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# Reflections on Surat Ya Sin's Tile Inscription: The Importance of 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II 's Renovation of the Dome of the Rock

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Jerusalem – Palestine

2017/1439

## Dedication

To my Parents and my children

To Jerusalem

To the Palestinians living in Jerusalem

To each Arab and Palestinian who loves and misses Jerusalem

**Declaration:**

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master, is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this study (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:

Zahra Hazem Mahmoud  Khalidi

Date: 20/12/2017

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and

Members of the discussion committee

## Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to study the tiles on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock which are inscribed with Surat Ya Sin and the political or other circumstances that led 'Abd al-Hamid II to make a major renovation of these tiles in 1876. It is important to study these renovations in order to document the features of the various tiles currently within the Islamic Museum on the Noble Sanctuary and to refute the Western inclination of historiography claiming that the last few centuries of Islamic rule in Jerusalem represented a persistent slide into neglect and deterioration until the intervention of the European forces in the region. Quite the contrary, the thesis includes information about the continuous and methodological care committed by each and every dynasty to upkeep and renovate the Islamic monuments in Jerusalem and also of course in Mecca and Medina. At times due to the presiding political circumstances these renovations were expedited or they were postponed until the situation became more convenient. However, the Ottomans were active in this respect throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Dome of the Rock is conceived as one of the most significant innovations of Islamic architecture in the world. In addition to its religious significance and sacredness, it is the most ancient remaining Islamic monument. It also represents a reserve of proof, researchers can recourse to in order to discover more about the epochs in which it was constructed or renovated. Oleg Grabar notes that an outstanding distinctive feature of the Dome of the Rock was the conservation of its basic form during innumerable restorations, while only its surfaces were altered and modified to new settings. It is highly esteemed due to the beauty of its adornments which carry the traces chiefly of Islamic and other civilizations over its numerous consecutive eras.

According to Grabar the Dome of the Rock thus lures and attracts the curiosity of both scholars and tourists, in addition to pilgrims from all over the world. This is due to the religious status of the Dome of the Rock which attracted Muslims to visit this holy place and for researchers, due to the harmony of its architectural and decorative features, to the point that it is considered the embodiment of architectural accomplishment.

This splendid structure was built by ʿAbd al- Malik b. Marwān (reigned 684-705). He began building it in 68 H / 688 and it was completed in 72 H / 692. The two supervisors who oversaw the building process were a Palestinian from Baysān Raḏjaʾ b. Ḥaywa al-Kindi and Yazid b. Sallam, who was an experienced Christian architect from Jerusalem and he was contracted (along with his two sons) to be the responsible supervisor within the project. Additionally, his role may have been as liaison with the local community. Radja' b. Ḥaywa al-Kindi on the other hand was a scholar, political counsellor and often acted as an envoy for ʿAbd al-Malik. He was a renowned expert on Palestine and the Holy places. Raḏjaʾ was a prominent Islamic jurist and Arabic calligrapher who is possibly most famous as the artist who made the detailed inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock.

The stunning beauty of the exterior tiled walls arrived in 1545. The renovation was commissioned by Sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent. The renovations to the building remained continuous over the centuries of Islamic rule within the city and are discussed within the chapter detailing the historical background of these renovations, as each dynasty or caliphate sought to leave its mark upon this holy site.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd II used pan-Islamism to solidify his internal rule and to rally Muslim opinion outside the empire, thus creating difficulties for European imperial powers in their Muslim colonies. One of his tools of pan-Islamism was to use the inscription of Surat Ya Sin (which is called the "heart of the Qur'an" by Islamic scholars) on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock as a method for the promulgation and consolidation of Islamic control of Jerusalem, especially, and the whole of the Ottoman Empire in the face of growing European attempts at gaining a stronger foothold within the Holy city during the *Tanzimat* period under the pretense of the necessity for its "Modernization". Additionally, Herzl and the newly established Zionist bodies continuously pressured 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II politically at times and offered financial bribes at others, in order to make him concede to giving Palestine to the Jews so they could establish a state there, as part and parcel of the European efforts to gain a grip upon affairs within the area**.**

Currently it is of utmost importance to both follow up the upkeep of renovations, and at the very least, to document what has previously been achieved in order to protect our heritage. This is due to the fact that the whole area of al-Aqsa Mosque is being continuously violated by the Israeli occupying forces, Israeli settlers and members of extremist Zionist organizations. The obvious recommendation that first comes to mind is that the tiles from the various periods and renovations be housed in a building and that they be electronically documented and categorized for further reference and in case of future calamities. Another recommendation could be to also study the available historical pictures by early photographers such as Bonfils and others which could assist in categorizing the tiles and restorations of, at least the last century and a half.

**تأملات حول نقش سورة ياسين القاشاني: أهمية ترميم عبد الحميد الثاني لقبة الصخرة**

**إعداد: زهرة حازم محمود الخالدي**

**إشراف: د. نظمي الجعبة**

**ملخص**

الهدف من هذه الرسالة هو دراسة البلاط الموجود على المثمن الخارجي لقبة الصخرة الذي نقش عليه سورة ياسين والظروف السياسية أو غيرها من الظروف التي قادت السلطان عبد الحميد الثاني إلى إجراء عملية ترميم رئيسة لهذا البلاط عام 1876. من المهم دراسة هذه التجديدات من أجل توثيق ملامح البلاط المختلفة الموجودة حالياً في المتحف الإسلامي في الحرم الشريف، ودحض النزعة الغربية للتأريخ التي تزعم أن القرون القليلة الأخيرة من الحكم الإسلامي في القدس كانت تنزلق فيها الأمور نحو الإهمال والتدهور حتى تدخل القوات الأوروبية "المنقذة" في المنطقة. بل على العكس تماماً، تتضمن الرسالة معلومات عن الرعاية المستمرة والمنهجية التي قامت بها كل أسرة أو سلالة إسلامية من أجل صيانة وترميم الآثار الإسلامية في القدس، وكذلك بالطبع في مكة والمدينة. في بعض الأحيان وبسبب الظروف السياسية، تم تسريع هذه التجديدات أو تم تأجيلها حتى أصبح الوضع أكثر ملاءمة. ومع ذلك، كان العثمانيون نشطاء في هذا الصدد طوال القرنين الثامن عشر والتاسع عشر.

تعتبر قبة الصخرة إحدى أهم الابتكارات المعمارية الإسلامية في العالم. فبالإضافة إلى أهميتها الدينية وقدسيتها، فهي أقدم نصب إسلامي مازال قائما بدون تغيرات جوهرية. كما أنها تمثل مخزون من الدلائل ، يمكن للباحثين اللجوء إليه، من أجل اكتشاف المزيد حول العهود التي شيدت أو تم تجديدها فيها. ويشير أوليغ غرابار إلى أن إحدى السمات المميزة البارزة لقبة الصخرة هي حفاظها على شكلها الأساسي بالرغم من عمليات الترميم التي لا حصر لها، حيث تم تغيير واجهاتها فقط وتعديلها إلى إعدادات جديدة. وهي تحظى بتقدير كبير بسبب جمال زخارفها التي تحمل آثارا إسلامية علاوة على تأثيرات حضارية أخرى من العصور العديدة المتتالية.

ووفقا لغرابار، فإن قبة الصخرة تغري وتجذب فضول كل من العلماء والسائحين، بالإضافة إلى الحجاج من جميع أنحاء العالم. ويرجع ذلك إلى المكانة الدينية لقبة الصخرة التي جذبت المسلمين لزيارة هذا المكان المقدس والباحثين، وذلك بسبب تناسق معالمها المعمارية والزخرفية، لدرجة أنها تعتبر تجسيدا للإنجاز والجمال المعماري عالميا.

بدأ عبد الملك بن مروان (حكم في الفترة 684–705م.) ببناء قبة الصخرة في 68 هـ/688 واكتملت في 72 هـ/692 م. كان المشرفين اللذين أشرفا على عملية البناء فلسطينيين هما رجاء بن حيوه الكندي وهو من بيسان، ويزيد بن سلام، وهو من القدس، تم التعاقد معه (ومع ولديه) ليكون المشرف المسؤول في المشروع. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، من الممكن أن دوره كان ايضا هو الاتصال مع المجتمع المحلي. أما رجاء بن حيوه الكندي، فكان باحثاً ومستشاراً سياسياً، وكثيراً ما عمل مبعوثاً لعبد الملك، وكان خبيرا مشهورا في فلسطين والأماكن المقدسة، وعالِمًا إسلاميًا وخطاطًا بارزًا، وربما كان أشهر الفنانين الذين وضعوا النقوش التفصيلية على قبة الصخرة.

وصل الجمال المذهل للجدران الخارجية المكسوة بالبلاط في عام 1545. وقد تم التجديد من قبل السلطان سليمان القانوني. وبقيت أعمال التجديد للمبنى مستمرة على مدى قرون من الحكم الإسلامي داخل المدينة، ولقد تمت مناقشة هذه الاعمال في الفصل الذي يتناول بالتفصيل الخلفية التاريخية لهذه التجديدات، حيث سعت كل أسرة أو خلافة إلى ترك أثرها على هذا الموقع المقدس.

استخدم عبد الحميد الثاني مفاهيم الأمة الإسلامية لترسيخ حكمه الداخلي ولحشد رأي المسلمين خارج الإمبراطورية، مما خلق صعوبات أمام القوى الاستعمارية الأوروبية في مستعمراتهم الإسلامية. واستخدام نقش سورة ياسين (التي تدعى "قلب القرآن" من قبل علماء الإسلام) على المثمن الخارجي لقبة الصخرة كطريقة للترويج الإسلامي وتوطيد السيطرة الإسلامية على القدس خاصة، والإمبراطورية العثمانية بأكملها في مواجهة محاولات أوروبية متنامية في الحصول على موطئ قدم أقوى داخل المدينة المقدسة خلال فترة التنظيمات تحت ذريعة ضرورة "تحديث المدينة". بالإضافة إلى ذلك، قام هيرتزل والهيئات الصهيونية المنشأة حديثًا بالضغط المستمر على عبد الحميد الثاني سياسياً في بعض الأحيان وعرضت رشاوى مالية في أحيان اخرى، من أجل جعله يتنازل لمنح فلسطين لليهود حتى يتمكنوا من إقامة دولة هناك، وذلك كجزء لا يتجزأ من الجهود الأوروبية للحصول على السيطرة على الشؤون داخل المنطقة.

ومن الأهمية بمكان في الوقت الراهن متابعة صيانة أعمال التجديد، وعلى أقل تقدير، توثيق ما تم إنجازه في السابق لحماية تراثنا. ويعزى ذلك إلى حقيقة أن المنطقة بأكملها في المسجد الأقصى تتعرض باستمرار للانتهاك من قبل قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلية والمستوطنين الإسرائيليين وأعضاء المنظمات الصهيونية المتطرفة. والتوصية الواضحة التي تتبادر إلى الذهن أولاً هي أنه يجب وضع البلاط من الفترات المختلفة في مبنى وأن يتم توثيقه وتصنيفه إلكترونياً كمرجع إضافي في حالة حصول اية كوارث مستقبلية، لا سمح الله. والتوصية الأخيرة، قد تكون أهمية دراسة الصور التاريخية المتاحة من قبل المصورين الأوائل مثل Bonfils وغيره، على الأقل خلال القرن ونصف القرن الماضي، والتي قد تساعد في تصنيف البلاط وترميمه.

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## 1.1 Introduction:

The Dome of the Rock is considered one of the most important landmarks of Islamic architecture worldwide. In addition to its religious standing and sanctity, it represents the oldest surviving Islamic monument (Slavic: 2001). It also embodies a treasury of evidence that researchers can resort to in order to find out more about the eras in which it was built or restored. Oleg Grabar observes that a striking characteristic of the Dome of the Rock was the preservation of its basic form during countless restorations, while only its surfaces were transformed and adapted to new contexts (Grabar: 2006). It is highly revered due to the beauty of its decorations which carry the imprints mainly of Islamic and other civilizations over its numerous successive epochs.

The Dome of the Rock has therefore become a magnet (Grabar:2006) that attracts the interest of researchers and visitors alike, in addition to pilgrims from all over the world. This is due to the religious status of the Dome of the Rock which attracted Muslims to perform *Ziyara* to this holy place and for researchers, due to the harmony of its architectural and decorative features, to the point that it is considered the epitome of architectural achievement.

This magnificent edifice was built by ʿAbd al- Malik b. Marwān (reigned 684-705). He began building it in 68 H / 688 and it was completed in 72 H / 692. The two supervisors who oversaw the building process were a Palestinian from Baysān Raǧaʾ b. Ḥaywa al-Kindi[1] and Yazid b. Sallam, who was an experienced architect from Jerusalem and he was contracted (along with his two sons) to be the responsible supervisor within the project . Additionally, his role may have been as liaison with the local community. Radja' b. Ḥaywa al-Kindi on the other hand was a scholar (*faqih*)[2], political counsellor and often acted as an envoy for ʿAbd al-Malik. He was a renowned expert on Palestine and the Holy places (Grabar: 2006). Raǧaʾ was a prominent Islamic jurist and Arabic calligrapher who is possibly most famous as the artist who made the detailed inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock. According to al-Wasiti, between 687 and 691 Caliph Abdel Malik instructed two Arab supervisors b. Haywa and Yazid b. Sallam to "construct a dome with the best materials available to them (al-Wasiti: 1979). Additionally, according to Sheikh Sa'id Ibn Jubayr (d.714), Raǧaʾ b. Ḥaywa used to be regarded as the most knowledgeable *faqih* in Syria. He later functioned as an advisor under the Caliphs Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik (reigned 715-717) (Eisner,*EI*$^2$) and Umar II (reigned 717-720**)** (Cobb: *EI*$^2$)**.**

According to al-Maqdisi (see also al-Wasiti), when ʿAbd al-Malik intended to construct the Dome of the Rock, he came from Damascus to Jerusalem. He wrote:- "ʿAbd al-Malik intends to build a Qubba (Dome) over the Rock to house the Muslims from cold and heat and to construct the *masdjid*. However, before he starts he wants to know his subjects' opinion." With their approval the deputies wrote back, "May Allah permit the completion of this enterprise and may He count the building of the Dome and the *masdjid* a good deed for ʿAbd al-Malik and his predecessors." He then gathered craftsmen from all

[1] Radja' b. Haywa b. Khanzal al-Kindi, Abu 'l-Mikdam or Abu Nasr (d.112\730), for more details about him see: Ibn 'Asakir, Tarikh, 18:96-116;Bosworth, *EI*$^2$.

[2] *Faqih* became the technical term for a specialist in religious law and in particular its *furu'* (branches), for more details see: MacDonald, "fakih", *EI*$^2$.

his dominions and ʿAbd al-Malik asked them to provide him with the description and form of the planned dome before he engaged in its construction. So, it was marked for him in the *sahn* of the *masdjid*, He then ordered the building of the treasury (*Bayt al-Mal*) to the east of the Rock and filled it with money. He then appointed Radja' b. Haywa and Yazid b. Sallam to supervise the construction and ordered them to spend generously on it. After that he returned to Damascus. When the two men completed the building, they wrote to ʿAbd al-Malik informing him that they had completed the construction. They said to him – "There is nothing in the building that leaves room for criticism" and they informed him that a hundred thousand dinars were left from the budget he had allocated. He offered the money to them as a reward, but they declined, indicating that they had already been generously compensated. So 'Abd al-Malik ordered the gold coins to be melted and cast on the Dome's exterior, which at the time had such a strong glitter that no eye could look straight at it. (Al-Wasiti:,vol 136) (Rabbat, 1993)

Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Maqdisi the famous geographer, wrote in his well-known book *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'arifat al-Aqalim* that during a discussion with his uncle on why[3] the Caliph spent lavishly on building the mosques in Jerusalem and Damascus, al-Maqdisi writes:-

> 'O, my little son, thou hast no understanding, Verily he was right, and he was prompted to a worthy work. For he beheld Syria to be a country that had long been occupied by the Christians , and he noted there are beautiful churches still belonging to them, so enchantingly fair, and so renowned for their splendour, as are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the churches of Lydda and Edessa. So he sought to build for the Muslims a mosque that should be unique and a wonder to the world. And in like manner is it not evident that Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, seeing the greatness of the martyrium of the Holy Sepulchre and its magnificence was moved lest it should dazzle the minds of Muslims and hence erected above the Rock the dome which is now seen there.' ( al-Maqdisi: 1906 ), (Le-Strange:1890).

