



Architectural and Cultural Significance of the Al-Bidyah Mosque: An Exploration of Islamic Heritage in the UAE

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ABSTRACT

Al-Bidyah Mosque, located in the Emirate of Fujairah, represents the oldest surviving mosque in the United Arab Emirates and stands as a rare exemplar of rural Islamic architecture that has remained largely intact since the 17th century. This study offers a comprehensive architectural, historical, and jurisprudential analysis of the mosque, situating it within the broader spatial and cultural dynamics of the southeastern Arabian Peninsula. Through original field documentation, comparative typological analysis, and critical engagement with Ibadi jurisprudence, the paper challenges prevailing misconceptions surrounding the mosque's function and typology—particularly those suggesting funerary or Ottoman associations.

Radiocarbon dating, combined with oral testimony and Portuguese and Dutch archival records, suggests a construction date between 1650 and 1680 CE, likely under the influence of the Ya'ariba architectural revival that followed the expulsion of Portuguese forces from the Gulf. However, the evidence also supports the possibility that this structure was built atop the remains of an earlier mosque, potentially dating back to the mid-14th century. The study argues that Al-Bidyah Mosque forms part of a transregional architectural idiom shaped by environmental adaptation, maritime connectivity, and legal-religious values, with close parallels to now-lost sites such as Qidfi' Mosque. Its architectural features—including a four-dome roofing system, central load-bearing column, recessed mihrab, and absence of a minaret—are examined as deliberate expressions of Ibadi spatial philosophy and liturgical pragmatism. The study affirms that the structure was conceived and continuously functioned as a mosque, rather than as a mausoleum.

The paper further considers the mosque's conservation history, its inclusion on UNESCO's Tentative List, and its enduring role as both a living place of worship and a heritage monument. As such, Al-Bidyah serves as a key reference point in understanding the material culture, religious continuity, and architectural legacy of early Islamic settlement along the Gulf of Oman.

INTRODUCTION

The architectural history of the southeastern Arabian Peninsula is often eclipsed by the region's contemporary urban development. Yet, amidst the rapidly transforming coastal and mountainous terrains, survive traces of a deep-rooted and multifaceted Islamic architectural legacy. Among the most compelling of these is Al-Bidyah Mosque, located in the Emirate of

Fujairah. As the oldest surviving mosque in the United Arab Emirates, and one of the few rural mosques in the Arabian Peninsula that retains its original architectural and functional elements—including four asymmetrical domes, a central stone pillar, a recessed concave mihrab, a traditional three-step minbar, and an adjacent well—Al-Bidyah stands as a unique site of enduring religious and architectural significance.

While previous scholarship has touched upon various aspects of mosque typologies in the UAE and Oman, a comprehensive, interdisciplinary study of Al-Bidyah Mosque remains a scholarly necessity. Ziolkowski (1999, 2008) laid foundational work by documenting early mosque structures in the UAE and addressing their typological and material characteristics. Her contributions, particularly on the domical typologies and the use of vernacular materials, provide essential context for understanding Al-Bidyah's architectural vocabulary. However, her analysis stops short of linking these features with broader jurisprudential and cross-regional networks of influence. In contrast, Costa (2001) explores a broader array of historic mosques and shrines in Oman, several of which share notable similarities with Al-Bidyah, particularly in their use of local stone, absence of minarets, and austere design—traits also observed in early Ibadi mosques.

This study further engages with Uthman's (2014a-b and 2015) significant contribution on the impact of Ibadi jurisprudence on Islamic architectural forms, which articulates how legal constraints and doctrinal simplicity shaped the built environment in Ibadi regions. While Uthman focuses on structures dating up to the 12th century CE, this study extends that line of inquiry by investigating whether similar legal-architectural continuities persisted into the post-16th century contexts of Al-Bidyah. In the same context, Benkari (2016, 2019) explains how Ibadi fiqh governing the architecture of mosques considering examples in M'zab, Djerba, and Oman. Additionally, this paper critically engages with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre's (2012) Tentative Listing of Al-Bidyah Mosque, which highlights the mosque's rarity and architectural integrity but does not explore its historical or jurisprudential underpinnings in depth. Another group of studies dedicated to the mosques digitization and digital documentation including (Holden, Silcock, & Arrowsmith 2012; Holden et al. 2015 and (Abdalhaleem et al. 2024).

Methodologically, this paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining architectural and spatial analysis, historical document review, and jurisprudential discourse analysis. Central to this inquiry is original fieldwork conducted at Al-Bidyah Mosque, which included on-site architectural documentation, photographic surveys, proportional measurements of structural elements, and spatial analysis of circulation, orientation, and elevation. These primary observations are supported by comparative case studies of mosques in Oman and the broader Indian Ocean rim.

This study contends that Al-Bidyah Mosque must be understood not only as a relic of early Islamic settlement in the region, but as a manifestation of regional architectural identity shaped by legal traditions, environmental adaptation, and maritime connectivity. In re-evaluating its architectural and historical identity, the paper situates Al-Bidyah within ongoing scholarly debates surrounding Islamic vernacular architecture, Ibadi spatial philosophy, and heritage conservation in the Gulf. The significance of the mosque lies not solely in its antiquity, but in the continuity of its form, ritual function, and material authenticity—elements that remain remarkably intact despite centuries of social and environmental change.

SITE OF AL-BIDYAH MOSQUE

Al-Bidyah Mosque derives its name from its geographical setting in the village of Al-Bidyah—also variably rendered in historical and cartographic sources as *Bidiya*, *Bidya*, *Bidiyah*, or *Badiyah*. The toponym “Al-Bidyah” is semantically linked to the Arabic root *b-d-w*, connoting permanence or rootedness, which may reference the sedentary lifestyle of its historical inhabitants in contrast to nomadic populations. This etymological connection underscores the mosque’s central role in a settled, agrarian community, with enduring cultural and religious traditions embedded within the local topography and oral history (Al’aboudi 1992, 19-22; Ziolkowski 1999 19-20).

Geographically, Al-Bidyah is situated within the Emirate of Fujairah, on the eastern seaboard of the United Arab Emirates, approximately 40 kilometers north of the city of Fujairah (Fig. 1). It lies strategically between the historic port towns of Khorfakkan and Dibba, two coastal settlements that were of considerable maritime and geopolitical significance during the early modern period. Facing the Gulf of Oman and backed by the foothills of the Hajar Mountains, the site’s natural environment provided both agricultural fertility and defensive topographical advantages—factors that likely influenced the placement and durability of the mosque structure.



