

Michael Jung

The Wall Paintings of the Great Mosque of Isfahān, with contributions by Antonella Altieri, Paolo Cornale, Fabio Frezzato and Claudio Seccaroni (Arte e Restauro / Casi studio). Nardini Editore, Firenze 2016, 132 pp., 138 figs. ISBN 9788840404349.

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The Author is responsible for the first section of the book, which opens with a 'Preface' (pp. 8–9) followed by the 'Acknowledgements' on p. 10. There follow two chapters, respectively entitled 'A short outline of the main building phases of the Great Mosque' (pp. 11–14) and 'The wall paintings of the pre-Seljūq mosque' (pp. 15–59). The latter—the Author's backbone essay—consists of three paragraphs: 'An Introduction to the research of the excavated fragments' (pp. 15–27), 'The refined typology of the wall paintings' (pp. 28–51) and 'Chronological attribution and search for comparisons' (pp. 51–59). A third chapter is devoted to 'The wall paintings of the post-Seljūq mosque' (pp. 60–76) and is divided into three paragraphs: 'The excavated mural paintings of sector 112' (pp. 61–64), 'Two paintings of mosques and hand-prints' (pp. 64–69) and 'The wall paintings of the *gāv-chāh*' (pp. 70–76).

The second section of the volume contains two multi-authored contributions that can be listed as follows: 'Materials and painting technique of the wall paintings of the pre-Seljūq Isfahāni Mosque' by Paolo Cornale, Fabio Frezzato, Michael Jung and Claudio Seccaroni (pp. 77–108); 'Botanical characterization of some iconographic painted elements' by Antonella Altieri (pp. 109–110). The book ends with a 'Summary', written by Jung and Seccaroni (pp. 111–112) and the 'Bibliography' (pp. 113–131).

Ostensibly, the Author's aim is to provide readers with a "comprehensive essay [of] the mural paintings of the Masġid-i Ġum'a" ('Preface', p. 8). Nevertheless—much to our regret—we were surprised to note that the Author omits to inform the reader that these artefacts were found during a number of long-lasting Italian archaeological campaigns and surveys. Easily, this 'oversight' can be accounted for by the fact that he neither took part in the excavation campaigns of the 1970s nor regularly joined the subsequent Iranian-Italian ADAMJI Project (2003–2010), the nature, objectives and guidelines of which

should have been clear enough to the Author and were unequivocally aimed at creating a digital archive of the archaeological finds.

It is in fact worth noting that the studies and research on the wall paintings of the Masǧid-i Ġum'a in Iṣfahān are closely tied to the broader context of the excavations carried out during the period 1972–1977 by the late Umberto Scerrato—also directly conducted by the writers—and subsequently merged into the Iranian-Italian ADAMJI Project. Therefore, the materials and data were—and still are—the property, in fact and in law, of the ADAMJI Project (2003–2010), directed by Fariba Saiedi Anaraki (RC-ICHTHCO-Research Center of Iranian Handicrafts, Tourism and Cultural Heritage Organization/ICAR-Iranian Center for Archaeological Research, Tehran and Iṣfahān, Iran), and Bruno Genito (Università di Napoli “L'Orientale”, Naples and IsMEO/IsIAO, Rome, Italy). A comprehensive scientific work is already being produced and is due to be edited by Faribah Saiedi Anaraki and the present writers. This final report is intended to present in a systematic way the whole set of data originating from the archaeological activities carried out in the Friday Mosque of Iṣfahān.

The Author, in fact, took part in the archaeological studies in Iṣfahān during short periods. Nevertheless he does not seem to have grasped the complex nature of the ADAMJI archaeological project, nor the scientific impact it had due to the relevance of its results and finds. The Author's contribution to the work of the Iranian-Italian Archaeological Mission in the field was relatively limited when compared to the substantial effort made by the other members of the working group. Let us not forget the Iranian-Italian team's painstakingly commitment, over several years, to properly preserving, filing and photographing all the materials, including, incidentally, the fragments of the wall paintings.¹

In the 'Bibliography' at the end of the volume the Author inexplicably fails to mention several contributions already provided within the framework of the project to date.² Had he taken into account this rich and available

1 Since the excavations, the procedures achieved to recover, consolidate and keep each painted fragment intact required days of work, under the supervision of Raimondo Boenni, restorer of the Italian Restoration Mission.

