

his accession. The correct date for her death, 25 Jan. 1578, is given only by Gerlach, *Tagebuch*, 449; the date in Karačelebi-zāde, *op. cit.*, 458, namely *Dhu 'l-Kā'da* 984/20 January-18 February 1577, is a whole year off. She was buried beside her father in his *türbe* (tomb-mosque) in Istanbul. From her marriage with Rüstem Paşa, two sons and a daughter 'Ā'ishe Khānum were born; the latter married the grand vizier Semir Ahmed Paşa and then the *Nishāndġi* Feridūn Ahmed Beg (see A.D. Alderson, *The structure of the Ottoman dynasty*, Oxford 1956, Table XXX).

Bibliography: In addition to the references given in the article, see Mehmed Thüreyyā, *Sidjill-i 'othmāni*, i, 83; von Hammer, *GOR*, iii, 393, 425 and *passim*; a description of the circumcision festivals of her sons Djihāngir and Bāyazid is given in the Turkish ms. no. 34, fol. 43a ff., in the Prussian State Library (cf. W. Pertsch, *Verzeichnis*, 66); Ahmed Refiğ, *Kadınlar saltanatı*, Istanbul 1332/1914; I.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı tarihi*, Ankara 1951-4, iii/1-2, index; Çağatay Uluçay, *Harem den mektuplar*, Istanbul 1956 (letters of Mihr-i Māh Sulţān in the Topkapı Sarayı Archives); *İA*, s.v. *Mihr-ü Māh Sultan* (M. Cavid Baysun).

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MIHRĀB (A.), pl. *maḥārīb*, the prayer niche in the mosque.

Etymological origin of the word. In Islamic religious practice and in Islamic architecture, the word denotes "the highest place in a mosque", a "niche" which shows the direction of the *kibla* [*q.v.*], or "the station of the *Imām* in a mosque" (Lane, 1865, 541). The word includes the radicals *h-r-b*, from which comes the verb *ḥariba*, which in Form I means "to be violently angry", "to be affected by canine madness"; in Form II "to provoke", "to sharpen", or "to excite s.o."; in Form III "to fight", "to wage war with...", or "to battle with..." and in Form VI "to make war", or "to wage war with one another". Due to these definitions, some scholars expressed their doubts that *mīhrāb* derives from the above verb. Lane put forward "... that the explanation of this is because the person praying wars with the devil and with himself by causing the attention of his heart" (*loc. cit.*). A similar interpretation was offered by Goldziher when he suggested that the *mīhrāb* was a "place of struggle", a "battlefield", and he referred to the Prophet Muḥammad who said that "as blood circulates in people, likewise Satan circulates around them" (Goldziher, 1872, 220). The above explanations are clearly not satisfactory. It was because of this difficulty that some scholars surmised that it was a loan-word in Arabic. Dillman tried to connect it with the Ethiopian *mek'ērab* (Dillman, 1865, 836). The possible Ethiopian origin of the word and its connexion with *mek'ērab* was refuted by Praetorius who, after studying some early South Arabian inscriptions, concluded that the word *mīhrāb* at that time meant some kind of a building, but conceded that the origin of the word was still obscure (Praetorius, 1907, 621). Others, as e.g. Beer (1895, 19) and Daiches (1908, 637-9) tried to connect it with Hebrew *ḥorḥōt* which occurs several times in the Old Testament and means "ruins", "ruined cities", "ruined dwellings" or even "palaces" or "fortified buildings". This theory was again considered to be very unlikely by Nöldeke (1910, 52).

The majority of scholars have never doubted that the word is Arabic and, accordingly, have tried to find its provenance and original meaning by examining pre-Islamic Arab literature and one of the earliest and most important sources of the Islamic period, the

Qurʾān. Rhodokanakis was one of the first scholars to study these early sources and to publish his observations in two articles. In the first article he concluded that the word in pre-Islamic literature meant a "palace", a "niche", a "recess" or a "room", a "balcony" or a "gallery". Then he quoted a sentence from the *ḥadīth* where the word can be interpreted as "sanctuary" (Rhodokanakis, 1905, 296). In his second article, Rhodokanakis narrowed down the meaning of the word and suggested that it actually referred to a part of a king's or a prince's building, namely to a "meeting-room", or more precisely to a "throne-recess" within such a room, as mentioned in Qurʾān, XXXIV, 12. Such throne-recesses can be found, Rhodokanakis continued, in the Umayyad palaces such as Kuşayr 'Amra and Mshattā (we can now add also Khirbat al-Mafdjar). In other verses of the Qurʾān, namely in XIX, 12, it refers to a "sanctuary", while in III, 36, the word is used for "a lady's private chamber" (see also Dozy, 1927, i, 265). Rhodokanakis mentions that in XXVIII, 21, it was not clear whether the Prophet meant a complete "palace" or only a "chamber" (Rhodokanakis, 1911, 71). Horovitz referred to some of the occurrences in pre-Islamic poetry, among them one of al-A'shā's poems (al-Buhturī, *Hamāsa*, CDIV, 4) where the word, he claimed, meant a "throne-recess" (Horovitz, 1927, 260). In a more recent article, Serjeant explained that the basic meaning was a "row of columns with their intervening spaces". He also suggested that under the Umayyads, "while retaining its other senses, it was the name given to the *makṣūra* [*q.v.*] (Serjeant, 1959, 453). Maḥmūd 'Alī Ghūl claimed that the ancient South Arabian *mīdhkān* was almost identical in usage with the *mīhrāb*. It was a kind of *masjid* or *muṣallā* [*q.v.*], or even a "burial place in the shape of a portico, place for prayers, and services for the dead" (Ghūl, 1962, 331-5). In connexion with this last interpretation, the present author in an article called attention to the fact that flat marble, stucco, stone, or faience *maḥārīb* strongly resemble tombstones. Tombstones from early Islamic times onward frequently depict a *mīhrāb* design. He re-examined one of al-A'shā's poems (al-Buhturī, *Hamāsa*, CDIV, 4) where the word *mīhrāb* occurs and suggested that it can be interpreted as a "burial place", as opposed to Horovitz's explanation as a "throne-recess". Other literary examples also use the word in the same context (Fehérvári, 1972, 241-54; also, *idem*, 1961, 32 f.). From these interpretations it would appear that in pre- and in early Islamic times, the word *mīhrāb* was basically used for a special place within a "palace" or in a "room"; it was "the highest", "the first" and "the most important place". At the same time it also denoted "the space between columns" and was equally used for a "burial place". Its architectural origin and introduction into Islamic religious practices as the most prominent feature in a mosque should be examined from these various angles.

Architectural origin. In his *ET* article on the *mīhrāb*, Diez mentioned that orientalist and art historians give a twofold origin for the *mīhrāb*: the Christian apse and the Buddhist niche (Diez, 1936, iii, 485). Both features were alien to the Arabs and were not required by Islamic religious practices. Thus it could never have been introduced and accepted by the early Muslims without an adequate theological explanation. As an architectural feature, the *mīhrāb* is made up of three basic elements: an arch, the supporting columns and capitals, and the space between them. Whether in a flat or in a recessed form, the *mīhrāb* gives the impression of a door or a doorway.

The application of this feature can be as varied as the pre- and early Islamic meaning of the word suggests. The idea of a decorated recess or a doorway in the form of what we know and accept today as a *mīhrāb* goes back to remote antiquity in the Near East. In its secular sense it was used in palaces as a raised platform with a dome above supported by four columns under which the divine ruler carried out his most important functions (Smith, 1956, 197). It was a royal baldachin, "the first place" in a *maǧlis*, a "throne-recess". In its religious context it was a "sanctuary", fixed or portable, under which the cult images were placed and were provided with a shelter. The tradition of these domical shelters can be traced back to some of the tent traditions of the Near East, particularly to those among the Semitic people (Smith, 1950, 43; idem, 1956, 197). Such domical tents or structures were also used over burial places. These ancient oriental traditions were later adopted by Judaism and Christianity. The direction of prayer and divine service in ancient religions, particularly in Judaism, added greater importance and widened the scope of these antique traditions. Orientation was especially important among the Semitic peoples and it was not a matter of choice. The Jews turned towards Jerusalem, and in this respect all monotheistic people looked up to the Jews and followed their practice (Krauss, 1922, 317). Early synagogues, however, had no orientation; only the prayer was directed towards Jerusalem. The Ark of the Law, the *'aron ha-kodesh*, had no permanent place in the building. It was only in the second phase of the development of synagogue architecture that it received a permanent station within the building, an apse or a niche which was orientated towards Jerusalem (Suknik, 1934, 27). The earliest known synagogue with such an apse was excavated at Dura-Europos dating from the 3rd century A.D. (Lambert, 1950, 67-72; Goodenough, 1953, figs. 594-5, 599). From subsequent centuries there are several other examples known, some of these depicting the Ark in mosaic decoration on the floor of the apse (Hachlili, 1976, 43-53). The essential part of these decorations include a pair (or two pairs) of columns supporting a semicircular arch framing a conch, while below, within the columns, the Ark is shown as a pair of doors, thus symbolising a doorway, the portal of the life beyond, or the "portal of the dead" (Goldman, 1966, 101 f.). Christianity followed the same tradition. Early churches had an east-west orientation, the entrance was facing the east and the altar was towards the west. There was usually an apse, a *haykal*, with a pulpit. Churches and funerary chapels (*martyria*) generally had a large dome in Syria and in Palestine, not because of the structural function but rather because of the importance attached to this form (Smith, 1950, 92). The domical form with a portal below was frequently depicted on coins from the 4th century A.D. onwards (Smith, 1950, figs. 17-21), and later appears on tombstones (Goldman, 1966, 105). The form of the Christian and Coptic apse was so strikingly similar to a *mīhrāb* that it was not surprising that Arabic sources mention it as a feature borrowed from Christian churches (Lammens, 1912, 246; Creswell, 1932, 98).

The form was, however, not unfamiliar to the Arabs. Pre-Islamic sanctuaries in Arabia had a round tent, a *kubba* [*q.v.*] over their idols or over some of their burials (Lammens, 1920, 39-101; idem, 1926, 39-173). It seems reasonable to surmise that the Arabs wanted to preserve this ancient Semitic Arabian custom, but intended to dress it in an Islamic garb by offering a new interpretation to the pagan tradition.

