

## Remembering the Imām Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim *mashhad* in Mosul

This paper is an attempt to provide as full an account as possible of the *mashhad*<sup>1</sup> of Imām Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim. The square-plan building, constructed on the cliff edge above the southern bank of the Tigris in the citadel of Mosul in *circa* 637/1239,<sup>2</sup> was destroyed in an act of cultural genocide by ISIS<sup>3</sup> on the twenty-third of July 2014.<sup>4</sup> The destruction of the building was but one manifestation of a far larger and ongoing attempt to eradicate the medieval architecture of Mosul, both Christian and Muslim. The aim here is to provide a reassessment of the structure and its regional context. Furthermore, hypotheses as to the original appearance of the tomb are put forward, and the wide ranging sources of the formal and decorative elements of the building are examined. The *mashhad* was the most richly ornamented of the medieval tombs in Iraq which had survived into the modern era, yet it had not been comprehensively studied in over a century.<sup>5</sup>

Mosul, or *al-mauṣil* (the junction) is the place where the trade routes from Iran, lower Iraq and Syria converge.<sup>6</sup> The city lies on the southern bank of the Tigris in what is now northern Iraq. The ruler of the city and the surrounding region for much of the first half of the thirteenth century was Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', a former Armenian slave<sup>7</sup> who ruled as regent for the Zangids and then, following the death of the last Atābeg, as independent ruler of Mosul, using the Turkish title *ṭogrul-tekīn* (Falcon Prince).<sup>8</sup> He was recognised by the Caliph al-Nāṣir in 631/1233 and there followed a cultural boom, which ended with his death in 657/1259.<sup>9</sup> He is known to have patronised a large number of buildings<sup>10</sup> and the contemporary chronicler Ibn al-Athīr comments on his reputation for kindness towards his subjects, upon whom he bestowed money.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after the death of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' the citadel in Mosul was destroyed by the Mongols, led by Sundāghū, following their capture of the city in 660/1262.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 1** View of Mosul looking east in 1933 with the *mashhad* on the left.<sup>13</sup>

The *mashhad* was located on the northern edge of the citadel overlooking the Tigris, close to the palace of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', in the north of Mosul (fig. 1). Originally the site of the Ibn Ḥamdān Mosque, founded before 338/949,<sup>14</sup> it was subsequently converted into the al-Badriya *madrasa*, at the behest of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', for the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*, at some point before 615/1218.<sup>15</sup> The *mashhad* of Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim was added to the *madrasa* in *circa* 637/1239. Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' was buried in the vicinity of the *madrasa* complex,<sup>16</sup> which, along with his tomb, had disappeared prior to any scholarly documentation of the site, with only the *mashhad* remaining into the twentieth century.



**Figure 2** Drawing of the *mashhad* of Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim by Carl Brodführer, dated 1919 © Metropolitan Museum of Art

There was an earthquake in Mosul at midday on the twenty-fifth of Dhū'l Qa'da 623 / seventeenth of November 1226 which destroyed many buildings in the surrounding area, including the nearby citadel at Shahrazūr.<sup>17</sup> Such destruction may, in part, have been the reason for the construction of the *mashhad* of Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim, and, furthermore, may suggest that the whole structure, and not just the

sarcophagus,<sup>18</sup> was built in *circa* 637/1239. Such a view is supported by the stylistic evidence, such as the amount of glazed tile used on interior and exterior of the building, which suggests it was built in the first half of the thirteenth century. It was after the death of the last Zangid, Maḥmūd ibn Mas‘ūd II in 631/1234 that Badr al-Dīn Lu‘lu‘ introduced sarcophagi dedicated to various descendants of ‘Alī into *madrasas* in Mosul, thus converting them to shrines.<sup>19</sup> Snelders has argued that he added them to the Sunnī *madrasas* of Mosul as part of a social policy aimed at creating more general acceptance of Shī‘ism among his primarily Muslim Sunnī subjects.<sup>20</sup> The argument that Badr al-Dīn Lu‘lu‘ was a Shī‘ī has been made since the medieval period, but Patton does not believe that this was the case.<sup>21</sup> He makes the important distinction between the ‘Alids and Shī‘ī.<sup>22</sup> The ‘Alids, with lineage from ‘Alī, had the associated prestige and privilege, but they were not necessarily Shī‘ī.<sup>23</sup> Patton makes the crucial point that the majority of the ‘Alids were likely to have been Sunnī. He goes on to argue that the ‘Alids were accorded almost universal respect, while the Shī‘ītes were usually despised, if not persecuted.<sup>24</sup> More recently, Mulder has noted that the non-sectarian reverence for ‘Alid shrines was a rare point of commonality, and one that had with few parallels in the medieval Islamic world.<sup>25</sup> This more nuanced view of the situation suggests that the *mashhad* was never intended as a specifically Shī‘ī shrine, but formed part of a policy initiated by Badr al-Dīn Lu‘lu‘ to gain legitimacy and bolster support from across a much wider spectrum of the subject population. With the loss of the building itself, it is the surviving drawings and photographs which now provide the evidence for the presence of craftsmen working at the highest register of technical ability for a prolific patron of religious and funerary architecture in Mosul in the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

One of the earliest descriptions of the *mashhad* is by Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815), in his *Voyage en Arabie d’autres Pays circonvoisins*, published in Amsterdam in 1776. He describes the *madrasa* of “LULU” and the superb edifice for the tomb of “PACHIA IBN EL KHASSEN”, also known as “ABUL KHASSEN”. He notes that the Christians regard him as a great saint, and know him as “JACHA EL äSRAKI”. Thus the full name is shown to have been known in composite, with the usage split between the Muslim and Christian communities. Niebuhr goes on to describe the epigraphic band of marble carved out and filled with lime plaster that ran around the interior, and another inscription of carved clay.<sup>27</sup> Niebuhr’s account of the use of the *mashhad* by both Christians and Muslims may be seen as evidence for the longevity of what Mulder describes as the polyvalent semiotic flexibility of such buildings.<sup>28</sup> The *mashhad* was documented by Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948) and Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945) during their first trip along the Tigris between October 1907 and March 1908.<sup>29</sup> It was subsequently photographed by Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) in the spring of 1909, during her first journey through Mesopotamia.<sup>30</sup> One of the photographs she took, of the entrance façade, was published in 1911 in *Amurath to Amurath*, but Bell gives little detail about the building in the text.<sup>31</sup> The only thorough published study of the building is included in Sarre and Herzfeld’s *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, a four volume set published in Berlin between 1911 and 1920.<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 3** Northwest façade of the *mashhad* of Yahyā ibn al-Qāsim in 1983 © Yasser Tabbaa Archive, Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT

Herzfeld recorded that the first restoration of the *mashhad*, in 1907, involved the addition of plaster to fill the large cracks in the northwest and southeast portions of the internal *muqarnas* ceiling, where the building had started to separate into two sections as a result of subsidence.<sup>33</sup> Returning during the First World War, he noted the addition of the retaining bastion on the Tigris side in 1916, in order to prevent the entire structure falling into the river.<sup>34</sup> By the mid-1950s the unstable nature of the

ground, and the weight of the buttresses had caused the bastion to deform. In November and December 1964 Roberto Pagliero surveyed the *mashhad* in order to make a plan for further restoration and stabilisation of the building. He noted that the buttresses were performing no useful function, as they were detached from the building and were, in fact, causing more harm because their four hundred tonne weight was responsible for much of the deformation of the bastion, which was actually holding the building up.<sup>35</sup> As well as the structure having split in two as the northeast half started to slip towards the edge of the cliff overlooking the Tigris, there was also a small degree of movement in the opposite plane.<sup>36</sup> The *mashhad* had experienced three major phases of reconstruction prior to 1964,<sup>37</sup> and more recent images show that another major restoration, including re-plastering the entire exterior surface, had occurred prior to the destruction of the building in 2014 (fig. 22).

