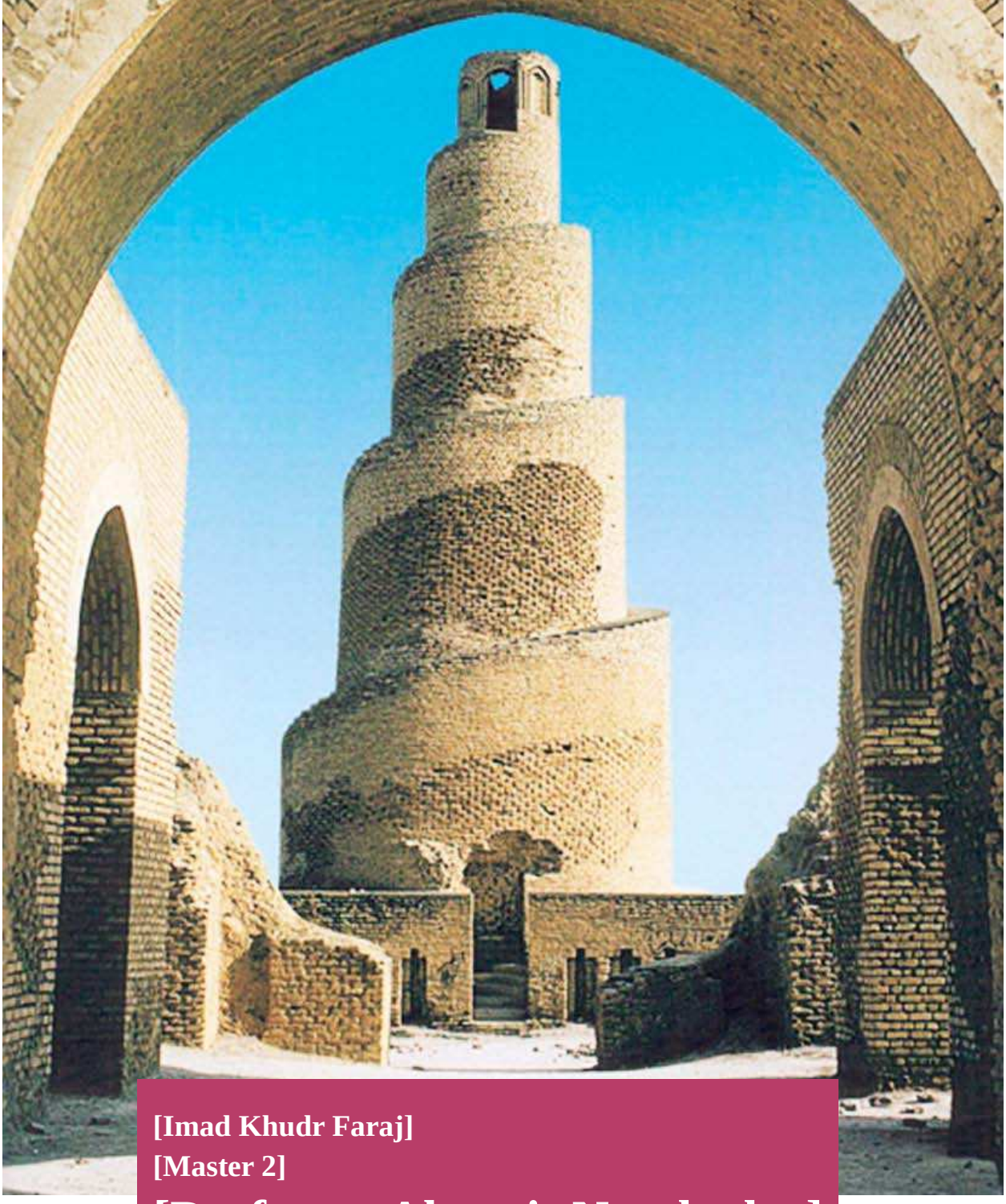
UNIVERSITÉ PARIS 1 PANTHÉON-SORBONNE

[Abu Dulaf Mosque]

جامع أبو دلف (سامراء)



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Abu Dulaf Mosque
جـامـع أبو دلـف (سامـراء)
Introduction

Mosques in Islamic Cities are Symbols of Faith and Power. This fact is no more obvious than in the Mosques of Samarra which was the capital city of the Abbasid.
The city of Samarra was unique in many ways, including the Style of urban design and its great buildings especially the great Mosque of Samarra and Abu Dulaf Mosque.
These two Mosques were built in different time-periods. In many ways they share similarities, especially the Minarets (Almalwiya) of both Mosques, which share both the same shape and same spiral staircase.
Despite the similarities between the two, they also differ greatly in many ways.
This raises many questions to which the answers are hard to come by.
The unique design of both Mosques and their Minarets inspired and encouraged archaeologists to from many different theories regarding the original state of the Mosques.
The time between the constructions of the two Mosques saw many political upheavals, advancements in the social situations, and military events.
These factors go some way to explain the Mosques differences.
In spite of the many theories regarding the two Mosques, Samarra remains one of the most interesting and important ancient cities in the world. *Fig.2,3,4*

The congregational mosque was built over the former fortification wall of al-Maenza - the well-known Abu Dulaf mosque, the mosque itself follows almost the same model as the earlier mosque of al-Mutawakkil at Samarra, but the plan of the complex is better preserved. The mosque measures 214 x 135 m, and is set inside a nearly square outer enclosure of 358 x347 m. *Fig.5*

There is a rest house behind the qibla wall the spiral minaret is smaller and measures 34 m High. The prayer hall is built with rectangular piers, and introduces for the first time in the east the Tplan with a wider axial nave and a double aisle parallel to the qibla wall Although the mosque shows no sign of reconstruction or repair, at least one pier has 11 coats of plaster. This suggests that the mosque continued to be used for some years after the abandonment of al-Mutawakkiliyya.

The name is later than the mosque, but is certainly found at the beginning of the 20th century. The personality concerned, Abu Dulaf al-Qasim bin Isa al-Ijli, is discussed above in connection with the house attributed to him.

He was al-Qasim bin yIsa al-yIjli, known as Abu Dulaf, who flourished in the time of al-Ma'mun and al- Mutasim, and who died in 226/841. The power base of the Dulafid dynasty was located at Karaj in Iran.

