CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE BAHRI MAMLUKS

THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN AL-ZÄHIR
BAYBARS (1266-69)

The mosque of al-Zahir Baybars is the earliest surviving royal mosque of the Mamluks in Cairo. Situated outside and northwest of the gates of the Fatimid city, in what was then the northern suburb of Cairo, it was built on the site of a polo ground, surrounded by greenery and overlooking the Khalij. The quarter now called colloquially “al-Dāhūr” takes its name from this mosque which, though in very dilapidated condition, still suggests the grand appearance it must originally have had.

The Exterior

Al-Zahir Baybars’ mosque shows influences from the mosque of al-Hākim: the protruding main entrance and its carved decoration; arched panels, carved lozenges and medallions at the portal, and the pointed arches of the interior standing on rectangular piers. Here, however, the arcades framing the courtyard, another arcade inside the sanctuary separating the maqsūra dome from the rest, and the aisles of the three entrances are on piers. The other arcades were on columns, most of them have not survived.

The mosque was free standing, its massive walls supported by buttresses. It is little wonder that Napoleon’s troops used it as a fortress. They may have contributed to its decay, but at the time they used it, most of the columns were already missing.

The main entrance, opposed the prayer niche, is in the form of a protruding cube and is decorated with keel-arched niches and lozenges. The entrance passage is covered by a shallow dome on pendentes, as at Bāb al-Futūh.

There are two side entrances, also protruding, but smaller in size, and their passages are roofed with cross-vaults as at Bāb al-Nāṣr. The arch of the main entrance is adorned with a cushion vousoir, like the side arches at Bāb Zuwayla. The side-entrance arches are carved differently, one with zigzags and the other with scallops.

The main entrance used to have a minaret, a rectangular shaft decorated with keel-arch panels, whose stub is shown in an illustration in the Description de l’Égypte.

The exterior walls of the mosque have no decoration except for the pointed-arch windows with stucco grills and stepped crenellation.

The Interior

The mosque’s sanctuary has a remarkable feature. In front of the prayer niche, which now has none of its original decoration, is a large area, the space of nine bays or three-by-three arch widths, which instead of being roofed with a ceiling like the rest of the mosque, or covered by a small one-bay dome as in earlier mosques, was covered with a dome as large as that of Imām Shāfī‘i. In royal mosques, the space in front of the prayer niche, called the maqsūra, used to be enclosed and exclusively dedicated to the prayer of the ruler and his entourage. The dome of Baybars, made of wood, disappeared long ago. Baybars ordered the dome to be built and decorated with the wood and marble he brought as trophies from the Citadel of Yaffa, captured from the Crusaders. The dome thus commemorated Baybars’ victory and the triumph of Islam. From the maqsūra to the courtyard, Creswell has identified a transept, or triple aisle, higher than the rest and running perpendicular to the qibla wall instead of parallel to it.

A nine-bay dome over the prayer niche appeared first in Persian Saljuq architecture and was then repeated in eastern Anatolian mosques, from where it most probably was introduced to Egypt. Another notable feature at this mosque is the use of ablaq masonry, striped courses of light and dark stone, at one of the entrances. According to Creswell, this is the earliest extant example of ablaq, which becomes typical in later Cairene architecture. When applied on marble, ablaq masonry was made with two differently colored marbles. With stone, however, it was common to paint one course in red or black and leave the other with its natural stone color.
The stucco window grills of the mosque are shaped in intricate arabesques covered with carving. Finely carved stucco panels and bands can still be seen inside the mosque though very little of this decoration remains.

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**THE MAUSOLEUM-MADRASA AND HOSPITAL OF SULTAN AL-MANṢŪR QALĀWŪN (1284-85)**

This complex, on what was the main avenue of medieval Cairo, opposite the madrasa of al-Ṣāliḥ and on the site of the western Fatimid palace, is one of the most outstanding monuments of medieval Cairo architecture and has several features without precedent in Cairo Maqrīzī writes that the land on which the building was erected was acquired illegally by...
Qalāwūn Jurists thus questioned its status as a pious foundation, but Maqrīzī reluctantly adds that similar situations applied to many religious buildings. Originally, the complex included a madrasa, the mausoleum of the founder, and a hospital.

The Hospital

The hospital was known by the Persian word mārastūn or place of illness; originally, the name was bīmārastūn, place of health (the prefix bī- forming the antonym), but the appellation was shortened. Having been cured at the hospital of Nūr al-Dīn at Damascus, Qalāwūn included a hospital in his complex, though he was not the first to do so in Cāiro. Ibn Ṭūlūn, the Fatimids, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had sponsored hospitals, but that of Qalāwūn is best known because it continued its functions as a charitable institution and center for studies and practice of medicine until the nineteenth century when modern medicine and hospitals were introduced by Muḥammad ʿAlī. The hospital of Qalāwūn was mentioned often by travelers. In the Middle Ages, Muslim medical knowledge and practice were very advanced, and Muslim medicine was taught in some parts of Europe until the eighteenth century.

As a philanthropic foundation, Qalāwūn’s hospital was remarkable for its time, and even in comparison with modern times. Its foundation deed states that it was dedicated to all Muslims of both sexes and all ages, of whatever social or moral position, from any place in the world, with no distinction to be made except that priority should be given to those most in need of care.

The hospital was divided into sections for men and women, and each patient was entitled to a bed made of wood or palm slats, with pillows and covers. The administrator of the foundation, who also handled financial matters, took care that each patient was given proper food and medicine. He supervised the laboratories where medicines were mixed and bottled in adequate, but not excessive, quantities. The kitchen prepared juices and broth, chicken and meats for the patients, and each patient received his portion in an individual, covered vessel, fanned in the summer. Drinks were served in individual cups. Each patient had his own chamber pot. The laundry of the patient was done by the hospital. Physicians met to discuss each patient’s case and his treatment, and followed up his progress. The ophthalmologists consulted the general physician. Doctors were present at all times at the hospital, together or in shifts. All services were generously provided and free of charge. Even funeral expenses, should the patient die, were assumed by the hospital foundation, and each person had a funeral according to his social standing. This applied even if the patient died in his own home after returning from hospital.

The building itself, which aside from a few walls, has not survived, is described as having been beautifully decorated, with fountains trickling in marble basins. Curiously, the foundation deed itself refers to the beauty of the building, noting that it was intended to be one of the most magnificent in the world so that the foundation would have the dignity it deserved, and so that no one would be reluctant to make use of its services. The few remnants of wall decoration suggest how much care was lavished on this charitable institution.

Pl 68 The minaret and dome of Sultn Qalāwūn.
The plan of the hospital must have been cruciform, with four large halls built along the four sides of a courtyard connected by a number of smaller rooms. It most likely was incorporated into the structures of the Fatimid palace. From the street only the facades of the madrasa and mausoleum were visible. A passage at the back led to the hospital.

**The Facade**

The facade of Qalāwūn’s complex is fairly well preserved. Approaching from the south, the madrasa appears first, then the passage on whose left is the entrance of the madrasa, and on its right, the entrance of the mausoleum. The hospital is behind both. At the northern extremity of the facade, the minaret stands at the angle facing the pedestrian coming from Bāb al-Futūḥ and Bāb al-Naṣr.

The facade treatment was innovative for its time, enhanced by several recesses over the length of the whole building, and showing unprecedented verticality. These recesses have pointed arches. Unlike earlier architecture, however, no keel arches or stalactite recesses are visible on the facade. The only stalactites are a small row in the wall underneath the minaret. The recessed panels include three tiers of windows, giving the building the appearance of having three stories. The lower windows are large, rectangular, and have iron grills; the middle windows are smaller and pointed, and the uppermost windows are double windows with round arches separated by a column and surmounted by a small circular window. The lower part of each recess is flanked by a pair of elegant marble columns with fine pre-Islamic capitals. This row of columns along the facade is unique in Cairo’s architecture.

Above the lower rectangular windows runs a band of inscription all along the facade, deeply carved in stone. This band, originally gilded, is called a ṭirāz, a term borrowed from textile arts designating an embroidered band in a ceremonial robe with the name and titles of a ruler.

The portal is composed of a round arch framed with interlacing bands of white and black marble ablaq. The earliest example in Cairo of this type of decoration is at one of the portals of the mosque of al-Zāhir Baybars. A beautiful original bronze door with geometric patterns still stands at the entrance, and a small iron grilled window above the door is attributed by Creswell to French craftsmanship, most likely by a Crusader.

![Fig 20 The madrasa and mausoleum of Sultan Qalāwūn (Creswell)](image)

The facade of the Qalāwūn complex clearly shows departures from local tradition. It lacks the keel-arches, stalactites, lozenges, and medallions of previous buildings. The pointed-arched panels with double windows and bull’s-eyes have been interpreted as influences from Crusader architecture in Palestine. Creswell, however, finds their prototypes in Sicilian architecture of the same period. Sicily had close connections with the Muslim world in the medieval period and its own arts and architecture owe a great deal to the Fatimids. It is not unlikely that the transfer of styles traveled in both directions.

**The Minaret**

Qalāwūn’s minaret is an imposing construction. The rectangular shaft and receding rectangular second story are built in stone, the third circular story is made of brick and decorated with stucco. The first story has horseshoe arches on cornices of stalactites on each side and is crowned with stalactites. The second story has horseshoe arches and cushion voussoirs. At this time horseshoe arches were typical of Andalusian and North African architecture. Lājin’s minaret restoration at the mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn, done a few years after Qalāwūn’s minaret, also shows influences of craftsmen.
who had immigrated to Cairo from western Islamic cities

The third story of the minaret was constructed by Qaläwûn’s son, Sultan al-Nâṣir Muḥammad, after the 1303 earthquake had demolished the original. Its lace-like stucco carving is not in harmony with the rest of the minaret. An interesting band with vertical moldings resembling ancient Egyptian reed motifs marks the end of the circular part. The helmet disappeared and was replaced at a later period by the present conical structure. Al-Nâṣir Muḥammad’s restoration of the minaret, with a reference to the earthquake, is commemorated in inscription band carved on the first story.

**The Madrasa**

The madrasa is today entered through a window opening. The original entrance, further back, was redecorated with moldings in the eighteenth century by Amir ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā.

The madrasa is not completely preserved, but can be reconstructed. The courtyard was surrounded by four iwâns of unequal size and between them, on several stories, were the students’ cells. The largest of these iwâns is the sanctuary, on the qibla side, and it is the best preserved. The hall opposite is much smaller. On the lateral sides two recessed spaces flank the courtyard.

