

ANCIENT MOSQUES IN THEIR SPATIAL CONTEXT

HYBRID WORKSHOP, DECEMBER 3rd-4th 2021

Friday, December 3rd

14:00-14:30 registration

14:30-15:30 OPEN DATA AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Chair: Catharine JUDSON

Why would you like to share your research data?

Sarah ZAHREDDINE (Université libre de Bruxelles)

Opportunities and challenges in archaeological data publishing: perspectives from Open Context

Sarah WHITCHER KANSA (The Alexandria Archive Institute)

► on zoom

Introducing the Early Islamic mosques database

Hagit NOL (Université libre de Bruxelles)

15:30-15:50 coffee break

15:50-17:20 ANCIENT MOSQUES SESSION I

Chair: Marie-Odile ROUSSET

Early and Middle Islamic mosques in Palmyra and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi

Denis GENEQUAND (SMRA, Avenches)

Al-Khanka al-Salahiya Mosque (complex) in Hittin

Abed al-Razeq MATANI (independent scholar)

17:20-17:40 coffee break

17:40-19:10 KEYNOTE

Comparative perspectives on Islamisation. An archaeological view from Sub-Saharan Africa

Timothy INSOLL (University of Exeter)

► on zoom

19:10 reception

room B1.315

ULB, 50 avenue F.D. Roosevelt
1050 Bruxelles

For registration, please write Hagit NOL at:
hagit.nol@ulb.be until November 30th.

Saturday, December 4th

9:30-10:00 coffee

10:00-11:30 ANCIENT MOSQUES SESSION II

Chair: Nicolò PINI

The pre-Crusader mosque of Sour / Tyre (Lebanon)

Marie-Odile ROUSSET (CNRS – Archéorient, Lyons)

The congregational mosque in Jarash (Jordan) before and after the earthquake of 749 CE

Louise BLANKE (University of Edinburgh)

► on zoom

11:30-12:00 coffee break

12:00-13:30 ANCIENT MOSQUES SESSION III

Chair: Agnès VOKAER

The Early Islamic mosque at al-Yamāma (Najd, central Arabia)

Jérémie SCHIETTECATTE (CNRS Orient & Méditerranée, Paris)

Mosques in al-Andalus: state of the art from archaeology and experiences from Córdoba

Carmen GONZÁLEZ GUTIÉRREZ (University of Córdoba)

13:30-15:00 lunch

15:00-16:30 ANCIENT MOSQUES SESSION IV

Chair: Laurent BAVAY

Early mosques in West Africa and the Swahili coast: the role of Ibadi and Ismaili communities

Stéphane PRADINES (The Aga Khan University)

Mosque and the city: rethinking early Islamic concepts and links

Hagit NOL (Université libre de Bruxelles)

16:30-17:00 coffee break

17:00-18:30 KEYNOTE

Mosques and the material fabric of Islam: two questions for archaeologists

José C. CARVAJAL LÓPEZ (University of Leicester)

19:00 dinner



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The relatively young discipline of Islamic Archaeology deals with past cultures who either identified themselves as Muslim or were living within a Muslim hegemony. Unlike other disciplines that investigate material culture, the main emphasis of archaeology in many schools of the world is context, so that "an object as an object, alone, is mute" (Hodder and Hutson 2003: 171). The contexts commonly identified are spatial, typological, temporal, and dispositional. In practice, any find is interpreted in relation to other finds and other characteristics of its locus, layer, structure, site, or region. The object in its contexts tells the story of the people who made it, used it, disposed or destroyed it, and forgot about it.

Mosques are one of the physical representations of Islam and of Muslim communities in the archaeological record. Since the late seventh, eighth, and ninth century, mosques were built in various regions in Africa, Asia, and Europe with distinctive elements which allow for their identification. Archaeological excavations of ancient mosques as well as archaeologically-oriented surveys reveal the spatial contexts of these structures in their close domain, inside

neighborhoods and settlements, and across lands and continents. These studies point to various practices linked to mosques or to the communities who maintained them, to changes over time, and to similarities and dissimilarities between places. The results of these inquiries provide a better understanding of the social practices of different communities as well as the possible networks and the diffusion of knowledge between them. It also highlights the unique contribution of archaeology to the corpus of historical sources.

This workshop will first present a number of archaeological case studies in the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, and Spain between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries. Mosques will be introduced in relation to water systems and burials, to earlier and later structures, and to specific types of settlements. In particular, the workshop will treat the question of Islamization, the definitions of the term, and its validity. The event will also include launching a database for excavated mosques until the 9th century in OpenContext.org and discuss methods and approaches for open access to archaeological data.



