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Ḥatam, Barzaḥ, and the Hereafter: Considerations for an Iconographic Analysis of the Eight-Fold Marīnid Zillīḡ

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ABSTRACT

[Ḥatam, Barzaḥ, and the Hereafter](#)

[Considerations for an Iconographic Analysis of the Eight-Fold Marīnid Zillīġ](#)

María Antonieta Emparán Fernández

This study explores the geometric and symbolic dimensions of the eight-fold *zillīġ* patterns in Marīnid madrasas, particularly al-ʿAṭṭārīn and Bū ʿInāniya, and their connection to eschatological themes. Grounded in a multidisciplinary approach, the analysis reveals how these ornamental designs serve as visual manifestations of intellectual, spiritual, and cosmological ideas within the Marīnid elite. By integrating geometric principles with Qurʾānic inscriptions and Sufi notions of *zāhir* and *bāṭin*, the patterns are interpreted as pedagogical tools for contemplation and spiritual ascent, exclusive to the madrasa's scholarly community. Furthermore, the study contextualizes these patterns within broader Marīnid strategies of power legitimization, linking them to key sites such as the Dome of the Rock and Shālla. The findings contribute to understanding the interplay between art, symbolism, and intellectual culture in pre-modern Islamic societies, demonstrating how geometry transcends ornamentation to embody profound metaphysical and eschatological significance.

KEYWORDS

Marīnid Dynasty, *Ḥatam*, *Barzaḥ*, Hereafter, *Zillīġ*

Ḥatam, Barzaḥ, and the Hereafter

Considerations for an Iconographic Analysis of the Eight-Fold Marīnid Zillīġ

1 Introduction

¹ The Marīnid dynasty (1244–1465), as part of its strategies for legitimising power, focused on constructing madrasas where the intellectual elite of Marīnid society were educated free of charge. This was made possible through a system of endowments established by the sultans, who allocated the revenues from specific commercial enterprises to fund the operation of these institutions. These madrasas included dormitories to accommodate students from other cities, and students were also provided with bread, oil, and distinctive clothing that identified them as part of the intellectual class.

² Most of these madrasas were dedicated to the teaching of traditional sciences, primarily focusing on Islam and law. However, two of them also offered instruction in foreign sciences. These two madrasas stand out for their exceptional ornamental programs, setting them apart from the others. They are the madrasas of al-‘Attārīn and Bū ‘Inānīya (Fez, Morocco). Both feature highly complex geometric ornamentation that not only reflects the refinement of crafts, as described by Ibn Ḥaldūn (1332–1406) in his account of the development of crafts in sedentary societies, but also highlights the intellectual sophistication achieved by Marīnid society.

³ The geometric patterns found in the *zillīġ* are, however, exclusive to the academic community of the madrasas, as they are located within the central courtyards, spaces accessible only to students and teachers. As we shall see, and as the madrasas themselves suggest, this academic community possessed the ability to see beyond the apparent design of the *zillīġ*, comprehending not only the geometric complexities of the patterns but also their symbolic implications.

⁴ This theory of a symbolic language within geometric ornamentation is grounded in the work of anthropologist Dorothy Washburn¹, who argues that every society has an exclusive group capable of decoding the symbolic message embedded in geometric ornaments. Similarly, the ways of seeing that each culture develops, as proposed by

¹ Washburn 1998; Washburn 1999; Washburn 2003; Washburn – Crowe 2006.

anthropologist Alfred Gell², must be taken into account when analysing artistic works. Within this framework arises the duality of *zāhir* and *bāṭin*, elements deeply embedded in the Marīnid intellectual elite. This suggests that art not only conveys a message but also has a specific intended audience. Consequently, the geometric patterns of the *zillīġ* in both al-‘Aṭṭārīn and Bū ‘Inānīya are directed toward the »possessors of intellect« (*ulū al-albāb*).

2 Epigraphic Inscriptions

5 A series of epigraphic inscriptions in the central courtyard of the madrasa directly reference the hereafter and prescribe the correct attitude required to gain entry into paradise. Both the al-‘Aṭṭārīn and al-Bū ‘Ināniyya madrasas feature Qur’anic inscriptions, including a unique phrase that appears in neither other Marīnid madrasa. This repeated phrase, drawn from Qur’ān 3, 190–191, reflects several key aspects: the intellectual capacity of the students in these institutions, the nature of the sciences taught within their walls, and the hermeneutical skills cultivated by both students and masters. Furthermore, this phrase supports the hypothesis that the geometric ornamentation in these madrasas contains a symbolic code accessible only to their students and instructors – those granted the privilege of engaging with the *zillīġ* within the madrasas. In al-‘Aṭṭārīn (Fig. 7), this inscription frames the entrance to the vestibule on the northern wall, displayed within three plaster cabochons. This inscription is also found in plaster on the gallery walls, positioned between the *zillīġ* and the plaster ornamentation. Additionally, it reappears in the prayer hall, also rendered in plaster. Similarly, in the Madrasa Bū ‘Ināniyya (Fig. 8), this inscription is located on three plaster bands that frame the entrance to the western hall³.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأُخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُوبًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا تُشَبِّحُكَ فَقَتَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ.

Truly in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variation of the night and the day are signs for the possessors of intellect, who remember God standing, sitting, and lying upon their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, ‘Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain. Glory be to Thee! Shield us from the punishment of the Fire⁴.

6 *Ulū al-albāb* (singular: *lubb*) literally means possessors of the kernels (core), employing the symbolism of a nut to signify those who see beyond the outer shell, thereby accessing the inner truth⁵. The mention of »standing, sitting, and lying« serves as one of the textual foundations for the Sufi practice of dhikr, performed continuously in all moments and circumstances⁶. Regarding the symbols in the heavens, on the earth, and in the alternation of day and night, it is noteworthy that the first teacher of al-‘Aṭṭārīn

2 Gell 1998. Interestingly, Péter Tamás Nagy also applies the same theory to analyse Šalla as a work of art in his doctoral thesis: Nagy, unpublished, 4. I would like to thank Péter Tamás Nagy for granting me access to his doctoral thesis, which is still in the process of being edited for publication, enabling me to write this article.

3 Qur’ān 3, 190–191. All the inscriptions mentioned here are referenced in the doctoral thesis of: Aouni 1991. In his argument as to why philosophy is not only authorised by the *šārī*, but recommended by it, or rather set as an obligation for the intellectual elite, Ibn Rušd (Averroes, 1126–1198) quotes this very verse, along with others, at the beginning of his treatise. Cf. Averroes 2017, 51; further on this topic, the forthcoming article »The Aesthetics of Allegory. I. Rhetoric versus Demonstration in the Hermeneutics of Images in Classical Islam« proposes an aesthetics of allegory in classical Islamic art, examining the hermeneutics of literary images in key thinkers, starting with Ibn Rušd, and the Marīnid Sultanate’s use of geometric art in madrasas as a visual representation of Islamic cosmology, accessible primarily to the intellectual elite (Emparán Fernández, forthcoming b).

4 Paret 2007; cf. Nasr 2015.

5 Nasr 2015, 2:179.

6 Nasr 2015, 3:191.

was Ibn Bannā' al-Marrākuṣī (1256–1321), a renowned astrologer, astronomer, geometer, and expert in the occult sciences. As for al-Bū 'Ināniyya, it is important to recall the intrigue that facilitated Abū 'Inān's (r. 1348–1359) usurpation of power from his father, Abū al-Ḥasan (r. 1331–1351), based on a horoscope predicting a grim fate for the dynasty under the latter's rule⁷.

⁷ In the vestibule (Fig. 7), displayed within four wooden cabochons, is an especially striking inscription that exhorts young students to uphold moral conduct. Positioned at a key transition point, this admonition confronts students entering the central courtyard, whether coming from the outside or from the dormitories for those residing within the madrasa. This Qur'anic verse is particularly outstanding as it calls for the remembrance of God through fear of His wrath and punishment, specifically in response to immoral sexual behaviour. It is also part of a broader series of exhortations within al-ʿAṭṭārīn, emphasizing gratitude and hope, even in times of hardship. This is reflected in the call to contribute, despite adversity, a theme that resonates with the historical context of the madrasa's construction, during which the city of Fez endured catastrophic floods⁸.

اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ص 10 اللهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ
 وَسَلَّم تَسْلِيمًا سَارِعًا¹¹ إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ
 عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ
 فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِيقِ وَالْعَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا
 فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ
 فَأَسْتَفْقَرُوا لِدُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرِ الدُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ¹²

And be quick to (obtain) forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden – its width (is like) the heavens and the earth – prepared for the ones who guard (themselves), who contribute (alms) in prosperity and adversity, and who choke back their anger and pardon the people. God loves the doers of good, and those who, when commit immorality or do themselves evil, remember God and ask forgiveness for their sins – and who forgives sins but God? – and do not persist in (doing) what they did, when they know (better)¹³.