By examining the life of the first Muslim community in Medina we may understand how and why this feature was adopted and introduced into Muslim religious practices. During his lifetime the Prophet was not only a religious leader, but also a statesman who used the first primitive mosque in Medina not only as a place for communal prayer but also for public ceremonies where he received delegations and delivered judgements. He used to sit on his *minbar* [*q.v.*] which was set against the *kibla* wall. Thus in the strictest contemporary interpretation of the word, the place was a *mīhrāb*. When the Prophet died he was buried in a room next to the *kibla* wall, whereby in every sense his grave was in a *mīhrāb*, coinciding with the definition of a "burial place". His grave was most probably marked, we may presume, with a stone which included in its decoration all the elements already known from Judaic and Christian funerary art. That this must have been the case is perhaps attested by the references given by Ibn Rusta and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (Fehérvári, 1972, 252). Furthermore, there is ample evidence suggesting that early *mahārīb* were not recessed niches but flat panels reminiscent of tombstones.

History. Primitive Islam and the Umayyad period. After the Prophet's death, in the early primitive mosques the *mīhrāb* was indicated by a stripe of paint or by a block of stone embedded in the *kibla* wall. It appears that this practice was followed for a considerable time, since al-Maḳrīzī informs us that when 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ built his mosque at Fuṣṭāṭ in the winter of 20/641-2, he placed "no hollow *mīhrāb*" in it (*Khīṭat*, ii, 247). In the Prophet's mosque at Medina, the *kibla* was indicated by a large block of stone which was first placed to the north, i.e. towards Jerusalem, but in the second year of the *Hijra* was moved to the south side, facing Mecca (Burton, 1893, 361). In the earliest mosque at Wāsit, built by al-Ḥadīdjādī b. Yūsuf [*q.v.*], the excavators found no *mīhrāb* recess (Safar, 1945, 20). This was also the case in the mosque of Banbhore in Pakistan, built at the end of the 1st/early 8th century (anon., in *Pakistan Archaeology*, i [1964], 52). That must indicate that in both cases the *kibla* was most likely marked either by a flat stone or by a stripe of paint.

The earliest known surviving *mīhrāb* is a marble panel known as the *mīhrāb* of Sulaymān in the rock-cut chamber under the *Ḳubbat al-Ṣakhra* [*q.v.*] in Jerusalem (Pl. I, 1). Creswell has already indicated that this was most likely the earliest surviving *mīhrāb*. His argument was based on the shape of the arch, on the primitive Kūfīc inscription on the lintel, and the simple scroll motif on the arch and the rectangular frame (Creswell, 1932, i, 70, pl. 120a in ii; idem, 1969, i/1, 100, fig. 374). Several other points can now be added to Creswell's remarks. The crenellations and pearl motifs on top of the panel recall pre-Islamic, i.e. Sāsānid, monuments with identical decorations. The vertical bands down the pilasters are similar to those on the mosaics of the circular arcade and on the drum of the dome (Creswell, 1932, figs. 189-9, 201, 205, pls. 33b, 37b). Further evidence is provided by coins depicting *mīhrāb* designs on their reverse, most likely accepting the *mīhrāb* of Sulaymān as their model (Miles, 1952, 156-71; idem, 1957, 187-209, nos. 7-8; idem, 1959, 208, pl. I/1; Fehérvári, 1961, 90-105). All of these coins are attributed to the period when 'Abd al-Malik introduced his financial reforms in 75/694-5.

The first concave *mīhrāb*, i.e. *mīhrāb muḍjawwaf*, was introduced by 'Umar b. 'Abd al-ʿAzīz, governor of Medina, when he rebuilt the Prophet's Mosque in 87-

8/706-7 (al-Makrīzī, *Khīṭat*, ii, 247; Ibn Taḡhribirdī, *al-Nuḍjūm al-zāhira*, i, 76). It was richly decorated with precious material (Sauvaget, 1947, 83-4). After that, semicircular *maḥārīb* rapidly spread throughout the Muslim world. Such a *mihrāb* was introduced into the Great or Umayyad Mosque at Damascus when al-Walīd I took over the entire building and rebuilt it between 87/706 and 96/714-15. According to early accounts, it was set with jewels and precious stones. This *mihrāb* was destroyed in 475/1082 and then was subsequently rebuilt but destroyed again by fire in 1893. The third concave *mihrāb* was built in the Mosque of ‘Amr at Fuṣṭāt in 92/710. Semicircular *maḥārīb* flanked by pairs of columns were found in almost all of the Umayyad desert palaces (Creswell, 1932, fig. 438, pl. 120b, e; idem, 1969, i/2, figs. 538, 638, pls. 66 f., 103e and 115b). The earliest surviving concave *mihrāb* in a mosque is, according to Creswell, in the Mosque of ‘Umar at Boṣrā, built during the late Umayyad period (1969 i/2, 489, fig. 544, pl. 809).

‘Irāq. The *Khāṣṣakī mihrāb* in Baghdād (Pl. I, 2) is the earliest known surviving example in the country, as it may date from the end of the Umayyad or from the beginning of the ‘Abbāsīd period (Sarre and Herzfeld, 1920, ii, 139-45, Abb. 185-7, Taf. XLV-XLVIa-d; Creswell, 1940, 35-6, fig. 26, pl. 1a-c; al-Tutunċi, 54-62, figs. 3-5, pl. 4). It was carved out of a simple block of marble in a shallow semi-elliptical form. The spiral columns are crowned by acanthus capitals which support the bell-shaped niche-head, which is framed by a frieze of acanthus leaves, followed by a narrow stripe of astragals and a band of palmettes alternating with bunches of grapes. A vertical ornamental band runs down at the back, the lower part of which is missing. The most interesting part of the design is the shell which is contained within a horseshoe shape. The shell as niche-head occurred for the first time in a grotto at Bāniyās in Syria, dating from the 1st century B.C. (Wheeler, 1857, 37). Later, it was frequently used in classical art but was more popular in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. The motif was associated with funerary monuments and as such was often depicted in Jewish and in early Christian sepulchral art. The rounded shape of this *mihrāb* and the fact that it was made of marble, which was not available in ‘Irāq, may indicate that it was imported from Syria or from the southern part of Asia Minor. As a rule, *mihrāb* niches are rectangular in ‘Irāq and in Persia. The origin of this form may be found either in the rectangular recesses of Nestorian churches in ‘Irāq or in the Persian *iwān* [q.v.]. The earliest known rectangular *mihrāb* in the country survives in the fortress palace of Ukḥayḍir, dating from the latter half of the 2nd/8th century (Creswell, 1940, pl. 120e; al-Tutunċi, figs. 6-9, pl. 5). *Maḥārīb* which were erected in mosques, palaces and in private houses at Sāmarrā mark the first turning point in the development of this feature in Islamic religious architecture. The significant role of the *maḥārīb* was emphasised by their size, which became considerably larger during the 3rd/9th century, e.g. in the Great Mosque of Sāmarrā (Creswell, 1940, pl. 66c) or in the Mosque of Abū Dulaf, where the excavators discovered two *mihrābs*, one within the other (Francis, 1947, pls. 5/1-2; al-Tutunċi, figs. 15-7, pl. 9). By then, they were more lavishly decorated with carved stucco. A large *mihrāb* with stucco decoration was excavated in the *Djawsak al-Khākānī* palace in Sāmarrā, built by the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim between 224/838 and 228/842, close to his throne-room. The niche was more than one metre deep and was flanked by two pairs of columns. The walls of the niche and

the columns were coated with stucco (Herzfeld, 1923, Abb. 132; Creswell, 1940, fig. 191). Flat *mihrāb* panels were used in smaller mosques, mausolea and in private houses. The prototype for these flat *maḥārīb* was clearly provided by the *mihrāb* of Sulaymān in Jerusalem. Evidence for this is to be found in the *mihrāb* of the *Djāmi‘ al-‘Umariyya* at Mawṣil. It is made up of six panels, the lowest central one being the earliest, probably of the 3rd/9th century, and a close copy of Jerusalem flat *mihrāb* (Sarre and Herzfeld, 1911, ii, 285-6, Abb. 275, Taf. CXXXV). Several stucco flat *maḥārīb* were discovered in private houses in Sāmarrā, presenting all the three styles of the Sāmarrā stucco decorations (Herzfeld, 1923, Abb. 167-70, 269-60, 316, Taf. LXII and XCVII). An interesting combination of flat *maḥārīb* can be seen in two small mausolea in Mawṣil, the Mausoleum of Yaḥyā b. Kāsim (Pl. II, 3) and in the Mausoleum of *Imām ‘Awn al-Dīn* (al-Tutunċi, fig. 59, pl. 34), both erected during the 7th/13th century (Sarre and Herzfeld, 1911, 249, 263-8, Taf. CXXXV). These two *maḥārīb* are almost identical. They are made up of two flat panels showing the correct *kibla* direction. In each of these two *mihrābs* there is a mosque-lamp hanging down from the pointed arch.

Out of the later rectangular *maḥārīb* in ‘Irāq, mention should be made of the main prayer niche of the Great Mosque in Mawṣil which appears to be a combination of flat and rectangular types (al-Tutunċi, figs. 34-6, pls. 17-9). It is flanked by a pair of octagonal pilasters decorated by intertwined scrolls and crowned by what Herzfeld called ‘*Iyra*’ capitals (Sarre and Herzfeld, 1911, ii, Abb. 230-3). The spandrels and the canopy have rich arabesque decoration. Below, at the back of the recess there is a decorated panel showing a pair of spiral pilasters on bell-shaped bases and topped by identical capitals supporting the arabesque-decorated spandrels and canopy. This *mihrāb* may also be regarded as a transitional form between the simple and multi-recessed *maḥārīb* that played an important role later in Persian religious architecture. The inscription round the niche bears the signature of the artist, one Muṣṭafā from Baghdād, and the date 543/1148 (Van Berchem in Sarre and Herzfeld, 1911, i, 17; Herzfeld, 1911, ii, 216-24). There was a free-standing *mihrāb* built of stone in the courtyard of this Great Mosque in Mawṣil, but it was moved to the ‘Abbāsīd Palace Museum in Baghdād. It was attributed to Nūr al-Dīn Arslān *Shāh I* (589-607/1193-1211). It has two recesses, the outer one being rectangular in plan while the inner one set back from it is pentagonal. There is an interesting innovation here, namely, the frame is composed of small compartments (Sarre and Herzfeld, 1911, i, 18, ii, 227, Taf. V; Francis, 1951, pl. 3, no. 10; al-Tutunċi, fig. 38, pl. 20). A similar frame, but decorated with human figures, appears around a niche that was discovered near *Sindjār* on the site of *Gū Kummat* and which might have been a *mihrāb* (Reitlinger, 1938, 151-3, figs. 14-7; Francis, 1951, pl. 5, no. 16; al-Tutunċi, figs. 39-9, pls. 29-30). The marble *mihrāb* of the *Pandja ‘Alī* in Mawṣil (built in 686/1287) can be regarded almost as a triple *mihrāb* since the central pentagonal recess is flanked by a small niche on either side. All three recesses are crowned by *muḥarnas* [q.v.] semi-domes, while each panel in the central niche is decorated by a hanging mosque-lamp (Sarre and Herzfeld, 1911, ii, 270-8, fig. 268, Taf. VII; Francis, 1951, pl. 2, no. 5).

