

AMMAN.

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THE building at Ammán has also been visited by Canon Tristram and Colonel Warren, the latter of whom was enabled to take a good photograph of it, and to take a general plan of the remains of the city, which plan was published in the *Quarterly Statement*, 1872, p. 66, accompanied by a short description by the Rev. A. E. Northey.

Canon Tristram has also described the building in "The Land of Israel," p. 588. He states that "the interior architecture of the church, if not in the purest taste, is marvellously elaborate. It is faced with 120 small round-topped niches, each shallow, and the panels filled with carvings of endless variety. No two are alike, either in the sculpture of the arch-heads or of the panels. Flowers, leaves, and fruits are the predominant designs, forming quite a pattern-book for Gothic decoration. The upper story is filled with niches of similar plan, but much larger, extending to the roof. Eight panels of leaves and pines, all in different patterns, occupy the faces towards the centre, and many others the limbs of the cross. The whole reminded us somewhat of the ancient church at Athens, though that is much poorer and on a smaller scale. The state of preservation of this building is truly marvellous."

But the curious architectural details were not, unfortunately, drawn by him.

Captain Conder has now supplied these, together with a photograph taken by the second officer in charge, Lieutenant Mantell. The plan externally of the building is, roughly speaking, quadrangular, 85 feet by 80 feet. But internally, it is that of a Greek cross, the centre part being occupied by an open court, 33 feet square, in each side of which is a recess, 18 feet wide, and 18 feet deep, arched over, but open to the court in front.

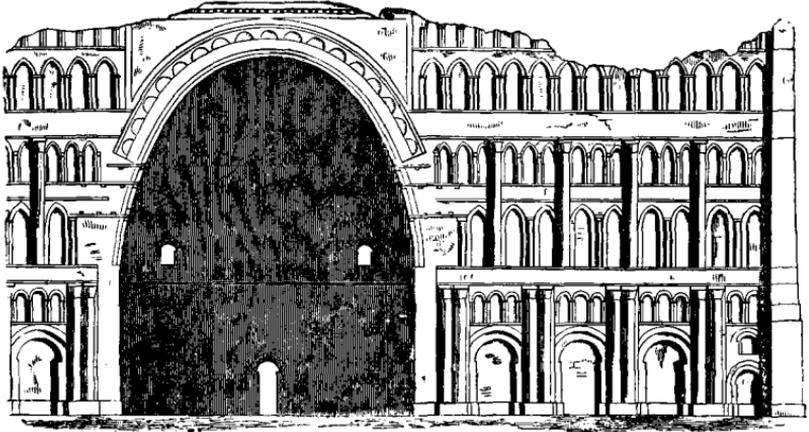
The arches appear to be pointed.

Three of the spaces completing the square are occupied by vaulted chambers, and in the fourth (north-west angle) are the remains of a staircase.

The large recesses are 33 feet high to the apex. There are no remains of dome or other roof over the crux. The building has been variously described as having been a church or a mosque. The plan bears some resemblance to that of a Greek church, but differs from it in some essential particulars, and more resembles that of such buildings as the Mosque of Hassan at Cairo, or the Mosque at Broussa, whose date is known to be of the 14th century, or the new Mosque at Algiers, built in the 16th century, both of which were designed by Christian architects for Mohammedan worship.

There are special features in the building at Ammán which render it very interesting.

In the first place the great arches over the recesses, and the wall spaces on each side, are designed in almost exactly the same way as those of the Tak Kesra at Ctesiphon, as shown in Mr. Fergusson's "History" (here reproduced by Mr. Murray's permission) and to a large scale in Flandin and Coste's "Persia."



This is assigned by him to the Sassanian period, 550, and the Ammân building, though very much smaller, is so like to it, that no one, whether architect or not, can fail to be struck by the resemblance. But the details at Ammân much exceed those of Ctesiphon in richness.

To quote Captain Conder's words, "The main feature is the elaborately sculptured ornamentation of the inner walls, the style of which, as a whole, is quite unlike any sculpture found in Western Palestine."

The ornament to which he refers consists, mainly, of panelling, as at Ctesiphon. But instead of being plain, as there, the semi-circular arches are much enriched, and the larger ones enclose others of distinctly a horse-shoe form, the panel having a centre mullion.

The narrow lights thus formed are filled in with roundlets, each having a rose or other ornament in the centre. Captain Conder notices that "there is an entire absence of any figures of animals." As to "the vine branches which occur in the interior of some of the panels, similar conventional vine patterns occur not only in the later Jewish tombs when Greek art influenced the native sculptors, but also in Byzantine tombs and chapels of the 5th and 6th centuries in Western Palestine. Among the details are a flat tooth moulding, which somewhat resembles the ornament applied by the Crusaders to arches in their early churches of the 12th century,—as in the beautiful west end of the Muristan, Jerusalem."

The architectural peculiarities to be noted from the forgoing statements are the general design—the horseshoe and (probably) pointed arches—the ornamental filling in to the narrow lights—and the tooth ornament.

