EFFECTING BELIEFS OF THE PLACE ON ANCIENT YEMENI ARCHITECTURE IN THE PERIOD BEFORE ISLAM

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الملخص

تحاول الدراسة أن تسلط الضوء على حضارة اليمن القديم وخصوصا في المجال المعماري، لإبراز عمارة اليمن القديم إلى النور. وتركزت مشكلة الدراسة في عدم فهم أصول العمارة اليمنية القديمة ومؤثراتها، وخاصة تأثير المكان المقدس على العمارة. وسعت لتحديد العلاقة بين معتقدات المجتمع اليمني القديم حول المكان المقدس وتأثيره على صياغة العمارة والعمران. واعتمدت الدراسة في تفسير المكان المعماري على استخدام إطار عام فيما يتعلق بالمكان المقدس من مراجعات الأدبيات بالتحليل والمقارنة، ومن ثم تطبيقه على العمارة اليمنية القديمة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن المكان في المعتقدات اليمنية القديمة يختلف وينقسم إلى جزأين، الأول مقدس والثاني عادي. وخلصت أيضا إلى أن عمارة اليمن القديم تجسد مفهوم المكان المقدس وعناصره

ABSTRACT

The study tries to highlight ancient Yemen's civilization, especially in the architectural field, to bring it to light. The problem of study is the lack of understanding of the old Yemeni architecture and its effects, especially the impact of the sacred place on architecture. It focuses on determining the relationship between the beliefs of Yemeni society and the place affecting the formulation of architecture. The study aims to interpret the architectural place by using a general framework for the sacred place of literature reviews and comparison among themselves, and then apply it to the architecture. The study concluded that the concept of sacred place was an idea in which all the ancient near east civilizations had taken it. It was also concluded that the old architecture of Yemen reflects the concept of the sacred place and its elements.

KEYWORDS: Sacred Place; Architecture; Ancient Yemen; City; Beliefs; Religions.

INTRODUCTION

Yemen occupies the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula and is on the same site as Asia Figure (1). In fact, the local environment has affected Yemeni architecture in all aspects of planning, formation, and construction. Yemen has a moderate climate throughout the year, and mountain nature has all kinds of stones that are used in construction. It remained away from the waves of foreign impacts for many centuries. One researcher indicated that Yemen, between the first century B.C. and the third century A.D., began to open up to foreign arts. In the third and fourth centuries A.D., Yemeni architecture began to be affected by the architecture of other civilizations. It was affected by Byzantine art in the sixth century because of the occupation of Abyssinia. It was exposed to the Persian occupation at the end of the sixth century A.D. and was affected by Persian art. Yemen remained conservative in its architecture after entering Islam and did not notice any changes in traditional architecture [1]. The Yemeni community has maintained its ancient traditions, so most of the regions in modern times, especially in

rural regions, remain based on ancient customs and traditions. The remaining traditions of society are the belief in invisible things, the belief in parents, and the belief in sacred places. On the other hand, the problem is the absence of understanding of ancient architecture, especially the influence of sacred places on architecture. So that, the hypothesis of the study is defined in a question: How did a sacred place affect the ancient Yemeni architecture? Since the purpose of this study is to analyses sacred places, it focuses on the places as imagined by society and the representations of architecture. Therefore, it attempts to explore the relationship between architecture and religion, and to explain the concepts of sacred spaces in architecture. Furthermore, it aims to present not only the architectural expressions of sacred space but also the social and cultural practices. In addition, the specific objective is an attempt to look at the beliefs and role of the place in formulating the architecture.

Figure 1: Map of the South of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen [2]

METHODOLOGY

The study's approach depends on the culture of society, especially religion and beliefs, which in turn are reflected in the architectural product. The beliefs gave the value system of architecture through symbols. Therefore, it requires reviewing the ideological and symbolic systems of ancient Yemenis and then applying them to the architecture. The purpose of the study is to offer an approach to interpreting the architectural place and symbols by describing various referents and associations of the culture. In order to achieve its aims, the paper traces the following steps: A framework is built to demonstrate approaches to the sacred place that can be incorporated into assignments based on literature reviews, comparing, and interpreting the gathered data. They have been divided into two parts. The first concerns dealing with the concept of sacred space. The second focuses on sources connected with architecture. In addition, the study also used an analytical method based on comparing and analyzing the selected architectural elements.

