

Chapter X

The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City: The Case of the Mosque*

The significance of mosques in the definition of an Islamic city-pattern is acknowledged by all general theories of the Islamic city and is also obvious to anyone who has visited a contemporary Middle Eastern city. Not only are mosques a feature common to all Muslim cities, but they also have had a continuous existence and exert a profound influence upon the cities.

Moreover, since the mosque can be studied in the context of many different urban settings, it provides an advantage over the other two methodologies commonly used in studies of Middle Eastern cities. The first one postulates the existence of an "Islamic" city-pattern. Apparently justified by an urban ideal going back to the Prophet's *hadith*, by the existence for several centuries of a large unified empire which, directly or indirectly, sponsored cities from North Africa to Central Asia, and by a number of literary sources, this view has led over the past thirty years to a number of more or less systematic and more or less extensive statements about the "Muslim city." Louis Massignon, George Marçais, Edmond Pauty, Leopoldo Torres Balbas and Gustave von Grunebaum have in various articles been the most lucid exponents of the notion of a pan-Islamic urban order, in which a large number of local peculiarities are overshadowed by a community of purposes and of habits of life – at least during the classical centuries of Islamic civilization in the Middle East.

The second approach is the precise study of local conditions. This type of information may involve monographs on individual modern cities, such as Clerget's study of Cairo, or investigations of the development of a given city over the centuries, such as Sauvaget's *Alep*, or the identification of a key moment in the history of a city, such as Le Tourneau's study of Fez under the Merinids or Mantran's Istanbul in the seventeenth century. This approach is also used in the study of institutions or characteristics which affect several cities, for instance, [27] the various studies devoted by Claude Cahen to

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social organisms or by R. Brunschvig to fairs.¹ The information provided by these documents is peculiar in several ways. It is fragmentary, since it involves only a limited number of towns, and it will never be complete. Even the most optimistic scholar cannot envisage the possibility of monographs on all cities of the Middle East or on all pertinent and comparable institutions. Furthermore, this information is interdisciplinary to an almost frightening extent: archaeology, epigraphy, traditional philology, art history and virtually all branches of the social sciences are involved in its formulation. Finally, it is intellectually unsettling because its validity – the degree to which a precise bit of knowledge about a specific city at a specific time can be used for anything but that city at that particular time – is often difficult to determine.

In contrast to these two methods, an examination of the mosque helps to bridge the gap between generalizations about the “Middle Eastern city” and specific monographic data. The theme of the mosque or, more generally, of the building which reflects the religious needs of Islamic culture has already been broached in many studies. Both archaeological and literary information on mosques is plentiful, and there is a large scholarly literature on the subject. However, it is not yet possible to develop a full and thorough statement of what the mosque has meant to the Muslim city. Therefore this paper will present a sketch of what seem to be the main features of the historical development of the religious building in Islam. Through the study of this particular feature as it changes over time, some meaningful conclusions about the city should emerge. But I should like at the very outset to emphasize how much is still uncertain and hypothetical about the method I will use as well as about many precise details.

What is a mosque? Let us turn first to textual evidence. The most pertinent passages from the Qur’an seem to me to be the following ones:

II, 144: And now verily We shall make thee turn (in prayer) toward a *qibla* which is dear to thee. So turn thy face toward the [28] *masjid al-haram* and ye (O Muslims), wheresoever ye may be, turn your faces (when ye pray) toward it.

XVII, 1: Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the *masjid al-haram* to the *masjid al-aqsa*.

IX, 17–18: It is not for the idolaters to tend God’s sanctuaries’ [*masajid*], bearing witness against themselves of disbelief ... He only shall tend God’s sanctuaries who believeth in God and the Last Day and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due and feareth none save God.

¹ A complete bibliographical apparatus is unnecessary. Two works can lead the reader to most of the significant studies or sources. One is G. E. von Grunebaum’s masterful essay, republished in *Islam, Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (London, 1955), pp. 141–58. The other is Ira M. Lapidus’s *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1967), with a particularly complete bibliography, especially on pp. 239–41.

IX, 107–108: And as for those who chose a place of worship [*masjid*] out of opposition and disbelief, and in order to cause dissent among the believers, and as an outpost for those who warred against God and His messenger aforesaid, they will surely swear: We purposed naught save good. God beareth witness that they verily were liars. Never stand (to pray) there. A place of worship [*masjid*] which was founded upon duty from the first day is more worthy that thou shouldst stand to pray therein, wherein are men who love to purify themselves.

LXXII, 17: Verily sanctuaries [*masajid*] are but for God.

XXII, 40: Sanction is given for fighting to those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly because they said: our Lord is God. For had God not repelled some people by means of others, churches [*sawami*], synagogues [*bi*], oratories [*salawat*], and *masajid* would have been destroyed.²

From these passages no clear conception of a specifically Muslim sanctuary or temple emerges. The word which ties all of them together is the word *masjid*, but it is not necessarily a building for the new faith (except possibly in the very obscure last passage quoted); it is merely a place which is generally defined as belonging to God. The matter is of particular interest because it contrasts with ritual obligations [29] which are spelled out in far greater detail. Furthermore, while there is no clear Muslim holy building, the Meccan sanctuary is recognized as the central holy place of the faith, with the mysterious *masjid al-aqsa* as a less clear second sanctuary.³ Finally, the Qur'an has no statement which would define the physical character of a *masjid* or which would attribute to it any sort of architectural or symbolic characteristic.

The early *hadith* and whatever is known of the practices of the early Muslim community before and a few decades after the Prophet's death provide a few additional data about early Islamic sanctuaries, but, as is well known, these data are very difficult to situate properly in time. Preliminary investigations of these data seem to point to the existence of several partially contradictory trends in the early Muslim community. One was the notion that prayer is an individual act and thus, to paraphrase a celebrated tradition, a *masjid* exists wherever one prays. An even more important result of this

² Each of these quotations poses a different problem of exegesis, especially those from *suras* IX and XXII which are clearly related to precise incidents (see commentaries or summaries of discussions in R. Blachère, *Le Coran*, 3 vols (Paris, 1947–51). Additional information may be gathered from such books as Ibn Ishaq's *The Life of Muhammad*, tr. A. Guillaume (London, 1955), which suggest a slightly more complex as well as more specific context for the mosque in the Prophet's time than I propose here. See also M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet* (Paris, 1957), pp. 108, 120, 202, 522, etc. I still feel, however, that even if it will have to be modified in details, my interpretation of the qur'anic evidence is justified, by among other reasons, the later history of the mosque.

³ O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock," *Ars Orientalis*, 3 (1989), with further references.

direct relationship between man and God, as it expresses itself in the act of prayer, is the lack in Islam of any clergy or intermediary between Creator and creature. Both of these notions tend to make a building with complex ritual requirements unnecessary.

On the other hand, a third early feature of Islam has an opposite result. It involves the complex notion of the community of the faithful (already apparent in the celebrated passage from the Qur'an LXII, 9–11, calling to prayer on Fridays), with its concomitant features such as the *khutba* and its symbol the *minbar*, the choice of Friday as the main day of gathering, or the appointment of specific hours for formal prayer and the growth of a ceremony of the call to prayer. These are the features which permitted the slow transformation of the Prophet's house in Medina into a sanctuary, a phenomenon for which there is no evidence in the Prophet's own time.⁴ It is also out of the notion of the community of the faithful that there arises the most characteristic, if not the only characteristic, requirement of the early Muslim sanctuary: a large enough space for the whole body of the faithful who find themselves in any one place. [30]

One last element must be added to this equation of early Islamic needs for a mosque, even though I know of no clear textual evidence for it. It is the existence of churches and synagogues identified with other systems of faith. As the conquest took place, Christian sanctuaries with their highly developed architecture and complex symbolism sometimes served as positive, but more often as negative, models for the Muslims. While the sting of rejection by organized Jewish and Christian communities led the Muslims to adopt cult practices which differentiated them from Jews and Christians (the most obvious example is that of the *qibla*), numerous individual conversions and cultural osmosis created a constant influx of internal suggestions for the adoption of Jewish and possibly even Christian habits and practices.

The need for a space large enough to contain the community of the faithful, the principle of the individual act of prayer, the presence of Jewish and Christian traditions, and, except for Mecca, the lack of any concrete notion of a holy sanctuary seem to be the only features which can be proved or assumed to have existed in early Islamic times. The definition of these features derives totally from literary sources, since no archaeological information is available for the period preceding the conquest. There is perhaps some danger in drawing too many conclusions about this period, for the sources tell us more about what the culture wanted to do than what it actually did. Altogether, then, it appears impossible to say precisely what a

⁴ There is as yet no definitive study on these early problems of the cult. See J. Sauvaget, *La mosquée omeyyade de Médine* (Paris, 1947), especially pp. 134 ff; C. H. Becker, "Die Kanzel im Kultus des alten Islams," and other studies in his *Islamstudien*, I (Leipzig, 1924); S. D. Goitein, various articles gathered in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1966), especially chs IV and V.

mosque was in early Islamic times even on the assumption that there was a clear conception of a mosque.

Let us turn now to the late Middle Ages and to the most celebrated theoretical formulation of the Muslim world, Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*. Its first characteristic for our purposes is that the chapter dealing with mosques identifies only three monuments as being mosques: the sanctuaries of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.⁵ The chapter closes with the following remarkable statement:

The ancient nations had mosques which they venerated in what they thought to be a spirit of religious devotion. There were the fire temples of the Persians and the temples of the Greeks and the houses of the Arabs in the Hejaz, which the Prophet ordered destroyed on his raids. Al-Mas'udi mentioned some of them. We have no occasion whatever to mention them. They are not sanctioned by a religious law. They have nothing to do with religion. No attention is paid to them or to their history. In connection with them, the information contained in historical works is enough. Whoever wants to have historical information (about them) should consult (the historical works).⁶

All sanctuaries, past and present, Muslim or not, are simply dismissed as fakes in the eyes of God.