Due to its significance and beauty, the caliphates succeeding the Umayyads attempted to appropriate credit for the building. The ‘Abbassid Caliph al-Ma’mun, for example, attempted to do this as first mentioned by Melchion de Vogue in 1864; however, the year mentioned on the inscription exposed his attempt (De Vogue: 1864). In addition, a number of literary texts and historical resources have clearly mentioned that the Umayyad Caliph ‘ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān spent seven years’ revenues from Egypt to complete the building amounting up to 15 million golden dinars' (De Vogue: 1864).

Thus, upon calculating the enormous amounts spent on this great monument, which was allocated revenue from Egypt, the largest Islamic state at the time, for seven years, one can deduce that the Islamic Empire during the Umayyad period had enormous economic and political prowess at least equal to, if not more than, the other great empire, i.e. the Byzantine empire.

It could be said that religious art and architecture's main role was to reinforce memory. The Dome of the Rock, however, opposed Byzantine art and ideas, despite the fact that many of its decorative and architectural elements include Byzantine trends; and since Christianity

[3] For this ongoing discussion see "The Dome of the Rock as palimpsest:"'Abd al-Malik's grand narrative and Sultan Suleyman's glosses", Muqarnas 25, 2008, 17-105; and more recently L. Nees, Perspectives on Early Islamic Art in Jerusalem (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

was coupled with Byzantine political power, the Umayyads had to oppose it. Nevertheless, as the Muslims were still a minority in Jerusalem (Lassner: 2006), it is obvious that 'Abd al-Malik employed many Christian artisans to build the Dome of the Rock. The Dome of the Rock became a visible proclamation and "tour de force" of the new faith in the city of Christianity, previously. The new building was supposed to rival their foremost sanctuaries and even those of Mecca and Medina. Its presence probably also intended to stimulate the local economy by becoming a focus for pilgrimage.

Within the Dome of the Rock the decorative elements, apart from the calligraphic Qur'anic inscriptions consisted entirely of flora, arabesque and Sassanid or Byzantine crowns indicating the victory of Islam over these empires (Armstrong:1996). The stunning beauty of the exterior tiled walls arrived in 1545. The renovation was commissioned by Sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent. The intensity of decoration on the exterior is surprising as most Islamic architecture places more value on decoration inside a building (Grabar: 1959). The exterior is usually irrelevant and hidden; and if there is any minimal decoration on the outside of the building, it is usually limited to the domes and gates. Thus, the Dome of the Rock provides a notable exception, which corroborates one of the hypotheses put forward by this paper, i.e. that the Dome of the Rock as the first and most eminent building of Islam was used as a "purposeful" monument that taught the Qur'an to the local population and consolidated the "new" religion.

The renovations to the building remained continuous over the centuries of Islamic rule within the city and will be discussed further within the chapter detailing the historical background of these renovations, as each dynasty or caliphate sought to leave its mark upon this holy site. However, the main focus of the study will be upon the Ottoman period and particularly that of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II and the circumstances surrounding his renovation of the inscription of Surat Ya Sin on the outer octagon of the Dome. Documentation of the features of the ceramic tiles of the Quranic Surat Ya Sin placed since 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II's reign (1876) and replaced in the late Ottoman Period, which are stored in al-Aqsa Mosque Museum will be discussed**.**

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II was Ottoman sultan from 1876 to 1909, under whose rule the reform movement of Tanzimat (Reforms) reached its climax and who adopted a policy of pan-Islamism in opposition to Western intervention in Ottoman affairs. He was the son of Sultan 'Abd al Mejid I, and came to the throne after the overthrow of his mentally deranged brother, Murad V, on Aug. 31, 1876. (Deny *EI*[2]: 2012)

On Dec. 23, 1876, he propagated the first Ottoman constitution, primarily to deflect foreign intrusion at a time when Ottoman successes in Serbia and Montenegro had aroused the resentment of Western powers and Russia (Hoiberg *EB*[1]: 2010). After a disastrous war with Russia (1877), ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II was convinced that little help could be expected from the Western powers without their intervention into Ottoman affairs. He dismissed the Parliament, which had met in March 1877, and suspended the constitution in February 1878. Subsequently, he ruled for 40 years from seclusion at Yıldız Palace in Constantinople. (Hoiberg *EB*[1]: 2010)

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II believed that the ideas of the *Tanzimat* could not bring the incongruent peoples of the empire to a common identity, such as Ottomanism; so he tried to formulate a

new ideological principle, Pan-Islamism; since Ottoman sultans beginning with 1517 were also nominally Caliphs, he wanted to promote that fact and emphasized the Ottoman Caliphate. (Chisholm: (1911), p. 36.) ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II used pan-Islamism to solidify his internal rule and to rally Muslim opinion outside the empire, thus creating difficulties for European imperial powers in their Muslim colonies. He encouraged Pan-Islamism, meaning that Muslims should unite and help each other against European colonization. This threatened European countries, namely Austria through Albanian Muslims, Russia through Tatars and Kurds; France through Moroccan Muslims, and Britain through Indian Muslims. (Takkush: pp.489,490) The privileges of foreigners in the Ottoman Empire, which were an obstacle to an effective government, were curtailed. During his rule, Abdul Hamid refused Theodor Herzl's offers to pay down a substantial portion of the Ottoman debt (150 million pounds sterling in gold) in exchange for a charter allowing the Zionists to settle in Palestine. He is famously quoted as telling Herzl's Emissary "as long as I am alive, I will not have our body divided, only our corpse they can divide." (Lewis:1962).

Moreover, and in agreement with Karpat, this thesis seeks to prove that his emphasis upon renovating the Holy Islamic sites especially in Jerusalem, (apart from Mecca and Medina), was significant as a statement that he was against European attempts to gain more control over the city, as the European intrusion into the city became visible (Karpat: 2001).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The main problem or “issue” to be discussed in the research is the reason behind renovation of the inscription of the “Surat Ya Sin” on the Dome of the Rock by Sultan 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II and its confirmation of his attempt to stand up to increasing European influence within the Empire to appear as the champion of Islam against aggressive Christendom.

Moreover, the research will deal with the topic of utilizing calligraphy within the Dome of the Rock, on its outer façade in particular and on other Islamic religious monuments to convey the religious message of Islam.

## 1.3 Justification

- Studying the use of calligraphy as an element with both decorative and didactic purposes on Islamic monuments in Jerusalem and particularly on the Dome of the Rock.
- Coming to a better understanding of the reasons behind restoration of the inscription of Surat Ya Sin by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II.
- Discussing Herzl's Zionist attempts at "purchasing" Palestine from the Sultan.
- Documenting the changes that took place in the building and the decorations mainly within the late Ottoman period.

- Making a modest contribution towards documenting the reasons for these changes, i.e. – political prerogatives, climatic or elemental factors etc.

## 1.4 Research Goals / Objectives

- To explain the use of monuments as a means of relaying religious messages.
- To enumerate the major renovations to the Dome of the Rock made by the various caliphates.
- To clarify the circumstances leading to and the political conditions behind Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II's major renovation of the Dome of the Rock.
- To document the features of the tiles placed by Sulaymān the Magnificent and renovated by 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II of Surat Ya Sin inscribed upon the external octagon of the Dome.
- To study the artistic styles and calligraphic details of the removed and newly installed tiles.

## 1.5 Questions

1. Why did 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II  in particular order the renovation of the inscription of Surat Ya Sin on the Dome of the Rock?
2. What were the political conditions of the times that induced this decision?
3. What were the artistic styles that were used within the late Ottoman period and how were they influenced by the artistic and cultural aspects and the craftsmanship of that era?
4. Why was *Thuluth* chosen as the style of calligraphy used in the inscription?
5. How were the artisans able to fit the inscription exactly on the circumference of the outer octagon?
6. What is the importance of Surat Ya Sin in Islam?
7. What was the reason behind renovation of the inscription of "Surat Ya Sin" on the Dome of the Rock by Sultan 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II?
8. What was the effect of the Surah inscribed on the outer octagon on the space in general and on the population?

## 1.6 Hypothesis

'Abd al-Ḥamīd II  used pan-Islamism to solidify his internal rule and to rally Muslim opinion outside the empire, thus creating difficulties for European imperial powers in their Muslim colonies. One of the aspects and tools of his pan-Islamism was to use the inscription of Surat Ya Sin (which is called the "heart of the Qur'an" by Islamic scholars) on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock as a method for the promulgation and consolidation of Islamic control of Jerusalem, especially, and the whole of the Ottoman Empire in the face of growing European attempts at gaining a stronger foothold within the Holy city during the *Tanzimat* period under the pretense of the necessity for its "Modernization". Additionally, Herzl and the newly established Zionist bodies continuously pressured 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II  politically at times and offered financial bribes at others, in order to make him concede to giving Palestine to the Jews so they could establish a state there, as part and parcel of the previously mentioned European efforts to gain a grip upon affairs within the area.

## 1.7 Boundaries

The research will mainly deal with the renovations carried out within the Dome of the Rock during the Ottoman period and particularly within the reign of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II .

## 1.8 Limitations

- The subject of the renovation of the tiles has been tackled by only a few scholars and the literature is quite difficult to access.
- The university does not provide access to Jstore, in Jerusalem.
- Libraries in Jerusalem are not all easily accessible.
- The cost of photographing the tiles for documentation is high.

## 1.9 Methodology

The historical descriptive approach and to some extent archaeological methodology and fieldwork are utilized in this study. The historical method comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence, including the evidence of archaeology, to research and then to write histories in the form of accounts of the past. The question of the nature, and even the possibility, of a sound historical method is raised in the philosophy of history as a question of epistemology (according to the Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy - epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. Understood more broadly, epistemology is about issues having to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiry).

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - A key usage of the concept of historiography that is more present-oriented and methodological incorporates the study and exploration of historical methods of investigation, analysis, interpretation, and presentation used by current historians. How do contemporary historians carry out their responsibilities of understanding the past? Sometimes matters have to do with the lack of or partiality in the accessible bodies of historical records. Sometimes they have to do with the effort in interpreting historical sources.

An important issue that arises in historiography is that of the status of the notion of "global history." One important reason for thinking globally as an historian is the fact that the history discipline—since the Greeks—has inclined to have a Eurocentric outlook in its choice of topics, framing assumptions, and methods. The industrial revolution in England and the creation of the modern bureaucratic state in France, Britain, and Germany, are often treated by scholars of economic and political history as being exemplars of "modern" development in economics and politics. This has led to an inclination to look at other countries' development as non-standard or stunted. So global history is a framework within which historians can avoid privileging one regional center as primary and others as secondary or peripheral.

Second is the linked fact that when Western historical thinkers—for example, Hegel, Malthus, Montesquieu—have written about Asia, they have often engaged in a high degree of derogatory stereotyping without much factual historical knowledge. The ideas of Oriental despotism, Asian overpopulation, and Chinese stagnation have encouraged a distorted replacement of the elaborate and various processes of development all over Asia by a single-dimensional and reductive set of simplifying frameworks of thought. This is one of the points of Edward Said's critique of orientalism (Said:1978). So writing "global" history means paying rigorous attention to the specificities of social, political, and cultural

arrangements in other parts of the world besides Europe; and being more skeptical about patterns of development, and more open to discovery of surprising patterns, twists, and variations in the experiences of India, China, Indochina, the Arab world, the Ottoman Empire and Sub-Saharan Africa. European historians for example dubbed Turkey with the 'title' of - "The Sick Man of Europe".

Within this research, however, data will be collected from multiple sources – previous studies, historical resources and participant observation in order to guarantee an objective tackling of the subject.

## 1.10 Review of the Literature

- **St. Laurant, Beatrice and Riedlmayer, Restorations of the Dome of the Rock and Their Political Significance, 1537-1928, *Muqarnas*, Vol.10, Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar (1993), pp. 76-84.**

  In this article St. Laurant and Riedlmayer mention Evliya Chelebi's description of the Ottoman takeover of the city of Jerusalem whereby Sultan Selim's claim to possession of the "first Qibla" denotes Ottoman awareness of the significance of Jerusalem, especially on the religious level and the importance of its legacy to Ottoman claims of religious and political hegemony over the Holy Land. They also state that contrary to Western scholar's claims that the Ottoman Empire only brought about a legacy of decay and downfall, the alternative view is that there was active Ottoman engagement with Jerusalem and its monuments between 1517-1917; and that there was a continuity of maintenance from 691 till at least the end of the Ottoman Empire.

  They describe the renovations made on the interior and exterior walls of the Dome of the Rock within the various Islamic eras and the crusader period. But the facts most pertinent to this research are related to the detailed information on the Ottoman period and the replacement of the *Qashani* tiles on the exterior octagon of the Dome of the Rock and especially the Surat Ya Sin tiles. In this respect, they state that in the 19th century, all major building projects and restorations were induced by Istanbul's government centralization of military and administrative control over the provinces during the *Tanzimat* period and especially during the reign of 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II . Thus the politically motivated restorations of the Haram's monuments can be seen as physical expressions of the *Tanzimat* and 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II's policy of Islamization.

- **St.Laurant, Beatrice (1998), The Dome of the Rock and the politics of Restoration. *Bridgewater Review*, 17 (2), 14-20.**

  In this article St. Laurant emphasizes the fact that restorations of the Dome of the Rock, from the 16th century to date were politically instigated at pivotal turning points within the region's history. Moreover, she states that its construction was a strong religious-political statement establishing the city as a center of Islamic pilgrimage while at the same time proclaiming Islamic sovereignty over the city.

She describes the various additions within the Haram and the restorations made over the various Islamic periods, through the British mandate, Jordanian rule and up to current times. She concentrates on the role of Sulaymān the Great's influence and his symbolic appropriation of Jerusalem for the Ottomans by rebuilding its walls and then by covering the Dome of the Rock with a new "skin" of 40,000 tiles. She also states that part of 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II 's expression of his policy for Islamization of the Empire were the restorations of the Haram monuments, the addition of Hamidian style buildings to the Ka'aba in Mecca and his assumption of the title of Caliph.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework.

When contemplating a panoramic view of Jerusalem, it is quite evident that there is an architectural dialogue between the various religious affiliations, cultures and civilizations within the city, the most obvious being the one between the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock.

In ancient and medieval times, religious institutions practiced the highest authority, while pervading all of society, thus they needed a physical presence. As a result, sacred places and religious architecture started to dominate the spatial organization of cities. Thus, the whole city of Jerusalem nestles around the Christian shrines and the towering Islamic monuments on al-Haram al-Sharif.

Religion is still a vital and influential aspect of modern society all over the world, but with the rise of modernity and secularism it could be said that it has been relegated a periphery position in life (Britton: 2010). However, this is definitely not the case concerning Jerusalem; quite the contrary. Even though over the past 200 years it has been modernized and commercialized its social and physical landscape is still dominated by sacred architecture and sites. In other parts of the world this shift in the reversal of importance and status between the sacred and secular has also been reflected in that the supreme authority that spiritual leaders once possessed has been reassigned to political and cultural leaders. Similarly, this radical change has had its implications on the built environment. Thus, although the temple, church and mosque have not vanished, they no longer dominate the urban architectural landscape; nevertheless, this has not been the case in Jerusalem throughout the ages. There are several theoretical lenses one can utilize in order to explain this reality, and they will be discussed within this chapter.

## 2.1 Space Versus Place

The difference between space and place is of critical importance. Both space and place have multiple meanings because each is experienced in a different fashion according to the participant's perception. According to the religion historian, Philip Sheldrake, space is an abstract analytical concept (Sheldrake: 2001). Place can be considered "tangible, physical, specific and relational" and can be defined by the relationship between humans and the environment (Sheldrake: 2001). Thus, place can be considered a "meaningful segment of space" and is established and made concrete through the remembrance of its historical meanings (Creswell: 1996). Moreover, it may function as the foundation of or tool for, establishing personal and communal identities.

The value or meaning of a place, which are both concrete (material) and ideological (mental), are not inherent (Creswell: 1996). Place is a more suitable definition to use for the specific religious site considered within this thesis; as place is a human construct and necessarily relates to human identity, relationships and history.

