NEW "SYSTEM" OF PRESENTATION OF UMAYYAD DESERT CASTLES IN JORDAN. INTEGRAL MUSEUM OF UMAYYAD CIVILIZATION

Jamal ILAYAN*, Jordanie / Jordan

INTRODUCTION

These ancient castles were built as travel stations along the road between the Umayyad capital, Damascus, in Syria and the other district cities in Iraq and Arabia. The interpretation of these castles will be based on understanding the reasons for their foundation, their typology, function, structure and the relationships between them. At present these castles need a new system for their presentation that reflects their present condition while preserving and respecting their values and significance. The new system offers to the public a clear view of the integral aspects of the Umayyad civilization, which will help in the development of the program "*Museum with No Frontiers" (MWNF)*[1]. Each one of these castles will present one part of that civilization museum, in accordance with its architectural characteristics and appropriate development management.

A. Analyses and Interpretations of the ancient system

In the first part of this study we need to analyze and interpret all aspects that are necessary for developing our project proposal. The aspects we need to stabilize the most are the significance and values (tangible and intangible) of the ancient system. The second part of the study consists of the presentation of the new system of Umayyed castles that will be based on the first part of the study.

I. General typology system

Desert castles belong to the typology of suburban structures. There are many correlations between Umayyad castles and the previous suburban ancient structures. We can see Persian and Roman architectural influences, which are the result first of the central location of Syria[2] and second, of Islamic spiritual unity.

Ancient civilizations erected structures outside the cities for different purposes. For example, in Syria Persians, Romans and their Arabic allies[3] (Lakhmed in Iraq and Ghassanid in Syria) built agricultural houses[4], Khans, castles and control towers. Babylonians built the first Khan in Mesopotamia in the second century, with a square plan and a central portico. This typology influenced the general plan of Umayyad castles. We can identify the Byzantine influence in the technical structure and in the adaptation of the typology (way in which the space was used) of single apartments in the Umayyad castles.

II. Interpretation of the system of ancient Umayyad castles (significance and historical value of the ancient system)

This study focused on the system and its various elements. This complex system[5] was developed over time and for different reasons. The first group of castles was built between 661 and 685 AD by Muawiya I and his son Yazid I for leisure and recreation, with functions similar to those of a Roman villa[6]. The following castles in the Levant are representative of the foregoing group: Anjar, Minyah and Jabal Usays. The second group was built for political reasons, as propaganda for Umayyad policies and for official caravans (between the capital, Damascus, in Syria and other district cities in Arabia and in Iraq, such as Amman, Jerusalem, Kharana and Muaqqar), between 685 and 717 by Abd Al Malik and his two sons, Al Walid and Suliman.

---

1 "MWNF is a new exhibition concept. The trial exhibit "Museum with No Frontiers" is a program designed to take advantage of the merits of artistic and cultural heritage based on a new concept. Artworks remain *in situ* and the visitor travels to discover works in their home environment." From a Jordanian tourist publication.

2 Hellenistic culture, in the past and in the same region in Syria, was the first to make a fusion of the two cultures, oriental and occidental.

3 V. Strica, *Origine e primi sviluppi dell'architettura civile musulmana*, Istituto Tipografico Editoriale, Vinezia 1967, pp. 87 - 88

4 We have to remember that Ibn Khaldun, in his Muqaddema, considered that all basic structures were built by nomads as single houses scattered in the desert, and that cities developed later. See Ibn Khaldun, *Al Muqaddema,* Beirut 1995 p. 116.

5 There are different interpretations for these castles. The first one provides a nostalgic reason (Bedouin desert life). This theory was proposed by Musil and Lamens. The second interpretation, by Suvage and Grabar, assumes that Umayyad castles were a sort of Roman villa in a fertile territory. The third one, presented by Gaube and Bisha, gives the ancient system of castles the function of stations for official caravans. The last one, a political and socio-economical interpretation, is proposed by S. Urice. In reality, all of these interpretations are correct for each group of castles (see bibliography).