This is not to say that Ibn Khaldun does not have anything to say about mosques. But the chapter in which he discusses them is not the one which concerns itself with places of worship but the one dealing with the *imamate*.⁷

The leadership of prayer is the highest of (all these functions) and higher than royal authority as such, which, like (prayer) falls under the caliphate. This is attested by the (circumstance) that the men around Muhammad deduced from the fact that Abu Bakr had been appointed (Muhammad's) representative as prayer leader, the fact that he had also been appointed his representative in political leadership. They said: "The Messenger of God found him acceptable for our religion. So, why should we not accept him for our worldly affairs?" If prayer did not rank higher than political leadership, the analogical reasoning would not have been sound. If this is established, it should be known that city mosques are of two kinds, great spacious ones which are prepared for holiday prayers, and other, minor ones which are restricted to one section of the population or one quarter of the city and which are not for the general attended prayers. Care of the great mosques rests with the caliph or with those authorities, wazirs, or judges, to whom he delegates it. A prayer leader for each mosque is appointed for the five daily prayers, the Friday service, the two festivals, the eclipses of (the sun and the moon), and the prayer for rain. This (arrangement) is obligatory only in the sense that it is preferable and better. It also serves the purpose of preventing the subjects from usurping one of the duties of the caliphs connected with the supervision of the

⁵ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, tr. F. Rosenthal, vol. II (New York, 1958), pp. 249 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 449–50.

general (public) interests. The (arrangement) is considered necessary by those who consider the Friday service necessary, and who, therefore, consider it necessary to have a prayer leader appointed. Administration of the mosques that are restricted to one section of the population or to one quarter of the city rests with those [32] who live nearby. These mosques do not require the supervision of a caliph or ruler.

There appears in these paragraphs a rather curious *ex post facto* recognition of the existence of sanctuaries and an attempt simply to record the legal position of a phenomenon which is not explained and perhaps not fully sanctioned. Ibn Khaldun refers to al-Mawardi, who also deals with mosques in one of his chapters on the *imamate* and who is somewhat more explicit. He recognizes two kinds of sanctuaries (*masajid*): official ones (of which he names three types: *masajid* proper, *jawami*, and *mashahid*), which are controlled by the caliph or his representatives; and private ones (*'ammiyya*), which are the responsibility of whatever person or group built them. Al-Mawardi's concern is primarily a legalistic one, that of defining properly the validity of the fundamental Muslim act of prayer.⁸

From Ibn Khaldun and al-Mawardi we acquire new information in addition to what was provided by literary evidence dealing with early Islam. First, the mosque appears to be legally defined primarily as a place for prayer, and a hierarchical value is given to each place of prayer according to its relationship to the institution of the *imamate*. Second, a distinction seems assumed – although neither theoretician has been willing to discuss it in any detail – between divinely ordained sanctuaries (of which there are only three), the only true *masajid*, and man-created places for worship. Within the latter, al-Mawardi distinguishes three types but does not define them. This point leads us to a third conclusion: whatever the theoretical constructs of Muslim scholars of the Middle Ages, there appears in them a certain uneasiness about institutions, practices and buildings which had developed and yet did not seem to fit into the “system.” This point has been made more than once with respect to political institutions. It is interesting to note that it applies also to monuments of religious architecture.

We should also consider another type of literary source – descriptions of cities and of their monuments. These accounts give us some indication of the actual, physical reality of religious institutions in the Muslim world, without our relying exclusively on the chance preservation of specific monuments. Even these accounts have to be used with some care whenever one attempts to generalize about the Muslim world. It is only from about the twelfth century on that they appear [33] in sufficiently large numbers to permit generalization; earlier accounts are either valid for one city only⁹ or

⁸ al-Mawardi, *Les statuts gouvernementaux*, tr. E. Fagnan (Algiers, 1915), pp. 209 ff.

⁹ The most celebrated one is the Khatib's *Tārikh Baghdad*, a new translation with important commentaries by Professor J. Lassner is published in *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1970).

are too brief to be really useful, as are the classical geographers. For archaeology or the history of art, however, the later sources are invaluable, for they are the only sources which permit us to appraise the historical and documentary value of surviving monuments. The contrast between the picture provided by city descriptions and theoretical statements is quite striking. Al-Maqrizi in the fifteenth century lists the following religious or primarily religious buildings in Cairo: eighty-eight *jami*'s, seventy-four *madrasas*, nineteen *masjids*, twenty-one *khanqas*, twelve *ribats*, twenty-five *zawiyas*, three *mashhads*; thirty-three *masjids* and one *jami*' were found in the suburb of Qarafa.¹⁰ Ibn 'Asakir describing Damascus in the twelfth century lists 241 *masjids*, twelve *madrasas*, and one *ribat*.¹¹ Similar data from Aleppo, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Isfahan or Samarkand would illustrate the point that, whereas Muslim theoreticians saw the religious institution as consisting of three divine sanctuaries with a hierarchy of man-devised spaces (both known as *masjids*) officially recognized only for the specific purposes of private or communal prayer, the actual development of religious institutions in Islam was far more complex. It included a differentiation of functions, illustrated by the growth of a terminology for religious buildings which does not appear in Ibn Khaldun or al-Mawardi, as well as a transformation over the centuries of the physical character of the city. This is evidenced by the fact that the small number of functionally defined buildings in early Islam was followed by a tremendous multiplication of structures with religious purposes.

