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ISMAILI THOUGHT AND ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE IN YEMEN DURING THE SULAYHID PERIOD (439-532 AH/1047-1137 AD). THE GREAT MOSQUE OF JIBLAH AS A CASE STUDY

EL PENSAMIENTO ISMAILI Y LA ARQUITECTURA ISLÁMICA EN YEMEN DURANTE EL PERÍODO SULAYHID (439-532 AH/1047-1137 AD). LA GRAN MEZQUITA DE JIBLAH COMO CASO DE ESTUDIO

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ABSTRACT

The current research deals with an important era in the history of Islamic civilization in which the Sulayhid state ruled in Yemen. The problem of the research centers on the lack of architectural studies that addressed architecture from the analytical aspect as well as the artistic and intellectual aspect. It aims to study the possible influence of Ismaili Tayyibi thought on Islamic architecture through studying the symbolic aspects of Ismaili thought in the architectural elements included in Islamic architecture, which were built during the Sulayhid rule. The methodology is based on the symbolic approach, which focuses on studying the culture of society, to know the symbolic systems through which society expresses its culture and beliefs. It is formed through constructing an intellectual model that includes the principles of Ismaili thought and its teachings. Then, it is applied to the architecture, and choosing the Great Mosque in Jiblah as a model. The research concluded by extracting a set of architectural characteristics that distinguished Sulayhid architecture. It also concluded that Ismaili Tayyibi thought relies heavily on symbolic thought in extracting the inner meanings of spiritual truths. Interpretation, guardianship, and the idea of the inner "Al-Batin" and outer "Azzahir", may be understood as expressions of this symbolic mode of thought. In this light, some features of the Great Mosque in Jiblah may be interpreted as reflecting this thought through architectural signs and symbolic forms. The research recommends that future studies focus on studying separately the influence of each historical period through which Islamic architecture in Yemen developed.

RESUMEN

La presente investigación aborda una época crucial en la historia de la civilización islámica, durante el reinado del Estado Sulayhid en Yemen. El problema central radica en la escasez de estudios arquitectónicos que analicen la arquitectura desde una perspectiva tanto analítica como artística e intelectual. Su objetivo es estudiar la posible influencia del pensamiento ismaelita Tayyibi en la arquitectura islámica, analizando los aspectos simbólicos de dicho pensamiento en los elementos arquitectónicos construidos durante el gobierno Sulayhid. La metodología se basa en el enfoque simbólico, que se centra en el estudio de la cultura de una sociedad para comprender los sistemas simbólicos mediante los cuales expresa su cultura y creencias. Este enfoque se construye a partir de un modelo intelectual que integra los principios del pensamiento ismaelita y sus enseñanzas. Posteriormente, se aplica a la arquitectura, tomando como modelo la Gran Mezquita de Jibla. La investigación concluye con la identificación de un conjunto de características arquitectónicas distintivas de la arquitectura Sulayhid. Asimismo, se concluye que el pensamiento ismaelita Tayyibi se basa en gran medida en el pensamiento simbólico para la comprensión de los significados profundos de las verdades espirituales. La interpretación, la custodia y la idea del "Al-Batin" interno y el "Azzahir" externo pueden entenderse como expresiones de este modo de pensamiento simbólico. En este sentido, algunas características de la Gran Mezquita de Jiblah pueden interpretarse como un reflejo de este pensamiento a través de signos arquitectónicos y formas simbólicas. La investigación recomienda que los estudios futuros se centren en analizar por separado la influencia de cada período histórico en el desarrollo de la arquitectura islámica en Yemen.

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Introduction

Islamic architecture was formed in every region of the Islamic world as a result of the environmental, social and intellectual factors of societies. Intellectual factors, including religion and beliefs, had the greatest role in influencing the technical and planning aspects of architecture, as architecture is a mirror that reflects the beliefs and traditions of society. Society usually expresses its beliefs and intellectual perceptions in its physical products. On the other hand, Yemen was ruled by several states in the Islamic era. In the beginning, Yemen followed the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate, then the Abbasid Caliphate. It gradually separated with the emergence of independent states such as the Zayadiyyah, the Ya'fariyyah, the Zaydiyyah and the first Ismailism. The situation resulted in the emergence of the Ismaili Tayyibi, which ruled Yemen in the name of the Sulayhid state.

This study examines the relationship between intellectual beliefs and Sulayhid architecture in Yemen. Therefore, it requires presenting previous studies to define the research problem. There are studies dealing with the subject of Islamic architecture in Yemen, and other studies dealing with the subject of Sulayhid architecture. The most closely related to the topic is the study of Mustafa Abdullah Shiha (1987), which presented a descriptive study of the Great Mosque in Jiblah. Shiha said that the Jiblah Mosque is an ideal example of the Fatimid style that prevailed in Egypt during the fifth century AH, in terms of Fatimid arches, decorative elements, notched balconies, blind entrances, and many artistic influences exchanged between Egypt and Yemen. However, Fatima Ahmadi (1425 AH) contradicted the previous opinion of Shiha, and confirmed that in terms of planning the mosque, the mosques did not have a special architectural style, and they did not bring anything new. She said that the Great Mosque in Jiblah took its origins from the style of previous Yemeni mosques.

The study of Ramzi Al-Hakimi (2011) dealt with the remaining religious and funerary buildings in the city of Jiblah from its inception in the Sulayhid era until the end of the Tahirid era. The study focused on the documentary and descriptive aspects of religious architecture during the Sulayhid, Tahirid and Rasulid periods. However, Sami Al-Shehab's study (2024) dealt with the city of Jiblah, the capital of the Sulayhid state in Yemen, its origins and planning. The study focused on the planning aspect of the city. It provided an architectural description through archaeological documentation of specific buildings, especially the administrative building called Dar al-Izz.

Taken together, these studies indicate that Sulayhid architecture in Yemen has received limited attention from analytical, artistic, and intellectual perspectives.

Objectives

The current research attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- Identifying the architectural and intellectual characteristics of Yemeni Islamic architecture during the period of Sulayhid rule.
- A new attempt at understanding Islamic architecture, especially studying the influence of Ismaili thought on Sulayhid architecture in Yemen.

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- Identifying the symbolic aspects of Ismaili Tayyibi thought in the architectural elements of Islamic architecture in Yemen during the same period, represented by the Great Mosque in Jiblah.

Methodology

Religious architecture may serve as a medium through which some of the beliefs and values of a society are expressed. Its forms may also be interpreted as carrying symbolic meanings, especially in religious contexts shaped by esoteric traditions. The study relies on the symbolic approach, which focuses on studying the culture of society, to know the symbolic systems through which society expresses its culture and beliefs, and delve into reading the symbolic meaning. This approach requires close attention to doctrinal concepts, particularly in traditions that place strong emphasis on inner meaning. Such knowledge is not generally accessible to the public and is often limited to certain groups within the doctrine. Furthermore, it focuses on the esoteric meaning of texts and things. Based on previous studies, a general intellectual model will be built including the principles of Ismaili thought. In addition to a general model of symbolic systems, that includes the set of symbols and interpretive methods. The model will be applied to Sulayhid religious architecture, and the Great Mosque in the city of Jiblah (Queen bint Ahmad Mosque) will be chosen as a model.

