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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities

THE MOSQUE OF QIJMAS AL-ISHAQI

A Thesis Submitted to

the Department of Arabic and Islamic Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for

the degree of Master of Arts

By Gazbeya El-Hamamsy

B.A. Psychology

(under the supervision of Dr. Bernard O’Kane)

May 2010

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my father who initially sparked my interest in the field of Islamic art. While working on his thesis, he would drag me, at the age of seven, along on some of his fieldtrips, and although I was too young to appreciate it at the time, something must have remained in my mind from those trips. Following my undergraduate studies at AUC, I decided to pursue a degree in this field.

When came the time to begin work on my thesis, he offered me invaluable encouragement throughout the months when I was researching and writing. Meticulously editing each completed chapter, the comments he made opened my eyes to all sorts of ideas I may have overlooked in the process of writing. For the time and effort he took in doing that, I am truly grateful.

I would also like to thank my advisor Dr. Bernard O’Kane, who guided me through the writing of this thesis and helped me with ideas and provided me with sources.

I also owe much thanks to my husband who has been very supportive, especially in the last couple of months when he would make me sandwiches as I was writing away late into the night. His encouraging words and the sustenance he offered had a calming effect on me when I would get overly stressed.

Last but not least, little Amin is also to thank for being the sweet baby he’s been. His good nature certainly made the process a whole lot easier.

Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the Burji Mamluk mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi built near the end of the fifteenth century during the reign of sultan Qaytbay. It was founded at a time when the city of Cairo had already become heavily built-up and when much maneuvering was needed in order to find a good spot in the city to build on. Qijmas al-Ishaqi, being a powerful emir of sultan Qaytbay, managed through several acts of *istibdal* to acquire the plot he wanted on al-Tabbana street in the Darb al-Ahmar area.

At a time when the focus was on extensive decoration and not so much architectural innovation, the mosque of Qijmas still managed to show ingenuity in both its structure and its decoration. Most striking is the mosque's staggered façade that unfolds like a fan before the eyes of the passerby, and the bridge linking the mosque to its dependencies on the other side of the street. The mosque did not only accommodate the street contours, but it took complete charge of it, and fully integrated it into its plan. This in itself constituted an architectural feat given the odd triangular plot the mosque was built on. The decoration of the mosque is both innovative and surprising at times. It does not simply conform to the Qaytbay decorative repertoire but it displays its own decorative language, especially in its mihrab, its portal and its extensive epigraphy.

Also adding to the interesting aspect of the mosque were its oddities such as the minaret and the dome, which were decorative misfits that appeared to have been left in an almost unfinished state. The kuttab lost its usual place above the sabil and was moved altogether to the other side of the street from the mosque.

In my research, I relied on a number of primary sources – most notably the Comité bulletins and the waqfiyya of the mosque – and secondary sources. In my discussion on the restoration of the mosque, I conducted a close reading of the Comité bulletins, which provide a thorough documentation of the preservation works. The waqfiyya was important in clarifying the function of certain areas of the mosque, which may have otherwise been unclear to me.

The mosque is a highly impressive architectural piece that relies heavily on the element of surprise, with unexpected elements scattered throughout it. In many ways, it is an unusual building that not only followed the Qaytbay building style, but it altogether surpassed it.

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Introduction

The mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi was built near the end of the fifteenth century by emir Qijmas al-Ishaqi¹ during the reign of sultan Qaytbay (1468-1496). By that time, the city of Cairo was already heavily built-up, and emirs were competing for the best spots in the city. Qijmas was an important and favored emir of Qaytbay, who held a number of important posts throughout his career. Following a number of *istibdal* transactions, he managed to secure a spot for his mosque on the busy and popular al-Tabbana street in Darb al-Ahmar neighborhood south of al-Qahira, on which a number of emirs had already erected their pious foundations. The street had also acquired a ceremonial importance during Qaytbay, which explains the mosque's orientation to look towards Bab Zuwayla and not the Citadel.

The busy character of the city played an important role in the shaping of this mosque – both from its structural and decorative standpoints. It defined the architecture of its facades and their decoration, their fenestration and the placement of their different elements. The relatively good condition in which the mosque stands nowadays facilitates its documentation. Throughout this thesis, I will attempt to show the particularities of its construction and ornamentation, the different influences that came into play and that are visible in various parts of the mosque and the innovations and surprise elements that give it its added appeal. Following the four chapters of this thesis, I have attached the segments from the waqfiyya of the mosque describing it.

I have divided my thesis into four chapters. In chapter one, I will be discussing the political, economic and social conditions in Egypt during the time of the building of this mosque, and the defining features of the patronage of sultan Qaytbay. In spite

¹ Qijmas al-Ishaqi died in Damascus in 1487.

of the fact that the end of the fifteenth century proved to be a trying period in the history of the Mamluks in Egypt, marked by political turmoil, recurring epidemics and economic difficulties, the reign of Qaytbay was still a time of great architectural patronage, during which he encouraged his emirs to erect foundations in various areas in and around the city of Cairo. The discussion in this chapter will help to place this mosque within the context of the active patronage of the period.

In chapter two, I will give an overall description of the mosque and its founder. Qijmas' life and the different positions he assumed throughout his career may help to shed light on some of the unresolved decorative questions regarding this mosque. Following that will be a discussion on the restoration works that were undertaken by the Comité starting in 1892. Through a close reading of the Comité bulletins, the state of the mosque and the problems it faced with regards to its preservation come to life. In addition to that, the bulletins provide a detailed account of the restored parts of the mosque – essential for knowing what was original and what was a Comité restoration or altogether a new creation.

Following that, I will be analyzing the mosque from a structural point of view, with a closer look at it in relation to its environs. The plot on which the mosque was built is challenging in that it was almost triangular and limited in size, which resulted in a most interesting façade and a number of peculiarities, the most notable of which was the displacement of the kuttab on the opposite side of the mosque linked to it by a bridge. The challenge of double alignment, which was faced by many buildings founded on main thoroughfares not originally aligned with Mecca, was brilliantly dealt with in this mosque. The street is so well integrated within the structural fabric of the mosque, it practically becomes part of the plan. Finally in this chapter, the

importance of verticality and the fluidity in design of Mamluk buildings such as this one are examined closer.

In the fourth and final chapter of this thesis, I will be examining the epigraphy and the decoration of the mosque. Qijmas' interest in calligraphy must have played a role in the extent and the nature of the inscriptions scattered throughout the exterior and interior of the mosque, which displayed their own set of innovations. The decorative prowess of the Qaytbay period appears in this mosque in all its splendor – adorning everything from panels to portals to window spandrels – and culminating in the decoration of the mihrab.

Chapter I: Egypt During the Time of the Foundation of the Mosque and Architectural Patronage during the Reign of Qaytbay

1.1 Conditions in Egypt at the Time of the Foundation of the Mosque

The late fifteenth century, during which the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi was founded, was a tumultuous period in the history of the Mamluks in Egypt, with times of severe depression brought on by political dissention, plagues and famines, and times of relative peace and prosperity. The mosque was founded not long before the Ottomans seized power away from the Mamluks in 1517.

The final century of the Mamluk dynasty opened with the disastrous reign of Faraj (1399-1412) and ended with the Mamluks' unconditional defeat at the hands of the Ottomans (1517). It is considered a period of decline, interrupted only by remissions during the reigns of Barsbay and Qaytbay: the great Mamluk institutions experienced irreversible deterioration; the country faced external problems to the north that would bring about its fall, its demographic and economic bases collapsed, disorder and insecurity reigned—and the city naturally felt the effects of these disastrous developments.²

Although the long reign of sultan Qaytbay – spanning 28 years starting in 1468 to 1496 – was marked by relative stability, there still were costly military campaigns and three severe outbreaks of the plague during his reign, which placed a great deal of strain on the country's resources.³ The number of dead incurred by these outbreaks had a detrimental effect on both the demography of the country and its economy. The first six years of Qaytbay's reign were relatively stable politically, but things once again took a turn for the worse for a little over a decade as of 1477, with intermittent conflicts with the Ottomans who were posing a threat to the Mamluks. Those threats were exacerbated by internal problems within the country. A treaty was finally signed between both parties that would last for around fifteen years. The huge

² Raymond, *Cairo*, 165.

³ Ibid 167. According to Raymond, during Qaytbay's reign, the plague broke out in 1469, 1477 and 1492.

financial burden imposed by these conflicts constituted a hefty price to pay. “The preparations for an expedition represented a veritable financial chasm, particularly as the Mamluks became more and more demanding and wanted bonuses both at the departure of an expedition and at its return (Qaytbay’s sixteen campaigns are estimated to have cost 7 million dinars).”⁴

Internal conflicts and the demographic decline affected the country’s commerce and agriculture. Struggles erupted between Mamluks of different allegiances and some industries faced difficulties. The revenue from agriculture also declined due to the depopulation of Egypt following the epidemic outbreaks. The decline in revenue and resources in Egypt following political problems and natural disasters forced sultans, such as Qaytbay, to resort to extreme measures, often at the expense of the population, to fund their architectural projects. “It is true that, in order to procure money for building, he had to recourse to very reprehensible means; he overtaxed the miserable population and extorted money from his own Emirs by torture and confiscation.”⁵ Raymond states that, in 1491, Qaytbay ordered a number of “exceptional taxes”, including five months’ worth of revenue from properties under him.⁶

1.2 Architectural Patronage during the Reign of Qaytbay

By the time of Qaytbay’s ascension to power, the city of Cairo was a metropolis that appeared to have reached its building limits – a result of the Mamluk sultans’ desire to leave “their architectural imprint upon the capital.”⁷ This, however,

⁴ Raymond, *Cairo*, 166.

⁵ Devonshire, *Moslem Builders*, 69.

⁶ Raymond, *Cairo*, 168.

⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, “Al-Nasir Muhammad and Qaytbay,” 275.

did not deter the sultan from carrying out his own building program, which included the foundation of buildings by him and his emirs as well as the restoration and the alteration of existing pious foundations. Behrens-Abouseif notes that his restorations of existing buildings was a distinctive feature of his architectural patronage as it would seem more glamorous to erect one's own building, as opposed to preserving someone else's foundation. "Immortalization of one's name in association with a pious or charitable work had always been one of the Muslim ruler's incentives for the erection of buildings. A ruler usually preferred to erect a mosque rather than enlarge or improve that of a predecessor."⁸

While the extent of the building projects undertaken by Qaytbay is rather impressive given the overall social, political and economic climate at the time, it was the relative stability during his reign, and his long tenure in power that allowed for a revival of architectural patronage and commercial activity in the city of Cairo.

...The patronage of Qaytbay took place in circumstances that were quite different, and in fact far less favorable than those al-Nasir enjoyed. The empire was less prosperous during Qaytbay's reign...He had to cancel some of the traditional imperial ceremonies and regalia, concentrating his resources on building and on the purchase of Mamluks...⁹

Qaytbay's strong interest in the art of building and his contribution to Cairene architecture earned him a place alongside sultan al-Nasir Muhammad as one of the greatest patrons of art the city has ever seen. He is said to have sponsored "at least as many religious foundations as had al-Nasir."¹⁰

"Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun and Sultan al-Asraf Qaytbay are widely acknowledged as the greatest patrons of art and architecture of medieval Egypt...It probably is not an overstatement to say that Mamluk art

⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, "Al-Nasir Muhammad and Qaytbay," 267.

⁹ Ibid, 276.

¹⁰ Ibid, 274.

and, more specifically, medieval Cairo, are essentially the products of the patronage of these sultans.”¹¹

Aside from a number of impressive buildings of his own, Qaytbay also strongly encouraged his important emirs to build their own residences and religious foundations in different parts of the city. Amongst these emirs was Qijmas al-Ishaqi who chose to erect his mosque in the busy neighborhood of Darb al-Ahmar.

Unlike earlier Mamluk buildings, those founded during the reign of Qaytbay were usually of a more modest size with less emphasis on monumentality and more importance placed on the decoration of the edifice. The heavily built-up state of the city would not have allowed for monumental buildings at this late stage of Mamluk rule. It was in areas such as the Northern Cemetery that monumental buildings could still be built. A number of emirs such as Qijmas, however, still opted for the busy Cairene neighborhoods as sites for their foundations.

Architectural creativity came second to extensive carving and ornamentation. The mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi, while conforming to the Qaytbay style of modestly-sized buildings, managed to display both architectural ingenuity and decorative splendor, earning it a place among the more interesting monuments of the period. “On the whole the buildings of Qaytbay were intended less to enlarge the city than to preserve and embellish it, and to improve housing conditions and water supplies for its inhabitants.”¹²

¹¹ Behrens-Abouseif, “Al-Nasir Muhammad and Qaytbay,” 267.

¹² Ibid, 267.

Chapter II: Description of the Founder and his Mosque and the Restoration Works done on the Mosque

2.1 Qijmas al-Ishaqi – The Founder

Qijmas al-Ishaqi al-Zahiri Jaqmaq (-1487) was an emir of sultan Qaytbay (1468-1496). He is described by the contemporary historian Ibn Iyas as being a good, charitable and polite man with a majestic allure.¹³ He was also known for being a humble and well-respected figure. His bravery during the battles against the Ottomans was something for which he was remembered.¹⁴ He grew up under the guidance of his teacher and mentor sultan al-Zahir Jaqmaq (1438-1453). The appellation “al-Zahiri” in Qijmas’ name was most likely a result of his association with his teacher Jaqmaq. Qijmas mastered the art of calligraphy, which caught the attention of Jaqmaq.¹⁵

نشأ في خدمة استاذة وجود الخط في طبقتة بحيث كتب برودة وقدمها له فاتهم بأنها خط شيخه
وكان كذلك فامتحنه فكتب بحضرتة بسملة فاستحسنها سيما وقد أشبهت كتابة شيخه فيها وصرف
له أشياء

He (Qijmas al-Ishaqi) was raised in the service of his teacher and excelled in calligraphy. He wrote the *burda* and showed it to him (Jaqmaq), who accused him of pretending his shaykh’s writing was his own, and so he had him write a *basmala* in his presence. After writing the *basmala* in a way that resembled his shaykh’s writing, his calligraphic abilities were confirmed.

It was common for young Mamluks to be taught in the art of calligraphy and Quran memorization.¹⁶ His appreciation for calligraphy may have affected his choice of the inscriptions – both extensive and innovative – to be applied in his mosque on al-Tabbana.

Qijmas ascended the ranks of Mamluk power, beginning as treasurer (*khazindar kis*) under al-Zahir Khushqadam (1461-1467). The duty of *khazindar kis*

¹³ Wiet, *Mamelouks circassiens*, 272.

¹⁴ Al-Sakhawi, *al-Daw’ al-lami’*, 6:213-4.

¹⁵ Ibid, 6:213.

¹⁶ Yehia, *al-Amir qijmas*, 20.

was to carry the purse with the money intended for charity and to distribute it amongst the poor.¹⁷ Following that, he was promoted during the very short reign of al-Zahir Billbay (1467) as emir of ten (*amir 'ashara*), which was a military post allowing him to command ten warriors during battle and he was given a non-revocable permission to ride.¹⁸ Qijmas' career truly took off following sultan Qaytbay's reign, with whom he shared good relations and became close to. Qaytbay even housed Qijmas in his home in al-Batiniyya district. Soon after becoming sultan, Qaytbay assigned Qijmas to the important post of governor of Damascus (*na'ib al-sham*), which he occupied until 1470 when Qaytbay wanted him back to Egypt to assume the governorship of Alexandria.¹⁹ The latter post was an important one given the fact that Alexandria's coasts constituted a target for external attacks.