At this point, I would like to turn to the archaeological evidence in order to consider how an architecture inspired by the needs of the faith developed. Preliminary investigations of various aspects of this subject have led me to suggest four major periods in the growth of religious architecture in Islam.

It is clear that all early Islamic cities had what we may call in today's parlance a Muslim "civic center." In the newly created cities, which are better documented, these centers developed in two stages which are quite close to each other in time and yet quite different in [34] significance.¹² The first stage (Basra in 635, Kufa in 639, Fustat in 641–42) consisted of the creation of a sort of forum, open from all sides and directions (partial exception in the case of the Egyptian city), somewhere in the center of the city. This forum was usually called a *masjid* and in one instance a *musalla*.¹³ It served all the functions which affected the *jama'a*, the community, from prayer to military recruitment

¹⁰ al-Maqrizi, *al-Mawa'iz wal-I'tibar bi-Dhikr al-Khitat wal-Athar*, especially vol. II of the undated Cairo edition.

¹¹ Ibn Asakir, *Tārikh Madina Dimashq*, ed. S. al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1951).

¹² The main evidence has been gathered by K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. I (Oxford, 1932), chs 1 and 2. Some of these schemes, especially as they have been put together so brilliantly by L. Caetani, *Annali dell' Islam* (Rome, 1905–18), appear at times too neat and may already have been medieval simplifications. But even if this is so in part, the pattern suggested makes sense.

¹³ al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), p. 350.

to collection of taxes. To this Muslim center corresponded a group of tribal centers, also called *masajid*. In later times, as is suggested in a text transmitted by al-Maqrizi,¹⁴ these early creations were interpreted as part of a coherent plan in the Caliph Umar's mind. Umar was said to have forbidden parallel development of Muslim and tribal institutions called by the same name in Syria. Umar is also supposed to have decreed that only one *masjid* may be founded and that individual tribes must be prevented from building their own. Whether or not this was consciously planned by the second caliph, it is indeed true that in the old cities conquered by the Muslims (information is available for Damascus, Hama and Jerusalem) a single Muslim entity was created. Usually it was begun by taking over some disused or little used open space near the center of the city and, after minor repairs, this space functioned in the same fashion as the Muslim *masjid* in the new cities.

The main characteristic, then, of this first stage was the creation of a space which served exclusively Muslim purposes and which, in cities that were entirely Muslim, existed on two separate levels of exclusivity. The word *masjid* is always associated with these spaces, but it does not yet possess any formal structure nor does it have any precise function other than that of excluding non-Muslims.

A second stage occurred between 650 and 750.¹⁵ To my knowledge, twenty-seven *masjids* from this period are archaeologically definable. This figure includes modifications to earlier buildings, but excludes buildings known through texts only (this unfortunately means all Iranian mosques). If we bar from consideration such local topographical [35] features as may have affected individual changes during this century, the following points seem to characterize this period. First, each Muslim center continued to have *masjids*, but the tendency was to recognize only one for each place: local tribal *masjids* still existed, but their importance dwindled. In the case of Basra, for instance, physical changes were made in the *masjid* of the community because Ziyad Ibn Abihi, the governor, was afraid of the undue importance taken by smaller *masjids*. No other term than *masjid* appears to have been used, although instances occur of the word *musalla*, but these instances (especially in Medina) seem to refer to an institution *extra muros* which still demands investigation. Second, the *masjid* was transformed from a space into a building. This is a crucial development of this century and is all the more remarkable because all twenty-seven mosques were related in form. They were all hypostyle constructions with columns or piers as the main units of construction and bays framed by two or four

¹⁴ Al-Maqrizi, II, p. 246.

¹⁵ In this division my position departs somewhat from that of K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, and J. Sauvaget, *La mosquée omeyyade*. These scholars separate the changes which occurred between AD 650 and 700 from those which followed al-Walid's rule. A detailed discussion of the reasons for my position cannot be made here.

columns or piers as the module, which allowed an almost infinite growth of the building in any direction. In this respect the early mosque was a remarkably modern building which could be expanded or contracted according to the needs of the community.¹⁶ All mosques had a certain relationship between open and closed covered spaces. The problems posed by this relationship pertain primarily to the history of art, except on one point, which is the apparent tendency to consider the covered parts as the *bayt al-salat*, i.e. place of prayer, and the rest of the building as an overflow area for prayer. All these buildings were enclosed by walls and did not have an exterior façade. Their orderly form appeared only from the inside where the balance between open and covered spaces served, among other things, to indicate the direction of *qibla*. Their only outward symbol was the minaret, a feature which appeared early in mosques built in old cities with predominantly non-Muslim populations and only later in primarily Muslim ones. The minaret was only one of several new features found in all or most mosques; others were the *mihrab*, the axial nave, the *maqsura*, the decoration, a small dome in the center, and so on. All these features can be explained as due to various secular needs,¹⁷ but all of them tended during this period to acquire a religious meaning or, to be more precise, a cultic meaning by becoming involved in the ceremony of prayer. Yet more importantly, these mosques, like Constantinian [36] basilicas, were almost all willful creations of princes and of governors. They were closely tied to palaces and to the *dar al-imara*, and were rarely spontaneous creations reflecting the immediate spiritual or ritual needs of the populations. If it is too strong to refer to them as imperial mosques, their consistent formal typology and their use as models for later times certainly permit us to call them "classical" mosques.