Literature Review

Ismaili Doctrine

Ismailism is one of the Shiite sects that was established in 148 AH, 765 AD, after the death of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, following a dispute among the supporters of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib over who succeeded the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. Some recognized Musa al-Kadhim's claim to rights, while another group supported Ismail's descendants (Shuja Al-Deen, Salah, Jafar and Abu Thar, 2022). The Ismaili is often described as "Batiniyyah" due to its belief that Sharia has an apparent and hidden nature. Some anti-Ismaili sources, such as al-Qasim bin Muhammad and Ibn al-Jawzi, described the Ismailis in highly critical terms. For example, al-Qasim bin Muhammad characterized them as outwardly professing Islam while concealing unbelief. Similarly, Ibn al-Jawzi portrayed them as people who appeared to belong to Islam even though, in his view, their beliefs and actions differ from the principles of Islam (Marjouni, 2023). In 297 AH/909 AD, the Ismailis were able to establish a caliphate in what is known today as Tunisia, in opposition to the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. The eleventh imam of the Ismailis, Abdullah al-Mahdi, was declared caliph. They succeeded in 969 AD in invading Egypt peacefully and establishing the city of Cairo as the capital of the caliphate. In 973 AD, the fourteenth Imam Al-Muizz settled in Cairo, and the Ismaili imams were called "Fatimids" because their lineage is directly related to Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (Daftary, 2001). Ismaili sources and later scholarship describe that da'wa was characterized by having an organizational structure. At the head was the imam, and the caller to the preachers, which called the "Bab", carried out the work of the da'wa in the name of the imam.

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The first Ismaili in Yemen began in 266 AH, which is attributed to Ismail bin Ja'far bin Musa Al-Kadhim. The credit is due to the preacher Abu Al-Qasim bin Hawshab, who belongs to the Imami family from Kufa, and his conversion to the Ismaili doctrine, who was known as Mansur Al-Yaman. In addition to the preacher Ali bin Al-Fadl, who followed the hidden Imam Al-Hussein bin Ahmed (Ahmadi, 1425 AH). After they were sent to Yemen, Ali bin Al-Fadl occupied Sana'a, so all of Yemen came under Ismaili control in 293 AH. However, Abu al-Qasim bin al-Hawshab sent missions to spread the Ismaili da'wa. He sent one of his relatives to Sindh. He sent Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i to Morocco. He sent other preachers to Bahrain, Egypt, and Al-Yamamah (Daftary, 2001). The da'wa continued to be stable for a period of approximately ten years. Then it entered the stage of concealment, which extended from the period 303 AH/915 AD, until just before the establishment of the Sulayhid state in 429 AH/1038 AD. Contrary to what the da'wa was inside Yemen during the secret stage. Nevertheless, outside Yemen, it has announced the stage of publicly announcing the establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate in Morocco by the Caliphate of Abdullah al-Mahdi in 297 AH/910 AD (Al-Wajih, 2013).

The Rule of Sulayhid State

Some secret preachers were able to attract the establisher of the Sulayhid state, Ali bin Mohammed al-Sulayhi, to the Ismaili doctrine. He was able to extend the influence of his state from Hadramaut, Aden, and Lahj in the south to Saada in the north. He was even able to impose his supervision on Mecca. However, sulayhid influence diminished by settling in the central regions of Yemen after his death (Al-Wajih, 2013). The conditions of the Ismaili doctrine in Yemen stabilized until the Fatimid dispute emerged in Egypt between the heirs of the Caliph al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah. They are divided into the Hafidiyah Ismaili branch, who follow al-Hafiz li-Din Allah, and the Tayyibi Ismaili branch, who follow the caliph's two-year-old son, al-Tayyib Abu al-Qasim (Daftary, 2001). The Musta'liyya branch of Hafiziya disappeared after the fall of the Fatimid state while the Musta'liyya branch of Tayyibi remained, followed by the Sulayhids. Queen bint Ahmad was one of the followers of al-Tayyib Abu al-Qasim, and she became his guardian in Yemen (Shuja al-Deen et al., 2022). Queen bint Ahmad reached the rank of "Hujjat" (Al-Wajih, 2012). She was carrying out the mission of preaching in Yemen, as well as in some other countries such as India and Oman, and appointing preachers in those countries (Shaheen, 2023). She combined the political and religious authorities, and then she separated the affairs of the religious to become independent of the state's affairs (Al-Wajih, 2012).

The mission of the judge, Lamak bin Malik al-Hammadi, to Egypt in 454 AH, and stayed there for five years, studying Ismaili sciences, then returning to study in Yemen in 459 AH/1066 AD, had a profound impact on the doctrine. The matter developed among Ismailis when the Ismaili preacher, Hibat Allah al-Shirazi, was sent to Yemen to teach the preachers, and to him were attributed the interpretation councils. The councils were performed in the palaces and houses of the various Sulayhid sultans. They used to hold interpretation councils to dictate to the respondents the approach. The book of the Islam Pillars for the Judge of Al-Numan is the meetings with the students to teach them the fundamentals of the doctrine. It is one of the five prescribed books on the science of interpretation. Then the councils supporting the Ismaili preacher Al-Shirazi, all collected in a book "Al-Jami", which was studied by the majority

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of Ismailis, including the Ismailis of Yemen during the Sulayhid era, such as Yahya bin Lamak, Al-Dhu'ayb bin Musa al-Wadi'i and others (Al-Wajih, 2013).

Beliefs and Thoughts of Ismaili Tayyibi

Since the division of the Ismaili in 286 AH into two sects, a clear discrepancy has emerged between the apparent and hidden aspects. According to Tayyibi Ismaili belief, heavenly books are understood as possessing both their apparent literal meanings called "Azzahir" and their latent esoteric spiritual meanings called "Al-Batin". Therefore, the hidden spiritual truths are revealed through (al-Ta'wil) interpretation (Daftary, 2001). Ismaili sources present that the apparent verbal text of the Qur'an is only for the obligations of the Sharia, while the innermost meaning constitutes the basic nucleus of the divine Sharia and its truth is constant and eternal, emanating from the Creator of the universe. They see the connection between the apparent and the hidden, and the necessity of interpreting the Sharia, because what is meant is the hidden rather than the apparent. Therefore, interpretation is a central thing in Ismaili thought, whether the interpretation of texts or rulings or even the interpretation of everything that exists in the universe (Marjouni, 2023). After the leadership of Ismaili in Yemen passed to the second preacher, Ibrahim al-Hamidi, he formulated a new doctrinal thought, and established the intellectual system (Daftary, 2001). The most important principles are:

Creation and Existence

In Ismaili cosmological literature, God existed before space and time, and his will created light that was known as "KN". The "K" and "N" became what was known as "KUNI", followed by "QDR," from which all other creatures were created. Kuni and Qdr consist of seven letters that begin with "K," which symbolizes Adam, and end with "R," which symbolizes the Mahdi. The seven letters are also associated with the seven oracles. They believe that God sent six prophets in succession called the Natiqs "Speakers" to carry the laws. The cyclic time of humanity passed through seven cycles for each stage Natiq "Speaker". There are the six prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. They conveyed the outward aspects of each heavenly law without explaining the inner meaning. Each of them had a Wasi "Guardian" whose mission was to reveal the innermost meaning. The six guardians were Seth, Shem, Ismail, Aaron, Shimon, and Ali bin Abi Talib. In each stage, there were seven of the Etamh "supplements". In Islam, Muhammad bin Ismail was the seventh imam who entered the Dawr al-Sitr "Disappearance Stage" as the Mahdi, being the last of the Imams (Daftary, 2001).

Al-Wilayah (Guardianship)

All Shiite sects believe that the legitimate successor to the Prophet is Imam Ali. Therefore, the Prophet stated that in revealing the divine command at "Ghadir Khumm" before his death (Daftary, 2001). According to the Shiite Ismaili belief, the word Wali or Wasi "Guardian" is the person who knows all the religious teachings. Imam Ali is the one who knows all the teachings of the Prophet (El-Barbary, Al-Tohamy and Ali, 2016). The verse, "O Messenger, deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed his message" was came in the Messenger Mohammed, Imam Ali, and the Guardianship (Kabashi, 2013). In dividing the obligatory duties, they believe that prayer and fasting are an obligation on a person's body,

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zakat is an obligation on their money, and Hajj and jihad are an obligation on the body and money. Nevertheless, al-Wilayah "Guardianship", among all the obligations, is an obligation on the heart, which is the prince of obedience. Islam is described as being founded on seven pillars, and guardianship is the best and highest position. Therefore, prophets have guardians, so the guardian of Prophet Mohammed is Imam Ali, and there is no difference between them (Shaheen, 2023).