⁸ Around the courtyard (Fig. 7), both in ceramic tiles and plaster, Qur'anic texts are inscribed on the walls of the galleries as well as on the pillars. All the Qur'anic inscriptions are thematically linked to prayer and the constant remembrance of God. Due to spatial constraints, only the verses will be mentioned in the order of their appearance, following the sequence of their recitation. In *zillīġ*, the following verses are found:

- Western façade, southern section: Qur'an 33, 56
- Southern pillar, western section: Qur'an 42, 20
- Southern pillar, eastern section: Qur'an 29, 45
- Eastern façade, southern section: Qur'an 35, 29–30
- Eastern façade, northern section: Qur'an 35, 31–32
- Northern pillar, eastern section: Qur'an 20, 132
- Northern pillar, western section: Qur'an 2, 238
- Western façade, northern section: Qur'an 35, 34.

⁷ In a forthcoming article titled »Ornament and Power. The Bū 'Ināniya Mosque–Madrasa (1350–1355) in Fez as a Panegyric to Sultan Abu 'Inān«, this topic is explored in greater depth, drawing on Ibn Ḥaldūn's critique of astrology as a disruptive force undermining the proper functioning of governments and societies. (Emparán Fernández, forthcoming c).

⁸ Aouni 1991.

⁹ »I seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan«. Cf. Qur'an 16, 98.

¹⁰ *Basmala*.

¹¹ *Ṣalawāt: ṣallallāhu ʿalā sayyidīnā Muḥammad wa ʿalayhi wa sallam taslīman*.

¹² Qur'an 3, 133–135.

¹³ Droge 2013.

9 In plaster, the inscriptions on the pillars (Fig. 7) are as follows:

- Southern pillar, western section: Qur'an 4, 103
- Southern pillar, eastern section: Qur'an 22, 78
- Northern pillar, eastern section: Qur'an 24, 37
- Northern pillar, western section: Qur'an 31, 17.

10 At the threshold between the courtyard and the prayer hall, on both *zillig* panels (Fig. 7), a Qur'anic text referring to prayer is inscribed: Qur'an 33, 41–43.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

You who believe! Remember God often and glorify Him morning and evening.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

He (it is) who prays over you, and His angels (do too), to bring you out of the darkness to the light¹⁴.

11 The Madrasa Bū 'Ināniya, unlike earlier madrasas constructed by the Marīnid dynasty, benefits from a significantly larger space for the inclusion of epigraphic inscriptions. It contains a total of 22 inscriptions (counting distinct bands and cabochons of a single text as one inscription). Of these, ten are political or sovereign in nature, explicitly naming Sultan Abū 'Inān¹⁵, excluding the marble slab bearing the foundation inscription. This marks a departure from previous Marīnid madrasas, where Qur'anic texts were predominant. In Bū 'Ināniya, however, only two Qur'anic texts are present, while the ten remaining consist of eulogies.

12 The first Qur'anic text had previously appeared in al-'Aṭṭārīn, highlighting a direct connection to this madrasa built by Abū 'Inān's grandfather. This link is further emphasised through the repetition of the most intricate geometric pattern from al-'Aṭṭārīn, reinterpreted in a simpler form to suit the ornamental context of Bū 'Ināniya¹⁶. The second Qur'anic inscription is carved into wood, forming long bands that stretch across all four walls (Fig. 8). These bands are positioned directly beneath the consoles of the awning, emphasising their prominence within the architectural framework.

اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِنَّا¹⁸ فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا لِيُفَوِّرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيمًا هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزِدُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ¹⁷ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَبُكَرَّتْ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا وَبُعْدَتِ الْمُتَنَفِّقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ يَا اللَّهُ ظَنَّ السُّوءِ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السُّوءِ وَعَظِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيمًا حَكِيمًا

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا لَتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَتَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُتُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شِعَلْنَاتِنا أَمْوَالنا وَأَهْلوانا فَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَنَا يَقُولُونَ بِالسِّيئَةِ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَ قَمَن يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مَنَ اللَّهُ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ صَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزَيَّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَّتُمْ ظَنَّ السُّوءِ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا وَمَنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَعِيرًا وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُعْزِزُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا¹⁹

14 Droge 2013.

15 The reasons behind this innovation, as well as the emphasis on political inscriptions highlighting the figure of Sultan Abū 'Inān, are explored in greater depth in the aforementioned forthcoming article.

16 Both geometric patterns are the subject of analysis in an upcoming article titled, »Let No One Ignorant of Geometry Enter Here! Who Drew the Marīnid Geometrical Patterns?« (Emparán Fernández, forthcoming d).

17 »I seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan«.

18 *Basmala*.

19 Qur'an 48, 1–14.

We have given you [s] a clear victory, That God may forgive you [s] your past sin and your sin which is to come, and that He may complete His blessing to you and guide you on a straight path, and that God may help you with mighty help. [It is] He who sent down the reassurance into the hearts of the believers that they might add faith to their faith – to God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth; God is Knowing and Wise – That He may admit the believers, men and women, to gardens through which rivers flow, in which they will remain for ever, and that he may redeem their evil deeds for them. That is a mighty triumph with God. And that He may punish the hypocrites, both men and women, and those, both men and women, who associate others with God, who think evil thoughts about God. Against them is the evil turn of fortune. God is angry with them and has cursed them and has prepared for them Jahannam – an evil journey's end. To God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth. God is Mighty and Wise. We have sent you [s] as a witness and a bearer of good tidings and a warner, that you [p] may believe in God and His messenger and support Him and revere Him and glorify Him morning and evening. Those who swear allegiance to you [s] are swearing allegiance to God. The hand of God is above their hands. Whoever breaks his oath breaks it against himself; but whoever fulfils the covenant he has made with God, He will give him a mighty wage. The *bedu* who were left behind will say to you [s], ›Our possession and households kept us busy; so seek forgiveness for us.‹ They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say, ›Who possesses anything that will avail you [p] against God, if He desires harm for you or desires benefit for you? No. God is informed of what you [p] do. No. You [p] thought that the messenger and the believers would never return to their households. That was made to seem fair in your hearts. You had evil thoughts and you were a corrupt people.‹ Those who do not believe in God and His messenger – We have prepared a blaze for the unbelievers. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He forgives those whom He wishes and punishes those whom He wishes. God is Forgiving and Compassionate²⁰.

3 Hereafter

¹³ According to the Qurʾān, humans are destined to rise again in the very form they occupied during their earthly existence, once the Archangel Isrāfīl²¹ has sounded his trumpet on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. All deeds and actions performed in this life are believed to be meticulously recorded by honourable, watchful scribes who observe every individual's conduct. Each person is thought to possess a personal register that will one day be unveiled with the directive to examine its contents. Entire communities are likewise said to have their own collective records. In keeping with the notion that humanity (as well as the jinn) can be broadly divided into three categories – those who reject faith, ordinary believers, and the most exemplary believers – people will ultimately be grouped into three classes on the final day: one destined for punishment, another for paradise, and a foremost category that will be granted the first share of heavenly bliss²².

²⁰ Jones 2007.

²¹ About Isrāfīl cf. Al-Suyūṭī 2019, 128–131.

²² Günther 2020, 477–479.

3.1 Barzah

14 Between *al-dunyā* and *al-āhira* lies an intermediate realm or time known as *barzah*, which serves as a prelude to the Day of Reckoning. This cosmological gap or boundary remains the subject of varied interpretations. Nonetheless, it functions as a third element that shapes the nature of the two realms it separates, distinguishing them not only in spatial but also in temporal and substantial terms. *Barzah* furthermore opens questions concerning the soul, immortality, and the boundaries of human life²³. Exegetical discussions propose different views on *barzah*; some present it as a moral prohibition from God, while others interpret it as a physical boundary between this world and the afterlife, or as a division between Hell and Paradise²⁴. The Qurʾān²⁵ also suggests that it is a tangible obstacle, preventing the deceased from returning until the Day of Judgement²⁶. Regardless of its precise nature, *barzah* represents the period each individual must endure from the moment of death (an individual experience) until the day of resurrection (a collective event)²⁷.

15 The Qurʾān mentions the prohibition of praying over the graves of infidels, yet it makes no explicit reference to the tombs of saints²⁸. Consequently, not only did large pilgrimage mausoleums emerge over time, but tombs were also built at the burial sites of saints to seek their favour²⁹. Moreover, intercessory prayers incorporating Qurʾānic elements appeared in the eighth century inscribed on gravestones so that visitors could recite them³⁰.

16 Once the angel of death has taken the soul and it has been reunited with the body in the grave³¹, it is expected that the soul recites the *śahāda* as evidence of faith³². The angels typically believed to be responsible for questioning souls about their beliefs – and thereby administering part of the torment within *barzah* – are Munkar and Nakīr³³. Those who fail to respond adequately are subjected to torment and daily beatings until the day of reckoning, with the sole exception of Fridays³⁴. In contrast, those who demonstrate their faith will find *barzah* to be their home³⁵, with a spacious tomb said to measure 70 by 70 cubits³⁶. As al-Ġazālī (c. 1058–1111) stated, »The grave is either one of the chasms of Hell or one of the gardens of Heaven«³⁷. For the faithful, through the door to Paradise – which opens at the moment the soul returns to the body – a breeze from Paradise will fill the tomb, and the ground will be spread with one of the carpets of Eden³⁸.

