CHAPTER EIGHT

ARCHITECTURE OF THE CIRCASSIAN MAMLUKS

THE MADRASA-KHANQĀH OF SULTAN AL-ZĀHIR BARQŪQ (1384-86)

This building stands next to the madrasa of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad at Nahhāsīn on the street called al-Muṣīzz. Its founder, Sultan Barqūq, was of Circassian origin, recruited under the Turkish Bahri Mamluks. He himself recruited Circassian Mamluks from the Caucasus, and the next period is thus known as the Circassian Mamlik period. The Circassian Mamluks were garrisoned in the Citadel and were therefore also called the Burji (from the fortress) Mamluks.

This foundation endowed a madrasa teaching the four rites, a Friday mosque, and a mausoleum, but unlike Sultan Hasan’s madrasa, it was also a khanqāh for Sufis. It was a large foundation, housing one hundred twenty-five theology students and sixty Sufis, with living quarters for the teachers and stables for their mounts.

The Exterior

The facade is characterized by its trilobed stalactite portal, next to which on the north is a large dome flanked by a minaret. The facade is paneled as usual with recesses topped by stalactites. The upper windows are in pointed arches and have wooden grills, rather than stucco with painted glass. This style is seen in several mosques of the Bahri Mamlik period, such as that of Aydumur al-Bahlawān (1346) and of Ulmas (1329/30). A ṭīrāz band runs along the facade.

Though the dome next to the minaret is not original, the two features are nicely composed. The original dome, a wood and plaster structure, collapsed in the nineteenth century, but the building had been illustrated often, making it possible to reconstruct the dome rather accurately. The present dome is of brick. The dome’s surface is plain but has a cornice of stalactites at the base, a feature seen at the mausoleum of Ṣarghitmish, the Sulṭāniyya, and the mausoleum of Yūnus al-Dawādār (1382) near the Citadel; this is the latest surviving example.

The minaret is octagonal throughout but differs from most fourteenth-century minarets in that its shaft is carved. There are intersecting circles where white marble has been inlaid in the stone. These circles may have been inspired by the intersecting arches atop the minaret of Qalāwūn, which was built during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign. The facade has on its lower part, as at Qalāwūn’s mausoleum, columns attached to the wall. These columns with their capitals are carved parts...
of the wall masonry, not true capitals. The capitals have quite unusual patterns, with palmettes in high relief. One of them displays a motif of a stylized ram’s head.

**The Interior**

The vestibule imitates that of Sultan Hasan’s mosque, though on a much smaller scale, and has a stone dome flanked by stalactites. The original bronze door with geometric stars is still in its place. The recess of the portal is decorated with a large rectangular panel with inlaid marble geometrics, reminiscent of that at Sultan Hasan’s vestibule.

The bent entrance leads through a passage to the cruciform interior. On the left side of the vaulted passage is a recess no doubt for water jugs, kept fresh by a wooden lattice door that is no longer there. The four iwâns facing the courtyard have four large, pointed arches. The sanctuary is not vaulted but has a wooden ceiling. Above the arches is a large inscription band carved in stone.

The ablution fountain in the center of the courtyard has a bulbous wooden dome on eight marble columns, similar to that at the mosque of Sultan Hasan. At that time the traditional inauguration ceremonies of a mosque the sultan attended the first day of prayers. It is recorded that at the inauguration of Sultan Barqûq’s mosque, the ablution fountain was filled with sugared water, and sweetmeats were distributed to the congregation.

The sanctuary’s composition is tripartite, like that of Sultan Qalâwûn’s mosque, with two pairs of granite columns on each side separating the central, larger aisle from the side aisles. The gorgeous painted and gilded ceiling was restored in modern times, and the qibla wall is decorated with a marble dado and a marble prayer niche.

The entrances to the four madrasas are pierced in recesses, the upper part of which form round arches with zigzag carved voussoirs, a device seen at the Rawḍa Nilometer, though there, the arches are pointed.

The doors inside the building have a new feature. Rather than the whole surface being faced with a bronze sheet, there is a central bronze medallion and four quarter circles of medallions at the corners, leaving the wood background to contrast with the bronze. The bronze appliqués are also pierced, showing the wood background. This pattern of decoration, common in carpets, was originally adopted from book bindings.
The living units for the students all open onto interior passages, as there is no space on the facade or the courtyard.

On the north, or left, side of the prayer hall a door leads through a vestibule with a stone bench to the domed mausoleum. The dome has wooden pendentives, painted and gilded, and the usual decorations. The mosque has a number of its original windows, doors, and other furniture.

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**THE KHANQĀH OF SULTAN FARAJ IBN BARQŪQ (1400-11)**

Sultan Barqūq, though he built a mausoleum for himself in the city, wanted to be buried near the tombs of the Sufis in the northern cemetery. His son and successor, Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj, fulfilled his father’s wish, building a large khanqāh and double mausoleum near the Sufis’ tombs and the mausoleum of Anāṣ (1382), father of Sultan Barqūq. The mausoleum, with a ribbed brick dome, still stands.

The northern cemetery is on the eastern, desert outskirts of the Fatimid city of al-Qāhirah. During the reign of Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars, there was a hippodrome where the sultan, a great soldier himself and fond of chivalric sports, attended tournaments and encouraged his amirs in these contests. Later, under Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, this hippodrome was abandoned in

Pl. 97. The khanqāh-mausoleum of Sultan Faraj Ibn Barqūq.
favor of others, and the amirs began to build religious and funerary structures on its site.

Sultan Faraj, while erecting the khanqāh, planned at the same time to urbanize the site. He transferred the donkey and camel market and had other commercial plans, but died before realizing them, and the donkey and camel market returned. It should be kept in mind that a Muslim medieval cemetery was never totally a place of the dead. Palaces and residences were also built for the rich to stay in during feasts and other occasions when they visited their dead. There was also a good deal of traffic produced by those who came to visit the tombs of saints and other venerated persons. The religious foundations and great tombs always had residential structures attached to them for the founders and their families, as well as for Sufis and students.

The khanqāh took eleven years to complete. The sultan was dethroned twice in the meantime. The latest inscription on the building is 1411, but according to Maqrizi, the khanqāh was inaugurated in 1410. Forty Sufis were appointed to it. As no foundation deed exists, we do not know how far this khanqāh also performed the functions of a madrasa.

**The Exterior**

Having plenty of space and no restrictions of prior development in the cemetery, the architect could afford to design a very symmetrical structure that is rare in Mamluk architecture of this period. The building is free-standing, with four interesting facades. At the southwest corner is a trilobed portal flanked to the left by a sabil-kuttab. This façade has a tīrāz band at the top and twin minarets. The north façade also has a portal, with a sabil-kuttab on its western corner. The two portals, though not identical, have a conch on stalactites and on both sides, the round blazon of the founder. The northern façade shows one of the two minarets mentioned above and to the left, one of the two domes, the same combination seen from the southern side of the building. The eastern façade shows the two huge stone domes and between them, a smaller ribbed brick dome which is above the prayer niche.

