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İSAM 

Note on a Nineteenth Century Painting of the Sacred Precinct in Mecca

Bill Hickman*

Mekke'deki Mescid-i Haram'ın Ondokuzuncu Yüzyılda Yapılmış Bir Resmi Üzerine Bir Not

Özet ■ Mekke'deki Mescid-i Haram'ın Kuzey Amerika'da bulunan bir resminin, nereden geldiği ve bilinmeyen tarihi hakkındaki bu makaleye, Mescid-i Haram'ı temsil eden resimlerin tarihinin de bir özeti eklenmiş ve hem bu tarihin kronolojisi hakkında küçük düzeltmeler yapılmış, hem de daha çok araştırma gerektirecek bazı sorular ortaya atılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Osmanlı Türkiyesi'nde ondokuzuncu yüzyılda resim; Mekke'deki Mescid-i Haram'ın resimleri; New England kaptanları; Chatham, Massachusetts.

Tom Goodrich published the results of valuable research in early Ottoman cartography, showing how some Turks imagined the New World in the sixteenth century. In what follows I hope to throw faint light onto another *terra incognita*: how some New Englanders in the nineteenth century might have imagined a distant corner of the Old World.

My maternal grandparents spent their summers in a house in Chatham, Massachusetts, at the “elbow” of Cape Cod. I have many fond memories of vacations there: I tested my ability to swim, took long walks on two very different beaches and learned to row a boat (an old fashioned Cape dory). Their summer home was only a few blocks from the water and a second story balcony afforded a view across a broad inlet out to what was known as “North (or Outer) Beach.” Beyond that was the open Atlantic where at least two of my forebears had sailed a century or more earlier.

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Regular vacation trips to Chatham also included an obligatory social call on my grandfather's first cousin, Josephine Atkins, who lived nearby, and whom we all called "Aunt Josephine." In a narrow hallway of her modest Cape home hung a strange painting. It was done in rather muted colors and, in the evening hours when we mostly visited, it seemed decidedly dark. My aunt had no idea what the subject of her oil painting was or, indeed, where it had come from. The home had been in the family for generations and the painting had probably hung in that hallway for a great many years. At that time, however, I had no understanding of my family's history on the Cape and little interest in it; as a boy I was more obsessed with baseball and tennis.

Several years later, returning from a teaching stint at Robert College in Istanbul, I visited my "aunt" again. The painting still hung in the same hallway. Its subject was now entirely clear to me: the Great Mosque (*masjid-i haram*) of Mecca with its four colonnaded walls enclosing the courtyard and Ka'ba. While the Meccan *haram* was now instantly recognizable, I had never seen a portrayal of it quite like this: a rather somber, architecturally over simplified, and somehow naive portrayal of perhaps the most sacred space in the Muslim world, a structural complex—however stylized—seemingly lifted straight out of its close urban surrounding and placed on the canvas, now entirely without environment. In keeping, apparently, with pious Muslim sentiment the picture was devoid of human figures. The canvas was largely taken up by the walls of the sanctuary and the seven minarets. Faint traces of what appeared to be Arabic writing could barely be made out near several of the smaller structures within the enclosure (see the reproduction in Figure 1).¹

When my aunt died a few years later, no one else in the family had the slightest interest in the painting and I claimed it for myself. More recently, having hung in my own house, the painting continues to capture my imagination. Among many questions that have come to mind, an answer to one ("How did it reach a home in a small town on Cape Cod?") seemed fairly obvious.

Allow me to digress briefly with some family history. My grandfather's and Aunt Josephine's mothers were sisters. Emma and Lizzie Payne were the sole surviving children of John Payne, Chatham sea captain who, with his wife (Reliance Harding) and two other children, had been lost at sea on the maiden voyage of the Bark MADELIA in 1864. Too small for a long and strenuous transoceanic voyage, Emma and Lizzie had been left at home with relatives.