'Space' could be as intimate as familiar 'places'[4]. However, in Arabic, there is a stark difference between *fada'* (space) and *makan* (place). While *fada'* refers to astral infinite emptiness, *makan* refers to empowerment (*makkana*, *tamkin*) and to the existential verb 'to be' (*yakoun*). Purposeless speech is referred to as *fadhi* or *'ala al fadhi* (for nothing). If someone takes a position in a purposeful discourse, or takes a stance regarding an issue, it means that he/she gained his *makana* (status). When space and place are used commensurably in this thesis I refer to the Arabic *makan*, the powerful, the status and the existential verb 'to be.'

As early as the 18th century, Immanuel Kant asserted that, "All outer appearances are in space, and are determined *a priori* in conformity with the relations of space… [And] that all appearances whatsoever, that is, all objects of the senses, are in time, and necessarily stand in time-relations" (Kant: 1963[1787]). Yi-Fu Tuan not only calls for an experiential perspective to space but argues that we creatively do many things efficiently but unthinkingly out of habit" (Tuan: 2008[1977]). The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a return to space as a unit of analysis and as a tool for understanding memory, sociality and human behaviour. Edward Hall argues that people not only structure spaces differently but experience them differently (Hall: 1966). Frances A. Yates writes, "If we wish to remember much material we must equip ourselves with a large number of places" (Yates: 1966). Bourdieu points to the power inherent in the spatio-temporal embodiment of practices that these "temporal forms or the spatial structure not only the group's representation of the world but the group itself" (Bourdieu: 1977[1972]). A similar conclusion was made by Doreen Massey who argues that it is only by looking onto both space and time that we can avoid abstractions and representation of space and human relations (Massey: 2006).

Henri Lefebvre's (1974) work has been so far the most celebrated conceptual and theoretical framework. Michael De Certeau (1984) has been 'the charming presence' with a 'frameless' frame that loosely travels beyond spatial categories. He argues that only by tracing the ordinary man's everyday creative practices could we reveal the human subjectivities of roaming, making, and altering space. For him moving in space resembles the uttering of the language that contributes to the making of identities. This is particularly important when exploring architecture and spaces as meaningful structures (the etic)[5] that need to be deciphered into their rudimentary elements (the emic).

## 2.2 Territoriality

One of the theories that this research is based upon is territoriality. According to Robert David Sack in his book "Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History", territoriality in humans is socially and geographically rooted. Its use depends on who is influencing and controlling whom and on the geographical contexts of space, place and time.

It is intimately related to how people use the land, how they organize themselves in space and how they give meaning to place. That is, it is a human strategy to affect, influence and control. One can also say that territoriality is a historically sensitive use of space,

[4] It is common to hear somebody saying, "I need my space," referring to a certain bubble within his/her workplace, home, or room. This implies that the word space is also an intimate category.

[5] Etic is the explanation of social phenomenon or practice from the researcher's point of view.

especially since it is socially constructed and depends on who is controlling whom and why. It is the key geographical component in understanding how society and space are interconnected.

In his book, he demonstrates that territoriality for humans is not an instinct, but a powerful and often indispensable geographical strategy used to control people and things by controlling area. This argument is developed by analyzing the possible advantages and disadvantages that territoriality can provide, and by considering why some and not others arise at particular times.

Territoriality can be used as a valuable lens for deciphering special structures and their power dynamics and to understand the special territorial aspects of the perceived world and its material/physical production. Territoriality is defined as "the attempt by an individual or a group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationships by defining and asserting control over a geographic area". (Sack:1986); territoriality works at different scales and covers most spatial aspects of social life. As per this definition, territories are the consequence of a strategy that proposes to affect, influence and control actions and interactions in a specific area (Delaney: 2005) So one could say that, urban space is territoriality set in stone.

Architectural plans and buildings are manifestations of territoriality; in their attempt to create efficient and psycho-socially healthy places, they control area and attempt to influence actions and interactions inside and outside the specific area. Thus, territoriality … can be observed on small as well as on large scales: in geographical terms, it is a form of spatial behaviour, it allows and favours certain activities and uses in a certain area and denies others (Sack: 1986).

Political geography and territoriality are useful for understanding the politics of space and relations to power (Delaney: 2005; Sack: 1986). Additionally, according to Lefebvre "Social space is a social product - the space produced in a certain manner serves as a tool of thought and action. It is not only a means of production but also a means of control and of domination power. (Lefebvre: 1991b.)

Territory and territoriality can be utilized as analytical tools that have the capability to elucidate and demonstrate human geographical methods of controlling space (Yousef, 2009). Since territoriality is a human geographical practice it is defined as "the attempt by an individual or a group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area. This area will be called the territory" (Sack: 1986). As for the conceived or political, this dimension involves the intellectual world and knowledge construction. Politicians, economic actors, planners, architects and technicians of space act within this level in order to create concepts, thoughts, rationale and ideologies that are manifested as models, patterns and prototypes. This is the location within power where participants theorize their spatial strategies in text and graphics. (Yousef: 2009).

As stated by Krupat (1985):

> "… the relationship of person to environment is dynamic rather than static. There is a give and take, with each part of the system providing reciprocal influences on each other. We shape our environment and are in turn shaped by it in a never ending cycle of mutual influence"

Moreover, within his environmental behavioural studies, Rapoport (1990) draws our attention to the fact that "the importance of meaning as one of the central mechanisms linking meaning and environment and hence in understanding environment-behaviour relations". He puts forward three levels of meaning when considering interaction with the environment: 1) High level meanings: "related to cosmologies, cultural schemata, world views, philosophical systems, the sacred and the like". 2) middle level meanings: communicating, identity, status, wealth and power. 3) Low level meaning: every day and instrumental meanings. Thus, the built environment that surrounds us is steeped in memories and visions of the future. Monuments, buildings and territories take up the role of transporters of meaning and symbolic messages about identity and future aspirations. Monuments, both historical and religious and significant contemporary buildings as well as urban public squares play a major role in the development of national pride and identity. (Lang, Desai and Desai: 1977).

## 2.3 Sacred Space

Sacred spaces play a central and incomparable role in the construction of identity; and it is a kernel component of sacred place, sacred architecture and monuments occupy a central inimitable role in the construction of identity; and as it is a kernel component of sacred place, sacred architecture and monuments occupy a central position in ideological and symbolic systems. Thus, campaigns for a certain identity are often carried out through sacred architecture. In other words, sacred place and identity politics are quintessentially related through sacred architecture.

The Dome of the Rock, a monumental Islamic commemorative structure built by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan in the seventh century, through its history, evolution and uniquely controversial topographical position illuminates the relationship between sacred place and identity.

Three methods have been identified by which societies might utilize a sacred place to shape and comprehend their identity – 1) Visual competition between religious monuments. 2) the creation and exchange of place myths and 3) the use of sacred sites as political or religious tools.

The first depends on the architectural components of a structure, including the use of particular geographic locations. For example, there is symbolic significance and many connotations are related to the Dome of the Rock's elevated position on al-Haram al- Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), when compared with the location of the Holy Sepulchre which is the complex built in the 4$^{th}$ century and which remains one of the most sacred places in all of Christendom on Golgotha Hill at a lower elevation across the city.

The second method identity is shaped by is the narrative around a sacred site that has been built up through myth and legend.

The third way in which sacred places and architecture are used to build identity is through persuasive and comprehensive politics of possession born out of a desire to control and own a sacred place; as such control enables the group in power to manipulate it for their

religious, political and cultural benefit. The battle for the possession of sacred places has been referred to as the politics of property (Chidester: 1995). Power employed towards this end is asserted through the institutionalization of sacred space, which Ronald Hassner defined as the process by which a religious community gradually assumes control over a sacred site (Hassner: 2009). Furthermore, monuments built for religious purposes often act as vessels for the most revered meanings, stories and beliefs of a religious community and as a vehicle for propagating them.

The Dome of the Rock situated on the Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem is perfectly symmetrical and is adorned with brilliantly coloured mosaics and tiles, thus manifesting an astounding physical and aesthetic presence. Situated on top of the elevated platform, the Dome towers over the city while seeming to soar into the heavens and the imagined divine realm above. Its importance, however, extends beyond the merely visually symbolic presence as it represents the power of Islam, while also symbolizing the political and cultural might of the Moslem community dating from the Islamic conquests in the seventh century to the present. The Dome of the Rock is an architectural marvel because of its aesthetically pleasing application of geometrical design and impressive size, and because of the legibility of its construction from the exterior (Grabar: 1997).

I thus, conclude that territoriality is extremely relevant to my thesis as I believe that it is related to the actions of 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II and especially his renovation of Surat Ya Sin on the octagon of the Dome of the Rock in order to consolidate his policy of Pan-Islamism, due to the pressures on his territories by European appropriation and influence and the badgering by Zionist leaders to “purchase” Palestine from him so they could settle the Jews there.

## Chapter 3: General Historical Background about the Dome of the Rock and its renovations.

When Mohammad, the prophet died on 6th June 632 CE, he had united almost the whole of Arabia under his leadership. However, clannish conflict was so prevalent within the Arabian Peninsula that there was a risk that the newly established Islamic nation would disintegrate. Abu Bakr, the first Muslim caliph, had to thus fight against the rebel tribes of Asad, Tamim, Ghatafan and Hanifah and then probably decided to curb the internal strife by using energies within the *Ummah* (Islamic community) against external enemies.

In 633 the Muslim armies launched several military campaigns in Persia, Syria and Iraq; and by the time of Abu Bakr's death in 634 one Arab army had driven the Persians out of Bahrain and the other had marched into Palestine and conquered Gaza. These wars were not as much inspired by religious motives as they were by ones of expansionism, as for centuries the Arab nomads of the Peninsula had aspired to break out of it in search of more fertile land. However, until then they had been held back by the armies of the two great empires of the times, that is, Byzantium and Persia. One of the factors that also led them to begin their external campaigns in 633 was that a power vacuum had been created by the fall of these empires.

### 3.1 The Caliph Omar

After the death of Abu Bakr, the Caliph Omar, continued military campaigns against both Persia and Byzantium. When the Arab armies reached Palestine in August of 636, they defeated the Byzantines at the battle of Yarmuk. In the middle of the battle, the Ghassanids (Arab Christians) defected from the Byzantine army and crossed over the lines to join their fellow Arabs. Heraclius then hurried to Jerusalem to take the True Cross and left to Syria for ever. By February 638, the Christians surrendered after a defence of the City organized by the patriarch Sophranius, who later handed it over to Omar. Omar facilitated the transfer of power without killing, destruction of property, or burning of rival religious monuments; neither did he carry out expulsions or expropriations or force the population to take up Islam, which expressed the monotheistic ideal of compassion more than any other conqueror of Jerusalem. (Armstrong: 1996)

Al-Maqdisi, al—Wasiti, Ibn al-Murajja and Mujir al-Din al-Ulaiymi, the Jerusalemite Arab historian, state that when Omar reached the ancient ruined gates of the Noble Sanctuary he was horrified to see the filth "which was then all about the Noble sanctuary, had settled on the steps of the gates so that it even came out into the streets in which the gate opened, and it had accumulated so greatly as almost to reach up to the ceiling of the gateway" (Le Strange: 1980). Omar started clearing the area of the dirt and rubble with

his own hands alongside Sophranius and his entourage, as the shock of the sight of the holy space whose renown had reached them in Arabia was never forgotten by the Muslims.

The capture of Jerusalem during Omar's reign was most likely symbolically important to him, since controlling Jerusalem would not have provided any military advantage (Duri: 1990). Omar's visits and activities in Jerusalem can be summarized as follows: - the surrender of the city to him, his first visit to the Noble Sanctuary, and his construction of a mosque there. He behaved humbly in the company of his new Christian subjects. According to Duri, Omar's presence in Jerusalem was stipulated for the city's surrender (Ibid).[6] The Islamic armies felt aimless and far from their roots, as they were constantly on the move, until they took Bayt al-Maqdis, home of some of the greatest prophets and their first Qibla. They felt like it was a homecoming of some kind, or a 'physical return' to their ancient ancestors' religion.

As is evident until these days in Jerusalem, the Muslims did not attempt to settle in the more hygienic and prestigious part of town but at the base of the Haram. So, at the time, Jerusalem remained mostly a Christian city with one Muslim sacred area. But the Muslims' esteem for the City is evident from the calibre of people who were appointed to govern it. Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufian, a future Caliph, became governor of Syria, 'Uwaymir Ibn Sa'd, one of the most important officers was placed in charge of Jund Filastin and 'Ubadah Ibn al-Samet, one of the five leading experts in the Qur'an became the first Qadi (Islamic judge) of Jerusalem. Other prominent Companions of the Prophet (Sahabah) like Fairuz al-Dailami and Shaddad Ibn Aws, also stayed in Jerusalem, attracted to the holiness of the City (Armstrong:1996).

By the end of Omar's reign, the entire Arab Peninsula, part of the Persian Empire and the Syrian and Egyptian provinces of the Byzantine Empire were under Islamic control (Hourani, 1991).When Omar was killed in 644 by a Persian prisoner of war he was succeeded by 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, one of the first 'Sahabah' and a member of the aristocratic Umayyad tribe. In 656, he was murdered by a group of officers. After that, Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the prophet's closest living male relative, was proclaimed as the fourth caliph. Immediately afterwards civil war broke out between Ali and Mu'awiyah, ruler of al-Sham (Syria) and the leader of the Umayyads. 'Ali was stabbed by a member of a new fanatic sect and died in 661. Six months later Mu'awiyah was proclaimed caliph in Jerusalem. After him the Umayyads ruled the Islamic empire for nearly a century. He moved the capital to Damascus and this was good for Palestine and it prospered culturally and economically as it became close to the seat of power (Armstrong:1996).

## 3.2 The Umayyad Period

At the apex of Umayyad power in 715 the Arab empire extended from the Chinese borders to the Atlantic Ocean; from France to the frontiers of modern India, and from the Caspian Sea to Nubia in Africa. It encompassed Spain, the whole of the northern coast of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Palestine, half of Anatolia, Iraq, Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan. Thus, the Umayyads can legitimately claim a stage of magnificence, unparalleled by any other empire in human history. No empire approaching these dimensions has been won in so short a time. Between 632 and

[6] Duri,106. Duri refers to 'Azdi and Tabari.

715 the tribesmen of Arabia, scornfully dismissed by the great powers of the times as barefoot colonials conquered over four and a half million square miles of territory at a rate of advance equal to 150 square miles per day for 83 years. What is still more significant is that these Arab conquests altered the face of the world by overthrowing Greek and Christian influences from North Africa and the Levant as well as converting the former Persian empire to Islam. No other Arab dynasty was able to match these conquests either in scope or haste.

Moreover, the Umayyads built shrines to match their military accomplishments. The three supreme and the most impressive edifices in the empire were built by them – The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the great Umayyad mosque in Damascus, and the mosque of Abdul Rahman III in Cordova. ʿAbd al- Malik b. Marwān, especially was as avid a builder as he was a fighter. In 694 he completed work on the Dome of the Rock built (according to legend) around the rock where Abraham stood ready to sacrifice his son (according to the Muslims Ismael) and where Mohammad began his ascent into the seven heavens. With a copper and gold roof, towering pillars of veined marble and gold mosaics – replaced since the sixteenth century by blue, green and yellow tiles – around its outer walls, this first lavish monument of the Umayyad empire was intended to be a shrine more incredible and spectacular than anything built by the Jews or Christians within Jerusalem.

The Dome of the Rock is still one of the most expansive and splendid places of devotion in the world and of all the Umayyad's monuments, perhaps the most expressive of their character. It was built and decorated by an army of Byzantine craftsmen and Persian, Indian and Egyptian workmen. Its cost was equal to seven years' revenue of the whole of Egypt. Despite the incomparable splendour of the construction – with the wide stone courtyard, the brilliant mosaics, the vast marble floor and exquisitely carved roof with 600 lamps hanging on golden chains – there was and still is an amazing aura of tranquillity that portrays more vividly than any words of any book or sermon the inner meaning of Islam and the total submission of the soul to the will of God (Nutting: 1964).

