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Historic Jeddah as a Unique Islamic City

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Abstract: This article discusses Historic Jeddah as a unique Islamic city. The focus is on the city's rich history, its cosmopolitan character, its status as the gateway to Makkah and its distinctive architecture. The article aims to enrich discourses on Islamic urbanism and architecture. It concludes that Historic Jeddah's morphology successfully met all the imposed environmental, socio-economic, cultural and religious requirements. The natural surroundings, the people and built environment were ingeniously integrated into an invigorating and vastly enriching urban as well as civilisational environment, which, even though relatable to time, space, styles and typologies, surpassed them all.

Keywords: Jeddah, Makkah, history, architecture, environment.

Introduction

The built environment of al-Balad (the Town), which is the most historic area of the city of Jeddah—city and major port in the central Hijaz region, western Saudi Arabia—is unique. That is, primarily, due to the uniqueness of the city's history and geography as well as socio-economic and religious status. The city evolved on the eastern shore of the Red Sea from a small primitive fishing settlement in about 350 BC to a major port and commercial hub of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is now the second largest city in the Kingdom, after Riyadh. It is nicknamed the Bride of the Red Sea. It is also regarded as the capital

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of Saudi economy and tourism. Today, al-Balad area serves as the historic and cultural centre of the entire city of Jeddah. It is the latter's soul. This article describes the main aspects of the distinctiveness of Historic Jeddah. The focus is on the city's rich history, cosmopolitan character, status as the gateway to the holy city of Makkah and its al-Masjid al-Haram and also architecture.

Rich History

The history of Jeddah is very rich. It is normally divided into two broad historical periods: pre-Islamic and Islamic (al-Anṣārī, 1981). The latter period is then divided into five main phases: early Islamic, Mamluk, Ottoman, the early or pre-oil-discovery Saudi phase and the subsequent post-oil-discovery Saudi phase.

On December 23, 1925, ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz bin Saʿūd victoriously entered Jeddah and declared himself the "King of Hijaz, Sultan of Najd and its Dependencies." It was only in September, 1932 that the country was named Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz bin Saʿūd as its first king (al-Lyaly, 1990, p. 24).

Prior to the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in 1938—after which enormous riches started pouring into the coffers of the government and its citizens—the city of Jeddah underwent no dramatic changes in terms of its built environment and spatial morphology. The city's development was spontaneous and unhurried, while the citizens' lives were, in equal measure, day-to-day and easy-going. However, following the discovery of oil and the emergence of a powerful and booming oil industry as the nerve centre of the country's fast-thriving economy, the city of Jeddah entered a phase of rapid expansion and modernisation. Its fate with the recurring ups and downs signified a microcosm of the situation of the entire country.

The latest phase could be called as a modernisation phase. It was then that a gradual deviation from traditional built environment styles and the people's traditional ways of living started to occur. It was then, furthermore, that the recoiling tradition became increasingly irreconcilable with the invading modernity, both at the conceptual and operational planes. Symbolic of this tense relationship between the two realms was the demolition of Jeddah's wall in 1947. Only a few

remains of the wall are available today, a sign of the ultimate victory of modernity and its standards of living over tradition and its own ways of life.

There are no detailed accounts about the pre-Islamic settlement of Jeddah, especially with regard to its particular characteristics and social structure. However, the mere existence of reports, even though sketchy, testifies about Jeddah's uninterrupted historical importance and role in the region.

According to some accounts, Ḥawwā' or Eve, the wife of the first man and prophet on earth, Ādam, was buried in the city. There is an archaeological site towards the north-east from the city's Makkah Gate that is called the tomb of Ḥawwā'. It allegedly contains the grave of the mother of all mankind, even though there was never any archaeological evidence that could support that claim. Therefore, according to certain beliefs, Jeddah means "grandmother." To many people, however, this is simply a myth. Ibn Jubayr—a famous Spanish Muslim traveller who traversed much of the Muslim world from 1182 to 1185—rightly commented that "God best knows concerning it" (Ibn Jubayr, 2001, p. 70).

According to another interpretation, Jeddah was named after the leader of the Arabic tribe of Quḍāʿa, Jidda ibn Jurhum ibn Rayyān ibn Hilwān ibn ʿAlī ibn Isḥāq ibn Quḍāʿa, who settled there in about 115 BC after the collapse of the Dam of Ma'rib in Yemen.

Some scholars yet believe that the area of Jeddah was inhabited as early as during the Stone Age. Some even imply that the Persians might have played a prominent role in the city's genesis. Hence, the name "Jeddah" could also be derived merely from the city's geographical location, that is, from the word *juddah*, which in Arabic means "seashore." This is the view of al-Muqaddasī (2001) and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1979). Al-Muqaddasī (2001) recorded that Jeddah (Juddah) is a city on the seashore, "from which circumstance it derives its name" (p. 72).