¹ The surface of the painting measures approximately 23-1/2" x 18". Unfortunately the writing on the painting is all but invisible in the reproduction of Figure 1. On this point see fn. 9-10 below and the detail in Figure 2.



Figure 1. Photo of “Mecca painting” belonging to Bill Hickman.

Before that last ill-fated trip to China, Capt. Payne had made many other voyages. Among the foreign ports he had visited were Smyrna/Izmir, Constantinople/Istanbul, perhaps also Alexandria.² Given the wide-ranging travels of my great great grandfather, it seems likely that John Payne brought back more than just Smyrna figs from one voyage to the Eastern reaches of the Mediterranean Sea in the middle of the 19th century.

My grandfather's other, paternal, grandfather, Elijah Crosby, had also gone to sea. He had lived a more fortunate, certainly longer life than John Payne, and he, too, had made multiple crossings of the Atlantic. In my grandfather's two homes (the other one in Brookline, Massachusetts), as well as in my aunt's home, ship paintings hung prominently, each typically showing a handsome multi-masted vessel, sails taut, sometimes against a backdrop of the foreign port which the ship had reached. These were typically painted *in situ* by artists commissioned by the vessels' captains: the paintings would then be brought home, each no doubt a source of great pride. One such painting even documented Elijah Crosby's arrival in Turkey: “The Bark SCHAMYL entering Smyrna Bay.”³

- 2 I am indebted to my cousin, Jeff Eldredge of Middleborough Massachusetts, retired mariner, fine art painter, and maritime historian par excellence, for providing details of family history (and especially our ancestors' voyages) and for helping bring alive a time and way of life otherwise unfamiliar to me; and also to my sister, Nancy Eldblom of Ojai California, family genealogist, for confirmation and correction of my own memory.
- 3 The Bark SCHAMYL, which Elijah Crosby then captained, must have been named for the Muslim leader Sheikh Shamil who, for a time, successfully resisted Czarist Russian ambitions in the Caucasus. According to my cousin, Jeff Eldredge, anti-Czarist sentiment was especially strong in New England in the years before the Crimean War—testament to a particular Yankee zeal for liberty and freedom from alien oppression.

My aunt's Mecca painting is an entirely different matter: no ship, no background port.⁴ Nor does it document any proud ship captain's safe arrival anywhere. Still, its subject is striking, as austere and mysterious perhaps for a Western viewer in the nineteenth century as for a young boy in the twentieth.

If its representation of the *masjid-i haram* seems almost disembodied—deprived of any surrounding environment—the Mecca painting is still quite conventional in its perspective. With its aerial perspective from the northeast the artist's vantage point was one that had become common at least since the early eighteenth century in portrayals originating both in the Muslim world and in Europe. My painting, although an interesting artifact, today seems devoid of artistic or art historical significance. Yet I have been unable to find another similarly spare portrayal of the same subject, and it continues to intrigue me.⁵ For whom would this painting have been done; and by whom? What story could it tell?

Rachel Milstein has noted that as more and more Muslims made the pilgrimage to Mecca, there was an “ever growing demand for the highly cherished souvenirs from the Holy Mosque.” Indeed, the Meccan economy was largely dependent on the pilgrim tourist trade.⁶ While there is nothing to document a tradition of oil painting on canvas in Arabia, by the late eighteenth century the tourist trade for visual imagery related to the holy sites had spread beyond the Arabian peninsula. Though he himself never reached Mecca, the Danish scholar Carsten Niebuhr published a drawing of the *haram* whose origin he explained as follows:

I even obtained at Kahira [Cairo] a drawing of that holy place, which I had afterwards an opportunity of correcting from another draught by a *Turkish painter*. This painter gained his livelihood by making such draughts of the Kaba and selling them to pilgrims.⁷

4 The style and artistry of my family's several ship paintings are so different from those of the Mecca painting that the painter of the latter could not have been the same artist who created any of the ship scenes. One of the best known painters of ships working in Smyrna/İzmir at that time was Raffael(e) Corsini.