In 680 al-Husayn, the son of Ali and grandson of the prophet rebelled against the Umayyads and was killed at Karbala' in Iraq. Three years later, in 683 there was another revolt as when the caliph Yazid fell gravely ill, 'Abdallah Ibn al-Zubayr declared himself caliph and seized Mecca. He remained in power until 692 but was unable to gain the allegiance of the whole Islamic nation. After the death of Yazid, Marwan the first (684-685) and his son 'Abd al-Malik (685-705) re-established Umayyad power, first in Syria, Palestine and Egypt and then the rest of the empire.

Caliph Abd al-Malik turned his attention to Jerusalem once he had established some peace and security in the empire. He was very devoted to the City as were all the Umayyads, so he repaired the city walls and gates and built Dar al-Imara (a residence for the governor) near the Haram. However, Abd al-Malik's major contribution to the City, of course was the Dome of the Rock, which he started building in 688 (Armstrong: 1996).

Islam had its holy places and beautiful Arabic scripture but it had no monuments in Jerusalem, which was full of beautiful churches and shrines. According to the Jerusalemite historian al-Maqdisi all the churches of al-Sham were so 'enchantingly fair' and the 'Dome of the Qumama so great and splendid' that Abd al-Malik feared that it would dazzle the minds of the Muslims'. They wanted 'monuments that were unique and a wonder to the world' (Muqaddasi: 1896, 1971). Abd al-Malik therefore decided to build a new Dome and

he employed Byzantine craftsmen and architects. However, the Dome of the Rock as the first great Muslim monument definitely carried an Islamic message (Armstrong: 1996).

Finally, it is worth noting that Abdul-Malik and the Umayyads felt that they must honour the religion of the Prophet. But while the origin of the faith was in the Arabian Peninsula, they believed that for the growing empire to sustain itself, leadership and governance had to move beyond the area of Islam's origin. To do this and counter Muslim disparagers in Mecca and Medina, the Umayyads increased Jerusalem's importance and commissioned the Dome of the Rock to make both a political and a religious statement. Moreover, Abdul-Malik wished to make a statement to all Jews, Christians and Muslims living in Jerusalem that Islam was the state religion of the City. The preponderance of Christian architecture made it even more important that the Dome of the Rock overshadow the buildings such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Evidently, Abdul-Malik attained his goal since the Dome of the Rock, as Grabar states, still stands today with the same design as it did when it was first built. Furthermore, with the added inscription on the outer octagon it strengthened its religious message and controlling power over the local population and millions of Muslims worldwide.

"*Verily the sanctuaries of God will be maintained by those who believe in God.*" (Qur'an 9:18). This verse is usually quoted in full in Mosques all over the Muslim world, as it continues with a list of a believer's basic obligations. In this case, the part could represent the whole, consistent with the practice known in many depictive arts whereby only a fragment of a whole visual statement needs to be presented in order to transmit the message. It was thus supposed to invoke divine favour for those who renovate monuments devoted to God. The statement is repeated at the four corners of the building; so maintenance of sanctuaries is considered an act of piety favoured by heaven and solely dedicated to God and not for the benefit of the faithful. It was therefore acknowledged that the Dome of the Rock was a sanctuary whose maintenance was the responsibility of the ruler; and the final words of the inscription are a prayer articulating his future prospects: "*May God give glory and power to our lord, the Commander of the Faithful, may He give him the possession of the East and the West of the earth, and may He find him worthy of praise at the beginning and at the end of his actions."* (Grabar: 2006, p.131-133).

Thus the Muslims took care of the Dome of the Rock and carried out various renovations and embellishments over the consecutive Islamic periods. This took place especially when it was damaged due to natural elements or catastrophes such as earthquakes, storms, torrential rain or fires. No Caliph or Sultan neglected its renovation or conservation.

Moreover, there were political reasons, mainly being Christian renovations of the Holy Sepulchre and other churches in Jerusalem; as no city lent itself to manifesting the dynamic between politics and place as much as Jerusalem. Throughout its millennia-long existence, Jerusalem has exchanged hands countless times, each defeat yielding to a new leader, a new political structure and often a new religion. Times of social and political upheaval provide insight into the politics of place, for it is during these turbulent moments that the functional and symbolic significance of sacred places is exposed in its truest form. Thus, the building of the Dome was a strong statement with religious and political connotations consolidating Jerusalem as a centre of pilgrimage and pronouncing the dominance of Islam within the city. After the Dome of the Rock the Umayyads constructed al-Aqsa Mosque. The late Umayyad and Abbasid empires began an extended practice of key embellishments

and restorations that also continued throughout the fourteenth century Mamluk period (St. Laurent:1998).

## 3.3 The Abbasids

It has been claimed that the Abbasids did not pay any attention to the Noble Sanctuary or its architecture (due to their animosity towards the Umayyad caliphate); however, that is not true as they preserved the buildings as well as they could. Of course, they did not make any tangible changes to the Umayyad characteristics of these buildings.The al-Aqsa building was severely damaged by earthquakes in 808 and again in 846. Both the caliphs al-Mansour and al-Mahdi renovated al-Aqsa mosque after it was damaged by earthquakes.

In 831 CE, the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun visited Jerusalem after the Dome of the Rock had been damaged, so he ordered its renovation. Matters developed, so it became a major restoration project to the extent that the inscription was changed to include his name instead of the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik's as the constructor of the monument. However the date was not tampered with and scholars were able to deduce that it was Abdul Malik who had established the Dome of the Rock that was completed in 691 A.D. al-Ma'mun also minted coins in 832 A.D. with the name al-Quds on them for the first time in the City's Islamic history in commemoration of his renovations.

Within the era of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir Billah (908-932), in the year 913 A.D. renovation of the woodwork in the Dome of the Rock included renovating part of the ceiling and installation of four gilded doors, as ordered by his mother.

## 3.4 The Fatimids

New building and the many renovations of the Haram indicated the aspiration of consecutive sovereigns to leave their distinctive mark on the Holy Sanctuary and its various constructions. Thus, the Shi'a Fatimid rulers of Egypt, who had seized control from the Sunni Abbasids, brought about many changes on the Haram, including modification of the Aqsa mosque, as they reduced its size and aligned it directly with the Dome of the Rock. They also built some of the arcades leading to the upper patform, and they reconstructed the south east area of the platform and its substructure known as Solomon's stables (St. Laurent: 1998).

During the Fatimid period Palestine was exposed to violent earthquakes, one of which took place in 1016 A.D.. It led to damage of the inner dome and the destruction of parts of the larger outer dome (Ibn al-Atheer, 1978, p.295). The renovation began during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim Bi'Amr Allah (996-1021 A.D.) and was completed during the reign of his son, caliph al-Thaher Li'zaz al-Din (1021-1036 A.D.). The renovations included the Dome and its decorations by 'Ali Ibn Ahmad in 1022 A.D., according to the inscription placed on the drum of the Dome (Van Berchem: 1927, II, 289). Further restoration work is recorded for 1027.

The redecoration and gilding of the dome's interior with the typically Fatimid decor survives to the present. Al-Thaher re-covered the dome, not with gold but with black lead, giving the construction a new profile that endured for 940 years (St. Laurent: 1998).

## 3.5 The Crusader Period

When the Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099 A.D. they drove the Jews and Muslims from the city. They transformed the Dome of the Rock into a church which was named Templum Domini and had a cross placed on top of the golden dome (Prawer: 1975). The Dome of the Rock was given to the Augustinians, who turned it into a church while al-Aqsa Mosque became a royal palace. The Knights Templar, active from c. 1119, identified the Dome of the Rock as the site of the Temple of Solomon and set up their headquarters in al-Aqsa Mosque adjacent to the Dome for much of the 12th century.

The Aqsa Mosque was re-named Templum Solomonis. During this time, the Dome of the Rock was converted into a church and paintings were added to its walls. This Kingdom was to last 87 years, during which time neither Jew nor Muslim was allowed to dwell within the walls of the city. 'Ali al-Herawi (of Herat) states in 1173, during the Crusader period that there were two paintings on the interior of the Dome. Opposite the stairs leading to the cave there was one of Solomon and another of Christ covered with jewels. In addition, the Aqsa Mosque was altered into a palace for the Knights Templar and the area underneath became stables for their horses. (St. Laurant:1998)

Ibn al-Athir writes in his book *al-Kamil fil-Taarikh* (The Perfect History) of the scene when the Muslims recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders:*"…At the top of the cupola of the Dome of the Rock there was a great gilded cross. When the Muslims entered the city on the Friday, some of them climbed the top of the cupola to take down the cross……a great cry went up from the city and from outside the walls, the Muslims crying 'Allahu-akbar' in their joy, the Franks groaning in consternation and grief. So loud and piercing was the cry that the earth shook. …Salahuddin ordered that the shrines should be restored to their original state. The Templars had built their living quarters against al-Aqsa, with storerooms and latrines…This was all restored to its former state. The Sultan ordered that the Dome of the Rock should be cleansed of all pollution, and this was done…"*(Ibn al-Athir:1978)

## 3.6 The Ayyubids

Salahuddin al-Ayyubi (1169-1193 A.D.) recovered Palestine from the Crusaders in 1187 (Ibn al-Athir:1978). He removed all the changes undertaken by the Crusaders, such as covering the Rock with marble, the paintings and the statues; and ordered that it be renovated as required. He also removed the altar that was placed on top of the Rock. Additionally, he renovated the golden decorations on the inner dome, as is proven by the inscription within the Dome stating: "In the name of God the merciful, our Sultan the victorious and just king Salahuddin Yousef bin Ayyub (God have mercy upon him) in the year 586 Hijri. (Van Berchem: 1927). Salahuddin also took measures for following up

maintenance of the Dome of the Rock and preserving it through employing an Imam and attendants to service the building. Moreover, he established specific trusts to ensure funds for these services.

The Ayyubids following Salahuddin continued to care for the Dome of the Rock. Historic sources indicate that most of them swept its floors and then cleaned them with rosewater, with their own hands. Othman bin Salahuddin (1193-1198) placed the wooden partition that surrounds the Rock to protect it, instead of the iron guard placed by the Crusaders.

## 3.7 The Mamluks

During the Mamluk period, the Sultans did not forget to follow up on and pay attention to the preservation of the Dome of the Rock. The Sultan al-Thaher Bibers (1260-1277 A.D.) renewed the mosaic decorations on the upper section of the façade of the outer octagon in 1270 A.D. (Mujiruddin: 1973).

As for the Sultan al-Naser Muhammad bin Qalawoon, who ruled in (1285–1341 A.D.); he carried out major restorations and renovations in the Dome of the Rock, the most important of which are – renovating and gilding the interior and exterior domes in 1318 A.D.. (718 Hijri), as mentioned in the inscription at the top of the drum of the inner dome (Van Berchem: 1927).

During the first part of the Sultan al-Thaher Barquq's rule (1332-1380 A.D.) the caller to prayer's bench to the West of the cave's doorway and opposite the southern door, was renewed in 1337 A.D. The Sultan delegated this task to his viceroy in Jerusalem Muhammad bin al-Saifi Bahder al-Thahiri according to the inscription. (Van Berchem, 1927).

In the era of Sultan al-Thaher Juqmuq (1438-1453) part of the ceiling of the Dome of the Rock which was damaged by fire after being exposed to a violent bolt of lightning was renovated (Mujiruddin: 1973).

The Mamluk sultans conserved the continuity of preservation and maintenance of the Dome of the Rock either through actual renovations or through creating funds (Waqf) to provide for a continuous financial resource to guarantee that expenditures could be covered.

It seems also that the sultans, if there were no renovations needed, were still concerned with putting aside the sums of money gathered from the "Waqf" until they were needed. For example, Sultan al-Ashraf Bersbay (1422-1437) ordered the purchase of whole villages so that the money gained from selling their produce could be spent on the Dome of the Rock.

The final Mamluk renovation was in 1509-10 when al-Malik al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghuri renovated the lead of the outer dome (Burgoyne: 1987)

## 3.8 The Ottomans

From 1517-1917 – one of the longest periods of continuous rule in the city's history – Jerusalem was ruled by the Ottoman Turks. It should be noted that the history of the Dome of the Rock entered a new phase during the Ottoman period which lasted for four centuries, as the importance of preserving and maintaining it did not decrease but multiplied. (Van Berchem: 1927).

The first Ottoman Sultan to bestow the greatest attention upon the Dome of the Rock was Sulaymān the Magnificent (1520-1566). He was able to adorn the Dome of the Rock with Ottoman art through his gigantic project of placing decorative ceramic tiles on the whole of its exterior in order to replace the deteriorating Umayyad mosaics. The 45,000 tiles were placed on the outer façade of the Rock between 1545 and 1552 and gave it a beautiful and colourful glow on the outside. Its illustriousness became evident from afar and it was granted beauty equal to that of its interior mosaics. He later extended this decoration to the lower walls of the octagon (Meinecke, Micahel:1988, 257-360). The large inscription band that runs along the top of the drum and just under the golden dome is from Surat al-Isra' (Quran 17:1-20)and ends with a date 0f 1545-46 (Van Berchem 1927 233, no 239). According to another dated inscription originally above the outer north door of the Dome, Sultan Sulaymān later (in 1551) protracted the tile adornments to the lower walls of the octagon. (St. Laurant: Ottoman Jerusalem). Sultan Sulaymān also renovated the windows on the drum of the Dome in 1538.

The consecutive Ottoman sultans took great interest in the renovation and preservation of the Dome of the Rock during their lengthy period of rule. They thus created a special committee for the renovation of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque including the Imam, the building officer and the financial officer. (al-Aref: 1958).During the 16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ centuries the Dome of the Rock was renovated at least three times – by Sultan Mehmet III (1597), Ahmet I (1603) and Mustafa I (1617). Support for religious institutions and thus restoration projects remained reliant on the Waqf (al-Asali: 1989). Very little is known about 17$^{th}$ century renovations, however, fortunately much more is known about 18$^{th}$ century.

Beginning in 1705 and continuing until 1780, there were at least four major renovations of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque. There were restorations in 1705and in 1720-21 for Ahmed III (r.1703-30); in the autumn of 1742; in 1754 for Mahmud I (r.1730-54); and in 1780 for Abdul Hamid I (r. 1774-1789) (Al-Asali: 1989).

The most important of these restorations is the major one by Sultan Ahmed III in 1720-21 which is recorded in a document in the Turkish National Archives in Istanbul and includes orders, accounts and inventories dated between 1720 and 1736 . An inventory of 1734, included within the document indicates that tiles were found in storage under the Haram. They were no doubt extra tiles to be used in later restorations .

In 1742, another important renovation was initiated in the name of Sultan Mahmud I Another document in the *qadi sijillat* of Jerusalem in 1754 indicates that there was further restoration Of the Dome of the Rock (*The Guide Abrege du Dome du Rocher et de al_Haram al-Sharif* Jerusalem Auqaf Council 1966) Much time and expenditure was devoted to the restoration and replacement of the *qashani* or tiles of the Dome of the Rock . The Ya Sin inscription was restored from the south to the west to the end of the north

facades. This is the first noted restoration of the tile mosaic inscription with the extent of the work listed as 340 dhira' Sijill for 1742).

It is known that there were two periods of renovation of this inscription, which replaced the Umayyad mosaic with ceramic tiles on the west and north-west sides of the building (Van Berchem:1927 ). Megaw also discusses two periods of restoration tiles indicated by two qualities and suggests that the better quality tiles date from the period of Ibrahim I (1642-50) and the later ones to Abdul Aziz in 1875. (Megaw: 1946 ).

In 1780 -81 Sultan Abd al Hamid I (r. 1774-80) rebuilt the west entrance of the Dome and the inscription indicates that the supervisor was Haqqi Muhammad (Van Berchem 1927). Major restorations of the Haram's monuments continued through the reigns of succeeding Ottoman sultans. One of the most important was that of 1817-18; under the order of Sultan Mahmud II, Sulaymān pasha the wali of Saida carried out the this major renovation of the Dome of the Rock (al-Asali, 1989)

Some of the important renovations made during the Ottoman period include those achieved during the reigns of Sultan Abdul Majid I (1839-1861) and Sultan Abdul Aziz (1861-1875), whereby great restoration works took place over a lengthy period of time and they cost the treasury enormous amounts of money, as experts and architects were brought from abroad to strengthen and renovate the main building of the Dome including its interior and exterior decorations. (al-Aref, 1958).