During the second half of the eighth century, as well as during the ninth and tenth centuries, the "classical" mosque type dominates the whole Islamic world. It is the time of the great masterpieces of Cordoba, Samarra, Kairouan, Cairo and Baghdad. The very same type seems to have existed in Iran, although our information is too scant to permit certainty on this point. With the growth of huge metropolises such as Baghdad, Samarra and Cairo, some cities acquired several *masjids* with equal legal status. The increase of large sanctuaries is usually explained as being due to the increase of population, but other factors are involved as well. Imperial glory was a factor in the construction of the mosque of Ibn Tulun, the Azhar, or the Samarra mosques, while the development of local social identifications in Baghdad's population

¹⁶ On this point see O. Grabar, "La mosquée de Damas et les origines de la mosquée," *Synthronon* (Paris, 1968).

¹⁷ Most of them have been studied by J. Sauvaget, *La mosquée omeyyade*. See also H. Stern, "Les origines de la mosquée," *Syria*, 28 (1951), and O. Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 18 (1964), p. 74.

also contributed to the growth of several other mosques.¹⁸ However, sheer size was the main factor and each mosque probably served as a center around which the life of various city sections was organized.

Thus, partly as a consequence of these divisions within large urban units, a less immediate relationship prevailed than had previously existed between the mosque and the caliph or his governors. Palace and mosque were no longer necessarily adjacent. Officials appeared less often in the sanctuaries. In Fatimid Cairo, the caliph's visit to the four mosques of the agglomeration became an organized and carefully regulated ceremony instead of a common occurrence.¹⁹

At the same time the considerable development of such features in the mosque as the *mihrab* area or the so-called T pattern can be explained as the results of purely religious, almost spiritual, values attributed to the mosque.²⁰ [37]

While the formal typology of the *masjid* during these centuries remained more or less as it had been in the first century of Islam, and while no obvious major changes seem to have occurred in the function of *masjids*, the mosques in the very large cities became partly dissociated from the secular authorities and developed as specifically religious symbols. In lesser towns the situation varied considerably. In Cordoba the palace was still adjacent to the mosque. In Bukhara or Merv, on the other hand, the governor's palace seems to have been independent of the mosque. (There is some uncertainty as to the position of the mosque in the large *maydans* which began to appear.)²¹ The situation in small towns or villages is hardly known. Altogether, the exact characteristics of this third period are not easy to establish and, pending the discovery of new material, I would prefer to define it as a period marked by refinement in the internal arrangement of the classical mosque with significant novelties demonstrable only in the very large cities.

A fourth period can be fixed on archaeological grounds as belonging to the twelfth century, but for a number of reasons which still require study, it probably began somewhat earlier. One of the most important aspects of this period was the changes in the appearance of the whole Muslim world, changes which were not the same throughout but varied with local traditions.

Let us examine the archaeological evidence. The major monument of Islamic architecture of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries is the

¹⁸ For Baghdad see note 3, above. On other cities the most accessible sources of information are K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. II, and *Muslim Architecture in Egypt*, vol. I (Oxford, 1952).

¹⁹ See the description of the inauguration of al-Hakim's mosque, al-Maqrizi, II, pp. 280 ff.

²⁰ The theme deserves further study; in the meantime see E. Pauty, "L'évolution du dispositif en T dans les mosquées à portiques," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 2 (1932).

²¹ For the Central Asian examples useful indications and summaries are found in G. A. Pugachenkova and L. Rempel, *Istoriia Iskusstva Uzbekistana* (Moscow, 1965).

Great Mosque of Isfahan.²² Its very complicated history and its extraordinary aesthetic merits need not concern us here. It is important to know, however, that this is the first known example of a series which remained typically Iranian until today. An aerial view of its location within the city shows a position clearly akin to that of the mosque of Damascus and of the Ibn Tulun mosque in Cairo. It is fully integrated within the city and obviously occupies a large space. It has no clear outside façade and can be entered from several places. The internal arrangement, however, is changed. The twelfth-century mosque replaced an earlier hypostyle mosque and reflected, therefore, a conscious formal change. Instead of the large space of the hypostyle hall with its endless possibilities of movement and growth, there is an interior courtyard (and not merely the open part of a single area), [38] with an interior façade and a division of the covered parts into four separate areas through the creation of large *eyvans* on each side of the courtyard. The earlier internal unity of spatial arrangement is gone, and enlargements become impossible except through the addition of separate buildings attached to the original *masjid*.