The prayer hall has a new type of facade, with a triple arch supporting a second story of arches, a device frequent in Byzantine architecture. The interior plan is that of a basilica, a central nave flanked by two smaller naves, from which it is separated by granite columns of ancient Egyptian origin. Stucco floral patterns and great numbers of marble colonnettes decorate the arches and upper walls. The ceiling is of painted and gilded wood. The prayer niche is richly decorated with marble, and its conch, like that at Shajarat al-Durr’s mausoleum, is decorated with glass mosaics. Instead of a tree, however, a vase with plants is represented. No stucco carving was used in the prayer niche.

**The Mausoleum**

The mausoleum chamber is the best preserved part of the complex and is considered one of the most beautifully decorated medieval buildings in Cairo.

It is reached from a small courtyard surrounded by an arcade with shallow domes, perhaps of Byzantine inspiration. In the middle of the courtyard there was once a fountain. An arch carved in stucco frames the entrance leading to a rectangular hall. In the middle of this hall the dome rests on an octagonal structure, like the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, composed of two pairs of piers alternating with two pairs of columns. The original dome disappeared, and the modern dome is modeled after the mausoleum of al-Ashraf Khalil, son of Qaläwûn, erected in 1288. Because it is mounted on an octagon, it has no zone of transition. A well-restored and preserved wooden screen, commissioned by al-Nâṣir Muḥammad, son of Qaläwûn, surrounds the octagonal part.

As the window recesses show, the facade of the building is aligned with the street, and the inner walls are set askew with the outer ones. Cupboards set in these walls, are fitted with wooden doors.

From top to bottom, the walls are covered with various types of decoration. Marble covers the lower parts, where the most remarkable feature are the numerous panels with inlaid marble, mother of pearl, and colored stones. A great variety of patterns are found, including for the first time in Cairo, square Kufic script repeating the name of Muḥammad. Bands of carved marble and a band of wood with relief inscriptions, painted and gilded, run along the walls. The coffered ceiling is painted and gilded, composed of sunken polygons similar to those first seen at the mausoleum of Imām Shâfi‘î.

The outstanding feature of the mausoleum is the huge prayer niche, one of the largest in medieval Cairo. It is richly decorated with marble inlay and rows of niches with shell conchs, flanked with small colonnettes. The madrasa prayer niche also has these decorative arcades. Lavish use of mother-of-pearl with marble accentuates the decoration. As Meinecke has shown, Byzantine craftsmen must have been involved in these decorations, as many details, particularly the marble carving and inlay, resemble that of contemporary buildings in Constantinople. Indeed, Sultan Qaläwûn had friendly relations with the Byzantine emperor. The plan of the sanctuary of his madrasa also reveals Byzantine influence.

Qaläwûn’s tomb became the site for celebrations of the appointment of amirs to be sent to Syria. Earlier they had taken place at the tomb of al-Ṣâliḥ, across the street.

Like the madrasa, the mausoleum chamber also housed a teaching program in the four rites of Islamic law. Qaläwûn’s grandson, al-Malik al-Ṣâliḥ ʿImād al-
Pl 69. The mausoleum of Sultan Qalāwūn (German Archaeological Institute).
Din, intended to build a madrasa but died before he had done so, and a friend, Amir Arghun, made the endowment to establish the madrasa at Qalawun’s mausoleum. Readers of the Quran recited all day in the deeply recessed windows of the tomb. There was also a substantial library, and cupboards to house the sultan’s robes. Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad and other sons of Qalawun are buried there.

During the reign of Qalawun and his descendants, endowments were increased and the mausoleum was the site of many celebrations and ceremonies. The sultan’s private guards had the honor of living in and caring for the complex.

THE MADRASA OF SULTAN AL-NASIR MUHAMMAD IBN QALAWUN (1295-1303)

This madrasa is adjacent to the complex of Sultan Qalawun. Its facade and minaret are visible only when one is quite close to them. The building was begun by al-Adil Katbugha who ruled very briefly (1295/6) and was completed by al-Nasir Muhammad, son of Qalawun. The madrasa taught the four rites of Islamic law.

THE EXTERIOR

The rather narrow facade includes the minaret above the entrance, to the right of which is the mausoleum of the founder Al-Adil. He carried out the construction up to the tierz band, and the rest was done during the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad. The mausoleum’s wooden dome collapsed long ago, and only its octagonal wooden transitional zone with pendentives has survived.

The most remarkable feature of the facade is the portal, a trophy brought from a church in Akko during the Crusades by al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalil and used later by al-Adil Katbugha for his madrasa. It is a Gothic marble portal with pointed arch, at the apex of which was added the word, Allah Maqrizi considered it one of the most magnificent portals in Cairo.

Above the portal stands the minaret. The first story of the rectangular brick shaft is covered with extremely fine stucco carving, giving a lace-like effect that contrasts with the shape of the shaft. The decoration is well preserved on the facade; little remains on the back and sides.

As in previous minarets, medallions, lozenges, and keel-arched niches and panels decorate the shaft, but here, the whole surface is completely covered with fine arabesques carved in high relief and on more than one level. The keel arches include lobed, smaller arches. Toward the top, there is a row of lobed arches filled with tiny geometrical shapes like the ones seen in the

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The Interior

Not much has survived inside the madrasa, but there is enough to indicate that the courtyard was once surrounded by four unequal halls, or that it was cruciform. The two larger iwâns are on the qibla side and the side facing it, which are vaulted. Between these iwâns were several stories of student cells.

The only decoration surviving in the interior of the madrasa is the carved stucco prayer niche: it is adorned with bosses, carved and pierced, that call to mind the repoussé technique of metalwork. The arabesque motifs of the background appear as carved, curving stripes in a very complex arrangement. The prayer niche is set within a larger arch also carved in stucco which includes a stucco window whose grill is of later date.

This prayer niche, which has no parallel in Cairo, is by a foreign hand. It shows similarities to Persian stucco work, which could have reached Egypt during the reign of al-Nâṣir Muḥammad. The sultan was married to a Mongol princess from Persia and had friendly relations with the Mongol court of Tabriz. While the two countries exchanged ambassadors, Persian craftsmen came to Cairo and introduced the art of faience mosaic seen on other buildings. The minor arts were also influenced by these contacts.

It is possible that the madrasa’s prayer niche was added at a later date. At the time it was built (1295-1303), Egypt’s relations with Persia had not yet been fully developed, as they were later to become in al-Nâṣir’s long, but twice interrupted, reign (1293-1341).

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THE KHANQĀH-MADRASA OF AMIR SANJAR AL-JAWLĪ (1303-4)

The founder of the madrasa/khanqâh of Sanjar al-Jawlî was one of the most powerful amirs during the reign of Sultan al-Nâṣir Muḥammad. The building commemorates his long friendship with Amir Salâr, to whom he dedicated the large and more decorated of two mausoleums.
The Exterior

The building stands on Saliba street not far from the mosque of Ibn Tulun and is one of Cairo’s most remarkable monuments. Perched on the rocks of Jabal Yashkur, the building is impressive to the viewer coming down from the Citadel, along one of the medieval processional roads. The facade is dominated by the unusual silhouette of a minaret flanked by two unequal domes, and the lower part of the building is paneled with window recesses as is usual in Mamluk mosques. The entrance, on an angle with the rest of the facade, is not particularly enhanced but is crowned like the windows with a stalactite cornice. A jirāz band runs along the facade. The mosque has another entrance at the rear with a stalactite portal.

The rectangular shaft of its mabkhara-type minaret is more slender and elongated than those built earlier.

Fig 21 The khanqāh-madrasa and double mausoleum of Amir Sanjar al-Jawli (Creswell)

Its decorations recall those of Qalawun’s minaret, each side having an arched panel resting on stalactites and flanked with colonnettes; the horseshoe arch and double window with bull’s-eye is also used here. The type of stalactites atop the rectangular shaft also recall those of Qalawun’s minaret.

The upper structure is slender; the octagonal elongated section supports a cornice of stalactites and above it a ribbed helmet on a circular pavilion. A special feature of the minaret is a portal at its stairway entrance from the roof of the mosque with a trilobed arch and two small maksalas or benches on both sides. Only the minaret of Bashtāk, built in 1340, has a portal at the staircase entrance. The rectangular part of the minaret is made of stone, the upper part of brick.

The domes are similar but unequal in size. They are ribbed, but only as exterior decoration (the inner surface is plain), and they are decorated with a band of stucco at their drums with a Quranic inscription, a device widely used in the architecture of Bahri Mamluk domes. Their profile, unlike that of Baybars al-Jeshankir’s khanqāh mausoleum, curves after about one-third of the dome’s height.

Pl. 72 The double mausoleum of the amirs Sanjar and Salār at the madrasa-khanqāh of Amir Sanjar
The Interior

The entrance leads to a vestibule with a cross-vault, like most of the Mamluk entrance vestibules. The interior is unusual. To the left is an irregular iwān, not oriented toward Mecca. The prayer niche, set askew on a side wall, is not the original. This iwān faces a courtyard (today covered) surrounded on three sides by cells. An arched, smaller iwān faces the main iwān. A stucco inscription band, nicely carved, runs along the walls that frame the courtyard. The cells are lit with openings with decorative grills, some of stucco and others of stone, pierced and carved in arabesque patterns.

The iwān with the cells is on the left side, to the right is a corridor, roofed with a line of cross-vaults. On the right side are the two doors of the two mausoleums, at the back of which is a dome built of stone, undated and unidentified. Judging from the style of its transitional zone, which resembles that of the dome added by Lājin above the prayer niche of Ibn Ẓūlūn, it is one of the earliest stone domes of Cairo, if not the earliest.

On the left, the western side of the corridors, there are three pointed arches opening onto a courtyard that have quite special screens. There is a fourth such screen at a window between the covered courtyard and the open courtyard overlooked by the arches. These screens, which are stone panels that do not close the entire height of the arches, leaving an upper part bare, are pierced and carved. This technique is usually applied to stucco window grills. Panels made of stone and used as screens have no precedent in Cairo's architecture, though this type of work continued to be used and had an impact on minaret architecture.

Minaret balconies, formerly adorned with wooden parapets, were later to have parapets made of such
stone panels, pierced and carved. The earliest extant examples can be seen at the minarets of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad at the Citadel (1318/35). There are more such panels, though smaller in size, decorating the walls of the corridor of the Sanjar double mausoleum, set between the arches as decoration. They are used again instead of stucco window grills to bring light into the students’ cells.

Each of the four screens mentioned is carved with an individual, intricate floral design, one of them depicting grapes. Stylized palmettes, flowers and stalks are also used.

**The Mausoleums**

The two domed chambers are reached from the corridor through two doors on the right side, and they communicate with each other through doors inside the mausoleums. The first door leads to the larger of the two tombs which is also the more decorated. It has a prayer niche with fine geometric marble inlay designs like those in Qalâwûn’s mausoleum. A wooden inscription band runs along the walls. The transition zone of the dome is made of an octagonal belt of niches and stalactites pierced by windows in niche forms. The inside of the dome is, unlike the exterior, not ribbed, thus differing from those of Sayyida Ruqayya and Yaḥyā al-Shāhī, where the flutes of the domes are structural.