During the reign of 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II (1876 – 1909) Surat Ya Sin was written on the outer lower octagon, on the façade of the Dome of the Rock. It was written on the tiles by the calligrapher Muhammad Shafiq in *Thuluth*, which is one of the most beautiful calligraphic styles. The Sultan also ordered that the monument have its floors fully covered with luxurious carpets. (al-Aref: 1958).

It is also worthy to note that the small dome to the west of the entrance to the cave, which was seemingly added during the Ottoman period is called the Prophet's hairs chamber; and the Shihabi family (a well-known old Jerusalemite family) was given the task of caring for these two hairs that are celebrated annually on the 27$^{th}$ of Ramadan.

Between 1936-1948 the Higher Islamic Council established by Hajj Amin Al-Husseini took up the responsibility for caring for the Dome of the Rock and it carried out the necessary renovations with the help of specialized experts. Renovations continued during the Jordanians' rule whereby the Jordanian government decreed in 1954 that the cabinet should appoint a committee to be responsible for renovating both Holy sites on the Noble Sanctuary. Since then the committee has been carrying out its job of carrying out restorations on the site.

# Chapter 4: The political conditions that induced the inscription of Surat Ya Sin.

## 4.1 The Caliphate

Throughout Islamic history, one of the unifying features of the Moslem world was the Caliphate. In 1517 the Caliphate was reassigned to the Ottoman family, who ruled the largest and most powerful empire worldwide in the 1500s. The Ottoman sultans did not really accentuate their role as Caliph for centuries. However, during the degeneration of the empire in the 1800s, a sultan came to power that would choose to recover the standing and authority of the caliphate. 'Abd al- Ḥamīd II was resolute in his determination to counter the regression of the Ottoman state by way of the restoration of Islam throughout the Islamic world and pan-Islamic unity founded upon the idea of a resilient caliphate. Nevertheless, his 33 year reign did not stop the inevitable fall of the Empire; but he managed to give the Ottomans a final period of comparative power in the face of European intrusion and colonialism, with Islam being the dominant emphasis of his empire.

From 1516 until the end of World War I, the whole region of western Asia was part of the Ottoman Empire. The splendid structure of the walls around the Old City of Jerusalem, renovated by the Ottoman sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent (1520-66), proves the magnitude of Jerusalem's standing in Ottoman eyes. Similarly illuminating is the sponsorship made in 1552 by Khasseki Sultan (known in Europe as Roxelana), the favourite and queen of Sulaymān . Seeking "the pleasure of Allah," she built a complex in Jerusalem "for the poor and the needy, the weak and the distressed" that encompassed a religious foundation "with fifty-five doors" and lodgings together with a public kitchen, bakery, stables, and storerooms. The endowment documents detailed the range of employees vital for running this institution – stewards, clerks, master cooks (and apprentices), food inspectors, dishwashers, millers, handymen, and garbage collectors. It defined in detail the menus to be served, the constituents to be used, and the amounts to be cooked. For the upkeep of the foundation, it reserved the proceeds from twenty-three Palestinian villages as well as those from a village in northern Lebanon, and shops and soap factories in Tripoli. Khasseki Sultan's public kitchen and bakery were still functioning under the British Mandate and continue to function to date. (Natsheh: Ottoman Jerusalem)

## 4.2 Ottoman Tolerance

The Ottomans conscientiously sustained the Muslim tradition of tolerance toward Christian religious interests in Palestine. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem was acknowledged in the sixteenth century as the custodian of the Christian holy places, and from about the same time France became the guardian of the Latin clergy. Like earlier Muslim powers, the Ottoman Empire opened its gates to hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Spain and other parts of the Christian world. But the vast majority, as in the earlier centuries after the Crusades,

did not choose to live in Palestine. Thus, the number of Jews in Jerusalem in the first century after the Ottoman conquest dropped from 1,330 in 1525 to 980 in 1587. Even by the middle of the nineteenth century, only a few Jews had taken the opportunity to settle in the Holy Land. Those who did so lived in the four cities of special significance to Judaism: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias. The Ottomans presided over a set of protocols and understandings, known as the "status quo", that governed rights and admittance privileges of Jews and Christians at their respective religious locations and shrines. These regulations and understandings were based on accustomed practice as it had accrued over the years. They included rights recognized by earlier Muslim rulers and the verdicts of Muslim courts in support of these rights, as well as Christian and Jewish commitment to abide by customary practice. (Armstrong: 1996)

The undertakings of European merchants in the towns of Palestine were unhampered by the Ottomans. The agriculture and industrial goods of the interior found their way to Europe by means of the ports of Gaza, Acre, and Jaffa. As before, the overland trade routes between Syria and Egypt passed through Palestine, while the pilgrimage roads to Mecca (whether from Cairo, Damascus or beyond) congregated at the port of Aqaba. By the mid-nineteenth century, many European powers had consulates in the country, and during the second half of the century Christian missions – Catholic, Protestant, and Greek Orthodox – flourished along with their schools, hospitals, printing presses, and hostels. In 1892 a French company completed the building of a railroad connecting Jaffa and Jerusalem. Of all the Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was the most exposed and accessible to Christian and European influences. (Armstrong: 1996)

## 4.3 The Capitulations

Particularly with the gradual decline of the Ottoman political and military power, this contact also had its disadvantages. The industrial revolution and the European economic infiltration of the region dealt a harsh blow to local crafts and industries, while enhancing European political leverage against Constantinople. One much-abused method for such political pressure was afforded by the so-called Capitulations – a system of extraterritorial privileges granted to nationals of European powers who lived in the Ottoman Empire. The early Zionist immigrants and settlers eventually made complete use of the Capitulations. (ibid)

## 4.4 The Ottomans, the Palestinian Arabs and the 1876 Constitution

In 1887-88, the area that in the future became Mandatory Palestine was divided into three administrative units: the district (sanjak) of Jerusalem comprising the southern half of the country and because of its importance to the Ottomans, the district of Jerusalem was governed directly by Constantinople; and the two northern districts of Nablus and Acre. The two northern districts were administratively linked to the province (vilayet) of Beirut. The area across the Jordan River (Trans-Jordan or Jordan) was administratively detached from the Palestinian districts and formed part of the

province of Syria, with Damascus as its capital. At this time the population of the three Palestinian districts was approximately 600,000, about 10 percent of whom were Christians and 90% mostly Sunnite Muslims. The Jews numbered about 25,000; the majority were profoundly religious, devoting themselves to prayer and contemplation and deliberately avoiding employment or agricultural activity. Until the initiation of Zionism, relations between Palestinians and Jews were unwavering and nonviolent, softened by more than a millennium of coexistence and often shared hardship (Khalidi: 1991). Despite all that the Zionists, and particularly Herzl was working hard to convince Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II to give up Palestine to the Jews.

Although proud of their Arab culture and lineage, the Palestinians considered themselves to be descended not only from the Arab vanquishers of the seventh century but also from indigenous peoples who had lived in the country since time immemorial, including the ancient Hebrews and the Canaanites before them. Politically their loyalty was to Constantinople, partially because the Ottoman sultan was also caliph and head of the Muslim community (Ummah) and also because they felt like citizens rather than subjects of the empire. Their feeling of citizenship was consequent to the fact that the Ottoman Turks had never colonized the Arab provinces in the sense of settling in them; thus among the Arabs Ottomanism had attained the inference of partnership between the peoples of the empire rather than that of dominance by one ethnic group over another. Nonetheless, relations between the diverse ethnic groups within the empire became increasingly tense during the period from the turn of the century to World War I, largely under the influence of mounting European nationalism. Both Arabs and Turks were affected by this climate, which reinforced the appeal of the specific ethnic and political identity of each. A powerful secondary influence on the same track was the Arab intellectual and literary renaissance that formed toward the end of the nineteenth century and emitted its sway from Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut. (Karpat:1974)

The announcement of the new Ottoman Constitution in 1876 (short-lived as it was) permitted the first elections to be held to the Ottoman Parliament, in which many representatives from the Arab provinces, including Palestinians from Jerusalem, took their seats. (It is ironic that Palestinians were sitting in the Parliament in Constantinople twenty years before the Zionists held their first congress in Basel in 1897.) Arabs, including Palestinians, were appointed to high office not only in the civil service, the diplomatic corps, the judiciary, and the army, but also as ministers in the Ottoman cabinet.

## 4.5 Zionist Pressures on 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II

During the 1880s a significant development in Eastern Europe began to cast its lengthening shadow on the future of the Palestinians. The phenomena of European nationalism and colonialism had stimulated a national political movement known as Zionism among an increasing number of East European Jewish intelligentsia. The Zionists yearned to escape from Jewish minority standing and the twin threats of integration and persecution. They saw that the attainment of territory where a Jewish sovereign state could be established as the means of national self-actualization and deliverance. The ancient Jewish association with and religious connection to Palestine

were considered as justifying its choice as the site for such a state, though some early Zionists were willing to consider alternative locations.

The Zionist resolution, late in the nineteenth century, to colonize Palestine with a vision of turning it into a Jewish state regardless of the existence and desires of its native population lead to the tempestuous modern period of Palestinian history, whose consequences are with us today. The course set by the Zionists was guaranteed to lead to conflict and tragedy, an outcome predicted by some Zionist leaders themselves. For Palestine was not an empty land. Its inhabitants lived in a score of cities and towns, and some eight hundred villages, built of stone. While the majority of the population earned their living from agriculture, the townspeople engaged in commerce and the traditional crafts; some were in the civil service, others in the professions. Many of the urban rich were landlords, but members of the older families were also in the upper tiers of the civil service, the judiciary, and the professions. The Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim, formed a proud and vivacious community that had already crossed the verge of an intellectual and national renaissance. They shared and reflected the cultural and political values of the neighboring Arab metropolitan centers. For centuries they had had trade links with Europe and interaction with Europeans who came as Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. For decades they had been exposed to modernizing influences and service in the European and Asian provinces of the Ottoman Empire had widened their horizons ( Howard:2001).

The Palestinians were as genuinely rooted in their country on the eve of the Zionist scheme as any citizenry or peasantry anywhere. The contemporaneous photographic collection of Félix Bonfils (1831-85) and his son Adrien (1860-1929) is visual evidence of this fact. No less telling is the substantiation of the many European artists and painters who visited Palestine before the advent of Zionism, e.g., William Henry Bartlett (1809-54), David Roberts (1796-1864), Edward Lear (1812-88), and William Holman Hunt (1827-1910).

The preliminary stages of Zionist activity in Palestine took place in spite of the escalating alarm and opposition of the Palestinians. The Ottoman authorities recurrently tried to legislate controls on Zionist mass immigration and land procurement only to be frustrated by the pressure of European powers, the corruption of their own local officials, the greed of individual landowners, and Zionist exploitation of the Capitulations system. The earliest tensions between Palestinians and Jews developed as a consequence of the colonizing program and stated political purposes of European Zionist immigrants. Enormous estates were purchased by the central Zionist institutions from feudal absentee landlords in Beirut, without the knowledge of Palestinian leaseholders and sharecroppers.

Theodor Herzl, the originator of the Zionist movement, personally requested from 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II special authorization to settle in Palestine in exchange for 150 million pounds of gold, which could have helped the Ottomans repay their colossal debts. Herzl's aims were not to settle there and live under Ottoman authority, he evidently wanted to launch a Jewish state whittled out of Muslim lands (as of course happened in 1948). 'Abd al Ḥamīd recognized that his role as caliph vitally required him to protect the sacredness and dominance of Muslim land, so he responded to Herzl as follows:

*"Even if you gave me as much gold as the entire world, let alone the 150 million English pounds in gold, I would not accept this at all. I have served the Islamic milla (nation) and the Ummah of Muhammad for more than thirty years, and never did I blacken the pages of the Muslims - my fathers and ancestors, the Ottoman sultans and caliphs. And so I will never accept what you ask of me."*

He further prevented the purchase of tracts of land within Palestine by Zionist organizations, ensuring that their attempts at establishing a foothold there were futile. Ultimately, the Zionists were allowed to purchase land and settle in Palestine after the reign of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II, when the Young Turk movement became in charge of the Ottoman Empire. (Armstrong: 1996).

## Chapter 5: The special significance of the Surah and the use of Islamic art on monuments to relay the message of Islam. Styles of Islamic calligraphy, especially *Thuluth* and Technical aspects of the inscription.

**Figure1: Part of the Ya Sin tile inscription currently on the Dome of the Rock (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

## 5.1 Introduction To Surat Yaseen

Sūrat Yāʾ-Sīn (Yaseen) is the 36th (chapter) of the Holy Quran. It has 83 ayahs and is one of the Meccan_surahs, although some scholars maintain that verse 12 is from the Medinan period. The name of the chapter comes from the two letters of the first verse of the chapter, which has caused much academic deliberation, and which Tafsir al-Jalalayn, a Sunni tafsir, interprets by saying, "God knows best what He means by these." Yā Sīn is also one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad, as reported in a saying of Ali, "I heard the Messenger of God say, 'Verily God has named me by seven names in the Quran: Muhammad [3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29], Ahmad [61:6], Tā Hā [20:1], Yā Sīn [36:1], thou enwrapped [al-Muzammil; 73:1], thou who art covered [al-Mudaththir; 74:1], and servant of God [ʿAbd Allāh; 72:19].", (Lumbard and Rustom: 2015).

The surah has 83 verses, 733 words and 2988 letters. It concentrates on establishing the Qur'an as a divine source, and it cautions of the fate of those that mock God's revelations and are obstinate. The surah tells us of the punishments that afflicted past generations of nonbelievers as a warning to present and future generations. Additionally, the surah reiterates God's sovereignty as exemplified by His creations through symbols from nature.

The surah ends with opinions in favor of the existence of Resurrection and God's sovereign power.

It has been proposed that Yāʾ-Sīn is the "heart of the Quran". The meaning of "the heart" has been the foundation of much scholarly discussion. The eloquence of this surah is conventionally regarded as representative of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. It presents the indispensable themes of the Qur'an, such as the sovereignty of God, the unlimited power of God as exemplified by His creations, Paradise, the eventual retribution of nonbelievers, resurrection, the struggle of believers against polytheists and nonbelievers, and the reassurance that the believers are on the right path, among others. (Tafsir al-Jalalayn: 2007). Yā Sīn presents the message of the Qur'an in an efficient and powerful manner, with its quick and rhythmic verses.

There are three main themes of *Yāʾ-Sīn*: *Tawhid*, the oneness of God; *Risala*, that Muhammad is a messenger sent by God to guide His creations through divine revelation; and the reality of *Akhirah*, the Last Judgment. 36:70 "*This is a revelation, an illuminating Qur'an to warn anyone who is truly alive, so that God's verdict may be passed against the disbelievers."* The surah recurrently warns of the consequences of not believing in the rightfulness or the revelation of Muhammad, and encourages believers to remain unfaltering and resist the mockery, oppression, and ridicule they receive from polytheists and nonbelievers. The arguments arise in three methods: a historical parable, a reflection on the order in the universe, and lastly a discussion of resurrection and human accountability.

The chapter begins with a confirmation of the legitimacy of Muhammad. For example, verses 2-6, "*By the wise Qur'an, you [Muhammad] are truly one of the messengers sent of a straight path, with a revelation from the Almighty, the Lord of Mercy, to warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, and so they are unaware*." The first passage, verses 1-12, focuses predominantly on promoting the Qur'an as guidance and establishing that it is God's sovereign choice who will believe and who will not. It is stated that regardless of a warning, the disbelievers cannot be persuaded to believe. 36:10 "*It is all the same to them whether you warn them or not: they will not believe."*

Surat Yāʾ-Sīn then continues to tell the tale of the messengers that were sent to warn nonbelievers, but who were rejected. Although the messengers declared that they were legitimate, they were accused of being ordinary men by the nonbelievers. 36:15-17 *"They said, 'Truly, we are messengers to you,' but they answered, 'You are only men like ourselves. The Lord of Mercy has sent nothing; you are just lying."* Upon his death, the third messenger entered Paradise, and lamented the fate of the nonbelievers. 36:26 *"He was told, 'Enter the Garden,' so he said, 'If only my people knew how my Lord has forgiven me and set me among the highly honored."* This surah is meant to warn the nonbelievers of the consequences of their denial, but verse 36:30 implies that regardless, the nonbelievers will not see. *"Alas for human beings! Whenever a messenger comes to them they ridicule him."* Ultimately, it is God's will who will be blind and who will see.