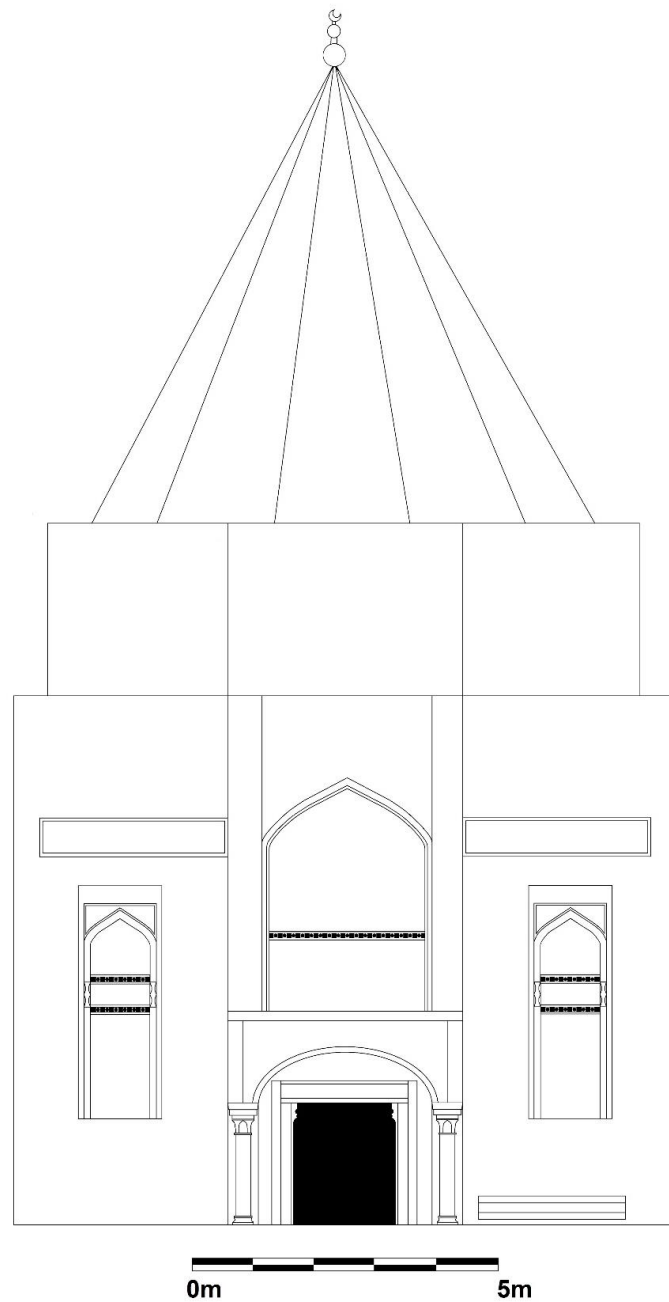


**Figure 4** Entrance façade of the *mashhad*, photograph by F. Sarre © Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

## **EXTERIOR**

Having examined the context and the history of the *mashhad*, it is with the entrance façade that the analysis of the formal and decorative characteristics of the structure begins. The majority of the load bearing structural elements were built using the half off-set or common horizontal bond, known as *hal wa shad* (tie and untie).<sup>38</sup>

The entrance façade was orientated on a line running at 134 degrees,<sup>39</sup> and facing northwest and the original appearance remains unclear. Early photographs show a portico which, while clearly of some age, obscured part of the left-hand blind niche, and is thus unlikely to have been part of the original design schema. A photograph taken by Gertrude Bell in 1909 shows two additional arched sections attached to the northeast side of the marble portico. These had been removed by the time a photograph published by ed-Diwachi in 1968, but probably older, was taken.<sup>40</sup> It is likely, but by no means certain, that the entire portico was a later addition, as there was an inscription at the base of the door jamb that used the word *tajdīd* (renovate).



**Figure 5** Drawing of the northwest façade of the *mashhad* of Yahyā ibn al-Qāsim © R. McClary<sup>41</sup>



**Figure 6** Pointed arch panel to the left of the door, northwest façade of the *mashhad* © Yasser Tabbaa Archive, Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT

## Epigraphy

A large stone epigraphic panel was set into the bottom of the wall beneath the tall narrow pointed arch panel to the right of the door. It can be seen in earlier images but is not present in images from after 1980. The panel had three lines of script, described by van Berchem as being Ayyūbid-Naskhi.<sup>42</sup>

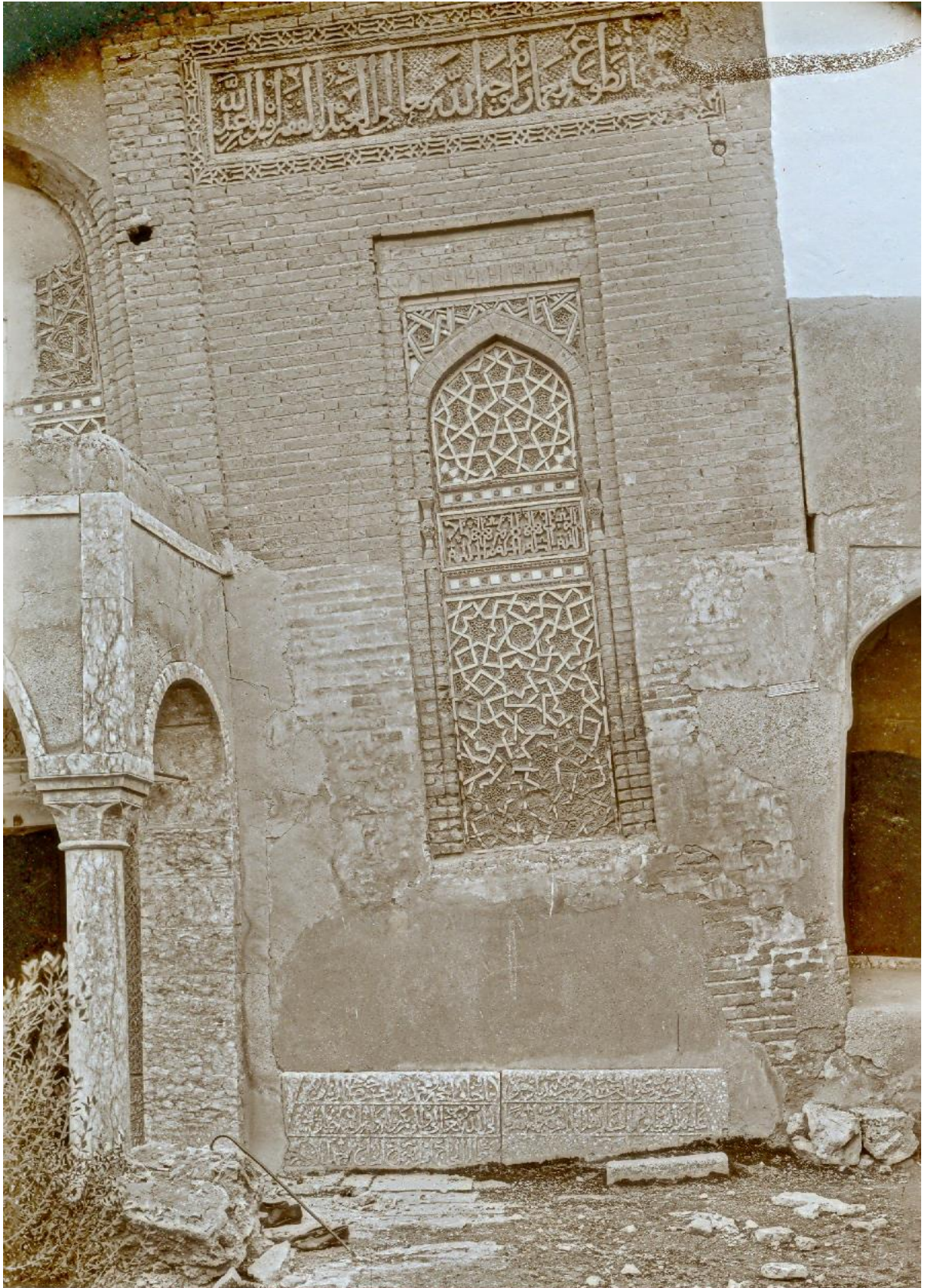
- 1 والحسن بن عليّ العسكري وسيّدنا ومولانا لا باخلف (sic) الحجّة محمد بن الحسن صاحب الزمان
  - 2 عليهم الصلوة و السلام (isc) هذاما أمر بعمله تقرّباً إلى الله تعالى و إلى رسوله و أهل بيته صلوات
  - 3 [الله عليهم أجمعين العبد الفقير] إلى الله تعالى الحاجّ إبراهيم أخ (isc) الحاجّ أحمد الأشقر (?)
- [end missing]

*wa al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-‘Askarī wa sayyidu-nā wa Maulā-na, khala (sic) al-ḥujja, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, sāhib al-zamān ‘alā-him al-ṣalāt wa al-salām (sic) hadhā mā amara bi‘amali-hi, taqarouban ilā Allāhi ta‘ālā wa ilā rasūli-hi wa ahli bayt-hi ṣalawāt [Allāhi ‘alāi-him ajma‘in, al-‘abd al-faqīr] ilā Allāhi ta‘ālā al-ḥājj Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Ashqar (?)*

*and al- al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-‘Askarī [the eleventh Imām] our lord and master, heir of the proof, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan [the twelfth Imām] lord of time, upon them be greetings and peace. The command for making this was issued by the pilgrim Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Ashqari who wished to draw near to God the most high, and to his prophet and to the members of his household, may God’s greetings be upon them all.*

The presence of the names of two of the twelve Imāms<sup>43</sup> on the slab, along with the lower band of epigraphy inside the *mashhad* having featured the names of at least some, and probably all, of the twelve Imāms, does indicate there may have been a somewhat more overtly Shī‘ī character to the building than suggested by Patton.<sup>44</sup>





**Figure 7** Epigraphic panels on the northwest façade, photograph by F. Sarre © Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

The two panels of epigraphy in the blind niches either side of the entrance featured knotted tripartite Kufic lettering with foliated *hastae* tips, with the decoration addorsed on the tips of the *alif* and the *lam* of the final *Allāh*. Each panel consisted of three unglazed sections of irregular width, so as not to unduly cut through the letterforms. On the left-hand inscription, the break between the second and third panels divided the tail of the *nūn* at the end of *min* but the intention is clear, and it allowed the entirety of the final *Allāh*, including the knotting of the *hastae*, to be placed on the one large tile (fig. 6). The most elaborate knotting was to be found on the *alif* and *lām* *hastae*, with two examples on the right-hand panel being almost identical to those seen in the (arguably)<sup>45</sup> apotropaic dragon bodies found on several other buildings in the region attributed to Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'. An example of such a motif can be seen on the al-Khan gateway near Sinjar.<sup>46</sup> The motif is referred to as the 'pretzel knot' and the 'Syrian knot' by Gierlichs.<sup>47</sup> The use of an identical decorative motif in the epigraphy flanking the entrance of the *mashhad* as one used for the apotropaic dragon bodies on buildings patronised by Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' suggests that some apotropaic semiotic value was transferred from the zoomorphic to the textual context. In all cases the motif was associated with the entrance to a structure.