He remained in Alexandria until 1475 when he returned to Cairo as grand master of stables (*amir akhur kabir*). In 1479, during his time in Cairo, he went on the pilgrimage as emir of the pilgrimage (*amir al-hajj*) heading the *mahmal* procession (*birakb al-mahmal*), which was a prestigious title given the importance of the journey of the *kiswa* from Cairo to the holy city of Mecca (fig. 2.1).²⁰

امير اخور الاسحاقى، قجماس على السلطان اذ لى الاخر ربيع وفي
المحمل بركب الحاج امرة في وقرره ك بير،

In the month of *rabi' al-akhar* (April) the sultan gave orders to Qijmas al-Ishaqi, grand master of stables, to head the pilgrimage and the *mahmal* procession.

In 1480, following the imprisonment of Qunsuh al-Yahyawī (the governor of Damascus), Qijmas once again assumed the position of governor of Damascus. He died in Damascus in 1487, and was buried in the funerary madrasa he founded there.

¹⁷ Yehia, *al-Amir qijmas*, 29.

¹⁸ Al-Sakhawī, *al-Daw' al-lami'*, 6:213.

¹⁹ Rizq, *al-'Imara al-islamiyya wa'l-qibtiyya*, 1330.

²⁰ Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i al-zuhūr*, 3:146.

Qijmas was responsible for a considerable number of constructions. In Alexandria, he oversaw the construction of Qaytbay's fortress and built a Friday mosque behind the Alexandria Gate, along with a tomb where sultan al-Zahir Tamurbugha was buried, and a large garden and a khan nearby.²¹

و عمر لنفسه حين نيابته بها جامعا ظاهر باب اسكندرية المسمى بباب رشيد للجمعة والجماعات مع تربة وخان بقربه كان السبب فيه عدم أمن من يبيت من المسافرين ممن يصل الى الباب بعد الغروب وغلقه وحصل به نفع كبير

He founded, during his post as governor (of Alexandria), a Friday mosque called Bab Rashid behind the Gate of Alexandria, along with a tomb and a khan nearby, which constituted a safe overnight place for travelers reaching the gate after its closing at sunset. It served a good purpose.

He also built a ribat by the sea at Silsila,²² and restored a mosque known as al-Sawari mosque near the Sidra Gate.²³

In Damascus, he built the above-mentioned funerary madrasa, which is often compared to the one he built in Cairo in al-Darb al-Ahmar district (the subject of this thesis).²⁴ In addition to his Cairene funerary mosque, he also built a tomb in Cairo that included sufi activities.

²¹ Al-Sakhawi, *al-Daw' al-lami'*, 6:213.

²² Silsila is on the eastern harbor of Alexandria.

²³ Al-Sakhawi, *al-Daw' al-lami'*, 6:213.

²⁴ Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i al-zuhūr*, 3:243. I do not think that Qijmas' funerary madrasa in Damascus still exists as I could not find a mention in any of my sources pointing to its existence until this day.

2.2 Description of the mosque

The mosque of emir Qijmas al-Ishaqi was built between 1479-1481. It is located on al-Tabbana street in the Darb al-Ahmar area. It is situated at approximately 200 meters to the east of Bab Zuwayla in direction of the Citadel (fig. 2.2).²⁵

The mosque occupies a triangular plot of land that is formed by the angle of al-Tabbana street and its offshoot Abu Hurayba street.²⁶ It measures 27 meters from east to west by 24 meters from north to south, with a surface area of 480 meters.²⁷ It is freestanding on all four sides except for the bridge that connects the mosque's northern side to the ablution court, the drinking trough and the kuttab on the other side of Abu Hurayba street (figs. 2.3-2.4). It has two main facades: the northwest and southwest facades, both of which overlook al-Tabbana street (figs. 2.6-2.7). The remaining facades consist of the northern one on Abu Hurayba street and the eastern one on the narrow alley called Sikkat Abu Hurayba (figs. 3.1-3.2). Unlike the main facades, the latter two overlook streets of lesser traffic and importance.

The mosque is raised above shops on its ground floor level.²⁸ The description of the shops in the waqfiyya of the mosque coincides well with their state nowadays. It mentions the existence of three shops on the ground floor of the northwest façade, with their stone landing and wooden doors, as well as their placement below the three grille windows of this façade (fig. 2.5).²⁹

²⁵ The mentioned distance between Bab Zuwayla and the mosque is according to the Comité bulletin on the mosque. Comité Bulletin. 139th Report of the 2nd Commission. 7 Oct. 1892, 86-7.

²⁶ Abu Hurayba street used to be called Bir al-Mish street.

²⁷ Comité Bulletin. 139th Report of the 2nd Commission. 7 Oct. 1892, 86-7.

²⁸ Mubarak estimates the mosque's elevation above street level to be of three-arms' length. Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 4:102.

²⁹ Waqfiyya lines #7 & 8

Coming from Bab Zuwayla in direction of the Citadel, the first façade the viewer encounters is the northwest façade (fig. 2.6).³⁰ It is composed of two rows of three windows, behind which lies the western iwan of the interior. The top row is made up of arched windows and below it a row of rectangular grille windows. Following that is the eye-catching, stepped southwest façade occupied by the sabil, a highly decorated portal and the mausoleum with its dome (fig. 2.7). The stepping follows the contours of al-Tabbana, and truly distinguishes this mosque from other Mamluk examples with straight facades. Also featuring on this façade is the minaret located near the main entrance, and which, along with the dome, provides the mosque with a degree of verticality.

Due to the restrictive plot of the mosque, the kuttab is not above the sabil as was traditionally the case in other Mamluk examples. It was moved to the other side of Abu Hurayba street above the drinking trough (fig. 2.8). This oddity has led some to question whether the corner on the southwest façade (occupied by the sabil) was actually occupied by a sabil or not. The foundation inscription on the upper metal band of the door leading into this space confirms that it was indeed a sabil (fig. 2.9).³¹ Although the sabil remains closed nowadays, the carved marble shadirwan with its multi-tiered muqarnas hood and the gilded ceiling with its muqarnas corner pieces, are slightly visible through its grilles (figs. 2.10-2.11). The waqfiyya makes a mention of a basin placed by each window of the sabil in which the potable water was placed

³⁰ The road from Bab Zuwayla to the Citadel is the primary direction of traffic nowadays. Considering the ceremonial route during the reign of Qaytbay also followed this same direction, it is possible to assume that the direction of traffic was the same at the time of the foundation of the mosque as it is today.

³¹ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 694. Unfortunately, due to the accumulation of dust and dirt, the inscription on the metal band of the sabil door is only legible when examined up-close, but it is hardly clear in photographs, and so the figure I am referring to here unfortunately does not show the actual inscription but rather an overall view of the sabil door.

for easy access to the passersby.³² There is a narrow staircase in the interior of the sabil leading to the space above it occupied by cells (*khalāwi*) set on two levels (fig. 2.12).

Following the sabil is the main portal of the mosque (fig. 4.11). It is an impressive, highly charged decorative composition. The remaining two elements of this main southwest façade – namely the minaret and the dome – constitute decorative anomalies in their lack of carving and ornamentation (figs. 4.26-4.27). According to the waqfiyya, the mausoleum holds two tombs,³³ but Qijmas al-Ishaqi did not occupy either of them as he was buried in Damascus. It was a shaykh named Ahmed Abu Hurayba al-Naqshibandi who was buried there in 1268 – which is how the mosque got popularly known as the mosque of Abu Hurayba. The tomb next to that of Abu Hurayba is said to have been left empty.³⁴

On the eastern façade of the mosque is another decorated portal that opens onto stairs that descend to the crypt below the level of the mausoleum (figs. 2.13-2.14). It connects with the eastern door of the open-air passage between the entrance vestibule and the sahn of the mosque as the latter door also leads down to the crypt (fig. 2.15). Both doors remain locked nowadays. The eastern qibla façade portal displays an unusual amount of decoration considering the narrowness of the alley it overlooks. As for the northern façade, it is devoid of any decoration.

The mosque interior is a four-iwan plan composed of two large iwans – the larger eastern qibla iwan, and its western counterpart – and two small lateral iwans occupying the north and south sides (fig. 2.4). The lateral iwans are so small, they

³² Waqfiyya line #18.

³³ Ibid, #53.

³⁴ Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 4:102.

look more like recesses than full-fledged iwans, and they are referred to in the waqfiyya as ‘*sidillas*’ which is defined as being a “large recess in the side walls of a qa’a.”³⁵ Above the southern lateral iwan are cells set on two levels (fig. 2.16). They are reached by means of stairs that continue upwards to the roof of the mosque from which the call to prayer is made. There are also cells above the entrance vestibule of the mosque (fig. 2.17). The waqfiyya provides some descriptions of these cells.³⁶ An elaborate lantern, added onto the mosque by the Comité, covers the sahn (fig. 2.21). It is unclear whether the mosque was originally adorned with one or not. The interior displays refined decorative features of the Qaytbay repertoire with its carved stone and inlaid marble panels and extensive inscriptions. The mihrab is an elaborate composition, which features a number of interesting innovations, and the minbar displays fine craftsmanship in the art of woodwork (figs. 4.40-4.55). A kursi was originally part of the interior, but has since been moved out of the mosque and today it is located in the Museum of Islamic Art (fig. 4.4). In his account on the mosque, Mubarak mentions the existence of a dikka, which no longer exists.³⁷

The mausoleum lies to the south of the qibla iwan, connected to it by means of a small passageway. Like its dome, it is barely decorated. It has a mihrab and grille windows that open onto the southwest and eastern facades (figs. 4.30-4.31).

Connected to the north side of the mosque through a bridge are the ablution area (which has been completely renovated), the drinking trough and the kuttab (fig. 2.18). Passing through the bridge from the mosque, one is led to stairs that descend

³⁵ Waqfiyya line #46. This definition of *sidillas* is according to the Islamic Art Network. In its definition, it also adds that following the considerable reduction in size of the side iwans by the end of the Burju Mamluk period, they came to be designated instead as *sidillas*.

³⁶ Ibid, lines #42-44.

³⁷ Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 4:102.

towards a corridor that leads to the ablution court.³⁸ The corridor ceiling is groin vaulted with doors lining its western side (fig. 2.19). The doors are locked nowadays, but they may have lead to rooms used by employees of the mosque. There also is a door on the street level that opens straight onto the corridor leading to the ablution court. On the same side of the street, there is another door that opens onto stairs leading upwards to the kuttab located above the drinking trough.

The drinking trough is nowadays an unused space while the kuttab is still being used as a school (fig. 2.8). In the text of the waqfiyya, there is a mention of “an old lower one known as the drinking trough” and in the following line, it says that Qijmas expanded the drinking trough.³⁹

64. سفلى قديم يعرف بالحوض والمسجد (...) تغمده الله برحمته فجدد الوقف المشار إليه (...)

65. والبئر والمسجد احتسابا لله تعالى واوسع في الحوض (...)

This may indicate that the drinking trough existed before this mosque was founded, and that Qijmas kept it in its location, expanded it, and planned the placement of the remaining parts of the mosque— namely the kuttab above it and the ablution court — around this existing drinking trough. It is difficult to say whether this drinking trough was part of an existing complex or whether it functioned as an independent entity.

In the sources, the foundation of Qijmas al-Ishaqi is sometimes referred to as a mosque and at other times as a madrasa. The waqfiyya itself uses both terms in

³⁸ At the top of these stairs is a groin vault with a cruciform in its center (fig. 4.54). We will see another occurrence of this design in a small passage between the qibla iwan and the mausoleum – both of which are reminiscent of the vestibule vault of the earlier funerary madrasa of Uljay al-Yusufi (1373).

³⁹ Waqfiyya lines #64-65.

referring to the building. It is clear from the waqfiyya that the mosque also served the purpose of a madrasa: ⁴⁰

4. الكامل أرضا وبنا المعروف بإنشائه وعمارتة الذي عنه جامع ه المعمور بذكر الله تعالى المذكور اعلاه المعروف بالمدرسة (.....)
58. وهذه الشبائيك كلها نحاس اصفر بجوار باب المدفن بأيوان الجامع الكبير باب مربع يدخل منه إلى (.....)
59. ولا حراز كتب المدرسة المذكورة (.....)

The interchangeable use of both terms demonstrates the multi-functionality of Mamluk buildings at the time.

2.3 Restoration Works in the Mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi

The Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe was formed in 1881 by Khedive Tawfiq with the aim of preserving Islamic and Coptic monuments in Egypt. It was part of the Ministry of Waqf until 1936 when it was moved under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and it was finally dissolved in 1961. Its most prominent figure was a Hungarian architect named Max Herz Pasha who headed the body between 1890-1914 and whose documentation work remains an invaluable resource on monuments. Today the Supreme Council of Antiquities has assumed the responsibilities once held by the Comité.

The Comité was made up of two sections: the First Commission which came up with an inventory of every monument in Egypt – Islamic and Coptic – while the Second Commission was the more technical group which concerned itself with visiting the sites and making recommendations for changes. It also provided a detailed

⁴⁰ Waqfiyya lines #4 and #58-59.

account on the state of the monuments and the issues they faced, with follow-up reports on each monument.⁴¹

The reports of the Comité concerning the state of the Qijmas mosque give us an interesting glimpse into the world of conservation and restoration of Islamic monuments in Egypt at the end of the 19th century. Without such efforts, many monuments such as this one would be in a decrepit state by now or would be altogether gone. It is clear from the detailed reports that the Comité regularly inspected the mosque and many other monuments with any needed repairs carefully documented, and made proposals for the necessary works. While these were probably not the only times when restoration work was done on the mosque, the meticulous documentation the Comité left is unparalleled. But aside from learning about the areas of the mosque of Qijmas that were being fixed, the bulletins have more to offer by illustrating the daily dealings surrounding the maintenance of a mosque.

The Comité documentation reveals that, aside from the Ministry of Waqf – for which the Comité assumed an important advisory role – the Ministry of Public Works was also among the parties involved in the preservation efforts. In addition to making proposals regarding the preservation of a mosque, the Comité would also follow closely the progression of the work undertaken on the monument. The Ministry of Waqf was concerned with the mosque and its dependencies, while the Ministry of Public Works was involved in all that concerned the urban surroundings of the mosque.

The bulletins also highlight the tensions that arose between the various parties involved in the monument's preservation and at times even legal disputes. The

⁴¹ Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation.

Comité was sometimes responsible for mediating between the Ministry of Waqf and the Ministry of Public Works. Sometimes one party would place conditions on the other before accepting to take part in a given conservation project. The reports also shed light on the daily workings of maintaining a mosque. Everything from budgeting issues, to street level concerns was included in the bulletins.⁴²

There are several recurrent themes in the bulletins prepared by the Comité concerning the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi. One of the main themes is the importance of ensuring that the commercial entities occupying the ground floor of the mosque not have any detrimental effect on the state of the mosque and that the Ministry of Waqf apply tighter restrictions on the rental terms. One of the bulletins expressed concern over the state of the door frames of the shops and its potential impact on the solidity of the facades.⁴³ Another one questions whether allowing shop owners to rent out the space of the old drinking trough under the kuttab would have a detrimental effect on the structure and goes further in requesting that the Ministry of Waqf limit the duration of the rental contract to no more than one year in order to assess the potential risk.⁴⁴ In a third bulletin, the Comité asks the Ministry of Waqf that no commercial rental permission be granted prior to getting the opinion of the Comité on the matter.⁴⁵

An issue that often comes up in the discussions of the Comité is the assessment of the quality of restoration work done on the mosque. The Comité visited the monument regularly and gave its opinion on how well – or not – the work has been executed. There were often delays in the completion of restoration projects. These delays were documented and the possible fines incurred upon the artisans for

⁴² An example of budgeting issues can be found in the Comité Bulletin. 161st Report of the 2nd Commission. 1894, 18.

⁴³ Comité Bulletin. 160th Report of the 2nd Commission. 1894, 13-14.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 300th Report of the 2nd Commission. 1902, 33.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 163rd Report of the 2nd Commission. Nov. 1894, 41.

the delays were left up to the discretion of the Comité – often dependent on how satisfied it was with the quality of the works done.