Abu Dulaf himself was a litterateur and patron of the arts. He seems to have lived in Baghdad, and was governor of Damascus under al-Mutasim, while also taking part in the campaign against the Iranian rebel Babak in 838 In view of his biography, it is quite possible that he had ahouse at Samarra. (1)

Abu Dulaf Mosque is located 15 km from the northern part of the city, which was built by the Caliph al-Mutawakkil and named the „city of Ja'fari", as according to Al Yacoubi. (2)

The mosque is similar in style to that of the great Mosque of Samarra.

The exterior walls of the Abu Dulaf Mosque are dilapidated at this point in time, but its interior walls still stand in good condition. The interior walls of its counterpart, the Great Mosque of Samarra, crumbled and disappeared due to it being built with mud-brick. (3)

The exterior walls, on the contrary withstood over time as it was not built with mud-brick. The planning of this Mosque was more-or-less the same as the planning of the early Muslim's Mosques in Kufa, Wasit, and the Great Mosque of Samarra.

(1) Historical Topography of Samarra by Alastair Northedge 2008. P. 217

(2) (Albuldan) by Al Yacoubi . P.42 معجم البلدان اليعقوبي

(3) Herzfeld ,Archäeologische Reise .P 70,90

. Creswell , Early Muslim Architecture P. 278

. Creswell A short account of early muslim architecture . P282

. مديرية الاثار القديمة (سامراء) صفحة 67

. جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة63

The ground plan of the Mosque is simple and from the main parts which still stand now, one can see a rectangular shape, smaller than the Great Mosque. [4] The length is about 222.80m long from the south-side to the north-side and 138.36m from the east to the west**.** **(5)** *Fig.6*

As mentioned before, the exterior walls were built from mud-brick. This means that at the time of writing, nothing remains which can give us insight into it's' shape or the method of construction. Miss Bell observed that in 1909 the walls were nothing more than a pile of rubble. [6]

Nowadays it is possible to see only the outlines of these walls, except for the northern wall which still stands at between 5-7m. [7]

The width of the northern wall is 1.6m and was built using baked brick. The walls were plastered on the inside and outside to protect it from the elements, and were fortified by the use of half-circle (crescent) shaped towers, a tactic also used during the construction of the Great Mosque of Samarra. [8] *Fig.8*

Herzfeld mentions that the southern and northern walls are divided by conjunctions, and that the eastern and western walls are divided by 13 breaks. It was also noticed that these breaks were all dissimilar in size. [9]

This meant that Herzfeld could not be sure of the original number of the half-circle shaped towers and the size of each one. As the wall was in such bad condition, it was difficult for him to measure the individual parts of the walls. [10]

The half-circle towers were constructed on a base of a rectangular-prism with dimensions of 3.10m by 1.90m. They stood at 1.9m tall. The length of these prisms was parallel to the length of the main wall. These were built from brick. [11]

(5) Herzfeld , Archäeologische Reise .P 70

(6) Amurath to Amurath by Miss Bell P.245

(7) (8) Herzfeld , Archäeologische Reise .P 70

. Creswell , Early Muslim Architecture P. 278

. Creswell A short account of early muslim architecture . P282

. مديرية الاثار القديمة (سامراء) صفحة 67

. جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة63

(9) (10) Herzfeld , Archäeologische Reise .P 72

(11) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة64

At each corner of the mosque stood a circular tower which was built on top of a square shaped base. Each dimension of this cube was 3.60m. The diameter of the circular towers was also 3.60m. The height of the base was 0.55m. The base was built using clay, whereas brick was used for the tower itself. There is no agreement amongst experts regarding the number of the half-circle towers which strengthened the exterior walls. (12)

Miss Bell recorded three such towers on the south wall, eleven on both the east and west walls, eight on the north, and then 1 single circular tower on each of the corners or the Mosque. **(13)** Creswell's estimations substantiated these findings, apart from his opinion that the south wall had eight towers. (14) He later changed this estimation to six. (15)

According to the results of the excavation performed by the Iraqi Archaeological Department, 42 towers were discovered in the perimeter. Eight were on the north side, ten on the eastern, western sides and 10 on the "Qibla" wall as well as one on each corner. (16)

Amongst the ten towers on the "Qibla" wall was one, the "Mihrab", which was situated in the middle. The towers on either side of each corner tower were built from baked brick, and the towers next in line were built from mud-clay. This alternate sequence was continued the whole way around the wall, meaning that the number of baked brick towers was six whereas the number of mud- clay walls was 4. The distance between the corner towers and the next tower in line was 12.40m. The next tower along was 4.60m away. The distance between the "Mihrab" and its neighbouring tower was 18m.

The width of the northern wall, which opposes the "Qibla" wall, was 1.80m. This wall was in much better shape than all of the other walls.

The distances between each tower on the northern wall does not follow the same sequence as those of the "Qibla" wall. They were in fact constant. The distance between the corner tower and the next was 11.80m.

The distance to the next was 12.60m. The towers on either side of the main entrance were also 11.80m apart and all were constructed from baked brick, as well as being plastered. (17)

(12) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة64

(13) Amurath to Amurath by Miss Bell P.245

Palace and Mosque at Ukhaider by Miss Bell P.155

(14) Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture. P. 281

. Creswell A short account of early muslim architecture. P284

(15) Creswell, OP. cit. P.281

(16)(17) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة64

Miss Bell recorded that the water canals were all on the northern wall. [18]

The aforementioned excavation concluded that they were made from brick, and that they had a depth of 20cm and a width of 18cm at certain points. These findings were similar to those of the Great Mosque of Samarra. The archaeologists did not have the time to follow the path of these canals. [19]

They concluded that there could have been drainpipes which carried rain water from the roof down to the canal.

The upper parts of the eastern and western walls were in such disrepair that it is only possible to see piles of rubble. [20]

The excavation carried out by the Iraqi archaeologists found that the width of both walls was 1.60m and that both consisted of ten half-circle towers. On both walls, the distance between the corner tower and the next was 35.80m. Between this one and the next, the distance was between 14-15m. [21]

Herzfeld could not be sure about the dimensions of each brick which was used on the exterior walls. However, the excavation found that each mud- brick was 27cm in length 27cm in width and 7.5cm in height. The size of the baked brick was 34cm by 34cm, with a height of 9.5cm. [22]

The width of the bricks which Herzfeld presented differs from the findings of the Iraqi archaeologists. Herzfeld measure the height of ten layers of bricks, including the mortar, and recorded it as 90cm.