6 "Roman villas in Syria were richer because of local architectural elements". V. Strica, op.cit. p. 20

In addition to this system, two baths, Amra and Sarah, were also built for their comfort. The third group appeared in the Late Umayyad period, between 717 and 743, under Hisham and Yazid II, who wished to revitalize the socio-economical situation. They started to use some of the previous castles, like Kharana and Muaqqar, as caravan khans. For the same reason they also began to use once more some Roman castles, like Azraq and Hallabat, and they built new castles, such as Tuba, Mshatta, al Hir al Sharqi, al Hir al Gharbi, Jerusalem and Qasr Hisham.

III. Significance and values of castles

All values are important and will be preserved. We separated values[7] into cultural and socio-economic ones. Cultural values are archeological, historical, architectural, artistic, technical, and in terms of identity and rarity. Socio-economic values are economic, functional, educational and social.

We saw in paragraph A-II some aspects (formation and stratification) of the historical value. Desert castles are rare structures bearing the unique archeological and identity aspects of the Umayyad civilization. Architectural, artistic and technical values are analyzed in fig. 1.

Function is the most important aspect of the architectural component. We have to analyze the ancient functions of each castle and compare them to the proposal for the new function, which must be congruent with the ancient one. Also, we have to respect the architectural characteristics and present condition of the castle (see paragraph b-II).

B. Projecting the past into the future: presentation of the new system

We study the past in order to understand the present and to plan for the future. In previous studies we defended different aspects, analyses and interpretations of desert castles. In this paragraph we wish to identify their present condition in order to put forward our project proposal for their future.

I. Present condition of the castles and their conservation

The present state of the castles and their conservation are important for making an appropriate proposal for the presentation of the new system. In Jordan we have ten castles, two of which are Amra[8] and Kharana, in an integral original condition, still preserving their volumes.

They can be prepared for use only with some restoration works.

Four other castles, Amman, Qastal, Azraq and Sarah, are in a partial state of conservation, which has enabled their use as museums. We can increase their capability with restoration works and anastiloses.

The remaining four castles, Hallabat, Tuba, Muaqqar and Mshatta, are in bad condition and in need of more extensive conservation works, such as restoration, anastilosis, construction of shelters, etc.

This is the present state of the particular elements of the system of desert castles. We must also analyze the present condition of the overall system and the possibility for its use. We have to examine its accessibility and its collective factors. All of the castles are linked by state roads, which are highly frequented by tourists and passengers traveling between Amman, Syria, Arabia and Iraq. This fact guarantees the favourable development of our proposal.

II. Feasibility study for the new system

A feasibility study is a rational method for choosing the correct function for the (monuments) elements of the system. An example of economic cost and benefit analysis has been applied to Qasr Kharana. We considered the comparison between the two project proposals for Kharana. Proposal A is the "MWNF" scheme and proposal B is ours, as part of the "Integral Museum of Umayyad Civilization". We did not consider the cost of conservation works because it is the same for the two proposed projects. The result of the cost analysis of Proposal A is of 83,000$; the cost of proposal B is 154,000$, while the benefits are 50,000$ and 205,000$, respectively. The relationship between cost and benefit is more favourable in the case of the second proposal.

III. The integral museum idea

This study of the integral museum of Umayyad civilization came as a project proposal to develop the program "Museum With no Frontiers" (MWNF), financed by the European Union's Meda Programme, Euromed Heritage and with the participation of the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. MWNF organizes "Islamic art in the Mediterranean" as part of the "International Exhibition trials" in different countries in the Mediterranean. The Jordanian exhibition is entitled "The Umayyad, the Commencement of Islamic art"[9].