Syria and Palestine. *Maḥārīb* were usually concave in these countries, but flat panels were used from time to time. A small and somewhat simple marble

mīhrāb panel decorates the first pilaster under the western portico in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. It is attributed to the Tūlūnid period (Creswell, 1940, ii, pl. 123c). Another flat *mīhrāb*, a stucco panel, probably of the same period, is in the Makām ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz at al-Ḡharrā. Two pairs of pilasters support the rectangular frame which surrounds the richly decorated canopy and spandrels (Herzfeld, 1910, 53-6, Abb. 18, Taf. IV-V; idem, 1923, Taf. LXXVIII; Creswell, 1940, 356, pl. 121c). Rectangular *maḥārīb* with stucco decoration came to light during the excavations at Meskene, ancient Bālis [see MASKANA]. One of these was in the central room of the Great Mosque. Another triple *mīhrāb* with a central deeper rectangular recess flanked by shallow openings was found in room no. 1, while a third one was in room no. 2 (Salles, 1939, 221-4, pls. XCIXa-b, Ca). Two stucco *mīhrābs*, almost identical in shape and decoration were discovered at Palmyra. The shallow semicircular niches are flanked by pairs of pilasters supporting round arches, with shell-shaped canopies inside. The spandrels have arabesque decoration and the panels are surrounded by floriated Kūfic inscriptions. Marble coating for *maḥārīb* was first introduced in Syria, which was always rich in this material. As one of the possible prototypes and earliest examples for these polychrome marble-lined *maḥārīb*, the one in the Madrasa *Shādbakḥṭiyya* in Aleppo, made of polychrome stones, should be considered. An interesting innovation can be observed here: the upper part of the *mīhrāb*, namely the rectangular frame surrounding the spandrels, is much wider than the lower part (Herzfeld, 1942, fig. 72; Sauvaget, 1931, 79, no. 21; Creswell, 1959, 103). The same form can be observed in the polychrome marble-lined *mīhrāb* of the Madrasa Sultāniyya in Aleppo, dated 620/1223 (Herzfeld, 1921, 144; Creswell, 1959, 102). A slightly earlier and similar example can be found in the Madrasa *Ashrafiyya* (607/1210). Polychrome marble work, however, reached its apogee in the *mīhrāb* of the Madrasa al-Firdaws, erected in 633/1235 (Pl. II, 4). It is the most developed and the largest of the polychrome marble prayer niches. The spandrels depict skilfully interlaced ornaments, the lines of which also form the frame of the upper part. Above there is a semi-circular panel filled by three coloured interlacing patterns and framed by an inscription. This type of marble-work found its way to Egypt and greatly influenced the decoration of later Ayyūbid and Mamlūk *maḥārīb* in Cairo. An interesting example of polychrome marble-work is a small flat *mīhrāb* in the courtyard of the Bimāristān Nūr al-Dīn in Damascus which was built in 549/1152. It is of white marble, but the arch and the spandrels have polychrome marble decoration. Creswell attributed it to Maḥmūd b. Zankī b. Aḳsunḳur, whose name appears in an inscription on the building and the date of construction. Creswell has also suggested that this was the earliest marble mosaic work (Creswell, 1959, 202). On stylistic grounds, however, Herzfeld claimed that it must have been erected at least a century later, possibly in the late 7th/13th century (Herzfeld, 1942, 10).

Egypt. The first concave *mīhrāb* in the country was built by Kurra b. *Sharīk* [q.v.], governor of Egypt, in 92/710-11, in the Mosque of ʿAmr at Fuṣṭāṭ. The structure of the main *mīhrāb* in the Mosque of Ibn Tūlūn (265/878-9) is original and so are its four flanking columns and capitals. The polychrome marble of the recess and the wooden lining of the canopy and that on the archivolt are later in date (Creswell, 1940, 348-9, pl. 122; Fattal, 1960, 22-4, pls. 10-11). There

are five flat *maḥārīb* in the mosque, two of which are contemporary with the building. They are placed on piers in the fourth arcade of the sanctuary. One of them is badly damaged, but the other one is well preserved (Creswell, 1940, 349, pls. 123a-b; Fattal, 1960, 24-5, pls. 17, 18 and 29). The two panels must have been almost identical. A pair of pilasters on bell-shaped bases and topped by identical capitals support a pointed arch, the outline of which can also be observed on the damaged panel. A row of pearl motifs provides the border for both and an inscription runs across on top. A difference can be noted in the decoration of the spandrels and in the spaces below the arches within the pilasters. In both instances the influence of Sāmarrā is obvious, just as it is evident in the overall plan and decoration of the mosque. The main *mīhrāb* of the Mosque of al-Azhar, built between 359/969-70 and 361/971-2, although several times altered and restored, still retains some of its original decoration. The canopy with its elaborate and deeply-cut floral design, the soffit of its arch covered by finely executed scrollwork, together with the floriated Kūfic inscription on the archivolt, are most probably of the same period as the mosque (Creswell, 1952, 55-6, pls. 4a, 7c; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 1976, fig. 22). This original stucco work was covered by a wooden lining until 1933 (for a picture of this, see Hautecour and Wiet, 1932, ii, pl. 91). The marble lining of the niche and the flanking columns are much later in date.

One of the finest stucco *maḥārīb* in Cairo which survives in its original form, is that of the Mosque of al-Ḍjuyūshī, built in 478/1085 (Pl. III, 5). Its stucco decoration, after that of the Mosque of Ibn Tūlūn, and that of the al-Azhar, is the third outstanding example in Egypt. The design here is nevertheless richer and more refined (Creswell, 1952, 157-9, fig. 80, pls. 48c, 116a; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 80, figs. 31-2). None of the prayer niches built in Egypt in the following two centuries has ever surpassed it. The decoration of the Sayyida ʿĀtika, built during the first quarter of the 6th/12th century, is more restrained but presents some new ideas. The frame, which is an epigraphic band, does not surround the entire niche, but only its stilted and pointed arch; then it turns at right angles and runs all around the interior. Furthermore, in the spandrels there are large fluted paterae in high relief surrounded by pearl motifs. Finally, above there is a geometric band of overlapping ovals (Creswell, 1952, 229-30, pls. 80e, 117b). Somewhat similar but more elaborate patterns appear above the *maḥārīb* of the Mausoleum of Sayyida Ruḳayya, built in 527/1133 (Pl. III, 6). The horizontal panel over these *maḥārīb* recall the Sāmarrā ornaments (Creswell, 1952, 249, fig. 143, pls. 87b, 119c-d, 120a; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 82, figs. 37-8). All the recesses in this building have scalloped canopies. Three phases can be observed in the development of these canopies. In the first phase, the slightly projecting frame follows the outline of the scallop. One of the earliest examples of this is the *mīhrāb* of Umm Kulthūm, built in 516/1122 (Creswell, 1952, 239-40, fig. 135, pls. 82b, 118b). The second phase of the development is connected with the *mukarnas*, where the frame of the scallop is combined with *mukarnas* cones, placed in one, two or three lines above the other (e.g. the *maḥārīb* of the Sayyida Ruḳayya). The third phase was used in Turkey and will be discussed further below. There are two stucco *mīhrābs* in Cairo which present a special group. They are triple-recessed. The earlier of these two is in the mausoleum of Iḳhwat Yūsuf, built during the last

quarter of the 6th/12th century (Creswell, 1952, 235-6, pl. 118a). These recesses here are plain, but their upper parts are surrounded by a continuous band of floriated Kūfic which runs all around the interior of the building. The spandrels are filled by carefully-executed arabesques which are comparable to earlier stucco work in Cairo and accordingly may indicate an earlier date for this *mihrāb*. The decoration of the second triple-*mihrāb*, in the mausoleum of Muṣṭafā Paṣḥa (middle of the 7th/13th century), is so deeply cut that it looks like openwork. The recesses here have keel-arches which most probably originated in Egypt and were widely used there during the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries (Creswell, 1959, 178-80, pls. 57c, 107c). An interesting and somewhat bold experiment can be observed in the *mihrāb* of the mausoleum of Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Rifāʿī, erected in 690/1291 (Pl. IV, 7). The *kibla* wall has pieces of glass embedded in the stucco background and these are painted in green (Creswell, 1959, 220-1, pl. 109c; Lamm, 1927, 36-43). The experiment was not successful and was never attempted again.

It has already been pointed out that the polychrome marble-work of Syria had greatly influenced *mihrāb* decorations in Egypt from the mid-7th/13th century onwards. One of the earliest examples is the comparatively simple but very large *mihrāb* in the mausoleum of Naḍīm al-Dīn, built in 647-8/1249-50 (Creswell, 1959, 102, pl. 106c). A marble lining for the main *mihrāb* of the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn was executed at the order of Lādīn [q.v.] in the same year, and that of the Mosque of al-Azhar in 665/1266. The *mihrāb* of the Madrasa of Kaḷāwūn [q.v.] and the almost identical one in his mausoleum, both erected in 684/1285 (Pl. IV, 8), are perhaps the most outstanding examples of polychrome marble work in Egypt. Both niches are of horseshoe shape instead of the conventional concave one. Inside of the *mihrāb* in the mausoleum there are four rows of small arcades, each crowned by a shell, while in that of the *madrasa* there are only two rows. The canopies and the spandrels of these two *mihrābs* are covered with gold mosaic, showing grapes and vine leaves. The arches are also horseshoe-shaped, being made up of white and coloured voussoirs. The influence of the Maghrib is well demonstrated here in the shape of the niches and the arches and the coloured voussoirs, while the row of small arcades reveals Syrian traditions (Creswell, 1959, 202, pls. 108b, c).