The following passage addresses the signs of God's supremacy over nature. This is presented by the sign of revived land, the sign of day and night, the sign of the arc and the flood, and the sign of the sudden blast that arrives on the day of judgment. 36:33-37 The sign of revived land follows:

*There is a sign for them in this lifeless earth: We give it life and We produce grains from it for them to eat; We have put gardens of date palms and grapes in the earth, and We have made water gush out of it so that they could eat its fruit. It is not their own hands that made all this. How can they not give thanks? Glory be to Him who created all the pairs of things that the earth produces, as well as themselves and other things they do not know about.*

The disbelievers do not recognize God's power in the natural world, although He is the one Creator.

The surah further addresses what will happen to those who reject the right path presented by Muhammad and refuse to believe in God. On the last day, the day of reckoning, the nonbelievers will be held accountable for their actions and will be punished accordingly. God warned the nonbelievers of Satan, and yet Satan led them astray. 36:60-63 *"Children of Adam, did I not command you not to serve Satan, for he was your sworn enemy, but to serve Me? This is the straight path. He has led great numbers of you astray. Did you not use your reason? So this is the fire that you were warned against."* Although God warned them against following Satan, the nonbelievers were deaf, and so now they will suffer the consequences of their ill judgments. 36:63 *"So this is the Fire that you were warned against. Enter it today, because you went on ignoring [my commands]."*

The surah proceeds to address the clear nature of the revelation and assure that Muhammad is a legitimate prophet. 36:69 states, *"We have not taught the Prophet poetry, nor could he ever have been a poet." Yāʾ-Sīn* concludes by reaffirming God's sovereignty and absolute power. 36:82-83 *"When He wills something to be, His way is to say, 'Be'—and it is! So glory be to Him in whose Hand lies control over all things. It is to Him that you will all be brought back. It is to God, the one Creator who holds everything in His hands, that everything returns.* The closing passage is absolute and powerful and carries an essential message of the Qur'an.

This Thirty-sixth ($36^{th}$) chapter of the Qur'an was revealed in the early part of what is termed the "middle" Makkan period (just before the Chapter of *Al-Furqan*).

1. This Surah is almost entirely devoted to the problem of man's moral responsibility and, hence, to the certainty of Resurrection and Allah's judgment: and it is for this reason that the Prophet called upon his followers to recite it over the dying, and in prayers for the dead. Several *Ahadith* have been quoted by Ibn Kathir to this effect at the beginning of his commentary (*Tafseer*) on this great chapter of the Noble Quran. *Surat Yaseen* is the most famous surah within the Holy Quran after surat *al-Fatihah*. However, not many know the meaning and explanation of these verses as explained by Prophet Muhammad. He has narrated many virtues that are unique to this surah. He described it as the heart of the Quran. It contains a number of key themes that are covered throughout the Holy Quran, such as the message of Islam to mankind, the relation of past nations with their respective Prophets, life after

death i.e. Resurrection, *Jannah* (Paradise), *Jahannam* (Hell), and the accountability of mankind on the Day of Judgment. This surah provides a proportionate representation of the fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam. (The Qur'an. A new translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem: 2004)

**Figure 2: Part of the Ya Sin inscription tiles from the Sultan Sulaymān period currently in the Islamic Museum (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

## 5.2 The History of Islamic Art and a comparison with Western art forms

One area where the brilliance of Muslim culture has been renowned worldwide is that of art. The artists of the Islamic world modified their vision to arouse their inner beliefs in a series of abstract forms, producing some amazing works of art. Rejecting the portrayal of living forms, these artists gradually established a new style noticeably deviating from the Roman and Byzantine art of their time. According to these artists, works of art are very much associated to ways of conveying the message of Islam rather than the material form used in other cultures. (Saoud: 2002)

Islamic art has attracted the attention of numerous Western scholars who gained good standing because of their contributions to the research and promulgation of the field.

Regardless of this positive facet, their work included an element of prejudice as they recurrently implemented Western standards and criteria to their assessment of the art produced throughout Islamic history. According to their opinions, far from contributing to the arts of its society, Islam has constrained, weakened and underrated artistic creativity. Islam is seen as obtrusive and restraining to artistic talent and its art is often judged due to the fact that it is denied permission to depict figures and natural or dramatic scenes. Such arguments demonstrate a serious misunderstanding of Islam and its approach towards art. The outlook that Islam encourages harsh and simple living and discards sophistication and comfort is an allegation often made by orientalist academics. This false claim is rejected by both the Qur'an and the example of Prophet Muhammad (al-Alfi:1969).

The Qur'an, for example, permits comfortable living if it does not lead the believer astray:

"*Say, who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for his servants, and the good things from among the means of sustenance"* (Qur'an 7:32).

This message is stressed again in another verse:

*"O you who believe! Do not deprive yourselves of the good things of life which Allah has permitted you, but do not transgress, for Allah does not love those who transgress."* (Qur'an 5:87).

The authentic saying of Prophet Muhammad which was narrated by al-Boukhari:

*"Allah is beautiful and loves beauty."*

This is perhaps the most vibrant interpretation of Islam's position towards art. Beauty, in Islam, is a quality of the divine. The Islamic scholar al-Ghazali (1058-1128) considered it to be based on two main criteria involving prefect proportion and radiance, while encompassing both outer and inner parts of things, animals and humans. (Saoud: 2002)

The other determinant factor influencing Western scholars' views on Islamic art is connected to the Greek-influenced approach which considers the image of man as the source of artistic creativity. Thus, portraits and sculptures of man were seen as the highest work of art. According to this view, man is nature's most magnificent and most beautiful creature and should be both the start and destination of human artistic endeavour. Successful works of art are those which explore the inner depth and external physical appearance of the human body. Perhaps the highest position given to man, in this art, is when divine beings are represented in his form, or when he is represented as being created in the image of the Deity. Islamic art, however, has a radically different outlook. Here, man is seen as an instrument of divinity created by a supremely powerful Being, Allah. (ibid)

Western academics often connect Islamic art to Greek and Byzantine heritages, as they do with many fields, claiming that the artists of the Muslim world only copied or borrowed from these two cultures their art and reproduced it in a Muslim "dress" of Arabesque and calligraphy. The Byzantine muse started in the early stages of the Muslim Caliphate when the Umayyad Caliphs Abdul-Malik and al-Walid I sent for Byzantine artists to adorn the Dome of the Rock (691-92) and the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (705-714). Byzantine influence is seen in the iconographic themes in the Dome of the Rock, as replicated in the mosaics of crowns and jewels of that mosque, which Grabar (1973) believed were imitating Byzantine symbols of power. These decorations were symbols of holiness, power and sovereignty in Byzantine art. Pursuing this theme, he says:

> "In other words, the decoration of the Dome of the Rock witnesses a conscious use by the decorators of this Islamic sanctuary of representations of symbols belonging to the subdued or to the still active enemies of Islam" (Grabar:1973).

However, Grabar later admits that the Arabs, both before and after Islam, used to offer their valuable possessions, including crowns, to the Ka'bah and hang them there.

With regards to vegetal images, in Grabar's view, once again. Islamic artists seem to derive from Byzantine portrayals of heaven as if they lacked any knowledge or literary description of it. He claims that Byzantine art was so complete and superior that the Muslims had to emulate it. Faced with the question of why the Muslims did not embrace figurative art, Grabar contended that they had to give it up because Byzantine art was superior and they could not compete with it. He says that:

> "The Umayyads could hardly in one generation acquire the sophisticated practice of imagery which characterised Byzantium. Faced with this dilemma, the Muslims tried both alternatives, but soon discarded imagery, and, as we have seen adopted the techniques of Byzantium without its formulas".

Grabar thus obviously overlooked the disapproval of Islam to imagery, which is exemplified in a number of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings (Grabar:1976, pp. 33-62).

Von Grunebaum, (1955) delivered a more all-inclusive interpretation arguing that the lack of imagery was due to the position of man in the Islamic religion. An important aspect of Muslim theology was the distinction of the attributes separating God, the Creator, and man, his preferred creature. Man is guided by and subject to his fate and therefore cannot reach the station of God, which other religions say he can accomplish. The central ideologies of art in Islamic culture are the declared truths that there is "no god but God" and "nothing is like unto Him"; His realm is neither space nor time and He is known by ninety nine attributes, including the First and the Last, and the Seen and the Unseen, and the All-Knowing:

> *Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting' Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what (appears to His creatures) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He will. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory) (Qur'an 2:255).*

This is perhaps the main dichotomy in the philosophy and attitude towards art between the Muslims and non-Muslims. With this approach, Islamic art did not need any figurative illustration of these conceptions. How can the Muslim portray God if he believes that He is the Unseen and nothing is like unto Him? Any artistic expression of these, either in natural or human forms, would undermine the meanings and the kernel of the Muslim faith. Subsequently, artists were involved in expressing this truth in a sophisticated system of geometric, vegetal and calligraphic patterns (al-Faruqi: 1953). Islam was the only religion that did not need figurative art and imagery to establish its concepts (Von Grunebaum: 1955).

Islamic art varies from that of other cultures in its form and the constituents it uses as well as in its topic and meaning. Western art historians were of the opinion that Eastern art, in general, is primarily concerned with colour, unlike that of western art, which is more fascinated in form. They described Eastern art as feminine, sensitive, and a matter of colour, in comparison to Western art which they saw as masculine, intellectual, and based on plastic forms which overlooked colour. Of course this echoed their cultural and artistic prejudice, as art in Islam never lacked intellectualism even in its simplest forms. The summons to observe and learn is found in both open and concealed messages in all its forms. Burgoyne (1987), in contrast, compared the art forms of Greek, Japanese and Islamic cultures and classified them into three groupings involving animal, vegetal, and mineral respectively. According to him, Greek art stressed proportion and plastic forms, and the features of human and animal bodies. Japanese art, alternatively, developed vegetal characteristics relating to the principle of growth and the beauty of leaves and branches. On the other hand, Islamic art is characterised by a correspondence between geometrical design and crystal forms of certain minerals. The main difference between Islamic art and that of other cultures is that it concentrates on pure abstract forms as opposed to the depiction of natural objects. These forms take numerous figures and patterns. Prisse (1978) categorised them into three types, floral, geometrical and calligraphic. Another classification was proposed by Burgoyne (1987) involving decorative stalactites, geometrical arabesque, and other forms. The three forms suggested by Prisse, appear, either alone or together, in most media, such as ceramics, pottery, stucco or textile.

## 5.3 Vegetal and Floral art

**Figure 3: Tile with floral decorations previously found around the Surat Ya Sin tiles on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock (Photo by Hisham Rajabi)**

While, Muslim art was not, of course, developed autonomously of influences from nature and the environment, its representation was abstract rather than realistic, as in Western art. This is clearly evident in vegetal forms where plant branches, leaves, and flowers were intertwined and interlaced into and often not distinguished, from the geometrical lines around them as seen in arabesque. The use of vegetal forms in Islamic art is also influenced to some extent by the Islamic prevention of the imitation of living creatures. However, this prohibition naturally decreases with the descent from human to animal to vegetable forms. Art critics describe the floral representations and adornments of the artists of Islam as conservative; lacking the properties of growth and the creation of life (Dobree: 1920). According to them, the

reason behind the nonappearance of growth was due to the natural environment of the Muslim countries, where the experience of spring, the season of plant growth is transitory. However, the religious prevention mentioned above was behind the absence of lifelike creation in much of Islamic floral art.

In the Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, which contain the first examples of Islamic vegetal art, we find more realistic representations of plants and trees, but these examples, as noted earlier, are regarded as Byzantine work for the Umayyad customers. Nevertheless, the vegetal ornamentation in Samarra Mosque (Iraq) shows how artists, in contrast, intentionally reproduced the vine leaves and branches in an abstract form. However, by the 13th century a more realistic method gradually developed in Muslim Persia and Turkey, influenced by the Chinese and the Mongols (al-Alfi: 1969).

The Muslims used vegetation with pronounced gracefulness especially around the arches and windows. The stucco borders used in the mausoleum of the Mamluk Sultan Qalawun, built in Cairo (Egypt) in 1284/85, consisted of buds and leaves arranged in a continuous scroll pattern. The vault also contained examples of other floral drawings set in rectangular and circular panels, a feature which became particularly popular in the 15th century (Poole: 1886). The use of this type of art extended to many decorative objects, such as pottery, and wood and leather carving as well as coloured tiles.

## 5.4 Geometrical Art

The second component of Islamic art encompasses geometrical patterns. The artists used and advanced geometrical art for two main reasons. The first reason is that it provided a substitute to the prohibited depiction of living creatures. Abstract geometrical forms were predominantly preferred in mosques because they encourage spiritual meditation, in contrast to portrayals of living creatures, which distract attention to the cravings of creatures rather than the will of God. Thus geometry became crucial to the art of the Muslim World, allowing artists to free their imagination and creativity. A new form of art, based exclusively on mathematical shapes and forms, such as circles, squares and triangles, arose.

The second reason for the advancement of geometrical art was the sophistication and fame of the science of geometry in the Muslim world. The recently discovered Topkapi Scrolls, dating from the 15th century, demonstrate the systematic use of geometry by Muslim artists and architects (Gülru: 1995). They also show that early Muslim craftsmen developed theoretical rules for the use of aesthetic geometry, denying the claims of some Orientalists that Islamic geometrical art was developed by accident (e.g. H. Saladin: 1899).

This geometrical art is very much connected to the famous concept of the arabesque, which is defined as "ornamental work used for flat surfaces consisting of interlacing geometrical patterns of polygons, circles, and interlocked lines and curves" (Chambers Science and Technology Dictionary 1991).

The arabesque pattern is composed of many units joined and intertwined together, flowing from each other in all directions. Each unit, although it is independent and complete and can stand alone, forms part of the complete design; a note in the general rhythm of the pattern (al-Faruqi: 1973). The most common use of arabesque is ornamental, comprising mainly, a two dimensional pattern, covering surfaces such as ceilings, walls, carpets, furniture, and textiles. From his study of 200 examples, Burgoyne (1987) determined that this style of art required a significant knowledge of practical geometry, which its practitioners must have had. In his opinion, the arabesque design is built up on a system of articulation and is eventually capable of being reduced to one of nine simple multilateral elements. The pattern may be built up of rectilinear lines, curvilinear lines, or both combined together, producing a cusped or foliated effect. It is reported that Leonardo da Vinci found Arabesque fascinating and used to spend extensive time working out complicated patterns (Briggs: 1924, p.178).

Arabesque can also be floral, using a stalk, leaf, or flower (*tawriq*) as its artistic medium, or an amalgamation of both floral and geometric patterns. The expression embodied in its interlacing pattern, cohesive movement, gravity, mass, and volume denotes infinity and produces a contemplative feeling in the spectator leading him slowly into the depth of the Divine presence (al-Alfi: 1969). Dobree (1920) explained the impact of Arabesque art as follows:

> "Arabesque strives, not to concentrate the attention upon any definite object, to liven and quicken the appreciative faculties, but to diffuse them. It is centrifugal, and leads to a kind of abstraction, a kind of self-hypnotism even, so that the devotee kneeling towards Makkah can bemuse himself in the maze of regular patterning that confronts him, and free his mind from all connection with bodily and earthly things" (quoted in Briggs:1924).

It is obviously evident that much of the credit for the development and the popularity of geometrical art goes to the artists of the Islamic world, although its origins are still debated. Claims have been made that primitive geometrical decoration was used in Ancient Egypt as well as in Mesopotamia, Persia, Syria, and India. The star pattern, for example, was widely used by the Copts of Egypt (Gayet: 1893), but the artists of the world of Islam were its all-time masters.