In Cairo during the same period, in addition to the four large mosques previously discussed, several small mosques acquired spectacular features such as a street façade that fitted awkwardly into the pre-established pattern of the city.²³ Mausoleums appeared in the city and especially outside its walls, and some of these had small oratories attached to them.²⁴ In Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul and Baghdad we can not only follow the same developments but also we can witness the rather sudden appearance of a hitherto unknown type of building, the *madrasa*. *Ribats* and monasteries of various types also appeared in large numbers within the cities, although these forms were previously found mostly in frontier areas. A major terminological change followed. The term *masjid* tended to refer only to the smaller sanctuaries, while *masjid al-jami'* and later simply *jami'* referred to the older or larger ones. The latter word eventually took over as the only word for mosque. The exact moment when the linguistic shift occurred is not very certain. The earliest formal occurrence known to me is in the text of an inscription (but unfortunately not a building inscription) dated AD 956 and copied by al-Maqrizi.²⁵ Among writers I have consulted, Ibn Hawqal (late tenth century) seems to be the first to use the term systematically. In this case, however, I am uncertain whether the word is a colloquialism or whether it corresponds to an official terminology.

²² There is still no usable monograph on this building. Best summaries are by A. Godard in *Athar-é Iran*, I and II (1936–37).

²³ Creswell, *Muslim Architecture in Egypt*, pp. 239 ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *passim*, and O. Grabar, "The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Buildings," *Ars Orientalis*, 6 (1967).

²⁵ al-Maqrizi, II, p. 255.

In any event, these novelties imply two major changes in the structure of the urban system. On the one hand, varying architectural forms evolved to serve Muslim piety. Communal prayer in a large mosque may have continued; but, parallel to the mosque, mausoleums for holy men and women also appeared, as well as private oratories which were identified with smaller social units (family, quarter, profession). Muslim versions of monastic orders which separated some individuals from the total community, along with a new system of teaching and training in the faith which was separated from that of the traditional mosque, also called for new structures. In the large [39] mosques themselves – such as that at Isfahan – the breakup of the original single unity of the building can be explained as a result of divided allegiances within the city; the community no longer prayed together but formed smaller groups for prayer.

This change in the nature of the community of the faithful, indicated by an analysis of the monuments, suggests many different hypotheses. I should like to single out several in particular. First, the *morcellement* of spiritual allegiances, when related to the grandeur of the many new buildings, shows a widening of the social base of architectural patronage: more people acquired more means to build more numerous and more varied types of pious buildings than ever before. This extension of patronage and of taste can be confirmed by evidence from other arts.²⁶ But these new constructions also adapted themselves to the existing pattern of the city. They no longer transformed the city by becoming its obvious centers but fitted themselves wherever space was available. Indeed the earlier city had often imposed small and sometimes awkward shapes upon them. Alternately, new sanctuaries moved outside city walls and were one of the contributing factors to the growth of suburbs, as has been shown by Sauvaget's study of Damascus.²⁷

A second change implied by these architectural novelties is perhaps even more important for an understanding of the structure of the city. The cultic and spiritual life of the city was no longer tied to one or to a few large places but to a vast number of buildings. In this respect the city of the twelfth century appears to have consisted of a series of parallel and probably partly competing poles of spiritual allegiance and religious behavior. While to my knowledge there never occurred a parish-like organization in Islam, archaeological evidence suggests that the allegiance of the individual Muslim was parochial, though it is not clear whether the parochialism was related to quarters or whether certain city-wide organizations took precedence over topographical proximity. To interpret the evidence we need further textual

²⁶ See some preliminary remarks on this subject in O. Grabar, "The Illustrated *Maqamat* of the Thirteenth Century: The Bourgeoisie and the Arts," published by A. Hourani and S. M. Stern in the proceedings of the 1965 seminar in Oxford on the Islamic city.

²⁷ J. Sauvaget, "Esquisses d'une histoire de la ville de Damas," *Revue des Études Islamiques*, 8 (1934), p. 461.

investigation. However, two other archaeological phenomena can be added to our dossier. One is the burgeoning of minarets, particularly prevalent in Cairo and Isfahan. Minarets began to be constructed in the twelfth century. In certain places in Iran, minarets [40] still remain even though their mosques have disappeared. Minarets were hardly necessary in such quantities for the specific aim of calling to prayer; rather, like the spires of churches, they were symbols of the presence, not so much of individual religious institutions, as of the people who built them or for whom they were built. Like the façades of mausoleums or of other sanctuaries, minarets became a form of conspicuous consumption and publicity for the buildings with which they were found. Thus they contributed to the creation of monumental avenues, like the *shari' bayn al-qasrayn* in Cairo, where a whole series of superb buildings exemplified the same needs and functions. The other phenomenon is the accentuation of a trend we have noted in the previous period. Secular buildings become completely separated from the sanctuaries, and, even when certain holy places were found in the citadel itself, as in Aleppo or Cairo, these places no longer played a significant part in the spiritual life of the city.

The sketch I have proposed for the fourth period in the development of the religious building in Islam still requires a few additional remarks. First, it seems that this phenomenon is not valid for the Muslim West. Second, the phenomenon lasted in the Arab world through the Mamluk period and in Anatolia until the beginning of Ottoman power. In Iran, with the advent of the Mongols, large imperial complexes took over, as they would do later under the Ottomans. These complexes usually included most of the functions of the buildings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but little is known as to whether they were actually used in the same way or whether they were merely expressions of imperial glory. Third, after the fall of the Mamluks, many of the institutions for which all these buildings were constructed fell into disuse; in Iran mosques and *madrasas* disappeared leaving only minarets and mausoleums.

