Conservation and Building Practice in a World Heritage City:
The Case of Sana'a, Yemen

by

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SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHITECTURE:
HISTORY AND THEORY OF ARCHITECTURE
AT THE
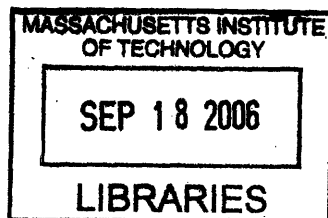MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 2006

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on August 11, 2006 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture: History and Theory of Architecture

ABSTRACT

The unique architecture of Sana'a, Yemen has been the focus of international conservation efforts, which have stimulated local interest and contributed to the formation of a local discourse. Because conservation followed so quickly on the heels of modernization, Sana'a provides an opportunity to study the interplay of these two global ideologies in the context of a strong local tradition of building.

The "international" theory and practice of conservation developed in a specific cultural and intellectual context, that of modern Europe: it is based on the idea of an historic past that is radically different from the modern present. The artifacts of this past are frozen in time, relics of a past that has now been superseded. But the increasing museification of the built environment is untenable, and also incompatible with current notions of sustainability.

Conservation in Sana'a and other cities in Yemen is unusual because the "historic past" is not so far in the past; in many cases, it is still part of the present. This provides not only an interesting case study, but an opportunity to reassess certain assumptions of international practice that are based on the idea of rupture between past and present, for example, the notions of historical value and authenticity. In contrast to other studies of conservation, this dissertation does not focus on heritage as a project imposed by international agencies or by the state bureaucracy. Rather, it treats heritage as a discourse that is shaped on the ground by various actors, many of whom see themselves as representing the historic past.

A unique approach has developed in Sana'a at the intersection of international and local practice, and it is this intersection that is the subject of the present work. The first chapter establishes the wider context of the project "site": it discusses the development of conservation theory and practice in Europe, with special attention to the idea of the historic city. Chapters two and three provide historical background on the development of the city of Sana'a and the UNESCO international safeguarding campaign of the 1980's. Chapters four and five take an ethnographic approach: they look at ways in which international practice has been understood and applied in the local context, by architects, builders, and residents. Chapter six traces the evolution of local discourse and practice through a series of projects, conducted with foreign assistance and by local organizations. The concluding chapter discusses the synthesis of international and local ideas and practices in Sana'a, and proposes policy directions based on this synthesis.

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List of Abbreviations

CATS	Center for Architectural and Technical Studies (the research and documentation center of GOPHCY)
CEFAS	Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales a Sana'a
EOPOCS	Executive Office for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (name of the conservation office before unification, when it was under direction of Prime Minister's Office)
GOAMM	General Organization for Antiquities, Museums, and Manuscripts
GOPHCY	General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities of Yemen (name of the conservation office after unification, reflecting its expanded mandate)
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, the development agency for the government of Germany
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IHS	Institute of Housing Studies (Rotterdam)
MOC	Ministry of Culture
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen; joined with North Yemen in 1990 to form the Republic of Yemen).
SFD	Social Fund for Development
TOPOCS	Technical Office for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (predecessor of EOPOCS)
UCHP	Urban Cultural Heritage Project (sponsored by the Netherlands; now dissolved)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational. Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNOTC	United Nations Office of Technical Cooperation.
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen; joined with South Yemen in 1990 to form the Republic of Yemen).

Acknowledgements

This dissertation attempts to write a very recent history, indeed, one that is still in the making. In addition to thanking the individuals that guided me through the design, research, and writing and the institutions that made the work possible, I am grateful to all those individuals in Yemen and elsewhere who shared their personal and professional histories with me. Like other researchers, I was astounded at the willingness of Yemenis of all walks of life – officials, architects and engineers, builders, and residents – to spend time with me and share information and insights. This project is above all indebted to the informal exchanges I had with many individuals, who shared their experience of conservation with me; many also became friends. I would like to take this opportunity to thank as many individuals as possible by name, especially since I am unable to credit many contributions in the body of the dissertation. In the text, I have omitted the names of individuals linked to the history of the conservation office and its projects, as well as those of builders and residents, in order to comply with the protocol of M.I.T.'s Committee on the Use of Human Subjects (COUHES). I have identified informants by name if they are public figures or officials; if they asked to be named; or if I requested and was granted permission to use their names. In addition, I have used names when they are listed as the authors of published materials or documents from archives.

I would first of all like to express deep thanks to my committee. Composed of two architectural historians, an anthropologist, and a conservator, the committee reflects the interdisciplinary nature of this project; they all believed in it and encouraged it. Over the course of my six years at M.I.T., my advisor Nasser Rabbat has provided me with intellectual

support, challenging me to refine my ideas. I thank him especially for being open to this project, and to the projects of my colleagues, which push the boundaries of our discipline. It is this, I believe, that makes the Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture at M.I.T. unique. Heghnar Watenpaugh has contributed greatly to this project with her special insights regarding conservation and her wide knowledge of the Middle East region. She has provided much-needed encouragement, as both a mentor and as a friend. Michael Herzfeld kindly agreed to supervise my minor exam, on the anthropological dimensions of heritage and the transmission of knowledge. This work and our many discussions have been invaluable for the dissertation, as will be clear in the following pages. In addition to his advice and support, Frank Matero helped arrange for me to spend a semester at Penn's Graduate School of Historic Preservation. The exposure to both the theoretical and practical aspects of the conservation profession have been important in my approach to the subject matter, supplementing my own training as an architect.

In addition to my committee members, I would like to thank several individuals who supported my research in various ways. I cannot express adequate thanks to Ronald Lewcock. Ron encouraged me to research the UNESCO Campaign which he directed, in a city that he has known and studied in great depth over the course of three decades. He served as a reader for the dissertation, and has been extraordinarily generous with his time and contacts; he and his wife Barbara welcomed me into their home in Atlanta as their guest, when I was just beginning the project. Ron visited Sana'a several times while I was there, so I had the special privilege of seeing the old city through his eyes. Accompanying us was Saba al-Suleihi, a graduate of the Aga Khan S.M.Arch.S. program at M.I.T. and a former student of Ron's. More than anyone in Sana'a, Saba made my time there special as a friend

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the Institute in June 2005; and Muhammad Jazim, senior researcher at CEFAS, formerly with the Handicraft Center.

In Paris and in Sana'a, a number of current and retired officials from UNESCO and the World Heritage Center were generous with their time: Mounir Bouchenaki, Gérard Bolla, Giovanni Boccardi, Véronique Dauge, Franca Miglioli, Anna Paolini, and Sa'id Zulficar. I would like to thank Anna Paolini for allowing me access to files on Yemen at UNESCO's Office for Arab States. UNESCO's archivists Jen Boel and Mahmoud Ghander were very helpful, as was Christine Carbonnel Saillard of the Bureau of Public Information and Audiovisual Resources.

I am grateful to Daniele Pini and Franca Miglioli, and to team leaders Saveria Teston and Luca Lanzoni, for allowing me to participate in the training seminar held at CATS in July 2005. I benefited greatly from conversations with Daniele Pini on the history of urban conservation and his experiences in the Middle East/North Africa region. I am thankful to Horst Kopp for speaking with me in Sana'a, and for providing me with photocopies of studies and reports on Sana'a which I had not found in other collections. I benefited from many conversations with Hadi Saliba, formerly of the UNDP/UNESCO in Sana'a, and am grateful to him and his wife Fadhila for their friendship. I would like to thank Gianni Brizzi, former Director of the World Bank in Yemen, for granting me phone interviews in the U.S.

It was an honor to have the opportunity to speak with a number of government officials in Yemen who were instrumental in launching the Sana'a Campaign. Among these are former Prime Minister 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani; former Prime Minister 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd al-Ghani; Dr. Hussein al-'Amri; Qadi 'Ali Abu Rijal; Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa'; and Muhammad al-Tayyib.

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'Abdurahman al-Mu'assib, Jamal Mubarak, Muhammad Murayt, Trevor Marchand, Muhammad Musleh, Tawfiq al-Othmani, Sarah Philips, Hassan Radoine, Jamil Shamsan, Jamil Sari', 'Abdullah Soueid, Mujahid Tamish, Muhammad al-'Udayni, Tawfiq al-'Usabi, Khalid Wahhas, and Fernando Veranda.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support, without which this dissertation would not have been possible. In particular, I am very grateful to Steven Kramer for his unfailing love and support, and for his superb and patient editing. I am grateful to my parents, who have always encouraged me to pursue my desires, goals, and adventures – even when these have taken me to places that have brought them worry. Finally, I thank my aunt Angie for visiting me twice in Yemen, and for taking me on an unforgettable trip throughout the country.

Portions of the work that follows were published in *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, volume XVI, no. 11, spring 2005, under the title "Rethinking Cultural Heritage: Lessons from Sana'a", pp. 17-37.

Introduction

From its initial concern with monuments, conservation - called historic preservation in the U.S. - has expanded its focus to include cities, landscapes, and even cultural practices and traditions. The protection of this ever-expanding body of material culture has become increasingly problematic because legislation does not typically allow for change.[1] Identified as "heritage" and located in the past, whole segments of the built environment have been isolated behind a conceptual and legislative *cordon sanitaire*.

The theoretical framework of conservation has its roots in certain intellectual currents in 19th century Europe, which posited a radical disjuncture between past and present. In particular, the historical narrative of the West describes the notion of a modern era that is radically different from eras that preceded it. History becomes a tool to establish a contrast between modern forms and the forms of a pre-modern or "traditional" past. Certain aspects of this past must be conserved to foreground and "stage" the modern. Heritage is thus, in a sense, one of modernity's "others" - implicitly justifying the development of modern society according to inexorable laws of progress.[2] This is underlined by the similarity of architectural and conservation discourses in the early 20th century: both saw the old and the

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[1] The conservation field is generally sympathetic to a more inclusive definition of heritage, but many worry about the "rampant relativism" that may ultimately undermine the project of conservation itself. (F. Matero, "Ethics and Policy in Conservation", *Conservation, the Getty Conservation Newsletter*, Millennium Edition II, vol. 15, no. 1, 2000, p. 7; and D. DeLong, personal conversation).

[2] The idea of the traditional as a means to "stage" the modern is developed by T. Mitchell in various works; see, for example, "The Stage of Modernity," in T. Mitchell, ed., *Questions of Modernity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000; and *Colonising Egypt*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1991.

The relationship between conservation and modernity is emphasized by F. Choay (*Invention of the Historic Monument*, trans. O'Connell, L. M., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and by. D. Lowenthal (*The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Patrick Haughey takes the idea further, arguing that conservation is essential to the project of modernity ("Oppression and Resistance: Historic Preservation in the Politics of Modernity", unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Architecture, University of Washington, 2001).

new as antithetical, but also as complementary and dependent on each other.[3] While all cultures and eras have selectively maintained and preserved elements of the past, the modern era is distinguished by an *ideology* of conservation constructed in opposition to the ideology of progress.[4] The contest between the two has been played out in the physical and social fabric of cities: while grand schemes and urban renewal have destroyed historic districts, conservation policy has reified them; both strategies isolated and circumscribed the traditional within the modern.

While modernity, modernization, and modernism are distinct terms, they share certain ideological premises. In particular, all three are indebted to the notion of progress, which is in turn based on a developmental view of history.[5] As Foucault argues, ideology is a complex of ideas tied to institutions and things. The techniques and processes of modernization produce forms that are at once material and aesthetic; these forms, in turn, tend to reproduce the dominant discourse. If modernization consists of a set of quasi-scientific practices and institutions that aim to establish certain indices of "progress", then modernism can be described as a faith in these practices and institutions, and their ability to transform society.[6] Like postwar modernization theory, modernism in architecture and urbanism assumes a clear break with earlier forms. "The main point about modernism, in art

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[3] A. Colquhoun, "'Age value' and Alois Riegl", in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition: Architectural Essays, 1980-1957,* Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1989, p. 214.

[4] David DeLong, personal conversation.

[5] T. Mitchell and others have emphasized the close relationship between modernity, capitalism, and history. See especially G. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. For a discussion of the relationship between 19th century theories of history and development discourse in the 20th century, see J. Rist, *The History of Development,* London and New York: Zed Books, 1997, chapter one.

[6] James Scott describes "high modernism" as a "faith" shared by diverse political ideologies in *Seeing Like a State,* New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 88-89. In chapters two and three, he looks at the ideological underpinnings of urban form in the hands of architect-planners like the Baron Haussmann and Le Corbusier. For a critical review of modernization theory, see D. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* vol.15, 1973, pp.199-226.

as in architecture," writes critic Alan Colquhoun, "was that it stood for a change in the relationship between the present and the past, rather than being the continuation of an existing relationship."[7] The call for an "architecture of the time" had the force of dogma: it was framed in universal terms, but reflected a particular approach and aesthetic preferences. The reformulation of architecture on a "rational" basis in effect sanctioned the de-skilling of labor and strengthened new professional groups. At the same time, it played into the logic of the market economy. Despite the concern of many modernists for the architecture of the past, this ideology supported a "culture of destruction," the effects of which have outstripped those of war and natural disaster.[8]

Karl Polyani, echoing Marx, argued that land and labor came to seen as commodities, as values associated with older social and economic patterns declined.[9] It is in this area that conservation has great potential as an alternative discourse. Much like the environmental movement, which attributes new values to land that is no longer farmed or constrained by custom, architectural and urban conservation ascribe new values to buildings and districts that might otherwise be demolished for market purposes. While conservation can and has been coopted by the market economy, it can also be pressed into the service of progressive forces: for example, by challenging the absolute right of private property, and insisting on the wise use and reuse of resources. It is on this basis that the conservation field attempted to establish an alliance with the environmental movement; in recent years, "sustainability" has become a new motto.[10] But as some practitioners have noted, the critical potential of

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[7] *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*, p. viii.
[8] A. Tung, *Preserving the World's Great Cities*, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001, p. 1.
[9] *The Great Transformation*, Boston: Beacon Hill, 1957 (originally published in 1944).
[10] For the alliance with environmentalism, see "In Search of Collaboration: Historic Preservation and the Environmental Movement", *Preservation Forum*, Information series no. 71, 1992. During the 1990's the conservation of the built environment received increasing attention for its potential role in

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conservation is constrained by disciplinary and conceptual boundaries that divide the old and

the new. Architectural education and practice, particularly in the U.S., have focused on

design *ex novo*, taking a hands-off approach to historic buildings and districts; at the same

time, conservation claims the growing body of historic properties under legislative

protection. It is slowly becoming clear to all parties that a sustainable approach to the built

environment requires that the old and the new be treated as part of a single continuum.[11] "If

sustainability ultimately means learning to think and act in terms of interrelated systems,"

wrote two noted conservators, "then heritage with its unique value and experience must be

ultimately integrated with the new."[12]

> This kind of shift requires a reassessment of the critical framework of conservation:

> [F]or all its engagement with the function, presentation, and interpretation of heritage as material
> culture, conservation lags behind in the larger debate, both in terms of a critical reassessment of
> its own principles and in dialogue with related fields, such as design and aesthetics, as well as
> history, anthropology, and the other social sciences. This lag is due in part to conservation's
> recent and somewhat insular professional development and its avoidance of a critical examination
> of the inherited historical and cultural narratives constructed through past motives of
> preservation.[13]

A critical reappraisal is especially important now, as the temporal and geographical boundaries

of conservation have expanded. Over the course of the last two centuries the time required for

an artifact, monument, or city to be considered "historic" has diminished – in direct proportion, it

seems, to the pace of change and technological capacity to document and disseminate images of

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sustainable development, both in developed and developing areas of the world. An early sign of this
was an alliance between conservationists of the built and natural environments in the U.S. More
recently, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) sponsored a series of
symposia on sustainable approaches to the conservation of the built environment. Papers presented at
these symposia treated projects in developed and developing countries that used conservation as a
framework for "managed change" (J. M. Teutonico and F. Matero, eds., *Managing Change:
Sustainable Approaches to the Built Environment*, proceedings of the 4th Annual US/ICOMOS
Symposium, Philadelphia, April 2001, Los Angeles: the Getty Conservation Institute, 2003).
[11] M. A. Hewitt, "Architecture for a Contingent Environment", *Journal of Architectural Education*,
vol. 47, no. 4, May 1994.
[12] F. Matero, "Preface," *Managing Change.*
[13] F. Matero, "Ethics and Policy in Conservation", p. 5.

the past. At the same time, conservation spread outside its birthplace in Europe to other parts of the world – first in the context of colonialism, and later, through international agencies and protocols. Like other aspects of Western epistemology and practice – including modern historiography itself[14] – conservation is portrayed as universally valid; but in recent decades this has been challenged by practitioners working in non-Western countries. The response of the establishment has been two-fold: to reassert the universality of heritage values on a moral, rather than a legal, basis;[15] and to soften universal claims through an approach of "cultural relativism." Research institutes are now assisting non-Western countries in the development of culture-specific conservation standards, based on "indigenous" principles and values.[16] While this approach attempts to counter charges of cultural imperialism, it is questionable whether conservation can operate outside the system of values and assumptions within which it was conceived. "Cultural relativism" is perhaps most useful in underlining the relativity of the established discourse.

For many critics, heritage is a means by which culture is commodified and reified, through bureaucratic processes that have become increasingly transnational. They see it as a kind of "invented tradition" that extracts buildings and sites from existing webs of meanings and

[14] See W. Mignolo, *Global Histories, Local Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

[15] See, for example, J-L Luxen (former secretary-general of ICOMOS), "Reflections on the Use of Heritage Charters and Conventions", in *Conservation, the GCI Newsletter*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2004.

[16] The development of conservation standards relevant to different cultures and regions has been the focus of various charters as well as expert missions. The Getty Conservation Institute and the Australian Heritage Commission, for example, have worked with the Chinese government to develop the so-called "China Principles" for the conservation of Chinese cultural heritage (Jeanne Marie Teutonico, personal communication). The approach of "cultural relativism" in conservation developed from experience at Native American sites (Frank Matero, personal conversation). There is an extensive bibliography on this subject - for example, articles in *CRM/Conservation Resource Management*, a publication of the U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service: D. Cushman, "When Worlds Collide: Indians, Archaeologists, and the Preservation of Traditional Cultural Properties", *CRM* 16, 1996, pp. 49-54; S. T. Greiser and T. W. Greiser, "Two Views of the World" *CRM* 16, 1996, pp. 9-11; and D. Hems, "Abandoning the Cult of the Artifact", *CRM* 4, 1997, pp. 14-16.

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uses, reframing them in terms of official or corporate narratives. In many cases, conservation is unrelated to local social and economic goals, and imposes an alien vision that has little meaning for local residents. It is often associated with regressive political and economic forces. In many cities in the industrialized world, elites have move into old districts that had been abandoned; now refashioned as "historic", they are the source of an instant pedigree.[17] In poor areas and developing countries, old districts and the groups that inhabit them are framed as "traditional," and become stage sets for the tourist trade. They are seen to represent local or national culture and thus are seen as moral and virtuous; but at the same time they are marginalized and insulated from the modern.[18]

While much of this critique is valid and important, it is problematic in several respects. Most of the critics are not trained in architecture or conservation and have little experience in the field. Their studies tend to see conservation as a hegemonic discourse that leaves little or no room for agency. As such, they miss the nuances of what is in fact a shared discourse of the past and the "traditional."[19] Most importantly, these critics look at

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[17] For this argument, see various articles by R. Handler, including "Heritage and Hegemony: Recent Works on Historic Preservation and Interpretation", *Anthropological Quarterly*, July 1987, vol. 60 no. 3, pp. 137-141; "Who Owns the Past? History, Cultural Property, and the Logic of Possessive Individualism", in Williams, ed., *The Politics of Culture*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, pp. 63-74. See also J. Turtinen, "Globalising Heritage – On UNESCO and the Transnational Construction of a World Heritage," unpublished paper, www.score.su.se/pdfs/2000-12.pdf. For case studies of conservation from this perspective, see N. Alsayyad, ed., *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, London: Routeledge, 2001. On gentrification, see N. Smith, ed., *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, New York: Routeledge, 1996.

[18] M. Herzfeld, *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, chapter one; and personal conversation.

[19] Herzfeld makes this point in his review of Scott's *Seeing Like a State* ("Political Optics and the Occlusion of Intimate Knowledge", *American Anthropologist*, vol. 107, no. 3, pp. 369-376, pp. 370-1). He develops the idea of "cultural intimacy" with regard to the past in his study of conservation in Rethemnos, Crete: heritage is a way for people to conform to and resist official notions of the past and to negotiate their position relative to it. This occurs, for example, through the reframing of the appropriated discourse in terms of the familiar (for example, the old city as 'dowry"; see *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*, Princeton: Princeton University Press,

conservation in isolation from modernist planning, which imposes its own values and regulations. As such they implicitly privilege modernist ideology and its ethic of progress - which have provided the dominant models and images for developing societies.[20] This ideology promotes not only modern design and methods, but dependence on foreign products, technologies, and expertise at the expense of local material and labor resources. It is in this area that conservation, if carried out within a progressive political framework, can function as a form of resistance, promoting local models, knowledge, and practices as alternative models for modernity.[21]

The approach of this study

In contrast to most studies of conservation in the developing world, this work reframes conservation within the wider context of modernization – recognizing that both are imported ideologies, and both are transformed and used by various actors for different purposes. Both are rooted in a particular understanding of "history" as development and perpetual progress, which leaves the past behind. This thesis questions certain premises of conservation that depend on this evolutionary model of history, in particular, the notions of

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1991). For an extended discussion of the notion of cultural intimacy, see M. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics of the Nation State*, New York: Routeledge, 2005.

[20] This point was raised by a South Asian graduate student at a lecture by David Lowenthal at MIT in May 2002. In response to Lowenthal's critique of "invented pasts" the student replied: "These are important, alternative images for us: because the dominant images and models for the future have been those of modernization."

[21] One author describes conservation that serves local and community needs as "criticism in action" (S. S. Townshend, "Architectural Conservation in the Dawning Second Republic", *Architecture SA*, May/June 1993). Such "criticism" takes on special relevance in a globalized world. Scholars in various disciplines have recently begun to consider the role of local knowledge and methods in constructing "alternative modernities", or more radically, "alternatives to modernity" The latter approach, in particular, goes beyond the mere appropriation and domestication of western knowledge and practices, arguing instead for their radical reformulation according to local epistemological systems. See A. Escobar, "Culture sits in places", *Political Geography*, vol. 20, issue 2, pp. 139-174.

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historical value and authenticity. It does this indirectly, by looking at a place where the assumptions that underlie these notions do not necessarily apply. Yemen's experience of modernity differs from that of Europe, and from that of other countries in the region. What happens when we attempt to conserve the "historic past" in a place like Yemen, where it is not so far in the past – or is even, in some sense, still alive? How is the present constructed as "past"? Or is the "past" in fact reframed as part of the present? How does this influence the aims and methods of conservation? Can conservation in such places lead us to reconsider our own notions of the past, and how we conserve?

Sana'a, the capital of the Yemen Arab Republic, provides an ideal site for this investigation (figure 1). Modernization here is relatively recent, at least in terms of its material and economic impact. It did not begin in earnest until the end of civil conflict in the late 1960's (following the 1962 revolution); it rapidly gathered momentum with the mass migration of Yemeni workers to the Gulf during the oil boom of the 1970's, and the influx of cash remittances. Around the same time, the architecture of Sana'a was brought to the world's attention: the old city was portrayed as a living relic of the past, endangered by rapid modernization. Unlike Europe, where conservation was introduced at a later date to remediate the effects of modernization, in Sana'a the two processes have been more or less concurrent. This has resulted in a paradox: unlike many other countries in the Middle East that abandoned traditional construction practices in the 19th century, in Yemen these building practices have not died out. Yemenis are not separated from their "heritage" by an historical divide; rather, living traditions are to be "conserved."

In the 1980's UNESCO and the government of North Yemen initiated an International Safeguarding Campaign for the old city of Sana'a, and the city was listed as a

World Heritage site. The Campaign has been internationally recognized, notably by an Aga

Khan Award in 1995. A unique feature of the Campaign was that it emphasized, at least

initially, urban revitalization rather than monuments conservation. Both the authors of the

Campaign and Yemeni policymakers insisted that the old city was both living and historic: it

should not be turned into a museum. As such, conditions had to be improved to keep people

living there. The Campaign set the tone for conservation activities throughout the country:

conservation and modernization were not seen as conflicting operations, but rather as

complementary ones.[22]

Now, two decades after the beginning of the UNESCO Campaign, conservation is a

shared discourse in Sana'a and in much of Yemen.[23] It is seen as a new, imported idea and

yet also as strangely familiar – in part because the places and artifacts it attempts to safeguard

are not fully part of the "past." "Yemen," writes a British author and long-time resident of

Sana'a,

> [is] one of those rare places where the past is not another country. I have eavesdropped on
> tribesmen visiting the National Museum and heard them expressing surprise, not at the
> strangeness of the things they see, but at their familiarity.[24]

In Sana'a and elsewhere in Yemen, individuals and groups are confronted with

representations of the historic past – but they often see themselves as representing and

embodying this past, or "traditional" practices and ways of life. This dissertation focuses on

an historical passage in Yemen, when individuals became aware of everyday practices as

"traditional" or "historic." The usefulness of the terms "modernity" and "tradition" is the

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[22] See M. Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development of Historic Cities: the Case of the Old City of San'a in Yemen," *Regional Development Studies*, vol. 1, winter 1994/5, pp. 143-170.
[23] T. Marchand, *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001, p. 21.
[24] T. MacIntosh-Smith, *Yemen, the Unknown Arabia*, Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2000, p. 47.

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subject of debate among scholars in the social sciences and other disciplines; I will not enter

this debate, but rather will focus on how these terms are used locally.

In contrast to other studies that see heritage as a top-down process, this study focuses

on the construction of heritage by various actors within the bureaucracy and outside it:

architects, builders, and residents. They construct heritage within the framework of what

they see as "historical" or "traditional." Their agency resides in their ability to make various

choices, and to frame these choices in terms of a discourse that is at once global and local.

These groups make claims to represent the past, based on inherited or acquired criteria of

authority, expertise, and belonging. The tension that arises from these competing claims has

produced a unique approach to conservation in Yemen. This approach has developed at the

intersection of international and local practice – and it is this intersection that is the subject of

the present work. This dissertation will not compare Sana'a to other cases of conservation in

the region, but rather will refer back to the theoretical formulations of what I will call

"international practice."

As such, the introductory chapter will attempt to establish the wider context of the

project "site": it will look at the development of conservation theory and practice in Europe,

which has to a great extent shaped international practice.[25] In this chapter I will discuss some

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[25] The implications of globalization for the notion of the "project site" are discussed in A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, "Discipline and practice: 'the field' as site, method, and location in anthropology", in Gupta and Ferguson, eds., *Anthropological Locations: boundaries and grounds of a field science*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
  I have restricted my discussion to conservation in Europe, although developments in the U.S. have also influenced international practice. S. Titchen notes, for example, that the criteria used in nominating sites of "outstanding universal value" to the World Heritage List may derive from those used by the National Park Service in 1974 in nominating U.S. sites: "significance", integrity", and "suitability" ("On the construction of 'outstanding universal value'; UNESCO's World Heritage Convention (*Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, 1972) and the identification and assessment of cultural places for inclusion in the World Heritage List", unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Australian National University, 1995, pp. 102-4).

concepts and terms that are relevant to this study, and several key theorists whose ideas led to the formulation of what has been called "classic" monuments conservation in the early 20th century.[26] The second part of the chapter looks at the development of the idea of the "historic city" in conservation practice. Chapters two and three are historical: the first briefly sketches the development of what has come to be called the "old city" of Sana'a, and then outlines the developments that led to the UNESCO Campaign. Chapter three relates the history of the Campaign itself, focusing on overall strategies rather than projects.

Chapters four and five take an ethnographic approach to conservation in Sana'a, focusing on the relationship between local and international discourse and practice. They can be considered as a pair. Chapter four looks at the ways in which conservation has been understood and applied by residents and officials; it concludes with a brief discussion of the conservation office's attempts to define heritage in the Yemeni context. Chapter five looks at those who conserve and build heritage: the new professionals who have taken on the task of conserving old Sana'a, approaching it from the perspective of architecture and other fields; and the "old professionals", or builders, who see themselves as heirs to traditional practice and caretakers of the old city. In chapter six, I will trace the evolution of local discourse and practice through a series of projects: several early projects conducted under the Campaign, with foreign aid and/or technical assistance; and later projects conducted by local organizations. The concluding chapter, seven, assesses the successes and the failures of the Campaign, and its legacy for current work. It then discusses the synthesis of international and local ideas in Sana'a, and proposes directions for policy based on this synthesis.

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[26] The term is used by M. Petzet, "The Venice Charter, Forty Years Later", *World Heritage Review*, vol. 38, December 2004, p. 21.

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Although I have described certain chapters as historical or ethnographic in their approach, most of the research presented here is a synthesis of the two. In contrast to other historical studies, much of the history presented here has been reconstructed from oral accounts – an exercise that has made clear, to the author, the difficulty of portraying an "objective" view of the past. At the same time, builders in Sana'a continue to see their practice as "historical." Their understanding of building and aesthetics provides not only an interesting local study, but also suggests new ways for historians to look at architecture of the past. As Paul Dresch has noted, the distinction between history and anthropology does not readily apply in Yemen.[27] In conservation as in other areas of practice, the unique circumstances of Yemen can perhaps help us to reevaluate the distinction between change and atemporal pattern that has informed many academic and professional models.

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[27] "[S]equence, whether built into change or stasis, is a product of social forms just as much as the social forms are to be seen as 'coping with duration'...Neither Zaydism nor tribalism is ordered to a concept of change. Each can pick out a *principium individuationis* from the other as part of its own generalizable scheme; but neither turns in on itself to revalue its own products and make the past alien. The older opposition of history to anthropology, as change is opposed to atemporal pattern, or statistical to mechanical models, seldom readily applies here" (P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, p. 31).

Chapter One

Historicizing Conservation

The discussion that follows has two aims. The first is to define and historicize what I will refer to throughout this study as "international practice" - that is, conservation practice as it is represented by organizations like ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites), the advisory body to UNESCO on matters of cultural heritage. As will be clear in the chapters that follow, "international practice" is far from monolithic, but it is sometimes represented as such in official discourse. The second aim is to provide a brief overview of the idea of the historic city in conservation. The history of urban conservation has not, to my knowledge, been treated in a comprehensive manner: the few histories of conservation focus on monuments, and most architectural historians ignore conservation. No one has looked systematically at the overlap of ideas in conservation, architecture and urban planning, relating them to wider developments in historiography and the social sciences, although some attempts have been made in this direction. A comprehensive study would have to treat not only Europe but its colonies, and would have to cross the boundaries of several disciplines. It would also have to take into account many regional and local developments; as in art historiography, the standard narrative of conservation history has been based on translations of major texts.

If there are few general histories of conservation, even fewer are written from a critical perspective. But they are nonetheless indispensable.[1] A growing and specialized

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[1] Of special note in Francoise Choay's *Invention of the Historic Monument*: it is the most critical of the studies but it lacks in detail, especially regarding conservation of monuments and cities in the 20th century. J. Jokilehto's survey is, to my knowledge, the only comprehensive work (*A History of Architectural Conservation*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999); he includes only a limited treatment of urban conservation, and tends to cast it in terms of "classic" conservation principles. See

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body of literature focuses on the history of conservation and restoration in the Middle East

and North Africa, first in the context of European colonialism and later, as a project of

nationalist regimes. These studies can be divided into two types: those that deal with

conservation of native cities and wider planning concerns; and those that deal with the

preservation of antiquities and, in the post-war period, a more broadly defined "heritage."

Few of these studies, however, have attempted to link developments across borders and

disciplines, which is indispensable for a critical history of urban conservation. Most of these

studies look at the conservation of antiquities and cities in particular places, like Cairo and

Tunis. Lacking, to my knowledge, is a history of urban conservation in Europe as it develops

in the work and writings of architects, planners, and municipalities. The subject is discussed

in several works, but few succeed in crossing disciplinary boundaries.[2] Also important for a

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also his useful summary of 19th-20th century ideas in "Conservation Principles and their Theoretical Background", in *Durability of Building Materials*, 5, 1988, pp. 267-77. Also helpful is N. S. Price, et. al., eds., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2000. D. Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* is an important historical and critical work, but it does not attempt a systematic chronology.

[2] There is, to my knowledge, no comprehensive work on urban conservation in English. Even Choay's chapter on the historic city concentrates on three key figures (Ruskin, Sitte, and Giovannoni) without tracing developments in practice and legislation. A more useful approach may be found in Spiro Kostof's two volume work, which treats question of urban form as a whole (*The City Shaped: Urban Planning and Meaning Through History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1991; and *The City Assembled: the Elements of Urban Form Through History*, Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992). In contrast to standard histories written from an architectural (and modernist) perspective, Kostof treats conservation as a model, but devotes limited space to it.

P. Larkham's *Conservation and the City* (London and New York: Routeledge, 1996) provides an overview of urban conservation policies in the 20th century in England. For an early, but still useful, account of case studies in Europe, see D. Appleyard, ed., *The Conservation of European Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979). This volume includes a detailed account of the conservation of Bologna by F. Bandarin. A number of studies on Italian cities were published in the journal *Urbanistica*, including L. Piccinato, "Siena: città e piano" (vol. 27 no. 23, March 1958).

In recent years there have been a number of important studies on the conservation in the Middle East; most of these have taken the form of monographs on specific cities, with a focus on antiquities and heritage. Of special note is A. el-Habashi's unpublished dissertation, "*Athar* to monuments : the intervention of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*", University of Pennsylvania, 2001; and studies by D. M. Reid, especially *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, museums, and Egyptian national identity from Napoleon to World War I*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. For case studies of urban conservation, see *Présent et avenir*

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critical history is the body of international charters and protocols, and institutional histories

of the various bodies (international and regional) concerned with conservation. These

sources have not, to my knowledge, been studied from a critical perspective.[3]

Terminology provides a convenient touchstone, since it provides insight into wider

historical and theoretical issues. Throughout this work I will use the European term

"conservation" to refer to what Fitch calls the "curatorial management" of buildings and

cities.[4] With regard to architecture, "conservation" indicates a range of attitudes and

approaches that represent different degrees of intervention. Terms used to describe these

interventions vary from place to place. I will present here the terms and definitions that were

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des medinas (de Marrakech et Alep), Fascicule de recherches no. 10-11, Tours: C.N.R.S./Institut de Geographies, 1982; S. Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present,* London: Thames and Hudson, 2000; and H. Radoine, "Conservation-Based Cultural, Environmental, and Economic Development: the Case of the Walled City of Fez", in ed. L. F. Girard, ed., *The Human Sustainable City: Challenges and Perspectives from the Habitat Agenda,* Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2003 (at www.archnet.org). N. Alsayyad, ed., *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage,* includes studies from both industrialized and developing countries, written from a critical, rather than a policy-oriented, perspective.

Architecture and urbanism was a focus of French colonial policy, and a number of studies have been devoted to this topic. Two works are exceptional in their attempt to link developments in the social sciences and urban policies (including conservation) in France and its colonies, and to look at connections between disciplines. These are Gwendolyn Wright's *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and P. Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment,* Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1989. S. Hamadeh also takes an inter-disciplinary approach in "Creating the Traditional City: a French Project" (in N. Alsayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Experience,* Aldershot: Avebury Press, 1992). She looks at the idea of the "traditional city" in urban historiography and its influence on colonial conservation policies in Algiers and Tunis. See also A. Abdelmajid, "Le paradoxe de la construction du fait patrimonial en situation coloniale. Le Cas du Maroc", *Revue du monde musulman et de la Mediterrannée,* vol. 73-76, 1994/3-4, pp. 153-166.

[3] For an overview of the international charters see D. Bell, *The Historic Scotland Guide to International Conservation Charters,* Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 1997. For an important but rather uncritical account of the origins of the World Heritage Convention, see S. Titchen's unpublished dissertation, "On the construction of 'outstanding universal value'", 1995 (copy on file at the UNESCO archives, Place Fontenoy, Paris).

[4] J. M. Fitch, *Historic Preservation: the Curatorial Management of the Built World,* Charlottesville: University Press of Virgina, 1990. In Europe, the term "conservation" is used for architecture and cities as well as art objects; it also refers to the protection of the natural environment. In the United States and Australia, the term "preservation" (or "historic preservation") refers to buildings and urban districts; "conservation" refers to artworks and the natural environment.

used in a 2004 training seminar in Sana'a, in connection with the inventory of the old city that is being conducted under the auspices of UNESCO. "Restoration" means returning something to its "original" state, through gentle interventions that do not alter historic material, and which can be reversed without harm to the structure. "Rehabilitation" means a change in use that does not alter the form or typology of the building; it implies a greater degree of change, since the building must be adapted to a new use. "Renovation" means to add a new element or component in compatible materials, and/or to reconfigure interior space; in principle, renovation should respect the original form of the building. If a building is rebuilt in whole or in part, this is called "reconstruction"; it is prohibited or discouraged in international charters.[5]

In professional discourse and practice, however, these different types of intervention are not always clearly distinguished. British architect Robert Maguire observes that two different understandings of architectural "conservation" have developed since the 1960's:

> • Conservation means retaining and, where necessary, adapting or adding to old environments, in such a way that a fresh entity is created to serve modern life, in which the old is respected and valued for its contribution.
>
> • Conservation means retaining old environments and creating conditions in which they may survive into the future (but essentially unchanged) and users must accept the limitations on their way of life such restrictions of change imposes.
>
> These two understandings accord with two philosophical positions that had the same root, but have been forced apart by historical pressures...

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[5] These terms are listed on the survey form for the inventory of old Sana'a, designed by Daniele Pini and Franca Miglioli with officials from the local conservation office; the terms were explained in a training seminar led by two Italian architects and a senior Yemeni architect. The translations in Arabic were given as follows: restoration, *tarmim* (literally, "repair"); rehabilitation, *i'adat ta'hil* ("returning something to a suitable or usable state"); renovation, *tajdid* ("making new"); reconstruction, *i'adat bina'* ("rebuilding"). Significantly, the trainers did not say that "reconstruction" is prohibited: rather, it should be respectful of the existing architectural language (S. Teston, 7/25/04). Other and more interventionist treatments included on the form were redevelopment, *i'adat tatwir*, the creation of a building that has no relationship to the old; demolition, *izala*; and new building, *insha'*.

Maguire notes that there are problems with both definitions: the first presumes that qualified

and sensitive professionals will do the work, but in practice this is often not the case. The

second definition "has led to oppressive planning control, exercised at the local level by

people who have learned it by rote."[6]

These two philosophical positions have a long history. They are perhaps most clearly

seen in the great debate between "restoration" and "conservation" that took place in the 19th

century. Much restoration in the 19th century was creative: it used historical documents to

reconstruct a building as an artistic whole, as it was conceived by the original maker.

Those who opposed restoration held that the maker's intentions could never be conjured in

the present; any attempt to do so was "false."[7] The 19th century debate survives in a new,

tempered form. Conservators now speak of a competition between "values": between

aesthetic or artistic values, according to which a building is a work of art and an aesthetic

whole; and historical values, according to which a building is a document of the past and a

witness to history.[8]

We can trace these two positions backward, to two developments in the early

Renaissance that led to the modern conception of the monument - what historians call the

"historic monument".[9] The first development is a new sense of "historical distance", which

allowed history to be conceived as a discipline. The second is the notion of art as an

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[6] "Conservation and Diverging Philosophies", *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, no. 1, March 1997, p. 17.
[7] The debate, which will be discussed below, is referred to in many sources. See, for example, F. Choay, *Invention*, chapter four, especially pp. 102-8; and N. Pevsner, "Scrape and Anti-Scrape", in J. Fawcett, ed., *The Future of the Past*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976, pp. 35-53.
[8] J. Jokilehto, for example, traces the major theoretical developments in the 19th and 20th centuries according to these two types of values ("Conservation Principles and their Theoretical Background").
[9] The term "historic monument" is first used to indicate the "modern monument" by Alois Riegl in "The Modern Cult of Monuments, its Character and Origins" (trans. K. Foster and D. Ghirardo, *Oppositions*, Fall 1982, vol. 25, pp. 21-51; I discuss the essay below, pp. 44-50). The term is adopted by Choay in her book, *Invention of the Historic Monument.*

autonomous activity.[10] These two developments were formative in art historiography, and in the emergence of the professional artist. The notion of the creative individual or author developed alongside the notion of the authentic object that he or she produced; both were closely tied to the modern notion of the individual.

In the 15th century it was the very remoteness of the past, says Lowenthal, that allowed the humanist to freely adapt it to the needs of the present:

> Imitation taught Renaissance painters, sculptors, architects and men of letters how to reanimate ancient models and also improve on them. The reuse of classical exemplars ranged from faithful copying to fundamental transformation, roughly paralleling what the humanists termed *translatio, imitatio, aemulatio*. Each mode of imitation expressed different relationships with precursors, but most humanists employed not just one but several of these modes.[11]

Over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries old structures of authority were challenged, a process facilitated by spread of printing.[12] Developments in philosophy, historical studies, and science reflected a new sense of the individual or self, which in turn informs the notion of the modern state.[13] A new way of thinking about the past developed, transforming older notions in a new framework of natural law. Like Christian time, the Enlightenment concept of time is linear: it moves forward toward a goal, overseen by a quasi-divine, sovereign rationality.[14] The idea of the past as a model for the present was increasingly questioned, most famously in the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns that began in the late 17th

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[10] F. Choay, *Invention of the Historic Monument*, pp. 27-8.
[11] D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 80.
[12] B. Anderson identified "print culture" as essential in the formation of the nation state, an "imagined community" based on affective ties (*Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York: Verso, 1991).
[13] R. Handler, "Authenticity," *Anthropology Today*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1986, pp. 2-4.
[14] The notion of history as progressive had been anticipated by Christian teleology, which led forward to salvation; in the new framework of natural law, the sense of forward movement was retained, but the end point was removed (Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, pp. 2-20; G. Rist, *The History of Development: from Western Origins to Global Faith*, London and New York: Zed Books, 2002, chapter two).

century. The debate was tentatively settled by distinguishing between the sciences, which

were subject to progress, and the arts, which were not. [15]

Choay calls the period from the 16th century to the French Revolution the "age of the

antiquarians": they were interested in the study of the past for its own sake, and in the close

study of objects. Inspired by empiricist methodology in the sciences, they attempted to

portray a "natural history" of architecture.[16] Their efforts were initially focused on the

antique and biblical past, but gradually they turned their attention to other eras and places.

Within Europe, there was an interest in medieval architecture which was broadly

characterized as "Gothic." At the same time, scholars and architects turned their attention to

other parts of the world, in the context of exploration and conquest.[17] A new taste for exotic

motifs developed, initially in garden design and interiors. This would lead, in the following

century, to the scholarly study of oriental architecture and the development of orientalizing

"styles" in architecture. Despite continuing faith in the classical mode, in the 18th century it

was colored by nostalgia and a sense of irretrievable loss.[18] Over the course of the century

the classical model was challenged by these new tastes, and by the growing influence of

mathematics and technology in building.

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[15] See Lowenthal's account of the distinction between the arts and the sciences in the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, pp. 92-6.

[16] Choay, *Invention*, pp. 50-1.

[17] See E. Crinson, *Empire Building: Victorian Architecture and Orientalism*, London and New York: Routeledge, 1996. The idea of the Other as formative in the self-image of Europe is a theme of Thierry Hensch's book, *Imagining the Middle East* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992, p. 50). Hensch suggests that Foucault's paradigm shift – the breakdown of the "classical episteme" – is related to factors external to Europe, but Foucault's Gallo-centric view does not account for these. The challenge to the classical canon must be seen as part of this wider development.

[18] A. Colquhoun notes that in the 18th century "the return to classicism was always accompanied by poetic reverie, nostalgia, and a sense of irretrievable loss." In this, it contrasted with Renaissance classicism which "picked up the threads of a world that was more modern than recent medieval culture" ("Three Kinds of Historicism," in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*, p. 6).

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The interest in new and varied aesthetics was part of a sensibility that came to be called the "picturesque." Usually associated with painting and landscape design, the picturesque had a wide impact in architecture and urbanism, although the specific lines of transmission between these fields have not been studied. In formal terms, the picturesque was a reaction against classical principles of design, such as symmetry, regularity, and the rational control of composition. It was also a reaction against the transformation of the countryside during the agrarian and industrial revolutions.[19] It was based on the Romantic idea of association: forms could recall meaningful contexts, and emotions related to those contexts. Emotions were evoked through contrast and mixture: in picturesque gardens, classical ruins were juxtaposed with medieval cottages and exotic motifs.[20] Of particular interest were subjects that evoked the passage of time. English picturesque painting portrayed abandoned landscapes, dilapidated houses, and struggling peasants, victims of economic dislocations. These subjects were portrayed as timeless and pure; they were sometimes contrasted to modern elements, for example, factories and smokestacks that loomed in the distance. Painters had an aesthetic interest in poverty, neglect, and decay, yet these were anaesthetized by the effect of spatial and temporal distance. This was accomplished through pictorial techniques that derived from empiricism.[21]

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[19] M. Andrews, "The Metropolitan Picturesque", in S, Copley and P. Garside, eds., *The Politics of the Picturesque: literature, landscape, and aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 283.

[20] The picturesque garden was deliberately composed to contrast with the order and hierarchy of the classical garden. In late 18th century England, the picturesque garden offset villas in the classical style. Arthur Payne Knight, an early theorist of the picturesque, described it as a "a mixed style...built piece-meal, during successive stages, and by several different nations. It is distinguished not by particular manner of execution, or class of ornament, but admits them all promiscuously" (cited in S. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 2).

[21] Andrews, "The Metropolitan Picturesque", pp. 288-9. M. Tafuri explores the link between the picturesque and empiricism in *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), chapter one.

These developments in aesthetics occurred against the backdrop of a new theory of historical change, known as historicism. The idea of historical change was anticipated in the 17th century, but it was formulated as a theory in the context of German romanticism and rising nationalist sentiments.[22] The theory held that societies (like individuals) are subject not to natural law, but rather to historical development; the same is true for values and cultural products. Because the development of each society is different, it has a unique essence that can be discerned through historical research. Historicism gave a theoretical basis to aesthetic relativism, especially through the new discipline of art historiography which developed in the mid-19th century. The close observation of objects, writes Choay, was abandoned. Objects were now valued primarily for their ability to illustrate the historical development of art.[23] Yet features of empiricist methodology remained, for example, methods of documentation and classification. These methods, along with historical narrative, produced an "objective" art history. The empiricist tendency to observe objects independent of context would have important consequences for art historiography, and for the documentary procedures of conservation that were modeled on art historical methods.

Historicism lent validity to the notion of historical "styles", identified with particular periods. Studies of vernacular, medieval forms (broadly characterized as "Gothic") were used to develop revival styles for contemporary building. A history based on development is an inherently narrative form, a kind of collective biography closely tied to the nation state.[24] This approach to history reinforced the narrative aspect of the picturesque, and of Romantic art generally. Especially in England and France revival styles were understood as part of a

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[22] The following discussion is based on Colquhoun, "Three Kinds of Historicism," in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*, pp. 3-6.
[23] Choay, *Invention*, pp. 53-5.
[24] H. White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1980. pp. 5-27; cited in P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, pp. 175-6.

national narrative, and were used to validate local aesthetics.[25] In the revolutionary period in France, antiquities were used in this way. As symbols of the Ancien Regime were destroyed, others were conserved and reframed within an historical narrative that legitimated the new order. Using the metaphor of inheritance, revolutionaries invoked a collective responsibility for monuments that are "the patrimony (*patrimoine*) of all...and should be maintained, enlarged, or embellished at the expense of all."[26] In effect, the notion of patrilineal inheritance was transferred to the state.[27] For Handler the idea of "heritage" is based on the idea of property: as the individual is defined by his right to own property, the nation is defined by the culture it "possesses."[28] But the inheritance metaphor also evoked shared memories and responsibilities that provided a sense of identity for families and groups, and transferred these to the nation.[29]

This affective role of *patrimoine* was the basis for new "imagined communities." It is based on a sense of shared history that is somehow sacred: the new "cult of monuments", observed Alois Riegl, performs a function similar to that of religion in earlier ages.[30] During the French Revolution, symbols of the old order were in a sense re-sacralized, using the

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[25] F. Choay, *Invention*, p. 44-5.

[26] Armand-Guy Kersaint, *Discours sur les monuments publics*, 1791, cited in F. Choay, *Invention*, p. 195 fn. 9.

[27] M. Herzfeld, personal conversation, April 2005.

[28] "Who Owns the Past? History, Cultural Property, and the Logic of Possessive Individualism", in Williams, ed., *The Politics of Culture*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, pp. 63-74.

[29] In his *Philosophical Dictionary* Voltaire wrote: "A country is a composition of many families, and as a family is communally supported on the principle of self-love, when one has no opposing interest, he extends the same self-love to his town or his village, which is called his country. The greater a country becomes, the less we love it; for love is weakened by diffusion. It is impossible to love a family so numerous that we hardly know it" (cited in A. Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 311).

[30] See below, pp. 44-50. For an interesting view of the relationship between religion, socialism, and what Alois Riegl called the "modern cult of monuments", see M. Olin, "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion in Late 19th Century Austria", *Wiener Jahrbuch fur Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 38, 1985, pp. 177-198.

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quasi-religious terminology of Enlightenment thought. The sacred character of "ancient buildings" was important to John Ruskin and William Morris in the mid-19th century. Inspired by socialist ideals, they believed that the values of the monument would transcend national borders: they saw the monument as a basis for the imagined community of a wider humanity. As such, they anticipated the 20th century language of "universal values."[31]

Two views of authenticity

In the 19th century, two approaches to the monument developed: both were rooted in a Romantic view of history, and both depended on historical sources. In France, historical and archeological investigations of medieval or "Gothic" architecture led to an approach called "stylistic restoration", associated especially with Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and his followers. Viollet-le-Duc (1814-79) was an architect and theorist, and also served as chief inspector of historic monuments for the state. He understood restoration as the reconstitution of a building as an artistic whole, in a hypothetical form which, he believed, reflected the intentions of the original builders. This often meant fabricating new elements and stripping buildings of later additions.[32] Over the course of the 19th century, stylistic restoration was the dominant approach in Europe, and in other parts of the world where European restorers worked. Historically "correct" notions of style were applied to buildings, and were also used

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[31] Ruskin and Morris established an international basis for monuments conservation: "[A]fter rising to the defense of a popular neighborhood in Naples that was threatened with destruction," writes Choay, "[Morris] took the struggle beyond Europe's borders, to Turkey and Egypt, where he sought to gain protection for Arabic and Coptic architecture." To this end he published a manifesto in the Athenaeum in 1877 which includes the signatures of Carlyle, Webb, Burnham-Jones, and Holman Hunt (*Invention*, p. 95 and fn. 42).

[32] S. Rab', "The 'Monument' in Architecture and Conservation – Theories of Architectural Significance and their Influence on Restoration, Preservation, and Conservation", unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Department of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology, 1997, p. 95. For the idea of stylistic unity in restoration, see Jokilehto, *A History of Conservation*, chapter 5.

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in "revival" styles; indeed, the two practices informed one another.[33] Many buildings in the

area now known as Islamic Cairo were transformed according to idealized Fatimid and

Mamluk "styles"; these in turn informed revivalist architecture, notably what Rabbat has

called the neo-Mamluk style.[34]

In both stylistic restoration and revivalism, architects aspired to authenticity by being

faithful to the intentions of the maker as they understood them, "recreating" the past in

hypothetical forms. But John Ruskin, the most famous opponent of restoration, saw it as

> the most total destruction which a building can suffer...Another spirit may be given by
> another time, but it is then a new building...[I]t is *impossible*, as impossible to raise the dead,
> to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture...
>
> Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end...We have no
> right whatever to touch [the buildings of the past]. They are not ours. They belong partly to
> those who built them, and partly to the generations of mankind who are to follow us...[35]

For Ruskin, as for William Morris and their followers, ancient buildings were silent

witnesses to history. It would have been better for them to decay and return to nature. But in

practice, Ruskin and Morris advocated the protection of old buildings - along with the traces

of age that confer upon a building its particular beauty and character. In 1877, William

Morris founded the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), which

continued to be influential in the 20th century. The ideas of the group closely reflected those

of Morris: he argued that buildings should not be completely renovated, as this "takes away

the appearance of antiquity...from such old parts of buildings as are left."[36]

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[33] F. Choay, *Invention*, pp. 91-2.
[34] N. Rabbat, "The Formation of the neo-Mamluk Style in Modern Egypt", in M. Pollak, ed., *The Education of the Architect*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press. For the transformation of Islamic Cairo see A. al-Habashi, "*Athar* to monuments"; P. Sanders, "Making Cairo Medieval", unpublished paper, no date.
[35] J. Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory", *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, nos. 18-20.
[36] Morris, 1877, cited in Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, p. 37.

The approach of Ruskin and Morris was not strictly antiquarian: their interest in age

was at once historical and moral. For them, as for A. W. Pugin several decades earlier, the

medieval world represented a more pious and humane time that contrasted with the soulless

architecture and society of the industrial age. While some architects, notably Viollet-le-Duc,

saw the past as inspiration for a modern style, Ruskin and Morris wanted to return to a more

beautiful architecture and the way of life it represented:

> A day never passes without our hearing our English architects called upon to be original, and
> to invent a new style…We want no new style of architecture. There seems to be a wonderful
> misunderstanding…as to the very nature and meaning of Originality, and of all wherein it
> consists…our architecture will languish, and that in the very dust, until…a universal system
> of form and workmanship be everywhere adopted and enforced.[37]

Alois Riegl and the idea of "age value"

The ideas of Ruskin and Morris were formative in modern conservation: at the end of the 19th

century and in the early 20th century they were discussed and elaborated, especially in

Austria and Italy. Of special note is art historian Alois Riegl (1857-1905), whose notion of

"age value" will be cited throughout this study. Riegl rationalized Ruskin's ideas, reframing

them in terms of his theory of a subjective art history. His essay, "The Modern Cult of

Monuments: its Character and Origin" (1903), is often cited as a basis of contemporary

doctrine.[38] He wrote the essay as an introduction to a conservation law that he drafted soon

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[37] Cited in P. Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, pp. 34-6; see also Choay, chapter four. At the
time, most British antiquarians were Anglican ministers who supported the "re-gothicizing" of
churches; see Pevsner, "Scrape and Anti-Scrape."

[38] "The Modern Cult of Monuments: its Character and its Origin", trans. K. Foster and D. Ghirardo,
Oppositions, Fall 1982, vol. 25, pp. 21-51. David Lowenthal and Margaret Olin have called attention
to the link between Ruskin and Riegl. D. Lowenthal, "Art and Authenticity", *World Art : Themes of
Unity in Diversity*, University Park, PA and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989, pp.
843-7; M. Olin, "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion in Late 19th Century Austria", *Wiener
Jahrbuch fur Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 38, 1985, p. 177-98). Olin notes that the "Lamp of Memory"
appeared in German shortly before Riegl began work on the "Modern Cult of Monuments." Riegl's

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after he was appointed General Conservator for the Austrian state. By the end of the century, most European countries had developed national antiquities laws, but they remained relatively weak until a second round of legislation in the first decades of the 20th century.[39] Riegl's essay was influenced by its practical aim – the elaboration of a state conservation policy - but it is usually presented in isolation, as a theoretical work.[40]

In his essay, Riegl discusses three historical stages in the idea of the monument. In ancient times the monument was defined by the intentions of the maker: monuments only survived as long as they retained meaning for the societies that made them. It is not until the Renaissance that we see the origins of a modern approach to monuments conservation, with the development of a new appreciation for historical value. Ancient monuments were "intentional monuments", in that their makers determined their significance. Historical monuments, in contrast, are "unintentional": they acquire significance in later periods, because they are seen as historical. Over time, intentional monuments, too, take on new meanings, and thus become "unintentional monuments." In the case of both intentional and unintentional monuments, writes Riegl, "we are interested in their original, uncorrupted appearance as they emerged from the hands of their maker and to which we seek by whatever means to restore them."[41]

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term *Errinerungswerte*, "memorial values", may derive from the German title of Ruskin's essay - *Die Leuchthe der Errinrung*, published by Leipzig in 1900.

[39] P. Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, pp. 37-9. Early government efforts in France were not systematized until 1831 with the establishment of the *Commission des Monument Historiques*. Larkham notes that the German states were particularly early to take action: the first inventories of monuments were undertaken in Bavaria and Wurttemberg in the 16th and 17th centuries, respectively.

[40] I developed this idea in a seminar paper written at MIT for Nasser Rabbat and Erica Naginski, "'The Modern Cult of Monuments' in Context: Conservation and the Problem of Value" (May 2002). The draft legislation that accompanied Riegl's essay has not been translated into English. S. Scarrochia presents both the essay and the legislation in *Alois Riegl : teoria e prassi della conservazione dei monumenti : antologia di scritti, discorsi, rapporti 1898-1905, con una scelta di saggi critici*, Bologna : CLUEB, 1995.

[41] "The Modern Cult of Monuments," pp. 21-3.

In the Renaissance the historical appreciation of monuments was linked to a single and objectively valid aesthetic, the classical. Thus the value of a monument was art-historical, rather than historical as such. This art historical value remained the basis of conservation until the 19th century, when the theory of historical evolution destroyed the notion of a single aesthetic. But faith in an artistic ideal was not entirely abandoned: "Only around the beginning of the twentieth century," writes Riegl, "have we come to recognize the necessary consequences of the theory of historical evolution..."[42] The theory has important implications. All artifacts of the past are irrecoverable: they constitute irreplaceable links in an historical sequence. They are not canonically binding, because aesthetic perceptions change over time, and from viewer to viewer. Since there is no longer a single artistic ideal, art value cannot be the basis of monuments conservation: it has been superseded by historical value. In terms of conservation, this has two major results. On the one hand, the canon is expanded to include all periods and times, regardless of current aesthetic judgments. On the other hand, a building cannot be stripped of later historical layers in order to recover or reconstruct the original form, according to an idealized style.

In the modern era, however, there is a new value – "age value" - that is more general and thus more important than historical value. A ruin, for example, is of interest not so much for historical reasons as for the emotional state it provokes in the viewer, a sense of the passing of time. Historical value is based on the object itself. But in terms of age value objects are incidental: they are "indispensable catalysts which trigger in the beholder a sense of the life cycle..."

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[42] "The Modern Cult of Monuments," p. 23.

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This immediate emotional effect depends not on scholarly knowledge nor historical education for its satisfaction, since it is evoked by mere sensory perception. Hence it is not restricted to the educated (for whom the task of caring for monuments must necessarily be limited) but also touches the masses independent of their education. The general validity, which it shares with religious feelings, gives this new commemorative (monument) value a significance whose ultimate consequences cannot yet be assessed.

For Riegl, "age value" is the basis of the modern conservation: "the category of monuments of age-value," he writes, "embraces every artifact without regard to its original significance and purpose, as long as it reveals the passage of a considerable amount of time."[43] In the draft legislation that follows his essay, he summarizes the implications for policy:

[Age value is] in principle independent of other values, especially [values of] material, technical execution, destination, and historical and artistic significance. To state this in other words, *in terms of age value all monuments are equal*....From this we can deduce two principles of protective legislation: 1.) Every work of the hand of man, solely by the fact that is a "monument", i.e. has existed for a certain amount of time, enjoys the right of protection; 2.) the state is charged with the execution of this protection.[44]

For Riegl, age value does not replace, but rather supplements, historical value. The shift in emphasis from historical, academic values to the more democratic age value recalls the social ideas of Ruskin and Morris: they identified patrimony with the "collective", which was now responsible for maintaining and protecting it.[45] Riegl's concept of "age value" rationalized Ruskin's more emotional formulation, which in turn reflected the wider notion of the picturesque: age value provides a theoretical basis for the picturesque's interest in age. Like Ruskin, Riegl advocated the protection of historic buildings along with their "signs of

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[43] "The Modern Cult of Monuments", pp. 23-4.

[44] Riegl, "Progetto di un'organizzazione legislativa della tutela dei monumenti in Austria," in S. Scarrocchia, *Alois Riegl : teoria e prassi della conservazione dei monumenti,*" p. 231 (emphasis mine).

[45] For Ruskin and Morris, the definition of "collective heritage" challenged the very notion of private property (M. Olin, "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion"). Riegl hoped that the new definition of the monument would supersede narrow, nationalist aims. In principle, the new criteria apply only to monuments held by the state, although the state should make efforts to acquire monuments held by private citizens. All such buildings are to be registered in a state inventory and "must not be destroyed, transformed, or sold without the permission of the responsible authority" (Riegl, "Progetto", pp. 219-220).

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age." This position came to be widely accepted throughout Europe, and was later developed

by Cesare Brandi and others as the notion of "patina."[46]

Riegl realized that the implications of age value could not yet be fully assessed. In

the draft legislation, he notes that there is a

> danger of over accumulating an incalculable mass ...of minor objects...[This] is to be
> prevented with the determination of an age limit of sixty years [after which] works may be
> categorized as monuments.

Since the monument will no longer be evaluated according to qualitative criteria (all are

equal in terms of age value), the *quantity* of monuments must be controlled by establishing a

period of time after which a monument acquires age value.[47] For Riegl, the values of the

monument are constructed in the present, but its *form* must be conserved in its current state,

including the "traces of age that exist in it." The form is essential, because "it constitutes...

the support for the interior experience of the atmosphere of the old..."[48] The monument thus

becomes a document of the viewer's subjective process.[49]

In his essay, Riegl suggests that value is not inherent in the object, but rather derives

from the relationship between the viewer and the object; values thus change over time. But

the object is to be conserved in its *current* state – in effect, codifying our present reading of

it. Riegl thus confirms an art historical or "philological"[50] approach to the monument, even

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[46] William Morris' view that "the natural weathering of the surface of a building is beautiful, and its loss disastrous" came to be generally accepted throughout Europe (cited in D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 164).

[47] Riegl admits that the choice of sixty years is arbitrary; it is merely a way to establish a "synchronic unit" of time ("Progetto", p. 212).

[48] "Progetto", p. 235.

[49] M. Jarzombek has termed this process "subject-objectification": "[I]f empathy subjectified the aesthetic process by placing thought in the domain of feeling, subject-objectification was its antinomic companion, returning that which was felt to the certainly of knowledge" (*The Psychologizing of Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 66).

[50] G. Carbonara, *La reintegrazione dell'immagine*, excerpt reprinted and translated in S. N. Price, ed., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2000, p. 238.

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as he dramatically expands its definition. At the same time, he does not completely drop the notion of significance. We must admit the existence of exceptional works, he writes, "the premature destruction of which would displease us more than the destruction of others."[51] The criterion of significance thus survives alongside age value, although they derive from conceptions of history that are fundamentally opposed. As Tainter and Lucas argue, the concept of "significance" derives from the positivist view that meaning, and hence value, are inherent in the object.[52] The notion of "age value" holds that meaning is historically constructed.

Some writers lament that Riegl's ideas have not impacted modern conservation, which continues to follow 19th century principles.[53] But in fact, current practice is consistent with his theory. The criterion of age - usually fifty to sixty years – is the primary criterion for listing in most conservation laws, alongside other criteria based on expanding notions of "significance." In principle, the notion of relative and changing values should challenge the philological method. Instead, the method has assimilated relative values – resulting in the infinite expansion of the "museum."

Riegl's theory reflects an academic approach to the monument which, according to Jokilehto, was well established in much of Europe at the end of the 19th century.[54] In the following decades a modern theory of conservation would be elaborated, especially by Italian

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[51] In paragraph ten of his draft law, following French practice, Riegl distinguishes between "classified" and "unclassified" monuments; the former "are monuments of exceptional quality or of extraordinary artistic-historical significance or general historical significance" ("Progetto", pp. 220, 231; translation from the Italian is mine).

[52] The term "national significance" is found in conservation laws in Europe and the United States beginning in the late 19th century - for example, in the U.S. Antiquities Law of 1906 (Tainter and Lucas, "The Epistemology of the Significance Concept," p. 707).

[53] For example, Choay, *Invention*, p. 84.

[54] He cites, for example, Camillo Boito, who wrote the Italian charter of conservation in 1883. He promoted strict conservation along the lines of Ruskin and Morris (J. Jokilehto, ""Conservation Principles", p. 270).

theorists and practitioners. This period sees the beginnings of conservation as a distinct profession, distinguished by a specialized methodology taught in new departments and institutes. It is also a time when the conservation of historic centers is formulated in terms of policy – and approaches to art, monument, and urban conservation begin to overlap. But the modern, historicist view of authenticity was slow to gain acceptance. Stylistic restoration was more appealing to patrons, for whom the symbolic value and image of the past were important than historical accuracy. Among architects, too, the modern approach faced obstacles. While classical architecture was part of an architects' training, they had little knowledge of the Gothic and even less of the Romanesque. Perhaps most importantly, the historicist approach was not "gratifying in the eyes of practitioners. It was not prestigious, and did not call upon the 'creative genius' of the artist."[55] Like histories of modernism, histories of conservation describe the development of theory and practice as an inevitable and natural progression. But the reality is more complex. The cult of the past would only be furthered through the creation of a specialized profession in the early 20th century, distinct from architecture but in many ways mirroring it.

From "historic monument" to "historic city"

How is it that the idea of conservation – originally developed for monuments and art objects - came to be applied to cities? Over the course of the 19th century, the city is constructed as an object of discourse and practice, in both Europe and its colonies. This occurs in new scholarly and professional fields, especially urban historiography, and social sciences that focus on urban problems. It also occurs in the practice of municipal officials, architects, and

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[55] F. Choay, *Invention*, pp. 100-1.

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engineers who develop strategies to deal with the "chaos" of the industrial city.[56] From the

18th century they were faced with the challenge of modernizing pre-industrial urban fabrics:

their efforts both facilitated and mediated the emergence of a capitalist market. The new

economy required roads and railways that could not be accommodated within existing cities;

new structures for appropriating and redeveloping land for industrial and commercial use;

infrastructure for new utilities, and housing for the rural migrants that flooded the cities.

Even Romantics who admired the form of old cities saw them as incompatible with

modernization:

> Modern Paris would be impossible in the Paris of old...Civilization is cutting broad avenues
> into the old city's dark maze of alleys, intersections and cul-de-sacs; it levels houses like the
> American pioneer levels trees...Rotten walls are collapsing, allowing dwellings worthy of
> man to rise out of their rubble, dwellings to which health streams in with the air and peaceful
> contemplation with the light of the sun.[57]

Old urban cores of cities were progressively abandoned by the new bourgeoisie, and left to

the working poor. This historical, social, and economic process – that is, "modernization" -

is in many ways similar to the process that has been occurring more recently in less

developed parts of the world. Development discourse has masked this parallel: imbued with

the rhetoric of progress, the discourse naturalizes the process that took place in the

industrialized world from the 18th-20th centuries. It forgets the tremendous costs, bitter

struggles, and displacements that accompanied the emergence of industrial capitalism, and

the impact of this process on cities.

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[56] Choay, *Invention*, p. 120; *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, New York, George
Braziller, 1969, pp. 7-15; P. Rabinow, *French Modern*, chapter seven. The idea of the "historic
monument" is usually attributed to the Renaissance; the notion of a wider urban heritage does not
develop for four centuries. Choay attributes this time lag to the scale and complexity of cities, and
also to "the persistence of a mentality that identified the city with a name, a community, a genealogy,
and a kind of personal history – while taking no interest in its physical space" (*Invention*, p. 119).
[57] Théophile Gautier, close friend of Victor Hugo and spokesman for the Romantic movement, in his
preface to Fourier's 1855 book on old Paris (cited in F. Choay, *Invention*, p. 119).

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The notion of an "urban heritage" developed gradually, alongside historical studies. The process was slow, since basic information – cadastral maps and archives – was lacking. Historical accounts of cities from the late 18th century emphasized social and institutional structures rather than physical form, while architectural historians generally ignored the city. Early studies were haunted by a nostalgia for disappearing forms and ways of life: authors like Michelet, Burkhardt, and Foustel de Coulanges contrasted the disunity and fragmentation of the modern city with the coherence of historical precedents.[58] At the same time, architects and writers began to appreciate the form of old cities as aesthetically and even morally superior. The concept of "organic" and "mechanical" urban form date from this period, used to contrast cities of the past and the present, respectively.[59] The organic and the mechanical were associated with other oppositional pairs in Romantic thought and aesthetics: spontaneous and planned, rational and emotional, beautiful and ugly, humane and inhuman. Pugin's *Contrasts* (1836) juxtaposed images of a pious, moral medieval society with images of the soulless society in which Pugin lived. One pair sets the skyline of a medieval town, punctured by church spires, against a stark industrial landscape. In another, pastors attend to the poor and sick in an old rectory; in the modern scene, they are left to die in poorhouses and asylums, built in the classical style.[60] In late 18th century

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[58] Choay, *Invention*, pp. 199-120. Historians, she writes, do not treat urban space per se until well into the 20th century.

[59] F. Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, New York: George Brazilier, 1969, p. 102.

[60] A. W. Pugin, *Contrasts, or A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day, Shewing the Present Decay of Taste*, 1836. The city views are reprinted in Kostof, *The City Shaped*, p. 282.

England medievalism and the "Gothic style" had political associations; in the 19th century, they came to represent morality and social reform.[61]

From the 1840's the railroad produced significant breaches in old city cores: it is at this point that urban space is reshaped to meet the needs of industrialization. In mid-century the idea of the "regulating plan" emerges in France, Italy, and Germany. The goal was functional, economic, and political. The regularization of the city was used to create a kind of new urban theater to exhibit the institutions of the Liberal State – following Baroque and neoclassical models, but applying these on a much wider scale. Another goal was securing social order. In contrast to earlier planning which dealt with specific districts, planning at mid-century aimed, as Haussmann put it, to transform the "huge consumer market, the immense workshop" of the city into a unified whole.[62] Haussmann's *grands trauvaux*, carried out between 1850 and 1870, were the largest scale undertaking of the kind, the result of an alliance between the new bougeoisie and a long-established state corps of engineers.[63] For Haussmann the wide boulevards or *percées* were more functional than aesthetic, designed to open the city up to light and air: he used the term *éventrement*, suggesting the treatment of a pathological disorder.[64] Late in the century this approach to the city would be articulated in terms of concern for "hygiene."

Haussmann's plan was widely imitated and resisted; he had many critics within Paris, who charged him with vandalism. But he challenged his opponents to

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[61] Pevsner relates 18th century picturesque to British individualism and nationalism, and the triumph of the Whig party ("The Genesis of the Picturesque", *Studies in Art, Architecture, and Design*, Volume One, "From Mannerism to Romanticism," London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, pp. 78-101).
[62] Choay, *The Modern City*, pp. 10-1, 16; S. Kostof, *The City Assembled*, pp. 57-9, 156.
[63] A. Picon, *Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment*, trans. T. Martin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, chapter one.
[64] Choay, *The Modern City*, p. 15; Kostof, *The City Assembled*, p. 266. Kostof notes that the term *éventrement* (Italian, *sventramento*) derives from Enlightment discourse. See his discussion of "Haussmannization" in the 19th and 20th centuries, pp. 266-279.

name a single ancient monument worthy of interest, a single building precious for the arts or intriguing by virtue of its memories, that has been damaged by my administration...if it has not been for the purpose of isolating it and placing it at the greatest possible advantage, in the most beautiful possible perspective.[65]

Even the Romantics, who were traumatized by the *grands travaux*, protested only when a notable monument was jeopardized: the wider fabric was a source of nostalgia, but hardly worthy of preservation.[66] Haussmann's planning respected contemporary notions of the monument and the way it should be treated: by isolating it and enhancing it as a marker and shaper of a vista. This practice, called "disencumbering", would inform conservation practice well into the twentieth century.[67]

As Haussmann's example was imitated in other cities, it gave rise to a social, cultural, and historicizing defense of old towns.[68] In the last quarter of the century, two alternatives began to challenge the model: a new mode of picturesque planning, and the idea of conserving wider urban ensembles. As in the case of architecture, both picturesque planning and conservation depended on historical studies, and informed one another; the former had appeal especially in German-speaking countries, where historical studies validated an interest in folk culture.[69] The key figure is Camillo Sitte, who developed a picturesque mode based on the planning principles of old towns. His book *The Art of Building Cities* (1889), a

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[65] Cited in Choay, *Invention*, p. 117.

[66] Even Victor Hugo, who derided Haussman's *percées* and the monotony of the new boulevards, did not protest the wholesale transformation of the urban fabric. Like Montalembert, he argued for the deviation of streets to protect specific monuments (F. Choay, *Invention*, pp. 118-9).

[67] See below, p. 67. Disencumbering has precedents in Renaissance and Baroque urbanism, but was transformed in the 19th century by new theories of vision. The practice reached its height between 1880 and 1910; see Kostof, *The City Assembled*, pp. 138-141. Although the idea of demolishing surrounding context has been rejected, disencumbering survives in the notion of the *non aedificandi* zone included in some conservation laws and charters.

[68] S. Kostof, *The City Shaped*, p. 82.

[69] Choay, *The Modern City*, p. 106.

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reaction to the construction of the Ringstrasse in Vienna, was widely read in Europe.[70] For

Sitte the beauty of old towns derived from the continuity of the urban fabric, and from the

relationships between elements that formed urban space. This fabric was made up of houses

and other buildings that were not properly monumental. "The rage for isolating everything,"

wrote Sitte, "is a modern sickness."[71] Sitte was an advocate for the conservation of urban

districts, and along with Patrick Geddes, insisted that historic districts be documented prior to

interventions. Charles Buls, mayor of Brussels and an admirer of Sitte, was perhaps the first

official in Europe to call for the protection of the city's old quarters.[72]

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[70] Choay says the book was ignored in France, but Rabinow notes that the French translation differed significantly from the German (*French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1989, p. 213).

[71] *The Art of Building Cities: city building according to its artistic fundamentals*, trans. Charles T. Stewart, New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1945, p. 54. Sitte attempted to extract planning principles from old towns. He associated the causal irregularity of old towns not only with beauty, but with good society: they were the product of a relationship that develops over time, between people and the physical environment. While others (including Sitte's own followers) argued that the charm of old towns resulted from disorder and intuition, Sitte held that they were based on reasoned principles that could be extracted from the close study of old town plans. They could be found in the straight streets of Renaissance or Baroque towns, or in the meandering streets of medieval towns, all of which he documented in his work. Sitte's ideas were echoed by theorists in Austria and Italy; his book encouraged an appreciation for the wider urban fabric, and became a rallying point for the defense of old towns (S. Kostof, *The City Shaped*, pp. 83-4; see also F. Choay, The Moden City, pp. 104-6).

For a discussion of what Kostof calls the "planned picturesque" and its relationship to urban conservation, see *The City Shaped*, pp. 69-93. Choay calls this the "culturalist model" of planning which she contrasts with the "progressivist" model; they are based on metaphors of the organism and the machine, respectively (*The Modern City*, pp. 102-7)

[72] Collins & Collins, *Camillo Sitte and the Birth of Modern City Planning*, 1965, p. 22; S. Kostof, *The City Shaped*, p. 84. Buls outlined his ideas in the book *Esthetique des Villes* (1893). Kostof says that he is an admirer of Sitte, but Rabinow notes that he does not mention Sitte in his book (*French Modern*, p. 213).

The urban picturesque

As Haussmann's *grands travaux* were underway, the idea of the historic city emerged in

England, in the writings of Ruskin.[73] Ruskin's love for the "ancient city" was not historicist,

but emotional: he valued it primarily as a bearer of collective memory and identity. Like

Sitte, Ruskin identified the city's beauty with its fabric, which was composed of ordinary

houses; it was this fabric that was being destroyed by modernization. Ruskin laments

> the changes wrought in my own lifetime on the cities of Venice, Florence, Geneva, Lucerne,
> and chief of all on Rouen, a city altogether inestimable for its retention of medieval character
> ...the only town left in France in which the effect of old French domestic architecture can yet
> be seen in its collective groups.[74]

An appreciation for the picturesque qualities of old towns was already in evidence in the 18th

century, for example, in the treatises of the Abbé Laugier and I. P. Willebrand, and in a new

kind of "picturesque tourism" of the run-down districts of London.[75] Early theorists had

agreed that the picturesque was not appropriate for urban scenes, which were linked to

civilization and historical time. But in the first decades of the 19th century, some writers in

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[73] F. Choay, *Invention*, p. 119.

[74] "On the Opening of the Crystal Palace" (1854), cited in Choay, *Invention*, p. 215 fn. 11.

[75] Laugier praises the irregularity and disorder of old towns in his *Essai sur l'Architecture* (1754).
Willebrand wrote a treatise on the esthetics of planning, *Grundriss einer schönen Stadt*, in 1775 (S.
Kostof, *The City Shaped*, p. 82). M. Andrews argues that a "metropolitan picturesque" emerges in
London as the city undergoes rapid change – paralleling the rural picturesque that accompanies the
transformation of the countryside (M. Andrews, "The Metropolitan Picturesque", pp. 290-2).

Before the modern period the irregular form of medieval towns had been occasionally
appreciated for its military and climatic benefits – narrow streets were shaded from the sun and
protected from winds. In the writing of Alberti, an early exponent of the geometric planning that
came to be identified with the Renaissance, we can discern the beginnings of a sensibility that later
came to be identified with the picturesque: "...in the heart of the town it will be handsomer not to
have [streets run] straight, but winding about several ways, backwards and forwards like the course of
a river. For thus besides that by appearing so much longer they will add to the idea of the greatness
of the town, they will likewise conduce very much to the beauty and convenience, and be a greater
security against all accidents and emergencies. Moreover this winding of the streets will make the
passenger at every step discover a new structure" (iv, p. 5, cited in Kostof, *The City Assembled*, p.
70).

England described a "natural" picturesque that existed at the margins of urban society.[76] In

the 1850's Ruskin, Dickens, and others decried the tendency of the picturesque to anesthetize

suffering and poverty; they called for a new, more humane picturesque. In *Modern Painters*

(1856), Ruskin identifies the "surface-picturesque" with detachment and heartlessness; in its

place, he proposes a picturesque inspired by the work of Turner, in which the spectator

engages empathetically with his subject. By the 1870's the picturesque had penetrated the

discourse of a new conservation movement: a reflection of growing anxiety at the

fragmentation of urban society, and the loss of a connection with the past.[77]

In Paris, appreciation for old streets and quarters developed as Haussmann's works

were nearing completion.[78] But this sensibility did not give rise to the idea of conserving

cities within France.[79] Rather, it is in the colonies that the urban picturesque developed into

policies for the conservation of native cities.

As we have seen, oriental and exotic motifs were established features of picturesque

design in the 18th century. Especially after the appearance of the massive documentary

project, *Déscription de l'Egypte* (1809-28), this interest was given a new historical basis.[80]

Like the idea of the "historic city" in Europe, the idea of the "traditional city" emerged in the

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[76] G. Dillon, "The Uses and Disadvantages of the Picturesque in French Morocco", unpublished paper, December 1998. My discussion of the urban picturesque is indebted to this study, which Dillon prepared for a graduate seminar that I taught at Duke University. Regarding the natural picturesque, Andrews cites an 1854 reviewer of Dickens' *Hard Times*, who identifies social variety with the absence of etiquette and other middle class constraints: "Original and picturesque characters are therefore much more common among the poorer orders: their actions are simpler, proceeding from simpler motives, *and they are principally to be studied from without*" ("The Metropolitan Picturesque", p. 287; italics mine).

[77] M. Andrews, "The Metropolitan Picturesque", pp. 288-97.

[78] P. Sanders, "Making Cairo Medieval", unpublished paper, no date; citing Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (1997).

[79] According to Choay, the idea of conserving the wider urban fabric is resisted in France because of "deep-seated cultural traditions; the attitude "would long persist...and has yet to truly disappear" (*Invention*, p. 119).

[80] Crinson, *Empire Building*, pp. 23-6.

context of destruction. In Algiers (occupied in 1830) heavy-handed interventions in the first

decades of colonial rule, carried out under the Ministry of War in Paris, formed a new

administrative center in the heart of the city. Streets, buildings, and the institutions that

supported them were destroyed, and there were proposals to demolish the native city entirely.

European travelers lamented the destruction of the *medina* – as the native city came to be

called - and the monotonous, modern character of new French building.[81] In 1865, after a

visit of Napoleon III – the sponsor of Haussmann's work in Paris – incursions into the

medina were halted. A report on the personal investigation of the Emperor concluded

> that the upper town must stay as it is, since it is appropriate to the morals and habits of the
> natives; that the opening of wide arteries is very harmful to them; and that these
> improvements must be seen as onerous to the indigenous population, who do not have the
> same way of life as Europeans.[82]

A French settlement was built outside the *medina*; a similar strategy was followed at

Tunis (occupied 1882). These districts were planned according to European planning

principles, but the architecture neo-Moorish – in contrast to the neo-classical design of the

conquest phase. The interest in arabacizing architecture accompanies the shift from

assimilation to "association" in French colonial policy.[83] The neo-Moorish style was based

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[81] Rabinow, "Colonialism, Modernity: the French in Morocco", in N. Alsayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Experience*, London: Avebury, 1992, p. 174. *Medina* means "city" in Arabic; in French North Africa the term came to refer to the "old city", the native city, opposed to the modern districts. For the case of Algiers, see M. Lamprakos, "Le Corbusier and Algiers: the Plan Obus as Colonial Urbanism", in N. Alsayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance*, pp. 186-193.

[82] Cited in Béguin, *Arabaisances*: Décor architecturale et trace urbaine en Afrique du Nord, 1830-1950, Paris: Dunods, 1983, p. 14.

[83] Béguin identifies the first period of the occupation (1830-1855) with incursions into the native city and the classical style in new architecture. After mid-century, this "style of the Conqueror" is replaced by the "style of the Protector", an arabicizing style intended to gain the sympathy of the natives. This shift accompanied a change in French objectives, which were now economic rather than military. It was outlined by Napoleon III in a letter written in 1865: "My program can be summarized in a few words: to gain the sympathy of the Arabs through positive benefits, to attract new settlers through examples of real prosperity among the old, to utilize the material and human

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on the study of North African forms and elements; these were freely mixed and applied in

public buildings of Beaux-Arts design.[84] Arab architecture, town scenes, and social customs

were exhibited at two world expositions in Paris (1867 and 1889). This work was informed

by, and contributed to, the growing interest of scholars in Arab architecture and cities. The

term Arab architecture would gradually be superseded by "Islamic architecture." In the 20th

century the concept of the "Islamic city" developed in the work of Orientalist scholars; it

would later become an adjunct to the term "traditional city" in conservation discourse.[85] In

their efforts to document and conserve local architecture, architects and historians faced

problems that would continue to confound conservators in the late 20th century. The

nomenclature and typologies of European art historiography could not easily be applied to

North African forms.[86] Moreover, they searched for evidence of historical and stylistic

evolution, but again, the European model did not apply. As a result, local architecture must

exist outside time:

> Up until 1909 custom (ciada) had not changed [since the fifteenth century]. Mason, sculptor, carpenter, ironworker, each enjoyed himself on his own without breaking the harmony among them, so much had traditions remained stable in these countries situated outside the grand currents of Europe.[87]

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resources of Africa, and thereby to diminish the size of our army and expenditures" (cited in Béguin, *Arabaisances*, pp. 14-5).

 Around the turn of the century, politicians and intellectuals debated two alternate models of colonial rule: while assimilation was based on the cultural and military predominance of the European country, association involved respect for and preservation of local cultures, institutions, and monuments. This approach, combined with social services, might counter resistance more effectively than military strength. Yet the two approaches were closer together than most commentators acknowledged (G. Wright, *Politics of Design*, pp. 73-84).

[84] S. Hamadeh, "The Traditional City," pp. 249-251. The key figures were Giauchin in Algiers, Guy, Valensi, and Saladin in Tunis, and Prost and Laprade in Morocco.

[85] For the historiography of the idea of the "Islamic City" and a critical reappraisal, see J. Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic city: historic myth, Islamic essence, and contemporary relevance" *IJMES* vol. 19, May 1987, pp. 155-76; R. Ilbert, "La Ville Islamique: réalité et abstraction," *Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale,* 10/11, 1982, pp. 6-13.

[86] E. Crinson, *Empire Building,* pp. 19, 23.

[87] A. Laprade cited in G. Wright, *The Politics of Design*, p. 111. Compare this statement to the Quaroni Bonifica report for Sana'a of 1981 (see below, chapter seven, p. 403).

Under General Hubert Lyautey, who took a special interest in architecture and planning, neo-Moorish architecture and conservation became official policy in Morocco.[88] In 1914, the first comprehensive urban planning legislation in the French world was adopted for Moroccan cities. It was informed by new ideas about urbanism that were developing in France at the end of the century, but it differed from French urban planning laws that would be passed after the First World War. In particular, the law required the strict separation of old and new cities.[89] In a sense, this reflected current practice in Europe: new districts or extensions were planned outside old cities, according to neoclassical principles. In Morocco, however, colonial planners felt the separation of cities was important to preserve the picturesque character of the native city.[90] The 1914 law seems to have been the first law (in Europe and the colonies) to provide for the conservation not only of monuments, but their context; and to define urban ensembles and even quarters as "monuments."[91] In practice, however, the *medinas* were neglected and deteriorated as a result of social and economic pressures. Plans for Tunis and Rabat created new cities. But they did not install infrastructure in the *medinas*, nor did they provide for their growth. This contrasts with the

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[88] See G. Wright, *The Politics of Design*, chapter three.

[89] Rabinow, *French Modern*, p. 290. Ideas about urbanism were developed by geographers and anthropologists at the Musée Sociale (established 1894); in 1911, some of its members created the Société Francaise des Urbanistes (G. Wright, *The Politics of Design*, chapter one). Rabinow notes that ideas of historical and class separation had been mentioned in the Musée Social's discussions on urbanism.

[90] F. Béguin, *Arabisances*, p. 120; S. Hamadeh, "The Traditional City", p. 252. This is made clear by the architect Valensi, writing in Tunis in the 1920's: "It is this old picturesque city...that makes our city incomparable to all the oriental cities in the Mediterranean basin and which attracts tourists...[I]t is important that it always remain as it is" (cited in J. Abdelkafi, "La Médina de Tunis: l'éspace historique face au processus d'urbanisation de la capitale," *Présent et avenir des médinas*, p. 202).

[91] In this, it differed from precedents in Italy and Tunis. The walled city of Fez was declared s monument in a *dahir* of 1914 (A. Abdelmajid, "Le paradoxe de la construction du fait patrimonial en situation coloniale. Le cas du Maroc", *REMMM*, vol. 73-4, nos. 3-4, 1994. pp. 157-8).

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treatment of old cities in Europe – for example, a plan for Anvers by Lyautey's chief

urbanist, Henri Prost, which provided the old city with modern amenities.[92]

Attitudes toward the native city, in both French and British colonies, were shaped in

part by the old ideas of organic and mechanical city form; these survived in the new

discourse of urbanism that was taking shape in the second half of the 19th century. These

attitudes were also informed by current thinking about "culture," which came to be defined

as an area of inquiry largely through experience in the colonies. In the new social sciences

culture was understood as a discrete, bounded entity that contained a genuine and unspoiled

essence. This essence could be discerned from the study of material artifacts and settlement

patterns.[93] In historiography and the social sciences, culture was conceived according to an

evolutionary model that was both temporal and spatial: certain cultures were seen to be

"behind" others, and thus seen as part of the past – even though they existed in the present.[94]

"Traditional" aspects of native culture, including city form, were evidence of a culture's

authenticity, and had to be protected from corruption by the modern. They were associated

with native artisanry and charm, and also with primitive ways that were incompatible with

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[92] P. Rabinow, *French Modern*, pp. 238-41. Henri Prost, chief of urbanism under Lyautey, had won a competition for the city of Anvers, based on the integration of old and new; it was on this basis that he was chosen by Lyautey. Although there was concern for hygiene in the *medina*, it was felt that sewers would ruin its charm (Hamadeh, "The Traditional City," p. 253). In 1927 Lyautey wrote: "Nothing has been more deadly for the originality and charm of the Algerian cities, than their penetration by modern European installations…[this] upset completely the whole indigenous city" (cited in J. Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco*, 1983, p. 143).
[93] R. Handler, "Authenticity", *Anthropology Today*, 2:1, 1988; G. Wright, *The Politics of Design*, chapter 2.
[94] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 25-30 and chapter two. Tipps notes that the popularity of developmental theories coincides with periods of expansionism: evolutionary theory during the Victorian period in England; Social Darwinism with the growth of American imperialism at the end of the 19th century; and modernization theory with American expansionism in the post-war era ("Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.15, 1973, p. 209 and fn. 7).

the modern.[95] Yet the notion of the "traditional" was based less on the study of colonized

societies than on the projection of Western notions of social change. "Tradition" was defined

as all that was pre-modern.[96] In the colonial context, this meant all that was not European, or

influenced by the European.

New ideas about culture seemed to confirm the notion of authenticity that was

developing in conservation. Historicism held that meaning was attributed to objects, not

inherent in them. But the notion of a cultural essence seemed to confirm the older, positivist

idea of inherent meaning. Artifacts and buildings were deemed authentic according to

historical and material criteria; moreover, they conferred authenticity on the thing

represented. This gave a new, "scientific" validity to the construction of national cultures

and folklores: the importance of an artifact or building in these narratives is what makes it

"significant". The idea of authenticity also gave a new scientific validity to the picturesque

aesthetic. In rural and urban scenes, in Europe and the colonies, the picturesque emphasized

contrast between that which is subject to historical change and that which is not. In the

colonies, picturesque revivalism and conservation tended to mask the upheavals and ruptures

of colonialism. In Morocco the Protectorate advocated the conservation of buildings and

local crafts and the "reeducation" of artisans, even as new realities were destroying them.[97]

Nochlin has noted this tendency in her analysis of Orientalist painting:

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[95] Lord Cromer, who served as consul-general of Egypt (1883-1907), described the link precisely:
"The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural
logician....his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the
other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the
most slip-shod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the
science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty" (*Modern Egypt*,
cited in Said, *Orientalism*, p. 38).
[96] D. Tipps, "Modernization Theory", pp. 212-3.
[97] A. Abdelmajid, "Le paradoxe de la construction du fait patrimonial", p. 159.

The same society that was engaged in wiping out local customs and traditional practices was also avid to preserve them in the form of records...Only on the brink of destruction, in the course of incipient modification and cultural dilution, are customs, costumes, and religious rituals of the dominated finally *seen* as picturesque. Reinterpreted as the precious remnants of a disappearing way of life...[98]

The focus on the political agenda of colonial urbanism, however, has obscured important parallels with Europe. The creation of modern extensions outside the old city was often more practical than the Haussmann model, and was less politically sensitive if issues of land tenure could be overcome.[99] Here too, the historic city was created by way of difference or contrast.[100] In many cases this difference was not only physical, but social: European cities had their own "others", rural migrants and working poor. A second point to note is that in the Middle East and North Africa, the dual city model was often adopted by indigenous rulers. A notable example is the modernizing projects of the Khedive Ismail, who developed French-style districts in the floodplain of the Nile.[101] Where direct colonial rule pertained, the dual city was colored by class as well as race. In Morocco native elites petitioned for their own districts, apart from the French.[102] But these new districts were also apart from the *medina*s, which were increasingly inhabited by rural migrants.

During the interwar period the French doctrine of dual cities was debated, with concern for hygiene a particular point of contention. The key concerns of early modernist urbanism – hygiene, circulation, and zoning – figured prominently in the new technocratic

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[98] L. Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America*, 1983, p. 9. See also Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations*, Spring 1989, no. 26, pp. 107-122.

[99] Kostof, *The City Assembled*, pp. 43-59.

[100] It "was by way of difference, and in Pugin's lexicon, of *contrast* that the ancient city became an object of imagination" (Choay, *Invention*, p. 120).

[101] S. Kostof, *The City Assembled*, p. 274.

[102] Rabinow notes that their first plan for reforms the Jeunes Marocains (the sons of the elite toward whom Lyautey had directed his policies) objected not to the dual city doctrine, only to the favoritism shown to the French (*French Modern*, p. 287).

planning that emerged in the colonies in the interwar period. New districts were built

according to a modernist aesthetic, inspired by the notion of a pan-Mediterranean

architecture.[103] Planning was increasingly influenced by functionalist urbanism, as

articulated by CIAM (*Centre Internationale de l'Architecture Moderne*). The approach was

adopted by local architects, planners, and administrators who promoted the modernization of

old cities. Plans were proposed that ran wide boulevards through the fabric, opening it to

vehicular traffic and highlighting important monuments.[104] After decolonization modern

districts remained centers of government and commerce; old cities continued to suffer from

acute pressures, especially the influx of rural migrants. In some cases, prominent European

architects were invited to make proposals: for example, André Guitton's plan for Aleppo

(1954); Ludovico Quaroni's plan for Tunis (1964); and Michel Ecochard's plan for

Damascus (1986).[105] Colonial urban policies had been motivated by political interests, but in

retrospect they were more sensitive than modernist planning: they succeeded in preserving

monuments and the wider fabric that is now valued as "heritage."[106]

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[103] S. Hamadeh, "The Traditional City," p. 250; M. Fuller, "Building Power: Italian Architecture and Urbanism in Libya and Ethiopia," in N. Alsayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance*, pp. 217-8. For an overview of CIAM's evolution, see Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1985, pp. 269-271. In Michel Ecochard's projects in Morocco, the emphasis was on technocratic planning and the integration of the races; arabacizing architecture were seen as architectural "pastiche," but native elements could be used as decoration (Rabinow, "Colonialism, Modernity: the French in Morocco", in N. Alsayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance*, p. 178).
[104] For the history of proposed *percées* and demolitions in the medina of Tunis between 1933 and 1978, see J. Abdelkafi, "La Médina de Tunis", pp. 201-218.
[105]J. Abdelkafi, "La Médina de Tunis," p. 206; S. Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World*, pp. 171-2. Quaroni, in association with the Italian consulting firm Bonifica, designed a plan for the medina of Sana'a in the early 1980's; see chapter three, pp. 149-151.
[106] This important caveat in the critique of colonial planning is also made by A. al-Habashi, with regard to monuments conservation in Cairo.

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Two professions

Urban conservation in the 20th century is shaped by the development of two professions, architecture and conservation. In the early 20th century architects begin to see themselves as ideologists of society: they see the city and urban society as their field of intervention.[107] At the same time a theory and method of conservation are articulated, especially with regard to art objects. From the 1930's the two professions grow apart as distinct educational programs develop, and as architecture comes to focus on design *ex novo*, without reference to historical precedents. The relationship between the fields varied from place to place, but these differences are not well documented. As conservation legislation comes to include historic areas, the principles of 19th and early 20th century laws – based on art historical notions of the monument – are applied to historic areas. This happens in national and municipal laws, and also in international charters. It is sanctioned by both professions, who increasingly come to see themselves as respective specialists of the old and the new.

The notion of cultural property as the common heritage of mankind originated in the context of war, as early as the 18th century; in the 19th century it was the subject of international conferences and conventions, culminating in the Hague Convention of 1907.[108] The First World War traumatized Europe: it transformed the basis of architectural practice and aesthetics, and raised questions of reconstruction that would be revisited after the next world war. Immediately after the First World War, France's Commission des Monuments Historiques extended its list of protected monuments to include historic areas, such as the hill

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[107] M. Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 3.

[108] For efforts to protect cultural property in wartime, see Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 283-4. Hamadeh notes that conservation gained ground in France following the Franco-Prussian war ("The Traditional City," p. 256).

of Vézelay where the church of La Madeleine stood.[109] International cooperation continued

through the League of Nations' Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (the predecessor of

UNESCO), but now the effort focused not only on protection, but on methodology. The

Athens Charter of 1932 was the first international document to promote modern conservation

theory.[110] It noted and endorsed the general tendency in Europe to abandon restoration, in

favor of a more conservative approach to the treatment of monuments; this approach should

be developed on a scientific basis. The historic character of monuments should be

preserved, and all historical periods of the monument should be respected. The surroundings

of a monument should be given special consideration; "[e]ven certain groupings and certain

particularly picturesque perspective treatment (sic) should be preserved."

In 1933 another and more famous "Athens Charter" was drafted by CIAM. It

reflected a shift of the group's interest toward urbanism under the leadership of Le Corbusier

(1887-1965). In *La Ville Radieuse*, published the same year, LeCorbusier proposed to do

away with "history, historic and tubercular Paris."[111] CIAM's founding document (1928)

had already outlined the principles of the new urbanism: "Urbanization cannot be

conditioned by the claims of a pre-existent aestheticism; its essence is a functional

order..."[112] The Athens Charter developed these principles in a generalizing tone that gave

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[109] J. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 283. For the transformation of architectural practice and patronage after WWI, see S. Kostof, *A History of Architecture*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 695-707.
[110] J. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 284-5. The full title of the document is "Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments." It was based on the recommendations of a 1931 conference that included Jules Destrée, president of the International Museums Office and chair of the conference; Gustavo Giovannoni; Paul Léon; Leopoldo Torres Balbás, A-R Powys, and Sir Cecil Harcourt-Smith.
[111] *The Radiant City: elements of a doctrine of urbanism to be used as the basis of our machine-age civilization*, Paris, 1933, cited in J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 116. In chapter four of this work, Scott presents a forceful critique of "high modernist planning", especially the work of LeCorbusier.
[112] La Sarraz Declaration, 1928, cited in K. Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, p. 269.

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it, in Reyner Banham's view, an "air of universal applicability [that] conceals a very narrow

conception of both architecture and town planning." The Charter committed CIAM to rigid

functional zoning and a specific house type – the high-rise widely spaced apartment block.[113]

In 1941 LeCorbusier published the recommendations of the Athens conference along with his

comments under the title *La Lettre d'Athènes*. Significantly, the document called for the

preservation of monuments and ensembles if these were the expression of past cultures, and

if hygienic conditions could be established. While planning could accommodate historic

elements (for example, by diverting traffic around them), any reference of new architecture

to the old was categorically refused.[114]

The timing of the two Athens Charters and their drafting in an international context

underlines the ideological parallels between the two professions. Both insisted on a *contrast*

between new and old, in both architecture and urban form. "The truly modern work," wrote

Riegl, "must recall...earlier works as little as possible." Colquhoun notes that this

> corresponds closely to the ideas of the modern movement, in which the preservation of
> historical monuments sometimes went hand in hand with the destruction and rebuilding of the
> city.... Historical works have here lost their meaning as part of the fabric of time and space
> and are preserved as emblems of a generalized and superseded past.[115]

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[113] "At a distance of thirty years," writes Banham, "we recognize this as merely the expression of an aesthetic preference, but at the time it had the force of a Mosaic commandment and effectively paralyzed research into other forms of housing" (*Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, cited in K. Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, p. 270). Banham notes that CIAM IV was the first CIAM congress "to be dominated by Le Corbusier and the French, rather than the tough German realists." LeCorbusier dominated the group until 1947 (K. Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, p. 270).
[114] The recommendations were published under the title *La Lettre d'Athènes* (J. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, p. 285).
[115] "Newness and Age Value in Alois Riegl", p. 220.

Urban conservation was the antithesis of the modernist vision of the city, yet selected monuments and even areas could be conserved.[116] Le Corbusier's grand urban schemes (for example, his Plan Voisin for Paris and his plan for Algiers) would have left only selected monuments standing, as Haussmann had done the century before. The Athens Charter for conservation reveals an interest in modern materials and techniques: conservators were intrigued by materials like concrete, and approved its judicious use in restorations. In the following decades conservators would insist that interventions be reversible, in order to protect historic material. Concrete would be abandoned, but with advances in materials pathology invisible techniques like plastic resins would come into favor.

From the 1930's architectural education was influenced by the model of the German Bauhaus and the ideology of CIAM. Also in the 1930's Giulio Carlo Argan proposed the creation of a specialized institute that would develop a unified approach to the conservation of art objects and monuments. In 1939 the Istituto Centrale di Restauro was established in Rome under the leadership of Cesare Brandi, whom many consider the foremost theorist of conservation in the 20th century. From the creation of the Rome institute in 1939 through the establishment of the international bodies of ICOMOS and ICCROM in the mid-1960's, conservation theory and method develop in a fairly insular way. Brandi developed the theory of *restauro critico*. He saw conservation as a critical activity, requiring both humanistic and scientific knowledge and procedures; the object must be seen as both an artistic unity and as an historical document. Brandi's ideas were rejected by many architects, who saw certain aspects of the theory as inapplicable to buildings. Unlike a painting, for example, which can

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[116] Choay, *The Modern City*, p. 27. Adolf Loos, an ideologue of early modernism - who stated that "ornament is crime" - advocated the conservation of historic areas in a 1907 article (J. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, p. 219).

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be separated from its armature, in architecture structure and appearance cannot be separated.[117]

But in a sense, this is what happened. The profession of conservation came to focus increasingly on the treatment of materials - especially in the post-war period, when the introduction of new technologies elevated conservation "from the level of traditional working-class artisanship to that of an exact science."[118] Giovanni Carbonara, an articulate insider critic, has suggested that the emphasis on scientific principles, even neo-positivism, was perhaps a response to the crisis in aesthetic philosophy.[119] As values came to be seen as relative, there has been an increasing emphasis on the representative type, rather than the outstanding example.[120] Age value is the defining criterion of the historic monument, whether it is a canonical "masterpiece" or an industrial shell: all buildings of a certain age are, at least in theory, subject to the same degree of protection.

Meanwhile, architects continued to work on historic buildings: their work was often influenced by modernist ideas, and in some cases it was creative and synthetic.[121] An approach to urban conservation developed in the writing and practice of architects, many of

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[117] S. N. Price, "The Emergence of Modern Conservation Theory," in S. N. Price, ed., *Historical and Philosophical Issues*, pp. 208-9. See also C. Iamandi, "La Théorie de la Restauration de Cesare Brandi: Validité et Limites pour la Restauration des Monuments Historiques", unpublished Master's thesis, Faculté des Etudes Supérieures, Université Laval, 1994, chapter one.

[118] P. Philoppot (former director of ICROM), "La restauration dans la perspective des sciences humaines", in C. Périer-D'Ieteren, ed., *Pénétrer l'art, Restaurer l'oeuvre,* 1989, pp. 491-500; excerpt reprinted and translated in S. N. Price, *Historical and Philosophical Issues*, pp. 216-229.

[119] C. Iamandi, "La Théorie de la Restauration de Cesare Brandi", p. 78, citing G. Carbonara, "La philosophie de restauration en Italie" *Monuments Historiques de la France*, no. 149, 1987, p. 18. Ten years earlier Carbonara noted that "[i]n terms of the two 'requirements' raised by Brandi, around which the whole problem of restoration revolves, the philological method tended to take into account only the historical one..." (*La reintegrazine dell'immagine*, cited in S. N. Price, *Historical and Philosophical Issues*, p. 238).

[120] W. Baer, "Should art or science be preservation's guiding metaphor?", *Historic Preservation Forum*, July/August 1991, p. 39.

[121] Notable examples Carlo Scarpa in Italy and Hans Döllgast in Austria, both of whom worked in the postwar period. Ellen Sorkin analyzes Scarpa's work relative to restoration theory in "Restauro in Venezia," *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 47, no. 4, May 1997.

whom were also historians.[122] Of special note is Gustavo Giovannoni, who directed Rome's

school of architecture from 1927 to 1935, and taught historic conservation until his death in

1947. Giovannoni was the first to coin the term "minor architecture" in an exhibit of 1910;

according to Choay, he was also the first to use the term "urban heritage." His major work

Vecchie Città ed Edilizia Nuova (1913) outlined a strategy for integrating old cities with the

new, accommodating the principles of both "life" and "history". He developed the concept

of *diradamento*, the "thinning out" of the urban fabric especially in the interior of blocks, to

make room for new buildings and services. He was virtually alone in defending historic

cities against Haussmann-inspired plans and later, against fascist projects; he can be credited

with preventing much destruction throughout Italy.[123]

The massive physical destruction of World War II called for an unprecedented scale

of rebuilding. Some communities chose to rebuild historic centers in their pre-war form, as

they had after World War I - demonstrating that the public had little interest in either

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[122] Ronald Lewcock of the Georgia Institute of Technology, former director of MIT's Aga Khan Program, is an example of this synthesis. He directed UNESCO's international committee for the Sana'a campaign, and was involved in other efforts including a conservation plan for Islamic Cairo.

[123] J. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 219-221; F. Choay, *Invention*, pp. 131-7. Giovannoni's *Vecchie Città* was a response to Joseph Stubben's *Der Stadtebau* (1890) which argued that the modern city should be developed over the old, taking advantage of existing conditions. It was on this basis that further cuttings through the fabric of Rome were projected, in the plan of 1908. Giovannoni was consulted on the revision of this plan, and on master plans for other towns, including Venice, Bari, and Bergamo. His ideas were integrated into the *Carta italiana del restauro* (1931) but were resisted by the fascist regime. He was the sole architect to oppose Mussolini's project for the Vittoriano, which destroyed significant fabric around the Victor Emmanuel monument (A. Tung, *Preserving the World Great Cities,* pp. 61-2).

