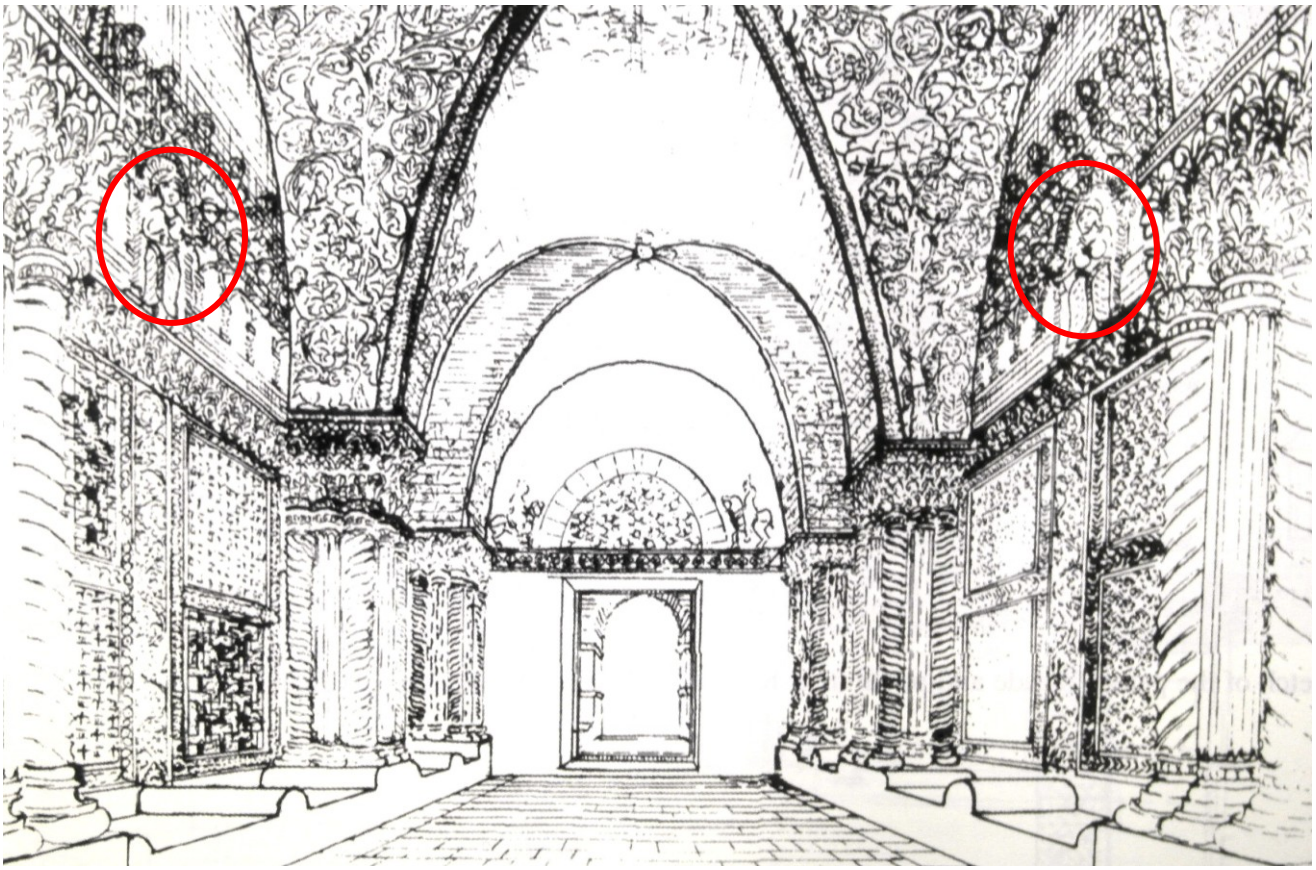
Fig.1 (Text p. 16)

Landscape between Jerusalem and Jericho, May 2010

Fig.2 (Text p. 16)