The epigraphy in the two small panels is hard to read. The panel to the right of the door is described as being the *bismillāh* by van Berchem.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately the extant images of the panel are not very clear, but the reading of the final two words as *al-rahmān al-rahīm* is problematic. There is a ligature connecting the *lām* and the two different and oddly formed *hās*, over the *ra*, at the beginning of both of the last two words. Despite these orthographic liberties, *bismillāh al-rahmān al-rahīm* remains the most plausible reading (fig. 7). The unpublished left-hand panel (fig. 6) also presents a number of difficulties, but it appears to read:<sup>49</sup>

و ما بحكم [مولما] ف من الله

*Wa mā taḥkum / yaḥkum [m-w-l-m-a] fa min allāh*

*And what [subject] rules is from God / And what you rule [complement or adverb] is from God*

Above and below the two epigraphic panels there was a band of squares, all four bands alternated between turquoise glazed tiles and terracotta squares, with rectilinear and curvilinear intaglio patterns. The bands were recessed, with a bevel and framed with a narrow border with a curvilinear pattern (figs. 6 and 7) The lower decorative panel, below the epigraphic panel on each of the two blind niches was flanked by engaged octagonal columns, topped by a vase-like capital the height of the inscription panel.

Above the right-hand blind niche on the entrance façade there was a larger, and longer,<sup>50</sup> band of unglazed epigraphy in cursive script (fig. 7). The inscription continued onto a corresponding panel on the other side of the northwest façade, but even the earliest surviving images of the tomb show only a small fragment of the epigraphy in the bottom right corner, with the void left by the rest of the missing panel filled with plaster. The background decoration around the letter forms of the inscription consisted of small square divisions, each featuring a quatrefoil pattern. The whole panel had a turquoise glazed border, which was in turn surrounded by a

wider terracotta intaglio border with a geometric pattern, known locally as *zanjil*.<sup>51</sup>  
The text as given by van Berchem read:<sup>52</sup>

Right [هذام] ما تطوع بعمارته لوجه الله تعالى العبد الفقير لؤلؤ بن عبد الله

Left نقب [ . . . ]

*Hadhā mā taṭawwa`a bi-`imārati-hi li-wajh allāhi ta`ālā al-`abd al-faqīr Lu`lu` ibn `Abdallāh. Takab a... (?)*

*This was ordered to be built for the sake of God the Almighty by the poor servant Lu`lu` ibn `Abdallāh*



**Figure 8** Doorway of the *mashhad*, photograph by F. Sarre © Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

There were two epigraphic marble blocks set at irregular heights at the base of the door jambs. They are visible in a photograph taken by Sarre (fig. 8), which shows that each one had five lines, with the bottom two lines of the left hand panel being too damaged to read clearly. The text, described as a Mamlūk-Naskh script by van Berchem, read:<sup>53</sup>

Right (1) هذاما (2) اجتهد فى تجديد (3) هذه الحضرة الشريفة (4) العبد الفقير إلى (5) الله وابتغأ تعالى

Left (1) الحاجى (2) إبراهيم بن علىّ (3) خادم الحضرة المقدّسة

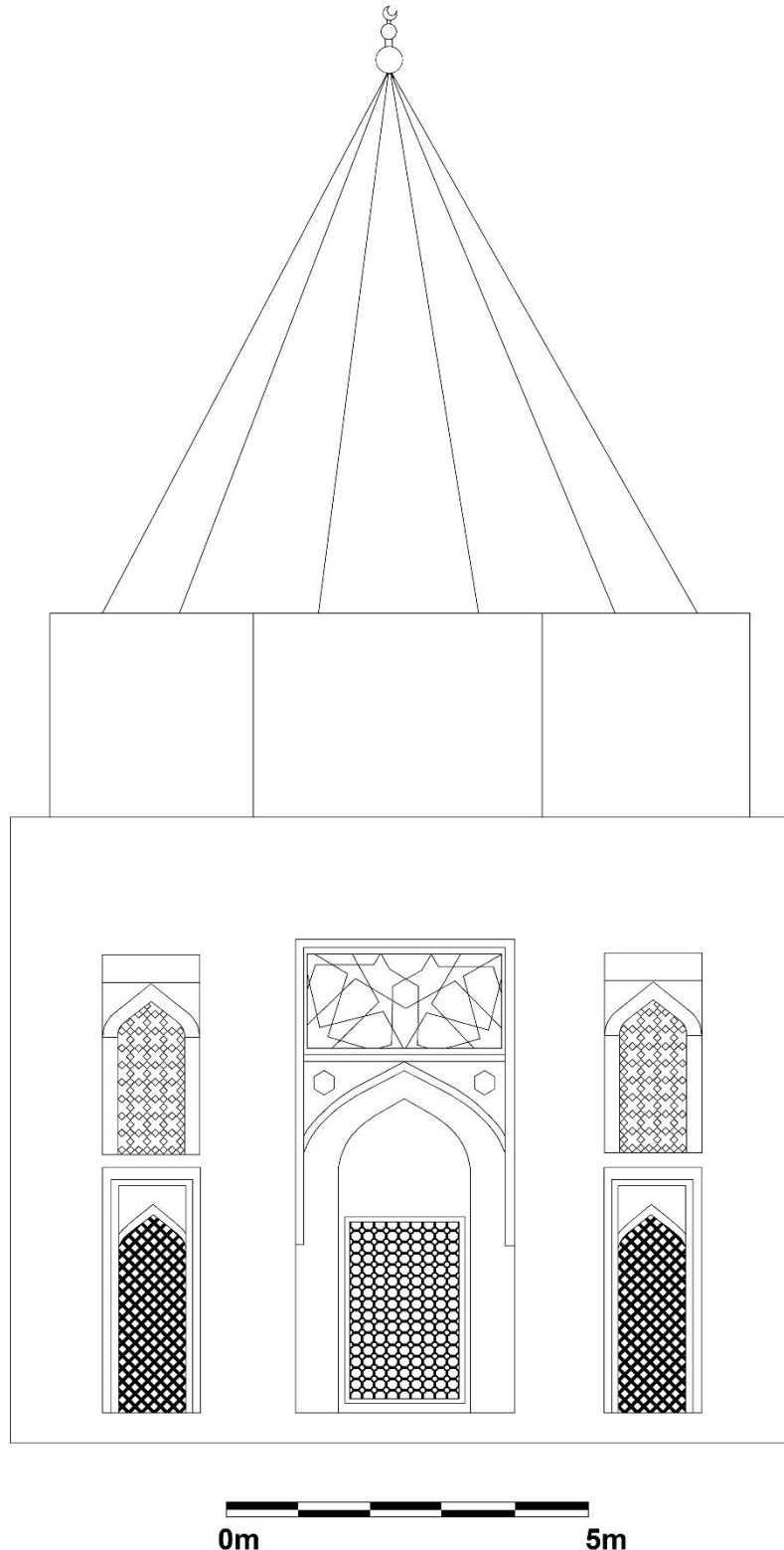
*Hadhā mā ājtahada fī tajdīd hadihi al-ḥaḍra al-sharīfa al-ʿabd al-faḳīr ʾilā allāh wa abatʾagha tʾalī ... al-hājj Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī kādim al-ḥaḍra al-muqaddasa*

*Here has sought to renovate this noble presence,<sup>54</sup> the slave of God, the pilgrim Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī, the sacred presence...*

### Patterns

There were three main patterns employed on the entrance façade. The lower section of the tympanum of the central arch over the door, along with the lower, larger rectangular panels in the two blind pointed arch niches either side featured Bourgoin's Series VII pattern, plate 170 (fig. 10), with the filling ornaments seen in fig. 16 in the interstices of the lines. The upper, arched, section of the two panels featured Bourgoin's series VIII, plate 178,<sup>55</sup> but turned through ninety degrees and with the addition of three small kite-shaped tiles in the two bottom corners (fig. 6). The large upper section of the central arch tympanum was the pattern depicted in Bourgoin's series IV, plate 123.<sup>56</sup>

The curvilinear, densely patterned, terracotta panels that were inserted into the interstices of the rectilinear geometric panels gave a sense of added depth and complexity to the overall compositions, but their details are not clear on the surviving photographs. Figure 18 shows three examples, described by Herzfeld as filling ornaments (*fülungs-ornamentes*),<sup>57</sup> which were drawn by him and illustrate the split palmette and crown motifs far better than any photographs of the building do.<sup>58</sup> The repertoire of filling sections included six full shapes, along with a number of partial sections, required to fill the spaces where the frame cut the pattern off.<sup>59</sup>