Choay writes that Giovannoni was unfairly implicated in fascism; he was also criticized for excessive attachment to the past, largely for his criticism of LeCorbusier and other stars of the modern movement (*Invention*, p. 218 fn. 45). But according to Tung, Giovannoni's opposition to the Vittoriano scheme "stamped the integrity of [his] thinking into the memory of the city." One therefore suspects that he was faulted primarily for his opposition to the modernists. Choay says Giovannoni's work has been ignored, and is currently being rehabilitated by scholars is Italy. But the relationship of his ideas to later Italian practice seems clear.

modernism or in strictures against historic reconstruction.[124] Many countries and

municipalities passed legislation to allow for large-scale redevelopment, and adopted

ambitious building programs. This opened the field to modernist ideas, especially those of

LeCorbusier who was widely admired among architects and planners. These ideas supported

a new interest in "scientific planning" that predominated until the 1970's.[125] Through the

mid-1950's most redevelopment was under public control. But investment in commercial

building drove up land values, and increased pressure to demolish existing neighborhoods;

this was sometimes done under the pretext of slum clearance. As recovery gave way to

economic boom, redevelopment was increasingly given over to private developers: they

financed large-scale commercial and office complexes in city centers; in many cases, these

were accompanied by publicly financed infrastructure, especially highways.[126] These

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[124] J. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, p. 285. The city of Warsaw is the most famous example: the reconstructed center was listed as a World Heritage site in 1978. Note that the World Heritage Convention (1972) discourages reconstruction, but may approve if it adheres to strict historical documentation (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, 2002). The question of reconstruction had been raised by the First World War. Jokilehto notes that a Belgian law of 1919 stipulated that historic monuments were to be rebuilt to their prewar appearance. After debate the town of Ypres was rebuilt in its prewar form (p. 282-3).

[125] S. Kostof, *The City Shaped*, pp. 275-9; A. Tung, *Preserving the World Great Cities*, pp. 300-2; J. Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, pp. 186-7. The case of London serves as an example: as early as 1943 Sir Patrick Abercrombie proposed a plan for the redevelopment of London after the war, based on functionalist principles and the rational planning of new neighborhoods. The plan was opposed by the City Corporation, which defended customary building practices and regulations and endorsed preservation. The CC did not prevail; four years later the Town and Country Act authorized redevelopment. But it also included preservation measures, including new measures for the protection of inhabited houses. As a result, some sectors were spared from redevelopment (A. Tung, *Preserving the World Great Cities*, p. 303). A more radical plan had been prepared in 1941 by MARS, a British affiliate of CIAM. It proposed configuring the city in a linear pattern with islands of new residential development on each side, separated by green zones (B. Risebero, *Modern Architecture and Design: an Alternative History*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1983, p. 213). Like most CIAM projects, the scale was too radical existing cities; the built examples are new cities, such as Brasilia (by Costa and Nieymeyer) and Chandigargh (by LeCorbusier).

[126] D. Appleyard, "Introduction," *The Conservation of European Cities*, pp. 10-1; B. Risebero, *Modern Architecture and Design: an Alternative History*, pp. 215-8.

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projects began to displace working class residents from city centers, mirroring a process that

had begun earlier in the U.S.

Public protest crystallized around this wave of redevelopment. Over the course of the

decade new community and municipal organizations promoted conservation and

rehabilitation, and a number of laws were passed for the protection of historic districts.[127]

The protest was supported by a number of incisive critiques of rational planning, such as Jane

Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) and Colin Amery and Dan

Cruickshank's *Rape of Britain* (1975). Jacobs held that order was not formal and visual, but

rather exists in complex social systems, at the scale of the neighborhood. This deeper order

is reflected in social and economic diversity that is also physical: as such, she outlines "the

need for aged buildings."[128]

The failures of urban renewal and functionalist planning were part of the wider

critique of the welfare state in the 1960's. It also led to what is usually described as the

"crisis" of modern architecture. The critique had already been evident in the 1950's, when it

was articulated in socio-psychological terms. Team X called for an "organic process" of city

building that accounted for the human element: this was the origin of the "megastructure", a

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[127] These districts were called *secteurs sauvegardés* in France, "conservation areas" in Britain, "landmark" or "historic districts" in the U.S., *centri storici* in Italy. Key legislation was the Loi Malraux for Paris (1962), and the Civic Amenities Act of Britian, 1967; in the U.S., the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. For an overview of the development of legislation in this period, especially in the U.S. and Britain, see Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, pp. 39-55.
   Key projects that mobilized public protest were the redevelopment of Covent Garden, where conservation groups defeated a redevelopment plan; and Les Halles in Paris and Pennsylvania Station in New York, where conservationists lost. In Paris, with the exception of the highway constructed along the Right Bank of the Seine, most development had been directed to outlying areas like La Défense. But the law passed under Malraux (Minister of Culture under de Gaulle) did not prevent the developments of Tour Montparnasse (completed 1972) and Beaubourg (completed 1977).
[128] *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Random House, 1961, chapter 10; S. Kostof, *The City Assembled*, p. 54; J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 132-146. Similar ideas were proposed regarding the environment: Scott notes, for example, the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* a year after Jacob's book.

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framework that was supposed to accommodate spontaneous transformation by its inhabitants.

Team X projects were massive and rationalizing, in this sense akin to those of CIAM. Alison

and Peter Smithson, who led the group with Aldo van Eyck, were interested in the ideas of

"identity" and "association" - inspired in part by a new picturesque photography that

documented working class areas in London.[129] In 1964 Giancarlo DeCarlo, a member of

Team X, designed a plan for Urbino that focused on conservation and the rehabilitation of

existing housing stock, rather then new development. With the Urbino plan, writes

Frampton, "Team X arrived at the complete antithesis to the Cartesian projections of *La Ville*

Radieuse."[130]

In these same years other Italian architects produced plans for historic centers, based

on the close study of urban form and typologies: of particular note are Piccinato's plan for

Siena and Astengo's plan for Assisi. From the 1970's municipalities took the lead in

developing regulations and plans for historic centers.[131] Bologna is an exceptional case,

where urban conservation was implemented in the context of progressive politics. Pier Luigi

Cervellati's plan, based on historical study and typological analysis, involved both

rehabilitation, infill, and selective demolition, in a strategy reminiscent of Giovannoni's

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[129] This is the work of photographer Nigel Henderson, who documented London's East End. "[T]he Bye-law Street," writes Frampton, "albeit distorted by [the Smithsons'] own rationalization, became the conceptual 'armature' for their Golden Lane housing proposal of 1952..." The East End was an area that was bombed during the Blitzkreig.

Team X developed as a critique within CIAM, then broke with it in 1953 (Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, pp. 271-2). It is associated with the movement that came to be called "The New Brutalism." Another Team X member, Shadrac Woods, designed an extention for Toulouse based on an organic model: the pedestrian street is a "stem", and housing plugs into it; collections of stems form a larger web that mutates, according to intensity of use. Kostof notes that the plan of Toulouse-Le Mirail recalls that of a North African *medina*: "it is not without an element of irony that the quarter is now predominantly occupied by Algerian immigrants" (*The City Shaped*, pp. 90-1). In his later work LeCorbusier had also developed an "organic" imagery, based on his plan for Algiers.

[130] K. Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, p. 272.

[131] D. Pini, personal conversation. He described the plans for Siena and Assisi as "milestones" in urban conservation.

diradamento. The communist city government, working through neighborhood councils, insisted that conservation must include both physical and social structures. As such, it developed measures and regulations to keep the working classes in the historic center.[132]

In the 1960's, a broad critique of modernism developed within the architectural profession, generally known as "post-modernism." It was characterized by an interest in contextualism and the representational qualities of architecture, and in a variety of vernacular, regional, and cultural expressions. The phenomenon that Kenneth Frampton called "critical regionalism" was based on the self-conscious cultivation of difference and "cultural identity."[133] The world heritage initiative, which developed over the course of the 1960's, was linked to this shift in architectural interests.[134] The term "heritage" started to be heard in the 1960's, first in the United States; by the early 1980's, it is was widespread use.[135] From the late 1970's the term "cultural resources" is also heard, a borrowing from the environmental movement ("natural resources"). The term implies the non-renewability of heritage, and also their potential economic value. The latter point is underlined by the term *mise en valeur,* which establishes conservation as part of the wider "culture industry."[136] Unlike Bologna, most historic areas are rehabilitated by private interests: municipalities see the rehabilitation of historic areas as a way to attract investment, and generally impose few controls. In the United States, urban conservation boomed after the introduction of historic

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[132] F. Bandarin, "The Bologna Experience: Planning and Historic Renovation in a Communist City", in D. Appleyard, ed., *The Conservation of European Cities,* pp. 178-202; S. Kostof, *The City Assembled,* pp. 303-4.

[133] "Toward a Critical Regionalism: ix Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in H. Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture,* Seattle: Bay Press, 1983, pp. 16-30. For a critique of regionalism see A. Colquhoun, "The Concept of Regionalism," in G. B. Nalbantoglu and C. T. Wong, eds. *Postcolonial Spaces,* New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997, pp.13-23.

[134] I am thankful to Saba al-Suleihi for pointing out this connection.

[135] S. Titchen, "On the construction of 'outstanding universal value," pp. 75-7; P. Larkham, *Conservation and the City,* p. 13.

[136] Choay, *Invention,* pp. 143-4.

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tax credits in 1986.[137] The result was rapid and widespread gentrification - a picturesque

form of urban renewal that spares buildings but not communities.

The World Heritage initiative

It is curious that a new international practice of conservation, based on principles inherited

from the 19th century, was articulated precisely at the moment that the profession was facing

its greatest challenges, both at home and abroad. Historic cities came to be perceived as

objects of conservation. The principles of conservation practice could not easily be applied

to "living cultural environments" which require creative intervention. But this carried the

danger that historical values might be ignored.[138] This was also the period of decolonization.

Many new states sought, or were encouraged to seek, assistance in conserving not only

antiquities but a more broadly defined "heritage." The different historical and cultural

experiences of these states presented certain challenges for established methods.[139]

It has been noted that the old urban cores of most cities in the Middle East and North

Africa continue to be subject to "ghettoization" rather than gentrification.[140] The notion of

old cities as "urban heritage" has yet to be fully assimilated. In some places, the process

started as it had in Europe: as a reaction against modernist planning schemes at the local

level. This happened first in Tunis, where the "Association pour la sauvegarde de la médina"

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[137]As part of the Tax Reform Act of that year.

[138] This view is expressed by Paul Phillipot; see below, p. 87.

[139] In the 1950's, writes Price, an "awareness of the problems of conservation was growing in various countries and cultures in the developing world. They approached the debate with their own sensibilities, starting from traditions completely unlike those of the West and with an altogether conservation history" (S. N. Price, "The Emergence of Modern Conservation Theory," in S. N. Price, ed., *Historical and Philosophical Issues*, p. 205).

[140] S. Abdulac, "An Introduction to Urban Conservation problems Today in the Arab Region", in *Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Conservation of the old City of Sana'a, Yemen*, 18-19 December 1991, UNESCO Working Documents, 1992.

was created in 1967; a similar association for the region of Tunis was established five years later.[141] In the 1970's, development agencies like the World Bank and the UNDP became interested in conservation as a development strategy, in conjunction with tourism.[142] Until this time, development discourse had been shaped by modernization theory, which saw local models and practices as incompatible with modernization.[143] The tone of the discourse shifted in the 1970's. There was a new interest in the link between development and culture; traditional models and the informal sector were now seen as the basis for development.[144] Influenced by the new thinking in architecture, architects and planners called for the conservation of historic urban fabric and architecture and, in some places, the use of traditional building practices and materials. Places like Yemen were seen as repositories of local building skills that could reanimate the lifeless uniformity of modern architecture.[145] On the one hand, this can be seen as a recurrence of the Romantic trope noted by Edward Said, the idea of Asia reanimating Europe.[146] At the same time, it was taken seriously by a younger generation of architects in the developing world who, like their peers in the West, were questioning the modernist precepts of their teachers. These young architects believed that regional models could inspire contemporary work; the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy,

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[141] J. Abdelkafi, "La médina de Tunis", p. 216.

[142] G. Brizzi, phone interview, 10/30/05. Brizzi joined the World Bank in the 1970's and directed the Sana'a office from 1998 to 2002.

[143] A. Escobar, *The Culture of Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 4.

[144] This was related to the critique of modernization theory, and alternative models proposed by politicians and intellectuals in the Third World; see J. Rist, *The History of Development*, chapters eight and nine.

[145] See, for example, Sa'id Zulficar's preface to the proceedings of the 1993 Aga Khan Seminar, held in Sana'a. In contrast to some of the papers presented at the conference, Zulficar sees identity in a more nuanced way: "[The] assertion of identity, which finds its inspiration in the cultural past and in the ecological reality, should not be viewed as a romantic attachment to a vanishing or extinct past. Rather, it should be regarded as a necessary phase in the reappraisal process of the forms of a culture" ("Preface", *Development and Urban Metamorphosis*, vol. 1, p. xii).

[146] *Orientalism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 115.

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whose work had been unappreciated in Egypt, provided a model for many. For some architects, this reappraisal led to an interest in conservation.[147]

The World Heritage initiative developed in the same period. In the 1960's there was a growing interest at UNESCO in the "common heritage of mankind"; a project to write a "history of mankind" was also initiated.[148] These interests were related to UNESCO's international safeguarding efforts. The first of these was the operation to rescue the monuments of Nubia, which would have been inundated with the creation of Lake Nasser.[149] Four years after the ratification of the Convention, a committee was established to implement it. It was expected that most applications for World Heritage listing would come from European countries, and this turned out to be the case. A list of prospective sites in the Middle East was prepared, and the countries in which these sites were located were asked to participate.[150] The *medina* of Fez was one of the first sites added to the list, in 1976. Fez was followed in 1979 by Tunis, the old city of Damascus, and Islamic Cairo (distinct from "Old Cairo," which is identified with the Coptic community). Other cities in the region were listed in the following years, including the walled city of Jerusalem (1981); Shibam-Hadhramaut (1982); Tyre (1984); Marrakesh (1985); Aleppo (1986); and Sana'a (1986).

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[147] An example is an architect and former official at the conservation office in Sana'a: trained in Lahore in the 1980's, exposure to the work of Hassan Fathy led him to pursue a career in conservation (interview, 3/18/04).

[148] S. Titchen, "On the construction of 'outstanding universal value," chapter three.

[149] This Campaign was launched in late 1959 at the request of Egypt and Sudan, and continued until the 1980's. Some twenty-two monuments and architectural complexes, including the temple of Abu Simbel, were relocated ("International campaign to save the monuments of Nubia", *Museum*, vol. XIIII, no. 2, 1960, p. 65). The Nubia effort was the precedent for dozens of international campaigns, including the campaign for Sana'a, the subject of this dissertation.

[150] Selma al-Radi, archeologist and restorer of the Amiriyya *madrasa* in Rada, worked briefly for the World Heritage Committee during these years on a list of prospective sites in the Middle East (personal conversation).

In 1981 UNESCO announced an international safeguarding campaign for Fez

(preparatory studies had begun in the mid-1970's); campaigns were subsequently prepared

for Cairo, Shibam-Hadhramaut, and Sana'a. The Cairo campaign was abandoned because of

insufficient political support, but the other campaigns went forward. Until this time

UNESCO campaigns had focused on archeological or monumental sites, like Abu Simbel in

Nubia; the exceptions were campaigns for Venice and the Florence, launched to remediate

the effects of catastrophic flooding in 1966. The campaigns for Fez and other cities in the

region were aimed at wider issues: the neglect and development pressures that accompanied

modernization. They pursued a conservation-based development strategy that had already

been applied in projects for Fez, Algiers, Tunis, and Lahore in the 1970's. In these projects

the UNDP or the UNOTC (Office of Technical Cooperation) prepared a master plan for the

larger city, working with UNESCO on historic areas. "We didn't need campaigns for Fez

and Tunis, because we had UNDP projects," said Sa'id Zulficar, who was Desk Officer for

Arab States at UNESCO in the 1970's. He and other officials feel that campaigns were

primarily for purposes of publicity.[151]

The idea of the international safeguarding campaign seems to have developed

separately from the World Heritage Convention, but UNESCO acknowledges that they

derive from a common inspiration.[152] The campaigns were seen to provide moral support for

the elaboration of the Convention – a way to raise world awareness of special sites in need of

financial and technical support. In contrast to the rigorous process of World Heritage listing,

the announcement of a campaign required only a request of the state party and a decision by

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[151] S. Zulficar, interview, 5/11/05.
[152] I. C. Clark, et. al., "International Campaigns for the Preservation and Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Mankind," report of the special committee appointed by UNESCO's Executive Board, Paris, 9/25/85, p. 4.

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UNESCO's General Director.[153] From the mid-1970's, General Director Mahtar M'bhow announced numerous international safeguarding campaigns, especially for sites in the developing world. This was the time of the North-South conflict within UNESCO that led to the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom. According to two former officials, the international campaigns were politically motivated - a way for M'bhow to promote "Third Worldism" – and in many cases, they were unsupported by historical research. "At the time, no one knew what African art and architecture were," recalled one of these officials.[154] The proliferation of campaigns was problematic in a number of ways: donor states could not be expected to finance countless, costly campaigns; at the same time, the campaigns raised expectations of funding that were unlikely to be met. In 1985 a special committee was appointed to assess campaigns then underway, and found that few had met their objectives. The committee recommended the rapid conclusion of existing campaigns and a moratorium on news ones.[155]

It was under M'bhow's direction that campaigns were planned for Fez, Islamic Cairo, Sana'a, and Shibam, part of his wider strategy for Islamic cities.[156] In the speech that launched the Fez Campaign, M'bhow situated Fez and by implication, other Islamic cities, in the narrative of world historical currents and thus, in the new canon of world heritage:

> [S]ituated at the crossroads of the great intellectual and religious itineraries too often overshadowed by the famous routes of trade, Fez formed a nodal point in a vast intellectual network which profoundly influenced the whole fabric of relations between various regions

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[153]T. Postel, "L'UNESCO et la sauvegarde du Patrimoine culturel et naturel mondial: Convention du Patrimoine mondial, et campagnes internationals de sauvegarde", unpublished thesis, Université de Droit, d'Economie, et des Sciences d'Aix-Marseilles/Institut d'Etudes Politiques d'Aix en-Provence, 1986, p. 169. Appendix five lists the twenty-nine international campaigns underway as of 1986.
[154] Interview, Paris, 5/12/05.
[155] I. C. Clark, et. al., "International Campaigns," pp. 3, 16.
[156] H. Radoine, formerly of ADER-Fès, personal conversation, 6/10/05. I am grateful to him for pointing this out, and for directing me to M'bhow's speech on Fez.

of the African continent, the Islamic East and the European West. It was one of the principal seats of learning from which scientific knowledge and basic philosophical reflection, blossoming under the influence of Islam, were to stimulate and at times even generate an unprecedented development of knowledge on the threshold of the modern world.

A thousand years of history had neither affected the urban fabric, impaired the architectural homogeneity, nor even disturbed the intellectual and artistic activity of the City of Fez. Today, this is no longer the case...The changes that have taken place in recent decades are on such a scale that Fez is in danger, under the pressure of demographic, social, and economic constraints without precedent in its history, of losing the profoundly original quality which makes it one of the purest jewels of Islamic civilization....

M'bhow went on to note that the international campaign for Fez was inspired by the same thinking that led to the Nubia and Venice campaigns. But he notes that the initiative for Fez is "by its very nature a campaign without precedent in the activities of Unesco. It is the first campaign to be undertaken on behalf of an Islamic city..." He concludes with an appeal to the world community to contribute generously to this massive challenge, so as to

preserve, for the happiness of those who inhabit Fez and of those who visit it, its collective soul, the bearer for more than eleven centuries of the most up-to-date messages, that of the solidarity and brotherhood of all mankind.[157]

Because Fez was a World Heritage site, ICOMOS – the advisory body to the World Heritage Committee on matters of cultural heritage – was charged with drafting the campaign strategy. The same would be true in Islamic Cairo, Shibam, and Sana'a.

Through the early 1980's, Fez was the primary model for urban conservation in the Arab world; it was studied as a model in Sana'a.[158] The case of Fez was widely known because of its status as a World Heritage site and the subsequent UNESCO campaign. But in many parts of the region, authorities were not easily persuaded of the value of "urban

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[157] "Appeal for the Safeguarding of the City of Fez," speech delivered at Fez, 4/9/80.
[158] O. A-A al-Hallaj, personal conversation, Sana'a, 12/8/04. One of the founders of the conservation office in Sana'a said, "We replicated the experience of Fez." Former Prime Minister Dr. Abd al-Karim al-Iryani told me that the Board of Trustees for the Sana'a Campaign requested and studied documentation on the Fez project (interview, 5/12/04).

heritage." Monuments conservation had been established in many countries in the 19th

century, by colonial authorities or by local rulers with nationalist aspirations. This patrimony

was defined according to the prevailing art historical view, that is, in terms of monuments.

In contrast to ancient or Islamic antiquities, which could be prized as signs of civilization, old

cities symbolized backwardness and economic marginality. Old cities were messy tangles of

streets with complicated patterns of ownership, not readily amenable to modernization.[159]

They were inhabited by "traditional" groups with which new elites could not fully identify.

Sa'id Zulficar, who served as UNESCO's Desk Officer for Arab states in the 1970's, recalls

the situation in Cairo at the time:

> The Department of Antiquities was staffed by Egyptologists...They saw the old city as old
> buildings and poor people and dirt. Why conserve it?...Some of them had never set foot in
> the old city.[160]

In socialist states old cities were associated with pre-revolutionary elites; in some places,

they were actively destroyed in the 1960's and 1970's. For the government of South Yemen,

for example, Shibam represented the *saada* – the class that had historically dominated the

south and which the 1963 revolution had finally overthrown.[161]

From the late 1970's governments in the region began to see the usefulness of

heritage for nationalism.[162] It was also clearly a potential source of tourist revenues. The

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[159] R. Lewcock, "Preservation versus Modernization: Realities in Islamic Architecture," in Y. R. Isar, ed., *The Challenge to our Cultural Heritage: Why Preserve the Past?*, Proceedings of a Conference on Cultural Preservation, Washington, D.C. April 8-10, 1984, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press and UNESCO, 1986, p. 31.

[160] Interview, Paris, 5/11/05.

[161] O. A-A Hallaj, Selma al-Radi, personal conversations, 12/8/04. The *saada* claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad and were a privileged group in both the north and south of Yemen; see below, chapter two, pp. 102-3.

[162] O. A-A al-Hallaj, personal conversation, 12/8/04. UNESCO may have emphasized the link between conservation and nationalism to encourage countries to submit sites to the World Heritage list. The link is mentioned in several consultants' reports in the early 1980's and in other documents produced by UNESCO and the local conservation office (see chapter 3).

expanded definition of heritage included vernacular sites and cultural landscapes: countries

that did not have "high" artistic traditions could now claim sites of national, even universal,

significance. But this meant that signs of backwardness had to be embraced as "difference"

and cultural identity.[163] Cultural heritage is part of a wider process that includes regionalism

in architecture, and new tastes for local products and traditions.[164]

International charters

Conservation practice in the Middle East and North Africa has relied to a great extent

on architectural studies and urban monographs written by European scholars. Like their

predecessors, practitioners have realized that concepts and categories of European art history

are not easily applied in other parts of the world. The same is true for conservation theory

which, as we have seen, is closely related to art historical methodology. In recent years

conservation theory has been criticized by practitioners in developing countries, both local

and foreign. Before reviewing this criticism, I will briefly discuss two key international

documents that are relevant to the present study. These are the Venice Charter (1964) and

the World Heritage Convention (1972).

The Venice Charter is based on the 1931 Athens Charter: it reaffirms the historicist

principles of the earlier charter, stating them in more definitive terms. The Venice Charter

was also the founding document of ICOMOS, and as such, it formalized a new international

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[163] A. Arrif, "Le paradoxe de la construction du fait patrimonial", pp. 153-4.
[164] In the mid-1980's I worked for a development agency in Cairo on a project to revive silk production; as such, I worked with vendors who sold "traditional" products to elite consumers, mostly foreigners. At the time, only a minority of intellectuals showed an interest in local crafts; the work of architect Hassan Fathy was only starting to be appreciated by a wider audience.

profession.[165] Over the years professionals have recognized the limitations of the charter, but

it continues to be upheld as the basis of practice.[166] The charter defines the "historic

monument" as not only a single architectural work, but also the

> urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant
> development or an historic event. This applies not only to great works of art, but also to more
> modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time
> (Article 1).

A monument must be conserved along with its "traditional setting"; "no new construction,

demolition, or modification which would alter relation of mass and color must be allowed"

(article 6). Article 9, in particular, has been the target of criticism:

> The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal
> the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material
> and authentic documents. It *must stop at the point where conjecture begins*, and in this case
> moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural
> composition and *must bear a contemporary stamp*. The restoration must in any case be
> preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument (emphasis
> mine).

Social use is admitted, but should not impact the form of the building (article 2). Missing

parts should harmonize with the whole, but remain distinct from it so that "restoration does

not falsify the artistic or historical evidence." Additions cannot be permitted "except insofar

as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building" (article 13). Reconstruction

is also ruled out at archeological sites, where "[o]nly anastylosis, that is to say, the

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[165] S. Titchen, "On the Construction of Ourstanding Universal Value," p. 75. The full name of the
Venice Charter is the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and
Sites, adopted by the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic
Monuments, held in Venice in 1964.
[166] J. Jokilehto nd B. Fielden, *Management Guidelines for World Heritage Cultural Sites*, Rome:
ICCROM, 1993, p. 12 and fn. 1; J-L Luxen (former secretary-general of ICOMOS), "Reflections on
the Use of Heritage Charters and Conventions", in *Conservation, the GCI Newsletter*, vol. 19, no. 2,
2004; M. Petzet, "The Venice Charter, forty years later", *World Heritage Review*, vol. 38, 2004, pp.
20-4. For a summary of the criticisms of the Venice Charter and a thoughtful defense, see W.
Denslagen, "Restoration Theories, East and West", *Transactions*, vol. 18, 1993, pp. 3-7.

reassembling of existing parts, can be permitted" and must remain distinct from the original (article 15).

The second document, the World Heritage Convention, grew out of efforts by UNESCO to protect the "common heritage of mankind"; the term heritage replaces the phrase "monuments and sites" that was used in the Venice Charter. The 1972 Convention regards the safeguarding of both cultural and natural sites, although these had initially been envisioned as separate conventions. Two expert bodies, ICOMOS and IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) serve as advisory bodies to UNESCO for cultural and natural sites, respectively. Like the international safeguarding campaigns, the Convention is motivated by the threat of destruction:

> ...[T]he cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage and destruction..

> ...[T]he deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or the natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all nations of the world...[167]

Under the terms of the Convention, member states must submit nominations for cultural properties. These are reviewed by ICOMOS and IUCN, which determine whether the nominated sites qualify as sites of "outstanding universal value." This value may be "intrinsic" to the site, or it may have developed over time (III.5). The value of monuments, groups of buildings, and sites is assessed from the perspective of archeology, history, art, or science; in the case of sites, from the perspective of ethnology or anthropology (I.1). The criteria for inclusion on the list have been amended over time, reflecting ever-broadening

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[167] *Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, 1972.

conceptions of values and heritage.[168] These criteria encompass both the older notions of the

masterpiece (criterion i) and a broader notion of heritage (criteria ii-v). The latter criteria are

representative in nature: a site may be listed if it has *influenced* developments in the built

environment (criterion ii); if it bears unique or exceptional *testimony* of a civilization that is

living or has disappeared (criterion iii); if it is an outstanding *example* of a building,

ensemble, or landscape that *illustrates* a significant stage in human history (criterion iv); if it

is an outstanding *example* of a traditional settlement or pattern of land use that is

representative of a culture (or cultures), "especially when it has become vulnerable under the

impact of irreversible change" (criterion v; emphasis mine). In addition, a site must

> meet the test of authenticity in design, material, workmanship or setting and in the case of
> cultural landscapes their distinctive character and components (the Committee stressed that
> reconstruction is only acceptable if it is carried out on the basis of complete and detailed
> documentation on the original and to no extent on conjecture).[169]

Although four types of authenticity are listed, in practice authenticity is defined primarily in

material terms.[170] "Inhabited" historic towns may be listed, but the fact that they have

changed over time and will continue to change "renders the assessment of their authenticity

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[168] The original criteria, according to Titchen, were influenced by a proposal presented by the US
National Park Service. Titchen has carefully documented the development of the criteria between
1972 and 1994 ("On the construction of 'outstanding universal value'", pp. 108-145); the account
below is based on the latest revisions that she recorded (1994). The criteria have been relatively easy
to amend, because they are in the *Operational Guidelines* rather than the Convention itself.
[169] *Operational Guidelines*, July 2002, 24.b.i.
[170] Feilden and Jokilehto describe this in more detail: "Generally speaking, authenticity is ascribed to
a heritage resource *that is materially original or genuine (as it was constructed) and as it has aged and
changed in time*." They cite the four types of authenticity – authenticity in design, materials,
workmanship, and setting – which may be applied depending on the "the context of the [resource's]
historical significance." However, "[a]uthenticity in materials is a primary criterion for authenticity
in design and in workmanship, which, together with authenticity in setting, define the cultural
heritage resource." In addition, ""the concept of *Authenticity in the socio-cultural context is one that
urgently requires consideration*" (B. Feilden and J. Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p. 17;
emphasis in original). Fielden and Jokilehto refer to the Shorter OED definition of the word
"authentic": "original, firsthand (as opposed to copy), or as real, actual, pretended)" (cited in fn. 5, p.
16). It is noteworthy that the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) does not define the concept.

more difficult and any conservation policy more problematical..."[171]

As noted earlier, challenges to conservation practice in the mid-20th century occurred

on two fronts: the expanded definition of the monument, to include historic districts, cities,

and landscapes; and the extension of conservation practice to non-Western countries.

These challenges have been addressed in numerous documents; most of these attempt to

modify and supplement the Venice Charter. But these documents do not challenge the

underlying principles of the charter.[172]   The tendency is to reassert the objective validity of

the charter's principles, while expanding the range of "values" that guide their application.

Michael Petzet, for example, acknowledges the charter's "slightly one-sided cult of historical

substance." He attributes this to the historical context of the Venice Charter, noting the close

association between conservation and architectural modernism. He argues, however, that the

charter is an "irreplaceable instrument" of international practice, and can be adapted to a

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[171] *Operational Guidelines*, July 2002, 27.ii.

[172] Rab' notes that number of charters and recommendations over the years have attempted to supplement the Venice Charter, but these have not challenged its basic principles Among the documents cited by Rab' are the Lahore Conference Recommendations, 1980; the Declaration of Amsterdam, 1975; the European Charter of the Architectural Heritage, 1975; Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary role of Historic Areas (The Nairobi Declaration), 1976; the Burra Charter, 1992; and the Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994 ("Authenticity in Cultural Heritage Management: Re-assessing the International Charters of Restoration & Conservation," unpublished paper presented at the Architectural Conservation Conference, "Between Theory and Practice", University of Sharjah, March 2004, pp. 1, 14).
   ICOMOS attempted to address the problem of historic cities in the "Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas," also known as the Washington Charter. Drafted in 1987, it was intended to complement the Venice Charter by accounting for the special needs of historic cities, building on earlier recommendations by UNESCO. The document calls for the integration of the historic city into wider policies of urban and economic development, and calls for the participation of residents in conservation planning. Yet the charter does not question basic principles and definitions of the Venice Charter: architectural form and urban elements, as well as *functions* that historic cities have acquired over time, should be preserved as part of the "authenticity of the historic town or urban area." The primary concern of the charter is the preservation of the city's "historic character." It echoes the Venice Charter's attitude toward new building, in a milder tone that reflects current postmodern aesthetics. While new architecture should respect the historic context, especially scale and lot size, "[t]he introduction of contemporary elements in harmony with the surroundings should not be discouraged, since such features can contribute to the enrichment of an area."

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"pluralistic" conception of conservation.[173] The notion of the "historical time line" remains sacrosanct, the basis of authenticity. Following Riegl and Brandi, Fielden and Jokilehto write in their *Management Guidelines for World Heritage Cultural Sites*:

> [The] historical timeline is irreversible. [The heritage resource] is a product of the specific cultural, social, economic, and political conditions of the phases that contributed to its creation and evolution. This linkage with specific historic phases becomes a fundamental reference for the evaluation of an historic resource...A heritage resource that is substantially reconstructed today would become a product of the present.[174]

It has been widely acknowledged among both conservators and architects that the principles of the international charters do not apply to cities. Former ICOMOS president Paul Phillipot (also the main interpreter of Brandi) notes that work in historic cities from the 1960's, particularly Bologna,

> permitted a rethinking of certain established principles. Notably, we have seen that the ideas implicitly embodied in various 'cultural heritage charters' are all derived from 'superior' categories of works of art, according to the way in which these categories have been established by traditional discourse on the history of art. But this restrictive conceptions of heritage is incompatible with the desire to save the totality of the living cultural environment...

But in historic cities, writes Phillipot, the architect has increasingly taken precedence over the archeologist and the historian. This carries a certain "danger": creative solutions are needed, which means that historical values may be subordinated to artistic values.[175] In the last three decades there has been a tendency to apply "historical values" at the urban scale – that is, to "freeze" historic districts. This is in part a response to earlier abuses. In the era of urban renewal, the old practice of "disencumbering" monuments from surrounding context continued, and was often justified on the basis of the Venice Charter. "Athough the intention

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[173] M. Petzet, "The Venice Charter, forty years later", pp. 20-4.

[174] B. Feilden and J. Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p. 17.

[175] "La restauration dans la perspective des sciences humaines", in C. Périer-D'Ieteren, ed., *Pénétrer l'art, Restaurer l'oeuvre,* 1989, pp. 491-500; cited in S. N. Price, *Historical and Philosophical Issues*, pp. 216-229.

of the Venice Charter was not to ignore context," observed Jean-Marie Teutonico, "many

disasters were committed in its name."[176]

In areas of the world where rebuilding rather than conservation is the norm, the

international charters are sometimes seen as alien and destructive to local skills. In 1993 the

Indian architect A. G. Krishna Menon published a critique of the Venice Charter, which also

addresses the wider discourses of both architecture and conservation.[177] Antiquities

conservation in India was instituted under the British: they considered monuments, and

categories of monuments, according to their own aesthetic sensibilities and understanding of

Indian art and culture. Their selectivity, writes Menon, may reflect "the sheer exasperation

of the colonial mind confronted by the problem of managing a prolific but alien culture."

Like the French in Egypt, the British conserved and restored monuments in ways that

disregarded local meanings and uses.[178] When the British left, colonial practice was

continued by the state conservation authority. In 1984, a new agency, the Indian National

Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), was established to bridge the gap between

town planning and the work of the state conservation office. As such, it promoted a broader

definition of cultural heritage. The agency's practice, however, relies on the principles of the

Venice Charter, which in many ways follows European colonial practice.[179] A key issue is

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[176] Lecture, University of Pennsylvania, fall 2002; Teutonico is a noted conservator with the Getty Foundation. A well-known example is Independence Hall in Philadelphia: the building was isolated in the middle of an extended park. To create the park, some of the oldest housing in the country (including an African American neighborhood) and turn-of-the-century commercial buildings were demolished.

[177] "Rethinking the Venice Charter: the Indian Experience," *TDSR Working Paper Series*, vol. XL 41-56, 1992, pp. 42-55. See also "Conservation in India: A search for direction," *Architecture + Design*, 1989, pp. 22-27.

[178] For the case of Cairo see A. el-Habashi, "*Athar* to monuments," pp. 180-4, 192-3.

[179] Menon notes that the manual developed by Bernard Feilden closely followed the 1923 British manual, and was explicitly based on the Venice Charter. Fielden did, however, recognize that the Indian experience was unique, and suggested that India develop its own charter ("Rethinking the Venice Charter," p. 44).

training; as in the Middle East, conservators in the Indian antiquities department are usually trained as archeologists, not as architects. Many of INTACH's employees are architects, but they receive specialized training in Europe. According to Menon, many do not question the validity of this training for the Indian context.

The Venice Charter assumes that there has been an historical rupture in building practice, which requires the intervention of highly trained specialists (article 9). Colonial administrators had declared that traditional building practices had "died out" – and a similar view was taken by Indian conservators after independence. But these practices, Menon argues, have not disappeared. Rather, they have been forced into the margins, where they continue "to determine the generation of urban space and architectural forms in most parts of the country." Master masons have been marginalized by both the modern construction sector and by the conservation profession: both discourses have rendered local practice "invisible." The creativity of master masons is devalued, but their skills are used when "authentic" techniques are required.[180] Menon faults the Venice Charter's ban on reconstruction, and its insistence that new work must "bear a contemporary stamp." In India

> the master-mason is still able to build and restore in the example of his forefathers. His pride lies in the fact that it is difficult to distinguish between the two.

Strict adherence to historical criteria, writes Menon, makes sense in the case of exceptional monuments that are deemed of national importance. But in "hundreds and thousands of less-than-exemplary monuments...we could *permit* reconstruction, *encourage* duplication, *value* invention, and *seek* transformation."

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[180] "Rethinking the Venice Charter", pp. 48-51.

In the following years other critics would echo aspects of Menon's argument.[181] Particularly relevant for the present study is the work of Trevor Marchand, an anthropologist and architect who apprenticed with minaret builders in Sana'a. Marchand has made similar observations with regard to the Yemeni context, based on a subtle analysis of builders' expert knowledge; his ideas will be taken up in chapter five. Marchand faults conservation for its emphasis on the object, rather than on the process that produces the object. Maintaining the object in its static, historic form means that builders cannot respond creatively to change. As such, building is divorced from the wider social context, which gives it meaning and value.

> If through legislation and cultural politics (Western-inspired) conservation efforts incapacitate contemporary traditional builders and inhabitants in responding to changing needs and social values, their architectural heritage will inevitably lose its utility and meaning for the living local population, and thus also its authenticity as a valued cultural commodity.[182]

Like Menon, Marchand argues for a new definition of authenticity based on the on-going production of culture.

A global picturesque?

Like the earlier focus on monuments, the hierarchy of world heritage focuses on particular sites that are representative of cultures: it is a "global grammar for local contexts."[183] As such, it depends on notions of culture that have long been discarded in the social sciences; this critique has only recently penetrated the field of architecture, and less so, that of

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[181] For example, N. Gutschow, "Restaurierung und Rekonstruktion Gedanken zur Gültigkeit der Charta von Venedig im Kontext Südasiens", *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalplege*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1991, pp. 156-160; S. Rab', "Authenticity in Cultural Heritage Management."

[182] See T. Marchand, "Process over Product: Case Studies of Traditional Building Practices in Djenne, Mali and Sana'a, Yemen," in *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Built Environment*, proceedings of the 4th Annual US/ICOMOS Symposium, Philadelphia, April 2001, Los Angeles: the Getty Conservation Institute, pp. 155-6.

[183] J. Turtinen, "Globalising Heritage – On UNESCO and the Transnational Construction of a World Heritage," Stockholm Center for Organizational Research, http://www.score.su.se/pdfs/2000-12.pdf, 2000, pp. 11-2.

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conservation. In a sense, world heritage is a kind of "global picturesque" based on difference

and contrast. Like earlier forms of the picturesque, it is an aesthetic closely linked to

destruction - in this case, the destruction caused by global capitalism.

The central issue has been identified by Giovanni Carbonara: insistence on a

disinterested, objective approach to conservation is related to the contemporary crisis in

aesthetics. Relative values have been assimilated to a philological methodology, which is

based on older notions of the object, meaning, and culture.[184] As values multiply, the

'containers' that hold them – the archive, the museum, the museified city – must expand

indefinitely. What they do not hold is left to the processes of change and development. We

risk the accumulation of representative "types" as the wider environment is transformed, and

often destroyed, by capitalist development. Carbonara, however, proposes a synthesis:

> The basic dilemma – conservation or intervention, historical or aesthetic approaches in
> restoration – is…always present and cannot be solved by denying one of the issues; by acting
> either as unconstrained innovators or as stubborn, noncritical conservators. The dilemma can
> and should be dealt with each time by critical actions and choices that, as such, are
> necessarily subjective, but not necessarily unfounded or arbitrary.

What happens when these kind of critical decisions are taken in other parts of the world,

where different understandings of history and cultural production apply? Many studies look

at heritage as an inherently globalizing project and, as such, leave little room for agency.

Despite the increasing universality of values, notes Herzfeld, difference persists in everyday

practice and interpretation.[185] The question is not whether diversity exists, but who defines

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[184] *La reintegrazione dell'immagine*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1976, chapter one; excerpted and translated in
S. N. Price, *Historical and Philosophical Issues*, pp. 236-240.

[185] M. Herzfeld, *The Body Impolitic*, p. 3. Earlier he writes: "It used to be that anthropologists had to
work hard to combat the idea of a universal set of values. Today, however, at the very moment at
which they have more or less successfully made the case for ethical diversity and relativism, some
attitudes appear to have become universal after all. Notions such as efficiency, fair play, civility, civil
society, human rights, transparency, cooperation, and tolerance serve as global yardsticks for

and represents it.

The picturesque aesthetic grew out of an empiricist approach to the world, but it had a critical aspect. In the hands of theorists, architects, and conservators, difference was a form of criticism against established structures, in particular, the primacy of formal theory in society and aesthetics. Ruskin envisioned a reconstructed picturesque based on empathy and content, rather than surface. Jacobs linked diversity in the physical world with social and economic patterns and relationships, at the scale of the neighborhood. They believed that difference could impact, and transform, the dominant ideology. The same is true for world heritage. The "value" of a World Heritage site is determined by an international body of experts, but it is reinterpreted locally. In the process, difference is transformed by established methods, but also transforms those methods. This process is interesting not merely as a case study, but for its wider implications. Practice in other parts of the world – because of different historical experiences and cultural norms – may help us reevaluate our own methods in a way that is richer, and perhaps more useful, than a critique based on theory alone.

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particular patterns of interaction. Startlingly, too, even 'diversity' can become a homogeneous product. So, too, can tradition and heritage: the particular is itself universalized" (p. 2).

Chapter Two

The city of Sana'a: an historical overview

The aim of this chapter is to provide an historical context for the conservation of the old city of Sana'a, which began in the early 1980's. I will begin by establishing the wider geographical, political, and social context of Yemen, focusing on issues that will be important for subsequent chapters. Then, following the standard local and scholarly narrative, I will discuss the urban development of Sana'a "before" and "after" the 1962 revolution - treating the latter period in more detail, since it provides the context for the conservation effort. While these periods are usually understood to mean before and after "modernity", the process of modernization began much earlier – but its scope and impact were limited by particular political and geographical conditions in the north. Nor is 1962 the real turning point. Dresch notes that while the "Revolution" in popular and scholarly discourse signified a transition from darkness into light, the phrase "before the revolution" really meant "before the remittance boom" of the 1970's, when hundreds of thousands of Yemeni men migrated to work in the booming Gulf states.[1]

It was largely the remittances of these migrant workers that fueled the spectacular and largely unplanned growth of the city. Over the course of the decade, well-to-do and middle class families left their family homes for the new districts, which offered modern amenities. Foreigners - notably the film maker Pier Paolo Pasolini - called attention to the unique beauty of Sana'a, which would soon be destroyed by modernization (figure 2). In the mid-1970's

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[1] *A History of Modern Yemen*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 144. Following the Arab Israeli war of 1973, oil producing states raised oil prices fourfold. This financed rapid expansion, in which Yemenis did the manual work. By the end of the 1970's it was estimated that some 800,000 North Yemeni men had migrated for work (p. 131).

UNESCO listed Sana'a as one of the three most endangered sites in the world.[2] Historical studies were launched and there was talk of an international safeguarding effort for the area that was now called the "old city." But as many Yemenis and foreigners note, until the early 1970's Sana'a *was* the old city – that is, development did not extend beyond the *intramuros* city and its old suburbs, as depicted on R. Manzoni's map of 1879 and Von Wissman's map of 1929 (figures 3, 4).[3] In the span of a decade, then, the *intramuros* city had come to be seen as "heritage."

The idea that Sana'a has changed little since the medieval period, in either its physical or social form, is often heard in conservation discourse. As recently as 1996 the concluding report of a UNDP-UNESCO project described the old city in the following terms:

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[2] F. Pipenberg, "Sana'a al-Qadeema: the challenges of modernization," in A. Saqqaf, ed., *The Middle Eastern City: ancient traditions confront a modern world*, New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987, p.102.

[3] It should be noted, however, that in the 1970's the historic core was only partially defined by the walls: the western wall and part of the southern wall had been dismantled in the 1960's.

R. Manzoni drew his map based on two stays in the city during the second Ottoman occupation, and published it in *El Yemen: tre anni dell'arabia felice. Escursioni fatte dal Settembre 1877 al Marzo 1880*, Rome (Botta), 1884. The second and more reliable map was published in Carl von Rathjens and Hermann von Wissmann, "Sanaa. Eine sudarabsiche Stadtlandschaft", *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erkunde zu Berlin*, 1929, pp. 329-353, map 6. This latter map has provided the base for most scholarly studies, including the map produced by Kopp and Wirth for the Tubinger Atlas der Vorderen Orients (T.A.V.O.) (G. Gillot, "Genéalogie des cartes de Sanaa", in M. Barcelo, ed., *Les jardins de la vielle ville de Sanaa*, Yemen, Bellaterra: Centre Francais d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales, Sana et Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona Servei de Publications, 2004, pp. 15-6).

In 1986, a survey of the walled city was conducted by a Korean team, but has not, to my knowledge, been published ("Map of the Existing Conditions in the Old City of Sana'a", scale 1:1000, on file at GOPHCY's Center for Architectural Studies and Research). This map has been updated using aerial photographs, and provides the basis for the G.I.S.-based inventory of the old city that is currently underway. This project, as well as studies for a conservation plan, are being led by Daniele Pini and Franca Miglioli under the auspices of UNESCO, in cooperation with GOPHCY, the Social Fund for Development, and the Italian government. Numerous maps of Sana'a from the the 1970's onward, as well as the aerial photos on which they are based, are on file at the Survey Authority of Sana'a. A recent and detailed inventory of the urban gardens, along with maps based on measured drawings and aerial photos, is provided in Barcelo, ed., *Les jardins de la vielle ville de Sanaa.*

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> The Old City of Sana'a is unique in Yemen and also in the World. Its value lies in the unforgettable impression made by the whole; an entire city of splendid buildings combined to create an urban effect of extraordinary fascination and beauty. The Old City is untouched by time; it is a functioning city of the Islamic ages.[4]

The idea of the old city as a timeless, unchanging place appeared to resonate with many in Sana'a. Like much of the highland plateau, Sana'a was largely insulated from development pressures until the mid-20th century, the result of the isolationist policies of the ruling imams. When the country opened to the global market, it had the force of a sudden shock. In contrast to new development that surrounded it, the old city seemed a relic of a bygone age – yet most of the political elite had grown up there, and had only recently left their family homes for modern houses in the new districts.

Sana'a had been the political capital of the Zaydi imamate from the eighteenth century, and became the capital of North Yemen in 1962.[5] A socialist revolution in the south the following year created the state of South Yemen (the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen), with its capital at Aden. In May 1990 the two countries unified, and Sana'a became the capital of a united Yemen Republic. The area that became modern Yemen managed to preserve a relative degree of autonomy throughout most of its history. With the exception of the British presence at Aden, Yemen was never occupied by a European power; nor did two Ottoman occupations (1538-1635 and 1872-1918) bring about the kind of domination association with European colonialism. At the same time, Yemen's modest petroleum reserves did not attract the kind of foreign intervention that occurred in neighboring states.[6]

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[4] "Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a: Project Findings and Recommendations", UNESCO mission on behalf of the UNDP, Restricted Technical Report UNDP/YEM/88/006, p. 1.

[5] The Zaydi dynasty was established in the tenth century and lasted until the revolution of 1962, although the extent of its rule varied considerably.

[6] These points are made by G. Grandguillaume in "Sanaa, Ville d'Arabie," in Grandguillaume, et. al. eds., *Sanaa hors les murs: une ville arabe contemporaine*, Collection Villes du Monde Arabe, vol. 1, Tours: URBAMA, 1995, pp. 4-6. Even the British occupation of Aden (1839-1967), notes

This has produced what many observers see as a unique cultural confidence among Yemenis. It is reinforced by the sense of Yemen as a natural unit – an idea that is deeply rooted in Islamic history and local literature, and also in the popular imagination. In contrast to other states in the region, Dresch notes, Yemen's history is somehow "real" – although the idea of Yemen as a single *political* unit is a modern idea, that developed in a context created by outside powers.[7]

Yemen is located at the southwestern corner of the Arabian peninsula, and is its only fertile area – which earned it the name *Arabia Felix* in ancient times. It is also more heavily populated than the rest of the peninsula: there are a few large cities, numerous towns, and thousands of villages and hamlets.[8] Many of these settlements are striking and varied in their architectural form.[9] The country is bounded on the west and south by water, and along its northeastern border by the so-called Empty Quarter (*al-Rub ' al-Khali*), that vast expanse of desert that is many ways like a sea. Yemen is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the north (although the eastern portion of the border is still undefined) and by Oman to the east (figure 5).[10] A striking geographical feature of the country is a chain of mountains that runs from the

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Grandguillaume, did not radically transform the tribal structure, but allowed for the emergence of a modernizing elite.

[7] P. Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 1. The following discussion draws on this work and on Dresch's *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (New York: Oxford Press, 1989); R. Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic: the Politics of Development, 1962-1986*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1987; and S. Day, "Power-Sharing and Hegemony: a Case Study of the United Arab Republic of Yemen", Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 2001.

[8] R. Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 6.

[9] See F. Varanda's study of regional architectures in Yemen, *The Art of Building in Yemen*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981.

[10] The present-day boundaries of Yemen were established in the mid-1930's, when Imam Yahya accepted the southern boundary drawn earlier by the Ottomans and the British, and renounced claims to Najran, Jizan, and the Asir in the north. "In the east, where imamate Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the Aden Protectorate intersected in the arid waste adjacent to the Empty Quarter," writes Burrowes, "the boundary remained undemarcated and of little concern to anyone" (*The Yemen Arab Republic*, pp. 16-17).

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Saudi border in the north to the city of Ta'izz in the south. The western slopes of these mountains are the site of terraced agriculture; the southern highlands, in the vicinity of Ibb, are the greenest and most fertile area of the country and also the most populated. While the highlands enjoy a temperate climate, low-lying areas are extremely hot. In the western coastal plain, called the Tihama, extraordinary heat combines with high humidity. Facing the Horn of Africa, its population and culture bear witness to centuries of intermarriage and exchange. This poor region is where some 800,000 migrant workers, expelled from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia after the 1991 Gulf War, were settled in refugee camps that have yet to be dismantled. The Tihama is also the site of Zabid, a city that was added to the World Heritage list in 1993. Zabid was an important center of Islamic learning and commerce; in later centuries, merchants who made their fortunes in the indigo trade built unique brick houses that bear much in common with Persian models.[11]

To the south and southeast of the mountains is the former territory of the PDRY. Since ancient times this area was important in the Indian Ocean-Red Sea trade: it had both sea ports and "desert ports", oasis towns located in spring-fed valleys (*wadis*). Merchants from the Wadi Hadhramaut were especially well established in the trade, and formed colonies throughout the Indian Ocean basin. The city of Tarim has recently come to be appreciated for unique earthen palaces built by merchants in the first half of the twentieth century, which incorporate South Asian and European neoclassical features.[12] Perhaps the best known oasis town of the Wadi Hadramaut is the tiny settlement of Shibam, known for

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[11] See P. Bonnenfant, *Zabid au Yémen: archéologie du vivant,* Edisud: 2004; "Zabid, anti-développement et potentialities," *Peuples Mediterranéens,* nos. 72-3, juillet-décembre 1995, pp. 219-242.
[12] See S. Damluji, *The Valley of Mud Brick Architecture: Shibam, Tarim, and Wadi Hadramut,* Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1992.

its multi-story earthen tower houses. Shibam was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1982 and like Sana'a, was the site of a UNESCO safeguarding campaign.[13]

The northern highlands form a wide and arid plateau, which tapers to the desert in the east. Sana'a is located at the western edge of this plateau, at an elevation of 7500 feet above sea level. The country's two main tribal confederations, the Hashid and the Bakil, inhabit this plateau. For these groups the tribe is still the primary source of group identity, in many cases more important than the state. While the notion of the tribe exists in other parts of the country, it less important than the kinship group and the village.[14] Dresch notes that most tribes are settled and agricultural, not nomadic. But the northeastern plateau supported only subsistence agriculture, making it a poor region. While most other areas of the country are predominantly Sunnis of the Shafi'i school, the northern tribes are followers of the sect of Zaydi Shi'ism espoused by the former imams. For centuries, the tribes formed the power base of the Zaydi imams: as their mercenaries, they depended on raids of Shafi'i agricultural areas for their livelihood.

Although scholars have emphasized the division between North Yemen and South Yemen, Stephen Day argues that this division was less important than the regional division between the areas known as Upper Yemen and Lower Yemen.[15] Upper Yemen is the area from the Samarra Pass (north of Ibb) to the Saudi border, encompassing the eastern plateau; it is largely tribal and Zaydi. Lower Yemen consists of the southern highlands, which are Shafi'i and which had strong ties to Aden. The division is not so much religious as cultural

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[13] See below, chapter three, p. 145.

[14] S. Caton, S. al-Suleihi, personal conversations.

[15] Stephen Day notes that most studies of Yemen emphasized the division between North and South because of current approaches in political science, especially the emphasis on state formation. But this division was less relevant than divisions within each country, which sometimes overlapped the border. He proposes a new scheme of cultural-geographic regions on (*Power-Sharing and Hegemony*, pp. 116-120; map, p. 112).

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and political. Zaydism is a moderate form of Shi'i Islam that does not differ significantly from from Shafi'i Sunnism on matters of doctrine: its main difference is the principle of imamic rule. Northern tribesmen, with or without support from the Zaydi imams, have often dominated Lower Yemen. This produced resentment toward northern tribes, which took on new meanings in the context of nationalism. The political system in North Yemen and later, in the post-unity government, has continued to be dominated by what Day calls "highland political culture," that is, by a political and military elite drawn largely from highland Zaydi tribes.

A modernizing elite emerged under British rule in the south, educated in the era of pan-Arabism; it was among this elite that the drive for unity was strongest.[16] After the socialist revolution of 1963, many educated southerners migrated to Sana'a and became technocrats, professionals, and skilled tradesmen in the public and private sectors. They represent the majority of the country's managers and intellectuals, but their opportunities for advancement were, and are, limited by northern political patronage. These tensions grew after unification:

> An image of modernity and order, based largely on an imagined West, had often been used by Shafi'i intellectuals against Zaydis; now the style of the South was pitted against the North's by modernists of whatever region and a presumed lack of 'civilization' was widely equated with tribalism. But the tribes of north and east complained that their own world was invaded by urban forces. Banditry occurred of a kind not seen before...Assassinations of a kind once common in Lower Yemen were attempted in Upper Yemen. Party feuds were blamed for this by some, foreign intervention by others, but the governance of disputes by custom was breaking down and conflicts once left in the countryside were pursued in towns. Sanaa had been known as *makhzan al-ru'us*, the place where people's 'heads' were safe; now it was best avoided.[17]

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[16] S. Day, pp. 110-1. There were also liberal reformers in the north, some of whom had been sent abroad for education by Imam Yahya; see below, p. 116.
[17] *Modern Yemen*, p. 191.

The resentment of modernists increased as the ruling elite monopolized the fruits of economic liberalization in the 1990's. It is seen as a new kind of "tribal raiding" by people who do not respect the rules of civilized society.

The tribal origin of many government leaders, including the President, did not translate into political control by the state. Until recently, the extent of state control has rarely extended beyond the triangle of Sana'a, Ta'izz, and al-Hudayda (a port city on the Tihama coast that has now become more important than Aden). It is this triangle that was first connected by asphalt roads in the 1960's, which were the major agents of integration and change.[18] Some observers (and many Yemenis, including tribesmen) see the President's manipulation of tribal conflict as a way to maintain power through political instability – the old technique of divide and conquer.[19]

Another historical opposition is that between city and tribe. This was especially salient in Sana'a, which was the political seat of the imamate. The imams relied on the tribes for military support, but also looked down on them – faulting them in particular for their tendency to give preference to tribal, rather than Islamic, law. Much of Sana'a's population was of tribal origin, but these affiliations had long been forgotten. According to Frank Mermier, it was only in Sana'a that an urban identity developed distinct from the surrounding tribal context – an identity defined largely in terms of difference.[20] The tribes, for their part, are generally contemptuous of city life and the control of government authority: they define their own attributes and virtues in opposition to those of city-dwellers.[21]

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[18] B. Burrowes, pp. 6-7.
[19] See David Finkel's series on democratization in Yemen, *The Washington Post*, December 18-20, 2005.
[20] "De l'Usage d'un Concept: la Citadinité a Sanaa", *Peuples mediterranéeans*, no. 46, janvier-mars, 1989, pp. 31-48. This point will be taken up in chapter four, pp. 196-8.
[21] Also expressed in an imaginary geography; see Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, pp. 14-5.

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The trope of city against tribe has a long history.[22] It has been important in the

Sana'ani imagination, as attested by numerous sayings and proverbs.[23] The trope overlaps in

complex ways with cultural divisions between the south and the north. Sana'a was

historically anti-tribal. But it is now the capital city of a regime closely linked to tribalism - a

social form which, according to modern political theory, is supposed to pass away in the

context of the modern state.[24] The old city of Sana'a was abandoned by its elite;

management of the city was entrusted to professionals, many of whom come from Lower

Yemen and the former PDRY. For these professionals the old city is evidence of Yemeni

genius in architecture and ecology. Yet it also epitomizes the backwardness of highland

culture.[25]

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[22] The idea of the tribes as foils to civilized life is deeply embedded in historiography, dating back to Ibn Khaldun's opposition of the *badawah* and *hadharah*. It has been portrayed as a determining characteristic of South Arabian society, in contrast to the urban-based cultures of the north: "...[I]t is a society radically different from those familiar in the vast conquered territories of Islam outside Arabia. It is a society in which the countryside dominated the towns, whereas elsewhere in Islam the town dominated the countryside" (W. Madelung, "Land ownership and land tax in Northern Yemen and Najran, 3rd-4th/9th-10th century", in T. Khalidi, *Land tenure and social transformation in the Middle East*, Beirut, 1984, p. 204; cited in Kopp and Wirth, *Sana'a*, p. 16). In northern Arabia, urban cultures were formed through the extraction of surplus production from the surrounding countryside in a process that parallels, but differs from, feudalism in Europe. In South Arabia – so the argument goes – tribal autonomy and subsistence farming prevented the extraction of this kind of surplus. Land was a major source of wealth, particularly for the dominant *sayyid* class, but at least in later centuries the land tended to be in the west and south of the country (Kopp and Wirth, *Sana'a* , p. 43). This suggests that there was a rural surplus, which was extracted from a remote, rather than contiguous, hinterland. For a critique of approaches to the study of tribalism in Yemen, see Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, pp. 6-8; and M. Mundy, *Kinship and Domestic Government*, pp. 3-10.

[23] For example: "May God protect you from the wickedness of the tribesman when he trades in the *suq*"; and "May God protect you from the tribesman when he takes up residence in the city" (the Arabic verb in the latter aphorism – *yatamaddan* - literally means "to become civilized"). The noted historian Qadi Isma'il al-Akwa', who collected these aphorisms, echoes Ibn Khaldun in his commentary: the virtues of the tribesman are spoiled when he adopts urban ways without understanding them in depth (*al-amthal al-yamaniyya*, Beirut: 1984; cited in P. Bonnenfant, "Maisons, Voisins, et Monde Exterieur", in Bonnenfant, ed., *Sanaa: Architecture Domestique et Société*, pp. 71-5 and fn. 107-8).

[24] P. Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, p. 6. Dresch notes that in Yemeni political rhetoric, tribalism is equated with nomadism, disorder, and violence; see *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, chapter one.

[25] This point will be developed in chapter four.

A word must be said about social divisions in Yemen that are particularly salient in the north. These relate to a conceptual geography that has bearing on the construction of modern heritage. Zaydism was founded in Yemen at the turn of the 10th century when northern tribes invited an outsider to resolve their disputes, in keeping with the custom of *hijra*. This outsider, al-Hadi ila al-Haqq, became the first imam of Yemen.[26] According to Zaydi political theory, imams had to be *sayyids*, descendents of the Prophet. Zaydi rulers relied on *sayyids* in their administration, and on a class of learned men called *qadis* (literally, "judges"). The *sayyids* or *saada* (the latter plural is often used colloquially) were resented for their privileged status by other groups, including tribesmen. The fall of the Imamate in 1962 dramatically undermined their status, although they retain great spiritual authority.[27] Below the *saada* and the *qadis* are the tribesmen (*qaba'il*) and, in Sana'a, a group called *manasib* (sing. *mansub*). *Manasib* claim tribal ancestry: they practice a variety of trades, including stonemasonry, bricklaying, and smithing.[28] Lower on the social ladder are the *muzayyan* (also called *bani al-khums*), who practice service and manual trades that are considered menial by *saada*, *qadis*, and tribesmen. In the tribal context *muzayyan* are considered "weak" people who are entitled to protection by the tribes. But they are lacking in authenticity or origin (*nuqqas al-asl*) and hence also in honor.[29] It is only very recently, with a market system and education, that *muzayyan* are starting to achieve a degree of social

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[26] *Hijra* also refers to the tribal custom of protecting certain groups and outsiders, and also refers to settlements founded for this purpose. See R. B. Serjeant, "Sana'a the 'Protected', Hijrah", in R. B. Serjeant and R. Lewcock, eds., *San'a: An Arabian-Islamic City*, London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983, pp. 39-43.

[27] Tribal sheikhs often competed with the *saada* for regional control (Caton, *Peaks of Yemen*, p. 7).

[28] This group is mentioned by W. Dostal, "Analysis of the Sana'a Market Today," pp. 254-5. I did not, however, hear the term *mansub* used in Sana'a.

[29] P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, pp. 118-9. Jews are also considered weak and thus protected. But they are considered of higher standing than the *muzayyan* because they have origin (S. al-Suleihi, personal conversation).

mobility, although they generally cannot intermarry with other groups. The *akhdam* are the

lowest group, believed to descendents of Africans. They are not allowed to acquire houses or

purchase land; in Sana'a, they generally work as street cleaners. They live an existence

completely apart from other classes of society.[30]

This status of the *saada* contradicts, in a curious way, a certain myth of descent that is

very much alive in the popular imagination, and which became important in revolutionary

ideology.[31] As southern Arabs, Yemenis trace their origin to a common ancestor, Qahtan (in

the Bible, Yoqtan), who is said to be the descendent of Sam (Shem), son of Nuh (Noah).

Another of Nuh's sons was Saba (Sheba). The Sabean and Hamdan kings, who controlled

the spice and incense trade of South Arabia, are descended from Saba and other descendents

of Nuh.[32] Although the *saada* are privileged as descendents of the Prophet, they are northern

Arabs - sons of Adnan (the collateral agnate of Qahtan). As Caton puts it, "they are all

foreigners or outsiders with no inherent legitimacy as rulers." Qahtan became a key figure

in revolutionary populism, a symbol of a "native" rebellion against the *saada*. A popular

poem during the revolution declared: "Qahtan is your ancestor and mine; the people of

Yemen are your possession and mine."[33]

Ronald Lewcock notes that an earlier name for Sana'a, 'Azal, links the city to the line

of the Prophet Nuh and thus establishes its place in an ancient and sacred genealogy.[34] The

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[30] "We don't even know where they bury their dead," a Yemeni friend told me.

[31] I am grateful to Saba al-Suleihi for pointing out this contradiction and its relation to heritage politics.

[32] S. Caton, *Peaks of Yemen*, p. 34; R. Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of Sana'a*, Paris: UNESCO, 1986, p. 19.

[33] Cited in S. Caton, *Peaks of Yemen*, p. 34. For the figure of Qahtan in the revolution, see S. Day, *Power-Sharing and Hegemony*, pp. 87-94, 110.

[34] Azal is traditionally identified with Uzal, mentioned in Genesis as one of the sons of Yoqtan (Qahtan). Yoqtan was a descendent of Sam, the first son of Nuh. Another of Nuh's sons was Saba

legendary founding of the city by Sam is related by medieval historians; the city is known as

medinat sam, the city of Sam.[35] The story is often repeated in conservation literature. The

nomination form submitted to the World Heritage Committee in 1985, drafted by the Yemeni

staff of the conservation office, stated:

> Sana'a is considered as one of the most ancient cities of the world. Al-Hassan Bin Ahmad al-Hamdany (10th c. Yemeni geographer and historian) describes Sana'a as the oldest city on earth and 'Shem' – son of Noah - as the Founder of the City of Sana'a.

Al-Hamdani, notes Dresch, worked with the cosmology of ancient Greek philosophers,

focusing on Yemen as "the best of the world's lands." His genealogical vision encompassed

an Islamic world centered on Sana'a: the city "is the mother of Yemen and its axis, for it is at

the centre."[36] According to al-Hamdani, Sam chose the site of Sana'a to found the first city

after the great flood. His founding act was the construction of the palace of Ghumdan,

legendary for its height and rich ornamentation - and often cited as the prototype of the

Sana'ani house. These notions of origin and genealogy struck a chord with Yemenis, and

furthered the nation-building project in a critical period of consolidation.

The urban development of Sana'a

Sana'a is located at a strategic spot in the Yemeni highlands, at the narrowest point of a wide

plateau. This was the intersection of two important trade routes: an ancient route that linked

Ma'rib, the capital of the Sabean empire, in the east to the Red Sea in the west; and by the

end of the first century BCE, a north-south route that passed along the highland plateau. The

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(Sheba), associated in the Old Testament with the kingdom of the south (Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of Sana'a*, p. 19).

[35] S. Caton, *Peaks of Yemen*, p. 34.

[36] Cited in Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, p. 205.

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origins of Sana'a seem to be linked with the increasing importance of the latter route: before the end of the 2nd century CE the city became a second capital of the Sabean empire.[37] The word Sana'a means "well-fortified" in ancient South Arabian, suggesting the origin of the city as a fortified settlement.

Archeological excavations have been extremely limited in Sana'a; the history of the city's development has therefore been pieced together from descriptions of medieval geographers and historians, and by such physical evidence as the construction of smaller mosques in the early centuries of Islam. In a recent paper, Ronald Lewcock attempts to reconstruct the development of the city by incorporating other surface evidence. In the brief historical overview that follows, I refer to sketch maps he presented as part of this paper, as well as maps drawn by Manzoni (1879) and Von Wissman (1929).[38]

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[37] The north-south route through Sana'a was a route of secondary importance; the favored route passed along the edge of the eastern desert via Marib. The kingdom of Saba (Sheba) was probably in existence by the second milleniuim BCE; it controlled the passage of spices and incense from the south and east, where they were imported and/or produced, to the northern Arabian peninsula and to the Red Sea ports in the west (R. Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of Sana*, pp. 19-20; and personal conversation).

[38] For Von Wissman's map, see figure 3. Manzoni's map is reprinted in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, pp. 200-1. Lewcock's presented this paper at a conference at the University of Sana'a, August 2004 ("Early and Medieval Sana'a: the Evidence on the Ground," www.lewcock.co.uk). The paper elaborates on and revises the account presented in R. Lewcock, et. al., in "The Urban Development of Sana'a" in R. Lewcock and R. B. Serjeant, *San'a*, pp. 122-143; and in R. Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of San'a*. For the medieval period the primary sources are descriptions of the city by Ibn Rustah who wrote after 903 CE, and al-Hamdani who wrote slightly later; as well as al-Razi's history of the city, written in the 11th century. Al-Razi is said to have constructed a map of the medieval city, but it has not been made available to scholars.

San'a: An Arabian-Islamic City remains the most comprehensive work on various aspects of the city and its history. See also H. Kopp and E. Wirth, *Sana'a: Developpement et organisation de l'espace de la ville arabe*, Cahiers de l'Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman (IREMAM), CNRS-Universites d'Aix Marseilles, 1994, especially for the Ottoman period; and P. Costa, "Sana", in Serjeant, R. B. ed., *The Islamic City*, Paris: UNESCO, 1980. The last two works include discussions of architecture and urbanism after 1962, but little else has been written on the subject. See G. Grandguillame, et. al. eds., *Sanaa hors les murs*, especially articles by J. F. Troin and J-L Arnaud; and F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change in the Built Space of Yemen", unpublished dissertation, Department of Geography, University of Durham, UK, 1994. The following account draws on all these sources.

The ancient settlement probably consisted of two, fortified areas. The first of these was in the vicinity of the Great Mosque: a tell to the east of the mosque is the site of a palace built in the 3rd century CE as part of a larger, fortified complex. The palace, which appears to have been destroyed, rebuilt, and refortified over the course of centuries, has been identified by historians as Ghumdan.[39] The second pole of the ancient city was what came to be known as the citadel or *Qasr*, a fortified complex at the eastern edge of the present walled city, at the foot of Jabal Nuqum. The *Qasr* consists of two parts: an upper fort, and a lower fortified area – called the *qasaba* in medieval texts - that may have been the original settlement.[40] The land slopes westward from the *Qasr* to the *wadi Sa'ila*, a dry river bed that bisects the old city from north to south. By the 3rd century CE, the city had expanded to the west and south of the *Qasr*; the market, which would have been located just below it, was pushed toward a second *wadi* that extends from east to west along the northern edge of the present *suq*. This *wadi* was the floodcourse of Jabal Nuqum; its path is still evident during the rainy season.[41]

By the 9th century the city consisted of two distinct quarters: *al-Qati'*, immediately to the west of the Qasr, controlled by people of Persian origin; and surrounding it on the west, south, and north, *al-Sirar*, controlled by Arab tribesmen. The word *sarar* means the fertile

[39] For example, by the 10th century historian al-Hamdani (Lewcock and Serjeant, *Sana'a, An Arabian Islamic City*, p. 44; R. Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of Sana'a*, p. 35).

[40] As such Sana'a would follow the pattern of development seen in Jerusalem and Fustat, as well as in many ancient Greek cities: the walled city of one period becomes the citadel of a later, expanded city (R. Lewock, *The Old Walled City of Sana'a*, p. 35). The *qasr* remained an important military installation through Ottoman times. It is still a military installation and is closed to to researchers and visitors: no archeological investigations have been conducted on site.

[41] Presumably from an early date, measures were taken to dam up the water at the edge of the city. The traces of this *wadi* – known by various names, including *Bir Ghimad* or *Ghumad*, or simply the wadi Sana'a - can be identified as an elongated open space or *maydan* that extended from the present quarter of al-Fulayhi to the northern *suq*; by 1929, it had been built over, as it is no longer in evidence in Von Wissman's map (Lewcock, et. al., "The Urban Development of Sana'a", p. 139; R. Lewcock, "Early and Medieval San'a", p. 10).

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bed of a *wadi*: the name *as-Sirar* probably refers to the *wadi Sa'ila*, to the west of the district. The predominance of gardens in the western part of the city attests to its origins as an area of farmsteads. [42] The palace of Ghumdan, which appears to have been the governor's residence under Abyssinian and Persian rule (6th-7th centuries), may have constituted, along with the central market, a neutral territory between the two districts. It was in the garden of the palace that the Great Mosque was constructed at the order of the Prophet Muhammad, when the Yemen was converted to Islam in the 7th century. Although the Palace of Ghumdan may have been destroyed under the Caliph Uthman or earlier, the residences of the early Islamic governors were in the same area, that is, near or adjacent to the Great Mosque. The governor's residence was later moved northward to the area of the *jabbana*, an open-air prayer space outside the limits of the walls. Land to the south and west of the city were endowed as cemeteries. [43] Al-Razi writes that Sana'a did not have a wall around it until the 9th century, but reference to city gates in earlier periods suggest that walls existed and had been destroyed. [44] Writing in the 10th century, Ibn Rustah describes a street that "splits [the city] into two halves and penetrates through to a *wadi* [*as-Sirar*] in which the floods flow on days of rain...the market adjoins the north side of the street." This street,

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[42] The predominance of gardens in the western half of the city can still be discerned, despite their diminution in recent decades. The duality between the two parts of the city was noted by al-Hamdani, writing in the 10th century. The Persians were known as the *Abna'*, literally "sons"; the Arabs were of the tribe of Banu Shihab who probably came from Sa'ada. Both these groups had assisted a Himyarite leader in his war against the Abyssinians in 575 CE, and may have been allocated these areas as fiefs. *Al-Qati'* may have been known as al-Qalis, after the Christian cathedral that was built under the Absyssinians (R. Lewcock, et al., "The urban development of Sana'a", pp. 124-5; R. Lewcock, "Early and Modern Sana'", pp. 8-11).

[43] The *jabbana* was constructed on the site of the camp of the Abyssinians, which extended along the wadi of Bir Ghimad (R. Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of Sana*, pp. 37-9).

[44] See R. Lewcock's schematic drawings of probably positions of walls and gates in various periods, "Early and Medieval Sana'a."

which is still visible in the eastern part of the city, began at a gate to the east of Talha mosque, and terminated in an open space at the foot of the citadel.[45]

The distinctive layout of Sana'a probably emerged in the centuries following the Islamic conquest, as the city expanded up to the banks of the Sa'ila.[46] The fabric of the city consists of tall, densely packed houses which, however, rarely shared common walls. The houses are often grouped around large, agricultural gardens; most of these were endowed as income-producing properties for mosques or, less frequently, for bathhouses.[47] In contrast to the small squares and streets that wind through the city, the edges of the gardens are somewhat regular, if not orthogonal – attesting to their origin in waqf deeds, which must have specified their boundaries. The small squares, or sarhat, seem to be left-over spaces. Paul Bonnenfant suggests that the sarhat were originally the courtyards of family compounds: over time, as houses were sold to individuals outside the family, the private court (hush) would become public; but the sarha often retains the name of the original owner. [48] The layout of quarters, and family compounds within quarters, may derive from early tribal settlements – although, in contrast to other cities of Yemen, they have not retained meaningful political autonomy.[49]

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[45] R. Lewcock, The Old Walled City of Sana', pp. 39-40.

[46] P. Costa, "Sana'", in Serjeant, ed., The Islamic City, p. 156.

[47] In the forty-three gardens surveyed by the UNESCO mission directed by M. Barcelo in 2000-1, thirty-four were attached to mosques, and nine to hammams (M. Theresa Marquez, "Les jardins potagers urbains de Sanaa: étude hydraulique", in Barcelo, ed., Les Jardins de la Vielle Ville de Sanaa, p. 18).

[48] "Maisons. Voisins, et Exterieur", in P. Bonnenfant, ed., Sana'a, Architecture Domestique et Société, pp. 65-6. I found evidence for this process in the area called al-Zumar: a large open space, surrounded by houses and accessed via an arched passage, appeared to be jointly shared by the families. I asked some children the name of the square, who replied, "it's hush al-Mutawakkil (the courtyard of the al-Mutawakkil family)." They pointed to one of the girls who lives in the house at the northwest corner of the square, and said, "This is their quarter (hara)."

[49] In cities of the Hadhramaut, for example, the boundaries of quarters were, at least until recently, well-known and actively maintained (or disputed) by residents; they were, to a large extent, autonomous entities within the city. In Sana'a, in contrast, the boundaries are not precise and are not

The endowed complexes (*awqaf*, sing. *waqf*) of Sana'a – consisting of mosque, bathhouse, lavatory, agricultural garden, and water supply system – must date to the early centuries of Islamic rule in Sana'a;[50] they form a unique urban morphology, inserted into what may have originally been a quasi-rural settlement pattern. Together with the houses, the endowments create a kind of eco-system based on the recycling of human waste and water, while providing for the production of perishable agricultural products within the walls. Since *waqf* land cannot be divided or sold, these urban endowments ensured that the land, and the facilities to which it was linked, would be kept intact.[51] Because fresh and waste water must be circulated through the various parts of the complex, its design is conditioned by topography. A close physical study of the *awqaf*, along with the endowment deeds, would provide the basis for an environmental and and social history of the city, while revealing much about its physical development.[52] The location of the *awqaf*, and the

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generally known by residents. Perhaps because of Sana'a's long subservience to central governments, its quarters lost their autonomy and thus a basis for their identity (R. B. Serjeant and H. al-Amri, "Administrative Organization", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *San'a*, p. 146). Ten years ago GOPHCY attempted to map boundaries of quarters (N. Monasser, D. Heepen, "The Boundaries of the Quarters in the Old City of Sana'a," Sanaa: GOPHCY, 1995).

[50] See R. B. Serjeant and H. al-Amri, "Administrative Organization", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *San'a*, pp. 151-4.

[51] R. B. Serjeant and H. al-Amri estimated that some two thirds of the old city of Sana'a is endowed as one of several types of *waqf* ("Administrative organization", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'*, p. 151). Representatives of the Ministry of Awqaf are currently compiling new statistics; they estimate that *waqf* properties may account for 90% of the land in the old city.

[52] Gardens are constructed at a low elevation, sometimes two to three meters below street level; some were constructed at the bottom of clay quarries, which were excavated to make bricks (R. B. Serjeant and R. Lewcock, "The Houses of Sana'a," in Serjeant and Lewcock, *Sana'a*, eds., p. 461). While the street level has risen over the centuries, the garden must remain at a low elevation relative to the mosque and its ablutions pool (*birka*), which distributes water to it; the point of entry of the water must remain constant relative to the system of canals that feeds the garden (Marquez, "Les jardins potagers de Sana'a, étude hydraulique," in M. Barcelo, ed., *Les jardins de la vielle ville de Sanaa*, p. 21). A similar procedure exists in the *hammam*, where whose grey water is collected in a drain and distributed to the garden. Other key relationships can be found in surviving wells and enclosures (*maran'i*, sing. *marna'*) which have been abandoned in favor of electric pumps. Water lifting devices were operated by animals who walked and back and forth along long ramps, which were often roofed. The length of the ramp is directly proportional to the depth of the well – both of which

development of the city in general, were closely tied to a complex system of water supply and drainage. Water for drinking and irrigation was drawn primarily from underground wells, which are often linked by man-made water channels called *ghayls*, similar to the Persian *qanawat*. During the rainy season the dry river beds, or *wadis*, flood and carry rainwater away from the city. The position of the *ghayls* and the *wadis* must have responded to, and in turn influenced, the development of the city.[53]

During the 10th and 11th centuries the city changed hands numerous times; much of it was destroyed and rebuilt. By the 12th century or earlier, the city had expanded across the banks of the *Sa'ila*. The Ayyubids built their palace on the west bank, with gardens fed by a *ghayl* that had been reexcavated and extended; the area is still called Bustan al-Sultan, although most of the garden has disappeared. They also repaired or rebuilt and extended the city wall around these new districts: where the wall crossed the *wadi*, arched openings (*khanadiq*, sing. *khandaq*) allowed floodwaters to pass through it.[54] In the following centuries large houses with gardens appeared in the area to the west of Bustan as-Sultan,

were modified over time, in response to changing groundwater conditions (I. Hehmeyer, "Mosque, Bath, and Garden: Symbiosis in the Urban Landscape of San'a", *Seminar for Arabian Studies*, Brepols, vol. 28, 1998, p. 109). For the current state of the urban gardens, see chapter four, pp. 235-7; for a discussion of the *marna'*, see chapter six, pp. 376-8.

[53] Heymeyer notes, for example, that two mosques were built along the course of the Ghayl al-Aswad so as to have access to this water source ("Mosque, Bath, and Garden, p. 109). For a discussion of the *ghayls*, see R. B. Serjeant, et. al,,"The Ghayls of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, pp. 19-31. Whereas in other parts of Yemen *wadis* are used to collect and distribute rainwater - for example, at the ancient dam at Ma'rib – the *wadis* in Sana'a seem to have been used primarily for drainage (R. Lewcock, personal conversation).

[54] It is probably because of this campaign of rebuilding that tradition attributes the city walls to Turan Shah, brother of Salah ad-Din (P. Costa, "San'a", in Serjeant, ed., *The Islamic City*, p. 156). Ibn al-Mujawir, writing in the 13th century, says that the walls were rebuilt in the 11th century before the Ayyubid conquest by the Sulayhid dynasty, incorporating seven gates. The *khanadiq* were destroyed by floods and rebuilt several times during the 16th and 17th centuries (R. Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of Sana'*, pp. 44-6). The area of Bustan al-Sultan is now a *qat suq* surrounded by development. The repair of the Ghayl al-Aswad, which reached Bustan al-Sultan, was ordered by Ali bin Salah ad-Din in 1400-1 (Serjeant, et. al,,"The Ghayls of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 26).

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outside the walls, which came to be called called Bir al-Azab after one of its quarters. Bir al-Azab would be favored by the Ottomans in the 16th century as a garden residential quarter.

The Ottomans, who ruled for Sana'a for ninety years (1547-1623), established the governor's seat in the Qasr and transformed the surrounding area into an administrative center. They constructed the mosque of al-Bakiriyya to the north, which may have provided a new, imperial prototype for the city. They also formalized the square below the Qasr, building upon it a *hammam* to support the mosque; a wide, tree-lined avenue was laid out from the square to the northern gate of the city, Bab al-Shu' ub. The city's fortifications were upgraded during this period, in accordance with the new requirements of heavy artillery.[55]

The "Zaydi Renaissance" and second Ottoman occupation

In 1630 the Zaydi imams drove out the Ottomans and managed for the first time to bring much of Yemen, including the Hadhramaut, under the rule of a single dynasty. The unification of territories under the Qasimis is sometimes viewed anachronistically as the first Yemeni state.[56] Sana'a became their capital in the 18th century: it enjoyed a period of prosperity under the so-called "Zaydi renaissance," due in large part to the role of Yemen in the coffee trade. Most of the great *samasir* (caravansarays; sing. *samsara*) appear to date from this period.[57] In the early 18th century the Imam al-Mutawakkil Qasim (r. 1716-27) initiated a building program outside the western wall near Bab as-Sabaha, intended as a new

[55] P. Costa, "San'a", in Serjeant, ed., *The Islamic City*, p. 156; R; Lewcock, *The Old Walled City of San'a*, pp. 46-7; Kopp and Wirth, *San'a*, p. 22.

[56] P. Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, p. 5 and p. 223, fn. 5.

[57] For a brief discussion of the *samsara* as a building type, see chapter six, pp. 302-3.

center of power distinct from the Ottoman imperial precinct around the Qasr.[58] The

complex included royal residences, gardens, a mausoleum, and public baths. Several open

spaces, enclosed within walls, fronted this complex on the east and west, including a

ceremonial parade ground. The mausoleum is the only surviving part of the original

complex, which was transformed in the following centuries. In the last decades of the 18th

century, a new Jewish quarter was created to the west of Bir al-'Azab, which came to be

known as Qa'a al-Yuhud.[59] This area and Bir al-'Azab were absorbed into the city when the

walls were extended in the early 19th century.[60]

The advent of modernity in Sana'a is usually identified with the second Ottoman

occupation, but some scholars have pointed to earlier origins. Messick describes

modernization in Yemen as a cumulative process of "detailed shifts" that occurred from the

Ottoman occupation onward.[61] If we accept the notion of an "early modern period", the

origins of modernization must be sought in the first Ottoman occupation and the subsequent

prosperity that accompanied the coffee trade, which linked Yemen to a global market. These

detailed shifts would then extend further back. Bernard Haykel, for example, identifies

changes that took place in the 18th century imamic state, in particular, new formalized

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[58] N. Um, "Eighteenth century patronage in Sana'a: building for the new capitol during the second century of the Qasimi imamate", *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, vol. 34, 2004, p. 6.
[59] The Jewish community had been exiled to the Tihama in 1678 for refusing to convert to Islam; they were allowed to return two years later but were made to settle two kilometers to the west of the old city. See A. Shivtiel, et. al., "The Jews of San'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, pp. 391-431.
[60] Lewcock, et. al., "The Urban Development of San'a," p. 137, in Serjeant and Lewcock, *Sana'*, p. 111).
[61] *The Calligraphic State: textual domination and history in a Muslim society*, Berkeley: *University of California Press*, 1993, p. 107.

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practices and bureaucratic structures which tended to supersede the old form of rule based on the charisma of the imam.[62]

Deteriorating conditions in the 19th century – called the "time of corruption" by Yemeni historians – are attributed to the decline of the coffee trade and the breakdown of Zaydi rule. As a result, the Ottomans were received with a degree of local support.[63] Sana'a was again made capital of the *vilayet* of Yemen, and remained so until the dissolution of the empire in 1918. Although historians have portrayed the second Ottoman occupation as a period of decline, Kopp and Wirth maintain that it was a time of prosperity for the city, the result of its new position in a wider imperial and world market. It was during this time, they believe, that many buildings were built and renovated in the old city, and the distinctive architectural style of Sana'a reached its apogee – even as the agricultural hinterland and its villages fell into ruin.[64]

The Ottomans reestablished their presence in the vicinity of the Qasr, lining the avenue with new administrative buildings and schools, and restoring the Bakiriyya Mosque.[65] At one end of the square – presumably *al-Maydan*, the square below the *Qasr* - was a thoroughfare that led to the old *suq*, lined with cafes and shops frequented by Turkish officers; called "el-Casino" by the Arabs, it was the site of a new kind of urban life during

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[62] *Revival and Reform in Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; cited in N. Um, "Eighteenth Century Patronage", pp. 4-5.

[63] Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, p. 4. The Ottomans occupied the Tihama coast in 1847. As in the 16th century controlling the highlands was more difficult, but was facilitated by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which enabled the Ottomans to move large contingents of troops quickly into the highlands of Yemen and the Hijaz.

[64] *Sana'a*, pp. 30-42. Many migrants from the villages went to work in the construction sector in the city. A new trade in European products enriched merchants in the markets of Sana'a and the port of al-Hudeyda. According to foreign observers, the Arabs were not interested in these products, which were destined for a Turkish elite with a Europeanized lifestyle (p. 41).

[65] The schools included a military academy, an industrial school, and two civilian schools (Lewcock, "The Urban Development of Sana'", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 138).

the period.[66] Outside the southern gate of the city, Bab al-Yaman, new barracks were built

in the late 1880's.[67] The area of the old imam's palaces was reused for official purposes; the

palace of al-Mutawakkil was destroyed, and a military hospital built on the site. Bab al-

Sabah, the old western gate of the city, was demolished presumably to facilitate circulation

with Bir al-'Azab: its name was attributed to Bab al-Shiarara, which survived until the mid-

1960's at the northern edge of the square called Maydan al-Tahrir.[68]

This period also saw important transformations in domestic architecture. The use of

glass appears to have expanded greatly from the end of the 19th century: the opening of the

Suez Canal in 1869 made it easier to obtain, and the Ottoman preference for wide expanses

of glass began to affect local tastes. Garden villas with large glass bays appeared on the

outskirts of Sana'a, in Bir al-'Azab, al-Rawdha, Wadi Dhahr, and Sanhan, built by princely

and merchant families desiring a second residence for summering.[69] Around the same time,

the windows of the tower house underwent a significant change. The old vertical type -

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[66] While Skovgaard-Peterson appears to associate the "Casino" with the wide street that runs between
al-Bakiriyya Mosque and Bab al-Shu'ub, one of the European travelers he cites, Walter Harris, notes
that it is only a "few hundred meters in length"; moreover, "it leads off to the bazaars." This suggests
that the Casino was the beginning of the main east-west artery, al-Suleihi Street, that begins in al-
Maydan and crosses the old city. See "The Appearance and Disappearance of Public Space", in H-C
K. Nielson and J. S. Peterson, eds., *Middle Eastern Cities: 1900-1950*, Proceedings of the Danish
Institute in Damascus I, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2001, pp. 152-4.
[67] These barracks replaced earlier Ottoman barracks which were destroyed around the same time, that
is, 1887. Bab al-Yaman itself was later rebuilt to the design of a Turkish military engineer, along
with a stretch of wall on either side of it (R. Lewcock, "The Urban Development of Sana'a", in
Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 138).
[68] Serjeant and Lewcock, *San'a*, p. 131, fn. 125. On Manzoni's map (1879) the name of the gate
appears as Bab al-Shiarara; in Von Wissman's map (1929) it is called Bab al-Sabah.
    The palace precinct must have been repaired, because Joseph Halevy, who visited Sana'a in
1869, reported that it was in ruins (R. L. Bidwell, "Western Accounts of Sana'", in Serjeant and
Lewcock, *Sana'*, p. 112). In the early 1890's a European made an official visit to the old imam's
palace, so the precinct must have been partially restored. He remarks: "the place has been so changed
and decorated and spoiled that it resembles to-day a huge barracks rather than a palace...the simple
old Arab taste has been changed for the decoration of Louis Quatorze, by no means bad of its
kind...but still sadly out of place" (W. Harris, *Journey Through the Yemen*, Edinburgh and London,
1893, cited in Skovgaard-Peterson, "The Appearance and Disappearance of Public Space", p. 152).
[69] P. Bonnenfant, et. al, "Le Livre des Jours et des Modes", in Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a*, p. 486.

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consisting of a small window surmounted by small circular openings (originally alabaster, later glass) - gave way to wider windows surmounted by an arc of colored glass.[70] These windows appeared in new stories added to older buildings – and perhaps suggest an attempt to emulate the garden villa in the *mafraj* of the tower house.[71]

After the collapse of the Ottoman empire in 1918, Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid ad-Din assumed control of the north and extended his control to Lower Yemen. It is this man, whose rebellions against the Ottomans (1905 and 1911) and subsequent truces with them were framed in proto-nationalist terms, that has been identified with the establishment of modern Yemen – the first time in history wherein polity and territory were coterminous.[72] This new Yemeni nation was defined by borders and underpinned by historical and geographical studies, sponsored by the Imam. While Yahya is often portrayed as a "traditional" ruler who isolated his country from the outside world, the term "progress" was often heard in official discourse: it was part of an ongoing conversation among intellectuals and in the press, which could not be halted by Yahya's ban on wireless receivers.[73] The trappings of a modern state were introduced, including a standing army and a ministerial

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[70] The old ratio of window to the lite (*qamariyya*) above, typically 2:1, was reduced to 1:1; see illustration in P. Bonnenfant, et. al., "Le Livre des Jours et des Modes," in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a*, p. 482).

[71] Bonnenfant, et. al., "Le Livre des Jours et des Modes", p. 484. Lewcock, however, points out that the *mafraj* itself predates the Ottomans: the ancient Qasr Ghumdan, for example, was described with a *mafraj*-like room at the top (personal conversation). The Dutch traveler Niebuhr saw Venetian glass in Sana'a in the 18th century, but according to Bonnenfant it only came to be used on a wide scale at the end of the 19th/early 20th centuries.

[72] The Zaydi dynasty had now, in Yahya's terms, reestablished its millennial rule, that is, from the 10th century CE to the 20th – a claim that was at once modern and dynastic (P. Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 7-9). The following account of the later imams and the post-revolutionary period draws from P. Dresch, *Modern Yemen*; R. Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic*, chapters two and three; and Kopp and Wirth, *San'a*, pp. 42-68.

[73] Yahya wanted to save Yemen from the fate of other Arab countries which had been colonized, he believed, because foreigners had been allowed to develop their resources. "I would rather my people and I eat straw", he reportedly said, "than let foreigners in." But Yemen was part of the wider Arab-Islamic world and was not insulated from nationalist ideologies (P. Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 50-1).

system, yet power remained concentrated in the person of the Imam. He did not allow travel outside the country, but did send some young men to Iraq and Egypt, to learn skills required for government. Those who went to Egypt in 1947 – later known as the "Famous Forty" - were to become the country's first generation modernists.[74] The imam undertook hesitant, modernizing projects, built public buildings, including schools, and restored and expanded mosques; one of the latter projects included a new library at the Great Mosque of Sana'a.[75] All of these efforts were focused on the capital - while the expansion of the city continued to be restricted by tribal ownership of surrounding land. Buildings built for the imam in this period include the mosque and palace at the complex of al-Mutawakkil (1936);[76] the near-by palace of Dar al-Shukr (1933); and the palace at Wadi Dhahr (1941-6).

Yahya was assassinated in 1948 by tribesmen in a plot by a group of progressive intellectuals. After ordering tribes to sack the city – a brutal undertaking that still burns in peoples' memories - Yahya's son and successor, Ahmad, transferred the capital to Ta'izz and never set foot in Sana'a again. Although Ahmad emulated the rule of his father, it was now the era of Nasserism and the Cold War – and the transistor radio, which was easier to conceal[77] – so isolationism was impossible. There is very little information on development of the city during this period, but because the capital was located elsewhere, it has been

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[74] R. Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic*, pp. 20-2; "The Famous Forty and their Cohorts: North Yemen's First Generation Modernists and Educational Emigrants," unpublished paper, no date.
[75] R. B. Serjeant, "The Post-Medieval and Modern History of San'a and the Yemen", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *San'a*, p. 100. His modernizing projects included the electrification of the palace quarter (1922) and the introduction water pumps; the extension of telegraph and postal networks which had been set up by the Ottomans; and the laying of truck routes, accompanied by security measures (Kopp and Wirth, *Sana'a*, pp. 43-4).
[76] The buildings on this site are currently being restored and renovated to house the new National Museum.
[77] Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, p. 77.

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assumed that little change occurred.[78] The Jews left Yemen in 1950, doubtlessly impacting

the city's economy; the abandoned quarter of al-Qa'a would be appropriated in the following

decade by migrants to the capital. Ahmad played the politics of the time, opening the door to

foreign assistance and intervention. An anti-British pact with Egypt and Saudi Arabia

(1956) led to closer ties with Nasser's Egypt, the supply of Soviet arms, and Egyptian

military advisors. Ahmad began a road-building program which, writes Burrowes,

> in the mid-1960's would come to symbolize great power competition for influence in less
> developed countries: the Soviets, Americans, and Chinese each working to build a highway
> on a different side of the triangle formed by Sanaa, Taiz, and al-Hudayda.[79]

The 1962 Revolution

From the late 1950's through the 1960's, Yemen became a theater of regional and

international politics, resulting in a series of overlapping wars.[80] Ahmad and his son, Crown

Prince al-Badr, were ousted in 1962 and a republican government was established under the

sponsorship of Egypt. The civil war that ensued became a war by proxy between Egypt and

Saudi Arabia which supported the republicans and the royalists, respectively. In the south,

the new federation of Aden and the hinterland opposed the British. When the Egyptians and

the British withdrew in 1967 Yemen remained divided as two states: North Yemen and South

Yemen, the latter a socialist state allied with the Eastern bloc.

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[78] Kopp and Wirth, *Sana*, pp. 47-8.
[79] *The Yemen Arab Republic*, pp. 20-1.
[80] The following account draws from Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, chapter four; P. Costa, "Sana'a," in R. B. Serjeant, ed., *The Islamic City*; Kopp and Wirth, *San'a*; F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change," chapter six. It also draws on interviews with officials who served in the Ministry of Works, who asked not to be named; and with Fernando Varanda, who was in charge of implementing a UNDP plan for Sana'a from 1973-5.

By 1963 a full-fledged occupation authority was in place, with some 30,000 Egyptian soldiers in North Yemen. As a new government was created, each office had an Egyptian advisor without whom no decision could be taken:

> To Egyptians Yemen was a 'primitive' country. They seemed convinced that Yemenis were incapable of conducting their own affairs and, as journalists noted, spoke of them in the racist fashion the British once used of Egyptian peasants.[81]

Sana'a seemed to embody this primitive state: foreshadowing the language of conservation, Cairo newspapers portrayed the city as a relic of the Middle Ages, in an attempt to gain support of the Egyptian public for an unpopular occupation and war.[82] The idea of Yemen as backward and "medieval" was internalized by many Yemenis, especially the Republicans, who aspired to the modernity they saw in Nasser's Egypt.

After the revolution the government undertook to modernize Sana'a, the capital of the new Republic, and to erase the memories of the imams' rule. There is a curious silence about planning in this period, which destroyed the western wall, part of the southern wall, and several gates circa 1964, and later, the northern and southern *khandaq*s (flood gates) over the *wadi*. It is significant that two of the individuals who directed the demolitions were among the "Famous Forty" sent for education abroad by the imam in the 1940's. 'Abd al-Latif Dayfullah served as Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Public Works; trained in Cairo, he was one of five army officers who plotted and carried out the revolution. According to a former official at the Ministry, Dayfullah directed the first round of demolitions with the encouragement of Egyptian advisors. "For the Egyptians, the only antiquities (*athar*) were in Egypt," said the official. "The *athar* of Yemen were worth

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[81] Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, p. 93.
[82] Dr. Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, former Prime Minister, interview, April 2004.

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little."[83] 'Abdullah al-Kurshimi, another of the Famous Forty and one of Yemen's first engineers, served as Minister of Public Works from1967-8 and from 1975 onward.[84] A senior official who worked under him in the 1970's said that al-Kurshimi's policies were informed by his training in Egypt. "He knew only Egypt," said the official, who asked not to be named. "He destroyed everything."[85]

Bab al-Khuzaymah and Bab al-Saqadif, which had enclosed the precinct of al-Mutawakkil, were demolished in order to open up a new street along the path of the old western wall, 'Abd al-Mughni Street. In 1966 the gate known as Bab al-Sabah, which stood at the corner of the present Yemen Arab Bank, was demolished and the open space outside the old palace precinct was transformed into a public square, Maydan al-Tahrir (Liberation Square; figure 6).[86] 'Abd al-Mughni Street, and the street that ran along the southern edge of the old city, al-Zubayri, generated a grid that would guide subsequent development. 'Abd al-Mughni Street was lined with buildings in reinforced concrete intended for commercial and multi-family residential use. Designed after Egyptian models, the buildings were

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[83] He noted that the Ministry of Public Works owned all the earth-moving equipment in Sana'a, which had been given to them by the Soviets (interview, 8/7/04). Varanda confirms that planning in the 1960's was directed by the Ministry of Public Works with the assistance of foreign, mainly Egyptian, advisors ("Tradition and Change", p. 204).

This official I interviewed told me that Dayfullah was Minister of Works after the revolution. According to Burrowes, he served as Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in 1963-4; he served as Minister of Public Works in 1974 and perhaps earlier. Dayfullah could have directed the demolition of the walls in any of these capacities (personal communication, 6/22/06).

[84] R. Burrowes, "The Famous Forty," p. 4, 10, 12; The Yemen Arab Republic, p. 36; and personal communication, 6/22/06. Al-Kurshimi spent a decade in Egypt (1948-59) and was one of three engineers to return to Yemen before the revolution; between 1968 and 1975 he held a number of cabinet posts and served briefly as prime minister.

[85] Interview, July 2005.

[86] The design was by British-trained engineer Muhammad Ahmad al-Junayd (R. Burrowes, personal communication, 6/22/06). Al-Junayd was founder of the Ministry of Finance and directed it for many years. The gate at the site of the Yemen Arab Bank was called Bab al-Sabah, but historically it was Bab ash-Shiarara; see above, p. 114.

imposed by the state and supported by funds from the U.A.R. (figure 7) [87] They were never

accepted for residential use, so all floors came to be occupied by retail and offices. The

contractors were from Adan, part of the first great wave of migration from the south: they

had learned new construction techniques under the British and sometimes used Egyptian

architects.[88] Until today Abd al-Mughni Street and the near-by Jamal Abd al-Nasser School

are seen as emblematic of both the revolution and the Egyptian occupation.

Although the city did not begin to expand rapidly until the mid-1970's, significant

building took place during the years of civil conflict: by 1970, the built-up area covered an

area three times the size of the city as it was in 1962 (figure 8). [89] The development was

generally low density and scattered, lacking in public utilities. In some areas, as in the zone

to west of the Sa'ila, development followed the kind of gridded layout proposed in an

Egyptian plan drafted during these years.[90] Much of the building activity in and around Bir

al-Azab and in the area of Bab al-Shu'ub provided new government infrastructure. Jamal

Street – named after the Egyptian president – was widened and developed into a secondary

commercial center: while many of the buildings were typologically new, they retained a local

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[87] J-L Arnaud, "Formation de l'architecture contemporaine à Sanaa (1965-1990)", in Grandguillaume, ed., *Sana Hors les Murs*, pp. 72-4. Arnaud notes that these projects had more to do with political expediency rather than a need for housing.

[88] Former Prime Minister 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd al-Ghani worked briefly for one of these contractors in 1967, Sharikat al-Nil, which built four of the early buildings on 'Abd al-Mughni Street. The company used Egyptian architects, and the workers and clerks had worked with the British in Aden (interview, November 2004).

[89] A. Bertaud, "Report on planning, building, and related fields in the municipality of Sana'a", Information Paper no. 1 (UNDP?), July 1970. Kopp and Wirth's map of development to 1970 was constructed on the basis of aerial photos at the Survey Authority. Costa says that development outside the city walls, at least on the northern side, did not affect the aspect of the city until 1969 ("Sana'a", p. 161).

[90] A. Bertaud, "Report on Planning", p. 4; Kopp and Wirth, *Sana*, p. 53. The Egyptians drew up plans for the three largest towns of North Yemen. Their plan for Sana'a proposed gridded extensions to the north, west, and south of the city: "[t]he design reveals the simplifications of the drawing board as a medium at the same time that it shows the predominance of networks over sites" (F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change", pp. 203-4). When Varanda arrived in Yemen in 1973 the Egyptian plan was still being used by the surveyors at the Ministry of Works (interview, 12/14/04).

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style and detailing.[91]   Palaces that had belonged to the imam were adopted for government purposes: the Ministry of Finance, for example, was located in Dar al-Sa'ada in the 1970's.

The attention that has been given to the walls of San'a both after the revolution and in the era of conservation – roughly, from 1980 onward - reveals their potent symbolism.   In the medieval period, as now, the walls defined the image and identity of Sana'a, whose protective function was not only physical, but symbolic and even magical.[92]   During the civil war, the city's vulnerability from the air demonstrated that these land defenses were outdated and futile.   At the same time, the new Republican ideal envisioned the end of tribal conflict, making the walls unnecessary.[93]   For many in Sana'a at the time the walls represented another kind of "protection": the isolationist policies of the imams, which had insulated the population from progress.   Other than the western and southwestern walls, the walls around the old core and a stretch of wall near Bab al-Balaqa were more or less intact in the early 1970's, but were slated for demolition.   When several foreign consultants tried to convince the Minister of Public Works to save the remaining walls, the latter reportedly said:

> We do not want things that remind us of a time when Sana'a was backward – the imam's time, when Sana'a was surrounded by mud walls.   We do not want these symbols.[94]

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[91] F. Varanda, interview, 12/14/04; Kopp and Wirth, *Sana'a*, p. 53.

[92] Al-Razi, writing in the 11th century, related the magical ability of the walls to ward off attacks. Two talismans on the gates of the city, he wrote, protected the inhabitants from snakes which were unable to enter the city (F. Mermier, "Les Fondations Mythiques de Sanaa et d'Aden", *Revue du monde musulman et de la Mediterrannée*, vol. 67, special issue, "Le Yemen, présent et passé de l'unité", 1994, p. 134).

[93] Varanda, "Tradition and Change," p. 194.   Varanda notes that at the entrances to houses in the countryside, images of airplanes could be found alongside signs like the hand of Fatima, suggesting their value as a modern talisman.

[94] F. Varanda, interview, December 2004.   A former employee of the ministry noted the irony of the association, since most of the existing walls had been built by the Ottomans, not the imams.

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The Ministry was finally persuaded – how or by whom, it is not clear – to leave the remaining walls around the central core intact. But the walls around Bir al-Azab and al-Qa'a, along with their gates, were gradually demolished by encroaching development.[95]

Urban expansion in the 1970's

The Egyptians withdrew in 1967. The regime that had ruled under the occupation was replaced by a conservative coalition of moderate republicans and tribal leaders. The coalition was strengthened by the National Reconciliation Pact of 1970, that ended the civil war between Republicans and Royalists; moderate Royalists (including *saada*) were brought into the fold of the regime. The new coalition, notes Burrowes, "contained a strong restorative undercurrent."

> In addition to seeking to return to Yemeni hands control over Yemen's destiny, it sought to restore certain traditional Yemeni values and practices that had been challenged by the rhetoric of Arab socialism and by other ideas during the Egyptian interlude.[96]

The restorative current was also evident in architecture. In the years following the revolution many in Sana'a had been attracted by the new way of life that the Egyptians brought, and wanted to live in modern houses. They associated the old architecture with the imam's regime.[97] After the Egyptians' departure, the buildings they built were "yemenized":

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[95] By the early 1970's the earthen towers at Bab al-Qa'a, at the far end of Jamal Street, had been destroyed (F. Varanda, interview). In 1976 Paolo Costa called for the protection of the surviving stretch of wall near Bab al-Balaqa, whose southern (exterior) face was particularly impressive. A new road along that stretch prevented development alongside the wall, but intense building activity was taking place along the northern side "without any plan to assure appropriate access. As each house is completed, the owners open a breach in the walls according to their personal requirements or haphazardly, without the least consideration for preserving the old wall. In one case the aperture has been dug right through a tower, which consequently was completely destroyed" (Costa, "Sana'a", in R. B. Serjeant, ed., *The Islamic City*, p. 64).

[96] Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic*, pp. 28-9.

[97] 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd al-Ghani, former Prime Minister and head of the Board of Trustees for the Preservation of Old Sana'a, interview, November 2004. He currently heads the Consultative Council (*majlis al-shura*).

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balconies were closed in and decorative, multi-lite windows (*qamariyyas*) were installed. In institutional architecture, Egyptian models were rejected in favor of a more domesticated modernism that incorporated local features.[98]

The new government faced the task of creating an institutional structure and providing basic infrastructure for much of the country, in conditions of ongoing financial and political crisis (including a war with South Yemen in 1972). The new state was entirely dependent on foreign aid, which was shaped by Cold War politics. State institutions, as such, were not truly operational before 1975. Nevertheless, a government agency for antiquities and libraries was set up and a National Museum established in 1969. In 1972 an Antiquities Law was passed, which provided for the surveillance of sites and monuments of historic value. A small architecture studio was installed in the new National Museum, charged with initiating an inventory and survey of the principal monuments.[99]

In the 1960's tribal and *waqf* land surrounding the city had been purchased or illegally seized, ending traditional barriers to development outside the walls.[100] As civil conflict abated, pressure for development became intense. There were no mechanisms to guide this growth. Although the Ministry of Public Works had been created soon after the revolution, as of 1970 there were no cadastral records or aerial surveys, no land use or zoning

[98] S. al-Suleihi, personal conversation; J-L Arnaud, "Formation de l'architecture contemporaine à Sanaa," in Grandguillaume, et. al. eds., *Sanaa hors les murs*, pp. 72-4. "Yemenized" residential buildings can be seen to the east of 'Abd al-Mughni Street, at the edge of the old city in the area around Bustan al-Sultan.

[99] A. Daolatli, mission report for ICOMOS, September 1982, 2.1. It is uncertain if this studio is the archeological section to which Costa refers, which opened in 1971 in Dar al-Shukr. Costa was appointed to catalogue the archeological collection at the museum in 1971 (P. Costa, interview, September 2004; and "Sana", in R. B. Serjeant, ed., *The Islamic City*, p. 162; Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 226).

[100] While Kopp and Wirth mention the sale of tribal lands (*San'a*, p. 52), they do not mention the illegal seizure and sale of *waqf* land. According to several informants, the practice was widespread throughout the 1960's.

guidelines, land development laws, or safety and health regulations. A building permit

process had recently been implemented but municipalities, which did not provide utilities and

infrastructure, had little authority to enforce it. Moreover, there were no individuals trained

in surveying, planning, or architecture.[101] The government did not have the funds or capacity

to deal with urban improvements such as the installation of utilities, roads, and solid waste

collection. In 1975 Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, one of the leaders of the revolution, formed a

Committee for the Improvement of the Capital (*lajnat tahsin al-'asima*), composed of

officials and prominent citizens. By lobbying well-to-do businessmen (including migrants to

the Gulf), the Committee was able to raise money to improve streets and install utilities. But

the streets improved were outside the walled city, some along its perimeter.[102] In the 1980's

Sheikh Sinan would serve on the Board of Trustees for the UNESCO campaign to save the

"old city." The area had been hooked up to an electrical grid in the mid-1960's, but there

was no running water until 1975. Sewers were not installed until the 1980's.[103]

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[101] Varanda was a consultant to the Ministry of Public Works from 1973-5, charged with implementing Bertaud's Master Plan at the level of the neighborhood. He and several other European consultants undertook to train the staff of the surveying office in their spare time in English, geometry, and the rudiments of planning; Varanda also developed a manual of land-use planning. Some of the trainees earned scholarships to study abroad and returned to assume responsible positions in government (Varanda, "Tradition and Change"pp. 204-9, and interview; see also A. Bertaud, "Report on planning, building, and related fields").

[102] These were al-Zubayri, al-Shu'ub (these ran along the northern edge of the old core), al-Qasr, and al-Qiyada (S. Abu Luhum, *Haqa'iq wa watha'iq 'ishti, Sana'a: mu'assasat 'afif al-thiqafiyya*, 2005, pp. 20-1; Dr. A. A. Othman, Professor of Sociology, Sana'a University, interview, July 2005). Othman was then Minister of Municipalities and served on the committee, which included Muhammad al-Ruba'i, Minister of Social Affairs; Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik al-Mutawakkil, head of the People's Cooperative for the Development of Sana'a; Qadi 'Ali 'Abdullah al-Amri, province of Sana'a; 'Ali Lutf al-Thawr, President of the Yemen Bank; and others.

        Qadi 'Ali Abu Rijal told me that a "committee of notables" (*majlis al-'ayan*) paved the area of Bab al-Sabah, but others said this did not happen. "We wanted to introduce the benefits of modern life into the city," said Abu Rijal, "while preserving its special qualities." He served as Deputy Minister of Public Works, but says that he assumed the position after the demolitions had been carried out.

[103] This according to Dr. Muhammad Sa'd, Professor of Urban Geography at the University of Sana'a. "Our house was the fourteenth house to get electricity," he recalls. "I remember that children

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Over the course of the decade a series of plans were commissioned by the Ministry of

Public Works and the Ministry of Municipalities.[104] But these plans were not implemented,

or implemented only in part – primarily because there was no cadre of trained technicians to

implement them, and no legal or planning framework to guide the work. The main problem

was the lack of authority, especially in the face of opposition from powerful interests.[105]

Following current urbanistic thinking, few of these plans were concerned with local context;

indeed, planners in the industrialized world were only beginning to question principles of

urban renewal. In his opening statement at the 1983 Aga Khan Seminar in Sana'a, Prime

Minister Yahya al-Iryani would look back on these plans from the perspective of a new

thinking about the relationship between culture and development.

> Our ancient tradition of building, developed over centuries, reflects the experience of
> generations. But many characteristic features of our buildings have been ignored by planners

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were dancing in the streets!" Water and sewerage were still provided through on-site wells and cesspits, both in the old districts and in new development. As water and sewer lines were laid from the 1970's onward, hookups were usually made by individual owners on an *ad hoc* basis; the situation is much the same today.

[104] The sequence of plans is not well documented. After the Egyptian plan, a Japanese plan was drawn up circa 1968. Alain Bertaud, UNDP consultant to the Ministry of Public Works, produced a plan for Sana'a in 1972 (see below, pp. 126-7). In 1975 the Ministry of Municipalities brought in Chinese consultants to draw up an urban plan; Othman was Minister at the time. This was followed by a Saudi plan (interview, July 2005). Plans for utilities had begun earlier: in 1970, Italconsult (Italy) had drawn up utility plans for Sana'a and Hodeida. The phased installation of a water system began in 1975, funded by USAID and the World Bank (see below, pp. 133-4, fn. 131). In 1975 Howard Humphrey and Sons (UK) was contracted by the National Water and Sewer Authority to plan a modern waste disposal system; the system was not installed until the early 1980's with funds from the World Bank. The World Bank was involved from an early stage, outlining a plan of development for the city in 1975 (Urban Sector Report 2699, March 1981). For a partial list of planning studies that had been done by 1982, see report carried out for the Ministry of Municipalities and Housing by Berger Louis, International and Kampsax, International, A/s, "Urban Planning Study of San'a, al-Hudaydah, Ta'izz, Ibb, Dhamar", 1979, volume one; and J. Abdelkafi, ICOMOS mission report, September 1982, appendix one and bibliography.

[105] The ability of the Ministry of Municipalities and Housing to implement plans, for example, continued to be hampered by the lack of legal authority, budgetary control, and technical capacity; the absence of an effective system of land registration; and the opposition of influential groups to planning initiatives (A. al-Shawish, "Conservation Policies in a Historic City: a Case Study of Sanaa", unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Town Planning, University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology, CARDIFF, October 1987, pp. 52-3).

and those international consultants responsible for the implementation of development projects.

It is worth stressing that in general terms received technology and methods are better and more suitable than modern technological means because they originate in the environment. Because of developed communications, technology transfer has become easier and faster in the twentieth century. But it has led to the adoption and literal imitation of technologies and methods of development that are alien to the need of many societies. Many countries have adopted means of development that are in contradiction to their environments.[106]

The Egyptian plan of the 1960's, for example, would have extended one or more arteries of a proposed grid through the old city to Jabal Nuqum, destroying the houses that stood in the way. In the 1970's Saudi consultants proposed a high-speed road above the *Sa'ila*, in order to make the corridor usable during seasonal flooding. The proposal would have destroyed houses on both sides of the *wadi*, driving a wedge through the old core and attracting development along the banks.[107] Voices rose in opposition to these proposals: European and American consultants at the UNDP (the Sana'a office opened in 1970) charged that the proposals treated the walled city as little more than a slum. They cited the unique architectural, urban, and environmental qualities of Sana'a, and called for their conservation.[108]

Architect Alain Bertaud, consultant to the Ministry of Public Works, was charged with developing a Master Plan for Sana'a (1972), which was primarily concerned with

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[106] "Opening Remarks", *Development and Urban Metamorphosis*, vol. 1, p. xvii.

[107] F. Varanda, interview; R. Lewcock, "Restoration and preservation of the historic architecture of the old city of Sana'a", mission report to UNESCO, 1982, p. 55. In 1982 two proposals for building a road above the Sa'ila were still under consideration; one of these was the so-called "Chinese plan" (designed circa 1975) which channeled floodwaters in a culvert below a raised roadway; the other was that by Quaroni Bonifica, which would have kept the roadway at the level of the wadi floor and place the culvert underneath it (Yoshida, "Study Report on the Wadi al-Sa'ila Improvement Project", 1990, pp. 12-3; Quaroni Bonifica, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center in relation to the urban development of the city", Rome, 1981, Section PII). Lewcock pointed out that flooding made the *wadi* impassable only a few days per year, and that this could be solved or reduced by providing drainage.

[108] Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 226. The following accounts of plans for Sana'a rely on chapter six of this work.

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guiding and controlling future growth. But it differed in several important respects not only from the Egyptian and Saudi plans, but from plans proposed by Europeans for other cities in the region.[109] Bertaud insisted, for example, that new development in Sana'a should be informed by local models, and that local materials and building skills should be used in new construction.[110] His plan also called for the protection of the city's cultural heritage from surrounding development; to underline this point, he undertook the first improvement of public space in the walled city by paving al-Abhar Square in 1972.[111] Although many interesting features of his proposal were rejected – for example, collective urban gardens for new districts, following the model of the *maqshama* - Bertaud succeeded in convincing decision-makers to build institutional buildings in stone rather than in concrete. Also at his suggestion several of the imams' houses, including the palaces at Dar al-Hamd and al-Rawdha, were restored and adapted for use as hotels.[112] Another architect, Derek Matthews, was sent to Sana'a by the UNDP in 1972: as director of institutional projects, he designed a number of important buildings in a local idiom.[113]

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[109] See above, chapter one, pp. 64, 75-6.

[110] In progress reports to the Ministry of Works at the end of 1971, Bertaud wrote that the use of traditional materials was "a prerequisite for the implementation of the Master Plan": it would halve the annual capital investment in construction over the following fifteen years. At the time the cost of concrete construction in Sana'a was three times that of stone (and four to five times higher in the countryside); moreover, money expended on stone construction tended to stay in the community, rather than be funneled to foreign suppliers and contractors (F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 205 and fn. 18-9).

[111] Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 226. After Bertaud left in late 1972, recalls Varanda, "the only people talking about conservation were Costa, Lewcock, Serjeant, and myself" (interview, 12/14/04).

[112] Varanda, "Tradition and Change", pp. 194, 205-9. Some of the institutional buildings that followed principles laid out by Bertaud were the Government Guest House, the new headquarters of the Minister of Public Works and Municipalities, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[113] These buildings included the National Institute of Public Administration, the Health and Manpower Institute, and the Ministry of Justice. In 1972 the Ministry of Public Works and the Head Office of Municipalities were installed in adjoining buildings: Matthews headed the institutional building sector for Public Works, while Bertaud was charged with organizing the Division of Physical Planning and Housing in Municipalities (Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 207).

Foreign embassies were transferred from Ta'izz to Sana'a after 1970, and many sought to set up operations in old houses. Yemeni officials were surprised at this: it was their first indication that the old houses of Sana'a were appreciated by foreigners.[114] With the transfer of embassies to Sana'a and the initiation of various projects, Europeans began to arrive in increasing numbers. They expressed awe and admiration for the local architecture, which prompted Yemeni officials and intellectuals to look at it with new eyes.[115] In October 1970, Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini visited Yemen to shoot footage for the film *Arabian Nights* (1974). He was moved by the beauty of Sana'a and its imminent destruction: he feared that it would follow the course of Italian cities, only to regret it later. He used some extra film to shoot a short documentary, *Le Mura di Sana*, framed as an impassioned plea to UNESCO to save the city. The language reflects Pasolini's mystical "ethics of place."[116] At the same time the prayer-like incantation, addressed to an international agency, evokes the quasi-religious role of heritage in the modern era:

> We appeal to UNESCO – Help Yemen save itself from destruction, which began with the destruction of the walls of Sana.
>
> We appeal to UNESCO – Help Yemen to become aware of its identity and of what a precious country it is.
>
> We appeal to UNESCO – Help stop this pitiful destruction of national heritage in a country where no one denounces it.
>
> We appeal to UNESCO – Find a way of giving this nation the awareness of being a common good for mankind, one which must protect itself to remain so.
>
> We appeal to UNESCO – Intervene, while there is still time, to convince an ingenuous ruling class that Yemen's only wealth is its beauty, and that preserving that beauty means

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[114] Dr. 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, former Prime Minister, interview, April 2004.

[115] 'A-K al-Iryani, interview, and Costa, "Sana'a", p. 160. Dr. al-Iryani remembers that European embassies insisted on setting up operations in old houses; this made an impression on him and other decision-makers, who had assumed they would want modern facilities.

[116] S. Iovino, "The Ashes of Italy: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Ethics of Place", University of Torino, www.arts.ualberta.ca/cms/**iovino.pdf**.

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possessing an economic resource that costs nothing. Yemen is still in time to avoid the errors of other countries.

We appeal to UNESCO – In the name of the true, unexpressed wish of the Yemeni people. In the name of simple men whom poverty has kept pure. In the name of the grace of the Dark Ages,

In the name of the scandalous, revolutionary force of the past.[117]

Pasolini appears to have submitted the film to UNESCO in 1973 – a year after the idea of heritage as "a common good for mankind" was canonized in the World Heritage Convention. In what may have been an accompanying statement, the filmmaker wrote:

Nowadays there is no longer any such thing as a Western or an Eastern culture. For some time now, the boundaries have been blurred. For Europeans, the old city walls of Sana'a are just as important as the lagoon city of Venice.[118]

Over the next few years, rising oil prices transformed the regional situation. From 1974, increasing numbers of Yemenis migrated to the Gulf countries to take advantage of their booming oil economies, sending back their earnings in the form of remittances. Labor migration, through the 1970's and 1980's, was the major catalyst of economic and social change: the shortage of labor and the influx of cash artificially inflated the economy, which had little to offer in the way of industry and services. The rapid growth had a tremendous impact on a variety of sectors, such as water and other natural resources and the form of towns and cities, while hastening the decline of the agricultural sector in a country that was,

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[117] "Le mura di Sana", 1974 (shot on October 18, 1970), documentary; cited and translated by S. Iovino, "The Ashes of Italy". The full text is available in L. Betti and M. Gulinucci, eds., *Le regole dell'illusione*, Roma: Associazione Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1974.
[118] 1973; quoted in "Programme 13: Venise, Sana'a, UNESCO/Transtel", M0365, no date; video film on file at UNESCO Visual Archives, Place Fontenoy, Paris.

and is still, overwhelmingly rural. Yet growth was kept in check to some extent by the labor

shortage.[119]

Capital in the form of remittances was in private hands and was generally not

channeled into the development of industry or commerce: rather, migrants preferred to

invest in land and later, in the construction of family homes.[120] By the mid-1970's,

speculation extended through outlying farmlands in a wave of development that was largely

unplanned, and executed partly or wholly in new, imported materials.[121] Little infrastructure

was in place, nor could the city afford to provide it. The opening of the eastern portion of the

first ring road in 1975 – intended to set the limits of expansion - served rather to increase

speculation along it; at the same time radial connections to the center of the city put

increasing pressure on the old districts (figure 9).[122] Implementation of the 1972 Master Plan

was handicapped by pressure to include increasing amounts of land within the area to be

developed, in Sana as well as in other provincial centers. It was also limited by the absence

of a cadastral survey, the looseness of building permit procedures, and the absence of proper

equipment and trained personnel. Laying out roads was dangerous work: surveying teams

were often fired upon.[123]

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[119] Troin reports that building activity slowed in Sana'a in the mid-1970's, due to the shortage of labor ("Sanaa: géographie d'une explosion urbaine", in Grandguillaume, et. al. eds., *Sanaa hors les murs*, pp. 15-30). For an account of the far-reaching economic effects that accompanied the remittance boom and the introduction of an economy based on wage labor, see Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 137-140; for the impact on the construction sector through the early 1990's, see F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change," pp. 198-202.

[120] Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 137-8.

[121] New construction was built of imported materials such as concrete, iron, plastics, and paint, which were diffused via an expanding road network. The result was, for European observers, a great breach between this new construction and the simple beauty of local forms: even the occasional "discords" of the Ottoman period, notes Costa, had been softened by the use of local materials ("Sana'a", p. 160).

[122] R. Lewcock, interview; P. Costa, "Sana", in Serjeant, *The Islamic City*.

[123] Varanda recalls numerous threats to his surveying team, and on one occasion a surveyor was shot with a machine gun (F. Varanda, interview, 12/14/04.). Such disputes over land are not uncommon in Sana'a today. In roadwork executed by the Committee for the Improvement of Sana'a, Sheikh Sinan

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The decline of the old city

Meanwhile, conditions in the old districts were worsening as new circumstances overwhelmed established mechanisms of urban management – rupturing what local architects describe as a self-sustaining "environmental cycle". There was little room for expansion within the city walls, and in any case, the vast majority of land was *waqf*. But the old city exhibited other kinds of pressures - especially a growing population, due to a rising birth rate and inmigration from the countryside. In some cases, relatives were brought from villages to live in family homes, as prosperous residents moved to the new districts.[124]

Old mechanisms could not keep up with changes, or were replaced by new ones that functioned less effectively. Manufactured products had been introduced on a relatively large scale, but there was no solid waste disposal system in place. By the early 1970's garbage was accumulating in the streets; the municipal street-sweeping system that had been set up by the Ottomans –operated largely by the *akhdam* – could no longer keep the city clean. Changes in the local authority structure released the *'uqal* (sing. *'aqil*), or heads of quarters, from their responsibilities of maintenance, yet new municipal structures were not in place or were ineffective.[125] Most of the streets of Sana'a had probably been paved from the medieval period onward, but in recent decades paving had been torn up by trucks and vehicles. The practice of tamping down the earth with water was gradually abandoned; dust was exacerbated by vehicles, which also rutted the muddy streets during the rainy season.

Abu Luhum was asked to intervene when there were disputes (A-A Othman, interview). Despite numerous plans in the subsequent two decades, draft planning legislation was not finalized until 1989.
[124] M. Sa'd, interview, November 2004.
[125] Varanda, "Tradition and Change", pp. 201-2; A. Oshaish, "Essential description of the historical city of Sanaa for the purpose on inclusion in the World Heritage List", TOPOCS (no date), p. 10; 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mu'assib, Principal, Panyemen Consult, personal conversation. The replacement of local institutions and practices by modern and still ineffective bureaucratic structures is a phenomenon that has touched many aspects of urban life; for the case of land registration, see chapter four, p. 226, fn. 101.

Wastewater from house lavatories – containing urine, but not feces – was disposed in pipes

on the house facades into the unpaved streets, making them humid and unsanitary. The

conditions of the streets were believed to be the single greatest cause of outmigration, which

accelerated over the course of the decade.[126]

One of the main reasons for deteriorating conditions was the change in supply and

consumption of water. Household water in San'a had been obtained from on-site wells,

drawn by bucket to upper floors; it was stored in masonry jars, often placed in a *shubbak* – a

projecting element of stone or brick - where it would be cooled by air currents. Water was

used sparingly, and recycled within the house for various uses.[127] Lavatories within the

house provided for the separation of liquid and solid wastes. Wastewater from bathrooms

and kitchens flowed down a recessed channel on the house façade; from there it was

conducted into a cesspit and soaked into the surrounding earth.[128] Human feces dropped

down a chute within the house that connected toilets on various levels; it quickly dried in the

mountain air and left little smell.[129] This "night soil" was collected via small doors at ground

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[126] Bertaud, "Report on planning, building, and related fields in the municipality of Sana'a"; R. Lewcock, interview and mission reports, 1984; 1987, para. 26.

[127] Itinerant water sellers also sold drinking water, and were still a common sight in the early 1970's. San'a was probably well provided with water, in comparison to other parts of the country: in 1972 it was estimated that 83% of households in the country were without well water. The most common means of water storage was open cisterns, from which women would carry water to their homes – usually uphill from the water source. Many of the cisterns that were clean and in active use in the early 1970's had been abandoned ten years later (Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 86). The following account of water supply and sewerage disposal before and after the revolution draws from this work, pp. 86-88 and 199-202; from P. Helmore, "Water Supply, Sewerage, and Stormwater Drainage", ICOMOS mission report, September 1982; and from Howard Humphreys, Ltd., "Improvements to water supply, sewerage, and stormwater drainage systems", September 1982.

[128] The cesspit was located in the street adjacent to the building, or less often, within the property boundary. There was no provision for emptying the cesspit: rather when a pit filled it essentially sealed itself, and a new pit was dug (R. Lewcock, personal conversation).

[129] The cleanliness of Sana'a has been noted over the centuries by visitors: the 19th century ethnographer Joseph Halevy, for example, considered Sana'a the most beautiful and cleanest town in Arabia, with straight, wide streets that were usually paved (Bidwell, "Western Accounts of Sana'a,

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level and sold to *hammams*, where it was burned as fuel; the ashes were subsequently used as fertilizer on the *maqshamas*.[130]

By the 1970's, due to increasing water consumption and a decreasing water table, wells in both private homes and in *marna'as* were fitted with motor-drive pumps. From the mid-1970's a new water supply system was introduced in phases: water was now retained in reservoirs, piped into the city, and stored in tanks on the roofs of buildings. Early phases of the system, installed first in the old city and al-Qa'a, were flawed in design and installation.[131] With the introduction of piped water, on-site water usage increased

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1510-1962", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 112). For an illustration of the lavatory, see Lewcock and Serjeant, "The Houses of Sana'a", p. 440.

[130] Lewcock believes that the first link in this system to fail was the abandonment of night soil collection (personal conversation, July 2004). According to middle-aged residents I interviewed, night soil collection continued at least through the mid-1970's. I was told that night soil collected in Sana'a was sold outside the city, because people objected to the use of its ashes in food-producing gardens; but I have been unable to verify this.

In the late 18th century or early 19th century, the duty of collecting night soil was imposed on Jews; they were also charged with removing dead animals from the city. The legality of imposing this duty on the Jews was the subject of extensive debate among *'ulema* at the end of the 18th century. Prior to this time, the collection of night soil appears to have been done by the Jews within al-Qa'a, and by Muslim bathkeepers in other areas (A. Shivtiel, W. Lockwood, and R. B. Serjeant, "The Jews of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, *Sana'a*, p. 394). The mass exodus of the Jews after 1948 doubtlessly affected the operation of the system.

[131] The southern portion of the old city, the area south of Tahrir Square, and al-Qa'a were the first areas to receive an "emergency water supply system" in 1975, funded by USAID. Pipes were laid at shallow depths, and sometimes left exposed on the surface; they were subsequently damaged when other work was done, such as the excavation of new cesspits. The pipes also leaked, affecting building foundations which are typically shallow and of dry joint masonry. A number of small, privately owned water distribution systems operated in the old city, and these were also constructed to inadequate standards. Phase one of a water project for Greater Sana'a was carried out from 1975-9 by Annem and Thabet/Lilly, a Lebanese contracting firm, under the direction of the National Water and Sewer Authority. This phase served the remainder of the old city and its immediate suburbs to the west, north, and south. While the phase one system appears to have been properly designed and pipes laid at sufficient depth, there were leakages due to the quality of pipes and workmanship. The phase one system was tied into the old emergency system, which served most of the old city and was still in extensive use in 1982. As parts of the phase one system were brought into operation, severe damage was caused to some buildings in the old city as a result of burst pipes and other defects (Helmore, ICOMOS mission report, 1982, pp. 15-20; Howard Humphreys, Ltd., "Improvements to water supply, sewerage, and stormwater drainage systems," 2.1).

A second phase of the water supply system was designed by Howard Humphreys Engineers and completed by contractor SOBEA in 1982. Phase two extended water supply to newer areas of the

dramatically. But because a sewer system was not installed at the same time, there was no

means to carry the water away. By 1982 flush toilets had been installed in some houses at

the recommendation of the World Health Organization, adding human feces to the waste

collected in the cesspits. [132] Cesspits overflowed under the increased load: sewage soaked

into the ground and seeped into the streets and wells; there were fears that areas of water

supply under low pressure might become contaminated.[133] Faulty pipes and workmanship

resulted in extensive leaking; when pressure within the system improved after 1979, the

leaking increased. Trapped below a perched water table, the groundwater destabilized

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city and upgraded service to the earlier systems. Pressure and water use increased yet again causing a new round of structural issues in the old city, including collapsed buildings. Howard Humphreys also designed a sewage system for the city in 1978; scheduled for construction in 1980, it was delayed for several years. In September 1982, in response to consultants' concern that the installation of a sewage system in the old city was of utmost urgency, Prime Minister al-Iryani assured them that the work had already begun (R. Lewcock, UNESCO mission report, Dec. 1983). The sewage system, along with the repair and upgrading of the water system, were presented as government contributions to the anticipated international campaign. Fewer problems associated with the water supply and wastewater disposal were observed in al-Qa'a, perhaps because the residential units there are smaller (Helmore, ICOMOS mission report, p. 29).

[132] R. Lewcock, "Three Problems in Conservation: Egypt, Oman, and Yemen," in Holod, R., ed., *Conservation as Cultural Survival*, Geneva: Aga Khan Award, 1980, p. 72.

[133] Helmore, ICOMOS mission report, 1982. By the early 1980's there was also evidence of contamination of the aquifers by sewerage (Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 200). Helmore wrote: "The quantity of water now available for consumption in the old City and al-Qa [sic] areas is greater than can be sensibly permitted until adequate sewerage facilities have been constructed and put into operation" (p. 21).

In 1982 most houses appeared to be using the old lavatories, but it was expected that increasing numbers of households would install flush toilets; the load could not be supported by cesspits. The installation of a sewer system was seen as highest priority. WHO's requirement that flush toilets be installed in all houses was questioned by some consultants; in 1982 there was still hope of upgrading the traditional dry chute system, which was seen as an effective and ecologically sound solution (R. Lewcock mission report, September 1982, 145, and interview). They feared that the mixing of sewage with wastewater would have adverse effects. Their fears were justified: in some cases, for example, ablutions water from mosques was not separated from black water coming from the lavatories, depriving the *maqshamas* of irrigation water (SFD project manager, interview, October 2003).

In retrospect, the dry chute system seems in keeping with current efforts to design alternative, ecologically sound toilets that are appropriate to local environments. It is interesting to note, however, that in the 1960's, prior to the introduction of piped water and a sewer system, some families were using water to flush human waste down the dry chute: one resident recalls that it seemed the "modern" thing to do.

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building foundations, which were not designed for water-laden soil. By 1982 some thirty houses had collapsed.[134]

As a result of these conditions, as well as changing lifestyles and preferences, those with means left the old districts. This outmigration – and the concurrent inmmigration from the countryside - has been underestimated in conservation literature, which has painted a portrait of old Sana'a as a place of continuous traditions. Although the numbers are uncertain, the scope of the transformation was clearly dramatic. "Don't believe it when they tell you that *some* people left the old city," said a native of Sana'a, and widow of one of the architects who was a moving force behind the conservation effort. *"Everyone* left, except for very few."[135] The attraction of the new districts were many: they had clean streets and modern amenities, including the possibility of owning a car. New houses types – modeled on rural precedents, or western-style "villas" that migrants had seen in the Gulf – allowed for new comforts, and independence from extended families. Even middle income families could now afford to build new houses, thanks to remittances.[136] The family houses in the old districts were usually left in the hands of elderly or less prosperous relatives, who did not

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[134] R. Lewcock, interview; P. Helmore, "Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage." For an explanation of the perched water table, see R. Lewcock, "The problems of subterranean water in the old urban areas of Arab cities", in Serageldin, I. And El-Sadek, S., *The Arab City: its Character and Islamic Heritage*, Proceedings of a Symposium held in Medina, Saudi Arabia, 28 February – 5 March, 1981.

[135] Most living in the old city, she said, have arrived recently from villages and rent their houses (interview, December 2004). But in their survey of houses in the old city (March 1999) Eckert and al-Maqrami found that 77% of families owned their homes ("Cultural Heritage Report", vol. 2, Annex 3A, p. 35).

Varanda writes that the exodus of population from the old city in the 1970's and 1980's was not as great as had first been feared ("Tradition and Change", p. 229). But this is contradicted by oral testimony. A-A Othman says that very few of what he calls the "'traditional urban middle class" remained in the old city. He says the trend continues: more people tend to leave than move back (interview, November 2004).

[136] Building permits – introduced after 1968, but unevenly enforced – rose steadily after 1975 and reached a peak in 1984 (see chart in Varanda, "Tradition and Change", p. 213). Shortly after joining the UNDP in 1970, Alain Bertaud did a survey of traditional and new house types which has been reproduced in various publications (including Kopp and Wirth, *Sana'a*, pp. 55-7). The original report is entitled "Housing in Sana'a", UNDP, no date.

have the means to maintain them. In some cases houses were rented to migrants from the countryside, who had limited financial resources and were not invested in the maintenance of the houses and the city streets. [137] New construction within the walls was limited by various factors. There was little unbuilt land, and vehicular access was difficult. But there was increasing pressure for development, especially with the opening of the *Sa'ila* as a through road. The dearth of land in the walled city led to demolitions and building on open spaces including the *maqshama*s, where cultivation had declined in recent years.[138]

In the course of only a decade the historic core had been marginalized both physically and economically: in 1971 it was still the dominant physical and social space of the city; by 1982 it occupied a twelfth of the total urbanized area, and housed only one fifth of the population.[139] The new metropolis was organized by new principles, those of consumer culture. In the late 1960's, recalls a Yemeni historian, "every house in Sanaa was a self-contained economic unit, and the original inhabitants depended on what was in their store

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[137] Although this phenomenon has been seen as a politically motivated trope – "blaming" the migrating rural classes for the disintegration of old cities – it seems a reality to many observers, including the writer. For the former argument, see W. C. Bissell "City of Stone, Space of Contestation: Urban Conservation and the Colonial Past in Zanzibar," vol. 1, unpublished dissertation, December 1999; for the process of *ruralisation* of historic districts, see J. Abdelkafi, "La Médina de Tunis," in *Présent et avenir des médinas*.

[138] M. Welbank and J. Figueiras/Shankland Cox Partnership, "San'a: a Report to UNESCO", London, 1978, 3.3.1. In an edict of 1982 the Minister of Municipalities outlawed all new building and substantial alterations in the walled city, suggesting that this activity was not insignificant. Building on the *maqshama*s was seen as particularly problematic, since they are such an "essential...feature of the [old city's] character. This encroachment onto open land has already begun, as has the construction of concrete framed buildings, completely alien in character and scale." For a discussion of the *maqshama*s see below, chapter four, pp. 235-7.

[139] R. Lewcock, mission report, 1982, paragraph 2. The figures given by Lewcock are as follows: the old walled city (that is, excluding Bir al-Azab and al-Qa'a) was 100.8 hectares and had 50,000 inhabitants circa 1971; the area outside the walls in 1982 was estimated at 1250 hectares, with a population of 200,000 inhabitants. Saqqaf estimates that in1962 the city of Sana'a and its old suburbs covered 740 acres; in 1985, as the UNESCO Campaign was starting, it covered 7500 acres; the population had increased from 30,000 to 350,000 (A. Saqqaf, "Sana'a: a profile of a changing city," in A. Saqqaf, ed., *The Middle Eastern City*, 1985, pp. 120-1). See F. Varanda's synthesis and analysis of estimates of population versus built area between 1976 and 1988 in "Tradition and Change", p. 198.

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rooms...and in their own wells." Now, as Dresch observes, economics had replaced ecology.[140]

[140] *Modern Yemen*, pp. 167-8. The author is al-Jawi, *Hisar San'a*, 1975, cited by Dresch.

Chapter 3

The Campaign to Save Old Sana'a

In the early 1970's, the idea of Yemeni heritage was largely restricted to antiquities (*athar*). By the end of the decade, this notion had expanded to include a wider conception of heritage, including settlements and customs. This reflected the international discourse of world heritage, and also a new political era in the YAR. In 1978 Ali Abdullah Salih of the Hashid – one of two major tribal confederations in Yemen – seized power in a military coup, after years of political upheaval. State institutions were now stronger, thanks to assistance from foreign government and institutions. But state authority was weak, at times limited to the environs of the capital. North Yemen was often described as a nation, but not a state.[1] The idea of Yemen as an historical and natural unit easily translated, in the minds of Yemenis, into nationalist sentiments. But the nation meant a unified Yemen, as it was conceived historically and geographically. The leaders of both North and South Yemen were constitutionally bound to work toward unity.[2] It was through unification that Yemen would become a nation-state, where territory, history, and polity coincide.[3]

It was in this context that images of popular heritage (*turath*) started to circulate in the media. Television shows broadcast images of landscapes and towns, and the "customs and traditions" (*'adat wa taqalid*) of both north and south.[4] In political discourse "customs and traditions" were asserted as the basis of tribal identity. The phrase is commonly heard

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[1] Dresch, "A Daily Plebiscite," *REMMM*,vol. 67, no. 1, p. 67; *Modern Yemen*, p. 159.

[2] F. G. Gause, "The Idea of Yemeni Unity," *Journal of Arab Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1987, pp. 55-81.

[3] Here I am extrapolating from Dresch's point: "Since unity in 1990...there seems to be little doubt in Yemenis' minds, wherever they are from, that the state now is properly a nation-state" ("A Daily Plebiscite", p. 67).

[4] Dresch, *Modern Yemen,* p. 150.

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today in Yemen, among individuals of various ages and educations.[5] Another factor was mass education: textbooks "make available, in compact form, a set of discrete state histories (Tahirid, Rasulid, Zaydi) as part of a national history."[6] For revolutionaries the period of the imamate represented darkness and oppression, and some saw the walls of the old city as reminders of this. An increasingly self-confident state would assimilate the Zaydi past, and the walls of the old city would become part of the national, historical narrative.

The idea of the "old city" as a protected area developed over the course of the 1970's, as scholars began to study its history. At the same time, there was growing interest in Sana'a at UNESCO – perhaps sparked by Pasolini's film.[7] By 1975 Sana'a had been listed as an endangered site by the World Heritage Committee. As such, it must have been on the Committee's list of prospective World Heritage sites in the region.[8] But the associations with the old order were still fresh: ex-Royalists, including many who had worked under the last imam, were brought into the government after 1970. In 2005, I asked a prominent *qadi* historian (and former Republican) about this; he had been an official in the Ministry of Public Works and later became a staunch supporter of conservation. "Old Sana'a cannot be seen as symbol for the return to the old order," he said. "Anyway, most of the revolutionaries were from the old city."[9]

As we have seen, Imam Yahya had encouraged historical studies as part of a protonationalist program; later, the pre-Islamic past played an important role in revolutionary

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[5] In 1993 Dresch wrote: "In the context of progressive, developmental rhetoric promoted by the State and parties, tribal 'customs and traditions' (*'adat wa taqalid*) have become a marker of Yemeni cultural authenticity" ("A Daily Plebiscite," p. 73).

[6] Dresch, "A Daily Plebiscite," p. 75.

[7] There appears to be no record at UNESCO of the film, when it was received, or the impact it had. But it is often cited in Yemen as the initial spark that led to UNESCO's interest.

[8] See above, chapter one, p. 77.

[9] Interview, 5/7/04.

ideology. At the end of the 1960's, the new Antiquities Department began to document

important monuments and artifacts. Art historian Paolo Costa oversaw this work and

published a number of studies, including a study of the Great Mosque of Sana'a in 1974.[10]

R. B. Serjeant of Cambridge University, a noted scholar of Islamic architecture and urbanism

and former director of SOAS, had long dreamt of studying North Yemen. Serjeant was a

specialist in south Arabia, and as such had broadened the canon of "Islamic architecture" that

had focused on a handful of Mediterranean Arab cities.[11] Under the imams northern Yemen

had been relatively inaccessible to European scholars and archeologists. With the end of

civil conflict, Serjeant saw an opportunity. He sought and obtained funding for an expedition,

which he carried out with a team of foreign and local experts in 1972, including Ronald

Lewcock. The results of what came to be called the Cambridge Expedition were exhibited

the following year. In 1976, a World of Islam Festival was organized in London, with the

support of Arabists and officers at the British Foreign Office and funding from Saudi Arabia.

As part of the festival an exhibition called "Nomad and City" was installed at the British

Museum, with a section on Sana'a conceived by the Cambridge Expedition team. Intended

as a brief exhibit, it remained open for several years due to overwhelming interest and

attendance. The "City of San'a" was one of twenty-three exhibits at the festival on the art,

music, and culture of the Arabian peninsula. The Sana'a exhibit featured full-sized replicas

of part of the *suq*, a *mafraj* (sitting room) and a typical *Sana'ani* kitchen (*dayma*).[12]

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[10] *La Moschea Grande di Sana'a*, Naples: Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1974.

[11] As late as 1958, in the rewriting of his classic *Early Muslim Architecture*, K. A. C. Creswell wrote that "Arabia, at the rise of Islam does not appear to have possessed anything worthy of the name of architecture" (cited in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'*, p. 11). Serjeant died in 1993. This account is based on interviews with Ronald Lewcock, who collaborated with Serjeant in his work on Sana'a.

[12] R. Lewcock, personal communication, 2/2/05. The exhibit was conceived and created by Serjeant and Lewcock, in association with Paolo Costa, Walter Dostal, Martha Mundy, Rex Smith and Robert Wilson; interpreted and curated by Margaret Hall and her team at the British Museum (Serjeant and

During the mid-1970's, Serjeant and Lewcock spent extended periods in Sana'a,

researching and coordinating the articles that would form the book, *Sana'a, An Arabian

Islamic City* (1983). In 1976 Lewcock was asked to undertake studies of the northern Gulf,

Oman, and Muscat for a variety of sponsors, and worked with UNESCO on the preparation

of an international campaign for Islamic Cairo. He was also approached by UNESCO to

undertake missions to Sana'a and Shibam, and was later appointed coordinator for the

campaigns to safeguard those cities. Many of the individuals who worked in Sana'a had also

worked in Cairo, including Michael Welbank, who would direct UNESCO's first major study

of Sana'a in 1978.[13]

This study, by the British firm Shankland Cox, was carried out in the framework of a

master plan for Sana'a and four other cities by the German firm Berger Kampsax

International.[14] It is not clear whether the Shankland Cox study was initiated by UNESCO

or Berger Kampsax. The Berger Kampsax plan identified an historic core, composed of the

walled city and the old Jewish quarter of al-Qa'a –but not the old suburbs that were

collectively called Bir al-'Azab. The plan also called for a specialized study of this area and

the creation of an administrative framework for its protection.[15] Like the Berger Kampsax

Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 12). See the exhibition catalogue edited by J. Kirkman, *City of Sana'a: Nomad and City Exhibition*, Museum of Mankind, Department of Ethnography of the British Museum, London: World of Islam Festival Publishing Co. Ltd., 1976.

[13] S. Zulficar, interview, Paris, 5/11/05. The study directed by Welbank for Shankland Cox (to be discussed below) was preceded by a brief study by G. Ehrbach, "Cultural Town Planning in Sana'a", dated March 1977 (on file at the Office of Arab States, UNESCO). UNESCO's first work in North Yemen was the conservation of the Zafar Dhi Bin Mosque, overseen by Zulficar in the early 1970's.

[14] Berger Louis, International and Kampsax, International, A/s, "Urban Planning Study of San'a, al-Hudaydah, Ta'izz, Ibb, Dhamar", 1979 (for the Ministry of Municipalities and Housing).

[15] The Berger Kampsax plan was concerned mainly with zoning and road networks, and was thus largely passive in its attitude to directing growth. Nor did it exhibit the kind of interest in local models evident in Bertaud's plan. Like many other plans and studies, however, Berger Kampsax plan remained largely on paper, due to the absence of a legislative framework (Varanda, "Tradition and Change," pp. 210-1; A. al-Shawish, "Conservation Policies in a Historic City", p. 52). In his proposal for a conservation plan for Sana'a circa 1982, Ludivico Quaroni commented that the 1978 Berger

plan, the Shankland Cox study was prepared for what was now the Ministry of Public Works

and Municipalities (Municipalities would separate from Public Works shortly thereafter).

The firm was asked to advise the ministry on matters related to "cultural planning",

especially planning and conservation problems in "Old Sana'a...[which] has recently come

to be regarded as a key element in the world's cultural heritage."[16] Sana'a's listing as a

World Heritage site was thus anticipated in 1978.

Michael Welbank and Julio Figueiras carried out a number of missions to Sana'a for

Shankland Cox that year, and submitted their report in June. The Shankland Cox proposal

would have created *three* conservation districts - the walled core, al-Qa'a, and the districts

known collectively as Bir al-'Azab. The consultants stressed the need to preserve these areas

as living entities, and at the same time to protect them from development pressures. In order

to accomplish this, the existing housing stock and the mix of socio-economic groups should

be maintained; accessibility and services should be improved; and commercial viability

should be enhanced. In language reminiscent of Giovannoni's *diradamento*, the plan called

for sensitive and selective "surgery", distinguishing it from the approach used for

monuments.

> In accordance with the general strategic objective of maintaining the city as a busy living
> entity, the concept of conservation here cannot be an absolute one, as it would be for instance
> in the case of the Pyramids of Giza or other similar monuments. If changes are required to
> keep the city a living entity they must be accepted even at the price of some destruction of the
> existing physical fabric. How the changes are actually effected is a far more critical issue.
>
> In other words, it is better to accept minor surgery now to maintain a healthy living city than
> to reject all surgery at the expense of the patient's death. The conservation task is therefore as
> much concerned with the sensitive handling of change as with defining the exent of
> acceptable change...[17]

Kampsax studies were not adapted to the local context (proposal to the government of Yemen on file
at the Office of Arab States, UNESCO, Paris; no date).
[16] Shankland Cox report, 1978, 1.3, 5.4.2.
[17] M. Welbank, M. and J. Figueiras, "San'a: a Report to UNESCO", Shankland Cox Partnership,
London, 1978, 3.3, 5.1. The authors proposed a degree of "dedensification", a strategy that was

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Their willingness to allow change in the physical fabric – for example, the transformation of

the largely unused ground floor of the tower houses into car parks - was rejected by later

UNESCO consultants, as well as by members of government.[18] Nevertheless, the main

strategic objective of the plan was adopted, which in some ways sanctioned the pattern of

development up to that point: the functional core of the city was "displaced" to the west,

around Tahrir Square, giving it space to expand. In the view of the consultants, this would

allow the walled districts to remain an integral part of the expanding city, yet be protected

against development pressures.[19] Later consultants, however, would see this central position

as exerting significant development pressure on the old city.[20]

UNESCO normally works through Antiquities Departments, but in this case, their

counterpart was the Ministry of Public Works and Municipalities – presumably because the

study was carried out in the context of the Berger Kampsax plan. The historic districts

identified by the team would be administered by a conservation unit within this ministry.[21]

The Department of Antiquities was also interested in conservation. The director of

Antiquities in Sana'a at the time, Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa', is a distinguished historian who

had worked closely with Serjeant and Lewcock's team. He was also a friend of Mounir

Bouchenaki, who would later become Desk Officer for Arab States at UNESCO. Prior to

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proposed around the same time for Fez; but it appears that their analysis of current densities and relation of built to open space was not based on traditional space use in the city. Population density in the old Sana'a is not mentioned by Lewcock and other consultants as a matter of concern in the early 1980's.

[18] R. Lewcock, mission report to UNESCO, April 9-12, 1982, pp. 22-3.

[19] M. Welbank, "Conservation and Development", in *Development and Urban Metamorphosis*, Proceedings of Seminar Eight in the Series "Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World", Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Singapore: Concept Media, 1983, vol. 1, p. 9.

[20] For example H. Eckert,"The Chief Urban Functions of the Old City of San'a Today", Technical Report, Paris: UNDP, 1992; and B-M Nardella, "Mission Report", prepared for UNESCO – Culture, Tangible Heritage Department, January 2004.

[21] M. Welbank, M. and J. Figueiras, "San'a: a Report to UNESCO", 5.4.

this appointment, Bouchenaki had been director of Antiquities in Algeria, and then of the Department of Cultural Heritage.

Bouchenaki recalls that the idea of protecting the "old city" came up at a conference of culture ministers in Sana'a: al-'Akwa' and Youssuf 'Abdullah (who later directed the Department of Antiquities) were frantic about the state of the old city.[22] This was probably the Advisory Committee on Arab Culture, held in Sanaa in June 1979; this was the first of a number of regional conferences in the field of culture held in Sana'a during these years.[23] The following year, at UNESCO's General Conference in Belgrade, North Yemen would refer to the recommendations of the June 1979 meeting in its Draft Resolution to the UNESCO Secretariat. The resolution, submitted on October 3, 1980, requested international assistance to save the "Islamic monuments of Yemen"; the preamble of the resolution called special attention to "the ancient city of Sana'a."[24] Three days earlier, at the thirteenth plenary meeting, North Yemen's representative to UNESCO had called for an international campaign to save the country's heritage, which "we consider a unique and rich example of human heritage, that is the common property of mankind" (*juz' asilan wa mukmilan lil turath al-insani alladhi huwa mulk lil bashariya jam'an*).[25]

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[22] Phone interview, 1/13/05.

[23] Other conferences held in Sana'a were the Arab Conference in Architecture, organized by the Arab Organization for Education Culture and Science (Ninth Session); and a seminar sponsored by the Aga Khan Award, entitled "Modernity and Tradition." The proceedings of the latter conference were published in two volumes under the title *Development and Urban Metamorphosis* (Proceedings of Seminar Eight in the Series "Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World", 1983). The conference was attended by many of the individuals, both Yemeni and foreign, who had been involved in conservation and conservation policy in the country.

[24] Draft Resolution 323, General Conference, Twenty-First Session, Belgrade 1980. Two goals of the Recommendations of the Third Session of the Advisory Committee on Arab Culture were cited: the "appreciation and respect for cultural identity"; and the "preservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage."

[25] Proceedings of the 13th Plenary Meeting, 30 September, 1980, p. 675. North Yemen's representative was Muhammad al-Khadim al-Wajih, Minister of Education and President of the National Commission for UNESCO.

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South Yemen had prepared a similar initiative earlier that year, and North Yemen

must have been aware of it. Several months before the Belgrade conference, South Yemen

had submitted a Draft Resolution for consideration, which called for the protection of

"monuments and sites of historic, cultural, and natural value in Wadi Hadramaut and

particularly the architectural heritage of the city of Shibam." The resolution notes that

UNESCO had already supported a general survey of historic sites and monuments in the

Wadi Hadramaut in 1979-80.[26] South Yemen called for an international safeguarding

campaign at the Belgrade plenary meeting of October 2, referring to its Draft Resolution.[27]

This was two days after North Yemen made its request for assistance. The General Assembly

authorized preparatory studies for campaigns for the two cities.

The competition between the two countries would continue in the following years.

Shibam was listed as a World Heritage site in 1982. Sana'a was not listed until 1986; the

delay seems to have been on the North Yemeni side. Lewcock recalls, however, that not all

UNESCO officials were persuaded of the "outstanding universal value" of Sana'a. In

contrast to Shibam-Hadhramaut which had enchanted many at UNESCO, Sana'a was seen by

some as simply "vernacular".[28] One suspects that Sana'a may have been less appealing

because of its highly ornamented architecture: in his 1974 film Pasolini called the beauty of

Sana'a "unreal...almost excessive." A UNESCO film, produced in 1994, referred to the

"flamboyant, harmonious, amusing architecture" of Sana'a that was reminiscent of the

Thousand and One Nights, "like a child's dream come true."[29] In contrast, the restrained

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[26] Draft Resolution 88, General Conference, Twenty-First Session, Belgrade 1980, submitted on July 16, 1980.

[27] Proceedings of the 13th Plenary Meeting, 2 October, 1980, p. 972.

[28] R. Lewcock, personal conversation, 2/2/05.

[29] "Sana'a and Shibam, the Towns of Sand", directed by Descamps, 3+ MDM Productions in cooperation with UNESCO; on file at the UNESCO Visual Archives, Place Fontenoy, Paris.

earthen tower houses of Shibam, with their planar surfaces and regular openings, were easily

assimilated to the modernist aesthetic. Such culture-specific preferences would color the

assessments and recommendations of consultants in the years to come – an often

unacknowledged factor in the search for "outstanding universal value."

Preparations for the campaign

Before an international safeguarding campaign can be launched, the state party must submit

an application, based on a technical report.[30] It is also recommended that the state party

prepare a nomination form for the World Heritage list. In 1980 North Yemen ratified the

World Heritage Convention, so it was now a state party and could submit an application. In

the same year, a presidential decree called for the preservation of the Yemeni architectural

style and the use of traditional materials.[31] The nomination form was not submitted until

1985, after the Campaign had been announced, but all parties expected Sana'a to be added to

the World Heritage list.[32]

After the General Assembly adopted North Yemen's resolution, UNESCO's General

Director Mahtar M'bhow traveled to Sana'a to meet with government authorities. He also

organized preliminary missions by Abd al-Aziz Daolatli, then president of ICOMOS, and by

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[30] R. Lewcock, report on mission conducted 9-16 April, 1982, items 135-6; the terms of reference above are from the same report, p. 3.

[31] Presidential decree no. 50 (A. Oshaish, "Toward a strategy for the preservation of the urban cultural heritage of Yemen and the experience of the preservation of the old city of Sana'a", Urban Cultural Heritage Project, 2002).

[32] The nomination file was received by UNESCO in July 1985; "Essential description of the Historical City of Sana'a for the Purpose of Inclusion in the World Heritage List", Technical Office for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (TOPOCS), no date.

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Ronald Lewcock.[33] In the spring of 1982, when Bouchenaki joined UNESCO as Desk

Officer for Arab States, he recalls that M'bhow was concerned: preparations for the Sana'a

campaign were moving slowly. He sent Bouchenaki to Sana'a later that year to obtain a

commitment from the government. Bouchenaki returned with a letter outlining a

preliminary plan of action, approved by the authorities.[34] The next step was for ICOMOS to

develop the plan of action with state authorities, along with a preliminary cost estimate; on

the basis of this plan, the Executive board of UNESCO would authorize the General Director

to launch a campaign. ICOMOS organized a mission of five experts for this purpose, carried

out in September 1982. This mission will be discussed in some detail below.

The support of North Yemeni policymakers was not self-evident: after years of

political and financial crisis, there were more pressing matters at hand. After the revolution

Yemenis across the political spectrum saw modernization as a panacea that would undo the

effects of decades of isolation and oppression. Many in Sana'a embraced the modern

lifestyle brought by the Egyptians. At the same time, the grand old houses of the walled city

retained a certain status – and semiotic meaning - that had developed over centuries, in part

due to their association with dominant social groups.[35] Many of the post-revolutionary

political elite came from these groups: they had been born in the walled city, and still had

relatives living in the family house. Their sense of obligation to the walled city must have

been as much personal as political. Yet the conditions there were an embarrassment, a sign

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[33] A-A Daolatli, ICOMOS mission report, 1982, pp. 2-3. The dates of the missions were December 1981 and April 1982. Both Daolatli and Lewcock participated in the ICOMOS mission later that year which drafted a campaign strategy (see below).

[34] In Sana'a Bouchenaki, formerly director of Antiquities in Algeria, reestablished contact with his colleague Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa', and was able to leave with a letter from Dr. Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, then Foreign Minister (M. Bouchenaki, phone interview, 1/13/05).

[35] This point was made by two architects who are veterans of the UNESCO Campaign. See S. al-Suleihi, "The Lyrical Facades of Sana'a", unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Architecture, M.I.T., 1992.

of the country's backwardness. It may be for this reason that the walled core and al-Qa'a

were the first parts of the city to receive a water supply system, even before UNESCO turned

its interest to the city. The ruling elite was also aware of the economic potential of the new

"cultural tourism" that was developing in the early 1970's. Tourism development was seen

as a potential source of revenue to supplement the declining agricultural sector, and by 1977

it was a stated policy of the government.[36] Decision-makers were gradually persuaded of the

usefulness of UNESCO's interest – because it carried a certain prestige, affirming the value

of Yemeni civilization before the world community; and because it carried a promise of

funds to deal with living conditions in the old districts. "When we saw [foreigners] were

interested," said a prominent official, somewhat shyly, "we became interested."

The lobbying efforts of resident foreigners had been important in persuading

policymakers, and several embassies had promised to sponsor projects.[37] Two young

Yemeni professionals, who worked at the Ministry of Municipalities and had a close personal

relationship with the Deputy Minister, were also instrumental. They managed to convince

the ministry to secund them to work full-time on the preparation of the international

campaign. This allowed work to begin on the ground, making the campaign a practical

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[36] J. Binous, ICOMOS mission report, 1982, p. 17. The first Five Year Plan, published in 1977, listed among its objectives the development of "the tourist industry by taking advantage of the country's climate and historic landmarks" (cited in Shankland Cox, 1978, 2.5). The responsible agency was the National Tourist Corporation. Cultural heritage was an important part of the tourism development program envisioned by Binous in her mission report (pp. 23-30). Foreigners in the city had emphasized the tourist potential of Yemeni towns and villages since the early 1970's in an effort to encourage conservation (for example, Pasolini's reference to the old city as an economic asset). In the 1970's the World Bank was also interested in cultural tourism as a development strategy; see below, p. 187, fn. 143.

[37] In the late 1970's and early 1980's these resident foreigners included Paolo Costa; Rémy Audoin, archeologist and director of the French Institute for Yemeni Studies; Selma al-Radi, an Iraqi archeologist working on the restoration of the Amiriyya *madrasa* with the Department of Antiquities; Werner Ligenau, German attaché to the Department of Antiquities, and others.

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reality.[38] In 1984 they ran what was to become the Campaign office from the Ministry of

Municipalities; after the official announcement of the campaign, the office got its own

headquarters. One of these two professionals was an architect who had recently graduated

from the University of Damascus; he and two other Yemeni students wrote a joint Master's

thesis on the old city of Sana'a circa 1981. They were aware that Tunis and Islamic Cairo

had been listed as World Heritage sites, and of the international safeguarding campaign for

Fez. They believed that Sana'a deserved the same attention. ""The Campaign was their

idea," says the widow of the architect. "My husband was upset at the neglect of the old city

of Sana'a...he thought that it should be world heritage (*turath 'alami*)."[39]

The Quaroni Bonifica studies

In Sana'a today, many individuals still associate the beginnings of conservation with

Italy. The government of Italy had made urban planning and cultural heritage a focus of its

foreign aid program.[40] Between 1979 and 1985 some three hundred Italian experts were sent

to Sana'a in the fields of architecture, planning, engineering, and archeology.[41] At the 1983

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[38] R. Lewcock, personal communication, 2/5/05.

[39] Interview, 11/22/04. Her husband died tragically in an electrical fire at their home in 1995. He is fondly remembered for his commitment, energy, and love of the old city. The other young professional studied engineering in the U.S., and has worked for various agencies involved in conservation. He is currently a project manager with the Social Fund for Development.

[40] This specialty was, and continues to be, a way for the government of Italy to both provide development assistance and jobs overseas for Italian architects and conservators.

[41] M. Yoshida, "A Concept on 'Conservation-Based Development' for Historic Cities – Problems Related to the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a in Yemen," report for the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, 1994.

Aga Khan Award Seminar in Sana'a, Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa' noted that Italy had been the

first country "to express its willingness to participate in the campaign to save Sana'a."[42]

In fact, the Italian effort began independently from that of UNESCO. Around 1981 a

study for the conservation of the old city was initiated by the Department of Development

Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; its counterpart was the Department of

Antiquities, which was also engaged in preparations for the UNESCO campaign.[43] The firm

that undertook this work was Quaroni Bonifica, an association of Studio Quaroni s.r.l. and

Bonifica s.P.a. The project for the old city of Sana'a was one of three master plans for

foreign capitals designed by the partnership in the first half of the 1980's, as part of Italy's

program of foreign aid.[44] Bonifica s.P.a. was the most important state-owned consulting firm

in Italy, and the most skilled in mobilizing resources and the best consultants. Ludovico

Quaroni was considered a master of Italian modernism, and was also a scholar of Arab

architecture. He and his partner, Adolfo DeCarlo (a civil engineer), were not specialists in

conservation. But according to Daniele Pini, Quaroni was a sensitive designer who, like

many other Italian architects then and now, were attracted by the historical layers of old

cities, including the modern.[45]

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[42] "Opening Remarks," *Development and Urban Metamorphosis*, vol. 1, "Yemen at the Crossroads", p. xiv. Dr. 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, who was heavily involved in preparations for the campaign (see below) told me that the Italians were the first to work in conservation.

[43] Studio Quaroni S.r.l./Bonifica S.p.A, "Action Proposal: Implementation of a Conservation Reinstatement Measure for a Sample Nucleus of the Historical Centre of Sana'a and the Establishment of a Restoration Workshop/School", January 1986, p. 19.

[44] The others were Addis Ababa, under the supervision of a team from the University of Venice; and Mogadishu, by Paolo Portoghesi (D. Pini, interview, 9/8/04.). Quaroni had prepared a plan for Tunis with DeCarlo in 1964; see above, chapter one, p. 64.

[45] Interview, 9/8/04. Daniele Pini teaches at the University of Ferrara. He has worked on urban conservation in the Middle East North Africa region for two decades, and is currently directing the inventory of old Sana'a with Franca Miglioli of UNESCO.

Building on existing studies, including several that would become part of Serjeant

and Lewcock's book, Studio Quaroni and Bonifica s.P.a. produced reports and drawings that

would be used in much of the subsequent work in the old city.[46] In the view of some the

Quaroni Bonifica proposals, which were submitted in 1983-4, should have formed the basis

of a conservation plan. But a plan is only now being drafted, more than two decades later.

The approach of the Quaroni Bonifica partnership (like that of Shankland Cox) tended to

emphasize revitalization over conservation, and this differed from that of the UNESCO-

ICOMOS consultants. Some aspects of their proposal were also rejected by the government -

in particular, the proposed demolition of most shops of the *suq*, which were to be replaced by

modern trade facilities with parking below grade.

The politics of conservation

All of these efforts were embroiled in politics. First, there was the competition between the

departments of Antiquities and Municipalities. The 1978 Shankland Cox study, sponsored

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[46] The authors of the Quaroni Bonifica study acknowledge their indebtedness in C. La Rocca, "Studio per la salvaguardia del centro storico di Sana'a", *Urbanistica*, vol. 92, 1988, p. 58. The Quaroni Bonifica studies were conducted in three phases: a preliminary or "Reconnaisance Phase" (1981); a "Proposal Phase" (1983); and "Implementation Phase" (1989-1990). The Proposal Phase consists of an introduction and five volumes, which include numerous large-format drawings. The Implementation Phase was concerned with the rehabilitation of a model neighborhood. Only portions of the studies are on file at GOPHCY's Center for Architectural and Technical Studies (CATS), which was built with Italian assistance under the Implementation Phase. In late 2004 CATS was attempting to acquire a complete set by appealing to private individuals as well as the archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am grateful to several of these individuals for allowing me to consult volumes not available at CATS.

While Yemenis are appreciative of the contribution of the Italians, they question the appropriateness of their conservation approach for Yemen (see below, chapter six). A few privately acknowledge the murky relationship between Bonifica s.P.a. and the Italian government, in particular questionable contracting procedures. These procedures were brought to Italian public attention in the early 1990's, leading to an official inquiry and the dissolution of Bonifica-Italy. The dissolution of the firm and the death of the principal players makes research into the firm's activities in Sana'a difficult. According to an official at the Embassy of Italy, files are transferred to the archive of the Foreign Ministry in Rome after five years.

by UNESCO, had as its counterpart the Ministry of Public Works and Municipalities; the

study had called for a conservation unit to be established in that ministry. Since then

Municipalities had become a separate ministry. It saw itself as sponsor of the campaign; this

would be reinforced in the following years, as the ministry's employees took charge of the

campaign office. There was also competition between UNESCO and Quaroni Bonifica.

While Quaroni Bonfica was well-financed by the Italian government, UNESCO had no

money – only moral authority. One high-level official who was involved in preparations for

the Sana'a campaign said that the campaign was intended in part to counterbalance Quaroni

Bonfiica's influence. It was a way "to help Yemenis refuse [Quaroni Bonifica's] urban

strategies and proposals."[47] UNESCO perhaps feared that the firm would replicate Quaroni

and DeCarlo's approach in Tunis, which was opposed by some professionals there -

including 'Abdel-Aziz Daolatli and Jelal 'Abdelkafi, both of whom were consultants for

ICOMOS on the Sana'a campaign.[48] According to Lewcock, UNESCO sought to bring the

Italian project within the framework of the international campaign, and eventually succeeded.

By the mid-1980's Italian cooperation was presented as part of campaign activities.[49] In

1986 North Yemen signed a second agreement with Italy: a pilot project for the conservation

and upgrading of one of thirty "islands" or "action areas" in the city.[50] Both Quaroni and

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[47] Interview, 1/23/05.

[48] The differences between UNESCO-ICOMOS and the Italians are clear in the mission reports of the former, particularly the report of J. 'Abdelkafi who was asked to review the Italian project, then in the proposal phase. A founder of l' *Association pour la Sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis*, 'Abdelkafi had opposed the work of Quaroni and DeCarlo in Tunis; see above, chapter one, pp. 75-6.

[49] See, for example, the UNESCO-UNDP promotional brochure and catalogue, which presents the Quaroni Bonifica studies as work accomplished under the campaign (M. B. Lane, "San'a: Pilot Restoration Projects for the International Campaign to Safeguard the Old City of San'a", General Organization for the Protection of the Historic Cities of Yemen, UNDP-UNESCO Report YEM/88/06 (no date, ca. 1990, p. 18).

[50] R. Lewcock, UNESCO mission report #4, 1987; former official of the Executive Office for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (EOPOCS), interview, 9/6/04. The preliminary studies by

DeCarlo died in 1987, and direction of Studio Quaroni was assumed by Quaroni's wife. The implementation phase of the firm's work will be discussed in chapter six.

In September 1982 ICOMOS sent a team of five experts to Sana'a to help develop the Campaign strategy. There they met with Dr. 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, then Minister of Foreign Affairs. Al-Iryani had been one of the architects of development and domestic and foreign policy since the 1970's; he became one of the main supporters of conservation among the political elite.[51] Al-Iryani told the ICOMOS mission that no official structure was yet in place to manage the campaign. But a committee, composed of representatives of concerned ministries, had been formed to coordinate conservation work.[52] He assured the consultants that the installation of a sewage system in the old city was about to begin, with financing guaranteed by the World Bank. Al-Iryani shared the mission's concern with infrastructure and especially street paving, emphasizing the importance of making the old city an attractive and desirable place to live. But what was expected of the international campaign, he said, was preserving the old city as it is: it should not be transformed into a modern city.[53]

Quaroni Bonifica divided the neighborhoods of the old city into "islands"; La Rocca sets the number at fifty ("Studio per la salvaguardia del centro storico di Sana'a", p. 59; and Quaroni Bonifica, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center", Reconaissance Phase, part III, "Sana'a al-Qadima: Approach to the Building Texture", p. 80).

[51] R. Burrowes, "The Famous Forty," p. 12; R. Lewcock, interviews, Atlanta, November 2-4, 2003. It was al-Iryani who supported Selma al-Radi when she initiated the restoration of the Amiryya madrasa in the 1970's.

[52] This ministerial committee, chaired by the Minister of Housing and Municipalities, was created by Cabinet Decree no. 5; the first meeting of the committee was held in January 1983 (A. Oshaish, "Toward a strategy for the preservation of the urban cultural heritage of Yemen and the experience of the preservation of the old city of Sana'a", Urban Cultural Heritage Project, 2002). The mission was not able to meet with the committee because it arrived during holiday of 'Id al-Adha'.

[53] Minutes of meeting recorded by J. Abdelkafi and R. Lewcock, mission reports, September 1982. This statement was perhaps in response to other planning proposals under consideration, including the Quaroni Bonifica studies which proposed to reconstruct the suq area place much of it underground. At the same time, two proposals were still on the table to transform the Wadi Sa'ila into a high-speed thoroughfare.

The five consultants' reports from this mission treated a variety of issues presumably

set out by Daolatli, the team leader: the restoration and development of monuments and

sites; urban planning; regulations for development and protection; promotion of the crafts

and tourism (which were, and would continue to be, considered jointly); and infrastructure,

communications, and sanitation.[54] The conservation area was defined as the area within the

walls of the old city as they existed at the time Von Wissman drew his map (1929), as well as

the area of al-Qa'a. This contrasts with the plan that Quaroni Bonifica was preparing, which

would define the "old city" as the area *east* of the Sa'ila: the quarters to the west of the

Sa'ila, the authors would argue, had been compromised by modern development.[55] Such

changes were seen to compromise the integrity and authenticity of the site, required for

admission to the World Heritage List. Similar reasoning led to the UNESCO team's

exclusion of Bir al-'Azab: the area had been "so intruded upon by modern buildings that it is

difficult to include it in a conservation project."[56] As for al- Qa'a, consultants suggested that

if funding were limited priority should be given to the walled city.[57] In the end, al-Qa'a was

not included in the conservation area: it was not included in the application for the World

Heritage List submitted by North Yemen. and there is no mention of it in subsequent mission

reports. There may have been other reasons for the exclusion of both al- Qa'a and Bir al-

[54] The consultants' were 'Abdelaziz Daolatli; Ronald Lewcock; Jelal 'Abdelkafi; Jamila Binous; and
P. I. Helmore. See "Consultant Reports on the Missions Executed from 12 September – 1 October
1982", ICOMOS.
[55] "It is necessary to maintain the 'break' of the wadi, this constituting the natural border between the
historic part of the city and the modern part, making it possible at the same time to enjoy the beauty
of the houses overlooking the wadi from the wadi bed structure...Its value and potential reside in its
capacity – increasingly endangered by total lack of control – of becoming one of the urban 'nodes'
able to reconcile the two realities, the old and the modern, of Sana'a"(Quaroni Bonifica,
"Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center," PII, p. 2-4).
[56] R. Lewcock, ICOMOS/UNESCO mission report no.1, 1982, p. 1. The walls around Bir al-'Azab
and al-Qa'a had been largely destroyed by the mid-1970's (P. Costa, "Sana", in Serjeant, R. B. ed.,
The Islamic City, Paris: UNESCO, 1980).
[57] R. Lewcock, personal conversation, 8/6/04.

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'Azab, since they were not included in North Yemen's application: they were associated with

Jews and Turks, respectively, and so perhaps did not fit as easily into the new national

narrative.[58] Two decades later, UNESCO consultants began to lay the groundwork for a

conservation plan. They proposed that Bir al-'Azab, al-Qa'a, and al-Rawdha - an old

summering district of villas and orchards – be included in the conservation zone. But in the

intervening decades Bir al-'Azab, as well as al-Rawdha, have been radically transformed by

construction.[59]

According to Lewock, there was a tension in the 1982 mission between two different

views of conservation. He and 'Abdelkafi, both architects, argued that "like Venice, the

value of Sana'a derives from the whole fabric, not just monuments. We insisted upon this."[60]

The whole city should be considered a monument, and also a living entity: in order to keep it

alive, residents must be induced to stay. Infrastructure works and street paving had to

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[58] This was suggested to me by a Yemeni architect who participated in the campaign, and also by Nancy Um.

[59] Bir al-'Azab has been transformed especially by commercial development that has occurred along Jamal Street, the street that borders it on the south; real estate pressures have led to infill of the district and the gradual demolition of many old houses. Al-Qa'a has been less affected, largely because of the poverty of the residents.

A recent decision by the Prime Minister declared that various areas belonging to the capitol authority (amanat al-'asima) be considered "historic" and "protected": Bir al-'Azab, al-Rawdha, the villages of al-Qabil, al-Hadda, San'a, 'Attan, Beit Baws. These areas should be studied and eventually proposed for inclusion in the World Heritage List (qirar majlis al-wuzara', no number, 2004). While al-Qa'a is not mentioned in this decision, another drafted by GOPHCY and to be endorsed by the Prime Minister includes al-Qa'a as part of the historic surroundings of old Sana'a (legal counsel to GOPHCY, personal conversation, 5/12/04).

Attempts to define a conservation area have been informed by existing historical research, but also by attitudes of consultants. Definitions of "old Sana'a" and its architecture were to some extent influenced by European, and in particular, Italian notions of both "classicism" and modernism, which desired a certain uniformity. Current research on the old city may challenge the notion of "traditional" Sana'ani architecture and therefore, the boundaries of the conservation areas: for example, the existence of smaller houses throughout the city, which do not conform to the tower house model; and the extension of these types beyond the walls, in residential districts that developed just after the revolution.

[60] R. Lewcock, personal communication, 2/5/05. He had already stated this position in his mission report of April 1981 (items 76-7).

urgently be carried out, to improve living conditions and also to prevent further damage to buildings.

> We always said that individual monuments should be conserved, but this should only be done after the problem of groundwater was addressed – otherwise the restored buildings would collapse.[61]

According to Lewcock, other members of the team, including Daolatli, argued for a more conservative approach. Invoking the Venice Charter, they argued that it went against the prevailing practice of ICOMOS, whose mandate was the careful conservation of historic monuments. The disagreement seems to reflect a difference in approach between UNESCO and ICOMOS. Many UNESCO officials and consultants realize that conservation involves rehabilitation and revitalization; ICOMOS follows a conservative approach, focusing on building restoration. "There is a kind of conceptual fight," said an Italian conservation architect.[62] The situation must have only arisen when a campaign was announced for a city – otherwise ICOMOS would not have been involved. But for Sa'id Zulficar, Daolatli's position seems out of character. Daolatli was director of the Association pour la Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis, a town-planning body that did roads and infrastructure as well as conservation. "He was used to this kind of work," said Zulficar.[63]

Certain key individuals in the Yemeni government and at UNESCO supported the idea of conserving the entire historic city:

> [I]t would be dangerous to focus too much attention…on one section of the city or another, or on the significance of a few monuments at the expense of the whole. (Indeed, the Prime Minister has specifically indicated that the government does not favor such an approach).[64]

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[61] Interviews, Atlanta, November 2-4, 2003 and Sana'a, 8/6/04.

[62] See below, chapter seven, p. 398.

[63] I asked Zulficar if Daolatli may have taken a more conservative approach because it was an ICOMOS mission, charged with drafting a campaign strategy for a World Heritage site. "Maybe," he replied. "But it surprises me that Daolatli would have had this attitude" (interview, Paris, 5/11/04).

[64] R. Lewcock, mission report, April 1982, item 77. Key supporters in the government were Dr. 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, Qadi Ali Abu Rijal, and Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa' (R. Lewcock, interviews, November 2-4, 2003; M. Bouchenaki, phone interview, 1/13/05).

It was clear, however, that the cost of infrastructure work would have to be borne by North Yemen. UNESCO had approached European and Arab embassies in Yemen, asking them to participate in the Campaign by sponsoring projects.[65] Those that agreed generally wanted to sponsor high-profile restoration projects, rather than infrastructure.[66] The Campaign was thus conceived in two phases: the first would focus on infrastructure, including the upgrading of the water system, the installation of a sewer system, street paving, and the stabilization of building foundations; this phase was paid for largely by the Yemeni government. A second phase, to be launched after infrastructure was in place, would restore and rehabilitate key buildings in the city; funds for these projects would be sought from donor nations and agencies.

The approach of the Campaign – to treat historic centers as living entities, and to focus on infrastructure before restoration –had important consequences for conservation in Yemen: it laid the groundwork for what has come to be called "conservation-based development" – a strategy that has been adopted by local and donor agencies in various cities and towns throughout the country.[67] But the campaign raised many crucial issues that have yet to be resolved – issues which stem from different, and sometimes conflicting, approaches to conservation. The kind of conservation implemented in Sana'a – which deals not only with monuments, but with so-called minor architecture, urban elements, and even infrastructure – required different standards and methods, as well as new institutional, legal,

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[65] M. Bouchenaki, phone interview, 1/13/05.

[66] G. Boccardi, currently of the World Heritage Center, and R. Lewcock, personal conversations, July 2004. In the end there were a few exceptions; see below, p. 167, fn. 192; and pp. 174-5.

[67] These efforts have been sponsored by individual donor nations and by such agencies as the UNDP, the World Bank, and the Social Fund for Development which now has a Cultural Heritage Sector. See M. Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development of Historic Cities: the Case of the Old City of San'a in Yemen," *Regional Development Studies*, vol. 1, winter 1994/5, pp. 143-170.

and funding mechanisms. These issues were also at the heart of an on-going discussion within UNESCO, where they had been raised by the campaigns for Venice and Fez.

An institutional structure

In December 1984, a Board of Trustees chaired by the Prime Minister was created by presidential decree. It was composed of heads or representatives of various ministries – demonstrating that the safeguarding of the old city was a collective effort that cut across jurisdictions.[68] The Campaign to Save Old Sana'a was formally launched in the same month. The appeal of UNESCO's General Director was timed to coincide with the meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Islamic World (OCI, based in Jeddah).[69] In his speech, M'bhow invoked the ancient history and unique architecture of the city:

> Sana'a, the prestigious capital of Arabia Felix [is] one of the oldest cities in the world. Legend holds, in fact, that it was founded by Ham [sic], son of Noah...Sana'a was a center from which the Islamic faith spread outward. Nevertheless, it continued to be a city of a variety of religious communities....
>
> During that period Sana'a played an important role in the propagation of the Koran's message. A number of buildings that are still standing were erected during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad: one example is the Great Mosque, a jewel in the heart of the old city which was embellished and enriched under the Ummayad and Ababasid caliphs and the later Yemenite governors. In addition, Sana'a features pleasing vistas of caravansarais, *hammam*s, *souk*s, palaces, and dwellings surrounded by rich gardens, all harmoniously laid out with subtle ingenuity within the walls surrounding the city...
>
> But Sana'a is also is also a twentieth century capital, where the most up-to-date achievements of a contemporary metropolis stand side by side with traditional sanctuaries, *madrasas*, markets, and dwellings. It is the juxtaposition of these two worlds that gives the city its originality...

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[68] Presidential decree #76, December, 1984. The Prime Minister at the time was Abd al-Aziz Abdel Ghani. The Board consisted of Hussein al-Hobaishi, Legal Advisor to the President; the Mayor of Sana'a, then 'Abdul Wahid Jubari; Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa', Director of Antiquities; Qadi 'Ali Abu Rijal, then Vice President of the Presidential Council; and a number of prominent citizens including Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum. For a list of members in 1987, see R. Lewcock, mission report no. 4, 1987, paragraph 15.

[69] M. Bouchenaki, phone interview, 1/13/05.

The character of the city is now threatened, said M'bhow, by the migration of urban activities outside the ancient city. The authorities of Yemen have "infused Sana'a with new vitality, but are also determined to safeguard the historic, artistic, and architectural treastures of their venerable capital..." An emergency program had been designed not only to restore monuments and dwellings, but to upgrade infrastructure in the historic center. M'bhow appealed for international solidarity in safeguarding "what can now be regarded as the heritage of all mankind". The plan of action designed by UNESCO and the YAR

> is designed to safeguard the unique character of Sana'a, not only by preserving its historic centre but also by introducing those facilities it needs in order to adapt to the requirements of modern life...The financial and technical problems that must be overcome before these objectives can be attained are so massive and so complex that they call for a worldwide effort of solidarity.[70]

The formal launching of the campaign had been anxiously awaited in Sana'a, where work had already begun. The international campaign was intended to mobilize resources and technical assistance from other state parties to the World Heritage Convention; it would also make possible direct assistance from UNESCO in organization and coordination of the work.[71] After M'bhow's announcement, the campaign office was formalized as the Technical Office for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (TOPOCS), responsible to the ministerial committee. The office moved from the Ministry of Municipalities to the Department of Antiquities; then, in the following year, it moved to Dar al-Jadid, one of the

[70] Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Sana'a, December 19, 1984. Two days later, M'bhow launched the campaign for Shibam-Hadhramaut.

[71] In late 1983, Yemeni government officials were concerned that the campaign should be launched as soon as possible, so that UNESCO could provide oversight and coordination for work already in progress – that is, sewer installation and water system upgrading; the latter was being carried out on an apparently ad hoc basis by local cooperatives and citizens. The officials also hoped that when the campaign was launched, an expatriate Technical Director would be appointed to assist the Yemeni campaign Director (R. Lewcock, mission report no. 2, 1984, p. 5). The expatriate post did not materialize as a full-time post, rather there was a UNESCO Coordinator (Lewcock) who undertook periodic missions.

imam's palaces in the old city. The building had been made available to Antiquities for use as Campaign headquarters and had been restored with government funds.[72]

In addition to planning for the first projects, the staff prepared and submitted a nomination form for the World Heritage list at the end of 1985. Sana'a was added to the list in the following year, 1986, on the basis of its "exceptional value...and its extreme vulnerability." The criteria for the listing were iv, v, and vi, interpreted as follows:

> Criterion IV: Within its partially preserved wall [the old city of Sana'a] offers an outstanding example of a homogeneous architectural ensemble whose design, and detail translate an organization of space characteristic of the early centuries of Islam which has been respected over time.

> Criterion V: The houses of Sana'a, which have become vulnerable as a result of contemporary social changes, are an outstanding example of a unique, traditional human settlement. Countless studies on the houses of Sana'a by urban specialists, architects and historians should not be a pretext for their destruction, even partial. The beauty of the urban landscape of Sana'a, whose overall appearance should remain intact, attests that they should be preserved integrally.

> Criterion VI: Sana'a is directly and tangibly associated with the history of the spread of Islam in the early years of the Hegira.

The World Heritage Committee recommended that a "buffer zone" be established around the old city. It noted that municipal regulations for the safeguarding of the site had been drafted and adopted.[73] The latter point is incorrect: although guidelines were drafted and have been reissued at various points, they have never been made into law.

In 1986, a presidential decree made the technical office an autonomous entity, responsible directly to the Prime Minister. Renamed the Executive Office for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (EOPOCS), it was placed under the direction of Dr.

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[72] The acquisition of a house in the old city for campaign headquarters had been proposed in February 1982 by Werner Ligenau, German attaché with the Department of Antiquities. Dar al-Jadid was made available for the use of the campaign in 1983; a budget was provided by the government for its restoration in 1985 (Lewcock, mission report no. 2, 1984, pp. 5, 23; mission report no. 4, 1987, para. 11; Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development", p. 150).

[73] UNESCO-WHC Documentation Unit Technical Evaluation, Yemen, no. C 385.

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Abd al-Rahman al-Haddad, who had been the YAR's representative at UNESCO. The two young professionals who had been running the Campaign office served as Chief Architect and Technical Director. The government allocated more than US $1 million in 1986 to set up a budget for administration and pilot projects.[74] UNESCO organized a working group to follow and advise the campaign; the committee of foreign experts was headed by Lewcock, and representatives of the French, Italian, and German archeological missions in Sana'a were sometimes asked to assist.[75]

The idea of making the campaign office an autonomous body outside the ministerial system was proposed by UNESCO consultants. Elsewhere in the region similar efforts had been hampered when various ministries sought to control them; the only solution, they felt, was the creation of an executive authority directly responsible to the Prime Minister.[76] The Department of Antiquities and Department of Municipalities were competing for control of the Campaign, and it seems that all parties were unhappy with the idea of an independent and powerful office. According to Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa', however, it was clear at the time that a project of this scope was beyond the capabilities of the Antiquities Department.[77] The existence of a Board of Trustees composed of representatives from various ministries and authorities, as well as several influential citizens, was intended to promote conservation as an activity that cuts across the isolated competences and jurisdictions of modern

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[74] R. Lewcock, mission report no. 4, 1987, para. 11.

[75] M. Bouchenaki, phone interview, 1/13/05.

[76] R. Lewcock, interviews, Atlanta, November 2-4, 2003. A similar conclusion was reached by the Quaroni Bonifica team and representatives of the Department of Municipalities and Housing and the Department of Antiquites, at a May 1984 meeting: "It was agreed that a project of such magnitude as the safeguarding of old Sana'a can only be successful if supervised by a council headed by no less a person than the prime minister himself" (F. Piepenberg, "Sana'a al-Qadeema: Challenges of Modernization" in A. Saqqaf, ed., *The Middle Eastern City*, p. 107.

[77] Interview, 6/12/04. The competition between the ministries has been described to me by R. Lewcock, M. Bouchenaki, and others.

government. But EOPOCS was perceived as infringing on the jurisdictions other bodies –

Antiquities, the ministries of Endowments (*Awqaf*), Municipalities, and Public Works, and

the newly created Capitol Secretariat (*Amanat al-'Asima*, the Mayor's Office). This led to

competition for control of projects that was at times paralyzing. EOPOCS was able to

maintain control over projects involving the old city. But as its capacity and efficiency

declined after 1990, other agencies became involved in the old city, especially the Mayor's

Office.[78] The banner of conservation has today been taken up by various bodies, but

authority in the old city continues to be contested – for example, the right to issue building

permits, which is currently controlled by the conservation office.

Conserving a living historic city: strategy and means

When veterans of the campaign talk about the early years, one is left with the

impression of a small, idealistic group of young individuals committed to saving a place they

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[78] Former EOPOCS employee, personal conversation, 5/30/05. From the beginning there was redundancy of responsibilities and legal overlap: for example, between the conservation office (renamed GOPHCY after 1991) and the General Organization for Antiquities, Monuments and Museums (GOAMM) which is responsible for the restoration of religious structures; and between GOPHCY, the Capitol Secretariat, and the Ministry of Construction, Housing, and Urban Planning ("Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen: Fact-Finding Mission Report", Association of Netherlands Municipality for the Ministry of Construction, Housing, and Urban Planning, April 1997, p. 11). In the difficult economic climate of the last fifteen years, competition for projects is motivated not only by corruption, but by the desire to provide incentives to underpaid employees.

The Ministry of Public Works had been responsible for planning activities in Sana'a until the creation of the Ministry of Municipalities in 1979 (the two ministries merged for several years, then were separated in the early 1980's). In 1983, the Capitol Secretariat was created and assumed administration of the city. In the 1990's, competition between GOPHCY and the Capitol Secretariat was particularly acute, especially regarding the prerogative of granting building permits. In 1995 F. Mermier wrote: "The lack of coordination and even open conflicts between GOPHCY and the Capitol Secretariat...which sees the historic center [as an area] under the jurisdiction of a competing body...are an important obstacle to the implementation of conservation programs" ("Sana', Métaphore de l'Etat Yemenite", p. 49; translation mine). While GOPHCY was demoted to an agency within the Ministry of Culture in 1990, the Capitol Secretariat retained the special status that EOPOCS had had: it is an autonomous body responsible directly to the Prime Minister. In recent years, under the leadership of a very popular Mayor, it has become an active and conspicuous sponsor of conservation.

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considered their patrimony. They remember the period – from the initiation of studies for the campaign in 1983 to around 1988 – as a kind of golden age. There was a high level of dynamism and cooperation, and commitment to a common goal.[79] EOPOCS had no employees: rather all were secunded by ministries and offices represented on the Board of Trustees, and received excellent salaries. The architects, engineers, and other professionals at EOPOCS saw their mission as improving the conditions of the old city and at the same time, as inculcating new values – that is, encouraging the residents of Sana'a to appreciate their everyday environment, which was now presented as "heritage". These values were also promoted among other government agencies working in the old city, which were not perceived to be sensitive to its special requirements - in particular, the Ministry of Endowments.[80] EOPOCS staff faced many obstacles – practical, political, and social – for which, by their own admission, they were unprepared: none had practical training in the care of old buildings and cities, nor did they have a conceptual framework from which to proceed. Yet what they lacked in experience, they made up for in enthusiasm and energy. They came to understand conservation – in the unique form it was applied in Sana'a - through experience on the ground and through interaction with UNESCO consultants, especially Lewcock, whom they regard as a patron and mentor.[81]

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[79] "At that time, we were all cooperating for a common goal," muses one professional. "Now everyone works for himself, gets his own projects: there is no more cooperation."

[80] The main buildings in the care of this ministry – mosques and other religious structures – are considered monuments; their restoration is expected to conform to the highest international conservation standards. Various attempts have been made to bring the Ministry into the fold; the first was in 1986, when Lewcock recommended that a decree be issued requiring all restorations and alterations to mosques to be subject to EOPOCS approval. I have been told that the restoration of mosques is technically under the authority of the Department of Antiquities (S. al-Radi, interview). But it is now standard policy that no alterations can be made to mosques (GOPHCY inspector, site visit, 5/10/05). For its part, Awqaf now presents itself as an advocate and sponsor of conservation, although there continue to many differences between its staff and GOPHCY in the field; this issue will be treated in the following chapter.

[81] Lewcock is still referred to by Campaign veterans as the "godfather" of the old city.

As noted above, the strategy for the international Campaign developed by UNESCO consultants and EOPOCS staff aimed to achieve two interrelated goals: the improvement of living conditions so that residents would remain there; and the restoration and safeguarding of cultural heritage. This dual strategy attempted to bring together two different conceptions of conservation – urban conservation and a monument-oriented approach. This strategy of "integrated conservation" was seen as especially suited to poor countries: because it brings together conservation and development; and because it reframes conservation in economic terms, especially as a means to promote tourist revenues.[82]

Various tactics were developed to meet these goals, which were outlined in the initial and revised plans of action (1984 and 1987), and in the first five-year plan (1987). Conservation was to be applied at the scale of the urban fabric (houses, open spaces, streets, and gardens) and at the scale of individual buildings and monuments (mosques, caravansarays, the city walls and remaining gate, bathhouses, water fountains, and other utilitarian structures).[83] The latter projects would be sponsored largely by grants and

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[82] In 1988 a UNESCO report defined "integrated conservation" as the integration of the objectives and methods of conservation and urban planning ("Project Findings and Recommendations", UNESCO-UNDP Restricted Technical Report, UNDP/YEM/88/006). See the paper by M. Welbank, one of the authors of the Shankland Cox study for Sana'a, outlining what was then perceived as the conflicting goals of development and conservation ("Conservation and Development", *Development and Urban Metamorphosis*, 1983, pp. 7-16).

[83] The division of the strategy into fabric on the one hand and monuments has perhaps obscured the important historical and functional relations between the two, especially in the context of the endowed complex. As we have seen, the *waqf* complexes included gardens and many of the "utilitarian" structures that were identified as objects of conservation: not only caravansarays (*samasir*) but also wells and ramps (*marani'*), water fountains (*subul*), etc. So far, studies and projects have tended to focus on elements of a complex, rather than the complex as a whole. This strategy tends to reinforce the declining importance of these endowments, which have been generally neglected since *waqf* income was centralized (to be discussed in chapter four). This is perhaps more evident in hindsight, given the detailed studies of *awqaf* in other parts of the Islamic world that have been carried out in recent years. Indeed, we may envision an approach to conservation that focuses on *waqf* complexes as significant historical and functional nodes tied to the life of specific neighborhoods. One hopes that current cataloguing project of the Ministry of Endowments will make

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technical assistance from foreign donors and international agencies. In addition, 30-100

private houses would be restored as demonstration projects. Several exemplary houses were

to be restored with donor funds, but the repair and conservation of others would be financed

through a loan fund.[84] The loan fund was part of a conservation strategy for the wider

fabric, which would be upgraded largely with government funding and protected through a

national conservation law, based on a master plan. The plan would outline building

regulations – for new construction and alterations to existing buildings – and would also seek

to preserve open spaces and urban gardens, which were seen as fundamental elements of the

old city and important to its environmental quality.

The improvement of living conditions would be achieved in three ways: installation

and/or upgrading of infrastructure (street paving, water, sewer, as well as the burying of

electrical and telephone lines); upgrading social and cultural services (especially sanitation,

health clinics, and schools); and support and revitalization of the market and the general

economy of the old city.[85] Traffic planning, often the most problematic aspect of urban

conservation, was seen as an important part of the Campaign: while most felt that traffic in

the old city should be limited in some way, some provision had to be made for vehicles in

order to satisfy residents and serve the market.[86] The improvement of the Wadi Sa'ila was

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possible a more detailed mapping and study of the endowments and their role in the development of the city.

[84] Former Technical Director of EOPOCS, interview, 9/6/04. This issue will be taken up in chapter six.

[85] There were four schools in the old city in 1987, and two new ones were proposed ("Campaign Strategy, 1988-1997, p. 80). When the Campaign began, approximately one third of the shops in the market had closed, especially around Suq al-Nadhara. Reasons for this are thought to be declining demand for traditional products and the attraction of new commercial areas (former EOPOCS official, interview, 9/6/04).

[86] Various solutions to traffic management were proposed by UNESCO missions, restricting the volume and/or hours of traffic in certain areas of the old city. Numerous studies would be conducted over the years; a traffic plan was finally implemented in the spring of 2004.

seen as critical in terms of environmental conditions, traffic planning, and the potential impact of development along its banks. It became even more urgent as roads were paved, since the surfaces increased run-off and flooding, which also affected housing foundations on both banks.[87] Finally, the Campaign aimed to establish ongoing institutional support for EOPOCS and to mobilize national awareness and support. The latter aim was to be met by the establishment of a division of Public Relations within EOPOCS in 1986. Other departments were Technical Cooperation and Studies; Projects; Planning; and Inspections.

It should be noted that UNESCO's role in the campaigns for Sana'a and other sites was that of a coordinating rather than a financing body – although the distinction was not always clear to local policy makers.[88] UNESCO would assist in the coordination of the Campaign and donor financing; its direct contributions were to be limited to short-term technical assistance, training, and equipment. But the focus would be on short-term missions; training was restricted to several seminars, and equipment provided was minimal.[89] The success of the Campaign – especially given its wide-ranging goals - depended on securing contributions from donors. The announcement of an international campaign was intended to throw the moral force of UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee behind certain sites that were deemed, in M'bhow's words, the "common heritage of mankind"; this moral appeal would in turn attract international assistance.

The "state party" to the Convention – in this case, the government of North Yemen – was expected to demonstrate its commitment to conservation. Despite official sanction and support for a conservation office, government funding for projects was slow to materialize; it

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[87] Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development", p. 160. The progress of paving may explain why, as Yoshida notes, the improvement of the Wadi Sa'ila became a priority after 1988.
[88] In April 2004 at a GOPHCY seminar on Zabid, the Director noted that there had been confusion as to UNESCO's role: it only gradually became clear that the agency had no funds of its own.
[89] See "Project Findings and Recommendations", UNDP, 1996.

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did not seem to be a high priority of policymakers, who were struggling with more pressing problems. In 1986 the German Ambassador assured EOPOCS staff that if they could convince their government to start the first project, donors would follow.[90] And in fact, as soon as the government had committed funds for the first "demonstration project", several embassies promised funds for others: the restoration of several *samsaras*, a portion of street paving, and the reconstruction of the health clinic at Suq al-Baqar.[91]

Demonstration projects

Despite consultants' emphasis on street improvement, it was not a foregone conclusion that paving and infrastructure upgrading should be the first project. But after considering several alternatives, it was decided that a streets project would have the greatest impact – producing immediate results and gaining the sympathy of residents for conservation.[92] The pilot area was al-Qasimi Street from the Sa'ila to al-Abhar Square: it was a visible area and a tourist route, and lined with important buildings as well as several urban gardens. A second area, to

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[90] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 9/6/04. The ambassador at the time was Dr. Heinrich Reiners, who is credited with the initiative for the German contribution to the Campaign, the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura (M. Petzet, "The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura as an Example of International Cooperation to Safeguard the Old City of Sana'a" in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *Sana'a: the Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansurah*, Munich: Bayerisches Landesamt fur Denkmalplege, 1995, p. 9).

[91] The Netherlands funded street paving from the Great Mosque to Maydan al-Luqayh, begun in 1988; it also agreed to restore Khan al-Jumruq (known as Samsarat al-Zabib) but an alternate site for the raisin sellers could not be found (former EOPOCS official, interview, 9/6/04). In September 1986 Norway agreed to sponsor a pilot restoration project on the condition that it have a community focus; the site chosen in the following year was Samsarat al-Nahhas, which would house a handicraft training center. Germany had conducted phase one studies for Suq al-Baqar clinic in 1983 (per drawings on file at GOPHCY) and later agreed to help fund its construction. In 1988 Germany signed a contract for the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura; around that time it also sponsored the paving of al-Nusayr quarter (begun June 1989) and for the reconstruction of Madrasa Ibn al-Amir, near Bab al-Shu'ub, after the old building had been destroyed (Yoshida, "A Concept on 'Conservation-Based Development' for Historic Cities," p. 25, fn. 11).

[92] Among other candidates for demonstration projects were the restoration of part of the city wall and the restoration of an important building. But the former was sensitive in terms of conservation standards, and very visible; the latter would have limited impact.

be implemented in the following year, would link the monumental city gate, Bab al-Yaman, to al-Abhar via the Great Mosque; an additional stretch was added to link Dar al-Jadid, the conservation office, to al-Qasimi Street (figures 10, 11). The project involved the installation of sewer lines, which had not yet been installed in this area and the upgrading of water pipes and connections.[93] At the same time, streets were regraded and manholes installed. Careful thought went into the selection of paving stones: a black stone with a round profile, commonly found in other highland towns, was chosen to discourage motorcycle traffic.[94] Paving was important not only to improve street quality, but also as an integral aspect of drainage; although storm drains were not installed, it was hoped that the sloped profiles of the streets would carry water to the Sa'ila.[95]

Consultants had repeatedly cautioned that the road work had to be carried out very carefully: the streets were narrow and the sewer pipes were wide; moreover, the foundations of the houses were very shallow, and the soil was already water-laden. Because of the risks, EOPOCS staff could not find local contractors willing to do the work. They finally found a contractor outside the city, who only agreed to the job at a very high price.[96] They

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[93] The water system was upgraded by installing a higher grade of pipe, which however still fell short of the specifications recommended by consultants. The recommended galvanized iron pipes were apparently not affordable; the project installed pipes in such a way that they could be easily removed and replaced later (Lewcock, report no. 4, 1987). The sewer system was projected to be complete by 1988.

[94] R. Lewcock, interview. The choice of paving has been the subject of much contention: most agree that the rounded stones did not discourage motorcycle traffic, but simply increased vibrations which affected near-by buildings (for example, 'Adil al-Hamadi's technical report dated 5/19/88 on file in GOPHCY's Planning Department). The stones are now being replaced by large, flat stones, and textured using electric tools to simulate hand carving; I witnessed an inspector instructing workmen in this method in the area of al-Shahidayn Mosque.

[95] P. Helmore, "Water Supply, Storm Water, and Drainage," ICOMOS mission report, 1982.p. 68; former EOPOCS official, interview.

[96] The contractor was described by a former official as a tribesman and "adventurer". The vibration of earth-moving equipment moved foundations and resulted in cracks in the walls; excavation for sewer lines was 40-50 centimeters, and in some cases foundations were only 60 cm. deep (former EOPOCS official, interview).

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themselves were on site around the clock, working as technical advisors, surveyors, and guards with the contractor and carefully monitoring excavations. Despite this care and attention, and efforts to explain the work to residents, the latter were suspicious and even hostile. It was only after there was visible progress that they started to accept the process.[97]

The Campaign planned to pave and upgrade infrastructure in only the main streets; connections to utilities and sewers would be made area by area. By the late 1990's, approximately eighty-five per cent of the streets and squares of the old city had been paved, largely funded by the government.[98] The remaining areas have since been completed. Despite the success of the paving and infrastructure effort, it has not been without problems – especially due to the lack of coordination between work in different areas of the city, which was in part due to insufficient funds.[99]

"People were suspicious of the Campaign," recalls an urban geographer at the University of Sana'a, who was born and raised in the old city and still lives there. "They thought it would change the city against their wishes."[100] Some officials describe this suspicion as a "lack of awareness" or, less generously, as "ignorance". Although one former EOPOCS official says that he and his colleagues met with community leaders - *sheikhs* and

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[97] The widow of EOPOCS' Chief Architect says things did not calm down until 1989. She used to visit the site of the first project at al-Qasimi Street with her husband. Residents would accuse the team of destroying the streets; they were even fired upon when the news spread that concrete and steel were no longer allowed in the old city. Her husband used to talk with residents and try to reason with them (interview, November 2004).

[98] GOPHCY promotional brochure, color, trifold format, Arabic; produced between 1997 and 2002.

[99] "Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen", April 1997, p. 5. This Dutch report, apparently based on interviews with GOPHCY officials, also cites other problems, including engineers' and builders' lack of knowledge regarding underground conditions; and substandard work that resulted in damage to foundations, leaks in the sewage system, and insufficient grading for drainage. Some areas that were paved in the 1980's and 1990's are now being excavated and upgraded to new specifications.

According to several architects I interviewed, lack of coordination between areas and phases of work and changes to drawings that had to be made on site have meant that the new systems remain in the memories of contractors; the absence of documentation is very problematic for management and trouble-shooting.

[100] M. al-Sa'd, interview, November 2004.

'aqils – in the lead-up to the Campaign, others report that a concerted effort to involve the community never took place. Coordinator of the campaigns in both Sana'a and Shibam-Hadhramaut, Lewcock was struck by the contrast between the culture of the two cities. In the latter, community meetings were encouraged from the beginning, an expected part of the process – perhaps due to the prevailing socialist system. In Sana'a, however, decision-makers frowned on participatory meetings.[101] Some architects at the conservation office – themselves from Ta'izz and Aden – continue to be struck by the different political cultures of Upper and Lower Yemen. They recall that EOPOCS leadership reacted negatively to their attempts to consult the community - an attitude which, they feel, has hurt the conservation effort.[102] This relates to the wider issue of the changing demography of the city, which will be discussed in the following chapter: while the built fabric represents an urbane and cultured past, few of the old families remain, having been replaced in great part by rural migrants. The new residents are seen to have little community spirit and political participation. In Sana'a, then, in contrast to Shibam, conservation was largely imposed from above.

Funding problems

During the first demonstration project, studies were underway for subsequent projects, including the restoration of several *samsaras*. Around this time, Lewcock began to withdraw from the Sana'a Campaign because of other professional responsibilities, especially his appointment as Director of the Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture at

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[101] Interview, November 2003.
[102] In the early 1990's, when a centralized garbage collection scheme was proposed by a German team, an architect at the conservation proposed that residents be surveyed, in order to assess their practices and opinions. The Director reportedly said, "You always want to let these *qabili* control us."

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M.I.T. But he continued to attend working group meetings, and to undertake occasional

missions for UNESCO. He had worked hard to persuade government officials to focus on

infrastructure and municipal services. He called for a two year delay on the conservation of

buildings, so that all available resources could be directed toward infrastructure. At a

UNESCO working meeting in June 1986 he wrote:

> Restoration would really come too early at this stage. National campaign should state that it
> is not with restoration that one would normally begin such campaigns. [103]

His approach was not accepted by donor nations or policymakers, who were eager for show-

piece projects. A certain momentum had been achieved: by late 1986 the conservation

office had grown to forty employees with additional expansion envisioned. In that year the

office formally requested financial and technical assistance from a number of countries, and

assistance was volunteered by several others.[104] Although support was sought from the oil-

rich Arab states, funding came only from countries outside the region.[105] The YAR budget

for conservation increased each year, but it did not keep pace with government contributions

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[103] R. Lewcock, personal communication, 2/17/06; the earlier quote is from handwritten notes dated June 10, 1986.

[104] Countries that contributed technical assistance North Korea (10 architectural and civil engineers and one interpreter, from June 1987); Peace Corps volunteers from the US (1986-1990); Japan (four experts, from 1987); the Netherlands (for studies of Samsarat al-Mizan, from 1987). In the late 1980's Switzerland sent experts for studies of Beit al-Ambassi and Beit al-Amri; Germany sent experts to evaluate Samsarat al-Mansura which built on surveys by EOPOCS staff and a Peace Corps architect. South Korea contributed technical equipment (Yoshida, "A Concept on 'Conservation-Based Development' for Historic Cities," p. 25, fn. 11; and B. Lane, "Pilot Projects").

[105] At a fund-raising meeting at UNESCO Headquarters (6/26/89) participants wrote: "In order to ensure the active participation of arab (sic) countries in the financing of the Campaign which has, until now, been supported exclusively by countries outside the region, it is of paramount importance to set up a high-level mission...to a number of selected countries in Arab World, such as Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates" (on file at UNDP/Sana'a). To my knowledge there was no support from within the region until the late 1990's, when some funding for conservation projects was provided to the SFD by the Arab Monetary Fund. From the late 1980's heritage became a major interest of Gulf states: in the rush to modernization these states had erased much of their pre-oil past and were now anxious to preserve (or rebuild) its remnants. Some professionals in Yemen suggest that Gulf states are envious of Yemen's enormous cultural resources, and have little interest in promoting their conservation.

envisioned by UNESCO.   In 1987 the budget for the vast scope of conservation activities

was estimated at US $201 million; about 40% would be contributed by the YAR; 10% would

be covered by grants from donor nations, and the remainder by international loans.[106]   But in

an interview with a reporter for the Arab News Service, EOPOCS officials estimated the

budget to be higher, in the range of US $1 billion.   The article reported that the Campaign

was threatened by lack of funds and the ongoing exodus of residents from the city.   Little

progress had been made since the Campaign had been launched in 1984, and so far there had

been only symbolic financial contributions, mainly from Italy.[107]

As we saw in chapter one, conservation in other cities was carried out by funding

agencies like the UNDP or the UNOTC, in collaboration with UNESCO.   Because Sana'a

was framed as an international safeguarding campaign, it was dependent on contributions

from donors – and these contributions were insufficient.   The YAR would seek funding from

the UNDP after the fact.   This approach was recommended by both Bouchenaki and

Lewcock, and the UNDP had in any case expressed interest in the Campaign.   An "umbrella

project" to provide support for the Campaign, financed by the UNDP and executed by

UNESCO, was proposed in July 1986.   In May 1988 the UNDP approved a small project to

promote the Campaign and provide institutional and technical support to EOPOCS; a second

project, in cooperation with the ILO, would provide technical assistance and equipment for

the National Handicraft Center.[108]   The projects sponsored short-term consultancies, which

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[106] Lewcock, mission report, 1987, paragraphs 54-84.
[107] D. Matar, "U.N. Plan to Save Old Sana'a Threatened", appended to Lewcock report no. 4, 1987 (no citation; published circa 1986-7). Officials told Matar that Gulf countries had not yet acted on pledges to support the project.
[108] "Draft Terminal Report/Restricted, UNDP/YEM/006", p. 1; and "Umbrella Project – Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a", UNDP, revised 27-4-87 (on file at UNDP/Sana'a). The two projects were identified as UNDP/YEM/88/006 (for promotion activities and institutional support); and

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were deemed to be more cost-effective than long-term missions. Although the use of United

Nations volunteers and associate experts was proposed as a means to achieve continuity, only

one associate expert was sent to the project, financed by the government of Italy. [109]

Around this time, the strategy of the international safeguarding campaign was

reappraised at UNESCO: there was concern that there were too many campaigns for the

organization to handle. [110] A team was sent to Sana'a to advise EOPOCS on new policies. A

new action plan for the years 1988-97, based on previous studies and reports, was developed

by EOPOCS in conjunction with UNESCO, and this plan continues to guide conservation

activities in the old city. [111] The plan included cost estimates for some twenty priority

projects, to be presented to national, bilateral, and international donors. The project

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UNDP/YEM/87/008, in cooperation with UNESCO and the ILO (for handicrafts; Abdo Seif, Senior Program Office, UNDP/Sana'a, interview, June 2006).