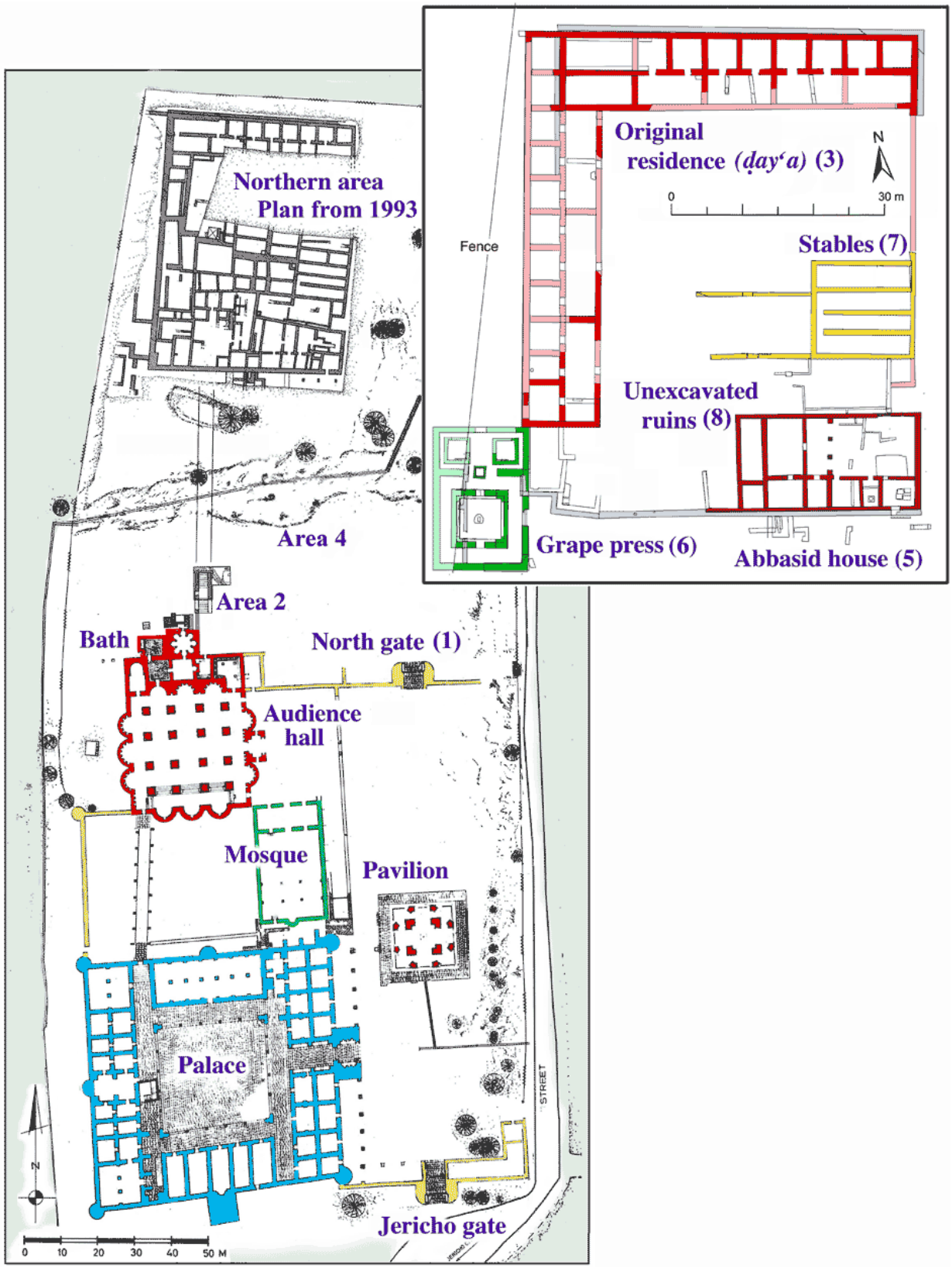
Khirbet al-Mafjar or 'Hisham's palace', Palestine, second quarter of the 8th century CE

Fig.3 (Text p. 28)



Khirbet al-Mafjar, lobby of the main residental building, female statues are encircled in red, Hamilton, R.W.