On the northern side of the complex is an arcade that starts on the left side of the portal and leads almost to the mausoleum of Barqūq’s father, Anaš. This arcade appears to have been a maqallā, or open prayer place for the dead. According to Islamic law, the dead are not to be brought inside the mosque when the funeral prayers are said.

The minarets on the northwestern façade are identical, beginning as rectangles, with the second story receding and circular and without a transition between the two stories. The middle of the shaft is carved with intersecting lines. The plan of these minarets was used earlier, in those of Baybars al-Jashankī, and the northern minaret of al-Nāṣir Muhammad at the Citadel.

The domes are the largest Mamluk stone domes in Cairo, with a diameter of over fourteen meters, not much less than that of Imām Shāfi’i, which is wooden. They are carved with a zigzag pattern, and their transitional zones on the exterior are treated in a novel manner. Instead of being simply stepped, they are carved with one step concave and the next convex, a device applied earlier at the minaret of Bashtāk (1336).

**The Interior**

Barqūq’s structure is a hypostyle mosque on stone piers. The sanctuary is flanked on each side by a domed mausoleum. The side riwāqs have only one aisle each, with cells behind. Both lateral sides had upper floors of cells, but they no longer exist. There are more cells on the northern side of the building, the dependencies are on the south side. This was the first hypostyle mosque plan to have living units attached to it. The plan had earlier been used only for plain mosques. When mosques were being replaced by a combination madrasa-mosque, or even madrasa-khanqāh-mosque, at first, it was the madrasa plan that was maintained. Here, we find a new architectural combination.
The arcades have pointed arches supporting a roof composed of shallow brick domes, each dome above a bay.

The courtyard has the remains of an ablution fountain. At the four corners of the courtyard are arched recesses with doors that are treated with round arches with zigzag vousoirs exactly like those of Barqūq’s madrasa.

The sanctuary is strikingly simple, with no marble and no painted wood. Only the windows are decorated, with stucco grills and colored glass. The prayer niche is of plain stone and two smaller prayer niches are to the left and right. The main one has on the marble column flanking it to the left a carving in the shape of a mosque lamp. A stone pulpit was added by Sultan Qāytbây, carved with panels in various geometrical and floral patterns which imitate wood carvings. As at Sultan Ḥasan, it has a portal with stalactite cresting and a carved bulb at the top. At the upper step, on the back of the seat of the preacher (khatib), a lamp flanked by a pair of candlesticks is carved.
THE MAUSOLEUMS

The northern mausoleum is for Barqūq and his son Faraj; the southern mausoleum for his wife and daughter. Both mausoleums are entered through wooden lattice screens. The mausoleums, in contrast to the khanqāh, are richly decorated with marble dadoes. Like most Mamluk stone domes, these are carried on pendentes carved with stalactites.

The use of the triangular pendenteve rather than squinches led to a different device for the windows of the transitional zone. This style became standard and is found at the madrasa of Ijjāy al-Yūsufi. It consists of a triple-arched window surmounted by three bull’s-eyes, one over two.

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THE MADRASA-KHANQĀH (1416-21) AND MĀRISTĀN (1418-20) OF SULTAN AL-MU‘AYYAD

THE MADRASA-KHANQĀH

This madrasa-khanqāh of Sultan al-Mu‘ayyad included a Friday mosque, two mausoleums, and a madrasa for the four rites dedicated to Sufi students, and is thus a hybrid madrasa-khanqāh.

Because of its site, the mosque, or at least its minarets, became a landmark of Cairo. Originally, the site had unpleasant associations. There was a prison adjoining Bāb Zuwayla which al-Mu‘ayyad, when an amir, was lucky to leave alive. Once he became sultan, he decided to pull it down and establish a pious foundation in its place. Numerous donkeys were occupied for days carrying away loads of bones of the dead found in the prison.

Originally, the mosque had three minarets, the twins we see above the towers of Bāb Zuwayla, and a third one of different appearance, located near the western entrance, which disappeared in the nineteenth century. The twin minarets, though they represent no innovation in the evolution of minarets, are particularly slender and elegant with their zigzag carved shafts. They do also have a very noteworthy feature: the signature of the architect, al-Mu‘allim Muhammad Ibn al-Qazzāz, is carved on a cartouche above the entrance to their staircases on the northern side of each shaft, with the dates 1419 and 1420. This is so far the only known signature of a Mamluk architect on a building. We do not know to what extent he was involved in building the rest of the complex.

The mosque originally had four facades and four entrances. The two main facades are the one parallel to Bāb Zuwayla on the site of the Fatimid southern city wall which was rebuilt in the nineteenth century, and the facade perpendicular to Bāb Zuwayla on its left, with the main portal.

THE PORTAL

The portal is of grand proportions and is enhanced by a pishtaq, or wall above the entrance higher than the rest. A conch rests on a large vault where dripping stalactites have been lavishly used. A band of carved...

PI 99 The portal of the religious-funerary complex of Sultan al-Mu‘ayyad
stone inlaid with marble and colored stones frames the doorway.

The door, a masterpiece of metalwork, was taken, together with a bronze chandelier, from the mosque of Sultan Hasan against payment of a sum to the waqf of Sultan Hasan—which, however, did not change the illegality of the deed. Islamic law prohibits the acquisition of land or other properties for a new foundation already endowed upon a previous religious foundation. Once endowed, a property cannot change owners. Maqrizi, however, mentions many such illegal acts connected with the foundation of religious buildings and makes a resigned and bitter comment about "one thief stealing from another."

**The Interior**

The vestibule is covered by a magnificent groin cross-vault flanked by two half-domes on stalactites. It is perhaps the most remarkable feature of the architecture of this complex. Today we enter the mosque through the mausoleum, but originally there was direct access into the courtyard. The mausoleum dome, whose exterior is similar to that of Faraj Ibn Barqiq, is smaller and has two cenotaphs, one larger than the other, with remarkable Kufic inscriptions in marble crafted during the Ikhshidid or early Fatimid period. Their texts are Quranic, and they must have been taken from an earlier building Sultan al-Mu'ayyad and his son are buried there.

On the top part of the northwestern wall of the mausoleum, on the side facing the courtyard, there are two blind windows with very intricately carved stucco decoration in the Andalusian style.

The hypostyle plan of the mosque is similar to that of the khanqah of Faraj Ibn Barqiq, but on columns instead of piers. There is an ablution fountain in the middle of the courtyard. Of the four iwans, only the
sanctuary has survived. It was planned to be flanked on either side by a domed mausoleum, only one of which was built. The site is occupied by the tombs of female members of the family, but there is no mausoleum.