[109] Susanna Innocenti of Italy, who was resident in Sana'a for one year. Some twenty-four expert missions to Sana'a were carried out between 1988 and 1990. The missions included technical assistance for craft development at the newly restored Samsarat al-Nahhas (to be discussed in chapter four); as well as architectural studies for the central suq and Samsarat al-Baw'ani (by G. Barbato, 1988-9) and for Samsarat Muhammad bin Hasan. The project also paid for the production of a promotional brochure; for the production of a film; and for an exhibition of projects at UNESCO Headquarters (later installed in Sana'a, during the Regional Seminar on the Safeguarding of the Old Cities in the Arab World, 12/89; "Draft Terminal Report/Restricted, UNDP/YEM/006", p. 6). For the thirty-four UNESCO and UNDP missions carried out between 1985 and 1991, see "Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a: Project Findings and Recommendations", Annex A, 1996.

The UNDP project's concern with "integrated conservation" led to an international symposium to address various relevant issues which had not received sufficient attention: the need for socio-economic studies of the old city and research for a legal framework, especially regarding property rights. The symposium was held in 1991 and its recommendations were to be translated into a new action plan, but as of 1997, none had been formulated ("Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen," April 1997, p. 9). This was partly due to the events of the intervening years, especially the restructuring of the conservation office, to be discussed below.

[110] See above, chapter one, pp. 78-9. The situation must have been compounded by the financial crisis at UNESCO that resulted from the withdrawal of the US in 1984 (D. Matar, "U.N. Plan to Save Old Sana'a Threatened").

[111] A. Oshaish, "Toward a Strategy for the Preservation of the Urban Cultural Heritage of Yemen and the Experience of the Preservation of the Old City of Sanaa", unpublished report, 4/13/01(revised 10/26/02).

proposals were incorporated into a detailed fund-raising brochure, which outlined work accomplished to date and projects in search of sponsors.[112]

By 1990, on the eve of unification, approximately 44,700 square meters of paving and infrastructure upgrading had been completed or were in process. Following the pilot project for al-Qasimi Street, the areas paved were al-Abhar Square to the Great Mosque and the conservation office; the area of Bab al-Yaman; the Great Mosque to Midan al-Luqayh (financed by the Netherlands); and the quarter of al-Nusayr (financed in part by Germany).[113] Several studies for garbage collection in the old city had also been undertaken.[114] The Ibn al-Amir Elementary School – a new, concrete-frame structure with brick façade that incorporated local details – was substantially complete in 1990. Construction drawings for Suq al-Baqar clinic, including a building not in the earlier German project, were drawn by the North Korean team, but the clinic was not built until the mid-1990's after much debate and redesign. With the exception of two *samsaras* and a portion of the city wall, most architectural restoration work was in the schematic phase. The restoration of Samsarat an-Nahhas was substantially complete at the end of 1989, and the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura was in progress. Funding for the craft training program to be housed in Samsarat

[112] "Draft Terminal Report/Restricted, UNDP/YEM/006", p. 4; "Campaign Strategy and Action Plan, 1988-1997", prepared by EOPOCS and the assistance of the Cultural Heritage Division of UNESCO, August 1988. B. Lane was sent to develop project proposals with EOPOCS in 1988-9. The brochure, "San'a: Pilot Restoration Projects," was designed by B. Lane and M. Bouchenaki and paid for by the UNDP-UNESCO project YEM/88/006. Only some of the projects outlined in this brochure have been realized.

[113] List compiled by GOPHCY, no date, on file in the Projects Department. According to Lewcock's notes from a 1986 UNESCO working meeting, the YAR signed a contract with China for paving from Bab al-Yaman to the Great Mosque (handwritten notes, dated June 10, 1986). But according to a list of paving projects at GOPHCY's Projects Department, this work was financed by the YAR. The list mentions some foreign funding for paving of the area from the Great Mosque to Maydan al-Luqayh, and the quarter of al-Nusayr.

[114] W. Huisman, P. Verbuck, W. Vrins, "San'a Old City Garbage Collection and Disposal: an Evaluation Study," February 1989; this built upon earlier studies, including one by Peace Corps volunteers.

an-Nahhas was provided by joint UNDP-ILO funding, which also funded a survey of the

current state of crafts throughout Yemen.[115] The French conducted studies for the

restoration of the earthen (*zabur*) southern wall, although much of it had been destroyed. By

1991 the wall had been substantially rebuilt – against the protests of some Yemeni and

foreign professionals, who felt that the ancient stone foundations formed an important

archeological record and should have been conserved. The Italian project for a model

neighborhood was inaugurated with much fanfare in 1989, attended by hosts of Italian

dignitaries and celebrities.[116] Several studies funded under the UNDP project were complete

or in process;[117] the Swiss had begun studies for the restoration of Bayt al-Ambassi and Beit

al-Amri.

Two views of conservation

Because of the dual focus of the Campaign – urban upgrading and building restoration - it is

remembered in different ways. Residents have experienced conservation largely in terms of

the street paving, water, and sewer works, which have made the old city one of the best-

serviced sectors of Sana'a. As a result, they see conservation not simply an aesthetic

exercise but as a process that has improved their lives and validated their environment. Yet

they are also disillusioned about the promises that accompanied conservation and World

Heritage designation: for example, no means has yet been found to conserve, or even

maintain, the thousands of houses that make up the city fabric. Moreover, a conservation

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[115] See below, chapter six. In addition, the Embassy of the Netherlands had rented and restored a
private house in the old city, Bayt Sunaydar, intended for use as a commercial center for Dutch
products and as a guest house.
[116] For this project, see chapter six, pp. 334-355.
[117] For Samsarat al-Baw'ani, by G. Barbato, and Samsarat Muhammad bin Hasan (commonly called
Bayt al-Mal), by Barry Lane and local architects, both conducted in 1988-9.

plan, which would have provided the basis for a law and certain institutional mechanisms, was never carried out. From 1985 Lewcock's reports mention a forthcoming conservation plan and the need for regulatory measures; and this is echoed in the revised Campaign Strategy for 1988-1997. According to Lewcock, a conservation plan was deliberately delayed in the beginning, because UNESCO agreed that emphasis should remain on infrastructure. This was in part to avoid mistakes of the Fez campaign, where many studies were conducted but there was little work on the ground. Regulatory measures were proposed but they were blocked by the Cabinet, because of opposition from the Mayor's Office.[118] A comprehensive survey of the old city is only now being carried out (begun in 2002); a draft national law has been on the desk of the Minister of Culture since 1995, but has yet to be passed.[119]

Others identify the Campaign primarily with the restoration and reuse projects which, they feel, were driven largely by the interests of donor nations and agencies rather than by local needs. "UNESCO's strategy was to compile a list of projects to sell to donors," says an Italian architect involved in the Campaign. "The donors left, disappointed, because there were no institutions to carry the work forward." The problem was two-fold: on the one-hand, there was a conceptual problem on the part of donor nations; on the other, local capacity was lacking. Campaign funds would have been better spent, he believes, in developing a conservation plan and a technical office that would provide meaningful assistance to owners.[120] The conceptual issue is taken up by a sociologist who wrote a study of the Sana'a *suq* and who conducted studies for the Campaign:

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[118] R. Lewcock, personal communication, 2-5-06.
[119] See below, chapter four, p. 246.
[120] Interview, July 2004.

The minimal coordination that takes place between the donor nations and GOPHCY is not inscribed in a comprehensive plan based on urbanistic, social, and economic criteria…Only an external vision, marked by an often reductive aestheticism, seems to prevail notably among the foreign experts, usually architects, involved in these projects. The perception of the old city is sustained by the nostalgia for a golden age, a lost harmony, coupled with the specter of an urban archipelago isolated from the rest of the city. This ideology of heritage, that conceives the *intramuros* area as an open-air museum and its inhabitants as the last representatives of an endangered species, has colored the elaboration of most of the projects undertaken until now.[121]

The *samsara*s, for example, were to be restored and used for purposes that were clearly oriented toward elite or tourist audiences; a UNDP project aimed at reviving crafts appears to have been designed without consulting local practitioners, despite the recommendations of a Yemeni consultant. [122]

Lewcock saw building restoration as a necessary part of the Campaign, but it had to come after infrastructure work. The shift to monuments restoration came too early, he says, perhaps due to pressure from Embassies and ICOMOS. "EOPOCS should have told donors, 'We'll decide how to use the funds.'"[123] If there was, as Mermier asserts, an "external vision" that guided donor interest and funding, it was not challenged by EOPOCS administration. Several Yemenis who worked with the Campaign admit that certain aspects of programming were driven by foreign ideas that had little to do with the needs of the local community:

We didn't have experience, and we were trying to filter ideas from so many studies by foreign consultants…Our approach did not account sufficiently for local, community functions that couldn't be integrated.

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[121] F. Mermier, "Sana'a, métaphore de l'état yemenite", in Grandguillaume, ed. *Sanaa Hors les Murs*, p. 50 (translation mine). Yoshida echoes these sentiments: "Each donor country participates in preservation activities in its own capacity and works independently without attempting to cooperate closely with other countries."
[122] On this project and the reuse strategy for the *samsara*s, see chapter six, pp. 302-320.
[123] R. Lewcock, interview, August 2004.

But in a sense the new functions, oriented to an elite and foreign audience, were attractive to

Yemeni professionals. "We wanted to make the old city more presentable," says an architect

who worked on Samsarat al-Mansura, which would become a artists' workshop and gallery.

This reveals another layer of attitudes toward the old city: on the one hand, professionals

valued it for its apparently unchanged state and way of life; on the other, the old city

represented a different culture, with which professionals could not completely identify.

For some, the most problematic aspect of donor aid has been the tendency to entrust

projects to foreign expertise.[124] Few projects provided for the training and strengthening a

local cadre of professionals, despite repeated recommendations from Lewcock; nor was there

much effort to involve local builders, despite calls for a "revival" of apprenticeship.[125] This

was due not only to the preferences of donor countries, but to certain institutional factors

within EOPOCS. As in many government offices, top positions are generally not based on

expertise in a specific field, but rather are awarded as political appointments. These officials

tended to leave design and implementation of projects to donor countries' engineers. The

Yemenis in the conservation office were recent graduates of architectural and engineering

programs, yet were appointed directors of departments. They supervised the work of

foreigners, both resident and non-resident, but most did not do a great deal of design work

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[124] There were a few exceptions, notably Samsarat al-Nahhas, where Norwegian conservation specialists were brought in only after the project was well underway.

[125] This was called for by various Campaign documents, and was to be a component of the Italian-funded Technical Center. But according to stories related to me by builders, apprenticeship was still very much alive at the time (and still persists, at least in some families; see T. Marchand, *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship*). Admittedly, many builders had switched jobs or were working for general contractors, but they could have been persuaded to join the conservation effort (Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development"). To date little effort has been made in this regard, as will be discussed in chapter five.

themselves. Thus, with a few exceptions, they had little opportunity to acquire practical expertise.[126]

The tendency to rely on foreign direction and expertise was related to institutional issues within EOPOCS itself, especially the role and personality of the director, Dr. al-Haddad. Al-Haddad was a gifted and energetic politician who knew how to get things done. At the same time, over time, he tended to concentrate power in his own hands – to the

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[126] This point was made by Yemeni professionals who worked at EOPOCS, and also by Yoshida, who wrote the following in 1994: "[M]ost Yemeni experts working at the Executive Office who graduated from neighboring Arab universities have no practical experience but they occupy responsible positions in each section regardless of their ability. They leave practical work to engineers who have little academic background, and do not take any initiative in plan formulation or management. They might provide constructive opinions during the plan formulation process, but are not involved in design and implementation which are entrusted to donor countries' engineers. Under these circumstances, there is no desire or need for technology transfer and the Government of Yemen simply requests the extension of services of experts dispatched by donor countries...In addition, there is the expectation that the presence of experts will bring financial assistance. In a sense, donor countries' assistance may discourage the self-help efforts of recipient countries.

"The shortage of advisors for the engineers and artisans of the Executive Office is an issue being given due attention prior to the expected increase in preservation activities...However, there are government officials in charge of preservation projects who place priority on their career prospects, and merely observe the work of donor countries" (Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development", pp. 157-9).

The limited archive of drawings at GOPHCY is probably not representative of work carried out by the Yemeni staff, since most construction documents are now in private hands. Nevertheless, one is left with the impression that at least prior to 1990 the Yemeni contribution was, in many cases, limited to surveys of existing conditions, on-site supervision, and in some cases, the redesign of projects to conform to existing context (for example, the redesign of Suq al-Baqar clinic, which is regarded by many today as unsuccessful). In particular, the plethora of drawings by the North Korean team – which staffed EOPOCS' Planning Department - suggests that they produced construction documents for virtually all of the streets and infrastructure, and for many other projects including several sponsored by other countries. They also produced a detailed map of the old city (1989) which continues to be updated and rectified on site and through aerial photography, in the current survey of the old city.

Several Yemeni architects, including the supervisor of the North Koreans, noted that the team had little experience in conservation; they spent little time in the field, in part because of the political constraints on their mission (because of security concerns, they were prohibited from interacting with other foreigners). As a result many of their drawings had to be revised in the field.

An important exception to the lack of training is the Netherlands' scholarship program to the Institute of Housing Studies (IHS) in Rotterdam, which began circa 1988. The scholarships – two or three per year – are for intensive graduate courses and accelerated one-year Master's degrees, with a variety of concentrations in conservation and urban management. The Yemeni graduates of this program report excellent experiences. Unfortunately, some of the most gifted professionals are unable to apply because of their limited command of English.

chagrin of the young men who had founded the office. An internal struggle developed and by the early 1990's, had turned into open conflict: several staff members had resigned, while others were transferred to other cities. According to one high-level official, al-Haddad "blocked the development of the [conservation] office": the continued efforts of the international community were the only thing that made up for the deficiency of the office, and kept the effort going.[127]

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[127] Opinions are sharply divided over the causes of the "decline" of the conservation office; many of the details of GOPHCY's internal politics have been related to me in confidence, so only the broadest outline can be related here. Moreover, the early death of the Director, Dr. al-Haddad, in 1995 complicates the reconstruction of events.

Al-Haddad directed the conservation office from 1986 to 1995. He had spent nearly two decades in France, a de facto exile that followed his close association with the Egyptian authorities in the 1960's. In France he worked as a security officer for the YAR; he was informally associated with UNESCO, and then was appointed as the YAR representative. Upon his return to Yemen in the mid-1980's, he was appointed Director of EOPOCS. Like the officials who followed him, al-Haddad's appointment was a political one: he was distinguished by his scholarship and his international connections, but he was not trained as an architect or engineer. He had two Master's degrees, in international public relations and film-making (he put the latter to use in documenting Campaign projects), and a Ph.D in history.

Al-Haddad is generally remembered as an energetic and uncorrupt administrator; he was a "reasonable" man, open to discussion, and, in the early years, appears to have delegated authority. But the fact that the office was being run by energetic young men in the twenties, recalls one foreign consultant, was a "thorn in the side of the establishment." Many of these individuals had high aims for the office, including the establishment of a regional training center with programs of exchange and accreditation. According to one view, over time al-Haddad felt threatened by the free and open debate in the office. He monopolized decision-making and marginalized those who insisted on a more democratic process, transferring many of them to other cities in 1991-3. This led to resentment, and ultimately to an internal coup circa 1995. According to the other view – presumably that of al-Haddad and his protégés – the dissidents in the office acted in a proprietary fashion and were not willing to play as a team.

According to several individuals I interviewed, including those who admired al-Haddad, his background as a security office colored his management style. In contrast to later directors, he understood that success depends on the will and influence of personality: "He understood how things work in Yemen...he dealt with politicians as he dealt with people in the street." This informant is a close friend of several of the individuals who were attacked by al-Haddad. But he maintains that "al-Haddad's good qualities outweighed his bad ones" (interview, July 2005). Al-Haddad's position was a prestigious one, allowing for frequent contact with foreign donors and dignitaries; he may have placed more emphasis on these connections than on building an institution. It should be noted that the complex interplay of local and international politics is by no means exclusive to the area of culture, nor to Yemen. The possibility of foreign expertise and funds, which can be tapped by local agencies, as well as the element of prestige are often sought at the expense of building local capacity. In this climate, UNESCO and its consultants often advocate for local professionals, as Lewcock has done on many occasions. In Fez, Morocco, for example, various government agencies often brought

The immediate issues at stake had to do with the organization of the office, particularly the decision-making process and the delegation of authority; but at a deeper level, they had to do with the mission and philosophy of the office – or lack thereof. In 1999, fifteen years after the inauguration of the Campaign, consultants noted that government organizations involved in conservation still had no clear function.[128] The conservation office has *de facto* authority for the old city, but this is not backed up by law; neither does the old city have a status distinct from the greater Sana'a.[129] Some professionals, as well as UNESCO consultants, felt that EOPOCS should not be an enforcing agency but rather a technical one. But the formation of a technical staff, with the required training, documentary base, and equipment, does not seem to have been spelled out as a priority of the Campaign strategy and was not made a project in its own right.[130] Although funds were raised for a number of projects outlined in the UNDP-sponsored brochure, not all were implemented due to the insufficient capacity of the conservation office.[131]

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in foreign consultants to compete with the work of the conservation office. UNESCO, and in particular Mounir Bouchenaki, continually supported local professionals, and in this way helped to build the strength of the conservation office (H. Radoine, formerly of ADER-Fès, personal conversation).

[128] In their assessment of local and national capacity for the World Bank, H. Eckert and A. al-Maqrami wrote: "[G]overnment organizations have no clear function, they lack transparency coordination and collaboration, so they are not able to provide communities with any meaningful facilities except schools and training centers" ("Cultural Heritage Protection Project: the Social Assessment Report for the Historic Cities of Old Sana'a, Shibam-Hadramawt, and Zabid", 1999, p. 5).

[129] A similar problem was dealt with in Fez by granting the status of municipality to the *medina* (H. Radoine, personal conversation, 6/16/04).

[130] A Technical Center with training for professionals and builders was envisioned as part of the Italian project for Mu'adh quarter, but for various reasons it was not realized (chapter six). Only one training seminar was held circa 1993 but did not include some of the senior technical staff. An Italian architect involved in the project admitted that the enormous funds spent on the restoration of Beit Sari would have been better spent on the establishment of a true technical office.

The role of the conservation office is still unresolved, although there are signs that the current leadership favors the restriction of its role to a technical and documentary center. In 2004 there were ongoing discussions with the Mayor's office on a new partnership in the old city.

[131] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 5/30/05.

There was also an unclear view of what conservation was, or should be, in the local

context. Many of the projects involved problems of design and implementation, provoking

controversy in the community and often within EOPOCS itself. At EOPOCS, the rebuilding

of the wall and the design of Suq al-Baqar clinic were especially contentious.[132] Much of the

controversy revolved around the question of appropriate methods of restoration and/or

conservation. The choice of buildings and programs were set by donors, following a list

developed by UNESCO and EOPOCS; and the technical approach was usually set by the

experts they sent. Most Yemeni professionals in the technical office were aware of their

limited background in conservation. While they questioned certain decisions, they did not

have the power to impact them. When they were in the position of decision-making, they felt

the lack of a conceptual framework; they knew that such a framework was well developed in

Europe, and that it would have relevance to the Yemeni context. But foreign consultants

came for short missions, and often lacked knowledge of the local context. Some were not

interested in dialogue. But in many cases contact between foreigners and local professionals

was restricted by the conservation office leadership. "There was a separation of local and

foreign experience," recalls a senior architect.[133] As a result, the local staff worked largely

on their own, without clear direction. One architect recalls:

> Eighty per cent of what we did in the technical office was a mistake. Engineers and
> architects did not have experience or training in conservation; they saw it as a cosmetic
> exercise - you can build in any materials as long as it looks the same. All our discussions in
> the technical office were at this level, cosmetic. We ignored basic questions like, why do we

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[132] Contrary to the wishes of some EOPOCS staff, the existing stone wall of the old clinic was
eventually demolished. The design and programming of the clinic was a subject of prolonged debate
in EOPOCS; see Yoshida, "Conservation-Based Development." The south façade as designed by the
North Korean team was seen as incompatible with the surrounding context. It was redesigned by
EOPOCS around 1990: the materials, elements, and detailing are adapted from the Sana'ani house but
executed at an institutional scale (see figure 14). The building was not built until the mid-1990's.
[133] Interview, 7/21/05.

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conserve this house? What kind of precedent does it set? What is the impact on public space, on people's attitudes?

A national conservation office

The situation was radically altered by events in 1990-1. EOPOCS was restructured as a

national office, part of the general reorganization of government that followed unification of

the two Yemens on May 22, 1990. The office reflected wider political tensions, particularly

the fear of southern socialists who had been integrated into the unity government. At the

same time the Islamic party Islah gained in strength, supported by the regime as a

counterbalance to the left.[134] "Things changed after unification," recalls a senior staff

member. "There was more freedom and everyone took off their masks. Now you knew who

was a socialist, who was a fundamentalist."[135]

The new General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities of Yemen

(GOPHCY) was now responsible for the conservation of all "historic cities" – although its

focus has been on the World Heritage Cities, Sana'a, Shibam, and Zabid (listed in 1993).

While many feel that all historic towns and villages – which are distinctive examples of local

and regional heritage - should be considered conservation zones, the capacity of GOPHCY

was not up to this challenge. No longer responsible directly to the Prime Minister, GOPHCY

was now a specialized agency within the Ministry of Culture and Tourism – in theory, with

administrative and financial independence. In practice, however, the Ministry of Finance,

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[134] The former governments of north and south remained in place in the form of parties: the General Popular Congress (the President's party); and the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), led by southerners. For post-unification politics see Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 186-191.

[135]Interview, November 2004. A socialist from Lower Yemen who had been with the conservation office since 1987 was fired by al-Haddad, apparently not for political reasons. His case became a *cause celèbre* in the press.

which retains a representative in each government agency and ministry, exercises significant control and takes a substantial percentage of all projects.[136]

Several months later, in August 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The lone Arab country on the Security Council, Yemen's abstention made it the rallying point for those Arab states that opposed the US-led coalition to drive Hussein out of Kuwait. Saudi Arabia revoked the special status of Yemenis; other Gulf nations soon followed suit, and an estimated 800,000 Yemeni migrants were expelled. Their sudden return to Yemen led to the crash of an artificially inflated economy: they required housing and services, and flooded the labor market. The value of the Yemeni riyal began a sharp decline, resulting in a dramatic decrease in income and prices.[137] At the same time, most donor nations and agencies cut off aid in protest against Yemen's position on the war. The new institution of GOPHCY had

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[136] According to one report, the Ministry of Finance takes up to 60% of project budgets. Although the system was not intended this way, the Ministry - one of the wealthiest - has been able to assume control over the annual budget and even the day-to-day release of funds. This is seen by many Yemenis and donor agencies as one of the major structural problems of the government system – and the reason most international organizations and donors now deal directly with NGO's, or with the Social Fund for Development, which operates outside the ministerial system (see below, pp. 187-9 and fn. 144).

A veteran of the Campaign recalls that al-Haddad lobbied to retain the special relationship with the Prime Minister's Office, but failed; other specialized agencies, like the Center for Information and Manuscripts (*Markaz al-ma'lumat wa al-watha'iq*) managed to establish a direct relationship with the Prime Minister. Perhaps, suggests this professional, the government felt that GOPHCY would not be able to function independently; everyone assumed that its mandate should now be national in scope. However, in the view of one high-level official with long involvement in the Campaign, decision-makers did not give sufficient attention to the conservation office and its leadership.

[137] As Dresch notes, however, the economic problems Yemen has since faced cannot be entirely blamed on the Gulf crisis. During the 1980's the riyal had dropped from 4.5 to the US dollar, to 12; it dropped to around 12 in 1990 and after the crisis, to 30. As of mid-1999 it had dropped to 160, without international crisis (but, it should be noted, with a brief "civil war" in 1994 which was actually a war between the major parties, the GPC – the President's party – and the YSP, the Socialist Party). The effects of the decline of the riyal, writes Dresch, have been "monstrous". In 1995 the IMF agreed to a program of "structural adjustment", once again opening the door to international aid (Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, p. 186; pp. 207-8). In the intervening years, wealth has become concentrated in fewer hands, especially those with access to the global system or capital derived from it; there has also been a dramatic increase in corruption, which is endemic – even quasi-official – at all levels of government.

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been deprived of its special authority, and had an expanded mandate and dramatically reduced resources; it was now also deprived of the donor funding that had helped overcome internal obstacles to conservation.[138] The Campaign had been implemented by executive decree; there was still no legal basis to deal with, for example, ownership issues that plagued several high-profile projects.

For its part, GOPHCY's leadership undertook its own, internal restructuring: several senior technical staff who did not support official policies were sent, or asked to go, to far-off posts to manage branch offices. Meanwhile salaries of the conservation office began to fall, like those of other government offices. The absence of donor funds, scarce resources throughout the government, and political troubles – the short-lived civil conflict of 1994 – meant that little money was directed toward conservation. A few projects went forward: the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura (Germany), the upgrading of Mu'adh quarter (Italy), and the restoration of Beit al-'Ambassa (Switzerland) - although the latter project was embroiled in a huge public controversy.[139] Other projects that had been projected did not get off the ground. The main activities carried out by GOPHCY in Sana'a were paving and infrastructure. Much of the city had been paved by 1997, although there continued to be problems with burst pipes and collapsing houses.[140] In addition, the clinic at Suq al-Baqar – a concrete frame building with brick detailing - was completed in 1995. A number of

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[138] F. Mermier, "Sana, métaphore de l'état yemenite", in *Sana'a Hors les Murs*, p. 52.

[139] The restoration of Beit al-Ambassi, completed 1995, under a team originally led by Stefano Bianca (see below, chapter six, pp. 350-1, fn. 174). The Italians continued their project in the Mu'adh quarter. The project included the construction of a new building that was intended to house a training workshop and restoration laboratory. Possibly in response to the creation of a national office, the building was reconceived as a documentation center that would form the basis of a national archive; but it was still to have a laboratory and training facilities. The North Korean team, which had drafted many of the projects and specifications over the previous years, left circa 1994.

[140] Requests for compensation for damaged or collapsed houses continued to be submitted to the conservation office through the mid-1990's especially in the area of Bab al-Shu'ub, where the phase one system had not yet been upgraded (on file with GOPHCY Project Department).

projects were undertaken in Shibam and Zabid, although a project for a brick factory which would have addressed a critical material shortage in Zabid was abandoned due to unresolved ownership issues.

Al-Haddad remained Director of GOPHCY, assisted by a deputy (*wakil*). He offered his resignation in 1993, but did not resign until 1995; he died later that year. Some staff lobbied for the appointment of one of the dedicated founders of the office as al-Haddad's replacement. But the position was given to a political appointee outside the field. GOPHCY was again restructured in what was essentially an internal coup, by those who felt they had been unfairly treated under the old regime. The primary change affected the department of Technical Cooperation and Studies, which had conducted studies and provided counterparts for donors. The functions of this office were now to be divided between the new Center for Architectural and Technical Studies (CATS), housed in a building designed by the Italian team, and the Planning Department. The senior architect at the Technical Cooperation Office was appointed director of International Technical Cooperation, restricting his role to public relations. He refused this offer and resigned.

As the efficacy of the conservation office declined other players emerged to fill the gap, notably the Mayor's office and, more recently, the Social Fund for Development, an extra-ministerial organization underwritten by the World Bank and funded by a variety of donors. In 1995, the IMF approved a program of "structural adjustment" for Yemen and funds slowly started to trickle in from various sources.[141] Shortly thereafter the World Bank began prepare a major cultural heritage initiative for the World Heritage Cities of Sana'a, Shibam, and Zabid, with funds contributed by Japan. A British firm conducted a

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[141] Credit and grants were extended by the IMF, the World Bank, the European Union, and the Arab Monetary Fund (Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 207-8).

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preliminary study, assisted by a local consulting firm and several professionals who had

worked with GOPHCY.[142] After submission of the report in August 1999 the World Bank

aborted the initiative, primarily because it felt that institutional capacity was lacking.

However, a decision was made to reroute the funds through the Social Fund for

Development, a governmental organization outside the ministerial system. The SFD was

deemed to have sufficient capacity and autonomy, as well as the ability to hire and pay

experts. Since its restorations of several urban gardens, which began in 1998, cultural

heritage has become a distinct program sector at the SFD. Most public conservation projects

in recent years have been sponsored directly or indirectly by the agency. The SFD works

closely with GOPHCY: the two offices jointly initiate projects and some GOPHCY

employees work as consultants to the SFD.[143] Professionals and others interested in

conservation are generally pleased that the SFD has infused new life into the conservation

effort, with the help of funds from the World Bank, other donor agencies, and foreign

nations. But some note that the creation of such agencies – based on World Bank

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[142] The study by Gilmore Hankey Kirke Ltd., was conducted from 1997-9 for the World Heritage Cities of Sana'a, Shibam, and Zabid, with funds contributed by Japan (Gilmore Hankey Kirke Ltd., in association with PanYemen Consulting Services, "Cultural Heritage (Protection) Project, Project Preparation, Final Report", 6 volumes, August 1999).

In the early 1970's cultural tourism was pursued as a development strategy by the World Bank at various sites in southern Turkey, Senegal, and elsewhere. Later in the decade the Bank reassessed the strategy and closed its tourism department. Some critics saw tourism projects as neocolonialist, with side effects like increased prostitution which corrupted local morality. In some places, where trained personnel, foodstuffs, and other services were inadequate they had to be imported, leading to low returns for local industry and labor markets. The World Bank renewed its interest in cultural heritage in the mid-1990's largely because of the interest of president James Wolfensohn (who served 1995-2000; G. Brizzi, phone interview, 10/30/05). On recent World Bank activities in this sector, see M. Cernea, "At the Cutting Edge: Cultural Patrimony Protection through Development Projects", in the proceedings of a World Bank-sponsored conference on cultural heritage (I. Serageldin, et. al. eds., *Historic Cities and Sacred Sites: Cultural Roots and Urban Futures,* Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001).

[143] The SFD also cooperates with Antiquities (GOAMM), which is responsible for mosque restorations (S. al-Radi, personal conversation).

operational standards - exacerbates the very problems that the Bank has identified, by

encouraging an internal drain of resources and skills away from government.[144]

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[144] For recent projects by the SFD projects, see chapter six, pp. 355-370; and 375-388. The SFD was established in 1997 (law no. 10) to under-take community-based projects. It was transformed into a major implementing agency through the infusion of World Bank Funds. It is administered by a Board of Trustees, headed by the Prime Minister and including representatives of various ministries. According to a program officer, the SFD was conceived as a "social safety net" to mitigate the effects of structural adjustment, but its work does not come close to meeting needs (interview, October 2002). But the main interest of the SFD for the World Bank is that it enjoys autonomy from the government bureaucracy, and thus can be held to international procedures and standards. Donor funds are routed through the Ministry of International and Cooperation, which interfaces directly with the SFD – bypassing the Ministry of Finance. The Bank helped to create another, similar agency in Yemen, the Public Works Unit (*Wahdat al-Insha' al-'Amma*) which is responsible to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Public Works.

Such semi-autonomous agencies, responsible directly to the Prime Minister - as was EOPOCS itself - are similar to the Central Planning Office, which was established in the 1970's (it was still active in the late 1980's, when the German government channeled commodity aid money through it for the restoration of Samasarat al-Mansura; see below, chapter six). Burrowes notes that such dynamic entities are created periodically by the system in order to bypass the cumbersome bureaucracy, but over time they are absorbed by the system (personal conversation, 4/14/04).

The World Bank has created such agencies in Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Morocco, Mauritania, and elsewhere in the region and beyond. Because they are able to pay high salaries and get the best projects, they are able to attract talented people away from government. The result is what some have described as a kind of "shadow" government that further weakens the government system. "'Structural adjustment' is primarily an adjustment of balance sheets", writes Dresch. "To address the more substantial structures would, in Yemen's case, mean dismantling the state itself, which is not sought by international agencies or by other governments" (*Modern Yemen*, p. 208).

Having little power, GOPHCY appeals for assistance to UNESCO and other parties which traditionally work through government counterparts. In a surprisingly frank statement at a World Bank-sponsored distance learning program GOPHCY's Director, Dr. 'Abdullah Zayd 'Isa, challenged the panel in Rome: "GOPHCY is weak in Yemen, under the Ministry of Culture. Because we're part of the government we are not receiving international assets – they go to the SFD... The SFD was established in Yemen by the World Bank. We [GOPHCY] are treated like any other customer. The SFD is taking ground from the government: initially they only funded projects, but now they're implementing too. My employees go to the SFD. It's stronger than GOPHCY, it has the money to bring consultants and make contracts." "We understand," replied moderator Elvira Morella. But the SFD, she said, seemed to be the only feasible way to make contributions to cultural heritage. The World Bank demands efficient infrastructure: although government institutions in Yemen are well established, "they don't adequately exploit the financial contributions of a body like the World Bank." "We're not proposing that the Social Fund be dissolved," said 'Isa, "but what is the role of GOPHCY?" "We know what is wrong with the Social Fund," replied Morella, "and we're trying to take a remedy. Future funding will be different" (World Bank Headquarters, Sana'a, June 2005).

Even though the contributions of donor states and agencies cannot be traced to individual projects, most have preferred to channel their funds through the SFD in recent years. EU funding is still limited; the Arab Fund, based in Kuwait, has financed many of the urban garden restorations. Some donors have sponsored longer-term documentation and planning projects. Two of these have been financed under the World Bank's $5,000,000 Cultural Heritage Trust from Italy, which requires
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The charge of "weak institutional capacity" is echoed in virtually every consultant's

report. Yet it is rarely noted that the shape of foreign aid, and the failure of government to

impose conditions on that aid, have contributed to this condition.[145] Only rarely are deeper

structural issues addressed. EOPOCS was a transitional entity with no legal basis other than

the executive decree that created it. The emergence of a profession, with a shared ideology,

knowledge base, and critical process is, as one architect notes, inseparable from the

institution that embodies and reproduces its structures.[146] The failure to create such an

institution is a source of deep frustration for many professionals. They tend to fault not the

foreign missions, whose values and ideas often coincide with their own, but the government

structure itself. For some these feelings are tied to the general disillusionment that followed

the revolution:

> We were young guys, looking for real work. We were all engineers (*muhandisin*)...there
> were no more class divisions. No one was better than the other. Heritage [*turath*] was the
> property of all – a symbol of our unity, not of our differences.

Yet most "modern" institutions and professions in Yemen are of very recent origin, and are

influenced by earlier forms and alliances; their emergence is inevitably accompanied by

struggle. [147] The problems of the conservation office – which have also impeded

documentation, the implementation of projects, and the enforcement of regulations – has

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the use of Italian firms: the current inventory for the old city of Sana'a, directed by D. Pini of the University of Ferrara, with F. Miglioli of the World Heritage Center (begun in 2003); and a cultural heritage inventory and archiving project for the Hadhramaut, conducted by an Italian firm called MEMAR (2001-2). From 2000-4 the Netherlands financed an Urban Cultural Heritage Program (UCHP) through the Public Works Unit and the Ministry of Public Works; its main achievement was the drafting of a conservation plan for Zabid. The UCHP was dissolved in 2004 with a reduced foreign aid program from the Netherlands.

[145] Yemeni officials are careful to avoid criticism of foreign aid, which has been crucial for the conservation effort. The criticism recorded here generally comes from those who were not decision-makers – and, as I note below, fault their own leadership more than the foreigners.

[146] H. Radoine, personal conversation, 6/16/04. See also Magali S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, Berkeley, 1977.

[147] See I. Glosemeyer, "The Development of State Institutions", in R. Leveau, et. al., eds., *Le Yemen Contemporain*, Paris: Editions Karthala, 1999, pp. 79-100.

slowed the emergence of a unified discourse. No one party can represent conservation to others: the meaning of conservation is continually influenced, negotiated, and challenged by various groups. In the long term, this may lead to a different and stronger kind of conservation, with roots in social practice and a diversified institutional base. Some of the ingredients of this process will be examined in the following chapters.

Chapter Four

Defining Heritage

In the mid-1980's a remarkable project was undertaken: a new dam was built at Ma'rib, the

site of the ancient Sabean dam and temple complexes, and the heart of a poor tribal area,

where state control continues to be weak. "Despite two thousand years that separated the two

dams and their very different technical conceptions," writes Jean Lambert,

> the modern dam was unanimously presented by the media and the *vox populi* as the
> "reconstruction" of the ancient dam: it represented the resurrection of ancient times (*ayam
> zaman*) and the return to a Golden Age of the kingdom of Saba, of which the dam was the
> greatest achievement.

Executed with foreign funding and expertise, the project was framed in terms of ancient and

modern myths. The "rebuilding" of the dam developed the idea of Yemen as birthplace of

Arab civilization, and established its place in Arab-Islamic and biblical genealogy - and

hence in Western civilization. At the same time, the project was touted as a modern miracle

that would help to achieve self-sufficiency in food production: a sign of contemporary

brilliance that matched that of the ancestors. In political rhetoric and artistic interpretations,

the rebuilding of the dam was seen to prefigure a "restoration" of the nation, particularly the

anticipated "reunification" of the North and South. The fall from grace - the destruction of

the dam - and the subsequent decline of the Yemeni people occurred because they forgot God

and the example of the ancestors. In the commemorative plaques at the new dam, as well as

a contemporary play produced in Aden, this notion of fall was assimilated to disunity and

civil war: in contrast to traditional accounts, which were essentially pessimistic, the modern

renditions saw salvation in the reestablishment of national unity. [1]

Concurrent with the dam project (1984-6), the cities of Sana'a and Shibam-Hadramaut were nominated by North and South Yemen as World Heritage sites: each was to assume its place as symbol of ancient Yemeni civilization. These projects also referred to a national "restoration":

> To be successful, the Campaign will need to develop, within the people of the old city of Sana'a and throughout the Yemen Arab Republic, a sense of participation in the restoration of a national spirit as symbolized by Sana'a al-Qadima.[2]

While the idea of an ancient Golden Age was a cornerstone of national heritage in Yemen as it had been for many other nations, a new twist was added in the era of "world heritage": now heritage consisted not only of the monuments of ancient civilizations, but of urban, vernacular, and natural sites that were seen to "represent" cultures at various historical moments. Sana'a, the site of an ancient urban civilization, had as its counterpart the city of Ma'rib, capital of a desert and tribal civilization that had controlled the fabled incense trade. Both places could now be appropriated by all as common heritage and representative of a shared genius - and indeed, are often presented together as emblematic of the nation, as in the twin commemorative stamps issued by the government.[3] A variety of sites throughout

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[1] J. Lambert, "Saba et le barrage de Mareb: récit fondateur et temps imaginé", *Peuples Mediterranéens*, no. 56-7, juil.-déc. 1991, pp. 141-159, 168 (translation mine). The dam was financed by a $90 million gift from Sheikh Zayd, the late ruler of the UAE, who traced his ancestry to Yemen. Unification talks were going on at the same time, and 'Abdullah Salih portrayed himself as the (re)unifier of an ancient Yemeni state.

[2] "Campaign Strategy and Action Plan:",1988-97, August 1988, co-authored by UNESCO and EOPOCS.

[3] I am grateful to Steve Caton for these observations. Ma'rib and Sana'a are often mentioned together, as in the following oral account: "In that era [the Sabean], men were more intelligent and greater than they are now. They were geniuses (*tahatuth*); their intelligence was proven by the fact that they were capable of building a dam and system of irrigation that was unequalled. The city of Sana'a, founded by Shem the son of Noah, owes its name to the rich craftsmanship [*sina'a*] that was practiced there....They were also giants ['*amaliqa*]: they were much larger and stronger than us..." (related by

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Yemen could be seen as representative of a Yemeni culture and nation; this resonates

particularly with intellectuals and professionals, many of whom come from Lower Yemen or

the South and were educated abroad. They believe that regional differences are what make

Yemen unique, and do not conflict with the idea of a unified, secular state. One official

closely involved in the early stages of the Campaign expressed it this way:

> Every piece of Yemen is different, and every piece belongs to me. I think most Yemenis feel
> the same. Perhaps this feeling is stronger for the elite, rather than for locals who haven't
> traveled.[4]

In contrast to other countries, heritage would be used not to erase tribal and regional

identities but rather to bring them into the national fold. Much as nationalism can be seen as

a process of forgetting,[5] heritage transforms old oppositions into cultural diversity -

sometimes described as a "mosaic". In this, heritage worked in parallel to the political

promises of the regime, which emphasize pluralism and, since unification, the

decentralization of power.[6]

Most scholarly studies of conservation have focused on the construction of heritage

by the state. In Yemen as elsewhere, heritage has become an important part of state

discourse: the Yemeni state is portrayed as heir to the ancient, and implicitly, unified

civilization of South Arabia; at the same time, the country's many regions and divisions are

portrayed in terms of a "diversity" that is characteristic of, and integral to, the nation. The

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J. Lambert, "Le Barrage de Sana'a", pp. 146-7).

[4] Interview, 6/14/05. This individual, from a prominent political family, is from Lower Yemen but
married to a woman from Sana'a from a family prominent in politics.

[5] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*,
London: Verso, 1983.

[6] Hence the well-known statement by President Salih: "The state is part of the tribes, and our
Yemeni people is a collection of tribes" (cited in Dresh, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*,
p. 7).

formula of diversity in unity plays to the popular imagination, and serves certain political

ends. But as Michael Herzfeld reminds us, the formation of collective identity is not a "top-

down" process: rather, it is constructed through a process of cultural engagement.[7] This is

especially true of Yemen's heritage project since, as we have seen, various factors have

impeded the emergence of a unified discourse. Conceptions of heritage and the past are

particularly rich and varied: in government circles and outside them, official representations

mix with and are colored by living memories and by "traditional" practices and values that

seem to be a vital part of the present. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the ways in

which heritage is represented by residents with various relationships to the old city.

I will then look at several places where definitions of heritage are contested: in the tower

house, which has in many ways become emblematic of the old city; and in the *suq* and urban

gardens. In these places social and economic changes – many of which, ironically, can be

linked to the UNESCO Campaign - have led residents and other interested parties, such as

the Ministry of Endowments, to contest GOPHCY's judgments regarding historic value. The

chapter will conclude with an early attempt by conservation professionals to define the

"historic monument" in the Yemeni context.

Heritage and origin (*asl*)

In the myth of the Ma'rib dam and its modern renditions, failure to follow the

example of the ancestors is implicitly linked to the influence of foreign ways: the

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[7] M. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation State*, New York: Routeledge, 2005, chapter one.

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diversification of cultures and a sullying of cultural origin or purity.[8] Origin (*asl*) is a key

concept in Yemen: in both tribal and non-tribal society, one's origin is determined by

lineage. This origin is a source of honor (*sharaf*), the social representation of the male

individual, which also includes one's land and one's house; in public rhetoric, ancestors pass

their honor on to their descendents.[9] Where tribal affiliations are weaker or forgotten - in

urban areas, and in western and southern parts of the country - consciousness of kin group

and lineage are still strong. One identifies oneself as part of a *bayt* – a family line and

literally, house - which is also the source of one's honor.[10] In her study of the village of

Wadi Dhahr, near Sana'a, Martha Mundy observes:

> In the speech of older women the vision of social order take the form of a tripartite division:
> men of religion, men of the sword and the plough, and men of service. Images of rank are
> cast in terms of origins. Houses (*bayt*, pl. *buyut*) possess origins; men are known and ranked
> as members of houses.

While the religious elite trace their origin to founders of the faith, both townsmen ('*arab*) and

countryfolk (*qabili*) trace their origin to a place "where [the] patronymic house is known for

its relation to the land, its honorable occupations and marriage alliances."[11] Most Yemenis

continue to identify themselves in terms of the place of their family's origin, even if they

have not lived there for several generations or more.

There is no word in Arabic for "ethnic": in Yemen, the terms that are used to

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[8] J. Lambert, "Saba et le barrage de Mareb", p. 150.

[9] P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, p. 39, 43-54. Dresch notes that in Yemen, as in Palestine, honor is associated with land, in word plays on the homonyms '*ardh*, honor (which begins with an '*ayn*), and *ardh*, land (which begins with a *hamza*); as in the phrase *al-ardh 'ardh*, "land is honor" For the link between the patronymic group and the physical house in North Yemen, see Mundy, *Domestic Government: Kinship, Community, and Polity in North Yemen*, New York: I. B. Tauris, 1995, pp. 93-7.

[10] P. Bonnenfant, "La Maison Microcosme", in Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a: l'architecture domestique et société*, Paris: CNRS Editions, 1995, pp. 50-6.

[11] *Domestic Government*, pp. 39-40.

approximate it have to do with origin and descent.[12]   It has been suggested that in some parts

of the Middle East, the tribe and the family are models for the "imagined community" of the

nation.[13]   This echoes an earlier process that may have occurred in towns and cities: as heads

of important tribes and families assumed leadership, the community was modeled,

consciously or unconsciously, on the patriarchal family.   In most highland towns in Yemen

communal identity tended to be linked to the surrounding tribes, which trace their origin to a

common and ancient ancestor.   By contrast, argues Mermier, in Sana'a a distinctive urban

ideology or *citadinité* emerged, distinct from the city's tribal context.[14]   This was perhaps a

means to overcome the tribal loyalties of early settlers.[15]   Like its tribal counterpart, this

urban ideology also posited common ancestors: Shem, who links Sana'a to a series of pre-

Islamic and biblical Prophets, and his descendent Qahtan, considered the common ancestor

of South Arabians; the latter, as we have seen, was a key figure in revolutionary populism.[16]

> Authenticity is established by this direct connection with the legendary past and by the belief
> that [Yemenis] carry the pure South Arabian blood in their veins.   The fact that

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[12] Day, "Power-sharing and Hegemony", pp. 94-5. The closest terms, says Day, are *irq* and
salala; he is probably referring to *'araqa*, which H. Wehr defines as "deep-rootedness; ancient
ancestral line"; and *asala*, "nobility of descent, purity of origin" (*Dictionary of Modern Written
Arabic*, J. Cowan, ed., Ithaca: Spoken Language Services, 1976).

[13] A. Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in
Tribal Jordan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 318. Shryock notes Benedict Anderson's
account of the origin of nationalism –its gradual emergence in a society dominated by a "religious
community" and a "dynastic realm" – did not account fully take into account conditions in the Middle
East, "namely, the presence of tribalism and pervasive clan organization, a form of community that
imagines itself genealogically." While Shryock asserts that in early modern Europe there was little
that could be described as "tribal" or "clan" structures, the quote of Voltaire which he cites earlier
(see above, p. 41, fn. 29) suggests that the family may in fact not have been remote as a model for
community. Despite different "cultural patterns" in European and Islamicate societies (see M.
Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: essays on Europe, Islam, and world history*, Cambridge and
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 126-170), there would appear to be a close
correlation communal identity and ruling families - for example, in the case of Italian city states.

[14] F. Mermier, "De l'Usage d'un Concept: la Citadinité a Sanaa", p. 31, 34-7.

[15] S. al-Suleihi, "The Lyrical Facades of Sana'a", unpublished Master's thesis, Department of
Architecture. MIT, 1992, p. 17.

[16] See above, chapter two, p. 103.

> legend...connected Sana'a with the venerated ancestor of the country, with emphasis on place rather than race, suggests a physical dimension of nobility; it is the very spot where Shem chose to build his lofty Ghumdan, the romantic ideal for all houses in the city...
>
> In this sense, Sana'a becomes an architectural manifestation of the genealogy of Yemeni tribes gaining, therefore, distinction [in the merging] of legend and political power, as the seat of the central state.[17]

Like the family, the city (and nation) derive their authenticity from origin and lineage, which include the concept of purity. That which is authentic and original (*asli*) precedes the introduction of Western ways and norms, and hence encompasses the notion of the "folk".[18] The origin of the city is the source of its honor and also of its divine protection. Architecture, and in particular, the house, is a key component of the urban culture of Sana'a, by virtue not only of its refinement, but of its origin: as such, it can be seen as an "incomparable piece of rhetoric."[19]

Transferred to the larger associations of city and nation, heritage or *turath* (from w-r-th, "to inherit") evokes a complex of social and emotional ties, including the achievements of the ancestral line. As such, it is an example of the assimilation of the ancestral concept of *sharaf* to present concerns.[20] As noted above, the mythical founding of Sana'a and the lineage of its founder are constantly evoked in conservation literature. This literature brings together two myths of authenticity: UNESCO's notion of the city as representative of a past

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[17] S. al-Suleihi, "The Lyrical Facades of Sana'a", pp. 16-7.

[18] E. Davis and N. Gavrielides, "Statecraft, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture in Iraq and Kuwait", in Davis and Gavrielides, eds., *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture*, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991, p. 143. The authors describe this phenomenon in Kuwait where, in the absence of ancient sites, folk heritage (*al-turath al-sha'bi*) has been encouraged by the state.

[19] S. al-Suleihi, "The Lyrical Facades of Sana'a", p. 26. Al-Suleihi argues that much as poetry served as the vehicle for tribal identity and ideology, architecture plays a parallel role in Sana'a.

[20] P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, p. 40. '*Ayb*, or public disgrace, is what damages *sharaf* as presented to others; hence the condition of the old city can be seen as a disgrace of collective honor.

culture, a city of "the Islamic ages" that is "untouched by time"; and a local myth of the city

as a locus of shared descent, values, and customs.[21] In the former, emphasis is placed on

material integrity as the criterion of authenticity; but significantly, both myths attribute

special status to the house, *bayt*, a word that also means family and lineage. While the dam

at Marib would be "restored", the old city of Sana'a would be "re-antiquated" or rather,

retained in its antiquated state. In many parts of the world "re-antiquating" is a "shocking

destruction of the familiar...not continuity but radical change."[22] In Sana'a, residents were

not separated from the "antique style" by decades or centuries of change. In a sense,

conservation validated the familiar and the indigenous. It built on *citadinité* by validating

Sana'ani urban culture which, as al-Suleihi suggests, may find its clearest expressions in

architecture - in particular, the composition of elaborate facades. Yet, as we shall see, for

many in Yemen preservation (*hifadh*) does not necessarily mean absence of change.

The old city as symbol

In the palette of national sites Sana'a holds a privileged place, like capital cities elsewhere: it

illustrates Yemen's claim not only to a "culture" but to a "civilization", which is required for

membership in the world community.[23] As in other places, the historic core of Sana'a has

become emblematic of the larger metropolis,[24] and of the state itself. The historic core and

its architecture are displayed alongside images of modern enterprise and technology -

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[21] See above, chapter two, p. 95. It is interesting that in this literature, the biblical genealogy has eclipsed Qahtan – perhaps because the latter is less recognizable to Western audiences.
[22] M. Herzfeld, *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 14.
[23] S. Caton, personal conversation, 7/6/04.
[24] S. Bianca notes this phenomenon in Europe and elsewhere (*Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2000, pp. 175-6).

establishing the nation as both modern and heir to a great urban civilization (figure 12). The

elevation of old Sana'a as a symbol of the nation appears to transcend sensitive historical

issues: the role of the city as the dynastic center of the later Zaydi imams; the tensions

between Upper Yemen and Lower Yemen; and the traditional antagonism between the city

and its tribal hinterland. The attraction of the city - for elites from various parts of the

country, for rural migrants, and for the tribes - has produced a kind of "urban mosaic".[25] The

concentration of resources and interests in the capital means that various groups identify with

it: the city, and even its old urban culture, have become a unifying force. The old urban elite

and middle class have become more accepting of their traditional "others", if only because

they have no choice.[26]

The tribes, who were once unwelcome in Sana'a (at least in theory) have become

important citizens and even patrons of the city.   Many tribesmen fought on the side of the

Republicans in the revolution, and the compromise of 1970 promised to bring them into the

new government. They were rewarded for their support in official and unofficial ways; as

they have settled and invested in the capital, they have appropriated the city in symbolic

terms. Two prominent tribal leaders were given houses in the heart of old Sana'a as

compensation for their own family houses that were destroyed in other towns.   One is

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[25] "...this mosaic character of the city, which has not yet given rise to a true urban culture, finds itself
confronted by the threat of a tribal environment that can impose its rules in the heart of the city, if not
the state itself" (Mermier, "Les Fondations Mythiques de Sanaa et d'Aden", *Revue du monde
musulman et de la Mediterrannée*, vol. 67 (special issue, "Le Yémen, présent et passé de l'unité","),
1994, p. 37). The animosity between city and tribe is not ancient history: tribes sacked the city as
recently as 1948; even today, there are occasional rumors of tribal interventions in the capital.
[26] A. A. Othman, interview, 11/12/04; and his unpublished paper "The City and the Other", presented
at a conference co-sponsored by Ministry of Culture and Sana'a University, August 2004. Lambert
describes how the old Sana'ani urban culture has become a reference point for individuals from
various origins ("Consommation de masse et tradition a Sana'a: vers une culture urbaine," in G.
Grandguillame, et. al. eds., *Sana'a hors les murs*, pp. 116-7).

Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, an important revolutionary figure who founded the Committee for the Improvement of the Capital (*lajnat tahsin al-'asima*) in 1975. He was granted a distinguished house on al-Abhar square; several decades later he was persuaded to cede the house to the conservation office.[27] The other is Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar, speaker of Parliament and leader of Islah, the Islamic opposition party. Extensions to the rear of his house, which is across from Sheikh Sinan's, reveal an attempt to appropriate the "Sana'ani style." Some architects cite such buildings as examples of the coarse, *nouveau riche* "tribal taste" that has invaded the city.[28]

A renewed pride in local architecture can be seen in new floors that have recently been added to houses in traditional *yajur* (fired brick) - both within the city and outside it, where no conservation guidelines are in place.[29] The tower house has become emblematic of the "Sana'ani style" – as witnessed by the ubiquitous plaster models that are popular among both Yemenis and foreigners (figure 13). Some officials and professionals attribute this renewed interest and pride to conservation. But it builds on an old discourse. "Sana'anis are very aware of their architecture," said a middle-aged scholar, who was born and raised in the city. "They will look at something you do and tell you it's not right." As I toured the old city alone, or with an architect or inspector, residents would sometimes offer their opinion: "This stone is cut incorrectly," said one. "It should be cut by hand, not with a machine."[30] A young worker at an old house in Bir al-'Azab, that is currently being restored by the

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[27] Renovated in the late 1990's, the house was used as the Women's Handicraft Center for several years; it now houses the Museum of Sana'ani Popular Life.
[28] "In Sana'ani," said one architect, "it would be described as *jadhib*, 'catching the eye' – and therefore unrefined.
[29] This point was made by one of the founders of the conservation office, interview, 10/12/03; and indeed, new "traditional" upper stories are common, especially in the old suburbs.
[30] Site visit, 4/15/04.

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Ministry of Tourism, showed me around the site with obvious pride – pointing out various disfiguring (*mushawwih*) elements that had been removed, and would be restored to their original state. He had worked in construction, but this was his first experience in old-style work; he is not from a family of builders. Yet he had a fairly sophisticated understanding of local architecture. His family's house in Bir al-'Azab is of concrete block; they planned to add a story in "*yajur*, in the old style; we'll clad the block below in stone." The new brickwork that can be seen throughout the city is not beautiful, he noted: "There's too much ornamentation (*nuqush*)." It should be restricted to the decorative brick courses (*hizams*), he said, that divide floors from one another.

The focus on Sana'a and the "Sana'ani style" has important consequences, which were perhaps not foreseen by the writers of the World Heritage Convention. The privileging of certain sites means that resources and studies are concentrated there, while hundreds of other important sites throughout the country - and the old neighborhoods that surround the old city of Sana'a itself - are neglected. When conservation projects are sponsored for other sites, they are carried out in the absence of local studies; they may be restored according to an idealized "Sana'ani style" with which architects are familiar. This is one of several ways in which heritage may serve to homogenize diversity. "Heritage is a fashion," says one architect. "It's more dangerous to our historic cities than modernism, because it combines resources with ignorance." While some Yemeni officials support the focus on the three World Heritage Cities of Sana'a, Shibam, and Zabid, the former UNDP-UNESCO representative has repeatedly warned of the dangers in this.[31]

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[31] H. Saliba, personal conversation. At least one prominent official (with long involvement in conservation) has advocated a policy of focusing on the three World Heritage Cities.

Until recently, the "Sana'ani style" was defined by builders. But aspects of their practice have suffered due to new actors, technologies, and forms; nor has a strong architectural profession developed to fill the gap.[32] Under the imams, officials and builders experimented with new institutional typologies, using local materials and building on Ottoman precedents. These experiments were largely abandoned in favor of a postmodernism derived from residential architecture. Features like multi-lite windows (*qamariyyas*) and decorative brick course (*hizams*) have been extracted from their domestic context and applied to commercial and institutional types - despite precedents for these types in the city (figure 14).[33] This "Sana'ani style" is used for new buildings not only in the capital, but throughout the country.[34] This new work is seen by foreign and some local professionals, particularly those familiar with the historical style, as "kitsch." "When you look at houses in the new districts, you realize that Yemenis think they are on the same historical time line - but it doesn't work," said an official from the World Heritage Center.

> They don't realize that the toy is broken. In the past, techniques developed over very long periods of refinement and adjustment; building was firmly grounded in hundreds of years of tradition. Rulers of the past could not go wrong: people knew what was good and what was bad. But now we don't have the same confidence - the magic touch is gone. We no longer have the capacity to transform our historic cities. It's a different era: we are not on the same

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[32] Architect, personal conversation, 4/16/04.

[33] Mosques and caravansarays are rarely seen as inspiration for new architecture. Rather, domestic architecture and especially façade treatments are adopted in the old city for institutional structures; notable case is the Clinic at Suq al-Baqar. One suspects that the domestic façade is used in this way because it is extroverted, in contrast to the sober and introverted mosques and caravansarays – and more immediately identifiable as "native." The Suq al-Baqar clinic was designed by EOPOCS in an attempt to be "contextual". This experiment contrasts with several projects executed under Imam Ahmad, such as the Ministry of Health, based on an Ottoman model but executed by builders who translated brick decorative elements in multi-colored stone. Working for the UNDP in the 1970's, Derek Matthews executed a number of buildings that attempt a "modern" Yemeni expression where the sense of mass remains.

[34] A veteran of the Campaign made this observation, adding, "perhaps we overemphasize the Sana'ani style." While the style of the capital city often exerts a hegemonic influence, here it perhaps takes on special significance in the context of new building techniques and programs that overwhelm local traditions.

time line.[35]

But in Yemen neither clients, nor their contractors and builders, have been schooled in architectural modernism - which, like conservation theory, holds that contemporary building should be distinct from that of the past. For many, *turath* encompasses both old and new buildings in the local idiom: they have not assimilated the notion of the "historical time line."

The old city as "jewel", as stigma

The thing that immediately strikes a visitor accustomed to the gentrified historic cities of Europe and the U.S., where well-preserved architectural shells are often owned and/or occupied by international companies and franchises, is that the old city of Sana'a seems surprisingly "normal". There is an obvious mix of activities, from small shops and workshops, to the pervasive fabric wholesalers, to tourist shops, and shops where electronics and cell phones are sold. There is also an obvious mix of social groups, from the working poor to a middle class that includes traditional, and changing, social statuses.[36] If one group is underrepresented, it is the intellectual elite who have chosen to live in the new districts. Despite the many problems and limitations of the conservation effort, one is struck by this very old urban fabric, an architectural "jewel" - a phrase that I've often heard from officials and residents - whose physical decline has been slowed or arrested. For residents, the generally well-preserved houses and restored gardens, the clean streets equipped with modern infrastructure, are a source of pride. They have seen their "historic" city - which is

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[35] Interview, Sana'a, 7/27/04.

[36] During my field work I visited a number of families who appear to be extremely poor. An interesting case is a row of one-room, concrete block units, built in the open space between two grand old houses in the quarter of al-Nahrayn. Occupied by rural migrants from the countryside – the woman I spoke with lived in the single room with her husband and three children – the complex is

still their every-day city - validated by the international community and by the state.

Consciousness of an "old Sana'a" developed gradually, as new districts were built in a radically different idiom. As late as the 1970's the old city *was* Sana'a, and the new districts were outside the city (*kharij Sana'a*).[37] But this original Sana'a was not restricted to the central core - it included the old suburbs that were still partially surrounded by walls. There is thus a kind of disconnect between the official designation of "old Sana'a" and personal and collective memory: the heritage of Sana'a is more varied, and much of it is of very recent origin.[38] The limitation of historic designation to the central core has perhaps contributed to a unitary reading of Sana'a's history, architecture, and people.

The isolation of the central core has been reinforced by the continuing focus on the city walls. Some segments were rebuilt under the Campaign, and there is now a project to rebuild the stretch adjacent to Bab al-Yaman, which means removing buildings and shops and compensating the owners.[39] As we saw in the previous chapter, the walls are a very old symbol of Sana'a: their gates embellished by talismans, they were seen as a symbol of divine protection.[40] The present focus on the walls seems motivated their iconic value and also as a defensive structure - no longer against raiding tribes, but against modern encroachments. In the words of one architect, the walls are essential to preserve the city as an historic monument, safeguarding it against "contamination of the undisciplined architecture of the

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known as a *samsara* in the neighborhood, evoking the transient character of the inhabitants.

[37] According to elderly residents, cited by Daolatli in his mission report of 1981.

[38] During a *qat* chew a builder now in his 50's described projects he worked on in Bir al-Azab with his father in the 1970's. An architect who has worked with the family for years said, "You see, their Sana'a is not UNESCO's Sana'a – it was much larger."

[39] The project is supported by officials and some conservation professionals, including Selma al-Radi. Among the opponents of the project are Ron Lewcock, who feels that the money spent on a symbolic gesture should be used for the city's more pressing problems.

[40] F. Mermier, "Les Fondations Mythiques de Sana'a et Aden", p. 134.

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[new] urban sprawl."[41] The stark contrast between the refined architecture of the old city and the prosaic development that surrounds it makes it difficult not to sympathize with this statement.[42] Yet the walls not only reinforce the edges of the old city as a physical space, but as a space of "traditional" identity.

In the parlance of UNESCO, old Sana'a is representative of a traditional urban settlement, "untouched" by the passage of time. The rhetoric has been adopted by local residents, as it confirms their image of the city and themselves. The mass exodus of the well-to-do and much of the middle class in the 1970's resulted in dramatic upheavals in demography and social relations. Though few of the original families remain, many residents of the old city insist that traditions are still alive - and the ideal appears to perpetuate practice. The old city is known as a more "traditional" place, where women would not think of going without the face veil and where foreigners should dress conservatively.[43] Social relations in the old city - which, according to the elderly, are nothing like they were in the old days - are still close enough that they are stifling for some young professionals used to a modern notions of privacy.[44] At the same time, the compactness of

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[41] Lecturer at Sana'a University, quoted by T. Marchand, "Walling Old Sana'a: Reevaluating the resurrection of the city walls", *Terra 2000: 8th International Conference on the study and conservation of earthen architecture*, London: James and James, 2000, p. 49.

[42] Ron Lewcock, who has been visiting Sana'a since the early 1970's, expressed dismay at what the city has become. "It has lost its uniqueness.... It could be anywhere, Egypt or India or Sri Lanka." For Lewcock and other architects, the character of Sana'a is not salvaged by the ubiquitous *qamariyyas* (decorative windows) which have become reduced to a sign in mundane, capitalist sprawl. For a somewhat different view on the evolution of the Sana'ani suburban house, see J-L Arnaud, "Formation de l'architecture contemporaine à Sanaa (1965-1990)."

[43] According to Lambert, young women who want to be rid of the veil try to move to the new districts (Lambert, "Consommation de masse", in G. Grandguillaume, ed., *Sana Hors les Murs*, p. 129).

[44] One artist who recently moved to al-Zubayri Street from the old city did so because it was difficult to work there: "people were always stopping by, wanting to draw you into social relations....they don't respect your privacy."
Elderly residents relate stories of the old days, in which different branches of the family often inhabited contiguous houses. One woman in her eighties recalls that women used to move freely

the fabric, the pleasant open spaces and gardens, and the restriction of vehicular traffic do

contribute to a sociability and sense of calm that many find lacking in the new districts. One

middle aged man of tribal origin who lives in a distant suburb says that when he has free time

he goes to the old city to walk, and to visit with friends at the teahouse at Qubbat al-Mahdi:

"I go because of the sense of calm [*raha*] I feel there."

The idea of the "old city" is sometimes used to validate social norms in the face of

rapid change. In some cases, the language of conservation is used to defend conservative

religious and political positions. A case in point is the Bustan al-Amri, a garden attached to

the *waqf* or endowment of the mosque of Qubbat al-Mahdi. In late 2003, in preparation for

Sana'a's year as Cultural Capital of the Arab World, the Ministry of Culture transformed the

garden into an open-air theater. Many of the events during the year used the old city as

symbol or stage of Sana'ani culture, but generally did not involve the residents themselves

(figure 15).[45] Some residents of the old city opposed the use of the garden for musical

performances, arguing that use of a *waqf* property for entertainment went against the original

intention of the patron (*waqif*). Moreover, the garden was attached to a mosque:

entertainment and music were not appropriate for the site.[46] The controversy, which

provoked a debate in Parliament, was still going on in April 2004 when I was making rounds

of the old city with an inspector. A young man approached the inspector, demanding to

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across rooftops, and knock on party walls when they needed something from their neighbors. A
widow, she still lives in her husband's house in the old city, but no longer knows her neighbors. "The
old way of life is no more," she said (interview, July 2005).

[45] At a concert in March 2003 by a German orchestra (see photo) admission appears to have been
restricted to Yemeni officials and the foreign community. The spectacularly lit house facades along
the Sa'ila formed the backdrop for the event, but the shadows of young Yemeni men lined up along
the Sa'ila created a disturbing, pseudo-colonial scene, with the natives excluded from their own
territory.

[46] *Al-Sahwa* (paper of the Islah party, the Islamist opposition party), February 12, 2004. In recent

know why GOPHCY was not discussing the matter. "Any modernization (*istihdath*) in the old city of Sana'a is forbidden," he said. "It says so on the Internet" (i.e., on UNESCO's website).[47] In their effort to preserve the traditional function of the garden – and, implicitly, to resist the coopting of their city by an elite and alien program – residents invoked the authority of UNESCO alongside Islamic law. In May 2004 the Social Fund for Development was considering a proposal to demolish the theater and restore the garden to its former state.[48] But during the month of Ramadan, in what may have been an effort to appease residents, the theater was used for performances of religious music (*tawshih*) by groups from different parts of Yemen.

As noted in chapter one, conservation is heir to an older tradition in the social sciences and the humanities that equates social and physical form; this has been taken even further in recent years, with the invention of a new category of "intangible heritage" that includes not only art forms like music, poetry, dance, but also social practices and customs.[49] It is unclear if certain cultural practices seen by some as incompatible with modernity - for example, the seclusion of women - are to be acknowledged as part of Yemen's intangible heritage. The phrase "customs and traditions" (*'adat wa taqalid*) appears to have taken on new currency in the old city: it is cited with both reverence and ambivalence, sometimes by

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years Islah has won a majority of votes in the district that covers most of the old city.

[47] When I later asked the inspector about the case, he said that the renovation of the garden as an open-air theater had been opposed by GOPHCY, which is an office within the Ministry of Culture. It was initially supported by the Ministry of Endowments (*Awqaf*), perhaps because of the prospect of revenue; but the Ministry changed its position in the face of strong opposition from residents.

[48] According to an interview with a GOPHCY official, 4/24/04.

[49] "Intangible heritage" also includes objects that are more properly classified as "folk"; the latter seem to be defined as intangible by virtue of their material (textiles, fiber, etc.), which are more prone to decay.

the same person.[50] This ambivalence extends to the old city itself: on the one hand, it is seen

as a bastion of Yemeni cultural identity and tradition, safeguarding these against foreign

influence and domination; on the other, as a backward place and an impediment to

progress.[51]

As we have seen, the ambivalence toward pre-revolutionary Yemen was shaped in

relation to the foreign and the modern.   Modernizing Egyptians and Yemenis returning from

abroad compared Sana'a unfavorably with foreign cities.   Through the eyes of foreigners,

the old districts came to be valued as evidence of a local genius that contrasted favorably

with the faceless architecture of modernity. A new pride in the local and the traditional was

assimilated by the modernizing elite; yet they continued to feel embarrassment at their

country's late and incomplete modernization, of which the old districts are potent reminders.

Writing in the mid-1980's, Jean Lambert noted

> In the often depressing conditions [of the present] it is hardly surprising that an image is
> being formed of a Golden Age of the old days of the city of Sana'a.....[T]his mythic
> memory... has as its corollary a great ambivalence toward the real city. One oscillates
> between a contempt for a backward, but recent, past, whose sequels are still too perceptible,
> and the valorization of a more distant and idealized past...This ambivalence is perhaps also
> inherent in the state of abandon of the old city, in this transitional period in which UNESCO
> has begun to restore it: the gaze of the foreigner is thus a determining factor in the content of
> one's self-image...[52]

As a form of institutionalized and collective nostalgia, heritage draws on the nostalgia

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[50] One young woman – who can be identified as part of what A-A Othman calls the "traditional urban middle class" - explained and reaffirmed the requirement that a woman obey her husband, which is equivalent to obeying God. Later in the conversation, she expressed sadness that her mother would not let her become a hairdresser and cosmetologist, areas in which she felt gifted. Cutting hair, as a hairdresser or barber, is a *muzayyin* profession. not suitable for a woman of her stock. "These *'adat wa taqalid'*, she said. "I wish they did not exist."

[51] T. Marchand, "Walling Old Sana'a," p. 49. An individual interviewed by Marchand blamed the residents of the old city for "keeping the country in the dark ages of the Zaydi imams." I often encountered similar sentiments in my fieldwork.

[52] "Consommation de masse et tradition a Sana'a: vers une culture urbaine" in G. Grandguillame, et.

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of individuals and families; here, it is alternately expressed as pride and shame. The shame is both societal and personal, since many educated Yemenis were themselves raised in these "backward" conditions. Many seem to feel a perceptual and even temporal divide between the new areas of Sana'a and the old city - which perhaps corresponds to an inner divide, between one's sense of self and one's past. This may perhaps explain the often shocking comments of some officials and intellectuals. On the one hand, they affirm the need to preserve the old city as a "living museum": "Even the people", one official told me, "are antiquities (athar)."[53] At the same time, they disparage the backwardness and ignorance of the people who live there, blaming them for the decay of the old city - when in fact, as residents and inspectors bitterly note, the biggest "violaters" are those with access to power. These privileged individuals incorporate memories of the old city in their villas, which many describe as "mixes" of the traditional and the modern. Yet they rarely visit the old city, seeing it as a world apart.[54] This attitude contrasts markedly with that of old city residents, who seem to move with remarkable ease between the old districts and the new. Many of their relatives have moved to new areas because the family homes could no longer accommodate them.

Despite the pride felt by many residents of the old city, there is for many a sense that the opportunities brought by modernity are happening elsewhere. The attachment to the ancestral home may be diminishing among some of the younger generations. While praising conservation and the old architecture, one young man said to me matter of factly, "Those

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al. eds., *Sana'a hors les murs*, p. 98.
[53] Interview, 3/12/04.
[54] Qadi 'Ali Abu Rijal notes that many families make weekly visits to the family house to visit relatives living there (interview, 3/24/04). But these weekly visitors tend to be drawn largely from the middle class rather than from the elite - especially since the better off a family is, the more likely

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with means, leave the old city." As the inhabitants of the old city become poorer, notes one

scholar, their resentment is increasingly aimed at those with means who have made their

homes outside, especially "those villas that officials [al-mas'ulin, literally 'responsible

ones'] build for themselves in the new quarters."[55] Yet others - educated single men or, less

often, families - have returned to the old city or are thinking of returning. Most cite the

urban life and sociability they feel is missing in the new districts; a few younger individuals

cite the qualities and "spirit" of the old houses. But their number remains small: living in the

old city continues to carry a social stigma, especially for the educated.[56] There is also an

intermediate type of residence: men who live in the new districts may return to the family

home for socializing. The mafraj of the old houses, which often has a panoramic view of the

old city, is considered the preeminent place to chew qat.[57]

While the mas'ulin embraced conservation, their enthusiasm waned when foreign aid

stopped in the early 1990's. It has revived to some extent with the renewed interest of the

World Bank and other donors, and the creation of a Cultural Heritage sector in the Social

Fund for Development. Yet government support seems half-hearted and sporadic, spurred

only by the promise of funding or threats by UNESCO to remove Sana'a and other sites from

the World Heritage List. Disillusioned professionals, some of whom have been committed to

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it is that all members would have relocated to the new districts.

[55] Cited by Lambert, "Consommation de masse et tradition a Sana'a", p. 93.

[56] Among the several cases I encountered is that of a professor in the social sciences at Sana'a University. He grew up in the old city, and moved back to the family house with his wife and children; but his colleagues look down on this as incompatible with his status.

[57] There is a culture of qat chewing, which includes particular postures and protocol, and recommends certain aesthetic and environmental conditions. For example, Sana'anis believe that while chewing one's body is more susceptible to drafts, hence windows cannot be opened (even with the copious cigarette smoking that accompanies qat).
The use of the old family house for male activities has also occurred in the old city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: while families have relocated to modern villas, men return to the old houses to

conservation for two decades, note that basic legislation - developed in the 1980's and submitted to the Ministry of Culture in 1995 - has still not been ratified. While financial support for property owners and other pressing concerns is lacking, lavish funds continue to be spent on international conferences, a tendency that is directly or indirectly encouraged by UNESCO and other foreign agencies. "Conservation is just for public relations (*lil 'ilaqat al-'amma*)," says a veteran of the Campaign – that is, it's just to please outsiders. "We need to move discussions of conservation from the board rooms of officials and foreign experts, to the streets of the old city."

The Sana'ani house: attitudes and adaptation

The family home is a fundamental institution in the South Arabian peninsula, representing the unity and permanence of a lineage. The term *bayt* is used to signify the house and also the family that resides in it. It also refers to a form of ownership - the family endowment - that aims to maintain the indivision of property, and thus reinforces the tie between the family line and the house.[58] Many residents of the old city of Sana'a appear to have a deep emotional attachment to their houses, particularly when the house has been held by a family for generations. In other cases, the house may have been acquired only a generation or two ago - but may still be seen as evidence of the continuity of the family line. Conservation has touched these emotions, and also begun to transform them. Thanks to media coverage of the conservation effort, residents have become increasingly aware of their houses, as well as aspects of their everyday life, as heritage (*turath*). "Now everyone is

socialize, and sometimes set up offices there (Hasan Uddin Khan, personal conversation).
[58] P. Bonnenfant, "Maisons. Voisins, et Exterieur", in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a: Architecture*

conscious of *turath*," a builder's wife told me. "Before, it was something they just did."

As noted above, the term *turath* derives from the verb *w-r-th*, "to inherit". *Turath* associates the idea of *wirth* or family inheritance with the collective inheritance of society and, as such, follows and essentially translates the French term *patrimoine*.[59] Many residents appear to have internalized this association, which makes the conservation of the city and its houses incumbent not only upon residents, but upon the government. Yet in some cases, *turath* conflicts with deeply held values of private property as enshrined in customary law – and some owners are beginning to challenge GOPHCY's legal authority. Here again, both sentiments are often expressed by the same individual. "The buildings of the old city are from our forefathers," said the assistant to the *'aqil* of the quarter of Bab al-Yaman. "Of course we must preserve them. They show the genius (*abkariya*) of our forefathers." He assured me that he had not changed his house at all, except to install a modern bathroom. But when I asked him about the new prohibition against vehicles in the old city - a prohibition of which he approved - he almost inadvertently said, "They want to make the old city a museum (*mathaf*), and this is difficult." When questioned about the term "museum", he went on to explain that Europeans and Arabs from other countries come to Sana'a to see something different, something that could be seen nowhere else. If the government wants to make the old city a museum, he said, it would have to buy the houses from their owners - but the owners would never agree to sell. To illustrate his point, he recounted the story of Imam Yahya's attempt to expand the Great Mosque. In order to do this, the Imam needed to buy five or six houses that stood in the way of the expansion – but

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Domestique et Société, pp. 65-6.
[59] 'Alaa al-Habashi, interview, Cairo, June 2004. Conservation professionals in Sana'a noted that in

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the owners refused to sell. Even an autocratic ruler - with the aim of expanding the most

important mosque in Sana'a - could not impinge on the rights of owners.[60]

The multi-story houses of Sana'a - especially the larger ones, which have been taken

as the prototype by scholars and architects - were often inhabited by several generations of a

family, including the families of married sons.[61] Additional floors would be added to the

house as sons married, or new structures built in the courtyard or other adjacent land.[62]

The tendency to expand vertically means that, in many cases, lower floors are often very old

while upper floors are often less than a century old. Because builders who add to and

renovate houses tend to work in a style similar to that of their predecessors, it is difficult to

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Oman, Qur'anic references to *wirth* have been used to establish an Islamic basis for heritage.
[60] Interview, 5/12/04.
[61] For a detailed discussion of the tower house and its construction, see R. Lewcock and R. B. Serjeant, "The Houses of Sana'a", in *Sana'a*, pp. 436-500; and P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a*.
[62] As noted in chapter two, the building of new structures on adjacent land may have given rise to the pattern of small squares (*sarhat*) throughout the city, as private courtyards were made public over time through rights of access (see above, chapter two, p. 108). I saw a number of recent cases in the quarters of Bab al-Yaman and al-Fulayhi, were houses or apartments were built on adjacent land to accommodate married sons. One resident in al-Nahrayn, the owner of a well-preserved five-story house, hopes to build a one-story addition in the adjacent courtyard, using brick, "in the old style", for his son when he marries. Many generations have been born in this house, he said. "I will never leave, I will die here... we old people will preserve these houses." Building in open spaces, however, is now prohibited in the old city and few exceptions are allowed.

Most studies have focused on large or moderately large tower houses – houses that are five stories or taller - as the standard. Yet many small houses exist throughout the city, their size perhaps determined by family income and status. They are not only shorter, but their plan is smaller; the vestibule, or *hijra*, found at each level of larger houses is often absent – and perhaps was not not needed if the house was to be inhabited by a single branch of the family. Builders note the close relationship between the plan dimensions of a house (width and depth) and its height; the relationship is a matter of both aesthetic proportions and structure: height is related to the depth of foundations, but also to the width of the *qutba* (literally "pole" or "axis"), the column around which the central stair core is constructed. To my knowledge, there has so far not been a study of house sizes by period and area which would offer important historical information – and perhaps suggest that alternative groupings of the extended family predated modernization. In the area to the west of the Sa'ila, in the quarters of Bab al-Shu'ub and Bustan Sharib, and in back streets throughout the city, I visited numerous small houses that were clearly designed for smaller households; they resemble houses in neighborhoods outside the walls of the old city, to the north. Different branches of a family often inhabit contiguous buildings, which were perhaps built on what was once common property. An elderly resident of al-Fulayhi told me that she had refused to buy a house across the street because it

date houses by style.[63] The exception is more recent additions, built in concrete block with

uniform window openings; but through the 1970's, before the UNESCO Campaign, new

houses and additions were sometimes built in entirely local materials.[64]

Some scholars have explored the social and symbolic significance of the house, in

particular, the use and distribution of space and decorative programs. Following Bourdieu's

analysis of the Kabylie house, for example, Bonnenfant identifies a series of oppositions -

high and low, light and dark, right and left - which he relates to wider cultural themes.

Privileged spaces, he suggests, are associated with height, light, and the mind, and hence

with male society; these contrast with the low and dark spaces, which are the realm of

women and the bodily functions.[65] Despite the appeal of the model, local perceptions of

value and hierarchy may be more nuanced and fluid, influenced by a combination of

environmental, socio-cultural, and spatial considerations.[66] The house is not segregated

according to gender, nor is there an easy equation between privilege and height: the kitchen

(*dayma* or *makan al-mar'a*, "the place of women"),[67] is on an upper floor, albeit for

functional reasons. The room at the top of the house is valued above all as a "place from

which one looks" (*mafraj*): it represents not an interiorized conception of mind, but rather

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was not contiguous with the family's property.

[63] R. Lewcock and R. B. Serjeant, "The Houses of Sana'a", in *Sana'a*, p. 487; and R. Lewcock, personal conversation, July 2004.

[64] For example, the family house of an architect who consults for the SFD in the quarter of al-Tawashi, which was built in the 1970's adjacent to a larger and older house.

[65] P. Bonnenfant, "Maison Microcosme", in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a: Architecture Domestique et Société*, pp. 554-9.

[66] A particularly fruitful line of research, for example, is suggested by Naim-Sanbar's attempt to trace changing perceptions of the house and its spaces through changing terminology; see "L'Habitat Traditionnel a San'a: Semantique de la Maison", *Journal Asiatique*, nos. 1-2, 1987, pp. 79-113.

[67] The room was so identified by men interviewed by Naim-Sanbar.

one that is activated through contemplation of the outside world.[68] The mass of the house

absorbs sun during the day and releases it at night, keeping the interior at a relatively

constant temperature - and the value of a house is determined by the orientation of its

primary living spaces. According a custom that is often cited by residents and builders, a

south-facing house (*adani*, the direction of Aden), is said to be a complete house (*bayt*

kamil); a house that faces west (*gharbi*) is called half a house (*nuss bayt*); one that faces east

is called a quarter house (*rub' bayt*); and one that faces north (*qibli*, the direction of Mecca)

is not a house (*ghayr bayt*).[69] Services are usually placed along the north wall - for example,

toilets, which are connected to a shaft that terminates at ground level. The favored south and

west facades - those that receive maximum sun exposure - are reserved for living areas,

which receive maximum warmth and daylight. In the past, it was most important that the

mafraj face south; but now living rooms and bedrooms are considered more important, and

thus should have a southern or western exposure.[70]

The ground floor of the house, often with a mezzanine, was traditionally used for the

storage of foodstuffs from the countryside and sometimes to keep animals. It is here that

one finds one or more wells (*bir*) from which water was drawn to upper floors, and the grist

mill (*madhan*), where wheat was ground into flour. On the exterior the ground floor is

expressed as a tall and forbidding stone plinth with minimal openings, that contrasts to the

more domestic floors above, in brick and plaster (figure 16). A series of thresholds control

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[68] Emphasis on view is one of several ways the Sana'ani house challenges the Orientalist notion of the inward-looking "Islamic house." It is one of numerous examples that should lay to rest the notion that the pleasure of the view is a characteristic of European modernity.

[69] Lewcock and Serjeant, "The Houses of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 441; and conversations with various builders. Ironically, in Sana'a the privileged direction of Mecca (*qibli*) is outweighed by environmental factors that influence quality of life.

[70] N. al-Kawkabani, interview, 7/11/05.

access to various parts of the house, required to preserve the seclusion of women. From the

central hall at ground level, one gains access to a stair that serves the upper floors; at each

landing is a small room that separates the stair hall - where unrelated men may circulate -

from the private realm of the family. The term for this space, *hijra*, derives from the Arabic

root *h-j-r*, to forbid or to deny access; in South Arabian languages *h-j-r* meant "to protect", in

ways that included the magical.[71] The upper floors consist of a series of living rooms,

including the *makan al-wasat* ("place in the middle"), usually on the second floor, which

served as a common space for the family.[72]

Although rooms were generally furnished in a similar matter - with continuous

cushions around all walls - they are distinguished by their size, orientation, and

ornamentation. According to residents, the most formal of the sitting rooms, the *diwan*,

ideally runs the length of the house; it thus has light on three sides. At the very top of the

house is the *mafraj* which, like the *diwan*, often has refined plaster ornamentation; its

windows are markedly larger and more colorful to optimize views and aesthetic effects,

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[71] N. Naim-Sanbar, "L'Habitat Traditionnel a San'a: Semantique de la Maison", pp. 87-91. It is still customary for unrelated men shout "Allah! Allah!" as they ascend the stairwell, to
avert women above to their presence. The women would then retreat into private quarters, or don the veil – which can also be seen as a kind of threshold.

The word *hijra* has been widely discussed in its meaning as a settlement that is neutral ground or refuge, that is, a place where one seeks protection. Sana'a itself is believed to have been a *hijra* (R. B. Serjeant, "Sana'a, the Protected, *Hijrah*", in Lewcock and Serjeant, *Sana'a*, pp. 39-43). Similar words that indicate protection are attributed to the city and the house; for example, *hima*, which indicated protected grazing lands outside the walls (p. 40) also refers to the "protected" perimeter of the house. The idea of protection is echoed in decorative elements on the façade which probably derive from, and may still be used as, talismans (P. Bonnenfant, "La Symbolique de la Demeure," in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a: Architecture Domestique et Société*, pp. 534-8.

[72] Lewcock and Serjeant write that women were not restricted to a particular part of the house, although the kitchen is largely their preserve, along with an adjacent terrace screened from outsiders' views by high walls. The *mafraj* is usually reserved for men, although occasionally arrangements are made to use it for women's gatherings. Naim-Sanbar presents a different view: she says one floor of the house was usually reserved for guests and another for women, but I did not find evidence of this in my field work.

particularly in the hours of waning light.[73] Within these rooms, the privileged position is "the head of the room" (ra's al-makan), that is, the short wall farthest from the door.[74] The ornamentation of these rooms contrasts with the plain surfaces of functional rooms, where food is stored and prepared and human waste eliminated. The kitchen (dayma) is usually just below the top floor, to facilitate ventilation; now that most kitchens have been modernized, the old kitchen is recalled as the place of the wood-fired oven (tannur) where bread was baked, often several times each day.[75] The dayma typically receives little light: it has few windows, and is often located on the northern wall.

In recent decades the interior organization of the house has undergone various changes that reflect changes in the family and the wider society. Since at least the 1970's there has been a tendency for families to organize as nuclear units. In many cases, sons leave the family home when they marry - something that was unthinkable a generation ago - and rent or build in the new districts. When they remain in the old city, they usually live with their wife and children on a single floor of the family home; if space and finances permit, they install a kitchen and partition spaces, to allow for additional rooms. When several branches of the family continue to occupy a house, they may eat a common meal during the

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[73] The hour before sunset is called Solomon's hour (al-sa'a al-sulaimaniyya): a time of contemplation rather than conversation, it corresponds to the sense of melancholy that sets in after several hours of chewing qat.

[74] Lambert describes the relationship between social status and distance from, or proximity, to the door; musicians, for example, of the muzayyin class, are seated near the door ("La musique dans la maison tour: harmonie et dissonance," in P. Bonnenfant, ed., Sana'a: Architecture Domestique et Société, p. 169). As a guest in the company of women or a family, I was always seated near the "head of the room". At a gathering of men at the house of the aqil of Zumar, I was seated on the side wall, while my male colleague was seated next to the 'aqil at the "head of the room"; when I moved closer to the 'aqil in order to interview him, however, none of the men objected. It is noteworthy that when the television is introduced into a sitting room, it is placed near the door – never at the "head of the room."

[75] N. Naim-Sanbar, "L'Habitat Traditionnel", p. 99. Many women still bake bread, usually once daily,

day, but in the evening each branch tends to stay on its floor; according to one resident, this tendency has been reinforced by television. The division of the tower house into separate apartments contrasts with the old arrangement, where the entire family lived on all floors, with children sleeping together; women shared a single kitchen, and would often take turns cooking and cleaning.[76] This arrangement is no longer desirable: now, residents say, each woman wants her own kitchen. Moreover, by assigning each nuclear family to a floor, it is easier to control numerous and unruly children.

The last point is significant, if one recalls that the birth rate has skyrocketed in recent decades. Changes in lifestyle and preferences are often cited as factors that impel residents to leave the old city, but according to the overwhelming majority of residents with whom I spoke, the main reason people leave the old city is expanding families and crowded houses (*izdiham al-buyut*).[77] As we have seen, Sana'a historically met the needs of an expanding population through densification. But now change cannot be accommodated in the

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in a gas-fired oven.

[76] The old arrangement was related to me by several elderly residents. While living patterns have changed, it seems likely that the "nuclearization" of the family is still fluid. In my field work I visited numerous houses that were reorganized, loosely or formally, into apartments. In larger houses the *diwan* and, according to Naim-Sanbar, even the *hijra* may be partitioned to create separate rooms, or to allow for a kitchen or modern bathroom. From a social point of view this seems a suitable adaptation of the tower house, although it results in a four- or five-fold increase in water usage on site. I saw several small houses owned or rented by poor and working class families which were partitioned into apartments, with up to eight children living on a single floor.

When a man has more than one wife, each woman and her children may live on a separate floor of the house; but more often, the second wife lives in another house. The owner of Beit al-Sari, which was restored as a "model" project by the Italians (see chapter six), has further partitioned each floor; but the house is still not convenient for his two wives, their children, and his brother's family, so he has moved outside the old city. He returns to the old house often, to visit his brother and to chew *qat* in the magnificent *mafraj*.

[77] Only two officials noted this point, Qadi 'Ali Abu Rijal and Dr. Hussein al-Amri. "Families of two or three children used to be the norm, the only ones to survive birth and illness," said al-Amri. "Now families of ten children or more are common." "In the past, families had four or five children at most; now scarcely a year goes by when the wife is not pregnant" related the *'aqil* of the *suq*; his laughs were met by the laughs of the merchants who were listening in.

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traditional way: most planners feel that the density of the old city should not increase, in order to maintain a livable ratio of open to built space. New construction in open spaces is prohibited by the conservation office, and vertical additions have been restricted.[78] But the question of how population pressure is to be accommodated - or not - has not so far figured in to conservation planning; there continues to be an emphasis on aesthetic concerns, a tendency that UNESCO encourages.[79]

Kitchens and bathrooms are in a sense the locus of modernity, and most have been partially or fully modernized.[80] Owners are usually proud to show a foreign researcher around the house; they immediately point out obsolete facilities - the well, the mill, and the wood-fired oven - as signs of *turath*, relics of historical interest. But some complain about

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[78] Restrictions on vertical additions are imposed either because of structural concerns, or because inspectors feel they will adversely affect the skyline in a given part of the city. Inspectors told me that when a resident applies for a permit for a vertical addition, it may approved if it is consistent with the height of neighboring houses. Technically, there is a moratorium on all building pending the development and implementation of a conservation plan (report of recent UNESCO mission; 'A. Zayd, Director, GOPHCY, interview, March 2004).

[79] Few socio-demographic studies have been conducted in the old city, although they have been repeatedly called for by consultants and faculty at the University of Sana'a. The exception is the report conducted by H. Eckert and 'A. al-Maqrami under the auspices of the larger World Bank study of the late 1990's ("Cultural Heritage Protection Project: the Social Assessment Report for the Historic Cities of Old Sana'a, Shibam-Hadramaut, and Zabid, May 1999). An early proposal by some GOPHCY staffmembers to include a department of social affairs within the institution was not implemented.

[80] In the 1970's C. Makhluf reported that many Yemeni women saw the introduction of modern kitchens and bathrooms as one of the most important signs of progress since the revolution (*Changing Veils*, 1979; cited by Naim-Sanbar, "L'Habitat Traditionnel," p. 105). When a female GOPHCY employee expressed admiration for a traditional bathroom that had still not been replaced, the owner of the house (a woman) said to her, "You like it because you don't have to use it every day!" While plumbing and appliances have been introduced in these spaces, modern finishes have generally not been applied – and these are important to residents. One woman described the modern bathroom she envisioned "covered with white tiles". This image from European or American interiors must be attractive: if bathrooms are not finished in *qaddad* (waterproof plaster) and continually maintained, they tend to retain moisture and smell.

In my field work many residents were positive about and proud of their houses, but in some cases I felt their comments were tailored to please the researcher. My own observations are supplemented by those of others, including Amat al-Razzaq Jahhaf, former Director of Women's

the house's deficiencies, including small rooms, lack of light, the many steps and the

separation of functions on different floors; many residents wish they had a private garden.[81]

When women shared a kitchen, this was seen as a major inconvenience. Two women I

interviewed noted that modern furnishings and finishes make it easier to clean the house:

"This is why women in the old city are old at age forty," said one, "because the work is

tiring, and makes us old."[82] Although these women say they prefer to sleep on the floor many

people prefer beds, which leads to a new kind of functional zoning within the house. But

there are few beds in the old city: the matrimonial bed - which is now often specified in

marriage contacts (again, by women!) - is not easily accommodated in the small room

reserved for a couple's use.[83] Similarly one rarely sees tables, sofas, and chairs - while in

new houses at least some rooms are designed for such pieces.[84] But the absence of furniture

may be due to the fact that most well-to-do residents have left the old city: a woman in her

forties - from an old Sana'ani family who moved back to the old city as a bride - says that the

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Handicrafts for GOPHCY, and Nadia al-Kawkabani, who conducted fieldwork in the old city with a German survey team in the mid-1990's.

[81] According to al-Kawkbani, even residents who repair and maintain their houses do not like them (interview, 7/11/05). The desire for a garden may be a new one: although many houses front on a *maqshama*, they did not have direct or private access to it, and the use of the space was public in nature. According to one gardener (*qashsham*), women used to gather under the trees of al-Da'ud *maqshama* until the trees were removed during the recent renovation by the SFD (interview, July 2005).

One day when I was accompanying an inspector on his rounds, a resident asked him for permission to create a new door in the rear of the house that would open onto the *maqshama*, or rather, the walk along its perimeter. The inspector refused, saying that there was no historical precedent for a door opening onto a *maqshama*. Perhaps he was wary that access would lead the residents to encroach on the garden. But the significant point is that he justified his judgment on historic, rather than contemporary, criteria.

[82] Interview, 11/4/04.

[83] I saw only one matrimonial bed in an upper room of Beit Sari' (see chapter six), reserved for the use of a young married couple; it must have been built or assembled in place.

[84] New houses of the affluent and educated middle classes often provide for both lifestyles: they usually have living and dining rooms, and also designate one or more rooms designed with traditional floor seating.

family house had a dining room table as long as a century ago.[85]

In raising the seated individual above the floor to socialize, to eat, and to sleep,

furniture affects an entire complex of cultural norms. In the old houses interior spaces - and

therefore, the exterior facade - were designed according to the height of the individual, seated

on a floor cushion. The depth of rooms was determined by the bearing capacities of wooden

beams, which in turn relates to the preferred social distance between interlocutors, who are

seated on cushions facing each other. When furniture is desired, builders told me, they are

asked to raise the height of window sills and heads and interior ceilings, which changes the

proportions of the facade.[86] Moreover, the carefully developed hierarchy of window

openings – which become larger and more numerous on upper floors – begins to lose its

meaning if each floor now has an equivalent use, housing a nuclear family. Should a family

living on a lower floor have fewer, and smaller, windows in an attempt to preserve a facade

in its historical form? The loss of hierarchy seems to be a modern theme, and in Sana'a it

can be seen everywhere - from facades that have uniform windows, to pop music, which is

driven by a constant rhythm rather than by structure.[87] Since houses typically grew vertically

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[85] Interview, 11/4/04.

[86] Builders see the effect on windows as especially problematic: because of raised sills and heads, the arched lite or *qamariyya* often has to sit directly on the rectangular window opening, rather than on a "neck" (a vertical extension about the window). According to builders this destroys the beauty of the façade (see below, chapter five, pp. 276-7). In new houses, all rooms have higher window sills. Those furnished in the traditional manner - with floor cushions - have to adapt to the higher sills: the standard height of the back cushion (*wisada*) has therefore increased from 20 to 45 cm (N. al-Kawkabani, interview, 7/ 11/05).

[87] A builder who also plays *'oud* noted that "today young people (*shabbab*) are influenced by TV. They are interested only in rhythm, not in the melody and how it goes with the words" (interview, 6/10/05). He, and the young women in his family, noted that traditional Sana'ani music is no longer popular at weddings: it is considered "old-fashioned." Although the builder did not draw the above parallel between rhythm in music and architecture, he agreed with me when I proposed it. On other occasions he had expressed frustration at having to make all windows the same, with higher sills – for example, in a hotel just outside the old city, inspired by the Sana'ani residential style. For analogies between architecture and music, see chapter five, pp. 277-282.

over time, the hierarchy of the façade may describe the historical development of taste - with larger windows at the top reflecting modern preferences.[88]

Everywhere modern conservation is practiced, difficulties arise where inside meets outside, or content impacts form. These are usually resolved by giving priority to exterior facades, which constitute the "public space" and are thus of primary aesthetic and historical interest.[89] In addition, a distinction may be made between the main façade and side facades, with more stringent guidelines applied to the former.[90] The logic of this approach is not obvious to some Yemenis, who see "tradition" embodied as much, or more, in a building's interior. In a seminar led by Italian conservators in 1991, several Yemeni participants objected to the idea that

> anything can happen on the inside, as long as the outside remains the same. But if the house is a whole that reflects the life of a society, why should different standards be applied to inside and outside?[91]

These feelings were echoed by a builder, who counseled me on several occasions to spend time inside the houses if I wanted to experience the old city. "Tourists, too, should go into the houses if they want to know what Sana'a is," he said. "It's not just about its external appearance (al-mathhar)." On other occasions, this builder maintained that buildings should be faithfully kept "as they were" on both the inside and the outside – although some of his colleagues have different views.[92]

"What you see of the old city is all for show (décor)," said one resident. "Inside

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[88] For one architect, this is justification for conservation – since changes were not made to lower stories (see below, chapter five, p. 256).

[89] F. Matero, personal conversation.

[90] R. Lewcock, personal conversation.

[91] This comment was related to me by an architect who participated in the seminar, interview, 8/10/04.

[92] See, for example, the case of the rebuilding of Talha mama', chapter six, pp. 375-388.

houses have changed completely." But this is probably an overstatement, as the structure of

the tower house makes it difficult to reconfigure interior space. I saw few houses that had

changed significantly, except for modernized kitchens and bathrooms and the erection of

interior partitions. To date, few models have been proposed for the adaptive reuse of

houses; where substantial change is desired, owners find it easier to demolish and rebuild.

Indeed, the frequency of clandestine demolitions and unauthorized changes has prompted

GOPHCY to keep inspectors on duty around the clock.

Despite misgivings about the house interiors, many residents appear to be

sympathetic to conservation. Residents are aware of regulations that prohibit them from

making changes to facades and require them to use traditional materials in any renovation or

new construction. Most individuals with whom I spoke approve of these regulations - often

citing the need to maintain *turath*, "the work of our forefathers *(ajdadna)*".[93] Their approval

of conservation – even as their houses become less suited to modern lifestyles - suggests that

they may in fact be slowly dissociating outside from inside, with the façade embodying

turath. Yet even with regard to facades, residents generally have a more fluid interpretation

of *turath* than the one described in official guidelines. They see certain changes - for

example, adding additional floors or annexes to house married sons - as compatible with

turath; indeed, this is what they have always done. But conservation professionals argue

that the traditional mechanisms of adaptation no longer work. They speak of preserving the

"character" of the city, but this often translates into practical planning concerns: for example,

the need to maintain a balance between built and open space, which has decreased

dramatically in recent decades - especially the urban gardens, which are now being restored

and preserved by the Social Fund. Vertical additions often present structural problems,[94] and

also may have an adverse effect on the skyline - which, for both local professionals and

UNESCO, is an important aspect of the city's historic character. Such judgments are, in fact,

not so different from traditional practice: a good builder, I have been told, assesses the

surrounding context - literally, the "air" (jaw) around the house - and builds what is

appropriate to it.[95]

According to one study, about two thirds of residents said they were able or willing to

repair their houses – and this figure correlates roughly with the number of houses that are

reasonably well maintained.[96] Most residents with whom I spoke recognize the value of

traditional materials and techniques and would like to continue to use them. Some are aware

of the value of local architecture as a system - its strength, its environmental properties, and

its artistic qualities. But according to planners, the cost of maintaining the massive tower

houses is beyond the means or priorities of most families – especially if maintenance is to be

carried out according to stringent conservation guidelines. Traditional materials and skills

are in short supply; according to builders, the lack of suitable brick as the single largest

obstacle in conservation.[97] Brick and hand-hewn stone are significantly more expensive

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[93] These findings are confirmed by those of Eckert and al-Maqrami, "Social Assessment Report."
[94] The shallow foundations are limited in their bearing capacity, especially now that the soil is water-laden. Moreover, upper stories are often built in concrete, a rigid cap on the brick and wood construction below; with settlement and movement, the walls may suffer damage and ultimately fail (H. Saliba, interview, 11/26/04).
[95] See below, chapter five, p. 253.
[96] Eckert and al-Maqrami, "Social Assessment Report," p. 25.
[97] The old-style brick was thinner (4 cm. X 20 cm.) and according to builders, is an important characteristic of Sana'ani architecture. It is now made only by special order, and costs YR 17 per brick in contrast to YR 13 for standard brick (7 cm. X 16 cm.). But even on special order, builders say, the thin brick does not perform like the old: the old formula – firing time, proportion of charcoal (khadhab), etc. – has been lost. "GOPHCY doesn't care about what kind of brick we use," said one

than new materials like concrete block, which is produced locally; in some cases labor costs

for traditional work are also higher.[98] Owners often opt for hybrid solutions, applying

decorative brickwork and stone cladding on a new constructive system (figure 17).[99] Such

solutions are usually approved by inspectors who, following local and international

guidelines, are primarily concerned with the exterior of buildings: as one builder puts it,

"GOPHCY is only interested in exterior 'make-up' (maquillage khariji)." He was one of the

ustas hired to build the "traditional" façade of the new Suq al-Baqar clinic (figure 14). The

façade, designed by architects at the conservation office, was applied to a concrete structure

built under the supervision of a general contractor. The work was not satisfying, says the

usta: "I want to be independent. I want to know what I'm building on top of."[100] The

reduction of "tradition" to veneer - a process that occurred in the 19th century in Europe and

the United States, as part of the industrialization of building - ultimately undermines the

critical potential of the architecture as a constructive and environmental system, and the local

knowledge on which it is based. By focusing on image rather than substance, conservation

guidelines may contribute to the demise of the heritage they purport to preserve.

Owners are less likely to maintain or restore the houses since they usually live

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builder. "They are only interested in the size of openings – and this is their biggest mistake" (interview, 4/15/04).

[98] Ustas say that the cost of traditional work is not more expensive, but their view may be colored by professional interests – or, more likely, it may not take into account the added costs of general contracting.

[99] Walls are typically built of concrete block instead of stone and fired brick (yajur); where stone is used, it is often machine-cut (manshur) rather than hand-finished (muwaqqis), although machine-finishing is technically prohibited in the old city. Ceiling/floor systems use imported milled woods of standard sections instead of what builders call baladi ("domestic", typically tanab for beams); floor surfaces above are cement on plywood. Interiors are often finished in traditional plasterwork.
The use of structural concrete, hidden from view or disguised by brick veneer, has been much debated among conservation professionals. Some see it as a natural evolution of building practice, while others feel it changes the character and qualities of the architecture.

elsewhere, and own the house jointly with siblings. According to inspectors, inheritance

disputes are one of the main causes for the neglect of houses. Upon the death of the owner,

the house is supposed to be divided among the owner's children. Since most heirs no longer

reside in the house, division of property is often delayed.[101] The relatives who remain in the

house are often poor or elderly, and do not have the means to repair and maintain the

building. In some cases, owners have rented their houses, as a whole or by floor, to unrelated

families, many of whom are migrants from rural areas. In this case the incentive to maintain

the house may be even less, especially since rents are low - in dramatic contrast to the high

commercial rents in the old city.

While owners may be attached to their houses, they are becoming aware of their

monetary value which has skyrocketed since the UNESCO Campaign: they can now envision

the opportunity - which so far arises only rarely - to transform the family home into capital.

Largely as a result of conservation - especially street paving and infrastructure - the value of

houses has appreciated dramatically. Because there is little market for the houses themselves

- the well-to-do, the educated, and the upwardly mobile middle class continue to prefer

modern houses in the new districts - the old city has not yet been gentrified. Few families

have been able, or willing, to sell. The changing and often conflicting attitudes toward the

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[100] Interview, 11/11/04. For more on this façade, see above, chapter three, p. 182, fn. 132.
[101] Traditionally ownership (*mulk*) is not only the preferred status of occupation, but it should be full and complete ownership, rather than co- or shared ownership (Bonnenfant, "Maisons. Voisins, et Exterieur", in P. Bonnenfant, *Sanaa*, pp. 65-6). It is difficult to assess how property division has changed in recent decades, since property in the old city is not usually registered with the authorities. Before the revolution an official called the *ma'mur* used to register land and all land transactions. This system was abolished after the revolution. A modern system of land registration is still unevenly implemented: new construction has to be registered in order to obtain a construction permit, but existing houses are usually registered only when they are sold or when the property is divided. The abolition of the old system has increased the tendency to leave the division of property unresolved ('A-R al-Mu'assib, personal conversation; and official at the Survey Authority, interview, 7/26/04).

family home - as symbol of the family line, and as capital - are often heard from the same individual.[102]

Given economic circumstances and high commercial rents, there is pressure to put portions of the house to productive use. The ground floor of the house is functionally obsolete - no longer used to store foodstuffs from the countryside - and adjoins the street, so it is seen as the ideal place to install a shop. But this requires changes in both form and use that contravene conservation guidelines. The facade of the ground floor and mezzanine - a tall, heavy stone base with minimal openings - is considered an important aspect of the aesthetic of Sana'ani architecture and a determining characteristic of the streetscape. Sometimes the stately portal of the house is used as a shop entrance; in other cases, new openings are created. Both solutions are rejected by inspectors on aesthetic grounds. But there are also structural considerations: the new openings in the massive stone walls - which may be several meters in depth - are often not designed to carry the tremendous load of the floors above. This often leads to differential settlement and cracking.