Al-Imamah (Imamate)

The Imamate is one of the basic pillars of the Ismaili sect. The Ismaili preacher Al-Naysaburi states that the Imamate is the pole and foundation of the religion. It is transmitted from father to eldest son, not from brother to brother. It is the basic pillar of all the pillars of the religion, and faith itself, so the religion and faith are not complete except through Hujjat (proof) and the Imam. Therefore, God imposed imamate on humanity in the lineage of Fatima (Shaheen, 2023). The seventh Imam of the Ismailis is Muhammad bin Ismail, the eldest son of Ismail, and the eldest grandson of Imam al-Sadiq, who was born in 120 AH (Daftary, 2001). The Ismailis of Yemen claimed that when Al-Aamer was killed and his wife was pregnant with a child named Al-Tayyib, he was granted the imamate. In order for Al-Hafiz not to kill him, he sent the Queen bent Ahmad in Yemen to hide him. The Queen made herself his guarantor and his representative, and she called herself the guarantor of the hidden Imam Al-Tayeb bin Al-Aamer (Al-Wajih, 2012).

Azzahir and Al-Batin

Ismaili thought has at its core a dualistic belief in the universe and existence. The first pair of existence consists of "KUNI" and "QDR" which are the first two principles of creation. There are many parallels between the spiritual and physical worlds, and everything in the upper world corresponds to everything in the underworld (Daftary, 2001). The Ismaili preacher Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani emphasizes the duality of the esoteric "Al-Batin" and the exoteric "Azzahir" of everything that exists in the world. Everything carries two things: the apparent, which is the thing that man perceives, and the other is the hidden thing that man does not perceive (Esfandiari, Baighi and Suleiman, 2023). The apparent corresponds to Mathel "the represent", while the hidden corresponds to Mamthol "the represented" (Abdul Ghaffar, 1993). The Mathel is the speech that indicates a thing, and the Mamthol is the innermost speech that indicates it. For example, the human body is a Mathel and the soul is a Mamthol, and this world is a Mathel and the hereafter is a Mamthol. The Sharia is the apparent or the Mathel, and its inner meaning is the hidden or the Mamthol. The apparent is the form, and the hidden is the meaning that appears to the people of proof (Shaheen, 2023).

Al-Ta'wil (Interpretation)

Al-Ta'wil can be defined as the process of removing rulings from the apparent meaning to the inner meaning. Every religious ruling has two sides, one outer and the other inner (Shaheen, 2023). It is known as deducing the original meaning from the apparent literal text or from a religious obligation through returning to the original (Esfandiari, Baighi and Suleiman, 2023). It has many names, including the symbolized, the represented, the hidden, and the secret, while the apparent is called symbol and represent (Ali, 1996).

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Al-Shirazi infers the meaning of the interpretation by depending on verse, "And no one knows its interpretation except God and those who are firmly established in knowledge" (Kabashi, 2013). The Ismailis believe that Ahl al-Bayt possesses hereditary qualities as a basic condition for possessing knowledge and extracting inner meaning through "al-Ta'wil" interpretation or esoteric exegesis. In Ismaili belief, the prophets spoke the outward, while the inner, which included the spiritual truths, remained hidden and concealed. Those who recognized the authority of the guardian of the Prophet, Imam Ali, and the imams revealed it through interpretation or the process of extracting the inner from the outer (Daftary, 2001).

The Awaited Mahdi

According to Ismaili belief, each of the first six religious roles, unlike the Natiqs and Guardians, has seven leaders who are responsible for preserving the spiritual meaning of the religion. The seventh imam (leader) rises in each stage to the position of Natiq in the next stage, abolishing the law of the previous stage and declaring a new law. In the sixth stage, the period of Islam, Muhammad bin Ismail is the seventh imam, who entered the Dawr al-Sitr "Disappearance Stage" as the Mahdi. He becomes upon his return the seventh speaker and the riser of the Resurrection, completing the stages of the Imamate. The roots of the belief in the Mahdi go back to the period of the martyrdom of Hussein in Karbala, and the beginning of revenge for his killing by Al-Mukhtar. Furthermore, in the third century AH, the Ismailis expected the appearance of the Mahdi, who would establish justice on earth (Daftary, 2001).

Maratib Al-Da'wa

The Ismaili da'wa was distinguished from the others by a hierarchical formation system of positions and ranks, progressing from the top of the pyramid represented by the Imam, and then came al-Bab (the Gate). It is the highest rank after the religious rank of the Imam. It is a very secret position, and only the Imam himself knows its occupant. Most of the time, it is occupied only by those close to the Imam, such as his son. The rank of hujjat (proof) is one of the ranks, directly after the imam, its owner is a representative of the hidden imam, and his shadow does not depart from him. In fact, there is no imam without a hujjat, and there is no hujjat without an imam. The rank of the preacher "Da'i al-Balag" is one of the seven limits that complement the role of the imam, and his task is to invoke proof in proving the upper limits, and his organizational task is to communicate the orders sent by al-Da'i al-Mutlaq (Shaheen, 2023).

Ismaili Symbolic Thought

In Ismaili symbolic thought, the apparent world is sometimes understood in relation to hidden inner meanings. For example, the words of the Qur'an have a hidden, internal meaning other than the apparent verbal meaning. The Ismaili preacher, Ja'far bin Mansour al-Yaman, says that the Qur'an is not taken on the apparent words only, but rather the meaning is taken from the interpretation of the innermost meaning. The words of God are proverbs that indicate representatives, symbols and signs that the guardians interpret and extract their true meanings. Ismaili used the metaphorical, symbolic, and hermeneutical interpretation of the Qur'an, the Sharia, and even the natural world, to extract the true hidden meaning. It relied on the

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hidden properties of letters, numbers, and symbols (Esfandiari, Baighi and Suleiman, 2023). Al-Ghazali mentioned that Ismaili is called "Baṭiniyya" because it claims that phenomena and things have interiors meanings. It is to the ignorant people images and illusions, and to the wise people symbols and signs that carry meanings for certain truths. Therefore, the sacred religious texts are symbols and signs that are interpreted as hidden truths and meanings (Shaheen, 2023).

In the literature, Ismaili thought linked the doctrine' rulings and principles to a relationship with the astronomical system. The imams' rulings revolve around seven such as the heavens and days, and the Noqaba' "captains" rulings revolve around twelve such as the year. The world, like the temporal year, is divided into twelve (Gaziras), one section of which is called an island, and within it is a Naqib "Preacher". The month thirty days and each island has thirty assistant captains. The day is divided into twenty-four hours, twelve at night corresponding to twelve hidden captains, and twelve hours during the day corresponding to twelve visible captains (Al-Qasir, 1993). The planets and celestial spheres have an effective influence on doctrine and its formative system of al-Da'wa. Each of them represents one of the positions of al-Da'wa. The sun represents the highest rank and corresponds to the speaking Imam "Nateq", the moon represents the second rank and corresponds to the recipient of the first rank, Venus corresponds to al-Da'i al-Mutlaq "the absolute preacher", and so on. One of the preachers states that the Prophet represents the sky and Imam Ali represents the earth, and both of them in the same status (Shaheen, 2023). Therefore, the inner symbol for the sky in the Qur'an refers to the speaker, while the earth in its inner symbol refers to the guardian, and they are the Prophet and Imam Ali (Jaafar and Al-Zubaidi, 2019).

The sun and the moon had an influence on their thought, as the sun symbolizes the Prophet and the moon symbolizes Imam Ali. In addition, the sun represents the highest rank of al-Da'wa and represents the rank of the speaking Imam (Kabashi, 2013). Likewise, the sun, moon, and planets indicate the imam, the al-hujjat, and the preacher. The night and day indicate Azzahir and Al-Batin, so the night corresponds to Azzahir and the day corresponds to Al-Batin (Ali, 1996). On the other hand, the stars indicate the Noqaba and imams, and they are like stars that guide people in the dark. For example, Imam Hussein described himself as a star between two moons in reference to his father Ali and his mother Fatima (El-Barbary, Al-Tohamy and Ali, 2016). The Star of David symbolizes the Prophet and Imam Ali, where the triangle whose head is up symbolizes the Prophet, and the one whose head is down represents Imam Ali (Gabr, 1999). The pillars of religion have symbols and meanings. Al-Shirazi mentioned that the religion has six pillars in relation to six days, which are purity, prayer, zakat, fasting, Hajj, and jihad. God preserved the six-day system with the day that is the sitting of the throne (Kabashi, 2013).