5 In the Addendum I have sketched a brief survey of representations of this Arabian space.

6 Rachel Milstein, “*Kitab Shawq-Nama: An illustrated tour of Holy Arabia*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 275-345, at p. 277. For comments by some Western travellers on this trade see: Carol G. Fisher and Alan Fisher, “Illustrations of Mecca and Medina in Islamic Manuscripts,” in *Islamic Art from Michigan Collections*, eds. Carol G. Fisher and Alan Fisher (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1982), 46-7.

7 The quote, from the English translation of Niebuhr's *Travels*, ii, 33, is found in C. and A. Fisher, “Illustrations of Mecca,” 46 (emphasis added).

It has also been reported that upper class residents of Istanbul were accustomed to keeping “little pictures of the Ka'ba” in their houses.⁸

As mentioned above, traces of writing now much faded and barely legible can be made out on the surface of my painting of Mecca. These word groupings occur in close proximity to prominent architectural features in the enclosed space such as the various *maqams*, the well of *Zamzam* and the like.⁹ While many of the letters are quite well formed, others are not, and I initially concluded that these clusters of letters were only a poor imitation of the Arabic script, written by someone not fully literate in any language written in it (see Figure 2). My friend Robert Dankoff has now convinced me otherwise. However misshaped or incompletely written the letters, and however misspelled some of these Ottoman words and constructions, they can be meaningfully read: they do in fact correctly identify the structures near which they are placed--as one would expect.¹⁰

But would a Muslim painter have marred his image of this most holy space with sometimes malformed writing? Or should we imagine a non-Muslim artist, perhaps only marginally literate in the writing of the dominant culture? Might the painting then have been made for some sort of non-Muslim tourist trade? The painting, as is clear, gives only a very general and not entirely correct impression of the *haram*, even if those now faded bits of Arabic script writing seem to add an air of authenticity to the overall image.

Whether the artist was Muslim or non-Muslim, my family's Mecca painting was surely made by a resident of one of those eastern Mediterranean commercial, cultural and religious entrepôts that John Payne is known to have visited around

8 See Carney Gavin, “Introduction” to: *Imperial Self-Portrait: The Ottoman Empire as revealed in the Sultan Abdul Hamid II's Photographic Albums*, published as *Journal of Turkish Studies/Türkölük Bilgisi Araştırmaları* 12 (1998): 13-16, at p. 14, where Gavin quotes Mouradgèa d'Ohsson, on whom see fn. 15 below. If this is correct it might have fueled the demand for the work of those enterprising artists mentioned by Niebuhr. Perhaps my Mecca painting is exactly the sort of thing the Fishers had in mind when, referring to images mentioned by 19th century European travellers, they wrote “That these illustrations were taken home and copied by perhaps more talented hands seems likely, but at this point unproven;” Fisher and Fisher, “Illustrations of Mecca,” 47.

9 Such writing is frequently found on Muslim portrayals of the *haram*, identifying the various gates, free standing structures, and other prominent features of the mosque and its enclosure. See, for example, reproductions in Milstein, “*Kitab Shawq-Nama*,” especially p. 326 (figure 9).

10 The use of Arabic script to suggest an authority or authenticity, possibly lacking or in question, is found in other works of non-Muslim origin, including, most notably for our purposes, the titles given to the views of Mecca and Medina published by von Erlach, on whom see below. A spatially larger grouping of words (themselves also bigger than the others but similarly faint) appears near the top of my painting between the central and leftmost minarets. These could, awkwardly, be “read” as a title for the painting. But they resist decipherment.



Figure 2. Detail from Bill Hickman's "Mecca."

1850. The artist would have belonged to a later generation of that veritable cottage industry suggested by Niebuhr. With or without access to Mecca, any artist in the middle of the nineteenth century would have had no difficulty finding a model to copy for an eager customer.

The painting of Mecca, which hung unrecognized for decades in a modest New England home, attests to a Western—in this case specifically North American—fascination with a geographically and culturally distant world. Like other New England sea captains, John Payne brought home objects which offered entry into, and might stimulate curiosity about, that world.