[7] For the classification values we refer to: A. Regal, *Il moderno culto dei monumenti, la sua essenza il suo sviluppo, intruduzione alla legge sulla protezione dei monumenti*, Der modern de nkmalkulsus, sien wesen, siene entessehung zum denklmal schsxgesatx. Wien Braunmuller 1903, Traduzione da Maria Annunziata Lima; B. M. Feilden, J. Jokilehto *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* ICCROM, Rome, 1998 pp. 11 - 21

[8] Qasr Amra is listed as World Cultural Heritage Site. It underwent extensive restoration in the 1970's by the Spanish archaeological mission.

[9] *Giordania, Gli Omayyadi la nasceta dell'arte islamica*, in *Museo senza frontiera Ottobre* 1998, Roma pp. 20-23

In Jordan, we have five itineraries. Umayyad castles (see fig 2) represent the second one. The MWNF programme uses each castle as a single museum in itself. The new proposal will result in a productive function as a part of the integral museum, which reflects one aspect of the Umayyad civilization, while always respecting values and architectural characteristics.

IV. The new system: integral museum of the Umayyad civilization

The presentation of the new system consists of two dimensions. The first one is in a general level: all castles have one function as part of the integral museum, reflecting the complex relationship of the ancient system. The second level relates to the association of one sub-function of the integral museum to each single castle. In this association we have to respect the guidelines for the use of ancient monuments as stated in the fifth article[10] of the Venice Charter. Therefore, we specified four criteria for choosing the function of each castle (see fig 3). They are:

1. Not to change the interior or exterior form of a castle.
2. Not to change the interior distribution or design of a castle.
3. The function must preserve the values of a castle.
4. The function must be compatible with the present condition, significance and historic value of the castle.

Krana constitutes an example of this type of use, with an exhibit of hand-made products on the ground floor, and a museum of original artifacts on the first floor (see fig 4).

Conclusion and recommendations

- The new system will be founded on the cultural supports of the ancient one.
- The function of the system gives more significance to the system.
- The method of presentation used is based on analyses and interpretations of values, significance and present condition of the monuments.

Using a monument helps in its conservation and thus becomes a development aid for society.

[10] The fifth article of the Venice Charter (1964) states: "The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the lay-out or decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted." Documentation Center, UNESCO – ICOMOS Paris

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- V. Strica, *Origine e primi sviluppi dell'architettura civile musulmana*, Istituto Tipografico Editoriale, Vinezia 1967
- Ibn Khldun *Al Muqaddema* Dar al kitab al lubnani litibah wal nsher Beirut 1959
- A. Musil, *Palmyerna, A Topographical Itinerary.*: American Geographical Society, New York 1928
- H Lamens, *La Badia et la Hira sous les Omayyades*, M.F.O.B., VI, 1910
- J. Sauvaget, *Remarques sur les monuments Omeyyades*, Journal Asiatique 231: 1-59 Paris 1939
- U. Grabar, *Arte islamica, la formazione di una civilta'*, Milano 1989
- H. Gaube, Die syrshchen Wustenschloser: Einige wirtschaftiliche politishe Gesschichtspunkte zu ihrer Entstehung. Zeitschrift des Deutschrift Palastina-Vereins 95: 182-209, 1979
- G. Bishah, *Qusir Amra and its aphrisqes*, in al Fikr al Arabi n 52, Kuwait 1988.
- S. Urice, *Qasr Kharana in the Transjordan*, American Schools of Oriental Research, Durham, North Carolina 1987
- A. Regal *Il moderno culto dei monumenti, la sua essenza il suo sviluppo, intruduzione alla legge sulla protezione dei monumenti*, Der modern de nkmalkulsus, sien wesen, siene entessehung zum denklmal schsxgesatx. Wien Braunmuller 1903, Traduzione da Maria Annunziata Lima.
- B. M. Feilden, J. Jokilehto *Management Guidelines for World cultural Heritage Sites* ICCROM, Rome, 1998
- *Giordania, Gli Omayyadi la nasceta dell'arte islamica*, in *Museo senza frontiera Ottobre* 1998, Roma
- Venice Charter (1964) Documentation Centre, UNESO – ICOMOS Paris.