Ismaili has limits and borders, as each limit is called Bab "a door or gate" that is the means to reach to the Imam (Ali, 1996). The Bab symbolizes Imam Ali, as it was mentioned that the Prophet said: I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate, and the lamp symbolizes the Imam Ali. The colors have special symbolisms in Ismaili thought, where the green color symbolizes Hussein (El-Barbary, Al-Tohamy and Ali, 2016). The green color is a symbolic expression of paradise, and the white color is the official color of the Fatimid state (Shuja al-Deen et al., 2022).

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It is agreed upon by most historians that the Ismaili took numbers as religious principles and references to hidden meanings (Abdul Ghaffar, 1993). The number one corresponds to the first mind (Speaker), which is the Messenger, which is Bab al-Abwab "the door of doors". The number two corresponds to the second mind (Guardian), which is Imam Ali, and refers to the hidden and the apparent. The number three corresponds to the third mind (Imam). The number four corresponds to the fourth mind (Al-Bab) the door and symbolizes the four worlds. The number five corresponds to the fifth mind the proof (Al-Hujjat), and refers to the upper limits (Previous, Next, Seriousness, Opening, and Imagination), where the previous and next are "KN" and "QDR" (Shaheen, 2023).

The number six refers to Ahl al-Bayt, who are the Messenger, Ali, Fatima, Al-Hassan, Al-Hussein, and Muhammad bin Ismail. The number seven refers to the pillars of the Fatimid Shiite faith (El-Barbary, Al-Tohamy and Ali, 2016). It also symbolizes obligations and guardianship (Kabashi, 2013). In addition, the number seven symbolizes the Mahdi and the spiritual era of the Mahdi when all the hidden and secret will be revealed and appear as the apparent spiritual truth (Daftary, 2001). The number seven also symbolizes the seven imams, namely Ali, Al-Hussein, Zain Al-Abidin, Al-Baqir, Ja'far Al-Sadiq, Ismail, and Muhammad bin Ismail. The number eight symbolizes the gates of Paradise, the soul and the seven upper letters, the seven imams and the awaited Mahdi. The number nine symbolizes the stages of al-Da'wa, which consist of nine stages. The number ten symbolizes the lower borders, which represent Maratib Al-Da'wa "ranks" (Shaheen, 2023), and the tenth mind, which represents the sublime world of nature. The number eleven refers to the nocturnal proofs, and they are the people of the inner, from whom the apparent duties of the elevation of their ranks are removed in Dawr al-Satr (Ali, 1996). The number twelve symbolizes the captains "Noqaba", "And We raised from them twelve captains" (El-Barbary, Al-Tohamy and Ali, 2016). The number nineteen symbolizes the Fatimid Al-Mustansir, who was the nineteenth Imam of the Imams, and was made one of the principles of the religion. It consists of seven, which is that each pillar was assigned seven duties, which are added to twelve, so the total is nineteen, referring to the Imam Al-Mustansir (Abdul Ghaffar, 1993).

Application and Discussion

Islamic Architecture during the Sulayhid Period

One researcher stated that religious and civil urbanism in Yemen, especially on the hand of the king Ali bin Muhammad Al-Sulayhi, flourished. The most important thing distinguished it was that the mihrab became a beautiful piece of art. In addition, the traditions of the mihrab slab and decorated minarets were introduced (Ahmadi, 1425 AH). Another researcher stated that many archaeological monuments that were built during the period of Queen bint Ahmed remain, including irrigation canals in Ibb and Taiz, the expansion of the Great Mosque in Sanaa, and the Great Mosque in city of Jiblah, where her tomb is located (Shuja al-Deen et al., 2022). She also built large and luxurious palaces such as Dar al-Izz Palace, wide squares such as Al-Sarihin Square, markets, and obligatory mosques. All streets were paved with solid, polished stones, and irrigation canals and arches were made (Al-Hakimi, 2011).

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In the fact, the Sulayhid period was famous for constructing small mosques with a cubic shape and a flat roof. The best example is the al-Abbas Mosque in the Asnaf region of Khawlan, which was built in the sixth century AH (Finster, 1992). The large mosques were distinguished by the component of the middle slab, and this appeared in the mosque of Queen bint Ahmed. As well as the entrance dome, that prominent cross-sectional passage and the riwaq arcades of the qibla, which oversees on the courtyard. In addition to the appearance of pointed arc with the two –centers developed from Yemeni pointed arcs and the pointed arcs with the four centers that similarity a lot from the Fatimid arcs (Ahmadi, 1425 AH). The earliest appearance dates back to the Sulayhid period, and it was used in the fourth Arcade in the Queen bint Ahmed Mosque (Al-Komany, 2010, p. 221).

The decoration that appeared was diverse in that period, which was characterized by its closeness to the decorations of the sixth century AH, such as the elements of the incomplete star plate, geometric decorations, and arrow decorations (Al-Shibani et al., 2005). One of the important mosques built is the Dhi Ashraq Mosque, where one researcher states that its layout, architectural elements, and decoration resemble the Egyptian Fatimid mosques, as well as its roof composed of wooden panels, and its cross-sectional passage perpendicular to the mihrab (Shiha, 1987). It is concluded that the application is on a Sulayhi Ismaili religious building, the Queen bint Ahmed Mosque in Jiblah (the Great Mosque), which retains many architectural principles, and elements to the present time.

The Great Mosque of Jiblah-Queen bint Ahmed Mosque

The Great Mosque is located on top of an irregular rocky plateau in the city of Jiblah, which is located northeast of Jabal Al-Takr (Al-Shehab, 2024). The city of Jiblah is in Ibb Governorate, and it is about 200 km south of Sana'a (Figure 1, next page). It is mentioned that the first person to plan the city was Abdullah bin Muhammad Al-Sulayhi in 458 AH/1066 AD. However, its name is derived from the name of a Jew who used to sell pottery. Historical sources mention that Queen bint Ahmad ordered the conversion of the first Dar al-Ezz into a mosque in 480 AH. The mosque is located on top of a high hill (Figure 2, next page). In order to settle the site of the mosque, it was built in two floors. The lower one consists of rooms and chambers used as commercial stores, and the second built the mosque in it. The eastern gate of the mosque is reached through a stepped slope known as the al-Alf stair (Al-Hakimi, 2011).

Some researchers believe that there are principles on which ancient Yemeni mosques were built, such as the Great Mosque in Jiblah, and the Great Mosque in Sana'a, which is the style that contains a courtyard and canopies. It began with the Great Mosque in Sana'a, then developed and became an open courtyard surrounded by arcades (Ahmadi, 1425 AH). However, Barbara Finster considers the Queen Mosque to be a type of mosque that contains a large central courtyard. He indicated that Fatimid architecture and the great mosques in Kairouan influenced on it (Finster, 1992). Al-Shehab believes that there is a great influence in the construction of the mosque by Fatimid architecture (Al-Shehab, 2024), where the prominent memorial entrances are topped with domes, which researchers agree are the oldest domes in Yemen (Al-Komany, 2010, p. 217). The mosque, its façades, columns and pillars were built of basalt stone, and the foundations were built with stones, as were the lower parts of the minarets. However, Bricks were used to build the bodies

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of the minarets, and the ceilings, walls and ground of the courtyard were covered with plaster (Al-Hakimi, 2011).