Art-Historical Addendum¹¹

Most readers will be able to recall one or another of the highly schematic, highly stylized images of the Ka'ba and its enclosure, in flat projection, created by

¹¹ Wanting to provide background for my discussion of the Mecca painting I began by reviewing the history of representations of the Meccan *haram*. Relatively well studied for the early centuries, the subject becomes murky in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. To complicate matters, reproductions of key images seemed to pop up everywhere, but often poorly (or incorrectly) identified by the publishers of the books whose jackets they frequently adorned. Suspecting that most readers of this *festschrift* will not be art historians, I offer the following brief survey of the subject intending 1) to clarify sometimes puzzling issues and 2) to provide sufficient bibliographic documentation to save others from repeating my often frustrating leg work. It would be embarrassing to list here all those who responded to e-mail queries on one or another fine point. That list would include, among others, many of the authors explicitly cited in footnotes. As always, interpretations (and misinterpretations) are solely my responsibility.

indigenous Middle Eastern artists from at least the late 12th century, in (or, on) various media: ceramic tiles, manuscript (and later, printed) book pages, *rotula* certificates of the *hajj* (hand painted and block printed), textiles, rugs and other objects.¹²

Demand for a highly popular guide to the Muslim holy places is said to have become so great that one historian has even discerned multiple branches of a “Meccan school” of painters who illustrated it—a book presumably intended for more well-to-do pilgrims. For unexplained reasons this particular tradition of manuscript illustration is thought to have come to an artistic peak in the latter half of the sixteenth century and to have lost its creative impulse in the next century. From the seventeenth century onward, portrayals of the holy places are judged to be less varied, aesthetically more conventional and symbolic.¹³

Most readers will also be able to envision later, but still indigenous representations of the Meccan sacred space: now an elevated view of the mosque, almost always from the northeast, slightly off center, typically placed in a dense urban setting trailing off to a horizon marked by rounded hills, the whole more realistic than earlier portrayals but still rather stylized. By the end of the eighteenth century, portrayals of the Meccan *haram* from that “bird’s eye” perspective are found in many of the same media as earlier ones.¹⁴ Oil on canvas paintings and large scale murals showing the same subject also came into vogue at about this time.

At the end of the eighteenth century a portrayal of Mecca appeared, stunning in its panoramic sweep and wealth of detail. Later widely reproduced and much celebrated, it was published by Mouradgea d’Ohsson in his *Tableau general de l’empire othoman*. Based on an original view by “one of the best painters from

12 My characterizations here (“highly schematic, highly stylized”) are intended to apply only to images from the pre-modern period. For a mid-sixteenth century illustrated book, see Rachel Milstein, “*Kitab Shawq-Nama*.” See also Şule Aksoy and Rachel Milstein, “A Collection of Thirteenth-Century Illustrated Hajj Certificates” in Irvin Cemil Schick (ed.), *M. Uğur Derman 65 Yaş Armağanı / M. Uğur Derman 65th Birthday Festschrift* (Istanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2000), 101-34, with sumptuous reproductions.

13 For the guide referred to, see Rachel Milstein, “Futuh-i Haramayn,” in David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon, *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honour of Michael Winter* (London: Routledge, 2005), 166-94. The judgments expressed in this paragraph are intended to reflect Milstein’s views.

14 For a typical eighteenth century illustration from the popular prayer book, “*Dala’il al-Khayrat*” by al-Jazuli, see Barbara Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 46-47, and plate 35; for a boxed “Indicator of the Ka’ba,” see V. Minorsky, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures* (Dublin: Hodges, 1958), 78-80, and plate 36. For ceramic tiles see below, note 24.