The width of each layer of this mortar was 2cm, and from these findings he concluded that each brick had a height of 7cm. [23]

(18) Amurath to Amurath by Miss Bell P.246

(19) (20) (21) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة64

(22) Herzfeld, Archäeologische Reise. P 73

(23) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة64

Entrances and Doorways

Despite the bad condition of the walls, it is still possible to observe the characteristics of the Mosque's entrances and doorways, as some of the actual thresholds remained in a decent condition. (24) Miss Bell was the first person to mention the doorways. She said that on the northern wall there existed 3 such doorways, one of which was in the middle. On the eastern and western walls there were six doorways on each wall. From the remaining parts of the southern wall, there was a door which she thinks may have led to a small building. She also recorded that on the eastern side of the southern wall, there existed a door. A similar door was found on the western side of the same wall. (25)

This was substantiated by the findings of the Iraqi archaeologists. Herzfeld on the other hand did not record any such findings of doorways, but simply concluded that a whole in the wall could have been a doorway. Creswell's findings agreed with Miss Bell's, in terms of the number and position of the doorways on the southern wall. (26)

The excavation proved that the "Qibla" wall consists of three doorways. Two stand next to the corner towers; the other was placed in the middle of the wall. The side doorways were situated 2m from the corner towers and they had a width of 1.58m. The frames of these doors were made of brick and had a width of 1.05m. (27)

The northern wall, which faced the "Qibla" was found to also have three doorways. One of these was in the middle, and led to the minaret. The width of this door was 2.95m. The eastern door on this wall was 17.30m from the eastern corner tower and the western door was 17.50m from the western corner tower. The width of each door was 2.60m. (28)

Along both the eastern and western walls there were 6 doorways. From the southern corner towers to the first doorways the distance was 24m. The width of these doorways on the exterior was 2m. This doorway gets narrower, so that on the interior the width is 1.45m. The second doors on these walls are 15.70m away from the first door. The third doors are 34m from the first, the fourth 64.50m and the fifth 95.10m. The sixth doors were 133.40m from the first door. The distance between the sixth doors and the northern corner towers was 19.50m. The width of these doors was 2.65m. From this we can conclude that in total the Mosque has 18 doorways. Three on the "Qibla" wall which lead to the compounds which were connected to the southern wall, and three on the northern wall, one of which leads to the Minaret. Six of the 18 were on the eastern and western walls each. (29)

(24) Amurath to Amurath by Miss Bell P.244

(25) Palace and Mosque at Ukhaider by Miss Bell P.155

(26) . Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture. P. 281

. Creswell A short account of early Muslim architecture. P. 284

(27) (28) (29) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة65

The Interior

In the centre of the Mosque is a courtyard (Al Sahan). It is rectangular in shape, and spans from north to south 155.70m, and from east to west is 104.60m.

The area is 16,286.22 square metres. [30] The courtyard is surrounded by four parts of the Mosque. From the south is the Mihrab, and the north, east and west are all connected to the "Albwa´ik" (a zone of columns and arches which support the ceiling). *Fig.17,18*

Al Haram has 16 columns which separate the space into 17 sections. Every section consists of 5 arches, each with a width of 3.12m. The arches all face northwards. Twelve of these arches are supported by a T-shape on the south side of the prayer house.

One of Albwa´ik is made up of 13 arches making the elevation. The same is true on the northern elevation for the prayer house. The average width of each section is 4.60m, apart from the centre section which is 5.30m. This section stands in the middle of two columns with a height of 4.35m. This is similar to the north side. The average width of the sections on the north is 6.20m, apart from the middle one which has a width of 7.30m. [31]

The prayer area is 29.20m in length, the same as the length of all the Albwa´ik which end with the T-shape support on the southern side. There are 17 pathways which are parallel to the southern wall. In front of these 17 pathways is a suite which has the same width as the Al Qibla wall. This suite lies between the Al Qibla wall and the last row in the prayer area.

Such suites started to appear in Islamic Mosques around this time and this was seen a major progression Mosque design, as Herzfeld mentioned. Prior to the last excavation it was not possible to tell whether the suite had originally been built with a ceiling, due to the damage caused over the years, as Miss Bell recorded. The Iraqi Archaeological Department did not reach a concrete decision on whether the suite had had a ceiling, despite finding the aforementioned T-shape supports. [31]

(30) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة62
Herzfeld, Archäeologische Reise. P. 71
. Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture. P. 278
. Creswell A short account of early Muslim architecture. P. 282

(31) Herzfeld, Archäeologische Reise. P. 71

Al Sahan

The Al Sahan lies in the middle. Its shape is rectangular and it has a length of 155.80m, and a width of 103.93m. (32) There is a path which surrounds the whole Al Sahan. The floor was constructed of glazed brick. Each brick had the following dimensions: 32cm x 32cm x 4cm. The upper realms of the supports were decorated with engravings (stucco). Each engraved part had a frame of three circular lines and in the middle was a hollow. Each engraved part had a length of 3.15m, and the width was 1.70m. (33) Each one was then covered in plaster. All of the arches along the sides were of the four centre variety. This technique was also found to have been used in other buildings in Samarra, for example the Al Kalif Palace and the Al Ukaither, west of Kerbala. (34) *Fig.21*

The Ceiling

What was left of the arches does not show that the ceiling was made of bricks. It was noticed that 15cm from the top of the arch there was a row of holes going in one direction. The distance between each hole was between 60cm-70cm and the diameter of the holes was 20cm-25cm. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the ceiling was standing upon wooden bridges, however no remains of these wooden bridges was found. (35)

Herzfeld mentioned that the ceiling was covered in palm leaves. Above these leaves there were weaved mats also made of palm leaves, plastered together with clay. This type of ceiling structure is not ideal for the rainy conditions fond in Iraq, as it does not channel the water. This is why Herzfeld later mentioned that the ceiling must have been sloped.

There remains the question of why the site which was parallel to the southern wall was wider than all of the pathways. The width was 10.60m and it was thought that this space had no ceiling. Herzfeld's excavation of 1912/1913 pointed to the conclusion that there was a row of stumps which divided the suite into two parts. Each part had a width of 40.38m, and the stumps probably used to be columns which supported the ceiling. (36)

(32) Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture. P. 278 (155.8m east wall ,155.73m west wall) (103.89m north wall, 103.98m south wall)
Herzfeld, Archäeologische Reise. P. 71 (160.75 m)

(33) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة69

(34) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة67

(35) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة68

(36) Herzfeld, (Mitteilung über die Arbeiten der zweiten Kampagne von Samarra). Der Islam P.204

Al Mihrab

The position of Al Mihrab was not obvious until Miss Bell, in 1909, discovered the remains of broken bricks in the middle of the southern wall. She suspected that this was either the remains of the curvature of the Al Mihrab or a door which led through to a passage. (37)

Herzfeld also noticed this gap in the middle of the southern wall, and suspected that it could have been the main entrance to the Mosque. (38) This difference of opinion is due to the abnormal width of the suite, which was not common place in the planning procedure of Islamic Mosques.