Definitions of the Sacred Place

In order to understand the architectural context and discover the sacred and its importance for both theory and practice, one must begin by defining place in the context of the sacred and profane. In fact, anything is sacred, so it is considered special, divine, religious, and unique. In contrast, the profane is mundane, ordinary, nonreligious, temporal, and secular. Both the sacred and profane are qualitatively different from one another [3]. A sacred place can be defined as a space that improves communication between humans and God. In general, sacred spaces should be classified into two alliances: the first natural settings, for instance, mountains, and trees, and the second cultic stones and temples [4]. In time, any person will meet the wonderful, and the natural world will provide a way to the mystic. The heavens and earth meet in any location that becomes sacred, set apart from other areas to become sacred space [5].

Sacred Places and Architecture

Eliade argued that the choice of the location of a sacred space in most religions is not random but is identified with the help of mysterious signs. The human being is concerned with the idea of a world center [3]. The center in Arabic beliefs represents a mountain, which is characterized by special holiness. In ancient Yemen, it is characterized by its geographical nature, as most of its land is high. The dimensions of space and the sanctity of place differ according to the human body in terms of front and back, right and left, and top and bottom. Therefore, the front is sacred and the back is profane, the top is sacred and the bottom is profane, and the right is sacred and the left is profane. On the vertical level, it is divided into a sacred upper and a profane lower [6].

The Formation of Space

The collective memory of any traditional society usually tries to transform any void into a place. The place is organized and driven by higher powers, which are characterized by sacredness. The tendency of societies is to live as much as possible within the boundaries of the sacred, characterized by truth [3]. In the ancient Near East, not all sacred places were identical in their features and characteristics, but they differed from one place to another. The sacred place comes with different levels of holiness, and different regions are identified and different from each other. The transition points are also guarded carefully at each level. The transition between different regions is required for a person to begin with the necessary ritual [5]. The sacred places in ancient Yemen are known as Hima, Haram, and Maharram, which are characterized by being protected and where every animal and plant is safe [2]. The sacred space was based on the ideas of "Haram," which means forbidden, sacred, and sanctuary; "Hawṭa," which means "sacred enclave"; "Maḥjar," which means, "Interdicted place" and "Hima," which means, "protected enclave, sanctuary" [4]. The sacred place in ancient Yemen progresses from the center, which is the sacred place. The Haram comes after it, and then, the Hima surrounds a place [7]. One of the most important requirements for discovering the sacred place and heading to create a world where one can live realistically is obtaining a fixed point [3]. The fixed point represents the center from which the cosmic axis of the world extends. Among these are holy sites and sanctuaries believed to be situated at the center of the world, temples replicating the cosmic mountain. For example, Jerusalem is in the center of the world and Al-Aqsa Mosque is in the center of Jerusalem, and therefore Al-Aqsa is in the center of the universe. On the other hand, each ancient Yemeni region had one god of borders. The boundaries represent the end influencing of the sacred. They are usually in the form of a

circle surrounding the sacred place. The meaning of the circumference in the inscriptions comes from the word "Hawl," which means a magical power to protect any place. From the circumference comes the concept of al-Houta, which means the place that is defined from all sides and has become a sacred place [7].

The Discussion: Beliefs of the Place and Architecture

The religious person creates physical symbols for doctrinal concepts, including building the model for sacred mountains in architectural works and forms that have spiritual functions similar to God's mountains. Since the mountain was physically and spiritually linked to heaven, it represents the cosmic axis and possesses its sacred power, so this transformation powers forms such as temples and palaces [6]. In the ancient East, the sacred mountain was the site of the meeting of the gods. It is also an important location for the appearance of the gods [5]. The places of worship were formed from a circular row of stones located in the sacred center, which was either a central stone or a smaller circular space [8]. The circle was the most expressive form of enclosure and encirclement. The cemeteries of Jabal Ruwaiq, spread to the northeast of Ma'rib city, represent the beginning of the places and heights holly Figure (2). All the tombs were built on the mountain slopes with raw stones [9]. The site of al-Muhandid, located in Tihama, dates back to the end of the Neolithic period, as shown in Figure (3). This place consists of a circular part with a center, followed by a long part that resembles a corridor. It consists of rows of stones that narrow as they move towards the circular [10].

