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CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

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Panel 8

A blooming caliphate: Abbasid stucco corpora reconsidered (8th-9th c.)

During the early Abbasid period (8th-9th centuries), architectural decoration is largely dominated by extensive use of carved stucco. Yet many of these stuccoes have been barely studied. Over the last few years, several individual investigations have focused on stucco corpora retrieved from key archaeological sites spanning from the Mediterranean to Central Asia, and have provided new data on hitherto unpublished materials.

By presenting some of these ongoing studies, this panel aims to explore new evidence from a broad comparative perspective. Despite their geographical distance, stuccoes originated from the Syrian-Iraqi region (Madinat al-Far, Samarra) and from the Persianate world (Isfahan, Balkh, Samarkand) share in many respects a common artistic language. Through a comparative approach, we propose to question the chronology of these corpora and the circulation of models and craftsmen across the Abbasid caliphate.

People in charge : Allegranzi Viola (Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences), Aube Sandra (CNRS, Centre de recherche sur le monde iranien, UMR 8041)

Discussant : Korn Lorenz (Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg)

Program

Haase Claus-Peter (Freie Universität Berlin)

Again the chronology of styles of early Abbasid stucco revetments in Madinat al-Far. Northern Syria and comparable material in the region, in Iraq and Northwestern Iran

The rich stucco material found during excavations in Northern Syria shows interesting comparable, as well as dissimilar styles and motifs with the famous Samarra, finds. Some of them may reveal the regional preparations for the development of styles applied in the Samarra Palaces, others copy them in less elegant versions and few resemble stucco motifs in early mosques in Iran. The sequence of these styles poses considerable dating problems which should be discussed in a wider frame.

Allegranzi Viola (Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences), Aube Sandra (CNRS, Centre de recherche sur le monde iranien, UMR 8041)

An undisclosed corpus: stucco decoration from the Abbasid Mosque in Afrasiab/Samarkand

About 1,000 fragments of carved stucco were uncovered in the Abbasid Mosque of Afrasiab, during the excavations carried out in the 1970s by Soviet archaeologists. This corpus was then deposited in the Afrasiab Museum stores and has so far remained unpublished. This paper presents the study recently undertaken on this material in the framework of the research activities of the French-Uzbek Archaeological Mission of Sogdiana (MAFOuz).

Corsi Andrea Luigi (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Stucco manufacturing in early Abbasid times: The case of the Friday Mosque of Isfahan

This paper focuses on the corpus of the stuccoes from the excavations carried out in the Friday Mosque of Isfahan by the Italian Archaeological Mission (1973-1977) and, specifically, on the specimens of the first building phase (767). While their iconographic aspects find several comparable evidence from coeval sites – revealing the occurrence of an artistic koinè –, the identification and study of the manufacturing traces and layering for the stucco installation give a more complex picture regarding the multifaceted technical procedures available to the craftsmen working on the site.

Struth Simone (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg)

A new way of looking at the Abbasid stucco material from Samarra

Based on several selected examples, this paper proposes a new way of looking at the Abbasid stucco material from Samarra – including finds from the German and Iraqi excavations. With the aid of comparative analysis related to design, technique, and function, the Samarra stuccoes can be divided into more meaningful categories relating to particular workshops, revealing the fact that a trans-regional exchange of forms took place at Samarra.