The Comité complained about the filth on al-Tabbana street in front of the mosque and its effect on its appearance. According to the report, the governorate claimed it was not responsible for the cleaning of this part of the street and so the Comité asked the Ministry of Public Works to take care of this issue as the doors on the northern side of the mosque were already rotten.⁴⁶ In addition, the mosque faced problems with sewage.

The rise in the street level of al-Tabbana was problematic for the lower parts of the mosque and was compounded by a declination in the street. The segment of al-Tabbana street that overlooks the northwestern façade has a slope which was problematic for the ground floor shops of the mosque that were flooded when it rained.⁴⁷ To resolve that, the Comité requested that the level of the street abutting the mosque be lowered and that a small barrier be built to stop the rain from reaching the shops. With that in mind, a small wall with a balustrade was erected to protect the passersby from falling into the lowered segment (fig. 2.7). This lower part along with the balustrade still exists today and has protected the ground floor of the mosque against the inevitable rise in the street level surrounding the mosque.

A reading of the bulletins also sheds light on the restoration works done. While no work was done on the structural aspect of the mosque, in its earliest report dating to October 1892, the Comité proposed a complete restoration of the minaret, warning that it was dangerous to keep it in the condition it was in as there were segments that risked collapse. In many parts of the iwan ceilings, the gilding and paint

⁴⁶ Comité Bulletin. 255th Report of the 2nd Commission. 1899, 66.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 231st Report of the 2nd Commission. 1898, 8-9.

had disappeared as a result of the infiltration of water.⁴⁸ Considering it a matter of urgent need, in 1894 the Comité restored the ceiling of the east and west iwans and repainted them – at the cost of 56 Egyptian pounds (figs. 4.59-4.60).⁴⁹ The Comité most often favored the preservation of parts of a monument over their rebuilding so as to avoid disrupting the daily functions taking place in the monument. It preferred to try and maintain things in a good condition instead of completely changing a part of a monument, but in a case like this one, the highly dilapidated state of the ceilings left the Comité with no option but to replace them completely.⁵⁰

Another matter of concern was the disappearance of the lantern of the sahn. The Comité considered a lantern necessary in the conservation of the mosque's interior. The photograph of the mosque taken in 1892 accompanying the first report by the Comité on the mosque confirms the lack of a lantern above the sahn of this mosque (fig. 2.20). The lantern in question is not visible from the outside, which suggests that it either did indeed disappear by the time the Comité approached the mosque to begin its work or that it never existed in the first place. This implies that the existing lantern, with its star and geometric patterns, was either the Comité's replacement for one that no longer existed or it was altogether a Comité creation (fig. 2.21). The waqfiyya of the mosque makes no mention of a lantern covering the sahn of the interior. The lantern in Qijmas' mosque closely resembles that in the funerary complex of Qaytbay in the Northern Cemetery (1472-4), which is also a Comité addition (fig. 2.22).

Is it possible that the sahn of this mosque may have originally been designed with no lantern? If the madrasa of al-Ghuri (1502-4) is any indication, then one can

⁴⁸ Comité Bulletin. 139th Report of the 2nd Commission. 7 Oct. 1892, 86-7.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 161st Report of the 2nd Commission. 23 Jan. 1894, 19.

⁵⁰ Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation.

hypothesize that the original plan of Qijmas' interior may have been that of a sahn with an opening in its roof with possibly only a net (*shabaka sharit*) as cover (fig. 2.23).⁵¹ The following comments by Gaston Wiet in *Cairo: City of Commerce* seem to be in favor of the idea that the plan of late Mamluk mosques such as Qijmas al-Ishaqi may not have originally included a lantern in their plan. The points made by Wiet would also explain the uncovered nature of al-Ghuri's interior:

In the fifteenth century very little open space was left in the city. As a result, the public buildings which were erected had to be smaller than the earlier ones. Schools were built on a reduced scale, and the central open courtyard was eliminated. The entire building was covered by a roof which contained an opening to admit daylight. Of course, housing for teachers and students in these buildings was out of the question. Thus, from the fifteenth century on, no difference can be seen between the schools and the mosques. There is a rectangular prayer room; the lateral liwans are reduced to mere recesses, and the only reminder of the old central court is a slight difference in floor level.⁵²

Among the other parts of the interior to have been restored was the minbar in 1894 (fig. 4.55). According to the Comité's assessment, the restoration work was of high quality.⁵³ Unfortunately, the door of the minbar no longer exists today as it has been stolen some years ago (fig. 4.56). Above the area once occupied by that door is an inscription referring to the restoration of the minbar during the reign of khedive Abbas Helmi II, which goes as follows (fig. 2.24):⁵⁴

تجدد هذا المنبر المبارك في عصر خديو مصر المعظم عباس حلمي الثاني، ادام الله
ايامه في سنة اثنى عشر وثلاثمائة بعد الألف من الهجرة النبوية

This blessed minbar has been restored during the reign of the great khedive of Egypt Abbas Hemli II, God grant him a long life, in the *hijra* year of 1312 (1907).

⁵¹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 298. The net that was originally above the sahn in the madrasa of al-Ghuri has disappeared. Nowadays, there are only two planks of wood going across the open space. Behrens-Abouseif says that the net was to deter birds and their droppings from entering into the mosque interior.

⁵² Wiet, *City of Art and Commerce*, 133.

⁵³ Comité Bulletin. 172nd Report of the 2nd Commission. 1894, 120.

⁵⁴ Yehia, *al-Amir qijmas*, 131.

The part of the mosque on the opposite side of the bridge – including the bridge itself - seems to have been in need of a facelift. The façade as well as the drinking trough under the kuttab, also needed repairs.⁵⁵ The support of the walls of the mosque's dependencies was apparently in a very poor state and on the verge of collapsing.

On a lighter note, the Comité was involved in decorative matters as well such as deciding on the color of the carpet of the mosque. The Comité also made suggestions for the type of lighting to be used inside the mosque. In 1903, it suggested to the Ministry of Waqf that instead of using gas for lighting the mosque, they should employ electrical lights once electricity reached the Darb al-Ahmar area.⁵⁶

The Comité bulletins shed some light on the daily tribulations of preserving a monument. It becomes clear that the preservation and restoration of a mosque was not a straightforward matter. Many parties were involved, budgeting issues and legal problems were encountered and there were also sometimes conflicting interests at play. Overall, the task of preserving a monument was an exercise of patience and perseverance.

⁵⁵ The Comité bulletins refer to the structure under the kuttab as the *abreuvoir*, which I have taken to mean the drinking trough.

⁵⁶ Comité Bulletin. 318th Report of the 2nd Commission. 1903, 30.

Chapter III: The Structure of the Mosque and its Relation to its Environs

Mamluk buildings were to a large extent a function of their surroundings. It would be inaccurate to analyze a monument in a vacuum independent of its neighboring context because Mamluk building principles were flexible, depending on a site's needs, rather than a strict set of rules. In the following text, I will take a closer look at the structural aspects of the mosque of Qijmas. They will be analyzed in relation to the mosque's location on al-Tabbana street, the importance of verticality in a dense urban environment such as this one, the spatial challenges posed by the triangular plot of land that Qijmas managed to secure for himself, and the peculiarities in the plan that arose as a result.

3.1 The mosque within the context of the Darb al-Ahmar area and al-Tabbana street

3.1.1 The Mosque on al-Tabbana Street

The expansion of the city southward outside al-Qahira between Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel “was the natural consequence of Saladin's construction of the Citadel [started in 1176] which opened up a large area for urban settlement between al-Qahirah and the new center for the army and government.”⁵⁷ The southern area saw a demographic expansion starting with the Ayyubids up until the beginning of the 18th century.

The urban development of the southern region of Cairo – which includes the Darb al-Ahmar area – continued well into the reign of Sultan Qaytbay. The mosque of

⁵⁷ Raymond, “Al-Maqrizi's Khitat,” 152.

Qijmas al-Ishaqi was one of 26 mosques built in the area south of al-Qahira between 1442 and 1517.⁵⁸ In importance, al-Tabbana came second only to royal al-Mu‘izz street. It was, however, the sole route to the Citadel from the Fatimid city for the population, and it grew as the “umbilical cord” linking the city to the Citadel.⁵⁹ Unlike al-Mu‘izz street, which was lined exclusively with royal religious foundations and amirial palaces, al-Tabbana was not adorned with a royal importance. It was, however, considered by Mamluk emirs from the time of al-Nasir Muhammad until the end of the fifteenth century as being a desirable location for their foundations. The only foundations of a royal nature on this street are the minarets of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (1415-20) above Bab Zuwayla at one end of it and the Citadel at the other end.

The trouble that Qijmas al-Ishaqi took in locating his mosque on this street is not only indicative of the street’s attractiveness as a site for such buildings, but also of the importance for Mamluk patrons to show their commitment to Islam by endowing pious foundations along the main arteries of the city that enjoyed a large degree of exposure. During the reign of Qaytbay, al-Tabbana had become the last stretch of the ceremonial route taken by the sultan leading from Bab Zuwayla all the way to the Citadel, the seat of Mamluk rule. The ceremonial routes went from east to west of the city and from north to south – as was previously mentioned – before reaching the Citadel. Ibn Iyas describes Qaytbay’s first procession by saying that the sultan entered the city through Bab al-Nasr in a lavish procession in which the city was beautifully decorated, with the finest silks laid out for the sultan’s horses to step on, and gold and

⁵⁸ Raymond, “Al-Maqrizi’s Khatat,” 154.

⁵⁹ The term “umbilical cord” was used by Rabbat in describing the role of al-Tabbana in his lecture entitled “How Mamluk architecture co-opted the streets of Cairo,” March 23rd 2010, at the American University in Cairo.

silver thrown in his path. Qaytbay went from the madrasa of Umm al-Sultan Sha‘ban (1368) on al-Tabbana all the way to the Citadel.⁶⁰ This route taken by the sultan would also explain why the mosque of Qijmas was oriented to look towards Bab Zuwayla and not the Citadel.

3.1.2 Acquisition of the Land

Qijmas al-Ishaqi went through quite some trouble to secure for himself the plot of land on which he built his mosque. He was a powerful emir who used his influence to acquire land in a prominent spot on al-Tabbana through several acts of *istibdal*.

It was not only al-Qahira proper that was feeling the effects of urbanization, but soon enough the areas outside the city walls were under pressure as well. They were packed with religious and secular buildings that were tied up in *waqf*. By the fifteenth century urban properties were a potentially profitable asset to have and influential Mamluks found a way to go around the *waqf* that existed in areas of the city that were already built up.⁶¹ They did that through *istibdal* or exchange by acquiring property from a *waqf*. Following the acquisition of the property, the new owners were free to make use of it as they pleased. Qijmas, for instance, destroyed the buildings that existed at the place where he built his mosque.

As a result, by the fifteenth century the legitimization of this process became inevitable, and the spread of *istibdal* gave a new impetus to construction. Thus, al-Qahira saw a new wave of large-scale building projects and the restoration of some of its decayed urban centers. Since *waqifs*-to-be were now able to clear up large plots of valuable land legitimately within the city proper, they would venture in large urbanization projects such as the ones that took

⁶⁰ Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i al-zuhūr*, 3:34.

⁶¹ Fernandes, “*Istibdal*,” 206.

place during the rule of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, Barsbay, Qaytbay, or al-Ghawri.⁶²

The *waqf* system was an important regulatory element in the acquisition and development of land – especially in a city as tightly knit as Cairo was by the end of the fifteenth century.

It is important to note that urban growth, with its combination of charitable and commercial structures, was not only a result of urban planning, but was indeed imposed by the *waqf* system, by which religious and pious institutions were financed and regulated... The creation of a religious institution was thus not only a pious deed, but also a vehicle of urban vitalization and lucrative business for the founder. Understanding this combination of interests is essential in examining and understanding the urban development of Islamic cities.⁶³

Qijmas acquired four plots of land that were *waqf* properties through *istibdal* over a period of five months. The plots were described as being in a ruined state, with three of them valued at 1850 dinars. In exchange, Qijmas provided several income-producing properties in other parts of Cairo valued at 2200 dinars.⁶⁴ The *waqfiyya* of the mosque mentions the fact that the mosque stands in the place of an older structure that Qijmas pulled down in order to make room for his mosque.⁶⁵

1. الوقف والبنا الموصوف أنشاء الجناب السيفي قجماس المشار إليه من ماله وصلب حاله
مكان البنا العتيق الذي هدمه الذي كان جارياً بيده

It was a requirement that the newly acquired *waqf* property be in a ruined state when a person was petitioning a qadi to acquire it. It had to be proved that the building was a potential danger to the people around it and its environs. Whether the buildings acquired by Qijmas were actually in a state of ruin and dangerous to their environs is hard to tell as “it is possible that there was an element of coercion in these

⁶² Fernandes, “*Istibdal*,” 206.

⁶³ Behrens-Abouseif, “Patrons of Urbanism,” 269.

⁶⁴ Sayed, *Rab' in Cairo*, 108.

⁶⁵ *Waqfiyya* line #1.

exchanges. During the late Mamluk period, many *waqf* properties were acquired after pressuring the overseers, witnesses, and judges.”⁶⁶ Because of the favoritism in these transactions, many qadis were against *istibdal* at the end of the fifteenth century.⁶⁷

3.1.3 The Choice of Location

Seeing how crowded al-Tabbana street was, and everything that Qijmas al-Ishaqi had to go through to secure this plot of land for himself, one has to ask: why didn't Qijmas simply choose to follow his sultan's example and build himself a much larger complex – with less spatial limitations – in an area like the Northern Cemetery? Would he not find more building freedom and space to have his foundation appear the way he would like it to without having to make the sorts of structural concessions he made in his plot on al-Tabbana?

In choosing al-Tabbana as the site for his mosque, Qijmas must have thought that it was truly a great location, even if it came at the expense of monumentality. His architects managed to compensate for the tightness in plot size by creating a mosque that was creative both architecturally and decoratively. Since al-Tabbana had acquired a ceremonial importance by the late fifteenth century, then placing such mosque on this street meant that they “fulfilled not only religious purposes, but they also contributed to the ceremonial show and served as well urbanistic motives.”⁶⁸ The plan of the mosque clearly addressed the need to fit into the ceremonial route.

Fitting a mosque in a limited space was a familiar concept to the Mamluks, who were spatially and visually sensitive. “The ‘means’ of fitting a building in an

⁶⁶ Sayed, *Rab' in Cairo*, 108.

⁶⁷ Fernandes, “*Istibdal*,” 207.

⁶⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, “Patrons of Urbanism,” 271.

urban situation became an ‘end’ in the sense that the jagged fronts became an integral part of a period’s feelings about the treatment of building masses. This is best revealed by the examples of Mamluk complexes built in the open spaces of the desert/cemetery outside the city, where the constraints existed more in the builders’ minds than in the locale.”⁶⁹

In his lecture entitled “How Mamluk architecture co-opted the streets of Cairo,” Nasser Rabbat noted that the Mamluks did not consider a street’s constraints and particularities as a building obstacle, quite the contrary. He argued that through the creation of tightly composed facades using elements of verticality, recessing and extensive decoration, the buildings not only accommodated the streets, but they dominated them. The street itself became part of the composition with its contours a part of the plan – especially visible in the later Mamluk buildings such as the mosques of Qijmas al-Ishaqi and of Khayrbek, that were “literally hugging the street.”⁷⁰ Both monuments showed a mastery of the art of street inclusion and domination. Through careful manipulation of street contours, Mamluk architects produced maximum visual effects and gained space. If the builders of Qijmas had decided to build a rectangular mosque instead of this almost triangular one, they would have lost space of the southwest side of the mosque and they would not have produced the same powerful visual effect. In this mosque, the contours of al-Tabbana played a defining role in the plan of the mosque as it prompted the architects to stagger the main southwest façade.