## 5.5 Calligraphy

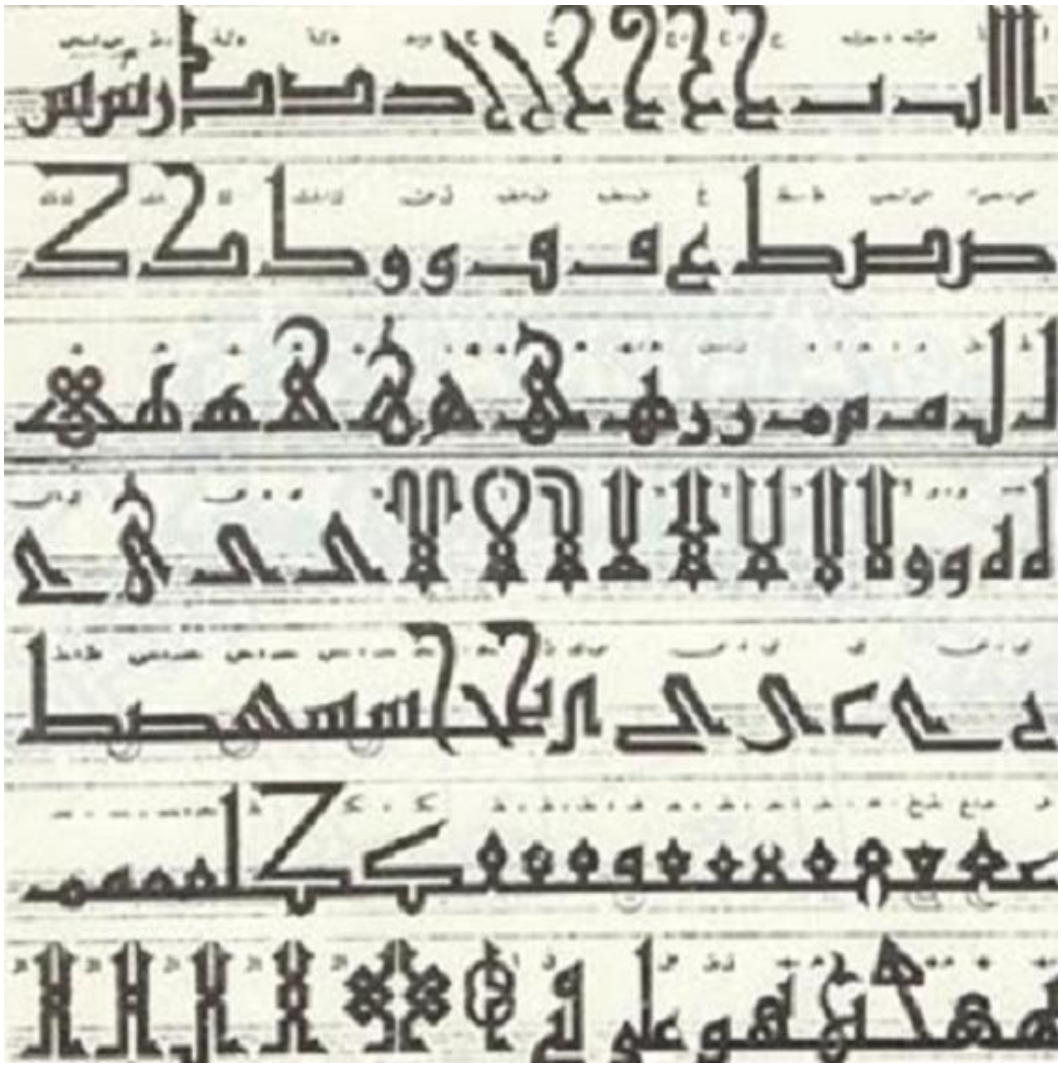

**Figure 4: Kufic Lettering (from al-Jiburi, 1974).**

The third ornamental form of art developed in Islamic culture was calligraphy, which consists of the use of artistic lettering, sometimes combined with geometrical and natural forms. As in other forms of Islamic art, Western scholars attempted to relate calligraphy to the lettering art of other cultures. The ornamental use of letters in both China and Japan seem to be an area of interest to them. Theories claiming that the development of Islamic calligraphy was influenced by the Chinese, uncertainly based on the pottery found in old Cairo (al-Fustat), seem to be ridiculous (Christie: 1922). The lack of any validated proof is clear evidence as are the wide differences between the two languages in the way and the direction they are written. The suggestion of any connection between Islamic calligraphy and ancient Egyptian is also implausible. It is true that the ancient Egyptians widely used hieroglyphics on wall paintings, but these had no decorative purpose (Briggs: 1924).

**Figure 5: Kufic calligraphy combined with floral and geometrical decoration with intersecting horseshoe arches. Plate on Cordoba Mosque façade (Muslimheritage.com).**

Calligraphy in Islam has always been considered one of the most significant forms of art. There was a belief that the Koran was first scribed in Arabic. For Muslims this holds a spiritual importance. Calligraphy was important because it did not have any visual images. In Islam, it is improper to have any visual picture that could be worshiped. Calligraphy was a highly valued practice. People wrote on paper that the Chinese invented. This paper was cheaper and easier to change colours on than other materials. A quill was the writing instrument used, which was made from reeds.

The most vital job of the calligrapher was to copy the Qur'an. When the first copies of the Qur'an were created they were immeasurably detailed and a few feet long. In mosques writing took place on the walls instead of in another presentation. The writings on the walls were usually verses from the Qur'an. This beautiful handwriting became so important that coins were decorated with it. As a leader's name became important to society, their faces became less important. After a while the leader's faces were substituted on coins with calligraphy. As the Islamic society augmented its usage of calligraphy the level of literacy rose. It even outdid medieval Europe. Even those who could not read calligraphy could understand the beauty behind it.

The improvement of calligraphy as a decorative art was due to a number of factors. The first of these is the standing which Muslims attach to their Holy Book, the Qur'an,

which promises divine sanctifications to those who read and write it down. The pen, a symbol of knowledge, is given a special import by the verse:

> "Read! Your Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who has taught the use of the pen, taught man what he did not know" (Qur'an 96:3-5).

This points out that the aim of Islamic calligraphy was not purely to provide decoration but also to worship and remember Allah. The Qur'anic verses mostly used are those which are said in the act of worship, or contain prayers, or describe some of the characters of Allah, or his Prophet Muhammad. Calligraphy is also used on dedication stones to document the establishment of some key Islamic buildings. In this case, a man is referred to as the founder, often a Caliph or an Emir, but he was intentionally described as poor to God or Slave of God, a reminder of his position before Allah.

The second reason behind the appearance of Arabic calligraphy is related to the importance of the Arabic language in Islam. The use of Arabic is obligatory in prayers and it is the language of the Qur'an and the language of Paradise (Rice: 1979). Furthermore, the Arabs have always attached a substantial importance to writing, stemming from their appreciation of literature and poetry. It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad said:

> "Seek nice writing for it is one of the keys of subsistence" and the fourth Caliph, Ali commented on calligraphy as:
>
> "The beautiful writing strengthens the clarity of righteousness" (both quotes from al-Jaburi: 1974).

In addition, the mystic power ascribed to some words, names and sentences as guards against evil also contributed to the development of calligraphy and its propagation. Arabic calligraphy was mostly written in two scripts. The first is the Kufic script, whose name is derived from the city of Kufa, where it was invented by scribes involved in the transcription of the Qur'an. They set up a famous school of writing. The letters of this calligraphy have a rectangular form, which made them well appropriate for architectural use. (al-Jaburi: 1974)

**Figure 6: Transcript of Naskhi calligraphy by Mahmud Yazre**

The other script of Arabic calligraphy is known as *Naskhi*. This style of Arabic writing is older than Kufic, yet it looks like the characters used by modern Arabic writing and printing. It is characterised by a round and cursive shape to its letters. The Naskhi calligraphy became more popular than Kufic and was significantly developed by the Ottomans (Al-Jaburi: 1974).

The early scripts in which Qur'ans were written were bold, simple and sometimes rough. Initially, they lacked the short-vowel indicators – so that a reader had to rely on context to know which vowel to insert in a given syllable – and were also without the system of dots, placed above or below certain characters, that distinguish s from sh, for example, or t from b, and so on. Again, only context could guide the reader in distinguishing certain similar letters from each other. The scripts used, from the seventh to the 11th century, were ultimately derived from those of the Hijaz, that is of Makkah and Medina. They can be broadly grouped into three main families: Hijazi, Kufic, and Persian Kufic.

**Figure 7: Early calligraphic scripts can be broadly grouped into three main families; Hijazi, Kufic and Persian Kufic.**

Hijazi, the ideal Qur'anic script, initially appeared in vertically-formatted pages, and is a large, thin variety with awkward vertical strokes, often sloping to the right. Kufic is usually written only in horizontal page formats, and is a totally stable form of script in which the base-line is the key element, with upward and downward strokes springing from it. Of all the early scripts, Kufic is the most majestic, and no faith was ever spread by a finer one. Its magnificence and stability reflect the classical period of Islam in which it was produced, when Islamic civilization had a perfect confidence in its dominance. As opposed to regional Hijazi and Persian Kufic, "true" Kufic was used from Islamic Spain all the way to Iran, a widespread script reflecting a universal civilization.

Persian Kufic appeared in the 10th century and survived until the twelfth. The system of vocalizing the script – marking the short vowels – and employing distinguishing dots, or points, were essentially those of modern Arabic. Thus, Persian Kufic employed the scheme used in contemporary cursive scripts like *naskh*, which we know was already being used to copy Qur'ans by the ninth century, though the earliest existing example is still the 1001 Ibn al-Bawwab copy of the Qur'an.

Western students of Islamic calligraphy have used the word "cursive" to differentiate scripts like *naskh*, *thulth*, *muhaqqaq*, and *rayhan*, which are cursive in appearance, from the Kufic family whose members are angular. However, medieval Muslim writers on calligraphy and the development of writing understood matters differently. According to their way of thinking, scripts other than Kufic could be classified into two broad categories:

*murattab*, meaning curvilinear, and *yabis*, or rectilinear. The rectilinear category included *muhaqqaq*, *naskh* and *rayhan* while *thulth*, *tawqi'*, and *riq'a* were considered curvilinear. This division was also the division between Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic scripts: Rectilinear scripts were – usually – employed for the sacred text, curvilinear ones for civil-service documents and correspondence. (Kvernen: 2009).

Islamic calligraphy is without doubt the most unique contribution of Islam to the visual arts, yet it is only recently that it has come to be respected in the West. Even among lovers of Islamic art, calligraphy has been the interest of a minority rather than the majority. But in past years exhibitions of Islamic art have included more and more examples of calligraphy, and there have been successful exhibitions devoted entirely to calligraphy.

**Figure 8: This painted wooden panel is inscribed 'Muhammad is the Guide' in oversize thuluth script. It was produced, probably for display in a mosque, by Sultan Ahmet III, ruler of the Ottoman Empire from 1703 to 1730. The inscription's final letter is forked like the double bladed sword that often appeared on Ottoman flags.**

For Muslim calligraphers, the act of writing – principally the act of writing the Qur'an or any part of it – was chiefly a religious experience rather than an aesthetic one. Most Westerners, on the other hand, can value only the line, form, flow and shape of the words that appear before them. Nevertheless, many recognize that what they see is more than an exhibition of skill with a reed dipped in ink: Calligraphy is the geometry of the spirit.

In the West calligraphy has always been a minor art. In Islam its standing is overriding, absorbing the creative genius that, in the West, went into religious and secular painting, sculpture and music. The holy nature of the Qur'an as the literal word of God, not a human document, gave the preliminary stimulus to the great creative

outburst of calligraphy which began in the seventh century and has sustained its momentum until now.

Calligraphy is found in all sizes, from immense to minuscule, and in all media. But the most important examples are those created on paper with a simple reed pen, called *qalam* in Arabic. The calligrapher, seated on the ground, with his paper supported by his knee, wrote in firm, sure strokes which showed his total physical and mental control over the pen. It took years of training and practice, but the ensuing masterpieces of outstanding calligraphy animated the admiration of high and low, were collected, preserved, and treasured, and were often bought and sold for the equivalent of the "old master" prices of our own times.

The history of Islamic calligraphy begins in the seventh century with the writing down of the Qur'an in a script originating from that of the Nabateans, a Hellenized, Arabic-speaking people from west of the River Jordan, the builders of Petra in Jordan and Madain Salih in Saudi Arabia. The Nabateans were creating rock inscriptions, in an alphabet identifiable as the one which would later be used to copy out the first Qur'anic texts, as early as the fourth century.

We know significantly more about the scripts of early Qur'ans since the discovery a few years ago of a huge hoard of Qur'anic pages and fragments in the Great Mosque of Sanaa, in Yemen. The manuscripts had become too ragged for further use, but, by tradition, the sacred character of Qur'anic texts prevents their destruction. These remains were therefore stored above the ceiling of the mosque, and are now being studied by the German scholars Gerd Puin and Hans-Caspar von Bothmer, both of whom have been deeply involved in the project to assist Yemen preserve this outstanding find. (Von Bothmer; Ohlig; Puin:1999).

## 5.6 Calligraphers

Calligraphers were among the most highly respected artists in Islamic societies, and this remains the case in many places today. Their status was based on the excellence of their work, but also on the prominence of their teachers. As a result, a literary tradition was established in which the history of calligraphy was conceived as a chain of transmission between masters and pupils, covering very long periods.

Training could take many years, with the novice learning to copy exactly models provided by the teacher. Only when the pupil had grasped the principles in this way could he or she – both men and women trained as calligraphers – become a master and begin to create new work. Learning calligraphy was therefore similar to apprenticeships in other crafts.

Many people who studied calligraphy were satisfied to stop their training when they knew enough to earn their living as copyists. Printing was introduced to the Islamic world gradually between the 18$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ centuries but the majority of books continued to be produced by hand for most of the Islamic period. Not all copyists were calligraphers, and many books were copied in untidy personal styles that did not

follow a set of rules. A book copied in a good, clear hand was therefore considered exceptional.

Others studied calligraphy to enter particular professions, such as that of chancery scribe. These men copied out official documents for the ruler, using distinctive styles of script. Some examples can be extremely impressive, and it was generally the case that the superiority and intricacy of the writing reflected the status of the document.

The calligraphers who advanced furthest produced the most sophisticated manuscripts. Their work was expensive and they generally worked on commissions from the richest members of society, especially sultans, shahs and other rulers. The best were often hired within a department of the ruler's palace dedicated to book production and associated tasks. Once the text was complete, the book was finished by other artists and craftsmen employed there, who produced the painted decoration and a rich binding.

The best calligraphers were also commissioned to create configurations that could be executed in other media. This was a different task from that of copying out a continuous text in a manuscript. The calligrapher had to bear in mind the space available and design the lettering to fill that space in a well-balanced way and according to the rules for the style of script. The calligrapher would work out the design on paper for transfer to the new medium (Bloom; Blair: 2009).

**Figure 9: Part of the Surat Ya Sin inscription currently on the Dome of the Rock (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

## 6.1 Symmetry and a gorgeous blending of colors

There is no doubt that the Dome of the Rock with its graceful dome, octagonal shape, and sound construction is unique in architecture, not only for the time it was built in but for all time. Its beauty, grandeur and symmetry have won the admiration of all those who have studied it in depth. Byzantine, Persian and Arab design and architecture are blended within it to create a magnificent whole. The blending of the three types of art is not surprising for all three peoples shared in the construction. Professor Hayter Lewis mentions in his book titled "The Holy Places of Jerusalem" that : "There is no doubt that the mosque is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. " It may also be added that it is one of the most beautiful recorded in history: and in "An Essay on the Ancient Topography of Jerusalem" by James Ferguson we can find the following appreciation:

> "The Mosque of the Rock is extraordinarily beautiful. I have visited many of the palaces and beautiful buildings in India, Europe and other places and as far as I can remember, I have not seen as magnificent a building as the Dome of the Rock. The symmetry and the gorgeous blending of colors I have not seen in any other building."

When the building was completed 100,000 dinars remained. Abdul-Malik offered this sum to the two men entrusted with establishing the building but they both refused to take it, saying :

> " We would rather give our own money and the jewels of our wives than take this. It would be better to use the money to make the building more beautiful." The order was then given to melt the gold and use it to cover the Dome. The Caliph also ordered a cover to be made of hair, wool and leather to protect the gold on the dome from the ravages of the weather and natural elements.