At any rate, these discussions and disagreements themselves demonstrate how long and rich the history of Jeddah is (al-Anṣārī, 1981; Bagader, 2016). Ibn Jubayr (2001) remarks that in Jeddah, there are many ancient remains, which show that the city is very old. In keeping

with some accounts, even Alexander the Great, who died in 323 BC, once stopped over in Makkah. Then, he undertook his sea voyage to the West from Jeddah, which, as early as at that point, functioned as a seaport (al-ʻAmūdī, 2018).

Subsequent to the arrival of Islam, Jeddah first rose to prominence in about 647 when the third rightly-guided Caliph, ʻUthmān b. ʻAffān, converted it into the port of Makkah. The latter lay about 80 kilometres away. With that, Jeddah was rendered as the gateway to the holy city of Makkah, which is the site of Muslim pilgrimage (ʻUmra and Hajj).

Since Makkah was perennially the object of all Muslims' spiritual cravings, the currency of Jeddah, as the former's gateway, thus dramatically increased too. It also became the object of many people's attention and interests. One of the early prominent Muslim settlers in Jeddah was Salmān al-Fārisī, a famous companion of the Prophet (pbuh) (al-ʻAmūdī, 2018).

Before Caliph 'Uthmān's decision, Jeddah was no more than a small village, as Makkah's port was al-Shuʻayba, a town southwest of Makkah and about 15 kilometres south of Jeddah (Buchan, 1980). Caliph 'Uthmān's making Jeddah, rather than maintaining al-Shuʻayba, as the port of Makkah was, firstly, due to security reasons because al-Shuʻayba proved more vulnerable than Jeddah to pirate raids from the sea. Secondly, it was due to the overall natural environment of Jeddah, which seemed more pleasant and conducive. It is said that the Caliph once bathed in the sea at Jeddah and liked it very much (Buchan, 1980).

Henceforth, in the minds of all pilgrims and visitors to the holy places, Jeddah was always bracketed together with Makkah and Madinah. They constituted a triangle of spiritual transformation and drive.

> Nevertheless, it was several centuries before Jeddah became truly integrated into the international trade and pilgrimage networks as part of the Incense Route. In the early Islamic centuries, it chiefly served as the port of entry from Egypt, whence most of Makkah's foodstuffs and clothing arrived. (Bagader, 2016, p. 158)

During the especially latter periods of the centralised Umayyad state and the first period of the Abbasid state, the socio-political situation of

Jeddah—together with the rest of the Hijaz cities and villages—was relatively peaceful and straightforward. Not much has been recorded in history books about it and its affairs during those two periods. Generally, whatever has been mentioned revolves around it being the main civilian port that served fishermen and sea travelling pilgrims from near and far for ‘Umra and Hajj.

However, as the strong centralised Abbasid government in Baghdad disintegrated, various independent and semi-independent states and dynasties started emerging on the Muslim political scene, often with questionable legitimacy, starting with the Tulunids in Egypt and ending with the Mamluks, principally in Egypt and Syria. The latter were overthrown and succeeded by the Ottoman Turks, who, to a large extent, succeeded in uniting much of the Muslim world and in restoring as well as unifying Muslim religio-political authority in the form of the caliphate.

During those often difficult and challenging times, the socio-economic and religious forte of Jeddah, as the converging point and gateway to the holy lands, was always the target. The fast-changing Muslim political landscape and its leading protagonists could not possibly overlook the opportunities the city presented for seeking a political legitimacy. They knew only too well that whoever controlled the holy places—Jeddah included as their entryway—enjoyed an upper hand in perennial confrontations for controlling the people’s hearts, minds and political destinies. Those dynamic political conflicts and clashes made the affairs of Jeddah ever more at once eventful and impactful.

The vast potential of Jeddah was recognised and cultivated throughout its prolific history. This was not done only by the administrations of the successive Muslim states and governments, but also by some, albeit transitory, non-Muslim regional political powers. An example is the brief occupation of Jeddah in 703 by pirates from the neighbouring Kingdom of Axum, which was a naval and trading power in Ethiopia that ruled the region from about 400 BC to the 10th century.

Another example is the continuous Portuguese raids throughout the 16th century in Arabian waters and, on a couple of occasions, on Jeddah itself. The cemetery of dead Portuguese soldiers can still be found within the old city of Jeddah today and is referred to as the site of the Christian

Graves. The dead Portuguese were buried at the site due to difficulties in transporting their bodies back to Iberia by sea (al-Shareef, 2011).

As a result, the Mamluk Sultan, Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī, built a strong wall around the city in 1506 or 1507, with further additions in 1514 or 1515. In charge of the construction was Husami Husayn al-Kurdī, the governor of Jeddah (King, 1998).

