From Arabia to Bilād al-Shām:
Muʿāwiya’s Development of an Infrastructure and Monumental Architecture of Early Umayyad Statehood

Beatrice St. Laurent

Bridgewater State University

This article first examines the early history of Muʿāwiya and his monumental architectural achievements in Arabia. He was from a wealthy land-owning elite Arabian family of traders from the Meccan Qurayshi tribe. As Companion and scribe of the Prophet he was well-positioned to achieve the goals of tribal unification, agricultural development, initiating a period of architectural construction and state-building. Second the article’s major focus is his monumental architectural construction in Greater Syria evidenced in the archaeological and re-evaluated textual evidence, which support his creation of statehood infrastructure for the Umayyads in Bilād al-Shām. As governor of Syria and later as the first Sufyānid Amīr al-muʾminīn or Commander of the Faithful in the Dār al-Islam, he controlled the development of an architecture and bureaucratic infrastructure of state throughout the region. After arrival with the armies of conquest in 634, he became provincial governor of Syria in 638/639 and continued the process of tribal unification and state-building at the behest of the Rashidun caliphs ʿUmar and ʿUthman. As Amīr al-muʾminīn he continued tribal consolidation, settling disputes by moving populations within the Dār al-Islam. He also engaged in monumental architectural development throughout the realm including mosques, palaces and fortresses, invented the miḥrāb—the stone or space (later the niche) indicating the direction of prayer toward Mecca, and established what was later known as the ribāṭ system along the Mediterranean coast. Though there are meager documentary survivals of texts and inscriptions, there is now sufficient archaeological and recent secondary scholarly evidence particularly in a revision textual usage to claim that Muʿāwiya created the Umayyad state and monuments reflecting statehood during his reign as Commander of the Faithful in Syria with multiple capitals in Damascus, al-Jābiya, al-Ṣinnabra and Jerusalem.

There is a lack of tangible evidence of monumental construction and datable signifiers during the period of Muʿāwiya for the Early Islamic period in Arabia and Bilād al-Shām or Greater Syria. Part of the problem lies with the interpretation and reliability of the sources and the

Keywords: Muʿāwiya, Amīr al-muʾminīn, Umayyad, Bilād al-Shām, al-Ṣinnabra
definitions used to discuss the period. Also contributing to the dearth of exploration of this time period has been insufficient evidence from material culture. This article first summarizes the available historical, art historical, archaeological, and updated usage of recent hence less biased than later research scholarship demonstrating more far-reaching evidence from multiple disciplines of Mu‘awiya’s development of an Early Islamic monumental architectural tradition both in Arabia and Syria. It further seeks to re-define the signifiers of Islamic presence in monumental architecture and statehood in terms differing from previous scholarly definitions.

“Mu‘awiya was apparently not a great builder and what he did build has mostly disappeared” and what was built was not at all impressive suggests S. Humphreys in his biography of the first Sufyânid Umayyad Commander of the Faithful or Amīr al-mu’minīn of the Early Islamic Empire (Humphreys 2006, 246) ruling from a variety of cities in Bilād al-Shām. Humphreys further cites J. Johns’ statement that ‘the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence’ and that there “is little prospect that archaeology will uncover new evidence of Islam from the first seventy years” all of this focusing on the lack of declarations in the name of Islam and mention of its Prophet Muhammad (Johns 2003, 411–415). Implicit in Humphrey’s assessment of Mu‘awiya’s monumental construction is that imperial architecture had to be grand and impressive. In fact, historical, archaeological and art historical evidence demonstrates the opposite—that the surviving material culture of the fledgling empire is modest in both scale and decorative splendor. Implicit in Johns analysis is that without the mention of Islam and Muhammad in inscriptions and texts there is no concrete evidence of statehood and that this only began with the Umayyad Marwanid rule of ‘Abd al-Malik.

There has been a long-standing debate concerning Mu‘awiya’s major architectural, bureaucratic and infrastructure accomplishments in Arabia and Bilād al-Shām or the lack thereof, fueled primarily by the ninth and tenth century Abbasid and later narrative texts and Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet). These texts deny his role in the development of his region of origin in Arabia and ignore completely his major contributions to the monumental architectural and urban development of Bilād al-Shām after he moved there with the army of conquest. However recent scholarship has begun to address the problem from multiple disciplines—textual analysis, archaeology, and monumental architectural construction.

This article first focuses on Mu‘awiya’s early history and accomplishments in Arabia prior to his departure with the army of conquest in 634 CE. It then evaluates his achievements in
Muʿāwiya’s Development of an Infrastructure and Monumental Architecture

Greater Syria or Bilād al-Shām, as governor and later as Commander of the Faithful until his death, in the northern districts Jund al-Urdunn and Jund Dimashq by the “Sea (or Lake) of Galilee,” Jund Filastin and in the Sahrāʾ al-Tīh or the Negev and Mt. Sinai region from 638–680. It also demonstrates his continued engagement with his land of origin in the Ḥijāz and further south in South Arabia/Yemen and makes a case for statehood during his reign from Syria. This study sets the stage for an elaboration on the topics explored herein and an extensive examination of ‘Muʿāwiya’s major focus on the architectural development of Jerusalem as one of the capitals of the emergent empire.¹

Muʿāwiya’s early years in Arabia 602–634

Muʿāwiya was born in Mecca between 595 and 607 (I. Hasson 1982 and 1984; S. Humphreys, 369) into the Quraysh clan or tribe—an elite wealthy urban family from the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad. His father was Sakhr b. Harb b.ʿAbd Shāms–more commonly known as Abū Sufyān–(560–650). The ‘ʿAbd Shāms line of the Quraysh was one of wealthiest in Mecca and Abū Sufyān belonged to the prestigious family of the Banū Ṭumayya—the Ṭumayyads (Humphreys, 392–411; Hasson 1998).

His father was an opponent of Muhammad’s new religious proclamations but both Muʿāwiya and his brother Yazīd grasped the advantage of affiliation with Muhammad and were politically strategic—including their father—in their acceptance of Islam by the fall of Mecca to the Prophet in 629 (Humphreys, 369; Kennedy 2007, 51; Hawting 1986, 22). During this formative period, Muʿāwiya was a Companion of the Prophet and his scribe taking dictation of the Prophet’s Revelation, beginning in 610 CE. During these years, he “emerges as a man who exemplifies the virtues of the Jāhilīyya [period in Arabia before Islam] but has no particular profile in Muslim piety. He respects Islam but it is not what moves him” (Humphreys, 369).²

Revisionist text and historical analysis³

There has been no major study of Muʿāwiya’s contribution to the urban, rural and monumental architectural development of his homeland in Arabia prior to his departure in 634 for Syria nor of his contributions in Bilād al-Shām. The cause of ignoring this period is partially attributable to later Abbasid “creative” political texts purposefully diminishing if not outright denying his and his family’s or for that matter the Prophet’s role in the physical transformation of early Islamic Arabia (Hawting 1986). More recent textual scholarship has begun to penetrate the void with “soundings” (Lecker 1995, XVI) providing valid textual data for the Sufyānid contribution.

There is also little early corroboration from the disciplines of archaeology or art history. There has been a long-standing belief among scholars that the Arabs swept north out of the Arabian desert as a nomadic tent-dwelling people bringing with them no urban or architectural traditions. In 2005 A. Peterson states:

¹. Not discussed in depth in this article is the conquest and rule over Jund Filastīn that included most of Palaestina Prima including Jerusalem and Caesarea/Qaysariyya—its capital. This area of the conquest will be discussed separately in an additional publication. For this author’s relevant publications on this topic see St. Laurent 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019.
The settled people of the Mediterranean littoral are characterized as civilized people who were either Europeans themselves or had adopted European (i.e. Hellenistic/Roman) customs. The nomads on the other hand are regarded as uncivilized barbarians intent on looting the towns and villages of the settled people...the overall picture is now generally rejected in favor of a more complex analysis. (Peterson 2005, 22)

While there exist early challenges to this misbegotten notion, they have been largely marginalized until recently.4

From the early history of the monumental architectural development of early Islam, K.A.C. Creswell and O. Grabar deny that there existed an architectural tradition at all in Pre-Islamic Arabia and the early Islamic period. Creswell, a major documentarian of Islamic art states in his 1932 Early Muslim Architecture: “Arabia, at the rise of Islam does not appear to have possessed anything worthy of the name of architecture.” O. Grabar, weighing in on the debate of textual reliability and early Islamic art in Arabia: “it is fairly certain, that, at least in the period immediately preceding the Muslim conquest, the Arabs of Arabia had very few indigenous traditions of any significance.” He continues “Any modification of this impression of poverty in the artistic development of pre-Islamic Arabia produced by excavations, explorations and a more systematic study of literary documents is hardly likely to be very significant” (Ettinghausen and Grabar, 17–18).5 This perspective led to a flawed view that saw the roots of an Early Islamic monumental architecture and art solely in the traditions of the conquered regions, notably the Byzantium and Sasanian Iran.