17 *Barzah* serves two crucial functions as a barrier between this world and the next. First, it prevents any communication with the dead; thereby, the risk of idolatry is avoided, since the departed – being in *barzah* – can neither receive requests nor communicate with either this realm or the hereafter³⁹. Secondly, it inhibits attempts at

23 About the topic see: Emparán Fernández, forthcoming a.

24 Carra de Vaux, online.

25 It is only mentioned on three occasions: Qurʾān 23, 99–101; 25, 53; 55, 19–20. For an interpretation of *barzah* in the Qurʾānic text, cf. Archer 2017.

26 Tesei 2015, 32.

27 Smith – Haddad 2002, 6. 8.

28 Qurʾān 9, 84.

29 Diez 1918.

30 Halevi 2007, 28–30.

31 Burge 2019, 78–80.

32 Tottoli, online.

33 Wensinck, online; on the characteristics of these angels, cf. Smith – Haddad 2002, 42; Halevi 2007, 212.

34 Lange, online; Wensinck, online.

35 Ebrahimi Dinani, online.

36 Wensinck – Tritton, online.

37 Al-Ġhazālī 2020, 127.

38 El-Şāleḥ 1986, 30.

39 Halevi 2007, 204; Archer 2017, 108.

interceding for the deceased to alter their destiny, which has already been determined according to their deeds in this life⁴⁰. Nevertheless, memorials built over the tombs of martyrs or saints have become sites of pilgrimage, believed to possess *baraka*⁴¹.

3.2 Dome of the Rock and Yawm al-qiyāma

And then, when death comes to one of them,
he says, ›My Lord, return me;
Perhaps I shall act righteously concerning that which I have forsaken.‹
No indeed. It is only a word that he says.
Behind them is a barrier [barzaḥ] until the day they are raised.
When there is a blast on the trumpet,
on that day there will be no kinship between them,
nor will they question each other.
Those whose balances are heavy
– those are the successful;
And those whose balances are light
– those are the ones who lose their souls,
remaining for ever in Jahannam. Qurʾān 23, 99–103⁴².

18 In his series of iconotextual studies, Shmuel Tamari analyses the symbolism behind the names of the Dome of the Rock's gates, beginning with the Eastern gateway named for the angel Isrāfīl, Bāb Isrāfīl. He suggests that the four gates correlate with the angel's four wings – the four wings of the earth – given Isrāfīl's characteristic of possessing four wings. The next gate, completing the east-west axis, is Bāb al-Nisā (the women's gate), which Tamari links to the fourth *sūra* of the Qurʾān and its content, deemed to oppose Christianity. He further associates the ›Christian Qibla‹ with the direction in which Archangel Isrāfīl would sound his trumpet on the Day of Judgement, *yawm al-qiyāma*⁴³. Moreover, tradition holds that the *munādī*, Isrāfīl, will blow his trumpet at the Dome of the Rock, signalling the beginning of the Day of Resurrection⁴⁴.

4 Dome of the Rock

19 Al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284 H/897–898 CE) recounts the events that compelled ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705) to construct the Dome of the Rock for political reasons⁴⁵. In an effort to bypass the pilgrimage to Mecca, he sought to replace the Black Stone with the Rock in Jerusalem, thereby circumventing the payment of pilgrimage fees to Ibn Zubair and the inhabitants of Makka. As a result, the offerings would instead be channelled into the treasury of ʿAbd al-Malik⁴⁶.

40 Leaman 2006, 562–565; Qurʾān 2, 254; 34, 23.

41 Bosworth, online; Rahim 2010, 149.

42 Jones 2007.

43 Tamari 1996, 6 f. For a comprehensive overview of all synonyms for the Day of Judgement and its mentions in the Qurʾān, cf. Günther 2020, 476.

44 Cook 2002, 307–311.

45 For insights into the political and religious circumstances behind the construction of the Dome of the Rock, cf. Elad 1995, 158–163; Robinson 2005, 42–43.

46 Le Strange 1965, 116.

4.1 Axis mundi

20 Aligned with the four cardinal directions – like the *Ka'ba* – the Dome of the Rock has no horizontal axis, thus acting as a microcosm and centre of the world, an omphalos, while the surrounding Haram represents a cosmos, mirroring the world⁴⁷. Jacob is said to have dreamt of a ladder rising from the Rock to the Gate of Heaven, upon which angels ascended and descended, and during this vision God informed him that a sanctuary would be built there. David later planned this temple, which Solomon ultimately constructed⁴⁸. In his history, al-Ṭabarī relates that during a devastating plague among the people of Israel, David received a vision designating the Rock as a prayer ground; above it, he saw a golden stairway by which angels ascended to heaven as a divine sign⁴⁹.

21 Early authorities found no immediate explanation for why Muḥammad prayed facing Jerusalem⁵⁰ – referred to as the *miḥrāb Dāwūd*⁵¹ – during the first years of his prophetic mission. The reasoning emerged only later, once the city and its history linked to earlier prophets, especially David, became widely acknowledged⁵². Jerusalem was likewise regarded as the *qibla* of Mūsā (Moses), given that the Ark of the Covenant had been placed upon the Rock⁵³. Nevertheless, prayer oriented toward Jerusalem was abrogated in 623, when, during the month of Rajab, Muḥammad received the revelation to redirect the *qibla* toward the *Ka'ba* in Makka⁵⁴.

4.2 As a Paradise on Earth

22 The naturalistic motifs in the Dome of the Rock mosaics include various botanical and schematic elements, such as acanthus, scrolls, supports in the form of acanthus vases, and trees (olive, palm, almond, reeds), along with garlands, leaves, and fruit (dates, grapes, pomegranates, pears, olives, lemons, cherries, and cucumbers). Additional decorative features consist of cornucopias, shells, pots, baskets, fruit bowls, stars and crescent moons, jewels, winged designs, composite motifs, conventional ornaments, and borders⁵⁵. Moreover, »a sort of fantastic tree rises above each capital and spreads out to right and left as the surface widens, [...]. It is encrusted with jewels, necklaces, pendants, and sometimes even with bunches of grapes«⁵⁶. Jewellery such as breastplates, necklaces, pins, earrings, crowns, and bracelets appear among the motifs depicted in the Dome of the Rock mosaics⁵⁷. The mother-of-pearl pieces and the tesserae associated with these motifs are set at an angle on the wall, reflecting the light more strikingly than the surrounding mosaic and thus creating the impression of relief⁵⁸.

23 The origin of the mosaics remains uncertain owing to limited written evidence. Marguerite Gautier-van Berchem observes that their exceptional craftsmanship surpasses that of earlier centres renowned for their mosaics and approaches the quality seen in the Great Mosque of Damascus. Although the finest and most carefully executed sections appear in prominent locations, other, less-polished work suggests multiple artisans. Each tessera measures around 2 cm × 2 cm – gold ones are typically smaller,

47 Archer 2017, 299.

48 Kaplony 2002, 38; Croitoru 2021, 13–23.

49 Al-Ṭabarī 1991, 150 f.

50 Peters 1985, 182.

51 Grabar 1996, 110.

52 Peters 1985, 182.

53 Le Strange 1965, 114.

54 Qur'ān 2, 142–143.

55 Gautier-Van Berchem 1969, 252–296.

56 Creswell 1958, 32.

57 Grabar 1987, 55 f.

58 Grabar 1996, 204.

while blue and green are slightly larger V – and were shaped with a hammer, leaving irregular edges. Gautier-van Berchem likens the blue and green tones to Persian ceramics, which rarely appear in European mosaics, while gold is extensively used in the background. Additionally, there are silver tesserae comprising about 2–3 mm of glass, overlaid with silver leaf and sealed by a final glass layer. Stone tesserae produce white, yellowish, and pink hues, and mother-of-pearl pieces, cut to match the overall design⁵⁹. This constitutes what Tamari refers to as »mineralogic tesserae«⁶⁰; in the Dome of the Rock mosaics, precious stones and minerals believed to exist in Paradise are not merely depicted, but also materially compose the tesserae themselves.

24 Tamari connects the octagonal base of the Dome of the Rock to the eight gates of Paradise; although the building itself has only four gates, its geometric design is believed to mirror this feature of Paradise⁶¹. Moreover, beneath the Rock, tradition holds, flow the four rivers of Paradise⁶²; »the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was associated with paradise on earth and the octagonal Dome of the Rock was seen as the Solomonic Temple rebuilt«⁶³. In *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Muqadas* (The Virtues of the Holy City), al-Wāsiṭī (d. ca. 360/970) recounts how Šurayk entered Paradise through a well on the Temple Mount:

[...] suddenly the bucket fell from [Shurayk's] hands, and so he descended [into the well] to search for it. A man appeared to him in the well and told him to follow him, taking him by the hand and ushering him into the Garden. Shurayk took leaves [from a tree in the Garden]. Then the man led him back, and [Shurayk] exited [the well]. He went to his companions and told them about it. His story was brought before ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who said: »Shall a man from this community enter the Garden while he is alive among you? Look at the leaves! If they have withered, they are not from the Garden. If they haven't withered, they are«. ... And indeed, the leaves had not withered⁶⁴.