Having secured full control of Jeddah in 1517, the Ottomans rebuilt—or just modified and strengthened—its weak wall in 1525, following their victory over the Portuguese Lopo Soares de Albergaria's Armada in the Red Sea. Nonetheless, it seems that Jeddah was a walled and fortified city well before the Mamluks. Al-Muqaddasī (2001) referred to it as such in the 10th century. Naser-e Khosraw (1986), a Persian traveller, did the same a century later. He wrote that Jeddah was a large and prosperous coastal city and had a strong wall on the edge of the sea. There were two gates: one towards the east and Makkah, and the other towards the west and the sea.

However, it appears as though the pre-Mamluk wall was neither as strongly built nor as earnestly maintained as its subsequent counterparts. It might not have even surrounded the entire city, rendering it vulnerable. When Ibn Jubayr (2001) visited Jeddah in 1183, slightly more than a century after Naser-e Khosraw, he did not speak about the wall. Rather, he spoke about its surviving traces as part of the city's general decline. The wall might have been repaired half a century later, though, and might have had as many as four gates (King, 1998).

According to Abdulla Y. Bokhari, since its inception as the port of Makkah, Jeddah, with few interruptions, remained a prosperous harbour and trade centre, despite interferences by the Dutch, the British and the Portuguese. It was a walled city for about a thousand years. Its first wall surrounded the city on its three land sides. The wall was presumably built by the Persians towards the end of the 10th century to protect the city from hostile nomads. Hence, the entire sea side needed no protective wall since the sea was its natural protection. Its second wall, which added a sea wall, was completed in about 1511 (different dates given by scholars might indicate different levels of construction and completion), either by the Mamluks themselves or by one of their vassals, to protect the town from the Portuguese (Bokhari, 1983).

During the 16th century, Jeddah became part of the Ottoman Empire. In the 18th century, the British and French East Indies companies established trading stations in the city, which enhanced its commercial functions. Early in the 19th century, Jeddah was established as a diplomatic centre with the appointment of British and French Consuls, thereby allowing the leading foreign powers to increasingly interfere and dictate local as well as regional affairs. The Ottoman domination of Jeddah lasted for about four centuries until they were defeated by Sharif Hussain bin Ali, with the assistance of the British, in 1919 (Alharbi, 1989).

Sharif Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī declared a revolt against the Ottoman Empire, seeking independence from it and the creation of a single unified Arab state, spanning from Aleppo in Syria to Aden in Yemen. Sharif Ḥusayn then declared the Kingdom of Hijaz, with him as its king. Later, King Ḥusayn was involved in war with ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz bin Saʿūd, who was the Sultan of Najd. King Ḥusayn abdicated following the fall of Makkah in December 1924, and his son, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, became the new king. A few months later, ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz bin Saʿūd conquered Madinah and Jeddah via an agreement with Jeddans, following the Second Battle of Jeddah. He deposed ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, who fled to Baghdad and eventually settled in Amman, Jordan, where his descendants became part of its Hashemite royalty. As a result, Jeddah came under the sway of the emerging al-Saʿūd state and dynasty in December 1925 (Abū Dāwud & Zaʿzūʻ, 2017). In 1932, the new state was renamed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Cosmopolitan City

By virtue of being the gateway to the holy city of Makkah—which the Holy Qur'an calls *Umm al-Qurā* (Mother of all Settlements) (al-Shūrā: 7), towards which the believing hearts are made to incline and hanker for (Ibrāhīm: 37) since this is where al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (the Holy Mosque) is located and also appointed as the first and most consequential house of worship for mankind (Āl ʿImrān: 96)—Jeddah, too, was thereby greatly affected. Although it was not a sacred city by any stretch of the imagination, it certainly always stood out as a social and economic hub on a par with its twin cities, Makkah and Madinah, and sometimes even surpassing them.

For example, in the 11th century, Naser-e Khosraw documented that Jeddah was a large and prosperous city. It had good bazaars and its population was 5000. However, at the same time, he wrote that in Makkah, there were not more than 2000 citizens, with an additional 500 foreigners. At the time of Naser-e Khosraw's visit, there was a famine in Makkah, for which reason a number of people had left (Khosraw, 1986).

Most people nowadays come to Makkah for 'Umrah and Hajj, principally through Jeddah. For instance, statistics show that in each of the last 25 years, an average of five million pilgrims visited Makkah and more than 75% of them passed through King 'Abd al-'Azīz Airport in Jeddah. The Saudi Ministry of Hajj further reported that 25% of these travellers intentionally visit Jeddah for various social, economic and tourist reasons (Bagader, 2016).