Miss Bell also recognized that it would have been difficult for the Al Mihrab to be in this position due to the lack of ceiling on the suite. This is why she concluded that the gap could have been a doorway, similar to that of the Great Mosque of Samaara. (39) *Fig.20*

Herzfeld was also unsure of the position of the Al Mihrab, but suspected that it was located in the middle of the southern wall. He said the issue could be solved by further excavations, and the latest excavations confirmed these suspicions. (40)

They also found that the Al Mihrab had shifted 12.50 degrees to the west, and it was made from mud- brick. It protruded 2.44m from the wall. What was left of the Mosque show that there were actually two Al Mihrabs, both of which were built at different points in time. The first one was probably built at the time of the original construction of the Mosque. When the Mosque was completed it was deemed necessary for it to be made smaller, and the reason for this was to accommodate the Al Minbar. (41)

The remains of the first Al Mihrab had a height of 2.45m, the second was 1.60m. The difference is therefore 85cm. Without this difference it was not possible to know that they had been built at different points in time. At the threshold of the first Al Mihrab, the length was 5.74m.

The space narrowed and then at the innermost point the length was 1.98m. The depth of the first Al Mihrab was 3.12m. The second Al Mihrab started with a length of 3.60m and narrowed to 1.60m. (42)

(37) Amurath to Amurath by Miss Bell P. 245

(38) Herzfeld, Archäeologische Reise. P. 75

(39) Amurath to Amurath by Miss Bell P. 245

(40) Herzfeld , Archäeologische Reise. P. 72

(41) (42) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة68-69

The Minaret (Al Malwyah).

The Abu Dulaf's minaret is similar to the minaret belonging to the Great Mosque of Samarra. It was described by Ross as a smaller version Al Malwyah. (43) *Fig.7* Despite the fact that the upper realms of the minaret were crumbling, Viollet could view the minaret from afar. (44) It lies 9.37m away from the northern wall, and it had a rectangular base which was 10.83m x 10.63m in length and width. The height of the base was 2.70m. Every surface of this base apart from the southern surface had 13 engravings (stuccos).

The southern surface only had 10, due to the entrance of the minaret in the middle taking up the space of 3 of these engravings (stuccos). (45)

The height of each engraving (stucco) was 1.55m, and the width was 45cm. The southern surface had a staircase which led to the base of the minaret. (46)

The width of the entrance was 1.15m. After this were 4 steps which led up to the Al Malwyah. On the left hand side of the entrance there was a structure which was 3m in length.

This was connected to the spiral of the minaret and the Mosque wall, so effectively it filled the gap in between. No such structure was found on the right hand side, making it hard to believe that the purpose of it was to create a cover as such a structure could not exist being supported only by columns on one side. Furthermore, there was no need for this area to be covered.

The spiral part of the minaret stood 16.20m above the base. This is why the height of the Al Malwyah from the ground was approximately 19m.

Before it was reconstructed, the minaret spiralled 3 times from the ground to the top in an anti-clockwise direction. The fourth spiral was added to the top by the Iraqi Archaeological Department. (47) *Fig.22*

(43) The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society XI p. 129

(44) Moslim Architecture by Viollet p.147

(45) Herzfeld, Archäeologische Reise. P. 72

(46) Herzfeld , Archäeologische Reise. P. 72

(46) (47) جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي الجزء الاول صفحة69