When an emir managed to secure a prime location for his religious foundation, it attested to his power and prestige. How prominently his monument featured within the crowded city of Cairo said a lot about how influential he was, especially since

⁶⁹ Sayed, *Rab’ in Cairo*, 180.

⁷⁰ Rabbat in his lecture entitled “How Mamluk architecture co-opted the streets of Cairo,” March 23rd 2010, at The American University in Cairo.

these foundations had acquired from early on the role of status symbols. There is no doubt that the patrons competed with each other for the best spots in the city.

Once the Mamluks were in power, the proliferation of *madrasas* along the major streets of the city was unparalleled. Each Mamluk patron felt the need to express his public presence individually through one or more religious foundations. The building in this regard was part of his image, and not merely a reflection of his status.⁷¹

3.2 Triangular Plot

By the time of the foundation of the mosque of Qijmas, the “optimum use of space became a matter of necessity,”⁷² because of the scarcity of the urban land and the fact that most real estate and land was under the *waqf*. The architects of this mosque were handed an unusual shape of land with which they dealt in a brilliant way. They took potential building site problems and turned them into structural strengths that made this mosque the jewel that it is. The aim was to make the mosque appear as grand as possible in the available space, while remaining true to the traditions that governed the building of religious monuments.

The triangular plot of land occupied by the mosque is housed between al-Tabbana street and the small eastward offshoot of Abu Hurayba street (fig. 2.2). At first sight, it is hardly the ideal setting for a mosque. It is freestanding on all four sides – unusual compared to Mamluk buildings in the city. Most Mamluk mosques within the city were connected to other structures – the most visible examples of which are the series of Mamluk mosques lining the al-Mu‘izz street.

On the ground level are a number of shops above which the mosque was built (fig. 2.6). It was common for religious foundations to house commercial entities on

⁷¹ Asfour, “Mamluk Esthetics,” 237.

⁷² Meinecke-Berg, “Urban Development,” 11-12.

their grounds, considered a source of revenue for the maintenance of the building. In this sense, the religious and commercial aspects of the city were very much intertwined and interdependent. The only connection to neighboring buildings is on the northern side of the mosque where a bridge links with the opposite side of Abu Hurayba street (fig. 2.18).

The mosque has four facades, the main ones being on the northwest side and the stepped southwest facade on al-Tabbana (figs. 2.6-2.7). A third northern façade lines Abu Hurayba street which is rather narrow, and the fourth one is the eastern qibla façade that overlooks Sikkat Abu Hurayba (figs. 3.1-3.2). The latter two are less decorated because they are less prominent. However, despite the narrowness of Sikkat Abu Hurayba, its façade still contains some decoration – possibly to mark its importance for housing the qibla (fig. 2.14).

As a result of the limited space of the mosque, a number of structural peculiarities arose which are worth examining closer.

3.2.1 Displaced Kuttab

The inclusion of the sabil and the kuttab within a religious complex started with the madrasa of Umm al-Sultan Sha‘ban that had both elements but they were still not joined as one unit. It is with the late Bahri Mamluk mosque of Uljay al-Yusufi (1373) that we see the sabil and the kuttab united into one structure for the first time. With the advent of the Burji Mamluks, the sabil-kuttab combination became a standard feature in religious monuments and it is during their reign that the kuttab was fully developed.⁷³ The sabil-kuttab most often occupied a prominent corner on the

⁷³ Wahdan, *Cairene Maktabs*, 1-2.

façade of a religious monument, with the kuttab on the top floor while the sabil occupied the ground floor to serve people water as they walked by.

Worthy of mention is the ease with which the kuttab was integrated into the plan of the mosque from the early Burji Mamluk period. It fast became an essential component of Mamluk religious architecture because it was a pious, charitable element that reflected well on its patron. Like the sabil, the kuttab provided services to the population on a practical level.⁷⁴ So while founding a funerary mosque also benefited the population, it was viewed as the patron's desire to show off his power and status and not just as a good deed. It had self-serving motives.

In the mosque of Qijmas, the space above the sabil was not big enough to accommodate a kuttab as would have been traditionally done (fig. 2.7). For the first and only time in Mamluk architecture, the kuttab is neither on top of the sabil nor anywhere else in the mosque building. It is altogether on the other side of Abu Hurayba street connected to the mosque by a bridge so as not to encumber the view of the mosque (fig. 2.8). This is absolutely unique in Cairene religious architecture. In his thesis on Cairene kuttabs of the Burji period, Wahdan suggests that by isolating the kuttab from the rest of the mosque because of site circumstances and by allocating a separate entrance of its own, it marks the first time that either the sabil or the kuttab detaches from a religious building. In this mosque, the separation was a matter of necessity rather than choice, but it is also around this time that the sabil-kuttab as a unit became increasingly independent. A contemporary manifestation of this

⁷⁴ Wahdan, *Cairene Maktabs*, 33.

phenomenon is Qaytbay's stand-alone sabil-kuttab on al-Saliba street (1480), designed as an isolated structure from the outset.⁷⁵

Some of the visual effect, however, that comes from pairing the sabil with the kuttab on religious facades was lost in the mosque of Qijmas because, while the kuttab served the functional role of a school for teaching orphan boys the Quran, it also served an important aesthetic role. Considering the existing interior iwan layout and the plot of land, not much room remained in the mosque to fit a kuttab. The kuttab was given less importance as it was located on a small secondary street leading to Bab al-Wazir, and not on al-Tabbana leading to the Citadel as was the sabil. A way in which the kuttab could have potentially been part of the main mosque structure was if the northwestern iwan opposite the qibla iwan were sacrificed to make room for a sabil-kuttab unit. Having the sabil-kuttab occupy the northwestern façade in its entirety would have put much more emphasis on both charitable elements and would attract the attention of the passersby coming from Bab Zuwayla. This imaginary layout, however, would leave the mosque interior rather narrow and encumbered. This is one instance where spatial limitations overcame tradition – resulting in the kuttab losing its usual spot above the sabil.

In his article entitled “Learning from Mamluk Esthetics,” Asfour says there are two competing forces on the exterior of a monument: the traditional and the innovative.⁷⁶ He says the mausoleum represented continuity, while the sabil-kuttab represented innovation. According to Asfour, the placement of those two elements was indicative of the patron's preference for either the traditional or the innovative. If the mausoleum was featured more prominently than was the sabil-kuttab, then

⁷⁵ Wahdan, *Cairene Maktabs*, 20.

⁷⁶ Asfour, “Mamluk Esthetics,” 240-241.

tradition was more important to the patron than wanting to be innovative. He argues that in the mosque of Qijmas, tradition overcame innovation as the mausoleum occupies an important corner of the mosque.⁷⁷ In my opinion, innovation was more important on the façade of Qijmas' mosque than was tradition because of the highly visible corner the sabil occupied, as opposed to the less visible mausoleum location. Part of this novelty is the displaced kuttab. The effect of the sabil, however, was muted by its missing the other half, the kuttab. This tension was part of a greater struggle in Mamluk architecture over the need to innovate and individualize a building while remaining within the framework of building traditions.

Connecting the kuttab to the rest of the mosque is the bridge that goes above Abu Hurayba street from the northern iwan (fig. 2.18). It is a definite peculiarity that remains unseen in any other religious building in Cairo. It was in direct response to the demands of the limited space and the necessity of including a kuttab. The trouble that the builders went through in finding a way to somehow connect the kuttab to the rest of the mosque demonstrates how important an element the kuttab was to a complex.

3.2.2 Shrunk Side Iwans

In the mosque of Inal al-Yusufi (1392), we see, for the first time, the lateral iwans being significantly reduced in size and acquiring an almost symbolic place within the *qa'a* plan.⁷⁸ In the mosque of Qijmas, we see the same thing happening,

⁷⁷ Asfour, "Mamluk Esthetics," 241. In his article, Asfour considers the both the sabil and the kuttab to be together on the other side of Abu Hurayba street. He does not believe that the sabil occupies a corner on the main southwest façade. This, however, is incorrect as the mosque's waqfiyya and the inscription on the upper band of the sabil door confirm its function as a sabil.

⁷⁸ O'Kane, "Mutual Influences," 162-163.

with the lateral iwans reduced to the size of mere recesses. The layout consists of a two-iwan plan with its two lateral recesses (fig. 3.3). Mamluks favored this type of plan to the riwaq layout because it took up less room – an important feature when building in a city as dense as Cairo was at the time.⁷⁹ It was easier to work an iwan than a riwaq into a limited space. In the Qijmas mosque, the extent of the lateral iwans is limited by Abu Hurayba street to the north and by the main southwest façade elements on the other. The qibla iwan is wider than its opposing iwan (fig. 2.4).

In the fifteenth century very little open space was left in the city. As a result, the public buildings that were erected had to be smaller than the earlier ones. Schools were built on a reduced scale, and the central open courtyard was eliminated...Of course, housing for teachers and students in these buildings was out of the question...the lateral iwans are reduced to mere recesses, and the only reminder of the old central court is a slight difference in floor level.⁸⁰

Unlike the creativity displayed on the exterior of the mosque, its interior layout is not much different from contemporary mosques. This type of layout with the widened qibla iwan by means of the *janahayn*, the lateral iwans and the flat iwans show influence from domestic architecture. These features become typical of religious buildings in Cairo starting in the third decade of the fifteenth century. Contemporary to this mosque are the funerary complex of Qaytbay in the Northern Cemetery (1472-4) and the mosque of Azbak al-Yusufi (1494-5), which also closely conformed to this layout.⁸¹

3.2.3 Sliding Door

A final structural peculiarity of the mosque of Qijmas, that is not the result of spatial limitations, is the wooden sliding door at the entrance vestibule that opens onto

⁷⁹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 74.

⁸⁰ Wiet, *City of Art and Commerce*, 133.

⁸¹ O’Kane, “Mutual Influences,” 156-157.

the roofless passage leading to the sahn (fig. 3.4). It does not seem to have resulted from a lack of space because a regular door with flaps could have fit in place of the existing sliding one. It appears to be a creative choice on the part of the architects and not so much a spatial necessity. Nowadays, the sliding door is kept almost fully open at all times, and it is no longer possible to slide it either way. It was very unusual in Mamluk architecture to have such a door. The only other known Mamluk example of a sliding unit were the three sliding wooden windows of the iwan in the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir (1479-80) near the Qasaba⁸² that overlook its ablution area (fig. 3.5). In this mosque as well, there doesn't seem to have been an actual need for the windows to be sliding, so it most probably was a creative choice there as well. Both mosques share the same foundation date and decorator by the name of 'Abd al-Qadir.⁸³

3.3 Double Alignment: Street versus Qibla

The Fatimid mosque of al-Aqmar (1125) located on the main Fatimid thoroughfare of al-Mu'izz, began an important tradition in urban religious architecture in Cairo: that of double alignment. The façade was aligned with the street and the rest of the mosque was Mecca oriented. In a crowded city like Cairo the available free space did not always allow for a single alignment and therefore adjustments had to be made. Religious monuments were preferably aligned with the street and they needed to be oriented towards Mecca. "It is no exaggeration to say that the Cairo architects could build Mecca-oriented monuments almost anywhere, and that in no other Islamic

⁸² Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 289.

⁸³ Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 151.

city were so many adjustments of monument to site necessary: it is one of the distinctive features of Cairo architecture...⁸⁴

Double alignment was achieved through careful manipulation of the thickness of the façade walls from one place to another and the depth of the window openings. It was an architectural feature that was developed further by the Mamluks and it remained peculiar to religious buildings in Cairo: “This structurally illogical treatment of the façade walls...is the hallmark of the medieval Cairene practice...”⁸⁵ The mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi is no different from other Mamluk buildings in its play of exterior versus interior orientation.

The architects of this mosque went to great lengths to achieve a successful double alignment. Like other streets in Cairo with a certain degree of “civic importance”, al-Tabbana was not naturally oriented towards Mecca or perpendicular to it, forcing architects to make structural adjustments to become a part of the larger urban scene.⁸⁶ One way in which many Mamluk buildings resolved the conflict of double alignment was by adding a triangular wedge on the street side of the mosque and filling it with small rooms – an example of which is the mosque of Aqsunqur also on al-Tabbana. The architects of Qijmas also added a triangular wedge to their southwest façade, but instead of filling it with small rooms that may not have been of much use, they filled it in with the entrance vestibule and the mausoleum (fig. 2.4). They did, however, lose some space with the staggering of this main façade, which I will discuss in more detail below in the section on the stepped façade.

⁸⁴ Williams, “Urbanization and Monument Construction,” 39.

⁸⁵ Kessler, “Madrasa-Mausoleum of Sultan Sha’ban II,” 97.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

On the exterior of the mosque, the façade overlooking al-Tabbana street is where most of the double alignment adjustments were made. Wall thickness and window depth are heavily manipulated in the entrance vestibule and the two windows in the mausoleum that look out onto al-Tabbana (fig. 3.6). The north side of the mosque that overlooks the narrower Abu Hurayba street also had to make some exterior versus interior adjustments, but in a much lesser and subtler way than the main façade. The qibla façade is the only one that was already aligned with the street.

Despite the restrictive plot of land that the mosque of Qijmas occupies, the mausoleum lies in the southeast corner of the mosque and it projects onto the main street, with its qibla façade overlooking Sikkat Abu Hurayba (fig. 3.7). The tomb chamber lies to the south of the qibla iwan, connected to the prayer hall through a passage that opens onto the south side of the qibla iwan.

It became customary to have the patron's mausoleum feature prominently on the main façade when faced with an urban context "for communication with the continuous stream of passersby and their baraka-invocations,"⁸⁷ and to be oriented towards Mecca. Attaching one's mausoleum to a religious foundation started with the mausoleum of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub (1250) built by Shajarat al-Durr at the end of the Ayyubid reign in Egypt. Having a prestigious burial place was one of the main motivations for sultans and emirs to become the patrons of religious foundations. Locating their mausoleums inside the city gave the commemorative structures even more visibility. The need to have it feature visibly on al-Tabbana façade constituted an additional spatial requirement to the already tight framework within which the builders of Qijmas were working.

⁸⁷ Kessler, "Madrasa-Mausoleum of Sultan Sha'ban II," 102.

3.4 Individuality and Visual Continuity

The quest for adaptability to the streetscape and continuity with tradition was challenging because it meant that architects had to be extremely flexible in striving to attain several, sometimes conflicting, spatial and visual goals. Builders wanted their structures to stand out from the rest of the streetscape and appear grand, while remaining true to Mamluk building traditions. Standing out and blending in are two seemingly opposite notions, but ones the Mamluks had grown accustomed to dealing with. I will now look at how this tension played out with regards to the exterior of the mosque.

3.4.1 Stepped Facade

The most dramatic response to the triangular plot of land is the stepped southwest façade of the mosque that is aligned with al-Tabbana street (fig. 2.7). It is stepped in three incremental places with a different element displayed at each step. The first step displays the northwest facade, the second is occupied by the sabil, and the third is dominated by the main entrance portal. This was a way of forcing the passerby to take notice of the building and engaging him visually through the appreciation of each displayed element.

As one approaches the mosque from Bab Zuwayla, the northwest façade appears (fig. 2.6). On the ground floor are three shops, topped by two rows of windows: a row of three rectangular grille windows topped by another row of arched windows. The first indentation leads the eye directly towards the corner occupied by the sabil. It was preferable that the sabil occupy a corner of the building because that

allowed for accessibility to more people through it grilles by having two sides.⁸⁸

Following that is the recess displaying the main portal, above which is the minaret.