Among the millions of pilgrims who, throughout the centuries, travelled to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, some settled in Jeddah and became citizens. Therefore, the social structure of Jeddah always consisted of different ethnic groups, with direct and indirect impacts on the architecture of the city, especially its houses. Jeddah, thus, became a cosmopolitan and multinational city, with a mix of cultures that have adapted to life in the main gateway to Makkah (Bagader, 2016). Just as in the case of the cities of Makkah and Madinah, Jeddah's multinationalism and multiculturalism became the main feature of its unique identity (al-Anṣārī, 1981). Moreover, it became a microcosm of the soul of the Muslim eclectic world, culture and civilisation.

Regardless of who politically ruled over them, Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah, in essence, always belonged to all Muslims. It follows that the rulers of the three cities should not feel as persons of power and authority. Rather, they should feel as servants of the Muslim *umma* (community) and its most magnanimous interests and standards.

Most of the people who traditionally came and settled in Jeddah were from Egypt and Yemen because Jeddah was dependent on them for its sustenance. Water was scarce in and around the city, while the surrounding country produced virtually nothing (King, 1998). In most cases, historically, whoever ruled Egypt, ruled Hijaz as well. Consequently, Jeddah's continuously thriving trade with Egypt and Yemen never failed to impress its insightful visitors.

As seen earlier, some consider that Jeddah was first founded as a fishing colony by the Yemeni Quḍāʿa tribe, which had left Yemen after the collapse of the Dam of Ma'rib. Not only historically but also presently, the social, economic, cultural and architectural configuration of Jeddah could not possibly be grasped without taking into account the influences of Yemen and the Yemenis. Thus, in the old and most historic part of the city, there is still a district that is called Ḥarrat al-Yaman (the Yemeni District). Certainly, there was always more to this District than its mere location and direction, for it is customarily—and superficially—held that the Yemeni District is called as such only on account of its location in the south of the city and its orientation towards Yemen. The same elaboration holds true regarding Ḥarrat al-Shām (the Levantine District).

Moreover, since the Ottoman Empire ruled substantial sections of the Arabian Peninsula for about 500 years, beginning with gaining the allegiance of the Hijaz region of western Arabia in 1517 and lasting up to the end of both the Ottoman rule and World War I in 1918, some Turks—as well as the citizens of diverse territories ruled by the Ottomans, such as Syria and the Balkans—migrated and settled in the central Hijaz region (Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah). However, according to William Ochsenwald (2015):

> … [not many] Turkish-speaking Ottomans settled in Arabia. The few who did stay were soon assimilated into Arab society. Turkish poetry, Turkish tiles, Turkish miniature painting, and a host of other cultural accomplishments and techniques were not extended on a large-scale basis into Ottoman Arabia. (p. 27)

This was mainly because of the vast distance between the heartland of the Ottoman Empire and the Hijaz territories, which was rendered more complex and challenging by the slow speed of transportation, communication and interactions. (Ochsenwald, 2015)

It is interesting to note that there is still today in Jeddah a house that belonged to a Bosnian named Kāmil Darwīsh al-Bosnawi. This house is located in Ḥarrat al-Shām (the Levantine District), opposite the Zāwiya (present-day Mosque) of Abū ʿInba. Towards the end of the Ottoman rule in Hijaz, Kāmil Darwīsh, due to his knowledge of Turkish, Arabic and English languages, served as a secretary and translator in the Ottoman

administration. He was based in the city of Taif. However, after the fall of the Ottoman rule in the region, he moved to and settled in Jeddah. He was among the first—perhaps the very first—to teach English language in the city after the establishment of the modern Saudi Arabia. He did so in a facility at the ground level of his house. Today, the house is often highlighted as a place worth visiting ("Al-Riyādāt al-ahliyyah," n.d.). Uncharacteristically, the house has several large windows at the ground level, confirming that it was designated for a public interest.

In any case, the political, environmental, social and even gender history of Hijaz was reasonably influenced by the Ottomans. It is yet believed that "the Ottoman Empire in Arabia succeeded in notably slowing the encroachment of European imperialism into the heart of Islam" (Ochsenwald, 2015, p. 23). All this occurred despite the modern governments in the Arabian Peninsula tending to ignore the Ottoman Empire's historical role in the region, with some yet displaying a degree of antagonism towards it: "This is in part caused by the present ruling elites, who in most cases consist of members of dynasties that were historical enemies of the Ottomans" (Ochsenwald, 2015, p. 23).

Finally, during the early epochs in particular, the role of the Persians was also notable, becoming at one stage more significant than any other. Travellers and explorers regularly referred to a sizable and prominent Persian community in Jeddah. It is said that in the 10th century, the city's trade was in their hands. They also built the city's first fortifications and wall. They were very wealthy and their palaces were spectacular. Lofty domed houses were likewise connected with them, their wealth and their architectural boldness and creativity (King, 1998).