Thankfully this picture is changing with recent studies in textual re-evaluation, history, art history and archaeology that reveal strong traditions of architecture in the pre-Islamic period. This can be seen in the surviving architectural remains of the pre-Islamic Arab, Jewish, Christian population of Arabia in the Hijāz and South Arabia. These publications suggest the existence of a monumental architectural tradition in Yemen and the South Arabian Peninsula. However there has been a dearth of archaeological excavations until recently in the region that would provide strong supporting evidence (Hattstein 2004, 9).6

---

4. See also Lammens 1907, 1914, 1930; Miles 1948.
5. I am not the first to note this but as an art historian of the Islamic period, I find it necessary to further elaborate on the subject. See also Lecker 1995, 11, who further cites that Creswell wondered where and when early Muslims first learned about fortification. An earlier scholar in the discipline D. Rice in 1965 insists on the dual origins in Byzantine and Sasanian traditions along with ‘Jewish thought’ (Rice, 1975, 9) Grabar clearly emphasizes as most significant the Byzantine and Sasanian traditions to the formation of Islamic art. As late as 1999, R. Hillenbrand indicates that in the early period, that there was “neither the desire nor the time to foster artistic expression.” He further states that the arts were not absent in Arabia as in the frescoes from excavations at Qaryat al-Faw show, these remnants of the visual arts “had no very significant role, though architecture flourished” (Hillenbrand, 11). M. Hattstein stresses that the exploration of Early Islamic settlement in the Arabian Peninsula is in its initial stages and that “Ancient Arabian culture is best documented in the Hadramawt and the rest of Yemen...where mighty buildings or their ruins and fortresses testify to the splendor.” (Hattstein, 2004/20011). J. Johns’ 2000 article explores the origin of the mosque in Arabia but is not relevant for Mu‘āwiya’s early oeuvre.
6. C. Robin, a scholar of the Hijaz and South Arabian kingdoms discusses the Himyarite heritage of Yemen in his 2010 publication amongst many others. See also the many studies of the region by J. Schiettecatte. Another notable publication for Yemen is N. Khoury’s 1993 article “The Dome of the Rock, the Ka‘ba, and Ghumdan: Arab Myths and Umayyad Monuments” discussing palatial development in Yemen in South Arabia based on Arabic textual sources as it affected the palace architecture of Bilad al-Shām.
Byzantine and Sasanian dominion in the “Arab” context

Briefly, the state of affairs in the region of Byzantine and Sasanian dominance was one of division during the rise of Islam in the lands controlled by these two great empires. In fact, ethnic diversity and fluidity of movement partially based on the north-south trade routes long pre-existing Byzantine and Sasanian imperial dominion were dominant features of the entire region. Nor can the population be easily categorized by ethnicity or religion; nor is what defines an Arab clear and is confusing at best. Suffice it to say that the designation can be linguistic, geographic or a combination of the two and is not time-bound to the rise of Islam but derives from when there is documented evidence of the earliest use of the term early in the seventh century BCE. (Graf 2017, 420). David Graf’s article defines the issues within this broader historical context, which leads one to conclude that the region was multi-ethnic and religiously diverse long before the arrival of Islam.

It is clear that the Arab penetration into Syria, southern Babylon, and Mesopotamia began at least in the eighth century BCE, with steady and increased migration to the region in the later periods. Many of these Arabs were migrants from the major oases of Arabia, most of which were located on the periphery of the Peninsula: the Arabian Gulf region of the northeast, the northwestern Hijāz region, and the southwest area of what is today Yemen. (Graf 2017, 426).

There are examples of Arabs serving the Roman army as early as the second century and that Nabateans were incorporated into the Byzantine army as late as 590 CE, producing a cultural and social continuity in post-conquest Syria (Peterson, 21). Graf summarizes the kingdoms, urban structures and types of architecture of the pre-Islamic period surviving as ruins or recorded in excavations: palaces, watch towers, tombs, dams for irrigation of vast agricultural properties (Graf 2017). It is sovereignty that alters with Islam and the creation of an empire that geographically, politically and socially united regions formerly under the Byzantine and Sasanian empires and “globalized” the culture.

Muʿāwiya’s role in the transformation of early Islamic Arabia

For this article and the relevance to Muʿāwiya’s contributions I cite primarily two major textual sources: M. J. Kister’s 1979 and M. Lecker’s 1995 publications. on the early years of Islam. The two studies of the central Arabian cities of Medina and al-Tāʿif corroborate Muʿāwiya’s role and contribution to the monumental development of Arabia during this period. Through re-evaluation of early Islamic sources, both scholars demonstrate that Muʿāwiya and his family played a significant role in tribal consolidation and were engaged in land acquisition, agricultural and monumental development of these two cities.

Medina is divided into Upper Medina—al-ʿĀliya—and Lower Medina—Sāfila, the former south of the Prophet’s mosque with major areas suitable for cultivation with valleys filled with orchards. The two areas were populated by distinctly different tribes of differing ethnic origins (Jewish and Arab), which the Prophet sought to unite under his sovereignty. The main types of buildings that are documented in this period are mosques, fortresses and fortresses converted to mosques. There were multiple types of fortresses including the husūn and/or ātām or ājam.

7. David Graf raises and defines the major debates and their history also citing much relevant bibliography on the pre-Islamic period. See also Graf 2015 and Graf 2017 for finds in material culture and text for Arab presence in Palestine/Israel.
ʿutum pl.)—used interchangeably—built by both Jewish and Arab tribes in the ʿĀliya. The ordinary ʿutum or tower houses were both residence and fortress (Lecker 1995, 1–12).

Muʿāwiya is said to have transformed at least one qasr into a hisn—Qasr Khall for the Umayya living in Medina. He is also known to have constructed Qasr Banī Hudayla in the heart of Medina as shelter for the Umayya. The Umayya were aware that the Medinans hated them and thus defense was a major focus in architectural urban development. These fortresses were a feature of Medina and held symbolic significance in the memory of Medinans. Conversion of a qasr involved the improvement of fortification and assurance of an independent water supply. It is known that these fortresses were rehabilitated by Muʿāwiya during his pre-634 time in Arabia because sources record demolition of at least some by ʿUthman b. ʿAffān (579–676) for either urban development or political reasons (Lecker 1979, 13).

Like his father Abū Sufyān, Muʿāwiya acquired lands in al-Tāʾif on the slopes of the Sarawat mountains and nearby areas. “The conversion of al-Tāʾif to Islam marked the last victorious stage of the Prophet’s struggle for control over the three important cities in the Arabian Peninsula: Mecca, Medina and al-Tāʾif.” It also was a summer retreat for the elite of Mecca and the fertile area for growing produce for Mecca and Medina during the time of the Prophet (Kister 1979, 13, 16–17). Also the Banu Thaqīf tribe of Tāʾif worked the fields of the valley supplying Mecca and eventually united with the Quraysh and the Prophet (Kister 1979, 14).

In summation, Muʿāwiya’s efforts in transforming Early Islamic Arabia prior to his move after 634 are as follows: consolidation of tribal allegiance, land acquisition mainly for agricultural development, the construction and management of water resources for irrigation, and monumental construction and restoration of fortifications, which could also include mosques. This knowledge and experience he brought with him to Bilād al-Shām.

Muʿāwiya in Bilād al-Shām: Setting the Stage for Jerusalem in Jund al-Urdunn

Historical and textual evidence

Muʿāwiya accompanied the first armies to Syria in 634 ordered by the first caliph Abu Bakr (Foss 2010, 75). In pre-Islamic times in Syria—that is, prior to the 634 conquest—Muʿāwiya’s father Abū Sufyān in the spring of 624 C. E. led a caravan from Gaza to Mecca accompanied by seventy men (Kennedy 1986, 35). By 630, he also owned a farm in the fertile region of Balqa south of Amman in the village called Qubbash in Byzantine Syria. Thus, just as the family had purchased and developed land for agricultural purposes in Arabia, so they had in Syria. This farm was a base for commercial trade along the route from Arabia to Damascus essential in the provision of wine, oil and grain from the region around Bosra or Buṣrā (south of Damascus) (Kennedy 2007, 77). According to sources, Abū Sufyān was there when the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius walked from Homs or Hims to Jerusalem returning the relic of the True Cross retrieved from the Sasanians to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Kennedy 2004, 61; 2007, 70-74). Thus, it was easy for Muʿāwiya to integrate into the region and it is probable that the family had built relations with the local population. Presently, it is not known if Muʿāwiya spent time there prior to his arrival in Syria in 634.