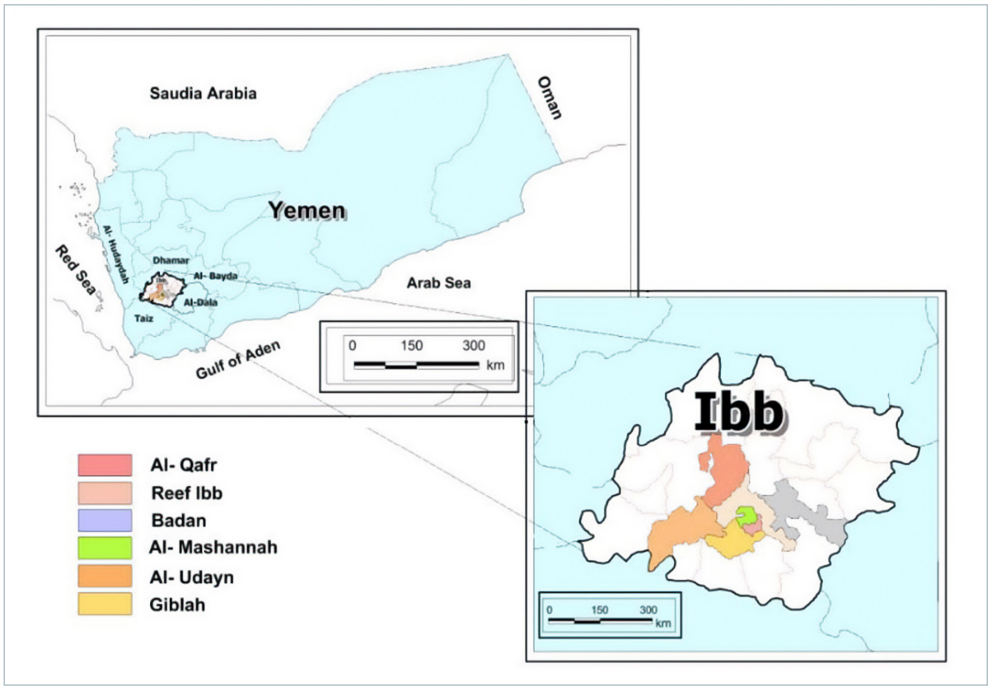


Figure 1

Map of Yemen showing location of Jiblah.

Source: Al-Fakih et al. (2022, p. 327).



Figure 2

General view of the city shows the topography.

Source: Al-Shehab (2024, p. 98).

Architectural Planning

The mosque was built in the shape of a rectangle on a land area of 1,157 square meters, with a courtyard in the middle surrounded by riwaqs "aisles" on all sides (Figure 3, p. 15). In addition to a number of other facilities such as a bookcase, the queen's shrine, and places for ablution (Al-Hakimi, 2011). The mosque consists of four riwaqs: al-Muqaddam "the front" on the northern side, the back on the southern side, and the eastern and western wings of the courtyard. The main part of prayer place (al-Muqaddam) is based on columns supporting roofs with dimensions of 31.50 m and 16.10 m (Figure 4, p. 15). The southern riwaq consists of one slab, while the eastern riwaq and western riwaq consist of two slabs. The place of

prayer is divided into an eastern part and a western part, with the middle crossing perpendicular to the qibla wall, which is surmounted by a dome located at its southern beginning.

The design of Mosque took the shape of a rectangle approaching a square shape, which may suggest stability and permanence; in symbolic traditions, the square has often been associated with the earth. The space of the courtyard in the middle of the architectural mass created a kind of binary contrast, in which the built mass may be read as corresponding to the exoteric "Azzahir", while the courtyard the esoteric "Al-Batin". Entrance to al-Muqaddam is from the southern side through five gates, where the middle gate is wide and perpendicular to the axis of the mihrab. The Ismailis appear to have attached particular importance to doors and gates in architecture, possibly because of the importance of al-Bab "the gate" in the Da'wa belief. It represents one of the important ranks, and corresponds to the fourth mind, through which spiritual truths are transmitted to the fifth mind, which corresponds to al-Hujjat "the proof". In addition to that, the gate represents Imam Ali, as the Prophet said, "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate". The number of gates may be interpreted in relation to Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet, Fatima, Ali, Al-Hassan, and Al-Hussein), and the five obligations, and the upper limits. It corresponds to the fifth mind (al-Hujjat) in the ranks of the da'wa, which was occupied by Queen bint Ahmed, with the rank of al-Bab and deputy imam.

The prayer hall consists of three rows of columns extending from east to west. The number three may be read as corresponding to the third mind, which is the Imam. Furthermore, in each row there are ten columns, five on each side of al-Majaz al-Qatie "the Transept", which created a kind of balance around its axis. Therefore, the prayer hall is composed of fifteen columns on the eastern side, and fifteen columns on the western side. In fact, the number ten in Ismailis represents the lower borders, which represent al-Da'wa levels. However, the number five symbolizes the upper borders, and represents the fifth mind "al-Hujjat" in the ranks of al-Da'wa. The total number of columns in the prayer hall is thirty columns, a number that may be associated with the thirty days of the month and, within Ismaili cosmological thought, with the composition of the world into thirty islands in which each island has a visible Naqib "captain". The mosque has two riwaqs "aisles", one on the eastern side and the other on the western side. Each of them consists of two rows of columns, with eight columns in each row. The number eight represents the eight gates of Paradise, and the seven imams with the Mahdi. The eight columns carry seven pointed arches in each row. Therefore, the number Seven symbolizes to the seven upper letters of existence, and to the seven imams. It was confirmed by constructing the northern portico overlooking the courtyard with eight columns and seven pointed arches. However, the Fatimid da'wa, which consists of nine stages, are represented in the construction of the southern portico of nine columns that lead to Paradise and entry through its eight gates, which represented in eight pointed arches.

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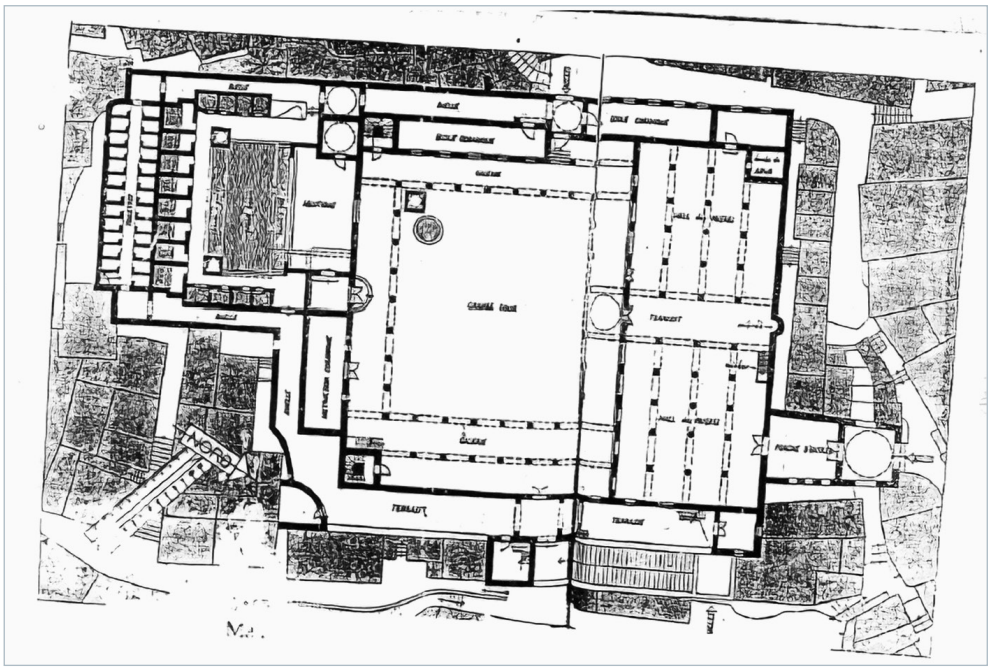


Figure 3

Plan of the Mosque and its annexes after additions.

Source: Al-Hakimi (2011).