Figure 2: Tomb Necropolis at Jabal Ruwaiq to the Northeast of Ma'rib City [9]   **Figure 3: The Site of al-Muhandid in Tihama [10]**

Sacred Place Location

When searching for the sacred place in the ancient Near East communities, this requires the presence of a manifestation suggested. The old, normal sites were characterized by natural terrain. Many of the sacred natural mountains characterize the nature of Syria and Anatolia. In southern Mesopotamia, as in Egypt, the land was plain and flat. Therefore, high land was built instead of natural terrain [5]. The sanctification of a place in Yemeni architecture dates back to the prehistoric period, as mentioned in the Jabal Ruwaiq site. It represented the beginnings of religious belief in the sanctity of mountains. This holiness was concentrated in the sacred center and the borders defining the sanctuary, as well as the fever that occupied the sacred sites. On the other hand, the location of Maifah city was selected according to site terrain Figure (4). It was located on a natural rocky land with the natural protection of the fences and towers [11].

Figure 4: The Fence of Maifah City on the Rocky High Location [11]

Sacred Place Boundaries

In the temples of Mesopotamia, especially in the Oval Temple in Khafagah, the curved wall bounded the temple to determine and separate the holy area (Figure 5). In addition, buried boxes under the corners of the temple platforms were basically constructed. Its purpose was directly linked to the holy concept, in order to demarcate the limits of the temple, separate the sacred place from the non-sacred space, and prevent anti-evil forces [12]. In ancient Egypt, the foundation deposits were used as foundations for the temple and its measurements. It also represented a way of protecting the temple area from the forces of chaos and darkness. Walls to determine the sacred area surrounding the temples. Great care was taken in the ritual of building the temple according to basic trends, with celestial bodies, and sometimes with local landmarks [5]. Each Egyptian temple has been divided into varying regions. A wall of bricks was built to separate the temple area from the external city. The wall was a border between the system and chaos, between organization and randomness [13].

On the other hand, Moses's tent was designed to increase levels of holiness with a person's entry across the temple complex. This was a gradient in design materials and construction techniques, and a wall to draw the sacred place's borders surrounds the outer courtyard [14]. In ancient Yemen, varied methods were applied in order to determine the boundaries of the sacred place. Walls were built around some temples to distinguish the sacred places. For example, in Maʿrabum temple (al-Masājid) to the west of Marib, which was built, an external wall was added to determine the sacred place's borders, as shown in Figure (6). In general, the walls of Yemen temples were built for several purposes: to provide protection from invaders, to protect the secret of a ritual inside the temple, and to separate the sacred space within the temple from external non-sacred space. In general, stone and clay walls fenced most of the ancient Yemeni cities. It is the protector and the first defense line of the city, facing any enemy that may attack. The fences in cities were used in the beginning of the first thousand B.C. The main fence is considered the city's boundary [11].
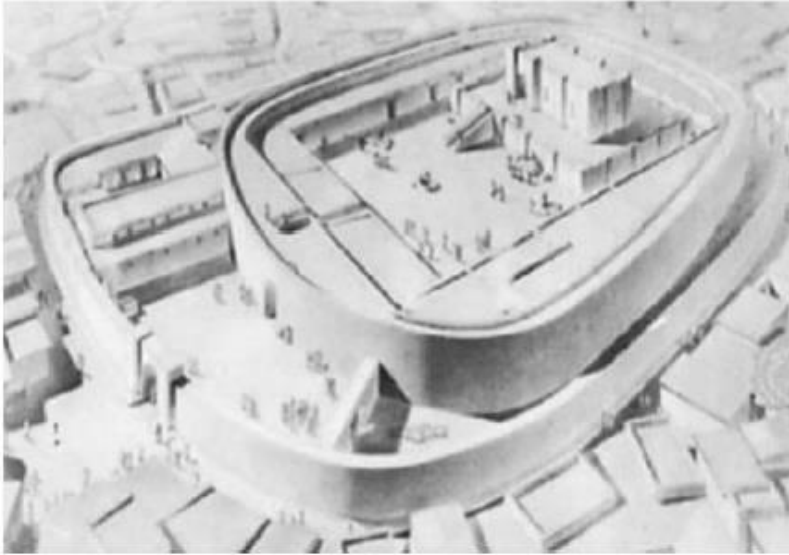
Figure 5: The Curved Fence of the Oval Temple in Khafagah Determines the Sacred Place [15]
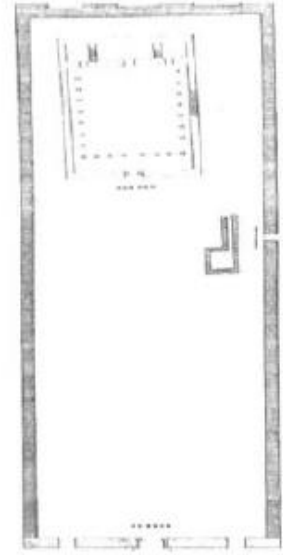
Figure 6: Maʿrabum Temple (al-Masājid) [7]

Ancient Cities

The ancient Yemeni city contained several important facilities, represented by the presence of a wall (fence) protecting the city. The first appearance of the wall was in the city of Yalla al-Dorib Figure (7). The palace is built in the inner city, located in the center of the city. The temples are built on the main axis of the city or in the center of the city. When referring to knowing the relationship between the components of the ancient cities and the formation of the sacred place, in ancient Mesopotamia, cities did not contain a city center where the palace, the market, and the temple were commonly located. The temples and religious complexes have been separated in the ancient cities of southern Mesopotamia.

Figure 7: The Wall of Yalla al-Dorib (Google Earth)
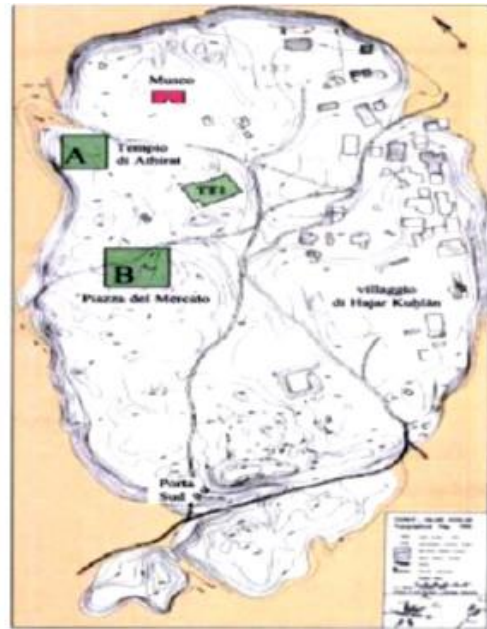
Figure 8: The Temple of Tamna City in the Centre [17]

The campus, residential neighborhoods, and all other buildings were still isolated from the city. Both the temple and the royal palace were often separate from each other [16]. There are certain ways to make cities holy places. For example, Mecca became the world center in three ways. First, the political capital of Muslims. Second, the presence of the Kaaba is associated with the higher world and the bottom. Thirdly it became the first kibla of Muslims. In order for God to impose authority, a temple must be built to give the place the holiness that is stretching and spreading in all directions. When Ezekial described the future city and temple, he identified the entire surroundings as the holy land. He pointed out that the temple in the mountain's full surroundings would be the holy sanctuary. The city and temple, along with their surroundings, are the holy holies. The whole area is a separate sacred space from abroad, which represents a non-sacred space [14]. It was concluded that all cultures agreed on the center and how the center can be embodied by building a temple that is the house of God.