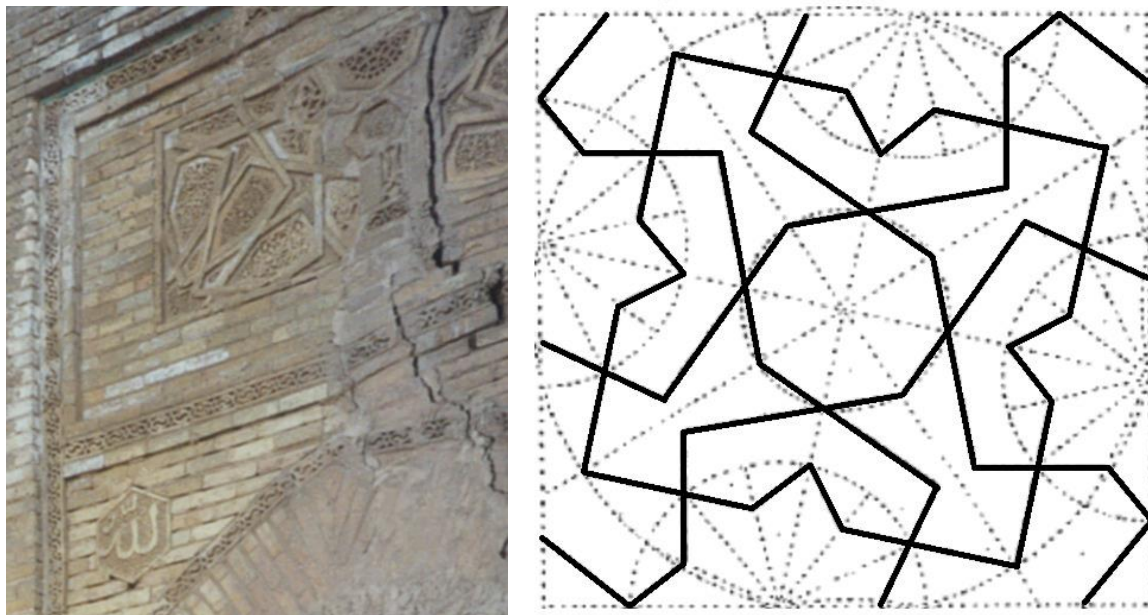


**Figure 9** Drawing of the northeast façade of the *mashhad* © R. McClary

Northeast façade

Originally the northeast façade, facing the Tigris, had two registers of blind niches flanking the central window (figs. 2 and 9), but these were blocked with the addition of the two large buttresses in the early twentieth century. In the middle of the façade

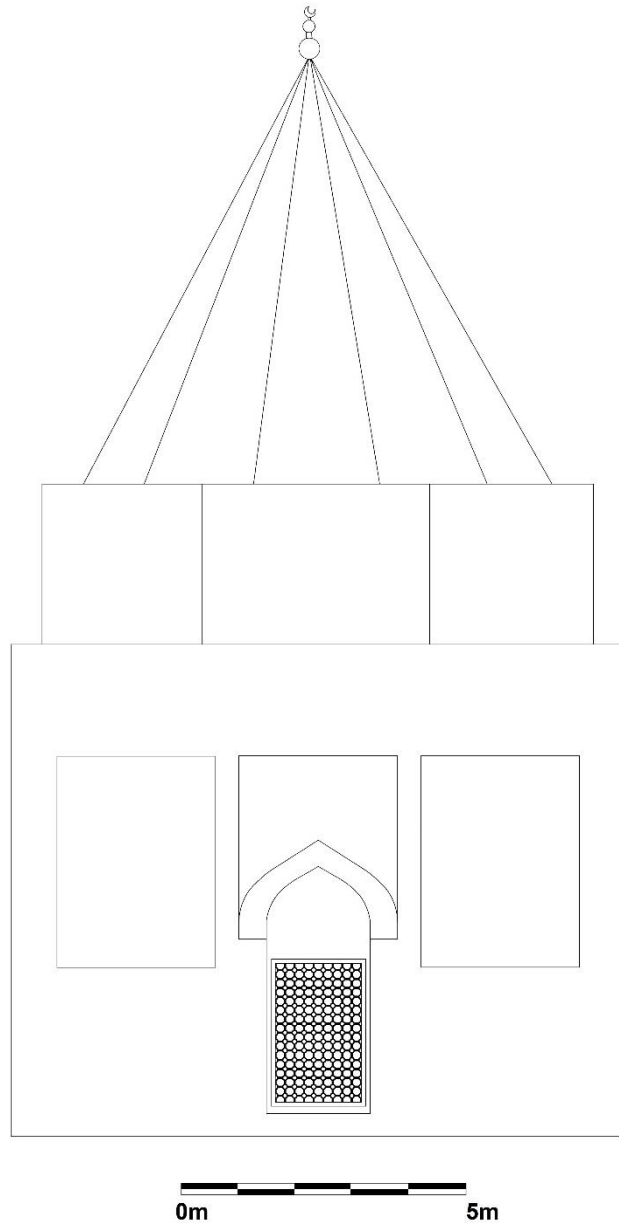
there was a rectangular window beneath a pointed arch, above which was a rectangular panel of geometric decoration, with inserts of curvilinear decoration in the recessed interstices of the pattern. The panel consisted of two opposing quarter repeats of a pattern with an isosceles plan, from the group defined by Bourgoïn as the dodecagonal family of patterns.<sup>60</sup> As with the large epigraphic panels on the upper section of the entrance façade, the panel had a framing band, but the pattern employed was different on the northeast façade, and they had a narrow border of turquoise glazed tiles (fig. 10). The few early images to survive show that the blind niches and the central window had fragmentary remains of iron grilles,<sup>61</sup> and these have been included in the hypothetical drawing of the building as it was probably built (fig. 9).



**Figure 10** Tympanum and spandrel detail on the northeast façade facing the Tigris © Katie Marsh (L) and a drawing of the pattern employed on the northwest façade (after Bourgoïn (1879), pl.170) (R)

### Southeast façade

The southeast façade of the *mashhad* was articulated by three rectangular shallow-recessed panels, with the central one originally having a blind pointed arch over a window (fig. 11). It had been bricked up by the time Herzfeld visited the building, but the arch remained visible inside, and although it cannot be seen in Brodführer's drawing dated 1919 (fig. 2), sections of the arch are visible in a photograph taken by Tabbaa in 1983.<sup>62</sup>



**Figure 11** Drawing of the southeast façade of the *mashhad* © R. McClary

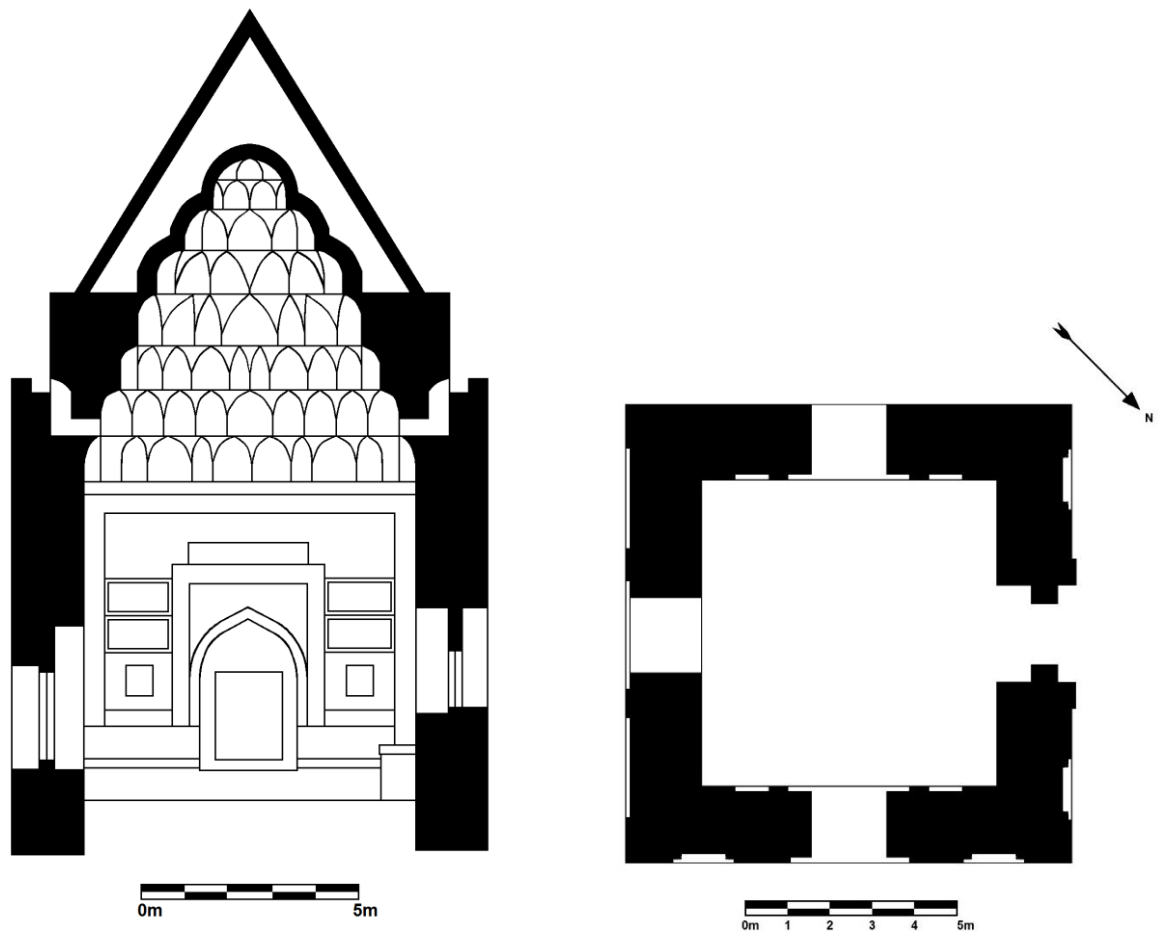
### Southwest façade

The southwest façade was formerly attached to another structure, possibly part of the lost Badriya *madrasa* or the tomb of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'.<sup>63</sup> Although similar in appearance to the southeast façade, this one had square rather than rectangular panels either side of the arched window recess, the tops of which were in line with the apex of the arch, rather than extending above. In addition there was no shallow rectangular recess around the central arched section, unlike the southeast façade. The two square panels featured decorative brickwork that consisted of a checkerboard design, with half of the squares projecting out slightly and with patterns incised into the face. Because of the low resolution of the available images the patterns are hard to discern, but they appear to be very similar to the joint plugs inserted between the brickwork of the *muqarnas* cells of the ceiling in the *mashhad*,

as well as the somewhat smaller background decoration of the large epigraphic panel on the entrance façade.<sup>64</sup>