Figure 4

View showing the Prayer Hall.

Source: photographic record of the authors.

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The Courtyard (Sahn)

In the middle of the mosque is a courtyard surrounded by arcades on all sides. It occupies an area whose length from east to west is 19.10 m, and whose width from north to south is 17.35 m (Figure 5). The courtyard ground is lower than the level of the arcades. There is a pool of water in the western corner of the courtyard, and a place of drinking water. On the other hand, the Sulayhi architect adopted homogeneous architectural proportions in designing all spaces and architectural details. For example, the height of the columns in the arcades of the courtyard from the base to the end of the capitals is 2.30 m, and the distance between each two columns is 2.30 m. In this regard, one researcher believes that the number of arches of the porticoes overlooking the courtyard is seven, which symbolizes the Saba'yah concept at Ismaili Shiites (Al-Hakimi, 2011).

The dimensions of the courtyard design are equal in terms of length and width, as well as the detailed dimensions between the columns and their heights. These proportional relationships may be interpreted as reflecting the Ismaili emphasis on both the inner "al-batin" and outer "al-zahir" and their complementary role in understanding the Sharia. The number seven in the columns of the arcades may be read in relation to the seven Natiqs, the seventh of whom is the awaited Imam who will liberate all esoteric truths at the end of time. On the other hand, the northern portico of the courtyard consists of pointed arches, the largest and widest in the middle facing the mihrab and the crossing passage, making it appear distinct and clear. As well as a decorative frieze of dentate bricks consisting of two rows surrounds the wall above the porticoes. Moreover, the skyline of the courtyard façade is crowned by a row of serrated balconies that that may evoke rows of Muslims. Above the façade of the entrance of transept are five windows, the middle is an opening, while the rest are solid (Figure 6). In addition, the number five represents the rank of al-Hujjat, a position linked in this context to Queen bint Ahmed.

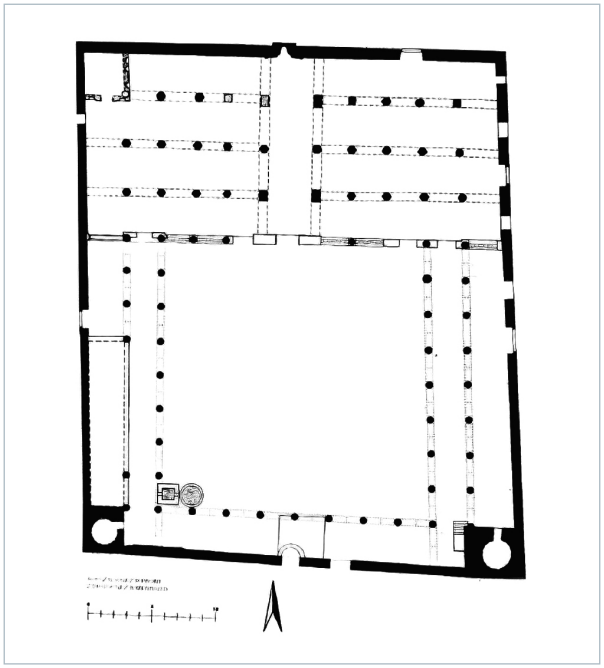


Figure 5 [left]
Plan of Mosque before adding the courtyard Riwaq.
Source: Al-Hakimi (2011).



Figure 6 [right]
The southern façade of the Prayer Place from the courtyard.
Source: photographic record of the authors.

Al-Majaz Al-Qatie (Transept)

The transept extends from the middle of the northern side of the courtyard, and ends at the mihrab (Figure 7, next page). It is running from north

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to south, and its roof was raised above the rest of the roof, possibly to distinguish this space architecturally and, within the present interpretive framework, to emphasize the idea of the Imam (Figure 8), and to achieve the belief of the Imamate, which represents an important axis in the Ismaili Da'wa. A pointed dome was built in front of it, possibly to emphasize the prominence of the axis; symbolically, it may also be read as suggesting the path toward wisdom and truth. According to the Ismailis, the Imamate does not change with the passage of time, and all the other axes of the al-Da'wa revolve around its center. Ismailis stated that, "Whoever dies and does not know the Imam of his time dies a death of pre-Islamic times". Therefore, Ismailis gave the Imam a sacred rank and a prestigious position, and made him the first manifestation, the ideal, and the representative of effective action. Al-Naysaburi said that Imam is the pole of religion and its foundation (Shaheen, 2023).

The design of al-Majaz al-Qatie, may be interpreted as reflecting the idea of the imamate and emphasizes the guardianship of al-Wasi and the imams, as they are the gate to reaching the truth and eternal survival. Within this doctrinal framework, guardianship is regarded as the highest level of obligatory duties and the highest level in al-Da'wa. For this reason, the space may have been distinguished architecturally from public places, and distinguished from the rest of the space by size, decoration, and formation. It was necessarily represented the high status architecturally in size and height of decoration. The ceiling of the crossing passageway of transept is decorated with wooden frames of splendid coffered ceilings that dating back to the fifth century AH when the mosque was built (Shiha, 1987). It is composed from a group of decorations similar to the decorations that was found in the Asnaf Mosque in Khawlan, where the eight-pointed star and the five-pointed star and the decorative formations. In this symbolic reading, the eight-pointed star symbolizes the eight gates of Paradise, the five-pointed star symbolizes the fifth mind "al-Hujjat" and the upper borders, and the plant decorative formations symbolize life and Paradise.

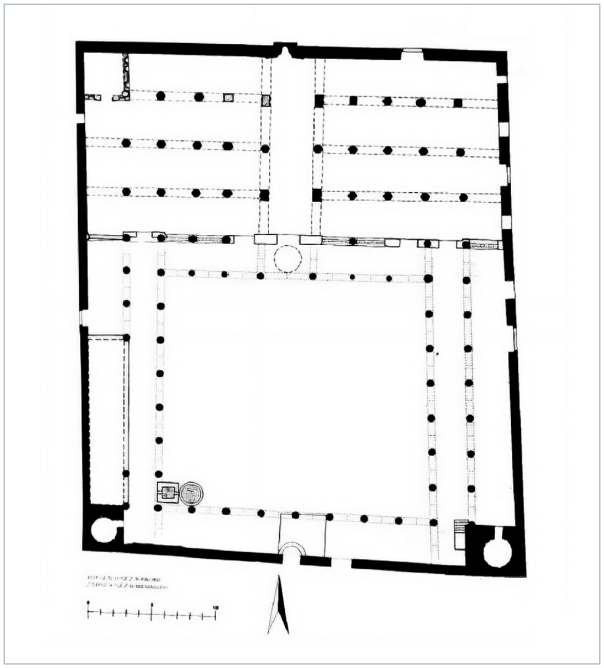




Figure 7 [left]
The Mosque after adding the northern pediment to the courtyard.
Source: Al-Hakimi (2011).

Figure 8 [right]
The Perpendicularity of al-Majaz al-Qatie with the Mihrab.
Source: photographic record of the authors.

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Al-Mihrab (The Apse)

The mihrab is a hollow apse in the middle of the northern wall. A pointed arch with a radiating decoration inside it in the shape of a conch crowns it. Its arch is carried on two combined columns decorated with five-pointed grape leaves (Figures 9 and 10, next page). Two other, larger columns crowned with three pointed arches surround the two previous columns. The pointed arches are derived from the Fatimid arch used for the first time in the mosque (Al-Komany, 2010, p. 221). From the center of the arches hangs a niche decoration, and is surrounded by a Kufic inscription "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful. Come to your Lord and be prostrate, and do not be among the heedless, and worship your Lord until He comes to you. Al-Yaqin". The lid of the mihrab and cavities are decorated with floral decorations made of grape leaves. There is an inscription "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful. Only God's mosques are maintained" (Al-Hakimi, 2011; Shiha, 1987).