In all the ancient Yemeni cities, several temples or at least one temple were built inside the city to give it the sacred center. In the city of Tamna, located in Wadi Bihan, the temple was built in the city center (Figure 8). As well, in other cities, the temple was built in the city center. Every ancient Yemeni city had a wall that surrounded and protected it. The walls were built in the form of protrusions. This method of construction has defensive benefits in order to avoid structural failures of the walls as shown in Figure (9) in the wall of Maifah city. In ancient Mesopotamia, the external walls surrounded the cities and the temples. In the Sumerian era, an oval wall, as shown in Figure (10), surrounded the city of Ur in the south of Iraq. The main part of the city is the religious complex, which consists of three temples and the Ziggurat of Ur [15]. The external wall (fence) was a separate area that must be overcome when the enemy attempts to break into and enter the sacred space from the outside world. The walls contained towers, which helped to strengthen the idea of separation [5].

| Figure 9: The Wall Protrusions of Maifah City [11] | Figure 10: The Curved Wall in the City of Ur in Iraq [15] |

In fact, the gates represented the weakest points in the city wall. They realized the importance of fortifying and designing in a way that guarantees their strength to be able to withstand enemy attacks [11]. The gate had two towers on two sides for guarding and surveillance, as shown in Figure (11) in the southern gate of Maifah city and in Figure (12) in the southern gate of Tamna city. The number of gates in the ancient Yemeni cities differed from one city to another. For example, Sana'a city has seven gates, of which the two most important are the southern gate and the northern gate, which link the center's axis. It is clear from the above that the ancient Yemeni cities have achieved the concept of sacred places. Therefore, the place is integrated with its parts and elements.

Figure 11: The Southern Gate of Maifah City [11]   **Figure 12: The Southern Gate of Tamna City [17]**
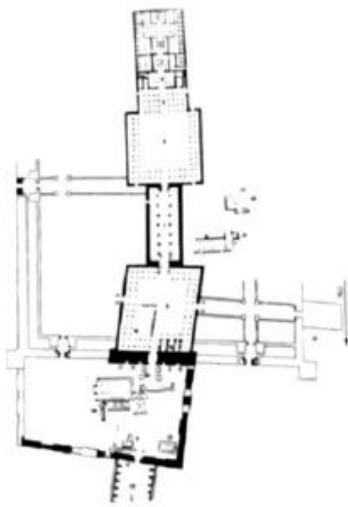
Temples

The Yemeni temple consists of a main sanctuary. It is designed in the form of a rectangle with a gate protruding from one of the sides. A number of pairs of columns carry the gate roof [7]. The temple played a major role in the lives of Yemenis. The presence of the temple within the ancient Yemeni cities gave them holiness. Therefore, determining the center of the sacred place requires building a temple occupied by the sacred. The temple represents a miniature image of the universe and the world. It occupies the center of the world, and its four walls represent the four walls of heaven [18]. The Egyptian temples were considered the center of the world and the universe. In fact, there is no doubt that the temples were seen as having originated on the primitive hill and every temple in Egypt is believed to represent the original temple. The locations of temples throughout the ancient Near East were sacred places. They were always standing in the center of their community. This does not mean to necessarily stand at the geographical center. It is possible to be outside the geographical center, but it refers to the religious center. A number of different images can also be used to express the concept of the sacred center [5]. The temples in Yemen were built on high land and higher than the surrounding areas.

The same method was used in the temples of the ancient Near East. They were built on the ground, which is high above the surroundings. It is advisable to be on a mountain or in a convenient location, and thus it combines the virtues of natural sacred space and the temple. If there is no mountain or high region, the ziggurat can be built on it, as in ancient Mesopotamia. The temple is usually built on a high platform until the sacred space is isolated from the profane space. The temple area is also determined and distinguished by raising the space region [19]. Many temples have already been built on real, natural hills. Moreover, the habit in ancient Egypt was to raise the level of the temple to the highest holiness, which symbolizes the hill. The common rites when building foundations in Egypt were important as a sacred and protected area from evil forces [20]. The sacred inner space of some temples in ancient Yemen was separated from the normal outer space by walls. On the other hand, Hindu temples have many characteristics of ancient Near Eastern temples. A huge wall was built to ensure that the sacred space was separated from the profane space surrounding it. The most holiness in the temple was in the central back of the courtyard. In the Egyptian temples, as shown in the Luxor temple (Figure 13), the more holy region was located at the back of the temple.