The sanctuary is lavishly decorated with a high marble dado and a polychrome marble prayer niche with a row of inlaid niches separated by blue glass colonnettes. A painted and gilded wooden ceiling, stucco grilled windows and beautiful doors inlaid with wood and ivory in addition to the marble columns with their pre-Islamic capitals, contribute to the richness of the decoration. The prayer hall was restored in the nineteenth century, and again in recent times. The mosque also has its original wood and ivory pulpit.

The living units of the Sufi students were not around the courtyard as they are at Faraj’s khanqāh, but formed a separate structure, a courtyard surrounded by several stories of living units. It no longer exists.

On the western side of the mosque, Sultan al-Mu’ayyad built a hammām. The pendentives in it that once supported a dome have remarkable stalactites.

The Mārisfān

Although the hospital of Qalāwūn was still functioning at the time, Sultan al-Mu’ayyad decided to build one of his own. It was built on the site of a former mosque, near the Citadel. It was used only a short time, however, and after the sultan died, the building was used by foreign residents and was later turned into a residence for ambassadors visiting Egypt. Still later, it was transformed into a Friday mosque. As it was originally built on the site of a mosque, the cruciform construction was already oriented toward Mecca, so it needed only a new prayer niche.

Although now in ruins, the building has preserved its splendid facade, one of the finest in Cairo. It is quite symmetrical, the middle part enhanced by the pishtāq with a pointed arch above the recess of the stalactite portal. Along the facade, running horizontally and vertically, is a carved molding in high relief in a pattern resembling a chain, the only such decoration in Cairo.

Two keel-arched panels flank the portal recess, composed of inlaid masonry with inlaid square-Kufic Quranic texts. Further to the right and left on the facade, on each side of the keel-arched panels, are medallions of inlaid marble. Above the entrance is a double-arched window within a keel arch. The whole makes an unusual facade composition. The interior has a cruciform plan, but is today in quite dilapidated condition.

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The Madrasa-Khanqāh of Sultan Barsbāy in the Northern Cemetery (1432)

Shortly after his accession to the throne, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy had built in 1425, a madrasa-khanqāh at the ʿAnbariyyūn or amber market, south of the Qalāwūn complex now in the street of al-Muʿizz, the royal avenue where so many sultans before had established their foundations. This complex was planned to accommodate sixty Sufi students. The building, which is architecturally typical of this period, has the usual Mamluk facade with a sabīl-kuttab on the left side of the portal. The portal has a ribbed conch on a small cornice of stalactites and pendentives at the corners. The minaret, almost identical to those of Faraj Ibn Barquq, flanks the small zigzag ribbed stone dome. The minaret and dome make an angle with the facade following the Mecca orientation of the interior, most likely for architectural rather than religious reasons.

The interior does not differ much from that of Barquq’s madrasa, aside from its being less well preserved. The inscription running above the arches of the four iwans, however, includes fragments of the waqf document stating what has been endowed upon the foundation, most likely as a precaution against illegal dealings. The small mausoleum has windows onto the street but has no prayer niche.

A few years later, in 1432, the sultan founded a khanqāh-madrasa in the cemetery, also with a mausoleum. The foundation in the city was a madrasa for the four rites, built to accommodate sixty Sufi students; the one in the cemetery was for only seventeen Sufis, of whom four were students, and only ten were housed on the premises. The complex, occupying both sides of the street south of the khanqāh of Faraj, covered a large area, but many of its structures have not survived.

The Exterior

The decoration of the domes with star patterns has already been discussed. The larger, and most likely the earlier, of the carved mausoleum domes included in this complex is that of the sultan, attached to the mosque. On its north side there is a smaller mausoleum, and on its eastern side another, open on
three sides, dedicated to amirs and relatives of the sultan. A fourth carved dome has disappeared. The enclosure included a number of other tombs. Today, we see the facade with a dome and a later and unattractive minaret flanked to the south by the ruins of an apartment complex.

Although it has been restored, it is obvious that the portal was not built in the stalactite-vaulted style of the time. A trilobed vault was used, including groins instead of stalactites. This pattern was again used in the late Mamluk and the Ottoman period, along with continued use of the stalactite portal.

The original minaret did not survive, though we may assume that its first story was rectangular, forming the lower part of the present structure.

**The Interior**

The cross-vaulted vestibule leads through a bend to the prayer hall that also differs from its contemporaries in style. It is neither a cruciform nor a hypostyle mosque, but an oblong hall whose roof is carried on two pairs of columns with three arches, each running parallel to the qibla wall and thus forming three aisles. The floors of the two side aisles are raised slightly above the level of the central aisle. Windows on both the east and west bring light into the covered hall. On the northern side of the mosque, opposite the entrance, the central aisle leads to the door of the mausoleum.

**The Mausoleum**

The mausoleum, due to the plan of the mosque, has the ideal location; it is open on three sides while at the same time attached to the prayer hall. Its dome’s transitional zone is composed of stalactite pendentives. On the outside, it is carved in an undulating pattern similar to that on the domes of Sultan Faraj. The other two domes of the complex are treated differently, one with a stepped exterior transition, and the northern one with...
a pyramidal structure at each corner leading from the rectangular to the octagonal part. Sultan Barsbāy is buried in this mausoleum, and not in the mausoleum he built in the city.

Decoration

The decoration of the sanctuary is unusual. While the walls are bare, the floor is richly covered with inlaid polychrome marbles of high quality. The prayer niche is of plain stone, and windows with stucco and colored glass are the only ornament on the walls. The painted wooden ceiling appears to have been redone in the Ottoman period. The pulpit has a star geometric pattern of ivory inlaid in wood, but the pattern is unusual in having curved segments.

In the mausoleum, the quality of the marble inlays of the prayer niche, with rows of niches running across the conch reminiscent of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, arouses the suspicion that Sultan Barsbāy used materials from earlier buildings. This also applies to the floor pavings of the mosque, which seem to have been originally intended for doors and windows.

Other Structures

Next to the mosque on its south side are the remains of the student living quarters. According to the foundation deed, there were ten units. These, however, unlike earlier accommodations, are not single rooms, but apartments in two-storied duplexes, each with a latrine. Each upper room has a window onto the main road. These dwellings appear to have been quite comfortable, and it is likely that the Sufis, who were each entitled to a whole unit, were also allowed to have their families with them. The foundation deed does not stipulate that Sufi students must be unmarried, as was the case in earlier foundations. There was also a hall on the upper floor for Sufi gatherings, of which all that remains is a prayer niche.

The complex of Sultan Barsbāy extended along both sides of the road. On the other side, there is today only a large domed structure, designated in the foundation deed as a zāwiya for the Rifāṭi order. The khanqāh appears to have been independent of any particular order of Sufis. The zāwiya is a smaller structure where the ideology of one shaykh and his order (tariqa) is practiced and propagated.