4.3 Geometric Plan

25 In 1888, Charles Mauss identified the geometric procedure for laying out the Dome of the Rock, which centres on circumscribing a square around the circle containing the Rock⁶⁵; Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell later accepted this method but corrected Mauss' inaccurate measurements⁶⁶ (Fig. 1). As Mauss explains, the radius of the circle that inscribes the Rock is $R = 11.225$ m, from which a unicursal star is projected to form the inner octagon with radius $R' = 20.68$ m, and finally the outer circle has $R'' = 27.075$ m, enclosing the octagon that constitutes the building's outer walls.

4.4 Šālla

26 The Marīnid dynasty, as part of its strategies to legitimise its power through the promotion of Mālikism and Sufism, not only focused on the construction of madrasas within the framework of urban redevelopment – aimed at projecting a pious image of the sultan – but also developed the monumental complex of the *Šālla* necropolis. Leveraging the sanctity associated with the early Marīnid sultans, such as the *baraka*

59 Gautier-Van Berchem 1969, 309–312.

60 Tamari 1999, 63.

61 Tamari 1996, 11.

62 Kaplony 2002, 71.

63 Lange 2017, 345.

64 In Lange 2016, 1.

65 Mauss 1888.

66 Creswell 1969, 74.

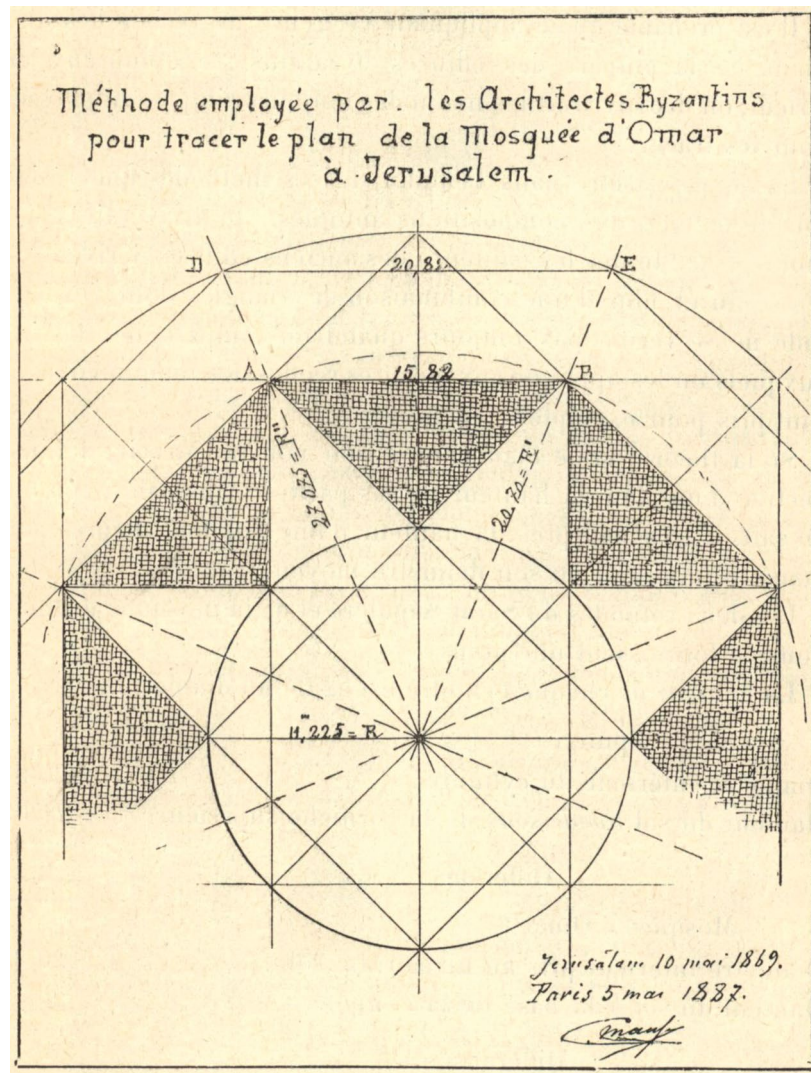


Fig. 1: Note on the method used to draw the plan of Omar's mosque (Mauss 1888, 17).

1

of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq⁶⁷ (r. 1244–1258) or the good star of Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb⁶⁸, (1258–1286) the consolidation of a site of pilgrimage and holiness began to take shape. This process was further advanced when Abū al-Ḥasan built a mausoleum for his father, marking the point at which the sacred character of Ṣālla became a significant element in its development.

²⁷ According to Ibn Marzūq (c. 1310–1379), Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb built a zawiya in Ṣālla⁶⁹, indicating that it was already an early site of pilgrimage and devotion. This location served as an important centre for mysticism and the practice of Sufism. Moreover, Ṣālla became a substitute pilgrimage site during periods of heightened tension and conflict with neighbouring sultanates, such as the Zayyanids (Tlemcen, 1235–1556)⁷⁰ and Ḥafṣids (Ifriqiya, 1229–1574)⁷¹, when travel to Mecca was too dangerous. During these times, the performance of the *haġġ* in Ṣālla was actively encouraged, highlighting its associations with the Ka‘ba. Additionally, the site was linked to the concept of Paradise. Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb

67 Ibn Al-Aḥmar 1989, 22 f.

68 Ibn Al-Aḥmar 1989, 33.

69 Ibn Marzūq 1977, 101 f.

70 Marçais, online.

71 Rouighi, online.

(1313–1374), in his descriptions of the location, reinforces this idea. While in exile, he withdrew to Šālla to lead a Sufi life, further emphasizing its spiritual significance.

28 After the death of Abū al-Ḥasan, his son, Abū ‘Inān, constructed a new mausoleum for his father and replaced the zawiya with a madrasa. It was this site that Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb dedicated himself to during his stay in Šālla. Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb received a stipend for reciting the Qur’ān at the tomb of Abū al-Ḥasan and for preserving his memory⁷². Despite the numerous structures and monuments Abū ‘Inān commissioned during his reign, he was not buried in Šālla, reflecting the distinct character of the necropolis. This distinction is further underscored by the refusal of Ibn ‘Āshir (d. 1362)⁷³ to grant Abū ‘Inān an audience⁷⁴.

5 Sufism under the Marīnids

29 Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī (1333–1390) was responsible for institutionalising the Šādhiliyya order in the Maghreb⁷⁵. Its founder, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Šādhilī (d. 1258), did not leave behind any written texts on Sufism. On this matter, he once declared: »My books are my companions«. In a similar vein, his disciple, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 1294), observed: »Everything contained in the books of the tribe amounts to [nothing more than] teardrops from the shores of the ocean of spiritual realisation (*taḥqīq*)«. Building on this perspective, the latter’s successor likewise remarked on the writing of books: »The sciences of this tribe are ultimately the sciences of spiritual realisation, the content of which lies beyond the comprehension of the masses«⁷⁶.

30 These pronouncements by the founders of the order reflect the spirit of Sufi practice in Fāsi society during the Marīnid period, as Ibn Ḥaldūn notes when discussing Sufism. In a similar fashion, Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī also makes certain statements regarding the use of books in Sufi practice. Nevertheless, he is not entirely opposed to writing; indeed, it is fortunate that two of his epistolary collections have survived⁷⁷, which to some extent fill a gap in our understanding of Sufi practice during the Marīnid era.

31 At the end of the 14th century in al-Andalus, a significant debate arose among Sufi mystics regarding whether guidance should be sought through books or if the attainment of truth strictly required a master’s instruction. Unable to resolve the controversy among themselves, they sent a letter to scholars in the Maghreb, including Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī⁷⁸. Ibn ‘Abbād responded through a letter, while Ibn Ḥaldūn also addressed the issue in a treatise on Sufism: *Šifā’ al-Sā’il li-Taḥdīb al-Masā’il*⁷⁹.

32 This book, however, is not mentioned by Ibn Ḥaldūn in his autobiography⁸⁰. Despite spending his final days as a *šeiḥ* in a Sufi *ḥānqāh* in Cairo, it is likely that the events surrounding his friend, the Granadan vizier Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, led him to remain reserved on such matters. The attitudes of both Ibn Ḥaldūn and Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī regarding the use of books reflect a deliberate need to keep certain aspects concealed, much in the same way as their famous shared teacher had done.

72 Nagy, unpublished.

73 Nwya 1961, 55–64; Cornell 1998, 142 f.

74 In a forthcoming article, »The Ornamental Zillij Program of the Mosque-Madrasa Bū ‘Ināniya (1350–1355) in Fes«, the consequences of Abū ‘Inān’s usurpation of the throne are explored. These consequences reflect attitudes toward the sultan as well as his need to undertake acts of piety of even greater excellence than those of his predecessors (Emparán Fernández, forthcoming c).