The mihrab is one of the most important parts of the mosque as it determines the direction of the Qibla, and in it the imam advances to the worshipers. It may be read as a focal element associated with the imamate, and around which the rest of the obligatory prayers revolve. Since the apparent "Azzahir" is the symbol and the inner "Al-Batin" is the hidden meaning that appears to the people of proof. The permeable part may be interpreted as referring to the apparent aspect of the Sharia, and it represents al-Natiq "the Speaker". However, the solid part may be taken as an allusion to the hidden aspect of the Sharia, and it represents al-Wasi in the temporal roles of religions. The two columns of the mihrab may be suggesting the duality of the apparent and the hidden. In addition, there are two other larger integrated columns to confirm the equality of the apparent and the hidden in the Ismaili belief.

The radiating decoration that resembles a conch may evoke the light of guidance that illumines the universe, and represents those who carry the message, namely the Messenger, Imam Ali, and the Imams. The grape decorations may allude to the hidden interior and paradise. In addition, the decoration of the hanging niche represents the light and illumination that the Imam carries to the humanity (Al-Hakimi, 2011). It appeared on the façade of the Al-Aqmar Mosque in Egypt during the Fatimid rule (Gabr, 1999). On the other hand, the Quran inscription surrounding the mihrab may point to the hidden power representing the image of the apparent that carries the inner meaning of spiritual truths. Al-Ta'wil of the Basmalah according to the Ismailis is that it is nineteen letters. In the name of God, it consists of seven letters like the seven speakers, and the seven imams who take the imamate between each speaker and another. The Most Merciful, the Most Merciful, consisting of twelve letters like the preachers who spread throughout the earth (Jaafar and Al-Zubaidi, 2019).

In the Quran text, the word "KN" represents the cosmic view of existence. In addition, how creation began from two letters, to create the first creation light and illumines. The first duality of existence consists of seven letters for the words "KUNI and QDR," representing "al-Natiqs" and al-Imams. The interpretation of the text "Worship your Lord until certainty comes to you," meaning that it is the Last Day, which represents the Mahdi, the end of time, and with whose presence hidden truths will be revealed to the humanity.

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Figure 9 [left]
The Mihrab of the Mosque.
Source: Al-Komany (2010).

Figure 10 [right]
The Mihrab of the Mosque.
Source: photographic record of the authors.

The Gates

The mosque can be entered through seven entrances, including three entrances on the eastern side, an entrance on the northern side, an entrance on the western side, and two entrances on the southern side. Through one of the three entrances on the eastern façade can enter directly into the prayer hall and through another entrance into the eastern riwaq "aisle". The main entrance is in the middle of the eastern side of the mosque's façade, which is an gate within an architectural block protruding from the façade by 2.78 m and 3.10 m wide. A semi-circular arch crowns the entrance with the inscription on its lintel, "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and in Him we seek help. The mosques of God are only inhabited by those who believe in God and the Last Day," and on the fillings, "You have been blessed, so you have been blessed more. Praise be to you. Enter them in peace and security" (Shiha, 1987).

The prominent entrance to mosques, whose magnificence is highlighted and small domes are added, began in the Abdullah al-Mahdi Mosque in the city of Mahdia (Othman, 2006). The northern entrance is a prominent block topped with a conical dome. It has a door opening on the northern side crowned by a pointed arch. It contains inscriptions of the verses "Guard the prayers and the middle prayer," and "Woe to the worshipers who are negligent about their prayers". In addition, there is a prominent entrance on the western façade covered by a dome. The entrance is located on the axis of the prominent entrance on the eastern side (Al-Hakimi, 2011). Furthermore, two other entrances on the southern side are not prominent, leading to the southern riwaq (Figure 11, next page).

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Given the importance of al-Bab in Ismaili thought, the prominence of gates in the architecture may be significant. This may reflect the importance of the thought that al-Bab "the gate" is an important pole in understanding the teachings and principles of al-Da'wa. The guardian of Ali is the gate to the city of knowledge, and the imam needs al-Bab to take the teachings of Sharia from him. Furthermore, al-Bab is the fifth mind and the highest rank after the imam while Bab al-Abwab is the gate of Saḥib al-Zaman through which one enters the bearer of the knowledge. Therefore, the presence of seven entrances to the mosque may point to the importance of the number seven in Ismaili Tayyibi thought. The number seven may be read in relation to the seven speakers, the seven imams, the seven captains, and the seven upper letters of existence. In addition, the number seven may also be associated with the spiritual era of the Mahdi.

In general, the gate represents the dividing point between two spaces or places to distinguish between them, thus isolating the inner place (sacred) from the outer place (profane). In Ismaili thought, al-Bab is considered a limit to reaching the Imam and one of the ranks of al-Da'wa. The presence of the verse that begins with "the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and by Him we seek help", has a significance that indicates to separation and transition, and the beginning of entering a space different from the one that preceded it. It has been interpreted to indicate the speaking and the silent. The interpretation of phrase "the Last Day" represents the Mahdi who will appear last time, which will reveal all the hidden inner spiritual truths of all previous religious laws.



Figure 11

The south entrance of the Mosque. Source: photographic record of the authors.

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The Minarets

Researchers agree that the minaret in Yemen did not appear until a late period, especially in the Sulayhid and Ayyubid periods (Saleh, Lotfy and Morghany, 2018). The oldest minaret dates back to 480 AH, which is the western minaret of the Jiblah Mosque, which dates back to the construction of the mosque. The Yemeni minarets consist of the main structural parts that are a square base, on which rises the octagonal and cylindrical body. Above that the balcony on which al-Muezzin sits, then the choir covered by a dome (Saif, 2004). However, the decoration of the minarets is inspired from traditional Yemeni architecture in terms of the construction material as well as the method and style of decoration. The bodies of the minarets are decorated with the hollow apses and solid niches, and there are Moqarnsat that support the balcony (Al-Komany, 2010).

The eastern minaret consists of a square base surmounted by tiered balconies at the corners, and topped by a ribbed body decorated with decorative formations worked with brick. Then the muezzin's balcony sits on al-Moqarnsat, which they may be interpreted as referring to the imams and captains. Nevertheless, the western minaret is considered the oldest minaret in Yemen. It consists of a base, then an octagonal body on which rests a body of sixteen sides. In each side, there is a false solid opening inside a pointed arch, and some of them contain small window openings. Then a round body, with a small balcony that it continues to end with a small dome (Figure 12).

The placement of the two minarets at the corners on both sides of the entrance may be read as suggesting the duality of the inner "Al-Batin" and the outer "Azzahir". Together, they may be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of these two dimensions, which Ismaili tradition presents as inseparable. The minaret points to the sky, may evoke transcendence and spiritual ascension. The design of the two minarets consists of a square plan, then an octagonal plan, then a polygonal plan with sixteen sides, then a cylindrical plan, and ends with a dome. The square symbolizes the earth, the octagon symbolizes the gates of Paradise, and the dome symbolizes the sky and the speaker. The false solid opening represent the inner "Al-Batin" and the hidden imam, while the window openings represent the outer "Azzahir".



Figure 12

General view of the Great Mosque in Jiblah.

Source: Al-Shehab (2024, p. 102).

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The Shrine (Mausoleum)

The shrine of Queen bint Ahmed is considered one of the most important Yemeni shrines built during the era of the Sulayhid state (Figure 13, next page). It was built on the northwestern side of the prayer hall, with dimensions similar in length, width, and height, which are 3.20 m. The façades of the shrine were decorated with a number of niches and false apses, including four on the eastern side and two on the southern side. Each false apse has two combined columns that end with a pointed arch. It has an entrance on the southern side, and an inscription band frames "In the Name of God, Most Gracious, and Most Merciful. God has promised the believing men and believing women Paradise. Beneath it rivers flow". On the eastern façade is a solid entry in the form of false apse, in the middle of the entry there is an inscription: "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful. Indeed, upon the guardians of God shall there be no fear, nor shall they grieve". It is surrounded by two false openings on each side, and pointed arches crown them. The walls of the shrine are decorated with scriptural decorations, including "In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God", decorations of plant leaves (Figure 14, next page), and decorations of palm fans and grape leaves (Al-Hakimi, 2011).