Fig.4 (Text p. 28)



Khirbet al-Mafjar, Full-site-plan

Fig.5 (Text pp. 30, 32)

5a
Khirbet al-Mafjar, Bath, Frigidarium hall, second quarter of the 8th century CE

5b
Khirbet al-Mafjar, Model of the bath

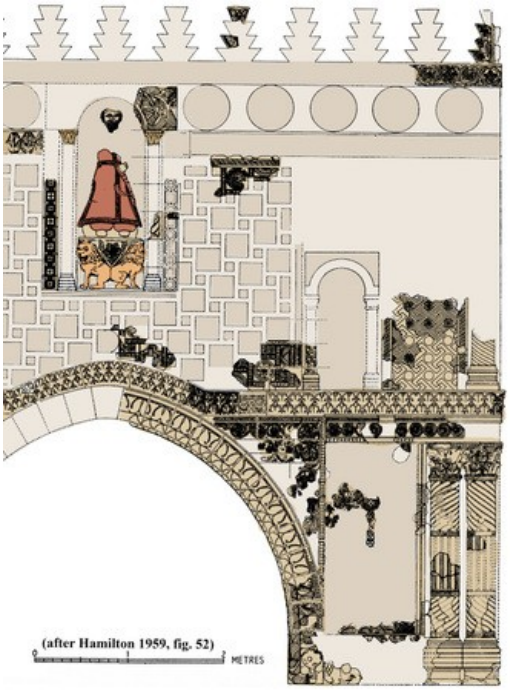
5c
Qusayr ‘Amra, Jordan, early 8th century CE

5d
Leptis Magna, Libya, Roman Hunting bath

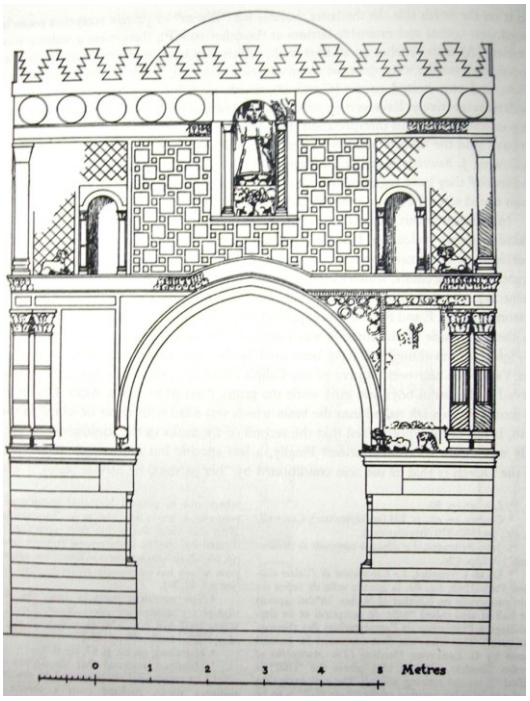
Fig.6 (Text p. 30)

Khirbet al-Mafjar, Mosaic floor next to the central niche of the frigidarium hall. Single organic form in the mosaic of this room, not identified yet.

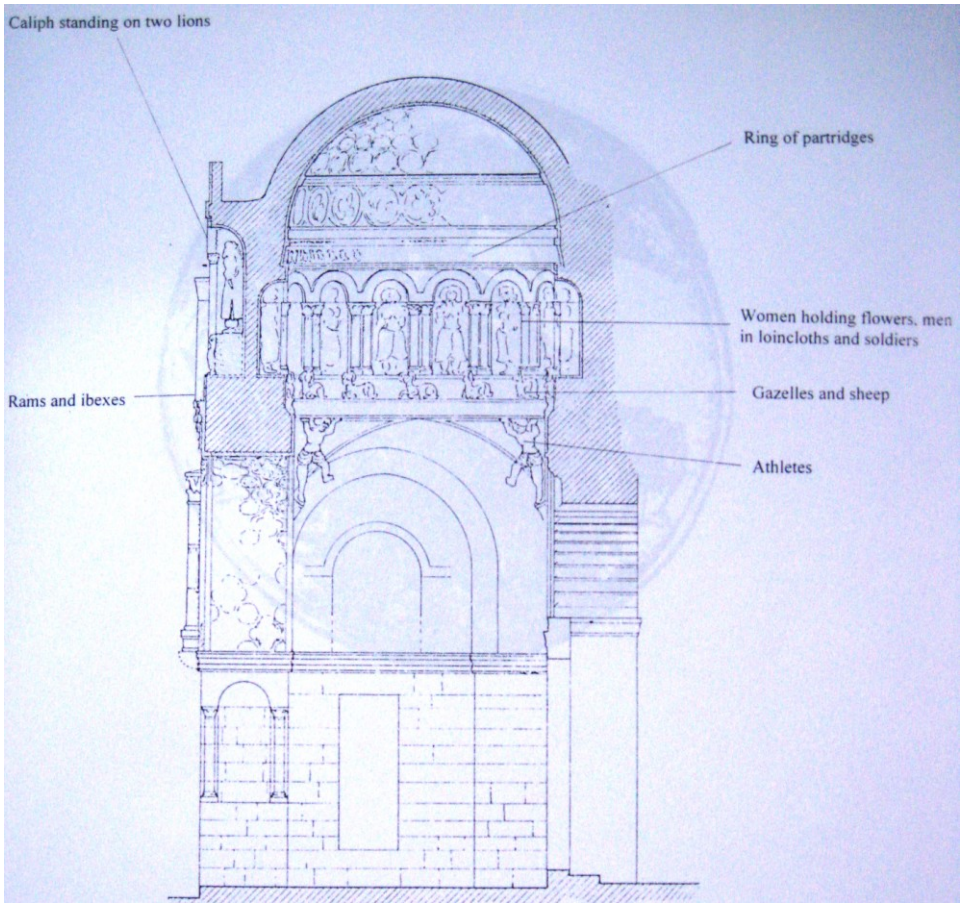
Fig. 7 (Text p. 30)