75 Nwya 1961.

76 Taleb 2020, 269.

77 Ibn ‘Abbād 1986; Ibn ‘Abbād 2005.

78 Özer 2017, p. IX.

79 Ibn Khaldūn 2017; Ibn Khaldūn 2022.

80 Ibn Khaldūn 1984; Ibn Khaldūn 2015.

33 Despite al-ʿAbilī (1282–1356) being part of the group of scholars accompanying Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan, he remained one of the staunchest critics of the madrasa institution. He argued that the reliance on sultanic funding inherently limited the scope of teachings that could be conducted within its walls. Nevertheless, al-ʿAbilī was a disciple of the renowned astrologer, astronomer, geometer, and expert in the occult sciences, as well as a Sufi, Ibn al-Bannāʾ al-Marrākūšī, who served as the first teacher of al-ʿAṭṭārīn⁸¹.

34 Upon arriving in Fez, Ibn Ḥaldūn resumed his studies with his former teacher from Tunis, al-ʿAbilī. Under al-ʿAbilī’s guidance, he studied mathematics, logic, law, the fundamentals of religion, and philosophy, encompassing both traditional and foreign sciences, with a particular emphasis on the works of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, c. 980–1037). Similarly, Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī, who initially studied at al-ʿAṭṭārīn and later moved to Bū ʿInāniya after its completion, was also a student of al-ʿAbilī. It can be inferred that he followed a curriculum similar to that of Ibn Ḥaldūn. As Ibn Ḥaldūn notes in his autobiography, al-ʿAbilī provided private lessons at his home for his most advanced students, covering subjects that could not be publicly taught. It is likely that both Ibn Ḥaldūn and Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī were recipients of these exclusive teachings⁸².

35 Despite his extensive training in law, Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī chose to abandon a career in *fiqh* to pursue the esoteric truths of the *bāṭin*. He withdrew to the necropolis of Ṣālla, where he became the most prominent disciple of the Sufi master Ibn ʿĀšir. It was presumably at Ṣālla that he encountered Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, who, during his exile in the Maghreb under Marīnid protection, embraced a life of retirement. Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb settled in the necropolis, receiving a stipend for reciting the Qurʾān and preserving the memory of Abū al-Ḥasan. This period marked a significant overlap in their lives, both under the influence of the revered master Ibn ʿĀšir. The prominence of Ibn ʿĀšir is underscored by the fact that Sultan Abū ʿInān himself requested an audience with the Sufi master, a request that Ibn ʿĀšir declined.

36 Regarding whether the Sufi path can be pursued through books, both Ibn Ḥaldūn and Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī agree that the scarcity of masters should not prevent seekers from striving for the truth. However, they acknowledge the limitations of beginning the journey solely through reading, as there are aspects of the path that cannot and should not be written, and guidance must also be tailored to the character of each seeker. Despite these challenges, Ibn Ḥaldūn himself authored a treatise on Sufism, offering a response to this debate, while Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī emphasised the possibility of epistolary communication between disciple and master when physical proximity was not feasible⁸³.

37 One of the reasons why it is not advisable to write books on sensitive topics such as the pursuit of truth is the risk that they might fall into the wrong hands. A tragic example of this is the fate of Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb. Driven by personal intrigues and animosities, he was accused of heresy in Granada. Although he initially found refuge once again at the Marīnid court, the Naṣrid court in Granada demanded his punishment. He was eventually arrested in Fez. Phrases from his text, *Rawḍat al-Taʾrīf bi-l-Ḥubb al-Sharīf*, were interpreted as heretical, sealing his fate. While imprisoned, a group hired by his enemy, Sulaymān b. Dāwūd, entered his cell during the night and strangled him. His body was buried in the cemetery of Bāb al-Maḥrūq, but the following day, his remains were found outside the grave, burned, with his skin completely blackened and his hair

81 Ibn Khaldūn 2015, 97 f.

82 Ibn Khaldūn 2015, 90–136. Where he also mentions Ibn Marzūq, vizier of Abū al-Ḥasan, as his friend. The latter was also a teacher of Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb.

83 Ibn ʿAbbād 1986, letter 16; Ibn Khaldūn 2017.

consumed. After this horrifying desecration, his remains were reinterred⁸⁴. In 1982, the Kingdom of Morocco erected the current mausoleum as a gesture of rectification for these tragic events.

6 Geometry

38 A craftsman in a small workshop in the *zilliğ* artisan district on the outskirts of Fez explained that the ceramic piece known as *Ḥātām*, *al-ḥātām*⁸⁵ (Fig. 2) is associated with the Seal of Solomon (*as-slimānī*⁸⁶). He described it as the pivotal element of any design, likening its function to that of a keystone in a vaulted arch, as it supports all the other pieces. For this reason, it is regarded as the key, the ring, and the seal. This craftsman, along with others, emphasized the connection between this piece and the Seal of Solomon, asserting that it is the central element that binds the entire composition together⁸⁷.

39 The geometric design of a *Ḥātām* is relatively simple to construct using a straightedge and compass, as it requires only the creation of a static and a dynamic square through the division of a circle into eight equal parts. Variations can be developed from this single construction, resulting in different octagonal geometric patterns. At al-‘Aṭṭārīn, a single octagonal geometric pattern can be found, while at Bū ‘Ināniya, three distinct patterns are present in the courtyard. Despite the simplicity of constructing the base *Ḥātām*, the various steps needed to create the designs for the *zilliğ* in both madrasas demand both geometric skill and creative ingenuity⁸⁸.

40 In all cases, the entire construction process (Fig. 3. 4) remains hidden in the presentation of the final *zilliğ* pattern. However, for any expert geometer, it is possible to discern the depth – both aesthetic and dimensional – of the geometric pattern, with its layers of geometric operations, proportional circles derived from the parent circle, and the emergence of various guiding lines. In this way, both the students and teachers of the madrasas, who were the intended audience for these geometric patterns, experienced an aesthetic encounter entirely distinct from that of the novice, who could perceive only the surface of the *zilliğ* (Fig. 5. 6).

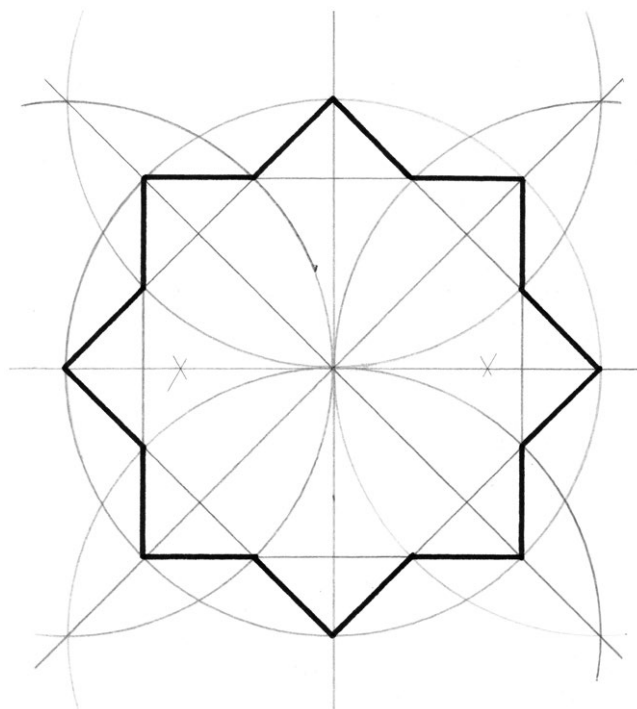


Fig. 2: al-ḥātām [as-slimānī].

84 Ibn Khaldūn 1956, 411–414.

85 The name of the *zilliğ* pieces were reported between 2021 and 2023. They were given in writing in 2021 and dictated in 2023; there is no sound recording of the name. The voice, as it corresponds to Moroccan Arabic, is transliterated following the system in: Premare et al. 1993.

86 Paccard 1980, 371: *Ḥatām*, and *Ḥātem ṭmānya*; Lavado Paradinas 1993, 132: *Ḥatām*; Damluji 1993: Dalmuji provides a glossary of terms belonging to the exclusive vocabulary of the *zilliğ*. She also offers a few profiles of exactly 29 *zilliğ* pieces within this glossary. Her method of collecting these terms follows the same method as that employed by other authors and in this work – interviews with *zilliğ* craftsmen. Because it is a glossary that lacks referential images, these terms are not reproduced here; the name have also been recorded in the ›Carpintería de lo Blanco‹. Cf. Aljazairi López 2015, 117.

87 Interviews conducted during fieldwork in 2019, 2021, and 2023.

88 In a forthcoming article, ›Let No One Ignorant of Geometry Enter Here! Who Drew the Marinid Geometrical Patterns?‹, I demonstrate why it is impossible for an artisan to have designed the geometric patterns of the Marinid madrasas al-‘Aṭṭārīn and Bū ‘Ināniya (Emparán Fernández, forthcoming d). Furthermore, I explain why the freehand drawing methods using grid paper, as recorded by authors such as Paccard 1980 and Castéra 1999, cannot be considered the construction method of the Marinids, since they are mathematically flawed. Additionally, in Emparán Fernández 2024, I provide a detailed explanation of why a geometric analysis and step-by-step reconstruction of the *zilliğ* patterns is essential for a proper understanding of these designs.