8. The historical name of Balqa’ in the seventh century Byzantine period applied to the entire area of the eastern plateau of the Jordan Valley (Howard-Johnston 2010, 373).

The majority of Arabs/Muslims who came to Syria from South Arabia and the Hijāz were urban dwellers and settled in semi-permanent sites (Whitcomb 2009, 241). Amr b. al-Ās was one of the commanders and a member of the urban land-owning elite from Tā’if (Kennedy 2007, 51). This same elite class of Arabian urban dwellers governed from the cities of the newly conquered regions in Syria. There is well-documented evidence of Amr b. al-Ās’s estates between Hebron and Beersheva (M. Lecker, 1989; J. Blakely 2010; Whitcomb 2016, 9). It would be of interest to determine if Mu’āwiyah purchased and established additional agricultural property in Syria.

Mu’āwiyah replaced his brother Yazīd as military commander of the Muslims and was appointed governor of Bilād al-Shām by Caliph ʿUmar in 638 serving until his investiture in 661 as the first Sufyānid Umayyad Amīr al-muʾminīn. With the death of ʿAli in 661, he became ruler of the Dār al-Islam serving until his death in 680. His task was to consolidate the local tribes in the service of the new Arab empire, including the Persians in Iraq and the tribal groups of Syria, notably the Kalb and Ghassanids—Arab tribes that had long been in the region and converted to Christianity and served Byzantine landlords. The pattern established in Arabia thus continued in Syria.

The former sixth century Ghassanid capital of al-Jābiya—Jābiyat al-Jawlan—was first a garrison town and main military camp after the Muslim conquest and between 638 and 661, when Mu’āwiyah was provincial governor, it was the capital of Jund Dimashq (Province of Damascus) (Shahid 2002, 96). Located between the Hawran Plain and the Golan, it was also the site of strategic administrative meetings of Arab leaders after the conquest (Lammens 1965, 360; Kennedy 1986, 62). The region was known for its fertile fields, was a favored residence of Mu’āwiyah and was a means of forging close ties with the Ghassanids. It also was later the favored summer residence of the Umayyads. This seasonal usage parallels a similar pattern in the Ḥijaz (see above). The site has never been excavated and thus no archaeological remains have been documented.

There is evidence of monumental architectural construction though mainly limited up to now to textual sources. H. Kennedy states that “literary sources tell us that mosques were constructed shortly after the conquest in many cities.” He further indicates that the archaeological evidence for all types of structures identifiable as Islamic has been “problematic and ambiguous, contested territory, and its interpretation often owes more to the preconceptions of the investigator than to hard science,” citing J. Johns 2003 JESHO article as “constructive.” There is textual evidence indicating that Mu’āwiyah’s brother Ziyād rebuilt the mosques of the eastern capital of al-Kufāh and al-Baṣrah in the province of Iraq but in scholarly sources up until very recently no archaeological remains have been documented (C. Foss 2010, 79; M. Morony 1984, 79–83). Prayer spaces and mosques were established during the governorship and reign of Mu’āwiyah in Damascus and Homs and these were shared spaces serving as both churches and mosques (Kennedy 2007, 31, 85). F. Flood elaborates on the shared prayer space in Damascus with the Church of John the Baptist. Muslims entered the Triple Gate of the ancient temenos and turned to the right to pray before the miḥrāb (flat arch, stone, space or niche indicating the
direction of prayer towards Mecca) established by Mu‘āwiya, and Christians went to the left to pray in the Church. Mu‘āwiya is said to have invented the miḥrāb space later a niche defining the prayer direction toward Mecca.\(^\text{13}\) Attached to the prayer space on the east was the Palace of Khadra establishing a precedent for other cities (Kennedy 2000, 85; Flood 2001; N. Khoury 1993).\(^\text{14}\)

Also during this time, the proclamation on coins and inscriptions was that Mu‘āwiya was ‘Amīr al-muˈminin or Commander of the Faithful or Believers but not yet in the name of caliph or Islam. The physical evidence of shared prayer spaces equally supports Donner’s view that the “Community of Believers” at this time included Christians and Jews; all were considered ahl al-kitāb People of the Book and monotheists and that a unified and codified concept of Islam for Muslims came later during the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik (Donner 2010, 124). This provides supporting evidence for the use of shared spaces by Christians and Muslims during this early period. It also suggests that using evidence from the later transformation of Islam is not appropriate for the earlier formative period.

**Archaeological evidence**

Archaeological evidence from the Negev at Nabataean/Byzantine Shivta (Esbeita/Subeita) on the trade route north from Yemen and the Hijāz to Gaza supports the existence of shared and nearby prayer spaces (Kennedy 2007, 85). Though dated later by archaeologists, a small mosque with a miḥrāb was attached to the baptistery of the southern church at Shivta (G. Avni 2014, 265–266; 1994, 87–88, figs. 8, 9; 2007, 127).\(^\text{15}\) In the slag valley of the ‘Arabah twenty kilometers north of Ayla (the new Arab city founded by ‘Uthman after the 650 Muslim conquest) or modern Aqaba, on the trade route north to Damascus is the undated open air structure of Be’er Ora defined by slabs of slag from copper mining (Figure 2). There is both a niche or apse facing east and one possibly a

---


14. Mu‘āwiya did not build a mosque in Damascus but utilized the interior space of the Roman temenos as an open air mosque.

15. There are many structures in the Negev and ‘Arabah that demonstrate the use of standing stones used in cultic worship as indicators of prayer direction toward Mecca some converted into miḥrābs. The publications of U. Avner (1999) and G. Avni deal more thoroughly with this topic.
miḥrāb facing south suggesting a shared space for Muslims and Christians. Such a structure could define a religious unity during this early period (Avner and Magness 1994, 49; Avni 2007, 133).16

It would be of interest to pursue the possible relationship of the development of the Umayyad farm sites of Yodvata and ʿAvrona published by U. Avner within the context of agricultural patterns of Arabia related to Muʿāwiya, his family and others prior to the move to Syria with the conquest (Figure 3). Clearly his father had a farm for which we have no descriptive or archaeological evidence in what is now present day Jordan and ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAs had properties in the Gaza region and further south (U. Avner 2015; Blakely 2010).

Excavations of monumental architecture in Greater Syria

Tiberias

Excavations in Greater Syria now provide archaeological evidence supporting the textual accounts of early mosque, palace, bath and administrative structures. This article now explores the results of these excavations and places them within the broader historical context. The sites discussed are the mosque in Ṭabariyya/Tiberias; the Palace of Ṣinnabra, bath and currently under excavation what likely is the mosque at the site, just south of Tiberias on the “Sea” of Galilee; and the nearby baths of Hammat Gader at the base of the Golan. Muʿāwiya played a role in either

---

16. Avner and Magness 1994, and Avni 2007, reference the open-air mosque of Beʿer Ora in the southern ʿArabah Valley twenty kilometers north of Eilat or Early Islamic Ayla. In that structure are two niches possibly an apse and a miḥrāb or two miḥrābs indicating in a shift of the prayer direction. Since the direction of prayer was changed before the death of Muhammad in 632 CE, it is highly unlikely that the mosque was built in this early period but rather was a shared religious space. The author visited the site with U. Avner in 1994. The author also discussed in 2016 with Avner the potential for an earlier dating of agricultural sites that had been dated by earlier scholarly sources depending on evidence currently questioned in more recent scholarship. Much of this requires additional pursuit.
the initial Early Islamic construction or additions to these sites, establishing an Umayyad base of operations between Tiberias and the road to Damascus in the region of the Byzantine capital of Palaestina Secunda.

Muslims conquered Roman-Byzantine Tiberias (Ṭabariyya) the capital of Palaestina Secunda in 635 and made it the capital of Jund al-Urdunn and occupied the Roman/Byzantine city. In 636 or 638, a meeting between army commanders and the caliph ʿUmar in al-Jābiya established the terms of occupation, divided Syria into provinces or ajnād, settled the tribes who came with the conquest, and fixed tax rates and means of collection (Cytryn-Silverman 2009, 37, 57 n. 3). Apparently the apparatus of empire was well in play during the period of conquest of Syria.

Just south of the city of Ṭabariyya/Tiberias, a mosque was built at the foot of Mount Berenice beside a Byzantine church. K. Cytryn Silverman has been excavating the mosque of Ṭabariyya/Tiberias and dates it to the eighth century possibly to Hisham ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (724–743) (Figure 4). A smaller earlier hypostyle mosque under the larger mosque was constructed reusing a Roman wall with columns in secondary use (Cytryn Silverman 2009, 49 ff; Cytryn-Silverman 2015, 207) (Figure 5). The column bases are not sitting on foundations of stone—a feature unusual to regional construction. Alignment along the qiblah wall suggests that the lower structure was the first mosque on the site and is dated earlier. Just east of the mosque there is a pre-Islamic building or praetorium, which was possibly converted to a Dār al-Imāra or administrative center (Figure 6) (Cytryn-Silverman, 54; Whitcomb 2016, 13). Just to the west of the mosque is a bath that has been dated to various periods by Cytryn-Silverman and earlier excavators of the site. The level of excavation suggests that it perhaps is contemporary with the earlier mosque. The mosaics also seem to have parallels to the nearby site of Muʿāwiya’s seventh century palace of Ṣinnabra discussed below.