### Roof

Above the cuboid body sat an octagonal zone of transition which supported the twelve-faceted roof of the *mashhad*. The pyramidal covering of the *muqarnas* cell dome, described as spectacular by Tabbaa, only allowed for windows in the base of the structure.<sup>65</sup> The exterior skin of the roof was originally glazed, but no evidence of such an aesthetic remained at the time of destruction, largely as a result of the exterior having been repeatedly plastered over.<sup>66</sup> The use of glazed tiles on the roof, represents, along with the tripartite division of the external façades and the use of *muqarnas* cells for the internal roof, another point of connection with the funerary architecture of the Khwārazm Shāhs at Kunya Urgench, in Central Asia, over fifteen hundred kilometres to the northeast.<sup>67</sup> These commonalities across large areas, and different political spheres of influence, demonstrate the wide diffusion of this type of funerary architecture in the first half of the thirteenth century, prior to the period of Mongol Ilkhānid rule. Although even the earliest surviving images show a *jamur*<sup>68</sup> at the apex of the roof, it is likely, although impossible to be certain, that it was part of the original construction.



**Figure 12** Cross-section elevation and groundplan of the *mashhad* of Yahyā ibn al-Qāsim © R. McClary<sup>69</sup>



## INTERIOR

Moving from the exterior of the *mashhad* to the interior, it is clear that from the ground up, the finest materials were used for the construction of the building. The floor of the *mashhad* consisted of marble slabs laid directly on the earth and the instability of the ground on which the structure was built resulted in a very uneven floor surface.<sup>70</sup>



**Figure 13** Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim sarcophagus (After ed-Diwachi (1968), pl.19)

The building retained the wooden sarcophagus<sup>71</sup> commissioned by Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'. It featured curvilinear carved patterns (fig. 13) along with an inscription that gave the name of the patron, the full name of Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim and the date. The full inscription read:<sup>72</sup>

هذا قبر يحيى بن القسم بن الحسن بن علي بن ابي طالب صلواة الله عليهم اجمعين تطوع بعمله العبد  
الفقير الراجى رحمته لؤلؤ بن ابد الله ولى آل محمد سنة سبع وثلاثون و ستمائة

*Hadhā qubr Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, salūwāt  
Allāh 'alai-him ājma'in taṭaww'a bi-'imāh al-'abd al-faqīr al-rāja raḥmata  
Lu'lu' ibn 'Abd Allāh wālī āl Muḥammad suna sab'a wa thalāthūn wa sitūmi'a*

*This is the grave of Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, God’s blessings over them all! Made in the hope of His mercy by the poor servant, Lu’lu’ ibn ‘Abd Allāh wālī āl Muḥammad in the year 637.*



**Figure 14** Upper section of the *mihrāb*, section set into the southwest wall of the *mashhad* © Yasser Tabbaa Archive, Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT (L) and *mihrāb* (R) © Katie Marsh

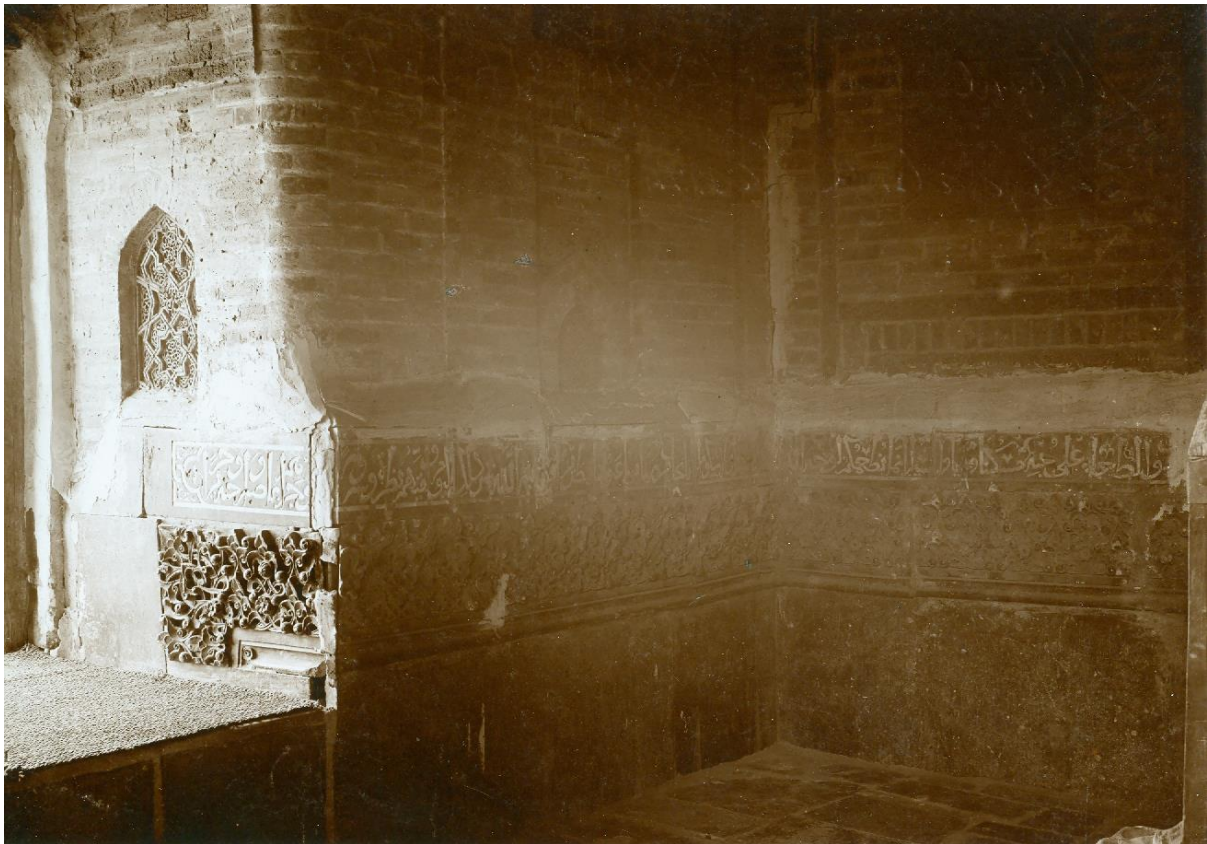
### The *mihrāb*

Although the presence of a *mihrāb* in a tomb is not unusual,<sup>73</sup> it is uncommon for one to be split into two panels, and set at right angles top each other in the corner of a square-plan building. Although such an arrangement preserves the internal proportional integrity of the space, it is somewhat odd that it is not a single panel set at an angle in the corner of the non-*qibla* orientated building. A very similar *mihrāb* was in the ‘Awn al-Dīn *mashhad* in Mosul<sup>74</sup> and the type is referred to as a corner *mihrāb* by Janabi.<sup>75</sup>

The *mihrāb* featured architectonic decoration, with a pointed arch supported by low relief bulbous capitals and columns decorated with curvilinear carving (fig. 14). There was also curvilinear decoration in the spandrels and a low relief carved lamp split between the two panels. Below the lamp were two small, low-relief candlesticks in holders. The band of epigraphy that ran along the sides and top of the *mihrāb* itself, not mentioned by van Berchem, began with *bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*, followed by Qur’ān *sūra* 76 *al-insān* (Man), *ānāt* 7 to 9, which refer to the servant of God’s love for Him. 76:8 is noteworthy for being one of only five *ānāt* in the Qur’ān that refer to human love for Allāh.<sup>76</sup> A further small band of cursive epigraphy ran along the top of the *mihrāb* that consisted of Qur’ān *sūra* 11 *al-hūd* (Hud), *ānā* 73.<sup>77</sup> Given the ‘Alid nature of the person honoured in the *mashhad*, it is not surprising that there was a reference to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the House) at the nexus of devotional focus in the building.