Two openings opposite the prayer niche lead from Salār’s to Sanjar’s tomb. Here, the prayer niche has no colored marble, but the conch is ribbed, the ribs ending at the bottom of the conch with a row of small niches, a rare type of prayer niche decoration in Cairo. The transitional zone of both domes is treated in the same style.

Coming back to the corridor, the first of the four arches, which is smaller than the rest, opens onto a courtyard that includes several tombs. We do not know the exact function of this courtyard, today framed on two sides by modern buildings. On the wall that is part of the madrasa/khanqāh building, there is a small stucco carved prayer niche set in a corner, and a stucco inscription band runs along this wall. This courtyard, which has on this side the remains of cells could have been part of the living quarters of the community attached to the complex.

**Functions**

The exact function of Sanjar’s foundation is unclear. Its own inscriptions do not specify whether it was built as a madrasa or a khanqāh; only the vague term, makān, or ‘place’, is used. According to Maqrīzī, it was both a madrasa and a khanqāh. We find that in the thirteenth century, many mosques as well as madrasas were already performing Sufi rites indicating that Sufism was becoming increasingly widespread and was no longer restricted to a small, select community. On the other hand, many khanqāhs were integrating the teaching of law into their activities, thus adopting the madrasa’s functions. With time, the madrasa/khanqāh became the main form of religious institution.

The madrasa/khanqāh of Sanjar differs architecturally, however, from all others known in that it has no qibla-oriented main hall, while the double mausoleum is given the optimal location that makes it both Mecca- and street-oriented. The religious part of the complex is thus left without the main feature of a religious building, the qibla.

A mausoleum in itself is not a religious, but a secular building. By being attached to mosques, madrasas or khanqāhs, and by traditionally having a prayer niche, it acquired religious features. Thus, the double mausoleum of Sanjar and his friend Salār should be seen above all as a memorial building to both men and their friendship.

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**THE KHANQĀH-MAUSOLEUM OF SULTAN BAYBARS AL-JASHANKĪR (1307-10)**

In Persian, jashankīr means “the taster.” Baybars’ position at the sultan’s court before he became becoming sultan himself. His reign after the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was very brief. During al-Nāṣir’s absence to escape enemies, Baybars usurped power only to pay with his life when al-Nāṣir returned for his third, and longest, period of rule.

The khanqāh of Baybars al-Jashankīr in the Jamāliyya quarter is the oldest surviving khanqāh in Cairo. The one built by Salāh al-Dīn disappeared long ago, and from the Khanqāh Bunduqdāriyya (1283/4), only the founder’s mausoleum survives.

Like the madrasa, the khanqāh had living quarters attached, including a kitchen and other dependencies. The Sufis were expected to devote themselves to their mysticism and to learning. Every khanqāh also had...
Pl 74. The khanqāh-mausoleum of Sultan Baybars al-Jashankīr (Department of Antiquities).
accommodations for visiting Sufis, who generally were not allowed to stay more than three days.

The foundation deed of Baybars al-Jashankir's khanqah has survived, giving a detailed description of the regulations to be followed by the Sufis living there.

**The Exterior**

From a distance, the building appears to be a harmonious combination of dome and minaret and from nearby, the portal is impressive. The facade is dominated by the portal, composed of a great round arch with cushion voussoir framing a recess with a half-dome resting on two pendentives carved with stalactites. Niches are carved on both sides of the entrance recess and on the flanks. Their conchs are done in black and white marble ablaq, arranged in a sunrise motif. Beautiful engaged marble colonnettes with Gothic capitals decorate the corners of the recess. On both sides of the bronze door, the original door with geometric patterns, there is an inscription in white marble inlaid in a black-marble background. The threshold has a stone block with hieroglyphics, a feature found in many medieval mosques. They were not simply spoils from ancient monuments but had some kind of talismanic meaning.

The facade also has a tiraz band with the name and titles of the founder, but Baybars’ titles were understandably obliterated by Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad after he had recovered his throne and executed Baybars. The khanqah remained closed for twenty years.

The khanqah was built first, and the mausoleum added later. A protruding wall with recesses and stalactites including iron grilled windows forms the left side of the facade. This is not the facade of the mausoleum itself, but a small room, or kind of vestibule, leading to it. The dome, like that of al-Sallihi Najim al-Din’s mausoleum, curves from a low level.

The first story of the minaret is a rectangular shaft with keel-arch niches, topped with bunches of stalactites very similar to those on al-Nasir Muhammad’s minaret. The second story, for the first time, is circular and also ends with stalactites. A ribbed helmet on a open circular pavilion crowns the minaret. The helmet shows the remnants of green tiles that once must have covered it entirely. The minaret thus lacks the octagonal part seen in other makhara-style minarets, and is one of a very few minarets without an octagonal transition between the rectangular and circular sections.

**The Interior**

One reaches the courtyard of the khanqah through a bent entrance. The plan of the khanqah is cruciform. The main iwans on the qibla side is vaulted, with two smaller arched recesses on its sides, each communicating with an air shaft. There is no decoration on the walls except for the two columns flanking the prayer niche, perhaps suggesting the simplicity needed for Sufi prayer.

Two smaller, unvaulted, iwans are on the lateral sides of the courtyard, and the fourth iwan is vaulted but smaller than the main iwan. Between these four unequally sized iwans there are three levels of cells. The upper floors’ cells have windows overlooking the courtyard. The cell windows form the main decoration.
of the courtyard and their recesses are topped with either keel- or pointed-arch niches with radiating hoods, or with stalactites of different patterns. Some windows are inside lobed arches. The khānqāh housed two hundred Sufis, but the living quarters, apart from these overlooking the courtyard, have not survived.

THE MAUSOLEUM

The sanctuary of the khānqāh is rather austere, with no wall decorations; the mausoleum of the founder, in contrast, has rich marble mainly black and white paneling.

The prayer niche is inlaid with two-colored marble, but, unlike the exterior niches, the radiation starts not from the lower part of the conch but from the apex of its arch. The marble dadoes or lower wall panels, though less rich and colorful than those in Qalāwūn’s mausoleum, are in the same style, as is the wood inscription running along the walls and framing the prayer niche.

Unlike all other royal mausoleums in medieval Cairo, this one does not open directly onto the street. Instead the protruding vestibule mentioned above is set between the domed chamber and the street, which it overlooks from large iron-grilled windows. The large window of the vestibule is said to have been removed from the palace of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad; it was taken to Egypt in the Fatimid period along with the turban of Caliph al-Qā'im, who had been overthrown in a rebellion. The window had been incorporated into the Fatimid’s viceroyal palace, on the site where Baybars’ khānqāh was erected Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had resided in this palace before it was turned into a khānqāh.

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THE MADRASA-MAUSOLEUM OF AMIR SUNQUR AL-SAʿDĪ (1315)

Originally, Amir Sunqur al-Saʿdī’s foundation consisted of a madrasa, the founder’s mausoleum, and a ribāṭ, a type of convent for women. In the Ottoman period it was used by Sufi dervishes of the Mawlawī order.

PL 75 The madrasa-mausoleum of Amir Sunqur al-Saʿdī
(Department of Antiquities)

The entrance has a stalactite portal, a half-dome resting on bunches of stalactites. The conch of the half-dome is treated with ablaq masonry in the form of sunrise motifs that radiate from three points at the base of the conch. There are the usual maksalas or benches at the door. Joggled lintels like those at Baybars al-Jashankīr’s khānqāh adorn the entrance. The windows are typically included in recesses crowned with stalactites. Above the portal arch there is a band of interlaced geometrical shapes whose origins go back to Fatimid prayer niches, which we also see on the south minaret of al-Hākim’s mosque and Imām Shāfīʿī’s mausoleum.

THE MINARET

The mabkha minaret is unusually slender and is decorated typically with stucco keel-arched niches. Its upper structure with heavy cascades of stalactites gives
it a special character. Lobed arched openings within keel arches cover the octagonal zone. Its finial is in the shape of a Mawlawī turban, which must have been added in Ottoman times.

THE DOME

The dome is unique in its exterior stucco decoration. The entire transitional zone is framed with carved hands forming rectangles, within each of which is a medallion. The drum of the dome is lavishly carved with inscriptions and arabesques that cover the whole area of the windows. The interior is remarkable, for although it is covered by a dome, it is rectangular not square. The prayer niche is one of the largest in Cairo’s medieval buildings.

The dome inscription is not Quranic, but a carved text from the Maqāmāt of al-Harīrī, the popular twelfth-century collection of stories in rhythmic prose. The texts selected for the mausoleum deal with death.

A further unique feature in this inscription is that the date (721 A.H.) is given in numbers, not words, as is the case in all other medieval buildings of Cairo. As on the exterior, the window zone of the dome (at the drum) is included in a ring of dense stucco ornament.

Of the madrasa, only one iwan has survived, but one may assume that the plan was cruciform. The rest was rebuilt in the Ottoman period by the Mawlawī dervishes as a theatre for their whirling performances. The building is currently undergoing restoration.

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THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN AL-NĀṢIR MUḤAMMAD AT THE CITADEL (1318-35)

The mosque of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad is the royal mosque of the Citadel, in fact, of Cairo, for it was there that the sultans of Cairo performed their Friday prayers, except on religious feasts, when prayer took place in a large gathering at the hippodrome beneath the Citadel walls.

The Citadel included a mosque from the time of its foundation, and the mosque of Sultan al-Nāṣir, like most of the buildings the Sultan erected at the Citadel, was built on the site of a previous construction. There were several mosques within the Citadel, but this was one of the most glorious in Cairo until the original dome over the prayer niche, covered with green tiles, collapsed in the sixteenth century and the marble was carried off by the Ottoman conquerors.

THE EXTERIOR

The mosque, according to an inscription at the northern entrance, was founded in 1318. We are told by Maqrizi that it was pulled down and rebuilt on a larger scale in 1335. However, its masonry shows that it was only built higher, and its roof rebuilt. Traces of
the walled-up earlier crenellation on the exterior indicate where the original level was.

The hypostyle mosque is built as a regular free-standing rectangle around a courtyard with a large dome covering the prayer niche area. There are three entrances, one on the northeastern side with a trilobed shallow recess and another on the northwestern wall with a stalactite portal. The third entrance is on the southern wall and is enhanced by a pointed arch including a sun-rise motif in ablaq masonry. Neither entrance has a maksala or bench making them the exceptions to the rule in Cairo. There are two minarets, at the northeast corner and at the northwest portal.

Unlike the mosques of the city, but like the mosque of al-Zāhir Baybars, its facades are not paneled and have no decoration except crenellation. Its appearance is rather austere except for the exotic minarets decorated with blue and green faience mosaics.