The workshop is organized by Hagit Nol and CReA-Patrimoine, Université libre de Bruxelles, as part of the project "Early Manifestations of Islam: A Critical Worldwide Survey of Mosques in the First Three Centuries of the Hijra (622-913 AD) through Archaeology and Arabic Terminology". This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no 801505



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ABSTRACTS

Comparative Perspectives on Islamisation. An Archaeological View from Sub-Saharan Africa

Timothy INSOLL

Islamisation varied significantly in sub-Saharan Africa in relation to the concept itself, the processes involved, and the resulting material 'signature'. Established models often invoke phases or stages. Their utility varies, but they often fail to acknowledge local geography, cultural adaptations, staggered chronologies, and syncretic processes, and their operation within local or regional contexts. Also mitigating against these models are the weaknesses of archaeological data and how different scales of research have generated variable datasets so that, for example, for Ethiopia very little is known, whereas for the western Sahel more data exists. Two archaeological case studies will be introduced, the city of Gao on the Niger Bend in Mali, and Harlaa in eastern Ethiopia. At first sight they appear very similar, both trade centres, not colonies, and with either an absence of, or problematic historical sources. These similarities also seem to extend into the archaeological evidence for Islamisation - mosques, burials and Arabic epigraphy, faunal remains - yet when this evidence is interpreted, differences emerge. This will be assessed with reference to the differences in linearity of conversion processes, the first communities that converted, and the implications of differences in terrain and physical access for agents of conversion.

Early and Middle Islamic Mosques in Palmyra and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi

Denis GENEQUAND

Palmyra and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi are two sites of Greater Syria in which early Islamic and middle Islamic mosques were identified and excavated. The first was a Roman and late Antique city that kept some importance in the early Islamic period, and the second was founded ex-nihilo as a new urban settlement in the Umayyad period. Both witnessed either continuation of occupation or reoccupation under the Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties. There were at least four ancient mosques in Palmyra and two of them were more specifically investigated in the very centre of the former Roman city. Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi counts two mosques that were studied during different archaeological projects since the 1960s. This paper will address a few points concerning these four monuments, amongst which the questions related to the identification of the structures and their date, but also to the choice of the site, and the relation between the mosques and the other components of the settlements in which they were built.

Al-Khanka al-Salahiya Mosque (complex) in Hittin

Abed al-Razeq MATANI

The presentation will discuss the mosque (complex) of the abandoned village Hittin (emigrated in 1948) in the area of Tiberias, near which the famous Battle of Hittin between the Ayyubids and the Crusaders took place in 1187 CE. It is a large complex of buildings whose total area is 875 sqm, which includes a central prayer hall (tunnel vault) and adjacent to it: two rooms (cross vault), two separate halls, a purification complex, toilets, and a huge yard that surrounded by a wall (height of 2.5m). The structure is usually dated as an Ottoman structure. Through the formal typology I conducted, I dated the structure to



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the Ayyubid-Mamluk period. Cross-referencing the data from the survey and historical sources led me to define the complex as a Khanka (an institution for religious studies): the size and shape of the complex, its structure that includes a prayer hall, multiple rooms that can be used as a study and sleeping rooms, and also toilets that are within the complex itself. The dating of the structure is also a corresponding dating of the period. In the presentation, I will explain the structure of the complex, its characteristics, its various components, including its developed purity system, its location with the settlement, the function and dating of the structure, and its multiple stages.

The pre-Crusader mosque of Sour / Tyre (Lebanon)

Marie-Odile ROUSSET

Since 2008, archaeological work has been conducted at Tyre (Lebanon) by a French-Lebanese team led by Pierre-Louis Gatier and then by Jean-Baptiste Yon (CNRS - HiSoMA, Lyon, France). The aim was to study a part of the city which had been excavated in the 1960's and 1970's and never really published. Two areas were selected: the huge baths (the so-called colonnaded street) and the Frankish cathedral. Cleaning of this last one, drawing of the plan and soundings showed that a previous medieval building existed before the large 12th century church. None of the scholars who have worked on this very emblematic building of the Crusaders (it was supposed to shelter Frederic Barbarossa's tomb) has ever mentioned an older building at the same place. The discovering, during the 2011 season, of what was considered to be a small bath, partly destroyed by a cistern contemporaneous of the cathedral building, awarned the team that it could be one of the Islamic monuments of Tyre. The 2012 season confirmed this and brought to light several characteristics of a Fatimid/Seljuk mosque. This building has been almost completely destroyed by the Crusaders to erect the cathedral.

The Congregational Mosque in Jarash (Jordan) before and after the Earthquake of 749 CE

Louise BLANKE

This paper explores the town of Jarash in the early Islamic period before the earthquake of 749 CE and the strategies employed by its inhabitants in the rebuilding that followed the disaster. Archaeological research carried out since the turn of the 21st century has uncovered a rich urban environment of public and private structures dating to the early Islamic period – most significant is a congregational mosque in the town's commercial centre. Constructed under the rule of the Caliph Hishām b. Abd al-Malik (724-43 CE), the mosque (in its original incarnation) was short-lived as it collapsed in the earthquake of 749. Unlike most of Jarash urban fabric, the mosque and the surrounding residential, commercial, and administrative structures were replaced after the earthquake. The mosque was rebuilt to the same dimensions, but with added features such as new entrances, mihrabs, an ablution foundation, and a minaret. Shops were added to the mosque's façade and residential structures were added to the west of the building. Together, these new constructions show how substantial efforts, at a private, communal, and public level, went into rebuilding and refurbishing houses, neighbourhoods, as well as the congregational mosque soon after the earthquake of 749 CE.