While the stepped technique employed on this façade produces a unique effect, Asfour argues that this technique also has its limitations. It is more successful when the building is viewed from one direction and not the other. Coming from Bab Zuwayla in the direction of the Citadel, the staggering is wonderful as the mosque unfolds like a fan before the passerby. But for viewers coming from the opposite direction, the effect is significantly curtailed (fig. 3.8). Choosing to have a straight façade lining the street, as was commonly done by the Mamluks, may have produced less of an effect, but one that could be appreciated from all directions. Since it was difficult for the mosque of Qijmas to be monumental, differentiation was essential.

For a differentiating technique to succeed there had to be a common practice that formed a contrast to the innovation used. For example, staggering the exterior walls of the façade would have had no urban impact had it not contrasted with the long-established practice of street alignment that was still routinely used in the Mamluk period. The idea of attracting the eye and exciting the soul through surprising arrangements derived from familiar elements was the essence of Mamluk architectural thought.⁸⁹

As a result of the staggering, however, the builders lost some of the surface area of the mosque. The sacrifice of some potential surface area was necessary (and most likely deemed to be worth it) if this façade was to make an impactful visual statement. Clearly, effect was more important to the builders than was the size of the mosque.

The façade of the mosque of Qijmas is truly a work of art in its own right. It takes “complete command of its urban setting” and works the streetscape to its full

⁸⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 131

⁸⁹ Asfour, “Mamluk Esthetics,” 250.

advantage.⁹⁰ Further towards the Citadel on al-Tabbana street is the earlier Bahri Mamluk mosque of Altinbugha al-Maridani (1340) whose main façade on al-Tabbana is also indented in two places to have the passerby pause before the mosque (fig. 3.9). Could the staggered facade in Qijmas al-Ishaqi be the result of proximity with the mosque of al-Maridani? Could the treatment of the façade in al-Maridani have inspired the architects of Qijmas in the treatment of their facade? While it is possible that the builders of Qijmas liked the façade treatment of al-Maridani and were inspired by its indentation, they took the stepping to a whole different level.

3.4.2 Verticality

The mosque of Qijmas could not be monumental because of the small plot of land it occupies. To compensate for that, verticality was essential to give the building a semblance of grandeur through its elevation. It was important for the mosque's façade to be dominated by the verticality of its elements rather than their horizontality.⁹¹

The placement of the minaret and the dome prominently on the facade were essential to give the monument upward elevation especially when viewed from a distance in a crowded city (fig. 3.10).⁹² The fenestration of the façade (see below) also contributed to the vertical feel of the structure. In his dissertation entitled *The rab' in Cairo: A window on Mamluk architecture and urbanism*, Sayed describes the

⁹⁰ Al-Harithy, "Concept of Space," 84.

⁹¹ Sayed, *Rab' in Cairo*, 40.

⁹² *Ibid*, 171.

Mamluk urbanistic approach as “a horizontal context serving as a backdrop for a forward thrusting and upward reaching monumentalism.”⁹³

Mamluk buildings were often situated above a row of shops on the ground level. Aside from the economic benefits of having commercial entities associated with religious foundations, other spatial considerations came into play. For a mosque like Qijmas, being elevated by a floor meant a buffer against the inevitable rise in street level and increased verticality for a mosque.⁹⁴

Stepping the façade, surprisingly, also contributed to the verticality of Qijmas. “Each setting back or thrusting forward of a component of the building plan produces a vertical line, providing a stronger vertical emphasis than achievable with a frame. The subdivision of the façade into masses, corresponding to the various components of the plan, also assists in the organizational role served by the frames.”⁹⁵ Going against the quest for verticality on the facades, however, are the use of ablaq masonry and the horizontal inscription bands. Both elements are found on the façade of Qijmas and may be used as a means of visually balancing the vertical with the horizontal, or maybe even as a way of further highlighting the verticality of certain elements of the façade.

3.4.3 Fluidity of Design

The main southwest façade of this mosque was not only stepped, but like other Mamluk facades, it lost its symmetry and orderliness in favor of “fluidity” and adaptability to the streetscape. It was no longer “an individual monumental façade”

⁹³ Sayed, *Rab' in Cairo*, 180.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 42. The Comité bulletins mention the rising street level as a problem for shops occupying the ground floor in the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 172.

but rather a street façade. Its layout was governed by the demands of its environs that were particular to this mosque rather than by a rigid set of rules. Having an interactive dialogue between the façade and the passerby was more important than having an orderly laid-out façade.

Formally, the static symmetrical facades of the Fatimid period were replaced by dynamic facades in the Mamluk city. The individual monumental facades were replaced by street facades, and the emphasis on axial symmetry gave way to an emphasis on continuity... The irregularities of street edges did not contradict the continuity of the façade once the concept of space was understood as fluid and activated by movement, marked by orientation pauses, and social urban pockets.⁹⁶

Given how crowded the city of Cairo had become by the end of the fifteenth century, the frontal elevation of a building became a practical impossibility. "... What could be visually apprehended and appreciated was a small and vertical slice of the building. This called for an exterior architecture of incidents and localized events rather than one of overall organization."⁹⁷

The asymmetry of the mosque exterior contrasts sharply with the symmetry of the interior iwan plan (fig. 2.4). Exterior order was abandoned in favor of a balanced interior. The plan of the *qa'a* with its two adjoining iwans could not have been changed much, but the other elements such as the sabil, the minaret and the main entrance were placed according to the effect the builders wanted to achieve. Considering the triangular plot of land on which the mosque was founded, and the irregularity of the exterior, it is impressive that balance was still maintained for the interior spaces. If more room had been available to the builders, it is doubtful that such creative use of space would even have been a consideration. Like other Mamluk

⁹⁶ Al-Harithy, "Concept of Space," 90-91.

⁹⁷ Sayed, *Rab' in Cairo*, 42.

buildings in the city, the mosque of Qijmas was forced to be more responsive in its construction if it was to achieve its full visual potential.

Because of the way Mamluk architecture developed over time, it becomes clear that the concept of space expressed in it is not manifested in isolated buildings but in urban infills or complexes set in the midst of existing structures and built for public use. Individually, Mamluk monuments were more responsive to their context than they were initiators or dictators of new ones. It was from their collective power that a new concept of space emerges.⁹⁸

3.4.4 Fenestration

Like a cover is to a book, so is the façade to a building. It is meant to “speak” to the viewer, attract his attention, and give him a hint as to what lies inside. It is certainly not meant as a static entity or a simple enclosure for its interior. As Al-Harithy states in her article entitled “The concept of space in Mamluk architecture,” the “façade is more than a device that separates inside from outside and public from private,”⁹⁹ it is a means to lure in the viewer and to establish a rapport between the mosque and its environs. Fenestration was meant as a way of providing the passerby with a window into the interior of the religious building, without giving away too much. The paneling of facades with windows – even when they weren’t needed for lighting – started long before the Mamluks with the Fatimids and the Ayyubids and by the fifteenth century, the Mamluks had fully exploited the tradition of façade fenestration.¹⁰⁰

Communication of interior spaces with the exterior urban setting was also achieved through fenestration that provides the passerby with a feeling of accessibility to the interior. “...Mamluk monuments cannot simply be read as containers of space

⁹⁸ Al-Harithy, “Concept of Space,” 73.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 87.

¹⁰⁰ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 86.

or objects in space, but rather as complex mediators between interior architectural spaces and exterior urban spaces.”¹⁰¹

The fenestration of the façades of Qijmas is composed of rows of window openings occupying a large portion of the facades (fig. 2.6). From the interior, the grille window provided air and light while the arched windows were filled in from the inside with colored glass that gave a warm effect to the interior (fig. 4.51). There was no innovation in the fenestration of this façade, quite on the contrary, the pairing of grille windows topped by arched openings was standard in many early and contemporary Mamluk religious buildings. Charging the façade with as much window surface as possible enhanced the feeling of transparency and accessibility a building has to the viewer. The fenestration of the sabil uses exclusively rectangular grilles on the upper and lower levels. The entrance vestibule also uses only rectangular grilles.

3.4.5 Transitional Spaces

Just as facades were important for the exterior of the building, transitional spaces within the complexes were important as well. They served the double function of “resolving the conflict between the newly initiated urban dialogue and the privacy needed for part of the complex...”¹⁰² Transitional spaces acted as the mediators between the busy exterior of the mosque and the calm interior of the mosque. It was a point where the person pauses before entering the mosque. It was a particularly important feature in Mamluk religious buildings given their extroverted nature.

The introverted nature of the domestic and military architecture that preceded Mamluk buildings offered a spatial experience that revealed little about the interior of the building from the outside. A building only unfolded after one

¹⁰¹ Al-Harithy, “Concept of Space,” 73.

¹⁰² Ibid, 85.

reached its center. Mamluk architecture had to resolve the problem of maintaining spatial and visual continuity between the interior and the exterior essential to its multi-use urban structures, on the one hand, while, on the other, sustaining the element of surprise in the experience of the building inherent in the collective memory of the users.¹⁰³

In the Qijmas mosque, the first transitional space is in the stepping of the façade that forms the portal. It's the first pause before entering the mosque. Following the main portal is the entrance vestibule, which is rather small and does not filter much of the outside noise. To enter the mosque from the entrance vestibule, there is a straight passageway that provides the interior with a buffer from the hustle and bustle of the outside. Interestingly, this passage is unroofed. There are no window openings in it to bring in any light, so that was an alternative way of ensuring lighting and ventilation for this corridor (fig. 3.11).

Often, bent entrances were used to slow down the access from the busy outside to the calm inside and to allow the worshippers privacy when inside the mosque. In this mosque the roofless corridor somewhat shielded the interior from the noise but not from view of those standing in the entrance vestibule. The relative disconnect from the street noise is impressive in Mamluk buildings – especially those located in busy neighborhoods. The task of juggling interior peace and quiet with a façade that “speaks” to and interacts with passersby is a delicate one, but one that the architects of Qijmas managed with success especially given the constraints they had to work with.

It is clear that the architects of this mosque had a number of spatial matters to juggle, and from the visual effectiveness of the mosque façade, they dealt with them in a brilliant way. In the little space they had, they managed to create a unique looking mosque that immediately captures one's attention by the way it gradually unfolds

¹⁰³ Al-Harithy, “Concept of Space,” 86.

before the viewer's eyes. The successful adaptation to the spatial limitations imposed by the plot of land epitomizes the way in which the Mamluks mastered the art of building within a dense urban environment like Cairo.

Chapter IV: Epigraphy and Decoration

The mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi is interesting in that the decorators compensated for the modest size of the building by creating a decorative jewel, which displays the finest skills of the Qaytbay period. Carving of high quality combines with fine marble and paste inlaid work in adorning the surfaces of the mosque with rich designs. The refinement in arabesque carving in particular has earned this mosque a place amongst the Qaytbay buildings with the most developed decoration. Added to that is the extensive epigraphy scattered throughout the mosque that displays its own set of peculiarities. Overall, the decoration is a combination of unique and innovative features, borrowed designs and techniques, and extensions of the contemporary Qaytbay repertoire. A closer look at the decoration will reveal a considerable number of similarities between the mosque of Qijmas and other religious buildings that occurred for a variety of reasons, including shared craftsmen, as in the case of the Abu Bakr Muzhir mosque (1479-80), and as an effect of proximity with the mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (1415-20) and the zawiya of Faraj ibn Barquq (1408).

In the following text, I will start with a discussion on the epigraphy of this mosque, and continue onto an analysis of the decoration of the main façade elements – namely the main portal, the qibla façade portal, minaret and the dome. This will be followed by a look at the elaborate decorative panels of the exterior. A discussion of the interior decoration will ensue with a focus on the spectacular mihrab, the interior decorative panels, the minbar, the ceilings and the lantern, in an attempt to reveal the most remarkable decorative features.

4.1 Analysis of the Epigraphy

The mosque of Qijmas is adorned with extensive inscriptions, especially in the interior. It is possible that Qijmas' mastery of the art of calligraphy¹⁰⁴ and his appreciation for it led him to take personal interest in the production of inscriptions. They shed light on the sequence of the completion of the mosque, and come with their own set of peculiarities. The inscriptions used are of the foundation, royal and Quranic types, along with a couple with the decorator's signature, rendered using a variety of mediums. In the following text, I will discuss the particularities of these inscriptions, their overriding patterns and what they tell us about the mosque and its components.

Firstly, one can make out the approximate sequence of completion of the mosque from its numerous foundation inscriptions. The construction sequence was from out inwards, except for the main portal (and possibly the entire façade), which was the last part to be completed in March-April 1481, according to the portal inscription. The architects began with the entrance vestibule, which was completed in November 1479 as witnessed by the inscription on the band beneath the ceiling that goes as follows:¹⁰⁵

أَنَا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا، لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا
مُسْتَقِيمًا، وَيَرْضُرِكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا، صدق الله العظيم ورسوله الكريم صلى الله على سيدنا
محمد، بتاريخ شهر شعبان من سنة اربع وثمانين وثمان مائة

Quran 48:1-3, God Most Great has spoken the truth and so has His eminent Prophet. May God pray for our master Muhammad. Dated in the month of Sha‘ban, 884 (October-November 1479).

¹⁰⁴ Al-Sakhawi, *al-Daw' al-lami'*, 6:213.

¹⁰⁵ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 682.

They then moved to the interior by completing work on the qibla iwan between May-June 1480 according to the foundation inscription on the stucco bands of the windows of the qibla iwan. The inscription goes as follows:¹⁰⁶

بسملة امر بانشاء هذا الجامع المبارك، من فضل الله تعالى وجزيل عطائه، المقر الأشرف
العالى، ... المجاهدي (?) المرابطي (?)، المخدومي السيفي قجماس، الكبيرى المالكي الملكى
الأشرفى، اعز الله انصاره بمحمده وآله، وكان الفراغ من هذا المسجد المبارك، في شهر ربيع
الأول سنة خمس وثمانين وثمان مائة

Basmala, has ordered the construction of this blessed mosque, through the grace of God and His abundant universal generosity, his excellency, the noble, the lofty, ... the holy warrior (?) the defender (?), the masterful Sayf al-Din Qijmas, the great, (officer of) al-Malik al-Ashraf (Qaytbay), may God strengthen his supporters through Muhammad and his family. The completion of this blessed mosque was in the month of Rabi' I in the year 885 (May-June 1480).

After the qibla iwan came the rest of the mosque interior with the sahn inscription bearing a completion date of November-December 1480 (the text of which is quoted later in the section). Interestingly, after having finished the mosque interior, the builders moved outwards once again to complete the main portal by March-April 1481¹⁰⁷ in an inscription that combined a foundation date with a Quranic inscription that goes as follows:¹⁰⁸

بسملة، وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا، صدق الله العظيم، وكان الفراغ من الجامع في
شهر الله المحرم سنة ست وثمانين وثمان مائة

Basmala, Quran 72:18, God Most Great has spoken the truth. The completion of this mosque was in the month of God, Muharram 886 (March-April 1481).

From the inscriptions, we find that the metal revetted door of the main portal was completed before the main portal itself. The production of the mobile ornaments of a mosque was not contingent on the completion of the mosque construction, but

¹⁰⁶ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 693.

¹⁰⁷ The main portal has the latest completion date compared to all the other inscribed built-up parts of the mosque, and not the ornaments of the mosque. As mentioned above, the kursi has the latest foundation date, compared to the other mosque ornaments.

¹⁰⁸ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 681.

was rather governed by demand on workshops that was prompted by considerable efforts of patronage at the time.

There is reason to believe that the facades were also completed at the same time as the main portal. While there are no foundation dates on any of the facades, one can assume that the rest of the exterior was left to the end as was the main portal, and completed at this later stage as well after Qijmas had moved to Damascus to serve as governor (*na'ib al-sham*) in December 1480.¹⁰⁹ So while the mosque interior was completed while Qijmas was still in Egypt, the main portal, and most likely the rest of the exterior, were not.