Deep carving of alabaster in several layers was employed in the building, most clearly in the band below the lower band of epigraphy, including over the top of the *mihrāb* (fig. 14). This style of carving could be found in other examples of stonework in Mosul and Aleppo, including both mosques and churches, and has been

described by Tabbaa as being in a style that resembles contemporaneous  
woodwork.<sup>78</sup>



**Figure 15** East corner of the *mashhad*. Photograph by F. Sarre © Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

### Epigraphy

In addition to the epigraphy around and above the *mihrāb* there were two long inscription bands running around the interior of the *mashhad*. The lower band, running horizontally one meter above the floor, had white lettering, consisting of gypsum or lime plaster, set flush into grey alabaster. Based on a photograph supplied by Sarre (fig. 15), showing the east corner of the *mashhad*, from the middle of the southeast wall to the reveal of the window in the northeast wall,<sup>79</sup> van Berchem identified the inscription as *āyat* 8 to 12 of *sūra* 76, *al-‘Insān* (The Man) of the Qur’ān.<sup>80</sup> The final part of the inscription includes a description of the rewards in paradise. Having never visited the structure, van Berchem had no way of knowing what the rest of the inscription consisted of.<sup>81</sup> It also included names of at least some, and probably all, of the twelve Imāms.<sup>82</sup> The available images allow for the translation of fragments of the text, including that shown in figure 16, which contained the name and title of the first wife of the Prophet, along with the second (and possibly the third) Imām:

..دجى الكبرا و الحسن المجتبا و الحن [cis] الش...

[kha]dīja *al-kubrā wa al-Ḥasan al-mujtabā wa al-Ḥussain* (?) *al-sha[hīd]*

*Khadija the great, and Ḥasan the chosen one, and Ḥusayn the martyr*

Other sections that have been photographed<sup>83</sup> included the names of the fourth, fifth and sixth Imāms; ‘Alī ibn Husayn Zaynul ‘Ābidīn, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Baqīr and Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣaddīq.



**Figure 16** Detail of the lower band of epigraphy inside the *mashhad* © Katie Marsh

Images of the *miḥrāb* show a portion of the band of epigraphy in place along the top and down the side of the half of the *miḥrāb* that was set into the southwest wall. This highly developed inlay technique was one of the city’s main artistic specialities at the time,<sup>84</sup> and bears remarkable similarities to the style, if not the scale or media, of the metalwork decoration for which Mosul was famous.<sup>85</sup> Such connections between the different media are particularly striking when the treatment of the *hastae* tips and split palmette leaves are examined (fig. 16).

The upper band of epigraphy, running immediately below the first tier of the *muqarnas* cells that formed the ceiling, consisted of carved panels with guard bands above and below. Those bands featured the same pattern as the one used for the border around the two upper panels of epigraphy on the exterior of the building’s entrance façade. The large Nashki lettering of the upper band consisted of the entirety of *sūra* 112 *al-ikhhlāṣ* (Sincerity) which, despite its brevity, was said by the Prophet Muḥammad to be equal to one third of the Qur’ān.<sup>86</sup> The inscription also included a fragment of *sūra* 22 *al-ḥaj* (The Pilgrimage), *āya* 41,<sup>87</sup> which refers to prayer (*ṣalata*) and the payment of tax (*zakāt*). Janabi describes the material into which the epigraphy was carved as a special type of blueish-grey marble, known locally as *hillan*.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, van Berchem states that the inscription was in terracotta (*gebranntem Ton*),<sup>89</sup> but the extant images appear to show a blueish-grey stone.

### The Muqarnas ceiling

Immediately above the upper band of epigraphy was a superb eight-tier *muqarnas* cell ceiling (figs. 17 and 18). It was one of the most notable features of the Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim *mashhad*, yet no significant mention was made in Sarre and Hertzfeld’s *Reise*, although the plan of the ceiling cells are included in their ground plan.<sup>90</sup> It is clear that the *muqarnas* cell ceiling was the most innovative and technically challenging parts of the structure to build. Pagliero suggests that it was less skilfully built than any other part of the building, noting that the masonry tapered unevenly and that some of the bricks were set irregularly on top of each other.<sup>91</sup> These irregularities may well have been the result of minor changes being made by the craftsmen, in order to keep the rows of cells in line as they were being built. Figure

18 shows a section of the ceiling where part has fallen away, revealing the cavity between inner and outer roof structures and the presence of wooden reinforcements that acted as a matrix for the brick-built cells.



**Figure 17** Upper section of the *muqarnas* cell ceiling © Katie Marsh



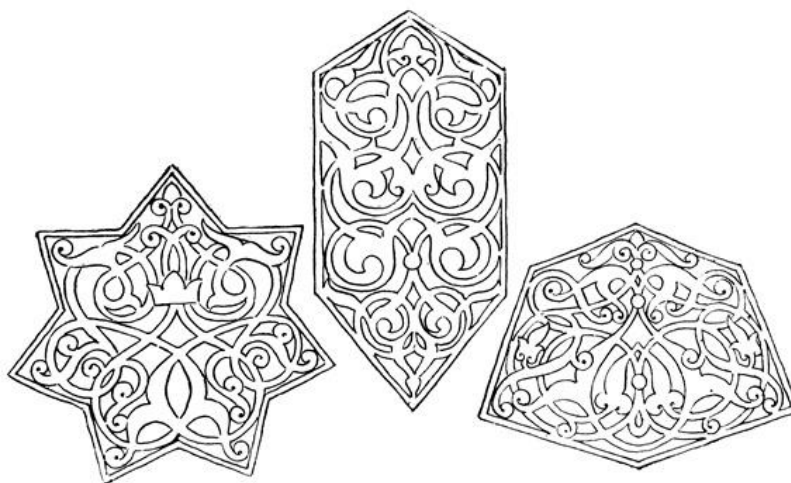
**Figure 18** Lower portion of the *muqarnas* cell ceiling © Yasser Tabbaa Archive, Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT

The second tier and above of the *muqarnas* cells in the ceiling vault have square patterns incised into the wide rising joints of the brickwork. Although the available images are not detailed enough to determine the exact details, they appear to be very similar to examples on the Mengücek Gazi tomb in Kemah (*circa* 1190) near Erzincan, located 470 kilometres north of Mosul.<sup>92</sup> There are also numerous square glazed intarsia set into the brick *muqarnas* cells, from the fourth tier up. The form of the *muqarnas* cells used in the ceiling of the *mashhad* in Mosul can be seen across the wider region, from Sivas and Malatya to the north in Anatolia, to Nakhchivān, Marāgha in Iran and Baghdād to the south.<sup>93</sup> The same basic *muqarnas* cell forms were used for different decorative and structural roles, including minaret balconies, mosque domes and tomb ceilings. They are of a type that can be found across a number of building typologies, and at different scales, over a large area during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

### Internal walls

The right-hand reveal of the window overlooking the Tigris featured a small arched panel with raised geometric strapwork and recessed curvilinear sections<sup>94</sup> executed in a similar manner to the larger panels both inside and outside the building, but unglazed. The same style of decoration, but with a different geometric pattern, was used in the sets of three pointed arch panels stacked either side of the northeast and southwest windows (fig. 20), in the two rectangular panels on each side of the door, and the opposite (bricked up) window. In addition, the tympanum above the window in the southwest wall featured a purely curvilinear vegetal pattern, formed from rectangular terracotta tiles (some with curved edges to conform to the arch shape).

The spandrels of the arch above the window overlooking the Tigris featured smaller-scale examples of the same dodecagonal-based pattern employed in the panel above the central arch on the exterior of the northeast façade, being the one that faced the Tigris (fig. 20). In contrast, the spandrels of the larger arch over the entrance only have one small hexagon in the centre.<sup>95</sup> The decoration of the spandrels above the opposite (bricked-up) window were still in place when Sarre and Herzfeld visited, and their image (fig. 22) show that there was a different pattern again.<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 19** Filling ornaments from the *mashhad* drawn by Herzfeld<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 20** Interior of the wall facing the Tigris © Katie Marsh



**Figure 21** Internal decorative panel and guard bands to the left of the entrance to the *mashhad* © Katie Marsh



**Figure 22** Southeast interior wall of the *mashhad*, photograph by F. Sarre © Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

Although there were minor differences between each of the four interior walls of the tomb, there were two basic types, opposite each other. The entrance wall, and the southeast wall opposite both had a square panel, topped by two rectangular panels of geometric and recessed curvilinear terracotta decoration flanking the pointed arch (figs. 21 and 22). In contrast the inside of the wall facing the Tigris, and the southwest wall opposite, had three registers of small pointed arch blind niches either side of the window (fig. 20). Below the upper band of epigraphy that ran all around the interior of the building at the base of the ceiling there was a single course of vertical set bricks, a bond referred to as *'ala ghaza* in Arabic,<sup>98</sup> which alternated between buff and glazed bricks. A similar bond, but with more than one course, some horizontal set bricks, square glazed intarsia, and with bevelled ends, was used for the top portion of the brick frames around the large arched recesses in each of the internal walls (figs. 20 and 22). Both the upper band and the framing bands were matched with vertical bands of alternating glazed and buff bricks, but set horizontally rather than vertically. In both cases they had a narrow inner guard band of carved terracotta to distinguish the pattern further from the structural *hal wa shad* bond.