Fig. 1. After google earth map shows the location of the Al-Bidyah, Fujairah, UAE

Al-Bidyah serves as the central settlement within a constellation of smaller villages, including Al-Fai, Al-Jubail, Haqeel, Twai Bin Saada, Al-Hara, and Al-Telae. Historically, these villages formed an interdependent rural network, with Al-Bidyah Mosque functioning as the communal religious hub for *Salat al-Jumu'ah* (Friday congregational prayer). Oral testimonies and ethnographic accounts suggest that, until recent decades, residents from this wider region would converge at the mosque, emphasizing its regional liturgical significance and social centrality (UNESCO 2012).

In addition to its religious role, the site of Al-Bidyah is archaeologically rich, surrounded by several pre-Islamic and Islamic-era features. These include four watchtowers that are visually aligned with the mosque’s position, suggesting a strategic surveillance function over coastal

and inland routes. Moreover, the area features remnants of ancient stone walls, residential foundations, retaining walls, and petroglyphs—all of which contribute to the multi-period layering of the landscape. Such features have led regional archaeologists and heritage authorities to classify the surrounding zone under the designation “Al-Bidyah Archaeological Mosque Site” (Fig. 2), integrating the mosque into a broader cultural landscape of historical continuity (Al’aboudi 1992, 21, Ziolkowski 1999, 20).



Fig. 2. A detailed site location of Al-Bidyah Mosque and the around archaeological remains, after google earth map

Ziolkowski (2008) notes that the presence of architectural remains and rock carvings in close proximity to the mosque may indicate a continuity of settlement and sacred practice dating back to the Iron Age or earlier. Similarly, regional surveys conducted by the UAE’s Department of Antiquities and the Fujairah Tourism and Antiquities Authority have suggested that the site may have hosted earlier religious structures prior to the construction of the current mosque, further corroborating radiocarbon data suggesting subsurface occupation layers possibly dating to the 14th century CE or earlier (UNESCO 2012).

Thus, the location of Al-Bidyah Mosque is not incidental but profoundly embedded within a landscape of historical depth, architectural endurance, and regional spiritual significance. Its positioning—both geographically and culturally—renders it a focal point in understanding not only the architectural evolution of Islamic sacred spaces in the UAE, but also the socio-religious ecology of the southeastern Arabian littoral.

PLAN AND ARCHITECTURE OF AL-BIDYAH MOSQUE

Al-Bidyah Mosque exhibits a distinctive spatial configuration (Fig. 3), anchored by an external rectangular courtyard, locally referred to as a *ṣarḥah* ‘صرحة’ (also known as *ṣaḥn* ‘صحن’ and *raḥbah* ‘رحبة’), measuring approximately 7 by 14 metres, effectively double the surface area of the mosque’s prayer hall or interior prayer space (*dākhil al-masjid*). This open-air courtyard historically functioned as an integral part of the mosque’s architectural and social programme, supporting communal worship activities beneath a former *‘arīsh* ‘عریش’, a traditional sunshade structure (*ẓullah* ‘ظلة’), crafted from palm fronds and timber poles (Figs. 4-5). While Ziolkowski (2008) mischaracterised this shaded courtyard as a *sabla*—a term more accurately denoting an intertribal gathering space—the designation is imprecise. Although the *ṣarḥah*, particularly when covered, may have accommodated various communal functions, its primary identity remains that of a mosque courtyard rather than a tribal council space.

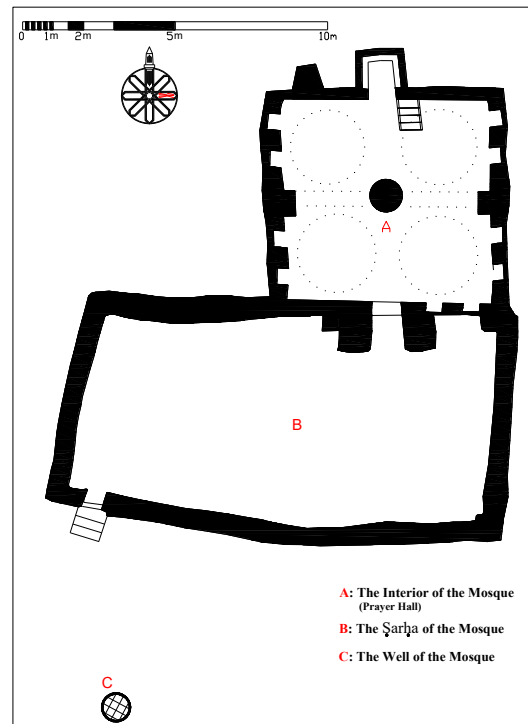


Fig. 3. Plan of Al-Bidyah Mosque ©Ahmed Ameen 2025

The courtyard is demarcated by perimeter walls reaching a maximum height of approximately 1.5 metres. These are constructed using indigenous materials, including mountain stone, coral fragments, and sun-dried mudbricks, all bonded with mud mortar and finished with successive layers of mud plaster and cement render (Ziolkowski 2008). The prayer hall itself is accessed through a single, centrally placed doorway located on the northwest side of the courtyard (Figs. 10-11), establishing a clear axial relationship within the mosque's spatial composition.



Fig. 4. 1974 Photo of Al-Bidyah Mosque, Source: *Dubai – A journey into the unknown* (2017) <https://bridgetmhs.wordpress.com/2017/04/11/dubai-a-journey-into-the-unknown/> (Accessed 11 Dec. 2024)

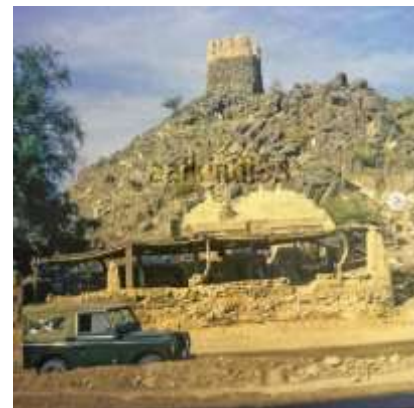


Fig. 5. Al-Bidyah Mosque in 1976, Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DFSi4vTTf3V/?img_index=1 (Accessed 7 Oct. 2024)

The prayer hall of Al-Bidyah Mosque is laid out in an irregularly shaped square plan, measuring approximately 6.8 by 6.8 metres (Fig. 3). Its main entrance is visually emphasised by the presence of prominent flanking buttresses and gently curved (Fig. 11), projecting wall segments—features characteristic of vernacular architectural expression in the region (Kennet 1995: 28; Ziolkowski 2008). These slender, inclined buttresses are carefully positioned on either side of the entryway, gradually merging with the wall surface at their apex. Though

evocative of the defensive elements commonly found in fortified structures, their role here is principally structural, functioning in a manner analogous to architectural piers.