At one point, the Persians had to be expelled from the city, perhaps owing to some little-known political reasons and jealousy, and also in order to diminish their immense influences. This was done most probably by ʻĪsā bin Jaʿfar al-Ḥasanī, the Emir or Ruler of Makkah from the late 960s to the early 970s. The said Emir ruled the region firstly on behalf of the Ikhshidids in Egypt and then of the Fatimids also in Egypt. Nevertheless, the great reputation and legacy of the Persians continued to be felt and appreciated well into the 13th century, as frequently highlighted by travellers and explorers (King, 1998).

However, the presence of the Persians significantly waned afterwards. It did to such an extent that John Lewis Burckhardt, who

stayed in Jeddah in July 1814, did not even mention the Persians as members of the city's demography. Regarding the reason for such a situation, Burckhardt himself gave a hint when he said:

> It deserves notice here, that the Persians were not always permitted to come to the holy city (Makkah); being notorious heretics, who conceal their doctrines only during the Hajj, that they may not give offence to the Sunnis. In 1634, a few years after the temple of Makkah (al-Masjid al-Haram) had been rebuilt, (Ottoman) Sultan Murad IV commanded that no Persian of the sect of Ali should be allowed to perform the pilgrimage, or enter the Baytullah. This prohibition was complied with for several years (after which it was rescinded). (Burckhardt, 1829, p. 251)

Indeed, a series of wars between the Ottomans—who ruled over the holy cities in Hijaz —and the successive Shia dynasties in Iran (Persia) from the 16th to 19th centuries was the main cause of such a state of affairs. It was a case of religion being politicised and politics being religionised.

Consistent with reports, the Persians moved to Jeddah after the decline of the town of Siraf on the Iranian coast of the Gulf, following an earthquake or a volcanic activity. Siraf was an internationally-renowned port, especially during the first Abbasid period. During the heyday of the Silk Road, most of the trade intended for Asia was conducted through Siraf (King, 1998; "Siraf," n.d.; "Siraf: Iran," 2006). Its people were well-known merchants. Regarding the presence of the Persians from Siraf in Jeddah:

> … [it] opens up an interesting possibility of connections between the architecture of the Iranian coast of the Gulf and the Red Sea shore in the medieval period. This diaspora from Siraf seems to have had a broad influence around the shores of Arabia and East Africa. (King, 1998, p. 41)

Ibn Jubayr yet has suggested that Jeddah might have had some close pre-Islamic connections with the Persian culture and civilisation. Furthermore, the Persians might have played an indirect role in the city's genesis. Ibn Jubayr, thus, has said that outside Jeddah, there were ancient constructions that attested to the antiquity of its foundation.

> It is said that it was a Persian city. It has cisterns hewn from the hard rock, connected with each other and beyond count for their number. They are both within and without the town, and men say that there are three hundred and sixty outside the town, and the same within. We indeed saw a great number, such as could not be counted. But in truth the things of wonder are many. Glory to Him whose knowledge encompasses them all. (Ibn Jubayr, 2001, p. 71)

Ibn Battuta (1983), too, wrote in the 14th century that Jeddah was an ancient town, which is said to have been built by the Persians.

Be that as it may, al-Muqaddasī's 10th century account on the matter appears at once most revealing and most comprehensive. It confirms that Jeddah was a safe and densely inhabited fortified city. It had many rich citizens whose livelihood was trade. It was the aim of many Egyptians and Yemenis to settle therein. It was their entrepôt and emporium. Nevertheless, the Persians dominated the city's demography and, naturally, they left their lasting imprints on the city's built environment. Their many palaces were described by al-Muqaddasī as extraordinary (*'ajība*). However, the people in the city faced serious troubles getting water even though the city had many ponds or cisterns (*birk*). As a result, water was obtained from afar (al-Muqaddasī, 2001).

On balance, about the cosmopolitan character of Jeddah in 1814, Burckhardt has recorded the following, adding an amount of hitherto unknown details and without mentioning the Persians whatsoever:

> The inhabitants of Jeddah, like those of Makkah and Madinah, are almost exclusively foreigners. The descendants of the ancient Arabs who once peopled the town, have perished by the hands of the governors, or have retired to other countries. Those who can be truly called natives are only a few families of sherifs, who are all learned men, and attached to the mosques or the courts of justice; all the other people of Jeddah are foreigners or their descendants. Of the latter, those from Hadramaut and Yemen are the most numerous: colonies from every town and province of those countries are settled in Jeddah, and keep up an active commerce with their native places. Upwards of a hundred Indian families (chiefly from Surat, and a few from Bombay) have also established themselves here; and to these may be added some Malays

> and people of Maskat (Oman). The settlers from Egypt, Syria, Barbary, European Turkey, and Anatolia, may be still recognised in the features of their descendants, who are all mixed in one general mass, and live and dress in the same Arab manner. The Indians alone remain a distinct race in manners, dress, and employment. (Burckhardt, 1829, p. 14)

Seven years earlier, in 1807, Domingo Francisco Jorge Badia y Leblich (known by his pseudonym or nom de plume as Ali Bey el Abbassi), who was a Spanish explorer, soldier and spy, wrote in his "Travels of Ali Bey" that Jeddah had about 5,000 inhabitants. They appeared to the author to have sprung from a mixture of "the Negro, Abyssinian, Indian and Arab nations." Some even looked like Chinese people. The intermixing between the men and female slaves of Abyssinia as well as Negresses was common (Bey, 1816).