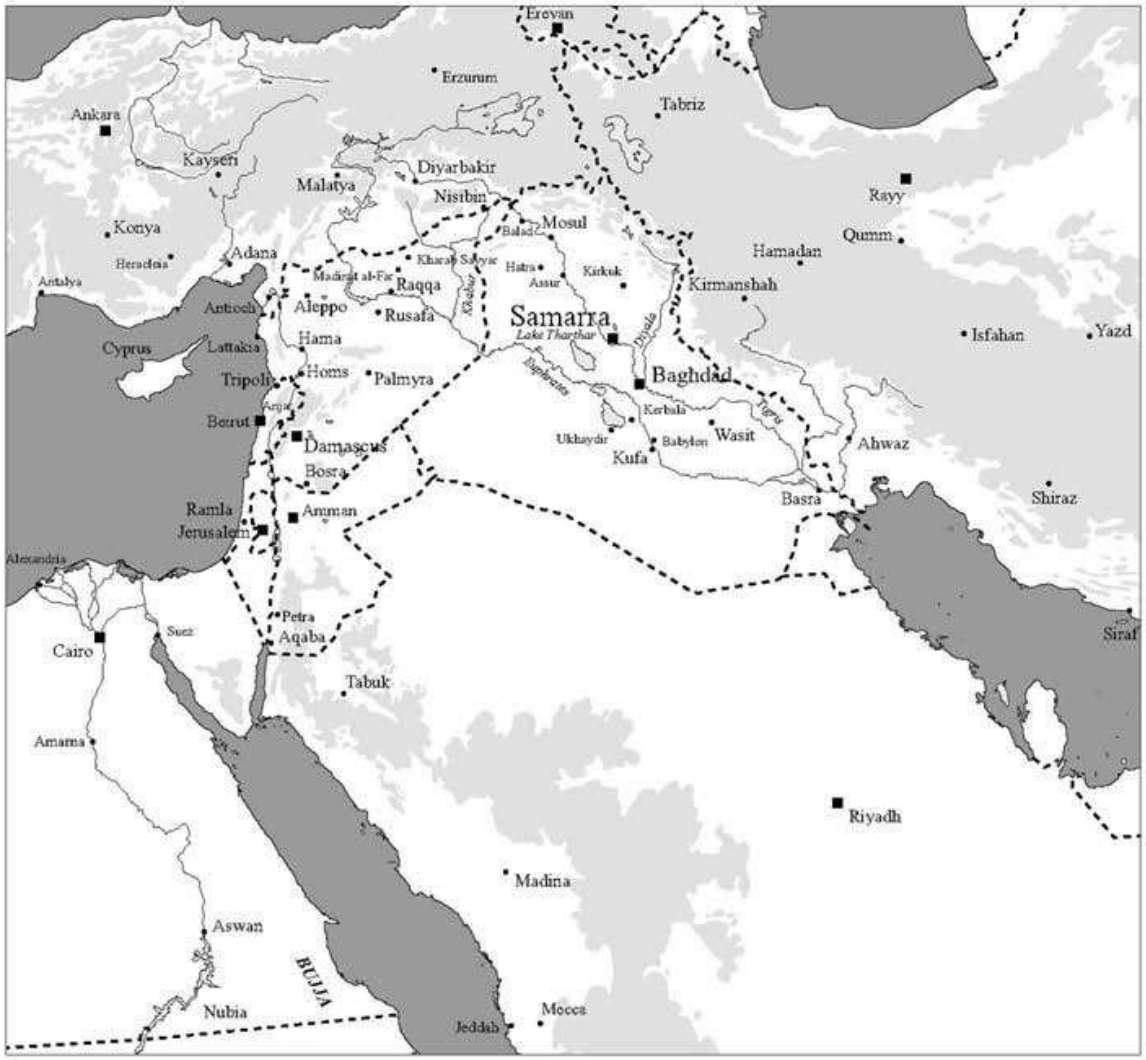

Fig. 1. Map of the Near East, showing the site of Samarra.
Historical Topography of Samarra.- Dr. Alastair Northedge

Fig. 2. Topography of the main site area of Samarra
Historical Topography of Samarra. Dr. Alastair Northedge

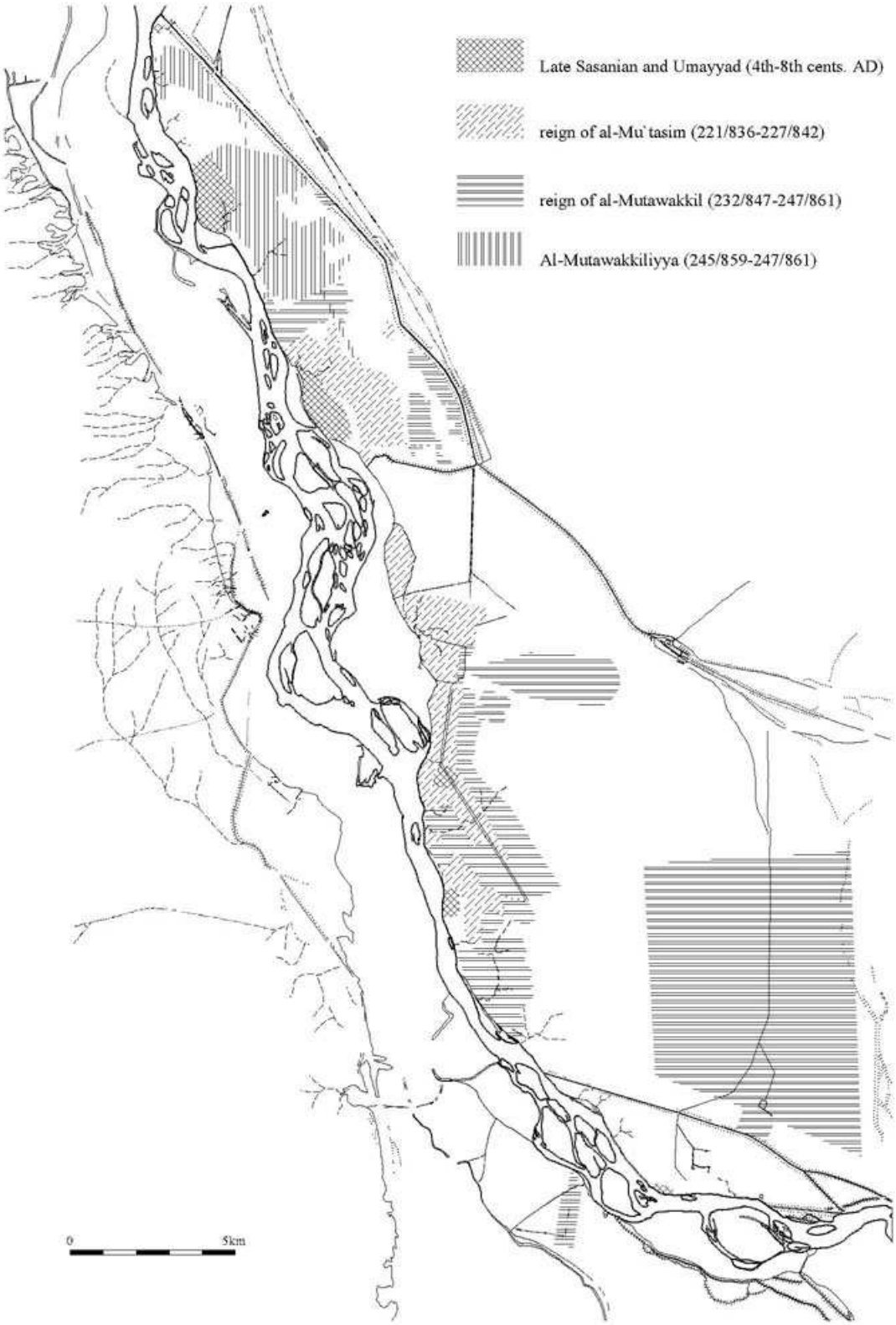

Fig.3. Samarra at the end of the reign of al-Mutawakkil (245/859 - 247/861).
Historical Topography of Samarra. Dr. Alastair Northedge

Fig.4. Abu Dulaf Mosque in Samarra
Historical Topography of Samarra. Dr. Alastair Northedge