Maghrib. The earliest known surviving *mihrāb* in the Maghrib is in the Mosque of Bū Fatāṭa at Sūsa in Tunisia, erected between 223/838 and 226/841. It is a low plain niche of horseshoe form with an arch of the same shape (Creswell, 1940, 247, pls. 58e, 121a; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, fig. 129). In the Great Mosque of Sūsa we find for the first time a *mihrāb* in front of which a dome was built (Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 100-1, figs. 140-1). This example was shortly followed in the Great Mosque of Ḳayrawān, when it was rebuilt by Abū Ibrāhīm Aḥmad II. He was also responsible for the decoration of the new *mihrāb*. The niche has a horseshoe form flanked by a pair of marble columns crowned by Byzantine-style capitals supporting a horseshoe arch (Creswell, 1940, 308-14, fig. 232, pl. 121b; Marçais, 1926, i, 19-22, 68 f., figs. 7, 36; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 92-3, figs. 96-9). The canopy has wooden panelling which was most probably added later. The walls of the niche are covered with marble openwork. The archivolt and the surface of the *mihrāb* are adorned with polychrome and monochrome lustre tiles imported from ʿIrāq in 248/862-3 (Marçais, 1928). The date of these tiles and

the introduction of lustre has recently been questioned; nevertheless, it is clear that stylistically these tiles are related to those excavated at Sāmarrā. Another horseshoe-shaped *mihrāb* is that in the Great Mosque of Cordova (Pl. V, 9), which was erected and decorated at the order of al-Ḥakam II in 354/965 (Marçais, 1926, i, 222 f., 264-66, figs. 146, 154; Creswell, 1940, 143). This *mihrāb* is remarkable in its size and in its extremely rich decoration of polychrome marble and gold mosaics. Several new decorative features which appeared here for the first time were accepted and applied to later *mahārīb* in the Maghrib. The niche itself is very spacious and high, crowned by a complete dome, the earliest such example in a *mihrāb* niche. The lower part of the niche has plain marble panels, followed by a cornice with a Kūfic inscription. Above there are seven trefoil arches supported by marble columns with gold capitals. These arches are almost identical to those which decorate the upper part of the *mihrāb*. Inside the arcade there are floral decorations in Byzantine style. The horseshoe arch rests on the wall and on two pairs of marble columns, one behind the other. The archivolt is decorated with voussoir stones, all with rich floral designs, and in white and in polychrome alternately. Acanthus scrolls with a rosette decorate the spandrels. The cusped arcades inside the niche and on top of the *mihrāb* are most probably imitations of the false window-openings found over the library portal in the Great Mosque of Ḳayrawān (Terrasse, 1932, 110); but as Marçais once suggested, they can ultimately be traced back to Syria (Marçais, 1926, i, 266, n. 1, fig. 147). The *mihrāb* is one of the most beautiful examples in the whole Muslim world. Its form and decorative style has several times been copied, but its fineness and richness has never been surpassed. Certain elements in this *mihrāb* like the horseshoe form of the recess, the cusped arches inside and on top of the *mihrāb*, the broad archivolt with voussoir stones and floral decorations became the accepted features of later *mahārīb* in the Maghrib.

The *mihrāb* in the Great Mosque of Tlemcen in Algeria is one which reveals close connexions to that in Cordova. It was built in 530/1135. The decorated and cusped archivolt closely resembles that of Cordova but is more elaborate, although executed only in stucco. The arch and the spandrels are surrounded, as in Cordova, with an epigraphic band of floriated Kūfic. The niche itself is pentagonal, a form that was to be frequently used in the Maghrib and also in Turkey. The niche is flanked by an opening on either side giving access all round the *mihrāb* (W. and G. Marçais, 1903, 140 f.; Marçais, 1926, i, 313 f., figs. 213-4, 381-5; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 111, figs. 208-9). This *mihrāb* in Tlemcen is clearly a deliberate copy of the Cordova *mihrāb*, albeit executed in cheaper material. Some architectural and decorative details which were new elements in Cordova appeared here, but in more developed forms, and were used again in later examples. These can be best observed in the *mihrāb* of the Kutubiyya Mosque in Marrākeṣh, built ca. 541/1146 (Marçais, 1926, i, 321 f., fig. 179; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 125; Basset and Terrasse, 1926, 119). The canopy here is decorated with a *mukarnas*, as is the large dome in front of the *mihrāb*. The *mukarnas* was a new feature in the architecture of the Maghrib and was introduced there during the first half of the 6th/12th century. The horseshoe arch of the niche rests on three pairs of engaged columns. The broad and cusped archivolt is decorated with trefoil arched compartments. A frame filled with geometrical and star patterns surrounds the arch,

while above there are five blind window-openings with lobed arches. In the Great Mosque of Tinnāl in the High Atlas, the *mīhrāb*, built in 548/1153, closely resembles that of the Kutubiyya. The same arrangements, sc. a *muqarnas* canopy inside the pentagonal niche, a similarly decorated dome in front of the *mīhrāb*, and a horseshoe arch supported by three pairs of pilasters and a frame not unlike that in the Kutubiyya, can be observed here. Again there are flanking niches and an open path behind, once more presenting a free-standing *mīhrāb* (Marçais, 1926, i, 323, 385, figs. 181, 216-17; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 128, figs. 472-3). There is another *mīhrāb* in the Mosque of Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr (also known as the Mosque of the Kaṣba) in Marrākeṣh, which stylistically is related to this group. This is perhaps the latest example of this type. It was built in 592/1195 (Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, fig. 413).

In southern Tunisia, at Tozeur, the *mīhrāb* built in 592/1195 represents an entirely different type. The pentagonal recess is considerably smaller than any of the previous examples, and is crowned by a semi-dome coated with carefully-carved stucco decoration of floral designs and epigraphic bands. The horseshoe arch has an incomplete double archivolt interrupted by the attached rectangular frame. Once again the floral decoration of the wedge-shaped compartments on the archivolt recalls Cordova (Marçais, 1926, i, 385-94, fig. 218; Hill, Golvin and Hillenbrand, 107, figs. 174-6). The unusual form and decoration of this *mīhrāb* was due to an Almoravid patron and to the presence of Andalusian craftsmen.

Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. During the last two or three decades, several new monuments, among them mosques and mausolea, have been discovered and excavated in this area. The mosque known as the Tāri Khāna in Dāmghān, built probably during the latter half of the 2nd/8th century, no longer stands alone as an early mosque in Iran. The comparatively deep rectangular recess with an oblique wall at its back for correcting the *kibla* direction, may be regarded as the original *mīhrāb* in this mosque. It has no decoration now, but we may presume that once it was coated with stucco (Godard, 1934, 226; *Survey*, 933-4). The recently-excavated Great Mosque in Sirāf (late 2nd/8th or early 3rd/9th century) had a rectangular *mīhrāb* but only the foundation walls were discovered *in situ* (Whitehouse, 1970, 2 f., figs. 1-2). The Masjd-i Djāmi' in Fahraḍj near Yazd (probably of the 3rd/9th century) has its main *mīhrāb* in the original place but the walls are of more recent date (Pirniyā, 1349/1970, 2-13; Alfieri, 1977, 65-76, pls. X, XIa, b; Shokoohy, 1978, 67, pl. 106). In the old part of the Masjd-i Djāmi' in Shīrāz the tilted back wall of the niche, together with the horseshoe arch and the fragmentary stucco decoration on its soffit were regarded as original and dated to the end of the 3rd/9th century (Pope, 1934, 324; *idem*, *Survey*, 1264-6, fig. 455, pls. 259A-B; *idem*, 1965, 80-1, fig. 75). As far as it is known today, the *mīhrāb* of the Masjd-i Djāmi' of Nāyin is the earliest example surviving in its original form (Pl. V, 10). It is a double-recessed rectangular niche, the prototype of which may be found in the Djawṣaḵ al-Khākāni, mentioned above. The canopies, frame, columns and capitals are covered with stucco. Unfortunately, the decoration is missing from the lower part of the inner pair of columns and from the back wall of the niche. Stylistically, this *mīhrāb* was dated to the latter part of the 4th/10th century (Flury, 1921, 230-4, 305-16; *Survey*, fig. 921, pls. 265B, 267, 269A-D, 511B-C; Pope, 1965, 84, fig. 76). Details of the stucco patterns

can be traced back to Sāmarrā, but here they appear in a more developed form.

Later *māhārīb* were double- or triple-recessed, e.g. like that in Mashhad-i Miṣriyān [q.v.] in Soviet Central Asia, dated to the end of the 5th/11th century (Kotov, 1939, 10-8, pls. XLV-XLVIII; *Survey*, 2721-5, figs. 922-4; Pugačenkova, 1958, 169-74). The decorative patterns are similar to those of Nāyin. Stucco *māhārīb* have also been discovered in Afghānistān. One of them was excavated in the Audience Hall in the Great Palace at Lashkarī Bāzār [q.v.] (Schlumberger and Sourdell-Thomine, 1978, i/B, 39 f., pls. 73d, 147-9), and it was attributed to the Ghaznavid period. Two small mausolea at Sar-i Pul in northern Afghanistan had fine stucco *mīhrābs* with inscriptions. These inscriptions were published by Bivar, who suggested that one of these two mausolea, namely the Imām-i Khurd and its *mīhrāb* (Pl. VI, 11) cannot be earlier than 450/1058-9, while the second one in the Ziyārat of Imām-i Kalān most likely dates from the 6th/12th century (Bivar, 1966, 57-63). Unfortunately, both *mīhrābs* have disappeared during the last few years (Shokoohy, 1978, 110-11, figs. 88-94, pls. 193-4, colour pl. 47). The *mīhrāb* of the Masjd-i Djāmi' of Zawāra, dated 551/1156-7 (Godard, 1936, fig. 199) and those in the Masjd-i Djāmi' in Ardistān (553-5/1158-60; Godard, 1936, fig. 195; *Survey*, pls. 322-4) may be regarded as combinations of flat and multi-recessed *māhārīb*. The *mīhrāb* of the Imāmzāda Karrār at Buzān (now in the Archaeological Museum in Tehran, acc. no. 3268) should also be mentioned. The niche is very deep like an *iwān*, and it is covered by a vault instead of a semi-dome. A floriated Kūfic inscription in the frame gives the date of construction as 528/1143. This inscription is very interesting since the *hastae* of the letters end in human heads. The stucco work here is richer and more refined than in any of the previous examples, showing the wide scope of this technique (Pope, 1934, 114; Smith, 1935, 65-81; *Survey*, pls. 331A-C, 312A). The two most outstanding stucco *mīhrābs* in Iran are those in the Madrasa Haydariyya in Kāzwin and in the Gunbad-i 'Alawiyān in Hamadān. Both are remarkable not only because of their enormous size, but mainly because of the extreme refinement of the stucco decoration. The designs appear as if superimposed in two or three layers. In Kāzwin, the lower part of the *mīhrāb* is missing, but the remaining upper half indicates that stucco work may very well have been at its finest here (Godard, 1936, 200, fig. 136; *Survey*, pls. 313A, 316A-C, 512D). The *mīhrāb* in the Gunbad-i 'Alawiyān in Hamadān perhaps does not surpass that of Kāzwin, but certainly comes close to it (Herzfeld, 1922, 86-99; *Survey*, pls. 330, 331A-B; Wilber, 1959, 151-2, fig. 116, cat. no. 55). Herzfeld and Wilber attributed this latter *mīhrāb* to the Il-Khānid period, while Pope dated it to the end of the 6th/12th century (*Survey*, 1301; *idem*, 1965, fig. 186). It seems most likely that both *mīhrābs* were erected about the same time, before the Mongol invasion of Iran in 617/1220. With the coming of the Mongols, the style slowly changed, and that change is already apparent in the stucco *mīhrāb* of the Imāmzāda Abu 'l-Faql wa-Yahyā in Maḥallat Bālā, dated to 700/1300 (Wilber, 137, pl. 67, cat. no. 44), and in two others, one of them in an *iwān* outside Shīrāz (Fehérvári, 1969, 3-11; *idem*, 1972, fig. 8) and the other one in the Pārs Museum (Fehérvári, 1972, fig. 7). The finest example of Il-Khānid stucco *mīhrābs* are in the Masjd-i Djāmi' in Reza'iye (Ridā'iyya) (Wilber, 112-3, pl. 9, cat. no. 16), dated 676/1277 and in the Masjd-i Djāmi' of Iṣfahān, built at the order of