Interestingly, its architecture is quite distinct from that of contemporary funerary structures, and in fact the domed building was not intended for burial. The height of the dome is not increased, and instead of the usual pendentives, it is carried by squinches that start within, not above, the rectangular space. The squinches were remodeled at a later date, and today they have a trilobed shape, reminiscent of the portal treatment at the khanqāh of Barsbāy. The dome is built in brick with a plain exterior surface. There was another zāwiya on the same side of the street, but it was not a domed structure.

There were two sabils, remnants of one of which can be seen, and other structures including large apartments and various dependencies.

The complex of Barsbāy, with fewer but larger living units than earlier ones, and with two zāwiyas, which is unprecedented in previous complexes, signals a new development in Caïrene religious life. It shows a trend toward a less monastic type of Sufism, in which the Sufis’ daily lives were less regulated. These later khanqāhs, combining the activities of khanqāh and madrasa, prepared their members for professional and administrative positions and thus their Sufis were more active than those who devoted themselves to mysticism and worship in seclusion.

The Tomb of Umm Al-Asihrāf

South of the complex of Sultan Barsbāy, in the cemetery on the west side of the street, is a brick dome carved with interlaced bands similar to the minarets of Sultan Barqūq. Apart from the usual ribbing, this pattern is the only one used to decorate brick domes. Today the tomb is surrounded by modern buildings. The mausoleum is neither dated nor identified except by its popular name, Khadija Umm Al-Asihrāf was a title of Sultan Barsbāy. Another dome carved in the same manner, that of Amir Taghibirdī on Šalība street between Sarghimshī’s madrasa and Shaykhū’s complex and dated 1440, suggests that this dome was built for Barsbāy’s mother sometime between 1430 and 1440.

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THE RELIGIOUS-FUNERARY COMPLEX OF SULTAN AL-ASHRAF İNÂL (1451, 1454, 1456)

Sultan al-Ashraf İnâl’s funerary complex stands to the north of the khanqâh of Sultan Faraj Ibn Barqûq, on the west side of the road that crosses the cemetery. At first glance, the great irregularity of its facade composition is striking

THE EASTERN FACADE

The eastern facade is of a mosque with groin-vaulted portal, on the left of which, not attached but connected only by a wall, stands a minaret. On the right side, also not attached but connected only by a wall, is a mausoleum. Its dome’s rectangular base is lower than the roof of the mosque. In the usual Mamluk facade, the base of the minaret and the dome are above roof level. An exception is provided by the minarets of al-Nâşir Muhammad at the Citadel, but that is because the mosque was remodeled after they were built.

The epigraphy in the architectural group confirms the impression given by the facade, that the complex was not built at one time.

THE MAUSOLEUM

The stone zigzag-carved dome of unpretentious proportions has an additional ornament: the carved loops that adorn the base of the dome are filled with balls of blue glass paste. These balls are also seen on the second story of the minaret of al-Nâşir Muḥammad’s madrasa and were added later, and on the mabkhara structures decorating the corners of the facade of the Mâridâni mosque. This mausoleum is dated 1451, at which time Sultan İnâl was only an amir. As the minaret’s and dome’s bases were built at the same level, we may assume that they were built at the same time.

THE MINARET

The shaft is completely of stone, lavishly carved, a development in minarets that took place during the fifteenth century. The base is almost totally covered with decorative carved panels. The first story has a molding running along its eight facets and framing the keel-arched niches. The space between these niches is also carved with arabesques and several colonnettes are set between them. There are also, as on the minarets of al-Mu‘ayyad, three inscription bands, two on the first and one on the second story.

The carving on the second story, where the minaret mason always shows most of his innovations, has an interesting design. The zigzag pattern is not applied on a plain circular shaft as usual, but the shaft at this level has a section like a multiple-pointed star, its own profile dented like a zigzag, so that the zigzag carving appears to be three-dimensional.

THE NORTHERN FACADE

The mausoleum dome occupies the corner between the eastern and the northern facade. On the left side,
the mausoleum is separate from the mosque by an open space. This facade of the mosque also has a portal, not groin vaulted but a conch on stalactites. To the right side of the mausoleum on the same alignment, a protruding structure is identified as a sabil-kuttāb whose upper structure is missing.

Further to the right, on the western edge of the complex, is a building with its own entrance, identified by its inscription as a khanqāh built in 1454, or later than the mausoleum; by that time, İnāl had become Sultan. The khanqāh is in ruins, but we can still tell that it was an important foundation, judging from its large number of duplex living units and dependencies, among which are latrines with running water. As at the khanqāh of Barsbāy, each living unit has its own latrine. There are also the remains of a qā‘a or hall for gatherings.

The Madrasa

The mosque, designated by its inscription as a madrasa was built in 1456. It is built above a row of rooms that might have been cells for students, or storerooms. The epigraphy in the building indicates that İnāl built a mausoleum for himself while still an amir, which most likely had a sabil-kuttāb attached to it. Usually tombs have a prayer hall attached, so there must have been a building on the site before the madrasa was added, and the minaret already existed since its architecture fits with that of the mausoleum. Once he became sultan, İnāl added the khanqāh, and later rebuilt the mosque. Ibn İyās writes that the expenses were taken care of by Amir al-Jamālī Yusuf, who also added a zāwiya, following the example of Barsbāy. It must once have been quite a luxurious building. The prayer niche of the mosque of İnāl is made of carved stone with a molding comprising a sunrise motif filling the conch.

The small mosque has two facades, one on the road and the other on a courtyard, and a modified cruciform plan. The reduced inner courtyard is the type usually covered by a wooden dome or lantern and paved with marble, rather than the larger courtyard open to the sky with an ablution fountain in the center.

The roofed cruciform plan is that of the qā‘a, or the reception hall, in residential architecture. In residential architecture, however, the central space was occupied by a marble fountain, usually octagonal, like the octagonal lantern above it that protrudes above the ceiling of the īwāns. The palaces of the Citadel, and perhaps other palaces as well, had domes in their centers. Even the large, open courtyards were covered against the summer midday sun, usually by tenting stretched on ropes. The earlier mosque of Aşlān al-Bahā‘ (1345) is cruciform with a roofed courtyard, but we do not know how many of the mosques with small courtyards were roofed.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, large mosques were no longer needed. With the inner space reduced and the living units concentrated in an independent structure, the smaller, covered courtyard was adopted, and mosques came to resemble residential reception halls. Already, in Fustāţ during the Fatimid period, the īwāns in the qā‘a of a house were closed by doors and the courtyard was open to the sky, but no doubt protected by tents. The adoption of the qā‘a plan was not the only borrowing from residential architecture. The double-storied living units themselves, as we see at the khanqāhs of Barsbāy and İnāl, have a plan that is borrowed from the rab‘ or apartment building.