In Tayyibi Ismaili thought, the shrine may be understood in relation to paradisiacal imagery, and the garden is considered one of the guardians. Queen bint Ahmed is described in the literature as having reached the rank of al-Hujjat, which is a rank that follows the rank of the Imam. She is equal to his crown prince, and is his deputy to the hidden Imam. Accordingly, she may have been buried in a place befitting her status as one of the guardians. The façade of the shrine was formed of blind curves or false openings that may suggest the idea of the inner "Al-Batin", and indicate hidden and concealment. When analyzing the writings, they begin with "In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God". According to the interpretation of Ismaili preachers, it may be understood as referring to the first mind (Speaker) and the second mind (Guardian) as well as indicates the spiritual and physical boundaries. Since the shrine is for a female, the verse that mentions a promise may have been selected for that reason. In the verse, there is no fear for God's guardians, considering that the owner of the shrine is one of the guardians as she is a guardian and representative of the hidden imam. In the verse "There is no god but God," which, according to the interpretation of Ismaili preachers, consists of three letters and four words to become seven, and the number of its letters is twelve, making all of them twenty-eight. Its examples from the sky are three: the sun, the moon, and the stars and the four words: heat, dryness, cold, and humidity. The seven syllables are the seven rulers and the twelve letters are the zodiac signs, so all of them become twenty-eight (Abdul Ghaffar, 1993).

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Figure 13 [left]
The shrine of Queen bint Ahmed.
Source: photographic record of the authors.

Figure 14 [right]
The shrine decorations.
Source: photographic record of the authors.

The Façades

Sulayhid architecture distinguishes with its main façade, which is dominated by the two minarets positioned at the corners of the façade. The nature of the land on which the mosque was built, which is characterized by its height, played a role in the construction of a staircase on the ascending slope that leads to the level of the prominent main entrance. The ascending approach may be read symbolically as a gradual movement through the ranks of al-Da'wa toward al-Bab (the Gate), associated in this framework with Imam Ali. Through it can enter the city of knowledge that it represents the Messenger (Mohammed). Intellectual dualism in everything, reflecting the idea of "Al-Batin" and "Azzahir" characterized Ismaili thought. It was reflected in architecture, which was characterized by balance and symmetry. The façades of religious buildings appeared balanced around a central axis perpendicular to the entrance that protrudes from the façade to give it prestige and invincibility. Furthermore, two minarets stand on the corners of the southern façade, one in the eastern corner and another in the western corner.

The arches that expand to reach their peak in the arch facing the entrance conflicting the mihrab distinguish the southern front façade of prayer hall (Figure 15, next page). The situation is repeated in the notched balconies at the top of the courtyard façade. It gives importance to the entrance and to al-Majaz al-Qatie as it refers to the imamate and guardianship. In addition to five upper openings indicate to Ahl al-Bayt and symbolize the upper borders. By increasing the height of the sanctuary, decorating it with belts and balconies, and roofing it with a dome, this made the axis dominate the façade. The courtyard is surrounded on all sides by a decorative belt of serrations, and the skyline of the façade ends with serrated balconies, which mimic rows of worshipers. The balconies are either serrated pointing towards the sky, or shaped like a three-lobed rosette, or shaped like an arrowhead pointing towards the sky. Furthermore, color played a major role in the appearance of the building, as white, which the Ismailis consider the official symbol, dominated the mosque and its façades.

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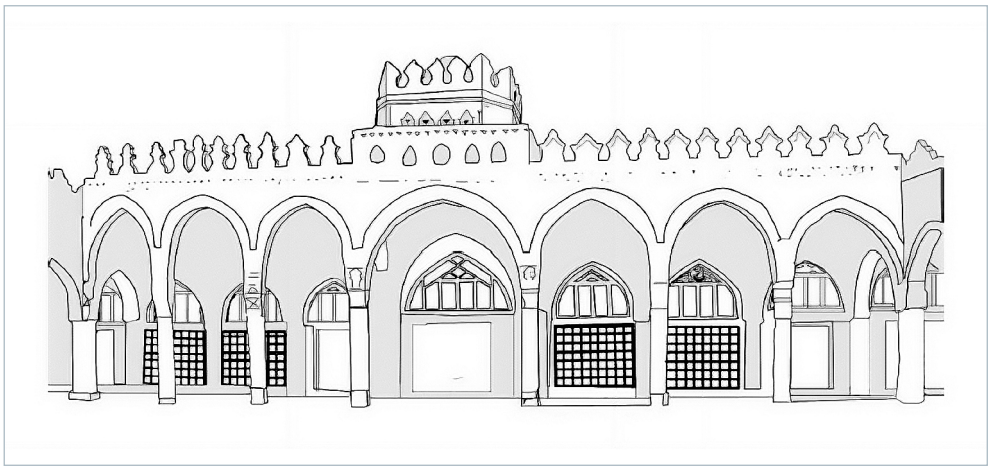


Figure 15
The southern front façade of the Courtyard.
Source: Al-Hakimi (2011).

Conclusions and recommendations

The Fatimid influences extended to Yemen since the fifth century AH, as a result of the alliance of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt with the Sulayhid leaders in Yemen. For example, luxurious and prominent gates that a dome above its roof appeared on the façades of the great mosques, and among them are the influences witnessed by the Great Mosque in Jiblah. In addition to relying on flat ceilings made of wooden frames of splendid coffered ceilings that showed a type of fine architectural art.

The research concluded a set of architectural characteristics that distinguished Sulayhid religious architecture, including the use of two types of mosque plans, the large type with a courtyard and the small type with a roofed structure. In addition, it is distinguished with using two minarets in the corners of the southern façade of the mosque, the entry of the shrine into the structure of the mosque, the raising of the passage of the mihrab slab, and the use of small domes above the entrance to al-Majaz al-Qatie. It is reliance on flat and decorated wooden ceilings, great care for the architectural façades, the presence of prominent and decorated gates, and the use of pointed arches. Furthermore, the large attention is adopted with the mihrab decorations, and serrated balconies that end the upper walls of the façade.

The study also suggests that one of the most important principles relied upon by the Ismailis is the idea of al-Ta'wil, by which the hidden inner meanings of events and things are deduced from the apparent text or apparent event. Furthermore, numerical symbolism appears to have played an important role in the extraction of inner and spiritual meanings from outward forms.

The idea of the inner "Al-Batin" and outer "Azzahir" belief appears to be one of the most important pillars of Ismaili Tayyibi thought, from which all other intellectual beliefs were formed. In fact, the interest in symbolic thought in the forms that in essence express the symbol, which was one of the foundations of esoteric thought, may also be reflected in the treatment of interior architectural façades, gates, and mihrabs.

Religious thought appears to have had a significant impact on social, political, intellectual, and cultural life, particularly through doctrinal methods associated with restricted forms of knowledge. It appears to have relied heavily on symbolic system in extracting the inner meanings of spiritual truths. The interpretation, the idea of the inner and the apparent, the proverb and the represented, may all be seen as an image of its thought. Religious beliefs may

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have been reflected in architecture in a deep symbolic way that could only be understood by those who were deeply acquainted with all the intellectual and symbolic aspects.

It is concluded that the Great Mosque in Jiblah is an architectural icon representing the Yemeni Islamic style that prevailed during that period. It was a turning point for a new phase of Yemeni Islamic architecture, with the introduction of architectural styles and elements for the first time into Yemen. In the architecture of the Great Mosque, many of these intellectual conceptions may be read through the signs and symbols of the architectural elements and formations that carried the meanings of spiritual truths.

The current research recommends quickly halting the random restoration, additions, and repairs to Islamic religious architecture in general, and the Great Mosque in Jiblah in particular, as its architectural elements lose their original archaeological features. It also recommends that researchers and those interested in cultural heritage, whether archaeologists or architects, intensify practical and field studies that help preserve buildings or historical Yemeni architectural elements ■

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