The total elevation of the mosque, inclusive of the roofing system, reaches approximately 5 metres. The enclosing walls rise to a height of 3.5 metres, with a foundational thickness of approximately 0.50 metre that subtly tapers to an average of 0.25 metre toward the top, creating a slight inward inclination that contributes to their structural integrity. Crowning the building are four dome-like roofing elements, each composed of three to four concentric layers diminishing in scale towards their summit. These domes exhibit minor variations in size and configuration, with external heights ranging between 1.26 and 2.06 metres above the wall line.

Among the mosque's most architecturally notable features is the *mihrāb* (Fig. 3, 9), which projects outward by 1.27 metres from the central axis of the *qibla* wall. Externally, this projection also functions structurally as a buttress, akin to those framing the main entrance. The *mihrāb* itself is defined by a rectangular footprint measuring approximately 1.27 by 1.64 metres, and is articulated in three stepped tiers that recede inward vertically, culminating at a height of 2.09 metres. Adjacent to the *qibla* wall, at a distance of 1.48 metres to the south of the *mihrāb*, is an additional buttress-like projection, mirroring those at the entrance, which extends approximately 0.70 metres from the wall surface—further reinforcing the mosque's load-bearing envelope (Fig. 9).



Fig. 6. A general view of Al-Bidyah Mosque with the exterior context



Fig. 7. A general view of the well of Al-Bidyah Mosque, the mosque with *sarḥah*, the behind mountain with the watchtower, arranged towards the qibla



Fig. 8. Al-Bidyah Mosque, the *sarḥah* with the prayer hall from the exterior



Fig. 9. Al-Bidyah Mosque, the prayer hall and the *sarḥah* from the qibla wall, showing the mihrab



Fig. 10. Al-Bidyah Mosque, from the *ṣarḥah* showing the prayer hall from the exterior



Fig. 11. Al-Bidyah Mosque, the prayer hall along with its entrance from the *ṣarḥah*

The interior of the prayer hall at Al-Bidyah Mosque (Figs. 3, 12-15) is defined by a slightly irregular square configuration, with its spatial hierarchy centered on a single, substantial circular column. This central pillar (Figs. 12-15), with a base radius of approximately 1.08 metres, tapers upward in a conical fashion until a height of 1.2 metres, at which point it transitions into an octagonal profile. This octagonal section serves as the structural springing point for the intersecting arches that support the mosque's four-domed roofing system. The column, in conjunction with the encompassing masonry walls, upholds the entirety of the superstructure.

Aligned precisely along the longitudinal axis formed by the entrance and the central pillar is the *miḥrāb*—a shallow, pointed niche (Figs. 3, 15) set into the *qibla* wall. The niche exhibits a minimalist aesthetic and is defined by dimensions of approximately 1.27 metres in depth and 92 centimetres in width at the opening, narrowing to 80 centimetres within. It reaches a height of approximately 2 metres, its pointed hood echoing early Islamic architectural language.



Fig. 12. Al-Bidyah Mosque, the interior of the prayer hall, view from the western corner of the qibla wall



Fig. 13. Al-Bidyah Mosque, documenting the dimensions of the interior of the prayer hall



Fig. 14. Al-Bidyah Mosque, the interior of the prayer hall, view from the mihrab



Fig. 15. Al-Bidyah Mosque, the interior of the prayer hall, view from the western corner of the entrance wall showing the qibla wall, mihrab, minbar and a part of the roofing

To the north of the *mihrāb*, a modest stone *minbar* (pulpit) is integrated into the fabric of the interior (Figs. 3, 15). Constructed from locally sourced mountain stone, with the incorporation of fossilized stone, bound with mortar, the *minbar* consists of three steps culminating in a small seat measuring 0.65 metres in width, 1.02 metres in length, and 1.2 metres in height. Low stepped side screens flank the pulpit, fashioned from the same materials, with a notable insertion of a fossilised stone in the second step of the northern screen—an element of geological interest and artisanal intent. The relatively narrow seating width of 0.5 metres may be interpreted as a reflection of the anthropometric characteristics of the local population at the time of construction, shaped by the region's rugged coastal and mountainous ecology.

Internally, the walls are rendered with a smooth gypsum plaster finish. Ventilation and illumination are facilitated through a series of small, nearly square perforations within the wall surface (Figs. 12-15). The ceiling features understated stone carvings that incorporate geometric motifs, although these are only partially extant. Integrated within the non-*qibla* walls are two tiers of recessed niches or storage cupboards (Figs. 12-14), locally known as *daraeish* (Al'aboudi 1992, 43). The lower tier is positioned at 0.35 metres above floor level and comprises compartments with average dimensions of 0.37 metres in depth, 0.55 metres in width, and 0.60 metres in height. Above this, beginning at a height of 1.32 metres from the floor, is a second tier, with slightly altered proportions—0.24 metres in depth, 0.65 metres in width, and 0.56 metres in height. The *qibla* wall, by contrast (Fig. 15), contains only an upper tier of similar niches, commencing at 1.59 metres above floor level. Historically, these cavities likely served to store candles, incense, instructional tablets, or ritual implements, with contemporary use primarily dedicated to housing copies of the Qur'ān.

The mosque's roofing system epitomises a vernacular construction technique in which the ceiling and central apex are supported by four intersecting pointed arches that radiate from the polygonal core of the central pillar (Fig. 14). Above a tapering shaft of 0.42 metres in height, the column expands into bifurcated triangular extensions, which generate sharply pointed junctions or “knots”—kind of pointed arches—that visually and structurally subdivide the ceiling into four distinct bays (Figs. 14-15). Each bay is crowned by a dome exhibiting a hemispherical profile from the interior and a spiral texture on the exterior—a distinctive formal signature of the region's local architectural idiom. The ceiling rises from the interior walls at a height of 2.92 metres above floor level. The domes vary in internal height, ascending from the

mosque floor to 3.8, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.7 metres respectively, reflecting subtle differences in craftsmanship and architectural modulation.

MATERIALS AND BUILDING TECHNIQUES

The construction and roofing techniques employed in Al-Bidyah Mosque exemplify the nuanced adaptation of local craftsmanship to the region's environmental and material constraints. A particularly distinctive feature is observed in the configuration of the mosque's roofing system, which centers upon a substantial circular stone column with a base radius of approximately 1.08 metres. This central pillar narrows to 0.42 metres in height before expanding to form bifurcated triangular projections, which give rise to pointed architectural nodes (Figs. 12-15). These nodal intersections serve as structural anchors for four intersecting kind of pointed arches that articulate the spatial layout of the prayer hall into four quadrants. Each quadrant is surmounted by an individual dome, culminating in a four-domed roof structure. The domes themselves display a dual formal character: internally they are hemispherical in section, providing a volumetrically harmonious ceiling plane; externally, however, the domes exhibit a spiral surface texture—a form of local ornamentation potentially signifying both aesthetic and symbolic intent.