The Minarets

The positions of the two minarets and two asymmetrically located portals are dictated by the situation of the mosque, which faces the northern enclosure of the Citadel on one side with its official and military buildings, and adjoins the residences of the sultans on the west and south.

The minaret to the north directed its call to prayer to the officers and soldiers dwelling there; the other minaret faced the sultans’ palaces. The northern minaret is the higher of the two, most likely so that it could be seen by the palace residents some distance away. Both minarets are built entirely of stone.

The western minaret is conical, its shaft carved with a deep zigzag motif that is vertical on the first story and horizontal on the second. Its top is unique in Cairo; it has no openings and has a garlic-shaped bulb resting on a ribbed, tapering cylinder. The whole upper structure is covered with green, white and blue faience mosaics like those found at al-Nāṣir’s sabil attached to the madrasa built by his father Qalāwūn. A Quranic inscription band made of white faience mosaic adorns the neck of the bulb.

The minaret at the northeastern corner of the mosque is a different shape. The base is rectangular and the second story cylindrical, and both are without carving. Its upper part has an open hexagonal pavilion that supports the top structure, which is similar to the top of the western minaret. Both minarets have balconies adorned with parapets made of stone panels pierced with arabesques and carved in the same technique used to make the screens of Sanjar.

We know that a craftsman from Tabrīz came to Cairo during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and that he built other minarets covered with faience, as was then the fashion in Persia. Not only the faience mosaic technique, but also the bulb shape, seems to have come from Tabrīz. Meinecke has found a thirteenth-century miniature painting of the city of Tabrīz with garlic-shaped minaret tops.

Both minarets have another feature distinguishing them from all other Mamluk minarets: their base is below the level of the roof of the mosque. This indicates that when the roof of the mosque was rebuilt after the walls were made higher, the minarets were already standing.

On the northern wall of the mosque underneath the minaret is a small balcony reached by a staircase inside the mosque. Its function is not known, but one may speculate that it was intended for prayers or recitations addressed to overflow crowds of worshipers outside the mosque.

The Interior

The walls supported by the arcades have a row of arched windows that give the building a special character. These windows must have been added when the roof was raised. The openings help reduce the thrust carried by the arches, admit light, and are ornamental as well. The voussoirs of the mosque’s arcades are composed of ablaq masonry of the same stone, but painted.

The crenellation around the courtyard is of the stepped type, differing from the outer crenellation composed of rectangles with rounded tops like those of the city and Citadel walls. At the corners near the crenellations of the courtyard are four decorative structures similar to the naḥkara minaret tops.

A special collection of pre-Islamic capitals crowns the marble columns of the mosque. The two pairs of Coptic capitals at the main entrance are most remarkable. Their white marble is carved with a basket pattern. Originally, the mosque had a number of large iron-grilled windows that are now walled up. It was also paneled with a high marble dado which was later removed by Sultan Selim and shipped to Istanbul with other marbles from the palaces. The ground level inside the Citadel has risen, and the mosque must have originally been at a much higher level and reached by a staircase.
Following the example of al-Zahir Baybars’ mosque, there is a dome above the prayer niche, though this one is much smaller and was covered with green tiles. The present dome is modern. The dome is carried by granite columns like those of the Citadel palaces; they were taken from ancient Egyptian temples. As the transitional zone is made of wood, we may assume that the original dome, like many others in Cairo, was made of plastered wood. The transitional zone consists of pendentives carved with stalactites. They, together with the inscription band referring to the founder, were painted and gilded.

During the later Mamluk period, we find that stalactite squinches are supplanted by stalactite pendentives. Pendentives are triangles at the corners of the transitional zone of a dome that transfer the thrust of the dome to the corners of the four walls. The squinches are arches or quarter-domes that transfer the thrust into the middle of each of the four walls. When pendentives were adopted, the transitional zone no longer had the appearance of an uninterrupted ring of niches, as is seen in earlier domes. In the absence of squinches, no niches were used in the transitional zone, and windows were no longer divided to resemble pierced niches; a new, arched style of windows appears. In al-Nâşir’s mosque three arched windows alternate with each pendentive.

Al-Nâşir Muhammed’s mosque has another interesting feature, a small loggia located above the northwestern entrance, reached by the staircase that leads to the roof. It is perhaps a dikkat al-muballigh, like the bench on columns in the sanctuary of other mosques that is used for call to prayer, recitations and Quran readings.

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THE ZĀWIYA OF SHAYKH ZAYN AL-DĪN YŪSUF (1298-1325)

Almost all the religious buildings dealt with in this introduction to Cairo’s Islamic architecture were sponsored by members of the ruling class—caliphs, viziers, sultans, amirs, or governors. They functioned either as mosques, madrasas, or khanqāhs, or a combination of these.

There are, however, a few other buildings of which not much survives today, founded by members of the religious establishment, usually Sufi shaykhs. Maqrīzī also mentions a few mosques, built by the wealthy bourgeoisie. In his enumeration of Cairo’s religious foundations, Maqrīzī mentions a number of zāwiyas, of which only one from the Bahri Mamluk period is extant, that of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf. A few from the Circassian period and several more from the Ottoman have survived.

The zāwiya of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf is the only foundation of the Bahri Mamluk period to carry an inscription identifying it as a zāwiya. Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf, whose genealogy is inscribed upon the building, is identified as a descendant of the Umayyad caliphs; thus he had the same Qurayshī Arab origins as the Prophet. Originally from Mosul, he migrated to Syria where he was offered an honorary title of amir and a fief, but he rejected these and lived in a luxurious castle, served by mamluks and slave girls. He surrounded himself with treasures, owned fine horses and sumptuous clothes, and celebrated banquets in royal style.

The importance of his status is shown in an episode related by Maqrīzī. Sultan al-Ashrāf Khalil, son of Qalāwūn, once sent him two of his highest ranking amirs to solicit his oath of allegiance. The Shaykh let them stand one hour talking with him while he remained seated, and when he invited them to sit, they knelt at his feet. He then gave him his oath of allegiance and a generous gift of 15,000 dirhams. His order, called the Ṭādwiyya after one of his ancestors, became powerful in Syria and politically suspect. When Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad began to persecute the Ṭādwiyya, Zayn al-Dīn, also in trouble with other members of his family, fled to Egypt, where he introduced the order. His status, equal at least to that of an amir, is reflected in the architecture and superlative decoration of the zāwiya and his mausoleum.

THE EXTERIOR

The zāwiya is in the southern cemetery between the Citadel and the mausoleum of Inām Shāfi‘ī. It has a portal that now stands detached and to the east of the building, dated later than the rest (1336). Its inscriptions give the genealogy of the Shaykh and the term

![Image of the zāwiya of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf](image)

Pl 78 The zāwiya of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf.

![Diagram of the zāwiya of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf](image)

Fig 23 The zāwiya of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf (Creswell).
zāwiya is used. The portal has a rectangular recess with stalactites. The building itself, on the west side of the cemetery road, has a rather low facade, with only one level of windows and a stalactite portal at the north side. The windows are set in recesses whose form and decoration are quite distinctive. The eastern facade has four windows, the two at the extremity set within a trilobe-arched recess, the upper part of which is framed by a molding. The two in the middle are crowned with stalactites and also framed in the upper part by a molding.

The south facade’s windows are crowned with keel-arched niches. Remarkable stone carved lintels with arabesques and inscriptions also decorate the windows.

The dome is attached to the prayer hall, on its west side, which is not the street side. At that time, mausoleums in the cemetery, unlike those in the city, were not always street oriented. However, the dome is high enough to be quite visible from the road above the low facade. Its windows overlook the street on the south side. The dome is of the elongated and ribbed type, and the exterior transitional zone is decorated with bands of carved stucco that frame all of its facets as well as the twenty keel-arched windows of the drum. Above the windows is another stucco inscription band. There is no minaret.

The Mausoleum

The lower part of the domed chamber is decorated with a polychrome marble dado and inlaid panels with square Kufic inscriptions. The upper wall decoration has disappeared, but that of the dome survives and is quite exceptional. The dome is ribbed inside and out, with flat carved ribs that spring from a central inscription medallion at the apex. At the base, each rib ends in a niche with a carved conch flanked by two colonnettes. The arabesque pattern carved on the ribs recalls the soffits of Qalāwūn’s mausoleum. The stucco was painted, and the frames of all twenty drum windows together with the composite squinches are carved stucco, giving the dome’s interior an extremely lavish appearance. The window stucco grills are formed with arabesque patterns and filled with colored glass.

The Interior

The stalactite portal, carrying an inscription assigning the zāwiya to the year 1298, on the north edge of the facade, leads through a vestibule to a cruciform interior. The courtyard is surrounded by four vaulted iwāns. The cruciform plan differs from others, however, in not having cells between the iwāns. There were formerly a few cells on the upper floor that were removed during restoration work. Another irregularity is that the side iwāns are unequal in size, and the qibla iwān is relatively shallow. Layla Ali Ibrahim, who studied the architecture of this building, assumes that the cruciform layout was introduced in the interior at a date later than that of the mausoleum and facade construction. An inscription slab at the mausoleum entrance carries the date 1325, but does not specify the event it commemorates. The two dates and the irregularity of the plan suggest that the zāwiya was not built according to a comprehensive plan.

The decoration of the zāwiya interior is composed of a band of carved stucco running around the whole building and framing the prayer niche, including within arabesque borders rows of cartouches, one oblong and the next circular, with inscriptions. This band also frames the entrance to the mausoleum dome adjoining the qibla iwān to the west.

As the qibla iwān is relatively shallow, the mausoleum is wider than the iwān’s depth and thus protrudes into the west side iwān which it also directly joins, as there are no cells between

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THE SABİL OF SULTAN AL-NĀSİR MUHAMMAD (1326)

On the left side of the entrance to Qalāwūn’s madrasa is an arcade of four pointed arches running around the corner of the building, forming an L-shape (s. Pl. 67). Its roof has a small octagonal structure, which must have been the base of a small dome no longer there. The structure is a sabil, added by Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, a public fountain for the thirsty visitor.

The name sabil comes from the expression, fi sabīl Allāh, which is equivalent to “for the sake of God”, or charity. The Quran has many references to the obliga-
tion of giving water to the thirsty. Such fountains were often sponsored by rulers as charitable, pious deeds.

Providing water in medieval Cairo, far from the Nile, was no small task. Houses of the rich had their own wells or cisterns, as did all important foundations such as mosques, madrasas, and khanqāhs. The cisterns were cleaned yearly and treated with aromatic herbs to give the water a fresh flavor, and filled by caravans of donkeys from the Nile. Common people bought water for general purposes from water carriers, but the sābils, of which al-Nāṣir Muhammad’s is the earliest surviving example, were for drinking water only. The sābil had a cistern, and a man in charge of cleaning and maintaining the facility and handing out water to the thirsty.