Constantinople,” it was subsequently copied and embellished, at d’Ohsson’s request, for inclusion in his book.¹⁵

Clearly long before then both aesthetics and art practice had changed dramatically throughout the world of Ottoman art. As one historian of Turkish art has written, “[t]he concept of three dimensionality, the most distinctive feature of Western art, began to penetrate Ottoman miniature painting from the seventeenth century onwards.”¹⁶ Artistic portrayal of Mecca and its holy space seems to represent a special case. Change in the representations of that subject may not have occurred as early as with other subjects. Yet as the examples in the previous paragraphs make clear, change appeared there as well.¹⁷

How—and through what stages—that radical transformation in the representation of images came about in the world of Ottoman art (including eventually artistic representations of the Meccan *haram*) is less clear. Unclear also is the role of Western example in that transformation.

Because of the prohibition on non-Muslim travel to the holy precincts in Arabia, views of the Meccan *haram* appeared relatively late in the West. The late Oleg Grabar, writing ten years ago about Fischer von Erlach and his “Project for a History of Architecture...,” with its drawings of the Muslim sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina,

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- 15 D’Ohsson’s ascription of the origin of the engraving is quoted by Gavin, “Introduction,” 13. Gavin’s promised more detailed study (to appear as “a concurrent issue of *The Harvard Library Bulletin*”) did not materialize. For a more detailed discussion of D’Ohsson and his book see Günsel Renda, “Illustrating the *Tableau general*,” in Sture Theolin et al., *The Torch of the Empire: Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson and the tableau général of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 59-75. Renda hypothesizes that the unnamed painter was likely the well-known artist, Constantine Kapıdağlı. See also Elisabeth A. Fraser, “Dressing Turks in the French Manner: Mouradgea d’Ohsson’s Panorama of the Ottoman Empire,” *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010): 199-230; for the view of Mecca, see p. 213. The painting behind the Ohsson depiction is apparently the one reproduced (a small black and white photo of an otherwise unidentified painting at the Topkapı Saray Museum) by Emel Esin in *Mecca, the Blessed; Madinah, the Radiant* (London, 1963), 65. A watercolor view of Mecca by the British artist Charles Hamilton Smith, ca. 1830, is reproduced in Esin Atil et al., *Voyages & Visions: Nineteenth-Century European Images of the Middle East from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 57. Clearly copied from d’Ohsson’s engraving, its origin was apparently unknown to the book’s editors.
- 16 Günsel Renda, “Traditional Turkish Painting and the beginnings of Western trends,” in G. Renda, et al., *A History of Turkish Painting* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 50. The sixteenth century topographic views in the works of Piri Reis and Matrakçı Nasuh suggest an even earlier beginning for the appearance of three dimensionality in Ottoman art.
- 17 If portrayals of the sacred spaces constitute a special case perhaps that situation may be considered analogous to the delayed acceptability of the printing of the Qur’an which lagged behind the printing of other books in Muslim countries.

first published in Vienna in 1721, stated: “These are the two earliest renditions of the sanctuaries included in a European source. I believe they also represent the first drawings of those holy places exhibiting the very special bird’s eye view developed since the Renaissance.”¹⁸ As it turns out Grabar was wrong on both counts.

As for the first assertion (“the earliest rendering of the Meccan sanctuary to appear in any European source”), that distinction now seems to be deserved instead by the work of the Dutchman Jan Goeree, whose copper engraving showing part of the *haram* appeared in a book published four years before von Erlach’s, in Utrecht.¹⁹ Goeree’s view, according to the engraver, was in turn inspired by a painting which had reached Europe a few years earlier still. Of uncertain provenance, this oil on canvas view of the *masjid-i haram* was brought to Sweden by Michael Eneman, during his brief tenure as chaplain to the Swedish legation in Constantinople, some time before his early death in 1714.²⁰ The perspective of this painting now appears to earn for its unknown artist the credit bestowed by Grabar in his second assertion (“the first drawings of those holy places exhibiting the very special bird’s eye view”)—at least as far as the Meccan space is concerned.