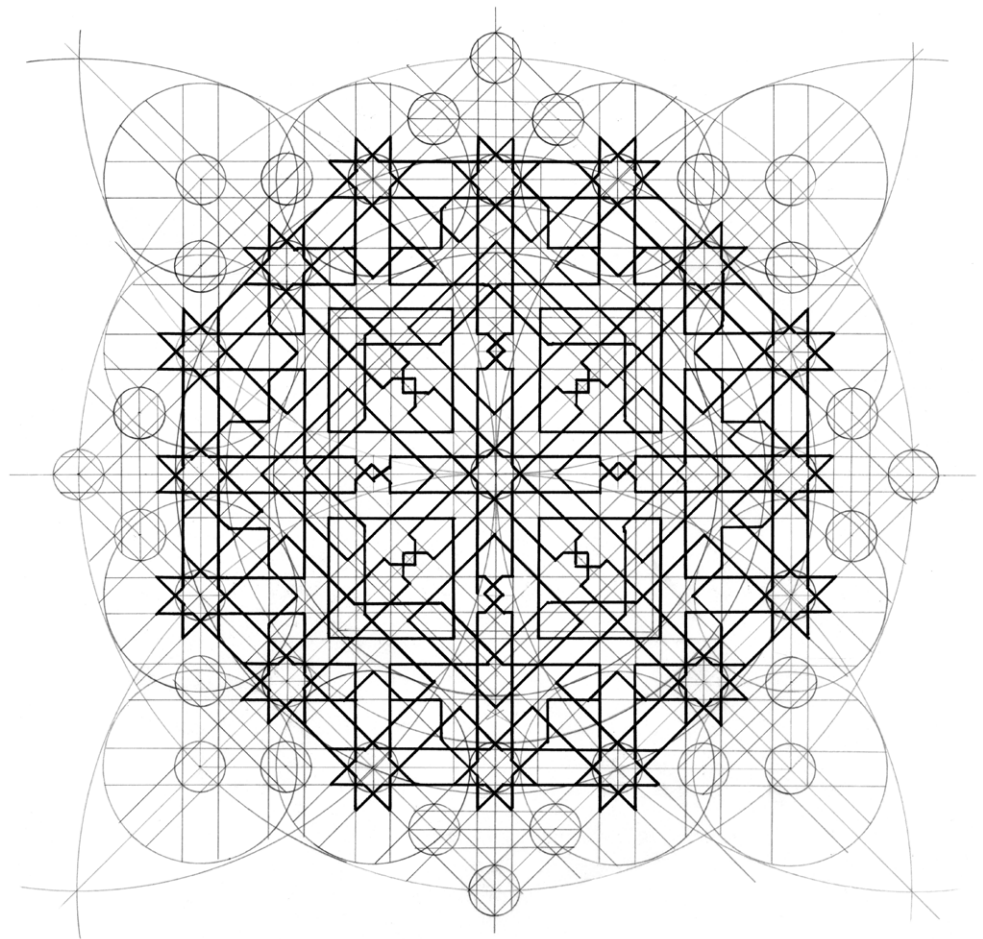


Fig. 3: Bū 'Ināniya, Mosque Panel. 3

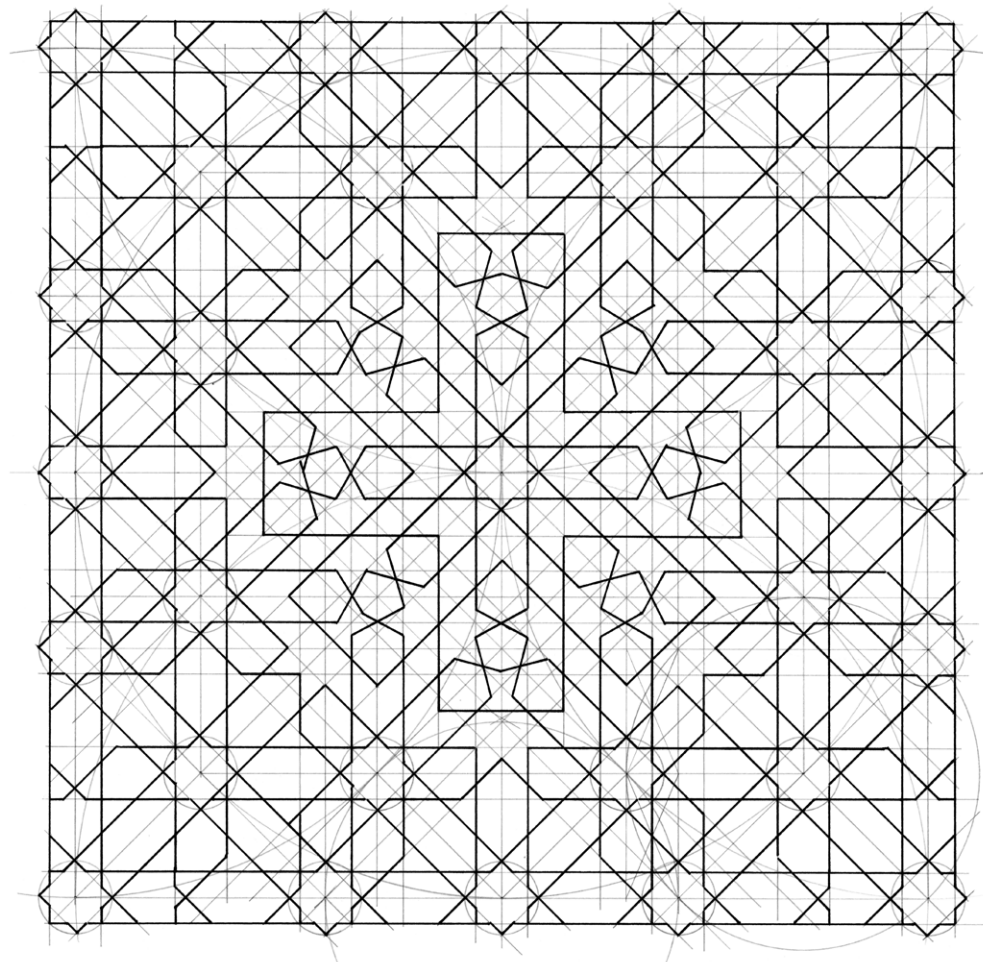
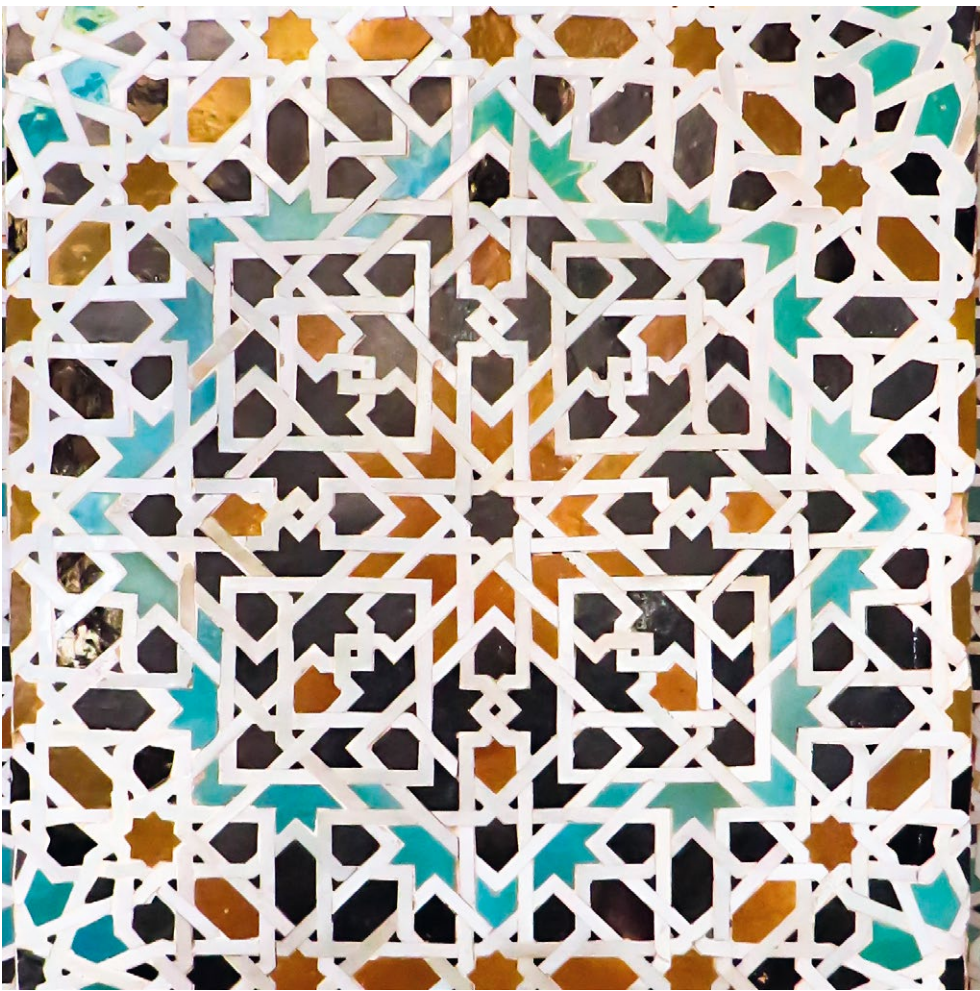
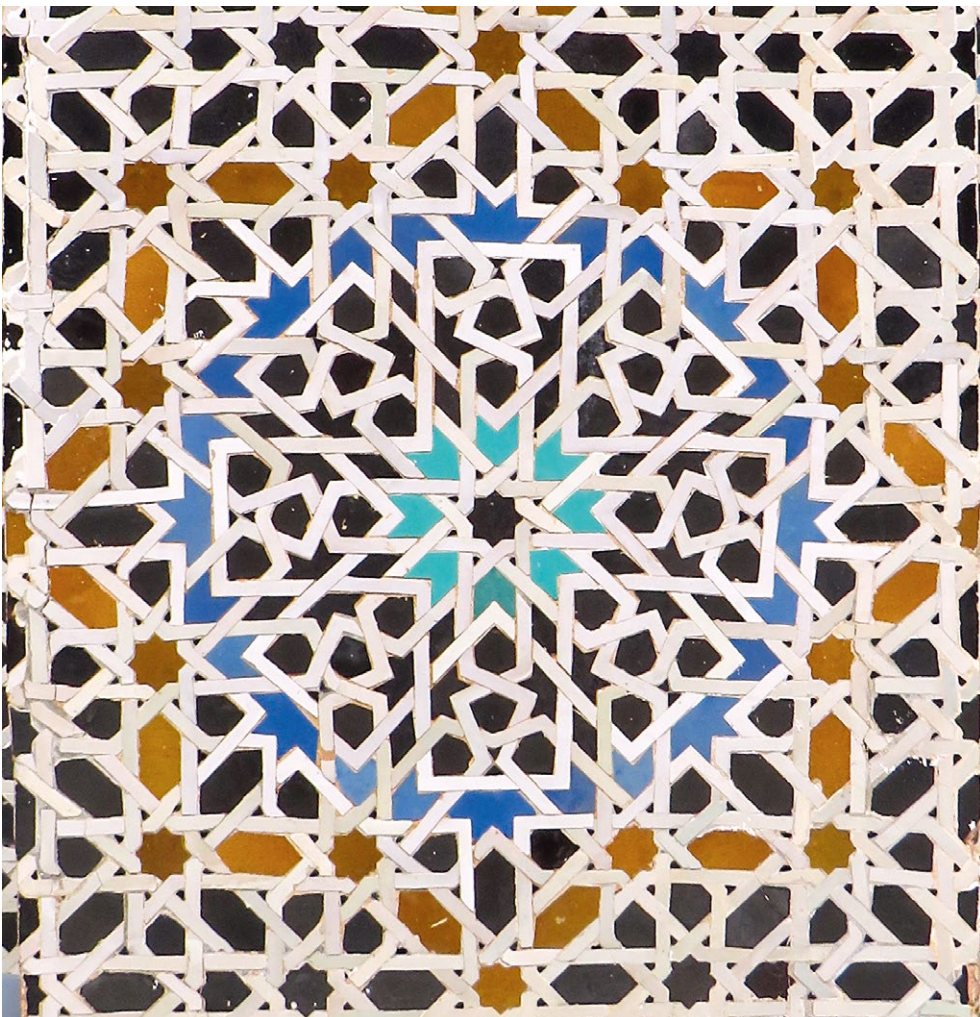