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THE RELIGIOUS-FUNERARY COMPLEX OF SULTAN AL-ASHRAF QĀYṬBĀY (1472-74) AND HIS MADRASA AT QAL‘AT AL-KABSH (1475)

The Religious-Funerary Complex

Sultan Qāyṭbāy was much given to founding religious institutions and his reign, like that of al-Nāṣir Muhammad in the fourteenth century, was long and stable enough to give a style a chance to develop in the various important monuments he sponsored.

The architecture of this period was not gigantic but tended rather toward refinement of proportions, and it was a golden age for stone carving. Marble work, especially on facades, also played a prominent role in architectural decoration. Compared to architecture during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muhammad, the style of the Qayṭbay period was more homogeneous, undisturbed by new ideas, foreign elements and daring innovations. It was a period of consolidation rather than of innovation.

The Mosque

Like most of the other religious funerary complexes, Qāyṭbāy’s was composed of several structures, not all of which have survived. The main and best preserved
The Interior

A particularly handsome umbrella-like groin vault, is above the passage leading to the interior, next to the recess with wooden lattice doors where water jugs were kept cool. The interior is a qa‘a, with two unequal iwāns and two recesses, all richly ornamented with marble floor, polychrome marble dadoes, and stucco with colored glass windows. The vividly painted wooden ceiling and wooden lantern above the central area have been restored along with the rest. The prayer niche is of stone, with albaq inlaid patterns similar to those of the portal conch. Keel-arched niches with windows decorate the corner recess around the covered courtyard. An inscription band frames the central upper space.

The mausoleum is reached from the courtyard. Its prayer niche is of paneled, carved and painted stone. The stalactites of the stone pendentives are finely carved.

None of the living units has survived, though the foundation deed refers to various apartments for the Sufis and others attached to the foundation. Though the foundation deed calls the building a madrasa, it does not refer to any systematic curriculum of instruction in Islamic law. It is noted that Sufis should attend sessions in the mosque, but no reference is made to their being boarders, and there was no kitchen attached to the structure. The term madrasa must have been used simply by tradition, rather than as referring to a particular function. It was an ordinary Friday mosque, and such mosques normally had sessions for Sufis.

On the west side of the mosque is the small mausoleum built by Qaytbay before he became a sultan. It has arabesque carvings. There are other funerary structures and a maqṣūd or loggia, this one pierced by a row of windows within blind arches opening onto the exterior of the complex. As usual in an important funerary complex, there were residential buildings. On the north side of the mosque the remains of an animal watering trough can be seen, decorated with keel-arched carved niches. Further north is the facade of the rabʿ belonging to Qaytbay.

The Rabʿ

The rabʿ of Qaytbay, as the portal shows, is buried more than two meters under the present street level. It has a magnificent groin-vaulted trilobed portal flanked by the sultan’s blazon. Though the shops are now

Pl. 103. The religious-funerary complex of Sultan Qāytbay

is the mosque, also called a madrasa, with the founder’s mausoleum.

It is a relatively small structure with two free-standing facades. The south side has a trilobed portal with a groin vault decorated with ahlāq inlay and some stalactites (s. Pl. 19), with a sabil-kuttāb to its left and the minaret to the right. Projecting from the southeast side of the building is the magnificent, though not large, mausoleum dome.

The minaret, slender and elegant, is of stone, carved with stars in high relief. Its bulb has a carved, twisted band on the neck. The sabil has a richly painted and gilded wooden ceiling, and in the vestibule are a stone bench and cupboard with doors inlaid with wood and ivory.
Pl 104 Interior of the mosque of Sultan Qāyṭbāy
buried, an idea can be had of the architecture of the apartments, whose wooden ceilings were painted.

A rabā′ may be built above storerooms or workshops of a complex called a wakāla, qaysariyya, or khān. Usually, the living units of a rabā′ have windows onto the street, unless they are built around a courtyard and have windows over the courtyard, as at the wakāla of Sultan al-Ghūrī (s. Pl. 35) Qāyṭbāy built another wakāla with a rabā′ above it near Bāb al-Nāṣr, and another which is now in ruins, near the mosque of al-Azhar.

The Madrasa at Qal′at al-Kabsh

This madrasa, built by Qāyṭbāy, is in the quarter called Qal′at al-Kabsh, on the eastern side of the mosque of Ibn Tūlūn. It is a free-standing building, with two entrances enhanced by two portals of different styles.

The minaret stands on the northeastern corner near the northern entrance which has a trilobed portal whose conch is carved with a geometric pattern with no other decoration. The other portal, on the southeastern side, is for this period almost old fashioned, with its semidome above bunches of stalactites.

The minaret is unusual in that it has only two stories. Its lower balcony rests on a carved octagonal base rather than upon stalactites, and the carved circular shaft above it is surmounted by a columned pavilion.

An interesting feature of the facade is the style of the upper windows, the type hitherto used in the transitional zone of domes, a double arch surmounted by a bull′s-eye. No marble decoration was used.

The interior is the qa′a plan with a plain prayer niche made of stone. The wooden ceiling is richly painted with arabesque patterns.

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The Sabīl of Sultan Qāyṭbāy (1479)

On Ṣalība street, between the complex of Shaykhū and the right-hand side of the square below the Citadel, stands a handsome sabīl-kuttāb built by Sultan Qāyṭbāy. It is a free-standing structure with a trilobed portal on its western facade, and large iron-grilled windows.

The upper structure, which must have been a kuttāb, is a modern restoration.

The facades of the sabīl are all richly decorated with polychrome marble inlay and carved stone in the same style as was used later at the mosque of Qīrām al-Ishāqī. After its ablāq painting was renewed, making the inlaid pattern and carved details more visible, the groin-vaulted trilobed portal regained its original grandeur. Cairo′s dust has taken care of applying the patina. The portal vault is flanked on both sides by carved medallions with the name and epithet of Sultan al-Ashraf Abū ’l-Nāṣr Qāyṭbāy.

The lintels are not simply joggled like those of the Bahri Mamluk period, but the inlaid blue and white marble forms a variety of intricate arabesque patterns on the facade. Each window is surmounted by two such decorative slabs, one above the other, and both are surmounted by medallions inlaid with arabesques in the same style and framed by carved moldings. Bits of red stone and ceramic enhance the effect of stone and marble interaction.

This is the earliest free-standing sabīl-kuttāb, not attached to a mosque, a combination that came to predominate in the Ottoman period.

The Cistern of Yaʿqūb Shāh al-Mihmandār (1495/6)

The domed cistern (ṣiḥrī) built by Yaʿqūb Shāh al-Mihmandār at the foot of the Citadel, facing it from
Pl. 106 The cistern of Amir Ya'qūb Shāh al-Mihmandār

the east, is not just a structure to store and provide water, but a memorial building of very special interest. Its founder, Ya'qūb Shāh was not a prominent amir, but he owed much to his master Sultan Qaytbay, to whose glory he dedicated this building, as its inscription, unique in Cairo’s Mamluk epigraphy reveals. The inscription running along the whole facade as its sole decoration commemorates in glowing terms the victory of Mamluk troops over the Ottomans and the capture of their general at the battle of Adana in 1486, years before the completion of the cistern. These facts are recorded in a literary style, unconventional for architectural epigraphy but comparable to that of medieval epics.

Domes in medieval architecture were not restricted to religious or funeral architecture; they also surmounted all types of secular buildings. The undecorated cistern is surmounted by a small dome occupying half its width. A shallow trilobed portal leads through a cross-vaulted vestibule to the domed room. The inscription refers to two domes and two cisterns, but only this domed structure survives.

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THE MOSQUE OF QĀḌĪ ĀBŪ BAKR IBN MUZHĪR (1479/80)

This mosque, erected in a quarter on the west side of al-Mu'izz street, is typical of the style of the time, a small architectural jewel. Its minaret is located at the corner where the west and south facades meet and is carved with star patterns. The conch of the trilobed groin-vaulted portal rests on two, instead of the usual three, arches and thus recalls the squinches of the Fadawiyya Dome.

The interior uses a qa'a plan with a variation: the two larger iwāns, instead of facing the covered courtyard with a large arch, have a triple arch supported by

Pl. 107 The mosque of Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn Muzhir, the qibla iwān

Pl. 108 Window spandrel with marble inlay and signature of the craftsman at the mosque of Abū Bakr Ibn Muzhir (drawing "The Mosques of Egypt").
a pair of columns. The side recesses have one arch each. A marble medallion covers the central part of the floor.

Another distinctive feature of the interior is the marble decoration on the qibla wall. The spandrels of the window arches and of the prayer niche itself are of finely inlaid marble, not as seen before with stones and marbles that dictate geometric patterns, but with a dark gyspsum-like colored paste that allows delicate curved lines, very finely drawn as on Persian carpets. The craftsman, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Naqqāṣ, naqqāsh meaning decorator, deservedly proud of his work, placed his signature in the same medium in a prominent place in the middle of a carved field above a window. The mosque of al-Māridāni has a marble inscription slab executed in this technique, on the north wall of its sanctuary; the inscription is made of green paste inlaid into the marble surface. Its vigorous style differs, however, from the work of ʿAbd al-Qādir.

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THE FADĀWIYYA DOME (1479-81)

For its period, the square domed building standing in the modern quarter of Ṣabāsiyya, once the northern outskirts of the medieval city between Ḥusayniyya and Raydāniyya, is in many respects an architectural surprise. Its popular name, Qubbat al-Fadāwiyya, dates from the Ottoman period. It is called in medieval sources Qubbat Yashbak. It once stood near a hippodrome amidst gardens and residences, overlooking an artificial pool dug by the founder to enhance the view. Amir Yashbak min Mahdī al-Dawādīr was one of the most powerful and wealthy amirs during Sultan Qāyrbāy’s reign. Yashbak also built for himself a mausoleum not far away, which is no longer extant. The building, part of a complex the rest of which has disappeared, is often mentioned in the chronicles of Ibn Iyās and always in connection with excursions, banquets, and processions of the sultan and his amirs.

The Exterior

Although domed, the building is not a mausoleum but a mosque. We do not know if there ever was a minaret, but there is no architectural trace of one on the structure now extant. As a mosque entirely covered by a dome, it is of special interest, and it is also the largest brick dome of Mamluk Cairo. The domed chamber measures 14.30 meters to a side.

The exterior is unusually plain, with one upper and two lower windows, except on the south side. The windows are not in their usual, recesses and the walls are therefore undecorated. The dome itself is also undecorated, starting from the cubic building without any exterior transitional zone.

The portal is a shallow recess crowned with stalactites in a rectangular frame with an inscription band on each side of the door. The inscription refers to Sultan Qāyrbāy as the founder, but historic accounts leave no doubt that Amir Yashbak began its construction. He died before completing it and the Sultan saw to its completion.

The Interior

Another particular feature of this building is that the prayer hall is built above a vaulted first story. The most extraordinary feature about the dome of Yashbak is that the entrance to the domed area, or prayer hall, was not reached as it is today by a flight of steps, but was originally connected to the Ḥusayniyya quarter by a long passage built on an arcade. The exact function of this long elevated passage is not clear, but it might have been connected with the hippodrome once located nearby.
Pl 110 Squinch at the Fadawiyya Dome (Creswell)

The portal leads directly into the prayer hall without bend or vestibule The interior space is impressive, owing to the height and width of the dome. The transitional zone of the dome, as we have seen from the outside, does not rest above the rectangular part, but within its walls, so that the dome proper begins immediately above the cube. The transitional zone differs from the usual type and has large trilobed squinches, each set within a large pointed arch. This trilobed squinch is reminiscent of the trilobed groin vaulted portals of the fifteenth century and was no doubt influenced by them, as the structural principle of transition from a rectangular to a spherical space is the same. The zawiya for the Rifaiyya order built by Sultan Barsbay near his mausoleum is a domed hall on similar squinches, and there were other zawiyas of this type of architecture which have not survived.

Under each of the squinches are two windows at the corner. The space between the squinches is filled with a pointed blind arch on each wall, to make the transitional zone homogeneous. The drum of the dome is pierced with a row of windows.

Decoration

The decoration is also extraordinary, for the entire interior except for the marble dado and marble prayer niche, of which only traces remain, is covered with carved stucco, once also painted and gilded. A large variety of patterns cover the transitional zone, each section differently treated, partly with geometric designs and partly arabesque. These patterns have no parallel in contemporary architectural decoration, and indeed, except for this dome and the mosque of Sultan Qaytbay in Rawda, no other building of the period is decorated with stucco. At the mosque in Rawda, however, very little of the decoration has survived.

There are two inscription bands, also of stucco, underneath the dome, one directly above the squinches and the other above the drum. The lower inscription is Quranic, the upper one commemorates the pilgrimage of Sultan Qaytbay in 1480. The entire interior of the dome has repetitive stucco arabesques, some of which still have fine paint and gold. The patterns recall the carved decoration on the dome of Qanibay al-Rammah.

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THE MOSQUE OF AMIR AZBAK AL-YŪSUFĪ (1494/5)

The mosque of Amir Azbak al-Yusufi occupies a corner between two streets, has a sabil-kuttāb, and is built on a side street off Ibn Tulūn’s Saliba. It has a carved minaret; the pattern in the middle section is similar to that of the minaret of Sultan Qaytbay at Qal’at al-Kabsh. The facade, including the portal, is richly decorated in the usual Qaytbay style.

There is no dome. Though the founder is buried inside, there is no particular architectural enhancement of his tomb, which is located in the east side recess to the left of the entrance. A noteworthy feature, however, is the window connecting this funeral iwân with the entrance vestibule, and thus with the street, so that the passer-by may see inside.

The dikkat al-muballigh is attached to the wall of the western iwân, facing the prayer niche.

Residential structures were attached near the mosque as the remains of a qaṣa‘a there indicate.

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THE MOSQUE OF AMIR QIJMAS AL-ISHĀQĪ
(1479-81)

The mosque of Amir Qijmas al-Ishāqī is popularly known by the name of Shaykh Abū Hurayra who was buried there last century. It is a congregational (Friday) mosque located in the Darb al-Ahmar quarter south of Bāb Zuwayla. The mosque stands above a row of shops, has three façades, and occupies a triangle in a bifurcated street. An elevated passage connects the mosque with the ablution fountains. The sabil-kuttāb is a separate structure across the street from the north side of the mosque and has only one large façade. Although the building had to be squeezed into a narrow plot, the architect dealt successfully with these restrictions.

The Exterior

The façade of this mosque is among the most characteristic of the late Mamluk period, with dense ornamentation in a relatively small space. The windows on the three sides of the façade are on two levels, placed close together and occupying most of the façade. The lower ones have lintels of polychrome inlaid marble. The treatment of these lintels with a great variety of complicated patterns, as at the sabil of Sultan Qāytbāy at Salība, has no parallel in earlier architecture and forms a characteristic feature of Qāytbāy’s decorative style. Stone panels with a net-like motif contribute to the façade ornamentation, as do the richly carved engaged columns at the corners.

The portal of the mosque, located on the southeast side of the façade, has a trilobed groin-vaulted arch with ablaq inlaid masonry. The central part of the portal recess also has an inlaid medallion. In contrast to the heavily decorated façade, the dome and the minaret are undecorated, which is quite unusual for this period. The dome is a narrow, plain brick construction, and the minaret is not carved in the middle portion as it usually is. The three rings of stalactites and keel-arched niches of the octagonal first story are the only ornaments.

The Interior

The interior, a qā'ā plan, is colorful and differs little from other mosques of the period except in the details of the decoration. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Naqqāsh worked here also, decorating the spandrels of the qibla windows. The prayer niche under the conch is masterfully decorated with panels of white marble inlaid with a dark-colored paste forming extremely fine scrolls or arabesques. In the very center of the decorated field, the artist proudly put his signature, as he did at the

Pl. 111 The mosque of Amir Qijmas al-Ishāqī

Pl. 112 The prayer niche at the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishāqī with the signature of the craftsman
THE MOSQUE OF AMIR QĀNĪBĀY AL-RAMMĀH (1503)

The foundation deed calls the mosque of Amir Qānībāy a madrasa, but it functioned as a mosque with the usual Sufi services. A tabīʿ in its neighborhood endowed the foundation and at the same time provided housing for the staff attached to it. The mosque included a library, a room near the sanctuary, served by a librarian.

The extraordinary facade of this building deserves special mention. The architect made ample use of the large site on a hill overlooking the hippodrome, the mosque of Sultan Ḥasan and the horse market, creating a facade that is notable among Cairo monuments.

The long facade has, from left to right, a sabil-kuttab at the western corner, a rectangular double-heaved minaret, a trilobed groin-vaulted portal to the right of the minaret, and on the eastern side and corner, a stone mausoleum dome carved in a repetitive arabsque pattern. The whole facade is reached by a ramp. Its composition is altogether quite harmonious.

A double-headed minaret was built by Sultan al-Ghūrī at al-Azhar. Qānībāy himself built another mosque in the Nāṣiriyya quarter which also has a rectangular double-headed minaret.

The interior reveals some variations on the qaʿa plan. The iwān with a prayer niche, instead of having a flat ceiling, has a shallow vault on spherical pendentives, the type seen at Bāb al-Futūḥ. The stone courses are alternately painted to give an ablaq effect. The lowest course has a carved inscription and blazons. The windows above the prayer niche are also unusual, for

mosque of Abū Bakr ibn Muzhir, in a scroll, written twice symmetrically from left to right and right to left. This device, common in North African art, can be seen in one of the windows of the mosque of al-Hākim, though in quite a different style. This type of marble work, which must have been the creation of ʿAbd al-Qādir, is one of the last innovations in the medieval decorative arts of Cairo.

In the western iwān, opposite the qibla, a thick cornice of painted and gilded wooden stalactites, runs along the upper part of the wall just underneath the ceiling. The dome, next to the qibla iwān, has an extended transition zone and is so small that it looks from the inside like a tower. Another notable feature in this mosque is the use of sliding doors in the vestibule, the only known example in the Mamluk period. It appears that the architect devised this solution to cope with the rather restricted space available for doors.

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Pl. 113 The religious-funerary complex of Amir Qānībāy al-Rammāh.
instead of being set in pointed arches, they are like those usually found on the transition zone of domes, three round surmounted by three circular ones, or bull’s-eyes. The prayer niche is made of stone and its conch has ablaq inlay. The iwān opposite the qibla is cross vaulted.

The four iwāns open onto the central space through a pointed arch with ablaq voussoir. The mausoleum dome is entered from the covered courtyard and is connected by doors to the qibla iwān.

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THE MADRASA AND KHANQĀH OF SULTAN AL-GHŪRĪ (1503/4)

Though the reign of Sultan al-Ghūrī followed shortly after that of Qāytbāy, it witnessed a clear decline in quality of craftsmanship, particularly in the stone carving and marble inlay that so richly embellished Qāytbāy’s monuments. Some innovations, however, did appear in minaret architecture.

The funerary complex of Sultan al-Ghūrī, in the Faḥāmīn quarter (charcoal market) in al-Muʿizz street, is interesting as an architectural composition built on both sides of a street. The western side includes a Friday madrasa-mosque built on the qāʿa plan, and the eastern side includes a khanqāh and mausoleum as well as a sabil-kuttāb.

THE MADRASA

The western facade has a trilobed stalactite portal, a jirāz band, and a minaret projecting at its south edge. The minaret is four-storied, a rectangular structure from bottom to top, with arched panels on each side. The top originally had four bulbs instead of just one, and they were made of brick and covered with green tiles. The present top with five bulbs is a modern addi-

Pl 114. The religious-funerary complex of Sultan al-Ghūrī
tion, and a misrepresentation of the original. There were already minarets with double bulbs, such as those at the mosques of Qānībāy al-Rammāh and that of al-Ghūrī at al-Azhar. When Muḥammad Bey Abū’l-Dhahab built his mosque he crowned its minaret with five bulbs.

The interior is richly paved and paneled with black and white marble. Stone carving covers the walls but it is of poor quality, shallow and repetitive. Of interest are the stalactites that frame the upper walls of the covered courtyard, underneath the skylight.

THE KHAŃQĀH AND MAUSOLEUM

This structure also has a trilobed stalactite portal and a ṭīrāz band. On its northern edge a sabīl-kuttāb projects into the street with three facades. The mausoleum on the south side of the interior now has only its rectangular base and transition zone. The dome, made of brick and covered completely with green tiles, collapsed at the beginning of this century. We know that the mausoleum dome of Imām Shabīrī was also covered at one time with green tiles, perhaps after al-Ghūrī’s restoration. The transitional zone is made of stone pendentives.

On the left or north side of the entrance vestibule is a qaʿā that is called a khanqāh, though no living units were attached to it. The waqf deed says that Sufis should have their meetings there, but does not refer to any living accommodations provided for them. A few living units are attached to the madrasa across the street.

This building, unlike all previous royal foundations along the street, has its facades unadjusted to the street alignment. They instead make an angle, leaving the space between the two facades widening into a sort of square. The square was rented for market stalls, the income contributing to Sultan al-Ghūrī’s endowment. David Roberts’ nineteenth-century engraving shows a textile market there, and today there are still shops and booths on both sides of the street, the rent of which is collected by the Ministry of Waqfs and used in maintaining the religious buildings and their personnel.

THE RELIGIOUS-FUNERARY COMPLEX OF AMIR QURQUMĀS (1506/7)

The funerary complex of Amir Qurqumās included a Friday mosque with Sufi services. Its layout is very similar to that of Sultan Qāyṭbāy’s mosque, with the minaret at the right of the portal, the sabīl-kuttāb at the left side, and the dome on the southeast corner of the building adjoining the qaʿā-plan prayer hall.

The dome has carved lozenges in the lower part and a zigzag pattern on the upper part. The minaret has lozenges carved on the faceted middle section and a zigzag profile like that of the mosque of Sultan Īnāl.

An interesting feature preserved in this complex is the qaʿā, the term used in the waqf deed to designate the hall on the south side of the mausoleum. This was a residence overlooking the cemetery to the south, east and west from large iron-grilled windows surmounted by arched openings in pierced stone rather than succo. There are latrines and bedrooms near it. The founders of large religious foundations often attached residential structures to their buildings, particularly if the foundation was for Sufis, like the khanqāh of Shaykhū, or was located in the cemetery where the founder went for feast days and other occasions. The complex of Barsbāy has apartments attached to it, and that of Qāyṭbāy still has a maqṣad or reception loggia.

The complex of Qurqumās had apartment complexes as well, occupying sites on both sides of the cemetery road. A rabʿ on one side has survived, with living units built on two floors and a latrine on both floors of each apartment. The foundation deed states

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Pl. 115 The religious-funerary complex of Amir Qurqumās with the minaret of Sultan Īnāl to its right
that these dwellings could be occupied by members of the foundation’s staff, as well as others, meaning that the inhabitants might be families with women and children. Like most of the foundations of its time, the complex of Qurqunäš was a mosque with multiple functions, not a khanqäh with a monastic community

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Amir Khâyrbak was the governor of Aleppo during the reign of Sultan al-Ghûri. As a reward for betraying the sultan and cooperating with the Ottomans’ conquerors, he became the Ottomans’ first governor of Egypt after their conquest in 1517. He built his mosque in 1520/21.

The Exterior

The building that stands at Tabbäna reveals to the passersby coming down from the Citadel to Bâb Zuwayla a carved stone dome and carved brick minaret. The dome is covered with a repetitive arabesque pattern and the minaret has a geometric stucco design carved on the brick shaft; the top has been lost, but old illustrations show that it was of the usual pavilion type.

The facade of the building is not regular. On the south side under the dome, the wall is on an angle. On the western or street side, the wall is adjusted to the street alignment between the mausoleum and the ruins of the palace. On the eastern side of the dome there is an arch including an interior staircase connecting the palace with the mausoleum. This palace was built by Amir Alîn Aq in the late thirteenth century and was subsequently inhabited by various amirs, including Khâyrbak. The facade of the mausoleum has arched windows in pairs surmounted by circular windows. The lower windows are rectangular. Carved stone panels and joggled lintels decorate the facade.

A trilobed groin-vaulted and marble inlaid portal leads through a corridor into a courtyard from where the mosque is reached, an uncommon approach to a mosque. To the left side of the portal, across an entrance passage, is a sabil-kuttâb. The courtyard on the east side of the mosque is occupied by a tomb and is bordered by Şâlâh al-Dîn’s eastern city wall, separating it from the cemetery of Bâb al-Wazîr.
The Interior

The interior of the mosque is not a qibla plan, but a hall consisting of three cross vaults supported by pointed arches. The central vault has an octagonal opening to admit light. The eastern wall, with the prayer niche, paneled like the rest of the wall with a polychrome marble dado with a conch of plain stone, shows an awkward feature. The windows above the prayer niche are partly hidden by the curve of the central arch supporting the vault, as if the architect had begun the walls with the intention of roofing them as usual with a wooden ceiling, but then changed his mind after the qibla wall was erected and instead added arches for the vault.

A shortage of wood might explain this anomaly. Egypt always had to import its wood, and in Sultan al-Ghūrī’s time, it would have been imported from Anatolia. At the time this building was erected, Egypt was already embroiled in the disturbances caused by the Ottoman conquests, and thus the importation of timber may have been difficult.

The dikka, a loggia made of wood, is placed on the western wall opposite the prayer niche. This wall, adjusted to the street alignment by irregular thicknesses of the wall, includes recesses. The qibla wall is not properly oriented to Mecca, as is the prayer niche in the mausoleum. The irregularity is most likely due to lack of space, raising the question of whether the space occupied by the mosque was originally planned for another purpose and later adapted for a religious building.
THE MAUSOLEUM

At the back of the prayer hall, facing the entrance, is a trilobed portal with a groin vault decorated with ablaq masonry and stalactites in the two side arches. It leads into the mausoleum. A special feature of this building is the treatment of the mausoleum entrance, which is enhanced by a portal and has a pair of maksiyas. This treatment is common on facades, not in interiors.

The mausoleum walls are not straight, and inside they also show irregularities in the arrangement of the windows. The inner window openings do not correspond to the outer openings, so that the openings run obliquely through the thickness of the masonry.

The mausoleum is dated 1502/3 but the foundation deed of the madrasa has the much later date of 1521. The madrasa itself has no dated inscription, but there is no break in the masonry of the mausoleum and madrasa to suggest that they were constructed at different times.

The foundation deed of the madrasa states that it was planned for ten students who were also Sufis. Five living units under the floor of the mosque, reached from the yard, provided their lodging.

Bibliography

Mubarak Khitat, IV, p 110

Pl 117 Interior of the madrasa of Amir Khâyrbak