The shape of this sābil is unusual, it is an arced building on a corner. The octagonal structure upon which a dome must have once stood is decorated with colored faience bits, ceramic pieces set like mosaics in patterns. Unlike common mosaics which are of uniform pieces, here the tessera are cut in larger or smaller pieces according to the requirements of the patterns of the letters, which are set on a plaster background. Today, these mosaics are hardly visible beneath the dust, but some brown, green and white pieces can be seen. This technique of architectural decoration originated in Mongol Persia during the same period, whence it came to Egypt and was used here and there but never to the extent that it was in Persia. In Cairo, carved stucco and stone were preferred to the more colorful ceramic decoration.

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The Mosque of Amir Alṭinbughā
Al-Māridānī (1340)

Amir Alṭinbughā was the cup-bearer and the son-in-law of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The mosque he erected is in the southern outskirts outside Bāb Zuwayla, in the quarter called Tabbāna.

The Exterior

The mosque has a hypostyle plan like the mosque of al-Nāṣir, but its exterior walls are treated in the usual urban Mamluk style, with recesses crowned with stalactites including double-arched windows.

The Minaret

The mosque has three entrances, one on the axis of the prayer niche which has a stalactite portal with a medallion of faience mosaic, and two on the sides. The main street is on the north side; hence the minaret and main entrance are also on the north side of the mosque.

The main portal is a deeply recessed pointed arch, with a richly decorated wall facing the street. Carved and inlaid two-colored marbles are topped by a stalactite cresting. There is a small window with colonnettes above the door, and maksalas flanks both sides of the entrance. On the left side of this entrance passage stands the minaret. The wall under the minaret has an obvious irregularity: the ṭīrāz band starting on the right side of the entrance, the vault that runs along the whole facade is interrupted underneath the minaret, and the colonnettes at the facade’s other corners are missing at this corner. A close look at the buttress of the minaret reveals that different types of stone are used, meaning that this part of the wall has been rebuilt. The crenellation is missing above the entire portal and the buttress of the minaret.

The south side entrance and northern axial entrance are decorated with blue and white faience mosaic patterns on window grills, medallions and panels.
seen to characterize all later Mamluk minarets. We know from Maqrizi that the architect of this minaret, Mu'allim al-Suyuti, Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's chief architect, also built the minaret at Aqbughâ's al-Azhar madrasa. That minaret has an octagonal first story, but the second is circular; the third is missing.

The Interior

Like the mosque of al-Nasir at the Citadel, this is a hypostyle mosque and its columns have a variety of pre-Islamic capitals. Ancient Egyptian granite columns support the dome above the prayer niche. This dome is similar to al-Nasir's royal mosque dome at the Citadel and has the same type of transitional zone.

The facade of the courtyard is remarkable. The pointed arches are framed with a continuous molding forming a loop at the apex of each arch. Above the arches, keel-arched niches alternate with a lozenge above a medallion, all carved in stucco. The stepped crenellation is also carved in stucco arabesques. Decorative structures of mabhkhara shape are set at the corners and in the middle of each wall of the courtyard facade, each carrying a bulb of blue glass.

The main feature of the courtyard facade is the wooden mashrabiyya that excludes the prayer hall from the courtyard. It has a large inscription and pleasantly filters light from the courtyard. This and the screen at the mosque of al-Shabih Talâ'î, originally also in the sanctuary, are the only surviving examples of such wooden screens in mosques. There is a similar screen at the mausoleum of Qalâwûn around the cenotaph area.

The interior of the sanctuary is richly decorated. In addition to the colored marble dado on the walls, there are panels of inlaid marble like those at the mausoleum of Qalâwûn, also with decorative square Kufic script repeating the name of Muhammad. The prayer niche is inlaid with marble and has rows of niches separated by blue glass colonnettes. Carved stucco once covered the walls with a series of medallions and naturalistic tree representations unique in Cairo architecture.

The pendentives of the dome and its inscriptions are made of painted and gilded wood. Stucco arabesque grills filled with colored glass decorate the windows. The pulpit, which is original, has geometric star patterns, and the bulb at its top is similar to that of the minaret. Above all these doors inside are panels with
blue and white faience mosaics. The ablution fountain in the courtyard is not part of the original mosque.

On the northern wall of the sanctuary is an inscription panel of white marble carved and inlaid with green gypsum-like paste.

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THE MOSQUE OF AMIR AQSUNQUR (1347)

The mosque built by Amir Aqsunqur, a son-in-law of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muhammad, and the husband of his widow, stands in the Tabbāna quarter between Bāb Zuwayla and the Citadel. It has a hypostyle plan like the mosque of Amir Alṭınbūghā al-Māridānī, though it differs in many other respects.

Because it is situated on a thoroughfare, the mosque has a ground plan that is not quite regular. It has three entrances, the main one opening onto the western arcade opposite the sanctuary, and two side entrances, one into the southern arcade and the other at the corner between the northern and western arcades.

The primary irregularity of the ground plan is the presence of a mausoleum dome on the street side that predates the foundation of the mosque and which was incorporated into its masonry. The mausoleum is not Mecca-oriented, which is unusual in Cairo mausoleums; instead it follows the street alignment.

When integrated with the mosque, the western arcade acquired a triangular shape to cope on one side with the street alignment and to be parallel on the other side to the Mecca-oriented sanctuary. Thus, the entrance bay is set askew to the rest of the mosque, as it is at al-Aqmar.

THE EXTERIOR

The tall circular minaret at the southwestern corner of the mosque is visible to the passerby coming down from the Citadel long before he reaches the door of the mosque. This minaret, because of its location in relation to the winding street and other buildings, was frequently illustrated by nineteenth-century artists and photographers. In three of these illustrations, we see a remarkable feature that characterized this minaret before it was restored—it originally had four, not three, stories. Unfortunately, when the minaret was restored at the beginning of this century, the third floor was not rebuilt, and it has thus lost its uncommon feature. The first story is circular and plain, the second circular and ribbed, the third was octagonal, and the fourth is composed of the usual pavilion of eight columns supporting a bulb like the top of al-Māridānī’s minaret. The minaret is remarkable in its elegance and in being one of the few Mamluk minarets with a circulator shaft.

The main portal is composed of a large pointed arch with corbels at the springing of the arch. The mausoleum on the north side of the portal has two facades on the street.

This mausoleum contains the graves of several sons of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muhammad. We know that the first deceased son died in 1341 so the mosque must already have been standing at that time. The mausoleum was known, however, by the name of Sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kujuk, another son of al-Nāṣir Muhammad, who ruled a brief time between 1341 and 1342. He was first buried elsewhere and then brought to this mausoleum two decades later, during the rule of his brother Sultan Hasan. Aqsunqur, himself related by marriage to the Qalāwūn family, incorporated the mausoleum into his own mosque and built a mausoleum for himself next to it where he and his son are buried. A sabīl and a kuttāb have completely disappeared.

THE INTERIOR

The interior presents a rather incoherent layout, as part of the arcades are carried by piers supporting
cross-vaulted bays while others are carried on columns supporting a flat wooden ceiling. Originally, the mosque must have been built only on piers supporting cross-vaulted bays. Meinecke identifies this feature as Syrian Aqsunqur had been governor of Tripoli in Syria and Maqrizi writes that he supervised the construction of the mosque himself, even to carrying materials along with the masons. The piers supporting the cross-vaults remain unique in Egyptian medieval architecture, with no later imitations. The prayer niche is enhanced by a one-bay dome on plain squinches, an archaic feature in 1347, though the combination is also found in brick in the same mosque in Kujuk’s mausoleum. The stone version is seen at the mausoleum domes of Umm al-Sultán Shabban and the two domes of Tankizbuhug (1539 and 1562). The prayer niche is quite remarkable with its carved white marble conch that was originally painted. The lower part is paneled with polychrome marble. The pulpit is one of the few marble ones and is a masterpiece, decorated with carved bands and on both sides with large patterns inlaid with colored stones. The pulpit door’s stalactites and the bulb on four columns at the top are all carved in marble.

The akka facing the courtyard from the sanctuary has Western style capitals that may be Crusader trophies. The mosque was in poor condition by the early fifteenth century, since its endowments in Syria had by then been lost. An amir added an ablution fountain in the center of the courtyard in 1412 but because of lack of funds, the mosque was used only on Fridays and special occasions.

Amir Aqsunqur’s masons, apparently not familiar with the vaulting system applied in the mosque’s architecture, must have done a poor job of building them, for in 1652 the Amir İbrâhim Aghâ Mustahfiżan made important structural restorations of the arcades and the roof, using columns to support the southern arcaded hall. At the same time, he redecorated the sanctuary with the tiles that have given the mosque its modern touristic name, “the Blue Mosque.”

In the Ottoman period many sponsors of religious foundations restored old mosques that had fallen into decay or built upon their foundations, walls, rather than building new ones. Such mosques then acquired the name of the restorer, and this mosque, after restoration, was sometimes called the mosque of İbrâhim Aghâ.

The tiles are of seventeenth-century Turkish Iznik style. They are blue and green with typically Ottoman floral motifs, such as vases with carnations and tulips, and cypress trees. Some motifs are applied individually on each tile; others form compositions on a set of tiles. The Cairo craftsmen were not quite familiar with the art of tile paneling, and the tiles are inexpertly applied to the walls.

İbrâhim Aghâ used the opportunity to add in the southern arcade a mausoleum for himself, also paneled with marble in Mamluk style and including a prayer niche whose decoration is quite faithful to the Bahri Mamluk marble-inlay tradition.

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THE MOSQUE AND THE KHANQĀH OF AMIR SHAYKHU (1349, 1355)

The mosque and khanqâh of Amir Shaykhu, a leading amir under Sultan Hasan, face each other on Saliba Street with similar facades and minarets, giving the complex an interesting appearance. Six years separate the foundation of Shaykhū’s mosque from that of the khanqâh.

The architectural combination appears today as unique, but at one time it was not. A few years earlier (1340), Amir Bāshi built a mosque and a khanqâh facing each other across a street, with a bridge connecting them. The complex of Amir Manjaq al-Sālāhdār near the Citadel (1349) also consisted of a mosque on one side of the street and a khanqâh on the opposite side, of which only ruins remain. Some complexes in the cemetery, such as those of Barsay, Qāytbāy, and Qurqumās, were also composed of structures on both sides of the street.

THE MOSQUE: THE EXTERIOR

The lintel and threshold of the mosque are taken from ancient Egyptian temples. A stalactite portal surmounted by the minaret leads to the vestibule. The minaret is octagonal throughout and has a special feature—rather than stalactites underneath the balconies, it is decorated with carving consisting of
horizontal moldings at the first balcony and vertical ribs at the upper balcony. The vertical ribs are similar to those at the top of Qalawun’s minaret, added by his son al-Nāṣir. Creswell compared this pattern to ancient Egyptian reed motifs. Only one other minaret in Cairo, that of Manjaq al-Silāḥdār, has this type of decoration.

