Michael Jung


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The Author is responsible for the first section of the book, which opens with a ‘Preface’ (pp. 8–9) followed by the ‘Acknowledgements’ on p. 10. There follow two chapters, respectively entitled ‘A short outline of the main building phases of the Great Mosque’ (pp. 11–14) and ‘The wall paintings of the pre-Seljūq mosque’ (pp. 15–59). The latter—the Author’s backbone essay—consists of three paragraphs: ‘An Introduction to the research of the excavated fragments’ (pp. 15–27), ‘The refined typology of the wall paintings’ (pp. 28–51) and ‘Chronological attribution and search for comparisons’ (pp. 51–59).

A third chapter is devoted to ‘The wall paintings of the post-Seljūq mosque’ (pp. 60–76) and is divided into three paragraphs: ‘The excavated mural paintings of sector 112’ (pp. 61–64), ‘Two paintings of mosques and hand-prints’ (pp. 64–69) and ‘The wall paintings of the gāv-chāh’ (pp. 70–76).

The second section of the volume contains two multi-authored contributions that can be listed as follows: ‘Materials and painting technique of the wall paintings of the pre-Seljūq Iṣfahāni Mosque’ by Paolo Cornale, Fabio Frezzato, Michael Jung and Claudio Seccaroni (pp. 77–108); ‘Botanical characterization of some iconographic painted elements’ by Antonella Altieri (pp. 109–110).

The book ends with a ‘Summary’, written by Jung and Seccaroni (pp. 111–112) and the ‘Bibliography’ (pp. 113–131).

Ostensibly, the Author’s aim is to provide readers with a “comprehensive essay [of] the mural paintings of the Masǧid-i Ğum’a” (‘Preface’, p. 8). Nevertheless—much to our regret—we were surprised to note that the Author omits to inform the reader that these artefacts were found during a number of long-lasting Italian archaeological campaigns and surveys. Easily, this ‘oversight’ can be accounted for by the fact that he neither took part in the excavation campaigns of the 1970s nor regularly joined the subsequent Iranian-Italian ADAMJI Project (2003–2010), the nature, objectives and guidelines of which
should have been clear enough to the Author and were unequivocally aimed at creating a digital archive of the archaeological finds.

It is in fact worth noting that the studies and research on the wall paintings of the Masǧid-i Ğum’a in Iṣfahān are closely tied to the broader context of the excavations carried out during the period 1972–1977 by the late Umberto Scerrato—also directly conducted by the writers—and subsequently merged into the Iranian-Italian ADAMJI Project. Therefore, the materials and data were—and still are—the property, in fact and in law, of the ADAMJI Project (2003–2010), directed by Fariba Saiedi Anaraki (RC-ICHTHCO-Research Center of Iranian Handicrafts, Tourism and Cultural Heritage Organization/ICAR-Iranian Center for Archaeological Research, Tehran and Iṣfahān, Iran), and Bruno Genito (Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”, Naples and IsMEO/IsIAO, Rome, Italy). A comprehensive scientific work is already being produced and is due to be edited by Faribah Saiedi Anaraki and the present writers. This final report is intended to present in a systematic way the whole set of data originating from the archaeological activities carried out in the Friday Mosque of Iṣfahān.

The Author, in fact, took part in the archaeological studies in Iṣfahān during short periods. Nevertheless he does not seem to have grasped the complex nature of the ADAMJI archaeological project, nor the scientific impact it had due to the relevance of its results and finds. The Author’s contribution to the work of the Iranian-Italian Archaeological Mission in the field was relatively limited when compared to the substantial effort made by the other members of the working group. Let us not forget the Iranian-Italian team’s painstaking commitment, over several years, to properly preserving, filing and photographing all the materials, including, incidentally, the fragments of the wall paintings.\footnote{Since the excavations, the procedures achieved to recover, consolidate and keep each painted fragment intact required days of work, under the supervision of Raimondo Boenni, restorer of the Italian Restoration Mission.}