18. Conversation with Cytryn-Silverman in 2016. I will return to this subject later in the article.
19. Conversations with Katia Cytryn-Silverman both onsite and elsewhere.
20. Whitcomb used the term praetorium.
21. A visit to the site with D. Whitcomb and I. Awwad prompted a discussion of a possible seventh century Islamic dating of the bath. Since that time the site of Ṣinnabra has been well published (Greenberg, Tal, Daʿḍli 2017) and the mosaics of the Palace are closely similar to those of the bath at Tiberias.
Mu‘āwiya built his palace cum fortress of al-Ṣinnabra six kilometers south of Ṭabariyya on the southwestern shore of the ‘Sea’ (or Lake) of Galilee, south of the northern branch of the Jordan River.\(^{22}\) Also it was located on the road from Damascus to Tiberias and the coast. The main building on the site was identified as Khirbat al-Karak, Bet Yeraḥ, a Roman fort and a synagogue. Ronnie Reich in 1993 disproved the synagogue theory and Donald Whitcomb identified the site as Mu‘āwiya’s Umayyad winter palace of al-Ṣinnabra (Figures 7, 8) (Whitcomb 2002, 1–6; Reich 1993).\(^{23}\)

The 2017 publication of the excavation dates the Palace of al-Ṣinnabra to the period of Mu‘āwiya (Da’adli 2017, 125–178; R. Greenberg, O. Tal, Da’adli 2017, 4–5, 213–220). The main structure is a rectangular fortress qaṣr with square corner towers enclosing a basilica constructed on earlier ruins preserved up to the foundation. The fortress has a gate in the south wall with two flanking towers and a second entrance from the north. The ‘basilica’ of mortared field-stones faced with basalt ashlars had a nave with a south-facing apse and side aisles ending in two rooms on foundations of molded mortared concrete-rubble. The similar rubble foundation supporting the columns of stylobates north and east of the basilica resembles the support structure of the early phase of the Tiberias mosque (Da’adli 2017, 157, fig. 8.34).

Parts of mosaic floors appear in the nave, the western aisle and the rooms flanking the apse. The coin excavated under the mosaic floor dates “to not before” 641 C. E. providing a terminus post quem for the laying of the floor to Mu‘āwiya (Da’adli 2017, 135–158; Y. Alexandre and A. Shapiro 2017; Y. Alexandre 2013; Y. Alexandre 2014, 5; G. Bijovsky 2017, 179). The mosaics are comparable stylistically to sixth-century Byzantine churches in Jordan, the bath adjacent to the Tiberias mosque, and also to the more complex patterns of the later Umayyad palaces of Khir-

---

\(^{22}\) For the most up to date publications on this site see: R. Greenberg et al. 2017, and R. Greenberg, et al. 2018.

\(^{23}\) The site was extensively excavated between 1945 and 1953. L. Mayer 1952 and P. Delougaz early on published on the site and R. Reich 1993, D. Whitcomb 2002 well summarize the previous research on the site. Israeli excavations are summarized in R. Greenberg et al. 2017.
bat al-Mafjar near Jericho and Qaṣr al-Hallabat in Jordan (Figure 9)\textsuperscript{24} (Daʿadli 2017, 147–150).\textsuperscript{25} It is suggested here that further study and comparison to the mosaic floors of the bath at Ṭabarīyya are warranted.

An excavation by Greenberg, Daʿadli and Whitcomb in February 2018, revealed foundations north of the fortification and palace and south of an auxiliary building uncovered by Delougaz, thus connecting the three structures. A large paved court and the tops of two rows of stone pillar bases over one-meter in diameter set on mortared stone and concrete placed at regular intervals suggests a hypostyle prayer hall. This could be the mosque that connected to the palace through the fortification’s north entrance. If it is the mosque it was similarly placed next to the Byzantine church as at Ṭabarīyya. Textual sources indicate that Muʿāwiya prayed at Ṣinnabra perhaps in the structure revealed in the excavation (T. Daʿadli 2017, 125–178; R. Greenberg, T. Daʿadli, D. Whitcomb 2018).\textsuperscript{26} It will be of interest to see comparative examination of the “mosque” at Ṣinnabra to that of the early phase of the mosque at Ṭabarīyya.\textsuperscript{27} It seems possible now to suggest a seventh century date for the earlier mosque at Tiberias, perhaps ordered by Muʿāwiya after 638 when he was appointed governor by the caliph.

A bath attaches to the southern fortress wall east of the towered entrance gate. A post-reform coin found inside the north frigidarium wall provides a post terminus ante quem for the bath and fortification suggesting a date after Muʿāwiya in the time of ʿAbd al-Malik for both structures Daʿadli 2017, 159–169; R. Greenberg and O. Paz 2010) or at least for that part or one level of

\textsuperscript{24.} Daʿadli 2017, 147 cites the 1993 research of Piccirillo in Jordan on the Church of al-Dayr and the Church of the Apostles in Madaba. He cites Hamilton’s 1959 publication of the palace in Jericho and G. Bisheh’s 1993 on Hallabat.

\textsuperscript{25.} Daʿadli cites the work of R. Schick 1995 on the Muslim defacement but indicates that both Muslims and Christians defaced figural mosaics during this period.

\textsuperscript{26.} For further information consult the following Facebook site: https://www.facebook.com/TelBetYerah/

\textsuperscript{27.} D. Whitcomb confirmed by email of February 25, 2018 that there are parallels with the early phase of the mosque at Ṭabarīyya. Comparative examination to both Ṭabarīyya and the first mosque of Jerusalem will be further addressed in St. Laurent et al., due to be published in 2019.
Muʿāwiya’s Development of an Infrastructure and Monumental Architecture

Figure 7  Palace of Sinnabra (Bet Yerah/ Khirbat al-Karak), from the southwest. Photo: author, 2014.

Figure 8  Plan of the Palace of Sinnabra with its enclosure and bath. Excavations of 2018 revealed a building just north of the palace, which might be the mosque. Courtesy of Donald Whitcomb.
the bath. North of the fortification, Delougaz exposed another building above the Byzantine church—a courtyard surrounded by rooms on the east and west dated by a post-Reform coin to the eighth century and identified as a dār or auxiliary building by Whitcomb (P. Delougaz and R. Haines 1960, pl. 12; Whitcomb 2002: 4). Thus it is later than Muʿāwiya and probably attributable to ʿAbd al-Malik. Thus there are two major periods of construction demonstrating that ʿAbd al-Malik followed Muʿāwiya to the site.

A system of water supply and drainage is integral to the complex, the main feeder pipe of which was siphoned off the Roman Berenice aqueduct from across the riverbed to the palace and bath (Alexandre 2013). The inverted siphon is terracotta pipe later supplemented with a massive basalt pipe in re-use from Sussita or Hippos on the eastern shore of the lake, perhaps taken by boat across the lake (Gluhak 2017, 199–205). That these two pipes are at different levels of the excavation—the basalt encased pipe above a terra cotta pipe—indicates that the upper basalt pipe was installed at a different time implying that there may have been a two-period installation of the bath?

Several questions remain unanswered concerning the use of basalt siphons. Was it for pure economic and work-place efficiency that the basalt was brought from Sussita/Hippos? And that the basalt was from another ancient site in reuse suggest that there was possible historic consciousness on the part of the builder—Muʿāwiya—in the incorporation of ancient materials? If so, it will be significant to explore this concept of re-use of historic materials and spolia at other sites.

Whitcomb identifies this palace as the first Umayyad qaṣr (palace) built in Bilād al-Sham (Whitcomb 2016, 13) with later qusur (pl.) scattered throughout the region and in Jordan. The later Khirbat al-Minya is located north of Tiberias and Khirbat al-Mafjar is to the south in Jericho. According to Whitcomb, the palace plan also bears a striking resemblance to the praetorium of Tiberias, which served as the Dār al-Imāra or government administrative building of Ṭabariyyah. He also ties the building form to one in Mecca built prior to Muʿāwiya’s departure

---

28. This is the same aqueduct as the site of the mosque south of Ṭabariyyah.
29. Geochemical analysis of the stone by T. Gluhak indicates that the basalt used for the siphons utilized in the bath was the same as the basalt from the site of Sussita.
30. In Jerusalem there would slightly later be conscious re-use of spolia in both Muʿāwiya’s mosque in Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock.
We know that Muʿāwiya built and rebuilt fortresses in the Hijāz but it remains to be determined if there are Arabian or Yemeni parallels. Caliph Marwan I (684–685) who died there and ʿAbd al-Malik (646–705) followed Muʿāwiya to the seasonal winter residence. According to textual evidence, the palace continued to function until the end of the Umayyad dynasty in Syria in 650 CE or 703/704 CE (Daʿadli 2017, 127–128). This also is evidence of a pattern in that Muʿāwiya established a site and his Umayyad successors followed suit.