2 Cf. B. Genito, F. Saiedi-Anaraki (eds.), *A.rchaeological D.igital A.rchive M.asǧid J.um'a I.sfahan, From the Excavation to the Archive, Exhibition at the National Museum of Iran, Tehran*, Tehran 2004; F. Saiedi-Anaraki, B. Genito, Joint Iranian/Italian Project, *Archaeological Digital Archive Masjed-e Jom'e, Esfahan, The 9th Annual Congress of Iranian Archaeology, 9–12 December 2007*, Teheran 2007, pp. 111–28; B. Genito, F. Saiedi-Anaraki, *From the Excavation to the Archive: ADAMJI (A.rchaeological D.igital A.rchive M.asjed-e Jom'e at I.sfahan)*. A Joint Iranian/Italian Project, with Contributions by Sh. Juzdani, S. Massa, M. Jung, L. Rendina,

bibliography, he would certainly have been able to identify his own evident gaps of knowledge in terms of the stratigraphic layout of the site and the relative archaeological data. This could have prevented him from proposing poorly supported hypotheses and interpretations.

The “comprehensive essay” he offers the public (p. 8) should perhaps not have been written at all, for it stands out as a methodologically inadequate approach insofar as it is not accompanied by a detailed in-depth analysis of the archaeological context in which the materials (300 fragments out of a grand total of around 7,500) were actually found. In all likelihood all the findings from the filler layer found below the Seljuq floor (level 1b) and resting on a thin work level (–95 cm, most probably that used by the Seljuqs to construct the domed hall) belong to a period no earlier than the 9th-century Abbasid mosque. The stratigraphy of sector 190 (the Seljuq domed hall) is very complex, also in relation to that of the adjacent areas to the west and those to the north. Pictorial fragments bearing inscriptions confirm this. The palaeographic analysis carried out by the Author (the inscribed fragments found during the excavations are part of the large *corpus* of inscriptions from the mosque, which the Author does not seem to be fully aware of) is partial and imprecise and led him to dubious dating.³ Moreover it cannot be ruled out that the carved stucco fragment attributed by the Author to “Type VIII”, *i.e.* a “Plant-like relief” (p. 49), may actually be the epigraphic type, as a rotation of the photo (fig. 56) by approximately 120° clockwise would seem to suggest.⁴ The correct rotation would also be desirable for figs. 16 and 20.

Furthermore, the contributions not mentioned by the Author in his ‘Bibliography’ include a brief article from 1980⁵ on the same “picture of a mosque (figs. 11–12), to which Eugenio Galdieri drew our attention” (p. 67). Moreover, that essay would have been particularly useful to the Author in his interpretation of the subject.

M. Rugiadi, G. Maresca, M. D'Angelo, A. Giaccotto, *Newsletter di Archeologia* (CISA), no. 0, 2009, pp. 101–21, Napoli, http://www.unior.it/userfiles/workarea_231/file/Articoli/Genito,%20Saiedi,%20et%20alii%20ISFN%20101-121.pdf. See now the contributions in B. Genito (ed.), *Digital Archaeology from the Iranian Plateau (1962–1977)*. Collected Papers on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Demise of Umberto Scerrato, Napoli 2014.

- 3 Timely comparisons (such as, for example, with some painted fragments found in the excavations at Sabz Pūshān, Nišāpūr [Sh.S. Blair, *Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana*, Leiden 1992, p. 227, fig. 25]) would contribute to some datings.
- 4 Consequently, “Type VIII” would have no artefacts attributed to it and could thus be dispensed with.
- 5 M.V. Fontana, Una rappresentazione ‘shī’īta’ di Medina. *Annali dell’Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 40/4, 1980, pp. 619–25.

