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## The Development of al-Haram al-Sharif during Ottoman Rule

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The history of building in Jerusalem's Noble Sanctuary (al-Haram al-Sharif) after the Umayyad transformation of the site is a complex one. Various shrines and commemorative structures are known from early historical sources but few of them have survived. Apart from the Umayyad Dome of the Rock, Dome of the Chain and Aqsa Mosque and, from the Abbasid and Fatimid periods, two new stairways leading to the upper terrace and the arcades added at the head of all the stairways, the earliest surviving buildings are Ayyubid, usually incorporating large quantities of crusader material. The Mamluks concentrated their activities almost exclusively on the north and west Haram borders, almost as if they wanted to leave the sacred precinct untouched with nothing to detract from the awe-inspiring impact of the major monuments.

When the Ottomans entered Jerusalem in 922/1516 they found the Haram al-Sharif in good condition. They must have marvelled at the intensive Mamluk development on the north and west borders that remain impressive to this day. Admittedly, the outer decoration of the Dome of the Rock was poorly preserved, having been left to deteriorate in the winter rains since the mosaics had last been repaired in 695/1295–96, presumably because of the high cost of repairing the mosaics and the lack of skilled craftsmen to do the work. The east and south Haram walls, coterminous with the city wall, while better preserved than the remainder of that wall, also required repairs. As is well known, the exterior mosaics of the Dome of the Rock were replaced with faience tiles and the city wall was rebuilt in the reign of Sulayman the Magnificent (926-974/1520–1566) (Photo 2-3).

Little else was done by the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman in the Haram.

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Early in his long reign the main aqueduct supplying water to Jerusalem was repaired and two water fountains (*sabils*) were added near the entrance gates where none previously existed to provide the faithful with water for drinking and for ablution on entering the sacred precinct. Both are sunk below the level of the Haram esplanade (Photo 4-6), apparently to gain access to running water in the north branch of the aqueduct in the Haram. The Ottomans generally followed the Hanafi doctrine of Islam, which prefers running water for ablution.

Later, especially from the 11/17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, additional water fountains, various prayer niches (*mihhrabs*), prayer platforms (*mastabas*) and other structures were added on the Haram esplanade (Photo 7).

I intend to focus not on this lower esplanade but on the upper terrace, built around the Dome of the Rock, where the Ottomans located the majority of their buildings in the precinct. This upper terrace has received little scholarly attention, but our research reveals a long history, more complex than previously thought. Let us review that history before considering the Ottoman contribution to it.

#### **Pre-Islamic**

nothing survives of the temples of Solomon and of Herod except for parts of the enclosing wall, dating from the time of Herod's enlargement of the precinct to its present area, nor of Roman structures erected in the precinct following the destruction of Herod's temple and much of its enclosing walls. The Byzantines neglected the precinct

#### **Umayyad**

Dome of the Rock;  
upper terrace with stairs leading up to it;  
Dome of the Chain (Figure 1)

#### **Abbasid and Fatimid**

two new staircases added (at the north end of the west side and at the south side) and new arcades at the head of all stairs to upper terrace

#### **Crusader**

cloister of the Augustinian canons somewhere on the north side of the upper terrace, of which nothing survives in place

**Ayyubid**

Dome of the Ascension;  
 Dome of the Balance;  
 “Grammar School”  
 westward extension of upper terrace  
 including various water installations (Figure 2);

**Mamluk**

Two new arcades on the north side and one on the south end of the west side  
 “Summer Pulpit” (by Qadi Burhan al-Din)

The whole Haram, including the upper terrace, seems to have been treated as sacrosanct by the Mamluks, who, apart from improvements to the water supply—a constant concern—undertook only repairs or minor alterations to the buildings there. However, an exception was Sultan Qa’itbay, whose madrasa was built right at the end of the Mamluk period projecting into the Haram from the west border, the only building to do so (Photo 8).

Whether or not this was seen as a precedent, the Ottomans began more than 50 years later in 956/1538–39 to build within the Haram on a scale not seen since the Ayyubid period (Photo 9). What they built were small structures called variously *khalwa*, *oda*, or *hujra*: places of retreat. The form is always the same: a vaulted substructure built on the Haram esplanade to provide support for one or two domed chambers entered from the upper terrace, initially at the north retaining wall of the upper terrace but later at the west wall and, in the unique example of the Ahmadiyya Madrasa (1013/1604), at the east wall. The domed chambers were architecturally embellished, often with a two- or three-bayed portico facing the Dome of the Rock. These upper domed chambers were established as places for teaching Islam, including Qur’an recitation, while the lower floor, with its own separate entrance and no direct connection with the upper level, was often reserved as living accommodation, sometimes with a small garden attached, which the resident was permitted to cultivate and use.