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The early Islamic mosque at al-Yamāma (Najd, Central Arabia)

Jérémie SCHIETTECATTE

From 2011 to 2016, a Saudi-French archaeological mission undertook the survey of the vast oasis of al-Kharj, in the Najd region (Saudi Arabia). During this project, a major pre-Islamic and Islamic urban settlement, al-Yamāma, has been the focus of regular archaeological excavations. The purpose of this presentation is to present the work carried out in the extensively excavated area of the Friday Mosque. Below the well-preserved remains of a late Islamic mosque, an early Islamic mosque appeared as a component of city in the 8th-10th century. Apart from this mosque, very few remains from the early Islamic period have been identified and excavated on the site, so that it is difficult to obtain a precise picture of the occupation at this period. If one agrees to identify the site with the ancient Jaw al-Khidrima, the textual sources allow us to complete the picture and to put this urban monument into context.

Mosques in al-Andalus: state of the arts from Archaeology and experiences from Córdoba

Carmen GONZÁLEZ GUTIÉRREZ

The study of religious spaces in al-Andalus, centered on urban mosques, has experienced a fruitful advance in recent years thanks to the new archaeological information recovered in the last decades. It has brought a strong improvement to the field, allowing innovative perspectives to be addressed and to go beyond written sources, often biased and even confusing.

Thus, this contribution aims to present the material situation existing today for the study of mosques in al-Andalus, reflecting on the very different viewpoints and approaches that can be adopted thanks to archaeology. In doing so, special attention (but not exclusive) will be paid to Córdoba (Madinat Qurtuba). The former Umayyad capital has been the most fertile study case analysed so far. Topics such as typologies, formation and insertion in the urban tissue, relation with other infrastructure - cemetery areas or baths, for instance- topographical meaning, processes of urbanization and Islamization, or connections with political and social issues are some of the aspects that can be explored and that speak of the enormous utility that a global archaeological analysis of the situation in al-Andalus would bring.

Early mosques in West Africa and the Swahili coast: the role of Ibadi and Ismaili communities

Stéphane PRADINES

In this paper, we will evaluate the origin and the role of mosques built from the 9th to the 12th century in Sub Saharan Africa. One of the problems of early mosques in West and East Africa is their identification and chronology. Why are early Swahili Mosques not oriented toward Mecca? What was the impact of early Muslim communities, especially the Ibadi and the Ismaili, in the Islamization of the Sahara and the East African coast? Why was the 13th century a time of change in mosque architecture, what was the role of Sunni communities in Africa? The responses to these questions will create links between migrations, diaspora, and trading networks.



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Mosque and the city: rethinking early Islamic concepts and links

Hagit NOL

In historical geography and architecture studies of the Islamic world, cities and mosques are bound together. One premise is that cities have a central mosque. A corresponding premise is that central mosques define cities. In this presentation, I will first discuss the challenges with the paradigm, particularly regarding the Early Islamic period, and then propose a new perspective. Our main difficulty is establishing a consistent definition for 'cities' which is valid for a) the way ancient authors described and labelled contemporary places and b) the characteristics of medieval sites in archaeology. A case study from Israel/Palestine during the 7th-11th centuries resulted in several types of settlements and a poor correlation between cities and mosques. The same case study, however, indicates a possible link between mosques and the metropolis and a chronological frame for this link from the late 9th century onward. In the talk, I will present the worldwide distribution of excavated mosques from the 7th-9th centuries, their architectural features, and selected characteristics of their adjacent sites (e.g. size, variety of artefacts, relation to ancient roads). Tentatively based on the previous case study, these characteristics imply the 'cityness' or 'uncityness' of sites which have an Early Islamic mosque, questioning the paradigm further.

Mosques and the material fabric of Islam: two questions for archaeologists

José C. CARVAJAL LÓPEZ

In this presentation I will propose two questions about mosques for archaeologists. The first question is 'What happens if there is no mosque?'. I will discuss this question on the bases of direct and archaeological experiences pointing in the same direction. It will become apparent that mosques are not absolutely necessary for the religious practice of Islam. However, mosques can be spaces where the co-existence and contestation of different ways of being Islamic are played. This will take me to my second question: 'What are the specific meanings of ancient mosques?'. Traditionally, archaeologists have considered mosques the spatial expression of Islam. However, we may need to consider also that there might be specific lines of the being Islamic that are not necessarily manifested in mosques and that we are missing out. At the same time, ancient mosques can be the space of representation of other expressions of specific lines of symbolic practice that become part of a particular Islamic Con-Text (in Shahab Ahmed's terms). The challenge for archaeologists consists in addressing the study of ancient mosques as the privileged spaces that they are, and as indicative of the existence of subaltern Islamic cultic practices.



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