Except for their transitional zones and some details in the carved arabesques of the shaft’s first story, the two minarets are identical. Their bulbs are carved in an almond-shaped pattern and Quranic inscriptions encircle the necks of the bulbs.

The facade of the mosque has a small ribbed mausoleum dome next to the minaret. The entrance to the mausoleum is from the vestibule; the entrance to the mosque, also from the vestibule, is bent. In the vestibule are pieces of polished black stone in the walls that must have served as mirrors.

THE INTERIOR

The mosque of Shaykhū was severely damaged when the last Mamluk sultan, Ţūmānbāy, hid there during battles between the Mamluks and Ottoman conquerors. Some parts were burned, including a dome that was above the prayer niche. Little of the original decoration has survived. The prayer niche is paneled with marbles of no special interest; it may have been restored during the Ottoman period. The lower part of the prayer niche has seventeenth-century Tunisian tiles.

The plan of the mosque is hypostyle, though it differs from the plan typical of its time in having only two riwāqs or arcaded halls. On the lateral sides are recesses facing the courtyard with a double arch supported by one column. Thus, the features of the classic hypostyle plan are combined with the cruciform pattern. The prayer hall is not a regular rectangle, but follows without accommodation the shape of the ground space available.

The pulpit of the mosque is made of stone and though most of its decoration has disappeared, what remains shows the style of Sultan Qāytbāy’s reign. A similar, and better preserved, example is that at the khanqāh of Faraj Ibn Barqūq. The dikka, or bench used
for recitations, is also made of stone rather than the usual wood or marble. It is covered with carvings different from those of the pulpit and is dated A H. 963 (1555/6).

The Khanqāh (1355)

The portal and minaret are repetitions of the patterns used in the mosque facade six years earlier. Ancient Egyptian stones are also used here for the lintel and the entrance threshold. The vestibule leads through a bend to the khanqāh, whose plan differs from that of the mosque in having several stories of living units for the Sufis surrounding the courtyard on three sides. The prayer hall is hypostyle and has a prayer niche whose only decoration is the ablaq masonry in the conch.

The plan follows the street alignment and is thus irregular, making the interior of the sanctuary a trapezoid instead of a rectangle. Shaykhū was buried at
the corner on the northeastern or street side rather than in the mausoleum he had attached to the mosque, and the first shaykh of the khanqāh is also buried there. In the Ottoman period, wall paintings representing the Ka'ba in Mecca were added to this part of the sanctuary.

The fourth (north) side on the street, has a small iwan and is very irregular. In fact, it seems to have functioned primarily as a screen wall between the street and the interior. Its ground plan is triangular. This gave the courtyard a regular rectangular plan, unlike the sanctuary.

There is a bulbous wooden dome in front of the prayer niche which may or may not be original. The beautiful ceiling paintings in blue and white were done in the eighteenth century, as an inscription notes.

A foundation inscription slab, originally at the entrance but now in the sanctuary, is interesting in that it gives the founder's name without the usual series of titles and attributes. Only the phrase, "the humble servant of God," is used, suggesting that Shaykhū considered himself a Sufi. The text further implies that the khanqāh was also intended to house pilgrims on their way to Mecca, for interestingly, the text of the inscription on the khanqāh minaret is from the sūra referring to pilgrimage. The khanqāh of Shaykhū, according to Maqrizī, included the teaching of theology and the four rites of Islamic law, making it equivalent to a madrasa.

To the south of the sanctuary is a qa'a or reception hall, today in very dilapidated condition though its plan is recognizable. Sufi foundations often had residential structures attached where the founder spent time with the Sufis in order to receive their blessings.

The Living Units

The cells surrounding the courtyard of the khanqāh are supplemented by a large complex of three-storied cells on the south side of the building that overlooked a passage between them and the khanqāh. According to Maqrizī, the khanqāh originally covered an area of one feddan, or over four thousand square meters. Attached to the khanqāh were two public baths, shops, and living units, providing income for the upkeep of the foundation. The Sufis attached to the foundation were given bread, meat, oil, soap and sweets. This was one of Cairo's largest pious foundations.

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5 Abd al-Wahhāb Masājid, pp. 156 ff
Maqrizī, Khutāt, II, pp. 313, 421
van Berchem CIA, p. 232
Pl. 86 The facade of the madrasa-mausoleum of Amir Sarqhitmish (Department of Antiquities).
THE MADRASA OF AMIR ŞARGHITMISH (1356)

Amir Şarghitmish, whose career began under Sultan al-Mu'zaflar Hâji, died during the reign of Sultan Hasan. He built his madrasa adjoining the mosque of Ibn Tulun on Şaliba Street. The madrasa taught the Hanâfi rite, and its students were Persians. The building has several remarkable features.

The Exterior

The southwestern facade facing the mosque of Ibn Tulun has shops underneath, but the main facade is on the west side, with a stalactite portal and an octagonal minaret with carved bulb on its left. The portal stalactites differ from others of their time in having pendentive triangles at the two corners between the semi-dome and rectangular recess. The minaret is decorated with two-colored inlaid masonry forming a sunrise motif on the first story, and a zigzag motif on the second story. There is only one of the small decorative balconies on the second story where there are usually four, one on every second facet of the octagon.

Projecting onto the street on the southwestern side of the building is a mausoleum that does not adjoin the prayer hall, so that it can face the main street.

The dome is unusual with its particularly high drum, remains of an inscription band, and a cornice of stalactites underneath the dome. This is the earliest extant example of a dome with stalactites on the exterior. The transitional zone of the dome is not visible from the exterior and the profile of the dome differs from the common type in lacking a pointed top. It is double shelled, with the inner shell quite a bit lower than the outer, a device used in the mausoleums of Samarkand beginning in the Timurid period (early fifteenth century).

The Interior

The madrasa plan is cruciform with four unequal iwâns, between which are living units. Some of the living units overlook the street, others open onto the courtyard. An unusual feature in Cairo cruciform plan madrasas is the large dome over the prayer niche. The original dome collapsed and has since been rebuilt using an old photograph as guide. This dome does not have a double shell, as the dome of the mausoleum though it has a similarly high drum. We do not know whether the original dome had a double shell or not.

The dome is carried on wooden pendentives and covers the central bay of the prayer hall. Two flat-roofed bays are on each side of the domed area.

The prayer hall has carved marble slabs, some of which are in the Islamic Museum, and others in another mosque in the neighborhood. The decorations on these slabs are floral, one of them has an interesting composition of arabesques with two hands holding stalks, a lamp, and birds. Hasan ‘Abd al-Wahhab writes that marbles with animal representations and grapes were found under the floor of the madrasa.

One of the slabs near the prayer niche has a medallion at its center and an inscription with the founder’s name as well as a blazon, or emblem, of Şarghitmish, a handkerchief, symbol of his function as jamdår, or amir in charge of the royal wardrobe.

In the Bahri Mamluk period, the functions of the various amirs were represented in their blazons, or emblems applied to their buildings, residences, and objects they used. These blazons symbolized their functions at the royal court: a sword on the gate of the sword-carrier Manjaq al-Silâbdar (1346/7), polo sticks carved at the mosque of Amir Almalik al-Juqandar, the polo master (1319); a cup at the madrasa of Iljây al-Yüsufi (1373), and the wakâla of Qusun (1341), cup bearers. The earliest example of a blazon on a Cairo building is the pair of lions facing each other on al-Zahir Baybars’ madrasa at Nahhasin, in this case, the emblem was of his name, baybars meaning lion.

In the middle of the marble paved courtyard is an ablution fountain in the shape of a pavilion of eight marble columns which most likely once had a dome, like that on the Sultan Hasan mosque.

The domed mausoleum is reached from the western iwân opposite the prayer hall. The domed area does not directly overlook the street; adjoining it is a rectangular space that is cross-vaulted and has windows. A similar device is used at the mausoleum of Baybars al-Jashankir. In both cases, this is explained by the street alignment on one side and the Mecca orientation of the dome and its relationship to the rest of the building on the other side, where there is a fine marble cenotaph.

The transitional zone of its double-shell dome differs from that of the prayer-niche dome in being composed of several tiered squinches, as is usual in brick domes.

The Domes

The exotic character of the domes of Şarghitmish’s madrasa might be associated with its dedication to Per-
sian students. Though several similar domes are found at Samarkand in Transoxania (today in the Soviet Union), all examples are of a later date, built around the year 1400. There is no doubt, however, that these domes had a foreign prototype and did not belong to a Cairene tradition, for they appear suddenly in Cairo architecture with no signs of a previous evolution. Furthermore, double-shell domes were common in Persia. A common prototype in Persia could have been the origin of both the Samarkand and Şarghitmish domes, though no examples have survived there.

A similar situation is seen in the mosque of Ibn Tulun, where features taken from Samarra mosques have very few surviving precedents, and in the minarets of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad at the Citadel, whose Persian origins cannot be demonstrated in surviving structures. The double-shell dome was built once more in Cairo, at the Sultānīyya mausoleum.

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THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN HASAN (1356-61)

Although it was never completed, the mosque of Sultan Hasan has always been praised as one of the major monuments of the Islamic world. Its founder, Sultan Hasan, was not one of the major rulers of Egypt; he came to power as a child, and authority was in the hands of his regents. His rule was interrupted (1347-51 and 1354-61), and when he was killed, his body was hidden and never found again. Cairo’s greatest mausoleum was empty until an amir was buried there more than a century later.
The mosque of Sultan Hasan was a madrasa for the four rites of Islamic law, and for the first time in Cairo, the madrasa had also the status of a congregational mosque for the Friday sermon.

The foundation was ambitious in every respect. In architectural proportions it is the most gigantic of Cairo’s mosques, built to house four hundred students. The cost of the building and decoration became so high that the work had to be left uncompleted. It is reported that Sultan Hasan said he would have abandoned the whole scheme but for the shame it would bring if people could say that an Egyptian sultan was not able to complete a mosque he had started.

**The Site**

The mosque of Sultan Hasan was erected on the site of a palace that was pulled down, overlooking the square where the hippodrome and horse market were located, beneath the royal residences of the Citadel. It was thus one of the most prestigious sites in Cairo, and the centerpiece of the panoramic view from al-Qaṣr al-Abdāl with its huge gilded window grills. The entire architectural conception of this gigantic building responded to the privileged character of the site.