*Jamal Shafiq ILAYAN

- Ph.D. in Architectural Conservation, 1999, Naples Federico II University, Italy
- Ph.D. in Architectural Design, 1996, Rome La Sapienza University, Italy
- M.Sc. in Restoration of Monuments, 2000, Rome La Sapienza University , Italy
- High Diploma Architectural Design by Computer, 1990, Rome La Sapienza University, Italy
- B.Sc. Architecture, 1989, Naples Federico II University, Italy
- Member of International ICOMOS Committee, Paris
- Assistant professor at Yarmouk University, Department of Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage.
- Publication of different papers in international reviews
- Participation in different restoration projects in Italy

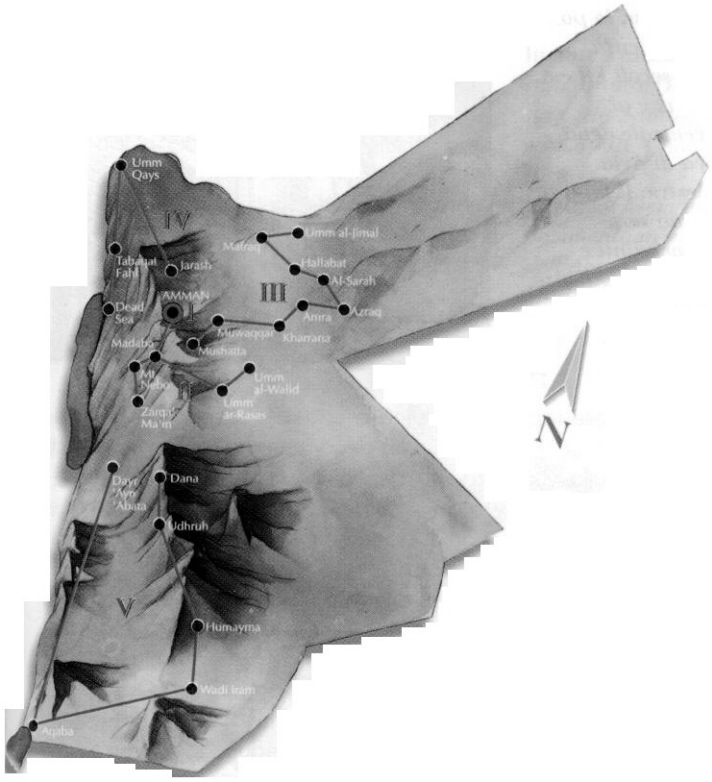
NEW "SYSTEM" OF PRESENTATION OF UMAYYAD DESERT CASTLES IN JORDAN. INTEGRAL MUSEUM OF UMAYYAD CIVILIZATION

Jamal ILAYAN*, Jordanie / Jordan

CASTLES

Analyses of cultural elements	Amman	Qastal	Mashatta	Kharana	Amra
Date of building	685 – 715	661 – 685	717 - 743	685 - 715	685 - 715
Architectural plan	Complex	Square	Complex	Square	Complex
Dimensions	~160x160 m	68x68	~144x144 m	36x35 m.	~ 70 mq
Parts of monument	Five parts	One part	Five parts	One part	Seven parts
Proportions of principal façade	Symmetrical	Symmetrical	Symmetrical	Symmetrical	Asymmetrical
Architectural typology	More than one courtyard	One courtyard	More than one courtyard	One courtyard	Organic composition
Number of floors	One	Two	One	Two	One
Construction system	Arches, vaults, dome	Arches and corbel vault	Ogival barrel vaults	Transversal arch and barrel vault	Transversal arch and barrel vault
Material	Square stone	Square stone	Square stone Red brick	Irregular stone	Irregular stone
Portico	One central road	Two levels in courtyard	One central road	Two levels in courtyard	No portico
Courtyard	More than two courtyards	One courtyard	More than two courtyards	One courtyard	No courtyard
Principal upstairs	More than two	None	None	Two	None
Staircase position	No staircases	Behind the entrance	No staircase	In the south of courtyard	No staircase
Reception room	On ground floor	On second floor	On ground floor	On second floor	---
Entrance	With portico	With iwan	With portico	With iwan	Simple
Audience room	Ground floor, with iwan	First plan, with two half-domes	Ground floor, with iwan	First plan with two half-domes	---
Mosque location	On ground floor	On ground floor	On second floor	On second floor	Outside qasr
Towers	No towers	Structure towers	Structure towers	Structure towers	No towers
Fortification system	Fortified site	Fortified building	Fortified complex	Fortified building	Not fortified
Construction stratification	More than two phases	Two phases	One phase	Two phases	One phase
Interior decoration	Stone sculpture	Gypsum roses	Stone capitals	Gypsum roses	Wall frescoes
Exterior decoration	Stone sculpture	Molding panel over entrance	Stone capitals	Mold brick and moulding panel over entrance	No exterior decoration