The founders of these places of retreat were local dignitaries, often governors (*amir liwa*) of the district of Jerusalem. Several were family affairs, with a son building at the request of his father (Hujrat Muhammad Agha,

996/1588), or both father and son building on adjacent plots (Khalwat Parwiz Katkhuda and Khalwat Qitas Beg, 967/1559-60) (Photo 10). One individual in particular stands out as a major patron of building within the Haram: Ahmad Pasha, governor (*sanjak-beg*) of Gaza district, a post held by members of his family over several generations. He commissioned four buildings on the upper terrace, three *khalwas* built between 1007/1598 and 1010/1602, and the so-called Ahmadiyya Madrasa (1013/1604). According to Muhibbi he was “a friend of scholars and poets.” He seems to have been financially independent, having ordered the restoration of the caravanserai at Khan Yunis at his own expense in his capacity as amir of the Syrian *hajj*. His buildings on the upper terrace are more elaborately decorated than almost any of the others and it has been suggested that they are the work of a well-known local architect, Abd al-Muhsin b. Mahmud b. Nammar. This family produced at least five generations of architects and thirteen of the seventeen holders of the post of *mimarbaşı* (Chief Architect) in the tenth and eleventh/sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Jerusalem (Photo 11).

Besides these places of retreat, a variety of structures were erected on the upper terrace. One founded by another governor of Jerusalem, the Muhammadiyya Zawiya (1112/1700–01) (Photo 12), is remarkable in that it is quite a large but plain, freestanding building. It is exceptional in that it is the only freestanding building except for the Dome of the Rock, the Dome of the Chain, the Ayyubid Dome of the Ascension and three small Ottoman domes. These small, freestanding Ottoman domes are a prominent feature of the upper terrace, Qubbat al-Arwah (the Dome of Souls) (Photo 13), Qubbat al-Khidr (the Dome of al-Khidr) (Photo 14) and Qubbat al-Nabi (the Dome of the Prophet) (Photo 15), all basically similar in form and all as yet undated.

It must be confessed that even the best of the Ottoman buildings on the Haram, in terms of architectural quality, are well below the standard of the surrounding Mamluk architecture. The scale is modest; the decoration tends to be fussy and tentative, salvaged material is reused in a cavalier fashion that often diminishes its architectural effect, and the quality of the actual construction can be indifferent. The materials used were similar: local stone including coloured stone used to produce polychrome *ablaq*, marble salvaged from earlier structures or possibly imported directly from Istanbul in the form of ready-made *muqarnas* column capitals, mortar made with quicklime and sand, often with the addition of ash (*qusurmil*) from the

bathroom furnaces used as pozzolanic additive to ensure a rapid set for plaster floors or for waterproofing domes. The roughly-pecked tooling of some wall surfaces was intended to allow a mortar render to adhere better to the surface, but the render has eroded away in the wet winter climate. Some idea of the appearance of these rendered façades may be gained from old photographs showing, for example, the Haram colonnades faced with render and decorated with painted patterns applied during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz (Photo 16).

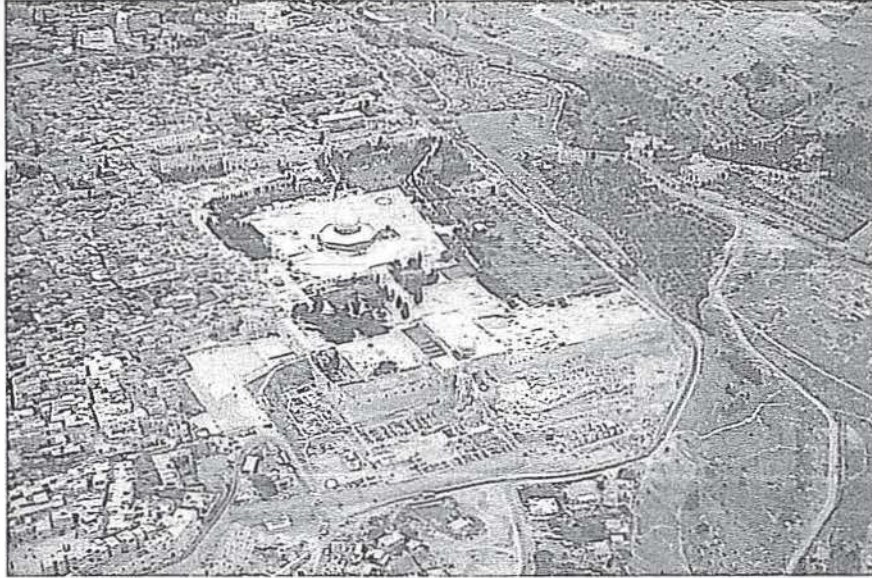
There are a number of issues concerning these Ottoman structures on and around the upper terrace that remain to be resolved, including the dates of construction of some of the retreats, notably on the west side, and of the domes on the upper terrace. Yusuf Natsheh has made a huge effort in studying Ottoman architecture in Jerusalem and has addressed the problems in a convincing matter-of-fact way. Doubtless further research in the *sijills* of the Ottoman court archives, augmented with additional architectural analysis—and reference to early photographs—will lead to a better understanding of these fascinating small structures. For instance, the photograph by Auguste Salzmann of 1857 shows the baroque dome on the Sabil Shaʿlan, but Maxine du Camp's 1851 photograph shows a plain rubble dome (Photo 17).