Ödjęytü Muhammad Khudābanda in 714/1314 (Wilber, 141, pls. 87-8, cat. no. 48; *Survey*, pls. 396-397A-B; Pope, 1965, fig. 189. In both *mihārābs*, the stucco work is of superb quality and is executed in openwork. The gradual change in taste and style resulted in the application of two new techniques in the decoration of *mahārīb*: the usage of mosaic faience and the application of lustre tiles.

Mosaic faience originated in Iran, and the earliest examples are to be found in the monuments of Khurāsān and Central Asia dating from the 6th/12th and early 7th/13th centuries. The technique was, however, perfected and first applied in the decoration of *mahārīb* in Turkey (see below). Mosaic faience decoration in Iran was not introduced in *mihārābs* before the 8th/14th century. The earliest known such *mihārāb* is in the Imāmzāda Shāh Husayn in Warāmīn, erected ca. 730/1330 (Wilber, 1955, cat. no. 86, 177-8, pl. 184). Two other outstanding examples are in the Masjid-i Dījami^c of Yazd, dated 777/1375 (Pl. VI, 12; *Survey*, pl. 443; Pope, 1965, 185, colour pl. VII and fig. 246), and the second one is in the Masjid-i Dījami^c in Kirmān, dated ca. 957/1550 (*Survey*, pls. 401, 540).

Flat *mahārīb* were also used in Iran. At first, these were of carved stone or alabaster. By the 6th/12th century faience tiles were used, with the decoration in relief painted in cobalt blue or turquoise under the glaze. During the early 7th/13th century lustre painting was introduced on these tiles. Occasionally cobalt blue and turquoise colours were added. There are some ten such large lustre *mahārīb* known today which were made up of several tiles. All of these were made in Kāshān. One of the earliest dated large lustre *mahārīb* is preserved in the shrine of Imām Ridā in Mashhad, dated Rabī^c II 612/July 1215 (Donaldson, 1935, 125-7; Bahrami, 1944-5, 37-8, pls. 20-1). These lustre tiles have recently been studied by O. Watson in great detail (see Watson, 1985). A somewhat unusual *mihārāb* is the Masjid-i ‘Ali in Kuhrūd [q.v.] near Kāshān (Pl. VII, 13). The recess and the lower part of the *kibla* wall are covered with monochrome-glazed and with some hundred lustre-painted tiles. Although the *mihārāb* in its present form was built probably during the last century, some of its lustre tiles bear the date of 700/1300. At the back of the rectangular recess there is a monochrome-glazed *mihārāb* tile, slightly tilted for correcting the *kibla* direction, dated 708/1308 (Watson, 1975, 59-74, pls. 1a-c, Vd).

Turkey. Early *mahārīb* in Anatolia were constructed of stone with a comparatively small and shallow recess which could be three-sided, such as the *mihārāb* of the Ulu Cami in Erzurum, dated 575/1179 (Ünal, 1968, 31, fig. 20). Others are pentagonal, like that of the ‘Alā³ al-Dīn Mosque in Niğde (620/1223), which is a double-recessed *mihārāb* with both recesses crowned by *mukarnas* canopies (Gabriel, 1931, i, 120, pl. XXXVI). *Mahārīb* with *mukarnas* canopies became popular in the country, and they were equally used in stone and in faience, and later in the Ottoman period in marble. Scalloped canopies were also used in Turkey, and here we find them in the third phase of their development (for the earlier two phases, see above, under Egypt); they are all double-recessed, the inner recess is crowned by a scallop, while the arch of the outer niche is cusped. One such *mihārāb* was placed in the Ulu Cami of Kızıltepe (Dunaysir), dated to 601/1204 (Gabriel, 1937; idem, 1940, i, 51, ii, pls. XXXI/1-2, XXXII/1-3). The second such *mihārāb* is in the Madrasa Mas‘ūdiyya in Diyarbakir, which is similar to the previous example (Gabriel, 1940, i, 197,

ii, pl. LXXIII/3; Bakirer, *Kat.* no. 20, 143-4, res. 55-7, şek. 20).

The second decorative technique applied for *mahārīb* in Turkey was mosaic faience. There are more than twenty such *mahārīb* known in the country (for a complete list of these, see Meinecke, 1976, and for tile work in Turkey, Öney, 1976). The tiles were coloured in cobalt blue, turquoise, black, aubergine and white. They form epigraphic and geometric bands round the niches and cover the walls, the *mukarnas* canopy and the spandrels. The most beautiful of these faience *mahārīb* are in Konya, which was the capital of the Saldjūqs of Rūm. One such *mihārāb* was installed in the Sadrettin Konevi, dated 673/1274-5 (Pl. VII, 14; Meinecke, 1976, cat. no. 85, i, 64, ii, 352-5, Taf. 36/4; Bakirer, *Kat.* no. 49, 182-3, res. 111-13, şek. 49). Towards the end of the 7th/13th century, tiles were used together with stucco and terracotta, as is the case in the *mihārāb* of the Arslanhane Cami in Ankara, built in 689/1290 (Otto-Dorn, 1957; Akurgal, Mango and Erttinghausen, 1966, 149, colour pl. on p. 132; Aslanapa, 1971, 121; Meinecke, cat. no. 18, i, 41-3, ii, 66-74, Taf. 8/3; Bakirer, *Kat.* no. 58, 196-8, res. 132-4, şek. 58). In the 9th/15th century, faience mosaic is replaced by the *cuerda seca* technique, and perhaps one of the most beautiful *mahārīb* with such decoration is that of the Green Mosque in Bursa, dated 824/1421 (Öney, 1976, 62; Goodwin, 1971, 66, fig. 60; Aslanapa, 1971, fig. 214). Simultaneously with the *cuerda seca*, underglaze-painted tiles were also introduced during the 9th/15th century. At first, these were painted in blue and white and later in polychrome.

India. The earliest known and reported *mihārāb* in India which survives is in the so-called Arhai-din-kajhompra Mosque at Adīmēr, completed in 596/1199-1200. It reveals strong Hindu and Buddhist elements in its decoration and in its arch, which is cusped and is carved out of a single block of marble (Nath, 1978, 17, pl. XXI). Three *mahārīb* in the tomb of Shams al-Dīn Ilutmish (died in 633/1235) are more in the traditional Islamic styles and in a way serve as models for later Indian prayer niches. The central *mihārāb* here (Pl. VIII, 15) is a combination of a rectangular and a flat *mihārāb*. The frame is filled by an epigraphic band. The pair of polygonal and richly decorated columns and capitals support the cusped arch. The canopy of the recess, just like that of the *mihārāb* panel at the back, is filled with plaited Kufic. In the centre of the back panel there is a rosette in relief. Such patterns can be observed in the centres of several Indian *mahārīb*. It is possible that the architects tried to imitate, either consciously or not, the black meteorite stone which is in the centre of the *mihārāb* of Sulaymān in Jerusalem.

One of the characteristics of Indo-Muslim architecture was to place three or more *mahārīb* in the *kibla* wall, as it had already been done in Ilutmish's tomb, where this principle was applied perhaps for the first time. The lotus flower, a hanging mosque-lamp or a vase from which a scroll emerges, become permanent decorative features of the back panels of later prayer niches. Such decorations appear in the five *mahārīb* of the Royal Mosque, the Kila-yi Kuhna in Dihlī, which was built by Shēr Shāh Sūr in about 949/1542. The *mahārīb* of the Kila-yi Kuhna are enormous in size. They are multi-recessed, with a cusped arch over the outer recesses, and a *mihārāb* panel at the back of each one decorated with a hanging mosque-lamp (Brown, 1964, 93, pl. LXII/2). By the late 9th/15th and early 10th/16th centuries, Persian influence becomes stronger and more apparent in Indo-Muslim architec-

ture. It was perhaps most obvious in the decoration of prayer niches. Most of the Indian elements were omitted and were replaced by Persian motifs. The cusped arch, however, remains. A good example for this strong Persian influence is the *mīhrāb* of the *Djāmi*^c Masjid in Fathpur Sikrī which is decorated with polychrome inlaid stonework and which reminds us of contemporary Safawid faience-tiled *maḥārīb* (Brown, pl. LXXII/1). Later prayer niches in Āgra and Dihlī are built of marble and decorated in polychrome in the *pietra dura* technique.