Aside from the Quranic verses on the foundation inscription of the main portal, two other Quranic inscriptions exist on the exterior. One is the beautifully carved stone inscription on the qibla facade portal, and the other one is a radial inscription adorning the centre of the medallion of the main portal door (figs. 4.1-4.2). It makes sense for the qibla façade portal to bear a Quranic inscription given its location in order to mark the sanctity of the mihrab lying in the interior. The former is an imposing naskhi inscription saying:¹¹⁰

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ، صدق الله العظيم

Basmala, Quran 2:215 (starting at وما), God Most Great has spoken the truth.

The radial inscription consists of a segment of a Quranic verse that goes as follows:¹¹¹

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَحْشَأْ إِلَّا اللَّهَ

Quran 9:18 (as far as الله الا)

¹⁰⁹ The wooden door leaves of the sabil bears a foundation inscription, but it is an ornament of the mosque.

¹¹⁰ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 685-6.

¹¹¹ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 291.

Secondly, there is a kursi that is no longer in situ as it was moved out of the building even before the Comité started work on the mosque in 1892 (fig.4.4).¹¹² It was finally relocated in the Museum of Islamic Art.¹¹³ The inscription on the kursi is a naskhi foundation inscription carved in wood:¹¹⁴

امر بانشاء هذا الكرسي المبارك المقر السيفي قجماس كافل المملكة الشامية سنة سب
وثمانينو ثمانمائة

Ordered the manufacturing of this blessed table his excellence Sayf al-Din Qijmas, governor of the province of Damascus, in the year 887 (1482-3).

The kursi was completed in 1482 after Qijmas had assumed governorship of Damascus. The title of Qijmas on inscriptions dating to later than December 1480 had changed to governor of Damascus from the earlier grand master of stables (*amir akhur akbar*) position he assumed starting 1475. Of all the mosque ornaments, this has the latest foundation date. We learn from the inscriptions that unlike the kursi, the minbar and the metal revetted door of the main portal were produced at an earlier date, while Qijmas was still grand master of stables. The inscription on the sides of the minbar says (fig. 4.5):¹¹⁵

امر بانشاء هذا المنبر المبارك المقر الأشرف الكريم السيفي قجماس أمير اخور كبير الملكي
الأشرفي عز نصره

Has ordered the construction of this blessed minbar, his excellency the most noble, the eminent, Sayf al-Din Qijmas, grand stablemaster of al-Malik al-Ashraf (Qaytbay), may his victory be glorified.

¹¹² The Comité's first report on the mosque of Qijmas is in the 139th Report of the 2nd Commission dating to 7 October, 1892, in which it documents the mosque and makes an inventory of the needed conservation works. Nowhere in that report does it make a mention of a kursi.

¹¹³ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 679.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 679.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 684.

As for the upper band of the metal revetted door, it carries the following inscription (fig. 4.6):¹¹⁶

المقر الأشرف العالي السيفي قجماس أمير اخور كبير الملكي الأشرفي أعز الله انصاره

His excellency the most noble, the lofty Sayf al-Din Qijmas grand stablemaster of al-Malik al-Ashraf (Qaytbay), may God strengthen his supporters.

In terms of the materials used, interior inscriptions display a much wider variety of mediums than do the inscriptions on the exterior. On the outside, inscriptions were done in either stone or marble with no obvious preference for either medium. In the interior decorators juggled between inlaid marble, painted wood, stucco and stone.

There are no royal inscriptions in the interior, only Quranic and foundation ones, in addition to two cases of inscriptions with the decorator's signature.¹¹⁷ The ratio of foundation to Quranic inscriptions in the interior is approximately the same, except in the qibla iwan where the majority of inscriptions are Quranic ones.¹¹⁸

As for the mausoleum, it is void of any inscriptions, as were the dome and the minaret (fig. 4.29). I will provide possible explanations for that in the discussion of the mausoleum and its dome.

The main inscription of the interior is the foundation band under the ceiling of the sahn that says (fig. 4.7):¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 680.

¹¹⁷ The text of the foundation inscription beneath the ceiling of the sahn very much resembles a royal type of inscription with its exaggerated laudatory language. It ends, however, with a foundation date.

¹¹⁸ The ratio was estimated by comparing the number of foundation versus Quranic inscriptions in the interior.

¹¹⁹ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 690.

بسملة، اللهم صلي على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم تسليما كثيرا، امر بانشاء هذا الجامع السعيد المبارك من فضل الله تعالى وجزيل عطائه العميم على مولانا المقر الأشرف الكريم العالي المولوي الأميري الكبير السيدي السندي المالكي المخدومي المجاهدي المرابطي المؤيدي المنصوري الورعي المتورعي الزاهدي العابدي الصائمي القائم الراعي الساجدي السيفي قجماس أمير أخور كبير المالكي الملكي الأشرفي اعز الله انصاره بمحمد وآله في ايام مولانا السلطان الملك الأشرف ابو النصر قايتباي، وكان الفراغ من هذا المكان المبارك في شهر رمضان المعظم قدره سنة خمس وثمانين وثمان مائة

Basmala, may God grant Muhammad, his family and companions salvation. Has ordered the construction of this auspicious and blessed mosque through the grace of God Most High and His abundant universal generosity, our lord his excellency the noble, the eminent, the lofty, the great amir, the masterly, the authority, the sovereign, the masterful, the holy warrior, the defender, the assisted by God, the victorious, the pious, the scrupulous, the ascetic, the worshipper, the fasting, the performer of religious duties, the performer of prayers, the prostrator Sayf al-Din Qijmas, grand stablemaster of al-Malik al-Ashraf (Qaytbay), may God strengthen his supporters through Muhammad and his family, in the days of our lord the sultan, al-Malik al-Ashraf Abu'l-Nasr Qaytbay. This blessed place was finished in the month of Ramadan the great in the year 885 (November-December 1480).

The pompous language full of praise for Qijmas the founder is interesting in that it strongly attempts to associate him with Islam through lengthy depictions that attest to his piety. While flowery language may have simply been the style of the period, the strong emphasis on a founder's piety may also be explained in these terms: "Of course, expressing piety and power through pious foundations and handsome architecture has always been common among Muslim rulers. However, the expressions of piety were amplified and personalized by the Mamluks to make up for their lack of respectable origins."¹²⁰

A number of peculiarities arise from a closer reading of the inscriptions.

Firstly, the fact that the stucco bands of the windows are adorned with a foundation inscription is unusual: stucco windows generally displayed Quranic verses, as in the windows of the durqa'a and west iwan (fig. 4.8).¹²¹ It is even more unusual in this

¹²⁰ Asfour, "Mamluk Esthetics," 237.

¹²¹ The text of the durqa'a and west iwan: Quran 3:173-174. O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 685.

case given the fact that they are the qibla windows. From the way they look, it would appear that the stucco windows of the interior have been restored, but it is unlikely that the text of the inscriptions were altered in the course of the restorations.

The second peculiarity is the paste inlaid signature of the craftsman ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Naqqash in the qibla window spandrels, and on the mihrab niche where it is rendered in mirror image (figs. 4.9-4.10). In *Cairo of the Mamluks*, Doris Behrens-Abouseif deems it blasphemous on the part of the decorator to inscribe his name so prominently in the center of the mihrab considering the holiness of this part of the mosque, “where not even sultans dared to put their names.”¹²² In my discussion of the mihrab, I will provide possible parallels for this type of inscription.

The final peculiarity is the great number of foundation inscriptions adorning the mosque, from the kursi (which is no longer in situ) to the minbar, and the panels above the doors of the sahn. An explanation for this may be the founder’s need to assert his presence within a dense environment of patronage.

...The type of decoration, sometimes in combination with their specific location, mirrors some of the aspirations and ideas current within Mamluk society. The dominating presence of founders’ names shows not only the importance granted to ownership but also the need to make oneself visible in a culture in which the lives of the elite were dominated by competition and internal strife.¹²³

4.2 Decoration of the Mosque Exterior

4.2.1 The Main Portal

¹²² Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 290.

¹²³ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 77. The decoration Mols is referring to in this quote is that on Mamluk metalwork, but I find the point applicable to foundation inscriptions of the mosque in general.

The main portal of the Qijmas mosque was, according to its foundation inscription, the last part to be completed in March-April 1481.¹²⁴ It is the most ornamented segment of the façade, displaying all the refinement of the period (fig. 4.11). Its prominent location on al-Tabbana street, coupled with its extensive decoration, makes it eye-catching. The bareness of the mausoleum dome in the background highlights the ornamentation of this portal even more with its hood, the roundel and its metal revetted door.

4.2.2 Hood

The hood is of the trilobed, divided type (fig. 4.12). This kind of hood was first seen in the divided portal of the funerary khanqah of Sultan Barsbay (1432) in the Northern Cemetery and was adopted in subsequent Burji Mamluk buildings.¹²⁵ It represented a break from the Bahri Mamluk tradition of the muqarnas hood – the final example being the funerary complex of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh. In the hood of Qijmas, muqarnas is eliminated and does not figure in any of the hood arches. As Behrens-Abouseif suggests, the groin vault in the arches of the hood has the appearance of a squinch: “There is a parallel between portal vaults and dome architecture; the portal conch, being a semi-dome, was constructed to seem supported by muqarnas pendentives or squinches. The portal seems, therefore, to have become a miniature experimental field for the development of dome architecture.”¹²⁶

The smooth semi-dome is inlaid with a bichrome foliated scroll pattern, below which are three carved marble panels occupying the lobed divisions. The central panel

¹²⁴ O’Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 681.

¹²⁵ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 255-6.

¹²⁶ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 89.

is made up of arabesque, and is flanked by two smaller panels composed of geometric motifs. The panels are set against a bichrome ablaq background.

Below the divided hood is the typical rectangular grille window also set against an ablaq background with a joggled bichrome lintel above and below the window. The segment between the central carved panel of the hood and this window is a rectangular muqarnas hood flanked by a carved arabesque panel on either side – the layout of which is similar to that of the main portal of Abu Bakr Muzhir (figs. 4.13-4.14).

4.2.3 Framing Bands

Running along the outline of the divided hood of the portal is a chain moulding with a large loop at its apex (fig. 4.15). The moulding is interrupted by loops interspersed within it. This type of framing device became characteristic of the facades of the late Mamluk period.¹²⁷ Around the hood frame is an additional rectangular moulding that frames the entire portal. A chain moulding has a visually defining effect of bordering the entire composition; it was used to “differentiate different programmatic parts.”¹²⁸ The spandrels of this portal, defined by the rectangular chain moulding running above the hood, are left undecorated, unlike some of its contemporaries.

4.2.4 Roundel

In the middle section of the portal between the two rectangular grille windows is a roundel of an imposing size (fig. 4.16). Roundels appeared in other contemporary

¹²⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 289.

¹²⁸ Sayed, *Rab' in Cairo*, 44.

monuments of the Qaytbay period as on the facades of the sabil-kuttab of Qaytbay (1480) on al-Saliba street (fig. 4.17).¹²⁹ Unlike the geometric patterns on the Qaytbay roundels, the one in Qijmas is a polychrome marble inlaid composition of trefoil motifs and stylized foliated scrolls. The circular motion depicted in the scrolls gives this roundel a more fluid and dynamic look than its geometric counterparts. It is set within a larger rectangular frame that includes four corners of a carved marble floriated design, and is flanked by two rectangular geometric carved panels.

Abdel Razik suggests a possible influence by proximity between the roundel found in Qijmas and the rectangular panel on the façade of the zawiya of Faraj ibn Barquq situated opposite Bab Zuwayla, close to Qijmas (fig. 4.18). I do agree with Abdel Razik on this point, as I do see a resemblance between both patterns. The smooth hood of Qijmas' portal may also have been inspired by the same design, as there is a discernable similarity between its patterns and the panel in the zawiya of Faraj ibn Barquq. Below the roundel is another small rectangular grille window, below which is a joggled bichrome relieving arch with a trefoil pattern flanked by geometric carved panels. Above the door is a black stone panel, flanked by small trefoil panels (fig. 4.61).

4.2.5 Door of the Main Portal

The metal revetted door of the main portal is of the medallion type composed of a central openwork brass medallion with trefoil finials above and below it, four corner-pieces, two oblong panels and a border to frame the entire composition (fig. 4.19). The design for this door type was first used extensively at the madrasa of

¹²⁹ The roundels I am discussing here are the two flanking the central oculus on the facades.

Sultan Barquq (1384).¹³⁰ The top panel here is adorned with a royal inscription, while the bottom panel is composed of interwoven knots (fig. 4.20).¹³¹

Of all the metal revetted doors in the Qijmas mosque, the main portal door is the only medallion one, the others are with metal bands. The strapwork of this door is composed of geometric star designs that occupy the inner space of the main components of the door (with the exception of the inner space of the oblong panels). In the central medallion is a 12-pointed star surrounded by four pairs of five-pointed stars and arrowhead figures. The triangular-shaped corners display a quarter of the 12-pointed star of the central medallion. While floral motifs tend to give a door a delicate lace-like appearance, this effect is lost in Qijmas with the use of the geometric star strapwork instead. Luitgard E.M. Mols, author of *Mamluk Metalwork Fittings*, believes that the former seems to have been the favored type of motifs for such doors: “Metalworkers ... clearly preferred to fill the interior of the medallion with openwork floral motifs, the mobility of which was much better suited to the round form.”¹³² A unique element of this door is the lotus flower with foliated stems on the metal surface of the corner pieces. It is the only time this motif appears on a door (fig. 4.22).¹³³

The fine naskhi inscription of the top panel lies on a background of spiral scrolls. It was customary for the top panel of this type of metalwork door to be inscribed and the execution of this inscription to be of superior quality (fig. 4.6). Noteworthy is the innovative inclusion of the radiating Quranic verses into the central star of the medallion (fig. 4.2). “The rendering of a religious verse...in a radiating

¹³⁰ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 45.

¹³¹ The text of this inscription can be found on page 56.

¹³² Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 46.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 48-9.

mode surrounded by a star is a novel design, not encountered before on any other Mamluk door.”¹³⁴ When Quranic verses were present on a door, they were differentiated either by their location or by their style of rendering. Despite the difference of eras and type of inscription, the latter radiating inscription is reminiscent of the circular inscription on the portal of the Fatimid mosque of al-Aqmar (1125) (fig. 4.3).

The pair of doorknockers is located between the top finial of the central medallion and the corner pieces (fig. 4.23). It conforms to the interlace type, all extant examples of which date to the second half of the 14th century onwards.¹³⁵ It is composed of an elongated hanger with openwork stems, making up four loops surrounding a central lozenge. “The stems do not merely serve to fill the interior but they actually define the exterior form of the hanger as well. The outer edge of this type of hanger is cusped with small protruding trefoils and ends below in a larger trefoil finial.”¹³⁶ The loop through which the hanger is suspended is in the shape of a stylized feline head, also a feature of this type of knocker. The surface of the loops and stems of the hanger are engraved with fine foliate scrolls. The interesting aspect of this doorknocker, however, are the dragon heads at the top of the interlace hanger to each side of the feline loop. The dragons face each other with wide-open jaws. The dragon-head hanger may be a unique feature found in the mosque of Qijmas as no other extant Cairene examples seem to exist. However, it seems a pair of Mamluk dragon-head hangers existed in the mausoleum of Ibrahim al-Khalil in Hebron, but it

¹³⁴ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 292. The text of the radial inscription can be found on page 55.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 62.

has been suggested that this design is not a Mamluk invention and that it existed in pre-Mamluk buildings in Aleppo and Damascus.¹³⁷

This door displays some very fine strapwork and engravings, and like many parts of the mosque, it carries a number of subtleties and innovations that make for an interesting reflection. The overall design of the portal is a rather dynamic one, with the varied motifs combining to form a harmonious whole. The richness of the portal decoration offers a peek into the decoration of the interior.