7a
Khirbet al-Mafjar, Bath porch facade with painted stucco decoration



7b
Khirbet al-Mafjar, Bath porch facade by Hamilton, R.W.



7c Khirbet al-Mafjar, Cross Section of the bath porch facade, Nicholas Youssef Mansour

Fig. 8 (Text p. 30)

8a Khirbet al-Mafjar, Diwan of the bath complex

8b Diwan, Stucco sculpture of the Dome cap

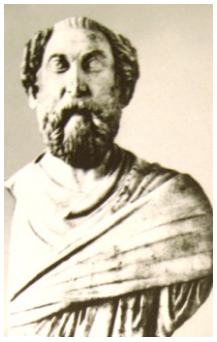
8c Phiale from the Rogozen Treasure, Bulgaria, 400 BCE

Fig. 9 (Text p. 31)

9a Petra, Nabatean site, Jordan

9b Khirbet al-Mafjar, Bath, Columns of the frigidarium hall

Fig. 10 (Text pp. 38, 41, 43, 44)



10a Khirbet al-Mafjar, Rockefeller Museum, Caliph Second quarter 8th century CE

10b Caliph as depicted by Hamilton 10c

10d Surkh Kotal, Kanishka I Afghanistan, 200 CE

10c Bust of a 5th century Philosopher, National Museum Athens

10f Umayyad dynasty, 695-6 CE, copper coin, obverse: ‘Standing Caliph'-probably Abd al-Malik, the Islamic profession of faith ‚shahada‘ is around the margin, reverse: modified image of a Byzantine cross on steps, surrounded by an Arabic legend that renders the date

10e King Uthal from Hatra, Iraq, 2nd century CE

10g Kushan coin, obverse: Vasudeva I, r.191-225CE, reverse: Zoroastrian deity OESHO

10h Sasanian coin, Bahram V, r. 421-438CE, obverse: the King's head with the mural crown, a crescent and a circle, emblems of the sun and moon gods; reverse: fire-altar, with guards watching it; The king's head appears in the flame upon the altar.

Fig. 11 (Text p. 47)

11a Khirbet al-Mafjar, female heads from the bath, second quarter 8th century CE, Hamilton R.W.

11b Khirbet al-Mafjar,female figure from the entrance hall to the main residential building, second quarter 8th century CE, Hamilton R.W.