Another area that seems to me to merit further study is the upper terrace itself. I think we now know the general history: built by the Umayyads and extended westward by the Ayyubids. The supporting walls of the Umayyad platform were buttressed on the south, east and north sides, but what was the now hidden west side like? If we look closely at the Muhammadiyya Zawiya (Figure 3), we see that it straddles the line of the west edge of the Umayyad upper terrace. In its basement, roughly where that west edge will have been, is a rock outcrop with, at its south end, a mihrab made up of reused crusader architectural fragments, suggesting a post-crusader date. I believe this basement enclosing the rock is part of al-Muʿazzam Isa's western extension. When the upper terrace was built in the Umayyad period the rock appears to have been left exposed, presumably the rock referred to in the sources as *bakbakh*, "wonderful".

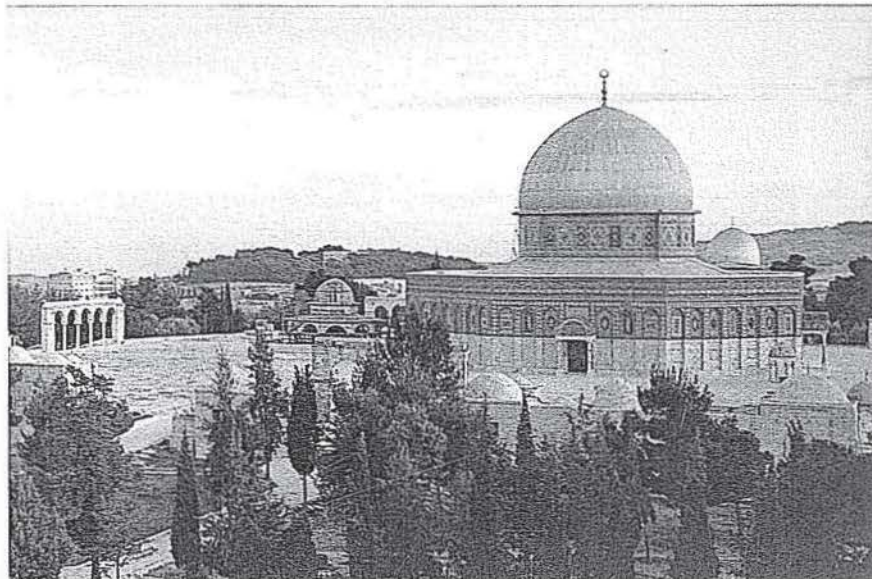
Finally, although Jerusalem was a political backwater, a small provincial town of little commercial importance at least until the very end of the Ottoman period—as indicated by the modest nature of the Ottoman development on the Haram, in complete contrast to the spectacular Ottoman monuments of

Istanbul—Jerusalem’s religious significance remained vitally important, as the provision of places of retreat, learning and Qur’an reading shows. The conscientious conservation —and embellishment— of the Haram over the centuries, including the Ottoman centuries, has preserved the third holiest site of Islam in excellent condition, just as the Old City itself, consisting largely of Ottoman buildings, survives remarkably intact except for the wholesale reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter. Robert Hillenbrand has observed that Jerusalem has managed to retain—against all the odds—its physical integrity. It simply works as a traditional Middle-Eastern city long accustomed to welcoming visitors and pilgrims (Photo 18).