Its location was, however, also a liability, for with its massive walls and proximity to the Citadel, it suffered in ways that no other mosque in Cairo did. During the reign of Sultan Barquq, rebels occupied the mosque and fired at the Citadel from its roof, whereupon Sultan Barquq destroyed the staircases in order to prevent any repetition of that event. Later, another sultan had to send soldiers to occupy the mosque to prevent rebels from entrenching themselves in it, and once again, Sultan Jaqmaq blocked the staircases. Sultan Jānbalāt took the surprising decision in 1500 to destroy the
mosque to prevent its being used for military uprisings, and a team of workers set about the demolition until criticism forced him to abandon it.

In the Ottoman period, the mosque was again involved in warfare. Bullet holes pierced the dome, so weakening it that it was demolished to prevent its accidental collapse. The collapse of one of the two minarets, taking away part of a buttress with its stalactites, could also have been a consequence of battles. In the eighteenth century, the mosque was reopened after having been closed for half a century for security reasons.

The Facades

The mosque is free standing and has three facades. The fourth, western, side has the large commercial complex and other dependencies belonging to the waqf of Sultan Hasan which financed the foundation. A waterwheel is still in place.

The facade as seen from the Citadel presented a dome flanked on each side by a minaret. The dome was that of the mausoleum, which collapsed in 1661. According to a traveler's description, it was huge and bulbous, built of wood and covered with lead as is the dome of Imam Shāfi'ī. The fact that it is described as bulbous recalls the mosque of Sarghitmish, built only a few years earlier. The present dome of Sultan Hasan is modern and is a misinterpretation of the original design.

One of the two original minarets has survived, the highest minaret of medieval Cairo at eighty-four meters. It is octagonal throughout, like the minarets of al-Māridānī, Shaykhū, and Sarghitmish. Its shaft also has geometric patterns made of inlaid stone, and its top is composed of a bulb on eight columns. Its silhouette is massive compared to other minarets of the same period. The second minaret collapsed in 1659 and was replaced shortly afterward by the inferior structure we see today on the north corner of the mausoleum.

The facade of Sultan Hasan's mosque that is seen from the Citadel today is thus quite irregular. The domed square of the mausoleum protrudes on three sides and is also particularly high, over thirty meters. At its top is a projecting stalactite cornice in carved stone running along the facade of the building; it has no parallel in any other Cairene mosque.

The center of each of the three mausoleum facades is decorated with a medallion with a bull's-eye in the center, framed by interlaced bands in two colors. There also two rows of windows, the upper ones inserted in recesses crowned with stalactites surmounted by a shallow conch, an arrangement similar to portal treatments. The shallow conch like the medallions is decorated with interlaced bands.

The lower windows are inserted in recesses that have a stepped pyramidal profile and were once decorated with faience mosaics, of which there are still traces on the south side. These mosaics show that the craftsmen from Tabrīz who came during the reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muhammad, Sultan Hasan's father, must have had their workshops in Cairo for several decades.

Finely carved columns with stalactite capitals and bases grace the corners. The twisted carved motif on the shaft of the columns is also seen on the colonnettes decorating the facade of the al-Aqmar mosque, a motif going back to Byzantine tradition. The southern facade of the complex has eight horizontal rows of windows, each two corresponding to one story of student cells. This composition gives the facade the appearance of a modern highrise not seen in any other medieval building in Cairo. The northern facade, with the mosque's portal, is also characterized by a multitude of windows.

The Portal

The portal occupies the whole length of the facade, making it by far the largest in Cairo. Its most remarkable feature is that it is set at an angle to the rest of the facade. It may have been set askew so that it is visible from the Citadel, or perhaps simply to suit the street.
alignment. The portal is dominated by a cascade of dripping stalactites surmounted by a fluted half-dome.

The architecture of the portal has been compared to that of the Gök madrasa in Anatolia built under Saljuq rule (1271/2), with medallions flanking the stalactite vault, the carved bands framing it, and the panels filled with geometric patterns. The similarity also extends to the original plan of the mosque, with two minarets at the portal as in Anatolian mosques and at the Gök madrasa. The original plan called for four minarets: one was built at the portal, but it collapsed before the second was erected, and the plan to build minarets at the portal was abandoned. The resemblance between the portals of Sultan Hasan’s mosque and the Gök madrasa cannot be explained by their having the same architect, as the Gök madrasa was built much earlier. However, the Sultan Hasan portal could have been designed by a Cairo craftsman who had been in Anatolia and was impressed by the portal of the madrasa, or it could have been made by an Anatolian craftsman in Cairo who was inspired by the same building. According to Maqrizi craftsmen from all over the world worked on the mosque of Sultan Hasan.

The portal of Sultan Hasan’s mosque is superlative not only in size, but also in the quality of the craftsmanship involved in its decorations. The decoration was never completed, though work on the mosque continued for years after Sultan Hasan’s death. Prayer, however, was inaugurated as soon as the prayer hall was completed. Because the prayer hall dictated the orientation of the main part of the mosque, it was the part completed first. The carved bands adorning the portal are not continued above, and the stages of work can thus be seen: the carvings below are completed and the patterns above them are incised but not carved out, showing that work began on the lower part and moved upwards. The uppermost part of the portal is devoid of decoration and seems to be lacking its facing.

The carved, but not completed, decoration at the portal of Sultan Hasan is of great interest, as it presents Chinese flower motifs such as chrysanthemums and Chinese lotus flowers. These patterns were common in Mamluk fourteenth-century minor-art objects, but this is the only known example in architecture. The patterns do not imply that Chinese craftsmen worked on the mosque, but that the craftsmen who did were familiar with Chinese art motifs. Trade between the Far East and the Islamic world flourished during the fourteenth century, promoted by the opening of land routes between the Mediterranean and China, under the Mongols’ Asian hegemony. Chinese porcelains and silks, highly cherished in Egypt, must have inspired Cairene artists to enlarge their decorative repertoire with these exotic designs.

On the right side of the entrance is a narrow, very curious carved panel with architectural designs, such as a Gothic portal and a domed structure with gabled roof of Western, probably Byzantine, origin, possibly a craftsman’s signature in disguise. In fact, the layout of the vestibule, with a stone dome on pendentives flanked with three half domes dripping with stalactites, is Byzantine in style. The domed structure has been interpreted as the Dome of the Rock.

Before entering the vestibule, there is a handsome inlaid marble inscription and two marble niches inlaid with geometric designs, whose conchs are decorated with stalactites as in Anatolian prayer niches. The vestibule has a large stone bench that may have been used by Quran readers, and also has medallions of inlaid marble with intricate geometric patterns and carved stone niches.

The original bronze door of Sultan Hasan’s mosque is now at the mosque of Sultan al-Mu’ayyad at Bāb Zuwayla. Al-Mu’ayyad acquired it, illegally, from Sultan Hasan’s foundation, along with a huge bronze chandelier that is now at the Islamic Museum.

The Interior

Through a bent entrance, passing beneath the student living quarters, we reach the courtyard framed by four unequal and enormous vaulted halls or iwans. In the center is an ablution fountain completed in 1362, composed of eight marble columns carrying a bulbous wooden dome decorated with an inscription band in relief. This is perhaps a replica of the missing mausoleum dome that was also wooden, and bulbous.

The great size of the four iwans leaves no space for the cells to overlook the courtyard, and as has been noted, their many windows overlook the street on the southern and northern facades. The other cells have windows onto light shafts.

Between the four iwans are the four entrances to each of the madrasas. The entrances are decorated with rich multicolored marble inlay work. The largest madrasa, on the right side of the prayer hall, was that of the Hanafi rite, to which the Mamluks adhered. Next largest, on the left side of the sanctuary, was that of the Shafi‘i rite, which most Egyptians at the time followed. The Mālikī and Ḥanbalī madrasas are on the opposite
Each madrasa has a courtyard with ablution fountain, a qibla-oriented ĩwān, and four stories of living units. Some cells are larger than others, and a number of latrines are included in the living quarters. Each cell on the street side has two large windows, one above the other, making the interior very light and giving the inhabitants a view outside.

Some features of the plan of Sultan Hasan’s mosque, such as the location of the cells in relation to the four ĩwāns, may have been inspired by the madrasa of Šarghīmish. However, the madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan locates most of the cells on the street, the only Cairene madrasa to do so, leaving the courtyard dominated by the four huge vaults. At the madrasa of Šarghīmish, some cells overlook the courtyard and others open onto the main and side streets, but the windows are not so organically integrated into the architecture of the facade as they are at Sultan Hasan.

The marble pavement of the courtyard is modern. There is no decoration of the ĩwāns except that of the sanctuary. This ĩwān is the largest vaulted hall of the medieval Muslim world and is reported by Maqrīzī as being even a few cubits larger than the ĩwān of Kisrā at Ctesiphon. The ĩwān of Kisrā, or vault of Cyrus (Khusraw), still standing not far from Baghdad, was part of a gigantic palace built at Ctesiphon, the Sassanian capital, and attributed to the emperor Cyrus. It is the largest single-span brick vault in the ancient World (twenty-six meters width by twenty-nine meters height), as famous in the past as at is today.

The ĩwān of Sultan Hasan is richly decorated. The qibla wall is paneled with a large polychrome marble dado, as is the prayer niche, flanked with columns whose style indicates that they must be trophies from Crusader buildings in Palestine.

A marble dikkat al-muballigh, the bench standing in the sanctuary near the courtyard, is adorned with remarkable columns composed of different colored stones. The pulpit for the Friday sermon is one of the few made of marble. It is topped by a carved bulb and has a portal leading to the steps with stalactite cresting and a beautiful bronze door with openwork bosses in the repoussé technique. There are several other bronze doors leading to various rooms that are masterpieces of medieval metalwork, particularly the one at the window between the sanctuary and the mausoleum, inlaid with silver and gold and bearing the names and titles of Sultan Hasan.

The most remarkable feature of the qibla ĩwān is the large inscription band that runs along its three walls, made of stucco with ornate Kufic script on a background of floriated scrolls with Chinese lotus blossoms.
There is a similar band in the ʿiwān of the Hanafi madrasa, but there is nothing else similar in Cairo architecture. The style is, however, typical of Quran illuminations of the period, and the architect must have been inspired by these to translate the designs into stucco.

Close to this band on the right is the signature of a naqqāš or decorator called ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ʿAli. Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Wahhāb’s interpretation of another signature found on the inscription band of the Ḥanafi madrasa as that of the architect is contradicted by historical sources, for the signature is that of the shād al-ʿamār, or supervisor of works, who was usually an amir, not a craftsman.