Richard F. Burton (1964) reported in 1853 that only Indians numbered no fewer than 1,500 in Makkah and Jeddah, besides 700 or 800 in Yemen. To him, such a body required a Consul to look after their interests.

Gateway to Makkah

Jeddah's biggest importance always lay in the fact that it was Makkah's gateway or entry point. It was its port on whose especially economic success the former's economic functioning mostly depended. Thus, al-Muqaddasī (2001) rightly dubbed Jeddah as the *khizānah* or *khazānah* of Makkah, which could be understood as (the source of) the latter's prosperity, yet subsistence, and its treasured dependency. It was also its granary.

As such, Jeddah was also somewhat regarded as part of the cradle of Islam. In realistic terms, it could hardly be separated from its twin (mother) city, Makkah. If controlling Makkah and Madina, and having a ruler's name mentioned in the sermon of the Friday Prayer (*ṣalāh al-jumuʿah*) in the two cities' holy mosques signified a prerogative of sovereignty and a source of legitimacy for whoever wanted to dominate the Muslim world, the same applied to Jeddah as well, albeit in the practical and operational, rather than theoretical and theological,

meaning of the principle. Jeddah and Makkah have always been mutually dependent in fortune and destiny (Bokhari, 1983).

From the very beginning, Jeddah had two, maybe even three, prominent mosques. Two mosques have been attributed to the second rightly-guided Caliph, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. One mosque has even been attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) (King, 1998). Ibn Jubayr has said that although two Jeddah mosques were attributed to Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, some still believed that one of them, which had two pillars of ebony wood (later known as the mosque of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān), was built by the fifth Abbasid Caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (Ibn Jubayr, 2001).

However, about some of those viewpoints, ‘Abd al-Quddus al-Anṣārī raises some serious doubts. He believes that since Jeddah first rose to prominence in Islamic civilisation in about 647 when ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, the third rightly-guided Caliph, converted it into the port of Makkah, he questions how Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb could possibly have built mosques in it. He states:

> There is something wrong with this view (that ‘Umar built a mosque, or mosques, in Jeddah). Jeddah was not an (established and developed) settlement at all during his reign. So, how could there have been in the city a mosque—or more—built by ‘Umar? (al-Anṣārī, 1981, p. 564)

The reputation of Jeddah was further strengthened by the myth that Ḥawwā’ descended from Heaven to the location where the city of Jeddah was subsequently established. Her husband, the first Prophet and the father of mankind, Ādam, on the other hand, was sent to India. They searched for each other and later met in Makkah. They did so at the locations of Muzdalifa and ‘Arafa, where, as a result, partly, some of the most important pilgrimage (Hajj) rituals are annually conducted ever since (Ṭarāblisī, 2006).

When she died, Ḥawwā’ was buried in Jeddah. Her grave was one of the reasons for the city’s age-old existence as well as name (Jeddah meaning “grandmother”) (Burton, 1964). Ibn Jubayr has said that the burial site of Ḥawwā’ had an ancient and lofty dome. The edifice was erected to illustrate the blessedness and excellence of the place.

Although the mentioned stories about Ḥawwā’ and Ādam are mere myths and legends—for which there is no sound evidence from

the revealed knowledge, except for some weak (*ḍa'īf*) Hadith and accounts of the *salaf* (predecessors), which had been obtained from the knowledge of the People of the Book and, thus, cannot be relied upon and trusted—the relationship between Jeddah and Makkah, in this manner, was additionally enhanced. This was particularly the case at the spiritual level. Since time immemorial, it goes without saying that Jeddah and Makkah were inseparable and their names were mentioned in the same breath.

Judging by the description of Ibn Jubayr, the burial place of Ḥawwā' must have been the object of people's, or rather pilgrims', keen attention and visitation. To some, such amounted to a form of mini-pilgrimage, in that the place was conceived as a source of blessing and distinction. This appears to have been particularly plausible during the time of Ibn Jubayr's visit and afterwards because that was a time when the unhealthy phenomena of erecting structures over the graves of eminent individuals (architecture of death), thus architecturally glorifying the dead, were gaining momentum in most parts of the Muslim world. Outstanding elements of funerary architecture were similarly reported in connection with Makkah and Madinah. As unfounded and superstitious as it was, paying homage to Ḥawwā' and her tomb, either on the way to Makkah and Madinah or upon their return, was to many pilgrims an additional bonus and privilege. Today, however, the supposed grave is devoid of any noteworthy architectural mark, and rightly so. The local authorities do their best to make sure that the place is not turned into a pilgrimage site.