The use of the ground floor for shops is part of a process that has been termed "suqification": the spread of commerce into areas that were largely, or exclusively, residential. According to planners who coined the term, suqification violates traditional zoning in the city which had ensured familial privacy - that is, the privacy of women. When a shop is opened in the ground floor, they argue, the family living above is impelled to

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[102] A young woman in al-Fulayhi quarter told me that when a foreigner had made a generous offer on their house a decade ago, none of the family wanted to sell. But now, she said, they might sell if the price was right. On another occasion, we were talking with her elderly father, who said that they would never agree to sell the house. The woman confirmed this: "It is impossible for a Sana'ani to sell their house to a stranger."

leave the house; as a result, the house falls into disrepair and ultimately collapses.[103] The

theory appears to have been widely embraced by planners in Sana'a, but some of its

assumptions are questionable. The collapse of houses, for example, is usually caused by

groundwater. It is not certain that traditional zoning was as rigid as the planners suggest:[104]

certainly in the twentieth century, well before the advent of conservation, commerce existed

in some residential areas. The area called al-Zumar, the northern end of the spine that runs

from Bab al-Yaman through the market to Bab al-Shu'ub, probably always had some

commerce, but was thoroughly suqified before the revolution. Shops were built in front of

many houses, or installed in the ground floor. Many of these houses continue to be owner-

occupied.

Yet the phenomenon of suqification is incontestable (figure 18). Indeed, it is

common in conservation zones in many parts of the world, due to rising rents: areas that were

formerly residential take on a mixed-use character. According to planners, this would be

unacceptable in Sana'a. "No one would ever agree to live above a shop," said one architect;

his statement was echoed by several builders I interviewed. But it is not certain that all

residents agree. Often a homeowner installs a shop himself: he operates it or assigns it to the

care of a young family member; in some cases, he rents it to a merchant unrelated to the

family. In many cases the owner continues to occupy the house with his family. When

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[103] The term *suqisation* was coined by architect Jacques Feiner and sociologist Hadi Eckert, who have
been involved in various conservation projects and studies in Sana'a and elsewhere in Yemen.
Jacques Feiner elaborated the thesis in his dissertation, "La vielle ville de Sana'a: analyse
morphologique comme fondement de la sauvegarde patrimoniale", Doctoral thesis no. 1652,
Department of Architecture, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, 1997.
[104] R. Lewcock, personal conversation. The notion of rigid functional zoning may be a holdover from
the idea of "the Islamic city" which, as we saw in the introduction, has been influential in
conservation discourse. Eckert and al-Maqrami, for example, write: "...the strict physical separation
between residential areas and the suq area [is]...a major distinctive feature of historic Islamic cities"

asked if shops in residential areas compromise privacy, residents generally responded in the negative. "Women come and go freely," said one man in the quarter of al-Nahrayn. "We are like one family here." Some residents, including several women, said that shops make life more convenient: one cited the old adage that proximity to the *suq* is desirable.[105] These contradictory reports may perhaps be explained by the disjuncture between the image and the reality of the old city. Values and customs are changing, in part as a result of the market economy - for example, increasing numbers of homeowners are renting floors to unrelated families, a change that would for many have been unthinkable some decades earlier. The old values and ways continue to be confirmed verbally, though they are often contradicted by practice.

As the immediate interface between the city and the family, the question of the ground floor captures the dilemma of conservation. Suqification was a focus of a warning issued by UNESCO in 2001, which, it was feared, would lead to Sana'a's removal from the World Heritage List.[106] A presidential committee was formed to respond to the situation.[107] Inspectors say that surveillance was tightened, and a moratorium on the opening of new shops was enforced; but a GOPHCY official told me that nothing had changed. Nevertheless, on any given day one can witness acrimonious confrontations between homeowners and officials at GOPHCY headquarters, with the former pleading that they need

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("Social Assessment Report," p. 29).

[105] The preference is noted by Bonnenfant, who says that this was the case before the 1962 revolution. Many of the wealthiest families built houses on the edge of the *suq* for this reason. ("Maisons, Voisins, et Exterieur", in P. Bonnenfant, ed. *Sanaa*, p. 25).

[106] See chapter six, pp. 297-8, fn. 14.

[107] The High Committee for the Preservation of the Old City, headed by 'Ali al-'An'si, Secretary to President 'Abdullah Salih.

the income to provide for their families.[108] Their resentment is fueled by the large-scale

violations that continue to appear in the old city, carried out by those with influence (*wasta*).

The moratorium sidesteps an important issue: the functional obsolescence of the ground

floor. In all the conferences and symposia on the old city, notes one architect,

> no one has ever mentioned this issue. They only talk about how the ground floor is essential
> to the historic character of the city. But it is impossible for us to leave it without a function...
> If the idea of conservation had been developed here, rather than abroad, it would be
> completely different.[109]

The key, many planners feel, is to give people alternatives. "Instead of prohibiting openings

in the ground floor," says a senior architect at GOPHCY, "perhaps we should help owners

design the openings, so that they are aesthetically acceptable and structurally sound." Such

an approach would add a prescriptive element to the largely proscriptive guidelines.

The authors of the UNESCO Campaign, both foreign and local, maintained that the

value of the old city of Sana'a lies not its monuments, but in the some five thousand houses

that make up the fabric of the city. Yet no means has been found to conserve this fabric.

During the Campaign, there were repeated calls for a small loan fund to assist homeowners,

but a fund was not established. In chapter six, we will look at a number of recent attempts to

assist homeowners which have, however, been very limited in number. Conservation

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[108] The potential income from a shop is enormous: in active commercial zones like as-Sukkari, the road just north of and parallel to the southern wall, key money may be hundreds, or even thousands, of US dollars, and monthly rent can reach $500-$600. For comparison, the daily wage of an unskilled laborer rarely exceeds US $5. There has to date been no study of rents in the old city, which would have to be analyzed along with ownership and other demographic factors.

[109] This architect once asked a friend and colleague - a dedicated conservation professional - what he would do with the ground floor if he owned a house in the old city. His colleague replied, "I would turn it into a shop." "If *he* takes this view," said the architect, "what can we expect from the population?"

Foreign consultants were not always silent on the issue of the ground floor. The Quaroni Bonifica studies envisioned the reuse of the ground floor for living space, and the 1978 Shankland Cox report recommended that the ground floor be used for parking. According to Lewcock, both conservation professionals and local policymakers rejected the latter idea (mission report #2, 1982).

professionals agree that it is a key issue. "If historic cities are the property of the collective, even the world," asks one planner, "should individual homeowners be made to bear the cost of their maintenance?"[110] "At least a city like Venice derives some benefit from its status as a world heritage city," said one resident. "They have lots of tourists, but what benefits have we seen?"[111] The designation of *all* houses as historic raises the question of conservation standards and methods: it suggests that "conservation" of historic cities should perhaps be reconceived as maintenance, which was traditionally carried out by residents and builders, rather than experts. "Residents had a spiritual tie to their houses," said a professional who now lives in the old city. "This tie translated into practices (*suluk*), like watering down the earth in front of one's house, and renewing plaster (*nura*)." This is perhaps why residents and builders have so easily embraced the idea of conservation, which seems to validate familiar practices.

The Expanding Suq: Merchants and the Ministry of Endowments (*Awqaf*)

It is perhaps an irony that conservation, which aims at slowing or arresting material decay, is often a powerful agent of change. In the old city of Sana'a property values rose dramatically when streets were paved and infrastructure installed. Yet it would be a mistake to attribute the changes in the old city - particularly the booming economy of the *suq* - to internal factors alone. Over the years various reports have warned that the old city's location at the convergence of important urban and regional arteries would result in development pressures. By the end of the last decade this factor, along with demographic changes - outmigration of

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[110] Director, Cultural Heritage Unit, Social Fund for Development, interview, 10/20/02.

better-off residents and inmigration from the countryside - had made the *suq* a "shopping area for the poor."[112] In streets leading to and adjacent to the *suq*, spreading commerce is seen by some residents as a source of traffic congestion, noise, and disturbances.[113]

The use of a house for commercial purposes affects not only the facade: limited interior spans, thick walls, and minimal openings do not easily accommodate commercial needs, especially those of the wholesale trade; in some cases, houses are altered significantly or demolished. This is the most worrisome aspect of suqification: the tendency for large merchants, notably fabric wholesalers, to transform houses into warehouses, with retail on the ground floor. Often merchants acquire several houses - in one case, an entire block - and demolish them. In their place they build concrete buildings organized around a central corridor, similar to the small infill shopping arcades that are common in the new districts. This type - commonly known as a *samsara* - is usually clad with a stone facade inspired by traditional motifs, including the ubiquitous *qamariyyas*. Demolitions are often clandestine: interior beams and floors are removed little by little, often at night, to destabilize the structure; it either collapses, or is condemned and slated for demolition. Fines clearly have

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[111] Contrary to popular perceptions, Venice is not a World Heritage city. Although it was the site of one of the first International Safeguarding Campaigns it has never been listed, because the nomination process was not initiated by the Italian government.

[112] Hadi Eckert and Abdullah al-Maqrami, "Social Assessment Report," p. 29. Eckert discusses the relationship between the historic core and the surrounding city in "The Chief Urban Functions of the Old City of Sana'a Today" (UNDP Technical Report, Paris, 1992). He looks at the old city in its wider urban context, and implications for traffic and development. The issue was also treated in the Berger Kampsax and Shankland reports of 1978 (see above, chapter three); volume one of the Bonifica Quaroni studies (Proposal Phase, 1981); and in Ron Lewcock's reports for UNESCO. A recent study commissioned by UNESCO identified various nodes where surrounding development is encroaching on the old city, introducing radically different typologies (B. M. Nardella, "Mission Report", prepared for UNESCO – Culture, Tangible Heritage Department, January 2004).

[113] Eckert and al-Maqrami, "Social Assessment Report," p. 29. Elsewhere they write:
"Old Sana'ni people blame newcomers to Sana'a responsible [*sic*] for dirty streets and waste accumulation everywhere", while others trace the problems to the lack of municipal services (pp. 26-7).

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little meaning in the current market, where expected income may lead a merchant to invest tens of thousands of dollars.[114] In one case, a magnificent old house on the square of al-Fulayhi was demolished in this way, and a hotel built in its place (figure 19) In another case, the well enclosure (*marna'*) of al-Tawashi mosque was destroyed, and a commercial building built in its place. Such incidents have provoked drawn-out struggles between GOPHCY and merchants, as well as the Ministry of Endowments (*Awqaf*) which holds title to some of the properties. While there have been sustained and even heroic attempts by conscientious employees at GOPHCY, others in the agency are suspected of collusion.[115]

One family in particular is said to dominate the *suq*: according to some officials, it envisions transforming the area to the north of the *suq* into a continuous commercial zone. Several family members acquired properties in three phases, from the late 1980's through the early 1990's. In the first phase, one acquired and demolished an old *samsara*, known as al-Rubu'i, to the north of al-Shahidayn Mosque, replacing it with a concrete shopping arcade.[116]

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[114] In one case, a merchant reportedly paid USD 20,000 to buy and demolish a small shop that blocked access to a *samsara* (GOPHCY inspector, site visit, 4/24/04).

[115] Some GOPHCY employees note that the biggest violations are committed by those with the most influence – and it is assumed that these cases involve lucrative bribes. Those lower down in the hierarchy thus see themselves justified in extracting what they can, turning a blind eye to violations that are much less offensive. Bribes are often the only way underpaid employees can make ends meet. "It's very simple," explained an informant. "If GOPHCY does not support its employees, how can they be expected to report violations? If the salaries were good, as they were in the early days, there would be no violations in the old city." A senior inspector, for example, makes YR 11,000 per month (about US $56), while his rent is YR 12,000.

[116] According to one anecdote, the family took advantage of the holiday at the end of the pilgrimage month to demolish the *samsara*. When GOPHCY learned of the incident it distpatched several armed guards to the site. But the family showed up with three cars – "guys with guns" – thus outnumbering the government side. This anecdote illustrates the dilemma of GOPHCY, and government offices generally (professor at Sana'a University, personal conversation, 7/20/05). According to a guard who has worked at GOPHCY for many years, this particular family can "call anyone – GOPHCY is terrified of them." The demolition of Samsara al-Rubu'i is mentioned by F. Mermier, "Sana'a, métaphore de l'état yémenite", in G. Grandguillaume, ed., *Sana'a Hors les Murs*, p. 49.

Soon after, two brothers bought land on the south side of al-Zumar square, where there were a series of shops in various states of ruin. Some new construction can be seen behind the shops, but appears to have been halted due to a dispute between the brothers. Two other family members began to acquire houses on the north side of a street that extends westward from al-Shahidayn square, just south of the new shopping arcade, with the intention of creating a textile *suq*. Working at night with large crews, they removed much of the interior structure of the houses - although in 2004 it appeared that GOPHCY had managed to halt the work, at least temporarily. According to informants, GOPHCY subsequently proposed to work with the family to transform the houses into a kind of *suq*, with a series of uniform, arched openings at ground level. I was able to locate plans for the project, signed by an architect at GOPHCY; but an official denied that such a proposal had been drafted. An energetic and well-trained inspector (a graduate of the fine arts institute) was transferred out of the agency for his opposition to this project, and to the hotel at al-Fulayhi.[117]

The same family attempted to gain control of two urban gardens. The last remaining unbuilt areas of the old city, the gardens are particularly subject to development pressures. Professionals call them the "lungs" of the old city: they provide greenery and open space within the dense fabric, allowing the city to "breathe" (figure 20). These vegetable gardens (*maqashim*) and orchards (*basatin*) are endowed properties, usually attached to a mosque.

The following account is based on interviews with inspectors – including two men who headed Inspections at various points during the case - as well as several individuals outside GOPHCY. I was unable to interview the merchants because they were out of the country. Perhaps not unexpectedly, GOPHCY's files on the case have disappeared; neither are they in the possession of the involved officials.

[117] The former inspector, with whom I toured the old city on several occasions, did not tell me this himself; I was told about the circumstances of his transfer by two other individuals. One, a senior employee at the conservation office, described the inspector (in his presence, and with a smile) as "an undesirable person [at GOPHCY] (*shakhs ghayr marghub fih*)."

Sustained by recycled water and waste, they were an important source of fruit and vegetables

within the walls before the revolution. In recent decades their area diminished, and by the

late 1990's many of the gardens were partially or completely abandoned. A variety of

economic and social reasons can be cited, but the main factor is the dramatic decrease in the

water table.[118]   Abandonment of the gardens led to encroachment by surrounding

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[118] In 1999 GHK wrote that two thirds of the gardens were partially or completely abandoned ("Cultural Heritage Project" vol. 2, p. 26). T. Marquez gives slightly different figures, perhaps because a number of gardens had already been restored: of a total of forty-three gardens, twenty-four were cultivated; eight were dry; four were not cultivated; and seven were under restoration ("Les jardins potagers urbaines de Sanaa. Etude hydraulique" in M. Barcelo, ed., *Les jardins de la ville de Sanaa*, p. 18). The diminution of urban gardens became pronounced in recent decades, but it may be part of a longer process. Using Von Wissman's map, E. Betzler calculated that 28% of the surface of the old city was covered by gardens in 1929; most were located in the areas to the west of the Sa'ila, which had been settled at a later date (E. Betzler, *Sozialer Umbrich und Kulturlandschaftswandel in Sudarabien*, Jemen-Studien, Bd. 5, Wiesbaden, 1987; cited in Kopp and Wirth, *Sana'a*, p. 46). According to the recent studies under the direction of Miquel Barcelo, the old city covers 160 hectares, of which 20.59 hectares are gardens ("L'Inventaire", p. 11, in M. Barcelo, ed., *Les jardins de la ville de Sanaa*, p. 15). According to these figures 12% of the old city is now covered by gardens, as opposed to 28% in 1929.

Most gardens were attached to mosques. An animal walking along a long ramp (usually housed in an enclosure or *marna'*) drew water from the well; the water was routed to the mosque, where it was used for ablutions. This gray water was stored in a storage tank (*birka*), and from here distributed to the garden. This system was still working in the early 1970's, but then wells began to dry up. To resolve the problem wells were dug deeper, or water was rerouted from other sites. Currently, there are numerous gardens that get their water from wells attached to other mosques (T. Marquez, "Etude Hydraulique", in M. Barcelo, ed., *Les jardins de la ville de Sanaa*, p. 18). Varanda reports that in the 1970's and early 1980's the water table was dropping at a rate of 2.5 meters per year, drying up existing wells and prompting the drilling of new and deeper ones; the installation of electric pumps exacerbated the problem (Varanda, "Tradition and Change," p. 202). In some cases the installation of sewer lines complicated matters: the new lines did not always separate black water (from the latrines) from gray water (from ablutions), thus eliminating the latter as a source of irrigation water. Part of the restoration strategy of the Social Fund for Development (SFD) is to again separate gray and black water, and redirect gray water to the gardens (SFD project officials, interview, October 2003 and October 2004).

In addition to the decrease in the water table, other factors have led to the abandonment of the gardens. Those who worked the *maqshamas* traditionally also worked fields outside the walls; after these lands were developed, many farmers left to be nearer their new and more distant fields (R. Lewcock, mission report 1982, para. 51-3). The abandonment of night soil collection and the introduction of a sewage system also played a role: human waste was no longer recycled and provided as fertilizer (see above, chapter two, pp. 132-3 and fn. 130; a diagram in the GHK study, vol. 2, p. 26, proposes a series of causes and effects in the abandonment of the gardens). Some

households, already pronounced in the 1970's, and to the use of the gardens as garbage

dumps. In their effort to consolidate their holdings around the northern edge of the *suq*,

members of the merchant family acquired cultivation rights (*haqq al-yadd*) to the gardens of

al-Khudayr and Bab al-Salam from the Ministry of Endowments. When they moved itinerant

merchants onto the sites, GOPHCY feared this was a prelude to permanent structures.

GOPHCY sent a memo to the Ministry instructing them to evict the itinerant merchants and

to strictly prohibit any construction in the gardens. GOPHCY's position was later reinforced

by a decree from the Prime Minister's Office; this decree continues to provide the legal basis

for prohibiting building in the gardens.[119]

In the late 1990's the Social Fund began its work in cultural heritage with a series of

garden restorations, which had been outlined in the Campaign strategy a decade earlier.

These projects create a defined "edge" through the construction of retaining walls, intended

to prohibit encroachment by surrounding households or other parties. The water supply and

sewage systems are rehabilitated where required, and the *birak*, or storage tanks (sing. *birka*),

are restored with *qaddad*, a traditional water-proof plaster.[120] To date thirty-six gardens have

been restored, and four more are in progress.[121] Many professionals consider these projects

the most successful in the conservation effort. But the future of the gardens remains in

question. The Campaign envisioned a variety of public and recreational uses for the gardens;

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gardeners have moved to more lucrative land outside the walled city, or changed professions for
economic and social reasons; see below, fn. 123.

[119] Former Director of Projects at GOPHCY, interview, 8/16/04.

[120] For the water supply and sewage issue, see footnote above; on *qaddad*, see S. al-Radi, "Qudad, the
Traditional Yemeni Plaster", in *Yemen Update* (American Institute of Yemeni Studies), no. 34,
winter/spring 1994. *Qaddad* technique had virtually disappeared, but thanks to conservation efforts
the trade has experienced a modest revival. Nevertheless the economics of the process, which is
extremely labor intensive, leads some to question whether the trade can be viably maintained.

[121] SFD project officer, personal communication, 7-31-06.

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gardeners, who inherited cultivation rights, should be organized as a corporation "under the authority of a new government body responsible for the upkeep of parks, gardens, and public open spaces."[122] The GHK study, financed by the World Bank (1997-9) proposed that gardens be reorganized as family cooperatives. But the authors recognized that the economic viability of the gardens was marginal, and that their reorganization as cooperatives would be hampered by the low social status of gardeners.[123] Professionals see the garden restorations as successful, but acknowledge that the gardens have lost their *raison d'être*, both as productive farms within the walls and as income-generating property for religious endowments.

One of the saddest incidents in the *suq*, according to professionals, is the "restoration" of Samsarat al-Baw'ani. According to popular tradition and the opinions of conservators, it is probably the oldest *samsara* in Sana'a; until the 1970's it was used as a *samsara* for oil.[124] In a mission report of 1989, Lewcock urged that emergency funds be allocated to stabilize the building, which was in danger of collapsing, and to conduct preparatory studies for a careful restoration.

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[122] B. Lane, "Pilot Restoration Projects", pp. 53-4. According to the brochure (1989) Bustan al-Sultan, on the west bank of the Sa'ila, would be reused as a public garden and Eco-Museum. Bustan al-Sultan had been abandoned for many years: "[i]n view of its prime position, the site is under heavy pressure for commercial development." At the time Bustan al-Amri (recently turned into an open-air theater) was still cultivated (p. 54). In the intervening years, much of the western portion of Bustan al-Sultan has been built up, and open spaces are used as a *qat* suq.

[123] Gardeners belong to the lowest of Yemeni social groups; the cultivation rights of an endowed garden (*haqq al-yadd*) typically passed from father to son. "Although the rent paid to Awqaf seems generally low and thus not a heavy production cost factor, high water costs make the gardens' production expensive. Their relatively high prices for good quality products cannot compete with similar products grown notably north of Sana'a where irrigation is provided by the unhealthy sewage pumps." While the study supported the idea of using gardens for leisure and recreation, in determining new uses "the social and cultural sensitivities of the local communities must be carefully considered" (GHK, "Cultural Heritage Report", vol. 2, pp. 27-9).

> Samsarat al-Baw'ani is the oldest samsara building in the suq and probably one of the oldest buildings in the city. Its conservation is a matter of urgency…With regards to the philosophy of conservation, such an important building demands the minimum of alteration and the maximum of strengthening and conservation. This may necessitate special techniques for the consolidation of the surface of the stonework without replacing more of it than is absolutely necessary for structural conservation.[125]

Giancarlo Barbato had recently documented the building with funding from

UNESCO/UNDP (figure 21). His studies were accompanied by a restoration and reuse

proposal which envisioned the building as a "Centre for Cultural Studies." Like Lewcock,

Barbato emphasized the historical importance of the building and the need to conduct a

careful restoration and archeological investigations of the structure.[126]

According to several informants, Barbato's drawings were "sold" in 1995 by an

official at GOPHCY to the influential merchant who controlled the *samsara*. According to

the Director of Planning at the time, the merchant initially agreed to follow the restoration

plans, but began to build according to his own wishes. Certain officials at GOPHCY wanted

to work with the merchant, inspired by recent thinking about private-public partnerships in

conservation.[127] They modified the plan to better suit his requirements - for example, by

connecting the courts at ground level (Barbato's plan would have connected the courts only

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[124] G. Barbato, "The Methodological Approach for the Restoration of the Samsarah al-Bowani and Samsarah al-Majjah", unpublished paper presented at the Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Old City of Sana'a, Sheraton Hotel, Sana'a, 15-19 December, 1991.

[125] R. Lewcock, mission report no. 5, 3/89, items 50-1.

[126] G. Barbato, "Restoration Project of the Samsarah al-Bawani: Centre for Cultural Studies" March 1989, section 10; the accompanying plans, sections, and elevations are reproduced at 1:50 in B. Lane, "Pilot Restoration Projects", pp. 62-3. Barbato's work was funded under UNESCO/UNDP YEM/88/006. According to Lane, the *samsara* was to be used as a workshop for the revival of textile trades. The local tradition that Samsarat al-Baw'ani is the oldest *samsara* in Sana'a is substantiated by architectural evidence: a number of unique features suggest that the building – especially the southern portion - probably dates from the mid-14th century or earlier (Barbato, "Restoration Project of the Samsarah al-Bawani," item 6).

[127] As presented, for example, at the Institute for Housing and Development Studies (HIS) in Rotterdam where numerous professionals have received training with scholarships from the Dutch government. One architect commented, "In Yemen we are not ready for this."

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at the first floor level). They insisted, however, that the original structure be respected and that traditional materials be used throughout.[128] In the end, the merchant ignored these plans as well and completely transformed the interior space, so that the plan - as well as the new entrances - resemble those of other shopping arcades (figure 22). The Director of Planning and the project architect went to the Director and Deputy Director of GOPHCY, who were, however, unable to stop the work.[129]

The Ministry of Endowments, which controls the vast majority of historic properties, was a key player in this and similar episodes in the old city.[130] As noted in chapter one, the institution of the *waqf* was a means to provide services to the city: rents from income-generating properties like *samsara*s would be used to support religious and charitable structures. As in other Islamic countries, *waqf* properties in Yemen were reorganized under a ministry, which continues to be directed largely by a religious establishment - although new blood has been introduced in the recently created "investment sector."[131] In the old system, an overseer (*nadhir*) managed the income of each complex; now rents from all *waqf* properties go to the Ministry and are redistributed according to its schedule of priorities.

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[128] Project architect at GOPHCY, interview, October 2005.

[129] It is not clear if plans on file in the Planning Department are those drawn by GOPHCY architects, or if they are plans submitted by the merchant, whose name appears in GOPHCY's title block; there are no signatures of GOPHCY employees on the drawing. The ground floor plan of this set shows original columns and staircases demolished and relocated, new entrances on the east and north elevations, and a connection between the courts at ground level. According to then-Director of Planning, GOPHCY did propose a connection at ground level.

[130] According to al-Amri and Serjeant, some two thirds of old Sana'a is *waqf* of one kind or another, including most of the public buildings and much of the market; but not all types of *waqf* are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry ("Administrative Organization", pp. 151-2; see also their discussion of the five types of *waqf*). Officials at GOPHCY and the Ministry of Endowments estimate the percentage of endowed land in the old city is higher, perhaps 80-90%. The figure should be clear upon completion of the national survey of properties that is currently being conducted by the Ministry.

[131] An inspector at the Ministry commented that the leadership is old guard (he motioned with his hands, indicating the headgear of the traditional religious elite); but the investment sector is staffed by young guys, "*shabbab*, like you and me....you can talk to them."

According to officials, the primary interest of the Ministry is maintenance of mosques.[132]

The role of ministries of endowments in historic cities, and their different understanding of history and utility, is a critical and understudied aspect of conservation in the Islamic world. These ministries are heir to an institution that was an inventive and distinguishing feature of Islamic urbanism - although historically, it was not without its problems and abuses.[133] One scholar has suggested that the *waqf* system was an indigenous form of conservation, driven by concerns of social utility rather than history and aesthetics.[134] Indeed, the Ministry of Endowments sees itself as the primary caretaker of properties in the old city - a role that the conservation office has attempted to usurp.[135] It claims a moral authority, which, in the view of some, masks their primary, financial interests. Social utility - what Riegl called "use value" - is often invoked with regard to *waqf* properties: many conflicts between the Ministry of Endowments and GOPHCY have arisen over additions to and expansions of mosques and other religious buildings, which are an important part of community life in Yemen. But changes to such buildings are now prohibited.[136]

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[132] Former employee, now independent consultant to the Ministry, interview, 12/8/04.

[133] The main failure of the *waqf* system, according to some historians, was its failure to account for inflation, which in turn led to various abuses.

[134] A. al-Habashi, "*Athar* to monuments," chapter one.

[135] According to a high-level official, his Ministry agreed that GOPHCY and the Department of Antiquities (the latter is theoretically charged with the conservation of mosques) should be consulted in the renovation of any structure over seventy-five years of age – but he thinks it should be more like one hundred years, or one hundred and fifty. "There is no essential difference between Awqaf and GOPHCY," he said. "The real problem is duplication of efforts. Who is the authority in the old city? We are all interested in getting rid of violations, but how?"

[136] When I pointed out to an inspector that mosques were often enlarged in prior eras, he replied simply, "Now such expansions are forbidden."

The Department of Antiquities is also held responsible for various "restorations" carried out without adequate supervision throughout the country. The 1972 Antiquities Law gave the department the authority to oversee monuments and other sites of historic value. But modifications to religious buildings are supposed to have GOPHCY's approval, since it is the responsible authority in the old city. This system seems to date to the Campaign: "It is recommended that the Governor of Sana'a issue a decree that al mosques and public buildings in the old city are national monuments and cannot

Professionals at GOPHCY say that attempts were made to involve the Ministry of Endowments in conservation, but most feel that the effort is hopeless. The Ministry, they say, has no understanding of the historic value of the structures it controls: it is interested in only pleasing tenants, and as such will make great concessions to assure future income.[137]

After years of conflict with GOPHCY, the Ministry of Endowments has taken up the banner of heritage and conservation; its Minister serves on the Presidential Committee for the Preservation of Old Sana'a.[138] The Ministry has recently begun to describe its projects as "restorations" - but they are usually carried out in ways that damage historic structures, and in many cases the work is now being reversed.[139] Officials maintain that it is the

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be altered or repaired without the agreement of the Trustees of the National and International Campaign, represented by their Executive Office" (R. Lewcock, Report no. 4 to UNESCO, 1987, p. 42).

Numerous conflicts between Awqaf and GOPHCY could be cited. In one case, an upper floor was added to a mosque at the edge of the old city. According to inspectors the floor, which blocks the view of the dome will be removed in accordance with a GOPHCY order. The most high-profile incident was a plan advocated by the President to expand the Great Mosque and widen the road from Bab al-Yaman that leads to it. As one architect noted, this was an attempt to continue the tradition of rulers leaving behind an important mosque. The President was finally persuaded that such a modification to one of the oldest mosques in Islam, in the heart of a world heritage site, was not possible or desirable. Instead, he selected a site in the new districts to the southwest, where an enormous new presidential mosque – a mix of Ottoman and Mamluk elements, in poured concrete – is currently under construction.

[137] The Ministry of Endowments is said to be one of the wealthiest ministries, and according to several informants, rife with corruption - which increased proportionally with land speculation. While denying charges of corruption, officials at the Ministry note that there is a great discrepancy between "government rents" – that is, those charged officially by the Ministry, and those in the private sector. Clearly this is one source of corruption.

European and Arab consultants who have worked in various countries in the Middle East say that *Awqaf* authorities are a problem everywhere: there is a basic lack of understanding, and it is easiest simply to bypass them. A Tunisian professional commented at a recent conference, "we solved the problem by making *awqaf* the property of the state."

[138] A recently published color brochure, for example, advertises the role of the Ministry as care-taker of Yemen's historic structures.

[139] For example, the Social Fund is now removing cement from ablution and bathing facilities in mosques and bathhouses and replacing them with *qaddad*. One *qaddad* master recalls that he was hired to apply cement in the 1970's, and now is taking them off in the same structures (interview, 9/7/04).

administrators and patrons (*mutabarri'in*) of *waqf* properties who do not appreciate historic value: "they can't be faulted," says one high-level official. "They are doing what they think is right." In an interesting twist on international discourse, the official explained that there are two kinds of conservation: historic conservation (*hifadh ta'rikhi*), which is concerned with the outside of buildings; and archeological conservation (*hifadh athari*), which is concerned with the inside. "Each person works according to his conscience," he concluded. His statement suggests that the public face of the building is "historic" (*ta'rikhi*), and can be considered independent of utility; only a structure that has value as an antiquity (*athr*) should be conserved on the inside.

This official, who works in the Investment Sector and attends Presidential Committee meetings on behalf of the Minister, tells a different version of what happened at Samsarat al-Baw'ani. The Ministry reached an agreement with the merchant who controlled the *samsara* (and thus paid rent to the Ministry): the merchant agreed to preserve the exterior of the building, but would renovate the interior. In this way, said the official, "the historical style (*al-tabi' al-ta'rikhi*) would be preserved, and the inside modernized (*mutahadiththa*)." The merchant had the right to do the work, he said: he "saved an historic structure" that was in poor condition. The official was not aware that GOPHCY had prepared drawings, nor was he aware of any stop-work order. He was surprised to hear the charge made by some that Ministry employees received money from the merchant. The former Director of Projects said that the merchant was concerned mainly with improving the shops in the *samsara* for his (sub)tenants, which were too small. Like others at the Ministry, he notes that the main function of the *samsara* is to provide income for the support of mosques: "The condition of

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the *samsara* is not the goal."[140]

The treatment of the Samsarat al-Baw'ani - the destruction of historic material, the construction of concrete block partitions, and cladding of surfaces with cement - is seen by professionals as a "tragedy".[141] But the official at the Ministry of Endowments invoked a precept of modern conservation: it was most important to preserve the exterior, he said, which embodies the "historical style", while the interior could be "modernized" - that is, its treatment should be guided by use value. Apparently the Ministry had failed to understand - or had not been informed - that the structure was considered a "monument" and thus subject to "archeological" treatment. GOPHCY had a clear understanding of the class of the building, as one of the oldest and most historically important buildings in the city. Yet no agreement had been reached with the Ministry, which was clearly not prepared to carry out a careful restoration project without assurance of income. GOPHCY could have agreed, for example, to rent the *samsara* from the Ministry as it did with Samsarat al-Nahhas, the building designated as a training center for handicrafts. Yet such a solution may not have been acceptable to the Ministry, since as a government agency GOPHCY's rent would be a fraction of what could be obtained in the market.[142] The case of Samsarat al-Baw'ani underlines the difficulty of constraining private interests to undertake careful and costly restorations: the tenant feared that his subtenants would not be able to afford to stay in the

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[140] Interviews at the Ministry of Endowments, 11/28/04.

[141] This is how the architect who worked with Barbato described the end result. The project architect who modified Barbato's drawings said: "I never go into the *samsara*. I bear no responsibility for it. It is the responsibility of the officials [who approved the work]". The former Director of Planning places the blame with the former Director and Deputy Director of GOPHCY; the latter, he notes with irony, currently serves on the Presidential Committee for the Preservation of Old Sana'a.

[142] Indeed, *Awqaf* inspectors complain about low rent they receive from Samsarat al-Nahhas, which is no more than a "symbolic rent (*ijar ramzi*)." GOPHCY architects note that *Awqaf* doesn't like the

samsara after it was renovated.[143] At the same time, the familiar distinction between "outside" and "inside" was here pressed into service to justify the work and to cover one or more lucrative financial deals.[144]

Defining the "historic monument"

The differing interpretations of historic value would be in part resolved by a classification system. But some foreign consultants and local professionals have been reluctant to implement such a system: they feel that historic value lies not in monuments or "class A" buildings, but in the fabric of the city which is composed of less "significant" structures. A classification system, they fear, would open the door to unwanted change; better to prohibit change entirely, knowing that it will happen anyway. This approach, frankly acknowledged by several GOPHCY staffmembers, is echoed by conservation professionals in other parts of the world: they know that regulations will not be observed, but it is important to maintain them as ideals.[145] But in prohibiting change, one misses the opportunity to guide change in desirable ways – and this may have unfortunate consequences. In Europe and the United States, where historic districts have become desirable places to live, conservation regulations often abet gentrification: only the rich can afford to restore and maintain their homes

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arrangement, because it means the *samsara* is not in their control – that is, they cannot collect money off the books. Yet some charge GOPHCY with a similar, double-book strategy at the *samsara*.

[143] Interview, former Director of Projects for the Ministry of Endowments, 11/28/04.

[144] A bribe was paid by the merchant to at least one employee at the Ministry of Endowments; but given the importance of the building, one imagines that money also went to higher level officials at the Ministry, and possibly also to officials at GOPHCY.

[145] Official at the World Heritage Center, interview, Paris, 5/9/05. The same point was made to me by a European consultant with long experience in the region, interview, Sana'a, 7/12/04.

according to exacting standards.[146] In the Middle East and North Africa, elites and aspiring

middle classes continue to favor modern districts, and historic areas are progressively

"ghettoized."[147] In such cases, conservation may exacerbate decay of the fabric by creating

the impression of an "untouchable" place, protected by guidelines that are never fully

clarified. An architect who worked on the UNESCO Campaign for Fez notes:

> [In Morocco] urban documents and master plans [from the 1970's onward] designated the *medina*s as 'preservation zones', but without providing any defined guidelines or norms. The most striking case is that of Fez. Indiscriminate preservation of such a large and complex unit has condemned it to decay. Experts have hesitated to tackle its challenges since it has been an untouchable site under the label of an undefined 'preservation.' Thus it has suffered from neglect and intense decay, and the sustainability of its socio-economic and cultural networks, which are in fact its *raison-d'etre*, has been disregarded.[148]

In Sana'a and elsewhere in Yemen, local professionals have struggled to come to

terms with international practice and its relevance for the local context. In the early years of

the Campaign, a small group of professionals secunded to EOPOCS from other ministries

spent much of their time wading through reports on Sana'a and working out a Campaign

strategy in conjunction with UNESCO consultants. They also studied the conservation laws

of other Arab countries – Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Oman - in the effort to develop a local

model. They quickly realized that certain practices and legal instruments developed in

Europe, and even in other Middle Eastern countries, were not easily applied in North Yemen.

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[146] The implementation of stringent conservation criteria was one of the factors that encouraged outmigration from the city of Venice in the 1970's; residents could no longer afford to restore, or even maintain, buildings. In this case conservation contributed directly to gentrification (F. Miglioli, World Heritage Center, personal conversation, 5/10/05).

[147] S. Abdulac, "An Introduction to Urban Conservation problems Today in the Arab Region", in *Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Conservation of the old City of Sana'a, Yemen*, 18-19 December 1991, UNESCO Working Documents, 1992.

[148] H. Radoine, "Conservation-Based Cultural, Environmental, and Economic Development: the Case of the Walled City of Fez", in ed. L. F. Girard, ed., *The Human Sustainable City: Challenges and Perspectives from the Habitat Agenda*, Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2003," pp. 461-2. M. Bouchenaki of UNESCO, who worked on Fez, told me that from the late 1980's emphasis was placed

Over the years professionals have attempted to "yemenize" existing models, incorporating

principles from their own practice in the field, *shari'a*, civil law codes, and the World

Heritage Convention and other international charters. A proposal for a national conservation

law was submitted to the Minister of Culture in 1995, but has yet to be approved.[149]

Yemen was put on the map of World Heritage not because of individual monuments,

but because of a spectacular "vernacular" settlement, composed of some five thousand

houses in addition to numerous religious and public buildings. This massive quantity of built

heritage presents a huge financial burden, especially since most donors will note finance

renovations of privately owned buildings. Many national conservation laws require the state

to purchase properties if they are not maintained by their owners. But in Yemen, the state is

still relatively weak and has limited resources, and a strong tradition of private property is

enshrined in both Islamic and customary law. The authors of the draft law framed house

maintenance in terms of the legal principle that "general interest precedes private interest":

owners are required to maintain their houses, but the state will provide financial and

technical assistance. The law proposes the creation of a small loan fund and free technical

assistance and supervision by GOPHCY staff. At the same time, it strengthens the

institutional capacity of GOPHCY by making salaries comparable to those at government

research institutes.

Most of the regional laws consulted by professionals defined a monument as any

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on the creation of legal, institutional, and financial structures – although the Campaign was also
hampered by competition among ministries (phone interview, January 2005).
[149] This section is indebted to conversations with GOPHCY's legal counsel and the "Draft Law for
the Conservation of Historic Cities, Areas, and Monuments, 2004." Lewcock notes that draft
legislation was submitted in the 1980's, but was never enacted (personal communication). Since
1995, the draft was resubmitted to a succession of several ministers but has not been approved. If
approved, the law would go to the Cabinet and finally to the Prime Minister's Office.

building over fifty years of age, in some cases as little as thirty. By this criterion most

buildings in Yemen would be considered a monument, and would thus be subject to the

highest degree of protection. In their discussions in the mid-1980's, the group proposed to

deal with the issue of "living heritage" in two ways. First, they argued that historic cities

should not be managed by the Antiquities Department. This represented a departure from

practice in most Arab countries, and converged with the desire of foreign consultants and

local policymakers to create an independent institutional structure.[150] The group also

proposed a distinction between two basic classes of buildings, based on their experience in

the field. They defined an "archeological monument" (ma'lam athari) as a building, or the

remains of a building, that no longer has a function and no longer accommodates, or is

surrounded by, life; an "historic monument" (ma'lam ta'rikhi) is a building that is lived in, or

can be lived in. As one professional noted, the historical layering of Sana'a means that even

within a single building, the "archeological" and the "historic" may be mixed, as in a house

built on an archeological site.

The terms "archeological" and "historic" are commonly used at GOPHCY, although

one professional says there is still no consistent distinction between them at the technical

level.[151] In practice, however, there does seem to be a distinction. While the term athari,

"archeological," originally meant a "dead" monument, it is now commonly used to indicate

an exceptional work that should be a accorded a higher level of protection – that is, simply, a

"monument." On the new survey form for the old city developed by foreign consultants and

GOPHCY officials, a building of the highest architectural quality – what the Italian authors

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[150] See chapter three, p. 161.
[151] Interview, 5/8/04.

call a "monument" – is translated as *ma'lam athari*. Other classes of buildings, ranked by quality - "excellent (*mumtaz*)", good (*jayyid*)", "ordinary (*'adi*)" – are seen as part of the historic fabric of the city; the only negative attribution on the list is "inconsistent (*ghayr mula'im*) [with the context]." This understanding of *athari* and *ta'arikhi* corresponds to that of the official at the Ministry of Endowments: a *ma'lam athari* is a building whose *interior* cannot be changed, because it has a higher level of protection; in the case of a *ma'lam ta'rikhi*, only the exterior must be conserved since it is representative of the historic style (*al-tabi' al-ta'rikhi*).

The terms *athari* and *ta'rikhi* are thus generally understood to indicate a building's relative age and importance. In practice, both types can accommodate and sustain life. The usages represent an interesting twist on international terminology. Riegl defined an "historic monument" as *any* building over sixty years of age, since it can be viewed through the lens of historical distance; the building may or may not have use value, but its primary role is as a bearer of "age value." In the Yemeni usage historic (*ta'rikhi*) indicates age, but specified the *continuation* of use and the support of life. As we will see in the following chapters, this understanding of *ta'rikhi* is shared by builders; it has significant implications not only for the designation of buildings, but how buildings are conserved.

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Chapter Five

Old and new professionals

In this chapter we will look at *turath* from another angle: that of the old and new professionals charged with building it and conserving it. The first part of this chapter will describe the experience of local professionals relative to the "typical" process of heritage training and management. The contrast derives in part from the fact that conservation was transferred to Yemen in the framework of international assistance. But it also derives from the specific conditions in Yemen, which often challenge the procedures of heritage management. We will then look at the "traditional builders" or *ustas* who, independently or under the supervision of architects, do the actual making. This section attempts to paint a portrait of builders' practice as they inherited it, and the pressures exerted by the new conception of *turath*. These pressures are both material and social, even psychic - challenging the identity of builders as expert persons and historical agents. At the same time, the new context of *turath* provides an opportunity for builders to influence the ongoing production of culture and conceptions of the "past."

The new professionals

Because of their training and their mandate, conservation professionals are on the "front lines" in the negotiation of international and local practice. They interface with international agencies like UNESCO and the World Bank, and may work with the programs of donor nations like Germany and the Netherlands.[1] Yet these professionals are aware of the unique

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[1] The German development agency GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) has been particularly active in cultural heritage in Yemen, as has the Netherlands, which had selected Yemen as a focus area in the Middle East. Many of the latter's programs, however, were cut in 2004: the

circumstances in which conservation has been introduced into Yemen – particularly its association with development which, for some, changes the nature of conservation. "Cultural heritage is a Western term," said an engineer with long involvement in the Campaign. "It has limited application in a place where the built environment continues to fill the need for shelter and social and spiritual sustenance."

Many of the conservation professionals cited in this work are graduates of professional schools - that is, they are architects, engineers, or planners; one individual who has worked at the conservation office since the late 1980's was trained as a lawyer, and has been involved in the development of guidelines and draft legislation. A number of individuals were sent abroad on government scholarships to universities in Europe, the United States, the former Soviet Union, Pakistan, and the Gulf. During the Campaign there was a kind of internal hierarchy in the office: one's position was determined by class and origin (*saada* vs. non-*saada*; Upper vs. Lower Yemen), but also by the place one studied (Western vs. Eastern Bloc or South Asia) and one's command of English. This hierarchy has to some extent dissipated, since those with the most prestigious degrees and the best English have migrated to the Social Fund. The majority of professionals in the conservation office are graduates of the University of Sana'a: some majored in architecture, while others studied history, archeology, sociology, philosophy, journalism, and business administration.[2] Still others are graduates of local vocational or technical schools (*ma'ahid fanniyya*), including one school specialized in the fine arts.

A small number of professionals received training in conservation at the Institute for Housing and Development Studies (IHS) in Rotterdam through scholarships from the Dutch

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Urban Cultural Heritage Project (UCHP), which developed a conservation plan for Zabid, was disbanded.

government, or in brief training courses elsewhere in Europe or in Sana'a. But the majority

of those working in conservation have no specialized training: they learn their work from

their colleagues in the field, most of whom also lack training.[3] A few inspectors, who are

daily called upon to authorize or reject work by residents, have developed a keen sensitivity

to the local architecture. Yet they too lack formal training in architecture, conservation, and

the history of local building. The lack of specialized training, and the absence of resources in

Arabic on Sana'a's architecture and history, is seen as one of the most pressing problems at

both GOPHCY and the Social Fund.[4] Although most international projects have included

training components, these are rarely meaningful in length and scope, often reduced to a

token "study trip."[5] On-site training opportunities were limited, at least in the early years, by

what most see as an over-reliance on foreign expertise. As we saw in chapter three, the

problem was compounded by the internal politics at EOPOCS, with leadership restricting

access to foreigners.

Veterans of the UNESCO Campaign admit that conservation was a "new idea...we

had to convince the people of its value." At the same time, certain aspects of conservation

seem strangely familiar: it affirms certain "historical" practices that in many cases have not

died out. Some professionals note that conservation emulates certain principles of customary

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[2] The Architecture Department at the University of Sana'a graduated its first class in 1992.

[3] One inspector whom I accompanied on rounds of the old city told me proudly that he was the first technical person at GOPHCY; prior to 1991 there was no technical staff (fanniyyin). He said he learned his job from his cousin, who was at the time director of Inspections (taftish; interview, 3/21/04).

[4] Only now, some two decades after its publication, is Serjeant and Lewcock's work being translated into Arabic, sponsored by the Social Fund; Paul Bonnenfant's works have never been translated from French into English, and hence are even less accessible.

[5] A World Heritage official told me that UNESCO is distinguished by its emphasis on training, which it sees as essential for sustainability. But a consultant with long international experience told me that this is true "only on paper: there are rarely the funds, or the time, to carry out meaningful training" (interview, 6/4/04). Most projects sponsored and led by foreign organizations must provide a

law *('urf)* and practices that have been neglected in recent decades.[6] Conservation and

sustainability *(istidama)* are old concepts, says one architect: Sana'a was built through

practices like maintenance, reuse, and the recycling of water and solid wastes. "Why do we

always have to look to Europe for concepts that we already have?" Efforts must be made to

identify and reaffirm local precedents for conservation. This is not just a romantic notion,

says GOPHCY's lawyer, but good legal practice: "It's a standard legal principle that a law

will only be observed if it has a basis in social practice." Most importantly, residents must be

involved in the process. Despite the great publicity around the Campaign, this has never

really happened in Sana'a – perhaps because officials and professionals believed that locals

would not be responsive. But in some places, residents have realized that conservation

involves their houses, their traditions, their way of life – and they are starting to demand a

voice. Following Zabid's listing as a World Heritage Site, says one architect,

> ... they [consultants and officials] came in and ignored the local people. Why don't they try
> to discover the local systems and use these to support conservation? These systems are also
> part of conservation.[7]

An international conference on Zabid in December 2004 (held in al-Hudayda, apparently

because of lack of facilities in Zabid) was well attended by residents of the city. "Everybody

was yelling," a World Heritage official told me. "The locals want to take control of the

process."[8]

The parallels between conservation and local practice are clear in the discourse of

new and old professionals. As we saw in the previous chapter, professionals' concern with

preserving the "historic character" of the city often translates into practical planning concerns

- density, the height of buildings, and so forth. The standard to which they refer is not a

manual of zoning regulations, but the old city itself – which was the training ground for

many builders who are now in their forties and fifties. The "rules" inherent in the old city are

the same rules that builders learned. When I asked a builder specialized in traditional

construction how he designs an addition to a house, he replied:

> I look at the surrounding neighborhood to see what it wants (*ashuf aysh yisthi al-jiwar al-mujawir*) and I look at the house itself, to see what it wants. I build a kind of dam around the house, so the adjacent houses are not affected. I look at the style of the surrounding houses. I build what will be appropriate to the environment (*jaw*) the house is in; it should fit like the fingers of a hand.[9]

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[8] Interview, Paris, 5/12/05. It should be mentioned that to date, very little work has been done in Zabid since its listing in 1993, largely at the initiative of Paul Bonnenfant. Conditions there continue to deteriorate; according to a (non-Yemeni) Arab professional, the situation has not been helped by Bonnenfant's recent work (*Zabid au Yémen: Archéologie du vivant*, Edisud, 2004). "You look at the book and you think Zabid is beautiful. How can he not show the state of decay and the poverty?" (interview, June 2005).

The lack of attention has disappointed locals, whose expectations where raised by the World Heritage listing and subsequent studies by the Dutch-funded UCHP. "We asked for a Campaign for Zabid, but UNESCO said there are no more funds for Campaigns," says a former GOPHCY official, now with the SFD. "At the very least, there should be a basic commitment to help endangered sites." Since 2000 Zabid has been classified as an endangered site, which means it may be removed from the World Heritage List. The official noted that the system seems counterintuitive and even destructive – since it is precisely "endangered sites" which should receive assistance (interview, June 2004).

[9] Interview, 3/24/04.

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Conservation professionals accept or reject new work in the old city according to whether or not it is consistent (*mula'im*) with the surrounding context, in its form and materials – what the builder above would call the *jaw*. The addition of stories depends on the height of surrounding buildings: if a house is shorter than those around it, floors may be added to it.[10] Those not trained in architecture sometimes use revealing metaphors to describe notions like "context". At a training seminar for participants in the current survey of the old city, a staff member asked why a certain addition, built of concrete, was classified as a violation (*mukhalif*). Another explained:

> It would be fine outside the old city. It's like going to the village wearing pants. If you did that, you would be inconsistent (*ghayr mula'im*) [with the context].[11]

The old city requires an architecture that is more "traditional" but also more familiar and domestic, like the clothing one dons when one returns to the village. This was a natural metaphor, since many professionals grew up in villages and return there regularly for 'Eid and other vacations. For some, the village is a primary reference for *turath*. The senior architect who led the training seminar (along with two Italian consultants) has an exceptional, even poetic, appreciation for *turath*. When I asked him how he had developed this appreciation, he replied: "I grew up in the village. The smells, the textures, the light; the songs my mother sang...I drank *turath* (*shiribt min al-turath*) throughout my childhood."

For many professionals, the contrast between the Yemen they knew as children and the Yemen of today is a kind of "cultural shock." Rapid modernization seems to confirm the idea of historical rupture that is embedded in conservation discourse. Like many other educated Yemenis, professionals see themselves on the other side of an historical divide.

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[10] Site visit with former inspector, 4/24/04.
[11] Training seminar for the inventory of the old city, July 2004. For a similar metaphor by a builder, see below, p. 275.

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"Change has happened so quickly," says one professional. "Everything is so new, that we now long for everything old." For some, the sense of historical rupture is felt as an alienation from one's own culture. For a female professional who directed the women's handicrafts project,

> ...even our beauties are not beautiful. The [modern] window has no relationship to life, or to the building. We have no idea where it came from. It's like a slap in the face...The same is true of clothing. The black *abaya* has no relationship to the life or culture or the spirit of the Yemeni woman.[12]

For professionals, conservation is perhaps a means to preserve part of their own identity – now conceived as a national identity, that all Yemenis can claim. This perhaps explains why they found the Campaign's aims - to protect not only the physical fabric, but a traditional way of life – so appealing.[13] In the words of one architect:

> Conservation (*hifath*) means preserving not only forms, but the social life (*al-hayat al-ijtima'iyya*). There are people [in the old city] who remember how it was. If the new generations come in, we will lose that. Yes, there have been changes in the social life [he said in response to my question]. Relations in the quarter (*hara*) are not as tight as they used to be. But [the old city] is still closer to the past than to the future.[14]

While this architect is from an old Sana'ani family, most professionals in the conservation office are not from Sana'a. As elsewhere in the public (and private) sector, most technical and managerial positions at GOPHCY are filled by individuals from Lower Yemen and the south, where there is a tradition of higher education. They may view the old city of Sana'a as a beautiful relic of urban highland culture, which is nevertheless backward and alien.

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[12] Interview, 5/24/05. The black *abaya* (worn in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries) is now worn by virtually all Yemeni women in cities and towns, having replaced regional and local forms – many of which were very colorful.

[13] "The goals [of the Campaign] are to convey [the] unique character of the [old medieval city] along with its sense of age and history, and to ensure the preservation and protection of [its] way of life as much as possible for those who desire it. Underlying these aims, however, is a recognition of the importance of carrying the burden of history without stifling urban life so that the population is encouraged to change and upgrade its way of life while still retaining the best of the past" (B. Lane, "The Campaign Plan of Action," *San'a: Pilot Restoration Projects*, p. 15).

While they feel that conservation should preserve social forms, they in fact consider some of these forms primitive, especially attitudes toward women.[15] Conservation often involves re-envisioning culture according to an idealized image – a tendency that is also found in much UNESCO literature.

The idea that a World Heritage site is both a collective masterpiece and a unified whole suggests that it evolved over time, adjusting slowly in response to changing conditions. But the "historical time line" sets an endpoint to this evolution. "Can we stop history?" asks one professional.

> We can't ask people to live as they did generations ago – people will leave. When I visited houses [during a 1996 survey by a German-led team], I saw girls in blue jeans. They were modern girls; why are we asking them to live as their ancestors did?...Bir al-Azab is different from the old city; every period should talk about its history. Time will pass and [the new] will become traditional.[16]

Since local professionals have a similar background to mine, I thought that most would agree that the physical fabric of the old city should continue to evolve. But I was mistaken: while they acknowledge the need to accommodate changes in lifestyle and use, most feel that such changes should have minimal impact on the physical fabric. Their language often seems to echo the international charters. "Yes, history is evolution," says one architect, "but now we've decided that evolution should stop." Today, evolution means erasing all difference and distinction:

> In the past evolution occurred through changes in successive floors [of a house]; there were no major changes in the lower ones. So you can read the history of the house in its stories. Now, with the current changes, everything will become the same.[17]

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[14] Former GOPHCY official, now with the SFD, interview, 8/9/04.

[15] A GOPHCY employee from Ta'izz, who accompanied me on my rounds of the old city, expressed frustration when a female resident could not write down her husband's name and phone number for us. "In Ta'izz we teach our women how to read and write!" he exclaimed.

[16] Conservation professional, personal conversation, 4/25/04. This individual, who is not an architect, is from Ta'izz as is evident from his dark skin. He says this is why he was allowed inside houses in the old city; a Sana'ani would never have been allowed in.

[17] Project manager, SFD, interview, 8/9/04.

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Modernity – which marks the end of "history" - is identified with sameness: even in the old city, the facades of new construction and additions will usually have identical window layouts and openings (figure 23).[18] This reflects, on the one hand, changes in taste: "Today everyone wants large windows," a builder told me. But it also reflects the changing use of space within the tower house: in contrast to the old communal living arrangement, "nuclear" families often occupy separate floors.

As might be expected, the most ardent advocates of international practice are architects and graduates of technical or fine arts programs: they have deep knowledge of and appreciation for the special qualities (*khussusiyyat*) of local architecture and want to conserve them. "There are fifty Sana'a in Sana'a," says the architect who led the training seminar. He asked his Italian colleagues how such diversity could be conserved:

> It's not enough to specify that stone be cut by hand, rather than by machine. There is a kind of cut stone unique to Sana'a, produced by a special tool. If workers come from outside, they will bring different tools and the feeling will be different.[19]

For this architect and others, the old city is all they have left. "It's like a sword that my father gives me," he said. "It will not be repeated." This uniqueness consists not only in buildings, but in a sense of the Sana'ani aesthetic that is very much alive, and that guides and limits intervention. A noted restoration architect explained his approach:

> The architectural style of Sana'a cannot be changed. Sometimes if an owner wants something new, I will do it very carefully. But most do not know the style, and end up ruining the facades.[20]

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[18] As we will see, a similar position was take up by the Italian authors of the current inventory, who proposal to evaluate a building according to its compositional richness; see below, chapter seven, pp. 412-3.

[19] Seminar, July 2004.

[20] A. al-Hadrami, interview, 8/8/04.

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Builders express the same notion, in remarkably similar terms. I pointed out to one builder that the architecture of Sana'a was not static, but rather had changed over time; should it not continue to evolve? "Change can be allowed," he replied, "but it must be within the framework (*nitaq*) of the Sana'ani style." Both these statements seem to uphold international strictures against change. Yet as we will see in the following section, architects and builders do not always agree on the practical application of the Sana'ani aesthetic. Their differences are rooted in different conceptions of *turath*.

The changing role of builders

As we saw in chapter two, the social and economic changes that followed the revolution produced an upheaval in traditional practice, particularly in the capital city. New materials and technologies, in particular reinforced concrete, were initially brought north by Adani contractors after the revolution, and diffused via a rapidly expanding road network. By the 1970's these techniques were in general use, not only for new commercial and institutional typologies but also for houses.[21] While these buildings incorporated certain local materials and elements, these were increasingly reduced to cladding. The master builder (*usta*; often, but not always, a mason) initially benefited from the construction boom and experimented with the new technologies. Increasingly, however, projects came to be directed by new professionals - engineers, architects, and construction managers - who had skills that were not part of the *usta*'s training. Some *usta*s acquired new skills and became prosperous contractors. But in many cases highly trained *usta*s ended up working in concrete construction for contracting companies, typically owned by men who had had experience

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[21] By the mid-1970's, 20% of houses in Sana'a were being built in concrete (F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change in the Built Space of Yemen", p. 158).

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with new construction technologies in the Gulf. No longer the head of a prestigious profession, the *usta* was now subordinated to a building process that valued different skills.[22] "Skilled artists have been transformed into unskilled workers", notes Sultan Sallam, author of a remarkable work on local building practice.[23] His observation highlights an aspect of modern building practice that is seldom acknowledged in modernist discourse.

The building arts have traditionally been highly valued in Yemen, as testified by the remarkable variety and quality of so-called "vernacular" architecture; even in Sana'a, many excellent examples are of fairly recent origin (figure 24). Building skills are passed on according to a genealogical model of authority, which may or may not correspond to blood lines.[24] In Sana'a, the ideal appears to be to pass building skills on to one's sons, although the rigors – even abuses – of apprenticeship may be incompatible with kinship, particularly agnatic ties.[25] Many families in Sana'a, as elsewhere in Yemen, acquired reputations as great *usta*s: builders often say that they learned the trade from their fathers, who learned it from their own fathers - reaching back many generations. One builder describes the transmission of skills in his family:

> My great-uncle passed the trade on to my uncle 'Abdullah, when it was about to become extinct *(tawarrath al-'aml ila al-'amm Abdullah, wa kanat sa tanqaridh)*. They are the ones from whom I inherited the trade *(tawarrathat al-mihna minhum)*.

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[22] F. Varanda, "Tradition and Change in the Built Space of Yemen", pp. 156-8.

[23] Interview, 3/2/04. Dr. Sallam is an architect and a professor at Sana'a University; the work is *Al-hiraf al-taqlidiyya al-islamiyya fi al-'amara al-yamaniyya* ("Traditional Islamic crafts of architecture in Yemen"), unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Fine Arts, University of Cairo, 1988.

[24] In Morocco Eickelman observed that craft knowledge – like the religious sciences – are conveyed according to a "quasi-genealogical chain of authority which descends from Master or teacher to student" *(Knowledge and Power in Morocco: the education of a twentieth century notable*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 308, cited in Marchand, *Minaret Building*, p. 10).

[25] T. Marchand, *Minaret Building*, pp. 138-9. Several studies of apprenticeship in other societies have argued that the development of a market economy and increasing division of labor lead to the training of unrelated family members; see, for example, E. Goody, "Learning, Apprenticeship, and Division of Labor", in M. W. Coy, ed., *Apprenticeship: from Theory to Method and Back Again*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.

It is significant that he uses a word that derives from the root *w-r-th*, "to inherit"; this usage

may be a modern one, perhaps influenced by the new currency of *turath* which, as we have

seen, derives from the same root.[26] Builders often maintain that they will pass the trade onto

their sons, even though this seems to be less often a reality. But according to some *usta*s,

even in the old days a great building house (*bayt*) rarely lasted more than four generations: by

the fourth generation its glory has expired, and sons have migrated to new fields.[27] In recent

decades, the process has accelerated - due primarily to the faltering social status of builders,

which has encouraged their sons to seek careers in new professions that carry greater prestige

and monetary rewards.

Conservation has, to some extent, renewed the prestige of *usta*s trained in what they

call the "Sana'ani style" (*al-tabi' al-sana'ani*). *Usta*s have benefited from increased

patronage in old-style work – mostly additions and restoratioms - in the old city and suburbs,

as well as in neo-traditional architecture throughout the city. Some builders now in their

forties and fifties, who began their apprenticeships after the revolution, were converted back

to the old style and now specialize in it (figure 25). Although they continue to work in

concrete construction - their bread and butter - they are advocates of traditional methods and

materials, which they believe produce better and more durable architecture. "Concrete may

last a generation," says one *usta*, "but a building of stone and brick (*hajar wa yajur*) will last

hundreds of years, and more." Some builders try to persuade clients to use traditional

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[26] The syntax suggests that it may be a new usage, since one would expect the builder to say *tawarrath...min* rather than *tawarrath..ila*. This builder (interviewed 12/3/04) is a son of the *usta* who was the master restorer for the UNESCO Campaign; he considered his own father less accomplished than his great-uncle and his uncle.

[27] Marchand was told this by builders in the mid-1990's, to explain why many of the well-known building families of the 1970's and 1980's were no longer practicing. He notes the uncanny parallel to Ibn Khaldun's observation in the *Muqaddima* (14th century CE): "[Prestige] reaches its end within a single family within four successive generations..." Most builders told Marchand that it was

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materials. But if finances permit, most opt for a structure of concrete and steel which carry

the allure of modernity and permanence - although they invariably clad these in a

neotraditional veneer.[28]

For some builders, conservation has validated the work of their fathers and

grandfathers: they see the old buildings as a training ground for them, challenging them to

perfect their own skills. "When I first built next to my father's work," said one builder,

> I felt ashamed [because my work was inferior]. But gradually I learned from his work, and
> came to feel proud. There is nothing like the old work, before it or after it (*al-shughl al-
> qadim ma bish ba'dih battatan*). When I began to work at Bab al-Yaman and I saw the work,
> I was amazed (*baharni*) and I asked myself, where are the *usta*s who built this? The work
> was perfect (*nadhif*).[29]

Despite his assertion that there is "nothing like the old work", the builder described himself

(on tape) as a "great builder (*usta kabir*), specialized in the old city...I learned this work

from my father, who learned it from his father." As Shryock notes, the belief that an age has

ended goes hand in hand with the desire to portray oneself as heir to that age.[30] While

builders are proud of their work in the "old style", they are equally proud of their work in a

neo-traditional style - what one builder describes as "the renewal of heritage (*tajdid al-

turath*)." These commissions include exterior cladding and ornamentation of private villas,

office buildings, and government institutions; and religious buildings like mosques, minarets,

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desirable to train one's family members in the trade, and this was affirmed in my own interviews.
[28] Alienation from local building methods and materials is amplified by its unfamiliarity, as many residents of Sana'a rarely venture into the old city. "The old buildings scare me," said an educated woman in her twenties, who lives in a new district. "The wooden ceilings and brick seem so unstable."
[29] Interview, 7/17/04.
[30] Reviewing an interview with a tribal *shaykh* in Jordan, Shryock writes: "The belief that an age had ended, and that 'there are no shaykhs today', went hand in hand with attempts to link oneself to the shaykhly era, to its values and luminary figures. Ancestral ties to men of renown, or the lack thereof, were offered as proof of a tribeman's social standing. When local histories could not support a man's claims to preeminence; when he could not produce a chain linking himself to a glorious past, then local histories had to be subtly, or brazenly, reinterpreted" (*Nationalism and the Geneaological Imagination*, p. 14).

and *madrasa*s, usually financed by private patrons as good works (*sadaqa*) and signs of their social status. In some cases, builders have managed to become contractors themselves, or work directly with the owner. A notable example is the construction of minarets: builders working in the old style continue to contract directly with patrons, and and exert control over the creative process and its execution.[31] In contrast, work on other building types is often performed under subcontract to a general contractor; the builder may have a say in the design, depending on the attitude of the contractor or architect.[32] In commissions for private houses, owners may defer to the authority of the *usta*, who freely changes the architects' plans and elevations on site; while these new houses have a very different layout, they are often designed with traditional features.[33] But especially in larger projects, including the more opulent villas, traditional motifs – translated into new materials - are reduced to cladding and are often executed in a formulaic way. As Sallam puts it, "details have become engineering."

The popularity of traditional motifs is not only due to conservation - nor is it, as has been suggested, due to the cheaper cost of traditional work, which has equalled or surpassed that of modern construction.[34] The taste for the local was in part a reaction against Egyptian

[31] T. Marchand, "Process over Product: Case Studies of traditional Building Practices in Djenné, Mali and Sana'a, Yemen," p. 123; and *Minaret Building*, Introduction.

[32] According to a builder who specializes in traditional construction, interview, 5/10/04. An *usta* from a distinguished family of builders described the traditional process as follows: "The owner of the house decides in agreement with the Master Builder on the arrangement of the floors and rooms, according to the dimensions of the site and without having a plan" (interview recorded by Hatim al-Sibahi in the 1980's, transcribed in *Sana'a, Yemen: Tradition and Modernity in Sanani Architecture*, Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), 1996).

[33] J-L Arnaud, "Formation de l'Architecture Contemporaine a Sanaa, 1965-90," in *Sana'a Hors les Murs*, pp. 169-70. N. al-Kawkabani notes while new houses may be inspired by Jordanian or other Arab models, they invariably have a *diwan*. The functional division of space often resembles that in old houses – although they are grouped on a single floor. Open plans are soon subdivided into separate spaces (interview, 7/11/05).

[34] Marchand attributes the persistence of traditional techniques to the rising cost of imported materials – especially after the economic crisis of the early 1990's and the civil war of 1994 (*Minaret Building*,

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modernism, which was perceived as an alien and imported style.[35] Pride in local

architecture was reinforced by European and American consultants, and canonized in laws

and architectural codes which, despite the absence of enforcement mechanisms, are widely

observed. This conformance is largely due to a shared perception of local forms and motifs,

and their associated values, as "traditional" (taqlidi).[36] As we saw in the previous chapter,

much neotraditional construction is disturbing to professionals, both local and foreign -

evidence that the old, refined sensibility of builders has dissipated under the influence of

rapid change. Yet for many builders and their clients, new work in the "Sana'ani style"

continues and validates past practice – although some builders, too, lament the lack of

refinement in modern work:

> As you see [he said, pointing out the window; we were sitting in a house in the old city] the experience of fifteen hundred years – even in the quality of the brick - has been lost. If there is no shepherd, the goat gets lost. We builders are goats without a sherpherd: each works the way he wants.[37]

It is perhaps an irony that conservation may contribute to the lack of continuity: due to

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p. 19). But I found no evidence to support this. In 1990 Varanda wrote that the cost of traditional construction was three times higher than that of modern construction. One builder I interviewed maintains that traditional work is significantly less expensive. But most builders and architects told me that *all* materials have become more expensive. The prices of traditional materials – especially structural wood and the particular type of brick used in old work – have continued to increase due to their scarcity. We might guess that the high cost of traditional construction techniques is also attributed to its new "elite" status, associated with foreigners; and also the added and substantial cost of new intermediaries, like restoration architects and general contractors.

While concrete block is domestically produced and widely available, Lewcock points out that the cheap cost of factory-produced block in fact represents a subsidy, since it does not account for the periodic replacement of equipment (personal conversation, 7/30/04).

[35] J-L Arnaud, J-L Arnaud, "Formation de l'Architecture Contemporaine a Sanaa, 1965-90," pp. 172-3; and and S. al-Suleihi, personal conversation.

[36] Marchand, *Minaret Building*, p. 217. In 1972 a law was passed to preserve the "Yemeni architectural style" (A. Oshaish, "Toward a strategy for the preservation of the urban cultural heritage of Yemen and the experience of the preservation of the old city of Sana'a", Urban Cultural Heritage Project, 2002). Marchand mentions architectural codes that require, for example, the use of decorative stone or brick cladding and multi-lite windows. Even architects who champion such codes, however, have recognized that the over-use of these elements may contribute to a decline in

regulations in the old city, it is difficult for building practice to evolve there. Innovation is

confined to new districts where construction and typologies are radically different, and there

is little context – and no regulations - to guide change. As in other parts of the world, "...the

preservation of monuments aims to prolong the life of the monuments, while killing the

architectural climate that has produced them."[38]

It is often said that builders are fundamental to the conservation effort: it is they who

possess the skills needed to restore and maintain old buildings. But in Yemen, as elsewhere,

the attitudes of conservation professionals toward builders are mixed. A few professionals

acknowledge that they have learned much of what they know from builders, who should be

privileged partners in conservation. At the other extreme, one planner suggested that the role

of builders in conservation was a provisional one: builders would ultimately be superseded

by a well-trained class of professionals. Most fall somewhere between these two positions:

they acknowledge that builders are crucial to the conservation process, but that their skills

must be elevated and refined in order to work on sensitive historic monuments. In this, they

echo the sentiments of consultants, dating back to the Quaroni Bonifica studies.[39] "The local

knowledge [of builders] is part of our experience," says one planner, "and we must find a

way to integrate it." Experience shows, says a senior architect, that "once you start a

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the quality of worksmanship as well as their old social prestige (Marchand, *Minaret Building*, p. 20).
[37] Interview, 12/3/04.
[38] W. Denslagen, on one aspect of criticism of the Venice Charter by practitioners in India and Nepal, ("Restoration Theories, East and West", p. 6).
[39] The Implementation Phase of the Quaroni Bonifica studies – the restoration of a model neighborhood (to be discussed in chapter six) - included the creation of a workshop/school to train *ustas* in conservation and restoration. The authors assume that the *ustas* skills have declined or been lost and must be "recovered." The project thus takes into account "the present state of preparation of the traditional workers (the 'ustad' , responsible for the survival until today of the residential area of Sana'a al-Qadima) and the possible interest of recovering the ancient trade within an institutional context that can guarantee the conserving of the level and which will see to the training of young workers" ("Action Proposal", January 1986, p. 10).
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dialogue *ustas* will react quickly, they will propose solutions." But this requires changes to

traditional practice as builders know it.

> This is paradox of conservation: traditional builders are most qualified to work on old
> buildings, but they are not sensitive to its historical aspects; they are interested only in
> pleasing the architect. They are separated from the architect by a cultural gap (*fajwa*
> *hadhariyya*).[40]

Many builders have assimilated the notion of the old city as a special and protected

area, where innovation should not be allowed. While affirming these principles and the

superiority of their forebears' work, *ustas* often try to improve the buildings, in aesthetic or

functional ways. This approach to the past conflicts with that of conservation professionals.

Most have been schooled, directly or indirectly, in international methods and standards -

although as we will see in the following section, they often disagree on their application, or

choose not to be bound by them. They have internalized the notions of the "historical time

line" and the "monument" – a designation they attribute to buildings in the old city in varying

degrees. But since there is no classification system – only a blanket guideline prohibiting

change – the degree of monumentality and the treatment called for are often the judgment of

individual inspectors, many of whom have no specialized training. The basis for such

judgments are not always clear to builders (or for that matter, to residents). Professionals

and builders learn each other's conceptions of the "historic" on site – for example, when

builders try to make changes that will improve the building.[41]

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[40] Former senior official at GOPHCY, now with the Social Fund, interviews, 7/26/04.

[41] Such stories have been recounted to me by several professionals with long experience in
conservation. Selma al-Radi, archeologist and director of restoration at the Amiriyya *madrasa* in
Rada, has been a vocal defender of the *usta*'s role in conservation. With her authorization and
assistance, the chief *usta* at the Amiriyya substantially rebuilt the foundations and other parts of the
building; the degree of rebuilding provoked criticism from some foreign observers. The chief *usta*,
recalls al-Radi, often tried to improvise, adding or changing details which he felt would improve the
building. She had to persuade him that in the case of an historic monument, the restoration had to be
faithful to the original (personal conversation, 4/9/04).

For centuries repair work, reconstruction, and modification to meet new needs were essentially part of the same process. Now, there are clear distinctions between these operations.[42] The resulting "cultural gap" between builders and conservation professionals involves competition over professional authority and the right to interpret the "past." But at a deeper level, the gap derives from competing notions of historicity, which are rooted in different types of knowledge. The *usta* who won the contract for the repair of an historic bridge at Damt – a challenging project that has required "all the experience of my father and grandfather and great-grandfather" – recalls how nervous he was when a committee from the Social Fund came to inspect his work:

> The committee judges between *turath* and me (*al-lajna tahkhum bayn al-turath wa ana*)... [when I began the job] I asked myself, how can my wall go with a wall that is four hundred years old? ...How am I to deal with *turath*?[43]

His words reveal an ambivalence toward *turath* and the new arbiters of the past - and a new uncertainty in a profession that has traditionally had a strong self-image. Builders are told that the work of their predecessors represents a pinnacle of refinement: now considered "historic," the work should not be changed – lest it be contaminated by new materials, methods, and tastes. Buildings are now valued according to temporal and aesthetic criteria defined by others. They are viewed in isolation from their performative context, which is intimately related to a complex of cultural norms – including the *usta*'s expertise and public status.[44] At the same time, the new values resonate with aspects of builders' discourse. *Ustas* agree, for example, that "there is nothing like the old work, before it or after it"; yet the

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[42] W. Denslagen, citing Niels Gutschow's account of the "cultural gap" between architects and builders in Nepal ("Restoration Theories, East and West", p. 7).

[43] Interview, 12/3/04. Although he had successfully bid on the job, making calculations on the basis of SFD drawings, when it came to building he was worried: "I was afraid because I had to follow what was drawn. The drawings were theoretical, not like reality...they were testing me, to see if I could read and measure from the drawings."

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opportunity to engage creatively with their predecessors' work is no longer permissible. The

builder cited earlier, who had been ashamed at the quality of his work in comparison to that

of his father, recalls the early days of Campaign:

> In the beginning I had problems with al-Haddad [Director of EOPOCS]. He hired me to do
> renovations in the old city; I would do the work in new ways - for example, using cement
> with brick, different kinds of stone and stone that was machine cut; I would open up a shop in
> the ground floor, and run away...Yes [he said, in reply to my question], conservation was a
> strange idea for us, it was a mistake [sic]. When we began to work in the old ways, we
> realized we had done things that were not good, because they disfigured the old Yemeni style
> and also the old city and the old work in it (*shawwahat bil namudhaj al-yamani al-qadim wa
> aiydan bi sana'a al-qadima wa al-shugl al-sana'ani al-qadim*). When I first started to work
> in the old style my conscience bothered me (*ta'annab dhamiri*) because I had done things that
> violated the old buildings.[45]

Once again, we hear a mixture of pride and shame in his words – and an attempt to translate

the new view of his craft into familiar terms.

Local building culture

It is difficult to walk through the old city of Sana'a – and countless other old towns in Yemen

- and remain unmoved by the creative vision that produced it. Foreign consultants maintain

that the World Heritage initiative has been invaluable in fostering an appreciation for

remarkable human masterworks – especially since the forces of globalization would

otherwise eradicate them.[46] Yet decades after the World Heritage Convention, we are

perhaps no closer to understanding the creativity that produced places like the old city of

Sana'a - and hence the true "value" of a World Heritage site. In the words of one architect

and veteran of the Campaign:

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[44] See Marchand, "Process over Product", pp. 137-9.

[45] Interview, 8/10/04.

[46] This view was, for example, expressed by Vincenzo Somella, heritage consultant to UNESCO, personal conversation, Sana'a, 7/6/05. It is echoed by other European and Arab consultants although, as we will see below, Yemeni professionals are more ambivalent.

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Yemeni conservationists would do better in Florence: that's where our understanding of architecture comes from. As for our local architecture, we still have no idea what it is.[47]

As noted earlier, local architecture in many ways resists categorization and analysis according to established art historical methods. In Europe and elsewhere, an academic, evolutionary model - based on notions of "period" and "style" - has tended to obscure the continuity of building practice and, more generally, the relationship between architecture and making.[48] Historians and other scholars have often imposed on architecture rather abstract, and subjective, notions of meaning. It is not accidental that art historical methods developed alongside the new architectural profession, distinct from builders' practice, which defined itself in terms of a new specialized knowledge and an historical self-consciousness.[49] In the practice of builders in Yemen, we have the opportunity to observe a different kind of knowledge and way of constructing meaning that perhaps resembles that of builders in Europe, before architecture was "professionalized" in its modern form. The approach of

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[47] Interview, 7/26/05.

[48] For example, it has obscured the recycling of forms that was common in all periods, as well as the great variations of place and technique (Ron Lewcock, personal conversation, 9/6/04). In particular, the favoritism accorded to classicism produced an evolutionary model that obscured the richness and variety of local practice; see C. Belsey, "Classicism and Cultural Dissonance", in L. Gent, ed., *Albion's Classicism: the Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

In his 2001 Ph.D dissertation, Jacques Feiner proposed an evolutionary scheme for the Sana'ani façade. In this, he was motivated by the laudable desire to understand local architecture in historical terms, rather than as a "traditional cultural universe...perceived, even by the elite, as a compact, mute, undifferentiated agglomeration" ("La vielle ville de Sana'a: analyse morphologique comme fondement de la sauvegarde patrimoniale", Doctoral thesis no. 1652, Department of Architecture, Ecole Polytechnique Fedérale de Lausanne, 1997, pp. 190-1). He developed a schema of periods and styles that was was until recently used on CATS survey forms. Lewcock raises two objections. First, the stylistic patterns and motifs identified by Feiner are not necessarily sequential; rather they overlapped and were imitated over time (and still are). Second, this kind of analysis may encourage restoration according to idealized styles and periods (so-called "stylistic restoration") which would obscure richness of local architectures (interview, 3/10/04). In the current inventory of the old city, Daniele Pini's team expressed similar objections (presentation to GOPHCY Director and staff, 7/26/04).

[49] In the formation of modern professions, notes Larson, "[h]istorical continuity is not only implied; it is deliberately and actively sought in the attempts by organized professions to give themselves a culture with roots in a classic past" (*The Rise of Professionalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, p. xv).

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Yemeni builders is perhaps brought into sharper focus, as one observes their interaction with new discursive practices and new hierarchies.

Sitting with builders at *qat* chews, and at meetings of foreign and local experts, I was struck by these disparate worlds. I wondered why foreign experts continue to be brought to Sana'a to evaluate and plan: not only is there a core group of local professionals with two decades of experience, but there is a rich and vital building tradition practiced by men in the prime of their careers, some of whom are third- or fourth-generation builders. Indeed, *ustas* are keenly aware that they are the ones who possess knowledge and skills required to conserve the old buildings: they know that they are now caretakers not only of local, but of *world*, heritage (*turath 'alami*). Yet they are rarely, if ever, consulted in discussions of what conservation is, or should be, in Yemen. Rather, they serve a system whose goals appear to be defined in the boardrooms of local and foreign agencies.[50] Why has this important resource not been tapped? The explanation perhaps lies in the competition between old and new professions[51] - and ultimately, between different forms of knowledge.

As Trevor Marchand has argued, building is a form of knowledge that is constituted in the acts of performance and transmission; the latter typically occurs through some type of apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship is aimed not only at inculcating skills, but at creating a professional person and moral agent with particular behaviors and values.[52] Training is

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[50] This point is made by A. G. Krishna Menon regarding builders in India ("Rethinking the Venice Charter". pp. 51-2).

[51] For the new professional competition between builders and a very young architectural profession, see Marchand, *Minaret Building*, pp. 236-9; and J-L Arnaud, "Formation de l'Architecture contemporaine a Sanaa (1965-1990)", in G. Grandguillaume, ed., *Sana'a Hors les Murs*, pp. 169-170.

[52] Marchand, "Process over Product: Case Studies of traditional Building Practices in Djenné, Mali and Sana'a, Yemen," in *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Built Environment*, proceedings of the 4th Annual US/ICOMOS Symposium, Philadelphia, April 2001, Los Angeles: the Getty Conservation Institute, pp. 137-159. This section is indebted to this and several other insightful

accomplished indirectly, through observation and imitation – as builders say, "just by looking

(*bi mujarrad al-nadhar*)." When asked how they learned the trade, builders relate an almost

identical sequence:

> I worked first with mud (*khulab*), I mixed earth with water (*kunt akhallib*)...After that I
> worked throwing the mortar to the *usta* (that is, as a *munawwil*). Then I worked on the inside
> of walls (*fil mathna'*, that is, as a *thanna'*). Little by little I got to work on the facade - first in
> stone, then in brick. After that I learned to work with the the string (*mizan*), working next to
> the stone-cutter (*muwaqqis*); we use the string for measuring, too [rather than a meter]. We
> also learned to cut stone (*al-qassa*). Then we went up on the facade (*tala'na fil wajiha*) and
> worked there. All this I learned with my father, who learned it from his father...[53]

In building and other trades, apprenticeship is often characterized by an almost total absence

of verbal communication - normally thought to be essential in the learning process. This is

due in part to the initiatory aspect of apprenticeship and the desire to safeguard specialized

knowledge;[54] but it is also related to the *type* of knowledge that is being transmitted.

Drawing on recent studies of language and cognition, Marchand argues that while building

is a non-lexical form of knowledge, it nevertheless consists of *concepts* that emerge in the

process of making. These concepts inform theoretical knowledge and in turn impact

making.[55] Knowledge is constituted through the engagement of the body and the material,

in a performance that is professional and public – and is thus closely tied to the builder's

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works by Trevor Marchand, especially *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen* (Richmond,
Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), the result of an apprenticeship with a family of minaret builders in
Sana'a.

[53] A forty-five year old *usta*, born and raised in Sana'a, interview, 8/10/04.

[54] Delbos and Jorian describe apprenticeship as a process of socialization which is as much about
what is *not* said, as what is said (*La Transmission des Savoirs*, p. 239.

[55] Describing his own experience as an apprentice for the al-Maswari family in Sana'a, Marchand
writes: "The steps, procedures, geometrics and spatial relations were progressively incorporated into a
skilled, habituated practice. In other words, the initial theory, or *knowing that*...guided my first
attempts at carving ['x' type bricks] was succeeded by a skilled and efficient performance, or
knowing how. Retrospectively, it was apparent that this *knowing how* had likewise modified my
'conscious' *thinking about* how to make 'x's, and that the two may be considered in dialectical
relation with one another via an interface mechanism which selectively interprets information

status and claims of professional authority. The *usta*'s authority is vested in a specialized

and secret knowledge, which is inculcated in stages during the course of apprenticeship.

Marchand sees the builder's knowledge as a form of "traditional discourse" which

focuses on specific events and contexts rather than on theoretical concepts.[56] The builder's

statements are assumed to have "truth value" not because the content is true, but because "the

utterance [is] an event...produced by a customized person who embodies the supposed

historicity and expert knowledge."[57] This focus on *events* recalls the term *ta'rikh* (history) –

literally, "recounting". It closely parallels Dresch's and Shryock's accounts of local forms

of historiography, both oral and written, which also emphasize events and persons: narrative

and sequence are subordinate or absent, in favor of a continuity that affirms the identity of

the group.[58] While scholars often assume that "history" has a positivistic sense - a

"'chronicle of actual events' as opposed to 'myth', 'legend', or 'fable'" - in Yemen *ta'rikh* is

often used to describe a past that is relativistic, and often frankly ideological.[59]

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between them" ("A possible explanation for the lack of explanation: or, 'Why the Master Builder can't explain what he knows'", *SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics*, vol. 10, 2000, p. 313).

[56] Marchand (*Minaret-Building*, pp. 137-8) builds on Pascal Boyer's work, *Tradition as Truth and Communication: a Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[57] *Minaret-Building*, pp. 218-9.

[58] Even in learned Zaydi historiography, writes Dresch, there "is no denial of political events or the passage of years...[but] there is no admitted change in the values by which people and events are judged" (*Tribes and Government*, p. 182).

Anthropologists have noted, writes Connerton, that the goal of performance is not so much *continuity* with the past as the desire to make explicit the social structure (*How Societies Remember*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 3). But Dresch and Shryock have called attention to the false dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony – which has led, for example, to the assumption that tribal histories are not "really" about the past. The reality, asserts Shryock, is more lively and colorful (Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination*, pp. 21-2). Following Heidegger, Marchand attempts an explanation at the interplay of past, present, and future in builders' "intentionality" (*Minaret Building*, pp. 220-4). These observations diminish the distance between "developed" and "less developed" societies: despite the emphasis in the former on textual accounts, the "past" continues to be sensed and transmitted in everyday, immediate ways.

[59] Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination*, p. 22. A tribal *shaykh* initially resisted Shryock's attempt to extract a chronicle of "actual events": "This is knowledge?" he asked. "God

Marchand's study of minaret-building does not attempt to explain the *content* of builders' knowledge, since the rendition of one form of knowledge into another can only be partial. Rather, his detailed account of the building process and his own apprenticeship attempts to show how this knowledge is constituted, and the social context of its production and reproduction.[60] Sultan Sallam chose to study building practice in a way closer to that of the 18th century *encyclopédistes*: in 1988 he spent several months on building sites, observing how *usta*s make decisions, and drawing their techniques and construction details. He explains his mission:

> I express (*u'abbir*) for the *usta*s, in words and drawings, what they cannot say for themselves....I am their ambassador (*safir*) to the architecture students, who are removed from [the *usta*s'] practice and from the old city.[61]

Like Marchand and other researchers, I at first felt frustrated that the *usta* "cannot explain what he knows." Yet as an architect and teacher, I realized that it is exceedingly difficult to articulate knowledge about practice and aesthetics.[62] Later, while reading Marchand's studies, I suddenly realized that the anecdotal stories and casual analogies I had been hearing from builders *were* their discourse: they do not explain the "knowing how", but rather shed light on the richness of the knowledge and its ties to an intensely local context.

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help you. Empty talk brings problems. Everyone recollects the past in the way he wants. Everyone makes his ancestor big; people lie and exaggerate, and the others get upset. By God, there is no benefit" (p. 15).

I am grateful to Michael Herzfeld for pointing out, in an early stage of my fieldwork, that the term *ta'rikh* may be used in ways that are not positivistic. This attuned me to the various uses of the word among residents, builders, and conservation professionals, as we will see in the coming pages.

[60] "A possible explanation for the lack of explanation," p. 309.

[61] Interview, 3/2/04.

[62] Connerton notes that the passage from incorporating practice (knowledge stored in and transmitted via the body) to inscribing practice (knowledge based on texts) makes expert knowledge more vulnerable to scrutiny and challenge (*How Societies Remember*, chapter three). This may explain in part what many practitioners see as the current crisis in architecture: the assumption that architecture is a rational discipline that can be described and defended verbally has perhaps contributed to its marginalization.

The *usta* who repaired the bridge at Damt - now in his fifties, he is one of the two

sons of the *usta* who worked as master restorer in the UNESCO Campaign – told me about

his initiation into the profession in the 1970's. The story provides a glimpse into the internal

workings of a vital profession – a vitality that persists today, even in the capital where the

trade has been most affected by recent changes.

> I used to work with my father; I made him lose money. He would joke with me and sing, "Ask my history, 'I am Yemeni'" [a song]... He used to tell me to go to the house to bring the *mizan* (level). I would go [but I would] sit, and imitate what I saw my father doing on the wall. I would be late returning, and my father would hit me...

> I used to work with other *ustas* too - they were the best, real perfectionists (*'ahl al-dhimma*). They did Beit Mi'yad, Beit al-Raqqas, Beit al-Haymi, and other houses. Once I worked in Bir al-Bahma [a neighborhood in greater Bir al-'Azab]. That place is a place of scholars of the trade (*ulama' al-mihna*) like Ahmad Miqbal Mi'yad – he is the summit of Yemen (*qimmat al-Yaman*) - al-Izzi al-Haymi, and others. They were all old men, and spent most of their time in the mosque. My father gave me a building to work on in front of the mosque. I had a *janbiyya saifani* [a knife of the highest quality]; I sold it and used the money for the work. When the *ustas* walked in the street, they would look at the building and say, "That boy is talented...his hand is good (*yaddih haliya*)."

> In those days Abdullah Ali al-Rawdhi was a big *usta* in Bir al-'Azab.[63] I was afraid of the *ustas*, afraid that they would criticize my work; in those days there was a lot of criticism. The old *ustas* used to ask, "Whose son are you?" If an *usta*'s work wasn't good, he would hide it when an old *usta* walked by, so he wouldn't criticize it. [But] the old *ustas* encouraged me. Al-Rawdhi came by, and I liked him a lot. He called to me while I was making a *hizam* [the decorative brickwork that divides one floor from another] and asked me if I knew its name. I said that I didn't. He said, "You are a talented boy"....He entered the mosque, and the *ustas* spoke about me. Al-Rawdhi said, "This boy has a great future" (*yaddih mubashira bil khayr*; literally, "his hand is headed for great things"). Al-Rawdhi said, "Come to me." And I used to go to him. He taught me a lot. He told the *ustas* that I was great; but they said, "Don't judge now: first let's let him build a *hizam* on Beit Sunaydar (*yihazzim beit Sunaydar*), and then we'll judge.

> The *usta* who was working on that house let me build the *hizam*. I worked on it, but I built a *hizam* of a different kind; I wanted to develop (*kunt ashti atawwir*) [the form], but the work was not good. I went down to the mosque to look at it, and I saw a hateful thing (*shay' karih*). I finished the work and went away. The *ustas* said to al-Rawdhi, "You see, we told you to wait before judging." After some time al-Rawdhi took me to his house. He was very, very mad at me because I made an ugly *hizam*, after he had told the *ustas* I was talented. He told me to go away. I was unable to sleep for three days. After that, I got a job: Beit al-

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[63] 'Abdullah Ali al-Rawdhi built the Ministry of Health (now the Mayor's Office) on Tahrir Square. Its exceptional façade draws on a tradition of polychrome stonework, and also appears to translate decorative brick patterns into stone on this Ottoman-inspired, institutional building. See P. Bonnenfant, *Les Maisons Tours de Sana'a*, Paris: Presses de CNRS, 1989, pp. 102-3.

Bashiri in Bir al-Azab, a building with stone cladding. As I worked on it, I remembered what al-Rawdhi had said [and] because of this, I worked work from my heart (*min dakhil qalbi*). I made a *hizam* of stone and called al-Rawdhi to see it, but he refused. "Go away," he said, "you're no good." Finally he agreed to go and look. After he saw the *hizam* he said, "I dare all the people in Bir al-'Azab to say that you are not an artist." He gave me a certificate (*shahada*, literally "diploma")....[64]

The themes of the story were echoed in my rounds and talks with builders. An *usta* who claims to be expert in *turath*, for example, should know the many types and names of *hizams*. These had almost been lost to memory – and one *usta* acknowledges his debt to Sultan Sallam's documentation of *hizam* types. Several builders with whom I spoke claimed to know the names of all of the *hizams*, but most *ustas* do not know them - and neither does GOPHCY. For these builders, GOPHCY's ignorance of such an important aspect of *Sana'ani turath* proves that the agency cannot understand or manage the old city.[65]

As the above story suggests, the choice and execution of *hizam* is an important test of a builder's proficiency. An architect can immediately see that the *hizam* at each floor level – its height and form – establishes the main proportions of the façade. The builder designs these proportions by eye, from the ground, compensating for the distorting effects of perspective.[66] Typically, the higher a *hizam* on the façade, the wider it is. But in my discussions with builders, it became evident that proportion is only one consideration: the *hizam* is an important aesthetic component, and in some sense establishes the character of the façade – not unlike, one suspects, the classical orders in ancient buildings. For *ustas*, the

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[64] Interview, 12/3/04. Other builders also told me they had received a *shahada* from an established *usta*.

[65] "I want you to ask all the people at GOPHCY how many types of *hizams* we have in old Sana'a, and what their names are," said one builder. "They don't know. I made drawings of all [fifty-two] types of *hizams* and gave it to [the Director of CATS]. There are houses in the old city where *ustas* built new *hizams* imitating [those on] the old houses. But the *ustas* were not good, the work was not good" (interview, 3/24/04).

[66] S. Sallam, interview, 3/2/04. The technique of manipulating perspective to please the viewing subject is a well-documented phenomenon in ancient Greek architecture.

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hizam is like the belt in which a man wears his knife (*janbiyya*; *hizam* in fact means "belt"), or the scarf that he wraps around his head.[67]

The *usta*'s body and perception are intimately engaged in the design process, which is akin to sculpture: a visual proportion is pleasing, says one builder, when it "fills my eye."[68] When a builder designs a *mafraj*, Sallam notes, he sits on the roof to determine the correct height of window sills.[69] The conceptualization of space may begin, as Marchand suggests, in the body's engagement with the module of the brick. During the course of apprenticeship

> [c]ontinuous building practice, meaning the regular involvement in the processes of *making*, served to develop a knowledge of the primary building components such as the central column, stairs, and walls, and the manner in which they are assembled to create *space*. At this scale of *making*, one's own body became the principal source of measurement, and by inhabiting the process, reflection upon the body in relation to the physical environment became the principal means of planning spatial relations.[70]

Perhaps it is this engagement between body and material that gives rise to an anthropomorphic conception of buildings: like a person, a building pleases (or not) by virtue of its stature, proportions, and "clothing."[71] When I asked one builder how many floors were appropriate to a house, he said that it depends on the height of the surrounding houses, but also on the nature of the house itself:

> If a house is five meters wide, maybe it permits only four floors, like the house we are in...If it's nine meters wide, it could have six floors in order to have good proportions. A short house is like a person in *sha'bi* (popular) dress, with a *janbiyya*. A tall house with a *mafraj* is is like a man in a suit and tie.[72]

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[67] S. Sallam, interview, 3/2/04.

[68] T. Marchand, *Minaret Building*, p. 178.

[69] S. Sallam, interview, 3/2/04.

[70] T. Marchand, *Minaret Building*, pp. 177-8.

[71] The architect José-Marie Bel used anthropomorphic terms in describing Yemeni architecture, and these are sometimes cited by local professionals (J. M. Bel, *Architecture et Peuple du Yemen*, Paris : Conseil international de la langue Française avec la collaboration de l'Institut international d'architecture mediterranéenne, 1988). But such analogies exist in what must be a very old local discourse. Analogies between architectural elements and the body is a theme in European architecture, although it has barely been considered in theory; see J. Rykwert, *The Dancing Column*: on order in architecture, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996.

[72] Interview, 6/10/04.

On another occasion I walked with this builder past a public garden (*maqshama*), surrounded by a new wall that GOPHCY architects had adapted from the *tijwab* (an arched parapet wall, typically on the upper floor of a house). The builder grimaced: the wall, he said, is like "a man who is so short that he can't breathe." Describing the technique of *fals* – the careful reconstruction of a wall by removing and replacing stones – another builder said that the wall in need of repair was bulging out twenty centimeters, "like a pregnant woman" (tracing a bulge in his belly). " We rebuilt it so it was the same as the others (*mizan wahid*)."[73]

The proportions of the arch above a window are, for builders, a particularly important characteristic of Sana'ani *turath*. In order to be pleasing, the arch must sit on a "neck" (*raqaba*), a vertical extension of the sides of the frame (figure 26). Without the *raqaba*, said one builder (hunching his shoulders so as to appear neck-less) the arch is "like a head without a neck." Builders sometimes poke fun at architects, who design ugly *hizams* and arched windows with no "neck".[74] When wide, Ottoman-inspired windows were assimilated into local architecture, builders continued to insert a short "neck" in the arch – although one builder notes that clients' demands for ever wider windows makes it harder to maintain the neck, given the restricted height of ceilings. Even in new work and in additions in the new districts, this builder says he maintains the *hizam* and the *raqaba* "which cannot be changed."[75]

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[73] Interview, 8/10/04.

[74] S. Sallam, interview, 3/2/04. One builder who was hired to work on the façade of the Suq al-Baqar clinic tried to convince the (GOPHCY) architect and contractor to build a larger *hizam* along the top of the large, three-story building, in a different pattern. But the former refused, because the *hizam* would have been too expensive. The *hizam* was built as drawn, identical to the *hizam* on the lower floor; according to the builder this is the greatest flaw of the façade (interview 11/11/04). Architects in and outside of GOPHCY also dislike the façade and the building generally, albeit for different reasons (see figure 14).

[75] Interview, 3/24/04.

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It is noteworthy that many of the same terms occur in various art forms - suggesting the existence of "affinities" which, one writer thinks, could be used to study cultural production from a culture's own perspective, rather than through theories external to it.[76] A noteworthy, and to my knowledge, unstudied example is the use of *hizam*-like illumination to separate chapters in Qur'an manuscripts.[77] Parallel structures and terms have been noted in music and architecture: Jean Lambert suggests that architectural terms allow aspects of music to be conceived and visualized metaphorically. Both musicians and masons, notes Lambert, are practitioners rather than theoreticians: "if one finds structures, they come after the fact, having been sanctioned by usage, rather than organizing practice *a priori*."[78] In poetry, a line is called a *bayt* (literally, "house"), while a song has a melodic-rhythmic structure called a *qa'ida* (base or model). A musical interpretation should follow a conventional sequence, writes Lambert, consisting of three rhythmic cycles or suites (sing. *qawma*):

> According to musicians [the *qawma*] must be like a building, *mabna'*, a structure in the architectural sense, *maqam*. The metaphor of the building clearly indicates the desire for perfection and cohesion of the entire sequence, in which the melodies are freely chosen by the musician. Moreover this does not exclude the existence of certain fixed sequences, doubtlessly because they had their hour of success: such is the case of a well-known suite called *al-qaws* (*arc*, but also arcade in architectural vocabulary) because it is made of several sections, *madraj*, particularly well assembled, *murakkaba*.[79]

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[76] S. al-Suleihi, *The Lyrical Facades of Sana'a*, p. 84. In addition to poetry, al-Suleihi explores aesthetic and structural parallels between architecture, music, and textiles (pp. 18-26).

[77] As in the very early fragments discovered in the ceiling of Sana'a's Great Mosque in 1972, on display at the Department of Antiquities' manuscript collection in the old city. To my knowledge, the parallel between these forms and architectural *hizams* has not been noted.

[78] J. Lambert, "La Maison Tour et la Musique: Harmonies et Dissonances", in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a*, pp. 165-173. S. al-Suleihi makes a similar argument regarding the genesis of the theory of meter in poetry in the 8th century. It developed in part from the desire to discover rules of poetic composition, but also, significantly, as "an act of preservation, when the art of poetry, which was a dominant mode of expression, was endangered by the dramatic changes that Arabic culture was then undergoing. Under the same circumstances and for the same reasons, the rules of Arabic grammar were derived and written at the time. Similar concerns with identity and cultural expression arise today, when not only is intuition less reliable, but the definition of what belongs and what does not belong is ambiguous." (*The Lyrical Facades of Sana'a*, p. 85).

[79] J. Lambert. "La Maison Tour et la Musique", in P. Bonnenfant, *Sana*, p. 167 (translation mine).

Qawma and *maqam* derive from *q-w-m*; the many variations of this root include the meanings "to be erected" or "to erect." Lambert suggests that musicians' use of the term *maqam* – that is, a building - differs from the use of term in Near Eastern music, where it means a mode in the tonal system.[80] Several builders I interviewed, however, use the term *maqam* in a way that seems close to the sense of "mode". When I asked one builder if he would agree to add two stories to a particular house, he said yes, "but I will make the windows in the same *maqam*; I will not go outside the *maqam* (*kharij al-maqam*)." When I asked him to explain what he meant by *maqam*, he did not answer directly, but said that *maqam* applies to the entire house (*al-beit al-kamil*). But for GOPHCY, "any beautiful thing is a *maqam*. They don't understand like the *ustas* do." Later – a couple of hours into *qat*-chewing - I asked him what types of houses are found in Sana'a. He replied,

> There are no types. All of Sana'a is of one piece (*qut'a*); the houses of Sana'a are of one *maqam*. Houses may differ by size but they are not "types". The "types" are arches, windows, and ornament (*naqsh*).

The last term, *naqsh*, is a significant one: builders use the term *naqqasha*, "to decorate", to describe the ornamentation of a façade, much as a musician embellishes a *maqam*. This term and others like it appear in Arabic literature and a variety of artistic and artisanal practices:

> Decoration seems to complete an object, a wall, or a person, by providing it with quality. In classical Arabic *adab* literature, literary theory or practice, words like *naqqasha* ("to cover with decoration" in many different techniques), *zawaqa* ("to embellish"), and especially *isti'ara* ("to use metaphorically") have different meanings dealing with artistic or esthetic practice or description; all are positive in their judgment and imply effective completion and even transfer of meanings from one form to another.[81]

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[80] J. Lambert. "La Maison Tour et la Musique", in P. Bonnenfant, *Sana*, p. 575, fn. 16. The term *maqam* in architecture indicates a commemorative structure, usually a mosque or saint's tomb (A-R Ghaleb, *Encyclopédie de l'Architecture Islamique*, Beirut: Jarrous Press, 1988, p. 397). In the latter sense, it means "a place where one rests."

[81] O. Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 25-6.

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Decoration may also be a metaphor for contemplation.[82] At the same *qat* chew, a researcher

asked the builder about the relationship between the architecture and dance of Sana'a. "Like

Sana'ani dance," he replied, "the façade [of the house] goes from right to left: the eye dances

on it, jumping from one beautiful thing to another."[83]

The detailing and decoration of the tower house has been presented by other

authors.[84] I will suggest here only a few thoughts regarding ornament as a product of

builders' discourse – a critical subject, requiring extensive ethnographic and historical work.

In addition to polychrome stonework, the main ornamentation of a façade consists of brick

patterns and panels, parts of which are painted with a white plaster called *nura* (figure 26).

Nura is also applied around window and door openings, perhaps as water-proofing.

Certainly functional reasons were long ago subordinated to a taste for decoration that

surpasses that of other highland towns – although builders note that ornamentation in Sana'a

has become excessive, even in the old city.[85] Doors and window openings are places where

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Lambert notes that in Sana'ani music the embellishment of a melody is described in terms borrowed
from artisanry. In addition to *naqsh*, the term *harsha* - the embellishment of the main melody with
the voice – also refers to the decorative motifs of the window-maker (*harrash*). *Tadfir* is used to
indicate the interpenetration of several elements. On one of my walks with a builder, he found a
vertical brick panel on a facade displeasing because the undulating lines (contained within the
verticals) did not interpenetrate (site visit, 5/10/04).

[82] "A wise medieval Jewish saying from the Book of Ben Sirach goes as follows: 'A mind settled on
an intelligent thought is like the stucco decoration on the wall of a colonnade.' The contemplation of
something intelligent is compared to what makes a wall beautiful, that is something plastered on it, in
a technique prevalent in Iraq whence the saying probably came" (*The Mediation of Ornament*, p. 25).

[83] 6/10/05. The researcher is Sabrina Kadri, who was conducting a study of women's dances in
Sana'a.

[84] In addition to Sallam's work, which includes extensive documentation of doors, windows, and
brick and plaster ornamentation, see parts four and five of P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sanaa.*

[85] Several builders pointed out these facades with dismay. They acknowledge, however, that *naqsh*
can be traditional, "of heritage" (*turathi*) or "modern" (*hadith*); they execute the latter on buildings in
the new districts. Decoration continues to be an important statement, as shown by the appearance of
new plaster motifs. For example, *janbiyyas* can often be seen on facades in the old city; the diffusion
of this motif is perhaps due to the increasing numbers of non-tribal men who carry these knives,

evil spirits may penetrate, and so are often adorned with talismans, sculpted in plaster or carved in wood.[86] One wonders whether *nura* itself plays such a protective role, since verb to plaster with *nura, nawwara,* also means to "bring light".[87] It is noteworthy that families traditionally renewed plaster on special and happy occasions, like weddings or births.[88] Plaster decoration is part of a decorative and iconographic program that extends into the interior of the house, in the ornament of important rooms. This program includes symbols and inscriptions that express gratitude to God and invoke divine protection, through a combination of Islamic formulae and pre-Islamic motifs.[89] The current tendency in academia to study the architecture of Islamic societies in isolation from religious and spiritual concerns seems inappropriate for Yemen. "The philosophy of the *ustas*," says Sallam, "is that God is most beautiful."[90] Builders are grounded in Islam, notes Marchand: it provides the basis of their socialization and hence of their individual and collective identities. In religion, as in building practice, their "grasp was of the *particulars*, each practice as a discreet object of knowledge, exercised automatically in reponse to a formalized set of circumstances."[91]

The builder who repaired the bridge at Damt and described his initiation is a master *'oud* player. He also happens to be illiterate. He likened the bridge to a song: in order to

which are highly charged with symbolism and often carry inscriptions (see P. Bonnenfant, "Les Inscriptions dans la Maison," in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sana'a*, pp. 513-521).