Fig. 4: Bū 'Ināniya, Side Panels of the Entrance Door. 4



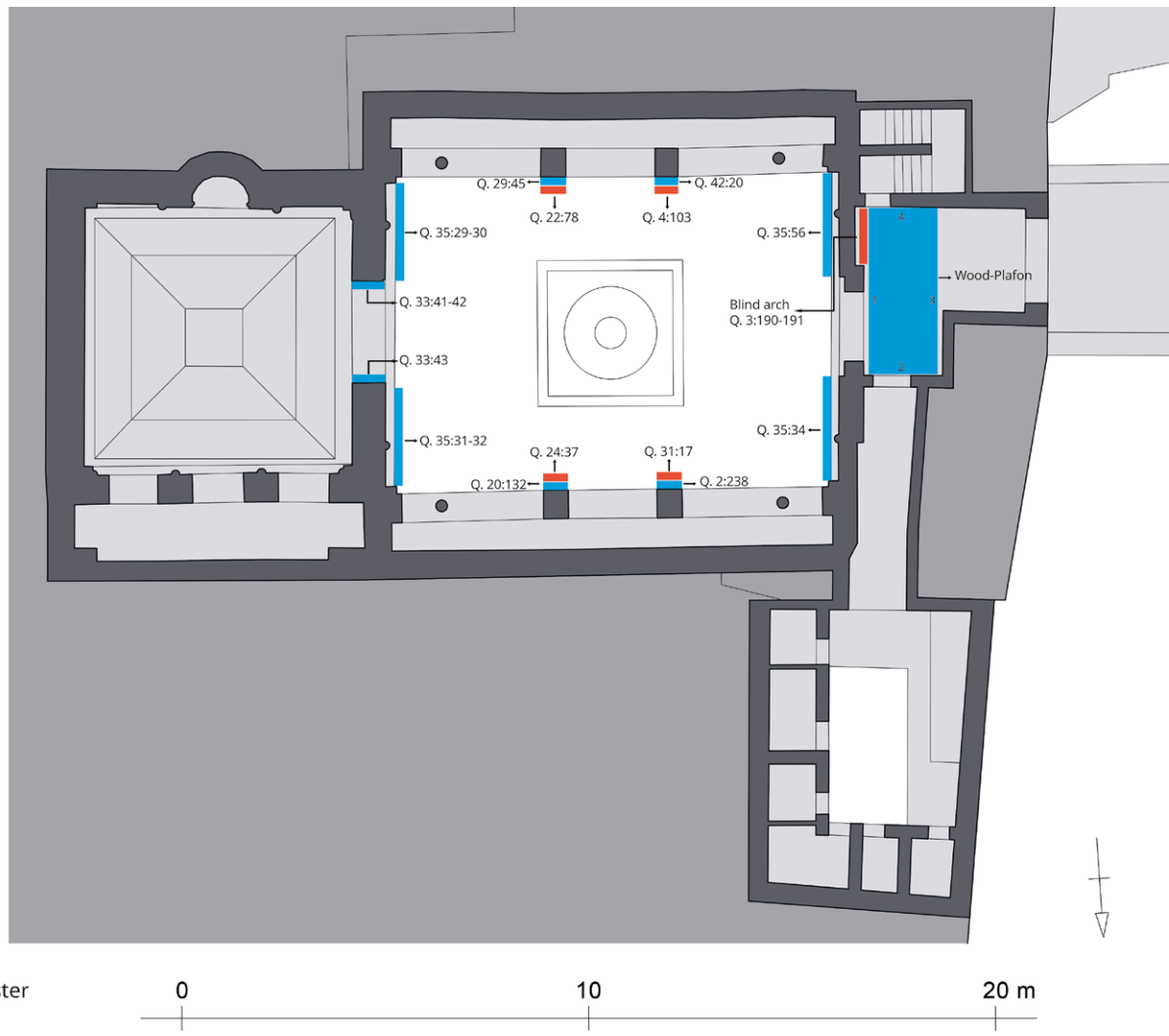
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Fig. 5: Bū 'Ināniya, Mosque Panel.



6

Fig. 6: Bū 'Ināniya, Side Panels of the Entrance Door.