On the account of Jeddah's remarkable reputation and role, many of its residents were honourable and upright, and had noble ancestors. Many belonged to the Holy Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*). Ibn Jubayr, thus, has observed that "most of the inhabitants of this town (Jeddah) and the surrounding desert and mountain are Sharifs, 'Aliites, Hasanites, Husaynites and Ja'farites – may God hold in His favour their noble ancestors" (2001, p. 71).

Ibn Jubayr then goes on to describe how hard their lives had been at that time, which could serve as an indicator that the economic life of Jeddah itself was going through some difficult spells.

> They lead a life so wretched as to break the hardest stone in compassion. They employ themselves in all manner of

> trades, such as hiring camels should they possess any, and selling milk or water and other things like dates which they might find, or wood they might collect. Sometimes their women, the Sharifahs themselves, would share in this work. (Ibn Jubayr, 2001, p. 71)

Architecture

For centuries, commencing with the seventh century that witnessed the inception of the eclectic Islamic culture and civilisation, the city of Jeddah functioned as a major port for Indian Ocean trade routes. It was also the gateway for Muslim pilgrims from all over the world to the holy city of Makkah. These twin roles saw the city develop into a thriving multinational and multicultural hub. It was only natural then that Jeddah evolved a distinctive architectural tradition rarely matched anywhere else in terms of authenticity, meaning and value. As a result, the historic section of Jeddah, called al-Balad, was recognised in 2014 as one of several UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It is comprehensively stated in a UNESCO document about the unique architecture of Historic Jeddah:

> Historic Jeddah is an outstanding reflection of the Red Sea architectural tradition, a construction style once common to cities on both coasts of the Red Sea, of which only scant vestiges are preserved outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the nominated property. The style is characterized by the imposing tower houses decorated by large wooden roshan built in the late 19th century by the city`s mercantile elites, and also by lower coral stone houses, mosques, ribats, suqs and small public squares that together compose a vibrant space. ("Historic Jeddah," n.d.)

> Historic Jeddah reflects the final flourishing of the Indian Ocean sea trade after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the introduction of steamboats that linked Europe with India and Asia. This brought enormous wealth to many merchants who built lavishly decorated houses, and it also led to developments of suqs and mosques. In addition, the increase in seagoing vessels allowed many more pilgrims to make the pilgrimage to Makkah, resulting in an expansion in

> the provision of accommodation for these visitors. ("Historic Jeddah," n.d.)

> The cityscape of historic Jeddah is the result of an important exchange of human values, technical know-how, building materials and techniques across the Red Sea region and along the Indian Ocean routes between the 16th and the early 20th centuries. Historic Jeddah represents this cultural world that thrived, thanks to international sea trade; possessed a shared geographical, cultural and religious background; and built settlements with specific and innovative technical and aesthetic solutions to cope with the extreme climatic conditions of the region (humidity and heat). ("Historic Jeddah," n.d.)

The architecture of Historic Jeddah (al-Balad) truly enjoyed all the qualities of an original and genuine style. Moreover, it embodied all the intrinsic and transcendent considerations that are expected from an Islamic architectural style. As such, Jeddah's architecture did not only reflect the city's natural features, history, demography, strategic location and religious predisposition, but also, through its visual relationships, tactile characteristics, expressive powers, dynamic functionality and strong desire to be human principles-oriented, it surpassed the parameters of time and space, styles and typologies. It rose and dwelled at the plane of satisfying the requirements of Muslim psychology, character and spirituality. It made the lives of people not only discernible and comfortable, but also meaningful, rich and stimulating. The sheer form and aesthetics were only one side of the phenomenon.

Above all, the remarkable architecture of Jeddah was an expression of human values and beliefs, articulated so eloquently through its spatial presence and connectivity with the rest of the surroundings. Its high quality and durable local as well as imported building materials fostered the ideas of timelessness, continuity and fortitude. It enhanced human thought, experiences and senses. The universality of natural and human goodness, coupled with the universality of man's heavenly purpose and everyday struggles, was also brought closer to human cognition and spiritual appreciation.

In Jeddah, it follows that the universal and the local, the foreign and the indigenous as well as the homogenous and the heterogeneous were

all brought together and integrated in a subtle aggregate, which was enlivened and consolidated by the universal spirit of human dignity, purpose and destiny. By virtue of being a cosmopolitan and all-inclusive urban environment, Jeddah was always ready to share its architectural and artistic riches with the rest of the world. It was always ready to give and take.