[86] P. Bonnenfant, "La Maison Microcosme," in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sanaa*, pp. 565-6.

[87] I am thankful to Engseng Ho for suggesting the metaphysical aspect of this verb.

[88] S. al-Suleihi, personal conversation.

[89] See P. Bonnenfant, chapter 23, "La Symbolique de la Demeure," on decorative motifs and their symbolism; and chapter 22, "Les Inscriptions dans la Maison."

[90] Interview, 3/2/04.

[91] Marchand, *Minaret Building*, p. 107; see also his discussion of builders and Islam, pp. 107-9. In the introduction to his book, Marchand notes that the cognitive theories on which his work draws do not reflect builders' own understanding of themselves and their work: "For many of my Muslim friends and colleagues in Yemen, even those who admitted to not being very devout in their religious

work on it, he needed to know the tones (*maqamat*) on which the song was built: "How can my voice go with [the voice of the *usta*] who built the bridge?" he asks. "I needed to know how my *maqam* would affect the old." His artistic impulses were reigned in by managers at the Social Fund, who tried to instill in him a different approach to the work. A manager told me, not without irony:

> During the course of the project, the *usta* learned about restoration. He wanted to beautify the bridge. We wanted to make it a monument.[92]

He noted, however, that the builder's proposal for repairing the bridge did not differ substantially from that of the civil engineer hired as a consultant on the project (figure 27).

In order to get the job, the *usta* had to read drawings produced by the SFD and submit an estimate. He was afraid at first, because he knew that the SFD would hold him to the scope of work as it was described in drawings: "the drawings were theoretical, not like reality... I knew it was a test." He tried to explain to them that the computer is different from his own method of "measuring":

> Anybody can play '*oud*. But music doesn't come from the right hand; it comes from the left [the hand that controls the neck]. Feeling is the important thing. The right hand gives me the tone (*maqam*), but how do I embellish it (*kayfa unaqqishu*)? When a poet speaks from a window, he speaks words of poetry. When I go to build I sing in a different way. Each [art form] has its effect on the other. The artist, poet, *usta* need to be together in a *maqyal* (*qat* chew).

> Not all have talent. I'm illiterate; I understand my work through *wiratha* (inheritance). They're saying they are preserving *turath*, but they're treating it as if it's a frozen thing. Architects shouldn't get their degrees until they are affected by Sana'a (*yata'ttharu bi Sana'a*) – until they have experience (*tajruba*) in old Sana'a. The architect should be the conductor [he motions with his hands]. GOPHCY should know [the name of] the *usta* who built each house, and who the family was; they should go to the documents (*watha'iq*)...[93]

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observances, the relegation of God outside the scope of my analysis was curious, and in some cases, contentious" (p. 26).
[92] Interview, 7/20/05.
[93] Interview, 12/3/04.

Identifying the *usta* is important, explained an architect who was present, because each family of *usta*s had a particular signature or "stamp" (*basma*). "First I have to be good in the *turath* of my country," said the builder. "Then I can leave a new stamp (*basma jadida*)."

As noted above, the authority of builders is vested in knowledge that is carefully guarded by practitioners. Early in the Campaign, the *usta* who worked as master restorer was asked to rebuild the *qutb* or central column of a building through the technique of *fals*. The supervising engineer asked him if he would permit the conservation office staff to film the operation. The *usta* said yes – but then came on Friday and completed the work, when no one was around. When the engineer asked the *usta* for an explanation, the latter replied that *fals* was special knowledge that could not be shared with others.[94] Indeed *fals*, more than any other operation, appears to embody the mastery and prestige of the profession. *Fals* involves the removal of stones and the insertion of wood (or iron) supports or wedges, so that the areas below can be rebuilt (figure 28).[95] The courses above appear to be without support – and builders often use the word "hanging" (*mu'allaq*) to describe portions of a wall or building that seem to be almost magically suspended. *Fals* can be complex and dangerous, as in the above example when the *qutb* was rebuilt, since it supports the whole house. Some *fals* operations are remembered in builders' lore as superhuman feats – endowing the *usta* with a mythical prowess:

> *Fals* is normal for us. The most important thing is the support. We can take out the [lower section of the] *qutb*, and hang it (*na'allaqu*) from the second floor....My father could remove the lower four floors of a building and leave the *mafraj* hanging – suspended in the air![96]

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[94] This story was recounted to me by an the former Technical Director of EOPOCS (interview, 2/16/04). The *qutb*, which supports the central stair core, is considered the core of the house and is usually erected first (A. al-Hadrami, interview, 11/3/03).
[95] A builder told me that the insertion of horizontal wood members in stone walls served several purposes: it allowed movement during earthquakes; it stopped the progress of cracks toward the foundation; and also allowed for *fals* in the area below.
[96] Interview with an *usta*, 8/10/04.

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The master restorer of the Campaign was specialized in restoration or repair (*tarmimat*). "He was a surgeon," says his son. "He could take apart (*yanqudh*, 'destroy') a building and rebuild it from ground up, just as it was."

Builders and conservation

Everything about builders' knowledge – its nature and method of transmission, and the professional secrecy that shrouds it - makes it difficult to integrate into the process of conservation:

> What has perhaps kept traditional practices and the processes of production peripheral to conservationist concerns is precisely their nontangible and dynamic qualities that render them elusive to effective control and manipulation.[97]

Modern professions like architecture and conservation are established through the production of particular forms of knowledge, which in turn determines what, and who, will be included or excluded. Yet in Yemen, these professions have not yet attained a privileged position, perhaps because they have not fully secured the sponsorship of the political and economic elite. The builder's knowledge is not easily assimilated to a purely cognitive framework; at the same time, the inclusion of non-cognitive knowledge may threaten the still fragile identity of the new professions. This may explain why, despite affirmations of the important role of the "traditional builders" in conservation, they are not only excluded from discussions of policy and practice, but seem to be economically and professionally marginalized. This is disturbing and confusing to *ustas*: while they speak fondly of certain conservation professionals who respect their skills, they wonder why their status is not valued and

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[97] Marchand, "Process over Product", in *Managing Change*, p. 138.

rewarded - especially in public conservation projects that rely on general contractors. Noting the damage that is done to old buildings by materials like cement, an *usta* specializing in *qaddad*, a traditional waterproof plaster, drew the following analogy:

> Do you water a tree with petrol or water? If you keep watering it with petrol, it will dry up and burn. The *ustas* are the ones who know how to water. We know how to maintain the old city, just like our fathers did, yet we get no benefit from it. The benefit goes to the contractors, who have money but no experience.

He noted with irony that he was currently removing the same cement plaster he had been hired to apply in mosques in the 1970's.[98]

Since the beginning of conservation in Yemen, consultants have proposed various kinds of training courses or vocational programs for *usta*s. The goal of such courses would be to bolster or renew disappearing skills, and to sensitize builders to the special qualities of historic buildings. Some professionals now acknowledge that such attempts will not work – nor are they needed, since a functioning apprenticeship system persists in many areas. Moreover, proposals for training courses might be perceived by *usta*s as condescending – even, perhaps, if they are the ones who would manage the process.[99] Marchand suggests that worries about the disappearance of traditional building skills have been overstated, and may be disingenuous.[100] I would argue that the reality lies somewhere in the middle: the *ustas'*

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[98] Interview, 8/11/04. The Social Fund is sponsoring the restoration of small mosques in the old city, which involves undoing older "restorations" carried out by the Ministry of the Endowments.

[99] O. A-A al-Hallaj, personal conversation. Such is the intention behind the new Center for Mud Architecture inaugurated in January 2004 in the Hadhramaut, under the patronage of author Graham Greene. Several professionals with whom I spoke wonder why this conception of "training" was endorsed by GOPHCY– especially because, as we will see in the next chapter, local mud techniques and the *usta*s who specialize in them are flourishing in the area.

[100] Architects of new work, suggests Marchand, may resent the continuing authority of the *usta*, who change their plans in the field in accordance with the client's wishes. "Personally, I saw no proof of this apparent 'demise' [of the *usta*'s traditional trade], as there was ample building activity throughout the country as a whole and the city of Sana'a by so-called 'traditional builders' (*banna'un taqlidiyyun*), and many of these projects were being commandeered by accomplished *asatiyyah*

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trade and numbers have perhaps been more affected in the capital than elsewhere, as

traditional building methods have given way to concrete and other modern techniques. It is

certain, for example, that *ustas'* sons tend to seek work in other professions, especially in

Sana'a and other cities where such opportunities are more numerous. In this, material factors

play an important role. As we will see in the next chapter, in Shibam-Hadhramaut mud

remains the preferred material for much new work. As a result, *ustas* have retained their

status and authority – and "traditional" practices and techniques have continued to evolve.[101]

This strength has been used to advantage in an innovative project in Shibam, sponsored by

the German Development Agency (GTZ) and the SFD. Older experienced *ustas* are hired as

consultants or partnered with younger, less experienced *ustas*. As such, the project provides

support to the apprenticeship system, rather than attempting to replace it with a new form of

instruction.[102] But this kind of approach has been rare. During the Sana'a Campaign, an

usta known for his mastery of *tarmim* (restoration or repair) was eventually retained as a

consultant by the conservation office, but this position ended with the resignation of Abd al-

Rahman al-Haddad as director in 1995.[103] The draft national conservation law would have

allowed older ustas and master craftsmen to be hired as government consultants, for the

purpose of training new practitioners. But this provision was struck from the law because it

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[builders, plural of *usta*] assisted by teams of village laborers and apprentices" (*Minaret Building*, p. 37).

[101] Director of GOPHCY's regional office in Shibam-Hadhramaut, interview, 12/9/04. It appears that most projects conducted under UNESCO's Shibam campaign did not use local *ustas* as contractors: "Citizens as well as local stakeholders put severe blame on GOPHY Headquarters for ignoring systematically local skill and know-how for the restoration of official buildings. They criticize that (sic) contractors totally unfamiliar with mud brick procedures and techniques are hired outside the Valley by the means of tenders out of the reach of local building masters" (Eckert and al-Maqrami, "Social Assessment Report", p. 36).

[102] This project is discussed in the following chapter, pp. 358-362.

[103] According to his son, interview, 9/2/04.

conflicted with an age limitation for government employment.[104]

The building process, notes Marchand, has many aspects which cannot be conserved through training courses. It includes the social roles and status of builders; their technical knowledge as embodied in practice and performance; the transmission of expert knowledge; and their social and economic relations with suppliers and clients.[105] Unfortunately, these aspects of building process are rarely considered in conservation projects. Publically funded projects are required to use general contractors, who are qualified by their administrative abilities and financial resources rather than by their skill in building. The contractor represents an additional layer of management, but the extra cost is rationalized as insurance against risk.[106] *Ustas* generally cannot qualify as general contractors because they may not have bank accounts or money to put up as security. They also have difficulty with, or resist, competitive tendering, which involves certain procedures that are alien to traditional practice. For example, *ustas* are often unable to read drawings and specifications, which are the basis of quantity estimating; they are accustomed to charging by the day, rather than by the square meter.[107] Contractors are often required to hire *ustas* as subcontractors on conservation

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[104] According to GOPHCY's lawyer, who told me about this provision, the objection can and should easily be overcome: laws at the same level are allowed to conflict, as long as they do not conflict with the constitution (personal conversation, 4/24/04).

[105] T. Marchand, "Process over Product", in *Managing Change*, p. 139.

[106] According to the Director of the SFD's Cultural Heritage Unit, the main problem with competitive tendering is the fixed fee contract, which encourages contractors to overbid (related to Ron Lewcock on 2/20/04, personal conversation). But this problem is not unique to Yemen: contractors everywhere overbid fixed fee jobs to protect themselves against unforeseen conditions and expenses. In Sana'a and elsewhere in Yemen, inflated project costs are above all due to percentages claimed by both the Ministry of Finance and the implementing agency (like GOPHCY). Contractors know that these offices will skim substantial portions of project costs, and so they bid high; according to a former GOPHCY official, the Ministry of Finance can take as much as 60% of a project budget (interview, 8/9/04).

[107] According to Serjeant and Lewcock, who were writing in the early 1980's, there were two kinds of contracts: a fixed sum contract for a complete work (*'amal muqata'a*), and a contract for work by the day (*al-'amal bil yawmiyya*) ("The Houses of Sana'a", in *Sana'a*, p. 468). Under the fixed sum contract, builders usually agreed upon the work directly with the owner. Quantity estimating, in

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projects. But as the employee of a general contractor, the *usta* suffers not only financially, but in terms of creative autonomy and social prestige. The architect who managed the restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas, the first restoration project conducted under the auspices of the Campaign, said these problems were evident from the beginning:

> The *usta*s do all the work, bear most of the responsibility, yet they get a fraction of the contract sum. These huge sums should go to them. We have to encourage *usta*s, and their sons, or they will leave the profession.[108]

Some have suggested that public projects contract directly with specialized building trades: "that way we will preserve the *usta*," says one architect, "not only the product of his work." This sentiment is echoed by builders: "If they do not first preserve the craftsmen (*al-hirafiyyin*)," asks one *usta*, "how can they preserve the old city?"

During my discussions with builders, the idea of a builder's society (*jam'iyya*) occasionally came up – perhaps inspired by other local societies (NGO's) rather than a traditional builder's guild, which curiously never existed in Sana'a.[109] One builder formally proposed the creation of a builders' society to the Director of GOPHCY, presumably in the hope of obtaining official support, but more than a year later had no reply. The builder

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contrast, presumes that an architect or engineer produces drawings which a builder will execute. Not only may the builder be unable to read the drawings – especially since the design is not his own conception – but he may feel unable to accurately estimate the project (see above, p. 26).

[108] Interview, 10/30/05.

[109] While craft guilds played an important role in Sana'a there is no record of a builders' guild. An *usta* from a well-established family of builders in Sana'a told Marchand that to his knowledge, there had never been a guild (*niqaba*) of builders in the city. Marchand suggests several reasons for this. Many *usta*s and their crews live outside the city, and their work in construction is often seasonal (they balance it with agricultural responsibilities in their villages). Construction is dispersed over various sites in the city, and there is no centralized place like the *suq* where builders congregate (*Minaret Building*, p. 72). Most of the *usta*s I interviewed were from Sana'a and continue to reside there. Yet as Marchand notes, the nature of the building trade – which not only involves work on various sites, but a network of relationships with suppliers, craftsmen, and clients in diverse locations – may not lend itself easily to a guild structure. It should be recalled that the *usta*s themselves are not only skilled masons, but the organizers of the work – which explains the transition of many to the modern

argued that such a society would set standards for work in the old city and would be accountable for the work of its members; it would include a number of trades concerned with *turath*. A manager at the SFD noted that the existence of such a society would be helpful in many respects: it would, among other things, provide the local counterpart required in donor-funded projects.[110] While other *usta*s with whom I spoke liked the idea, one noted that control of such a society would be a stumbling block: alliances between several branches of his own family had ended in disputes and dissolution, because "everyone wanted to be in charge." One *usta* pointed out that GOPHCY would never accept the idea of a builders' society, since violations are a way for the agency to make money – not only, or even primarily, through fines, but rather through bribes and kickbacks.[111]

The deskilling of the craftsman and the lack of continuity from father to son, are, in Sultan Sallam's view, a "tragedy." This issue has not been addressed by conservation; moreover, with the advent of concrete and steel

> we have lost the special qualities (*khasa'is*) that each part of Yemen had before the revolution. These new materials also bring problems of climate adjustment. So you see, there is no conservation of the human being and his environment (*la yujad hifath al-insan wa bi'atu*).[112]

This brings us back to a point raised earlier, and which we will take up again in the following chapter: the tension between physical and social structures, or the question of *what* is to be conserved. In my talks with professionals, builders, and residents, I detected a certain dissonance: if conservation is aimed at preserving and affirming the *turath*, why does it end

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role of general contractor. Their interests differ from those of the unskilled and skilled labor they hire, like stone-cutters, carpenters, window-makers, plasterers, and so forth.

[110] Interview, 8/20/04.

[111] I heard and saw evidence of kickbacks, which appear to be institutionalized at various levels of bidding and contracting. They are often substantial: they may increase the cost of projects by 200% or more.

by destroying traditional structures? In its policy and methodology, conservation is in many

ways a *modernizing* phenomenon:

> GOPHCY, the Social Fund, Public Works, and other agencies all abide by new rules - they
> use competitive tenders rather than traditional mechanisms. So you see, even in conserving,
> you are destroying aspects of the traditional system.[113]

As we will see in the following chapter, the Social Fund for Development has begun

to address these issues on an experimental basis.[114] As cultural heritage began to take on

increasing importance as a program area, SFD managers realized that although *ustas* were

best qualified to work on historic buildings, they were disqualified by certain procedures and

guidelines required by donor agencies. SFD managers have quietly begun to develop ways

to facilitate the participation of *ustas* and to strengthen their autonomy. In villages and small

towns, a system called "community contracting" is used: local committees act as general

contractor and employ *ustas* directly; progress of work and contract payments are overseen

by SFD supervisors. In urban areas, however, procedures are complicated by bureaucratic

structures that make disbursement of funds more cumbersome and expensive.[115] Most SFD

projects in Sana'a - for example, the restoration and upgrading of urban gardens

(*maqashamas*) - are awarded to general contractors, who are required to employ qualified

ustas. But in a recent project that restored a series of house facades on the Wadi Sa'ila, the

SFD helped one *usta* qualify as a contractor by simplifying certain procedures and waiving

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[112] S. Sallam, interview, 3/2/04.

[113] Architect and veteran of the UNESCO campaign, interview, 11/4/04.

[114] These attempts to adapt procedures to the special requirements of cultural heritage projects have
been described to me by the Director of the Cultural Heritage Sector and by several projects
managers.

[115] This explanation, offered by an SFD employee, is a euphemism for what we might call "structural
corruption." As every donor and researcher quickly learns, each layer of bureaucracy involved in a
project requires a "cut" - and in urban areas there are more such layers.

the requirements of a security bond and guarantees.[116] Architects and managers also realize

the problems inherent in the use of construction drawings: not only is the *usta* often unable to

read them, but they can restrict his creativity, which derives from the engagement of the body

and the material. SFD project drawings are thus often left intentionally schematic, allowing

the *usta* to execute details which, as one manager notes, "he can do better anyway."

The marginalization of the builder is by no means unique to Yemen: rather, it derives

from conservation theory, and the perceived rupture between traditional and modern building

practice. The notion of "age value" requires the indefinite preservation of original material

and traces of age, which are the source of a monument's authenticity. Riegl argued that this

task must be entrusted to new kinds of experts:

> The care of monuments, until now entrusted essentially to creative artists, who have had to
> reestablish the originality and lost stylistic unity of monuments, in the future will be provided
> by historians, who will have to judge and evaluate their historical value as well as their traces
> of age, and the technicians, who will have to determine and implement the appropriate
> measures for the conservation of the monument and the traces of the old that are existing in it.
> There is a place for the artist as such only if he is at the same time an historian and a
> technician...[S]uch a change in the organization of the care of monuments will not dispossess
> the artist, as might be superficially thought, but rather will liberate and greatly enlarge the
> field of his activity.[117]

Modern conservation is conceived not as a creative art, but rather as a science of the past: as

an historical document, a building must be restored according to concrete evidence rather

than conjecture or interpretation. Modern interventions and rebuilding are thus strongly

discouraged; where new work is required, it must be clearly distinguished from the old.

Like residents, officials, and architects, builders sometimes use the term "historic"

(*ta'rikhi*): one builder describes his work on old structures as an "historical treatment" or

"cure" (*'ilaj ta'rikhi*). They also occasionally use the term "traditional" – *taqlidi* – which

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[116] For a discussion of this project, see chapter six, pp. 365-370.

derives from the root *q-l-d*, "to imitate." While these terms appear to echo conservation discourse, builders use them to describe a process that is fluid and interpretive, rather than documentary. The Venice Charter's strictures against intervention have little meaning for builders: rebuilding, for example, must seem natural to them, since they continue to practice the old techniques. Nor would it occur to them to distinguish their work from the old. As we have seen, the continuity of building techniques makes it difficult, if not impossible, to date Sana'ani houses by means of style and details. This continuity has carried into the "modern" practice of conservaton: indeed, builders pride themselves in the fact that their often substantial interventions cannot be distinguished from the original building fabric. Interestingly, several builders specializing in *turath* seem to have embraced the idea of reusing original materials – not for economy's sake, but rather in interest of what conservationists would call historical "authenticity." The reuse of original materials renders the joints between and old virtually invisible – thoroughly disguising builders' interventions.[118]

"I understand my work through *wiratha* (inheritance)," said the builder quoted above. The concept of *wiratha* is easily assimilated to *turath*, which as we have seen, derives from the same root (*w-r-th*). While affirming the superiority of their forebears' work, *ustas* assume their position as heirs to their legacy. They maintain that their work is faithful to the "original" - even as they make changes that will improve the building, or adapt it to present conditions. On one occasion, a builder proudly showed me photographs of a house facade that he had rebuilt "exactly as it was", reusing the original materials. Yet upon further discussion, it became clear that he had in fact made significant changes to the building:

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[117] "Progetto", in S. Scarrocchia, ed., *Alois Riegl*, p. 212 (translation mine).

> The lower level was too short - like an old man hunched over - so I made it taller. The window sills also needed to be slightly higher, because the facade is *qibli* (north-facing); when the sill is higher, a child sleeping next to it will stay warm.

The apparent paradox dissolves when we realize that the *usta*'s statements are based on a different view of history – one that is embodied not in the object, but in practices that he has inherited and continue to perform in the present. Steven Caton had a similar experience studying oral poetry in the Khawlan, a tribal region to the east of Sana'a. Although the ideology of history is extremely important to tribesmen, he was unable to elicit the recitation of ancient works.

> Midway in my fieldwork it dawned on me that I had not been thinking about this tradition in the right terms. I had been assuming that it is the text per se that is important to remember, the verbal object we associate with printed poetry, when in fact it is either the *process of composition* that is to be remembered...or *the finished product of that process as it relates to a historically remembered situation*.[119]

In building practice in Yemen, as in other art forms, the past is validated by its continuing relevance in the present.[120] Builders may describe their work as imitating the past, but in fact it is creative and interpretive - in effect, improving on the past. This ideological evocation of the past is not so different from modern conservation, which insists on faithfulness to an original model. Theorists and practitioners have acknowledged that conservation involves change, material as well as social. But procedures and policies are

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[118] When I visited builders' projects, they clearly enjoyed my difficulty in distinguishing the location and scope of their interventions.

[119] S. Caton, *"Peaks of Yemen I Summon": Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p. 307, fn. 3 (the emphasis is Caton's). My own experience studying with the celebrated Egyptian dancer, Farida Fahmy, echoed Caton's experience. Fahmy replied with impatience to my inquiry about the historical transformations of a certain step, saying: "Don't worry about where it comes from or what it was. The important thing is how we do it, what we do with it, now." On another occasion she described the "rules" of Egyptian dance – which sensitized me to a similar phenomenon among Yemeni builders and architects: "You can improvise, but always within the framework of the Egyptian aesthetic" (June 2004 and June 2005, Cairo). Compare this to statements by a builder and an architect, pp. 257-8.

[120] S. Caton, *Peaks of Yemen I Summon*, pp. 35-6.

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generally aimed at masking or minimizing the apparent effects of change. While the discourse is internally consistent, it is not that different from the use of the term "tradition" in other societies and eras: the ideological usefulness of the term appears to lie in its ability to mask change. The language of conservation is thus familiar to builders, and easily adopted to express their own attitudes toward the past: like tradition, conservation involves change, but achieves its force through the rhetoric of the unchanging.

Chapter 6

The evolution of local practice

In 1993, at an international symposium on the old city of Sana'a, two young Yemeni architects presented a paper that reflected and exacerbated the current crisis at the conservation office. At issue was control of the decision-making process, especially regarding the formulation of conservation policies.[1] In their paper the architects compared two recent projects: the restoration of Beit Sari', part of a larger project by Quaroni Bonifica to conserve a "model neighborhood"; and the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura, a caravansaray at the edge of the *suq*, financed by the government of Germany. For the authors, the projects reflected two different models for conservation in Yemen, based on different attitudes toward local architecture and craftsmanship.

The architects felt that the Italian intervention was heavy-handed, and even at the time some foreign experts agreed.[2] Quaroni Bonifica's preparatory studies had asserted that traditional building methods should be encouraged and improved according to sound building standards; consolidation measures "must support the logic of traditional construction practice."[3] Yet these measures should also

> compensate for deficiencies in traditional building and technical methods, to restore or strengthen the function of the single structural components, but always maintaining the structural and formal 'character'. Appropriately developed and coordinated, these solutions will serve to create within the structures to be preserved a truly structural 'skeleton', providing old buildings with new and greater capabilities to resist stresses. The solutions suggested are compatible with professional capabilities of the local ustad who will be called

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[1] See above, chapter three, pp. 180-3.

[2] For example, Lewcock (personal conversation, 9/4/05).

[3] Studio Quaroni S. r. l. and Bonifica S.p.A., Proposal Phase, volume IIIA, "The Urban Texture", p. IIIi; and "Action Proposal: Implementation of a Conservation Reinstatement Measure for a Sample Nucleus of the Historical Centre of Sana'a and the Establishment of a Restoration Workshop/School," January 1986, p. 27.

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upon to learn and employ the new techniques and to pass these on to the young recruits so that local building traditions will be perpetuated.[4]

Beit Sari' was the test case for this strategy: foundations, floors, and walls were strengthened with concrete injections, steel reinforcing, and wire mesh, in effect creating a rigid shell inside the old structure. Two decades later, it is difficult to understand why the Quaroni Bonifica team took this approach - especially since other consultants were affirming the soundness of local building practice.[5] An Italian architect who worked on the project explained:

> In those days there was a fascination with restoration, which was preferred over maintenance. The Italian attitude was, 'Let's save these same stones'; an *usta* would have said, 'Let's rebuild'.[6]

But in the case of Beit Sari', rebuilding was hardly necessary. Quaroni Bonifica's conditions assessment found the house to be in an "initial state of degradation,"[7] but professionals recall that the building was in reasonably good condition. The cracks that could be found in this and other structures were most likely due to water-laden soil - a direct result of the recent introduction of piped water.[8]

For the authors of the paper, the new structural skeleton within Beit Sari' was "a strange object in a traditional body." They contrasted this approach to the restoration of

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[4] Proposal Phase, IIIA, "The Urban Texture", item 18, 1981. The "deficiencies" of local building practice are enumerated in the preceding sections of this document, and are illustrated in drawings submitted as part of the "Implementation Phase" (1989-90), to be discussed below.

[5] In addition to the German team at Samsarat al-Mansura, whose views are discussed below, Jacques Heymann, Professor of Civil Engineering at Cambridge University, reviewed building techniques in both Sana'a and Shibam in the ealy 1980's at the request of Ron Lewcock. According to Lewcock, Heymann found traditional building satisfactory in terms of both materials and construction methods. To date I have been unable to locate Heymann's reports.

[6] Interview, 7/24/04.

[7] "Reinstatement Plan" for Mu'adh Quarter, drawing A4; Quaroni Bonifica, Implementation Phase, 1990.

[8] Architects and builders I interviewed agree that the vast majority of structural problems can be attributed to water-laden soil, a condition for which the buildings were not designed. In many cases, the problem has been compounded by lack of maintenance.

Samsarat al-Mansura which, they believed, was a more appropriate model for Yemen. The

project relied on traditional materials and techniques – a principle which, they note, is

reiterated in all the international charters. In a publication released after the completion of

the project, one of the German conservators described the approach:

> Execution of the work...was exclusively in the hands of Yemeni craftsmen, with the Yemen
> Construction and Development Company as the general contractor. In view of the
> extraordinary significance of Samsarat al-Mansura as evidence of craft traditions that are still
> alive today, special value was placed on the use of traditional materials and on skilled
> craftsmanlike practices, as well as on the preservation and repair of the existing building
> fabric...Modern materials were used only in critical structural areas, for the renovation of the
> foundation with concrete...and for mechanical installations.[9]

Traditional materials were not only desirable, but were compatible with the building's

structural characteristics. Moreover, the use of local materials and techniques would keep

costs low and provide a model of restoration that could be replicated.[10] One of the authors

of the 1993 paper notes that local techniques created the uniqueness of Yemeni heritage

(*turath*), which is celebrated by UNESCO. "Why should we belittle our own experience and

knowledge, and bring in outside experts – when we have techniques that are hundreds of

years old?"[11]

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[9] M. Petzet, "The Restoration of Samsarat al-Manurah", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *Sana'a: the Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansurah*, Munich: Bayerisches Landesamt fur Denkmalplege, 1995, p. 12.

[10] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *Sana'a: the Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansurah*, p. 56.

[11] Interview, 12/9/04. This architect had worked as EOPOCS project manager on the restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas, to be discussed below. The other author of the paper, also an architect, was project manager for Samsarat al-Mansura; he discussed the presentation with me on 11/7/04 and 11/24/04.

The paper was presented at a "Sheraton conference" - probably the Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Conservation of the Old City of Sana'a, Yemen, held at the Sheraton Hotel, Sana'a, 15-19 December, 1991. It is not included in the conference proceedings on file at CATS or in the files of UNESCO's Arab Desk Officer. Neither architect could locate the paper in their files. The paper caused such controversy, they recall, that it must have been struck from the proceedings. Another professional recalls that the symposium was very heated; during his own presentation, the Director of the conservation office tried to have him removed from the proceedings, but was stopped by Lewcock.

In the years leading up to and following the announcement of the UNESCO

Campaign, local architects and engineers worked alongside consultants from a variety of

countries. They often found the experience confusing. In contrast to the singular and

monolithic "international" approach implied by the charters, foreign consultants often had

different attitudes and approaches to conservation, depending on their country of origin and

their training. The vast majority of these consultants were from Europe, or trained in

Europe.[12] Conservation was a relatively young profession there, and its precepts were, and

are, everywhere in flux; in the words of one consultant, "There are as many approaches to

conservation as there are conservators." While there are generally accepted principles,

interventions are designed according to the specific conditions of each case, and thus rely on

the judgment of a highly skilled conservator.[13] The experience was also confusing because,

as we have seen, the treatment of historic cities and "vernacular" fabric has not been clearly

distinguished from the treatment of monuments. Indeed, the designation of a World Heritage

site imposes conservation standards that were designed for monuments. Failure to comply

with these standards may result in the removal of a site from the World Heritage List – as

implied in UNESCO's 2001 assessment of conditions in old Sana'a.[14]

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[12] Lewcock is Australian, but educated at Cambridge. There were some exceptions. Yoshida was sent to Sana'a by the government of Japan. The North Koreans who played such an influential role in design and production were not, however, trained in conservation. One of the few Arab professionals working in Yemen is Selma al-Radi, an Iraqi trained as an archeologist, although she too was educated in the UK; over the years she has exerted considerable influence on conservation policy. More recently, 'Alaa' al-Habashi of Egypt was commissioned by the Social Fund to oversee the restoration of the Ashrafiyya Mosque in Ta'izz; Palestinian architect 'Issam 'Awwad has been hired selected to oversee the restoration of the Great Mosque of Sana'a. Hadi Saliba, a Lebanese architect, until recently served as the UNDP representative for cultural projects, interfacing with UNESCO.

[13] R. Lewcock, personal conversation.

[14] The text reads as follows: " Old City of Sana'a (Yemen): III.237 The Secretariat reported on the very worrying state of conservation of the site, which despite the positive achievements of the 1986 International Safeguarding Campaign for the Old City of Sana'a, is presently affected by an uncontrolled urban development, in the absence of an adequate protective measure. III.238 The historical market area (Souk), which serves now a much larger community than it used to only ten

Many foreign professionals are keenly aware of the problems inherent in cultural heritage management, although they rarely express these doubts in public forums.[15] In their role as international consultants, most take the view that there is a clear, agreed-upon body of knowledge and practice that can be taught to professionals in other parts of the world. In principle they acknowledge that it must be adapted to local conditions, according to the current approach of "cultural relativism." But in practice few foreign consultants who come to Sana'a on short-term missions or for conferences seem interested in working with local professionals, or learning about their experience. According to a consultant from South America who has participated in many international missions,

> [most] Western consultants treat their colleagues in the Middle East and other parts of the world as if they were idiots. That's what happens when you think what you're doing is objective science.[16]

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years ago, is spreading outside its traditional borders toward the adjacent residential areas, with significant impact on the lower levels' structure of these ancient buildings. Numerous new constructions are also being built within the walls of the Old City, using modern structures and materials. These constructions include several high-rise constructions, the height of which is in excess by several stories, of the level of other parts of the old city. On the other hand, most traditional houses are not presently maintained by the present inhabitants, mainly tenants who recently moved into the city from the villages, due to lack of financial means. III.239 The Bureau encouraged the Yemeni authorities to submit a request for International Assistance to the Committee, to enable the preparation of a comprehensive Safeguarding Plan for the Old City of Sana'a, in close consultation with the World Heritage Center. The Bureau, furthermore, invites the Yemeni authorities to consider the opportunity to take urgent measures in order to halt new constructions, modern additions or alterations within the traditional urban fabric of the Old City, until such a Safeguarding Plan has been prepared and adopted (Report of the Rapporteur 7-8 December 2001, World Heritage Committee, Helsinki, Finland 11-16 Dec. 2001, 25th Session, http://whc.unesco.org/archive/repburext01.pdf)

[15] A notable exception was the 2001 ICOMOS conference on conservation and sustainability, held at the University of Pennsylvania. Most of the presenters were managers working on project sites in developing countries. In contrast to the presentations of higher level bureaucrats at such conferences, these presentations were probing and insightful; see the published proceedings: *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Built Environment*, proceedings of the 4th Annual US/ICOMOS Symposium, Philadelphia, April 2001, Los Angeles: the Getty Conservation Institute.

[16] Personal conversation, 6/4/04. This exchange was witnessed and confirmed by a Lebanese professional, who said, "It's true – and being from the region, it disturbs me."

There are, of course, exceptions. Under the current UNESCO/Italian/SFD project for an inventory of old Sana'a, two young architects were sent on a number of short-term missions to train CATS staff; they worked closely and sympathetically with the group, despite a very tight schedule. The few Europeans who come on longer term missions, or like Lewcock, who have come to Yemen many times and demonstrated a commitment to the country, are regarded in a different light. A

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Foreign consultants usually interact with officials, who are themselves removed from the realities of the field. Working at this level, they are continually frustrated by the inefficacy of institutional structures, which – as local professionals themselves complain - are unable to document past work, manage ongoing efforts, and plan for the future.

Were these foreigners to probe more deeply, they would find a more interesting and complex reality. Many local professionals have had more than two decades of experience in decision-making positions and in the field, working alongside foreign consultants and builders and interacting with residents. In the early years there seems to have been much dynamism and enthusiasm, which has sadly been blunted by the weight of an inefficient and at times authoritarian bureaucracy. But local professionals continue to be reflective and critical: they have assimilated aspects of international practice, evaluating them relative to the local context. Like builders, they may affirm aspects of conservation discourse while making decisions that in fact contravene it. A local approach – or approaches – to conservation can be discerned in the design and management of projects; it can also be gleaned from formal and informal discussions, where fundamental issues are raised. What, in fact, is conservation? Why do we conserve? For whom do we conserve, and how? How do we reconcile development and conservation – especially when the latter is a low priority for policymakers? What is the value of conservation for a poor country, where the basics like food and education are beyond the reach of so many, and where democracy remains elusive? Is it simply a means to attract tourists, whose numbers continue to be limited? Is "World Heritage" a means to validate the local, or simply a strategy of political and cultural domination?

German architect who has worked at CATS for many years as part of a GTZ cooperation agreement, for example, has a close relationship with local professionals and staff.

> The implications of World Heritage are mainly legal ones. It permits external interference – it gives foreigners the same kind of domination (*imtilak*) they had in Egypt.[17]

Yet on other occasions, as we will see, local professionals invoke the authority of World Heritage Convention against what they see as misguided undertakings by their own leadership.

This chapter will trace the evolution of local practice through a series of conservation projects, which represent only a small portion of the work conducted over the last two decades. These projects were selected because they focus on components of the "living historic city" – the *suq*, the residential fabric, and other "minor" architecture – and because they demonstrate various types of interaction between professionals, foreign consultants, builders, and residents. While these projects are colored by the particular dynamics of Sana'a, they highlight issues that are at stake in conservation in other parts of the world: for example, the tension between the "living" on the "historic", and the contradiction between conserving a city for its inhabitants, and financing costly restorations.

The first part of the chapter looks at several projects conducted under the auspices of the UNESCO Campaign, which were cited by professionals as formative in the development of their thinking and practice. The restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas (1988-9) was the first restoration project conducted under the Campaign. Sponsored by the government of Norway, the work was largely in the hands of local professionals, who learned about conservation on site and debated appropriate treatments. While the restoration is generally seen as a successful project, the institution it was to house - a National Center for the Revival of Yemeni Handicrafts – is widely regarded as a failure. I will then discuss the rehabilitation of a "model neighborhood" by Quaroni Bonifica (1989-92), which included the

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[17] Conservation professional, Sana'a, personal conversation, 7/8/05.

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restoration of Beit Sari'. Despite the careful and thoughtful analysis of Quaroni Bonifica's

early studies, the project was conceived according to a vision that seems to have had little to

do with local realities; the work was executed and supervised largely by foreigners.

The second part of the chapter will look at a number of recent projects undertaken by

the Social Fund for Development in cooperation with GOPHCY, in the modest renaissance in

conservation activities that occurred with the resumption of donor interest in the late 1990's

and early 2000's. While still following a plan of action drafted by UNESCO and EOPOCS

in the 1980's, these projects demonstrate a unique synthesis of international and local ideas

and practices. The first of these projects address the long-standing issue of house

maintenance and restoration. An innovative project in Shibam-Hadhramaut, also a World

Heritage site, will be discussed by way of introduction. Co-sponsored by the SFD an the

GTZ (Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit, the German Development Agency) it is

unique in Yemen because it focuses on local builders as agents of conservation. I will

compare this project to a more modest effort in Sana'a to restore a series of house facades on

the banks of the Wadi Sa'ila (2003), an area that is valued for its appeal to tourists. I will

then compare this small and carefully designed project to the mass white-washing project

undertaken by the Ministry of Culture, in preparation for Sana'a's year as Cultural Capital of

the Arab World (2004). The concluding section of this chapter will describe the

rehabilitation of the *marna'* or well enclosure of Talha (2002-4) which, I believe, clearly

illustrates the independent direction of conservation in Sana'a.

The restoration of two *samsaras*

The first restoration projects undertaken under the UNESCO Campaign were commercial buildings called *samsaras* (Arabic pl. *samasir*), often called caravansarays in English and European languages.[18] Most of the existing *samsaras* are located around the edge of the central *suq*, Suq al-Milh, and probably date from the 17th and 18th centuries.[19] Most *samsaras* are *waqf*, endowed for the benefit of a mosque or other charitable structure, but Samsarat al-Mansura is property of the state (*amlak al-dawla*).[20] The *Qanun Sana'a*, a legal document that outlines regulations of the *suq*, says that *samsaras* were used as warehouses. But they probably also functioned as inns, with merchants sleeping on the upper floors and the ground floor reserved for goods and animals.[21] Most *samsaras* were links between the wholesale and retail trades, but some also served regulatory purposes, like the weighing of merchandise and the collection of duties; one was even used as a bank.[22] They were usually

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[18] *Samsara* derives from the quadriliteral verb *s-m-s-r*, which means "to act as a broker or middleman". It may be a later word, since in the 9th century Ibn Rustah uses the term *khan* (a Persian word that is commonly used in Arabic); Lewcock notes that *khan* was sometimes used in the 20th century ("The Buildings of the Suq", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 277). The following comments on the history of the *samsara* are taken from this article, pp. 277-290.

[19] According to Nancy Um, there seems to have been a surge in the building of *samsaras* with the prosperity that accompanied the coffee trade; she believes that the majority date from the first Ottoman occupation and later. In her forthcoming monograph on the port city of Mocha (University of Washington Press, 2007) she writes: "The exact date for Samsarat al-Nahhas is unknown, but Lewcock surmises that it is later than Samsarat al-Majja, which was built in the seventeenth century and is said to be linked to the endowment of the Ahmad b. al-Qasim Mosque in al-Rawda" (personal communication, 1/23/04 and 1/24/04). Lewcock notes that several *samsaras* in Suq al-'Inab were built as *waqf* for the al-Rawdha Mosque, endowed by Ahmad, son of Imam al-Mansur (d. 1597; in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., pp. 277-8).

[20] "Conclusions on the Restoration and Refunctioning of Samsarat al-Mansuriyya", EOPOCS proposal to the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, 18 August 1988, p. 2.

[21] R. Lewcock, "The Buildings of the Suq", p. 278; at the time he was writing, some of the smaller *samsaras* were still used as stables and inns (p. 284). The last edition of *Qanun Sana'a* had appeared by 1836 (N. Lowick, "The Mint of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 309).

[22] The *samsara* of Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim (17th c.) was known as *Dar al-Mal*, that is, as a "bank": a service charge was paid to the *amin* (official) on money deposited there (R. Lewcock, "The Buildings of the Suq", p. 278). Other *samsaras* with regulatory functions were Samsarat al-

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rented to an individual who managed the property (*samsari*), and who rented rooms to other

merchants for the storage of goods or as retail space.[23] While some *samsara*s are simple,

one- or two-story structures organized around a courtyard, the most stately have four or more

floors organized around covered, central halls. The latter have imposing facades, echoing

certain elements of domestic architecture (figures 29, 30).[24] Most rooms are accessed from

within, but some *samsara*s – like al-Mansura - had some shops that opened onto the street,

and were read as part of the *suq*.

The restoration of selected buildings was to be carried out in a second phase of the

Campaign, following infrastructure work. But these projects were in the works well before

infrastructure was complete – because donor nations were anxious to sponsor projects, and

EOPOCS was eager to begin them.[25] Drawings of various *samsara*s had been executed by

Serjeant and Lewcock's team and by Quaroni Bonifica, and from the mid-1980's detailed

studies of several *samsara*s were carried out by EOPOCS staff and foreign consultants. The

Campaign's promotional brochure, published in 1989, outlined plans for many of the twenty-

six documented *samsara*s, as well as other market structures. *Samsara*s were seen as ideal

buildings for restoration and reuse: they were public buildings, so there was no problem of

ownership; unlike religious buildings, they could accommodate a variety of new uses. Most

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Ghumruq (the customs *samsara*; it now houses a raisin market) and Samsarat al-Mizan (*samsara* of the scale).

[23] Like other service-oriented trades, that of the *samsari* is considered a dishonorable profession, practiced by *muzayyin* class (Lewcock, "The Buildings of the Suq", p. 278).

[24] W. Koenigs, "Samsarat al-Mansurah – Description of a Historic Building", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *Sana'a: the Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansurah*, Munich: Bayerisches Landesamt fur Denkmalplege, 1995, p. 33. A few *samsara*s have a double courtyard scheme, such as Samsarat al-Majjah, next to Samsarat al-Mansura.

[25] See chapter three, pp. 171-2.

importantly, the *samsaras* were seen as key in the revitalization of the *suq*[26] – and their

programming was very much influenced by the wider vision of the *suq*.

Virtually all foreign consultants saw the *suq* as the economic backbone of the old

city, and hence a vital part of the conservation effort. When these studies were conducted in

the late 1970's and early1980's, the *suq* was already showing evidence of decline: much of

the central area, Suq al-Milh, was closed, and importers were beginning to supplant artisanal

businesses.[27] The process had in fact started long ago, with the British presence in Aden.[28]

But it had accelerated since the revolution, and especially with the demand for consumer

goods that accompanied remittance monies. Commerce in the old city was hurt by

competition from new shopping areas, and by conditions in the *suq* itself - unpaved streets,

lack of infrastructure, and traffic congestion.[29] The *samsaras* had been marginalized along

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[26] Former EOPOCS official, interview, September 2004. In his description of the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura, B. Lane writes: "The objective of restoring the 'samsara' is to revitalize the suq (market) of the Old City by strengthening the economic situation of the people of the city, promoting and supporting handicrafts, artists, and artisans" (*Sana'a. Pilot Restoration Projects*, p. 26).

[27] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 9/6/04. See also F. Mermier's works on the Sana'a *suq*, especially *Le Sheikh de la Nuit, Sanaa: organization des souks et société citadine*, Arles: Actes Suds, 1997; and "Des Artisans face aux Importateurs ou l'Ange Maudit du Souk," *Peuples mediterranéeans*, no. 46, janvier-mars, 1989, pp. 155-164.

[28] "The British saw Aden as a *suq*; they sold goods were sold goods cheaply there. Local products could not compete... southern crafts died before the northern ones" (M. Jazim, researcher at CEFAS and one of the authors of the crafts survey conducted with UNDP funding, interview, July 2004). He notes that iron, for example, used to be obtained locally, from the mountains.

[29] R. Lewcock, Report no. 3, 1986, p. 6 and interviews, November 2003; Studio Quaroni S.r.1./Bonifica S.p.A, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center," Proposal Phase, 1983, volume IV.

Some authors and informants cite the mass emigration of Jews in 1948 as the beginning of the decline of handicrafts, especially silverwork. The dominant presence of the Jews in the *suq* of Sana'a is indisputable, but the impact of their emigration has still not been fully assessed – in part due to cultural politics. The craft production of Yemeni Jews received international attention at an exhibit at the Israel Museum; the catalogue is used as a reference work by some merchants in the Sana'a *suq* (E. Muchawsky-Schnapper, *The Yemenites: Two Thousand Years of Jewish Culture*, Jerusalem: the Israel Museum, 2000). Regarding this book, one Yemeni professional commented: "Who will do this for us?" He and others emphasize that Jewish crafts must be understood as part of the wider Yemeni heritage: the crafts were not, in many cases, uniquely Jewish, and were produced for both the Muslim and Jewish communities. This argument was expressed to me in private conversations, and also in a working group of the May 2005 conference on Cultural Heritage Inventory.

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with old production networks; many new transportation routes and facilities – which

accommodated the most profitable commerce - bypassed the old city entirely.[30] Yet many

samsaras remained in use, with merchants renting space as they had in the past.

While consultants emphasized the revitalization of the *suq*, their approaches varied –

suggesting different conceptions of the market and its role in the wider city. The Quaroni

Bonifica studies, which devoted an entire volume to the *suq*, argued for its modernization.

They saw the one-story shops as dilapidated and unsuited for modern commerce, in terms of

space, access, and communications. The team proposed to replace the shops with a modular

system of commercial units, with parking below grade; this modern project would tie

together restored *samsaras*, gardens, and other elements to retain the *suq*'s historic "image".

Economic activities in the new *suq* should be as numerous and diverse as possible.[31] Other

consultants and most Yemeni policymakers saw the destruction and rebuilding of the *suq* as a

radical and unacceptable solution. They may have also objected to a modern role for the *suq*,

which brings with it alien building types and materials, and new functions that undermine

social and economic relations.[32] Lewcock, for example, saw the old city as a regional

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[30] G. Barbato, "The Methodological Approach for the Restoration of the Samsarah al-Bowani and Samsarah al-Majjah", unpublished paper, Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Conservation of the Old City of Sana'a, Yemen, held at the Sheraton Hotel, Sana'a, 15-19 December, 1991.

[31] Quaroni Bonifica, "Safeguarding the Historical Center of Sana'a", PIV, Introduction, 1.1-16 and 3.3. For the site plan and axonometric of the proposed intervention, see C. La Rocca, "Studio per la salvaguardia del centro storico di Sana'a", pp. 56-7.

[32] As evident, for example, in Dr. 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani's comment that the old city should not be made into a modern city (1982; see above, chapter three, p. 153). While the old city is often portrayed as an island in the midst of modern development, various consultants have noted that it is in fact at the confluence of important arteries and networks: new functions infiltrate the old city, bringing with them alien typologies and construction techniques (D. Pini, interview, September 2004; see also B. M. Nardella, "Mission Report", prepared for UNESCO/Culture, Tangible Heritage Department, January 2004, carried out under Pini's supervision). For the economic role of the old city, see H. Eckert, "The Chief Urban Functions of the Old City of San'a Today", Technical Report, Paris: UNDP, 1992. According to these consultants, the only solution was to reinforce the edges of the old city, both functionally and physically - for example, through the reconstruction of the wall. The

market, specialized in traditional goods and serving a native clientele; the latter included both

rural folk and Westernized Sana'anis who came to the *suq* for certain specialized products.

He recommended conservation of the physical fabric of the *suq* and its institutional structure,

noting that "[t]he government is in favor of trying to preserve the market as it is to conserve

the way of life that it contains and that surrounds it."[33] Lewcock's view was important in

the development of the Campaign strategy, which also envisoned the development of

"compatible" new activities as a means to revitalize the *suq*.[34] For Lewcock and other

foreigners, new activities should be aimed at a local market; they repeatedly urged the

government to limit tourist activity in the old city. But for policymakers and local

professionals, tourists were the natural market for these new activities: there was little

hesitancy, for example, to transform old houses into hotels.[35] Policymakers saw tourist

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struggle over edges or boundaries, which are at once conceptual and physical, is a recurrent theme in the conservation of the old city, as in the restoration of the urban gardens; we will see other examples below.

[33] R. Lewcock, introduction to B. Lane, *Sana'a. Pilot Restoration Projects*, p. 9. He describes the role of the *suq* as follows: "30. The essential strength of the suq in the old city seems to lie in its role as regional market to a large hinterland of traditionally oriented farmers and villagers. Many products are unique to the suq. It is to capitalize on this potential, as well as on its role in the city itself, that action needs to be taken. 31. It is felt by a number of authorities that judicious help for certain trades and crafts from the Government would rapidly revive the prosperity of the suq. 32. Principles which might guide the revival of the suq are: i) the traditional fabric needs to be renewed. If the old structure is renewed, this will control the revival of commerce into the traditional social pattern..." (UNESCO mission report no. 3, 1985, pp. 6-7).

[34] One of the Campaign's objectives was "to reinforce and maintain the traditional economic activities of the old city and to develop compatible new activities to ensure a viable economic and commercial base for life in Sana'a" ("Campaign Strategy and Action Plan", 1988-97, August 1988).

[35] Most UNESCO consultants and some EOPOCS staff opposed the installation of tourist hotels in restored houses in the old city; they also asked embassies to discourage foreign nationals from living there (R. Lewcock, interviews, November 2003). The Third International Working Group stressed that the utmost care should be taken "to preserve communal structure of the old city... therefore conversion of houses into hotels should be done only after careful study..." (Recommendations of meetings held 24-26 January, 1989). But former Prime Minister 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd el-Ghani, who chaired the Executive Committee, recalls that the members generally supported the conversion of houses hotels (interview, November 2004).

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revenues as essential: they would help to persuade residents to accept the conservation effort, and would help finance the numerous and costly restorations envisioned by the Campaign.

These different attitudes can be seen in strategies for the *samsaras*. In his mission reports to UNESCO, Lewcock had observed that these buildings were in need of extensive conservation work, but were not productive enough to pay for themselves; he envisioned their reuse for the local wholesale trade.[36] But Yemeni policymakers and professionals saw the buildings as ideally suited for tourist activities, and this approach was endorsed in the revised campaign strategy.[37] The Campaign's promotional brochure, co-published by UNESCO and the UNDP, outlined new uses for *samsaras* that included museums, cultural facilities, and the production and exhibition of handicrafts. Some projects would have benefited crafts in "decline", like smithing and carpentry, through "soft" upgrading - street paving, the provision of water and utilities, roof repairs, and so forth. But even these projects would have reorganized and reoriented production by establishing "pilot" craft centers, which would revive traditional products and develop new ones.[38]

Most professionals agree that tourism was the main impetus behind the revival of handicrafts and other activities, and to some extent determined project priorities and locations.[39] Their feelings about this were, and continue to be, mixed. They realized that

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[36] Mission report, 9-16 April, 1982, item 66; and report no. 3, 1985.

[37] The twenty projects developed under the 1988-1997 Action Plan included "six first-class caravanserais which were to be adapted as tourist amenities containing information centres, cafeterias and other facilities or devoted to handicraft training"; as well as improvement and conservation projects for traditional markets, the Great Mosque, and service buildings like wells, bathhouses, etc. ("Draft Terminal Report/Restricted, UNDP/YEM/006", pp. 4-5).

[38] See projects for the carpenters' *suq*, the blacksmiths' *suq*, and three small caravansarays, in B. Lane, *Sana'a: Pilot Restoration Projects*, pp. 66-8. For other projected uses for *samsaras*, see p. 310, fn. 48.

[39] The early projects, in particular, were selected for their appeal and visibility to tourists. The first paving project was along a major tourist route (see above, chapter three, p. 168). Samsarat al-Nahhas was chosen to house the National Handicraft Center in part because of its location on the main road from Bab al-Yaman, also a major tourist route (see below).

most of the functions envisioned for the *samsara*s would have little appeal to the community, but they would promote employment, traditional skills, and the development of new skills and products. These products could be tailored to new markets, for example, interior furnishings.[40] For some, the new activities were also a way to introduce new attitudes: there was a need not only for economic revival, but for "cultural revival."[41] But the use of a *samsara* or other endowed building, I was told, must be compatible with the intentions of the patron – the same criterion that was invoked by residents of the old city in the dispute over Bustan al-Amri.[42]

In the 1970's and 1980's, many agencies were questioning the efficacy of tourism as a development strategy.[43] Foreign consultants and donors tended to emphasize "community development" over tourist revenues. In the development world "microenterprises" were receiving new attention, but in many cases their production was oriented to an elite market interested in hand-made goods. The creation of new products and markets was seen as the only way local crafts could survive in an industrial and increasingly globalized economy.[44]

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[40] "The National Center for Handicrafts was not intended only to revive handicrafts, but to develop them," said an architect who briefly directed the Center. "Handicrafts as they were traditionally produced would not be able to survive; we could put these skills and materials to new and creative uses." New products based on old models and made with traditional materials – lighting, furnishings, fabrics, woodwork – could be used by architects in new and conserved structures (interview, November 2004).

[41] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 9/6/04. See also above, chapter three, p. 178.

[42] See above, chapter four, pp. 206-7. The intentions of the patron are, of course, subject to interpretation. For the architect who oversaw the restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas, a recent proposal to install a restaurant in the *samsara* is unacceptable because the building was endowed as a trade structure. But an inspector from the Ministry of Endowments thinks a restaurant is a good idea, and consistent with the wishes of the patron. The restaurant would be small and "popular (*sha'bi*)." I believe he qualified it in this way to indicate that it would not be oriented to tourists (site visit, May 2004).

[43] For the World Bank's position on this issue, see above, chapter three, p. 187, fn. 144.

[44] From 1985-7 I worked as a project manager for Catholic Relief Services in Cairo on projects intended to revive local silk production – and thus was immersed in this type of work and discourse.

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Around the same time the term "cultural tourism" gained currency: in this loftier version of tourism, international tourists and representatives of local culture would come together in an equal encounter, each the possessor of a unique culture. A program under UNESCO's World Decade for Culture and Development (1988-97) proposed to restore caravansarays and postal systems as symbols of cultural encounter and exchange, that would become venues for cultural tourism.[45] The approach to the *samsaras* outlined in the promotional brochure of the Sana'a Campaign, published in 1990, may perhaps be understood in this light.

Planning for the restoration of several *samsaras* was going on during the first paving project, that is, in 1986. In 1985-6, UNESCO and EOPOCS approached Norway for assistance, and in 1987, EOPOCS requested funding from Germany.[46] A Norwegian mission in September 1986, led by the resident ambassador in Jeddah, developed the terms for a demonstration project that would raise national and international interest in Sana'a.[47] The building it restored should house functions that "will strengthen or develop the social fabric of the community; and support traditional occupations in the old city." The bilateral agreement would require the conservation office to run a concurrent study "to document the

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[45] *Rethinking Development: World Decade for Culture and Development, 1988-1997*, UNESCO, 1994. The World Decade for Culture and Development was conceived as an umbrella for various activities that aimed to assert and enhance cultural identities, which were seen as the basis for development; broadening participation in cultural life; and promoting international cultural cooperation. As part of the World Decade activities, UNESCO would sponsor eight case studies on the links between culture, tourism, and development in the Arab World; one of these case studies was on Yemen (H. M. Abdulla, "The Cultural Tourism and Development: the Case of Yemen", March 1996).

[46] M. Bouchenaki approached the director of Cultural Heritage in Norway on behalf of the Sana'a Campaign (phone interview, 1/13/05).

[47] In September 1986 Jon Gardner, ambassador of Norway to Saudi Arabia, along with Dr. Stephen Tschudi-Madsen and architect Amund Sinding-Larsen, undertook a fact-finding mission to Sana'a at the request of the Foreign Office and Ministry for Development Aid. They agreed to provide NOK $2 million, spread over two to three years, for the purpose of a restoration project and to provide personnel ("Outline of Terms of Reference for the Norwegian Project", no date, apparently by the Norwegian foreign office; in a folder entitled *Dirasat 'Amma*, Planning Department, GOPHCY).

community-related consequences of city conservation and development." Norway suggested

three *samsaras* - al-Nahhas, al-Mansura, and al-Majjah – as possible candidates. These three

were also favored by the conservation office, because of their location and architectural

quality. All three are located at the edge of Suq al-'Inab (the grape *suq*), the southwestern

portion of the central *suq* near the Great Mosque (figure 31).[48]

In 1988, handicrafts was identified as a distinct sector in the revised Campaign

strategy, and the creation of a national center for the revival of handicrafts was envisioned.

The project's vocational training and marketing aspects seemed ideally suited to Norway's

criteria, and in the early summer of 1987, a Norwegian mission agreed that the restored

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[48] To date, only the first two have been restored: al-Nahhas was restored in 1988-9, and al-Mansura in 1991-3. In 1987 Jamie Stone, a Peace Corps volunteer, conducted a survey of the *samsaras*, classifying them according to type, condition, and "quality." She ranked the *samsaras* of al-Nahhas, al-Mansura, and al-Majjah as highest quality; surprisingly, she ranked al-Baw'ani – probably the oldest *samsara* in Sana'a – as second quality (see chapter four, pp. 237-244). Stone also ranked Samsarat al-Ghumruq (now al-Zabib) and Samsarat Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim as highest quality; these buildings have yet to be restored.

According to the Campaign's promotional brochure al-Ghumruq was to be restored by the Netherlands and the YAR, but it is only now being restored by the SFD. The UNDP project financed studies of several *samsaras* - al-Baw'ani, al-Majjah, and Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim – by the Italian architect G. Barbato. According to the Campaign's promotional brochure, al-Baw'ani was to be used as a Pilot Textiles Workshop; Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim as a bank and trade center (in keeping with its former function as Dar al-Mal); al-Majjah as a Center for the Study of Popular Arts and Traditions (B. Lane, *Sana'a, Pilot Restoration Projects*, pp. 21-2, 24. 28; 59-3; 74; B. Lane, "Samsarat Muhammad b. Hasan b. Qasim, Suq al-Baz Bank and Trade Center", unpublished paper, Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Conservation of the Old City of Sana'a, Yemen, held at the Sheraton Hotel, Sana'a, 15-19 December, 1991). Al-Majjah, which was added to the scope of the UNDP project, was later envisioned as a center for vanishing handicrafts (G. Barbato, "Training and Exhibition Centre for Vanishing Handicrafts", report to UNESCO/UNDP, Paris 1991). In 1991 Japan promised funds for the restoration of al-Majjah, but apparently the project did not go forward (G. Barbato, "The Methodological Approach for the Restoration of the Samsarah al-Bowani and Samsarah al-Majjah").

The *samsara* of Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim, perhaps the grandest of the *samsaras*, had suffered extensive damage during a siege by tribes in 1948, and its condition worsened as a result of neglect. In 1988 UNESCO consultant Barry Lane and Abdullah al-Hadrami of EOPOCS directed cleaning and emergency consolidation work, with UNDP funding (R. Lewcock, mission report no. 5, 3/89, item 52). The *samsara* has not, however, been restored: a major reason is the dearth of historical documentation, which means that the original form of the rear portion, which has largely collapsed, cannot be accurately determined. In July 2005 SFD officials and consultants said that plans for the restoration were going ahead.

building could have a craft-oriented function.[49] After evaluating the three *samsaras*, the office decided Samsarat al-Nahhas was the best choice for the project: it was located on the main artery from Bab al-Yaman to the *suq*; it was large (four stories, 6000 square meters), in good condition, and of exceptional architectural quality (figure 32).

According to a hand-written report by a Yemeni official at EOPOCS (in English), the *samsara* restoration and similar projects aimed to revive the economy of the old city, which depended on craft activities. The project would bring economic benefits to the residents of the old city, enabling them to "carry heavy costs of traditional building maintenance, and afford costs of services." In a surprisingly direct way, the document portrays tradition as a form of marginality, produced and sustained by the West.[50] It is the "developed nation of Norway" that brings assistance to restore a "traditional" structure; "traditional building maintenance" is a burden which, implicitly, can only be carried with the help of tourist revenues (from developed nations).[51] The foreigner helps to revive and support the "traditional"; but it is also the foreign tourist who drains Yemen of its indigenous crafts – one of the reasons a project for handicraft revival was necessary.[52]

Norway's development office (NORAD) had committed two million Norwegian Kroner (YR 4,982,184 or USD 320,000 in 1987), to be spread out over two to three years.[53]

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[49] Hand-written document from EOPOCS, entitled "The Norwegian Project background", no date, probably the second half of 1987; with preliminary estimate in Arabic.
[50] See M. Herzfeld's discussion of the production of marginality as part of a new "global hierarchy of values", *The Body Impolitic*, pp. 1-5.
[51] "The Norwegian Project Background." A document in Arabic on EOPOCS letterhead, with no date but apparently written around the same time, also describes the revitalization of the old city as key to its self sufficiency (*himayit dhatiha*) in paying for repair and maintenance of buildings (*Dirasat 'Amma*, Planning Office, GOPHCY).
[52] According to a professional who worked on the initial stages of the National Center for Handicrafts, interview, 11/17/04.
[53] Financial report no. 3 (in Arabic), handwritten, no date; in Samsarat al-Nahhas project file, Projects Department, GOPHCY.

But almost as soon as the project began there were significant cost over-runs, because of work required by "traditional building practice (*wifqan lil bina' al-taqlidi*)" that had not been accounted for in the original estimates.[54] The Norwegian mission had said that it might provide technical assistance, but experts were not sent until the end of the project, for a brief period.[55] Norway hired a local company, staffed by Chinese engineers, as its local supervisors,[56] but according to the Yemeni architects who worked on the project, these engineers had no training in conservation. Samsarat al-Nahhas was thus an exception to the tendency of EOPOCS to rely on foreign expertise: "Yemenis did everything on this project," says one architect. But it perhaps suffered from the opposite problem: lack of experience, and a clear approach to the conservation of the building.[57] A Peace Corps volunteer drew up plans and sections of the *samsara*; despite lack of detail, these were used as the project documents for the technical specifications and estimate, drawn up by EOPOCS staff.[58] Yemen Construction and Development Company (*al-sharika al-yamaniyya lil insha'wa al-ta'mir*) was selected as general contractor; it was later awarded the contract for Samsarat al-Mansura and other projects. Although YCDC's supervisor was cooperative, the company had no experience in conservation.

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[54] Document dated 8/23/87 by or for contractor, Samsarat al-Nahhas project file, Projects Department, GOPHCY; and Technical Report no. 2 (in Arabic), handwritten, no date, no signature; written after June 1987 by the current project manager, in folder entitled *Abhath wa dirasat*, Planning Department, GOPHCY. Cost overruns appears to have been paid for by NORAD and EOPOCS; according to a GOPHCY memo, the final project cost was YR 5,767,320 (in English, no date, Samsarat al-Nahhas project file, Projects Department, GOPHCY).

[55] In addition, several EOPOCS professionals were sent to Norway on a brief "training" trip.

[56] Al-Sharq Contracting Company; the 7% fee for this company was included in the grant (financial report no. 3, in Arabic; no date).

[57] See comments by Lewcock, cited below, pp. 319-320.

[58] Drawings dated 12 July 1987, signed "JMS" (presumably Jamie Stone); and Technical Specifications (in Arabic), no date. A former EOPOCS official and the project manager confirmed that these drawings represented the project documents. I was unable to locate any drawings for Samsarat al-Nahhas at GOPHCY's Planning and Projects Departments, other than electrical plans annotated on copies of Stone's drawings.

The site was delivered to the contractor in May 1988 – three months late, because the

financial supervisor (*al-mukhassis al-mali*, presumably from the Ministry of Finance) did not

release funds on schedule.[59] Work was again delayed because tenants in the *samsara* did not

vacate their premises according to schedule. Formerly a *samsara* for copper goods,

Samsarat al-Nahhas was now used as a warehouse by various merchants – who sold dates,

oil, butter, and other foodstuffs – and also by a number of retailers. They were subtenants of

the well-to-do merchant who "controlled" the *samsara*.[60] In October the Minister of

Endowments was asked to enforce the evictions; he agreed to do so, but affirmed that the

Ministry had to approve any work in the building.[61] Around this time the square inside Bab

al-Yaman, the main entrance to the old city, was being paved and upgraded (figure 33).

Numerous shops were torn down, and contrary to assurances from the conservation office,

the owners were not compensated. As a result, a former EOPOCS official told me, the

tenants at Samsarat al-Nahhas were reluctant to vacate, not trusting the conservation office to

fulfill its promises.[62]

The lack of experience in conservation on all sides – EOPOCS, the Chinese

supervisors, and the contractor - slowed the decision-making process and the progress of

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[59] *Bayanat al-mashari'*, Samsarat an-Nahhas, Projects Office, GOPHCY (no date).

[60] Survey of *samsaras* by Jamie Stone, April 1987; and former EOPOCS Technical Director, interview, 9/6/04. According to the latter, the upper floors were not strong enough to bear the large loads of dates stored there. The project file contains numerous memorandums on this issue written during the summer and fall of 1987. In October 1987 several storerooms had still not been vacated, and remained locked (memo to al-Haddad, 5 Oct. 1987, from Technical Director and Project Manager, Samsarat al-Nahhas project file, Projects Office, GOPHCY).

[61] On the back side of this request from the *amin* of the *samsara* is an *aya* from the Qur'an with the following handwritten note, dated 12 July 1987: "No work can be done in the *samsara* without agreement from the Ministry; do not permit anyone to undertake work in it without our permission (*la yatimm ay 'aml fil samsara illa bi muwafaqat al-wizara. La tismahu liahad bi ay 'aml fiha illa bi muwafaqa minna*)" (Samsarat al-Nahhas project file, Projects Office, GOPHCY).

[62] Former Technical Director, interview, 10/1/04.

work.[63] Although the building was in relatively good condition there were structural problems, especially cracking on the north and west facades due to groundwater and settlement, and water infiltration at the roof. EOPOCS appears to have suggested laying a new foundation adjacent to the existing one, but the solution was rejected by the Chinese engineers.[64] In a technical report written shortly after the commencement of work, the project manager wrote:

> The restoration of old buildings is distinguished by technical, architectural, and constructive methods unique to it. I am convinced that the traditional *usta* must be well chosen [especially] at the beginning of restoration work: in view of his wide experience in this field, he is the foundation (*asas*) of the work.[65]

The contractor had been required to hire an *usta* to execute the work, but the work of the first builder proved to be unsatisfactory.[66] He was replaced by an *usta* who was known as a master of *tarmim* (repair or restoration). This *usta* went on to work on Samsarat al-Mansura and other projects, and was retained as a consultant to EOPOCS for several years.[67]

Because of the staff of EOPOCS had no practical or theoretical background in conservation, every step of the project involved negotiation – and there was no local experience on which to draw. The project manager recalls that they did not understand the properties of different types of local stone, and sometimes used them interchangeably. "This should have been basic information," he says.[68] They relied heavily on the experience of the

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[63] Technical report no. 2.
[64] Letter from supervising architects of al-Sharq Construction and Civil Engineering Company Ltd., in English, dated April 5, 1988.
[65] Technical report no. 2.
[66] Former project manager, interview, 10/30/04.
[67] The *usta*'s son says that his father's contract with EOPOCS was terminated when al-Haddad resigned (interview, 9/15/04). The *usta* died tragically in a motorcycle accident in 2000, around the age of seventy. His sons continue their father's trade, and were informants for this work.
[68] "We thought that basalt (*hajar aswad*) and limestone (*balaq*) had the same properties. When we worked at Samsarat al-Mansura, we did some tests on machine-cut limestone (*balaq manshur*), and we realized the difference" (former project manager. interview, 10/30/04).

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usta, but differed with him on certain matters; and architects and engineers in the office differed among themselves. Some found certain items in the specifications and estimate objectionable: the use of cement mortar, the removal of existing plaster, terrazzo tiles, and plumbing and electrical installations that were not suited to the building's fabric or character.[69] Mortar, in particular, was a point of contention. Like most other buildings, foundations and lower floors of Samsarat al-Nahhas are stone. While brick walls were constructed with a binding mortar (typically gypsum), stone walls were usually laid dry; masons filled in the spaces in plan with soft clay mortar and rubble. The wall was held together by the weight of the courses above, and tied at various points with timbers which also allow for movement. The strength of the wall depended not only on the mason but on the skill of the stone-cutter, who assured that the bearing surfaces fit perfectly.[70] Several professionals at the conservation office felt that cement mortar should be used in restoring the foundations and walls of the *samsara*, but others argued that only traditional techniques should be used on the building - so only clay (*tin*) should be used as mortar. But by the time of the Campaign, most if not all *ustas* in Sana'a were using cement mortar: "They saw the strength of cement, and thought it was a secret material," recalls one architect. The *usta* working on Samsarat al-Nahhas did not want to use clay mortar:

> He thought mud mortar was archaic. 'You're spending all this money on the project, why use mud?' he asked. He realized that there was a new international interest in Sana'a, that this kind of thing was part of a new trend.[71]

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[69] Interviews with former project manager, 11/9/04 and 6/16/05.

[70] Site visits with R. Lewcock and former project manager, May 2005 and July 2005. The stonecutter (*waqis*) carefully works three faces of the stone, leaving rough the face that will be hidden in the wall; see diagram in Paul Bonnenfant's and Guillemette Bonnenfant-Outrebon's discussion of stonework ("La Pierre," in P. Bonnennfant, ed. *Sana'a*, p. 288). Timbers were also used to "stitch" together cracks, a practice that Jacques Heymann found acceptable (R. Lewcock, mission report no. 5, 1989, section 43). On Heymann's studies, see p. 295, fn. 5.

[71] Architect and former EOPOCS employee, interview, 6/30/05. While the term "soft clay mortar" is used throughout the German-Yemeni publication that documents the restoration of Samsarat al-

Restorers worry that cement changes the structural properties of a building: mortar is intended to fail before the masonry; if it is stronger than the masonry, it can destroy the wall.[72] Cement mortar also requires less skill in the cutting and laying of stone:

> Now it's no longer important how good the stone is, or the stone-cutting; the only thing that has to be good is the exterior face. The traditional *ustas* also worked in new construction, they brought [new] things with them. So you see, even their beliefs do not follow the traditional system.[73]

The western (rear) wall of Samsarat al-Nahhas stayed open for two months while professionals discussed the issue of mortar.[74] In the end cement mortar was used. The project staff encountered many things on site, and were not sure how to deal with them. The interior bearing walls, for example, were not attached to the exterior walls. "Maybe the *ustas* built it this way because of differential settlement," suggests the project manager. There were no guidelines at the conservation office to deal with such things; the architects relied on their own judgment, and especially on the experience of the *usta*. The *usta* and a partner did *fals* wherever there were cracks, rebuilding walls from the foundation.

Because the *usta* was accustomed to working by the day, the project manager helped him prepare his initial estimate to the contractor, and later, his pay applications; these had to be calculated and reported by quantity (square meters). As the project manager examined

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Mansura, architects often use the term "mud mortar" is English. Builders say simply *tin* (clay), without the term mortar (*mawna*).

[72] "It need not be stressed that cement is a most unsuitable building material for the repair of this kind of traditional building, being too hard and strong for the bricks, so that thermal movements cause cracking. In addition, cement introduces free salts which can crack the walls" (R. Lewcock, mission report no. 2, p. 13).

[73] Former project manager, interview, 10/30/05.

[74] The project manager recalls that the foundation was only one meter deep on this façade, and only one meter in width. The kind of cement recommended by an engineer in the office, *ciment kibreeti* (used in sewage piping and other infrastructure work), was hard to obtain; this was one reason for the delay (interview, 10/30/04).

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each line item, he realized that the *usta* was getting only 20%-30% of the contractor's fee for

that item.

> He was doing almost all of the work, yet he got a fraction of the money. The contractor's supervising engineer had no experience with restoration. They gave all the traditional work to the *usta*. The contractor did not acquire experience, and it's still that way. The contractor even put the responsibility for demolishing and rebuilding walls on the *usta* - so if [the conservation office] architects didn't like the work, he would be would have to bear the expense and redo it.

> From this day I suggested that we require the contractor to pay the *usta* by the day, rather than by quantity...[75]

As noted earlier, neither EOPOCS staff nor the contractor had accurately estimated the

operations and materials required for the project. For example, the contractor estimated

qaddad, the traditional waterproof plaster called for on the roof of the *samsara*, at a fraction

of the actual cost.[76] At the time *qaddad* had almost died out; after two decades,

professionals and craftsmen have now come close to approximating the old *qaddad* work.[77]

As noted in chapter five, government regulations require the use of a general

contractor in publically funded projects, but contractors do not have skill in conservation and

restoration. This was true in the early years of the Campaign, and is largely true today.[78]

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[75] Former project manager, interview, 11/17/04.

[76] The contractor had estimated the cost at YR 200/sm when the actual cost was nine times that amount: when bids were solicited for Samsarat al-Mansura three years later, the cost was YR 1800/sm (former project manager, interview, 10/30/04; and J. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura*, p. 91, fn. 11. This is doubtlessly the cost of the general contractor; the *qaddad usta* who worked under subcontract would have gotten a percentage of this amount). The cost of *qaddad* in 2004 was YR 5000-6000/sm in Sana'a, or $26-31/sm. The tremendous labor input becomes clear when one recalls that a semi-skilled laborer in *qaddad* makes around YR 800, or US $4.20, per day.

[77] See S. al-Radi, "Qudad, the Traditional Yemeni Plaster", in *Yemen Update* (American Institute of Yemeni Studies), no. 34, winter/spring 1994.

[78] Despite experience gained by some contractors, most have little knowledge conservation and rely on their *usta* subcontractors. "A contractor is either a *qabili* (tribesman), or has a sheikh protecting him," said one architect.

The dilemma was noted by J. M. Klessing, one of the German technical supervisors at Samsarat al-Mansura which began two years after al-Nahhas was completed. The contract for al-Mansura was awarded to YCDC which, wrote Klessing, "could at least demonstrate some experience in the field of urban rehabilitation."[79] Having completed Samsarat al-Nahhas, the company was completing street paving between Great Mosque to al-Luqayh Square. But Klessing noted:

> In accordance with stipulations for government projects of this size, only general contractors that could furnish evidence of the necessary capacities and securities and that had the know-how for modern book-keeping came under consideration for execution of the work. A dilemma seemed to be preprogrammed since firms of this type work almost exclusively in the booming branch of new construction and seldom have experience in the field of restoration, yet the restoration work that was to be undertaken could only be achieved by means of traditional building skills and craftsman's trades which mostly are organized on a family or local basis.[80]

As at Samsarat al-Nahhas, YCDC's inexperience was remedied by requiring the company to "use only provenly (*sic*) qualified traditional craftsmen as subcontractors for each individual restoration measure, always in consultation with the project manager." Given the scope of conservation and restoration activities envisioned for the old city, cost has been a major concern for the conservation office. At Samsarat al-Mansura and elsewhere, it was hoped that the use of traditional materials and techniques would keep costs down and provide a replicable model for restoration.[81] But the benefits of this approach have to a great extent been cancelled out by the use of a general contractor, which drives up costs and subordinates the *usta*, discouraging replicability in the long run.

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[79] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura*, p. 54.

[80] According to GOPHCY records, that area was paved from October 1988 to August 1991; the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura began in October 1991.

[81] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", pp. 54-6, 80.

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Most of the disagreements that arose during the restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas derived from different conceptions of conservation – what was appropriate to historic structures in general, and to this building in particular. For some professionals, there was too much emphasis on aesthetics; but notions of aesthetics also differed. One argument involved the plaster finish on ceilings and beams: the Director and others at EOPOCS thought that plaster should be applied with a trowel, because they found a smooth surface more pleasing; the project manager argued that the it should be applied by hand, in the traditional way – and eventually he prevailed. For those with a strong sense of historic character, the taste for smooth plaster, terrazzo tiles, and so forth was guided by a modern sensibility. They feel that the historic character of the *samsara* was compromised by decisions taken too quickly, without adequate thought. For example, the rooms of the *samsara* had been filled with many built in shelves and niches which were an important aspect of the interior character; these had been removed along with the original plaster, as directed by the specifications. Rather than using a wire brush to clean the surfaces of stone columns and arches, laborers were directed to chip away at the stone:

> We lost an entire layer – and so we lost our connection to the old building. We relate to old buildings through an exchange of our humanity, and by taking away this layer we lost this.[82]

Although the project manager and others regret many mistakes at the *samsara*, they see it as a valuable learning experience – an opportunity for them to discover and test ideas of conservation in their local context. Lewcock, who was called back to Sana'a in March 1989, was brief but generous in his appraisal of the work:

> The building has been satisfactorily conserved. In the process a number of deficiencies have been discovered which it is hoped to rectify in the conservation of future buildings.

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[82] Former project manager, interview, 10/30/04.

His outline of these deficiencies reveal specific criticisms of the work at Samsarat al-Nahhas. He advised that "tell-tales" must be installed across cracks so that their progress could be monitored. Even with remedial efforts (new water pipes and drainage), Lewcock expected that the foundations in the old city would not settle down for ten or fifteen years, which would lead to continued cracking. He also stressed the need to conceive a philosophical strategy for conservation:

> The preparation of a work plan for conservation is not enough in itself. It has to be preceded by a decision on the attitude which is to be taken by the conservers towards building.

Did conservers want to restore the building to a hypothetically "original" state, or would they retain later changes and accretions? What parts of the building could be modified to allow for new uses and visitors, and what would be the character of these changes? The installation of modern amenities, like electricity and plumbing, should be carefully thought out and designed. Before conservation begins all aspects of traditional technology should be studied and materials tested; this would be facilitated by the laboratory to be provided under the Italian project. Serious attention should be paid to the revival of building crafts, so that they could replicate the quality of the original workmanship. "The most serious deficiency in this respect," wrote Lewcock, "is the quality of carpentry in Sana'a, which has steadily fallen into decline during the last thirty years." In addition, great care should be taken to obtain materials suitable to the character and quality of the original building.[83]

Some of these technical and philosophical deficiencies were addressed during the restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura which, in contrast to Samsarat al-Nahhas, was carried out under the supervision of a resident German team, working with local architects. EOPOCS

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[83] R. Lewcock, mission report no. 5, 1989, items 42-49. The project manager at Samsarat al-Nahhas found the carpentry objectionable: in particular, "the doors should have been made in a more traditional form" (former project manager, interview, 10/30/04).

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made an initial request to Germany for technical and financial assistance in 1987, shortly

after the Norwegian mission had come to discuss a project. In June of the following year,

Germany proposed a project that would contribute to the revitalization of the *suq* and the

handicraft sector; and that would contribute "to the upgrading of restoration works on

traditional buildings in Sanaa." Visits by an expert in Yemeni handicrafts, and two experts in

restoration, were planned. The Germans proposed Samsarat al-Mansura for the project, to

be perhaps followed by Samsarat al-Majjah.[84] The project would be financed by a special

commodity aid fund dedicated to the restoration of buildings in the old city, administered by

the Central Planning Organization.[85] In July EOPOCS signed an agreement with the

Bavarian State Conservation Office (BlfD), outlining the terms of reference for the project.

Under the agreement BflD would carry out detailed documentation of the building and

develop a restoration plan. Work on the building would be conducted according to

"international standards of preservation," including:

- Preservation of the whole historical substance of the monument, i.e. architectural elements and surfaces;
- Where restoration work is required, it shall be done by traditional methods and materials – with preference of repair over renewal!...
- There shall be no changes to the plan of the building (excluding some alterations of non-bearing walls);
- The facades shall be restored to their original appearance, with plasterwork, etc...[86]

A second agreement between EOPOCS and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

reiterated that the project would be conducted according to the principles of monument

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[84] "Proposal for the German Contribution to the International Campaign for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (according to the request of EPOPCS, September 1987)"; handwritten (English), no signature; submitted to EOPOCS on 6/21/88 (according to the memo to which it is appended, from Werner Ligenau to EOPOCS, 6/29/88). The Yemeni handicrafts expert was Hamid al-Iryani (apparently residing outside the country); and two restoration experts, M. Petzet and W. Koenigs.
[85] "Administrative Procedure for Managing the Counterpart Fund of the Commodity Aid provided by the Federal Republic of Germany", 12/21/87, appended to memo from Werner Ligenau to EOPOCS, June 6, 1988. On the Central Planning Organization, see above, chapter three, fn. 144.
[86] Text of BflD-EOPOCS agreement, reprinted in M. Petzet, "The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura", p. 13.

protection, "that is, with the preservation of the original material of the building and the use

of traditional techniques and materials."[87] Both agreements foresaw an "exchange of

experiences"; the BflD's restoration concept would provide the basis of the work, "in

cooperation with the Yemeni partner's concept of restoration."[88] BlfD would provide on-

site supervision throughout the project, and develop and test "appropriate and economic

techniques of restoration works on traditional buildings, in cooperation with EOPOCS and

Yemeni masterbuilders." These techniques would include a more economical production of

qaddad, and strategies for designing and installing plumbing and electrical works. The

installation of utilities – electrical, plumbing, and telephone – was to be planned and carried

out in cooperation with the Vocational Training Center of Sana'a. Lighting would be

designed by a German lighting designer, who would be brought to Sana'a on a short-term

mission.[89]

At the beginning of discussions between EOPOCS and the Germans, a handicraft

function was foreseen for the building. According to the agreement between EOPOCS and

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[87] This is from the Arabic text of the agreement, item 5. The copy I obtained has spaces for signatures by representatives of the Yemeni and German governments, but is not signed or dated, and the first page is missing.

[88] Text of BflD-EOPOCS agreement, reprinted in M. Petzet, "The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura", p. 13; "Conclusions on the Restoration and Refunctioning of Samsarat al-Mansuriyyah," signed by W. Ligenau, consultant to The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and A. Oshaish for EOPOCS, August 18, 1988, p. 4.

[89] "Conclusions," pp. 3-5. Lighting and plumbing were major concerns for architects, as they are for restorers in other parts of the world, because they require chases for wires and pipes which must be added to or subtracted from the walls. The choice of fixtures was also a dilemma because, as the agreement with the German Foreign Ministry notes, the selection of lighting fixtures in Yemen was very limited.

In a 1989 memo to the Director of Projects, the project manager at Samsarat al-Nahhas wrote that the contractor intended to import fixtures from abroad for both al-Nahhas and al-Mansura. These fixtures would be expensive, and would not serve their purpose. He suggested that they fabricate light fixtures locally, from materials available in the *suq*; these could be inspired by local fixtures, and would be more appropriate to the buildings (memo dated 1/22/89, handwritten, in Arabic; Samsarat al-Nahhas project file, Projects Department, GOPHCY). Both the directors of Projects and Technical Affairs signed their approval, but in the end imported light fixtures were used. For an attempt to design and produce street lights locally, see below, p. 345, fn. 162.

the BflD, the building "would house workshops and exhibition areas for artists and artisans." The August agreement with the German Foreign Ministry said that the *samsara* would be used by an artists' cooperative as workshops and exhibition space, and that their needs would be taken into account in the restoration. A statement by the cooperative, appended to the document and signed by eight artists, said that they would also hold classes in the building, and would set up a printing workshop and a library. The Arabic text of the German-Yemeni agreement stipulates that if the cooperative is unwilling or unable to make use of the building, it will be used by a similar society and/or for "representational cultural purposes (*liaghradh thiqafiyya mumaththila*)."[90]

Work on Samsarat al-Mansura was to begin in early 1989, but there were many delays.[91] Evictions appear not have been a major issue, since most of the *samsara* was vacant; the tenants of shops on the ground floor, facing the street, would be allowed to stay during most of the work, but a retail shop, installed in the entrance, was to be removed.[92] The project did not begin until October 1991, in difficult times: unification had occurred the year before, and the government had undergone massive restructuring; most donor funding had been cut off in retaliation for Yemen's position on the Gulf crisis. The conservation office, newly reorganized as GOPHCY – and now responsible for all the historic cities of Yemen - was in the throes of an internal crisis. Some senior staff members had been transferred or removed by the administration, except for a few who had "protection", that is,

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[90] Arabic text, item 6. The artists' statement (in English and Arabic), appended to the English version ("Conclusions"), was signed by Fu'ad Futaih, Mazhar Nizar, 'Abdullah Sallal (also of EOPOCS); 'Abdulkarim al-Iriani; Amin Nasher; 'Ali al-Dharhani; Fu'ad al-Haj; 'Aidaroos al-Jefri.

[91] Petzet attributes these delays to the difficulty of raising the DM 400,000 required for the project; the problem was resolved by allocating funds from the YAR's purchase of German commodities ("The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura," p. 12). But the commodity fund for restoration had already been established in December 1987.

[92] The shop sold *janbiyya* belts. The owner was to be relocated; EOPOCS would compensate him, if required, but this compensation should come from the project funds ("Conclusions", p. 2).

political connections. The project for al-Mansura had been developed by several staff

members who later fell into disfavor. They believed that interaction between foreign experts

and Yemenis was essential to the project and the future of restoration – and they were

supported in this by the Germans.

> We believed in the idea of national counterparts. The Germans insisted on this. They
> understood what was happening [at the conservation office]. What is the benefit of foreign
> consultants, we asked, if there are no Yemeni counterparts?[93]

In contrast to the restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas, detailed investigations of the

building fabric were carried out prior to the beginning of the work. Photogrammetric studies

of the façade built on earlier surveys by EOPOCS staff and a Peace Corp volunteer in 1988-

90.[94] Engineer Richard Hughes, who had conducted other studies for the Campaign, did tests

on clay mortar samples from al-Mansura. The EOPOCS project manager recalls that he and

a colleague spent two long afternoons on the roof with Hughes and Lewcock, debating the

use of clay mortar.[95] The German team decided to use clay mortar: it was compatible with

the building's structural characteristics, which were distinguished by their "softness."

> The traditional use of soft clay mortar, bricks, and layers of wood within parts of the masonry
> permits a certain degree of plastic deformation of building components. The insertion of new,
> rigid building components or the use of materials that are too hard would severely disturb the
> existing load-bearing behavior in a critical case of stress (such as earthquake) and in the long
> run would cause greater damage than would the measures otherwise needed for repair.[96]

In the end, clay mortar was used in repairing and rebuilding walls; concrete was used only to

stabilize the foundation. As noted in chapter five, *ustas* take great pride in the technique of

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[93] Former project manager for Samsarat al-Mansura, now with the SFD, interview, July 2005.
[94] Plans, elevations, sections signed by S. al-Suleihi, B. Polluck, 'A. Sallal, no date (circa 1988), on file at Projects Department, GOPHCY.
[95] Interview, 11/24/04. According to the project manager the results of the tests were included in a structural report prepared by Hughes, but I was unable to locate the report.
[96] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *Sana'a: the Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansurah*, p. 56.

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fals, which they use to rebuild walls or portions of walls that are collapsing, bulging, or detaching from the structure. When they reused original materials, it was probably in the interest of economy rather than "age value".[97] Following international practice, the German team preferred "repair over renewal."[98] Before making any decisions, they studied the structure of the building carefully and decided that it was essentially stable, despite its age. A Yemeni architect who worked on the project recalls:

> They saw it as a perfect system, the most stable plan for load-bearing walls. I remember Klessing's diagram: he drew the building as a tube, with an outer wall and an inner wall – two rings tied together.[99]

The Germans felt that structural problems in the *samsara* were due not to defects in construction but to weathering, deformation due to vibrations, and lack of building maintenance. The exterior walls, and particularly the front wall, were separating from the structure. An *usta* would have probably disassembled portions of the wall and rebuilt them from the foundation. The German team decided to tie the wall back with steel tie rods, in an effort to salvage the wall. The two approaches reflected different views of the structure: while an *usta* would focus on the wall and foundation, the German solution saw the ceiling as a "rigid" structure. The walls were "rehung" on the ceiling joists which, because of the bulging walls, had in part detached from their position in the masonry:

> Working floor by floor external or integrated wall anchors of various types…were fastened with steel tie rods and stable screw joints at intervals onto the ceiling joists. By fastening the walls to the ceilings, which in principle function as a rigid plate through their layer of brushwood covered with a clay "packing", the process of detachment of the outer walls could

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[97] It is difficult to assess the attitude of *ustas* toward the "original", since most now respond in the familiar language of conservation. In renovations in the old city, *ustas* often use a combination of reused original stone, and new stone which may be close in type and color to the original, but is distinguished by its machine-cut surface. I asked the son of the *usta* who worked on the *samsaras* if his father always reused original materials when he was rebuilding a wall. "Yes, he did, but other *ustas* do not," he replied. "Most are just interested in money" (interview, 5/14/04).
[98] See chapter one, pp. 82-4.
[99] Interview, 11/24/04.

no longer progress. In case of vibrations the building ought to be held together more firmly, as with a clamp, because of the restrained exterior walls.

The diamond shape of the wall anchors was inspired by the decorative brickwork on the building.[100] "Klessing and his colleague thought so carefully before putting in the ties," recalls the architect quoted above, "because they were introducing a new feature into the building." The project manager felt that it was an appropriate innovation: "There is no reason," he said, "we can't adopt new things when they will improve the building." In other cases, wall areas that were deemed to have no bearing strength – due to groups of cracks or long vertical cracks – were "consolidated once again through careful, step-by-step exchange of the deteriorated elements." That is, the *usta* was permitted to demolish and rebuild. In addition, parts of the roof were rebuilt, reusing the original materials where possible.[101]

The dynamic of the project was a complex one, influenced by individuals with different training and assumptions: the German conservation architects; local architects and engineers; and the *usta*s, craftsmen, and laborers. The Germans were clearly in a position of authority, but they "worked with the Yemeni colleagues as one team."[102] They respected the *usta*s and craftsmen, who sometimes solved difficult structural problems on site, and were clearly committed to the work.[103] But they felt that knowledge of traditional techniques, once of a uniformly high standard, was no longer complete:

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[100] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", p. 56; former project manager, interview, May 2004.

[101] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", p. 58.

[102] H. al-Sayaghi, "Samsarat al-Mansura Restoration Project: National Art Center Suq al-Ennab (Grape Market)", in M. Petzet and W. Koenigs, eds., *The Restoration of Samsarat al-Mansura*, p. 19.

[103] Early on in the investigations – before the *usta* had been hired - a Yemeni architect suggested that they bring him in to stabilize an arch on an upper floor, that had no support; it was resting only on the wall of the neighboring *samsara*, al-Majjah. The architect remembers that the German team was doubtful, but was impressed by the *usta*'s work (interview, 11/4/04).

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Indeed some things are known only by a few individual old master builders. The same is true for the practical ability to carry out traditional craft techniques. But for the preservation and repair of historic fabric this knowledge and the mastery of craft practices is imperative.[104]

The project was another opportunity for architects and *ustas* to negotiate their new relationship. When I asked about the dynamic on site, the project manager said:

> Sometimes the *ustas* take too many risks. The *usta* [on Samsarat al-Mansura] wanted to disassemble large portions of the floor, but I preferred that he do alittle at a time. I had to convince him that I respected his work, but that as project manager I was ultimately responsible.[105]

Professionals who worked on Samsarat al-Nahhas and Samsarat al-Mansura generally remember these initial experiments as positive ones. Despite the lack of technical knowledge and a clear approach at Samsarat al-Nahhas, it was a learning experience and produced an acceptable restoration. Work with the German team on Samsarat al-Mansura seems to have increased the self-confidence of professionals: they learned on site, but were also equal partners in the process. But the projects also established a new relationship - between architect, *usta*, and contractor. One *usta*, who worked on the restoration of the southern city wall (under a general contractor) said that several architects worked with him on site. "They learned many things, and then they went away" – that is, to become prestigious professionals in an internationally recognized endeavor. Some architects acknowledge their debt to the *ustas* and other craftsmen. The project manager at Samsarat al-Nahhas recalls:

> From the beginning I wanted to give these projects to people with traditional skills: first, to encourage them; and second, to create a way for us to understand each other. Until now, it's too difficult for the architects to work alone; they still can't work on their own without skilled craftsmen.[106]

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[104] J. M. Klessing, "Planning and Execution of the Restoration", p. 80.
[105] Interview, 7/26/04.
[106] Interview, 10/30/04.

Professionals see the *samsara* restorations as less successful in terms of their social and use value. Several had doubts about an art gallery. The fine arts were very new in Yemen: an art gallery would not be relevant to the residents of the old city, and perhaps not even to an elite Yemeni audience.[107] But the project was supposed to have a training component, which seemed to redeem it. In the end, the artists' cooperative was inactive; the contract was taken over by one of the artists, who uses the space primarily to exhibit his own work.[108] Many professionals had had high hopes for the handicraft center: they hoped that it would have a direct impact on the economy of the *suq* and the revitalization of traditional crafts and trades. The National Center for the Revival of Handicrafts had its main venue at Samsarat al-Nahhas; it was overseen by a Handicrafts Department, created when the conservation office was reorganized as GOPHCY in 1990-1. The *samsara* was to house the men's training center and an exhibition space for both men's and women's handicrafts – since the women's center (located in another building) could not receive male customers.[109] Despite the reported lack of support from GOPHCY, the women's program is regarded as relatively successful: many women have been trained in sewing and embroidery and, according to the program staff, depend on the Center for income. Their building does have

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[107] "When we had our first exhibit of paintings," recalls one artist, "even the Minister of Culture didn't understand what it was. How can you promote the fine arts in such a country?" (interview, September 2004).

[108] In recent years, however, the work of other artists has been exhibited on upper floors.

[109] The idea that the women's center could not receive male visitors probably came from EOPOCS, an attempt to protect local customs. But it is somewhat curious, since in some highland towns - for example, Thula, a town to the north of Sana'a - fully veiled young women are very active in the tourist trade; they are known for their aggressive bargaining and for their mastery of several languages.

The women's handicraft center was first located in Beit Mutahir; it was moved in 2000 to the restored house of Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, in al-Abhar Square. The supervising program officer at the UNDP in Sana'a says there was also a separate weaving center for women (interview, 6/20/05). The men's center was first at Beit al-Amri on the Sa'ila; it was moved to Samsarat al-Nahhas circa 1990, after the restoration had been completed.

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an exhibition and retail center, but marketing continues to be a problem.[110] The men's

program, in contrast, is widely regarded as a failure; of the professionals, artisans, and

merchants I interviewed, only the original director of the National Handicraft Center (who

has recently been reappointed to the position) considers it a success.

The story of this project is a complex one, with many local and international players;

only a relatively brief outline can be included here. As noted in chapter three, one of two

UNDP projects to support the Campaign was for training and equipment for handicrafts

(UNDP/YEM/87/008); it was designed with UNESCO and financed in part by the ILO.

The idea behind the project was to establish a national center for training, product

development, and marketing; Sana'a would be the pilot area, and regional centers would later

be linked to the national center. The project funded an initial survey of the current state of

crafts throughout Yemen, which would determine the direction of the project.[111] "We had

strong national feelings," recalls the Yemeni director. "We had counterparts from many

countries, and we learned a lot from them." The new generation would learn traditional

crafts and trades from the old; foreign consultants would bring techniques and equipment that

would make production more efficient, and help develop new designs.[112]

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[110] In addition to lack of funds, the exhibition/retail area is not easily visible from the street. Partly as an attempt to remedy this, a group of foreign women recently rented the ground floor of Samsarat al-Dhamari to exhibit products of the women's handicraft center and other women's NGO's (interviews with staffmembers, 11/24/04 and 5/30/05).

[111] "Work plan YEM/87/008, Development of Handicraft Industries", no date (cover letter by project director Kevin O'Connor signed 8/30/88); in folder entitled "United Nations Project, 4" at Samsarat al-Nahhas. The book that resulted from the survey appears to have been a joint UNESCO-ILO publication, but I have been unable to locate a copy of it. The crafts that were covered in the initial survey were textiles (handloom weaving and embroidery), woodcarving, leatherware (including book-binding), jewelry (silver-smithing, gold-smithing, and semi-precious stones), and stoneware (stone pottery and alabaster; "Work Plan", Appendix II).

[112] Interview, 11/24/04. An architect trained in Pakistan, the Yemeni director headed the National Handicraft Center with Kevin O'Connor from 1988; the latter's mission was funded by the ILO.

According to several professionals who worked on the project, it was mistaken in both its conception and execution. The project should have been conceived not as a training center, but as a center that offered support to craftsmen in the *suq* who were already practicing. These craftsmen would train apprentices at their shops, as they had in the past; the center would provide technical and marketing assistance.[113] Instead, a formal school was established. Students received theoretical instruction in drawing and design (the position was described as an Islamic Design Instructor) and training in a craft. Various crafts were considered for the program; those finally selected were silverwork, leather, agate, and wood-carving, for men; and weaving and embroidery for women.[114] Production would

> focus mainly on traditional decorative crafts for the local, tourist, and export markets...
> priority [will be given] to regional markets in the Middle East.
>
> ...Preference should be given to local expertise if it is available for some of the crafts groups.[115]

But the courses were largely run by regional consultants, including a woodworking expert from Azerbaijan; a Lebanese Armenian silversmith; and a Palestinian expert in embroidery.[116] The Yemeni director defends the use of foreign consultants, because local

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[113] These ideas were outlined by a professional who worked on the project, in a position paper that he wrote early on in the project; he was unable to locate the paper (interview, July 2004). His views were echoed by most of the other professionals I interviewed, and by merchants involved in the project.

[114] The embellishment of garments with gold thread, *dhahabi*, was later added; new departments envisioned are carpet-making and sewing (trainer at the Women's Handicraft Center, interview, 11/22/04).

[115] The memo, unsigned but apparently from UNDP/Sana'a, was intended to brief Handicraft Advisor Kevin O'Connor on the first six months of his mission, which began in 1988; in folder entitled "United Nations Project, 4" at Samsarat al-Nahhas.

[116] According to one professional, these individuals were brought through the "UNDP network": "Why were Yemenis not used?" (interview, 6/12/05). United Nations volunteers (UNV's) were considered for consultancies, but were too expensive. A letter dated 2/2/88 recommends that Middle Eastern and North African experts would be paid only $2500/month, and so would be more affordable than the $132,000 envisioned for two UNV's and six man/months of consultancies (in English, no signature; in file entitled "Projects Reports 4", Samsarat al-Nahhas). The memo makes no mention of local experts.

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crafts were no longer intact: "There is a gap of history (*fajwat ta'rikh*) in Yemen...[in the building trades and crafts] the chain of transmission (*silsila*) was not continuous." He says that Yemeni trainers worked alongside the consultants and benefited from their knowledge and labor-saving techniques:

> We are not organized or educated. We couldn't bring just anyone to teach. A craftsman (*hirafi*) doesn't know how to teach; few people would come [to study with him]...
>
> Yemeni silverwork was the best in the world, in Sana'a and the Hadhramaut. But the traditional work took too much time, the materials were too expensive. We brought a Lebanese instructor to work alongside a Yemeni: he showed us how to make lighter, cheaper things in the style of the old... What a Yemeni craftsman took two or three days to make, the Lebanese could do in two hours, using electric tools. We had to modernize our crafts, otherwise our craftsmen couldn't compete.[117]

For some professionals, however, the new techniques and foreign influence changed the nature of Yemeni crafts: "Our embroidery looked Palestinian," says a former director of the Women's Handicraft Center.[118] Because the trainees had no relation to the *suq*, says one professional, they left Sana'a after their training to work elsewhere. The director maintains that students had to be sought outside the *suq* because craftsmen and merchants were suspicious of the project – although several sent their sons to train there after the center had been operating for a year or so.

Today a few trainers remain at the center – a woodcarver, a silversmith, and an agate-polisher – but they lack students and funds. The women's center is locked in an ongoing struggle with GOPHCY over its budget.[119] Most professionals agree that the project effectively stopped with UNDP funds, in 1991. The director acknowledges that it was

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[117] Interview, 11/24/04. According to the director, the Yemeni craftsmen included a master silversmith and an 80-year-old master wood-carver (from Zabid). He recalls that the Yemeni silversmith was given a test before he was hired; this is also mentioned in documents in the project file.
[118] Interview, 5/29/05.
[119] I was told this by staff at the women's center; one trainer says she sometimes has to provides materials for students with her own funds (interview, 11/20/04). I was told by both women and men that the women's center is disfavored because it is more successful than the men's.

difficult to secure a budget from the Yemeni government in the following years; since the civil war of 1994, the center has had virtually no budget. Most shops are rented out by GOPHCY to tourist-oriented businesses, but according to the director, the sellers of agates and other gemstones were trained at the center. He says that the handicraft center has had an important impact on the *suq*: "The students have now become teachers of new students." At the time of the project, for example, there were only three master agate polishers left in the *suq*. Now thousands of people work in agate and other gemstones, assisted by machines; some have even found employment in the Gulf.[120] It is interesting to note that production in old style crafts continues, but it is unclear whether this can be attributed to the handicraft center. Merchants in the *suq* who sell old style silverwork, made by artisans in Sana'a and other towns, are often proud that customers cannot distinguish them from the old work.[121]

The *samsara* restorations highlight the different approaches to conservation that informed the Campaign, which are ultimately related to different conceptions of culture. Urban upgrading – infrastructure, street-paving, and improved services – were intended to make the old city livable. The *samsara* restorations would help to revitalize the *suq*, which was necessary to keep the old city alive. But in the end, they were simply "spectacular, international...projects" divorced from the population they were intended to serve.[122] In a strongly worded presentation at the 1991 symposium, Werner Ligenau, German attaché with

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[120] Interview, 11/24/04.

[121] When I asked the owner of a well-known jewelry and craft shop where the new silverwork is made, he said with a smile "In our workshops"; he clearly did not want to reveal their location. It is often sold to unsuspecting customers as "Jewish silverwork", which implies that it is old silverwork produced before 1948. One merchant defended this usage: for him, "Jewish" indicates not age or authenticity, but quality. The new Yemeni silverwork seems to be distinct from the ubiquitous (and lighter weight) Indian silverwork that can be found throughout the *suq*.

[122] W. Ligenau, "Remarks on the correlation between cultural and economic revitalization in the case of the old city of Sana'a", paper presented at the Symposium on the Integrated Urban Policy for the Conservation of the Old City of Sana'a, Yemen, held at the Sheraton Hotel, Sana'a, 15-19 December, 1991, p. 46.

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the Department of Antiquities and promoter of the Campaign, charged that the old city was being transformed for the benefit of outsiders under the banner of "cultural heritage." How is the term culture to be understood, he asked? If we understand it in the sense of high culture, distinct from the culture of daily life,

> ...the Madinah reduces itself easily to its fascinating silhouette of magnificent facades...an impressing spectacle in which a mixture of exotically dressed walker-ons and strange smells and noises entertain the culturally interested audience from around the world.
>
> But, the subject of observation changes completely as soon as one perceives and accepts that the Madinah with its market and traditional heritage of a – for Europeans today hardly understandable – Every-Day Culture which includes and integrates all ranges of life. This kind of Culture is not set off from the real structure of politics and economics, but is an integral part of all societal dimensions: the political order, the economic processes, the used technologies; also from societal value conceptions, perceptual images, lifelong habits, etc. to the artistic genre of façade decorations.
>
> The preservation charge for the Madinah must be understood from the standpoint of the heritage to be preserved and not from that of our Culture Industry where culture is seen as a Commodity...
>
> What, then, is Culture? Does UNESCO refer to it in the sense of Every-Day Culture – as demonstrated in the living example of the Historic Centre of Sana'a...? If this is so....the physical and spatial stock [must be seen as] inseparably interwoven...[123]

Ligenau points to an issue that lies at the heart of heritage management in Sana'a and elsewhere. The notion of culture as a discrete, bounded entity, long since discarded in anthropology and other social sciences, continues to lie at the heart of "cultural heritage," despite attempts by UNESCO and other agencies to qualify the term. This common-sense understanding of culture was, and perhaps continues to be, the predominant one among policymakers in Yemen. As Ligenau and others have noted, culture-as-object is easily translated as culture-as-commodity: the attraction of "local culture" to new and affluent audiences – in the case of Yemen, largely tourists – would bring resources to the community,

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[123] W. Ligenau, "Remarks", p. 47.

enabling it to bear the burden of conservation. At the same time, as we have seen, conservation would help to promote the current "cultural revival," bringing an authentic Yemeni spirit into contact with new audiences.[124] Two decades after the World Heritage listing, however, tourism has not increased to expected levels. This is due primarily to Yemen's international image as an insecure place, but also to the absence of tourist facilities outside the major cities.[125] Conservation has thus failed to deliver the hoped-for benefits – and this perhaps explains what both local and foreign professionals see as a "lack of political will" with regard to the conservation effort.