This roofing system reflects not only the ingenuity of indigenous structural logic but also continuity with architectural idioms observed in other early Islamic buildings in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in coastal regions where material scarcity necessitated creative solutions (King 1989; Kennet 1995).

The mosque is constructed primarily from regionally available materials, including mountain stone, coral fragments, and *farūsh* (beach rock), all of which are skillfully assembled using a core binding matrix composed of *sarūj*—a traditional hydraulic lime-based mortar. Notably, the *sarūj* mixture employed at Al-Bidyah contains visible charcoal inclusions, suggesting thermal treatment in its preparation, which enhances its binding properties and water resistance. This is a technique known in other parts of the Gulf region, particularly in Omani and southern Iranian vernacular construction, where *sarūj* has been used in water cisterns and roof coatings due to its resilience to moisture (Al'aboudi 1992, 43; Costa 2001; Ziolkowski 2008).

The mosque's outer walls are covered in no fewer than six successive layers of render, indicating repeated cycles of maintenance and adaptation over time. The basal layer, closest to the structural core, comprises *sarūj*, followed by intermediate coatings of gypsum and *wadī* sand-based plaster. The application of these successive renderings reflects a deep understanding of thermal insulation and durability, with each layer contributing to the overall environmental performance of the building—particularly in mitigating temperature fluctuations and protecting the structural fabric from erosion and salt-laden coastal winds (Ziolkowski 2008, 8).

The courtyard wall construction follows parallel logic but employs slightly varied materials. It is composed of mountain stone, coral, and sun-dried mudbrick, bound with mud mortar. This composition suggests a more temporally flexible or service-oriented construction, as opposed to the more permanent and heavily engineered prayer hall. The outer render of the courtyard includes a final coating of cement, possibly introduced during a later restoration phase to stabilize the wall against weathering. Beneath this, an earlier mud plaster layer is still discernible, indicating an initial phase consistent with pre-modern building conventions in the region (Al'aboudi 1992, 43; Ziolkowski 2008, 8).

This careful stratigraphy of materials—both structurally and in surface treatment—underscores a broader architectural narrative of adaptation, resilience, and layered historical continuity. Moreover, the diversity of materials and techniques reflects not only environmental adaptation

but also the integration of maritime trade influences, where building technologies and materials (like coral or *sarūj*) may have arrived via longstanding trade routes connecting the Indian Ocean littoral.

REASSESSING THE ATTRIBUTION AND CHRONOLOGY OF AL-BIDYAH MOSQUE: EVIDENCE FROM RADIOCARBON DATING AND HISTORICAL SOURCES

Recent investigations into the origins of Al-Bidyah Mosque, specifically the timing and cultural attribution of its construction, have benefitted from the integration of radiocarbon analysis and critical re-examination of historical sources. Small charcoal samples, extracted from the mosque's foundational wall matrix and indicative of the original construction phase, were subjected to Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dating at the Rafer Radiocarbon Laboratory in New Zealand. The results place the most probable construction date within a span of approximately 220 years—between the mid-15th and mid-17th centuries CE (Ziolkowski 2008, 12-13). More specifically, the probability ranges derived from the testing are 1450–1670 CE (95%) and 1480–1650 CE (68%), which, while not definitive, suggest that the mosque predates or coincides with the period of Portuguese expansion into the eastern Arabian Peninsula.

This dating window, however, stands in tension with the absence of any mention of a domed mosque at Bidyah in Portuguese colonial records or the accounts of contemporary travelers. Given the typically meticulous documentation and cartographic illustrations produced by the Portuguese in the region—including detailed notations of forts, religious structures, and settlements—it is notable that no such mosque is depicted or described in relation to Bidyah. The extant Portuguese sources, including those compiled by António Bocarro and edited by de Resende (Bocarro 1646; Ziolkowski 2008), instead focus on the fortifications at *Libedia* (Bidyah), which was seized by Portuguese forces in 1623 under the command of Mateus de Seabra following directives from Captain-Major Ruy Freyre de Andrade (Ziolkowski 2008, 21-22).

Bocarro's records describe a fortified coastal settlement located approximately one league north of Khor Fakkan, with a small population living in vernacular dwellings roofed with coconut and palm fronds. The fort at Bidyah was garrisoned by a lascarin captain and twenty armed men. Interestingly, the Portuguese illustration of the area depicts an inlet near the fort—an inlet that still exists today and provides an important topographical anchor point. Based on the geographical layout, the site of Al-Bidyah Mosque would have stood just north of this inlet, yet it goes unmentioned in any extant Portuguese documentation. This notable omission strongly suggests that the present mosque was constructed subsequent to the Portuguese withdrawal from the region, rather than during their occupation (Ziolkowski 2008, 21-22).

In light of this absence and in consideration of the mosque's architectural typology, the construction of the existing structure is more plausibly dated to the post-Portuguese period, specifically during the reign of the second Ya'ariba Imam, Sultan bin Saif al-Ya'aribi (r. 1649–1680). This was a transformative era in Omani history, marked by the decisive expulsion of Portuguese forces from Oman and much of the Gulf littoral. Under Imam Sultan bin Saif's leadership, key settlements such as Khorfakkan, Dibba, and Bidyah were liberated. It is thus highly probable that the mosque, as it stands today, was erected shortly thereafter, possibly over the remains of a preexisting religious structure that was destroyed or fell into disrepair during the earlier period of foreign military control.

Further corroboration of this post-1650 dating comes from Dutch maritime records. In 1666, the Dutch vessel *Meerkat* conducted a coastal reconnaissance mission from Bandar Abbas to

survey Omani shores. The Dutch description of Bidyah, referred to as *Lebdia*, aligns with that of the Portuguese: a small coastal settlement of approximately 200 houses, built using palm fronds and situated near the beach (Floor 1982: 303; Slot 1993: 176–177). The Dutch noted a nearby fertile valley replete with date palms, fig trees, wells, and a scattering of vegetables—yet made no mention of a mosque. However, it must be considered that the *Meerkat*'s reconnaissance was limited to the coastal fringe and may not have ventured into the slightly inland zone where the mosque is located, partially screened by dense palm groves and rising terrain. Thus, the absence of a mosque in these records does not preclude its existence, especially if it had only recently been constructed or was modest in scale at the time (Ziolkowski 2008, 22).