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- 18 See Oleg Grabar, “A Preliminary Note on two 18th century Representations of Mekka and Medina,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 268-274, at 269. The drawing is reproduced in full (figure 1). The German title of von Erlach’s work is *Entwurf einer historischen Architektur in Abbildung unterschiedener berühmten Gebäude des Alterthums und fremder Völker*. Von Erlach reportedly copied drawings in the possession of a British ambassador, which had been acquired from an “Arab engineer.” Those drawings have never been identified and are not known to exist today.
- 19 The book was *De Religione Mohammedica* by Adriaan Reelant (Hadrianus Relandus), first published in 1705. The image of Mecca, however, did not appear until the book’s second edition (1717). The book and the image have been briefly discussed, *en passant*, in three recent articles: Anton Schweizer and Avinoam Shalem, “Translating Visions: A Japanese Lacquer Plaque of the haram of Mecca in the L. A. Mayer Memorial Museum, Jerusalem,” *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010): 148-173; David Brafman, “Picart, Bernard, Hermes, and Muhammad (Not necessarily in that order),” in Lynn Hunt et al (eds.), *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2010), 139-68; and Kishwar Rizvi, “Persian Pictures: Art, Documentation and Self-reflection in Jean Frederic Bernard and Bernard Picart’s Representations of Islam,” in *Bernard Picart*, 169-96. Goeree’s engraving (reproduced in all three articles) was copied very closely by the engraver Jean Frederic Bernard for his illustrations in Bernard Picart’s *Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1723-43), the subject of the Hunt volume.
- 20 The Eneman painting is reproduced in color and briefly discussed by Karin Ådahl in Thomas Heinemann et al. (eds.), *Uppsala University Art Collections* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2001), 256-7. I have not seen the other (earlier) discussions of the work cited in her brief bibliography. None of this, apparently, was known to Grabar.

Unlike von Erlach's sweeping panorama, Goeree's view shows only part of the *haram* area. But the common space pictured in the two images is similarly, if not identically, rendered. I find it hard not to conclude that von Erlach's engraver either closely copied the Goeree view and embellished it, or that both artists had access to an earlier but now lost view. With those engravings in the public domain, so to speak, renderings of the Meccan sanctuary quickly proliferated.²¹

To my admittedly untrained eye, however, the execution of the painting acquired by Michael Eneman sometime in the early eighteenth century seems too confident to earn a title of "first." Other candidates for that distinction still await proper study. Among them are:

(1) A painting in the Ulu Cami in Bursa. Ådahl has described this as "more plainly executed and presumably older" than the one acquired by Eneman.²²

(2) A miniature painting in another manuscript copy of al-Jazuli's *Dala'il al-Khayrat*.²³

(3) The graphic designs which presumably served as models for various ceramic tile panel representations of the Meccan *haram* which proliferate in the early-mid eighteenth century.²⁴

21 For two of these, including an image found in George Sale's English translation of the Qur'an (1734), see Brafman, "Picart, Bernard," 148-9; and see also note 26, below. Another, slightly altered view is reproduced (without explanation) by Suraiya Faroqhi in *Herrscher über Mekka: die Geschichte der Pilgerfahrt* (Munich: Artemis, 1990), 138-9.

22 Ådahl, 257. A color reproduction of the painting is found in: Zafer İhtiyar, *Bir Hüsn-i Hat Sergisi: Bursa Ulu Cami* (Istanbul: Kaynak Kitaplığı, 2005), p. 68 (#35). While İhtiyar writes that the painting probably dates to the final years of the Ottoman Empire ("Osmanlı'nın son dönemi," p. 69), the caption to the reproduction refers to the painting as very old ("çok eski"). An earthquake in 1855 severely damaged the mosque; there is apparently no record of the painting before that time.

23 For a reproduction of this work see Rachel Milstein, *Islamic Painting in the Israel Museum* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1984), plate 157, with accompanying note, p. 132. The seventeenth century dating was made, not by Milstein, but by Na'ama Brosh. Another manuscript copy of al-Jazuli's prayer book with a miniature of the prophet's mosque in Medina, likely the work of the same artist, is also attributed to the seventeenth century by Brosh, but without discussion; see plate 159 and note on p. 136.