Still, the usefulness of the monuments of this period was not exhausted. Here perhaps the documentation I have presented for the Middle Ages may serve those who try to understand the contemporary city. For not all the buildings were destroyed, and, as new institutions developed, especially in the nineteenth century, these old buildings were restored and employed anew. It is no accident that old religious *madrasas* in Damascus are used as girls' schools, libraries and academies or that the Süleymaniye, in Istanbul, houses the main photographic laboratory for the library collections of the city. Other such buildings, such as Baybars' mosque in Cairo, are public gardens, for their large space is perfectly suited to the city planner's concern for [41] air and greenery. How restful and clean are the fountains in the courtyards of the many medieval buildings, in which today as in the past one escapes from the noise and the dirt of the city! In these ways the various

medieval religious developments which I have outlined have provided Middle Eastern cities – almost none of which are new cities – with a monumental frame or grid, in a manner comparable to the ways in which the Roman city created the grid of the medieval Mediterranean city. In part, the needs for open spaces in the modern city were already answered in the Middle Ages, although not for the same reasons of health; and the mosque, small or large, with its court is clearly far more “contemporary” in its function than the closed church or cathedral of continental Europe. The expression of the complexity of the urban structure in numerous architectural monuments, beginning around the twelfth century, and the decadence of the structure after the fifteenth century, which did not necessarily entail a destruction of the monuments, has provided many a Middle Eastern city with spaces and often buildings which can be reused by contemporary organs of government, society and culture.

However fragmentary and incomplete they may be, the information and the hypotheses which have been presented lead to a number of conclusions. First, a study of an Islamic architecture of religious inspiration indicates the existence of an evolution, of which we have defined four stages. For an understanding of the city – and especially of the pre-modern city – this evolution has several implications. One is that there was more than one *type* or *model* for the traditional city and that these types are definable in chronological succession. Another implication is that the pre-modern city acquired its essential characteristics around the twelfth century; the earlier, more unified city was superseded by a city with a multiplicity of spiritual allegiances, whose exact mode of operation still demands detailed studies.²⁸ This city in turn also decayed, but it did provide the contemporary town with architectural nuclei which can be reused for contemporary purposes.

A second conclusion derives from the fact that, except for the earliest periods, most of the documentation presented here has been archaeological. This evidence does not appear to coincide with theoretical statements made by classical Muslim writers. Does this mean that the behavior and attitudes suggested by the monuments were so obvious that writers did not record them? Or does it mean that the [42] reality of religious life was radically different from official statements about the faith? In any event, it would appear that for an understanding of the growth and development of the medieval world, sources derived from the fields of material culture may often be more authentic and more valuable than traditional literary ones.

Finally, these remarks are also intended to suggest problems and subjects for further study. There is a methodological problem concerning the exact validity of a scheme based on only one aspect of urban life for the study of the whole city. There is a linguistic problem concerning the history of the

²⁸ See now the book by I. M. Lapidus, cited in note 1.

terminology used for religious architecture and institutions.²⁹ And there is the problem of equalizing our knowledge of the various areas. This is particularly true when one considers that we know so much more about the Arab world than about Iran or Turkey.

But these problems will not be solved by one person; they require a long-range systematic effort by teams drawn from various fields of concentration and with different linguistic competences. Without such an effort we will always end up caught between excellent studies on points of detail, on the one hand, and brilliant but untested hypotheses, on the other.

Discussion

The members of the conference were particularly interested in some of the ramifications of Professor Grabar's remarks about the development of cities in his fourth period, the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Professor von Grunebaum considered the cultural context for this period and noted that both Professor Grabar and Professor Lapidus point out, for the period after 1200, "the domination of the city by clerical circles, by the law schools, and by people who created a particular atmosphere in education and knowledge. This is known, but as far as I can see, insufficiently exploited in one context with which we all are intrigued; and that is the question of why and when the intellectual impetus in Muslim civilization, or rather in Arabic civilization, died out. It seems to me that you have given one additional clue to the many clues which we have had so far. When you look back from that period to the ninth and tenth centuries, which were the high-point of the Muslim intellectual movement, there was [43] an *adab* (I don't mean *adab* as good manners, or *adab* as the ability to quote poems, but *adab* as a cultural ideal, as a formal ideal, as an ideal of behavior) which connected and tied together the courtly circles, the ruling circles and the intellectual circles. By the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the domination of the city's intellectual atmosphere by the concerns of the clergy marks the end of any intellectual model which would bind together the ruler and the ruled. The fact that the majority of these rulers were foreigners, and were only gradually and imperfectly assimilated, points this out."

Professor Lapidus remarked on the sociological aspects of the changes in building patterns, the development of new structural types, and the great multiplication of religious structures. He agreed with Professor Grabar that this implies a fragmentation of community life, but thought that "some distinctions have to be introduced. The multiplication of religious institutions did not necessarily imply an intensification of the very small scale community

²⁹ It should be pointed out that none of the Arabic terms mentioned in this paper have ever been studied in a historical fashion.

ties of quarters or fraternities. While the single mosques of the classical period implied a unified society most of the new structures seem to have represented instead the growth of resources, prestige, and power in the large religious communities which stood outside of small quarters and groups.