In reassessing the designation of Al-Bidyah Mosque as an “Turkish” or “Ottoman” structure—a classification occasionally suggested in earlier accounts (Al’aboudi 1992, 61–62)—there appears to be no substantiating evidence, either historical or architectural, to support such an attribution. The region was never effectively governed by the Ottomans, nor is there any indication of Ottoman patronage—as in most Islamic architectural monuments (Ameen 2019)—or influence in the mosque’s construction. The mosque’s multi-domed prayer hall, while superficially reminiscent of early Ottoman design, is best understood as an example of local innovation within the vernacular architectural tradition. The dome configuration is structurally and materially consistent with indigenous construction practices, using local stone, *sarij*, and mud-based mortars, without recourse to imported Ottoman techniques or stylistic elements. The apparent resemblance is thus coincidental or symbolic rather than indicative of cultural transmission.

Al’aboudi (1992) provides a valuable oral testimony recorded from a local resident, recounting inherited narratives passed down from his ancestors in Qidfi’—a coastal village south of Al-Bidyah, situated along the same shoreline in Fujairah. According to this account, a large fort once stood in Qidfi’, which collapsed approximately half a century ago. Adjacent to it was a mosque resembling the current Al-Bidyah Mosque. The informant reports that the original Qidfi’ mosque was demolished by the local community due to its small size and replaced with a larger congregational mosque. He further asserts that Al-Bidyah Mosque is architecturally similar to the former mosque of Qidfi’ and attributes the original construction of the Qidfi’ mosque to an Omani founder.

In sum, the composite evidence—radiocarbon data, architectural typology, and the documentary lacunae in European records—strongly supports a foundation date for Al-Bidyah Mosque in the immediate aftermath of Portuguese expulsion, likely between 1650 and 1680 CE. This timeframe coincides with a broader revival in Islamic architecture in the region under the Ya’ariba patronage and reflects the cultural reassertion of local identity following a period of foreign occupation. It may be proposed that Al-Bidyah Mosque formed an integral component of a broader architectural and urban initiative undertaken during the Ya’ariba period in the region. This hypothesis gains plausibility when considered in light of comparable examples, such as the Qidfi’ Mosque, which similarly reflects the stylistic and spatial strategies characteristic of Ya’ariba urbanism.

RESTORATIONS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

The Al-Bidyah Mosque underwent a significant phase of conservation and restoration in 2003 under the auspices of the Dubai Municipality, executed in collaboration with the Heritage and Archaeology Department of Fujairah. This intervention marked an important moment in the mosque's recent history, reflecting a growing national commitment to the safeguarding of the United Arab Emirates' architectural and cultural heritage in the face of rapid modernization and urban expansion (Sosa 2012, 3).

The restoration works were comprehensive in scope, yet carefully designed to respect the integrity of the original structure. Primary among the new additions was the construction of an ancillary service complex intended to enhance visitor accessibility and comfort without disrupting the mosque's historical ambiance. This complex includes a modestly scaled visitor center, ablution facilities (*wudu*'), and public restrooms, all positioned at a discrete distance from the original mosque so as not to encroach upon its visual or spatial primacy (Alwasila 2025).

Architecturally, these new structures were executed using sympathetic materials and forms intended to harmonize with the mosque's historical context. Rendered surfaces, soft earthen tones, and low-profile volumes reflect a deliberate attempt to integrate the new with the old. Importantly, the new constructions were not built atop the mosque's archaeological footprint, thereby preserving the integrity of the site for future scholarly study and public interpretation.

While the 2003 works were focused primarily on conservation and infrastructural enhancement, they also included essential stabilization efforts. These involved careful cleaning and re-plastering of damaged areas, the consolidation of the domes, and the reinforcement of the foundational walls where erosion had been observed. The sarūj-based mortar and local stone construction techniques were re-employed, following traditional formulas to ensure material compatibility and structural coherence (Alwasila 2025).

Though not a full-scale archaeological excavation, the restoration project did facilitate limited investigative work that provided further insights into the mosque's construction phases and material composition. For instance, it reaffirmed earlier findings regarding the use of indigenous materials—mountainous rock, beach rock (*farush*), and coral bound with sarūj mortar—further validating the mosque's classification as a product of local building traditions rather than imported styles (Sosa 2012).

This phase of restoration was significant not only for its physical contributions but also for its role in fostering public awareness of the region's rich Islamic architectural heritage. The establishment of visitor infrastructure has facilitated educational tourism and allowed for the integration of the Al-Bidyah Mosque into broader heritage trails and cultural initiatives within the emirate of Fujairah.

Future restoration efforts may benefit from a more rigorous program of archaeological excavation in and around the mosque complex, particularly in the adjoining courtyard and surrounding palm grove, where traces of earlier settlement patterns or religious structures may yet be unearthed. Such work could help clarify the stratigraphy of the site and potentially illuminate phases of occupation or reconstruction predating the current structure, especially in light of radiocarbon evidence suggesting the possible existence of an earlier mosque beneath the present edifice.

FUTURE CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Looking ahead, future conservation of Al-Bidyah Mosque should prioritize preventive preservation strategies, including ongoing structural monitoring, material testing, and environmental management to mitigate humidity and erosion—factors particularly relevant in the coastal and wadi-adjacent setting. Any future interventions must adhere strictly to authentic material practices and non-invasive techniques, guided by international charters such as the Venice and Nara Documents (Falser 2010).

The mosque's architectural typology, with its unique four-dome roof and central stone pillar, positions it as a cornerstone of vernacular sacred architecture in the southeastern Arabian Peninsula. As such, Al-Bidyah plays a central role in the cultural identity of the region,

embodying indigenous building knowledge, local religious practice, and historical resilience in the face of foreign incursion and natural degradation.

Moreover, its preservation contributes directly to the UAE's broader cultural narrative, aligning with national efforts to reclaim and valorize local heritage within the framework of post-oil identity construction and soft-power diplomacy. As the UAE continues to assert its cultural capital on regional and global stages, monuments like Al-Bidyah Mosque serve not only as objects of reverence but also as active instruments of cultural continuity, educational engagement, and touristic valorization (Holden et al. 2015).

AL-BIDYAH MOSQUE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The architectural characteristics of Al-Bidyah Mosque—particularly its four-dome configuration, central load-bearing pillar, and use of indigenous materials—invite comparative analysis with contemporaneous Islamic architecture within the Arabian Peninsula and broader Indian Ocean world. Ziolkowski (2008) correctly situates Al-Bidyah within a transregional architectural dialogue, underscoring affinities with religious and civic structures across the southern Arabian littoral and into the Swahili Coast. These connections are reflective of the extensive maritime trade and cultural exchanges that flourished between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries CE, linking the Arabian Peninsula with East Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia.