4.2.6 Window grilles

Within the realm of metalware are the window grilles made up of bosses and bars. The shape of the bosses differs in grilles on different locations on the façade.¹³⁸ In the text below, I will discuss the sabil grilles in more detail. The accumulation of dirt can make it difficult to discern the engravings on the surface of the bosses, which is why I rely, in part, on the documentation work of Mols in *Mamluk Metalwork Fittings*.

The surface of the lozenge-shaped bosses is engraved mostly with naskhi epigraphic inscriptions with the patron's title. Others display Qijmas' blazon (fig. 4.24).¹³⁹ During the Burji Mamluk period, blazons were often coupled with either inscriptions with the patron's title as is the case in this mosque or with floral patterns. Just as foundation inscriptions glorified the patron of a building, adorning the bosses

¹³⁷ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 60-1. Mols mentions the hangers on the entrance door to the bimaristan of Nur al-Din Zengi in Aleppo and his madrasa in Damascus, both dating to the 12th century.

¹³⁸ I suspect that the original bosses were the lozenge-shaped ones, while the other ones were restorations of the original one; I can provide no proof of that however.

¹³⁹ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 295-6.

with this type of decoration served to assert the power of the patron and his presence, however subtly it appeared on this medium.

... The high speed of production needed to keep up with the vast building projects of the ruling class might also have caused a standardization of metalwork fittings. In between 648/1250 and 923/1517 more than 2000 buildings or annexes were erected and buildings restored. Given these numbers, it is not surprising that metalworkers sought refuge in techniques such as casting that enabled the easy multiplication of doorknockers, which were often found in pairs or even in multiple numbers and that they favored the production of grilles and doors that were composed of small identical units. The common plain surface of grilles of the bosses-and-bars type also points to a continuous demand and a limited time frame. Given this principle of repetition, fittings could be distinguished from one another by advertising the name of the founder in a legible message so as to tell it apart from work commissioned by other elite patrons. Hence the abundant use of the patron's titles.¹⁴⁰

The bars are mostly plain except for a select few horizontal ones that display the signature of the craftsman Zayn al-'Abdin al-Zaradkash:¹⁴¹

The work of Zayn al-'Abdin al-Zaradkash عمل زين العابدين الزرادكاش

4.2.7 Qibla Façade Portal

On the qibla façade, situated on the quiet Sikkat Abu Hurayba, is another portal with stairs in its interior leading downwards to the crypt below the level of the mausoleum (fig. 2.14). Viewed from the exterior, this portal is located between the mihrab and the mausoleum. Considering the narrowness of the alley the viewer is forced to stand near the portal to see it properly, which leads one to question why it was so elaborately decorated in the first place. It neither contributes much to the overall decorative grandeur of the mosque, nor is it an opening onto the qibla area. One possibility could be that this alley did not originally exist, and that Qijmas chose

¹⁴⁰ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 76-7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 296.

to create a certain space between his mosque and the neighboring building. In order to draw attention to this facade, he chamfered its corners and embellished it with this portal. If, however, this alley did originally exist, then the portal's mere location on the qibla façade may have been the reason it was decorated. Nowadays, the door of the portal remains locked blocking all access to its interior.

The decoration of the portal is made up of an imposing stone carved inscription band and inlaid stone and marble panels. The portal projects very slightly forward and chain moulding with loops – a staple feature of Qaytbay decoration – frames and outlines each panel.¹⁴²

The Quranic naskhi inscription band is beautifully carved in large letters. Below it is the rectangular grille window flanked by carved complex floral arabesque panels. Below the window is the bichrome joggled relieving arch with the trefoil leaf pattern. It is flanked by geometric carved panels composed of a ten-sided star and geometric lines. The lunette lintel below the relieving arch is a braided leafy carving. Finally, directly above the door is a marble inlaid panel of an elaborate, complex trefoil design. The complexity of the panel designs marks the high quality of craftsmanship in the decoration of this mosque.

The door of the portal is decorated with metal bands. There is an oblong band at the top and another at the bottom of the door, and both are framed with an openwork trefoil motif. On the top panel is an inscription that is illegible due to the accumulation of dirt on it. The area between both bands is enclosed within a rectangular frame occupying the majority of the empty door space. This type of door was used extensively in the interior of religious buildings, as is the case here. The

¹⁴² To one side of this qibla façade door is the mihrab panel that also projects slightly, and on the other side is another projecting panel.

ones of the interior have the same appearance as this door, but they are without the central rectangular frame (fig. 4.25). This type of door was popular during the Mamluk era, especially in the 15th century when economic factors may have been at play.

It can be argued that the layout of doors with two oblong bands is closely linked to those of the star pattern type and the medallion door. If the entire central decoration of the latter two is omitted, what remains is a pair of oblong bands, positioned in the self-same location as is used in those doors which have no decoration other than metal bands. The growing popularity of this much simplified type of door decoration in the 15th century might well be explained by scarcity of metal or the tight budget of the patron.¹⁴³

Aside from the geometric and arabesque elongated panel that runs below the grille windows and a number of small, carved panels, the portal is the main attraction of this façade. Seeing how narrow the alley was, however, the builders chamfered both corners of the building leading into the alley as if to invite the passerby into the alley or, at least, encourage him to take a look at this secondary façade.

4.2.8 The Minaret

Both the minaret and the dome of the mausoleum follow their respective contemporary structural models, but they both represent decorative anomalies. Seen from a distance, they contribute to the verticality of the mosque, but do not add much aesthetically. A closer look at each element might lead to an explanation for this decorative deviance.

The structure of the stone minaret of the mosque conforms to the Qaytbay model with its octagonal first storey, followed by a circular middle part, and topped by the last storey composed of fine stone columns supporting the bulb of the minaret (fig. 4.26). It is a graceful structure of good proportion – a characteristic feature of

¹⁴³ Mols, *Mamluk Metalwork*, 54.

minarets during the time of Qaytbay.¹⁴⁴ It displays, however, a peculiarity in the lack of carving on its body, which would have been either of an elaborate floral or geometric nature. Noteworthy also is the lack of epigraphy anywhere on the structure.

At the base of the minaret is the transitional zone made up of triangles framed with chain moulding with loops. In the first octagonal tier, the keel-arched niches, which would typically be lavishly carved, are left bare with no moulding around them or sunrise motif in their hoods. The double colonettes and the spaces around the niches are not carved either – unlike typical late Mamluk minarets.¹⁴⁵ Above that is the circular middle tier with no carving at all, which is unusual considering it was the decorative specialty of the period. The lack of epigraphic inscriptions on any of the storeys of this minaret is again peculiar in this late Mamluk period when minarets were extensively inscribed, to the point where “some fifteenth-century minarets carry up to three inscription bands on the first and second stories.”¹⁴⁶ The last top tier features the usual column pavilion, first seen in the minaret of al-Maridani mosque (1340) carrying the bulb top of the minaret.

There are only two decorative additions to this minaret. The first one is the muqarnas carving topping each storey. It became customary in Mamluk minarets to have three rows of muqarnas in each tier displaying different arrangements. The inclusion of muqarnas as part of minaret decoration began with the mashhad of al-Juyushi (1085) as a cornice to its square shaft, and later it appears in the form found on the Qijmas minaret. The varied muqarnas patterns became a characteristic of

¹⁴⁴ Behrens-Abouseif, *Minarets*, 132.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 28.

Cairene religious architecture.¹⁴⁷ The second feature is the pierced designs of the balcony of each storey that also display a variety of patterns.

The minaret of Qijmas is a decorative anomaly compared to the contemporary Qaytbay model. It does not measure up to the splendor of Qaytbay's minaret in his funerary complex (1472-4), or to that of Abu Bakr Muzhir, contemporary to the mosque of Qijmas, with which it shares a number of decorative similarities.

Why did the decorators of Qijmas not fully apply the Qaytbay tradition of extensive carving and decoration to their minaret? Since the same question applies to the dome of the mausoleum, I will attempt to provide an answer to this question following a discussion of the dome.

4.2.9 The Mausoleum and its Dome

The mausoleum dome is a small structure that is devoid of any decoration, be it carving or epigraphy (fig. 4.27). Given the vertical advantage that the dome (and the minaret) had over the lower structures of a mosque, the decorators of the period made full use of this by adorning it with the most elaborate carvings. In this mosque, not only is the dome uncarved, but even the tiraz band above the windows, which is traditionally adorned with an inscription, is left bare.

Unlike many of its stone-built contemporaries, this one is a brick structure.¹⁴⁸ Strangely enough, however, stone is used in its transitional zone. This combination of brick dome with the stone zone of transition occurred in a number of late Mamluk domes such as that of al-Ghuri's mausoleum. The transitional zone, both inside and

¹⁴⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Minarets*, 20.

¹⁴⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 81.

outside is treated in the same way as that of a stone dome.¹⁴⁹ The outside is composed of triple prisms on two levels and Qalawun set windows placed in between. This type of transition zone was used in the fifteenth century and was inspired by transitional zones of earlier minarets.¹⁵⁰ In the interior, it is composed of multi-tiered muqarnas pendentives, also a device commonly used in the fifteenth century with stone domes (fig. 4.28).¹⁵¹

The drum of the dome has been raised to allow the dome to be seen by the passerby from the street and for it to visually couple with the minaret and add to the verticality of the mosque. The only visible part of the mausoleum to the passerby is the dome, whereas the triple prisms and the drum are concealed by the elevation of the main portal.

The mausoleum interior is more decorated than its exterior. Although it has an unpolished look, it still displays a number of decorative elements (fig. 4.29). The colored glass windows serve to break the monotony of the walls, while the small mihrab – flanked by a column on each side with a hint of ribbing on its niche – marks the direction of the qibla (figs. 4.30-4.31). The waqfiyya notes that the floor of the mausoleum is decorated with colored inlaid marble in the shape of star and geometric designs in the center surrounded by rectangular shapes acting as a border to the central designs. The rectangular marble inlaid border recalls the marble dados of the mosque interior (fig. 4.32).¹⁵² It also mentions the existence of marble dado going around the interior of the mausoleum, but it no longer exists, leaving the walls

¹⁴⁹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 81.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 83.

¹⁵¹ Ibid 82.

¹⁵² Waqfiyya line #55.

looking bare and unfinished.¹⁵³ The marble dado of this mausoleum may have been stolen, like the minbar door was. It is possible that the mihrab of the mausoleum also had marble dado and inlaid decoration, and that they either got damaged and were removed, or they were stolen.

Viewed from the interior, the dome is bare with no inscription on its apex, and its small circumference enhances the feeling of verticality of the mausoleum from the interior (fig. 4.29). The existence, however, of some decoration leads one to think that the mausoleum interior was most likely completed at around the same time as the iwans and qa'a were, and not left to the later stages of construction as was most likely the case with the minaret and the dome.

There is a strong contrast between the highly decorated lower part of the mosque – namely the façade and portal – and the bare upper parts: the minaret and the dome (fig. 2.7).¹⁵⁴ The plain dome contrasts sharply with the exceptional decoration of the mosque portal, for which it serves as a backdrop. This dichotomy raises the question of why Qijmas would have refrained from completing the beautification of the mosque in such visible elements, during a time that witnessed a supreme refinement in their decoration? Why would he have forgone the opportunity to make a dashing statement?

There are a number of possible explanations for the decorative bareness of both these elements. It would make sense to assume that the minaret and the mausoleum share either the same foundation date as the rest of the mosque exterior or possibly even a later one. By that time, Qijmas was already in Damascus serving as governor. It is possible that by then, the funds put aside for the foundation of the

¹⁵³ Waqfiyya line #55.

¹⁵⁴ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 289.

mosque had run out or that without the direct supervision of Qijmas, the remaining parts were erected simply to fulfill their structural roles without the additional decorative fanfare. The same is applicable to the mausoleum interior.

A more likely explanation could be that after assuming his position in Syria, Qijmas lost interest in the completion of this mosque and instead focused all his efforts and attention on the funerary madrasa he was founding in Damascus. The use of brick instead of stone in the dome may provide a hint as to the intention of the builder. If there were still enough funds and interest in decorating and carving the dome, then stone would have most likely been the material of choice. By using brick, one can conclude that the builders wanted to put up a dome that would not cost them much and that they had no intention, even prior to its building, of adorning it with any decoration.

4.2.10 Engaged Columns

Like chamfered corners, engaged columns at the corners of this building give the edges of the façade a smoother, rounder feel, and the transition between one part of the staggered façade and the next is rendered less abrupt. They contribute to the overall harmony and flow of the mosque.

Carved engaged columns flank both corners of the northwest façade and the corner of the southwest facade occupied by the sabil. The patterns on the northwest façade columns differ from that of the sabil column. The considerable repertoire of designs throughout the mosque of Qijmas is one of its distinguishing characteristics. While it was common for columns on buildings of the period to be carved, the carving

in these columns shows a great deal of refinement and mastery, comparable in quality to that on the dome of Qaytbay's mausoleum, considered the height of this art form.

The columns at the corners of the northwest façade are covered with geometric designs alternating with arabesque scrolls (fig. 4.33). The geometric designs consist of star-like strapwork that recall the geometric panels on the main portal, with vegetal carvings set within the geometric units. The lines making up the arabesque scrolls are doubled with the occasional loop running in between them, a recall of the chain moulding bands used in framing some elements of the mosque. Double chevron-patterned lines separate the different motifs. Alternating geometric and arabesque designs within a panel or column is a novelty that emerged during the reign of Qaytbay,¹⁵⁵ another example of which can be seen at the sabil-kuttab of Qaytbay, a contemporary building with which this mosque shares a number of decorative similarities.

The engaged column on the sabil corner of the southwest façade is adorned with a fine arabesque design onto which is superimposed another larger leaf-like motif (fig. 4.34). The refinement of the arabesque carving on such columns in the Qijmas mosque distinguishes it from other contemporary buildings and makes it stand out.

4.2.11 Decorative Panels

Among the remarkable features of this mosque's exterior are the decorative panels, both inlaid and carved, that adorn its facades. The variety in designs and the elaborateness of the panel decorations truly distinguish the mosque. The degree to

¹⁵⁵ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 289.

which a façade was decorated with panels was to a large extent a direct function of how busy the street onto which the façade overlooks was.¹⁵⁶ In the mosque of Qijmas, the northwest façade and the staggered southwest façade are the ones with the most extensive panels, followed by the qibla façade. The northern façade on Abu Hurayba street holds none at all, due to the narrowness of the street and its lack of importance.

The panels are of two types: the marble inlaid type and the stone carved ones made up of foliated scrolls, arabesque or geometric designs. The patterns of the marble inlaid panels are exceptionally intricate and elaborate, and are considered by some as being of unparalleled and unprecedented quality amongst Cairene buildings.¹⁵⁷ Below, I will discuss these panels, how they are used, their placement on the façade and the complexity of their designs.

The northwest façade displays a variety of decorative panels, but two are particularly interesting and worthy of mention. The first is the stone-carved extended horizontal panel that stretches the length of the entire façade in the area below the rectangular grille windows. It is composed of a combination of arabesque and geometrical patterns set side by side. The geometric motif is made up of a central six-pointed star around which is geometric strapwork (fig. 4.35). This elongated panel serves to visually separate the mosque from the shops below it. An elongated panel such as this one that combines geometric and arabesque designs also appeared on other Qaytbay buildings such as on the northeast façade of Qaytbay's sabil kuttab. Alternating between two patterns on a single panel adds a dimension of complexity and illustrates the carving prowess of the artisans of the Qaytbay period.

¹⁵⁶ An exception to that, however, is the highly decorated qibla façade portal.

¹⁵⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 289.

The second striking aspect of this façade is the two inlaid marble panels placed on top of one another above the central grille window (fig. 4.36). The combination of patterns and their placement is interesting. The top lintel is an ablaq inlaid marble with a joggled trefoil leaf design, while the lower one is a polychrome inlaid marble panel with a complex, eye-catching design of swirling scrolls surrounding what appears to be a six-sided star design. Both panels display an advance in lintel design, with the latter being particularly elaborate.¹⁵⁸ Their location above this window was not chosen arbitrarily.