Excellent workmanship in traditional Jeddah buildings, their composition on the basis of an intricate visual balance and "broken" symmetry of both general and human scale and proportion, rich decoration that stimulates the senses and the capacities of the mind and soul and, lastly, an overall rhythm that results from the regular and harmonious repetition and reverberation of forms, shapes, details and functions have all rendered the city's morphology to speak for itself. The city's unique architecture made Historic Jeddah function as an open-air or living-history museum. It became tantamount to frozen music, which resonates even now, especially through the sixth sense of perceptive visitors.

Thus, along the lines of Vito Acconci's statement that architecture is not about space but about time, and of Jim Rohn's affirmation that whatever good things we build end up building us, it could likewise be said that the only way to truly comprehend and appreciate a successful architectural narrative is by an awakened consciousness and mind, predicated on the total performance of such a narrative and how much it succeeded in making people's lives better, more meaningful and enjoyable. The physical and artistic dimensions of architecture represent a fascinating window into its yet more consequential intangible dimensions, which pertain to the world of ideas and values. Indeed, good architecture is lived and appreciated at all levels of human presence and operation. Both life and architecture (built environment) are inextricable; they are sometimes even seen as synonymous.

Moreover, the architecture of Jeddah (al-Balad) was environmental, for it duly addressed its surrounding environmental parameters. Through its design processes, procedures, buildings as net products and their performances, it respected the capacities of the environment, capitalising on its advantages and mitigating its disadvantages.

The architecture was also sustainable because it sought to address and minimise the potential negative environmental impact of buildings

through efficiency and moderation in the use of materials and energy, and by considering the space the development occupies and its wider ecosystem. In general, "this trend is about a conscious approach to energy use and ecological conservation, carefully considering the impact in the short term and the consequences for future generations" ("How sustainable architecture is changing," n.d.). The sustainability philosophy is "to ensure that the actions taken today don't have negative consequences for future generations and comply with the principles of social, economic and ecological sustainability" ("Sustainability in architecture," n.d.).

This is why in the construction of traditional Jeddah houses, four main building materials were used: coral stone, which was extracted from the nearby underwater reefs and the shore of the Red Sea (Nyazi & Sağıroğlu, 2018); purified clay used as mortar and water proofing for the floors, roofs and lower parts of the external coral stone walls, which were techniques unique to the city of Jeddah; teak wood, which was imported from neighbouring local areas or from abroad, such as India, and was used extensively for both construction and decoration purposes and, lastly; gypsum, which was locally produced and used mainly for decorating façades and framing doors and windows, and was painted white as a form of protection against the elements. (Murtada, n.d.)

As stated by Hisham Murtada:

> … the construction materials used in the houses of Jeddah indicate the ability of residents to integrate with the surrounding environment. As Jeddah has no mountains or forests, and its soil is salty and weak, inhabitants turned to the sea as a major source of construction materials. (Murtada, n.d.)

All these later proved to be the main reason behind the exceptional beauty, durability and sustainability of Jeddah's architecture (Murtada, n.d.).

About the underlying structural properties of coral stone and how it needed to be protected and safeguarded by other building materials in order for its advantages to be optimised, Hisham Murtada furthermore states:

> As it was light and weak, it was protected from humidity and air salinity with a thick layer of lime plaster (nora)

> and wooden pieces (ganadel) that absorbed cracks resulted from stone size reduction after drying. This has maintained the survival of many buildings for more than 400 years. (Murtada, n.d.)

Conclusion

Historic or traditional Jeddah (al-Balad) was indeed a distinctive Islamic city on the account of its rich and diverse history, multicultural and global character, status as the gateway to and port of Makkah and its unique architectural identity. The city's morphology satisfied and integrated the imposed environmental, socio-economic, cultural and religious requirements. The natural setting, the people and built environment were subtly unified in an exciting, exquisite and enriching urban as well as civilisational environment, which, even though relatable to time, space, styles and typologies, surpassed them all.

The city of Jeddah oozed an aura of timelessness, perpetuity and transcendence. It still tells a human story, not just through the endless horizontal and linear historical episodes, but also through the infinite vertical tiers of metaphysical orientation and reality. Its profundity lies in the ideas and values it personified. It is no wonder then that the exquisiteness and exuberance of Jeddah have been recognised in colloquial terms by branding it the Bride of the Red Sea. For similar reasons, in 2014, UNESCO has inscribed Historic Jeddah on its World Heritage list. It is worth emphasising that UNESCO's recognition is owed much to the city's architectural and urban inimitability, as to its overall universal cultural and civilisational importance and value to the Saudis, all Muslims and the whole world.

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