Wooden and portable *maḥārīb*. *Maḥārīb* either as large niches or small portable wooden panels appeared during the Fātimid period in Egypt. They were found in excavations in Fustāt, but several others are known from later periods and are preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (Weill, 1936, pl. X). Large wooden *mīhrābs* were also introduced and these were popular all over the Islamic world. One of the earliest of these large wooden *maḥārīb* is from the Masjid-i Maydān in Abyāna in Iran, dated 497/1103 (Ettinghausen, 1952, 77, pl. XII). An interesting wooden *mīhrāb* was discovered in Afghānistān in the upper Logar Valley in the village of Čarkh, in the Mosque of Shāh Muḥyī al-Dīn. It has an overall geometrical decoration and an inscription in Kūfic (Pl. VIII, 16). It is dated to the 6th/12th century (Bombaci, 1959, figs. 13-4; Rogers, 1973, 249, no. 82). The wooden *mīhrāb* of the Madrasa Halawīyya in Aleppo (dated 643/1245) is considerable in size, measuring 350 cm. in height and well over 100 cm. in width. It is richly decorated with geometrical patterns and is inlaid with ivory (Guyer, 1914, 217-31; Sauvaget, 1931, no. 15).

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(G. FEHÉRVÁRI)

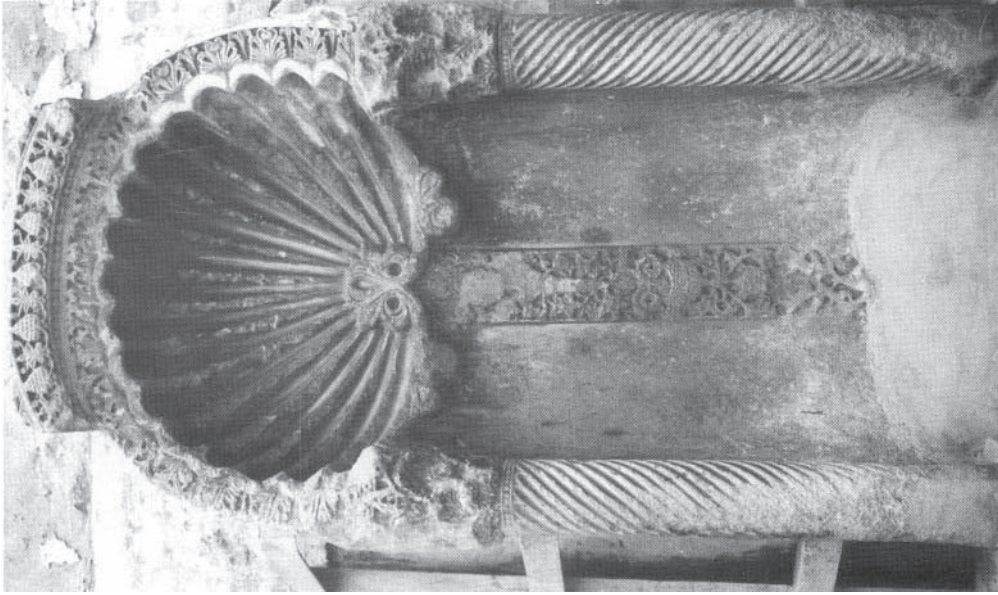
MIHRAGĀN (p. *Mihragān/Mehregān*; A. *Mihradġān*; *Meherangān* among the Parsees), name of an Iranian Mazdaean festival dedicated to Mithra/Mihr, traditionally celebrated in Iran around the autumn equinox. Its origins, its place in the calendar, its duration, its rituals and the beliefs connected with it, its diffusion in other cultural areas and its survivals in the Islamic period present several problems which are the subject of discussions and controversies. It is also a word used in toponymy, patronymy and music (see below, iv).

i. The name of the festival. It comes from the Pahlavi *mihrakān/mihragān*, ancient *mithrakāna* (Darmesteter, ii, 443), a noun derived from a proper noun, i.e. Mithra (Benveniste, 1966, 14; on the suffix *akāna* becoming *agān*, of Parthian origin, see Gignoux, 1979, 43 ff.). According to another attractive but faulty interpretation, the *kāna* component (no longer *akāna*) is a variant of *ghna* (Vedic *han*, Old Persian *jan*) meaning to strike or kill; *mithrakāna* is then the killing (or sacrifice) for Mithra, the expression being parallel to that designating the Indo-Iranian god Verethragna (Campbell, 235; on Verethragna, slayer of dragons, and its dialectal variants, see Benveniste and Renou,

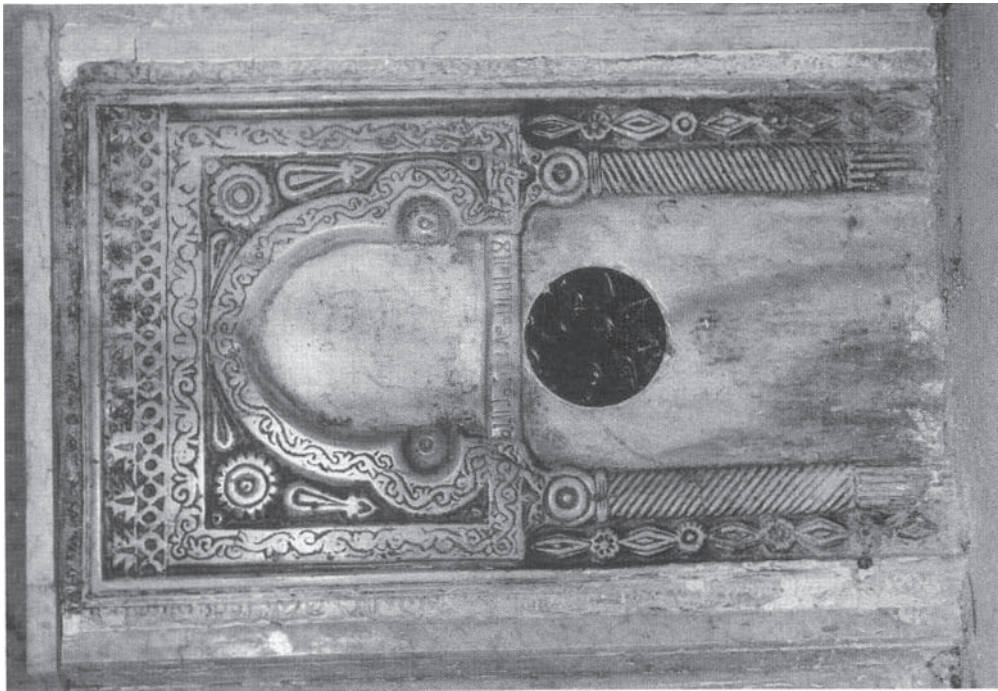
68-90; Skjaervø, 192). In the Islamic period there no longer appears to be any reference to Mithra. The most prolific author on the pre-Islamic festival, al-Bīrūnī, thinks that the Arabised form *mihradġān* means love (*mīhr*) of the spirit or the soul (*dġān*; *Āthār*, 223, tr. 209; the majority of Muslim authors followed his interpretation, and the Persian poets often make *mihrdġān* rhyme with *mihrbān*, friendly, benevolent). However, the meaning "sun" has also been given for *mīhr* and several myths which are associated with it (see below). Other interpretations which connect this name with death (*mīr*) are equally erroneous (on traditions and anecdotes reported by al-Bīrūnī and other authors, see Šafā, 30; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūġi*, iii, 404 = § 1287), as is also the view that it is a form of plural in the suffix *gān/dġān* coupled with a noun of divinity given to the months and days of the Mazdaean months or of ceremonies forming the names of festivals (an error of the Persian editor of the *Tafhīm* of al-Bīrūnī, 254, n. 1).

ii. Problems of calendars. The historical evolution of the various types of calendars used by the Iranians, notably under the influence of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks and the Arabs, is difficult to trace, but it determined the place and duration of their ceremonies and periodic festivals. The festivals celebrated at the solstice assumed a particular importance among the Indo-Iranians. They may have begun the year with the autumn equinox although, as for example among the Jews, several "beginnings" of the year could have been recognised simultaneously (Boyce, *HZ*, i, 174). The Achaemenid administration used a "luni-solar" year beginning with the spring equinox, similar to, but different from, that of the Babylonian calendar (Hartner, 747). This practice was taken over by the Seleucids, then by the Arsacid Parthians, at least as far as royal chronology was concerned (Bickerman, 778 ff.; see also below). Alongside the "Old Persian" calendar, we should take note of an "Old Avestan" calendar beginning the year in mid-summer. Both were abandoned for an "Egyptian" or "New Avestan" calendar (around 510 B.C.?; on the first reform see Takizāda, *Makālāt*, vi, 77 ff.; Hartner, 749 ff.). Another difficulty arises from the adjustment of time between the Zoroastrian calendar of 360 days and the solar year of 365 days and a quarter. This problem, never solved in a satisfactory manner, led, under the Sāsānids, to a resort to "epagomenes" i.e. intercalary or "stolen" days (*duz-dāda*), at the end of the year and one month every 120 years to recover the quarter of an annual day (see Takizāda, *ibid.*, 85 ff.; Bickerman, 786 ff.). Not well received by the faithful, this Sāsānid reform led to a duplication of Zoroastrian religious festivals: *Naw-rūz*, *Mihragān* and the six *Gāhāmbārs* (Christensen, *Types*, ii, 143 ff.; Boyce, 1970, 513 ff.). Today, the Iranians use, alongside the lunar *hidġiri* calendar, a solar calendar beginning the year from the spring equinox (*Naw-rūz*), based on the *Djalālī* [q.v.] calendar inaugurated under the Salġūk sultan Djalāl al-Dīn Malikshāh (465-85/1073-92 (cf. Hartner, 772 f., 784 f.).