In particular, parallels can be drawn between Al-Bidyah Mosque and The Great Mosque of Bilad Bani Bu 'Ali in Oman, which similarly employs local stone, saruj mortar, and multi-domed roofing supported by internal piers (Costa 2001). Although larger in scale, the Bilad Bani Bu 'Ali mosque shares typological features such as the simple yet robust load-bearing system, inward-sloping thick walls, and a clear spatial hierarchy organized around the mihrab axis. Likewise, Masjid al-Sunaysil—another early Omani mosque—displays comparable techniques in dome construction, notably the tiered transitions and spiral exterior finishing that resonate with the formal language of Al-Bidyah's domes (Al'aboudi 1992, Ziolkowski 2008).

Beyond Oman, architectural analogues may be traced to coastal East African Islamic structures, such as the Kizimkazi Mosque in Zanzibar and Gedi Ruins mosques in Kenya. These structures exhibit similar material choices—coral stone and lime plaster—as well as shared features like niche mihrabs, flat or domed roofs, and stepped minbars constructed from local stone. These similarities reinforce the proposition that Al-Bidyah belongs not solely to an inland architectural lineage but rather to a wider Indian Ocean cosmopolitan architectural sphere, shaped by both functional necessity and interregional connectivity (Insoll 2003).

The use of coral and farush (beach rock), the application of saruj incorporating charcoal, and the multi-layered render treatment—seen at Al-Bidyah—are also present in coastal structures from Bahrain to Lamu, indicating shared construction knowledge and environmental adaptation strategies across maritime Islamic communities. These patterns of material convergence and formal alignment reflect a common response to climatic and seismic challenges, as well as the portability of architectural knowledge facilitated by traders, scholars, and craftsmen moving along the Indian Ocean rim (Ziolkowski 2008).

Hence, Al-Bidyah Mosque should not be viewed as an architectural anomaly, but rather as an eloquent expression of a localized yet transoceanic Islamic architectural vernacular, firmly anchored in the indigenous traditions of the UAE while simultaneously resonating with the broader currents of Indian Ocean architectural exchange.

IBADI ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCE AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Though the Ibadi sect (Lewicki 1971; Wilkinson 1977) never established a significant religious or political foothold in the territories now comprising the United Arab Emirates, the architectural character of Al-Bidyah Mosque exhibits clear affinities with Ibadi mosque typologies—suggesting a shared cultural and spatial heritage rooted in the broader sociopolitical dynamics of the southeastern Arabian Peninsula. This is particularly evident when considering the proximity of Al-Bidyah to Oman and the historical interconnectivity between the northern coast of the Emirates and the interior of Oman during the early modern period.

During the seventeenth century, the rise of the Ya'ariba dynasty (1624–1741) in Oman marked a transformative era in the political and religious consolidation of the Ibadi imamate. The Yarubids not only expanded their influence across Oman's mountainous and coastal regions but also extended their maritime and political reach along the southeastern coast of Arabia, including portions of what is today the UAE. As noted by scholars such as Wilkinson (1977) and Ziolkowski (2008), the Ya'ariba actively promoted Ibadi jurisprudential ideals, which often materialized in architectural expressions that adhered to the sect's values of modesty, community function, and structural clarity.

The possibility that Al-Bidyah Mosque may have been constructed or maintained under the indirect influence of Ya'ariba-era builders or masons is further supported by the similarities it shares with contemporary Omani mosques, such as the Great Mosque of Bilad Bani Bu 'Ali and Mosque al-Sunaysil. These structures exhibit comparable features: small-scale, single-room prayer halls; thick, unornamented walls; the absence of minarets; and domed roofing systems supported by a minimal number of interior columns—each a hallmark of Ibadi sacred architecture.

In this light, the architectural congruence between Al-Bidyah and its Ibadi counterparts does not necessitate the presence of a doctrinal Ibadi community in the UAE per se, but rather reflects a shared regional architectural lexicon developed through networks of trade, kinship, and religious influence. The Indian Ocean trade routes, which flourished during this period, served not only as conduits for goods but also for ideas, crafts, and artisanal practices. Considering Al-Bidyah Mosque and the demolished Qidfi' mosque—which attributed to an Omani founder—declares that the coastal settlements along the Gulf of Oman—such as Dibba, Fujairah, and Kalba—formed a liminal zone where cultural and architectural practices from Oman, Persia, and the Indian subcontinent coalesced (Al'aboudi 1992, Costa 2001; Ziolkowski 2008).

It is thus plausible to interpret the architectural features of Al-Bidyah Mosque as expressions of a transregional building tradition, shaped by the prevailing jurisprudential, environmental, and material conditions of the 17th-century southeast Arabian littoral. The mosque's congruence with Ibadi typologies may therefore result from architectural diffusion—a process whereby formal characteristics were transmitted through mobile craftsmen, shared construction methods, and the circulation of religious and legal ideas, rather than through direct sectarian affiliation.

Moreover, the pragmatic functionalism inherent in the architecture of Al-Bidyah—its small scale, climatic responsiveness, and austere material palette—would have resonated with the Ibadi worldview, which emphasized simplicity, communal worship, and spatial utility over ostentation (Uthman 2015; Benkari 2016, 2019). This convergence of architectural values, even in the absence of doctrinal commonality, further reinforces the interpretive validity of viewing Al-Bidyah Mosque within a wider Ibadi-inspired architectural continuum.

These features bear the clear imprint of Ibadi jurisprudential rulings, as outlined in classical texts such as *Kitab al-Qismah* by al-Farustā'ī and *Ahkam al-Masājid* by al-Khurūsī (Uthman 2014a). These legal sources advocate for the preservation of the original architectural character during restoration, renovation, or reconstruction (Uthman 2015, Benkari 2016). Alterations are only permissible when deemed necessary and contingent upon the consent of stakeholders. This principle elucidates, on the one hand, the remarkable continuity of architectural typologies in Al-Bidyah Mosque—akin to other Ibadi mosques—despite the passage of time and successive maintenance efforts. On the other hand, it accounts for the formal and spatial similarities among these mosques.

With regard to the mosque's relationship to its urban context, Ibadi mosques are characteristically constructed on elevated platforms, higher than the adjoining roads and streets. They are accessed via external staircases leading to the enclosure walls and entrance gates. The mosques themselves rise above the surrounding terrain in a manner that ensures their visual distinction from neighbouring domestic architecture—remnants of which still survive (Uthman 2015). This elevation strategy is evident in Al-Bidyah Mosque, where, despite the gradual elevation of surrounding streets due to modern paving and urban development, both the courtyard (*ṣaḥn*, *ṣarḥah*, *raḥbah*) and the interior of the mosque “prayer hall” remain appreciably higher than street level (Uthman 2015; Benkari 2016).