The design appears clearly to have been derived from Sassanian sources.

The origin of the horseshoe arch is not so clear, but we have several well dated examples of it in the 6th and 7th centuries, as at Dana on the Euphrates, and at Edessa, as described in Pullan's "Byzantine Architecture."

Another well dated example has been kindly pointed out to me by Mr. Fergusson, viz., a Syrian MS., finished in 586, a copy of which is given in the splendid work of Garucci, and which shows horseshoe arches within semi-circular ones.

The filling in to the panels at Ammân is very similar to that of the windows in many of the small Greek churches, *e.g.*, the cathedral at Athens, the date of which is supposed by Couchaud (Églises Byzantines) to be the 6th century, whilst Mr. Fergusson considers the date to be of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries.

From careful examination of these and other old Greek churches on the spot many years since, and again, quite recently, I am in accordance with Mr. Fergusson, to whom I have given the reasons for my opinion.

The part of the Muristan at Jerusalem to which Captain Conder refers, which I know well, and of which we have a fine photograph, taken by Lieutenant Kitchener, is of the 12th century.

The result as to the Ammân building would appear thus to be that it was designed at a late period in the traditional style of the Sassanians, with the horseshoe arches of the East (whatever their origin), the Byzantine fillings in of the windows, and peculiar ornament used by the Western nations in their 12th century work. As singular a medley as is, I believe, to be found anywhere.

Near to the above are the ruins of a mosque, the greater part of whose walls and minaret remain, and of which we have photographs taken by Colonel Warren and by Lieutenant Mantell.

Captain Conder describes it thus—"It is a typical mosque resembling in plan the white mosque at Ramleh, and measuring 183 by 129 feet, built of finely dressed stonework. The minaret is nearly perfect, and the staircase intact. Two of the entrances have stone lintels under the arches. One arch is 7 feet 6 inches span, the lintel stone 9 feet long. Another has two lintels, each 16 feet long. The stones appear to have been cut for their present purpose, and to have little structural use. There are no traces of any inscriptions beyond a rudely carved Moslem religious formula over the door, which appears to have been cut at a late period by an unskilful hand."

The architectural interest attached to this is that these peculiar lintels were used in the early centuries A.D., in and about the Hauran, as may be seen in Count Voguë's book on Central Syria, *e.g.*, at Bozra.

To show still further what architectural interest attaches to these countries east and south of the Dead Sea, and east of the Jordan, I may mention that Professor Palmer describes in his report (to the Palestine Exploration Committee) of his journey through the rarely visited country through Petra to Beersheba, the finding of grand remains of the ruined city of Sebaita, supposed to be the Zephath of the Old Testament.

The ruins are 500 yards long, and 300 wide—the streets still to be traced ; and there are large remains of three churches, many of the walls being 20 to 25 feet high. “The houses are built of stone, and the want of timber beams has been most skilfully supplied, all the lower stories being built with arches about 3 feet apart, and 2 feet wide, long thick beams of stone being placed across them.”

No one who has visited the Lebanon district, or read Count Voguë's book on Central Syria, can fail to perceive that the style of building which characterizes these northern districts, was the style used also in Moab and south of the Dead Sea, and that there are several chapters yet to be written on the art history of the past when these wild districts have been carefully explored.

T. HAYTER LEWIS.

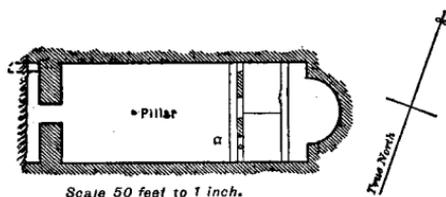
JERUSALEM.

NEWLY DISCOVERED CHURCH.

I.

18th January, 1881.

THE church of which I sent a plan by last mail has been further excavated, and an interesting piece of painting brought to light. A slab of fine limestone 20 inches by 4 feet 5 inches has on it a simple cornice,



Scale 50 feet to 1 inch.

once apparently gilt, and beneath this are the figures of the twelve Apostles, each surrounded by a sort of canopy ; they stand six each side of a central figure of the throned Christ. The figures are rather stiffly drawn, and

have long robe, the feet (remining one of the early Italian pictures of Giotto) are never visible—so far as I have as yet been able to ascertain. The slab has on the top surface the diagonal dressing used by the Crusaders.

Only a few courses of the walls of the church are standing, they have been plastered inside, and the plaster was painted. I found a mason's mark on one stone, and others have the diagonal dressing. North of the church are found vaults with pointed rubble arches. The whole is evidently of the crusading period. We are going to-day to take a tracing of the painted tablet, which will be sent home as soon as possible. The position of the church precludes the idea that it is that of St. Stephen, built in the 5th century. It seems to have been rather a chapel adjoining the Asnerie or Templars' Stable, which I was able to identify in 1873 with certain ruins close to the newly found church on the south.

C. R. C.