*Photo 1* al-Haram al-Sharif

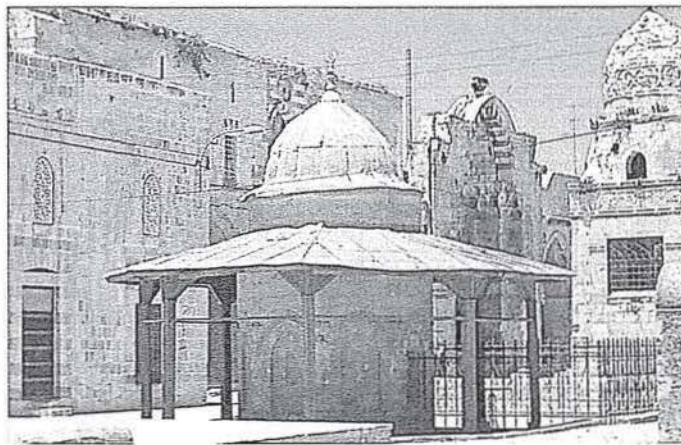


*Photo 2* Dome of the Rock from the north

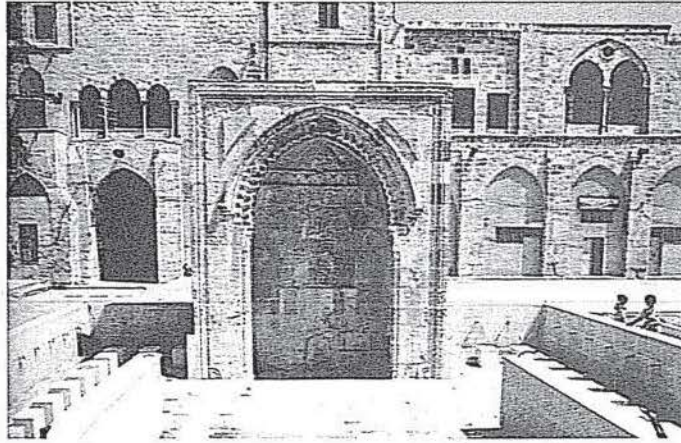




*Photo 3* Stork Tower (Burj al-Laqlaq) at the northeast corner of the city wall



*Photo 4* Sabil Qasim Pasha (933/1527)



*Photo 5 Sabil Bab al-'Atm (943/1537)*



*Photo 6 Aqueduct leading to the northern part the Haram exposed during pavement repairs*





Photo 7

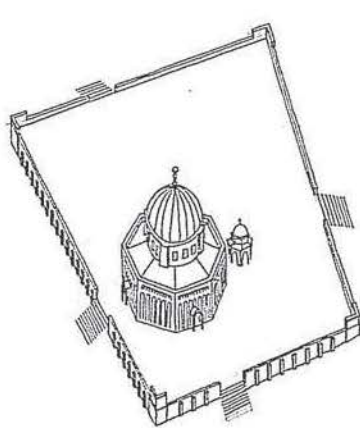


Figure 1 The upper terrace as it may have appeared in Umayyad times

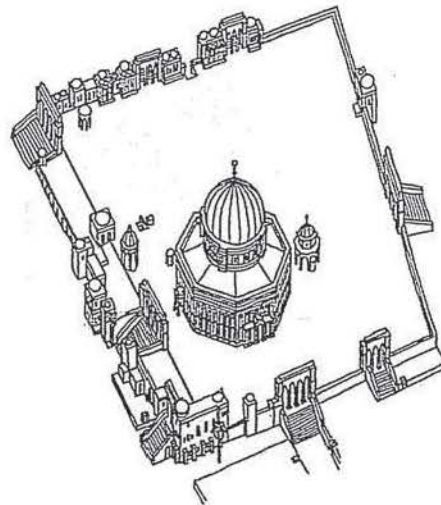
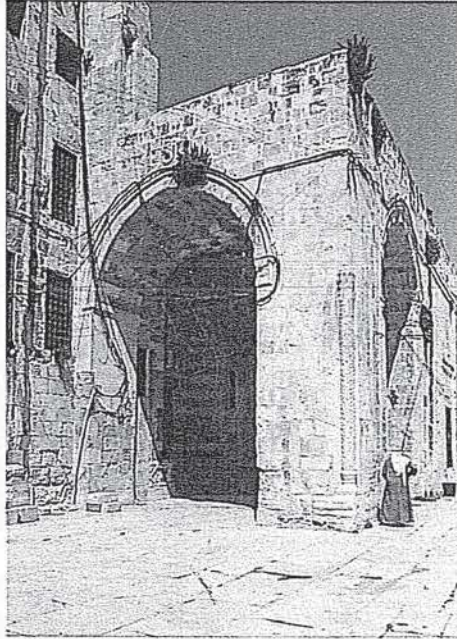


Figure 2 The upper terrace as it is today with the line in red marking the junction between the Umayyad upper terrace and the Ayyubid extension