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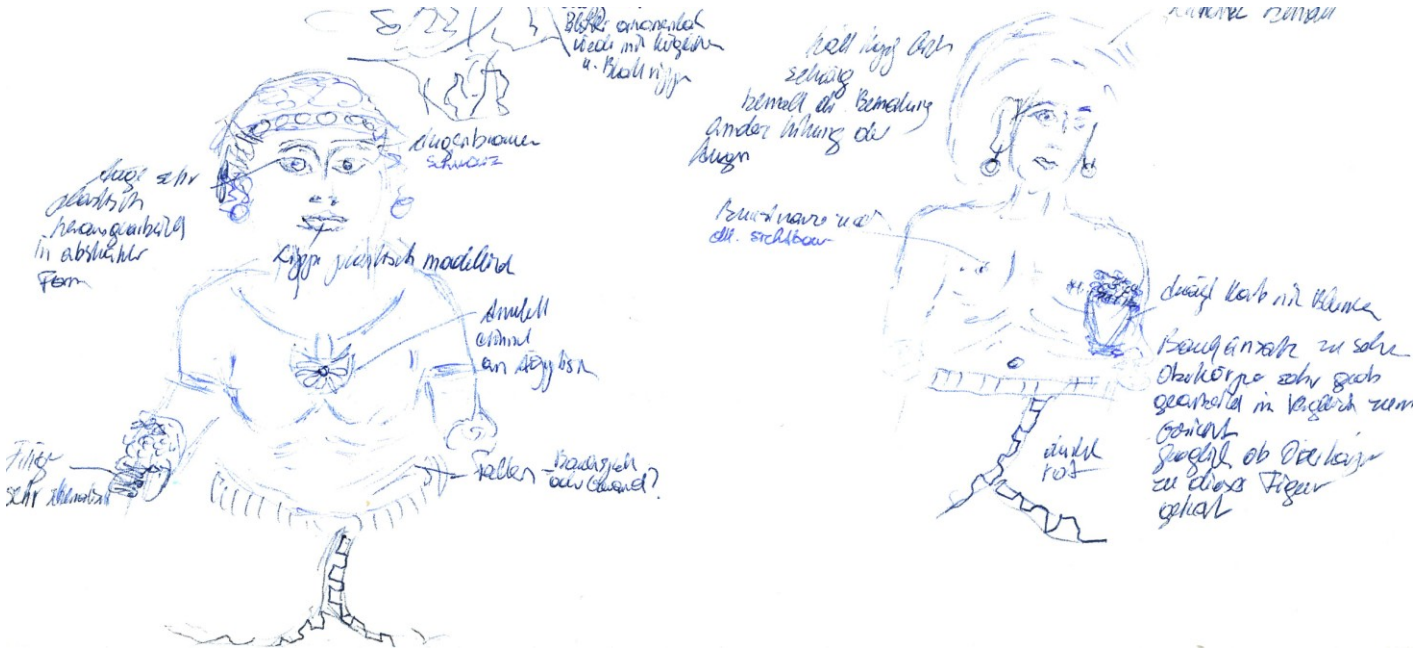


11c Female figure from the entrance hall to the main residential building, (left) and the bath (right) Khirbet al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

11d Khirbet al-Mafjar, female figure from the entrance hall to the main residential building, second quarter 8th century CE, Hamilton R.W.

11e Female figure from the bath, Khirbet al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

11f Female figure from the bath, Khirbet al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 12 (Text p. 47, 48)

12a Tang dynasty, first half 8th century,Tianlongshan caves, grey limestone, figure of a bodhisattva, diaphanous dhoti, 103.5 cm high

12b Yang Guify (719-756 CE) unknown provenance

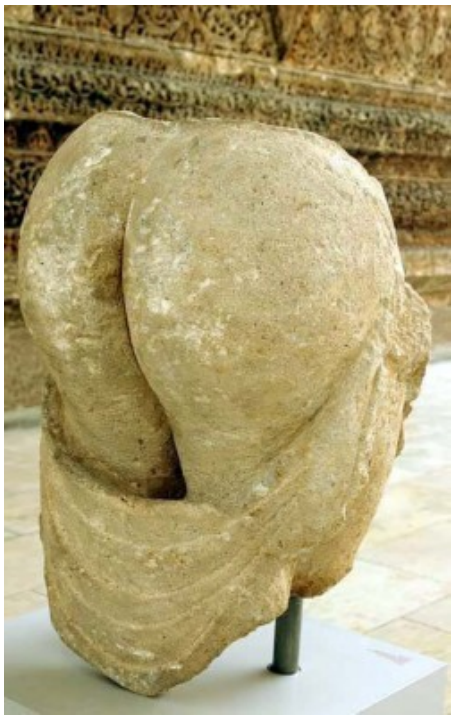
Fig. 13 (Text p. 49)