In fact, methods of distinguishing between spaces are through sequential progression and depth navigation. The Yemeni temple was graded so that the holy of holies was at the back end of the temple. The gate is raised above the outer space or from the courtyard and is reached by a flight of stairs, as shown in Dhat Hamim Rahban Temple Figure (14). The Mesopotamian community has followed strict architectural methods

when building temples. In distinguishing between the sacred space and the non-sacred space, one of these techniques uses a hierarchical series of transitions between several areas. Therefore, no one can move from the mundane place to the sacred place easily; there are strict limits. One must pass through stages of gradual and diminishing areas of holiness [5]. In Yemen, the temple was called Haram or Muharram, which means the holy. Therefore, the temple became an official holy place, and the holiness included all the lands belonging to the temple's property. In this way, the spaces were distinguished in terms of their location and the holiness of each area. So, architectural methods were adopted that separate each region from another, functionally or structurally. Finally, it is concluded that the temples of ancient Yemen represented a sacred place. It was expressed architecturally in a manner that reflected the beliefs of society. High and mountainous locations were selected to symbolize the center. The external space was separated from the internal space in several ways in order to be distinguished. The holiness of each area was distinguished in the interior design of the temples, as the holiness of the places differed from place to place.

Figure 13: The Luxor Temple-Sequential Depth in Spaces [7]
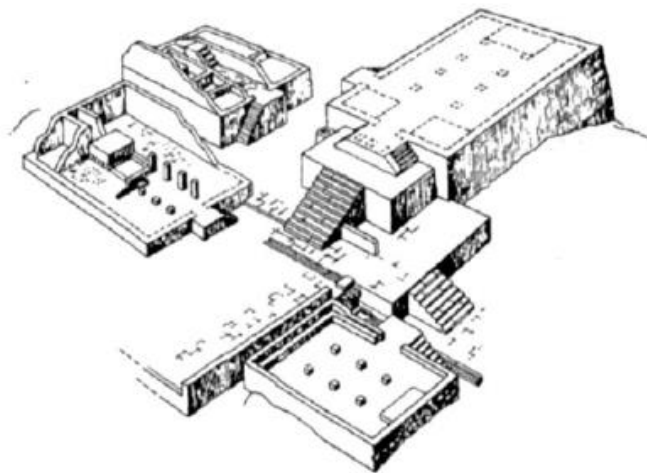
Figure 14: Dhat Hamim Rahban Temple-The Gate Raised Above the Courtyard [7]

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The reasresh concluded that the sacred place is an idea that has the same concept in various cultures especially, in the ancient near east civilizations such as Egyptian, Mesopotamia, Syria, Hebrew, and Indian civilization. The southern Arabian Peninsula has been part of these civilizations and has not yet been out of this idea, but has been a major culture among those ancient civilizations.

Sacred places come in varied levels of sanctity, and care is taken to demarcate different areas from each other. Access to each level is accurately guarded; a form of cleansing ritual usually accompanies passage from one area to another. As one progressed through the areas of places, increasing levels of sanctity and different grades of sacred space were achieved by using different materials and construction techniques. The city enclosed by the outer wall was the least holy area, and the entrance to the city was more sacred. The temple place inside the city was more sacred, and the holy of holiest places was the most sacred.

The study concluded that the place in ancient Yemeni beliefs was different and divided into two parts: the first was sacred and the second was profane. The ancient cities embodied the concept of the sacred place. The belief in the sacred place continued even after entering Islam in Yemen. There are some places in different regions that are the

places and shrines for prophets and parents. These shrines are becoming more popular in some places, which represents the main factor in the definition of a sacred place. Finally, the study recommends the need to intensify architectural studies on the ancient architectural elements to help reveal the heritage.

ORIGINALITY AND SCIENTIFIC ADDITION OF THE RESEARCH

This study sought to highlight the ancient Yemeni architecture and its technical and intellectual characteristics. It is a serious scientific step in understanding the architecture and taking advantage of all its scientific, technical, and intellectual aspects. On the other hand, it is trying to contribute to maintaining Yemeni civilization and its architectural heritage, as the government and private agencies concerned with this side are absent.

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