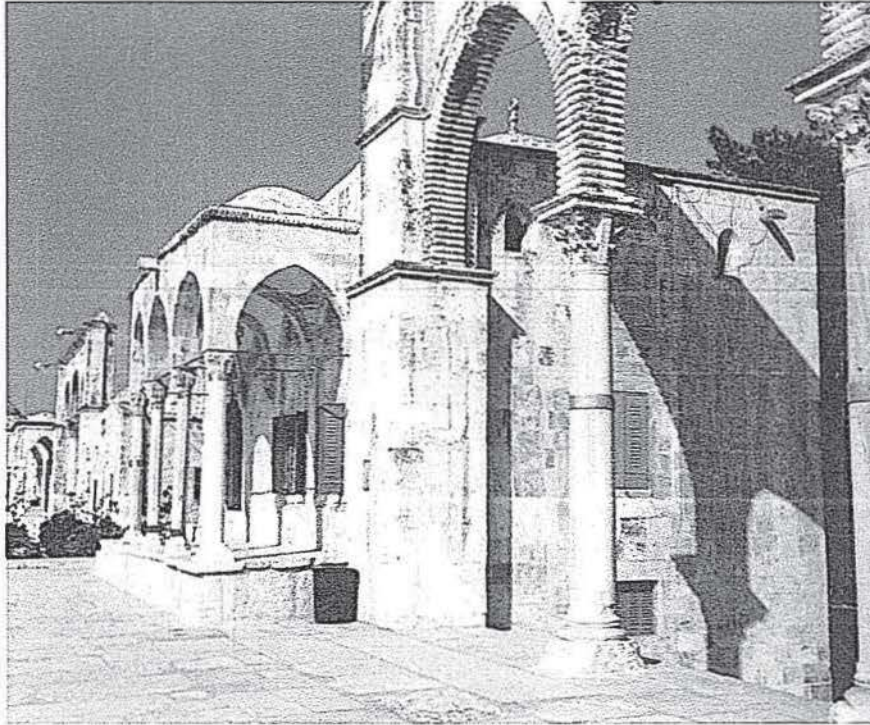


*Photo 8* Madrasa of Qa'itbay projecting from the west border of the Haram

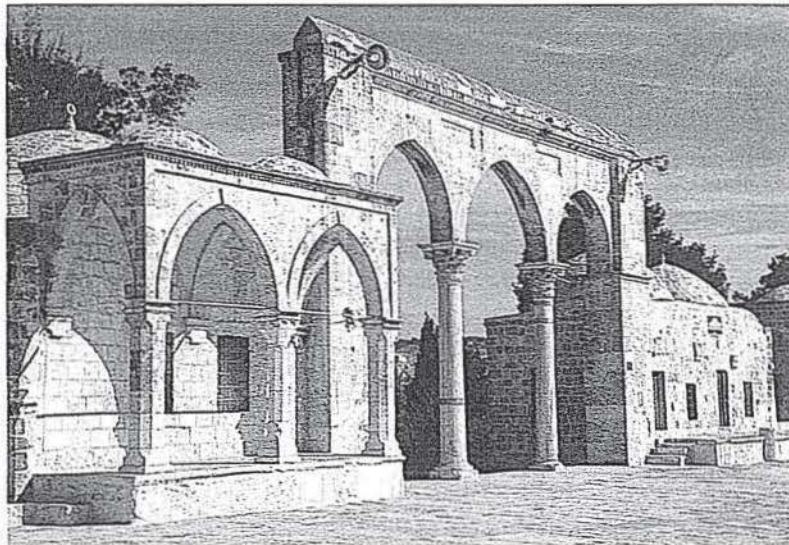


*Photo 9* Hujrat Islam Beg (1002/1593-94)