The palace was situated on the main road, which existed at least by 707 C. E. from Ṭabariyya, the district capital to the administrative capital of Damascus. It is known that Muʿāwiya established the Umayyad postal system barīd, which implies that there was also a road system either newly created or pre-existent and upgraded later. Mile markers placed along the route show that ʿAbd al-Malik improved the road system from Ṭabariyya to Damascus (Figure 10) (A. Elad 1999, 78–79). At al-Ṣinnabra there are two bridges, one from the mainland in the north crossing the north channel of the Jordan and a second crossing the south channel. When water flowed in both channels the site became an island (Y. Alexandre 2017, 2014). The basalt paving and walls survive on the northern bridge. One bridge connected the palace to the district capital of Ṭabariyya, the other to Damascus. It may be that the date of construction was the seventh century and that the bridge functioned during the entire Umayyad period (Y. Alexandre 2017; 2014, 6). The extensive use of basalt or ḥarrah in all phases of construction at Ṣinnabra suggests prior knowledge either of Muʿāwiya or the builders of the use of this

31. Whitcomb suggests that there might be a prototype in Arabia near Mecca. The structure is Palace of ʿAlwiya dated by T. Allen to the Abbasid period. Though the plan is similar, there is nothing secure about the dating to the seventh century.

material. That the stone siphons from Sussita were brought from across the “lake” indicates a preference for this hard volcanic stone for construction. The bridges may date from the time of Mu‘āwiya, possibly upgraded by 'Abd al-Malik.

Further, the siting of the palace on an island at the mouth of the two river channels is strategic and aimed at control of water resources feeding into the lake. During his entire professional life, Mu‘āwiya focused on acquiring land and developing an infrastructure focused on the harnessing of water resources both for agricultural and residential purposes both in the land of his origin in Arabia and now at al-Ṣinnabra in Syria.

Hammat Gader–al-Hamma

Mu‘āwiya engaged in an additional significant water management project located nearby Ṣinnabra in the restoration of the Bath of al-Ḥamma, which still functions today and is known as Ḥammat Gader. The baths are at the hot-springs circa ten kilometers from al-Ṭabariyya, six kilometers southeast of al-Ṣinnabra on the Yarmuk River at the base of al-Jawlān or Golan. It is nearby the ancient city of Gadara, today Umm Qais, and also significantly not far from the main road leading north to Damascus and his pre-caliphal capital of al-Jābiya, between the Hawran Plain and al-Jawlān (Figures 1, 11–13).

In a niche of one of the central rooms of the bath is one of few dated inscriptions that survive on monuments crediting Mu‘āwiya with their construction or restoration and the only one in Bilād al-Shām (Figures 14, 15). The extent of the project is unclear. According to the dedication inscription dated December 5, 662 C.E. written in Greek:

In the days of Abdallah Mu‘āwiya, the commander of the Faithful, the clibanus of the (baths) here was cleared and renewed by Abdallah son of Abu Hashim (or Abi ʿAsim), the governor, in the month of December on the fifth day, Monday, in the 6th (Year) of the (Byzantine) indiction, in the year 726 of the colony, according to the Arabs the 42nd year, for the healing of the sick, under the care of John the Gandarene, the steward. (Di Segni 1997, 239)

The use of the Hijra year 42 A.H. or 662 CE signals Islamicization and the imperial nature of the inscription during the second year of Mu‘āwiya’s reign. He is addressed as ʿAbd Allah or Servant of God, a title employed for early caliphs and Amīr al-muʾminīn or Commander of the Faithful referring to his role as ruler (Di Segni 1997, 239). The builder

Figure 11 Baths of Hammat Gader at the southern base of the Golan. View of the area restored and repaired by Mu‘āwiya. Photo: Courtesy of Alex Brey.

33. Transcription and translation by Leah di Segni. See also Hasson, 1982.
was working under the authority of Abū Hāshim the governor of Jund al-Urdunn at the time.

Monumental inscriptions are an important signifier of power, proclaiming authority on significant sites and buildings. That Greek is used—the lingua franca of the region—with a cross at the beginning suggests that when Muʿāwiya moved to the region he intended to integrate into the “community of believers,” which at that time included the People of the Book ahl al-kitāb—Jews, Christians and Muslims—here Christians (F. Donner 2010). That the inscription is not in Arabic by no means implies that the administration of the central government was little defined. Rather he wanted the message to be understood by the local Greek-speaking Christians that they were indeed part of the new Muslim imperial presence in the region. Muʿāwiya also retained Sasanian coinage with the addition of his title and hijra dates. This suggests that he favored inclusivity of all people including the Sasanians. This would be to his benefit consolidating Umayyad imperial control (D. Whitcomb 2016, 12).

The baths were initially built in the mid-second century with a Byzant-

34. Whitcomb’s 2016 publication “Notes for an Archaeology of Muʿāwiya: Material Culture in the Transitional Period of Believers” summarily examines this period emphasizing Muʿāwiya’s role in the consolidation of Early Umayyad rule both prior to the conquest and after the establishment of hegemony in the region.
tine phase of repair from the mid-fifth to the mid-seventh century. The bath was in use throughout the Umayyad period until the earthquake of 749 (Hirschfeld 1997, 11–12). Muʿāwiya saw the value of such a facility and assumed control and use of the spa of al-Hamma. The later Umayyads, ʿAbd al-Malik and his successors favored both the palace and baths and using them as the winter residence and spa. What is not clear is whether there was an awareness on the part of Muʿāwiya of the historic significance of the site. As at Tiberias and Sinanbra, he chose to build over ruins historically significant to previous dynastic rule rather than build on an unrelated site.

The construction of the mosque and palace and the renewal of the baths afforded early Umayyad dominion from Tiberias to the base of the al-Jawlān up to al-Jābiya to Damascus in the north. Muʿāwiya controlled the regional water resources supplying water to this area in the Jordan Valley. This winter capital also provided easier access via the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem and control over the road leading to that city. The scale of Muʿāwiya’s infrastructure construction in northern Bilād al-Shām

35. Additionally, there were two other phases during the Abbasid-Fatimid periods (8th–11th centuries) through the end of the Ayyubid period in 1260.
suggests that the administrative apparatus of the Early Umayyad Empire was well established and more than up to the task.

Fortresses and coastal development

Mu’āwiya as governor created a navy extending hegemony by sea to Cyprus (647–649) in attempting to further conquer Constantinople (674–678). The Rashidun caliphs 'Umar (634–644) and 'Uthman (644–656) ordered him to create an organized Islamic frontier defense system on the eastern Mediterranean coast “which was the birthplace of the ribāt defense system” (Y. Masarwa 2006, 156). He saw to repairing and modifying a series of Byzantine fortresses and watchtowers (manaẓir) signaling with either smoke during the day or flaming torches (māwaqīd) along the coastal cities (taḥṣīn al-sawāḥil) of Jund Filastīn, Jund al-Urdunn and in Ṣaḥrā’ al-Tīh or the Negev and Mt. Sinai. They were staffed with guards on the watchtowers and established communication methods with a policy of passive defense.

Caliph 'Uthman ordered Mu’āwiya to grant land or fiefs (qaṭāʾi‘) encouraging a pattern of coastal settlement. Mu’āwiya also gave those who were re-settled in the region from other parts of the fledgling empire abandoned houses of those who fled, built mosques, and enlarged those structures built during 'Umar’s reign in these cities. After 670 he established a shipyard in Acre, rebuilt by 'Abd al-Malik following a similar pattern in other parts of Bilād al-Shām (A. Elad 1982, 146–148). Since there was no great migration to the coast, Mu’āwiya, in the 660s, brought Persians from the interior to settle the coast. He also had his secretary purchase agricultural estates in the fertile area of Ascalon (Blakely 2010). Very recently there has been a study of Early Islamic settlement and agricultural usage in Yavneh Dunefield and in an area south of Caesarea (Taxel et al. 2018; Taxel 2018). This evidence suggests possible locations for Mu’āwiya’s development of farms in the region as dictated by previous Rashidun caliphs. The death of Mu’āwiya in 680 initiated a period of instability for ten years after which ’Abd al-Malik rebuilt these cities (Elad 1982, 150–151). Also, Mu’āwiya sent Muslim scholars to coastal cities during the Rashidun Caliphate (632–660), the Umayyad period, a process continued through the Abbasid period, Hadith were studied and transmitted in the coastal cities of Ascalon, Jaffa, Caesarea, Arsuf, Gaza, Acre and Tyre (Y. Masarwa 2006, 140–160; Elad 1982, 157–160).