The restoration of a model neighborhood, 1989-1993

In addition to the *suq*, the heart of the "living historic city" was its houses – some six thousand of them. As in Venice, it was from this remarkable fabric, rather than individual monuments, that the "outstanding universal value" of the old city was seen to derive.[126] This brought up an important issue that had already been raised in Venice and Fez: how was this fabric, virtually all of it in private hands, to be conserved? Consultants' reports produced in the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's warned that houses were falling into disrepair, largely due to outmigration. Not only were absentee landlords and rural migrants unable or

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[124] While serving as Permanent Delegate to UNESCO Abdul-Rahman al-Haddad, who would be appointed director of EOPOCS in 1986, wrote a treatise on culture policy in the YAR. Published by UNESCO, the treatise describes the cultural revival envisioned by the revolution. It includes both an elite "Arab" culture long suppressed by the imams, and a popular culture that expresses the national spirit (*Cultural Policy in the Yemen Arab Republic*, Paris: UNESCO, 1982).

[125] H. M. Abdulla, "The Cultural Tourism and Development: the Case of Yemen", March 1996. A World Heritage Center official told me that the prospect of increased tourism is a primary motivation behind a country's application for World Heritage listing (interview, 7/7/04). A *New York Times* article describes the direct relationship between World heritage listing and increased tourism (S. Rugel, "Preservation: Sure, it's a Good Thing, but...", 1/15/06, p. 3).

[126] This view, held by Lewcock and others, was reiterated in a number of promotional films produced by UNESCO. Of several films on file at UNESCO's documentary services, see especially "Programme 13: Venise, Sana'a, UNESCO/Transtel", M0365, no date.

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unwilling to maintain their houses: traditional materials and builders were in short supply,

making repairs unaffordable. New and cheap materials like cement were being used for

repairs and additions.[127] In recent years, maintenance seems to have improved somewhat,[128]

perhaps as a result of the increased property values that followed street paving and

infrastructure works. But the problem of house repair and maintenance is a daunting one -

especially since privately owned property is generally ineligible for donor aid.

In several reports, Lewcock argued that the repair of houses through a loan fund was

an essential part of the Campaign. In his 1989 mission report, he noted that although the

conservation of several houses would soon begin,

> ...the Old City represents a unique problem in that there are approximately seven thousand
> buildings within it, most of which are private houses and homes. A strategy needs to be
> implemented quickly for encouraging their rehabilitation in a careful and sensitive way
> before it is too late. For this purpose, the establishment of a development bank for the Old
> City to provide loans at a low rate of interest is a *matter of the greatest urgency*, as is the
> study of, and introduction of, other suitable incentives.[129]

According to a former official, the Campaign strategy envisioned the restoration of thirty to

one hundred private houses as demonstration projects, and other would be financed through a

loan bank.[130] But plans for the loan bank were never implemented: only limited funds are

available from a fund designed to compensate homeowners for damages incurred during the

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[127] R. Lewcock, mission report no. 2, 1982, pp. 11-13.

[128] According to Eckert and al-Maqrami (see above, chapter four, pp. 23-4). Lewcock, however, feels
that the deterioration of houses is progressing (personal conversation, February 2006).

[129] Mission report no. 5, 1989, p. 43 (the emphasis is Lewcock's). Earlier he had proposed that funds
for the loan bank be borrowed on favorable terms from the Bank of Kuwait (mission report no. 4,
1987, p. 10). Lewcock's sense of urgency was echoed by the Third International Working Group, in
which he also participated: "the government should as a matter of urgency implement their plans for a
Campaign loan bank to support and provide incentives to private owners to restore their buildings in
the old city in accordance with standards set up by the Campaign Executive Office." In addition, the
Campaign office should have access to funds that would allow it to intervene in house repair or
reconstruction, where because of inheritance disputes or other reasons, residents were unwilling to
undertake the work themselves ("Recommendations", 24-26 January, 1989).

[130] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 9/6/04.

course of infrastructure work. Nor have incentives been introduced: on the contrary, a rule remains on the books that disqualifies traditional work for construction loans. This rule would be repealed by the draft conservation law currently before the Minister of Culture, and would also exempt owners from permit fees and eventual taxes.[131]

Not all policymakers, however, agreed with the idea of a loan bank – nor did they feel that the restoration of private houses was the responsibility of government. According to the former Deputy Minister of Municipalities, whose support was instrumental in launching the Campaign, the Board of Trustees agreed that the whole city should be conserved, but homeowners should maintain their own houses. The government would undertake infrastructure and large rehabilitation projects, like the paving and upgrading of the Wadi Sa'ila; as the city's condition improved and its perceived value increased, homeowners would be encouraged to maintain their properties. A loan fund would not be practical, he said: neither homeowners nor institutions were accustomed to such a thing, and it would not be respected.[132] His view points to the different attitudes of policymakers inside and outside the Campaign office. But even Campaign officials acknowledged that the costs of house repair and maintenance would fall primarily on homeowners – one of the main reasons tourist revenues were needed.

During the years of the Campaign, only one project dealt with the repair and restoration of houses. This was a demonstration project conceived by the Quaroni Bonifica team, as a practical application of its work in the old city. According to the project agreement,

> ...the studies carried out thus far and the first results obtained from the international...campaign, in fact urge that a first practical example of urban recovery,

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[131] See above, chapter four, pp. 245-8.
[132] Interview, 6/16/05.

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implemented in line with the principles of scientific conservation, be undertaken without delay...

The aim of the project is to salvage an urban neighborhood of Sana'a al-Qadima, chosen as a prototype for the commencement of a functional urban conservation policy.

The conservation of the historical and environmental assets of old Sana'a was important not only for their own sake, but

also, and perhaps mainly, in the future role that the Historical Centre will be able to fill at the international level. We are thinking particularly of a cultural role which the historical city could undoubtedly take in the future.[133]

The demonstration project had been outlined in the first phase of the Quaroni Bonifica studies (completed 1983-4). The project agreement was signed in early 1986 in anticipation of a second grant from Italy, but was subsequently delayed for several years.[134]

There remains little documentation on this "implementation phase" of the Quaroni Bonifica studies – in Sana'a, generally called the "Italian project." Like earlier phases of the work, reports and drawings at GOPHCY's Center for Architectural and Technical Studies (CATS – which was built under the project) are incomplete. No documents remain at the Italian Foreign Ministry, and the firms involved no longer exist. Moreover, because the project was controversial some individuals are reluctant to discuss it. The main issue was an ownership dispute: a house that was restored under the project was forcibly reoccupied by its owners. The incident, which will be discussed below, provoked an official protest from the government of Italy. As a result, the Italian team did not hand over documentation, and some of the equipment promised for the restoration workshop was not delivered. The project

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[133] Minutes of meetings between representatives of Studio Quaroni and Bonifica and Yemeni officials, held at EOPOCS, 16-19 February, 2006.
[134] The project agreement refers to a bilateral cooperation agreement in the Italo-Yemeni protocol of December 1985. The contract, entitled "Conservation of a Sample Core of the Historic Center of Sana'a and the opening of a restoration laboratory/school – General Agreement," was signed by Francesco Pulcini, Ambassador to Italy; Riccardo Michara, of Studio Quaroni and for Bonifica SpA; and Abd al-Rahman al-Haddad, Director of EOPOCS, Sana'a, 22 February, 1986. I was permitted to consult (but not to photocopy) this document, which is on file in the Director's Office, GOPHCY.

seems to have been linked to a wider scandal that involved audits of Bonifica-Italy's operations at several Middle East and North African sites and ultimately, to the dissolution of the firm. [135]

The southwestern quadrant of the city had been a focus of attention since the paving of al-Abhar Square in 1972; the streets leading from the Sa'ila to al-Abhar were paved in the first upgrading project paid for by the government under the banner of the Campaign, in 1984-5. This major thoroughfare for both local visitors and tourists splits at al-Abhar Square: the northern branch leads past the Great Mosque to the *suq*, the southern branch to Bab al-Yaman. A number of stately houses are located on the square and in neighboring quarters. [136] In the first phase of the Quaroni Bonifica studies, the authors had chosen a project site that was in the same area, extending west from the northern edge of al-Abhar Square. They gave several reasons for the choice: the neighborhood represented a complete range of housing types of a consistently high architectural quality; the houses exhibited representative types of structural damage; and the area was characteristic of old Sana'a's urban morphology. [137]

The project was an ambitious one: it was conceived as an example of integrated urban conservation that would provide for replication, through training and research. It also

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[135] Interviews with two former EOPOCS officials, 9/25/04 and 10/11/04. "All of Bonifica's projects had problems; they wanted to point to Sana'a as a successful example," says one of these officials. He believes that the project in Sana'a was audited by the Italian courts because of the ownership dispute, to be discussed below. For background see chapter three, p. 151, fn. 46.

[136] It may be recalled that two houses on al-Abhar Square, which belonged to distinguished Sana'ani families, had been ceded to Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum and Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar for their assistance to Republican forces in the revolution (see chapter four, p. 200). For the paving of al-Abhar Square under the direction of Alain Bertaud (UNDP), see chapter two, p. 127; for the first paving project of the Campaign, see chapter three, pp. 168-9.

[137] Studio Quaroni S.r.1./Bonifica S.p.A, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center in Relation to the Urban Development of the City", Rome, 1981-1990, for the Yemen Arab Republic/General Organization for Antiquities and Libraries Proposal Phase, volume PIII, "The Urban Texture," 1983, p. 7. Har'at Mu'adh had already been studied during the Reconnaisance Phase; it was now part of a larger "island", no. 4 (on the "island" concept see chapter three, p. 152).

envisioned a training seminar, and an "international publicity campaign" aimed to promote

the international role of the old city.[138] The project would restore several representative

houses, selected on the basis of age, architectural features, and degradation, to serve as

models for future work by the conservation office and by private owners. Where static

conditions were unsatisfactory, the buildings would be consolidated with "materials and

procedures compatible with traditional techniques, but with modern conservation

principles."[139] The work would be carried out by local *ustas*: their skills would be upgraded

as required by scientific conservation practice, and they would eventually become trainers of

new recruits.[140] This training would take place at a restoration workshop and laboratory, a

new facility to be built by the project. The workshop would serve as a school for *ustas* and

"technicians" –presumably conservation office staff - and also as a research facility: planning

issues would be investigated here, and there would be a specialized lab for the study of

materials and techniques. The workshop would initially be run by Italians and Yemenis;

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[138] This role required a campaign to raise awareness, "involving the bilateral and multilateral organizations as well as the agencies and the economic operators chiefly concerned. Such a campaign, to be carried within the context of this project, will be developed, conducted within the joint cooperation of the Yemeni and Italian authorities" (meeting minutes, 16-19 February, 2006, item 5f). This call for a "campaign" – clearly distinct from the UNESCO Campaign, which was officially launched in December 1984 - may indicate the competition between the Quaroni Bonifica and UNESCO (see chapter three, p. 152).

According to former EOPOCS staff, the training seminar was held over a period of one to two months early on in the project (circa 1990); it was led by Quaroni's wife and facilitated by a translator. Some remember the seminar as useful, but most recall that questions were not welcomed. "Perhaps there was no supervision by UNESCO," suggests one staffmember (interview, 10/10/04). Because of political conflicts at EOPOCS, some report that a number of experienced architects and technicians were barred from attending, while staffmembers with no specialized training were included.

[139] Project agreement, February 1986. Ten to twelve houses were to be selected, and of these two to four would be restored within the contract period.

[140] The authors acknowledge that "[t]he time span for the gradual passage from the first stage to the second, i.e. the abandonment of old practices, and the adopting of new methods, will be rather long" (Quaroni Bonifica, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center", volume PIII, "The Urban Texture," 1983, pp. 2-4).

ultimately, it would be administered by local technicians and *ustas'* cooperatives.[141] In

addition, a ruined *samsara* at the northeastern edge of the project area, thought to be

abandoned, would be rebuilt and upgraded as a "polyfunctional center" for the neighborhood.

It would serve different purposes at different times (a kindergarten, meeting room, or

clubhouse) depending on the needs of the community. A public park in the same area was

also envisioned.[142]

An important part of the project was the "reordering" of what the authors called the

"urban texture," in keeping with both traditional precedents and contemporary needs. Traffic

would not be eliminated entirely, but rather would be made to skirt around the edge of the

neighborhood. Within the neighborhood, a system of pathways and "piazzas" would be

reserved for pedestrian traffic, leisure activities, and parking (figure 34). This network would

be consolidated by reclaiming small spaces that had been appropriated by residents,

obscuring the original urban morphology of small squares (*sarhat*) and gentle widenings in

streets. Residents had fenced off areas in front of their houses and built illegal structures; in

some cases, alleyways had been closed off with gates of wood or sheet metal, and "other

forms of 'modern' ugliness." These spaces would be "better suited for use by the community

in a new collective sense." The authors hoped that the conservation office would implement

the legal measures, especially a property registration system to determine ownership, since

the project required an exact determination of "public, semi-public, and private use."

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[141] Meeting minutes, 16-19 February, 2006, items 5-6; Studio Quaroni S. r. l. and Bonifica S.p.A., "Action Proposal", January 1986, p. 22. This January 1986 study, carried out just prior to the signing of the project agreement, elaborated the idea of a workshop/laboratory which had been mentioned in the Proposal Phase.

[142] Quaroni Bonifica, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center", volume PIII, "The Urban Texture," 1983, pp. 8-10.

Eventually, outdoor spaces could be administered through a form of condominium ownership.[143]

Although the project was intended as an example of "urban recovery", street paving and infrastructure were not originally included; perhaps the Italian team expected that this would be a contribution of the Yemeni government. At meetings that preceded the signing of the project agreement, EOPOCS officials suggested that some project funds be shifted to infrastructure. They felt this was more practical, since access to the buildings and open spaces would be difficult to secure. The Italian team agreed: infrastructure works and landscaping would be expanded, connecting the project area to "at least one relevant access point to the Medina." But this work would not be allowed to jeopardize the other objectives of the project, especially house restorations.[144] EOPOCS officials would conduct a preparatory study and work with the Italian team to identify two or three houses for restoration. They would assure that these houses, as well as the land for the workshop/laboratory, be made fully available for work.[145]

Perhaps because of difficulties in securing access to these properties, the project was delayed for several years. The delay may also have been due to the death of Quaroni and de Carlo in 1987 and the reorganization of the firm under Quaroni's wife.[146] The project was finally inaugurated in the first half of 1989, with great fanfare: many Italian VIP's – politicians, artists, scholars, filmmakers, journalists – were flown to Sana'a for several days

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[143] Quaroni Bonifica, "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Center", volume PIII, "The Urban Texture," 1983, p. 2, 7-8; and volume PO, ""Foreword and Summary", pp. 14-16.
[144] The scope of infrastructure and urban upgrading – landscaping, walks, street lighting, and so forth - would only be determined after the number and cost of house restorations had been finalized (meeting minutes, 16-19 February, 2006, item 5d; and project agreement). A note in the margin by an EOPOCS official cites "garbage collection" – an activity that had not yet been addressed.
[145] Meeting minutes, 16-19 February, item 3, 2006.
[146] D. Pini, interview, 9/4/04.

of events at the university, celebrating Sana'a's status as a world heritage site and historic

ties between Yemen and Italy.[147] Preparations for the work, including construction

documents, were underway in the summer of the same year. Several houses had been

discussed as candidates for restoration, but drawings were only done for two, Beit Sari' and

Beit al-Thawr. The owners of the latter project did not agree to the restoration work, so only

Beit Sari' was restored – although this project, too, ended in conflict.[148] Work began on the

ground in 1990 and was completed in April 1993; the project opened officially on the same

day as Samsarat al-Mansura.[149] The contractor was an Italian firm based in Addis Ababa; its

Sana'a office, staffed by Italian technicians, worked through a prominent Yemeni company

called YCon.[150] Work was supervised by architects representing the Italian Foreign Ministry,

one of whom lived in Sana'a during the course of the project. Neither Ycon nor EOPOCS

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[147] By one account, the Italian visitors probably numbered three hundred. The inauguration seems to have taken place in mid-1989 (former EOPOCS employee, interview, 6/30/05). Because of the absence of documentation, much of what follows is based on interviews with local professionals and an Italian architect who worked on the project.

[148] Two of the houses were immediately to the northwest of al-Abhar Square: Beit Sari' and the adjacent house to the north, Beit al-Thawr; construction documents were drawn up by the Quaroni Bonifica team for both of these. Two other houses were also considered: Beit al-Ramma, on the west side of the gated alleyway that leads from al-Abhar to CATS; and Beit al-Nunu, on the northern edge of the garden of the Great Mosque. Before work could begin, the latter two houses had partially collapsed (former EOPOCS officials, interviews, 10/4/04 and 7/25/05).

       There are two sets of drawings for the "Implementation Phase": "Preliminary Design" (1989) and "Final Design" (1990); only some of the drawings, and none of the accompanying reports, are at CATS. On file are drawings for Beit Sari', Beit al-Thawr, the multifunctional center, and plans for neighborhood upgrading and utilities.

[149] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 7/25/05. The work must have begun in the first half of 1990: one of the owners of Beit Sari' recalls that work on the family house stopped during the Gulf War, that is, August 1990 (interview, 9/30/04).

[150] Owned by the Yemen Bank for Reconstruction and Development, YCon has undertaken many high-profile construction projects (former EOPOCS staff member, interview, 11/7/04). I was unable to identify the Italian contractor, or locate other projects records. According to the EOPOCS architect who acted as counterpart to the Italian team, the project budget of L. 778,558,030 was to be disbursed between December 1990 and April 1993. He says that the final costs were around USD 6,000,000 (personal communication, 7/29/05). According to another EOPOCS official, the contract amount was USD 5,700,000; 25% of this amount was dedicated to studies (interview, 10/4/04).

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had much of a role – although apparently the Italians did not see it this way.[151] "The Italians did the implementation themselves," says the sole Yemeni architect who worked on the project, and who is sympathetic to it. According to one source, the Italians refused to provide the usual incentives for local staff: they felt that they were "training" and that this was adequate compensation.[152] This departure from usual practice, as well as the secrecy that shrouded much of the work (especially the restoration of Beit Sariʿ), seems to have fueled the resentment of local architects.

The last phase of the project was the restoration laboratory and workshop.[153] The building – later named CATS - was built on the site intended for the community center, which was not executed. The ruined *samsara* and the land turned out not to be abandoned: as the project got underway, some fifty persons claimed ownership. Most were poor, and easily agreed to sell their shares; but one owner who owned a house on the site refused to sell.[154] The new building was a concrete structure, in a design intended to be sympathetic to local architecture (figure 35).[155] According to a former official, he and several other architects tried to participate in the design process, but their ideas were resisted by the Italians. Two of

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[151] As the project was nearing its end, one of the supervisors for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the project as follows: "Italy is contributing to the safeguarding of the old city through an intervention of exemplary conservation, linking restoration and on-site training of master craftsmen and local technicians" (G. Boccardi, "Projet de la Coopération Technique Italienne pour la conservation du Centre Historique de Sanaa," *Chroniques Yéménites*, 1993, p. 52).

[152] Interviews with former EOPOCS staff, 10/11/04 and 7/26/05. According to the same source, a similar issue was at stake in the Swiss restoration of Beit al-Ambassi: the Swiss did not provide incentives for local counterparts.

[153] "The last phase of the project foresees the construction in an abandoned and deteriorated zone of the same quarter a building destined to accommodate and promote all the activities linked to the conservation of the old city...The program, already well advanced, should be completed by the beginning of 1993" (G. Boccardi, "Projet de la Coopération Technique Italienne", p. 52).

[154] Former EOPOCS offical, interview, 10/4/04. The house that remained on the site was called Beit al-Tabaqa.

[155] "The Italians designed it in the Yemeni style", said a former EOPOCS official (interview, 10/4/04). The building originally consisted of a ground floor and two stories; an additional floor, designed by architects at GOPHCY, was added in the late 1990's.

them had proposed that the workshop be modeled after a *samsara*, which was the only local

prototype for a public building. Although the interior court does evoke a *samsara*, the local

architects do not see it as such – perhaps because of its modernist (or rather, postmodernist)

language. The Italians, these architects say, wanted to achieve a complete contrast between

the new building and its old surroundings – a tenet of the Venice Charter:

> I believe in this idea, but not here, because of the culture. It will harm the International
> Campaign. We are an official body, trying to guide the people. What we do will be taken as
> an example.[156]

Indeed, residents sometimes point to CATS in exasperation: "They tell us not to use concrete,

and look what they did!" Ironically, the building served an unintended purpose: it was used

as a bunker during the civil war, since it was the only concrete building in the area.[157] The

programming of the building did not turn out as planned. A research lab and training center

were installed on the ground floor, but the equipment was not delivered at the end of the

project. Few workshops in restoration have been conducted there.[158] Moreover, Quaroni

Bonifica's vision of technicians and *usta*s running the center jointly was probably

idealistic.[159] CATS opened in 1995 as a documentation center for GOPHCY, but was not

operational.[160] The building currently houses two other departments, Projects and Planning;

a small auditorium is used for meetings and staff training.

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[156] Interview, 11/7/04. Quaroni Bonifica's outline of the project invokes this principle of the Venice
Charter: "…every innovative component, with regard to the material culture of that specific
typology, must remain distinct in terms of technique and materials, avoiding any imitation of the
characteristics thereof" ("Action Plan", January 1986, p. 30).
[157] Interviews with architects at the conservation office, 8/13/04 and 11/6/04.
[158] I was told of one training session recently held by an *usta*, on decorative brick patterns.
[159] At the meetings that preceded the signing of the agreement, the Italian team described the training
of craftsmen at the center. An EOPOCS official wrote a question mark in the margin, crossed out
craftsmen, and wrote "draftsmen." He wrote in the margin, "We prefer this."
[160] When the Dutch fact-finding mission wrote its report in 1997, CATS was not functioning
("Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen," p. 31).

Work at the urban scale included street paving, the upgrading of utilities, and minor façade repair. In his reports Lewcock had recommended that electrical and telephone lines, which criss-crossed house facades, be removed for aesthetic reasons and professionals at the conservation office agreed with him. The Italian project planned to do this, and laid conduit under the new paving for this purpose. But the wires were not moved underground, because it was not clear who should bear the cost of the work.[161] Street lighting was supposed to be part of the project, but was not done.[162] According to a foreign consultant, certain residents took advantage of the project. When the contractor's men went into houses, some residents asked them to undertake repairs and the workmen complied on a good will basis. But some residents were demanding: when workmen refused to do what was asked of them, they got angry. In two cases residents fired on the workmen and the supervising architect – apparently, a not uncommon occurrence in conservation projects.[163]

While suspicion or hostility was not new, it was perhaps exacerbated by another aspect of the Italian plan: the attempt to reorganize outdoor spaces according to a new "collective" concept. Local professionals and foreign consultants resident in Sana'a

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[161] Apparently the electric company expected payment for the work from the Italian project; the Italians thought it should be an input from the Yemeni government.

[162] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 10/4/04; G. Boccardi, "Projet de la Coopération Technique Italienne", p. 52. A small number of street lights were fabricated and installed in Mu'adh quarter after the design of a foreign consultant, but their Arts and Crafts design seems, to the author, out of place. According to the former director of restoration, street lights were to be provided for the project by a factory at Samsarat al-Dhamari. The factory was proposed by him circa 1988: it would produce electric street lights inspired by old fixtures in the samsaras. Funding was sought and obtained from the UK, and construction drawings were done for the samsara's renovation as a lighting factory. Although the equipment was delivered, the project never got off the ground (interview, 10/11/04; Mashru' masna' fawanis, project drawings on file at GOPHCY's Planning and Projects Offices). Samsarat al-Dhamari was restored in the late 1990's, but some professionals disapprove of the work, saying that it was substantially rebuilt when it could have been restored (interview, 11/29/04). In 2004 it became a retail outlet for women's handicrafts.

[163] "Twice isn't bad for Sana'a," the architect said. A team of workers and SFD staff were shot at as recently as 2002, in connection with the restoration of a maqshama (SFD project manager, interview, 8/8/04). Lewcock himself was caught in crossfire on one occasion, in a house at the edge of the suq.

worried that the plan was insensitive to local culture.[164] Vehicular access would, after all, be

permitted within the neighborhood. One street would run along an alleyway on the west side

of Beit Sari', and would continue through a series of ruined courtyards (*ahwash*, sing. *hawsh*)

to the new workshop. The courtyards were to be demolished and incorporated into the street,

or used for parking. A UNESCO consultant resident in Sana'a – Italian, but not connected

with the Quaroni Bonifica project – expressed her concern in a report to the Cultural Heritage

Division in Paris. The project was intended to provide a model for future work. It would set

a bad precedent, she argued, to encourage traffic through narrow alleyways where none

existed; these alleyways, along with the courtyards that abutted them, had important social

functions, especially for women and children. Ruined areas could be cleaned up and

squatters could be removed, but the courtyards should be left as they were, and the alley

reserved for pedestrians:

> The *hawsh* is one of the typical characteristics of the Sanani style and it must be
> preserved...It should be stressed that not all the technical staff of EOPOCS agree with the
> proposed solution...We must ensure that this example, to be repeated in other areas, is a good
> one... the study for the proposal was probably not prepared in an adequate time spent to
> understand the life in the quarter and with adequate knowledge in local architecture.

Her report was accompanied by a map illustrating the proposed route, and photos of the gated

alleyway and courtyards.[165] The *hawsh* and the alley, says GOPHCY's former Director of

Planning, are part of a spatial system designed to ensure familial privacy:

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[164] One of the concerned foreigners was Susanna Innocenti, whose report is cited below; she was the
only consultant sent on a long-term mission by UNESCO, funded by Italy (October 1988 through
July 1990). The other foreigner was Jamie Stone, Peace Corps volunteer, who had worked closely
with the community: "She knew the plan wouldn't work" (former EOPOCS official, interview,
10/4/04).
[165] In the report the consultant, S. Innocenti, referred to the new "handicraft school" but circled the
site of the proposed workshop/laboratory (report to M. Bouchenaki, Chief OPS/I, UNESCO, date not
visible; written before June 5, 1989, the date of Bouchenki's letter to Lewcock, to which the report is
attached).

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> If you happen to go into these areas – the courtyard (*hawsh*), the locked quarter (*al-hara al-mughaliqa*), the cul-de-sac (*al-shari' al-mughlaq*) – people will tell you to get out: they'll say, 'this place is locked' (*hina mughlaq*), or 'there is no way through' (*ma fish tariq*).

Women use the areas as an extension of their homes for certain household tasks and to socialize with neighbors: they are veiled, but feel free to spend time in this space, since no strangers pass by.[166] "The Italians wanted to make the neighborhood like the French Quarter in New Orleans," he says. They had only been in Sana'a for six months: they may have studied the physical layout and the economy, but they didn't understand the city's social relations.

> EOPOCS staff knew that these kind of spaces existed in Europe, and they knew they wouldn't work in Sana'a. They told the Italian team this. But the Italians persisted: they tried to convince the residents of the plan, but they refused. A few told them directly: 'We're not in Europe.'

This former official, who is himself from Lower Yemen, believes the plan would have worked in Aden, but not in Sana'a. Like other professionals from the south, he sees customs in Sana'a as "strange" – yet clearly feels an obligation to protect them.

This seemingly closed and hostile environment frustrated the Italian team – as is evident from an opinion piece written by one of the resident supervisors, Giovanni Boccardi, for the journal of the French Institute. Reiterating the goals of the project – to address the problems of the old city, to provide replicable models for restoration and urban conservation, to instill a sense of pride in local heritage – Boccardi admitted that now, as the project neared its end, only some of these goals had been realized:

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[166] "The Sana'ani house doesn't have the bent entrance (*al-madkhal al-munkasir*) that you find in other Arab towns, which prevents passers-by from seeing inside. Instead, we have these exterior features" (interview, 11/1/04). His observations are confirmed by my own. I often walked through the lovely gated alley that stretches between al-Abhar Square and CATS, in which a large old tree stands. Without fail several women were working there, usually sorting grain, and always greeted me. They have apparently not been discouraged from using this space even though it has become a well-used short-cut to CATS.

It is perhaps instructive to emphasize the great difficulties encountered at the local level by the Italian project during the course of its implementation. A sometimes difficult collaboration with the local administration, the mistrust of the population and its acute sense of private property, have largely undermined the successful progress of this project and threatened its realization. All these factors impeded the correct installation of planned urban infrastructure and have compromised the...effective use of public spaces. And if this 'insensitivity' and lack of participation [on the part of the Yemenis] in fact constitute the reason for the Italian presence in Yemen, the main question that poses itself today is...whether a simple maintenance operation really justifies so much expense, the signing of international agreements, and the presence of such a large number of technicians, experts, and supervisors. The misunderstanding is perhaps born of a utopian and ideological vision, a 'pasolinian' vision one could say, concerning an active Yemeni participation in the safeguarding of their own artistic and architectural heritage. In reality, the possibilities of intervening in the whole of the urban fabric are practically nonexistent. The Italian intervention would have doubtless been better perceived if it had been limited to saving a specific monument, concentrating its effort like France and Germany, on particular objectives: the city wall or one of the caravansarays.[167]

Earlier in the same issue, Boccardi had described the restoration of Beit Sari' as "integrating and improving traditional Yemeni construction techniques with the help of modern methods, respecting the original structure of the building and guaranteeing its longest possible conservation." The use of traditional techniques, less and less used nowadays, required research and analysis that allowed the production of a kind of manual, which could be used in the restoration of future buildings.[168] But in the opinion piece that followed this report, Boccardi admitted that the high cost of the work and the use of overly complex techniques could not but discourage homeowners from emulating the work. Moreover, they would not be able to visit the project since it was in private hands.

These economic factors and lack of knowledge about local problems are not the only issues...From a theoretical point of view, this elevated conception of restoration is not suited to the architectural reality of the country. Yemeni architecture makes use of very fragile materials, and has undergone over the course of centuries all kinds of modifications that are not easily dated and are difficult to reference – in conformity with an architectural history that

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[167] G. Boccardi, "Point de Vue", *Chroniques Yéménites*, 1993, pp. 54-5 (translation mine). The tone of this opinion piece contrasts with Boccardi's description of the project earlier in the same issue ("Project de la Coopération Technique Italienne," pp. 52-3). From the late 1980's the French government provided technical and financial assistance for the restoration and reconstruction of the southern city wall, a project that was also controversial.

[168] "Project de la Coopération Technique Italienne," p. 52-3.

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is characterized by little monumentality, and the absence of great technological and typological transformations. It does not require recourse to advanced technologies used in the restoration of monumental buildings.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the methods used by the Italian team in Beit Sari' were heavy-handed by today's standards (figures 36, 37). The foundation walls, for example, were consolidated using through anchors and staples, secured with cement injected into the masonry. Throughout the basement and on the upper stories, the inside face of the walls were stiffened using a layer of plaster or concrete reinforced by wire mesh; a layer of concrete was applied to floors to stiffen them, sometimes embedded with wire mesh or steel elements. The stair core was tied with a steel ring at basement level, and with reinforced concrete coating above. In some areas, exterior brickwork and stonework was "rebuilt section by section" using what was probably the traditional technique of *fals* – an attempt to keep the outside surface unchanged - even as the interior was essentially rebuilt.[169] For *fals* and other masonry work an old *usta* was employed; according to the EOPOCS counterpart, he was one of numerous Yemeni workers on the project.[170] But according to other EOPOCS staff and the *'aqil* of the quarter, labor on the project was largely Ethiopian. Several informants told me that during the course of the restoration work, no Yemenis - not even employees of EOPOCS staff - were allowed in the building. The owner's eldest son recalls that even the family was not allowed to enter, but he managed to get in on one occasion, with supervisors (*muraqibin*):

> I saw that they had demolished the ceilings and the walls; I heard that they had put wire mesh in the walls. They put concrete (*ciment kimawi*) and *qaddad* on the roof. They had excavated eight meters under the storage room (*harr*); maybe they were looking for things hidden in

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[169] A note on a QB drawing from 1981 of a house in an "advanced state of degradation" states: "Consolidation of degraded brick walling by remaking of joints without altering the outer surface" ("The Urban Texture, Guide of Standard Measures, Summary of Example D, PIII 28").
[170] Interview, 10/11/04.

1948 [the siege of Sana'a during the attempted overthrow of the imam]. This house is seven hundred years old. We thought that there must be antiquities (*athar*) in the house, that's why they wouldn't let us in. When I was little, scholars used to enter our house with cameras. Maybe they had equipment they had let them see what is behind the walls.[171]

"Why the secrecy?" asks the *'aqil*. "It made people suspicious."[172] Rumors still circulate today, more than a decade later: while I was photographing the house, a neighbor told me that the Italians had stolen treasure from the basement. The idea that money and valuables are concealed in old houses is a widely held belief, perhaps deriving from the practice of hiding one's wealth behind a stone, especially in the stair pier.[173] It figured prominently in an incident at another house, Beit al-'Ambassi, which was being restored by a Swiss team. The public scandal that resulted in 1992 was doubtlessly fueled by the conduct of work at Beit Sari'.[174]

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[171] Interview, 9/30/04. I am grateful to the owners of the house for granting me an interview and allowing me access to the house, which they have rarely done in the years since the restoration.

[172] Interview, 9/23/04. "The Italians did not even allow us to review the project accounts," says a former EOPOCS staffmember.

[173] This custom was related to me by the former Director of the Museum of Popular Life, interview, 6/11/05.

[174] According to the eldest son, a neighbor told the family that the Italians were removing things in trunks. The Swiss team at Beit al-'Ambassi was accused of having purchased eight trunks to remove the treasure it had uncovered in the building's foundations (F. Mermier, "Sana, métaphore de l'Etat yéménite", in G. Grandguillaume, et. al, eds., *Sanaa Hors les Murs*, p. 58, fn. 12).

    The project to restore Beit al-'Ambassi was launched in September 1991 and was to last five years. It was conceived as an interdisciplinary project that would include archeological investigations, studies of traditional construction techniques, and restoration. It would also include socio-economic studies to determine the best use of the building. According to the Campaign's promotional brochure, the Swiss would participate in an extension of the UNDP/ILO project for handicrafts, suggesting a related function for the house. Beit al-Amri on the Sa'ila would be restored to house the archeological team during their work. The Swiss team was led by Stefano Bianca and coordinated in Sana'a by Jacques Feiner (J. Feiner, "Projet de la Mission conjointe yéménite de restauration", *Chroniques Yéménites*, 1993, p. 53; B. Lane, "Pilot Projects", p. 27).

    Beit al-'Ambassi is a 14th century house in the southeastern quadrant of the city, along a major artery from Midan al-Luqayh to the *suq*. The house and location were attractive to the Swiss. But the house was a family *waqf*, and not all members of the family wanted to sell. Like the Italians at Beit Sari', the Swiss insisted on the choice of Beit al-'Ambassi for the project (former EOPOCS staff members, interview, 10/10/04, and 11/7/04). The project seems to have been brought to a halt when the owners reoccupied the house – perhaps as a result of the events described below. According to an EOPOCS employee, some on the Swiss side still talk of resuming the work.

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It seems likely that the secrecy that enveloped the project came not from the Italian

side, but from the administration of the Executive Office. "At this time, we were prohibiting

the use of cement in the old city," says a one staff member, "but the Italians built a concrete

structure inside the house." [175] Many of the interventions described above had been

anticipated in the Proposal Phase of the Quaroni Bonifica studies, which outlined the defects

of traditional construction; a set of standards and measures was developed to create within

the building "a truly structural 'skeleton', providing…new and greater capabilities to resist

stresses." [176] In an interview a decade later, Boccardi attributed the measures largely to a

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These events, which unfolded in 1992, reveal much about how conservation – and particularly the role of foreigners in the endeavor – was perceived by the local population. According to Mermier's account, "a merchant known for his obsession with subterranean treasures dreamt that the Swiss archeologists had discovered treasure of the Queen of Saba [Sheba] in the foundations of Bayt al-'Anbasi." The merchant convinced a high-level official to write an article in a local paper denouncing the excavation, which would deprive Yemen of "an immense treasure" that could provide for the country's future development. Assisted by soldiers supplied by the official, the merchant broke into the house at night and with shovels and pickaxes broke up the excavation site in search of the treasure. Both the merchant and the official were briefly imprisoned. The merchant undertook a second mission, with men supplied by a tribal sheikh from the Khawlan. They were accompanied by a man from Sar'ab, said to have the gift of seeing beneath the ground; he assured the group that there was no treasure in the foundations. The episode was widely covered in the press and had significant repercussions among residents of the old city; in an effort to sort out the matter, public statements were issued by the chairman of the conservation office (al-Haddad) and by the Swiss ambassador in Riyadh. The matter seemed to be closed, but in August 1994 the merchant undertook a symbolic gesture, inspired by tribal custom, to affirm his position: he sacrificed four oxen in the court of Beit al-'Ambassi, and four more at each of the four entrances to the old city. In this episode, Mermier concludes , "the treasure of the Queen of Saba [is]… extracted by foreigners from the entrails of the city, under the cover of an archeological dig which, according to its detractors, was inspired by the Saudi state." The proximity of the house to the site of the 6th century Cathedral of Sana'a, he suggests, doubtlessly fueled the myth of treasure ("Sana, métaphore de l'Etat yéménite", pp. 51-2). According to a former EOPOCS staff member, the official in question was from the Mayor's office. He says the incident was one expression of the then-fierce competition between the Mayor's Office and GOPHCY to assert control over the old city (interview, 6/16/05).

[175] This individual (like several other former staff members I interviewed) attribute the secrecy to al-Haddad: as a former security officer, he "had that mentality" (interview, 9/25/04). The architect who worked as counterpart to the Italians, however, sees the secrecy as natural: "If I were managing a project, I would want to keep the site secure."

[176] Figure 37 is part of an axonometric of a house showing "very advanced degradation"; it illustrates many of the methods employed at Beit Sari' ("The Urban Texture, Guide of Standard Measures, Summary of Example D, PIII 28"). For an enumeration of the defects of traditional construction, see "The Urban Texture," PIII, pp. 18-19.

structural consultant employed by Bonifica; at this point, he says, Quaroni was not heavily

involved in the project. [177] The consultant had no knowledge of the history of local

construction, nor did he have archives to consult. To be on the safe side, he overdesigned the

structure. His design involved sophisticated techniques and required specialized technicians;

this, as well as the use of a foreign contractor, contributed to the cost increase.

Despite these issues, Boccardi sees positive aspects to the project. The interior was

carefully designed to incorporate lighting and other modern features in a way that offset

traditional finishes and elements. The project anticipated the reuse of the tower house as a

multi-family structure, and so made each floor into an independent living unit. While many

houses are being used in this way, the solution is not always straightforward. According to

the EOPOCS counterpart, after Beit Sari' was reoccupied by the owners it was difficult for

the family to share the house, because the shares were not divided by floor. As such, a

separate apartment on each floor, with requisite privacy, was difficult to achieve. This is

probably one reason that the elder son has moved with one of his wives to a house outside the

old city.

Near the end of the project, in early 1993, the family forcibly reoccupied the house –

leading to an official protest by the Italian Foreign Ministry and suspension of project funds.

Although several versions of the story circulate, they reveal a common thread. Under the

project contract (1986) EOPOCS had agreed to make available two to four houses, which

would be acquired by the government; according to the rules of the Italian technical

cooperation, work could not be performed on private property. The Italian team insisted on

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[177] Interview, 7/21/04. The diminished role of Studio Quaroni at this point seems to be borne out by
the drawings. Final Design drawings for Beit Sari' (1990) are signed only by a representative of
Bonifica; the title block cites the authors as "Bonifica S.p.A. (agent, *mandataria*) and Studio Quaroni
S.r.l.-I.C.L.A. S.p.A." This contrasts to the title block of Proposal Phase drawings (1981-3), which
reads "Studio Quaroni S.r.l. with operational support by Bonifica S.p.A."

restoring Beit Sari' – although the owners of the house did not want to sell.[178] The director

of the conservation office, Abd al-Rahman al-Haddad, was under pressure to secure the

house so that work would begin. He worked hard to convince the owner, who was old and

ill, to sell the house. According to one version of the story, the owner finally agreed to

vacate the house and negotiate terms of the sale later; he agreed verbally to a selling price of

YR 20,000,000. By the time the project was complete, the owner had died and the heirs did

not want to negotiate.[179] The owner's eldest son tells a different story: the contract signed

by his father said that the owner would take back the house once work was complete, with no

obligation to sell. Because of this arrangement, EOPOCS paid for temporary housing for the

family at a house called Beit al-Wazir.[180] In 1993, as the project was nearing completion,

the family saw an article in the newspaper that said their house was to be used as a center for

conservation studies. The son recounts:

> As soon as we saw this we rushed to the house with our weapons and stayed there. We knew
> that if the case went to court, we would have no recourse. Al-Haddad sent a solider [probably
> a guard posted at the conservation office] to ask why we did this. We said, 'Tell al-Haddad
> he'd better not come here.' But al-Haddad did come with the Italians, and we showed him
> the newspaper article. We explained that we were afraid that the house would be taken from
> us, so we came back. The Italians understood, they were cultured and educated people
> (*muthaqqifin muta'allimin*).

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[178] Former EOPOCS official, interview, 10/4/04 and 10/11/04. Reportedly it was Quaroni's widow
who, as principal of Studio Quaroni, insisted on Beit Sari' and had strong ideas about how the project
should be conducted. The EOPOCS counterpart on the Italian project, who was from 1990 in charge
of the Department of Architectural Studies and Technical Cooperation, was also involved in the
selection of a house to be restored by the Swiss government, and says that the situation was similar.
"We showed [the Swiss team] several houses, where owners were willing to sell, but they insisted on
Beit al-'Ambassi." He says that the Italian team also wanted to restore the house of Sheikh Sinan
Abu Luhum on al-Abhar Square; al-Haddad tried to add it to the project but the budget was
insufficient. Sheikh Sinan did not cede his house to GOPCHY until 1990 (interviews, 11/6/04 and
7/25/05).
[179] Interview, October 2004.
[180] "Of course al-Haddad promised the family that they could return to the house," says a former staff
member. "Why else would we have paid for temporary lodging for the family?"

The Italian team wanted to return to the house to finish outstanding work, but the family refused. They also refused an offer of USD 1,000,000 for the house from al-Haddad, who said the money would come from an Italian company.[181] Two former staff members of the conservation office told me in separate interviews that there were, in fact, two different versions of the contract. The Italian contractor was aware of this, but the government of Italy was not.[182]

Lamenting the fact that this project, which was supposed to be a model project open to professionals and the public, would never be seen, sociologist Franck Mermier writes:

> The idea of purchase by the public authorities had always hovered beneath the project, but was never realized...[T]his failure is revealing, above all, of the quasi-improvised character of restoration policy that is designed blow by blow, according to the possibilities of financing. The foreign party, strengthened by its capital and technology, can impose many of its conceptions, but is sometimes confronted by local forces that cause the projects to deviate from their initial objectives.[183]

Most professionals disapprove of the techniques used in the project and of the way in which it was conducted. They fault not the Italians but their own leadership, which failed to set conditions on the project:

> It's the fault of the administration of the Executive Office...As for the techniques used, I can accept it as an experiment, but it can't be used as a model. Such efforts can only be justified for an outstanding building.[184]

The project sent the wrong message to the community, says one architect, and worked against the goals of the Campaign. It suggested that conservation required sophisticated techniques and foreign expertise, because local techniques were inadequate; at the same time,

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[181] According to the elder brother, the siblings present didn't want to sell. "We didn't believe it was true. We thought it was a way for them to get back into the house" (interview, 9/30/04).

[182] Interviews, 9/25/04 and 12/6/04.

[183] "Sana'a, métaphore de l'Etat yéménite", in G. Grandguillaume, et. al., eds., *Sanaa hors les Murs*, p. 51.

[184] Interview, 11/7/04. This view was echoed by Boccardi: he pointed out that the conservation office was aware of what was happening and could have intervened (interview, 7/25/04).

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the secrecy that surrounded the project contradicted the notion that heritage was a public

endeavor, for the benefit of the community.[185] Even the EOPOCS counterpart, who is

generally sympathetic to the project, admits that it was not suited to the local context. He

recalls that at the end of the work the supervisor for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

who used to travel back and forth to Sana'a, said with regret: "With that money, we could

have restored so many houses."[186]

Later projects

After 1994, the UNESCO Campaign provided little technical or financial support to the

conservation office. "I guess you can say that the Campaign ended with al-Haddad's

resignation in 1995," says one professional.[187] But as we saw in chapter three, conservation

activities had been waning for several years. There were two main reasons: the withdrawal

of donor funding in 1991, after the Gulf War; and the government restructuring of 1990-1

that transformed the conservation office into GOPHCY, responsible for all historic cities of a

newly united Yemen. The office's mandate expanded just as its political influence declined:

no longer attached to the Prime Minister's office, it was, in theory, a semi-autonomous

agency within the Ministry of Culture. But in practice, like other government offices, it is

weighed down by a heavy bureaucratic structure and has little fiscal control. With

GOPHCY's decline, other players took up the banner of conservation. One of these was the

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[185] Interview, 7/18/05.

[186] Interview, 10/11/04. This would have been the Director of Works (*Direttore dei Lavori*) for the Foreign Ministry.

[187] Former official at the conservation office, interview, 7/12/05. I have not been able to find an official end date for the Campaign, but it appears to have ended ten years after it was officially announced by UNESCO's General Director in 1984. "We thought the Campaign was supposed to be twenty years, not ten years," says a former GOPHCY official. The terminal report for the UNDP/UNESCO project to assist the Campaign office is dated 1996 ("Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a: Project Findings and Recommendations", Restricted Report, FMR/CLT/CH/96/223(UNDP)).

Capitol Secretariat (*Amanat al-'Asima*, the Mayor's Office), which had been a nemesis of the conservation office during the Campaign. Directly responsible to the Prime Minister's Office and now led by a widely admired mayor, the office is one of the most active and efficient sponsors of conservation. Competition between the Mayor's Office and GOPHCY still exists, especially regarding the right to issue building permits in the old city, but there seems to be an uneasy détente. There is even talk of restricting GOPHCY's role to that of an advisory agency, leaving implementation to the Mayor's Office – a solution that had been proposed by Lewcock and others in the 1980's.

By far the most influential sponsor of conservation is the Social Fund for Development. Created in 1997, it quickly became the main development agency in the country thanks to World Bank support, and to its direct relationship to the Prime Minister. In the late 1990's, after a World Bank study for a major cultural heritage initiative was aborted, funds for the project were rerouted through the SFD and other donors began to follow suit. With the renewal of donor interest, there has been a modest renaissance in conservation activities. Conservation is now widely viewed as a development strategy, because it creates jobs and protects cultural assets – which consultants describe as a kind of "oil".[188] Cultural heritage gradually came to account for a greater proportion of the SFD's program activities, and it is now a separate unit within the agency.

The SFD's cultural heritage projects are funded through loans and grants from the World Bank, the EU, the Arab Fund (Kuwait), and individual donor nations, often with matching funds from the government. Typically government agencies like GOPHCY, GOAMM, and the governorates submit projects outside their normal operating budgets to the

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[188] "Historic cities are our 'oil'", said D. Pini in a conversation with local professionals (Cultural Heritage Inventory Workshop, Sana'a, July 2004).

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SFD for funding; for these agencies, as for donors, it is a way to bypass the bureaucracy of the ministerial system. These agencies partner with the SFD for implementation; in practice, this means secunding employees as consultants to the SFD. This is the only way to implement special projects given very limited government resources. Most professionals are pleased that the SFD has renewed opportunities in conservation, but some officials complain that it further undermines the efficacy of government.[189]

The SFD has financed and implemented a wide range of cultural heritage projects, beginning with the restorations of urban gardens; these projects also included the restoration of associated structures, including a number of small mosques, *marna*'s (well ramps), and *birkas* (retention basins).[190] The SFD has also sponsored the restoration of a number of monuments, like the 'Amiriyya *madrasa* in Rada, the Ashrafiyya Mosque in Ta'izz, and most recently, the Great Mosque of Sana'a.[191] Only limited attempts have been made to address the issue of house maintenance – in part because of restrictions on donor aid that usually disqualify private property. But the director of the SFD's Cultural Heritage Unit believes that donors can be persuaded to finance such projects, depending on how they are structured.

> There needs to be a fund to maintain houses, and incentives or subsidies for electricity and water. We should reap the advantage of 'international value.' Why should residents pay for expensive maintenance, especially when they aren't allowed to expand their houses? ...Old cities should not be seen as private assets. In the end they become public assets, so they should be eligible for grants.[192]

The idea of the historic city as a public asset figured in an innovative project for Shibam-Hadhramaut, a World Heritage site known for its magnificent earthen tower houses (figure

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[189] For background on the SFD, see chapter three, pp. 187-9 and fn. 144.

[190] For a description of the urban garden projects, see above, chapter four, pp. 235-7.

[191] The current restoration of the Great Mosque of Sana'a, under the direction of architect 'Isaam 'Awwad, is the latest and most comprehensive of many studies and interventions.

[192] Interview, 10/20/02. In addition to the project for Shibam Hadhramaut, to be discussed below, the Director of the CH unit says that homeowner loans were made available in Zabid and Sa'ada through the Dutch-funded UCHP. When that program closed in 2004, the SFD was asked to take it over (interview, 7/20/04).

38). Inspired by Swiss architect Jacques Feiner's 1995 study,[193] the project was launched

with funding from the SFD and GTZ, the German state development agency; the local branch

of GOPHCY acts as counterpart.

The argument for public assistance goes as follows: once an area is declared historic,

a kind of "tax" is levied on residents. Their land and house are placed under restrictions (they

cannot demolish the house or develop the property) and they are expected to bear high

maintenance costs. It is only right that part of the tax be returned to residents; usually

thought of as a "subsidy", the amount in fact compensates residents for the costs they bear.

The amount of the subsidy is based on a number of factors, including the difference between

work inside an historic area and work outside it, and risk involved for the builder. In the

case of Shibam, this produce a cost differential of about 50%.[194] But in the case of the SFD-

GTZ project, residents have to pay 70% of restoration costs – an amount that most feel is too

high.[195] Nevertheless, interest in the project seems strong - many families are on the waiting

list - and *ustas* who work with the project say call it a "benefit to the city (*maksab al-

madina*)."[196]

According to the GTZ project director, the project aims not to provide "models" of

restoration, but rather to introduce conservation as a process; for this reason, it did not begin

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[193] "Study Report for the Preservation of Old Shibam", GTZ/GOPHCY, 1995.
[194] O. A-A Hallaj, GTZ project director, summarizing an argument developed by Jacques Feiner (interview in Shibam, 11/29/04). The difference between repair work in historic and new districts was calculated at around 40%. The figure includes not only costs of materials and techniques, but transport costs: in historic areas access of vehicles and machinery are often impeded by narrow streets, small windows and doors, and so forth. To this figure of 40%, a risk factor of 10% was added.
[195] This according to two homeowners who participated in the project (interviews, 12/1/04).
[196] Site visits with three *ustas*, 12/2/04. According to the GTZ project director, in December 2004 some sixty contracts had been completed, another twenty were underway; thirty homeowners were on the waiting list. In addition, some thirty per cent of houses had been documented – although the director says documentation has remained intentionally schematic.
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with historically significant buildings. The approach is a participatory one: a house is chosen for restoration at the request of the owner. A team composed of architect, engineer, and usta (the latter working as a consultant to the project) assesses the work that needs to be done, and prepares an estimate.[197] The owner decides which items of work he wants to do and signs a contract with the project office; the owner then works with an usta of his choice.[198] According to an usta who works with the project, he gives the owner an estimate of work by the day. But the project team's estimate is calculated according to square meters of work, based on a database of prices developed with ustas. The idea is to build their confidence in quantity estimating.[199]

Various strategies are used to ensure the quality of the work. A retired usta in his seventies works as a full-time consultant to the project, supervising the work of younger ustas. In another case, the project has helped younger ustas secure contracts by partnering them with a more experienced builder.[200] The younger ustas know mud construction but may have less experience with the buildings of Shibam, most of which are one hundred to one hundred fifty years old; as in Sana'a, these houses are subject to new structural problems due to the introduction of piped water.[201] The project attempts to develop standards for conservation and building reuse, without imposing norms. It is expected, for example, that

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[197] The owner begins work with his own funds; the project reimburses him for 35% of each draw. The estimate includes a 20% contractor's fee; if the owner manages the work himself, he keeps the contractor's 20% fee. One of the ustas who works with the project said the purpose of the 20% fee was to help cover the high cost of materials (interview, 12/2/04).

[198] Director of GOPHCY-Shibam, interview, 12/2/04; usta, interview, 12/2/04.

[199] The database consists of prices for various types of work, based on time and materials that ustas say they use for various tasks (O. 'A-'A Hallaj, interview, 11/30/04). According to one usta, the project team's estimates are relatively accurate, but in some cases they miss items that involve additional work for which he is not compensated. Another usta says that in his experience, extra work is always covered, in one case by additional funds from the SFD.

[200] This team was restoring the Mosque of al-Hara in December 2004; they had previously restored two houses owned by a family (GTZ staff member, interview, 12/2/04).

[201] According to the three ustas who have worked with the GTZ project, groundwater due to leaking pipes is the main cause of structural damage.

the *usta*'s materials, techniques, and details will change over time and on a case-by-case basis.[202] Rebuilding, which has always been a normal part of house repair, seems to be routine in the project.[203] The most important thing, says the project director, is to guarantee the future supply of master builders, and to further the continuing viability of mud construction. The project therefore supports the apprenticeship system, without interfering in it.[204]

As such, the project taps into and supports an existing resource: a local cadre of mud builders that continues to be strong and self-confident. Largely due to cost and availability, mud has remained the preferred form of construction in the Wadi Hadhramaut.[205] New building types in mud dot the valley – large, wide free-standing buildings, with plain, rhythmic openings that are reminiscent of the tower houses. Because of the fragility of mud, structures are often rebuilt – so ongoing maintenance has been and continues to be a source

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[202] Project staff occasionally intervene to save rare ornamentation on a house, or to persuade an *usta* to use less cement in the mud mix than he is used to – without asking him to eliminate it altogether. Details do and should change within the tradition, says Hallaj; the houses of old Shibam bear evidence of recent restorations (interview, 11/29/04).

    Like the spectacular mud palaces of Tarim (most of which date from the 1930's), houses in Shibam bear influences of both Indian architecture and European classicism. A first generation *usta* showed me a façade he had done, next to a façade executed by his teacher (*mu'allim*) twenty-five years earlier. He pointed out differences in techniques and materials; both facades have classicizing elements, but the columns on the recent house are more elaborate. When asked how he executes the design he replied: "I use a form (*tabla*) of metal or wood – they are made for common designs; or else I use anything, like a can, to do a design that the owner likes. I put it on the mud and trace over it" (interview, 12/1/04).

[203] I asked one builder if demolition is prohibited. "No," he replied, "if there's a lot of damage it must be rebuilt." In the old days, says the elder mason, if an owner wanted to demolish his house, the *'aqils* recorded the position of windows, drains, and other features that affected neighboring houses. The house was then rebuilt exactly as it was. "Now the conservation office (*al-hai'a*) enforces these rules, instead of the *'aqils*" (interviews, 12/2/04).

[204] Interview, 12/3/04.

[205] Although concrete is poorly suited to the extremely hot climate, this has not prevented those with means to build in concrete. According to a local *usta*, they do this primarily because they want more space – and concrete allows much thinner walls (20 cm, as opposed to 45 cm for mud). All these houses have water-based air-conditioning (interview, 12/1/04). A resident of Sana'a told me that his father built a new house of concrete in the old city in the 1970's for the same reason: concrete allows thinner walls than stone (interview 7/19/04).

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of work for *ustas*. These factors have contributed to the economic strength of mud building, and to the continuing evolution of types and techniques.[206] Yet the future of mud building is uncertain: *ustas* feel that over time, concrete will displace mud as the preferred building material. Moreover, they are not anxious for their sons to continue in the trade, which is hard and tiring. "I want them to write," said the older *usta* – that is, to work in an office, as an employee or professional.[207]

Perhaps because of their strong position, *ustas* seem to be treated as partners in conservation activities to a greater degree than in the north. According to an architect from Lower Yemen who worked on the Sana'a Campaign, *ustas* are treated as equals because there is a more enlightened mentality (*'aqliyya*) in the south, formed under more than two decades of socialism.[208] There may be some truth in this view: Lewcock recalls that when he was helping to lay the groundwork for the two UNESCO Campaigns in the early 1980's, community meetings were a normal part of the process in Shibam, but were discouraged by officials in Sana'a. According to another professional, this is why conservation works better in the south: "The culture of administration is different there, the people are more conscious,

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[206] Director of GOPHCY-Shibam, interview, 11/29/04. "It's not like *ustas* are sitting around, waiting for restoration work," he says. "They will tell you they're too busy to take on your project." The *usta* who worked on al-Qasr al-Junubi, the restored palace that now serves as GOPHCY's headquarters, seemed surprised when I asked him if he was a consultant on the project. "No, my brother and I were contractors. We have too much work for that."

In some cases, says the director, *ustas* use concrete beams in mud structures, and plumbing pipes are used for ceiling framing. According to one *usta* who works with the SFD-GTZ project, many builders have switched to lead pipes (*qasab anabib*) because they are impervious to insects, and allow a longer span: "Now everyone wants larger rooms," he says (interview, 12/1/04). But another *usta* points out that 'ilb, the wood traditionally used in framing, is no longer available (12/2/04).

[207] Of the *usta*'s five sons, two work in the building trades (interview, 12/1/04). Two of the four *ustas* I interviewed in Shibam appeared in Caterina Borelli's documentary film, "The Architecture of Mud" (1999); in this film, they and other *ustas* expressed doubts regarding the survival of mud building in the region.

[208] When I visited the site of a new Center for Mud Architecture with an architect who has worked mainly in Sana'a, the latter noted that the project documents listed local *ustas* as part of the project team. "You would never see this in Sana'a," he said.

so projects succeed. Here [in Sana'a] it's done by force." This individual (who is also from Lower Yemen) attended the IHS training course in Rotterdam in the early 1990's with the director of GOPHCY-Shibam; the latter, he says, "often spoke in the name of the citizen." Yet in an interview in December 2004, this director described the citizenry of Shibam in less idealized terms:

> Citizens are the main problem of the GTZ project. They expect the government to renovate and restore, to do everything for them. Now they're starting to get the idea that they have to contribute.[209]

During the Sana'a Campaign, reports by Lewcock and the International Working Group repeatedly called for a loan bank and other forms of assistance to homeowners. Some officials, however, felt that a loan bank would not work in Sana'a because it would not be respected. For the same reason, professionals at the SFD and GOPHCY doubted that a participatory project like the one in Shibam would work in Sana'a. To date, homeowners in Sana'a have had access only to a limited and informal grant program: funds earmarked for homeowner compensation – in cases of damage from street paving or burst pipes – have been diverted to provide small grants for house repair. But the number of grants does not come close to meeting needs, nor are their amounts sufficient.[210] Even if citizens could be persuaded to participate in a project, there would be other problems to overcome. In cities and towns, and especially in the capital, it is difficult to establish a direct funding relationship

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[209] Interview, 12/1/04.

[210] This may be due to faulty or incomplete estimates by GOPHCY staff (as in the case of one homeowner I interviewed), or to the often substantial kickbacks that are written into official estimates. One inspector says that grants are made according to an owner's influence (*wasta*) rather than need.

GOPHCY's lawyer feels that the use of compensation funds for homeowner repairs is not a long-term solution, since it has been challenged on legal grounds by the Ministry of Finance. He says that a "heritage fund" was established several years ago by ministerial decree, funded by taxes on several high-volume consumer products. To date, however, these funds have not been requested for projects (interview, 8/16/04).

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with local counterparts.[211] But the biggest problem is scale: Sana'a is ten times the size of

Shibam, with some five thousand houses to Shibam's four hundred fifty.[212]

The restoration of facades on the Wadi Sa'ila (2003)

Despite these obstacles, a pilot project for house restoration and repair was undertaken in

2002-3. In contrast to the usual process, whereby projects are proposed to the SFD by

GOPHCY or other government agencies, this project was initiated by the SFD's director,

'Abd al-Karim al-Arhabi.[213] It was conceived as a project of "façade improvement" that

would beautify a stretch of the Wadi Sa'ila - part of preparations for Sana'a's year as

Cultural Capital of the Arab World (2004):

> The cleaning and restoration of these highly visible houses comes amidst preparation for
> Sana'a as the Arab Cultural Capital, 2004. Historic landmarks around the city will be
> restored to their original condition.[214]

The creation of an outdoor theater in Bustan al-Amri, which used the facades of the Wadi as

a backdrop for performances, was also part of preparations for 2004.[215] From the time of the

Quaroni Bonifica studies, the Wadi Sa'ila had been seen as an area of great appeal to tourists.

Various proposals for the paving and upgrading of the Sa'ila had been considered since the

mid-1970's, but it was not paved until the mid-1990's, funded in part by proceeds from the

sale of American wheat.[216] While the upgrading of the Sa'ila was primarily to control

flooding and improve conditions in the old city, officials frankly admit that it was conceived

[211] As noted above, professionals report that work with citizens in Sana'a is impeded by many layers
of bureaucracy, all of whom want a "cut".
[212] Director of the Cultural Heritage Unit, SFD, interview, 10/20/02.
[213] Project manager, SFD, interview, 8/9/04. Al-Arhabi was recently appointed Minister of Planning,
but will retain directorship of the SFD (R. Lewcock, personal communication, February 2006).
[214] "Maintaining the historic Al-Saila façades", Yemen Observer, 5/3/03, p. 1.
[215] This garden was the target of protests by the community; see above, chapter four, pp. 206-7.
[216] This first phase of the Sa'ila improvement was for the area within the old city; subsequent phases
have improved the Sa'ila to the north and south.

as a project to attract foreign tourists;[217] the planning of cultural and recreational activities along the Wadi were designed, at least in part, with tourists in mind.

According to the SFD project manager, al-Arhabi's idea was to correct defacements (*tashwihat*) along the Sa'ila. A study of existing elevations was carried out in the summer of 2002, with the goal of identifying problems. Under the pilot project a small number of houses would be restored, selected according to the interest of owners and the architectural and aesthetic quality of the structures. Preference would be given to houses overlooking the Sa'ila; if the project was successful, it would be replicated throughout the city. The project was implemented in coordination with the Mayor's Office; the project counterpart was the elected Local Council, which represents most voting districts in the old city.

The SFD project documents note that Sana'a's status as world heritage (*turath 'alami*) derives from the unique decorations of its house facades and from the planning of its streets and urban gardens, which should therefore be conserved. Articles in the local press emphasized the project as one of beautification, aimed at repairing exterior features like *hizams* (decorative brick bands), *zakhrafa* (ornament, especially plaster), and the arches of *qamariyyat*, and the relocation of unsightly utility lines and pipes. In an interview with a local newspaper, the director of the Local Council said that the goal of the pilot project was

> ..to return the facades [of four to five houses] to their prior condition and to remove modern innovations (*al-istihdathat al-jadida*) like new openings, windows, and awnings, and defacements (*tashwihat*) resulting from random acts (*'amal...ashwa'iyya*)...[These changes] have ruined many houses that are considered historic monuments (*tamasat kathiran min al-ma'alim al-athariyya fi al-buyut*)...[The project] will restore to old Sana'a the beauty and splendor of its original decoration (*liya'udu li sana'a al-qadima rawnaqiha wa jamaliha al-zakhrafi al-asil*).[218]

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[217] For example, the director of Planning for GOPHCY (T. Marchand, "Walling Old Sana'a", p. 50).
[218] Quoted in "Tahsin wajihat al-manazil al-mutilla 'ala al-sa'ila", *26 Septimbir*, 3/13/03, p. 1).

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In this article and in local discourse generally, the term *ashwa'i*, "random", is used to indicate contemporary changes; the word, which also means "blind" or "senseless", implicitly contrasts these changes to the inspired, premodern order that produced the old city.

This language is also echoed in SFD project documents: in this and other projects, work is justified by the endangered status of cultural heritage, an indirect reference to Sana'a's status as a World Heritage Site.[219] SFD managers and their supervisor agree that the intent of the project was to eliminate defacements (*tashwihat*) which threaten the survival of Sana'a architectural style, but the intent was not just cosmetic. For the supervisor, a well-known restoration architect, the goal of repair work was to restore the "spirit of the building (*ruh al-mabna*)."[220] The project was not limited to facades, but aimed to correct structural problems that caused damage to the facades. It was a much-needed attempt to address the conservation and maintenance of houses, involving homeowners and the community in the process.[221] In contrast to the GTZ-SFD project in Shibam, owners were expected to pay only 30%, with the remainder covered by the project.

In March 2003, applications were solicited from interested citizens; these would be evaluated according to their ability to contribute to the costs of restoration.[222] The project began in late May and took several months to complete. Five contiguous houses were selected for the project on the east bank of the Sa'ila, north of Talha bridge (figure 39). The owners of one house were suspicious of the project and did not want to participate; according to the supervising architect, two additional houses were added at the northern end, for a total

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[219] Similar language was used in the project description for the restoration of the *marna'* at Talha; see below, p. 380.

[220] Supervising architect, site visit, 7/19/04.

[221] Interview, supervising architect, 2/17/04 and site visit, 7/19/04.

[222] According to the Director of the Local Council, Fahd al-'Alaya ("Tahsin wajihat al-manazil al-mutilla 'ala al-sa'ila", *26 Septimbir*, 3/13/03, p. 1).

of six houses.[223] US $30,000 (from the Arab Fund) was available for the project, and of this amount $26,000 was spent, an average of $4300 per house.[224] Stonework and brick were repaired and repointed; plaster and exterior woodwork were repaired. The entrance of one house was stabilized and rebuilt; in another, windows that had been closed with brick were reopened, and a new wooden door in the "old style (*'ala shakl al-qadim*)" was made and installed. Electrical wires were consolidated and, where possible, plumbing pipes were hidden in shafts; in the case of three houses, toilets were relocated to the rear façade. Water tanks were removed to the rear of the houses, and in one case, an arched parapet wall was built to hide it. This was a new use for the traditional *tijwab*, designed to conceal women on the roof: "We adapted an element of the traditional system of the old city," said the supervising architect.[225] In this house, water damage to the first floor structure had deformed the façade; the affected portion of the floor was rebuilt and a modern bathroom was installed, enlarged by capturing part of the hallway. The owners, who allowed me to visit the house, were happy with the work. But they said that the rear façade, facing the garden (*bustan*), was also in need of repair; unfortunately they didn't have the money for this work. "They couldn't even pay their 30% on the work we did," said the contractor.[226]

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[223] According to the architect, three houses were completed in 1-1/2 months; the substitution of two new houses took additional time, but they were completed in one month. According to the *usta* who held the contract for three houses and ended up managing all of them, the total work time was four months. He says five houses were restored, while the architect says there were six. According to the bid analysis, contractors initially bid on five houses ("Tahlil al-as'ar", Social Fund, no date); it appears that the owners of Beit al-'Abadi withdrew from the project.

[224] SFD project manager, interview, 8/8/04; and supervising architect, site visit, 7/19/04. The latter says that the cost of repair to stone and woodwork on the southernmost house drove up costs.

[225] Site visit, 7/19/04. The details of repair work are from this site visit, and from a site visit and interviews with a contractor and owner on 8/10/04.

[226] Site visit, 8/10/04. The row of house restored under the project have their rear facades on Maqshamat al-Kharraz.

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An important part of the project was "capacity building": *ustas* were to be trained as contractors, and the local council was to be trained as counterpart (*al-jihha al-kafila*). Both were to be assisted by the SFD's supervising architect.[227] The elected Local Council (*majlis al-mahali*) and various NGO's (*jam'iyyat*) have been involved in conservation-related activities in the old city, but their work seems to have declined in recent years.[228] In the Sa'ila project, the Local Council was supposed to manage construction and secure payments from the homeowners, but according to SFD officials, their performance was disappointing on both counts. Homeowners did not pay their 30% contribution, and in the summer of 2004, the Local Council was being held accountable for the funds.[229] Two contractors reported that they had not been paid, more than a year after work had been completed.[230]

As we have seen, government and donors require the use of general contractors, who are unfamiliar with traditional building. But most *ustas* cannot qualify as contractors, nor are they familiar with the procedures of competitive tendering. For the Director of the SFD's Cultural Heritage Unit, this is the greatest dilemma of conservation:

> *Ustas* have never submitted tenders, they don't have any bank assets, and so forth; yet they are the only ones who can deal with historic buildings.[231]

The SFD tried to address this issue by helping *ustas* qualify as contractors. Typically a contractor must put up a security bond (*dhamana*) for 10% of the contract price; during the

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[227] Director, Cultural Heritage Unit, interview, 7/20/04; "Ittifa' itar al-'aml (agreement for scope of Work)", Social Fund, no date.

[228] Director, Coordinating Council of NGO's (*majlis al-tansiq*), interview, 3/24/04. In the early 1990's an NGO, "Friends of Old Sana'a", was created to support conservation activities but is inactive; according to professionals, it was initiated not by citizens but by planners desiring to foster awareness and support of conservation activities.

[229] According to one official, the Mayor told the SFD that the local council lacked management experience, and that the effort would not work (interview, 8/4/04).

[230] One contractor told me that payment was supposed to come from the Mayor's office (site visit, 8/10/04).

[231] Interview, 7/20/04.

course of work 5% of each draw is withheld as security, usually for one year. In the Sa'ila

project, the SFD waived the security bond and agreed to withhold 5% on only a few items.

The supervising architect for the SFD helped the *ustas* prepare bids, interpret drawings and

specifications, and assist in scheduling, so that they would be able to manage the transition to

contractors. By putting the *usta* in charge of the process and giving him support, he would

regain control of his work and, it was hoped, experience less pressure.[232]

Of the three successful bidders, two were *ustas* who had not previously worked as

contractors; the third was a general contractor who had no experience in restoration.[233] One

of the two *ustas*, a master of *qaddad*, was awarded a contract for three houses. Despite easier

terms from the SFD, he had a hard time financially. He did not have capital to start work; he

says that he asked for an advance, but the SFD would not provide one without a security

bond of $5000. He finally managed to negotiate a small advance in exchange for a smaller

security, but it was not enough.

> The money ended, and the work hadn't even begun. I bought supplies - *nura* (plaster), wood,
> and other materials. Now I need more money, but I can't get any without more security. If I
> was a real contractor, I would complete the work quickly, with my own money, then I would
> get paid. There is no easing of the situation (*ma fish tashil*)...
>
> ...I got tired from this work. The work was exacting (*daqiq*)... I would bring *ustas* to do the
> work, and if they didn't do it right, I would bring someone else... The stonemasons did *fals*,
> and reused the same stone. Even the brick that was damaged, we changed with traditional
> (*taqlidi*) materials and methods. The doors were iron (*hadid*) so we changed them to *tanab*
> [the wood traditionally used for exterior woodwork]; some windows were aluminum and we
> changed them to *tanab*. As for the wooden awnings (*kunan*; sing. *kunna*), we made new
> ones. We did everything in the traditional style, like it was before (*kullu 'ala al-taqlidi 'ala
> ma kan al-awwal*). Some windows, we repaired. The [Social] Fund agreed that the windows
> should cost YR 50,000 but they cost more than that. There were other things we did not
> expect, like *fals* on the interior walls and arches. [All these things] increased my costs...

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[232] SFD project manager, interview, 7/20/04.

[233] Supervising architect, site visit, 7/19/04; and contractor, site visit, 8/10/04. The contractor had
worked for seven years with an Italian-owned construction firm in Saudi Arabia. When I asked him
if had experience in *tarmim*, he said "No, but the *ustas* do it all the time."

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The *usta* hired the required trades according to the recommendations of the supervising architect, and managed them: masons for stone and brick, carpenters, a tile setter, and a plumber (electrical work was under a separate contract). With the exception of the carpenter who was paid by the piece, the *usta* paid his subcontractors by the day; he had calculated his own bid by quantity, with help from a friend (an architect at GOPHCY, not the SFD supervisor). The work was very hard, he says, and his responsibilities exceeded the scope of his contract:

> I worked seriously - day and night. I even neglected my children. I used to sleep in the building. The other contractors didn't do this...they would take off. I was the responsible one... [The other contractors] brought their own supervisors (*mushrifin*), but they didn't know the work. The architect [from the Social Fund] let me supervise all five houses... The other supervisors stayed, but they didn't do anything. I was the one who did everything. Even if there was rain, I would come myself to cover things up and take care of the site. The workers always called me for everything, but nothing came to me [i.e. money].

In August of 2004, a year after the project ended, he had received most of his fee from the Social Fund, but the last five per cent was still being held as security for outstanding issues (*dhamanat al-siyana*, "maintenance security"). His subcontractors were asking for their payments, but the money was held up (*muhtajaza*) in the bank. The *usta*'s lot is difficult, he says, because he has few resources (*imkaniyat*) and work is sporadic. "I lost money on the project, I lost my health," he says. "The only thing I got was exhaustion and reputation (*ta'b wa sitt*)" – that is, some people think he made a lot of money. When asked how he felt about the work and whether he would do it again, he replied:

> I am happy [with the work], my conscience is content (*dhamiri murtah*)...Yes, I would do this kind of work again. Now I have more background. I can do traditional work and I can supervise it. But I need encouragement and support. Then I would be ready to compete, I could do anything.[234]

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[234] Interview, 8/10/04.

White-washing the old city (2003-4)

In December 2003 the Ministry of Culture initiated another, and much larger scale project, in preparation for Sana'a's year as Cultural Capital of the Arab World: the whitewashing of facades throughout the city. Initially only houses and monuments on the Wadi Sa'ila and along the main thoroughfares were to be whitewashed, but according to the Ministry, the project was so popular it was extended throughout the old city. The budget for the project was YR 65,000,000, or USD 350,000, and the Ministry of Culture would bear 100% of the costs.[235] According to several professionals, the project was designed in competition to the SFD project, which the Minister of Culture felt was too expensive.[236] According to several informants, local experts were not consulted in the planning of the project. The Ministry of Culture claimed that the Chairman of GOPHCY was on a panel that directed the project, and that eight technicians from his office were used as supervisors. But this was not confirmed by GOPHCY.[237]

When I arrived in Sana'a in January 2004 to begin my fieldwork, protests were being heard throughout the conservation community. I toured the old city with a friend, an architect and a veteran of the UNESCO Campaign, who was appalled by the city's "Disney-like" quality:

> Plastering reflects a social process: normally houses are plastered on special occasions, like weddings or for the 'Id feast. So the old city is always in a cycle of decay and renewal. To make it white and pristine, all at once, completely destroys its character.[238]

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[235] "Technical Report," World Heritage Mission to Sana'a, 24-30 July 2004, p. 1.

[236] Interviews with two professionals, 2/17/04 and 3/7/04. "The Minister of Culture wants to show that he's in charge," said one architect.

[237] "Technical Report," p. 2. The Ministry of Culture told the World Heritage mission that it had coordinated the project with two bodies: the High Committee for the Preservation of Old Sana'a (established circa 2000, and responsible to the Prime Minister); and the Coordinating Council of NGO's.

[238] Site visit, 1/26/04.

The project was billed as a white-washing project, that is, the renewal of plaster (*guss*)

decoration through the application of diluted plaster (*nura*). But in many instances old

plaster was removed and new plaster applied. It was applied thickly, with a trowel rather

than by hand, and finished against a straight-edge – producing an effect that contrasted

sharply with traditional application (figure 40).[239] The work was upsetting to my friend and

other professionals, and also to the craftsmen charged with carrying it out. When the

Minister of Culture came to review the work craftsmen reportedly told him, "This is not how

the work should be done."[240] Perhaps most shocking to professionals was the damage that

had been done to certain monuments, a point that was taken up some months later by a

mission from the World Heritage Center. Craftsmen had been instructed to scrape away old

plaster – in some cases with metal tools – which destroyed original ornamentation and

damaged the surface of the brick. One of the affected monuments was the minaret al-Abhar

Mosque (14th century), where bands of geometric decoration and calligraphy were damaged

(figure 41).[241] Professionals and contractors who worked on the SFD's Sa'ila project were

especially disturbed by the mass plastering. "The work they did is all exterior (*khariji*)," said

a contractor, the one who had no prior experience in restoration. "We did the work as it

should be done." The supervising architect on the SFD project said the mass plastering sent

the wrong message to the community: it suggested that conservation is about decoration and

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[239] During construction *guss* is applied by hand at a thickness of .3-1.5 cm; in whitewashing, the diluted solution results in a layer of only .2-.5 cm, and finished with a piece of leather (*shufra*). According to experts from the World Heritage Center who investigated the MOC project in July 2004 (see below), plaster had been applied up to about 15 cm. in thickness ("Technical Report," p. 4).
[240] This was related an artist who lives in the old city, and who is a friend of the architect accompanying me on my tour of the old city on 1/26/04. According to the artist, the Minister told the craftsmen to carry on and follow the instructions of their supervisors.
[241] The damage at al-Abhar was noted by the professionals I spoke with, and also in the technical report of the World Heritage mission (p. 6).

image, rather than process.[242] A manager at the SFD lamented that the project would

adversely affect future endeavors by the agency:

> We are trying hard to convince homeowners to contribute to restoration costs. Now people
> are spoiled, because the Ministry of Culture paid 100% – but it was all surface work, there
> was no substance.[243]

In February 2004, a noted foreign consultant and later, the World Heritage Center,

were notified of the plastering project and were asked to intervene. The World Heritage

Center wrote to the Ministry of Culture requesting information about the project, and asking

that the work be halted until its methodology and results could be assessed. In June the

Ministry agreed to stop work and invited a technical mission from the World Heritage Center

to review the project. When a mission of two experts arrived in July 2004, hundred of

buildings along the Sa'ila and major arteries had been plastered.[244] According to several

accounts, the visit was a tense one, and involved at least one heated session at which the

Minister was attacked by local professionals. Later in the week, the Minister organized and

attended a meeting in the old city with prominent citizens and the Coordinating Council

(*majlis al-tansiq*) of NGO's. The group informed the experts from the World Heritge Center

that the plastering project was very popular with residents of the old city, and should be

resumed. The experts presumably raised some of the objections that they later outlined in

their mission report. According to the World Heritage Convention, the Center should be

consulted on any large-scale programs that might affect the image and state of conservation

of a World Heritage site, and this had not been done. Moreover, no documentation, research,

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[242] "But the good thing," he added, "is that plaster wears away. A few rainy seasons and it will be
gone" (interview, 2/17/04).
[243] Interview, 7/20/04.
[244] Some eight hundred buildings of the projected three thousand ("Technical Report," p. 4). The two
experts were Giovanni Boccardi, then Chief of the Arab States Unit at the World Heritage Center, and
Jacques Feiner; both had worked in Sana'a in the early 1990's.

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or technical studies had been undertaken in preparation for the project.[245] The local

representatives expressed their desire to cooperate with the World Heritage Center. But

plastering, they said, is a traditional practice, and they knew perfectly well how to do it; such

work does not require studies or special supervision.[246]

The technical report submitted by the experts was sharply critical of the project, and

at the same time conciliatory. The authors commended the Ministry for its work, which had

the positive effect of making residents aware of the need to conserve the old city. At the

same time, the lack of technical criteria and "an insufficient level of expertise and skills

among supervisory staff and master masons" had a negative effect on the project.

Monuments, important houses, and minor vernacular buildings were treated in the same

manner, which had an homogenizing effect on the architecture and the image of the city; this

"contrasts sharply with the character of Sana'ni architecture, which is known for its extreme

variety." Perhaps most importantly, the report challenged the right of the project and its

supporters to represent "tradition":

> The simple reference to the 'tradition', repeatedly evoked (*sic*) during the mission by the
> persons involved in the programme, does not seem a sufficient guarantee for the conservation
> of the outstanding universal value that justified the inscription of the property on the World
> Heritage List, considering the changes introduced by the rapid modernization of Yemen and
> the increasing demographic and commercial pressure on the Old City. Indeed, this so-called
> tradition appears to be subject to rapid evolution, depending on the changes in taste and the
> introduction of new fashions coming from the outside.

The report recommended that the plastering be resumed, with certain conditions: only

accredited conservation architects and *ustas* should be used; buildings should be dealt with

on an individual basis; and techniques should conform to traditional practice.[247]

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[245] "Technical Report", p. 2.
[246] G. Boccardi, personal communication, 10/7/04.
[247] "Technical Report", pp. 9-12.

It was clear that the Ministry intended to proceed with the work, and felt that it was authorized to do so by both its mandate and by the community. While the experts from the World Heritage Center could not stop the work, they sought various concessions. The Minister of Culture reportedly agreed that plastering methods would be modified: in particular, existing plaster would not be removed and brick would not be scraped. The mission asked for and was assured of cooperation on other matters: the government should act to halt large-scale violations that were appearing throughout the city; and the Ministry of Culture should consult with the World Heritage Center before undertaking future projects.[248]

As signator to the World Heritage Convention, the state party is normally seen as the legitimate representative of heritage. For some critics, such protocols contribute to a reified vision of culture identified with the nation state. But in Yemen the persistence of traditional practice resists this kind of reification – and as such, produces a more complex dynamic between local, state, and international actors. In asserting its role as representative and caretaker of Yemeni heritage, the Ministry of Culture undertook a project which, in the view of many practitioners, contravened local practice and threatened the "authenticity" of the old city of Sana'a.[249] With little ability to influence policy, they sought the intervention of the body that underwrites the old city's status as "world heritage" – in effect, invoking the authority of the World Heritage Center over that of their own government. In the end, the World Heritage Center managed to gain certain concessions, on the basis of historical authenticity and precedent. In this case, then, an international agency defended not only local practice, but the right of local experts to interpret "tradition." Among these experts

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[248] R. Lewcock, G. Boccardi, personal conversations.
[249] "...[C]riticisms sparked by the programme within the community of experts and professionals...alleged [a] lack of sensitivity and a loss of authenticity caused by the extensive renovations" ("Technical Report", p. 1).

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were *usta*s and craftsmen, living representatives of the "past" who knew how the work "should be done."

The rehabilitation of the *marna'* of Talha (2002-4)

As we saw in chapter five, local professionals generally see themselves separated from builders by a "cultural gap." Builders, they feel, are generally insensitive to *turath*: they have been influenced by new materials and practices, and take liberties with historic monuments in an attempt to improve or beautify them.[250] Architects do not accept international practice uncritically: they quietly dismiss the notion of "material authenticity" since they allow rebuilding, and allow new work to pass for old. But in theory, at least, they uphold the idea that a building is an historical document that should be conserved in its original state. As such, they restrict the kind of creative restorations that builders would undertake if left on their own. In the GTZ project in Shibam-Hadhramaut we saw a move away from this position. Unless a building is considered of exceptional importance, *usta*s are given license to change elements and develop details, as they do in new construction and repair work throughout the valley. The project recognizes that traditional building practice must continue to evolve if it is to remain alive and vital. It is the *process*, rather than the artifact as such, that constitutes "heritage."[251] This suggests a different conception of authenticity, which is

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[250] See chapter five, especially pp. 264-5.

[251] This point has been eloquently argued by Marchand with regard to builders in Sana'a and Djenné, Mali (also a World Heritage Site). The expert discourse of masons, he writes responds to a particular cultural and social context that "is historically constituted and thus always in flux. It has been influenced by networks of trade, Islam, war, colonialism, globalization, and most recently, ...incorporation...into the UNESCO framework of World Heritage Sites. The contemporary traditional builder, through his apprenticeship, is inculcated with the technical and social knowledge necessary for innovatively responding to change while simultaneously producing a discourse of locality, continuity, and tradition. In short, it is this expertise that sustains a sense of place. If

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closer to that of the builders themselves: faithfulness to the practice of one's predecessors, which includes – even requires – the ability to respond creatively to the conditions of the present.

In this final project, architects themselves become agents of creative "restoration" – although the SFD is careful to refer to the work as rehabilitation (i'adat ta'hil) rather than restoration.[252] The project is notable because it concerns a minor monument – the marna' or well enclosure of Qubbat Talha – that was conserved under the auspices of a publically funded project. The mosque of Talha (qubbat Talha means the "dome of Talha", i.e., a mosque) is thought to be very old, although little of the original structure remains. In the early 17th century an Ottoman governor enlarged the mosque and added a minaret; it was renovated again in the first half of the 19th century by the ruling imam. The marna' is a utilitarian structure, but it was built under official patronage and may predate the 17th century expansion.[253] As such one would expect it to be conserved with strict adherence to

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through legislation and cultural politics (Western-inspired) conservation efforts incapacitate contemporary traditional builders and inhabitants in responding to changing needs and social values, their architectural heritage will inevitably lose its utility and meaning for the living local population, and thus also its authenticity as a valued cultural commodity" ("Process over Product", in *Managing Change*, pp. 155-6).

[252] On some project documents the term *ta'hil* is used alone – which means to "make suitable" or "qualify." *'I'ada* is the transitive form of "return"; the term *'i'adat ta'hil* literally means "requalifying", returning something to a usable state. It is usually translated as "rehabilitation."

[253] Lewcock believes that Talha Mosque is one of several small mosques that indicate the western limit of the city as early as the 9th century ("The Urban Development of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 133). In 1619-20 Ottoman governor Muhammad Pasha enlarged Qubbat Talha and added the minaret. In 1831-2 Imam al-Mahdi Abdullah al-Mutawakkil Ahmad renovated or partly rebuilt it, as recorded in an inscription on the south wall of the prayer hall. Nothing remains of the earliest mosque or of its 17th century form, "although the open-air ablutions, the covered ablutions, the well-ramp (*mirna'*) and the poor lodgings above it may date from before this period" (R. Lewcock, et. al., "The Smaller Mosques of Sana'a", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 381-2). According to Serjeant, the imam also added "lodgings external to the Jami' for students and strangers (*aghrab*) to the city" ("The Post-Medieval and Modern History of Sana'a and the Yemen", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 89). It is not clear if these lodgings are the ones above the *marna'*.

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international guidelines. Instead, architects reinterpreted the historic structure –which was functionally obsolete - in order to accommodate a new use.

Most of the urban gardens restored by the SFD are part of endowed complexes that included a mosque and a bathhouse, and were irrigated with water recycled from these structures. Water was drawn from a well by animal power, and channeled to the ablutions pool of the mosque and to the bathhouse. Once used for washing, the gray water was diverted to retention basins (*birak*, sing. *birka*), and then released to the garden. This gravity-based system required specific elevational relationships between well, buildings, and garden; the garden itself was often several meters below street level. A pulley above the well was attached to the backs of animals (camels, oxen, or donkeys); they walked down a long ramp, the length of which was proportionate to the depth of the well. The ramp was usually under a shelter of some kind, and in many cases the space above was captured for uses related to the endowment – resulting in a unique building type, the *marna'* (pl. *marani'*). The type can easily be identified by its narrow plan and stepped roof. The finest examples, such as the one attached to Talha mosque, were built of stone with upper stories in brick.[254]

The *marna'* of Talha extends along the street that runs along the southern boundary of the mosque complex (figure 42). The well is located at the eastern end of the building, and the ramp slopes down to the west. Until the 1960's or later, the rooms above the ramp were used as a children's Qur'an school (*kuttab*), and one room served as the teacher's residence.[255] The long rear (north) façade of the *marna'* abuts the ablutions building, which

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[254] R. Lewcock, "The Buildings of the Suq/Market", in Serjeant and Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a*, p. 302. Lewcock notes that the length of the ramp was modified over time as the level of groundwater diminished; in some cases ramps were extended underground. He says that manpower was on occasion used to raise water.

[255] The builder who restored the *marna'* (now in his mid-forties) studied Qur'an here as a child; he recalls that the teacher lived in the room above the entrance. Lewcock, who documented the building

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also included showers.[256] From here, gray water was channeled to the *bustan* (orchard) of

Talha and the *maqshama* of al-Taw'us, both located to the north on the other side of a major

east-west artery (Talha Street).[257] Within the *marna'* at the top of the ramp was a basin for

the animals and, up a short flight of steps, a small room for the driver; below the highest part

of the ramp was a stable, accessed from the street.[258] In the eastern wall of the complex, near

the minaret, was a water basin for animals.

The UNESCO Campaign aimed to restore and reuse *marna'*s and other utilitarian

buildings, like water fountains (*sabil*, pl. *subul*), sesame mills (*ma'sar*, pl. *ma'asir*), and

watchtowers. The Campaign brochure (1989) noted that most of the *marna'*s had been fitted

with electric pumps, and the buildings themselves had fallen into disuse:

> The present state of these fine structures varies considerably, some needing extensive
> restoration and reconstruction. One of them could be put back into working order and
> operated by a camel at certain times of the day in a living 'outdoor museum.'

The *marna'* of Talha was to be restored as part of a larger project for the neighboring

mosques of Talha and al-Tawus and their respective gardens, but a use for the building was

not specified.[259] Only a small number of the many projects envisioned by the Campaign

were implemented, but in the late 1990's some were revived by GOPHCY and the SFD. The

bustan of Talha was restored by the SFD circa 2002-3, along with the neighboring gardens of

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in the mid-1970's, mentions communal apartments above the *marna'*, but does not mention a *kuttab*.
He says that *marna'*s were normally built of layered clay or clay and brick; under the Ottoman period,
they came to be built entirely of stone ("The Buildings of the Suq/Market", in Serjeant and Lewcock,
Sana'a, p. 302).
[256] These are called *matahir* (sing. *mathar*); they do not include toilets (*mutakhadhdhat*) which are
dry, ventilated facilities, located in a separate building (consultant to the SFD, interview, 11/24/04).
For more on the dry toilets, characteristic of Sana'a and other highland towns, see chapter two, p.
132; and R. Lewcock, "Three Problems in Conservation: Egypt, Oman, and Yemen," pp. 72-3.
[257] Two gardens, then, were served by the well at Talha (M. Barcelo, et. al., eds., *Les jardins de la
ville de Sanaa*, p. 94). According to Lewcock, the well at Talha irrigated gardens and houses in the
surrounding area ("The Buildings of the Suq/Market", in Serjeant and Lewcock, *Sana'a*, p. 302).
[258] R. Lewcock, "The Buildings of the Suq/Market", in Serjeant and Lewcock, *Sana'a*, p. 302
[259] B. Lane, "Pilot Projects", pp. 51, 57.
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al-Taw'us and al-Kharraz.[260] Around the same time, a separate project was initiated for the conservation and reuse of the *marna'* of Talha. Studies for the project were conducted in mid-2002, and final approval came in December of that year. A budget of $110,000 was provided by the Arab Fund; it was exceeded slightly by the winning bid, from a local contractor who holds a U.S. passport.[261]

In the SFD project summary, *marna*'s are described as important elements of the urban cultural environment; they are now "exposed to a high degree of danger due to the daily violations" by inhabitants, and by some "traders of the suq who are working hard to change these buildings into private property." The output of the current project would be a building that "serves the needs of the community." The rehabilitated *marna'* would be used as a sewing center by an NGO called *Jam'iyyat al-Mar'a al-Muntija* (Society of the Productive Woman). It would include a workshop, an exhibition space for "charity products", and a library for children[262] – perhaps inspired by the former use of the *marna'* as a Qur'an school. The designers faced many challenges – especially the problem of fitting

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[260] In the survey of urban gardens conducted in 2001 under the direction of M. Barcelo, these three gardens were not yet under restoration. The well at Talha continued to supply the gardens of both Talha and al-Taw'us, but the water was not sufficient for cultivation – although the well had been re-excavated three years earlier to a depth of 180 meters (from its original depth of 60 meters). Parts of Bustan Talha were still planted, although several new houses had been built on cultivable land; Maqshamat al-Taw'us was not cultivated at all (*Les jardins de la ville de Sanaa*, pp. 92, 94, 98).

According to the architect who drew up site plans for the gardens of Talha, al-Taw'us, and al-Kharraz, this was the third group of gardens to be restored. They were preceded by the gardens of Ibn al-Amir, al-Jila', and Da'ud; and Jamal ed-Din, Dar al-Jadid, al-Mu'adh (interview, 11/24/04). This architect subsequently prepared preliminary plans and elevations for the *marna'* of Talha, which were later modified by another architect. I will hereafter refer to these individuals as the first and second consulting architects.

[261] "Marna' Talha" project file, SFD; project manager, interview, 12/12/04; senior architect and former official at GOPHCY, personal conversation, 12/12/04. The project description says that the funds are from the World Bank, but the project manager said they came from the Arab Fund (Kuwait).

[262] "Project Summary", SFD, 18 March, 2003.

the facility into a long, narrow plan (3.8 by 33 meters).[263] They were also faced by a severely deteriorated building fabric. Since the mid-1970's, when Serjeant and Lewcock documented the *marna'*, part of the wall along the street had collapsed. A section drawn in 2002 shows that parts of the roof had also collapsed; within the building, accumulated earth and debris obscured the old ramp. According to the *usta* who worked under the contractor (he was hired after several other *ustas* had been fired), the wall along the street had collapsed due to groundwater and rain infiltration; then the roof followed. The only option was to take the wall down to its foundations and rebuild it, using the salvaged stones.[264]

The design of the project was protracted, involving two different consulting architects and several phases of design. The debate continued throughout construction and involved supervisors working for the SFD, GOPHCY, and the contractor, resulting in long delays.[265] Throughout the process, it was clear that a new building was being created, inspired by the original form of the *marna'*: in the words of the technical supervisor, "It's a new building in traditional materials."[266] The building had to be faithful to *turath* and, at the same time, it had to suit the new function.

There was no ground floor in the old building – it was a ramp with an earthen floor. The rooms above stepped down, following the slope of the ramp (figure 43). Given the new program, it hardly made sense to re-excavate the ramp and reconstruct the stepped upper story and roof. In all of the designs developed by architects working with SFD staff, the

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[263] First consulting architect, interview, 11/24/04.
[264] Site visit, 3/13/04.
[265] Disputes between supervisors – employed by the SFD, GOPHCY, and the contractor – are documented in a memo from the contractor to the SFD, received in late February 2004, almost a year after work began. Some of the delay was due to the uncompacted soil, which required a new foundation design. But other delays were due to disputes over historical correctness ("Marna' Talha" project file, SFD).
[266] Interview, 8/11/04.

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floors and roof were built at constant elevations. The windows along the street façade were placed at the same height above floor level, in contrast to the old windows which stepped down with the ramp and the floor above. In the original building, the Qur'an school on the upper floor was reached via an external stair on the rear façade (accessed from within the complex, not from the street). The new program called for an interior staircase, which was difficult to achieve given the narrow plan. In two different schemes, the stair is placed roughly in the middle of the building. This produces a new hierarchy on the façade, with the tallest block above the stair.

If one were not familiar with the original form of the *marna'*, however, one might mistake the new building as a restoration of the original. Reinforced concrete was used in some parts of the building: under the rebuilt stone foundations, and in perimeter beams that run along the underside of each floor. These beams are recessed and covered by stone, so that they cannot be detected from the outside.[267] The exterior walls were rebuilt largely with salvaged stone, with new fired brick (*yajur*) for the upper story, as in the original building. Traditional materials were used for floors and ceilings – wooden beams packed with earth – even though these would not be visible from the outside.[268] At the eastern end of the building, the rebuilt wall ties into brick piers that support the pulley; the piers and the curving wall around the well-head appear to have been left in their original state.

A fascinating debate over the design of the building, and implicitly, over the nature of *turath* emerges from design drawings and other project documents, and from conversations

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[267] A similar technique is used at a smaller scale in new *turathi* facades, especially in the old city: a continuous beam (*corniche*) above the windows is recessed behind half bricks.

[268] The contractor complained that he lost a month searching for *'ilb*, the wood traditionally used for beams and required by SFD supervisors. When he finally managed to locate some, the supervisors changed their mind and decided to build the roof in *athal* (tamarisk; memo to the SFD, received 2/22/04).

with various actors involved in the project. There were points of agreement among professionals, but also many disagreements. The first consulting architect, for example, clashed with an SFD supervisor over the design of the roof. Since the roof had to be rebuilt he designed it in concrete – perhaps because concrete perimeter beams were being used. But the design was rejected by an SFD supervisor, who wanted the roof to be built of wood and earth. "We have *turath* of thirty or forty years ago," said the consultant, "but the supervisor wanted *turath* from the time of Sayyidna Muhammad." The consultant wanted to add balconies, but these were also rejected as inconsistent with *turath*. [269]

Although the street façade was substantially reconfigured, architects paid great attention to its composition and detailing. The first consulting architect did several iterations of the façade; then a second architect, known for his work on *turath*-related projects, was brought in to help with the design (figure 44). [270] The plan was simplified and the space more usable, by reducing the stair to a square well type with short, straight runs. [271] This also reduced the mass of the stair tower – producing a more pronounced stepping effect similar to the roof of the original *marna'* but in the opposite direction. The first architect had used wider windows in the second floor, like those in a *mafraj* (the sitting room at the top of a house); the arched window lites above were also wide, almost semi-circular. The window sills did not rest on the *hizam* as is usual, but rather were several brick courses above it. In iterations developed with the second architect, the windows were brought closer to the *hizam*.

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[269] Interview, 11/24/04.

[270] This architect, who works for the engineering division of Universal Travel, worked on the design of al-Hawta Hotel in the Hadhramaut and on the old American Embassy in Bir al-'Azab (Sana'a), which was to be turned into a four-star hotel.

[271] This reduced the number of level changes within the building; the second level was accessed by the first run of the stair. The earlier design had a more monumental staircase that split in two directions after the intermediate landing. It took up much of the long north wall, and reduced the vestibules on both floors to corridors (design drawings, phases one and two, no dates, "Marna' Talha" project file, SFD).

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The windows became smaller – closer in size to those in the original structure, with the 1:1 proportion of window to lite that is characteristic Sana'ani architecture; larger windows were confined to the second floor. But the hierarchy of windows (especially the small openings in the third floor) is not typical of buildings in Sana'a: the intention seems to be to preserve a sense of the mass of the original wall, which had minimal openings.

In fact, the architect says that the new façade should be "similar" to the original one. He indicates this on a sketch that he must have drawn at a late point in the process – probably after construction was underway. On the right side of the sketch is a note addressed to the project manager, requesting approval for modifications that they had already discussed. The architect proposed to simplify the façade, in conformance with "the simplicity of the old façade." The original façade, for example, was devoid of *hizams* and *zakhrafiyya* (plaster ornamentation) characteristic of residential architecture. He proposed to eliminate the *hizams* and replace them with wooden beams (*farashat khashabiyya*) that would separate the brick from the stone, and would serve as heads or sills for windows. At the roofline, there would only be a simple coping (*zarwa*) finished with plaster (figure 45). On the ground floor, original stone should be reused where possible, or new stone of a similar quality, and window lintels should be of stone. For the upper stories, brick should be of the same quality as that in the old building. The new function of the building should be respected: as much natural light as possible should be provided, as permitted by "the exterior (historic) form of the building (*ma'a al-shakl al-khariji (al-turathi) lil mabna'*)". The ideal, he wrote, is to implement the project "with sensitivity to the building's site in old Sana'a...It is recommended that you rely on a supervisor experienced in this kind of work" to ensure that no extraneous openings are made and that natural light is provided to the interior. The SFD

project manager accepted the proposal because it "coincides with the spirit of the old

building (*tatbiq ruh al-mabna al-qadim*) with regard to stone construction, and [per our]

review of the old photos."

The project was executed according to this last sketch – although the interpretation of

details continued during construction (figure 45). Again, the criteria was similarity to the old

building and to the surrounding context. In a site visit toward the end of construction, the

supervising architect for the SFD found certain aspects of the work in conformance with

turath while others were unacceptable. Interior plasterwork was inconsistent, and joints

between bricks in the stair tower (*beit al-daraj*) were not filled with mortar. When he

pointed this out to the workers (who were working under the supervision of the *usta*), they

said that they had been told to follow the example of surrounding buildings. The technical

supervisor (*fanni al-mashru'*) who "has experience in *turath* projects" expressed much the

same view. They told the SFD supervisor that "the form of the building required of them is

the same as that of surrounding buildings."[272] Perhaps the workers omitted the mortar

because it had deterioriated in neighboring buildings!

Architects, supervisors, and workers, in their various ways, aspired not to historical

accuracy but to *similarity* – and they seem to have succeeded. As I toured the site with the

usta, a young man from the neighborhood came up to us and showed the *usta* an old

photograph of the site. He congratulated him because the restored *marna'* looked exactly

like it did in the photograph – except for the basin in the east wall, which had yet to be

restored. At the time I had not yet reviewed the project drawings, so I was not aware of the

extent of the changes. In retrospect, I am sure that the view in the photo –the only view

[272] "…*afadu biann shakl al-mabani matlub minhum nafs shakl al-mabani al-mujawira*" (report of site
visit on June 4, 2004 signed by the supervising architect; "Marna' Talha" project file, SFD).
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possible in the narrow street – distorts the façade, making it difficult to judge changes. The wellhead in the foreground, which has not changed, furthers the impression that the building beyond is the same. This impression is reinforced by the materials, details, and general mass of the building (figure 46).

When I asked the young man how he felt about this kind of work, he replied: "All of the old city should be rebuilt exactly as it was." The *usta* told me that all the families in the neighborhood wanted the *marna'* to be rebuilt as it was – except for the family living in the house to the south. They complained that the rebuilt *marna'* would block light and air, and as a result a GOPHCY issued a stop-work order (although at the time, March 2004, exterior work was substantially complete). The first consulting architect later pointed out that light would not be blocked because the plaintiffs' house lies to the south of the *marna'*. "They just want a cut," he said. "because they know that the money [for the project] comes from abroad." The *usta* was upset by the stop-work order:

> These people are complaining because they don't remember what the building looked like before it collapsed twenty years ago. The problem is, here people don't appreciate *turath* – not like in your country (*mish mithl 'indkum*). There needs to be a law that requires all *turath* to be rebuilt exactly as it was.

On this first visit to the site, the *usta* told me that he had rebuilt the exterior wall in its original form. On a second visit, we went inside – and it became clear the interior had been completely reconfigured. "This was a mistake," said the *usta*. "The idea of a sewing center is good, but the building should have been kept as it was."[273] I asked another *usta* (the *qaddad* master who worked as contractor on the Sa'ila facades) how he felt about the *marna'* project: should it have been kept as it was? "It doesn't matter," he replied. "The important thing is that the *marna'* still looks the same on the outside." Like the second consulting

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[273] Site visits, 3/24/04 and 4/14/04.

architect who identifies the exterior as *turathi*, and like the official at the Ministry of Endowments who saw the exterior of Samsarat al-Bawa'ni as historic (*ta'rikhi*), for this *usta*, too, *turath* is conveyed primarily through the exterior façade. The *usta* who actually did the work – known among conservation professionals for his "sensitivity to *turath*"[274] – felt that *turath* included the inside. The whole building should have been kept as it was.

Likeness or resemblance, notes Herzfeld, is culturally constructed: it has rhetorical use in establishing continuity and consolidating the identity of a group. The ability to recognize resemblance is not natural, but rather depends on prior aesthetic criteria and on the politics of a particular situation:

> [E]ven when those concerned agree in principle on the criteria of resemblance, they may disagree about specific cases, and their disagreement will reveal something of the power play among them.[275]

In chapter five, we saw that both traditional building practice and modern conservation aspire to authenticity: both claim faithfulness to an original, even as they change and reinterpret it. But they differ in their definition of authenticity, and the criteria by which it is established. Modern conservation aspires to historical accuracy in terms of form and materials, based on criteria that are documentary and "scientific." For *usta*s, authenticity means mastery in the tradition of one's predecessors, in a mode (*maqam*) that is unique to Sana'a. The case of the *marna'* is a fascinating one, because it reveals a new, synthetic definition of authenticity that uses *both* traditional and documentary criteria. The debate over the appropriate treatment of the *marna'* draws on documentary evidence – drawings and photographs of the building's prior state – and also on personal and popular memory. It also involves judgments of the

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[274] Senior architect and former GOPHCY official, personal conversation, 7/11/04.
[275] *Cultural Intimacy*, pp. 94-5. The prior point is from p. 28.

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Sana'ani aesthetic by actors with different types of expertise: architects, builders, and craftsmen.