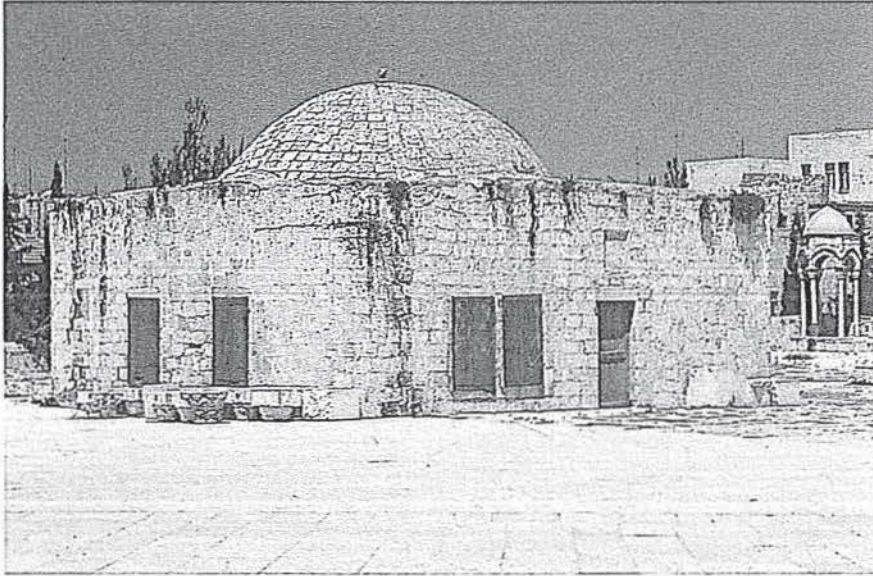




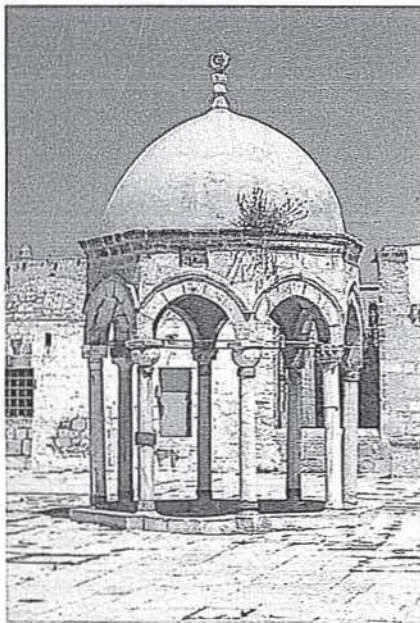
*Photo 10 Northwest khalwa of Ahmad Pasha (ca.1007/1598)*



*Photo 11 Hujrat Muhammad Agha (996/1588) Hujrat  
Muhammad Amir Liwa al-Quds (956/1549?)*



*Photo 12* Muhammadiyya Zawiya



*Photo 13* Qubbat al-Arwah



*Photo 14* Qubbat al-Khidr



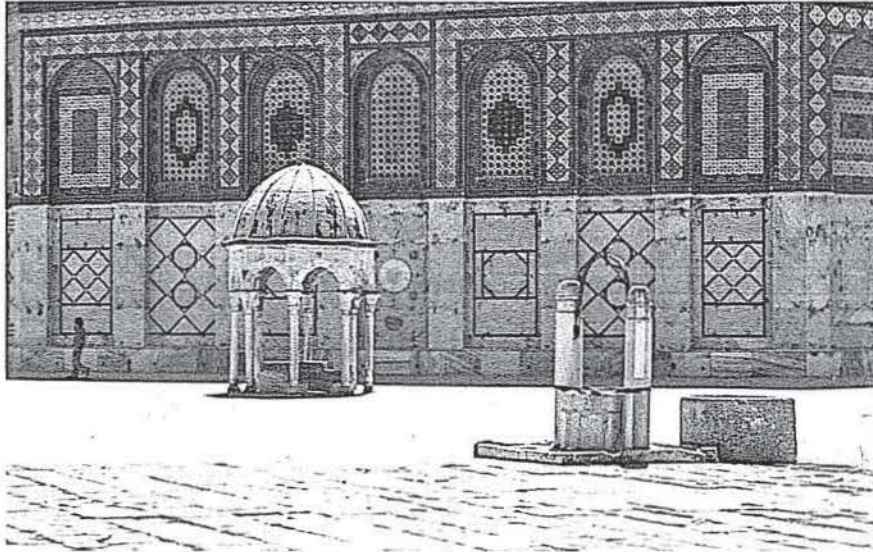


Photo 15 Qubbat al-Nabi

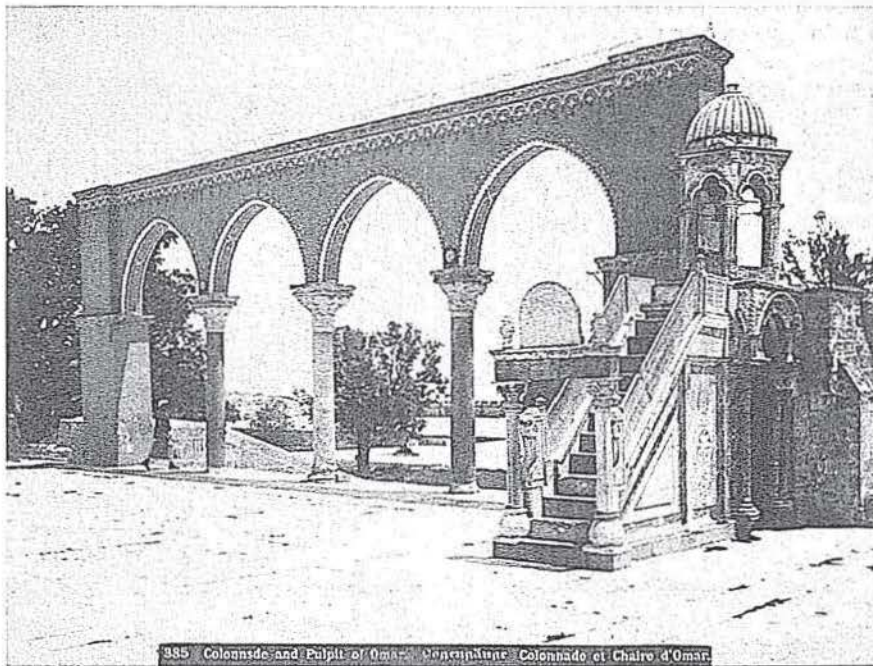


Photo 16 Haram colonnades faced with render and decorated with painted patterns applied during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz.