Al-Bidyah Mosque comprises two principal architectural areas: the prayer hall (or bayt al-ṣalāh) and the open courtyard (*ṣarḥah*), the latter being fully integrated into the mosque's liturgical function. The mosque may also include ancillary features such as a well and ablution facility, the configuration of which varies from one mosque to another. According to al-Khurūsī's jurisprudential rulings, the expansion of the courtyard is legally permissible, and attention is also given to the construction and restoration of its walls as part of the mosque's upkeep. His rulings also support the formation of a shading structure (*ʿarīsh*) in the courtyard for the benefit of worshippers (Uthman 2014b, 2015), an element confirmed to have existed in Al-Bidyah Mosque through 1970s archival photography (Figs. 4, 5). The legal discourse extends further to the treatment of entranceways and the permissible planting of trees within the courtyard.

The courtyard, beyond its occasional use for prayer, served multipurpose functions including communal *ifṭār* meals during Ramadan and the consumption of dates or light refreshments between the noon and afternoon prayers (*al-hajīrah*). It is, therefore, to be considered a multifunctional architectural element—akin to the *ṣaḥn* in non-Ibadi mosques—facilitating both spatial circulation and thermal regulation (Costa 2001, Uthman 2015). It provides natural ventilation and illumination to the prayer hall through a system of doors and small openings that mediate light and airflow.

The jurisprudential framework governing the function of Ibadi mosques had a profound influence on their spatial and structural formation. Al-Khurūsī's writings, for instance, permit the use of mosques as sanctuaries in times of conflict, which partially accounts for the defensive architectural characteristics observed in some examples (Costa 2001, Uthman 2015, Benkari 2016) including Al-Bidyah Mosque.

The relatively modest dimensions of the prayer halls in Ibadi mosques may be attributed to the proliferation of smaller, localised mosques, as well as the architectural constraints dictated by construction materials and jurisprudential considerations. A key condition is the uninterrupted visual and acoustic connection between the imam and the congregation. Consequently, most Ibadi mosques adopt a small rectangular or square plan, allowing the roofing to span the space with minimal structural obstructions—often a single central column or none at all. At Al-Bidyah Mosque, this visual continuity is achieved to a high degree (circa 95%) from both the

mihrāb (prayer niche) and *minbar* (pulpit). The only exception is a small blind spot created by the alignment of the column and entrance, which was partially mitigated by reducing the column's diameter and increasing its height to minimise visual obstruction.

The *mihrāb* at Al-Bidyah is of the concave type, echoing the form of the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, recessed to a depth of approximately 70 cm and centrally positioned along the *qibla* wall.

Ibadi mosque typologies typically include three main spatial components: the prayer hall, the courtyard, and auxiliary functional units such as the ablution area and well. It is customary in these mosques to spatially separate the ablution facilities from both the prayer hall and courtyard. In some cases, the *miḍā'ah* (ablution area) is entirely external or integrated in such a way as to open directly onto the courtyard. Notably, some mosques lack these facilities altogether, suggesting that worshippers would perform ablution beforehand, either at home or at nearby water sources such as wells, *aflaj* (ancient irrigation channels), or seasonal streams (Uthman 2015, Benkari 2016, 2019). This has led some scholars to consider the *miḍā'ah* as an ancillary rather than essential component of Ibadi mosque architecture (Uthman 2015).

In the case of Al-Bidyah Mosque, the *miḍā'ah* comprises a simple configuration: a well and a basin into which water was drawn for ablution purposes. Consistent with Ibadi practice, no latrines are found within the mosque complex—a feature that differs markedly from mosque layouts elsewhere in the Islamic world. The absence of such facilities ensures the purity of the water source. Jurisprudential sources stipulate that latrines must be sited at a minimum distance—typically six to seven cubits (2-3 meters)—from wells to avoid contamination.

Importantly, the construction of a well need not be contemporaneous with the original mosque structure; it could either precede or post-date it. Ibadi legal texts regulate this by allowing communities to dig wells using communal rather than mosque-specific funds. Provisions are also made for affiliating pre-existing wells to a mosque and for deepening them when necessary, reinforcing their centrality in ritual purification practices (Uthman 2015).

A critical re-examination of the mosque's architectural configuration—its spatial layout, constituent units, and typological features—within its jurisprudential context reveals the inadequacy of common misconceptions regarding its function. Assertions that Al-Bidyah Mosque may have served as a mausoleum (Al'aboudi 1992, 62-65), often grounded in its modest scale, absence of a minaret, and other morphological aspects, are demonstrably unfounded. Such an interpretation is inconsistent with the theological and architectural norms of the region's dominant jurisprudential tradition, which does not support the construction of shrines. Furthermore, the typological attributes of the mosque—including its compact form, internal organisation, and lack of a minaret—are well attested in other examples of Ibadi architecture in adjacent areas, most notably the now-destroyed Qidfi' Mosque, reinforcing the classification of Al-Bidyah as a functioning congregational mosque rather than a funerary structure.

ABSENCE OF MINARETS AND ORNAMENTATION

The lack of a minaret in Al-Bidyah Mosque is characteristic of historic Ibadi architecture. This absence reflects jurisprudential influences whereby the call to prayer is delivered from the rooftop rather than a raised tower. Likewise, the external façades lack crenellations or decorative parapets, consistent with Ibadi aesthetic restraint. This ethos extends to the unembellished interior and exterior surfaces of Al-Bidyah Mosque, underscoring a jurisprudential commitment to modesty and functional clarity (Benkari 2016, 2019).

This ascetic approach is similarly evident in the design of the minbar, which conforms to the tripartite form associated with the Prophet's own pulpit (Uthman 2015, Benkari 2016, 2019),

comprising three steps and a seat (*mustarāḥ*) of limited height. This stands in stark contrast to the more elaborate *manābir* found in other Islamic architectural traditions.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL VALUE AS A HERITAGE MONUMENT

Al-Bidyah Mosque stands as an unparalleled example of early Islamic religious architecture in the United Arab Emirates and the wider Arabian Peninsula. Unlike many historic mosques that have undergone successive phases of modification, expansion, or reconstruction, Al-Bidyah Mosque has remained remarkably intact, preserving not only its core structural components—such as the mihrāb, minbar, and prayer hall—but also its functional annexes, including a well used historically for ritual purification (*wuḍūʿ*). This level of preservation renders the mosque a singular and authentic rural Islamic monument, maintaining its original architectural character and religious function across centuries.

Its setting in a rural, agrarian environment—separated from the modern urban sprawl that has transformed much of the UAE—further accentuates its value. Al-Bidyah Mosque constitutes a rare survival of vernacular mosque architecture within a landscape that has largely been reshaped by rapid modernization. This rural embeddedness is key to understanding its design choices: compactness of scale, economy of materials, and environmental responsiveness. The mosque's unequal domes, built of stone, mud mortar, and palm-based plaster, rest on squinched corners and a central column that defines a prayer space carefully adapted to local construction capabilities and climatic constraints.