The arch forms around the entire structure, both within and without, were damaged by the combination of the shift of the structure towards the river coupled with the separation of the northeast and southwest portions. The subsequent series of restorations did not recreate the original pointed two-centred form of the arches.<sup>99</sup>



### The tripartite arched aesthetic in medieval Islamic funerary architecture

Having examined the form and decoration in detail it is necessary to place the building into the broader context of coeval Persianate tombs. The Mosul *mashhad* fitted into a long tradition of square-plan brick-built funerary architecture, often with at least one façade featuring tripartite articulation, the central entrance flanked by either windows or blind niches. Although no Muslim tombs are known to have existed in the Islamic world before 248/862,<sup>100</sup> the square-plan cubic form is common to a wide array of Islamic funerary buildings across the Persianate world, with the Sāmānid tomb in Bukhara, built in *circa* 390/930 being one of the earliest surviving funerary structures in Islam.<sup>101</sup> By the early eleventh century the tomb tower had been adopted as a means of expressing power,<sup>102</sup> and the prominent location of the Mosul *mashhad*, high up on the cliff overlooking the Tigris, gave a sense of grandeur and verticality when viewed from afar that greatly exceeded its physical dimensions.

The basic typology consists of a square plan, with a tripartite articulation of at least one façade, featuring an attenuated central entrance flanked by windows, all below double-centred pointed arches. In addition, most surviving tombs of this type feature conical or polyhedral roofs above the volumetric cuboid body. The type became a prestige trope across a wide area in the early to mid-thirteenth century. The use of glazed-tile decoration, knotted Kufic epigraphy, square plan and elevated polyhedral roof systems can be seen across the wider Persianate world, from Sivas in Anatolia and Mosul in Iraq, to Kunya Urgench on the banks of the Oxus and Safid Buland at the eastern end of the Farghāna valley in Central Asia.<sup>103</sup> The wide diffusion of these types of buildings in the thirteenth century and the formal and stylistic commonalities across such large areas is a phenomenon that transcends dynastic, regional and anachronistic nationalist approaches to the study of medieval Islamic architecture. The vast geographical scope of what may, in lieu of a more suitable term, be categorized as Persianate architecture speaks to the mobility of the craftsmen and the decorative and formal aesthetic for which they were responsible.

The tripartite division of the façade of a relatively small structure, with a large window or door in the centre of the wall, is to be expected if there is a need for flanking windows or the use of a blind recess either side of a door to enliven the articulation. For these reasons, there is an inherent risk in trying to develop too deep a philosophical framework for the understanding of the form, especially given the absence of any contemporary textual evidence. However, considering how common it was for tombs to be sites of veneration, especially where a *miḥrāb* was present, an argument may be made for the door having represented the point of access to Allāh, while the flanking panels stood in for ‘Alī and Muḥammad, as interlocutors for the faithful. Such a tripartite division was not limited to the façade of tombs, as a similar form was employed, on a smaller scale, for the high-relief carved alabaster *miḥrāb* (566-8/1170-3) in the nearby Jami‘ al-Nūrī in Mosul.<sup>104</sup>



**Figure 23** Final moments of the *mashhad* of Yahyā ibn al-Qāsim<sup>105</sup>



**Figure 24** Aerial view of the *mashhad* before (L) and after (R) destruction © Karel Nováček

## Conclusion

The *mashhad* of Yahyā ibn al-Qāsim consisted of an innovative blend of imported forms and materials, largely developed in Iran, with the indigenous deeply undercut alabaster or marble carving and *ablaq* epigraphic inlay techniques for which Mosul was famed. A wide array of the finest materials were used by the craftsmen who built it, including carved wood, marble, alabaster, glazed tiles and baked bricks. These materials were combined to create a politically motivated *mashhad* of the finest quality for a prolific patron. The building, almost alone among the medieval structures in the area, survived the Mongol destruction of the citadel in 660/1262 as well as the inherent instability of the ground and the erosion of the cliff edge by the river Tigris over the course of nearly eight hundred years. Alas, the building was unable to resist the explosive power of the dynamite set off inside it by ISIS in 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the meaning of the term *mashhad* see Grabar (1966), p.9-11. It was used to describe 'Alid tombs by both al-Muqaddasi and Nāšir-i Khosrow. Grabar states that it was common for a *mashhad* to be built on the site of a *mašjid*, as was the case with the structure under discussion here.

<sup>2</sup> The site of the Imām Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim *mashhad* is located at: Lat 36° 21' 17" N Lon 43° 7' 23" E. It measured 7.4m square inside, with an internal height of 15m. Externally it was 11.4m square and 18.7m high.

<sup>3</sup> ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham), also referred to as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), Islamic State and Da'esh, control large parts of Syria and northern Iraq at the time of writing.

<sup>4</sup> Nováček (2014), p.117.

<sup>5</sup> Pagliero (1965), pp.41-68 covers the restoration of the building, and includes a number of revealing images of the building, and ed-Diwachi (1968) includes nineteen plates, a number of which include details that cannot be seen in either earlier or more recent images.

<sup>6</sup> Patton (1982), p.1.

<sup>7</sup> van Berchem (1906), p.197, citing Nuwairi, but with no other details as to the source.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.200.

<sup>9</sup> Snelders (2010), p.103.

<sup>10</sup> See Patton (1982), pp.458-491 for a full list of the structures of the Atābeg period in Mosul that had survived in 1982. Patton (ibid., p.68), notes that the majority of the Atābegid-era structures to have survived were shrines, mostly dedicated to descendants of 'Alī.

<sup>11</sup> Richards (2008), p. 183. Such a view must be tempered by the fact that Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' was a patron of al-Athīr, (ibid., p. 153), and so may be expected to have painted him in a somewhat generous light. A structure that was reputed to be al-Athīr's tomb in Mosul was destroyed by ISIS in June 2014. Source: [www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/20/uk-iraq-security-shrines-idUSKBN0EV1JF20140620](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/20/uk-iraq-security-shrines-idUSKBN0EV1JF20140620) (accessed 28/7/2015)

<sup>12</sup> Patton (1982), p.46. Snelders (2010), p.99 states that Badr al-Din Lu'lu recognized the authority of the Mongols in 1245 and supported their invasion of Mesopotamia, thus saving Mosul from the first wave of destructive attacks on the cities of the region.

<sup>13</sup> The photograph, measuring 3.5cm x 5.75cm, was taken by Frederick Gardner Clapp in 1933. From the American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, digital ID c1002025.

<sup>14</sup> Patton (1982), p.57.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.79. The *madrasa* is unlikely to have been built before 607/1211, as that is when Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' became regent for the Zangid Atābegs (ibid. p.157).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.490.

<sup>17</sup> Richards (2008), p. 282, in his translation the chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr.

<sup>18</sup> It was the inscriptions on the wooden sarcophagus that gave the date of 637/1239.

<sup>19</sup> Patton (1982), p.358. In addition to the Badriya *madrasa*, Patton notes that sarcophagi were also added to the 'Izziya, and probably the Nūriya and Niẓāmiya *madrasas* among others.

<sup>20</sup> Snelders (2010), p.101.

<sup>21</sup> Patton (1982), p.357. What Mosul did have was an important group of people who venerated the descendants of 'Alī and other important figures in the history of Islam.

<sup>22</sup> For details of the 'Alids see Lewis (1960), pp.400-403. For a concise overview of the origins of Shī'ism see Madelung (1987), pp.420-424.

<sup>23</sup> Patton (1982), p.184.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.195.