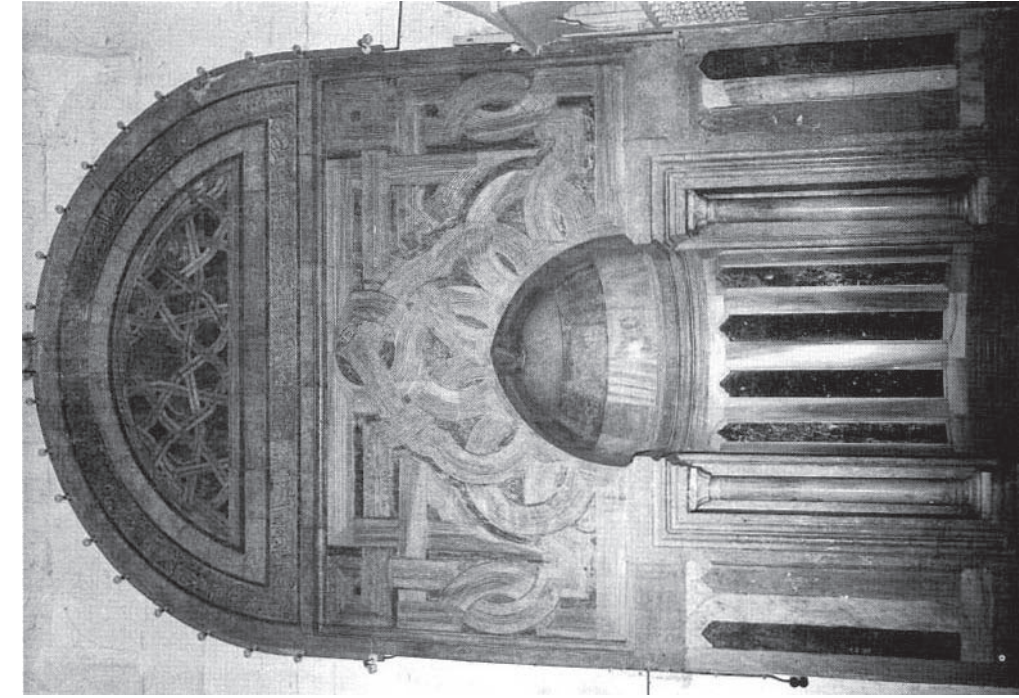
Until the Sāsānids, *Mithrakāna/Mihragān* remained, at least officially, a single day (Boyce, 1970, 518 f.; idem, *HZ*, ii, 34). Celebrated in autumn, the seventh month of the year, under the Achaemenids (6th/4th century B.C.), the festival was, inexplicably, observed in the spring, and *Naw-rūz* in autumn, under the Arsacid Parthians (3rd century B.C.-2nd century A.D.) who, following the Macedonian calendar established under the Seleucids, made the year begin with the autumn equinox (Boyce, 1975, 107; idem, 1976, 106). The introduction of the reform under the Sāsānids (who inherited the Parthian system) led, at



1. Jerusalem, *Mihrāb* of Sulaymān
under the Kubbat al-Šakhra,
72/962.



2. Baghdad, The *Khassakī mihrāb*,
late Umayyad or early
ʿAbbāsīd period.



3. Mawṣil, Corner *mihrāb* in the Mausoleum of Imām Yahyā b. Kāsim, 7th/13th century.



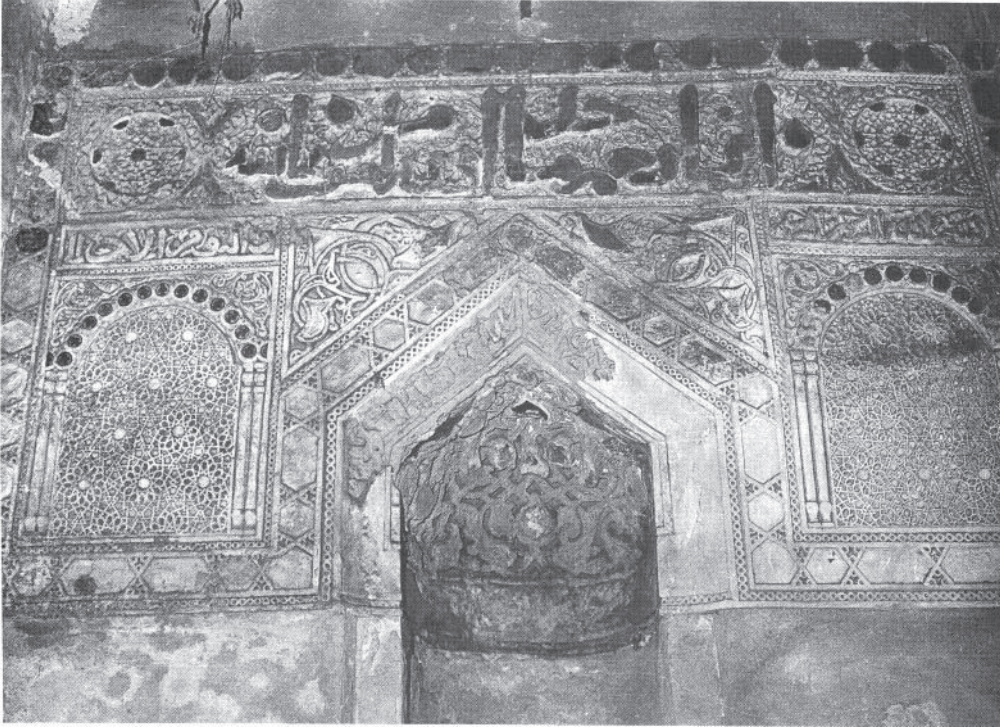
4. Aleppo, marble *mihrāb* in the Madrasa al-Firdaws, 633/1235.



6. Cairo, stucco *mihrāb* in the Mausoleum of Sayyida Rukayya, 527/1133.



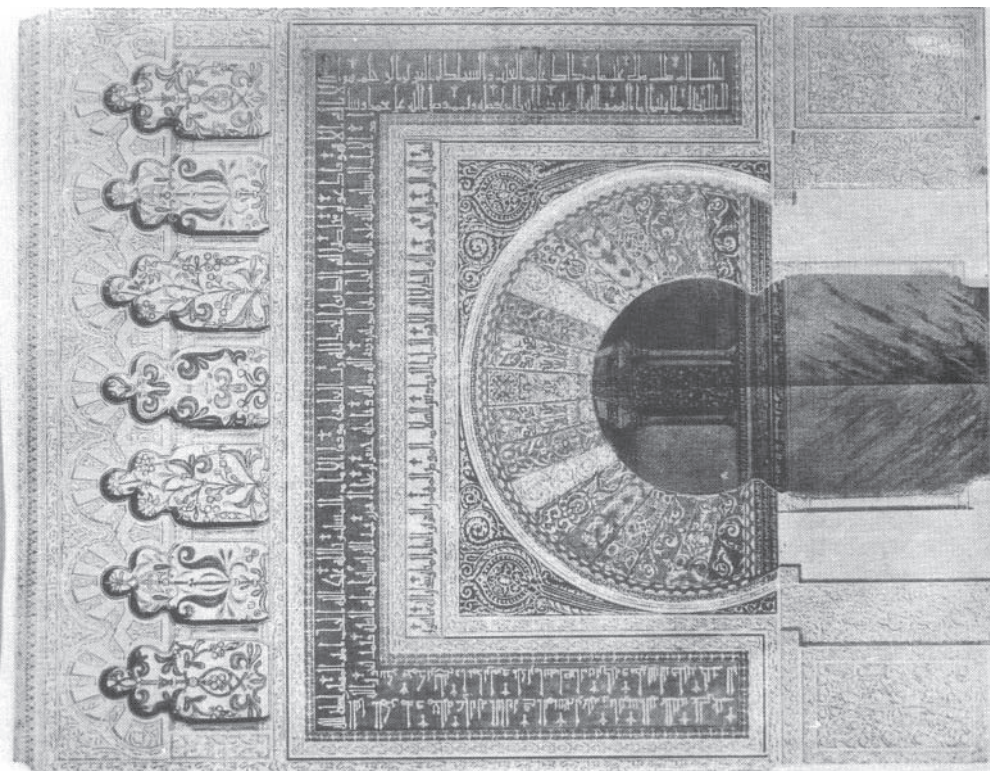
5. Cairo, stucco *mihrāb* in the Mosque of al-Djuyūshī, 478/1085.



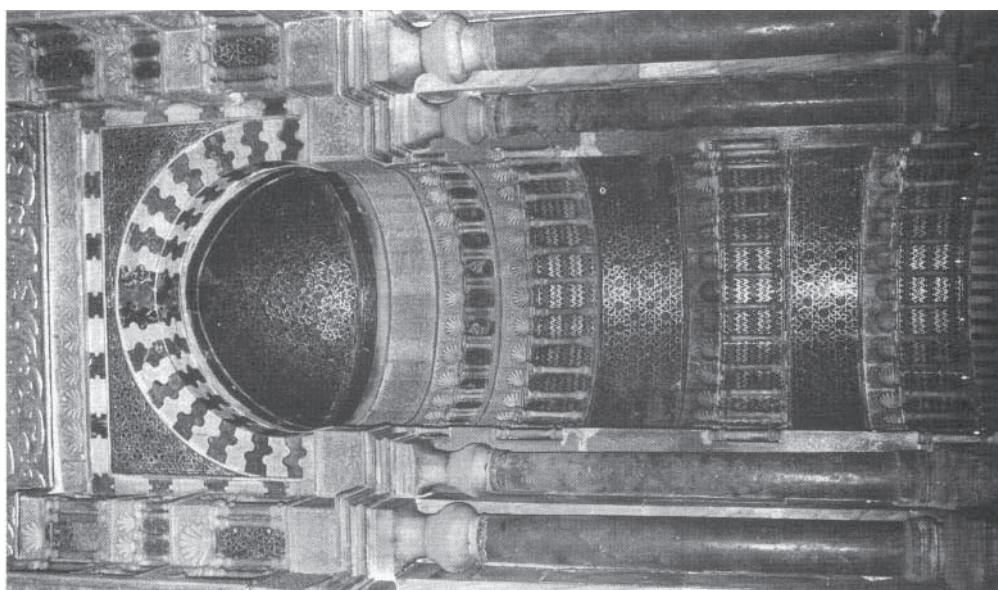
7. Cairo, stucco and glass *mihrāb* in the Mausoleum of Sulaymān al-Rifāʿī, 690/1291.