24 An outstanding example of such tile panels is the *sabil-kuttab* of Ketkhuda Abdurrahman in Cairo. The structure is dated to 1744 though it is not known exactly when the tiles were produced, or where. Another, smaller panel is found in the Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha mosque in Istanbul, built in 1734. The tiles originated from the Tekfur Saray manufactory in Istanbul, beginning in the 1720s. For a brief discussion of this late Ottoman flowering of ceramic art see Walter B. Denny, *Iznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 220-21. For the *sabil-kuttab* panel, see: <http://picasaweb.google.com/100512912092332646310/AegeanOdysseyNovember2010#55550010013718331458> – last access on March 5, 2012 – my thanks

But primacy is an elusive chase. What matters, surely, is that a new perspective, literally, on the sacred space in Mecca found acceptance perhaps from the late seventeenth century and perhaps also from multiple hands, bringing the technique of the “bird’s eye” view in line with the work of other indigenous artists and artisans.

Finally a note on photography: black and white images of Mecca, including specifically those of the *haram*, were published in two volumes in 1889 by C. Snouck Hurgronje. Accepted as the first photographs of the Meccan sacred space, they have, from their original publication, also been considered the work of the Dutch orientalist himself. A revisionist opinion now seems to prevail: that the photographs, especially those of the sacred space, were actually taken by an Arabian doctor, resident in Mecca, who had assisted Hurgronje and who, without being named, is described by the latter as “my friend.”²⁵

Whoever the photographer of those images was, my family’s oil painting of Mecca owes its inspiration to painted or drawn, not photographed, antecedents.²⁶

to Ian Shepherd for this and other on-line sources. A cropped and slightly simplified black and white reproduction appeared in the Swiss edition of Richard F. Burton’s *A Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*, 437. An even more cropped version appeared in M.N. Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience, 1500–1800* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996), 1. Neither has satisfactory explanation of provenance. A curiously reversed—but not quite mirror image of the same view—was reproduced by Albert Gayet: *L’Art arabe* (Paris, 1893), 20 (figure 5) where it is described, improbably, as “Miniature du xve siècle.”

- 25 The two books are: *Bilder aus Mekka* and *Bilderatlas*, published as companion volumes to his *Mekka*. The contrary notion was apparently first put forward by Carney Gavin and F. H. S. Allen. For a brief summation, see Gavin’s “Mecca and Medina in Early Photo Documents,” in F.E. Peters, *Mecca: A Literary History of the Muslim Holy Land* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), xiii. I have not been able to find any earlier publication, or better documented statement, of their argument. The name of the photographer (“Al-seyyid ‘Abd al-Gaffar, doctor in Mecca”) had been erased from the original photographic plates before their publication. Gavin does not mention that Hurgronje had himself taken that very same Muslim name following his conversion to Islam. See now also, Jan Just Witkam, “Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje: A tour d’horizon of his life and work,” in Arnoud Vrolijk and Hans van de Velde (eds.) *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936): Orientalist* (Leiden: Leiden University Library, 2007), 11–31.
- 26 Goeree’s engraving seems to be the source of the illustration, identified only as a “nineteenth century drawing,” found on page 10 of Phil Cousineau’s *The Art of Pilgrimage: The seeker’s guide to making travel sacred* (Berkeley: Conari Press, 1998), an illustration which instantly reminded me of my own painting when I first saw it.

A PAINTING OF THE SACRED PRECINCT IN MECCA

Note on a Nineteenth Century Painting of the Sacred Precinct in Mecca

Abstract ■ A painting of the great mosque (Masjid-i Haram) in Mecca prompts speculation as to its obscure origins and history, to which is appended a review of the history of representations of that space, including suggested minor revision of that chronology and some questions for further research.

Keywords: Nineteenth century painting in Ottoman Turkey, representations of the Meccan sacred precinct (masjid-i haram), New England ship captains, Chatham, Massachusetts.