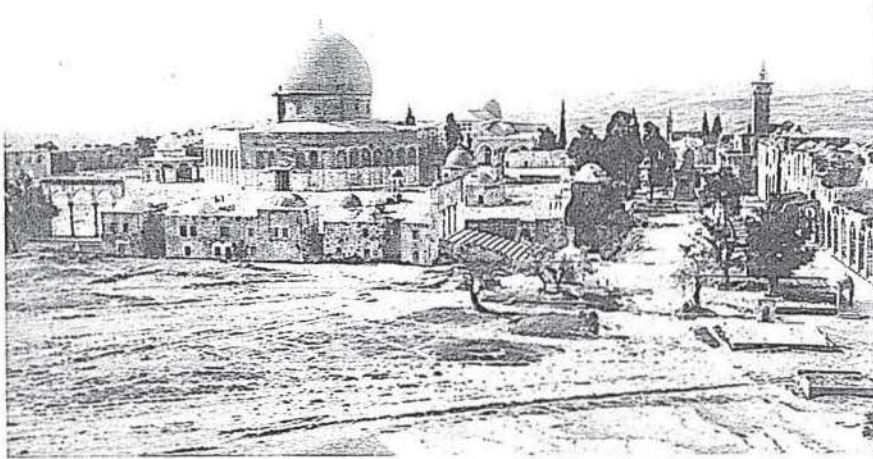


Photo 17 This photograph by Auguste Salzmänn of 1857 shows the baroque dome on the Sabil Sha'lan.

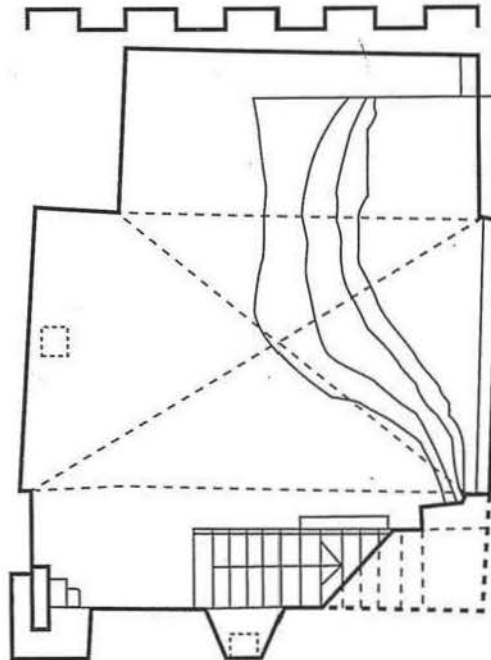


Figure 3 Muhammadīyya basement plan  
(after Yusuf Natsheh, *Ottoman Jerusalem*, London 2000)