**The Mausoleum**

The domed chamber of the mausoleum is reached by a door on the left side of the prayer niche and is thus located just behind the sanctuary, an unusual plan in Cairo. Only the mosque of Amir Husayn (1319) and the mosque of Mahmūd Pasha (1568) have the mausoleum behind the prayer hall. Usually, if attached to the qibla wall, the mausoleum is to one side of the prayer hall so that worshipers do not pray toward the founder’s mausoleum. The unconventional location of Sultan Ḥasan’s domed mausoleum is most likely explained by the urban setting of the building, built to impress the viewer from the Citadel with the mosque’s grand scale and exotic dome. Because of the location, the mausoleum is free standing on three sides and its windows open onto the street though the structure still adjoins the prayer hall. The concession made to gain these advantages was the unconventional, perhaps unorthodox, but apparently not forbidden, placement of the dome. In fact, building a mausoleum for a founder is in itself unorthodox in Muslim religion, as is even the decoration of mosques. None of the
medieval historians, however, seem to have been upset by the location of Sultan Hasan's mausoleum

The chamber, the largest domed mausoleum in Cairo, thirty meters to the top of the rectangle, is twenty-one meters wide. Its wooden inscription band, whose high relief is painted white, is easily read from below. The wooden stalactite pendentives formerly carried a wooden dome higher than the present one. In the upper part of the transitional zone are inscriptions with the name of Sultan Qāytbāy, indicating that restorations must have been carried out during his reign. Restorations were also made in 1671-77, as stated in an inscription.

The Islamic Museum in Cairo houses a large collection of glass enameled lamps that once hung in the mosque, as well as gigantic and splendid bronze chandeliers. Many chains still hang from the ceiling, but the lamps have gone.

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**THE SULTĀNIYYA MAUSOLEUM (1360’s)**

Located in the Suyūṭī cemetery beneath the southeastern side of the Citadel, this mysterious double mausoleum is undated and unidentified. Its popular name, “the royal” or “sultan’s” mausoleum, indicates only that it belonged to a person of royal rank. It is composed of two similar domes with a vaulted iwān between them, and the whole is built in stone. At a short distance, and now not connected with it, is a minaret that must have belonged to the building, most likely at a corner of the enclosure attached to the mausoleum.

The domes, like those of Ṣarghītmish, have a very high drum, and the transitional zone is not visible from the outside. Also as at Ṣarghītmish, they are both adorned with stalactites, but here these form the base from which ribs grow toward the apex, decorating the dome. The domes’ profiles are pointed, and they have a bulbous shape. The northern dome has square Kufic script carving in the drum, otherwise seen only in marble decorations, the other dome lacks this feature. Both drums are pierced with windows which, unlike the usual pattern, do not alternate with blind windows. The interiors are also different. The northern one has concentric masonry in the inner shell, in the southern dome, the stone courses radiate from the apex of the dome.

The prayer niche of the iwān is made of carved stone and is similar to the two niches flanking the portal of Sultan Hasan, a conch with stalactites, a motif often seen in Turkish Anatolian architecture. The prayer niches of the domes are plain. The minaret is octagonal, similar in design to that of Sultan Hasan, but more slender. Its decorations of inlaid masonry forming geometrical shapes also recall the style of Sultan Hasan. With these parallels to Ṣarghītmish and Sultan Hasan, the building can be dated in the 1360’s.

Like the domes of Ṣarghītmish, those of the Sultāniyya have parallels in the Central Asian architecture of Samarkand. The mausoleum of Timūr built in 1403/4 has a high drum with square Kufic inscription, a double-shell dome, and ribbed exterior ending in stalactites above the drum, but is made of brick covered with colored ceramics, mainly blue. Its profile is similar to the Sultāniyya’s dome, but is not pointed. Here again, the examples at Samarkand cannot have been the prototype, as they are later than the period suggested by other features of the Sultāniyya mausoleum. These features must have a common source from the northwestern province of Persia.

It is interesting to note here another example of Cairo architects translating foreign patterns originally done in brick into stone. The Sultāniyya, the minarets of al-Nāṣir at the Citadel, and the earlier minaret of Ibn Ṭūlūn, all show this translation into stone of prototypes built of brick. One more dome was built in this style, with high drum, ribbed, and with stalactites at the base of the ribs, that of Yūnūs al-Dawādār near the Citadel (1382). However, this one is so elongated that it is sometimes mistaken for a minaret, and it has only one shell. Moreover, the transitional zone is visible from the outside.

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THE MADRASA OF UMM AL-SULTĀN SHA'BĀN (1368/9)

Sultan Sha'bān was a grandson of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. His mother, Khawand (Lady) Baraka, was a wealthy and pious woman. The madrasa associated with both names is situated at Tabbāna, between Bāb Zuwayla and the Citadel.

The inscriptions on the building say that Sultan Sha'bān dedicated the foundation to his mother. The sultan was, however, still a child when the building was erected, and we may assume that Lady Baraka was the founder. In Muslim societies it was not unusual for a woman to erect a religious foundation. We have seen that Shajarat al-Durr founded a madrasa, and there are a number of other foundations created by women including the madrasa of Fāṭima Khāṭūn, wife of Qalāwūn (1283/4); the khanqāh of Umm Anūk, wife of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1363/4); the mosque of Sitt Miska, housekeeper at the court of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1340); the mosque of Fāṭima al-Shaqrā (1469); the mosque of Khadijā bint Dirham wa Nisf (1520); the mosque of Aṣalbāy, wife of Sultan Qāytbāy at Fayyūm (1499), and the mosque of the Ottoman princess Maliḳa Safiyya (1610). The royal ladies at the Mamluk courts were often extremely wealthy, and sometimes quite powerful.

THE EXTERIOR

The madrasa of Umm al-Sultān Sha'bān, founded in 1368/9 for both the Shāfi’i and Ḥanafi rites, had a
that from the street one cannot see the three elements at one time, as one can at Sanjar’s mausoleum.

On the main facade of the building, occupying the corner between a main and a side street, a large grilled window to the left of the portal belongs to a sabil. All mosques had sabils for the thirsty, though not all of these have survived. On the right side of the portal was a watering trough for animals and above it, an arcaded loggia that was a kuttāb or primary school for boys, which like the sabil was a charitable service of the mosque. As Muslim law does not allow children inside the mosque, so the kuttāb was always in a separate structure. Children were taught a basic knowledge of the Quran along with reading and writing. The kuttāb here is reached from the vestibule.

Pl 92 The madrasa-mausoleum of Umm al-Sulṭān Sha'bān
(Department of Antiquities)

Portal built in a style alien to Cairo but typical of Seljuk Anatolia. Instead of a conch above the stalactites, there is a deep stalactite vault with a triangular profile. If an architect came from that area to Cairo to work on the mosque of Sultan Hasan, he might have designed this portal as well, but we know almost nothing of the architects of this period.

Another interesting feature of this mosque is the upper composition of an octagonal minaret with a zigzag carved shaft next to two unequal domes built of stone and ribbed. This minaret is one of the earliest examples of a carved shaft instead of inlaid masonry ablaq decoration. The ribs of the domes end at the base with rows of festoon-like curves. The composition here is quite different from that of Sanjar’s double mausoleum. The minaret is on the left side of the portal, the larger dome is to its left, and the second dome is at the corner, both separated by the prayer hall so

Pl 93 The portal of the madrasa-mausoleum of Umm al-
Sulṭān Sha'bān
The Interior

A bent entrance leads through a long passage to the cruciform madrasa, the awkward layout is a result of the street orientation of the mosque and two mausoleums. There is not much remaining of the original decoration in the building except for some marble in the rather small sanctuary and remains of a painted wooden ceiling in one of the side iwāns. Unlike the madrasa of Sultan Hasan, the iwāns are not vaulted, but have a wooden ceiling. One either side of the qibla iwān is a domed mausoleum.

The northern dome next to the minaret is the larger of the two. In it, Lady Baraka and a daughter are buried. This mausoleum has a prayer niche between two windows overlooking the street. The smaller, southern mausoleum includes the graves of Sultan Sha'bān and his son al-Maṣūr Ḥājjī. Because of its disadvantageous location at the corner, it could not have both a prayer niche and a window onto the main street, and the window was given preference. Thus, this is one of the very few cases of a mausoleum without a prayer niche.

Both the stone domes have an interesting feature: they are not carried by triangular pendentives or several tiers of squinches as was usual during this period, but by plain squinches in the form of an arch at each corner. We see this feature also in the domes of the mosque of Aqsunqur (1347) in brick, and the mausoleum of Tānkizbughā (1362) in stone. It is an archaic feature, since this type of transitional zone was used in the early Fatimid period, as in the dome of al-Hākim, and later replaced by the more composite two (or more) tiered squinches.

The Exterior

The facade has a trilobed stalactite portal framed by a molding. Near the entrance we see the blazon of Iljāy al-Yūsufi, a cup in the middle of a circle divided by three horizontal lines. On the left side of the portal is a sabil surmounted by a kuttab, both on the corner. The kuttab is a loggia with columns at the corner and an arch on each side. At the madrasa of Umm al-Sulṭān Sha'bān, the sabil was on the left and the kuttab on the upper right side, but here the evolution has gone a step further, with sabil and kuttab forming an architectural unified composition that henceforth characterizes all mosques. The advantage of having the sabil at a corner is that it allowed better ventilation, to keep the water fresh, and at the same time provided access to more people to stretch their hands through the grill to have their cups filled by the sabil attendant.

Bibliography

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The Madrasa of Amir Iljāy al-Yūsufi (1373)

Iljāy al-Yūsufi was one of the amirs of Sultan Sha’bān and was married to Lady Baraka after the death of her husband, Sultan Husayn. He built a madrasa with Friday prayer at Sūq al-Silāh, the Weapons Market, on a street on the north side of the mosque of Sultan Hasan.
Between the recesses crowned by stalactites that decorate the facade of the building, there are also two recesses that have keel-arched niches at their tops.

The minaret and the dome are particularly elegant. The minaret is octagonal and circular with inlaid decoration once painted in ablaq. The bulb looks as if it is resting on a flower, the petals of which are represented by carving on the lower part of the bulb. The ribs of the dome, which are the only exterior carving, do not follow the usual vertical pattern from base to apex, but instead follow oblique lines, giving the dome a twisted appearance. We see this pattern sometimes carved on columns on the facades of mosques. The earliest example is on the facade of the al-Aqmar mosque, but this type of column decoration was used in the Byzantine period much earlier.

The Interior

The vestibule has two very noteworthy features: it is roofed by an elaborate groin vault carved in stone, which gives it the appearance of the inside of an umbrella, and the back wall has a trilobed arch also above a groin vault. The interior of this cruciform madrasa is characterized by its strict symmetry in the arrangement of windows. The qibla wall has two rows of pointed-arched windows. Curiously, the prayer niche is plain except for ablaq masonry in the conch.

The courtyard has windows at the corners of the four iwāns, set in recesses with a special type of stalactite at their tops. The students' living quarters have windows overlooking a side street. Here, as at Šarghitmişt, the mausoleum overlooks the street but does not adjoin the prayer hall.

Bibliography

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