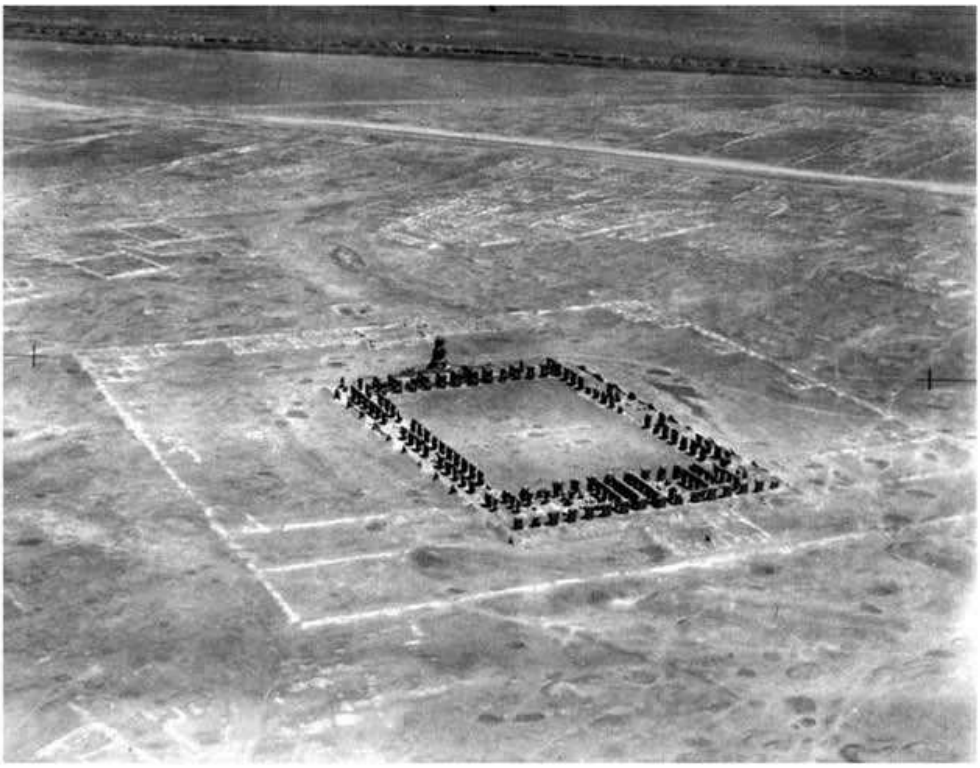

Fig.5. Mosque of Abu Dulaf, Oblique air view looking norhteast, dated 1937.
Historical Topography of Samarra. Dr. Alastair Northedge

Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

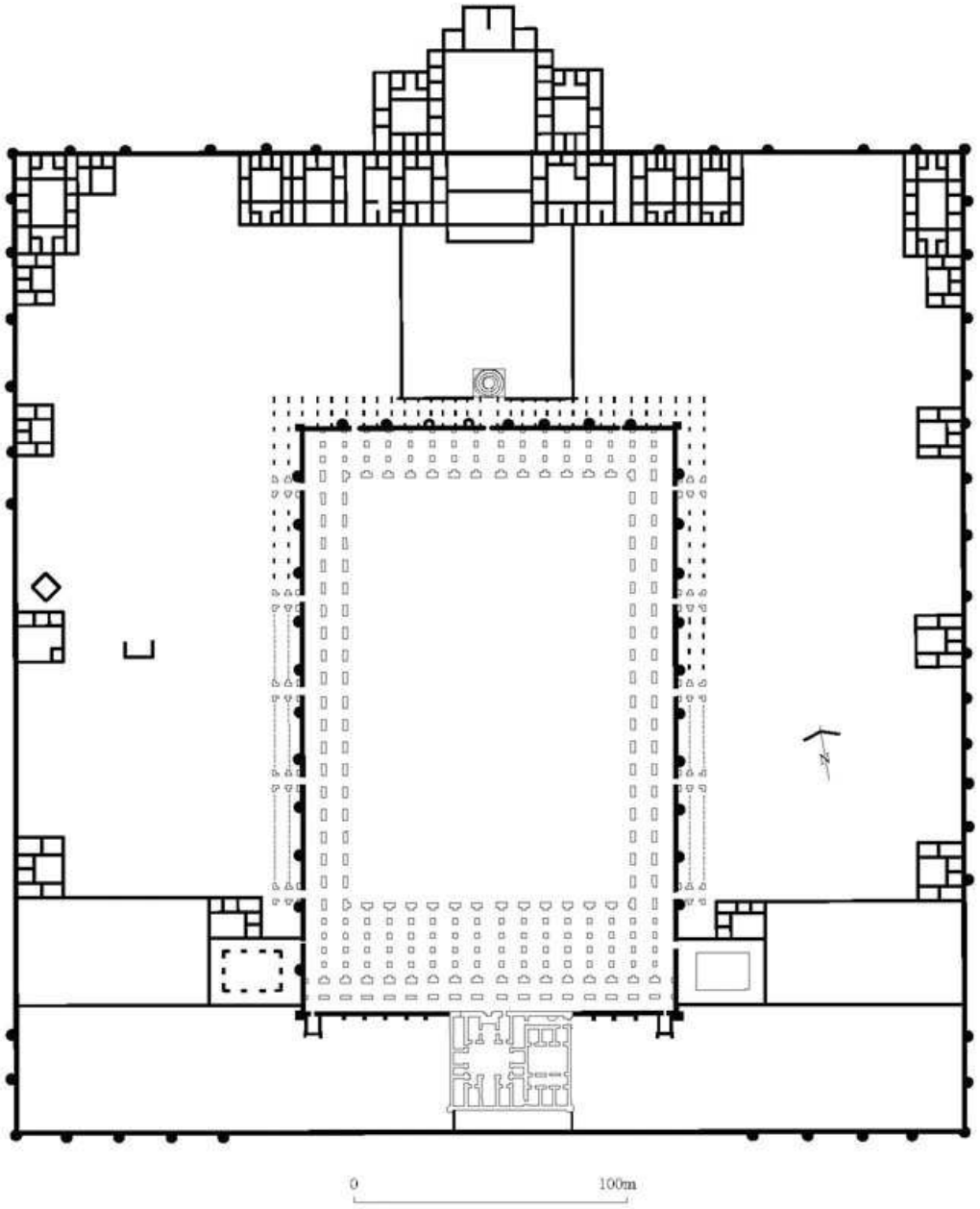

Fig.6. The Mosque of Abu Dulaf and its outer enclosure.
Historical Topography of Samarra. Dr. Alastair Northedge