The fortress or qal’a of Qal’at al-Mīnā (Fortress of the Port or Ashdod Yam today) the port being that of Māḥūz Azdūd or Ashdod (Figures 16–19) is on the dunes south of Ashdod and was founded in the Umayyad period and built on the remains of the Byzantine city. It is a rectangular sandstone structure with externally buttressed walls with four corner towers—two round and two square—and four flanking the eastern and western gates and there is a mosque in the central courtyard. According to Masarwa, the building type is derived from Byzantine and Roman forerunners (Masarwa 2006, 18–28). The remains of the Azdūd watchtower are east of the fortress (Masarwa 2006, 28). It would be of interest to explore if there are any ties to the surviving fortresses of the Hijāz built or modified by Mu’āwiya prior to his arrival in Syria. It would also be important to compare the coastal fortresses to the surrounding qasr-like structure enclosing the Palace of Ṣinnabra.

36. The ribat system was later extended to the coast of North Africa in the Abbasid period at Susa and Monastir. See Masarwa 2006.

37. For a more detailed analysis of this fortress see the more recent publication of K. Raphael 2014, 16–19. This topic will be further explored in author’s forthcoming book.
Figure 16 Qalʿat al-Mīnā (Fortress of the Port) at Māhūz Azdūd (today Ashdod Yam). View from the beach. Courtesy of Alex Brey.

Figure 17 Qalʿat al-Mīnā, view from the southeast. Courtesy of Alex Brey.

Figure 18 Qalʿat al-Mīnā, view from southwest. Courtesy of Alex Brey.
Muʿāwiya’s Development of an Infrastructure and Monumental Architecture

Muʿāwiya in Arabia during his reign as Amīr al-Muʾminīn 661–680

While Muʿāwiya established Umayyad imperial dominion in Bilād al-Shām, and attempted to expand northward deep into Byzantine territory, he also significantly expanded control in his homeland in Arabia and Yemen. Least of all did Muʿāwiya and the Sufyānids ignore their land of origin, notably the Hijāz. “There was in them a deep-seated nostalgia for the land whence they came that brought them back to it from the ends of the earth; and some homing instinct moved them to place a great part of their fabulous newly won riches in the soil of their native land” (Miles 1948, 236). Much of that development focused on the revival of agriculture in the three central cities of the Arabian Peninsula—Mecca, Medina and Tāʾif—a process begun during the process of early tribal unification in the time of the Prophet.

Little attention has been paid to this substantial contribution to development of the region because it was in the interest of later Abbasid historians to minimize the role played by the Prophet, Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads in the development of Arabia. According to C. Miles:

Propagating the anti-Umayyad cause, ʿAbbasid traditionalists put into the mouth of the Prophet the words, “I was sent not for agriculture but for jihad, the Holy War.” They averred that Muhammad “planted no palms, nor dug he canals or wells.” Such hadith were useful propaganda to combat the Umayyad agricultural policies, and thus Umayyad sympathies in general. (Miles 1948, 236)

Specifically Muʿāwiya in particular (and his family) with the newly acquired fortunes resulting from conquests in the north bought up vast properties and spent enormous sums developing the land for agriculture. He bought land in the vicinity of ʿArafah and in the Mecca Valley digging wells, building dams and dikes to contain the soil against the winter floods (sayls), and constructing barriers, reservoirs and fountains for irrigation purposes. He revitalized the area to its earlier period of flourishing emphasizing growth of dates and grain, which could be traded with the northern parts of the new empire, continuing a process begun by his family prior to Islam as in his father’s documented caravan to Gaza. Though he had little time to visit, he appointed a freedman Saʿd to execute his projects in the Hijāz stating about him “Happy man! He passes the spring in Juddah, the summer in Tāʾif, the winter in Mecca,” clearly continuing a pattern of tribal seasonal mobility also evident in Greater Syria (Miles, 236).

Miles’s source for much of this information comes from Lammens 1907, 130–140; 1914, 1930.
Mu‘āwiya needed laborers to tend and cultivate his properties and he managed this in multiple ways, one of which was through tribal affiliation with different groups. In Tā’if, he bought land from the Jewish tribes where they settled after expulsion from Yemen and Medina. He is also known to have sent Byzantines and Persians to settle in the valley by Tā’if to assure allegiance of the population. He further moved members of the local city tribe to the mountains (Kister 1979, 13, 16). Mu‘āwiya’s goals are not simply nostalgic but demonstrate political intent while ruling from Syria. He established a settlement program sending people from the northern regions to settle in Arabia defusing political and tribal rivalries. In developing the area of central Arabia, he consolidated power, contributed to economic development, all further globalizing the Empire.

The area around Tāʾif was developed for agriculture and was well-irrigated in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times (Lammens 1922). It is also known that Mu‘āwiya and his brothers ‘Utbah and ‘Anbasah acquired many holdings in the Tāʾif area so that it formed a single block of familial property (Lammens 1922, 238–239). He also attempted to buy an estate called al-Waht nine kilometers from Tāʾif in Wadi Wajj that belonged to ‘Amr B. al-‘Ās—the noted military general of Egyptian fame who owned estates in Palestine nearby to Gaza.

There is a long legacy for water management of agricultural estates in pre-Islamic Arabia. A notable example is the dam of Maʾrib, the capital of the Sabaean Kingdom in Yemen located one hundred and seventy-three kilometers northeast of the capital of Sanʿā. The area around Maʾrib was one of the most fertile and best irrigated regions of Yemen as well as an incense producing area, figuring prominently in the caravan trade, and thus was a wealthy urban settlement. Irrigation was practiced in the region for a period of 2700 years ending by the end of the sixth century CE. Dams were built, restored or repaired until the construction of the famous dam of Maʾrib, which was built in 500 BCE and survived until the mid-sixth century CE. This was a sophisticated system for irrigating regional agricultural properties. The dam was a “masterpiece of engineering” that included a lock to control the flow of water collected in the monsoon rains and channeled the water to six canals irrigating 47,990 acres as distant as fifteen kilometers away. The dam consisted of an earthen wall with stone fortification twenty meters high and 650 meters long. Similar dams existed for other wadis that directed the flood waters from the highlands to irrigate the fields (Graf 2016, 453–454; Müller). It would be of interest to comparatively examine the later dams from the Early Islamic period to determine whether or not there was continuity with the pre-Islamic period.

Mu‘āwiya’s links with Yemen and more specifically Sanʿā came early and were politically motivated. In 661, right after becoming Amīr al-muʾminīn in Jerusalem and after ‘Ali’s death in Kufa, he sent an army of three thousand men to expel the governor and the party of ‘Ali and established Umayyad rule installing his brother Utbah ibn Abi Sufyān the second Umayyad governor of Saʿnā (Smith 1983, 52–53). His goal was the consolidation of South Arabia for the Umayyad dynasty. Also, both the forces fighting with Mu‘āwiya and much of the Arab population that moved to Syria was Yemeni, thus strong supporters of the Umayyads (Grabar 1996, 157–161; Goitein 1982, 175).

39. Miles also cites Baladhuri and Yaqut as sources of his information for the agricultural development of the region.
40. Though Smith refers to Mu‘āwiya’s brother as Uqbah, it is Utbah ibn Abi Sufyān who was the governor of Saʿnā.
Datable monumental constructions in Arabia discovered thus far from Muʿāwiya’s time in Bilād al-Shām are associated with water management, dams for irrigation of his and his family’s agricultural estates near Tāʾif and Medina (Madinah). The dams are located to capture and control the flood waters from the mountains of the Hijaz. These dams are massive construction projects requiring a high level of engineering skill.