13a Female figure, Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, 724-7 CE

13b Caliph, Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, 724-7 CE

13c Palmyrenean sculpture, excavated next to Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi

Fig. 14 (Text pp. 49, 50)



14a 14b

14a Female figure, Mshatta, second quarter 8th century CE, Citadel Amman, Archaeological Museum, Jordan

14b Female figure, Mshatta, second quarter 8th century CE, Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Germany

Fig. 15 (Text p. 50)

Qusayr ‘Amra, Painting from the Central Hall representing a female, first quarter 8th century CE, Jordan

Fig. 16 (Text p. 53)

16a Anahita vessel, 300-500 CE, Sasanian, Cleveland Museum of Art

16b Silver plate, partially gilt, Sasanian, Iran, 4th century, Female Dancer, The Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art, Washington D.C.

Fig. 17 (Text p. 55)

Villa Romana del Casale, Sicily, Mosaic 'India', 4th century CE

Fig. 18 (Text pp. 56, 57)

18a Aphrodite Anadyomene, 7th century CE, Eastern Mediterranean

18b Aphrodite, Sirkap, Taxila, 1st century CE, 6,3 x 2,7 cm, National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi

Fig. 19 (Text p. 57)

Silver plate, partially gilt, Sasanian, Iran, 5th-7th century, Dionysos arrives in India, next to Dionysos sits Ariadne, The Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art, Washington D.C.

Fig. 20 (Text p. 57)

Brazier, 8th century CE (modern reproduction), Copper alloy, Archaeological Museum Amman, Jordan

Fig. 21 (Text p. 60)

21a 21b

21a Goddess (Durga), Shiva's consort, Cambodia, 7/8th century CE, Sambor Prei Kuk style, National Museum Phnom Penh
21b Goddess (Devi), Shiva's consort, Cambodia, 7th century CE, Sambor Prei Kuk style, Koh Krieng

Fig. 22 (Text p. 62)

22a 22b

22a Goddess, Butkara, 1st century CE, 133 cm high, Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Pakistan
22b Goddess (devi) or yakshi (natur deity), India (Uttar Pradesh, Mathura), Red Sandstone 57,5cm, Khusan Period (ca. 75-225 CE)

Fig. 23 (Text p. 65)

23a Nymph on seamonster, Coptic Period, Heracleopolis Magna, Egypt, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio

23b Nymph Daphne, Coptic Period, limestone relief, Schech Abade, Egypt

Fig. 24 (Text p. 66)

24a

24b

24a Female Torso, 6th century CE, Allahabad Museum, India
24b Female Torso, 7th century CE, Allahabad Museum, India

Fig. 25 (Text p. 67)

Chauri-bearer (Yakshi) from Didarganj, 3rd-2nd century BCE, Patna Museum, India

Fig. 26 (Text p. 71)

Fertility goddess, Ossian Temples, 8th century CE, Rajasthan

Fig. 27 (Text p. 74)

Borobudur, 8th century, Scenery from the avadana stories –the faithful minister Hiru arrives at his new home, main wall of the first gallery

Fig. 1

Michaela Mammerler, May 2010

Fig. 2

Michaela Mammerler, May 2010

Fig. 3

Hamilton, R.W., 1988, p.52

Fig. 4

http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/site-setting/full-site-plan

Fig. 5

5a and 5b	Michaela Mammerler, May 2010
5c	Michaela Mammerler, June 2010
5d	http://www.jorgetutor.com/libia/leptismagna2/leptismagna9.htm

Fig. 6	Hamilton, R.W. 1959

Fig. 7

7a	http://www.jerichomafjarproject.org/project/overview
7b	Hamilton, R.W. 1959
7c	Nicholas Youssef Mansour, 'The Iconography of Walid II at the Umayyad Palace of Khirbat al-Mafjar, Palestine, Fig. 24, Dissertation, Cambridge, 1997

Fig. 8

8a	Michaela Mammerler, May 2010
8b	Hamilton, R.W. 1959
8c	http://www.omda.bg/public/engl/history/rogozen_treasure.htm