Architects, who in theory represent international practice, use documentary evidence in an unexpected way: not to reconstruct the *marna'* "as it was", but as a guide to the "spirit" of the original building. This spirit is defined in aesthetic terms – in massing, materials, and details – and also in terms of the building's use: the new function, like the old, is a charitable one and hence suited to an endowed structure. Perhaps most remarkable is the reversal of roles. Architects here take up the position usually identified with *ustas* – approaching conservation as a "creative" rather than a scientific process. Yet they are careful to defend their position in terms of international discourse. "I wouldn't call [the work] restoration," said the SFD project manager, correcting me when I used the term;[276] as an adaptive reuse project, more liberty can be taken with the building fabric. It is the *usta*, known for his sensitivity to *turath*, who takes up the international position: "It was a mistake [to change the building]," he said. "It should have been kept it was." As Herzfeld suggests, these disagreements reveal power dynamics between old and new professionals: architects use the tools of their trade to reinterpret *turath*, rather than relying on the expert judgment of builders.

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[276] Interview, 12/12/04.

Conclusion

Conservation in Sana'a raises a fundamental question: what does it mean to engage in conservation in a place where the "historic past" is still alive? How must agencies and consultants representing international policy readjust theory and practice as they interact with the living representatives of this historic past? And what are the implications of the case of Sana'a for conservation in general? The stakes of this interaction are raised by the expanded definition of heritage. Originally conservation was about conserving select monuments of special historic or artistic importance. Now, the field claims a mandate for the protection of a "vernacular" heritage that includes entire cities and landscapes. In recent years, the idea of "competing values" in conservation has become a focus of policymakers: it is not only the values of the conservator that count, but the values of various "stakeholders." In the case of a World Heritage city, these local values must in theory be reconciled with the "outstanding universal value" that the site represents. What happens in a place like Sana'a, where the stakeholders are an entire city population – and see themselves as embodying the "historic past"?

The precepts of conservation, which changed over time and varied from place to place, came to be codified in international charters and administered by agencies that act as new global curators. Despite a wide variety of practices and much questioning within the field, international guidelines are generally seen to reflect universal values and principles which may be colored, but not challenged, by "cultural relativism."[1] But these values and principles in fact developed in a specific historical and intellectual climate, as part of Europe's experience of modernization and industrialization – a process that spanned two

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[1] See, for example, J-L Luxen, "Reflections on the Use of Heritage Charters and Conventions."

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centuries. Changes in building practice, in land use, in the organization of society were perceived as qualitatively different and incompatible with earlier forms. Without careful conservation, these earlier forms would soon be extinct. In order to protect the forms of the past from extinction or corruption, a clear break had to be imposed between past and present. This sense of rupture was palpably felt by contemporaries, but it was also constructed by new interests and groups. In the mid-19th century and later, many of the craft traditions that had produced old buildings were still alive in Europe and the United States. Not unlike Yemeni builders today, these craftsmen were engaged in a struggle with new professionals, the architect, the contractor, and later, the conservator; as in Yemen, the circulation of drawings and "pattern books" was important in these professional shifts.[2] As in Yemen, too, some practitioners "restored" creatively, inspired by styles of the past and contemporary revivals – as represented by the school of Viollet-le-Duc and his followers. With the emergence of "classic" monuments conservation after the turn of the century, this interplay of past and present was rejected: buildings were now to be conserved according to strict historical and scientific criteria, rather than creative interpretation. The new approach in many ways reflected the ideas of architectural modernism: in particular, the notion that the architecture of the present should be as distinct as possible from that of the past.[3]

Yemen's experience of modernity differed greatly from that of Europe and other countries in the region. Messick argues that this experience was not sudden: it unfolded in a series of "detailed shifts" over an extended time.[4] But especially in the highlands,

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[2] See S. Bozdogan, "The Lincoln Cathedral versus the Bicycle Shed", *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1983, pp. 10-15.

[3] M. Petzet, "The Venice Charter – forty years later", pp. 21-2; and A. Colquhoun, "Newness and Age Value in Alois Riegl", in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition: Architectural Essays*, p. 220.

[4] B. Messick, describing the relationship between education and social transformation in Yemen (*The Calligraphic State*, p. 107).

geographical and political isolation kept much of the material and social fabric relatively

intact. When the "shackles" of the imams were thrown off during the revolution and North

Yemen opened its doors to the global market, there was the impression of a sudden and

dramatic transformation. In the mid-20th century, capitalist modernity was at an advanced

stage: the sense of radical change was due primarily to the changed conditions of material

life. A Yemeni historian who worked on the handicrafts survey observes:

> Before modernity, everything related to the past, not the present – the ancestors (al-ajdad),
> and so forth... As for turath, it's a modern usage, Egyptian or Lebanese in origin. None of the
> old [Yemeni] documents refer to crafts, buildings, or customs as turath... Material life was
> part of religious and social life. Once the material effects of modernity happened, people
> came to see these things as part of the past.[5]

For architects, both foreign and local, the rupture seems physically inscribed in the fabric of

the city. The contrast between the old city and development outside the walls gives the

impression that the city has bypassed certain "historical stages": in particular, one misses the

19th century suburbs which, in other Middle Eastern cities, mark a gradual transition to

contemporary building. But for many Yemenis, the sense of "historical distance" is still

incomplete:

> Sieges of 1904 and 1911 against Sana'a, the sacking of the city by tribes in 1948, the
> revolution in 1962 and hostilities which continued until late that decade, and the Civil War in
> 1994 are significant events of this century which hardly afford the temporal distance
> necessary for viewing such structures as the city walls and fortifications as defused 'historic
> monuments' set in 'Victorian pastoral landscapes.' The city walls are still a potent reminder
> of a turbulent past and a not-so-stable present.[6]

Barely had North Yemen begun to modernize – following mainly Egyptian models -

when foreigners and concerned local architects called for the conservation of the old city of

Sana'a. The moment was a serendipitous one for Yemen: the world heritage initiative,

reflecting a new interest in regionalism, appreciated precisely the kind of vernacular

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[5] M. Jazim, interview, 12/7/04. He disagrees that in the Yemeni usage, turath is related to w-r-th (to
inherit): "w-r-th is something else, it relates to property."
[6] T. Marchand, "Walling Old Sana'a," p. 50.

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settlements in which Yemen was so rich. At the time, policymakers and planners elsewhere in the region showed little interest in urban conservation: in contrast to remote antiquities, these old urban cores were seen to have little value. When the idea of a safeguarding campaign for Sana'a was proposed, Yemeni policymakers had already made efforts to address the problems of the old city. Although they may have also felt ambivalent toward it, they were closer to it: many of them had grown up in the old city, and had relatives living there. The past it represented was their own.

In 1995, a decade after it was launched by UNESCO's General Director, the Campaign to Save Old Sana'a was awarded the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture. The award was made not for building conservation, but for urban revitalization – and indeed, this is widely seen as the greatest success of the Campaign. "The main point is that the old city is much better than it was," said a former director of the French Institute, who was an early promoter of the Campaign.[7] Street paving, utilities, and services like garbage collection have made a tremendous difference in the old city, making it one of the best serviced sectors of Sana'a. The Campaign was both a national and an international effort. But it is important to note that street paving and infrastructure were largely financed by the Yemeni government, not by foreign donors.

Some professionals credit the Campaign with fostering a sense of pride in local architecture, and "raising awareness" of the need to conserve.[8] Conservation built on local pride, and on a marked cultural confidence that can perhaps be attributed to the relative autonomy the country has maintained throughout its history.[9] A decade after the UNESCO

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[7] Rémy Audoin, commenting on my lecture at the French Institute, Sana'a, 6/25/05.
[8] This view was expressed by one of the founders of the conservation office, interview, 5/24/05.
[9] G. Grandguillaume, "Sana'a, ville d'Arabie", in Grandguillaume, et. al. eds., *Sanaa Sana'a Hors les Murs* , pp. 4-6.

Campaign ended, conservation seems to have taken root to a remarkable degree. "If the old city is conserved as well as it is, it's certainly not because of GOPHCY," says one architect. "It's because the people conserved it." This observation contrasts sharply with public and private comments by some officials and intellectuals, who blame the "decay" of the old city on "the people's ignorance." Conservation professionals are disturbed by such comments: it is the officials themselves, they say, who allow the large-scale violations. While some members of the political elite have provided critical support for conservation, they do so from the comfortable distance of their offices and villas in the new districts. "The officials are strangers to Yemen," says a local professional. "Even their money is elsewhere."

The relatively good state of conservation of the old city of Sana'a is due in part to poverty. Those who live in old towns generally lack the resources to make major changes to their houses, or to demolish and rebuild: "Poverty is both our blessing and our curse," says one architect. But the new formulation of *turath* is accepted in part because it is familiar: it resonates with local concepts and practices that have not died out. Support for *turath* may also be seen as part of a more general desire to maintain a local sensibility in architecture; this was already evident in the 1970's, when Egyptian modernism was rejected by architects and residents alike. This local sensibility can be seen in virtually all new building, in the old city and new. While foreigners and some local architects see much of the new work as "kitsch," residents and builders see it as new examples of heritage (*turath*) – in the words of one builder, "*turath mutahaddath* (modernized heritage)."[10] Yemenis "don't understand that we are no longer on the same time line," said a World Heritage official, exasperated at this neo-*turath*. Yet he admitted that Yemenis are clearly attached to their heritage - even though

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[10] Interview, 5/12/04/

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they conceive of it differently. "The strange thing about Yemen," he mused, "is that it didn't

go through a conceptual process."[11] The past, in effect, is too close to be "other."

In other areas, the UNESCO Campaign is seen to be less successful. It failed to

create a viable institutional structure and legal framework for conservation - which became

especially evident after the conservation office's relationship with the Prime Minister ended.

More than two decades later, the basic tools of heritage management are still missing:

> The Campaign was only 35% successful. If I do a project on my own, no one knows about it;
> under the Campaign it's different. That's where the Campaign succeeded. But what were the
> tools, what were the means? What is the old city of Sana'a, what do I want from it? Until
> now, we don't know. The Campaign gave me the bread, but not the tools to make the bread.[12]

Yemeni professionals fault their own leadership for this: especially since the end of the

Campaign, they say, the conservation effort has suffered from a lack of political will. Some

also fault UNESCO for not insisting on a conservation plan and regulatory measures as first

steps in the process. At a recent symposium celebrating the opening of the Amiriyya

madrasa in Rada, the UNESCO Desk Office for Arab States made the following comment:

> In the early years of the World Heritage Convention, the inscription process did not foresee
> the need to have management mechanisms in place. Now UNESCO and the World Heritage
> Center are encouraging this, also as a means to manage change.[13]

According to Lewcock, UNESCO did see the need for such mechanisms – and indeed, the

Campaign strategy and his reports repeatedly refer to an upcoming plan and legislation. He

says that the conservation plan was postponed to ensure that emphasis would be on

infrastructure; as for regulatory measures, these were blocked by the Cabinet.[14] But it is not

clear why a conservation plan – which would deal not only with regulations, but with

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[11] Interview, 7/17/04. For his earlier comments, see chapter four, pp. 202-3.
[12] Architect and veteran of the Campaign, interview, 7/8/05.
[13] A. Paolini, Sana'a, 6/16/05.
[14] Personal communication 2-17-06.

environmental conditions, socio-economic factors, issues of ownership, and so forth[15] – was

never implemented. Only now, two decades later, are an inventory and conservation plan

underway, sponsored by UNESCO with funding from Italy and the Yemeni government.

In the opinion of a World Heritage official, the Quaroni Bonifica studies of the early

1980's should have formed the basis of a conservation plan.

> There were two major problems [with the Campaign]: a conceptual one, on the part of
> UNESCO and donors, and a lack of local capacity. UNESCO's strategy was to have a
> compilation of projects to sell to donors. But the donors left, disappointed, because there
> were no institutions to bring the work forward.

The money spent on these projects, he says, should have been used for a conservation plan,

and for the development of a technical office that could offer meaningful assistance to

homeowners.[16] These projects – the restoration and reuse of *samsaras* and other buildings -

are also generally seen an unsuccessful. UNESCO asked foreign donors to sponsor these

projects, because it felt that they would have little interest in infrastructure.[17] But in the

1970's the first infrastructure projects for the old city had been sponsored in part by foreign

funds; indeed, this happens all the time, under the rubric of "development assistance." What

seems to have changed is not the nature of the work, but the way it was framed – as part of a

project to conserve a World Heritage City. It was expected that local embassies, in

particular, would want to sponsor glamorous projects that carried the cachet of conservation.

The restored buildings were to be given new functions, but in most case these were designed

with tourists in mind; even the project to revive handicrafts, for which professionals had

great hopes, did not build on the resources of the community, nor was it driven by the

community's needs.

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[15] Defined by D. Pini, personal conversation, 8/1/04.

[16] Interview, 7/14/04.

[17] G. Boccardi, R. Lewcock, personal conversation, 7/14/04.

In crafting these projects, the conservation office, UNESCO, and donors seem to have been guided by a romantic view of the old city and the role that it would play as a symbol of Yemeni culture.[18] This thinking continues to inform some conservation planning as witnessed, for example, by the use of the old city as a kind of stage for Sana'a's year as Cultural Capital of the Arab World.[19] According to one architect, in the early years of the Campaign some professionals

> were politically on the left; they had a rigid, old school approach to architecture. Their view of the old city was romantic, impractical – and undemocratic. It didn't account for people's needs.[20]

These individuals were former revolutionaries, and also deeply attached to the old city – which in some sense represented the "backward" ways that the revolution had hoped to be rid of. Romanticism was perhaps a way to come to terms with this past, to domesticate it and idealize it. A certain ambivalence – pride in a local genius that is recognized by the international community, and discomfort at persistent "backward" ways that are resistant to modernization – underlies the "cultural gap" between these professionals and the builders and residents with whom they share the responsibility of conserving the old city.

It is perhaps ironic that the success of the Campaign is attributed not to "classic" monuments conservation, but rather to modernizing operations – which were, in fact, needed to remediate earlier, failed modernizing efforts (the introduction of piped water). For an

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[18] The Quaroni Bonifica study of 1986 stated this clearly: it was important to conserve the old city not only for its own sake, "but also, and perhaps mainly, in [anticipation of] the future role that the Historical Centre will be able to fill at [the] international level. We are thinking particularly of a cultural role which the historical city could undoubtedly take on in the future" ("Action Plan," January 1986, p. 20).

[19] See chapter four, p. 206 and figure 15.

[20] These individuals sometimes came into conflict with an engineer from the Department of Municipalities, who was appointed Deputy Director of the conservation office in 1989. The latter had a more practical approach: "He thought that we should consider the Italian idea of demolishing the shops of the *suq* and putting parking underground. 'We can't be romantic about the shops,' he said. 'We need to think about economic needs, safety, and so forth. We need a vision for the future'" (personal conversation, 6/16/05).

Italian architect involved in the rehabilitation of Mu'adh quarter, urban recovery (*ricupero urbano*) was virtually impossible in Sana'a, given the closed and at times hostile nature of local society.[21] Indeed, working in Sana'a was not, and still is not, easy: the first Yemeni surveyors and their UNDP supervisor feared for their lives when laying out roads in the early 1970's; as recently as 2002, conservation work in a *maqshama* in the old city was challenged with gunfire. But it should be recalled that, after many difficulties, street paving and infrastructure in the old city were accepted and ultimately appreciated by residents. In contrast to the restoration and reuse projects, urban upgrading was not driven by notions of "traditional culture" but rather by a desire to modernize and improve. In simply bettering the quality of life, these operations attributed value to the everyday environment – and perhaps more effectively communicated the notion of "heritage."

As we have seen, the authors of the Campaign tried to bring together two different conceptions of conservation, which have their own histories and logics: the careful preservation of monuments, according to historical and "scientific" criteria; and an urban strategy that tries to reconcile old city fabrics with the requirements of modernization. In the post-war era, these concepts of conservation converged in both international protocols and national laws, but the differences between them were not clearly articulated. Almost by default, it seems, the conservation of historic cities is guided by principles and standards that were originally developed for artworks and monuments: they prohibit change, which is necessary for cities to remain alive. There have been several attempts at the international level to address the needs of historic cities, but these attempts have not questioned the applicability of criteria like significance and authenticity to cities. Officials at UNESCO and the World Heritage Center are aware that standards for cities have to be different: "Integrity

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[21] See above, chapter six, p. 348.

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is more important than authenticity," one official told me, off the record.[22] The conservation

of World Heritage Sites, in particular, is entrusted to "scientific" bodies, since they are

considered collective human masterworks. "ICOMOS and ICCROM managed to avert many

disasters – this must be stated up front," said an Italian conservation architect with long

experience in the region.

> But conservation implies rehabilitation, revitalization – not just restoration. Many people at
> UNESCO feel this way. But UNESCO has no money, so most of the strategies are designed
> by ICOMOS and ICCROM. They are very conservative: they're only concerned with the
> restoration of buildings. The approach works for monuments, but not for cities. There is a
> kind of conceptual fight.

It's easier for agencies and municipalities to simply prohibit change, he says, since

bureaucracy has a difficult time with complexity: "For public bodies, it's easiest to say,

'let's restore.' It's more difficult to judge buildings and interventions on a case-by-case

basis."[23]

The documentary project

The modern approach to conservation – what I will call the "historicist approach" – relies on

various tools to document and classify cultural products. Like other bureaucratic tools, they

translate local context-based knowledge into theoretical knowledge; once ordered and

rationalized, complex social and material phenomena become legible and easier to manage.[24]

As such, conservation is in many ways a modernizing phenomenon, part of the apparatus of

the nation state. Like other modernizing schemes it is often seen as hegemonic, reshaping

the past according to an "official" notion of history. But complete hegemony is rarely

realized: such schemes involve subjects, conditions, and materials that ultimately force

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[22] Interview, Paris, 5/12/05.
[23] Interviews, Sana'a, 8/10/04 and 9/8/04.
[24] J. Scott, S*eeing Like a State*, pp. 1-13.

bureaucracy to modify its methods and even its aims. The field of cultural heritage –

charged with managing and conserving all that is "pre-modern" – seems unsuited to a top-

down approach. "When the World Bank got involved in cultural heritage, it was a whole

new world for them," says an Italian consultant. "They were used to big infrastructure

projects. Conservation is small-scale, complex, local."[25] In Yemen, especially, bureaucracy

is handicapped by certain institutional constraints. At the same time, various actors – who

see themselves as legitimate representatives of the past – exercise agency by choosing among

a range of practices and discourses.

Tools for documenting and classifying heritage are based on certain assumptions

about the cultural artifact and the nature of the "historic." The inventory - which Fitch calls

the *sine qua non* of conservation planning -[26] assumes first, that an artifact was created by a

known author, at a given moment in time, and that its original form can be determined (since

it is the basis of authenticity). It also assumes that the artifact can be located within a wider

chronology (the "historical time line"), and that it is representative of a type, a style, a

culture, or a time period (and thus reflects a stage in artistic or human development). Perhaps

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[25] Interview, Sana'a, 7/14/04.

[26] In the typical inventory, writes Fitch, the surveyor is asked to note basic historical information for a building, such as construction date, architect, owner, and so forth, and features indicating period or style. Most forms require a photograph of the principle façade, and some have a graphic component, which is believed to reduce the subjectivity of the observations. The surveyor is also asked to judge the building's "integrity" and "significance". In theory, these judgments are not aesthetic in nature, but rather have to do with the completeness of the structure (or site) as it was originally constructed, and with its representative function: that is, its association with an architectural style or historical era, or an event, person, or group. Even the preparation of a simple form, notes Fitch, implies a degree of expertise, since the form determines which buildings will be studied in greater depth. "But any evaluation," writes Fitch, "by definition involves subjective judgment – a difficult enough task even for trained professionals; this can to some extent be minimized by a computerized database, which also allows easier retrieval of information. On the basis of the inventory, buildings may be ranked according to local, regional, or national significance (as, for example, in the "national register", a system that was instituted in many European countries and in some colonies in the 19th and early 20th centuries). The inventory process is thus highly charged, since it determines the degree of protection accorded to a building, complex, or district (*Historic Preservation*, pp. 307-8). Typically, the inventory precedes, and serves as a basis for, a conservation plan.

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most fundamentally, it assumes that the artifact exists as a discrete object, distinct from its surroundings. The expanding definition of heritage has challenged these tools and assumptions in various ways – and Yemen, in particular, challenges them on virtually all counts. In the first place, the country's historic cities are difficult to assign to the historical time line. The practices that built Yemen's cities and buildings are, to a great extent, still alive, although the social and institutional forms that shaped them have changed or disappeared. Some social forms closely conditioned by space persist, like the *maqyal* or *qat* chew; houses in the old city of Sana'a continue to be closely associated with families and carry the prestige of family names. These old social and building practices have been transferred to new houses and districts, where they continue to be considered *turath*.

Second, because modernization is recent, much of the built heritage of Yemen is relatively well conserved. Unlike the old cities of Cairo and Damascus where much of the residential fabric was made of earth and has decayed, the building materials used in the Yemeni highlands were durable ones, stone and brick. In other areas, like the Wadi Hadhramaut, the earthen architecture has until recently been subject to continual maintenance, and is in many places relatively well conserved. The project of documenting, let alone conserving, this heritage is daunting even to foreign consultants: there are thousands of exceptional settlements, many of which are partially or fully abandoned due to migration and the depressed agricultural sector (figure 46). The immense scope of the undertaking was obvious in a recent workshop to design a comprehensive cultural heritage inventory for Yemen – which also envisioned the documentation of "intangible heritage" like poetry, music, dance, and even cultural practices. "The complexity of an inventory derives from the

quality and quantity of cultural heritage," said a European consultant. "All of Yemen could be considered as cultural landscape."[27]

The sheer quantity of heritage in Yemen challenges the capacity of a classificatory system to document, contain, and explain it. This problem was foreseen by Riegl: he realized that the ascription of value according to age, rather than artistic or historical significance, could lead to the infinite expansion of the canon.[28] An age limit (usually 30-50 years) is included in most national conservation laws, and in most of the regional laws reviewed by Yemeni professionals in the mid-1980's. But they realized that an age limit wouldn't work in Yemen: "It works in the Gulf, because their *turath* is new," says one of the professionals who reviewed the laws. "In Yemen, most things are over fifty years old." This led them to distinguish between the "archeological monument" (*ma'lam athari*) and the "historic monument" (*ma'lam ta'rikhi*) which would in theory be accorded different levels of protection. While neither term excluded the possibility of habitation, the "historic monument" was defined as one that continues to support life.[29]

The massive heritage of Yemen cannot be ordered according to conventional periodization; nor can its prodigious forms easily be classified according to stylistic or formal criteria. In Europe, the documentary practices of conservation developed alongside historical studies; even in Sana'a, the best documented of Yemeni settlements, such studies are still in their infancy, so the basic data required in inventories is often lacking. The continuous use of materials and recycling of forms over long spans of time make dating difficult; moreover,

[27] V. Sommella, Cultural Heritage Inventory Workshop, Sana'a, 5-24-05.
[28] See above, chapter one, p. 48.
[29] See above, chapter four, pp. 247-8.

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several historical layers are often contained in the same building, with the older floors many centuries older than the upper floors.[30] In Sana'a, says one professional,

> we can't specify historical features, as in the Gothic, Renaissance, and so forth. [Historical] layering (tarakum) for us is not like the European. In Yemen it unfolds over the long term ('ala al-mada al-tawila).[31]

In conservation, as in the art historical methodology on which it draws, a building's value was determined by its position in an evolutionary sequence, defined by style or period; this in turn was closely related to notions of monumentality. Although recognition of the vernacular has, in theory, widened the scope of values in architecture, it is largely valued as the *inverse* of the monumental tradition – that is, for the absence of change and for anonymity. In Yemen, noted a World Heritage official, the kind of great technological changes that gave rise to new monumental types in Europe are generally lacking.[32] Over the years, foreign experts have been fascinated not by change in Yemeni architecture, but rather by its continuity.

Indeed, the old city of Sana'a was listed as a World Heritage site on the basis of continuity – even "timelessness" - which is best represented in its residential architecture. This is perhaps why the Yemeni house is seen to symbolize the nation's heritage. The Quaroni Bonifica team saw the Yemeni house as the perfect type of a society that remained largely undifferentiated:

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[30] R. Lewcock, personal conversation.

[31] Architect and veteran of the campaign, personal conversation, 7/26/04. In his doctoral dissertation, Swiss architect Jaques Feiner attempted to categorize local architecture according to historical stages ("La Vielle Ville de Sana'a," 1997). His system was used for some time in CATS' survey forms. The employees I accompanied on rounds in March 2004 generally found it difficult to classify the buildings according to Feiner's categories, especially those who were not architects. While the model is attractive in terms of its formal analysis, Lewcock and others have expressed doubt that it can be historically substantiated. Local professionals with whom I spoke appreciate Feiner's attempt, but some feel that it is essentially a European model that has limited applicability.

[32] Interview, 7/14/04.

> ...[T]he Yemenite house, the most important and most typical expression of southern Arabian architecture, in the architectural perfection of which it is an expression, seems to bear out the hypothesis that its origins go far back in time, 'worked' by an extremely long experience inherited – for how much longer? – by the highly skilled nameless masters, the 'Usta', who work freely without the constraints and conditioning factors of an architecture that is the expression of an official power, which in the long and troubled history of Yemen, has never in practice taken the form of 'designed' civil architecture. The anthropological basis of this is to be sought in the substantial lack of contrast between the central power and the power of the mainly mercantile citizenry, in the special status of the cities whose main impetus towards aggregation was their commercial function. When power launched its architectural messages, it was a foreign power, and it did so by way of religious buildings such as mosques and funereal architecture, practically without any consequences on the architecture of civil dwellings.[33]

In architecture, as in other spheres, great changes are attributed to foreigners – and these changes have little impact on building practice and society. The portrait of the *usta* as "nameless," master of a craft that is somehow natural, contrasts markedly with builders' own account of practice and aesthetics - and buildings which bear the distinctive stamp (*basma*) of their makers, who are remembered as masters and teachers. Studies of residential architecture in Sana'a have begun to document, or at least suggest, patterns of change and development that occurred over time.[34] This kind of slow, incremental development is also characteristic of the mass of "minor" architecture in Europe, which tends to be overlooked by the evolutionary model.[35] While the idea of a "timeless" continuity is problematic from a scholarly perspective, it is put to use by various local actors in the construction of the "traditional" – including *usta*s themselves, for whom it affirms the historical nature of their practice.

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[33] "Safeguarding of Sana'a Historical Centre", Proposal Phase, P0: Foreward and Summary, p. 24.
[34] For example, P. and G. Bonnenfant, eds., *Les Vitraux de Sanaa*, Paris: Editions de CNRS, 1981.
[35] This point was made to me by R. Lewcock, personal conversation, 9/1/04.

Two approaches to the past

The groundwork for a "conceptual process" the supports modern conservation – the creation of a documentary and national history – has to a great extent been laid in Yemen. It dates to the imams' sponsorship of historical studies; in recent decades, the process has been nurtured by foreigners, who undertook archeological missions and pressed for the conservation of Yemen's historic cities. As in Europe, the process was embraced and driven by an elite, and gradually came to involve other segments of society – particularly as representations of the past came to be circulated via print, and more recently virtual, media. As in Europe, the construction of modern history and heritage has gone hand in hand with modernization and nationalism. But in Yemen, the process has been compressed into one or two generations; indeed, it is still unfolding. As such, we have a unique opportunity to study the ways in which a modern understanding of the past develops from, and builds on, older forms. This can provide clues to a similar process that occurred at earlier moments in Europe and elsewhere.[36]

In the Middle East the derivation of heritage (*turath*) from inheritance (*wirth* or *wiratha*), both conceptually and etymologically, mirrors and essentially replicates the development of the term *patrimoine*: the idea of family, or patrilineal, inheritance is transferred to the nation state.[37] For Handler, the association with private property is fundamental: as the individual is defined by the property he owns, the nation is defined by

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[36] Benedict Anderson's call to study the relationship between nationalism and the "cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which – it came into being" (*Imagined Communities*, 1983, p. 19) relates also to the construction of a national history. The quote is cited by Messick as an inspiration for *The Calligraphic State* (p. 2).

[37] 'A. al-Habashi, interview, 6/30/04.

the culture that it "possesses"; as possession, culture becomes ever more reified.[38] In Yemen

the association of material inheritance and *turath* may be implicit, but professionals and

intellectuals say that there is no direct link between them. Adopted from other Arab

countries, the term has come to encompass a wide variety of practices. "The concept of

heritage is different in Yemen," says the Syrian architect who directs the GTZ project in

Shibam-Hadhramaut.

> In Aleppo, heritage is seen as *athar* (antiquities); for Shibamis, heritage is *turath, taqalidna* –
> our traditions. It's the way we live our life, they say. It's not the house.[39]

In Yemen, the official project of heritage draws on local understandings of the past in a

variety of learned, artistic, and popular traditions. It has begun to transform these traditions,

and has also been transformed by them. These traditions share a genealogical model, in

which origin (*asl*) is seen as the source of family standing, expert knowledge, authority, and

inspiration. This has historically been true not only of oral and artistic practices, but of text-

based practices – until the latter were gradually transformed in the early 20th century with the

advent of printing. In these various forms the authenticity of one's claims is substantiated by

a human link: "Between me and the author there are two men," a renowned religious scholar

used to say to his colleagues.[40] Similar statements are made by builders: "I learned the work

from my father, who learned it from his father, and from his father before him, like that

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[38] R. Handler, "Who Owns the Past? History, Cultural Property, and the Logic of Possessive
Individualism", in Williams, ed., *The Politics of Culture*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution
Press, 1991, pp. 63-74.

[39] O. 'A-'A Hallaj, interview, 12/7/04.

[40]"In this shorthand manner al-Nahi [of Ibb] expressed the particular legitimacy of his stature as a
scholar and a teacher. It was a remark worthy of citation in an intellectual world in which the texts of
knowledge were literally embodied, their conveyance reckoned in terms of known relayers. Authority
of this sort relied on the specification of human links between the intellectual generations" (*The
Calligraphic State*, p. 15). The authority of texts, notes Messick, ultimately derives from the spoken
word. This in turn produces a kind of "genealogy of texts," in which the copy (*nuskha*) has a
particular relationship to the original (*asl*) (p. 29). The relationship between original and copy could
be fruitfully explored with regard to builders' practice.

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(*hakadha*)," said a builder, gesturing with a hand over his shoulder to indicate the remote past.[41] In various areas of cultural life and production, historicity is associated not with material artifacts or texts, but in the persons and practices that create and sustain them.

"I understand my work through *wiratha*," said the *usta* who restored the bridge at Damt - using a form of *w-r-th* that can be translated as "legacy", rather than material inheritance. "They say they are preserving *turath*, but they're treating it as if it's a frozen thing." His words capture, in a way that is both incisive and poignant, the conflict between two notions of the past: the one performative in nature, the other historicist. The builder's practice is historic because it is inherited, and because it *requires* artistry and improvisation, in the tradition of his predecessors. The *usta*'s supervisors needed his expert skills, but they insisted that he adhere to documentary criteria: "He wanted to beautify the bridge; we wanted to make it a monument."[42] When supervision is less stringent, builders sometimes seize the opportunity to beautify or improve certain elements – and are pleased when their work is seen as "original". This *usta*'s brother, who is also a builder, is considered more "sensitive" to *turath* - and as such, he is particularly adept at moving back and forth between discourses. On our site visits he occasionally pointed out changes that he and his brother had made. In the house of Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, which now serves as a museum of Sana'ani popular life (*mathaf al-hayat al-sha'biyya*), they rebuilt two interior arches supported on a single column. His brother added a decorative base to the column, not part of the original structure (figure 47). Why did his brother do this? I asked. "Art (*fann*)," he replied with a smile. Later, as we walked past a near-by Ottoman *sabil*, the builder told me that a pilaster on the neo-classical façade had inspired his brother's improvisation.

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[41] Interview, 7/15/04.
[42] See above, chapter five, p. 281.

In building as in other practices, faithfulness to one's predecessors is affirmed while the composition itself – whether building, poem, or text – is interpreted in the act of performance. This improvisation occurs within culturally accepted frameworks of practice and aesthetics; it is through improvisation that the aesthetic is understood and appreciated as traditional.[43] Although a builder may affirm the superiority of his predecessors, he improves on the past according to new needs and an evolving aesthetic that he shares with his peers. Performance of the past is, in effect, synonymous with "tradition": it is not the mechanical reproduction of past forms, but rather an

> interpretive process that embodies both continuity and discontinuity. [It is] a process of thought – an ongoing interpretation of the past.[44]

This performative view of the past differs from the modern historicist approach in fundamental ways. In the former, practice actively constitutes culture;[45] in the latter, culture is represented by, or embodied in, the object or text. In the former, the past is valued for its continuing relevance in the present; in the latter, for its distance from the present, its essential otherness.

In a place like Yemen, where traditional building practice is still vital, it is tempting to see the historicist approach to conservation as superfluous, and ultimately destructive. But because of the rapid pace of change, conditions are different today - and *ustas* as well as architects are aware of this. Invoking the superiority of one's predecessors – doubtlessly a very long tradition – has taken on a new urgency, as it finds disturbing confirmation in

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[43] What Herzfeld calls the "creative deformation of conventions" (personal conversation, 2/5/06). The former point was made by S. Caton, personal conversation, 7/6/04.
[44] R. Handler and J. Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious?" *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 97, 1984, pp. 273-4.
[45] Following Bakhtin and his circle, Caton argues that art is "*constitutive* of social phenomena, particularly ideology. Artworks as practices are active agents, not just passive reagents, in history" (*Peaks of Yemen I Summon*, p. 250).

dramatic material and social changes. On my visits to building sites, *ustas* would immediately point out the inferior materials they have to work with: brick that is of a different size and quality; new types of stone, because traditional quarries have closed; lime that is fired with a different type of fuel, and is hence substandard.[46] The lack of traditional brick is the biggest obstacle to *turath*, says one *usta*, but "GOPHCY is only interested in the dimensions of window openings. This is their biggest mistake."[47] In the capital and other cities, *ustas*' skills have been influenced by their work in concrete construction; before conservation lent new value to the old skills, some *ustas* no longer appreciated them. While asserting their role as worthy heirs of their trade, *ustas* fear that "the experience of fifteen hundred years has been lost...We builders are goats without a shepherd: each works the way he wants."

In the context of capitalist modernity, change is no longer a matter of assimilating new concepts and practices within an existing framework: rather, new systems are embraced that undermine the framework itself. An anthropologist noted that tribal poetry may die out in Yemen because of competing values transmitted through the modern educational system, such as the privileging of text over spoken language, and standard Arabic over dialect.[48] Earlier in the century, religious scholarship was transformed under the impact of printing. Manuscripts, as both material products and discursive objects, had been open-ended and

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[46] According to a *qaddad* master, lime (*nura*) is now fired with *salit*, an automotive oil (interview 8/11/04). He and other *ustas* have told me that the new brick differs not only in size, but in its quality: the old method of wood-firing produced bricks that were less porous. According to one *usta* there were only three types of stone in Sana'a: *nuqumi* (from a quarry on Jabal Nuqum); *haddi* (from a quarry in the village of Hadda), and *habash*, black volcanic stone. The quarry on Jabal Nuqum is now closed because there is a military installation there; the quarry in Hadda no longer operates because of the recent development of the area. "When we need *nuqumi* stone we use *bahluli* (from the area of Bani Bahlul)." On the road outside Sana'a, he says, you can pull over at various vendors' sites and buy a wide variety of stone (interview, 3/24/04).
[47] Site visit, 5/12/04.
[48] S. Caton, personal conversation, 7/6/04.

fluid; the new printed text "contained a new authority, a new truth value, enhanced by the definitiveness of the technology."[49]   In a similar way, local building practice is being transformed by a new professionalism that privileges the drawing over embodied practice. This transformation is still incomplete: in new construction, owners encourage *ustas* to improvise freely on architects' plans.[50]   But as in societies that modernized earlier, a variety of economic and social factors in Yemen now favor the progressive "rationalization" of building.   Ironically, conservation – which aims to preserve cultural forms from extinction – in many ways contributes to the demise of traditional building practice by adopting similar, rationalizing methods: for example, use of the competitive tendering system, and the privileging of the text – drawings, historical documents, material analyses – over embodied practice.   It would appear, then, that local building practice is threatened on two fronts: by new constructive systems that ultimately undermine its conceptual, social, and aesthetic framework; and on the other by conservation, which tends to reify it.

What, we may ask, is the future of traditional building practice in this context?   In many areas of the world that experienced modernization, historicism has tended to replace traditional building practices as the latter were subsumed within modern constructive systems.   Because of the rapid pace of change in Yemen, the situation is somewhat different: traditional builders continue to practice, and have found validation for their work in historicism.   They often use the language of historicism, affirming their work as faithful to the original – and thus affirming their role as historical agents.   Masons who designate themselves as *taqlidi*, writes Marchand,

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[49] B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, p. 127.
[50] See above, chapter five, p. 262.
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in marked distinction to those working in the city with modern materials and equipment...advantageously manipulate this identity through the discourse.[51]

My field work suggests, however, that there is not a clear-cut distinction between "traditional" and "non-traditional" builders, at least among those working in conservation. These builders have assimilated the notion of the old city as a special place, requiring careful adherence to the old ways. But they also consider their work outside the old city, using modern materials and techniques, as *turath*. In some cases, they have different crews for work inside and outside the old city. Like residents who move easily between the old city and the new districts, these builders move easily between the old and new, framing both in terms of the "traditional".

Builders use not only the language of historicism: in some cases, they also use its tools. Sultan Sallam's exceptional documentary work on local building practice – the result of many months in the field with *usta*s – is used by at least one builder in his own practice. This builder is the one whom professionals describe as sensitive to *turath*; he is a son of the *usta* who acted as master restorer for the UNESCO Campaign. He admires Sallam for his documentation of the essential elements of the Sana'ani style, for example, the various types of *hizam*s (decorative brick courses); knowledge of *hizam*s is considered essential for mastery, but has been forgotten by most *usta*s. He used Sallam's illustrations in a training course on brickwork that he was asked to lead at CATS (the only such course, to my knowledge, that has been led by an *usta*). He has also used Sallam's drawings in restorations and new construction. In one case, he rebuilt the façade of a house not far from the Great Mosque, that had been damaged by settlement. He used a photo of the old building to do the work, and reused the same stone. But in place of the old doorway – a simple one,

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[51] T. Marchand, "Process over product", p. 143.

with a wooden lintel – he built a larger and more elegant opening, framed by a stone arch, in order to "fill the façade". The new doorway was based on one of Sallam's drawings (figures 48, 49).[52] For this builder, Sallam's work plays a role similar to that of the 19th century pattern book – blurring the line that exists, at least in theory, between conservation and "revivalism."

If historicist tools and concepts have to some extent been absorbed in the performance of "tradition", the inverse is also true: the existence of living practitioners conditions and limits historicism. Local architects and even foreign consultants generally ignore certain aspects of international practice - especially the injunction against rebuilding, and the directive to distinguish new work from old. According to a former GOPHCY official, rebuilding was standard practice until it came to be abused by property owners who built entirely new, and incompatible, structures. Now, he says, the process is more carefully controlled.[53] In project files at the Inspections Department, buildings are carefully documented with photographs and, in some cases drawings; the intent, say inspectors, is to ensure that buildings are conserved or rebuilt "exactly as they were." But many sets of before and after photographs show that substantial changes are allowed; since the work is often done using reused or "traditional" materials, and by *ustas* using the same techniques, it is often difficult to tell that the work is new. If there is little prejudice against rebuilding, there is virtually no attempt to distinguish new work from old, even when the process is managed by architects. Depending on the importance of the building, historical accuracy is not always a priority. The *marna'* at Talha is an interesting case, since it is part of a mosque complex that has the status of a monument. Although residents and builders assert that it was rebuilt "as it

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[52] Site visit, 3/13/04. He later showed me the drawing at his house, in a photocopy of Sallam's book that he had made for reference.

[53] Interview, 8/8/04.

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was", the façade was completely redesigned; as such, says the SFD project manager, it cannot be considered a "restoration". The architect and project manager were concerned not with historical accuracy: rather, they tried to be faithful to the "spirit (*ruh*)" of the original and respectful of its historic context. In practice, then, both architects and builders continue to fabricate the "traditional", preserving the "Sana'ani style" while addressing new needs.

These views are echoed by foreign consultants, who might be expected to insist on international standards. "Rebuilding in the old city is fine," says Lewcock, "as long as traditional materials are used."[54] A similar approach was applied in much of the work conducted under foreign supervision in Sana'a. It is shared by the Italian architects who are training staff at CATS in inventory methods (figure 50): reconstruction is allowed, as long as it is done with the proper materials and methods.[55] The survey form itself represents an interesting adaptation of international methods to the local context. Developed by consultants with long experience in the region and by GOPHCY staff, the survey form avoids notions of period and style. Rather, surveyors are asked to identify the number of "historical layouts" on the façade of each building. The concept was not an easy one for trainees to grasp, in part because of translations between Italian, English, and Arabic. The Italian project director tried to clarify it in a meeting with trainees: "layout" means, in effect, "composition." A typical building of old Sana'a consists of three "historical layouts": the base of the building, executed in stone, with small window openings; the upper floors, in brick with varied window openings; and a *mafraj*, a narrow sitting room, on the top.[56] If a building has only one "layout" – a single material, like stone, with uniform window openings on all floors – it is an indication that it is modern. "Richness," rather than historicity *per se*,

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[54] Personal conversation, Sana'a, 8/6/04.
[55] S. Teston, presentation to GOPHCY Director and staff, 7/26/04.
[56] D. Pini addressing CATS trainees, 9/6/04.

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thus becomes the main criterion of value in Sana'ani architecture; it is further elaborated

according to surveyors' judgments of architectural quality.

This system was developed in part because, as we have seen, notions of period and

style are not easily applied in Sana'a. But more importantly, if such categories were

invented, they could be used to justify "stylistic restoration" – that is, restoration according to

idealized styles and periods. This would ultimately destroy the richness of local architecture,

as it has in other parts of the world. In an address to GOPHCY officials, one of the Italian

trainers explained the team's approach:

> Each building has its own personality. We want to preserve the complexity and richness of
> Sana'ani architecture; we don't want to simplify it on a survey sheet. This system leaves
> doors open...We are learning together how to read the buildings of Sana'a.
>
> We don't want to say there's a Sana'ani type: it will end up homogenizing the architecture.
> The idea is, you give people the freedom to manage the elements, according to their social
> and economic needs. You only have to control the way the elements are executed. It's
> dangerous to say this window is good, this window is bad...
>
> People will show you how they want to change their houses. GOPHCY needs the tools to
> guide this process.[57]

The approach was questioned by some officials, but it seemed to be appreciated by most of

the surveyors: they perhaps found these ideas familiar from their training sessions with a

senior Yemeni architect, in preparation for the inventory. "Every place, every building has

its own character," this architect once told me. "It speaks to you like a human face speaks."

On other occasions he expressed concern that local architecture was understood through a

European lens - not only by foreigners, but by local architects trained in European history

and practice. At the UNESCO workshop to launch a nation-wide cultural heritage inventory,

he addressed the panel:

> We don't want our conceptions of beauty to be translated through the eyes of others...There
> is not one *turath*, there are many, varied *turaths*.[58]

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[57] S. Teston, presentation to GOPHCY Director and staff, 7/26/04.

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The survey form for old Sana'a aims at the most basic level of classification, leaving open the possibility of readings internal to the culture. The direction is promising, but it does not go far enough. Despite world recognition of Sana'ani architecture, "we still have no idea what it is," observed the same architect. "We would do better in Florence: that's where our understanding of architecture comes from."[59] In contrast to architecture of the distant past, built by builders who died long ago, there are living builders in Sana'a: their vital and subtle discourse can reveal much about the nature and value of architecture in *local* terms. This kind of discourse also exists among builders in the Hadhramaut and in other parts of the country. With all the international funds and expertise that have been devoted over the years to the study and conservation of Yemen's heritage, why have builders themselves not been studied and included? Some years ago Najwa Adra, an anthropologist known in particular for her work on Yemeni dance, was asked to help design an inventory for dances in Qatar. It soon became clear that the foreign experts' categories did not work: instead, they asked people who performed the dances to classify them as they understood them. They tended to classify a dance not according to formal criteria, but criteria of practice – for example, according to the social context in which a dance was performed.[60] A similar strategy should be urgently pursued among *ustas*: they should be asked to help develop classification systems, based on their own experience and understanding of building.

Such endeavors are mandatory if sites of "outstanding universal value" are to be conserved: if "universal value" exists, it is produced and conserved through local values.

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[58] Yassin Ghalib, 5/24/04 and 5/29/05.
[59] See above, chapter five, pp. 267-8.
[60] Personal conversation, Sana'a, 6/5/05.

Moreover, an investigation of building practice as "local knowledge" would greatly enrich historical studies, perhaps shedding light on pre-industrial architecture elsewhere in the world. Rather than forcing living experience into historical schemas, there is a unique opportunity to enrich our understanding of architecture through an inter-disciplinary approach that engages both living builders and the artifacts of the past.

A new synthesis

Such an approach follows logically from the unique synthesis that is already emerging on the ground - the result of a dynamic interplay between the global and the local, between an academic conception of history and one that is performative, rooted in local practice. Historicist tools and concepts have to some extent been absorbed in the performance of "tradition" – not only by builders, but by residents who would like to see the old city rebuilt "exactly as it was." This is consistent with the definition of tradition, which has always absorbed concepts and tools, and has in turn been transformed by them. At the same time, living practices resist the reifying effects of historicism. It is significant that, despite certain differences, architects and builders seem to agree on a culturally constructed framework for tradition: for both groups, historicist methods help to establish the parameters of that framework.

This synthesis of international and local practice produces, in effect, a new definition of authenticity: that which is authentic is "true to the original" in terms of practice, materials, and aesthetics. Authenticity means faithfulness to one's predecessors in terms of inherited knowledge and practice and in terms of a shared aesthetic, embodied in the buildings they left behind. This definition of authenticity can, and should, be consciously cultivated as the

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basis of official practice and policy. Policies would be prescriptive as well as proscriptive in nature, based on the idea of conservation as a creative process rather than simply as a means to preserve artifacts. They would recognize and promote builders as independent agents and full partners in conservation. At the same time, historicism would help to establish the framework for change – not by reifying forms, but by demonstrating their relevance and adaptability to present conditions (figure 51).

The tension between performance and historicism, or between the "living" and the "historic", in many ways reflects an old debate in European practice – one that has not entirely been put to rest. In the 19th century restoration architects like Viollet-le-Duc and George Gilbert Scott approached restoration as a creative process, inspired by the work of the past. They were vocally attacked by certain "antiquarians", who argued that buildings should be treated as historical documents. Both approaches grew out of historicism, but used the material in different ways. The antiquarians used historicism to establish criteria of historical accuracy and authenticity; the "creative" school used it to discern the intentions of the original builders, and to reconstitute their work in the present. Like Yemeni builders today, these creative restorers also invented new "heritage" in various revivalist styles; indeed, 19th century restoration and revivalism must be seen side by side. In the 20th century the antiquarian view was sanctioned in a new "scientific" approach to restoration. This was closely tied to architectural modernism, which also rejected the notion that the past could be "imitated." Despite official sanction, however, Wim Denslagen argues that

> [t]he doctrines of the antiquarians...have never received anything like general recognition; nor has this been the case since 1964, when the Charter of Venice was published.

> Between theory and practice there is an enormous fissure, not only with the restoration of less important monuments, where one might expect to see one, but also with important palaces and church buildings.

The gap between theory and practice is highlighted in places where living practitioners still build in the old ways. But the issues, says Denslagen, are the same everywhere.[61] He goes on to cite examples of 20th century reconstructions and restorations, often initiated by official bodies, that conflict directly with the Venice Charter. Among these is Saint-Sernin Cathedral in Toulouse, which was restored by Viollet-le-Duc in 1860 – according to his conception of the intentions of the original builders. In 1979, the Commission des Monuments Historiques decided to reverse Viollet-le-Duc's restoration, in order to "return" the building to its pre-1860 state – a project that involved further changes to the original structure. The project was halted in 1989 because of protest from citizens and art historians, but resumed in 1990.[62] Among other notable examples is the faithful reconstruction of the Campanile in Piazza San Marco, Venice, which collapsed in 1902; and more recently, the decision to rebuild the theater of La Fenice in its "original" form after a devastating fire in 1996. The unanimous

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[61] "Restoration theories, East and West", p. 6. Denslagen's article is a response to criticism of the Venice Charter, including A. Krishna Menon, whose argument was reviewed in chapter one. While Denslagen acknowledges that the criticism exposes certain weaknesses in the Charter, he believes that it does not undermine its essential aim: the protection of historic, material remains. "I suspect that in the East what people object to is not so much the spirit of the Charter of Venice as the pedantic tone adopted by Western providers of funds," he writes. "Whether or not time is linear or cyclical, ancient temples belong to India, just as cathedrals are a part of France, and in both cases it would seem advisable to preserve these monuments with respect for the people who built them. This remains the nub of international charters and conferences about restoration principles no matter what the circumstances. All one can hope for is that India will not treat its temples in the same way as France did its cathedrals in the past century. Most cathedrals have been restored to death. The advocates of the Charter of Venice, including this author, hope that monuments outside Europe will also not fall victim to well-meaning but disastrous stylistic 'improvements' and additions that are out of keeping with the whole. It does not matter if a monument is located in a country that still has a 'living' architectural tradition or in one where 'history' is treated as sacrosanct. What is more, I do not believe that the difference between the two attitudes is all that great. Indian art is not so static that it does not contain any traces of historical development, and in Europe there have also been attempts to soften the break with the past using stylistic imitations and reconstruction..." (pp. 6-7).
[62] See S. Rab's account of Viollet-le-Duc's restoration of Saint Sernin and its recent "de-storation", "The 'Monument' in Architecture and Conservation", pp. 82-106.

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decision by the town council, taken the day after the fire, was summarized in a phrase that became a motto: "As it was, where it was."[63]

Such incidents are surprising, since it is often assumed that in Europe and the United States, professionals are able to define and enforce an "official" view of the past. But just as often, local governments respond to the wishes of a populace that sees the past in less academic terms: it is the image of the past that counts, because it sustains a sense of continuity. Rarely are internationally accepted standards applied faithfully in practice and when they are, they are resisted in various ways. In the United States, for example, in order for a building or district to be listed as a local, state, or national landmark, the owner or municipality must undergo a rigorous process to establish its significance and authenticity. This process became especially important with the institution of historic tax credits in the mid-1970's: many old buildings that would have otherwise been demolished are now being restored and rehabilitated, because tax credits make them profitable. In order to qualify for the tax credits, a project must in theory adhere to strict historical criteria and restoration guidelines. But when these are too stringent, architects and builders may conspire in rebuilding and fabricating "historical" elements that pass for "original." On one occasion a mason in North Carolina, like his Yemeni counterparts, proudly showed me a new brick arch that he had constructed in an historic façade – a skill he had learned from his father. The façade was certified as historic, and thus eligible for tax credits. Preservation bureaucrats sometimes conspire in this process: they may turn a blind eye to reconstructions and changes, so that a project will qualify for historic designation. In some places, the motive may be

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[63] http://www.venicefoundation.org/pdf/vif12eng.pdf The rebuilding of the theater in a 19th century idiom, based on a design by Aldo Rossi, was opposed by many architects and cultural critics. The reconstruction of the Campanile, as well as the reconstruction of Michaeliskirche in Hamburg (burnt in 1906), were opposed by some, including noted art historians George Dehio and Cornelius Gurlitt (W. Denlagen, "Restoration Theories, East and West", pp. 5-6).

money. But in many cases, it is simply that bureaucrats want the project to go forward – and they see the changes as consistent with the spirit of the building and its historic context.

Critics have charged that conservation extracts buildings from complex webs of cultural and social meanings, and reframes them in terms that are narrowly academic and historical. But in Yemen, and perhaps elsewhere, the matter is more complex. In Yemen *ta'rikhi*, or historic, often indicates continuity with the past rather than separation from it. In industrialized societies, too, official notions of the past do not entirely supplant others. Notions of the past as exemplar and as source of prestige persist in social practice, and in the genealogical imagination of individuals, families, groups, and institutions. In modern conservation, the term "historic" perhaps generalizes and diminishes the positivistic sense of "history". Riegl's own formulation of the modern "historic monument" began to chip away at this privileged, academic definition. He saw the modern monument as a democratic phenomenon, closely linked to mass society. It included buildings and vernacular sites that were consecrated not by power or by specialist criteria, but by the subjective feelings of the masses: "in terms of age value, all monuments are equal."[64] For Riegl, art historians and specialized technicians would remain curators of the modern monument. But the masses did not view these monuments from a distance: they inhabited them and had often created them. It was perhaps inevitable that they would eventually claim curatorial rights. The current debate over "competing values" in conservation is perhaps best understood as a debate about the nature of the "historic" and its relationship to the present.

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[64] Cited by M. Olin, who notes that for Riegl the democratization of the monument was one aspect of preservation as a socialistic project; "[a]ttempts to apply universal aesthetic criteria are aristocratic" ("The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion in Late 19th Century Austria", p. 195).

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Figure 1 Aerial view of the old city of Sana'a, 1995

Source: Monica Fritz, 1995, courtesy of the Aga Khan Visual Archive, M.I.T.

Figure 2 The walls of Sana'a, 1970

Source: *Le mura di Sana*, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1974 (shot on October 18, 1970),

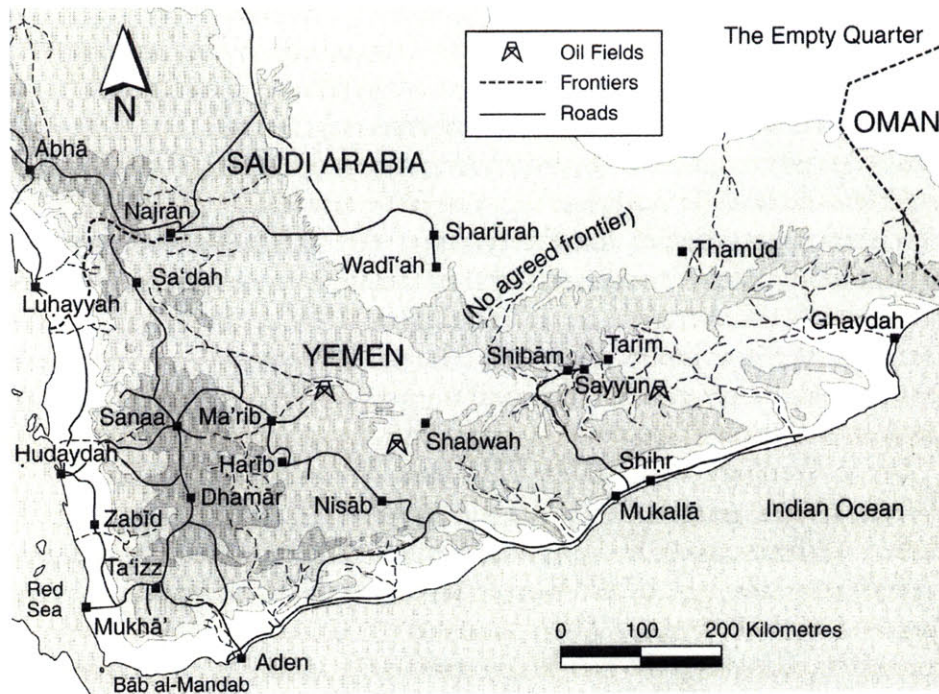**Figure 3**   Von Wissman's map of Sana'a, 1929

Source: R. Lewock and R. B. Serjeant, *Sana'a, An Arabian-Islamic City*, p. 118

Figure 4   Aerial view of Sana'a, 1970

Source: H. Kopp and E. Wirth, *Sanaa: Développement et organization de l'éspace d'une ville arabe*, p. 117.

Figure 5 Map of the Yemen Republic in the late 1990's

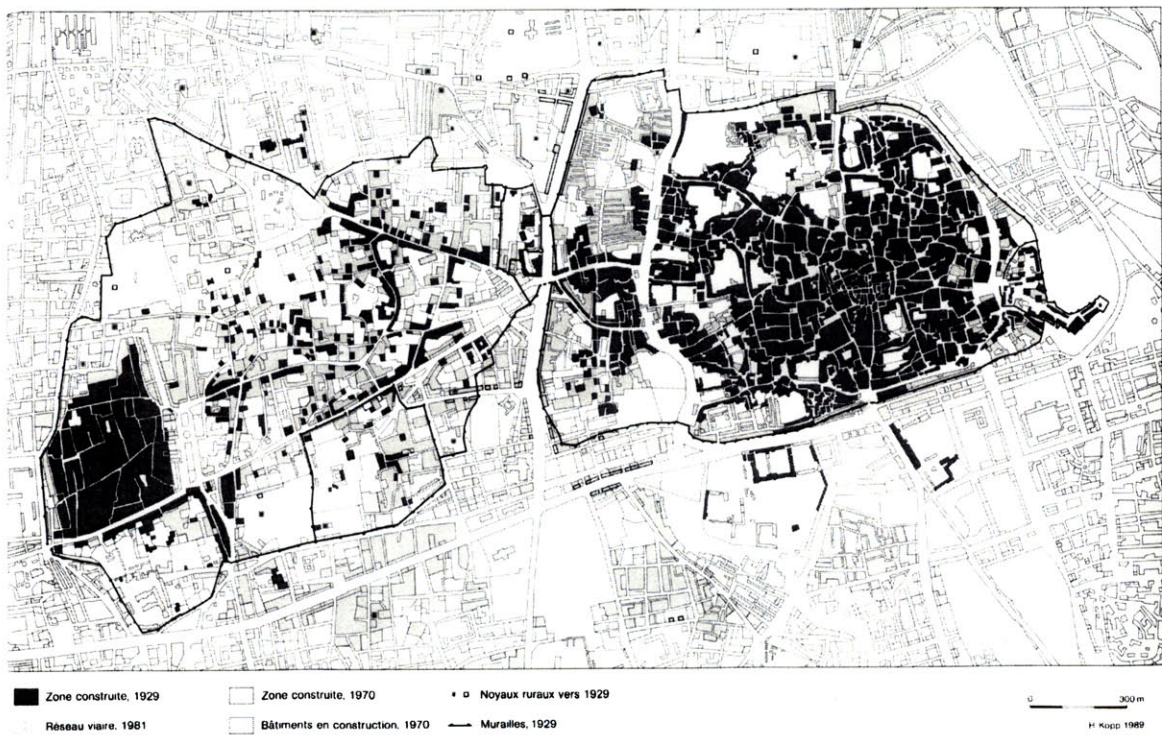Source: P. Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, p. 206.

Figure 6 View eastward across Midan al-Tahrir, toward 'Abd al-Mughni Street and the old city beyond.

Figure 7 'Abd al-Mughni Street, which runs along the line of the old western wall.

■ Zone construite, 1929	□ Zone construite, 1970	▪ □ Noyaux ruraux vers 1929
Réseau viaire, 1981	Bâtiments en construction, 1970	—— Murailles, 1929

0   300 m

H Kopp 1989

Figure 8 Growth of Sana'a from 1929 to 1970.

Source: H. Kopp and E. Wirth, *Sanaa: Développement et organization l'éspace d'une ville arabe*, p. 115.

Figure 3 : Le développement de l'urbanisation à Sanaa entre 1979 et 1985.
Carte établie par J.-F. TROIN. Fond topographique : Survey Authority.

Figure 9 Urban development of Sana'a, 1979-1985

Source: Jean-Francois Troin, "Sana: Géographie d'une Explosion Urbaine", in
G. Grandguillaume, ed., *Sanaa Hors le Murs: une ville arabe contemporaine*,
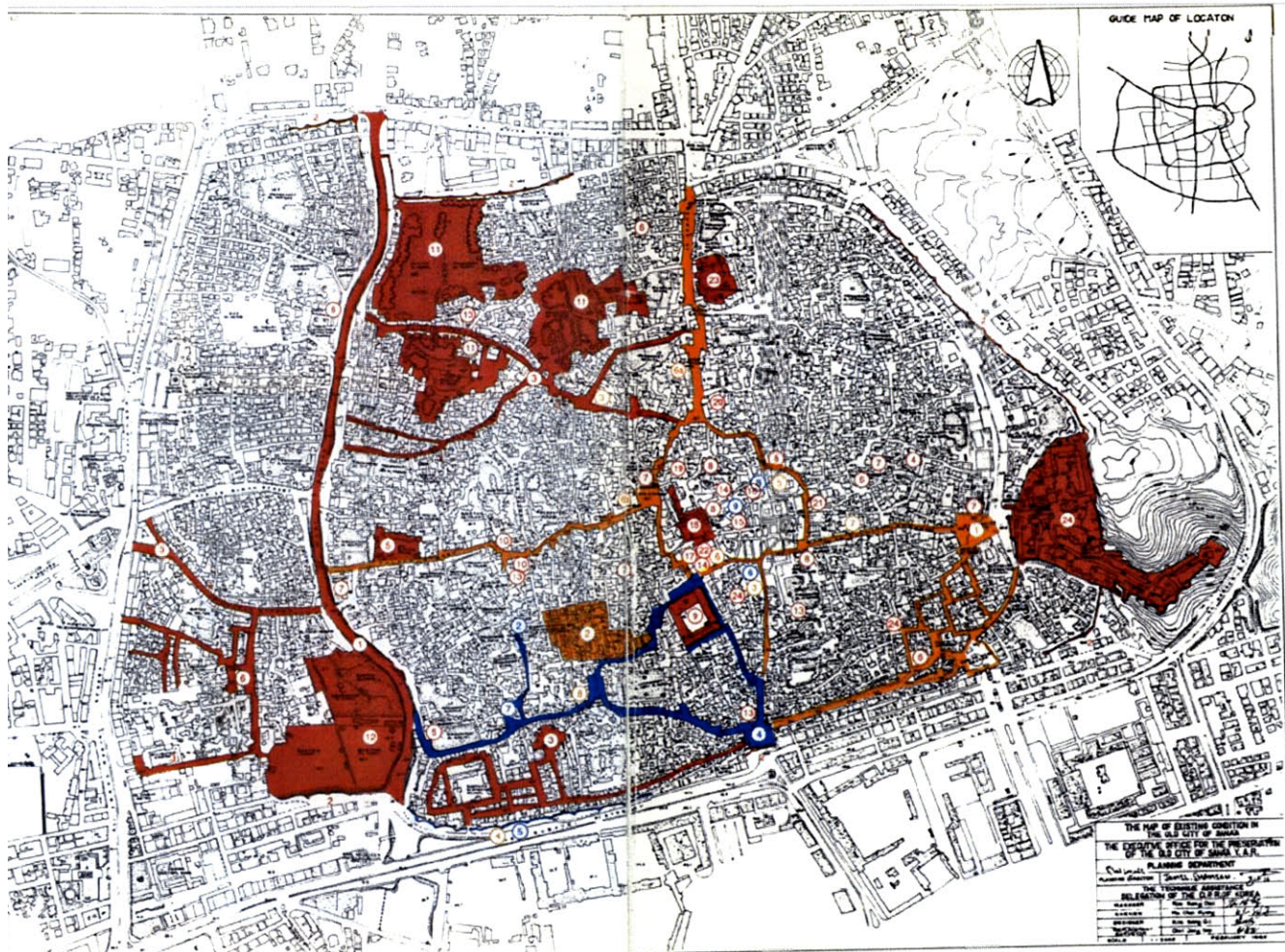p. 15.

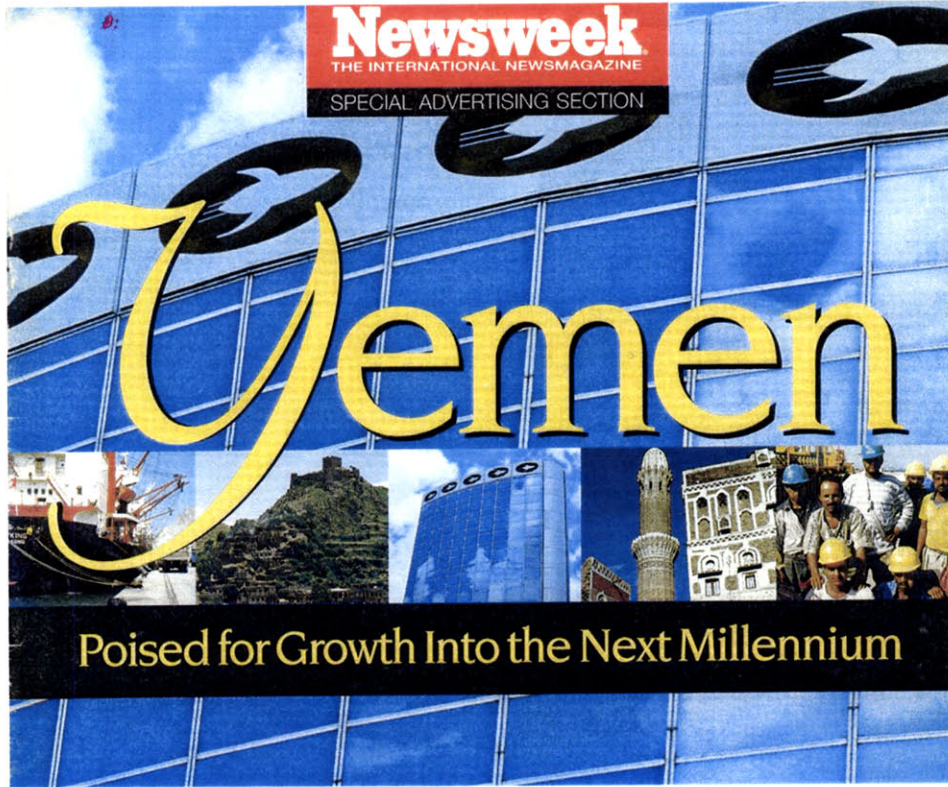**Figure 10** Phases of street paving in the old city.

Figure 11 Paving at al-Qasimi Street, the first area to be paved during the UNESCO Campaign.

Figure 12 Newsweek advertising supplement, juxtaposing images of old and new architecture and industry.

Figure 13 Plaster models of tower houses on sale at Wadi Dhahr, a popular Friday morning destination in the countryside near Sana'a.

Figure 14 Suq al-Baqar clinic, southeast corner.

Figure 15 The facades of the Wadi Sa'ila served as a dramatic backdrop for a concert by a German orchestra in the amphitheater at Bustan al-Amri during Sana'a's year as Cultural Capital of the Arab World (2004). Attendance was by invitation, excluding most residents of the old city who watched from the banks of the wadi. Photo courtesy of Marcos Puig Abbs.

Figure 16 House in the area of al-Zumar.

Figure 17 Construction of an upper story in the eastern part of the old city. Traditional-style brickwork, executed with half bricks, is applied as veneer to concrete block walls – a common solution that is usually approved by inspectors.

Figure 18 "Suqification": the ground floor of houses transformed into shops.

Figure 19 A new hotel built on the site of a demolished tower house in the quarter of al-Fulayhi. The house on the right is Beit al-Mutahhar (ca. 1830).
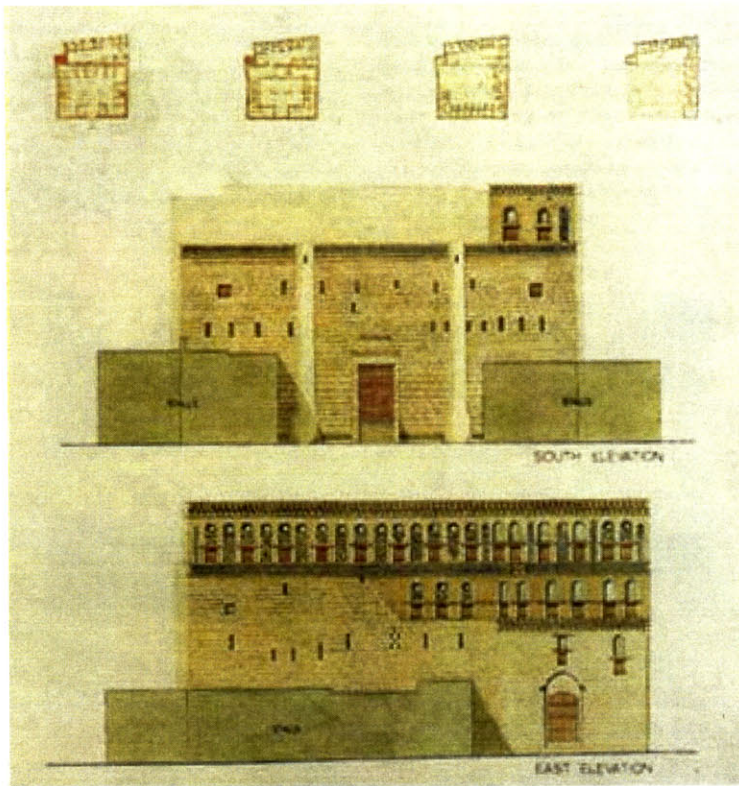
Figure 20 Maqshamat al-Hurgah, one of the urban gardens restored by the Social Fund for Development.
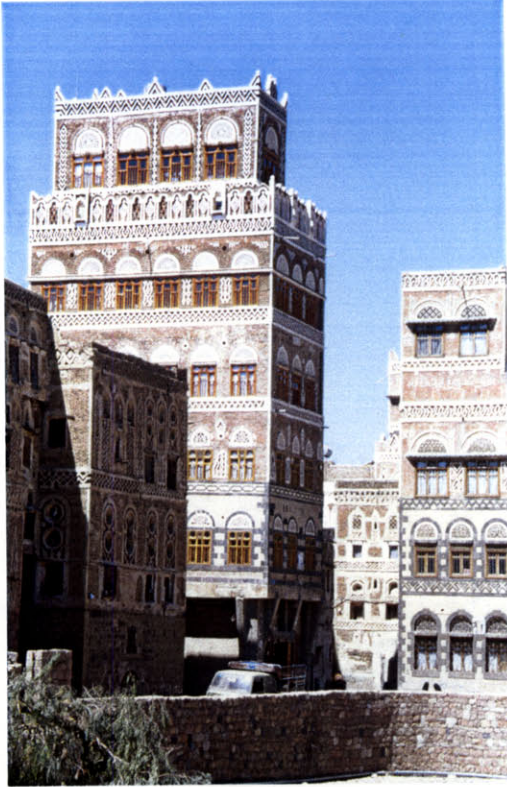
Figure 21 Restoration studies of Samsarat al-Baw'ani by Giancarlo Barbato.

Source: B. Lane, *San'a: Pilot Restoration Projects*

Figure 22 Samsarat al-Baw'ani, south entrance after renovation.

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Figure 23 The upper stories of this house in the old city were built by Ahmad al-Rawdhi. The image provides an interesting contrast to his father's work, below. Note in particular the window openings.

Figure 24 The upper stories of this house on the Wadi Sa'ila were built by Muhammad al-Rawdhi, the chief restorer for the UNESCO Campaign.
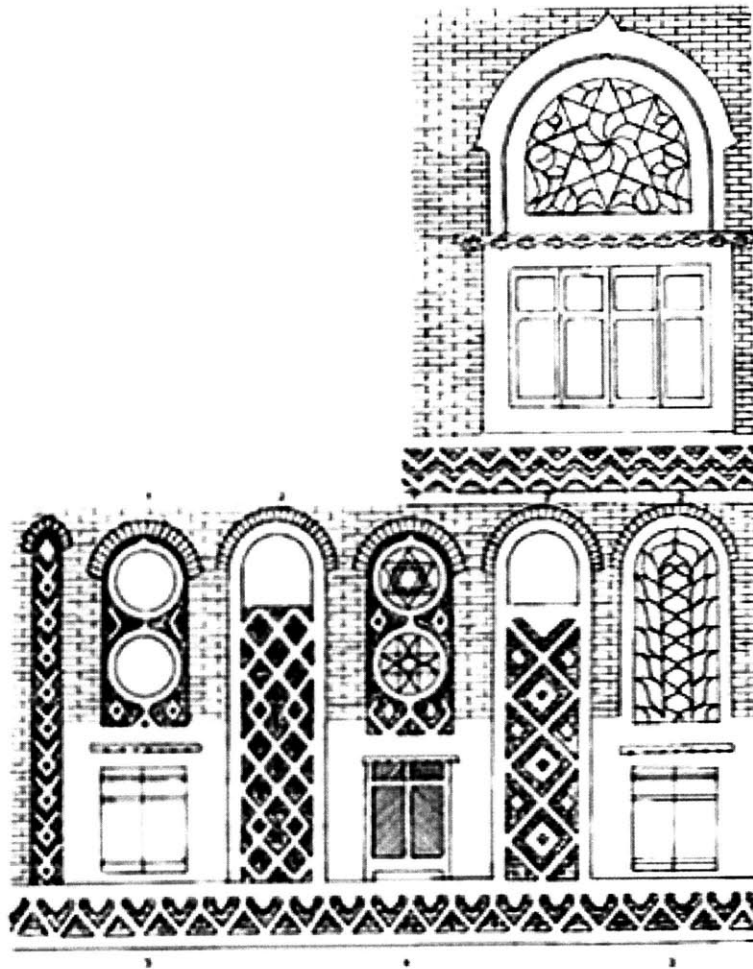
Figure 25 Builders in Sana'a who specialize in traditional construction. **Above, Ahmad al-Rawdhi at his home in** the old city; below, Yahya al-Dhahbani (left) with his foreman, on a job site in Bir al-'Azab.

Figure 26 Historical evolution of window types, proposed by Paul Bonnenfant, Jean-François Breton, and Christian Darles. At lower left, 17th-18th centuries: a small window with shutters is surmounted by two alabaster oculi, in an arched recess in the brick. From the 19th century, the alabaster oculi are replaced by small windows with colored glass (center bottom). Early in the next century, the two oculi give way to a single, arched window that fills the space that was formerly a recess (lower right). In the late 19th century wider windows of three or more shutters appear, with an arch above of the same width (top right). Note that even in this wider window, the arch does not sit directly on the window: rather it sits on a vertical extension – the *raqaba*, or "neck." Note also the vertical, ornamental panels of brick between the windows, and the horizontal *hizam*s ("belts") that divide the floors. Brick decoration and window openings are usually plastered.

Source: P. Bonnenfant, et. al., "Le Livre des Jours et des Modes," in P. Bonnenfant, ed., *Sanaa, Architecture Domestique et Société*

**Figure 27** The Rasulid bridge at Damt, to the southeast of Sana'a. In late 2004 the bridge was being restored by *usta* 'Abdullah al-Rawdhi, under the supervision of the Social Fund for Development. The wooden device in the middle of the image was constructed by al-Rawdhi to calculate the arch of the bridge.

Figure 28 The operation of *fals* – the removal and replacement of stones – at the pier of the bridge.
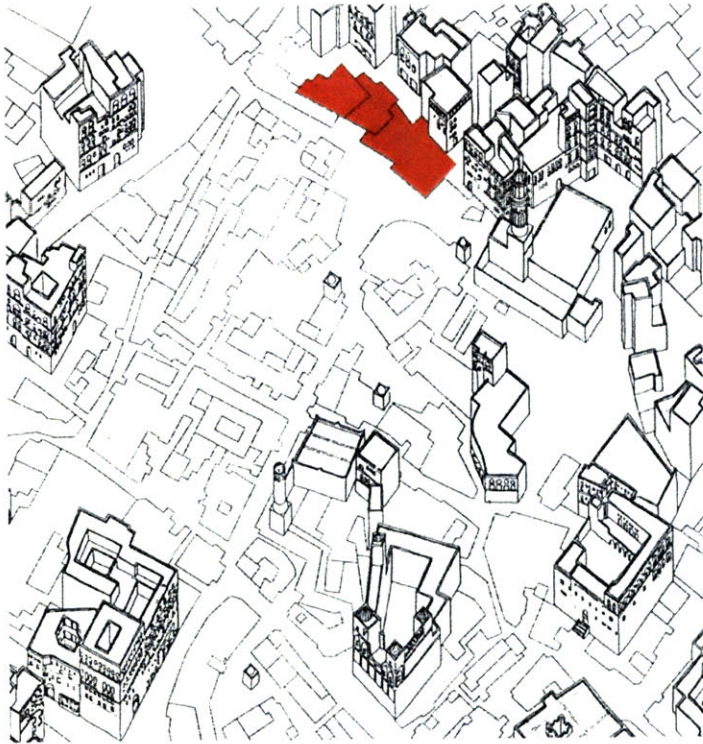
Figure 29 Partial plan of the *suq* by Quaroni Bonifica. The *samsara*s of al-Mansura and al-Majjah are shown at lower left, in axonometric view.

Source: B. Lane, *San'a, Pilot Restoration Projects*
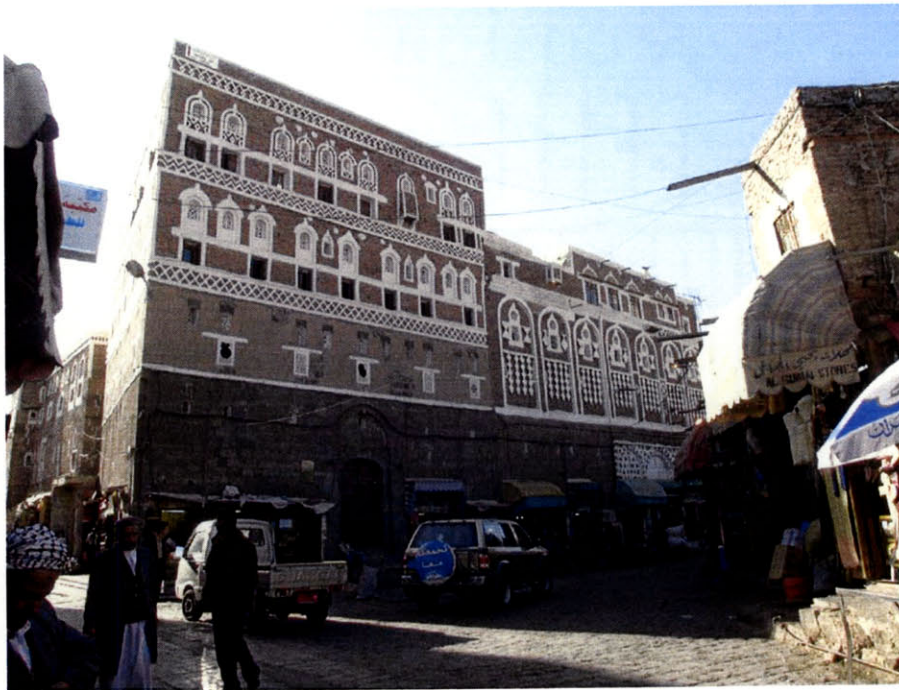
Figure 30 The *samsara*s of al-Mansura (left) and al-Majjah (right). Al-Mansura was restored by EOPOCS, 'Abd al-Hakim al-Sayaghi, supervising architect; Muhammad al-Rawdhi, *usta*.

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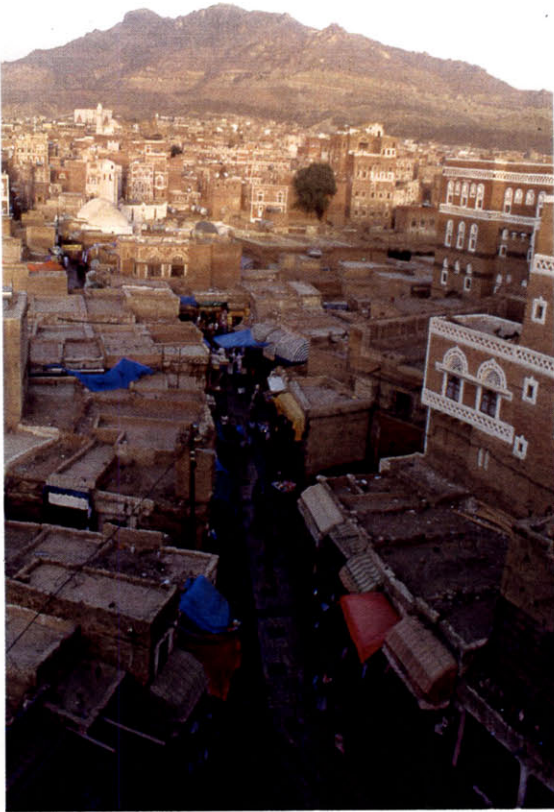
Figure 31 View of *Suq al-'Inab*, looking east to Jabal Nuqum.
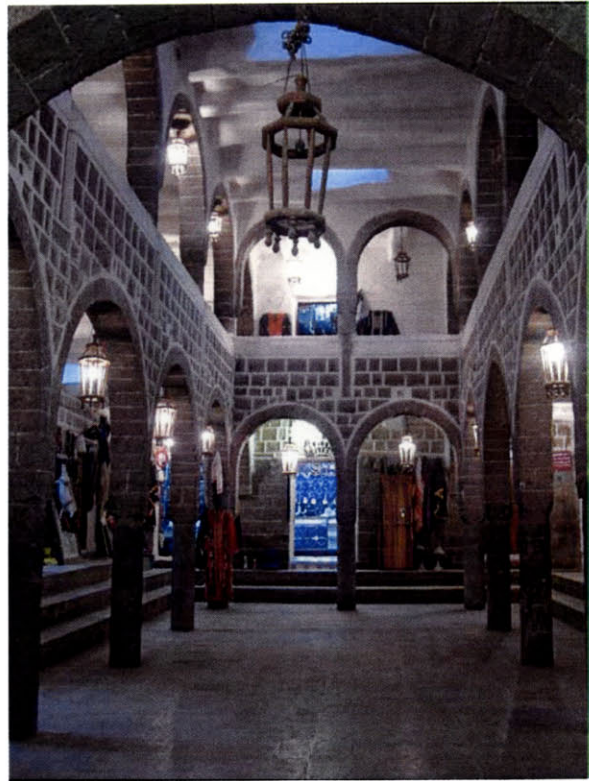
Figure 32 Samsarat al-Nahhas, view of central hall. Restored by EOPOCS, Yassin Ghalib, supervising architect; Muhammad al-Rawdhi, *usta*.

Figure 33 The square at Bab al-Yaman.
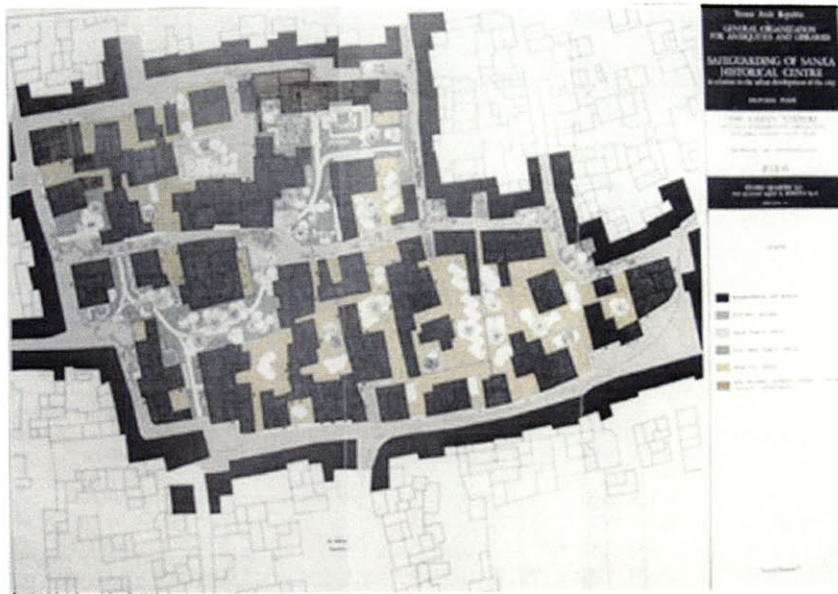
Figure 34 Conservation plan for the quarter of Mu'adh.

Quaroni Bonifica, Proposal Phase, 1983, Drawing P/III/6, on file at the General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities of Yemen (GOPHCY)/Center for Architectural and Technical Studies (CATS).

Figure 35 The Center for Architectural and Technical Studies (CATS), designed by Quaroni Bonifica.
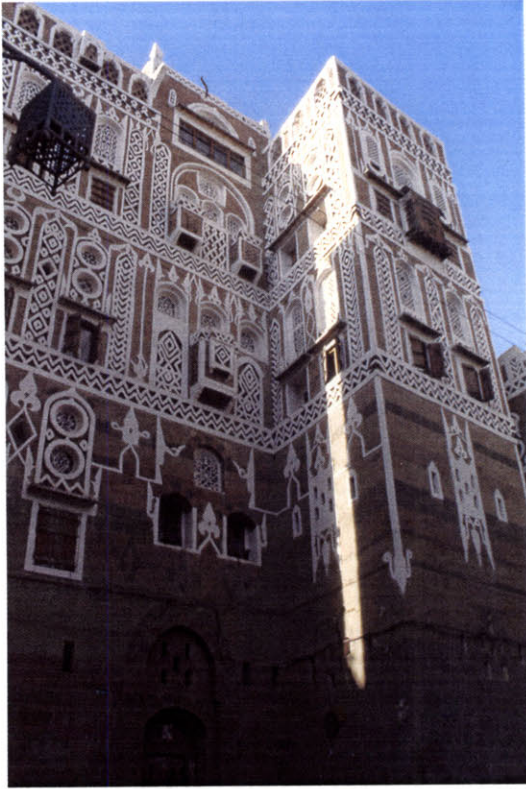
Figure 36 Beit Sari', restored under the Implementation Phase of the Quaroni Bonifica project.
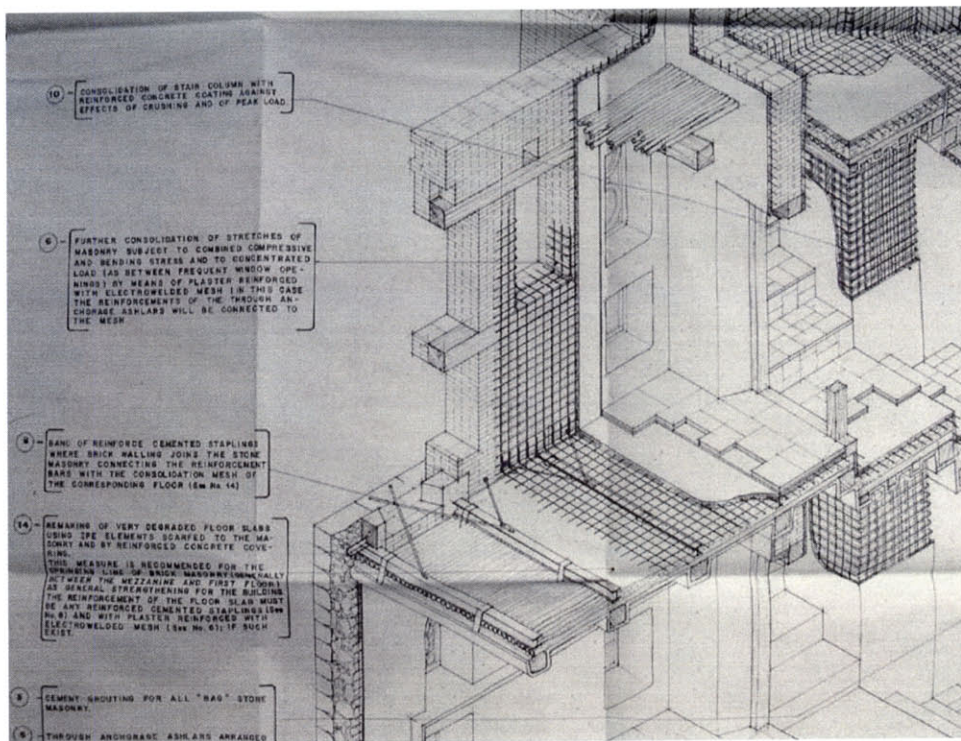
Figure 37 Quaroni Bonifica's proposal for the restoration of a typical house exhibiting "very advanced degradation," using reinforced concrete and wire mesh.

Quaroni Bonifica, Proposal Phase, 1983, Drawing P/III/28, on file at the General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities of Yemen (GOPHCY)/CATS.
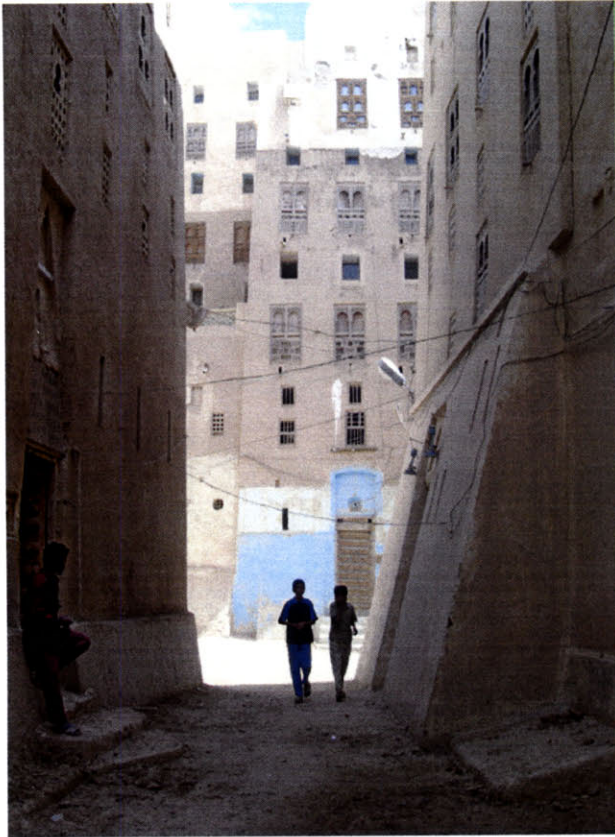
Figure 38
A street in Shibam-Hadhramaut.

Figure 39 Houses on the east bank of the Wadi Sa'ila restored by the Social Fund for Development. 'Abdullah al-Hadrami, supervising architect; 'Atiq Ahmad Sa'd, 'Abdu 'Ali al-Tuwaythi, Yahya Ahmad Murshid, contractors.

Figure 40 Houses at al-Abhar Square during the Ministry of Culture's white-washing project. The façade on the left has been scraped; plaster on the right has been applied against a straight-edge.
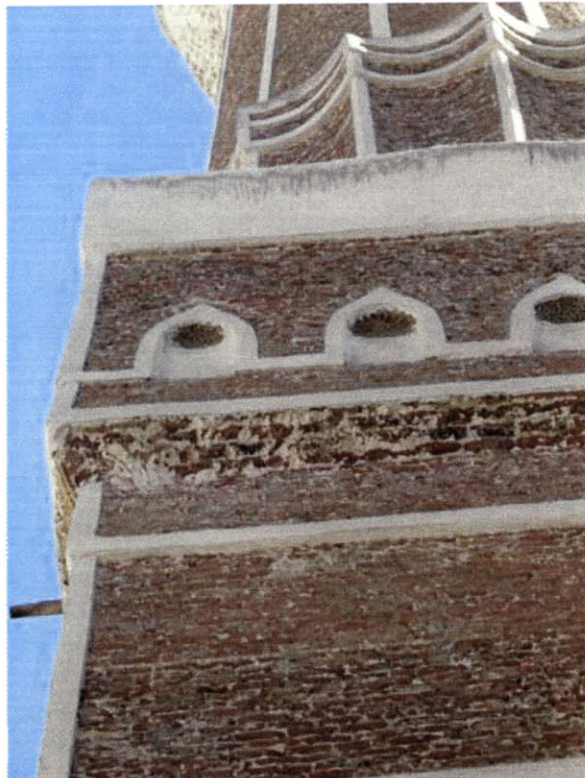
Figure 41 Brick detail on al-Abhar minaret, damaged by scraping.

Figure 42 Aerial view of the Talha complex. The *marna'* is at left, along the street at the south of the complex. The courtyard and dome of the mosque are at right.
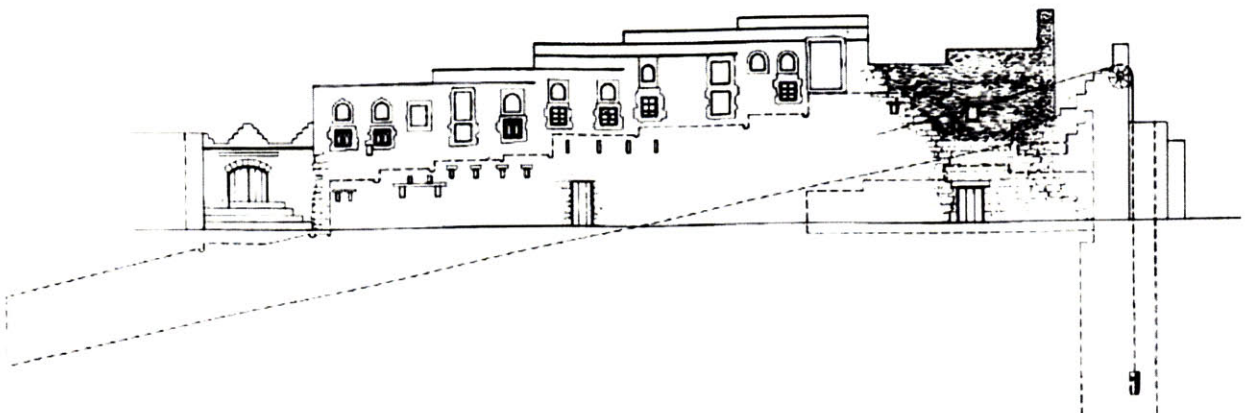
Figure 43 Façade of the Talha *marna'* as documented by Lewcock in the mid-1970's. The ramp and stepped roof are indicated with dashed lines.

Source: R. B. Serjeant and R. Lewcock, eds., *Sana'a, An Arabian Islamic City*

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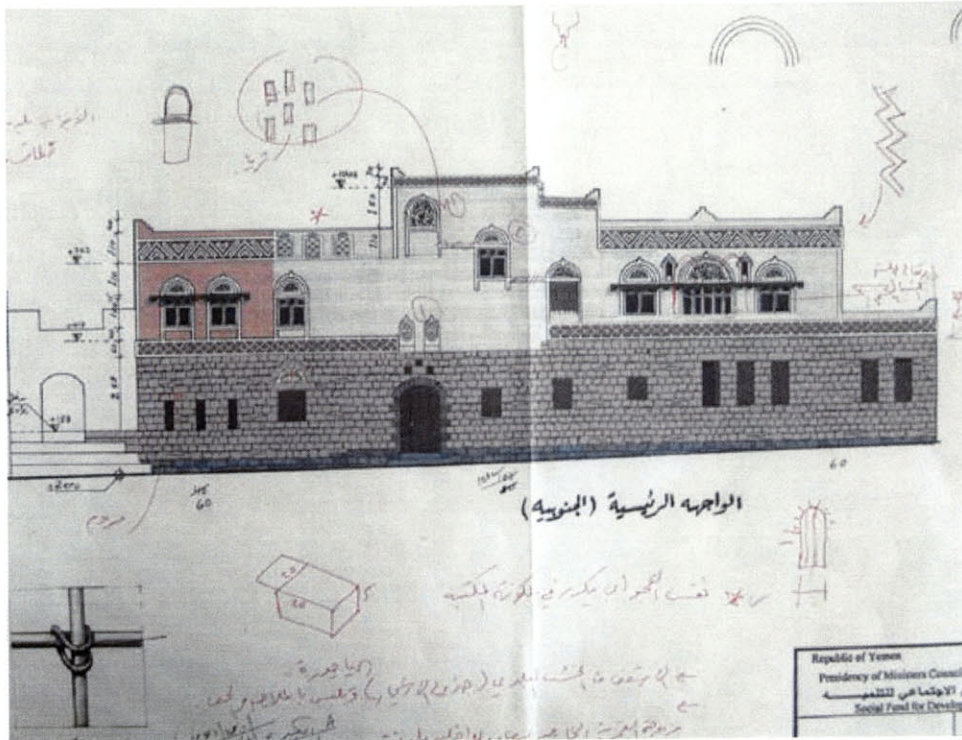
Figure 44 Phase two design for the adaptive reuse of the *marna'* as a women's sewing center.

Image courtesy of the Social Fund for Development.

Figure 45 View of the *marna'* after renovation. Design by 'Ali Sa'id al-Kabadhi, Sa'id 'Alawi, and others; construction, Ahmad al-Rawdhi.

Figure 46 The town of Hajjara, in the mountains to the west of Sana'a.

Figure 47 Column in the house of Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, now the Museum of Sana'ani Popular Life. Restored by GOPHCY; Muhammad al-Rawdhi and sons, *ustas*.

Figure 48 Page from a documentary work on Yemeni building crafts by Sultan Sallam, showing door openings from houses in Sana'a.

Source: S. Sallam, *Al-hiraf al-taqlidiyya al-islamiyya fi al-'amara al-yamaniyya.*

Figure 49 A new door opening in a recent restoration by *usta* Ahmad al-Rawdhi. He based the design of the door on Sallam's drawings.

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Figure 50 Training seminar in inventory methods at the Center for Architectural Studies (CATS), July 2004. On the left, Saveria Teston, with the Italian team; on the right, Yassin Ghalib, senior architect and veteran of the UNESCO Campaign.

Figure 51 The restoration of a caravansaray near Bab al-Sabah that houses migrant workers, sponsored by Oxfam. Restoration directed by Abdullah al-Hadrami.

APPENDIX:
MAJOR PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE UNESCO CAMPAIGN TO SAVE OLD SANA'A, 1984-1994

Notes:
• This list has been compiled and synthesized from project lists provided by the conservation office, and from interviews with former and current officials. Lists issued by the conservation office contain numerous discrepancies, especially with regard to project costs. I have chosen numbers based on the advice of my informants, and on my own judgment.
• Project cost includes contract amount and supplemental work, where these figures were available. Some projects were jointly sponsored by a foreign government or agency and the government of Yemen, but a breakdown of contributions was not always available.
• Budget figures are in Yemeni riyals unless otherwise noted. The value of the riyal dropped dramatically during this time period. Over the course of the 1980's the riyal dropped from 4-5 riyals to the US dollar, to 12 to the dollar. In 1990-1 the riyal dropped to 30 to US $1. By mid-1999 the exchange rate was YR 160 = US $1 (Dresch, Modern Yemen, p. 186).

PROJECT	LOCATION	SPONSOR	COST	START	END	SCOPE
• Paving and infrastructure						
Phase 1	Al-Abhar to Great Mosque	Republic of Yemen	10,000,000	Dec-86	Jul-88	13,000 SM, paving and upgrading
Bab al-Yaman Square	Bab al-Yaman	Republic of Yemen	1,965,000	Aug-88?	N/A	1,900 SM, paving and upgrading
Phase 2	Talha/al-Zumar to Bab al-Shu'ub	Republic of Yemen	12,000,000	Mar-88	Jan-90	18,000 SM, paving and upgrading
Phase 3	Great Mosque to Maydan al-Luqayh	Republic of Yemen, Netherlands	9,000,000	Oct-88	Aug-91	11,700 SM, paving and upgrading
Phase 4	Al-Nusayr quarter	Republic of Yemen, Germany	5,000,000	Jun-89	Jun-09	6,000 SM, paving and upgrading
Phase 5	Bustan Sharib to Bahr Rajraj	Republic of Yemen	13,609,109	Jul-91	Apr-93	13,144 SM, paving and upgrading
Phase 6	Al-'Alami, al-Quzaly, al-Fulayhi	Republic of Yemen	11,871,631	Jul-91	May-93	10,368 SM, paving and upgrading
Phase 7	Bustan as-Sultan Quarter	Republic of Yemen	56,242,402	Oct-90	Nov-97	21,000 SM, paving and upgrading
Suq al-Milh	Suq al-Milh	Republic of Yemen	35,695,490	Jul-92	Aug-97	7,000 SM, paving and upgrading
Northern al-Qasimi St	Al-Qasimi quarter	Republic of Yemen	1,500,000	Mar-92	N/A	500 SM, paving and upgrading.
Wadi Sa'ila	Old city	Republic of Yemen	72,060,950	1995	Jun-98	12,000 SM, paving and upgrading Implemented with Wadi Sa'ila Unit.

PROJECT	LOCATION	SPONSOR	COST	START	END	SCOPE
• Restoration, renovation, neighborhood upgrading						
Dar al-Jedid	Mu'adh Quarter	Republic of Yemen	2,192,000	Mar-87	1989	Renovation of former palace of the imam for use as EOPOCS headquarters
Bayt Sunaydar	al-Qasimi Quarter	Netherlands	300,000	1987	1988	Restoration of house, to be used as commercial center and guest house for the Dutch Embassy
Samsarat al-Nahhas	Suq al-Nadhara	Norway Republic of Yemen	5,767,320	Aug-88	Jul-89	Restoration of a caravansaray to serve as National Center for Revival of Yemeni Handicrafts
Al-Madhhab Hammams	Suq al-Milh	Republic of Yemen	914,809	Sep-89	Dec-90	Renovation and upgrading of ten bathhouses.
Southern wall, phase 1	Bahr Rajraj/al-Zubayri	France Republic of Yemen	13,638,270	Sep-89	Aug-90	Restoration/reconstruction of city wall, upgrading of adjacent areas.
Beit al-Amri	Wadi Sa'ila	Switzerland	N/A	Late 1989	1990	Restoration of house, to be used as residence for foreign team working on Beit al-Ambassi.
Mu'adh quarter, Beit Sari'	Mu'adh Quarter	Italy	778,588,030*	Dec-90	Apr-93	Rehabilitation of a model neighborhood; house restoration.
Beit al-Ambassa	Suq al-Milh Street	Switzerland	152,460,000	1991	1995	Restoration and archeological investigations of a house.
Samsarat al-Mansura	Suq al-'Aynab	Germany	4,623,000	Oct-91	Apr-93	Restoration of a caravansaray to serve as gallery for artists' coop.
Beit 'Atiya	Al-Zumar	Republic of Yemen	3,498,030	Aug-92	Jan-95	Restoration of house for use as GOPHCY guest house.
Bab al-Yaman, phase 1	Bab al-Yaman	Republic of Yemen	2,500,000	Aug-92	1993	Restoration of the southern city gate.
Southern wall, phase 2	Bahr Rajraj/al-Zubayri	Republic of Yemen	24,650,720	1994	Jan-96	Restoration/reconstruction of city wall, upgrading of adjacent areas
Bab al-Yaman, phase 2	Bab al-Yaman	Republic of Yemen	17,189,814	1995	1997	Restoration of the southern city gate, upgrading of adjacent area
• New construction						
Madrasat Ibn al-Amir	Al-Zumar	Germany	9,500,000	Nov-89	Feb-91	Construction of a 4-story school on site of an old school.
Center for Architectural and Technical Studies	Mu'adh Quarter	Italy	N/A*	N/A	1994	Construction of a center for restoration studies, training, and technical assistance to homeowners.
Suq al-Baqar Clinic	Suq al-Baqar	Germany Republic of Yemen	169,961,195	1991	1997	Construction of a 3-story facility specializing in women's and children's health, on site of a former clinic

PROJECT	LOCATION	SPONSOR	COST	START	END	SCOPE
• Major technical studies						
Technical studies (Studio Quaroni S.r.l. and Bonifica S.p.A)	Old City	Italy	SD 1,200,200	1981	1990	Studies for the conservation of the old city, for GOAMM.
Technical studies and support to EOPOCS	Old City	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	N/A	1987	1994	Survey of the old city (map, 1:1000, 1989); technical studies and construction documents for numerous projects.
• UNESCO/UNDP projects						

(For a complete list of UNESCO expert missions and technical studies, see "Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a: Project Findings and Recommendations", UNDP/UNESCO Restricted Technical Report, UNDP/YEM/88/006, Paris 1996, Annex A).

PROJECT	LOCATION	SPONSOR	COST	START	END	SCOPE
Development of Handicraft Industries (UNDP YEM/87/008)	Old city of Sana'a/ Samsarat al-Nahhas	UNDP, ILO	JSD 600,000	Apr-88	Jul-92	Add-on training project to the restoration of Samsarat al-Nahhas, programmed as National Center for Revival of Yemeni Handicrafts
Assistance for the Preservation of the Old City of Sana'a (UNDP YEM/88/006)	EOPOCS	UNDP	USD 374,800	Jun-88	Jul-91	Institution building assistance to EOPOCS. Included promotion of Campraign activities; coordination of external assistance; technical assistance and training to EOPOCS staff.

* Cost of construction of CATS may be included in figure for Mu'adh quarter upgrading.

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Primary sources used in this dissertation are mostly reports, drawings, and maps produced on the old city of Sana'a. There are two main locations for this material. The first is the General Organization for the Historic Cities of Yemen (GOPHCY): Department of Projects; Department of Planning; and the library at the Center for Architectural Studies (CATS). The other is UNESCO's Office of Arab States, Place Fontenoy, Paris. This office has a comprehensive collection of reports produced for the Sana'a and Shibam campaigns and other projects in Yemen. In addition to these two sources, a number of individuals provided me with documents, or access to documents, in their private collections.

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