Very few inscriptions from Muʿāwiya’s reign exist and all associated with water management. That at the baths of al-Ḥamma (Hammat Gader) at the base of the Golan Heights was discussed above. Two other inscriptions are found in Arabia. In Tāʾif, one of these inscriptions is on a dam created to supply water to his estates in that arid region in the southern Hijāz (Figures 20 & 21) Miles 1948; Foss 2010, 87). Photographs from 1945 document the inscription on the soil conservation dam twenty-five to thirty feet high, built of huge boulders and called locally in 1945, ‘Say-Sod’ and identified as Sadd (or dam) Saisad or Seesid Dam in the mountains less than twenty miles northeast of Tāʾif (S. al-Rashid 2008, 273). In simple Kufic letters in six lines identifying Muʿāwiya as Commander of the Believers’ and located on a large stone above the dam:

1. This dam [belongs] to ‘Abdullah Muʿawiyah
2. Commander of the Believers. ‘Abdullah b. Sakhr built it,
3. with the permission of Allah, in the year fifty-eight. O
4. Allah, pardon ‘Abdullah Muʿawiyah, C-
5. monmander of the Believers, and strengthen him, and make him victorious, and grant the
6. Commander of the Believers the enjoyment of it. ‘Amru b. Janab wrote[it]. (Miles, 237)
The dam was completed in 677/678 CE, two years before Muʿāwiya’s death in 680. Miles suggests that ‘Abdullah b. Saḥr is the builder. The inscription also identifies the ‘scribe’ or he who carved the inscription as ‘Amr b. Ḥabbab or Janab. This is one of the earliest dated inscriptions in Arabic (S. al-Rashid 2008, 272).

The second inscription in Muʿāwiya’s name in Arabia appears on a foundation stone high above a dam in Wādī al-Khanaq identified as Sadd al-Khanaq and Sadd Muʿāwiya located east of Madīnah. In fact, it is two dams located where rainwater and flooding collects from the mountains and forms a large lake. The wall of the first dam is faced with cut stones over a core of basalt rocks mixed with a strong mortar and gravel. The south façade is lined with courses of fired bricks and the north with large stones. The second dam was west of the first and controlled the excess spill from the first dam indicating a high level of engineering skill. The water was stored in the lake for irrigation in the valley. There are also remains of a kiln, slag, red bricks and a quarry for supplying the basalt or ḥarrāḥ. It should be noted here that the stone of choice for many of Muʿāwiya’s building projects was basalt both in Arabia and in Bilād al-Shām.

The dam is cited in many early sources and the translation of the inscription is:

In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful Bismillah
This dam for ‘Abdullāh Muʿāwiyah Commander of the Faithful
O Allah bring blessing for him, the Lord of sky and earth
Built by Abu Raddād (mawla) the adherent (for) ‘Abdullāh b. Abbās with the strength
And power of Almighty God
Built under the supervision of Kaṭīr bin l-Ṣalt and Abū Mūsā

Though there is no date, the title indicates that it was after he became Amīr al-muʾminīn so after 661. Abū Raddād was the supervisor of the project and is identified as a transmitter of Hadith from the Ḥijāz and as a mawlā from another tribe or a released captive. The other persons mentioned are also identified in texts and were prominent figures in Medina. The inscription differs from that in Tāʾīf in that it is longer, includes the bismillah and has no date or scribe (S. al-Rashid 2008).41

Other projects that included foundation stones by Muʿāwiya are cited in early sources such as al-Samhūdī (1466–1533 C. E.), who stated that Muʿāwiya instructed the governor of Medina to build a palace on the outskirts of the city that included an inscription in the name of

41. An undated report of the Department of Antiquities of Saudi Arabia lists nineteen dams from the Early Islamic period located in the Ḥijāz (Saudi Commission Report).
‘Abdullāh Muʿāwiya the Commander of the Faithful. Another palace is mentioned near Mecca (S. al-Rashid 2008, 273).42

The Arabic dam inscriptions and the Greek inscription from the Bath at al-Ḥammat Gader dated 662 C. E., use the same terms of address. It is now clear that this was what Muʿāwiya chose to use as his title throughout his reign. The dated inscriptions are in two different languages and this is worthy of exploration. The three inscriptions are in Muʿāwiya’s name and proclaim that he is the Amīr al muʾminīn, one in the second year of his reign the second two years before his death. Both dated inscriptions also refer to him as ‘Abdullah connected to the familial branches of his family. That the inscription at Ḥammat Gader is in Greek and those in Arabia in Arabic suggests a choice of language by the region where the language was spoken. This is further evidence that the goal of Muʿāwiya was to unify the extensive regions under his administrative control, allowing for all to communicate in their lingua franca—Greek in the north and Arabic in Arabia.

State of the state: Multiple capitals in the seventh century

Scholars are hesitant to designate Muʿāwiya’s tenure as Amīr al-muminīn (Commander of the Faithful) between 638 to 680 in Bilad al-Shām as an empire, with H. Kennedy proposing his “caliphate was decentralized politically, it was also decentralized administratively as well” (Kennedy 1986, 87). G. Hawting wrote concerning the Hadith: “Tradition expresses its hostility to the dynasty above all by insisting that they were merely kings and refusing to recognize them…..as caliphs” seeing them as kings in the Byzantine and Sasanian tradition citing specifically that “Muʿāwiya perverted the caliphate into kingship” (Hawting 1985, 11, 13). Accepting this premise, Johns suggests: “Muʿāwiya attempted to found his monarchy in Syria upon the material trappings of kingship rather than on the business of government. He sought to look like a king, rather than to build solid administrative foundations for his kingdom” (Johns 2003, 424) and that the “polity that found itself ruling the conquests was a loose confederation of Arab tribes, not a hegemonic state” (Johns 2003, 418). His justification is that from the time of the Rashidun Caliph ‘Uthmān and perhaps ‘Umar, the Arab leader ruled as khalīfat Allāh the Deputy of God” and that it does not appear during the period of Muʿāwiya (Johns 2003, 418; Crone and Hinds 1986). The phrase bism Allāh—in the name of God—commonly appears in early Arabic inscriptions, coins graffiti but not in the name of Islam or Muhammad. And one view is that it is only with the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwan that there can be declared an empire based on appropriate assignations.43 However this view based on later prejudicial sources precludes that Muʿāwiya defined empire in differently and distinctly from previous caliphal authority in dynastic terms in the name of the Umayya—a view later rejected by authorities and ‘Abd al-Malik.

It seems necessary to redefine what empire signifies in the era of Muʿāwiya. In 1986, F. Donner tentatively put forward the alternate view that “a state did exist from the time of ‘Abd al-Malik and that it probably existed back into the time of Muʿāwiya” and later indicates that there was already strong control during the reigns of the Rashidun caliphs ‘Umar and ‘Uthman.

42. Al-Rashid 2008, 274, indicates that Muʿāwiya owned much property and farms around Medina. He further suggests that close examination of other dams may produce additional foundation inscriptions.
43. Others supporting the same view as Johns are P. Crone 1980, 33; S. Humphreys 2006, 94, 110; R. Hoyland 2006, 398.
at the time of the conquests (Donner 1986, 293; 1995). By 2006, R. Hoyland credits Mu‘awiya with “a framework for governing his newly acquired lands” (R. Hoyland 2006, 401). Foss moves beyond Donner’s probability of state existence to more certainty in defining Mu‘awiya’s state.

Johns’ article is framed in negative response to Foss’s 2002 article suggesting that evidence in coinage and papyri points to an efficiently functioning central administration, with Johns ending his reference objecting to Foss’s assertions by saying “This is the view of a Byzantinist, seeing through the eyes of an ‘Abbāsid historian” (Johns 2003, 421). In my opinion, the Byzantinist’s response in 2010 is impressive viewing the topic with a fresh eye.

The question that Foss posed was whether or not Mu‘awiya ruled over something that is recognizable as a state or was it a tribal confederation as stated by Johns and others—he indicates that Muslims arrived with the “tribal democracy of Arabia,” which survived into the first decades after settling in the region (Foss 2010, 80). First it is necessary to investigate the definition of a tribal democracy and did it remain as such after Mu‘awiya’s investiture as Amīr al-mu’minin in his mosque in Jerusalem?

Foss refers to Donner’s definition or requisite elements defining statehood with respect to the eighth century as applicable equally to the seventh century: a governing group, an army, a police force, a judiciary and a tax administrative structure. He adds to these “relations with recognition by foreign powers.” He further cites the terms of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) defining the following qualifications of “modern” statehood that the state possess: a permanent population, defined territory, government and the capacity to enter into relations with foreign powers. He then demonstrates that both definitions apply to Mu‘awiya in that there was a permanent population; a central government comprised of Amīr al-mu’minin/Commander of the Faithful (though he states caliph) and governors and their subordinates; a judiciary in the qadi system for Muslims and clearly one for Christians at least in Egypt and Palestine; a tax administration; and relations with foreign powers signing treaties with Byzantium (Foss 2010, 91).

Also present was the postal system or diwan al-barīd, which linked Baṣra in Iraq and Khorāsān in Persia, Damascus and Medina and a system of roads to support it (A. Elad 1999; Foss 2010: 81). By 661, there also was a chancery using seals. A coherent system of numismatics began in 661 CE and 662/3 CE (F. Donner 2010, 135), which included the following: ‘Abd Allah b. Amīr, Mu‘awiya, Amīr and the bismillah with hijra dating. As governor of Syria in 640, he had created a navy of considerable strength and established a series of fortresses alternating with watchtowers along the western coast of Syria to protect from Byzantine naval attack and extending hegemony to Cyprus and beyond with the goal of conquest of Constantinople.