Fig. 9

9a	Michaela Mammerler, June 2010
9b	Michaela Mammerler, May 2010

Fig 10

10a	http://www.veins-web.net/images/art/khirbat2.jpg
10b	Hamilton, R.W. 1959
10c	Polewoi, Wladim M., ‚Die Kunst Griechenlands', Dresden, 1991, p.218
10d	http:/images.asc.ohio-state.edu/is/image/ha/0010385_c.JPG?size=668,668&qlt=30&fmt=jpeg
10e	http://www.artehistoria.jcyl.es/v2/obras/14220.htm

10f http://media.web.britannica.com/eb-media/17/92917-004-777F1917.jpg
10g http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vasudeva_I_01.jpg
10h http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bahramv.jpg

Fig. 11

11a Hamilton, R.W. 1959
11b Hamilton, R.W. 1959
11c Michaela Mammerler, drawing, May 2010
11d Hamilton, R.W. 1959
11e http://www.metmuseum.org/~/media/Images/Exhibitions/2012/Byzantium%20and%20Islam/blog/khirbat1.ashx?mw=600
11f https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/mtdavis/Art100/Images/271/50.gif

Fig. 12

12a http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/LotDetailsPrintable.aspx?intObjectID=4348352
12b http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/53/White_Glazed_Consort-Yang_Guifei(719-756_AD)_with_mandolin.JPG

Fig. 13

13a Bakour, Dina, 'The Animal Sculptures at the Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi', Fig.6, p.295, Rahden/Westfahlen, Leidorf, 2008
13b Talgam, Rina, 'The stylistic Origins of Umayyad Architecture and Sculpture', Part II, Fig 69, Wiesbaden, 2004
13c Talgam, Rina, 'The stylistic Origins of Umayyad Architecture and Sculpture', Part II, Fig 153, Wiesbaden, 2004

Fig. 14

14a http://www.sedefscorner.com/2012/07/byzantium-and-islam-age-of-transition.html
14b http://badwila.net/islam/index.html

Fig. 15

Dominique Clevenot, Gerard Degorge, Das Ornament in der Baukunst des Islam, 2007

Fig. 16

16a http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1962.294
16b http://iranian.com/main/files/storyimages/sas_5.jpg

Fig. 17

http://www.casparinstitute.org/trav11/index.php?dt=111025

Fig. 18

18a http://metmuseum.org/exhibitions/view?exhibitionId=%7Bcc6b0ffd-07d5-460d-bb78-8aaab1f40130%7D&oid=70019456&ft=*&fe=1

18b Rosen Stone, Elisabeth, 'Die Adaption westlicher Motive in der Kunst von Ghandara'. In ‚Ghandara, Das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans', p.98, Mainz am Rhein, 2008

Fig. 19

http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/singleObject.cfm?ObjectNumber=F1964.10

Fig. 20

http://www.metmuseum.org/en/exhibitions/listings/2012/byzantium-and-islam/blog/where-in-the-world/posts/khirbat-al-mafjar

Fig 21

Albanese, Marilia, 'Angkor', p.31, Vercelli, Italy, 2011

Fig. 22

22a Rosen Stone, Elisabeth, 'Die Adaption westlicher Motive in der Kunst von Ghandara'. In ‚Ghandara, Das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans', p.104, Mainz am Rhein, 2008

22b Pal, Pratyapadita, 'Desire and Devotion', Baltimore, 2001

Fig. 23

23a Thomas, Thelma K., 'Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture', Fig. 53, Princeton, 2000

23b Wessel, Klaus, 'Koptische Kunst', Recklinghausen, p.45, 1963

Fig. 24

Deva, Krishna [edt.]: Allahabad Museum: 'Stone sculpture in the Allahabad Museum, pp.199,203, edts. Krishna Deva', S. D. Trivedi - New Delhi, 1996

Fig. 25

http://www.shunya.net/Pictures/NorthIndia/Patna/PatnaMuseum01.jpg

Fig. 26

http://victor-vijay.blogspot.co.at/2011/03/art-of-india.html

Fig. 27

Tranchini, Marchello, ‘Borobudur: golden tales oft he Buddhas‘, p.68, London, 1990

Curriculum Vitae
Michaela Mammerler
I was born in Lower Austria
I was raised with love and care
amongst my parents vineyards
I worked, studied and traveled
to many beautiful places
I met wonderful people.
THANK YOU.
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