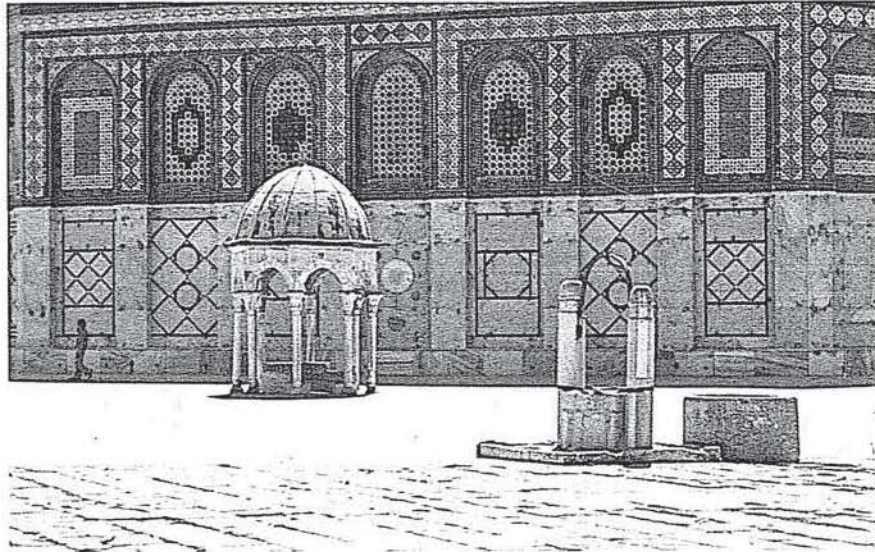


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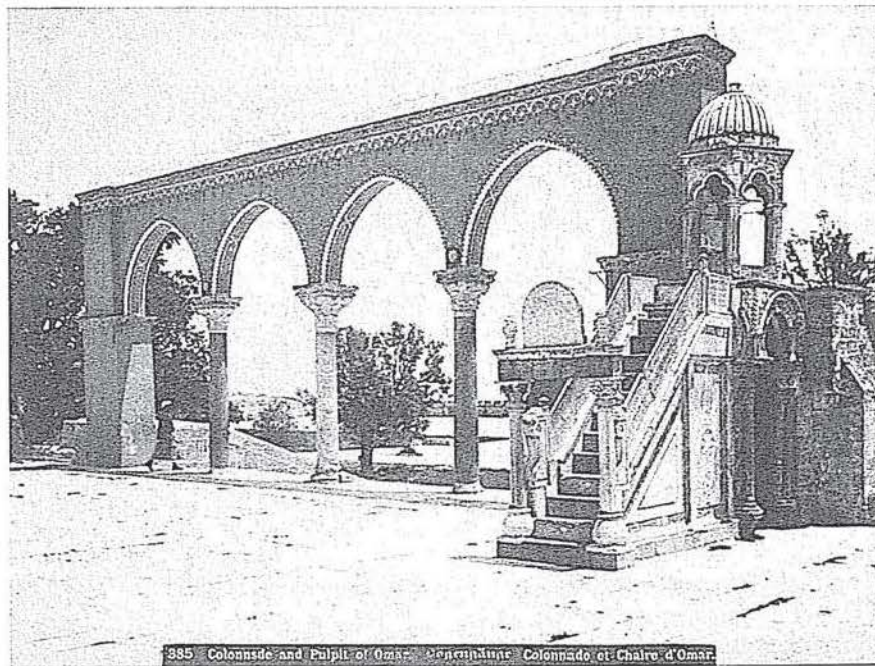


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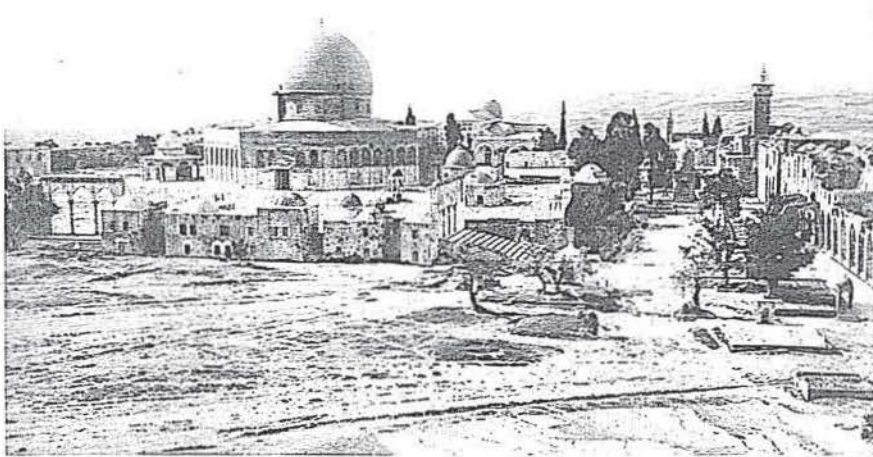


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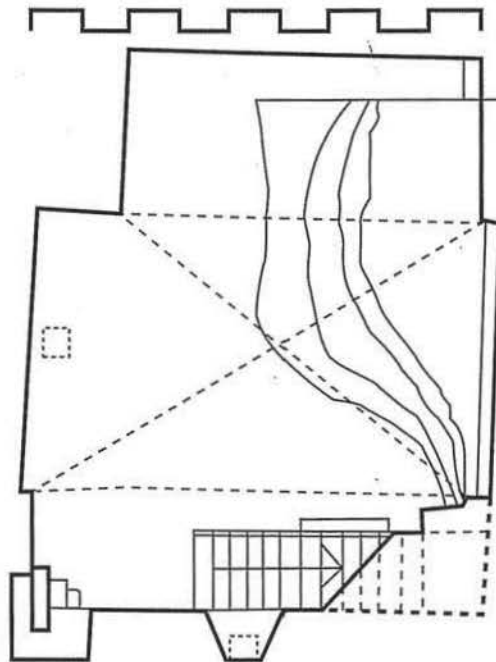


Figure 3 Muhammadiyya basement plan  
(after Yusuf Natsheh, *Ottoman Jerusalem*, London 2000)





*Photo 18* Friday morning vegetable sellers inside Bab al-Sahira (Herod's Gate)