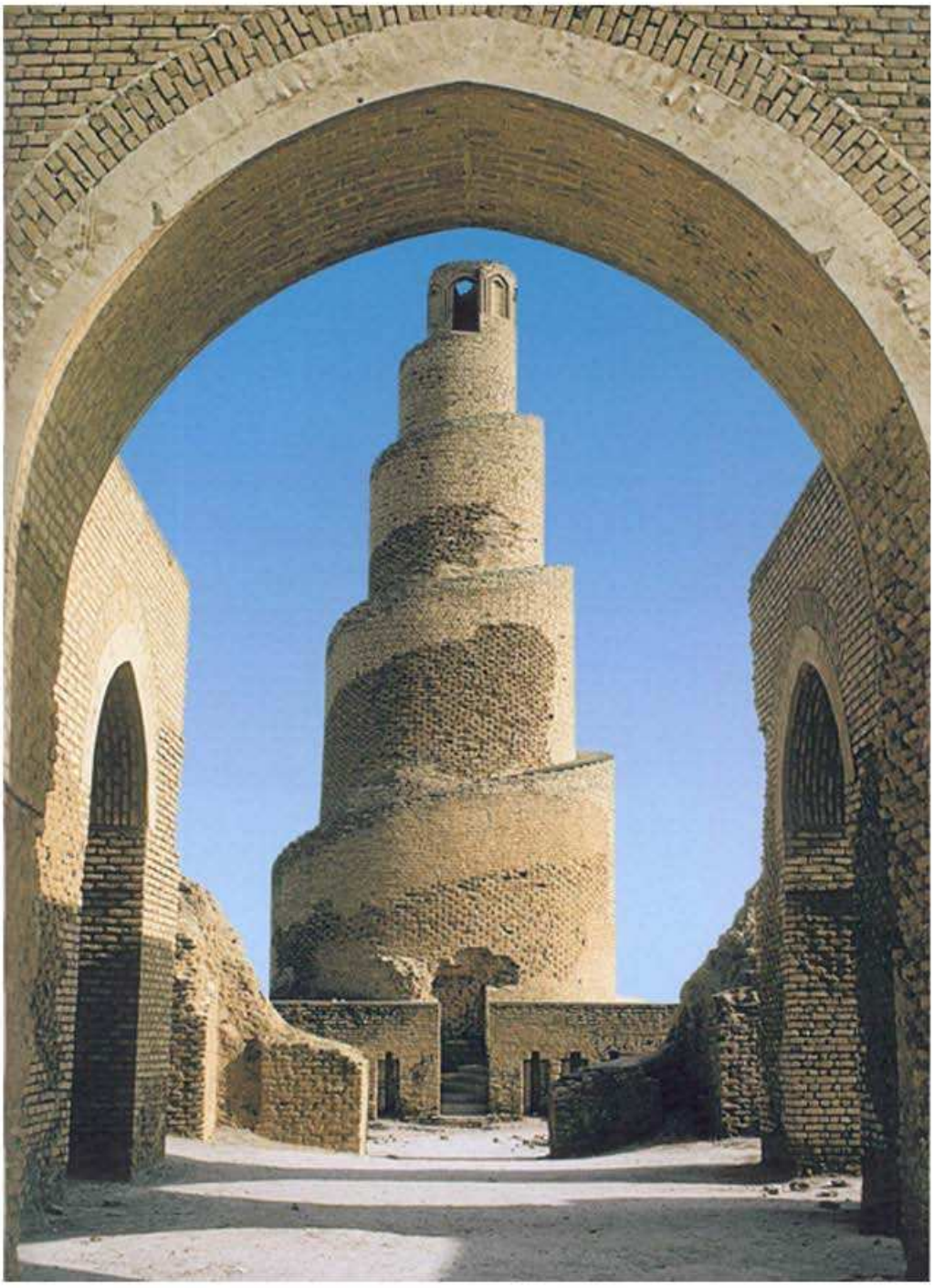

Fig.7. The Minaret of Abu Dulaf.
Samarra archaeological survey.Dr. Alastair Northedge

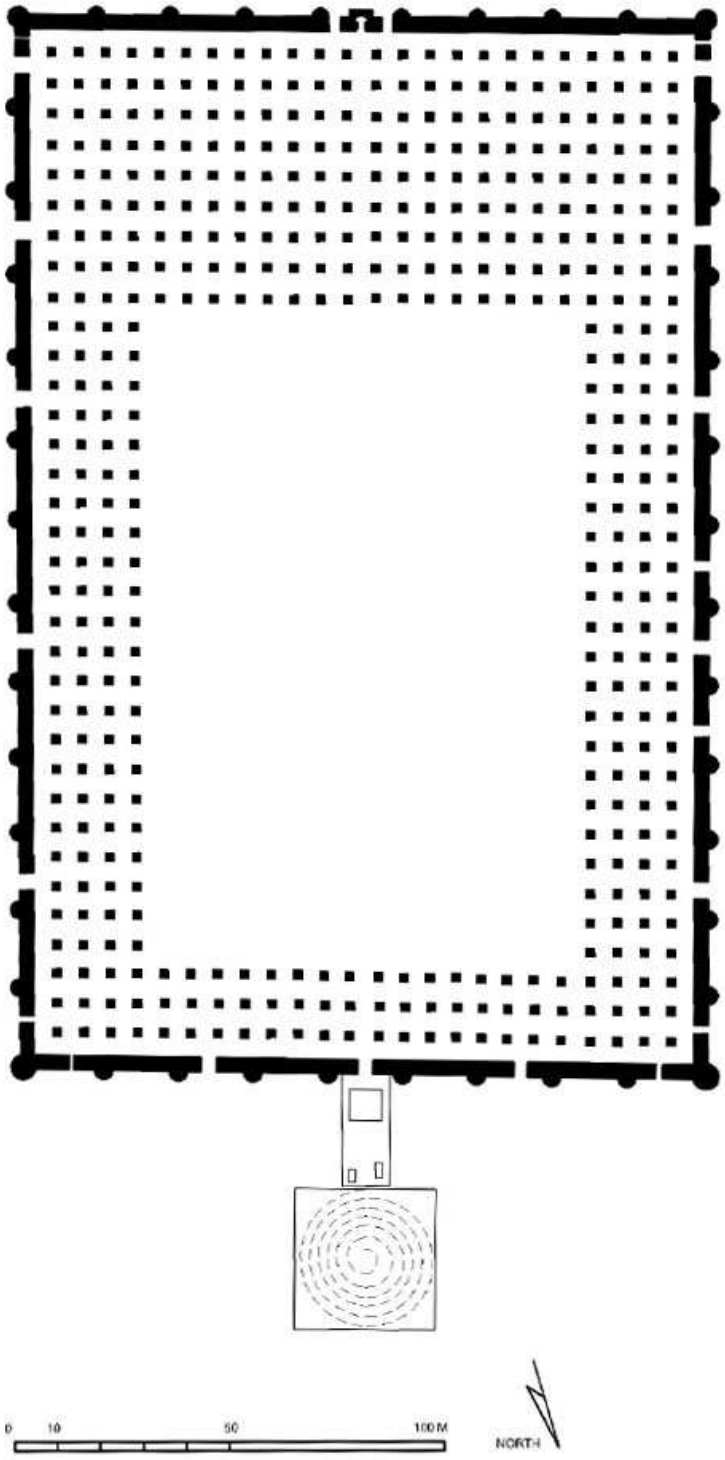

Fig.8. The Plan of Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.9. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