- <sup>25</sup> Mulder (2008), p.4. Ibid., pp.11-15 discusses the way in which supposedly Shī'ī shrines were built by Sunnī elite patrons across the region and suggests that they fit into a wider inter-sectarian process.
- <sup>26</sup> Snelders (2010), p.101 notes that Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' was responsible for the construction of fourteen religious shrines in Mosul.
- <sup>27</sup> Niebuhr (1776), pp.292-293. Niebuhr describes the magnificent chain of edifices that Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' built in Mosul. He gives the correct orientation of the building and notes that because it does not face Mecca, it is suitable for Christians to use the *mashhad* as well as Muslims. Niebuhr suggests this misalignment was a mistake, stating *il n'a pas été mis ainsi* (it was not put well), and marks the location on his map of the city, being *ibid.* pl.XLVI, opposite p.292.
- <sup>28</sup> Mulder (2008), p.19.
- <sup>29</sup> Kröger (2005), p.45. Ibid., p.57 states that Herzfeld was back in Mosul from June to mid-September in 1916 with Herzog Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg. It was during this time that he saw that the bastion had been added to support the *mashhad* of Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim.
- <sup>30</sup> Cooper (2013), p.143.
- <sup>31</sup> Bell (1911), fig. 174. Bell had little to say about the building, other than describing it as 'beautiful', and noting the deeply undercut stone carving inside (*ibid.*, pp. 259-260). All the images that she took of the structure (Album M1909, images M001-M005), along with her diaries, are available online at the University of Newcastle, URL <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/>.
- <sup>32</sup> See: Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol. 1, pp.2-23, inscription no. 25; Vol. 2, pp.249-263, especially pp.258-260; Vol. 3, pls. IX 1, XCIII 1, IC 1 – CII. Cooper (2013), p.151 states that in addition to their trip in 1907-08, research for the book was conducted during Sarre and Herzfeld's second trip to Mesopotamia, which took place between January and May 1911.
- <sup>33</sup> Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol. 2, p.249.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.249. This date of 1916 for the addition of the bastion does not tally with the drawing by Herzfeld's brother-in-law Carl Theodor Brodführer, that appears to have been drawn in-situ, and is dated 1919. It does not show the bastion, but may be a reworking of an earlier drawing.
- <sup>35</sup> Pagliero (1965), pp.51-52.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.65, fig.10b shows the extent of the movement, with a description of the process on *ibid.*, p.50.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.51.
- <sup>38</sup> Janabi (1982), p.202.
- <sup>39</sup> Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.3, pl.C.
- <sup>40</sup> ed-Diwachi (1968), pl.15. This is the image used as a basis for the form of the portico in fig.4.
- <sup>41</sup> In addition to the structural damage because of the vicissitudes of time, and changes that resulted from the multiple phases of restoration, not having had the chance to personally survey the site means that there are likely to be a number of minor unavoidable and, because of the destruction, uncorrectable errors and inconsistencies in the plan, section and elevation drawings included here.
- <sup>42</sup> Berchem (1911), p.23. The reading has been slightly emended from that given by van Berchem for clarity of meaning.
- <sup>43</sup> For a list of the names of the twelve Imāms see Nasr (1978), p.277.
- <sup>44</sup> See Patton (1982), p.184, p.195 and p.357.
- <sup>45</sup> Pancaroğlu (2004), p.160 argues for the interlaced dragons on the Bāb al-Tilism (618/1221) in Baghdād to be understood as apotropaic devices.
- <sup>46</sup> See Janabi (1982), fig.51. Ibid., p.253 describes the figure on the spandrels as depicting Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' himself.
- <sup>47</sup> Gierlichs (1995), p.201.
- <sup>48</sup> Berchem (1911), p.24. In his brief note on the inscription van Berchem makes no mention of the left-hand panel.
- <sup>49</sup> Translated with the kind assistance of Dr. Alain George.
- <sup>50</sup> Berchem (1911), p.22 gives the panel length as 2m 50cm.
- <sup>51</sup> Janabi (1982), p.72. A similar band can be seen on the *madrassa* al-Sharabiya in Baghdād, dateable to the late 'Abbāsīd period. See *ibid.* pls. 34B, 35A and 35B.
- <sup>52</sup> Berchem (1911), p.22. Although van Berchem gives (t-q-b) for the first word on the left hand panel, a better reading, given the context, may be *taqā* (to fear, especially God). See Wehr (1974), p.95.
- <sup>53</sup> Berchem (1911), p.23.
- <sup>54</sup> Wehr (1974), p.184 translates *al-ḥaḍra* as 'presence'.
- <sup>55</sup> Identified in Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.2, p.257.

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- <sup>56</sup> Identified in *ibid.*, p.255.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.259
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.259, fig.256.
- <sup>59</sup> The shapes were: kite, diamond, rhombus, octagon, seven-pointed star, and a triangle with a V cut out of one side.
- <sup>60</sup> Bourgoïn (1879), p.27. The full pattern can be seen in *ibid.*, pl.97. The only previously published photograph of the panel is in Pagliero (1965), pl.5a. Herzfeld and Sarre make no mention of the pattern, while Herzfeld's drawing, (Herzfeld and Sarre (1920), Vol.3, pl.C), reprinted in Janabi (1982), fig.10, features a fictitious pattern.
- <sup>61</sup> Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.3, pl.C has a drawing of the northeast façade with the three different grille types indicated.
- <sup>62</sup> All of his slides are now in the Yasser Tabbaa Archive, Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT.
- <sup>63</sup> Herzfeld's plan shows two short walls projecting from either side of the window of the southwest façade. See Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.3, pl.C.
- <sup>64</sup> A comparison may also be made with the larger square panels on the base of the minaret at the Great Mosque in Mosul. See Pagliero (1965), pl.2.
- <sup>65</sup> Tabbaa (2001), p.188.
- <sup>66</sup> Pagliero (1965), p.51. Pagliero notes that during the three major phases of reconstruction a lot of the glazed bricks had been removed and re-used in non-original locations. Images from the 1980's show a number of glazed bricks were inserted at random into the upper right section of the southwest façade of the *mashhad*.
- <sup>67</sup> See Mamedov and Muradov (2001), especially pp.45-47 and pp.63-69.
- <sup>68</sup> Described in Hillenbrand (1994), p.248 as a symbol of Islam, *jamur* consist of a series of superimposed balls crowned by a crescent.
- <sup>69</sup> The drawings are based on elements of Pagliero (1965), p.62, fig.7 and Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.3, pl.C, with corrections and modifications resulting from analysis of available images of the interior and exterior of the building.
- <sup>70</sup> Pagliero (1965), p.51.
- <sup>71</sup> ed-Diwachi (1968), pl.18 shows the lid, with a three-quarter view shown on pl.19.
- <sup>72</sup> Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.2, p.250 gives the Arabic and a German translation. The available images suggest that there was more text on the sarcophagus than is included in the book.
- <sup>73</sup> Janabi (1982), p.215 notes the presence of the *mihrāb*, and lists another eight coeval examples in other tombs.
- <sup>74</sup> Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol. 4, pl.CXXXV. For details of the 'Awn al-Dīn *mashhad* (1248) see *ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.263-70. It was also destroyed by ISIS in 2014.
- <sup>75</sup> Janabi (1982), p.212. *Ibid.* p.211 states that the *mihrāb* was one of the few, along with the one in the 'Awn al-Dīn *mashhad*, that remained *in-situ*.
- <sup>76</sup> Nickel (2009), pp.231-2.
- <sup>77</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Alain George for identifying the source of the inscription. The latter part of the reading is clear, but the only image of the first part, reproduced in ed-Diwachi (1968), pl.17, is shown at an angle and is very small, making it uncertain if there is anything else other than Qur'ān 11:73.
- <sup>78</sup> Tabbaa (2001), p. 86.
- <sup>79</sup> Image 1723 in the archive of the Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva.
- <sup>80</sup> Berchem (1911), p.24 gives the location, material and content of the inscription
- <sup>81</sup> Thanks to Mrs Antoinette Harri at the Fondation Max van Berchem in Geneva for confirming the he never visited Mosul and supplying the images from the archive.
- <sup>82</sup> Janabi (1982), p.265 states that the band consisted of blessings for the twelve Imāms, but does not give the text. ed-Diwachi (1968), pls.4 and 5 show three fragments of the lower epigraphic band.
- <sup>83</sup> See ed-Diwachi (1968), pl.5, lower image.
- <sup>84</sup> Snelders (2010), p.101.
- <sup>85</sup> Janabi (1982) p.254 Unlike some examples, the recessed letter shapes in the Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim *mashhad* were filled not with white marble but with either lime or gypsum plaster.
- <sup>86</sup> Abdel Haleem (2005), p.444. Following the *bismillāh*, it reads: *Say He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him.*
- <sup>87</sup> The Qur'ānic passages were identified by van Berchem, in Berchem (1911), p.24.
- <sup>88</sup> Janabi (1982), p.201. Janabi adds that it is a material that the area around Mosul is known for. Niebuhr (1776), p.293 also describes the stone used in the building as marble.

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- <sup>89</sup> Berchem (1911), p.24.
- <sup>90</sup> Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol.3, pl.C.
- <sup>91</sup> Pagliero (1965), p.51.
- <sup>92</sup> See McClary (2015), p.223, fig.3.51 C and p.227, fig.3.56. Similar motifs can also be found in the Ildegüzid and Great Saljūq architecture of northwest Iran.
- <sup>93</sup> For a study of the brick *muqarnas* cells found in Anatolia see McClary (2014), pp.1-11.
- <sup>94</sup> See ed-Diwachi (1968), pl.8.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid., pl.11.
- <sup>96</sup> See Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol. 2 p.254, fig. 251, p.258, fig.255 and Vol. 3, pl.CII. They identify the pattern as being from Bourgoin's series IV. Extent images are not clear enough to identify the exact pattern with certainty.
- <sup>97</sup> Image based on Sarre and Herzfeld (1920), Vol. 2, p.259, fig.256.
- <sup>98</sup> Janabi (1982), p.202.
- <sup>99</sup> Pagliero (1964), p.55 notes the need to restore the windows, doors and niche bays to their original shape.
- <sup>100</sup> Allen (1983), p.430. Allen adds that despite the absence of any earlier surviving structures they cannot have been lacking entirely. See Grabar (1966), pp.14-38 for a catalogue of the 116 known tombs from the period prior to the middle of the twelfth century.
- <sup>101</sup> Bloom (2012), p.106. Blair (1992), p.25 give the date of the building.
- <sup>102</sup> Bloom (2012), p.116.
- <sup>103</sup> For Sivas see McClary (2015), pp.347-378 and pp.457-461. The Il-Arslan tomb in Kunya Urgench is addressed by Mamedov and Muredov (2001), pp.45-47. For a study of the Qarākhānid tomb in Safid Buland see Cohn-Wiener (1939), pp.88-91.
- <sup>104</sup> See Hillenbrand (1999), p.177, pl.4.5.
- <sup>105</sup> Image source: <https://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/2014/08/14/august-in-iraq-more-destruction-humanitarian-catastrophes/> (accessed 3/6/2015). Originally released by Nynwa News for ISIS.