7

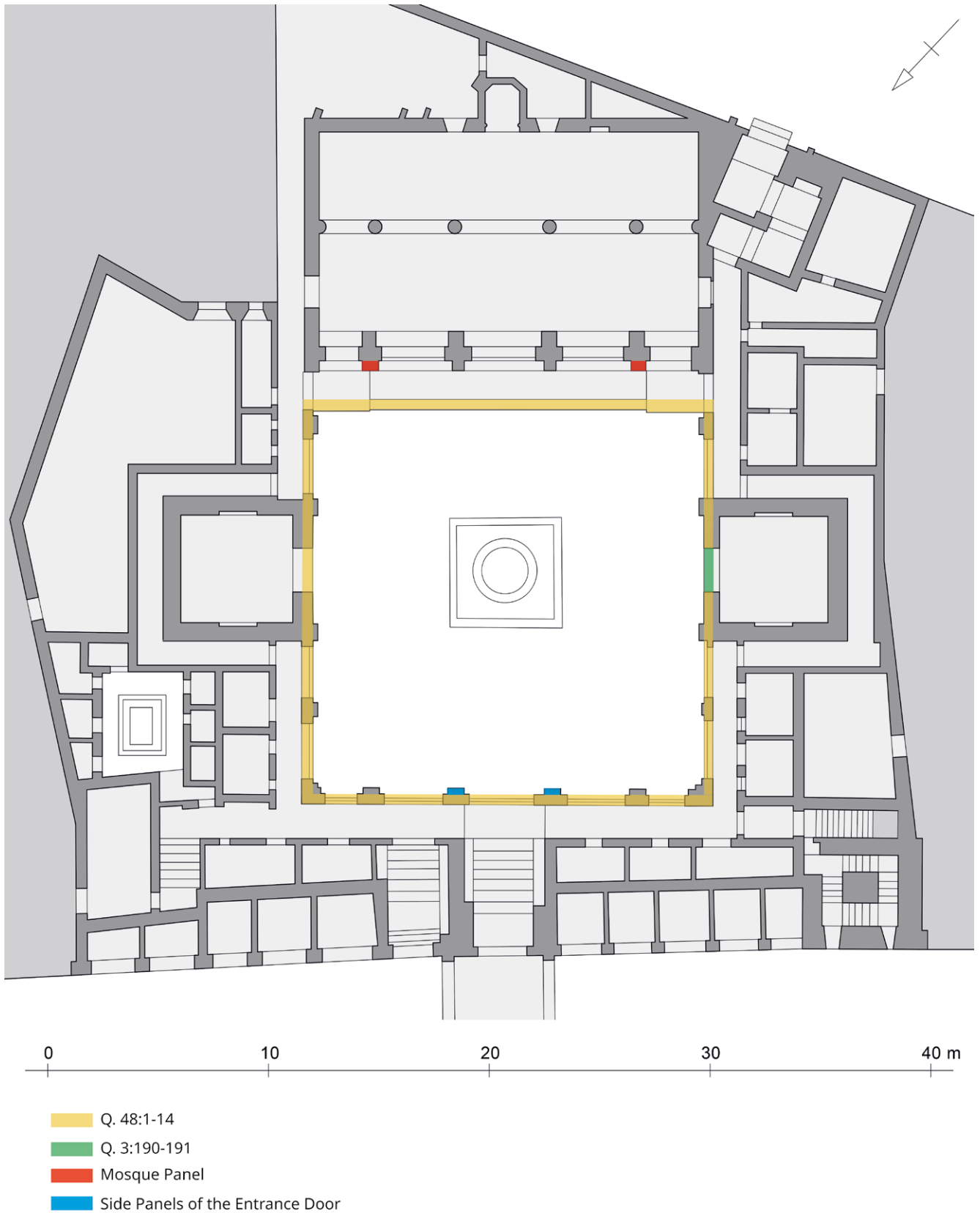
Fig. 7: Al-'Aṭṭārīn's plan: locations of epigraphic inscriptions.

7 Symbolic Analysis and Final Reflections

41 The geometric construction of the Dome of the Rock is fundamentally tied to the eight-pointed star, a pattern that has been extended and reconfigured to create successive variations of the same form. However, these patterns are not simply references to the physical structure of the Dome as an architectural entity but instead to its symbolic essence. The magical and spiritual significance of the Seal of Solomon lies in its potential to function as an *axis mundi*, connecting the Islamic cosmos to higher spiritual realms. This transcendence is not physical but contemplative in nature, allowing the rational soul, through intellectual contemplation, to decode the symbolic content and embark on a spiritual ascent.

42 Unlike the physical ascent of the Prophet Muḥammad during the Mi'rāğ, this spiritual journey is intellectual and mystical. The epigraphic inscriptions in the madrasa further connect this journey to the Day of Judgement. Students are called to prepare themselves for their time in *Barzaḥ* through the constant remembrance of God, awaiting the moment when the Archangel Isrāfil will sound his trumpet at the Dome of the Rock. At that point, the dead will be resurrected, and the Divine Throne will be placed upon the very rock from which the Prophet ascended to heaven.

43 Thus, in one instance, the Qur'ānic verse 22, 78 (*fa-aqīmū al-ṣalāt wa-ātū al-zakāt wa-i'taṣimū bi-llāh huwa mawlākum wa-ni'm al-mawlā wa-ni'm al-naṣīr*) underscores the importance of devotion to God, along with the fulfilment of obligatory acts (*ṣalāt* and



8

zakāt) and supererogatory practices (*du'ā'* and *dīkr*). Other verses, which reiterate these principles, consistently highlight the remembrance of God as a central theme. In this context, Gubert notes that *dīkr* serves as preparation for the grave. Through detachment from worldly life, *dīkr* equips the believer to endure the trials of the grave. After death,

Fig. 8: Bū 'Ināniya's plan: locations of epigraphic inscriptions.

the solitude of waiting is alleviated by the habit of constant remembrance of God developed during life⁸⁹.

⁴⁴ This connection between geometry and eschatology is further reinforced by the symbolic representation of the Divine Throne in the octagonal geometric patterns. The Throne, borne by four angels, can be conceptually linked to the geometry of the octuple star, composed of two overlapping squares. Additionally, the division of the circle into four quadrants to construct the eight-pointed star parallels the structure of Paradise with its four gardens and eight gates. Paradise represents the ultimate goal for the madrasa students, attainable through the constant remembrance of God and adherence to the epigraphic instructions inscribed in the courtyards.

⁴⁵ Thus, the students' spiritual path becomes evident: to remember God continuously and prepare for the waiting period in *Barzah* until the Day of Judgement. On that day, which centres on the Dome of the Rock, the evaluation of their earthly deeds will determine their final destiny. Reaching Paradise requires not only the remembrance of God but also detachment from the material world and a contemplative disposition. This state of mindfulness and spiritual focus enables the ascent to higher realms through intellect and spirit, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of both the madrasa's teachings and the geometric patterns embedded in its design.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ḥatam, Barzaḥ, und das Jenseits

Überlegungen zu einer ikonographischen

Analyse der achtfachen Marīnid-Zillīġ

María Antonieta Emparán Fernández

Diese Studie untersucht die geometrischen und symbolischen Dimensionen der achtzackigen Muster auf den *zillīġ* der marinidischen Madrasas, insbesondere al-‘Aṭṭārīn und Bū ‘Inānīya, und ihre Verbindung zu eschatologischen Themen. Auf der Grundlage eines multidisziplinären Ansatzes zeigt die Analyse, wie diese ornamentalen Entwürfe visuelle Ausdrücke intellektueller, spiritueller und kosmologischer Ideen innerhalb der marinidischen Elite darstellen. Durch die Integration geometrischer Prinzipien mit Koraninschriften und Sufi-Begriffen wie *zāhir* und *bāṭin* werden die Motive als pädagogische Werkzeuge für Kontemplation und spirituellen Aufstieg interpretiert, die für die gelehrte Gemeinschaft der Madrasa einzigartig sind. Darüber hinaus kontextualisiert die Studie diese Muster innerhalb breiterer marinidischer Strategien der Machtlegitimation und bringt sie mit Schlüsselorten wie dem Felsendom und der Shālla in Verbindung. Die Ergebnisse tragen zum Verständnis des Zusammenspiels zwischen Kunst, Symbolik und intellektueller Kultur in vormodernen islamischen Gesellschaften bei und zeigen, wie die Geometrie über die Ornamentik hinausgeht und eine tiefe metaphysische und eschatologische Bedeutung verkörpert.

SCHLAGWORTE

Marīniden-Dynastie, Ḥatam, Barzaḥ, Jenseits, Zillīġ

RESUMEN

Jatam, Barzaj y el más allá

Consideraciones para un análisis iconográfico del *zillīj marīnida* de ocho puntas

María Antonieta Emparán Fernández

Este estudio explora las dimensiones geométricas y simbólicas de los patrones de ocho puntas de los *zillīġ* de las madrasas marīnīes, en particular al-‘Aṭṭārīn y Bū ‘Inānīya, y su conexión con temas escatológicos. Basado en un enfoque multidisciplinario, el análisis revela de qué modo estos diseños ornamentales constituyen expresiones visuales de ideas intelectuales, espirituales y cosmológicas en el seno de la élite marīnida. Al integrar los principios geométricos con las inscripciones coránicas y las nociones sufíes de *zāhir* y *bāṭin*, los motivos se interpretan como herramientas pedagógicas para la contemplación y la ascensión espiritual, exclusivas de la comunidad erudita de la madrasa. Además, el estudio contextualiza estos patrones dentro de estrategias marīnidas más amplias de legitimación del poder, vinculándolos a lugares clave como la Cúpula de la Roca y *Shālla*. Los resultados contribuyen a comprender la interacción entre arte, simbolismo y cultura intelectual en las sociedades islámicas premodernas, demostrando cómo la geometría trasciende la ornamentación para encarnar un profundo significado metafísico y escatológico.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Dinastía marīnida, Jatam, Barzaj, más allá, *zillīġ*

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Fig. 7: F. Arnold, after A. Almagro Gorbea,

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Fig. 8: F. Arnold, after A. Almagro Gorbea,

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