**Figure 10: Western view of the Dome of the Rock (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

## 6.2 Study of the features of the tiles removed from the Dome and currently within the Islamic museum

The decorations of the Dome of the Rock are a source of boundless pleasure and every aspect of these ornamentations calls for special study. The superb tiling is a matter of great interest and deserves a deep study of its history. The tiling is not as old as the mosaics and other decorations which are part of the original design of the mosque, but it goes back 450 years and thus covers about one third of the life of the building. This tile work is remarkably beautiful and the partly Persian workmanship is considered the best example of Persian tile work outside that country. It is safe to say that the original tile decoration was the work of Persian craftsmen in 1543 A.D during the Ottoman period. There are also Turkish tiles in prominent places in the mosque and these too are of superior craftsmanship, quality and colouring. Some of the Turkish tiles are from the famous Iznik factory but it is assumed that the Persian ones were made in Jerusalem by Persian artisans brought here for the purpose. A kiln found in the Najara vaults or al-Madrasa al-Farsiya (pulled down in 1939 when the eastern aisle of al-Aqsa was repaired) in the Haram area, is thought to be the place where they were fired, (Megaw: 1946, Appendix 5:1 and Appendix 5:5). Modern experts are of the opinion that the cautious shaping of the tiles and insertion of designs to fit into the architecture of the building could have been done only on the

spot.(*A brief Guide to the Dome of the Rock and al-Haram al-Sharif , the Supreme Awqaf Council, Jerusalem, 1962*)

**Figure 11: Tiles from ceramic inscription panel of the Dome of the Rock. Nazmi Al-Ju'beh "Tile from ceramic inscription panel of the Dome of the Rock" in Discover Islamic Art, Museum With No Frontiers, 2016**. http://www.discoverislamicart.org/database_item.php?id=object;

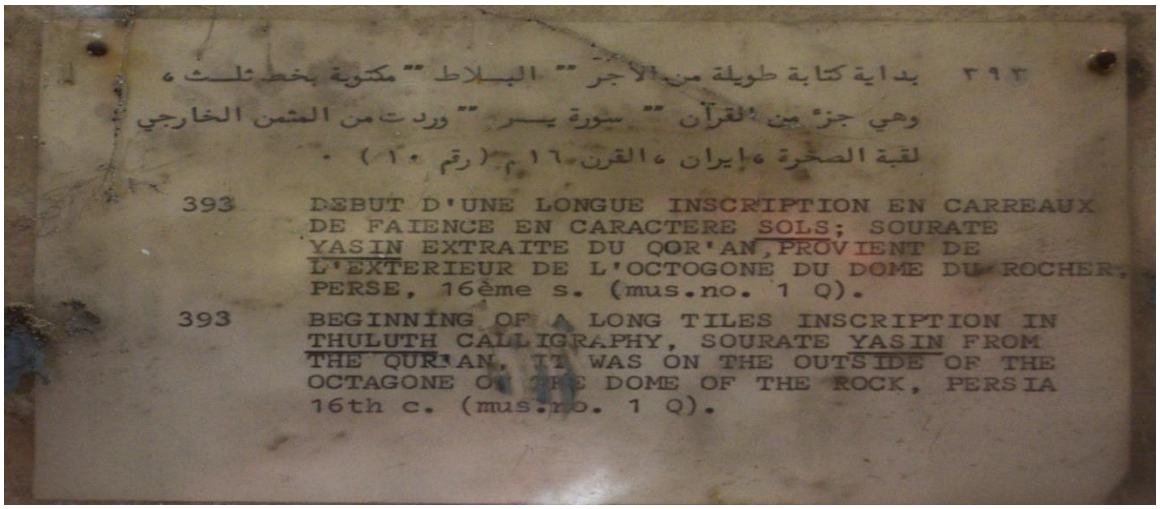


**Figure 12: Photo of the plaque beneath the tiles in figure 11 above placed by the UNESCO staff (photo by Hisham Rajabi)**

They have fine colours and are very detailed. They represent an early example of Ottoman ceramics, used generally in architecture during the period, and specifically in the Dome of the Rock. Monuments often had ceramic tile panels during the Ottoman period, in fact, such tile work is a distinguishing feature of Ottoman contributions to the restoration and renovation of holy places, not only in Jerusalem but also in places such as Mecca and Medina. It is worth noting that previous to these tiles, the outer octagon of Dome of the Rock was covered with a glass mosaic, which had deteriorated badly due to age, until Sulaymān the Magnificent ordered the removal of the damaged mosaic and replaced it with ceramic tiles.

**Figure 13: Umayyad mosaics previously on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock (Islamic Museum in al-Aqsa, photo by Hisham Rajabi)**

The inscription panel is dated. Jerusalem was narrowed down as the place of production for these tiles. This is supported by historical sources indicating the presence of a workforce and Ottoman ceramic tile-making kilns in the area. (Al-'Arif: 1955), (St. Laurent: 2000).

**Figure 14: Tiles from the Surat Ya Sin inscription found in the Islamic Museum on (al-Haram al-Sharif) the Holy sanctuary (These tiles are from Sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent period – the calligrapher was Ahmad Qurrah-Husari) (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

During the reign of Sultan Sulaymān the Great, between 1545 and 1585 the mosaics on the drum and outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock were replaced by tiles made on site at the Haram al-Sharif. Sultan Sulaymān the Great considered himself the cultural patron of his era and the new tile covering was a visual proclamation of Ottoman hegemony over Jerusalem. The Sultan sent Persian tile-makers to Jerusalem to produce the tiles. The original tiles were composed of coarse constituents and were very hard. They were formed in sizes larger than necessary and were trimmed down to fit into the places for which they were intended. Linking pins were used, holes sometimes one centimetre in diameter were made for them. However, the superior quality of these tiles is probably due to the glaze used in the mixture. The background is typically light and ranges between beige and even a subtle pink. The designs are definitely Persian in character with variety attributable to the individual tastes of the craftsmen who seem to have been allowed to exercise their own individuality or ingenuity. The colours used in the Dome inscriptions are predominantly white, cobalt, turquoise, brown, black and to a lesser degree green (St. Laurent: 2009).

**Figure 15: Another part of the Surat Ya Sin inscription from Sultan Sulaymān 's period (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

When the mosque was repaired by 'Abd al Hamid I in 1870, his tiles bore all the marks of the originals and it is thought that, at the time, there was a considerable quantity of tiles available that were left over from the first ones that were made. The few new tiles used in inscriptions are not of the same quality, being inferior to the original ones, but they are at

least better than the ones used in later periods. 'Abd al Hamid I had brought craftsmen from Damascus for this repair as they were supposed to have experience in the renovation of the beautiful mosques there. It is probable that these repairs were made chiefly on the western side of the building, as his inscription is found there (St. Laurent: 2009).

Forty years later, Sultan Mahmud carried out tile renovations and it is difficult to know how wide-ranging they were, but they probably extended to all sides of the building. The tiles of that period show a noticeable inferiority to the earlier ones as they are thin and of a coarse gritty texture. The colours are weak and tend to run. The tiles lack the clear beauty of the previous ones in design and technique and the artisanship is modest. These tiles were probably made in the Najara vaults in Jerusalem by Damascus craftsmen who attempted to emulate the original types but regrettably, were not able to master the ancient method (St. Laurent: 2009) .

The next major repairs on the tiles were carried out by the Sultan 'Abd al 'Aziz from 1872-75. They seem to have included all the buildings. However, the extent of these works might be responsible for the fact that the tile work is of inferior quality. The tiles are mostly thin, fragile and break easily. It seems that no attempt was made to commit to the original methods and the new designs of Sultan Mahmoud were incorporated rather than the more ancient ones. New colours are also introduced and a completely new method was used. Only a few original designs were imitated such as the lily and lotus, the flower in star and the Turkish tulip, but the colours were not closely followed. The tiles of this period were obviously made in Istanbul, as Arabic numerals are painted on the backs and they had been made according to specifications. Despite the fact that this meant a great deal of work and careful planning, the tiles that were produced have been the least able to withstand the weather of any tiles used. (*A brief Guide to the Dome of the Rock and al-Haram al-Sharif , the Supreme Awqaf Council, Jerusalem, 1962*)

'Abd al-Ḥamīd II placed gorgeous Persian carpets in the Dome of the Rock and a chandelier which used to hang over the Rock but was removed to al-Aqsa in 1951. He also renovated the tiles of a chapter from the Qur'an, Surat Ya Sin, inscribed on the outer octagon in 1876 A.D. The writing was done by a famous Turkish calligraphist called Muhammad Shafeeq, who was selected from a large number of competitors, the porcelain tiles on which this was written were brought from the province of Kashan in Persia. Muhammad Shafiq was a major Ottoman calligrapher who excelled in instructional calligraphic pieces. The calligrapher Muhammad Shafiq was the son of Sulaymān Maher Bek. He was born in the Bishk Tash area of Istanbul in 1235 Hijri. His calligraphy teacher was Ali Wasfi affandi one of the famous calligraphers Omar Wasfi's students. After Ali Wasfi Affandi died he joined the lawyer Mustafa Izzat's (who was his aunt's husband) offices. He worked as a scribe in these offices for 30 years until he learnt all forms and types of calligraphy. Then he was chosen by Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II to teach calligraphy in 1251 H and was commissioned by him to inscribe Surat Ya Sin on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock as he won a calligraphy competition held by the Sultan for that purpose . He also repaired paintings in the Great Boursa Mosque in 1256 H. He also copied two Qur'ans . He is considered one of the most distinguished and creative Turkish

calligraphers who perfected the following styles – Thuluth, Jaliyy, Naskh and Diwani. He was very famous for his steady hand and exact formations that could ascertain spaces and their use even when writing the most complicated calligraphy. He was also famous for innovating combined formations with different styles of calligraphy and of making "mirror image" styles.

**Figure 16: Sample of Muhammad Shafiq's work**

The tiles used in the Surat Ya Sin inscription are of the four colour glazed range, which include green and turquoise for ornamental components. The inscription itself encompassed three rows (however, I would like to mention that those from the Sultan Sulaymān period are three and a half as can be noted from the pictures below) of square tiles (25x25cm.), surrounded above and below by ornate tiles. The tiles of the original *Ya Sin* inscription were substituted in a refurbishment of 1876. The originals survive in the Islamic Museum. (St. Laurant: in Ottoman Jerusalem)

**Figure 17: Tiles from the Ya Sin inscription from Sulaymān the Magnificent's period (photo by 'Abdallah al-'Azzeh)**

**Figure 18: Tiles from the Ya Sin inscription similar to those from 'Abd al-Hamid II's period (photo by 'Abdallh al-'Azzeh)**

When comparing figures 17 and 18 above, which are the same part of the Surah one can note the great differences in the colours, size, decorations and style. The original tile adornment was the work of Persian craftsmen in 1543 A.D during the Ottoman period. There are also Turkish tiles in noticeable locations in the monument and these too are of

loftier artistry, quality and colouring. Some of the Turkish tiles are from the famous Iznik factory but it is supposed that the Persian ones were made in Jerusalem by Persian artisans brought here for the purpose. The tiles in figure 17, i.e. from the Sultan Sulaymān period have a simple painted white framing, whilst those in figure 18 have a ridged frame of two rows of light blue quarter tiles, one more protruding than the other.

Additionally the background colouring of the tiles differs a great deal – the tiles in figure 17 have a dark blue background that is inscribed upon with a stark white colour and behind the white calligraphic inscription there are spiral floral formations. Those in figure 18, i.e. from Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II period have a lighter shade of navy blue in the background and lack the spiral decorations. Moreover, the arrangement of the letters in the calligraphy has many differences.

**Figure 19 : Another part of the Surat Ya Sin inscription from Sultan Sulaymān 's period (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

**Figure 20: Another part of the Surat Ya Sin inscription from Sultan Sulaymān 's period (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

## 6.3 The importance of Documentation and Recommendations

The tile encasement on the outer octagon of the Dome of the Rock placed by Sulaymān the Magnificent constituted a stamp of Ottoman imperial identity in the lands of early Islam at a time when the Ottomans sought to establish Sunni Ottoman hegemony in a period of intense conflict with their Safavid neighbours (Necipoglu: 1990, 154). Similarly, Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II renovated the Surat Ya Sin inscription at a time when he felt it necessary to reinstate Islamic precedence in Bilad al-Sham as he adopted a policy of pan-Islamism in opposition to Western intervention in Ottoman affairs.

Thus currently it is of utmost importance to both follow up the upkeep of renovations, and at the very least, to document what has previously been achieved in order to protect our heritage. This being due to the fact that the whole area of al-Aqsa Mosque is being continuously violated by the Israeli occupying forces, Israeli settlers and members of extremist organizations.

The obvious recommendation therefore is that the tiles from the various periods and renovations be housed in a building and that they be electronically documented and categorized for further reference and in case of future calamities. Another recommendation could be to also study the available historical pictures by early photographers such as Bonfils and others which could assist in categorizing the tiles and restorations of, at least the last century and a half.

**Figure 21: Photo by Eric Matson 1934 depicting the generally dilapidated state of the monument and plaza**

**Figure 22: Photo by Felix Bonfils 1856 showing many missing tiles and the dire need for repair of the whole monument**

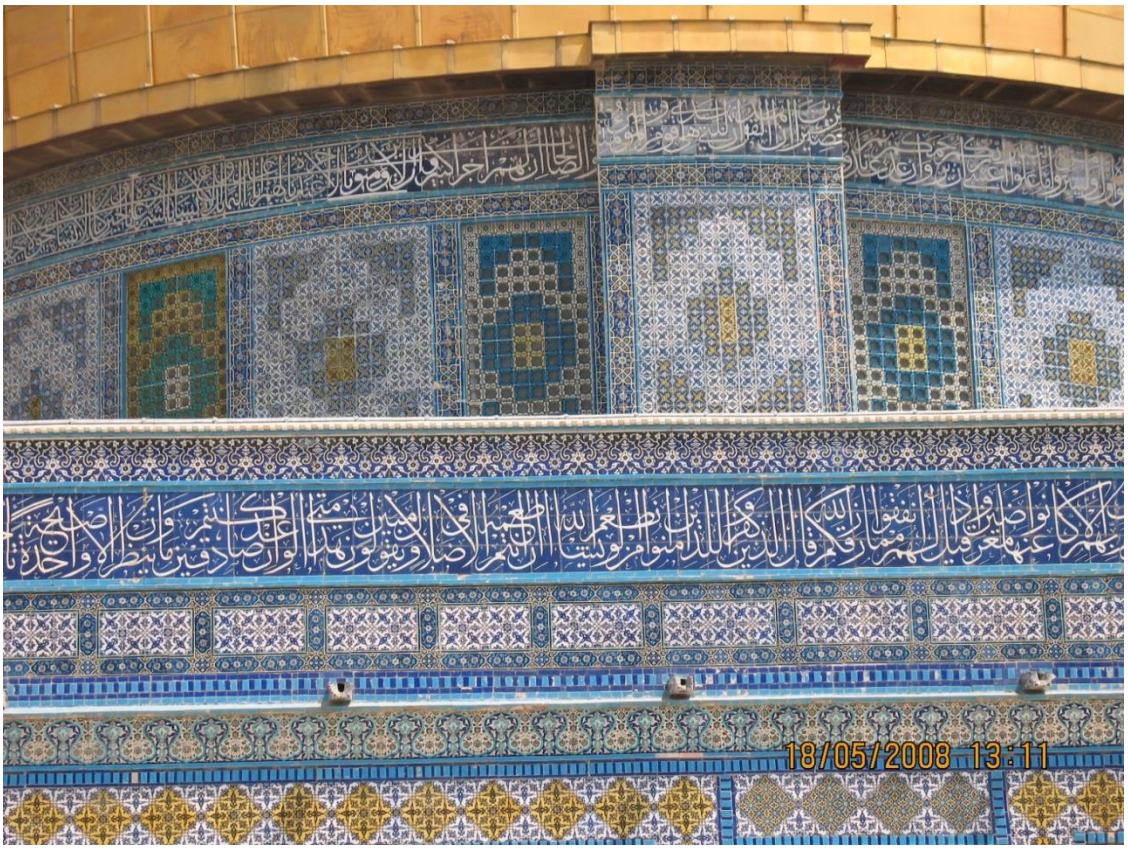


**Figure 23: The tile inscription of Surat Ya Sin currently on the Dome of the Rock in Thuluth style (from "Abdallah al-'Azzeh's photo collection**

**Figure 24: Tiles with the calligrapher, Muhammad Shafiq Bek's oval shaped signature with the date 1293 H. (1876 A.D.) below it. (photo by 'Abdallah 'Azzeh)**

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Figure: The Dome of the Rock – The Holy Sanctuary, Jerusalem – (Photo from Mr. Abdullah al-'Azzeh's collection)