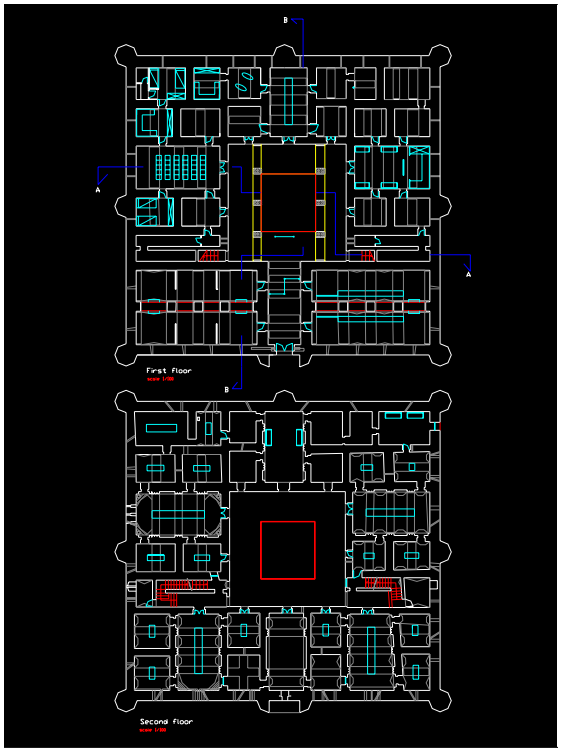
Analysis of the architectural, artistic and technical values of each castle.
N.B. We include the most important castles that display the elements for analysis.



"MWNF general plan of trails" exhibit in Jordan; the second one is of Umayyad castles.

Castle	Part of integral museum (singular function exhibit)	A	B	C	D	Total
Amman	Political	1	3	3	3	10
Qastal	Military	2	3	1	2	8
Mshatta	Religious	2	3	1	2	8
Muaqqar	Agriculture	1	3	3	3	10
Kharana	Artifacts	3	3	2	2	10
Amra	Architectural and art	3	3	3	3	12
Azraq	Economic	2	3	3	3	11
Tuba	Desert life	2	3	2	2	9
Hallabat	Relationship with other civilization	2	3	2	3	10
Sarah	Leisure	1	3	2	3	9
Total		19	30	22	26	88

Castles' function, part of integral museum of Umayyad civilization
We give degrees of satisfaction of function criteria from one to three.
A. Not to change the interior or exterior form of the castle.
B. Not to change the interior distribution or design of the castle.
C. The function must preserve the values of the castle.
D. The function must be compatible with the present condition, significance and historic value of the castle.
N.B. In this figure we include all Umayyad castles in Jordan.



Kharana, proposal project, hand-made products on the ground floor, and museum exhibit of original artifacts on the first floor.

Credits for illustrations

All illustrations by the author. Fig. 2 is taken from *Giordania, Gli Omayyadi la nasceta dell'arte islamica*, in *Museo senza frontiera Ottobre* 1998, Roma