As he had done in Arabia, he also moved populations from one region to another to stem political enmity and dissent. He moved Persian troops who converted to Islam from Iraq to the coastal regions of Tyre, Acre and Antioch (Masarwa 2006, 156; Foss 2010, 81–82). Additionally, Jews from coastal Qaysariyya/Caesarea were moved to inland Ṭabariyya to manage agricultural properties (H. Kennedy 2007, 96) and he later moved Jews from Ṭabariyya to Jerusalem settling them south of sacred precinct.44

Other features further substantiating statehood are the following: territorial expansion beyond original territory—built of separate units with some kind of diversity (ethnic, cultural,

44. See St. Laurent et al. 2016. This will be further discussed in forthcoming Capitalizing Jerusalem: Mu‘awiya’s Urban Vision 638–680.
religious) with implied inequality between rulers and ruled; multi-ethnic communities; control of water supplies—in this case in the core and external territory of origin.

It is usually assumed that a stable single capital dominates the imperial model. Foss’s “tribal democracy of Arabia” allows for the emerging view that rather than a single capital that there may have been a series of seasonal residences or “capitals” that dominate during the Early Islamic through the early Umayyad periods (Whitcomb 2009).

As was the pattern established during the period of the Rashidun Caliphs, garrison towns were established outside of major classical cities in al-Qinnasrin in the jund of northern al-Shām as well as in other places such as Kufa in Iraq and Fusṭāṭ in Egypt. Citing Kennedy: “the success of the Muslim conquest was a result of the unstable and impoverished nature of the whole post-Roman world into which they came, the hardiness and self-reliance of the Bedouin warriors and the inspiration and open quality of the new religion of Islam” (Kennedy 2007, 375). The hādir also served as commercial centers for the caravan trade (Whitcomb 2009, 241–242).

There is debate concerning the role of al-Jābiya. It once served as one of the main cities or summer capitals of the Arab Christian Ghassanids. Muʿāwiya’s use of the site was not as a garrison town but first as his residence and provincial capital for twenty years as governor. As Amīr al-muʿminin his administrative capital of Syria was Damascus in Jund Dimashq (Kennedy 2004, 62) and al-Jābiya became the summer capital with Sinnabra as winter capital located on the west side of the “Sea” of Galilee (Whitcomb 2009). In addition, Jerusalem, where Muʿāwiya built his mosque in which he was invested as Amīr al-muʿminin in 661, became the fourth capital of the nascent Islamic Empire (St. Laurent and Awwad 2013, 2016, 2020).

In 2010, Foss sums up his argument for Early Umayyad statehood in his defined three major regions of development of Iraq, Egypt and Syria as follows: “it is reasonable to suppose that Muʿāwiya presided over an organized state with a complex government, most evident in Egypt but also Iraq. Coinage in all three realms supports this. Unfortunately, the central region, Syria remains obscure.” The state of research when Foss wrote his article was such that there was little archaeological evidence or ‘facts on the ground.’

Recent historical research on Arabia and Bilād al-Shām and excavations in Tabariyya/Tiberias and Sinnabra discussed above and historical research on the nature of capitals in the Early Umayyad period begin to provide much stronger evidence of statehood in Greater Syria. In fact, that evidence demonstrates that under Muʿāwiya the provinces of Jund al-Urdunn and Jund Dimashq (the largest of the provincial districts) were united during his rule with administrative capitals in al-Tabariyya and Damascus. Though it has been briefly and incompletely introduced here, it remains to demonstrate that Jund Filastin also fits the pattern of monumental development with Jerusalem or Bayt al-Maqdis as its capital under Muʿāwiya’s Umayyad imperial dominion.

The leading arguments against Muʿāwiya’s establishment of an empire in Bilād al-Shām focus on: 1) no proclamations in the name of Islam or Muhammad 2) no coinage in the name of Muhammad or Islam 3) no inscriptions proclaiming the same 4) no centralized government 5) no substantive archaeological evidence (Johns 2003). This is based on the fact that the later Marwanid Umayyad caliphs did have all of the above. There are however 1) proclamations in the name of the Amīr al-muʿminin and Muʿāwiya 2) inscriptions proclaiming the same with Hijra dates 3) Coinage with

45. See also A. Walmsley 2005 “The Village Ascendant in Byzantine and Early Islamic Jordan: Socio-Economic Forces and Cultural Responses.”
the same 4) a centralized government 5) a growing body of archaeological evidence. Clearly, the features of empire are established in historical and archaeological scholarship that an empire did exist during the era of Mu‘āwiya and that it was later altered, re-defined and codified by ‘Abd al-Malik and other rulers who became deniers of Mu‘āwiya’s legitimacy.

Conclusion

There is an existing body of evidence of Mu‘āwiya’s role in the development of a monumental architectural tradition during the Early Islamic period prior to his moving in 634 from the central Arabian lands of his origin to his new base of operations and home in Bilād al-Shām. The roots of that early tradition were firmly grounded in the architectural, religious, socio-political and cultural precedents in the region of his birth and early life in the Ḥijāz and South Arabia. From the archaeological evidence of Ṭabariyyah and its region, it is clear that there is a pattern established by Mu‘āwiya for construction in the early Islamic empire in Bilād al-Shām that blends the traditions of Arabia with more regional Syrian and Persian cultural precedents. There are no grandiose monuments proclaiming loudly for Islam. Rather construction is modest in both plan, scale and decoration over ruins of previously significant sites of the Roman and Byzantine precedents such as baths and fortresses and others as with the praetorium were re-purposed in the newly Islamic domain. Both recent historical scholarship and the growing body of archaeological evidence of monumental construction more firmly confirm that the mechanisms of statehood were established by Mu‘āwiya and were operative during his reign in Bilād al-Shām.

What has not been discussed in this article is Mu‘āwiya’s role as governor and Amīr al-muʿminīn in the urban and monumental architectural development of Jerusalem during his long residency in Bilād al-Shām. It was not in the administrative capital established in Damascus that he built his mosque but in Jerusalem—the mosque where he was invested as Amīr al-muʿminīn—and initiated the construction of the Dome of the Rock suggesting that Jerusalem was the city that he envisioned as the seat of royal and religious sovereignty. The author’s forthcoming collaboratively written publication with Isam Awwad Capitalizing Jerusalem: Mu‘āwiya’s Urban Vision 638–680 expands into book chapters the major topics presented in this article and explores the history of his role in the development of Jerusalem as imperial capital.46

About the author

Beatrice St. Laurent received her PhD in Islamic Art at Harvard University as a student of Oleg Grabar. She is Professor of Art History (Islamic Art and Architecture) in the Department of Art and Art History, College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, MA, USA. Between February and July 2016 she was Seymour Gitin Distinguished Professor at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. She has been involved in research on the restorations of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque for 28 years with many book chapters and articles on the subject. She is currently completing a book co-authored with her now deceased colleague Isam Awwad (former Chief Architect and Conservator of the Ḥarām al-Sharīf) on seventh century Jerusalem entitled Capitalizing Jerusalem: Mu‘āwiya’s Urban Vision 638–680, as well as another book on the twentieth and twenty-first century restorations of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque.

46. Jerusalem as seventh century capital is explored in St. Laurent and Awwad 2020, under contract with Equinox Publishing Ltd. 2020
References

Alexandre, Y.

Alexandre, Y. and A. Shapiro

Allen, T.

Avner, R.

Avner, U and J. Magness.

Bisheh, G.

Bijovsky, G.

Blakely, J.

Creswell, K.A.C.

Crone, P.
Crone, P. and M. A. Cook.
Crone P. and M. Hinds.

Cytryn-Silverman, K.


Da’adli, T.


Delougaz, P. and R. Haines.

Di Segni, L.

Donner, F.


Elad, A.


Ettinghausen, R. and O. Grabar.

Flood, F.


Foss, C.


Gluhak, T.

Graf, D.


© Equinox Publishing Ltd. 2020
Kaplon, A.

Kennedy, H.


Khouri, N.

Kister, M. J.

Lammens, H.


Lecker, M.


Le Strange, G.


Magnus, J.

Masarwa, Y.

Miles, G.


Morony, M.

Müller. W.

Peterson, A.

Piccirillo, M.
Mu‘āwiya’s Development of an Infrastructure and Monumental Architecture

Raphael, S.

Reich, R.

Rice, D.

Robin, C.

Robinson, C. F.


St. Laurent, B.


Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage.

Schick, R.

Serjeant, R.


Shahid, I.

Smith, R.

al-Ṭabarī
Taxel, I.  
Walmsley, A.  
Whelan, E.  
Whitcomb, D.  