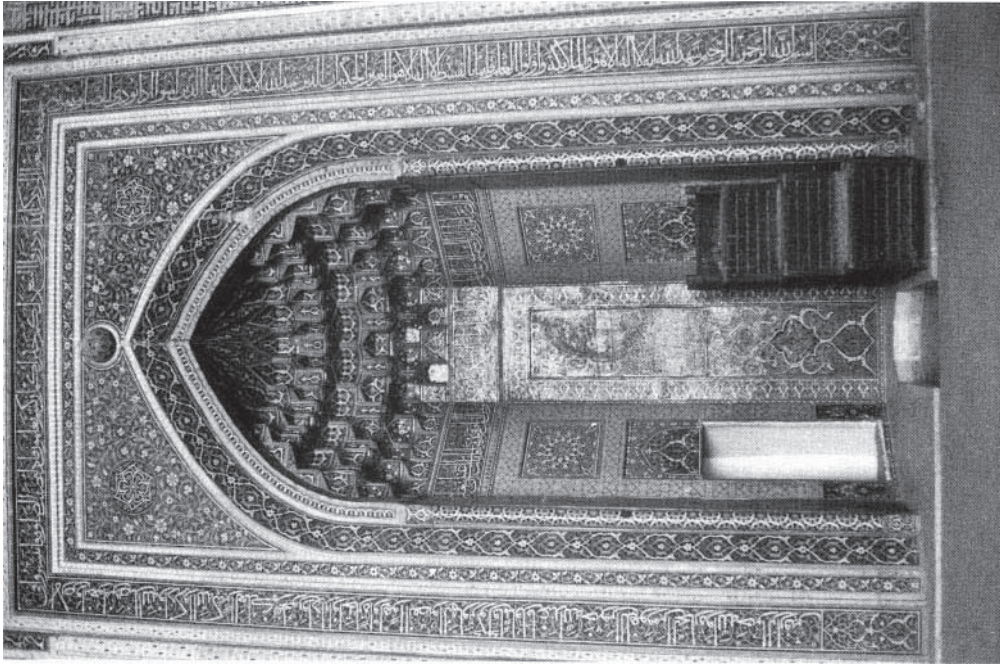
8. Cairo, marble *mihrāb* in the Mausoleum of Ḳalāwūn, 684/1285.



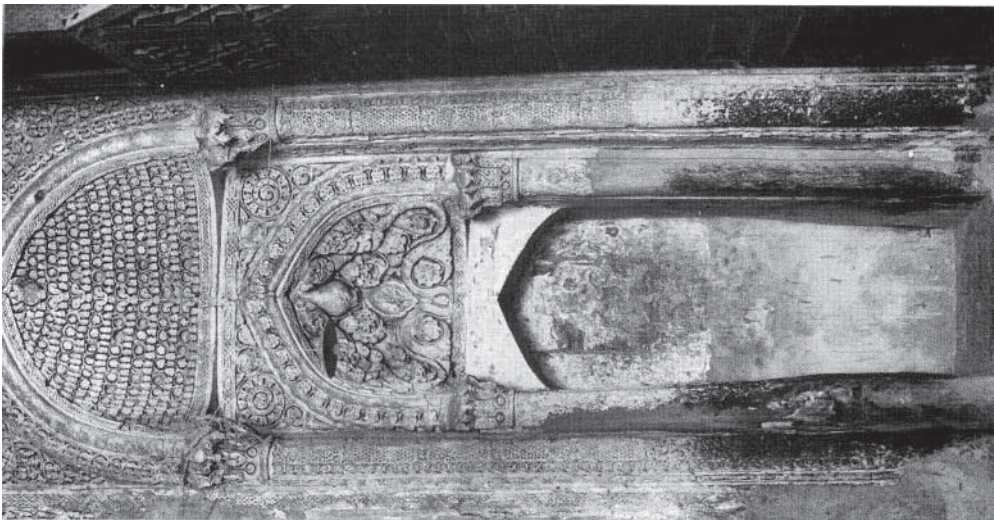
9. Cordova, *mihrāb* in the Great Mosque, 354/965.



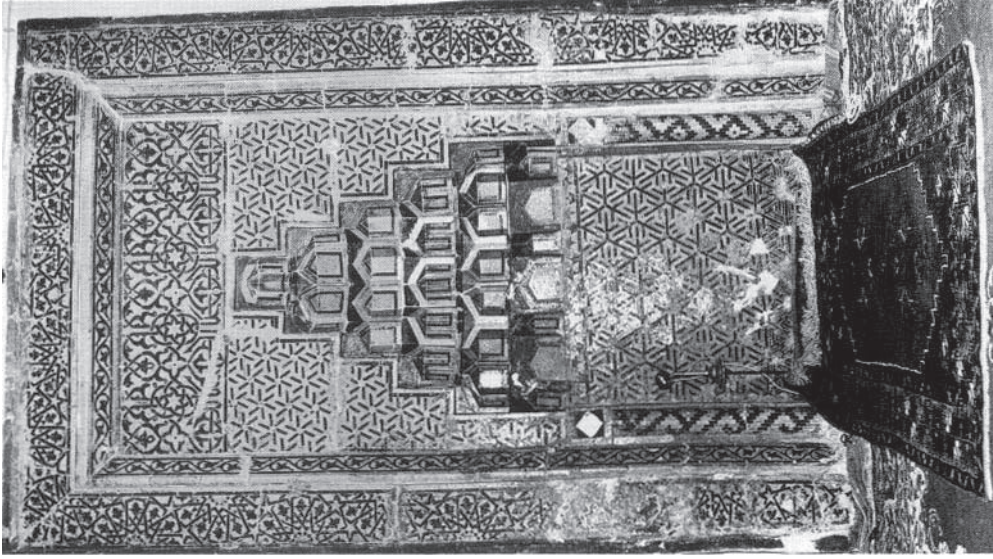
10. Nāyīn, stucco *mihrāb* in the Masǧid-i Dǧāmi; second half of 4th/10th century.



11. Sar-i Pul, Afghānistān. Stucco *mihrāb* which was standing until recently in the *Ziyārat* of Imām-i Khurd, 6th/12th century. (Photographed and reproduced courtesy of Prof. A.D.H. Bivar).

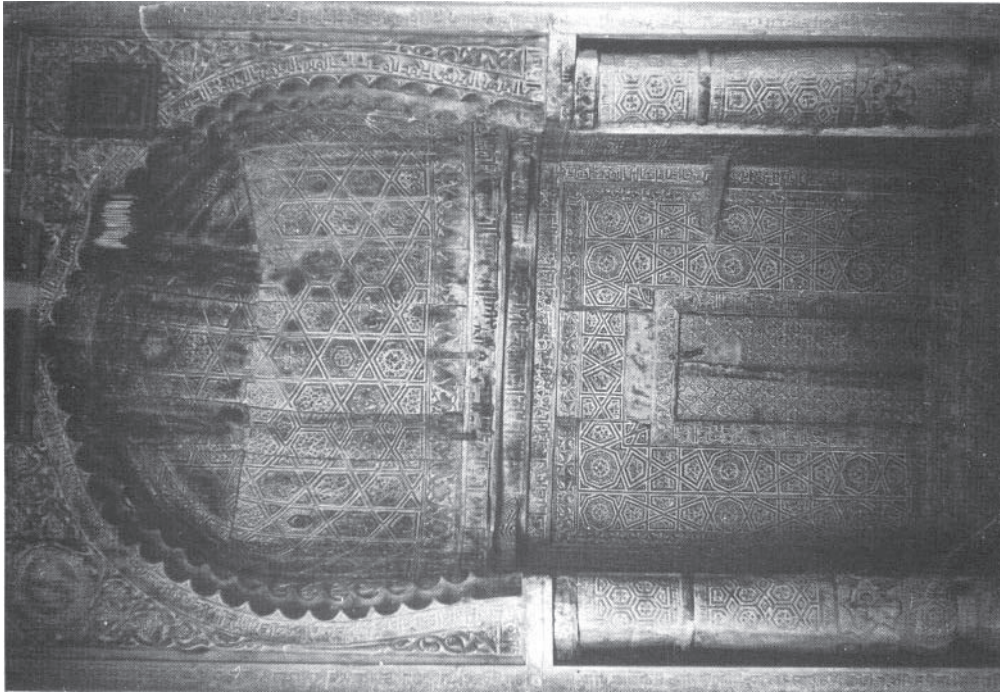


12. Yazd, faience *mihrāb* in the Masjīd-i Džāmi'.

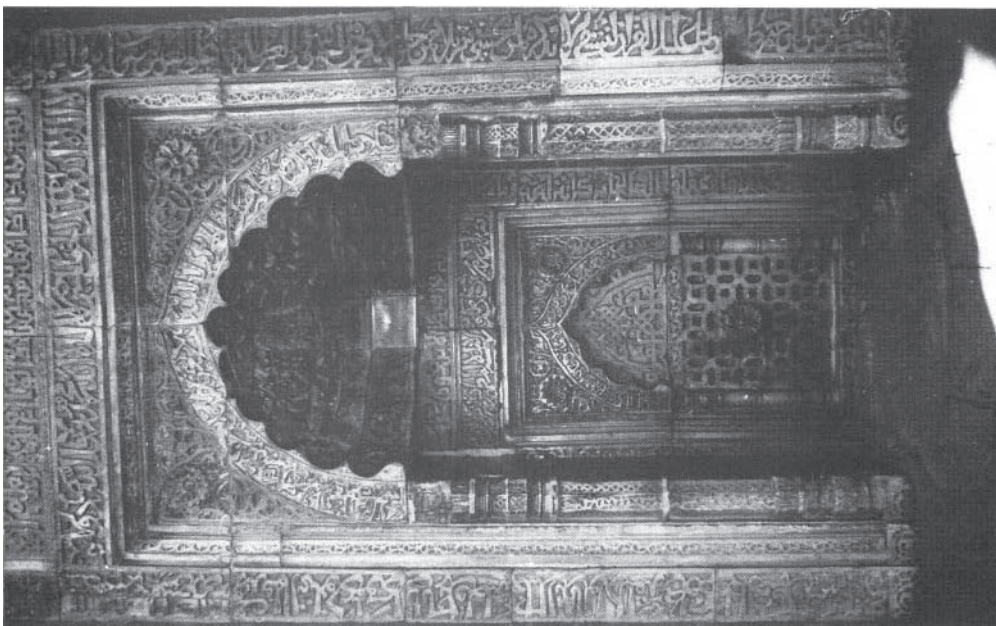


13. Kūhrūd, Iran, *mihrāb* in the Masjid-i 'Alī, lustre-painted and monochrome glazed tiles, 700-8/1300-8.

14. Konya, faience *mihrāb* in the Sadrettin Konevi, 673/1274-5. (Photographed and reproduced courtesy of Mr. H. Dewenter)



15. Dīhī, *mihrāb* in the tomb of Shams al-Dīn Ilutmish, ca. 633/1235. (Photographed and reproduced courtesy of Mr. J. Burton-Page)



16. Ārāk-Afghānistān, wooden *mihrāb* in the Mosque of Shāh Muhyī al-Dīn, 6th/12th century. (Photographed and reproduced courtesy of Prof. A.D.H. Bivar).