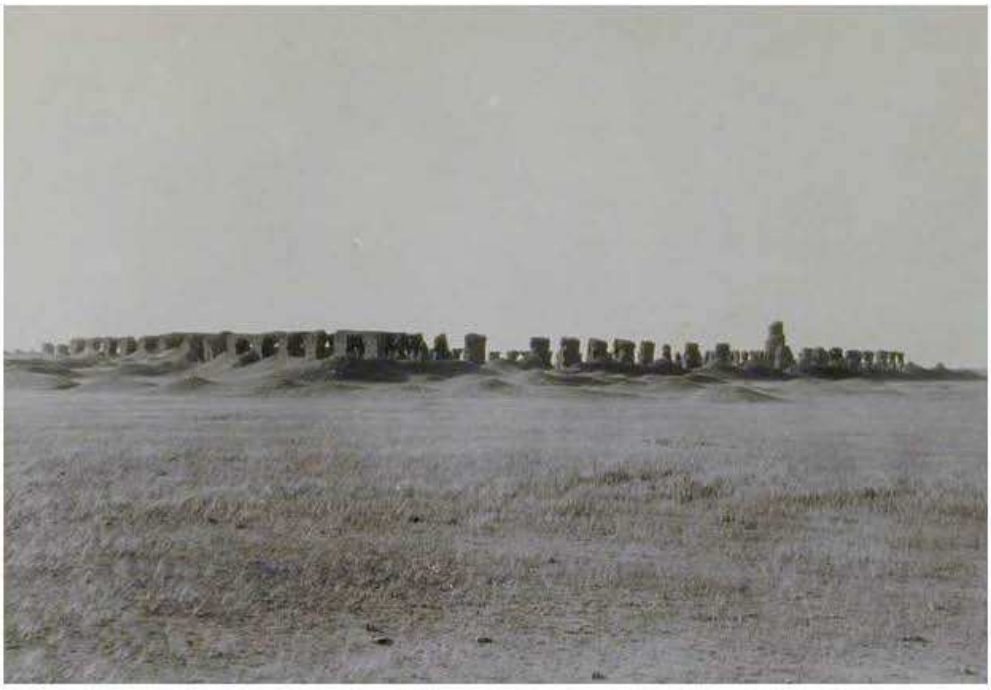

Fig.10. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.11. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.12. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.13. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.14. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.15. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.16. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.17. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.18. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Fig.19. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

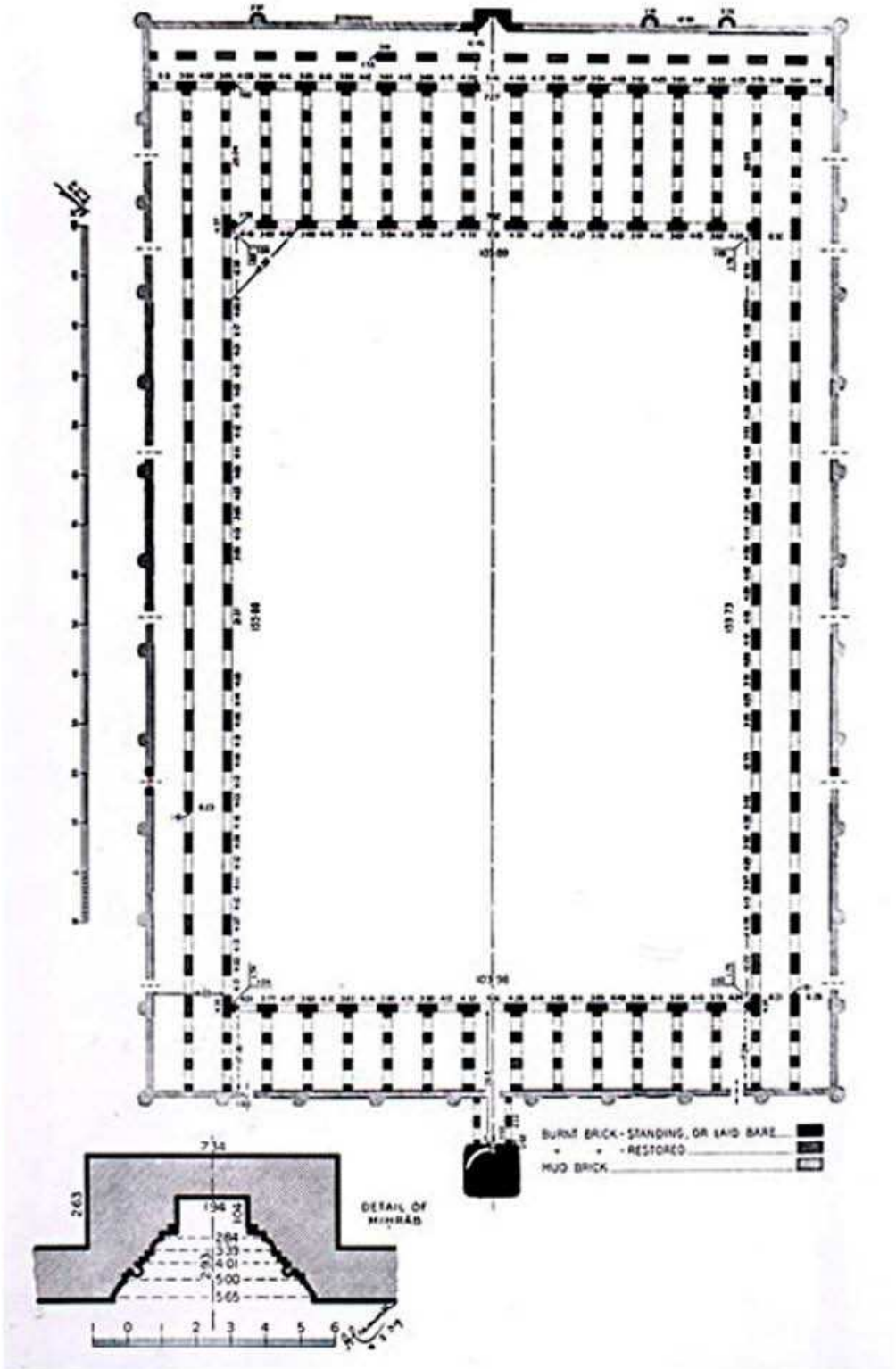

Fig.20. Abu Dulaf Mosque.ArchNet.

Addresses

Historical Topography of Samarra by Alastair Northedge 2008.

Creswell , Early Muslim Architecture

Muslim Architecture by Viollet

Herzfeld , Archäeologische Reise

جامع أبي دلف في سامراء بشير فرنسيس و محمود علي

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Herzfeld Samarra.

Herzfeld Die Ausgrabungen von samarra.

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