UNESCO's inclusion of Al-Bidyah Mosque on the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites in 2012 reflects international recognition of its architectural, historical, and cultural importance. The mosque exemplifies an untouched model of early mosque architecture—a rarity in the Arabian Peninsula—where original elements like the concave mihrāb and the modest three-step minbar are preserved in situ. These features offer invaluable insight into the functional purity and spiritual clarity characteristic of early Islamic religious buildings, especially within the Ibadi-influenced cultural landscapes of southeastern Arabia.

Of particular significance is the integrity of the mosque's annexes, most notably the well and the adjacent ablution basin (*miḍā'ah*). These elements not only fulfill practical ritual requirements but also embody traditional hydrological and architectural knowledge. The deliberate spatial separation of the well from latrines—a principle enshrined in classical Islamic jurisprudence—underscores the mosque's compliance with legal and sanitary prescriptions that ensured the purity of water for ritual use. Unlike other historical sites where such annexes have been either modernized or lost entirely, Al-Bidyah retains these features in their original or minimally altered form, offering a complete architectural ensemble of a rural mosque as it would have existed in the seventeenth century.

As a living heritage site, Al-Bidyah Mosque continues to host daily prayers, reinforcing its spiritual continuity and social relevance within the local community. It bridges the past and present, functioning as both an active place of worship and a monument of national cultural memory. This dual identity is especially vital in the UAE's evolving heritage landscape, where the pressures of urbanization often threaten the survival of vernacular traditions. The mosque thus assumes symbolic importance not only as an architectural artifact but also as a custodian of intangible heritage, including oral traditions, religious practices, and construction techniques passed down through generations (Holden, Silcock, & Arrowsmith 2012).

In architectural conservation terms, Al-Bidyah Mosque meets several key criteria for Outstanding Universal Value, as defined by UNESCO. It provides a rare, well-preserved example of Islamic architecture in a rural Arabian context, displaying distinctive adaptations to its environment, material availability, and religious doctrine. Its structural integrity,

continuity of use, and cultural resonance collectively mark it as a heritage site of exceptional significance—worthy of continued study, protection, and international recognition (UNESCO 2012).

CONCLUSION

Al-Bidyah Mosque emerges from this study not merely as the oldest extant mosque in the United Arab Emirates, but as a vital architectural palimpsest articulating the confluence of legal tradition, vernacular ingenuity, and transregional exchange across the southeastern Arabian Peninsula. Its spatial logic, construction techniques, and liturgical typology situate it firmly within an architectural continuum shaped by Ibadi jurisprudential values and the cultural momentum of the Ya'ariba period—a moment of regional revival following foreign occupation.

By interrogating the mosque's material fabric, formal organisation, and heritage trajectory, this research challenges reductive readings that have historically misclassified the structure. Instead, Al-Bidyah is repositioned as a consciously articulated sacred space—rooted in the environmental constraints and social fabric of its context, yet resonant with a wider architectural idiom shared across Oman, the Gulf littoral, and the Indian Ocean rim. The mosque's congruence with destroyed counterparts such as Qidfi' Mosque, and its compliance with Ibadi spatial philosophy despite its location outside an explicitly Ibadi polity, reinforces its status as part of a shared architectural and jurisprudential heritage rather than an isolated vernacular instance.

Ultimately, Al-Bidyah Mosque stands as a compelling testament to the persistence of indigenous architectural languages amidst shifting political sovereignties and climatic challenges. Its conservation and scholarly reassessment are not only imperative for safeguarding a unique architectural legacy but also for deepening our understanding of the Islamic built environment as a field in which theology, geography, and craft intersect. As such, the mosque calls for its rightful inclusion in broader discourses on Islamic architecture, heritage preservation, and the cultural history of the Indian Ocean world.

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الأهمية المعمارية والثقافية لجامع البدية: استكشاف التراث الإسلامي في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

الملخص

يعد جامع البدية، الواقع في إمارة الفجيرة، أقدم مسجد باقٍ في الإمارات العربية المتحدة، ويعد نموذجًا نادرًا للعمارة الإسلامية التقليدية التي بقيت على حالها إلى حد كبير منذ القرن السابع عشر. تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلًا معماريًا وتاريخيًا وفقهيًا شاملاً للجامع، وتضعه في سياق الديناميات المكانية والثقافية الأوسع نطاقاً في جنوب شرق شبه الجزيرة العربية. من خلال التوثيق الميداني والتحليل النمطي المقارن والتفسير النقدي في سياق الفقه الإباضي، تصحح هذه الورقة المفاهيم الخاطئة السائدة حول وظيفة المسجد ونوعه، لا سيما تلك التي تشير إلى كونه ضريحاً، وكذلك تفنيد نسبته للعمارة العثمانية.

يشير التأريخ بالكربون المشع، جنباً إلى جنب مع الشهادات الشفوية والسجلات الأرشيفية البرتغالية والهولندية، إلى أن تاريخ البناء يتراوح بين 1650 و 1680م، على الأرجح تحت تأثير نهضة اليعاربة المعمارية التي أعقبت طرد القوات البرتغالية من الخليج. ومع ذلك، تدعم الأدلة أيضاً احتمال أن الجامع لحالي المبني قد شُيد فوق أنقاض مسجد أقدم ربما يعود لم منتصف القرن التاسع الهجري (15م). تقترح الدراسة بأن جامع البدية يشكل جزءاً من برنامج معماري شهدته المنطقة الساحلية الشرقية مع وجود أوجه تشابه وثيقة مع جوامع مندثرة الآن مثل جامع قدفع. وفي سياق التحليل المعماري للجامع ووحداته المعمارية -بما في ذلك نظام السقف ذو الأربع قباب، والأسطون المركزي الحامل، والمحراب البارز عن سمت جدار القبلة، وكذلك غياب المئذنة- باعتبارها سمات رئيسة يمكن تفسيرها بجلاء في سياق فقه العمارة الإباضية وواقعية تشغيله كجامع كما تؤكد الدراسة أن المبني أنشئ كجامع واستمر في العمل كجامع، وليس كضريح.

تتناول الدراسة أيضاً تاريخ أعمال ترميم وصيانة الجامع، وإدراجه في القائمة المؤقتة لليونسكو، ودوره الدائم كمكان حي للصلاة وأثر تراثي. وبالتالي، فإن جامع البدية يمثل نقطة مرجعية أساسية لفهم الثقافة المادية والاستمرارية الدينية والإرث المعماري للمناطق الإسلامية المبكرة على طول خليج عمان.

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