The writers—had they been asked to offer some scientific advice—in addition to preventing some inaccuracies, could have informed him of new studies on the chronological attribution of the first Friday Mosque in Iṣfahān (p. 11). While up until now the first Abbasid mosque found in the 1970s by the Italian Archaeological Mission was considered to have been that erected in 772 CE by the Arab tribe of Ṭihirān, a very interesting MA thesis defended a few months ago at the Sapienza University of Rome attributed an early dating to the first mosque.⁶

Although the Author expresses his profound gratitude to the working group (p. 10), he nonetheless seems to be unaware of, or rather fails to mention, the fact that all the data collected during the field activities in the 1970s has been already processed, digitised and catalogued as part of the ADAMJI Project thanks to the generous financial and organisational effort made by both the Italian side (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IsMEO/IsIAO, “L’Orientale” Università di Napoli, the Sapienza Università di Roma and the new IsMEO Association), and the Iranian side (RC-ICHTHO⁷ and ICAR⁸ of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and ICAR branches of Iṣfahān). Curiously, in the ‘Acknowledgments’ (p. 10), the Author offers nothing but an incomplete mention of some of these institutions.

Specifically, the Author ought to have remembered how each scientific contribution concerning the ADAMJI Project, irrespective of its subject, contents or method, should have been previously discussed with and submitted to the Iranian and Italian supervisors of the project board, which is a basic rule and common practice when dealing with the editing of a scientific output directly

6 It is very likely that the first Abbasid Masġid-i Ğum’a, corresponding to that found by the Italian Archaeological Mission, was built in 767 CE by the governor Ayyūb ibn Ziyād when he established the new *miṣr* of Yahūdiyya. This mosque was built in the village of Kuṣīnān, along the southern border of the latter, contiguous with the old Jewish suburb of *yahūdiyya*, of pre-Islamic origin and positioned close to the *sūq*; it was on the occasion of this *tamṣīr* that the former suburb was transformed into a real town, a result of the union of several villages. The town preserved the name of the Jewish suburb, Yahūdiyya, because of the Jewish economic and numeric prevalence, initially at least, and was the seat of the ‘Abbasid governor. Instead, the Masġid-i Ğum’a built in 772 CE by the Banū Tamīm certainly was at Ṭihirān (*bi-Ṭihirān*, in Abū Nu‘aym), a village far from the suburb of *yahūdiyya*, most likely the homonymous place located 4 km northwest of the present-day Masġid-i Ğum’a in Iṣfahān (F. Duva, *Iṣfahān: fonti e urbanistica tra VIII e X secolo (con particolare riferimento alla Moschea del Venerdì)*. MA Thesis, Sapienza University of Rome 2014–15, especially quoting Abū Nu‘aym, Māfarruḥī, Abū’l-Fidā’).

7 Research Center of Iranian Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

8 Iranian Center for Archaeological Research.

linked to a running project. This issue is not just a mere formality, rather it involves a fundamental lack of respect towards the institutions and the archaeologists in charge, who, to different degrees, have directed the subsequent phases of such a long-lasting project. The Author alone takes full responsibility for having completely excluded the Iranian colleagues from sharing his studies and views and publishing these materials without their formal agreement.

Honesty and professional ethics should have prevented him and his collaborators from proceeding without any proper agreement with the head of the ADAMJI Project, the IsMEO/IsIAO, the new ISMEO Association and, above all, the Iranian institutions involved, RC-ICHTHO and ICAR.

Instead he appears to have focused on his personal interest in the matter, forgetting to make the necessary arrangements for his publication to take the proper scientific form.⁹

Maria Vittoria Fontana

Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"

mariavittoria.fontana@uniroma1.it

Bruno Genito

Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"

bgenito@unior.it

9 The author behaved in the same way during an International Congress held in Rome some years ago, presenting his work on the wall painting fragments from the Congregational Mosque of Işfahān without mentioning IsIAO/New ISMEO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the Iranian Institutions involved in the Project: institutions and people who were the proprietors of the study and analysis of these wall paintings long before there was any question of his rights over them. Although times have changed and the new generations struggle to keep from compulsively comparing notes on great deal of often scientifically inadequate online content found on blogs and other forms of social media, it is difficult to understand how an elderly scholar like the author could have fallen into the same trap, failing to give credit where it is due and not demonstrating his academic skills to the full.