Making your mark on the Landscape

The Umayyads and their building projects in Greater Syria
Umayyad patronage and the Landscape

The Abbasid period chronicler al-Tabarī (d. 311/923) reported: “al-Walīd I was an enthusiast for building and making constructions and estates. When people met in his time, they would ask one another about building and constructions.”

Yet, less than 50 years later this same chronicler records the pledge of al-Yazīd III in the year 744/126 in his accession to the Caliphate “not to place stone upon stone nor brick upon brick”
Some Questions

• What was the point of all this building?
• Was its geographical organization purposeful?
• Who benefits? Who looses?
• What would Ibn Khaldun think? Is this how empires are made and royal authority established?
Other Umayyad Period Imperial Constructions
A Dynastic Shrine?
The Umayyad Qusur (s. qasr) or “desert palaces”
Lascivious Living – Palace Style

Khirbet al-Mafjar and Qusayr ‘Amra
Proclaiming Royal Authority

Mashatta
Tribal politics and the Syrian Steppe

Qasr Kharana

Plan after Urice (1987)
Making the Desert Bloom
Something for Everyone

Large enclosure

Small Enclosure

Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi