ARCHITECTURE OF THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

THE MOSQUE OF SULAYMÂN PASHA (1528)

Sulaymân Pasha’s mosque is the first mosque founded in Cairo after the Ottoman conquest, but not the first religious foundation. It was preceded by the Takiyyat Ibrâhim al-Kulshani which was completed in 1524. The mosque is located in the northern enclosure of the Citadel which was at that time occupied by the Janissary corps of the Ottoman army. The provision that the shaykh of the mosque must be Turkish indicates its dedication to this corps.

The Exterior

The mosque’s architecture owes very little to Cairene architectural traditions and its plan is entirely Ottoman. It is a rectangular building, approximately half of which is occupied by the prayer hall, the other half by a courtyard. The prayer hall is a rectangular space covered by a central dome, flanked by three half-domes. The courtyard is surrounded by an arcade covered by shallow domes. The central dome, the shallow domes around the courtyard, and the conical top of the minaret are all covered with green tiles.

This building has no facade, in the Cairene architectural sense of paneling and decorative fenestrations. Its appearance is rather introverted, and its small portal is an imitation of that of al-Nâşir Muḥammad’s mosque nearby in the Citadel, a half-dome on stalactite carving on the balconies, an exception among Cairo’s Ottoman minarets. The profile of the dome is rounded and squat.

The Interior

There is no vestibule; the entrance leads directly into the prayer hall. The central dome rests on spherical pendentives. Its painting and that of the transitional zone have been restored. The dikka is attached to the upper part of the wall facing the prayer niche and is reached by an inner staircase. It is also painted. The lower parts of the inner walls are covered with marble dados in Mamluk style and a frieze of carved marble inlaid with paste runs above the dado.

A large marble pulpit, carved and painted, is surmounted by a conical top like that of the minaret, just as Mamluk pulpits had pavilions similar to those of their minarets.

A door in the western wall leads to a courtyard paved with marble. On the west side of the courtyard is a shrine built in the Fatimid period by Abū Manṣūr ibn Qasta, popularly known as Sidi Sâryâ. The shrine is incorporated into the architecture of the mosque, and covered by a dome larger than those around the courtyard. The shrine includes the tombs of Ottoman officials with cenotaphs topped with various types of turbans in marble. Until recently there was a wooden boat hanging above the cenotaph of Ibn Qasta; it is a popular tradition in Egypt to place boats in saints’ shrines.

On the north side of the courtyard another entrance leads to a second courtyard in front of a vaulted single long building composed of two halls. The outer hall opens to the courtyard and leads though a door into the inner hall. Both are roofed with two half domes on spherical pendentives, facing each other. According to the foundation deed, this building is a kuttâb. Its domes were covered with blue tiles; the mosque’s domes are in green. The kuttâb has a prayer niche with stalactites in the conch.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mubârak Khîtâj, V, p 14

THE TAKIYYA OF SULAYMÂN PASHA (1543)

The term takiyya (from the Turkish tekke) designates an Ottoman type of religious institution with boarding house functions. Its architecture, therefore, is characterized by the presence of living units for students or Sufis.
Pl 118 The mosque of Sulaymán Pasha.
exactly how the madrasa functioned, or if the foundation originally included other structures. There is no mosque or minaret attached to it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Mubarak Khattab, VI, p. 56; Van Berchem, C.I.A., p. 606

THE MOSQUE OF MAHMÜD PASHA (1567)

The mosque of Mahmûd Pasha is a free-standing building situated on the northeast side of the madrasa of Sultan Hasan, also facing the Citadel. Apart from its Ottoman minaret, the architecture is entirely Mamluk in style. There are even two features copied from the Sultan Hasan mosque: locating of the mausoleum dome behind the prayer hall to face the Citadel, and building the minaret on a semicircular, protruding buttress flanking the dome. The profile of the dome is slightly shorter and more rounded than Mamluk domes.

Pl 119 The takiyya-madrasa of Sulaymân Pasha

The takiyya is the equivalent of the khanqâh and indeed, some takiyyas had strict regulations reminiscent of the foundations of the early Mamluk period where Sufis dwelt, worshiped, and studied, following a clearly defined curriculum. Some takiyyas, such as the Sulaymânîyya and the Mahmuâdiyya (1750), are Ottoman in architecture, a courtyard surrounded by living units behind an arcade with round arches and shallow domes. The foundation deeds of later, eighteenth century, religious institutions show that Sufism was no longer part of the activities of mosques and madrasas. Instead, Sufi shaykhs pursued their rituals in the zâwiyyas and takiyyas.

Sometimes, the term takiyya was simply used to designate the part of the madrasa devoted to living quarters. At the foundation of Muḥammad Bey Abû ’l-Dhahab, a madrasa for the four Islamic rites, the students’ residence was called the takiyya, but no Sufis were attached to the foundation.

The inscriptions on the Takiyya Sulaymânîyya do not include the term takiyya, but do refer to a madrasa. Takiyya Sulaymânîyya is the popular name and also the term used by historians.

The Mamluk-style facade has a groin-vaulted portal leading through a straight, cross-vaulted passage into the courtyard. The courtyard is surrounded by a colonnaded arcade with round arches. Behind each arch is the entrance to a cell, except on the axis of the entrance, which corresponds to the qibla. There, a domed room opens onto the courtyard and includes the prayer niche. Unfortunately, the foundation is not mentioned in the waqf deed of Sulaymân Pasha, so we do not know

Pl 120 The mosque and mausoleum of Mahmûd Pasha
The minaret is a slender circular tower that appears particularly elongated because of the circular buttress on which it rests. The same feature can be seen at the nearby mosque of Sultan Hasan which might have inspired the Maḥmūdiyya architect. The shaft of the minaret, like the buttress, is ribbed with vertical moldings, and it has a balcony on stalactites at the roof level and another, higher balcony.

The rectangular hall’s roof is supported by two pairs of columns, a feature found in the mosque of Sultan Barsbāy in the cemetery, but here the columns are ancient Egyptian granite columns and their pointed arches are not parallel to the qibla wall, but form a rectangular pavilion in the center of the mosque with a lantern in the ceiling to admit light. The side aisles are slightly higher than the central aisle. A loggia of painted wood faces the prayer niche and is reached by an inner staircase.

There is no marble decoration, but intricate stucco and colored-glass windows and a beautiful arabesque painted ceiling make this mosque particularly attractive. The fact that the mosque is free standing enhances the effect of the light coming through the windows. The dome, beyond the qibla wall, rests on pendentives and is plain. It is one of the few domed mausoleums of the Ottoman period. The mosque of Masṭān Pasha (1575) at ʿArab Yasār in the cemetery southeast of the Citadel is similar in plan to this mosque, but its lantern is supported by piers instead of columns.

**Bibliography**

Abd al-Wahhab, *Masājid*, pp. 295–
Williams, J. “Monuments.”

---

**THE MOSQUE OF SINĀN PASHA (1571)**

This mosque is one of the most interesting in Ottoman Cairo. It was built on the Nile shore at the port of Būlāq, which was at that time separated from the rest of Cairo and closer to the river than it is today, because the river has since shifted westward.

The mosque is set askew within its enclosure to maintain the Mecca orientation. The mosque’s domed chamber is surrounded on three sides by an arcade of slightly pointed arches supporting shallow domes; a minaret flanks the mosque on the south side. The enclosure does not allow the mosque a street facade. Its architecture is dominated by the central dome. The central dome’s profile is rounded, and the lower part has two rows of windows, the upper ones in the shape of lobed arches. These are common on Fatimid buildings, but they are used only once in a dome, at the shrine of Sayyida Ruqayya, built more than four centuries earlier. Between the facets of the dome that include the windows, there are small buttresses or turrets crowned by onion-shaped tops, which give this dome its particular appearance. The minaret is a squat cylindrical shaft with one balcony and a conical top.

The mosque of Sinān Pasha has the largest stone dome in Cairo, with a diameter of about fifteen meters. It is a half meter larger than the dome of Barqūq.

The interior is heavily influenced by the architecture of the Fadawiyya mausoleum. The transitional zone is set within, not above, the rectangular part of the building and is composed of trilobed squinches, each within a pointed arch. The upper arch of the squinch is decorated with stalactites. Curiously, the inner lower
The mosque is built on a level much higher than the street and is reached by a long semicircular flight of steps. The exterior walls are not decorated but there are windows on two levels. A minaret flanks the building on the southeast corner. There are three entrances, one on each facade, each composed of a shallow trilobed recess framed by a molding with angular loops. They thus differ from the street entrance leading to the mosque complex, which has a trilobed groin-vaulted portal.

The plan is similar to that of the mosque of Sulaymān Pasha, with a similar courtyard. The sanctuary, however, although also covered by a large rounded dome, is flanked by small domes instead of large half-domes. The lateral small domes are supported by arches carried by columns. As at the mosque of Sinān Pasha, a wooden gallery runs around the inner base of the dome; the dikka is opposite the prayer niche. Three doors, the central one larger, connect the sanctuary with the courtyard. The mosque of Malika Ṣafiyya has one feature inherited from earlier architecture: a dome over the prayer niche, it protrudes at the back wall of the mosque.

Bibliography

Muḥātak Khāqān, V, p 19

THE MOSQUE OF MALIKA ṢAFIYYA (1610)

Malika Ṣafiyya was the Venetian wife of the Ottoman Sultan Murād III. When one of her slaves, ʿUthmān Aghā, decided to build this mosque, he came up against legal problems. It was found that as a slave, he was not legally entitled either to build a mosque or to make endowments, as his properties after his death should revert to his owner, Malika Ṣafiyya. As it could not be proved that the slave had been freed before his death, nor that he had the permission of his owner to make endowments, the endowment was considered illegal. Thus the mosque and all other properties endowed to it reverted to Malika Ṣafiyya.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Abd al-Wahhāb Manṣūrī, pp. 306 f
Mubārak Khāyat, IV, p. 39
Williams "Monuments," Appendix B

THE MOSQUE OF AMĪR YŪSUF AĞHĀ AL-ḤĪN (1625)

The mosque of Amīr Yūsuf Aghā al-Ḥīn is located in the neighborhood of the Islamic Museum; it was built by an amīr of Circassian origin. Except for the minaret, its architecture follows Mamluk traditions. A mausoleum with a dome, for the amīr and his family, was attached to the building, but was demolished in the last century to make way for the construction of Muḥammad ʿAlī street.

The mosque is a free-standing building with a qāṣa plan, decorated with polychrome marble in the Mamluk style. The original sabil-kuttāb can be seen on the eastern façade which also includes the portal. The other sabil on the northwestern corner of the mosque was added in this century, when the mosque was restored after the Khalīj was filled in and replaced by a street. This new sabil is an anachronism, as it is an imitation of the sabil of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā built about a century later than the mosque of Yūsuf Aghā.

The interior displays an unusual feature in the mashrabiyya occupying the western wall. The mosque was erected on the eastern side of the Khalīj and the windows were placed to allow worshipers to enjoy the view of the canal and gardens outside, as was common in residential architecture. Another interesting detail is the presence of wooden balconies that occupy the whole width of the three iwāns around the main one, and thus add a kind of upper floor to the mosque. The function of these balconies is not quite clear. It is unlikely that they all were dikās for recitations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Abd al Wahhāb Manṣūrī, pp. 312 ff
Mubārak Khāyat, IV, p. 102

THE MOSQUE OF SHAYKH AL-BURDAYNĪ (1616-29)

This small building, located in the Dāvūdiyya quarter not far from the mosque of Malīka Saḥīyya, is an architectural surprise. It appears as if the architect,
or the founder, tried to revive the style of Mamluk buildings of the Qāyybāy period. Lavishly decorated, its interior contrasts with that of the Ottoman buildings already described. Its founder was not a Turk, nor a member of the ruling class, but an Egyptian shaykh of the Shafi`i rite.

The facade treatment is totally Mamluk. The mosque has two facades, the western one with the portal and a minaret on its right side. The minaret’s first story is octagonal and the circular second section is carved. The upper part consists of a bulb resting on a balcony on stalactites, and is thus an imitation of late Mamluk minarets with a carved first story decorated with keel-arched niches framed with moldings. The two balconies rest on stalactites of different patterns. The only difference between this and Mamluk minarets is that the bulb is not carried on an octagonal pavilion, but set directly above the balcony. The quality of the carving is less refined than that of the Qāyybāy period. It is the only Ottoman minaret with an inscription band, here placed on the octagonal section. It provides the date of 1623, which is much later than that of the mosque.

The mosque is L-shaped and very small. The qibla wall is entirely covered with marble polychrome panels, and the other walls have a high marble dado. The windows have stucco and colored-glass decoration. The prayer niche, richly decorated with inlaid marble and blue-glass paste, is one of the finest examples of decoration in the Mamluk tradition, and the wooden ceiling is richly painted. Opposite the prayer niche are a dikka and a wooden frieze with an inscription band, also in late Mamluk style, running along the walls under the ceiling. The wooden pulpit with geometrical designs shows a successful revival of Mamluk art.

Shaykh al-Burdaynī, sponsor of the mosque, was a Shafi`i Egyptian, not a Turk, and this may explain the traditional, local character of the mosque’s architecture.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Mubarak *Khutat*, III, p 64; IV, p 65; IX, p 16

**THE MOSQUE OF AMIR ʿUTHMĀN KATKHUDĀ (1734)**

ʿUthmān Katkhudā, a wealthy amir, built a mosque together with residential and commercial buildings at Azbakiyya in the area which is today Opera Square. Only the left side of the facade of the mosque was visi-
The entrance leads directly into the mosque from the western side. The mosque is hypostyle in plan, with a courtyard. It is the only mosque of this period to have such an archaic layout. Marble columns support the beautiful painted wooden ceiling. The prayer niche is decorated with inlaid marble, also Mamluk in style.

**Bibliography**

‘Abd al-Wahhāb *Mansā*, pp. 323 ff  
Behrens-Abouseif *Asbakhs*, pp. 55 ff, 114 ff  
Mubarak, *Khulafā*, V, pp. 89 ff

**THE MOSQUE OF MUHAMMAD BEY ABÜ’L-DHAHAB (1774)**

Like the mosque of Sultan Hasan, that of Muḥammad Bey Abū’l-Dhabab was a madrasa for the four rites of Islamic law, but unlike the late Mamluk foundations, it had no services for Sufis.

**The Exterior**

Standing opposite al-Azhar in the middle of the city, it is architecturally an imitation of the mosque of Sinān Pasha at Būlāq, with slight differences. Sinān Pasha’s mosque is within a garden enclosure; Abū’l-Dhabab’s mosque, in the heart of the city, is surrounded by a facade wall. This wall is lower than the walls of the mosque proper, so that the arcades of the mosque are visible from outside the wall. The facade is paneled in
the Mamluk style with stalactite recesses including windows. The mosque stands above shops on the east and south facades. The profile of the dome is similar to that of Sinān Pasha’s mosque and it has the same width but is built of brick. The windows of the drum are the usual double-arched openings surmounted by a circular one, differing from the lobed-arch windows of the Sinān Pasha dome. Buttresses in the shape of turrets flank the sixteen corners of the drum.

The minaret also differs in shape and location. It is on the southwest corner and is an imitation of the nearby minaret of Sultan al-Ghūrī, which at the time Abū’l-Dhahab founded his mosque, still had four bulbs. The minaret of Abū’l-Dhahab has five bulbs. The portal is also Mamluk, trilobed and groined vaulted, and the windows have in their lintels bits of green and blue Ottoman style tiles.

The Interior

The portal, reached by a flight of steps, leads to a ziyāda surrounding the mosque on its east and south sides. The ziyāda results from adjusting the facade to the street alignment, making an angle with the main part of the building. To the left of the entrance is a very elaborate cast bronze grill behind which was once housed a very rich library.

Like the mosque of Sinān Pasha, this mosque is composed of a central dome surrounded on the three non-qibla sides by an arcade supporting shallow domes. The dome at the northeast corner is occupied by the tombs of the founder and his sister. The walls are paneled with Turkish and Tunisian tiles characteristically blue and yellow. The funerary corner is enclosed with a lacy bronze grill.

The sanctuary, or domed area, has three entrances leading from the three arcaded galleries through entrances enhanced by stalactite crestings. The interior has the trilobed large squinches seen at the Fadāwīyya dome and Sinān Pasha’s mosque. Mother-of-pearl inlaid along with marble, an exceptional decoration for this time, is found on the prayer niche which is paneled in early Mamluk style. The inscription bands are more Ottoman in style than Mamluk, set in cartouches underneath the dome and carved in rihānī script. They are painted and gilded. The dikka is a remarkable wooden balcony that projects on brackets from the wall facing the prayer niche.

On the south side of the mosque and separated from it by a wall is a two-storied complex of rooms around a courtyard. The foundation deed calls this a takiyya, and stipulates that it be used by Turkish students.

Bibliography

Mubārak Khutat, V, p 103
ʿAbd al-Wahhab Masājid, pp 351 ff

The Mosque of Hasan Pasha Ṭāhir (1809)

The mosque of Hasan Pasha Ṭāhir was built shortly after Muḥammad ʿAli came to power by one of his officers. The building, in the Hilmiyya quarter not far from the mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn, has a curiously hybrid character.
THE MOSQUE OF SULAYMĀN AĞHĀ AL-SILÂHĐÂR (1837-39)

The mosque of Sulaymān Aghā al-Silâhđâr, not far from the al-Aqmar mosque on the opposite side of the street, exhibits all the decorative features of the Muḥammad ʿAlī style.

The Exterior

The facade is relatively low and is composed of three sections. On the north section the mosque stands above a row of shops. An entrance at the northernmost section leads to the courtyard of the mosque. Further south is a round arched entrance between the mosque and the kuttāb, which is next to the sabil rather than above it. The minaret, an especially elegant shaft, tall,
slender and cylindrical with an elongated conical top, stands between the madrasa and the mosque. It has one balcony on horizontal moldings.

The facade of the sabil, a flamboyant display of late Ottoman decoration, rounded and built of marble with round arched windows, is at the southern part of the complex. Its cast bronze window grills have a very intricate lacy pattern. Above them are marble carvings imitating textile folds, a device of Italian Baroque art. Cartouches with Turkish inscriptions in nasta‘liq script decorate the entire upper part of the sabil facade and above these is a repetitive motif of acanthus-like leaves. A wooden carved and painted sunshade tops the sabil facade. There is a great similarity between this sabil and the one facing the madrasa of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, built in the same period (1828) by Ismā‘īl Pasha.

Next to the sabil of Sulaymān Aghā al-Silāḫdār is a round arch that frames the entrance on the side street leading to another entrance to the mosque through a covered flight of steps.

The Interior

The interior combines features of both Ottoman and Cairene architecture. The courtyard’s rounded arcades are covered with Ottoman style shallow domes. Above the entrance to the mosque is a charming small semicircular balcony that is very Western in style. The roof of the sanctuary is carried on four identical marble columns, forming three aisles parallel to the qibla wall. They support round arches and a central lantern. The prayer niche, made of white marble, is decorated with Western style floral motifs and looks like something that might be found in a European baroque church. The dikka is a gallery with wooden balustrade above the entrance, communicating with the small round balcony outside. A row of horizontally pierced oval windows bring light from the courtyard into the interior.

Interestingly, and unexpectedly, the window recesses of the mosque show that the facade has been adjusted to the street alignment by progressively thickening the wall, just as in the al-Aqmar mosque and all the Mamluk mosques on the same street.

Bibliography

5Abd al-Wahhāb Ma‘ṣūd, pp 360 ff
Muhānak Khatāt, V, p 15

THE MOSQUE OF MUḤAMMAD ʿALĪ (1830-48)

In the architecture of his mosque, Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, viceroy and initiator of Egypt’s modern age, achieved a radical break with all traditions characterizing Cairo architecture from the Mamluk to the late Ottoman period. The break is emphasized by the choice of site.

Muḥammad ʿAlī pulled down the remains of Mamluk palaces and their dependencies, described shortly before by Napoleon’s scholars as the most impressive buildings in Cairo despite their dilapidated condition. Recent excavations show that in order to build the mosque on top of the preexisting structures, some ten meters of rubble were filled in.

Just as Šalāḥ al-Dīn many centuries earlier had abolished all traces of Fatimid power and status by refusing to live in their palaces and having them dismantled and parceled out to his courtiers, so Muḥammad ʿAlī destroyed all traces of the Mamluk palaces from which Egypt had been ruled since the thirteenth century. That is why, among Cairo’s wealth of historic monuments, there is not one royal palace left from these periods.

It is, however, paradoxical that while politically Muḥammad ʿAlī acted quite independently of Istanbul, architecturally his reign style came closer to that of Istanbul than ever before, including its Western, particularly French, influence. Muḥammad ʿAlī’s Cairo set out to abandon the oriental Middle Ages and begin the modern Western Age, in effect, to surpass Istanbul Muḥammad ʿAlī, who was more eager to build modern factories than religious foundations, erected this mosque, where he is buried, as a monument to himself.

Originally, the planning of this mosque was assigned to Muḥammad ʿAlī’s French architect, Pascal Coste, who probably would have built it in the local Mamluk style, judging from his interest in Cairo’s traditional architecture. For some unknown reason, however, the Pasha changed his mind and an Armenian architect, whose name is not known, designed the mosque on a plan similar to that of the mosque of Sultan Aḥmad in Istanbul.

Because it is the most visible monument of Cairo, Muḥammad ʿAlī’s mosque, the last Egyptian of monuments, became a symbol of the city. Popularly known as al-qalʿa, meaning citadel, it is thus confused as well with the works of Šalāḥ al-Dīn.
The long time it took to complete this monument may be due to its size, gigantic by Cairo’s architectural standards. That combined with its prominent location and its profile, the domed silhouette flanked by a pair of slender high minarets, contributed to its prestige. The minarets, over eighty meters high, stand on bases only three meters wide. The architecture of the mosque is totally Ottoman, though its domes are, relative to their width, higher and less squat than those in Istanbul.

The plan is a central dome carried on four piers and spherical pendentives, flanked by four half-domes. The courtyard, as at the mosques of Sulaymān Pasha and Malika Şafiyā, is surrounded by rounded arcades carrying small domes.

The mosque has three entrances, on the north, west and east walls. The western entrance opens onto the courtyard, which also has a northern and southern entrance from the mosque. In the middle of the courtyard is a marble ablution fountain with a carved wooden roof on columns, the whole lavishly decorated in a style recalling the decoration of the sabil-kuttāb facing the madrasa of al-Nāṣir on Muʿīzz street built in 1828 by Iṣmāʿīl Pasha. The sabil and the upper part of the courtyard facade are decorated with small oval wall paintings on which Mediterranean landscapes are represented.

On the west wall of the courtyard is an iron clock presented to Muḥammad ʿAlī by the French King Louis Philippe, with a tea salon on the upper level. Its style is a mixture of neo-gothic and oriental elements.

The entire decoration of the building is alien to Cairene traditions, and in fact, to Islamic art. There are no stalactites, geometric shapes or arabesques; only the inscription bands continue an Islamic tradition. Even the marble chosen for decoration is different from that of earlier mosques: the walls and piers of the mosque are paneled with alabaster from Upper Egypt,
which is inappropriate for architecture as it deteriorates quickly.

In the southwest corner of the sanctuary, within an enclosure richly decorated with bronze openwork, is the marble cenotaph of Muhammad 'Ali. In 1936 serious structural deficiencies were found in the dome and it had to be totally rebuilt. It took two years. Between 1937 and 1939 the decoration was renewed and in the mid of the 1980's the whole citadel complex was again renovated.

**Bibliography**

Coste, Pascal *Architecture Arabe des Monuments du Caire* Paris, 1839


Wiet, Gaston *Muhammed Ait et les Beaux-Arts* Cairo, n.d., pp. 265 ff