“Socially speaking, these buildings also represented the patronage of the various military regimes and their interest in supporting and furthering, for a complex of motives, the activities of the religious community. I think Professor von Grunebaum’s remarks about the breakdown of a common culture between the military and intellectual and clerical circles are very germane in this respect. Genuine social ties, those of common cultivation, were replaced by formal external ties of alliance, support and patronage. I would suggest that although we do have a fragmentation of community life, the multiplication of institutions ultimately represented the enhancement of activity in the larger religious community as supported by political regimes.”

Professor Goitein raised the question of what concrete meaning a mosque had: “How closely were people attached to a particular mosque? Were they attached to a mosque as such or to the *imam* or prayer leader? I believe, for example, that many indications of a mosque belonging to a certain group of people, such as the mosque of the coppersmiths and so on, do not really imply a mosque for a corporation, but rather a mosque in a particular quarter or market.” Professor Fakhry responded: “Muslims have no preference whatever; all [44] mosques are the house of God, and if anyone has a certain attachment to a particular mosque, it is a matter of convenience. You are also quite right that the name indicates nothing at all and may be used simply because the quarter has that name even if there are no coppersmiths living there. People may go to a particular mosque but it has nothing to do with their profession. They go because of the good man they find leading prayers or preaching there.”

Professor Fernea, on the basis of contemporary experiences, saw other possible explanations for the multiplication of mosques. He observed that the “completion of a monumental structure such as a mosque requires both a cultural tradition for models and conceptions, and the organization of political, economic and social forces to realize this model. It seems to me that these two elements, the cultural tradition and the sociological background for the organization of the work, cannot be taken to be the same through such long periods of time and over such a wide geographic area. I think of two contemporary examples. I was doing some work among the Bedouins in northern Saudi Arabia a couple of years ago, and I happened to visit the town of Sakaka. As I was walking through the town, I noticed numerous *masjids*. I counted some two hundred and was surprised to find afterward that in a town of about 20,000 to 30,000 people, there were approximately 400 to 500 *masjids*. It turned out that these numerous *masjids* were by and large not used. They were really a device which enabled the king, through his ministry, to provide an income for as many religious people as he could.

It was a way of providing a kind of welfare pension for his subjects. I found this apparently true also in al-Quriyat and in Jidda.

“The other example that comes to mind is from Nubia. Beginning with the 1900s, Nubia experienced what is perhaps the most remarkable architectural renaissance of any rural area in the Middle East. From a collection of very small houses built close to the river, perhaps one room to a family, Nubian villages changed into conglomerations of houses with double courtyards, elaborate façades and fine decorations. Elaborate colonnades going down to the river front appeared in the villages. Along with this renaissance of domestic architecture and the increasing size and ratio of numbers of rooms to people, a large number of mosques were built, some of them with double minarets or with domes.

“There were certain economic circumstances involved. One was compensations that the government provided for loss of land when [45] the first dam at Aswan was built. Another was enforced idleness, since the rising of the reservoir cut the agricultural season to half of what it had been. In addition, villages moved up the mountainside where land was not as valuable for agriculture. All of these things help explain the economic circumstances of this development.

“There was a further consideration: in the southern half of Nubia, the mosques, but not the houses, were much more modest in size and complexity than the mosques in the northern part. We later found out that the villages of the northern part of Nubia, where a different dialect from that of the southern part is spoken, are not only residential units but also tribal units, whereas the people of the southern part of Nubia are not tribally organized; their villages are purely residential units and there is a great deal of fractionation of lineage groups. Thus it seems that the people who built the elaborate mosques in the northern part of Nubia had residential interests, tribal connections and tribal leadership to organize the kind of communal life necessary to build this architecture, whereas it was lacking in the other half of Nubia where all the effort went purely into the domestic work.” Professor Fernea concluded that the sociological and cultural considerations which explain such phenomena as the proliferation of religious institutions in the twelfth century may be complex indeed.

Professor Grabar was thus led to consider, apart from his original sociological explanation, the possibility that these buildings were a form of conspicuous consumption, investments on the part of princes, Mamluks, merchants and others, intended to impress people or tie down funds within certain families or groups. “We may have an architecture which corresponds not to the structure of the society, but to the interests of certain people or groups within it.”

Coming to more specific points, Professor von Grunebaum reconsidered the question of whether there were mosques in the time of Muhammad, in the earliest Muslim community. “In *The Life of the Prophet* by Ibn Hisham

the episode of the destruction of the so-called mosque of the opposition is recounted. The story is that the apostle went out until he stopped in a town an hour's daylight journey from Medina. The owners of the mosque of the opposition came to the apostle and asked him to come and pray with them. The prophet, however, did not go there but sent people to the mosque of those evil men to destroy it. They went and took a palmbrush and lighted it, and then two of them ran into the mosque and burned it. Thus, it [46] seems that we do have a mosque in the prophet's time."

Professor Grabar noted that palm trunks with palm leaves were used for protection against the sun, "but I have the impression that a mosque as a Muslim building, different from others, a place where God is worshipped, was not clearly differentiated in very early times. There is still no technical Muslim meaning of mosque."