To ensure maximum exposure, marble panels were usually placed over windows on the ground floor only, within the line of vision of the passer-by. Higher up on the façade, they would not easily have been viewed from the street below. The logic of the situation suggested that marble design of contrasting trefoils in figure-ground relationship was meant to be seen from close up, and as far as possible perpendicular to the line of vision.¹⁵⁹

Carved panels are also present on this façade in the form of arabesque panels, and others, like those above the side grille windows, are of knotted designs, which recall the knotted design of the lower panel of the main portal door (fig. 4.21). Crowning the top of the façade are the trefoil crenellations, below which are two rows of muqarnas.

The corner of the stepped southwest façade occupied by the sabil displays a pair of marble inlaid panels above each grille. The top panel is the same on each side of the sabil - a bichrome trefoil pattern with a foliated medallion in the center bearing a du‘a inscription that says (fig. 4.37):¹⁶⁰

God is Truth

الله حق

¹⁵⁸ Asfour, "Mamluk Esthetics," 256.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 254.

¹⁶⁰ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 694-5.

The inclusion of the medallion with the inscription in its center marks a further development of the trefoil design. A very similar pattern can be found on the lintel above the door of the main portal of Abu Bakr Muzhir as well as on the lintel above the sabil grille of the northeast façade of Qaytbay's sabil-kuttab.

The trefoil development paved the way for more sophisticated designs. These designs had the same main elements as those in the earlier period but they were treated differently. They capitalized on the fact that the viewer at this stage had become familiar with certain conventional designs. The new patterns would then attract the viewer's attention by a new series of unfamiliar arrangements. Using old elements in the new designs was crucial to achieving a surprising sensation, because the pattern would invite the viewer into seemingly familiar grounds only to present him / her with an unfamiliar misfit ... An example of advanced lintel design is on the Qijmas al-Ishaqi madrasa. The trefoil was no longer in an upright repetitive position but in clusters.¹⁶¹

The polychrome marble inlaid panels below the trefoil ones differ on each side of the sabil. On the side facing northwest is the panel composed of an elaborate trefoil and foliate design with heart-shaped patterns in the center, in upright and upside down positions (fig. 4.38). On the southwest side of the sabil is a different panel with a complex design of trefoil leaves set in circular clusters (fig. 4.39). It is the variety in the decoration of such panels that truly characterizes and differentiates the mosque of Qijmas.

To the east of the latter panel lies the door with the metal bands of the sabil above which lie the lintel, the rectangular window and the circular mashrabiyya window (fig. 2.9). The lintel above the door is a carved panel composed of a star pattern from which radiates arabesque scrolls that end in geometric strapwork at the top corners of the panel. Almost the exact same design can be found on the secondary door of the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir. The decorator of both mosques, 'Abd al-

¹⁶¹ Asfour, "Mamluk Esthetics," 256.

Qadir, must have designed similar patterns for both buildings but changed their location.

Above the lintel is a stone ablaq trefoil panel topped by a small rectangular grille window, which is flanked by carved panels with a star motif. Above the rectangular window is a circular mashrabiyya window: it is a change from the traditional rectangular grille window.

4.3 Decoration of the interior

Just as the exterior of the mosque constitutes a highly decorated façade, the interior also displays its own set of innovations and particularities in its mihrab, its minbar, its ceilings and its decorative panels. I will be undertaking an analysis of its components in the hope of revealing its overriding decorative character.

4.3.1 The Mihrab

The mihrab of Qijmas has been described as the “*pièce de résistance*” of this entire mosque.¹⁶² It is made up of inlaid spandrels, a delicate conch followed by a Kufic inscription, a remarkable niche, below which is the polychrome marble dado (fig. 4.40). It is a fine decorative composition that displays a number of novelties as well as a variety of influences from both earlier and contemporary buildings. Through a closer look at the mihrab spandrels, its hood, its inscription and its niche, one gets a clearer idea of the sources of inspiration for such a composite ornamentation.

The spandrels of the mihrab are an elaborate polychrome red and black marble and paste inlay composition of an intertwining scroll pattern, which starts as a dense

¹⁶² Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 289.

design at the arch of the mihrab hood and radiates in the direction of the corners. The scrolls widen as they move from their point of origin outwards. The effect of these spandrels recalls the earlier mihrab spandrel in the mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (fig. 4.41).¹⁶³ Despite the difference in the decorative scheme found in both mosques, the general impression and radiating effect are similar. Given the proximity of the mosque of Qijmas to that of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, a similarity is understandable.

The conch is adorned with a delicate polychrome geometric marble mosaic made up of star-like designs around which revolve geometric and arrowhead units. In the interior of the three star designs occupying the midline of the conch is inlaid the word "Allah". The design of the conch is a visual break from the intertwining motifs of both the spandrels above it and the mihrab niche below it. It is a recall of the fine dotted geometric mosaic framing the different elements of the main portal of the zawiya of Faraj ibn Barquq (figs. 4.42-4.43). This similarity shows the movement of motifs between mediums, and the versatility of many decorative patterns in relation to their location within a building. By altering the medium and location of a given pattern, innovative effects are achieved.

The double turquoise colonettes that line the area below the conch also appear in al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh. Below the colonettes is a foliated Kufic Quranic inscription inlaid into the white marble slabs of the mihrab niche with the following text:¹⁶⁴

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا، صَدَقَ اللَّهُ

Basmala, Quran 2:144-144 (as far as *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ تَرْضَاهَا*), God has spoken the truth.

¹⁶³ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 290.

¹⁶⁴ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 682-3.

It is peculiar in that it is the only Kufic inscription used in this mosque (fig. 4.44). It may have been inspired by the foliated Kufic inscription in the mihrab of the small domed mosque of emir Yashbak in Matariyya (1477), which was the earliest example of the revival of this type of inscription (fig. 4.45).¹⁶⁵ Other examples of Kufic inscriptions will also appear in other Qaytbay buildings and metalware, which have also been attributed to Yashbak's initiative.¹⁶⁶ In Qijmas, this single occurrence of Kufic may have been one way of distinguishing the mihrab from the rest of the interior. Another possible inspiration for this type of inscription may have been fourteenth-century Mamluk Quran manuscripts whose *sura* headings were traditionally rendered in Kufic.¹⁶⁷ Given Qijmas' appreciation and mastery of the art of calligraphy, he may have borrowed the idea for a Kufic script from Quranic scriptures.

The real eye-catcher in the mihrab, however, is undoubtedly its niche, which is particularly interesting in the finesse of its scroll design, its use of paste inlay, its inclusion of a rosette in its center and the audacious signature of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Naqqash, the decorator of the mosque, which goes as follows (fig. 4.10):¹⁶⁸

The work of 'Abd al-Qadir the engraver

عمل عبد القادر النقاش

The design of the niche is composed of a polychrome scroll pattern in the form of fine arabesque curves that radiate outwards, in direction of the edges. Its brilliance lies in the delicacy of the inlaid pattern, the finesse of which has been

¹⁶⁵ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 281.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Kahil, *Sultan Hasan Complex*, 151.

¹⁶⁸ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 689.

compared to the brushstrokes of a painting (fig. 4.46).¹⁶⁹ A magnified version of the very thin and tightly knit scrolls of the mihrab niche is applied to the spandrels of the qibla windows flanking the mihrab. The same design adorns the spandrels of the qibla windows of the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir, understandably so, given that both mosques shared the same decorator ‘Abd al-Qadir (fig. 4.47).

The scroll design of the niche is applied using red and black paste inlaid into the white slabs of the marble niche. While this is not the first example of the use of paste inlay instead of marble in the Qaytbay period, “its application here to create very thin curves of arabesques is unprecedented.”¹⁷⁰ The technique of using paste inlay was probably necessary for the decorator in the execution of the very delicate lines of this complex niche design.

In the center of the niche are two unique innovative features in mihrab decoration. Firstly is the rosette pattern, and secondly is the signature of the decorator within the rosette itself set in a mirror image. It was audacious and almost unheard of on the part of the decorator to place his signature in such a prominent location, but Behrens-Abouseif says it may be an expression of the decorator’s pride in his work and in the novelty of his design. She goes further in attributing these two novelties to an influence from contemporary Mamluk metal vessels that were produced in the Veneto-Saracenic style (fig. 4.48).

The central rosette bears a striking resemblance to the patterns used on the lids and bottoms of Veneto-Saracenic bowls. This type of marble inlay was a

¹⁶⁹ Shahin, *Qaytbay’s Decoration*, 30-1.

¹⁷⁰ Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 290. According to Shahin in his thesis on Qaytbay’s decoration, the first example of paste inlay was in the mosque of Aslam al-Baha’i (1345). The earliest examples of paste inlay in the Qaytbay period, however, were in the dado of the vestibule of Qaytbay’s madrasa in the Northern Cemetery and in the Kufic inscriptions in Yashbak’s mosque in Matarriya: Shahin, *Qaytbay’s Decoration*, 30.

novelty, which might explain the craftsman's multiple signatures in the mosque. Most interestingly, the signature of the mihrab is placed in the very center of the rosette and consequently of the mihrab itself, which is an unprecedented, almost blasphemous place for a craftsman's signature. Mahmud al-Kurdi is known to have placed his signature in such a central position on several pieces, including the lid of his bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum, another one published in Sotheby's catalogue, a tray in the Louvre, and another tray in the Hermitage Museum.¹⁷¹

'Abd al-Qadir's signature also adorns the spandrels of the qibla windows of the mosque of Qijmas and that of Abu Bakr Muzhir (fig. 4.9).

4.3.2 Decorative Panels

The panels of the interior are rendered in either carved stone – with arabesque or geometric and star patterns – or in marble. The lower sections of the walls are occupied by marble decoration, while the upper parts of the walls are dominated by stone carved panels, except for the qibla wall, which has a different composition from the rest of the interior. In the text below, I will discuss the panels of the interior, viewed from the bottom up.

The lower segment of the interior walls are occupied by polychrome marble dado that go around the interior in its entirety. Above the dados is a continuous carved marble panel decorated with intertwining and knotted stylized scrolls enclosed in a double chain moulding with loops as its upper border. This panel goes all around the interior, including the qibla wall. In the top part of the walls are the carved stone panels of the window spandrels, which are made up of an arabesque design (fig. 4.49). The spandrels are flanked by other arabesque panels, which are topped by geometric strapwork with some flower-like carving between the lines. The same design layout applies to all the windows of the interior. In the qibla and west iwans,

¹⁷¹ Behrens-Abouseif, "Veneto-Saracenic Metalware," 151-2.

the windows are topped by a lower inscription band, which is not the case in the side iwans. On all sides of the mosque are the stucco windows with the colored glass, which also bear an inscription and add a sense of warmth to the interior.

On the walls flanking the lateral iwan arches is a keel arch-shaped composition made up of a central carved arabesque design surrounded by three rows of radiating muqarnas (fig. 4.50). The spandrels are also carved with arabesque patterns with a large hexagonal loop at the apex of the arch. Above that keel arch is a small rectangular grille window flanked by geometric panels.

The qibla wall differs from its opposing one in the northwest iwan in that there is an additional marble dado above the carved marble band, and more importantly, the treatment of the window spandrels is completely different in that it displays the scroll design of the mihrab niche, and not the carved designs on the other windows (figs. 4.51-4.52). The area below the arch of the qibla wall windows is adorned with a horizontal marble ablaq, as opposed to the plain stone surfaces of the other windows. Such differences in decoration serve to give the qibla wall a more grandiose appearance than the rest of the interior walls.

Interestingly, attention was given to the subtlest areas of the interior, like the endings of the iwan arches that are composed of a combination of muqarnas units filled in with arabesque carvings (fig. 4.53). Also interesting is the narrow groin vaulted passage¹⁷² leading from the south side of the qibla iwan in direction of the mausoleum that opens onto a grille window. In the center of the groin vault is a cruciform that recalls the vestibule vault of the funerary madrasa of Uljay al-Yusufi

¹⁷² This grille window is closed nowadays. The passageway parallel to it on the same side of the qibla iwan is the one that leads from the mosque interior into the mausoleum.

(1373). A similar example can be found on the ceiling of the stairs leading down to the ablution corridor (fig. 4.54).

4.3.3 The Minbar

According to the Comité reports, the minbar of Qijmas was restored in 1894,¹⁷³ and it remains in good condition nowadays (fig. 4.55). The waqfiyya does not provide much detail with regard to its decoration, so I will be analyzing the minbar with the assumption that the Comité preserved the original decoration of the woodwork in its restoration.

It is an elaborately decorated wooden minbar inlaid with ivory and mother of pearl. The patterns on the sides are of a 16-sided star design with a boss in relief in its center, two halves of another 16-sided star, in addition to small star motifs and geometric patterns that complete the decoration. The rails of the minbar are inlaid with star and geometric motifs, while the rectangular panel closest to the qibla wall displays a central ten-sided star motif in the centre with a boss in relief along with geometric patterns. Below this rectangular panel is a naskhi foundation inscription on both sides of the minbar that dates the manufacturing of this minbar to the period when Qijmas was grand stablemaster of Qaytbay (fig. 4.5).¹⁷⁴

The door of the minbar has been stolen some years ago. It displayed an inscription with the following text (fig. 4.56):¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Comité Bulletin. 172nd Report of the 2nd Commission. 1894, 120.

¹⁷⁴ The text of this inscription can be found on page 56.

¹⁷⁵ Yehia, *al-Amir qijmas*, 131. The text of this inscription and those on the sides of the minbar are the same. The inscription on the door of the minbar must have been on the interior side of the door because it is not visible on the available picture. The quality of the picture is not good because it is a magnified section of a photograph that showed the whole minbar.

أمر بإنشاء هذا المنبر المبارك المقر الأشرف السيفي قجماس أمير اخور كبير الملكي الأشرفي
عز نصره

Has ordered the construction of this blessed minbar his excellency the noble Sayf al-Din Qijmas grand stablemaster of al-Malik al-Ashraf (Qaytbay), may his victory be glorified.

The rectangular panel above the area once occupied by the door of the minbar bears an inscription indicating that the minbar underwent restoration (fig. 2.24).¹⁷⁶ On the other side of this panel – in the interior area of the minbar – is a Quranic inscription that says the following (fig. 4.57):

ان الله وملائكته يصلون على النبي يا أيها الذين امنوا صلوا عليه وسلموا تسليما

33:56 Quran

Above that are four rows of muqarnas crowned by trefoil crenellations. The crenellations recall those crowning the façades of the mosque. The top part of the minbar is occupied by rows of muqarnas and the bulb dome, which recalls the larger minaret bulb top, except the former has muqarnas on its neck. Inscribed on it is a Quranic inscription (fig. 4.58). A part of the inscription goes as follows:¹⁷⁷

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

Basmala, Quran 62:9-9 (as far as ذكر الله)

4.3.4 Ceilings

The ceilings of the mosque are of the coffered type with tie beams running between the different coffered rows. The ceiling most richly decorated is the qibla iwan one, followed by the northwest iwan ceiling, both of which were restored by the Comite in 1894.¹⁷⁸ The small area reserved for the ceiling of the lateral iwans does

¹⁷⁶ The text of this inscription can be found on page 25-26.

¹⁷⁷ O'Kane, *Documentation of the Inscriptions*, 689.

¹⁷⁸ Comité Bulletin. 161st Report of the 2nd Commission. 23 Jan. 1894, 19.

not leave much room for a developed composition, while the entrance vestibule ceiling is a simple composition that is in a dilapidated state.

The qibla iwan ceiling is composed of decorated coffered units and tie beams that flatten near the edges (fig. 4.59). Most of the coffered parts are adorned with designs of intersecting lines, while the ones on the edge of the ceiling display a star design with the central boss in relief similar to the one displayed on the sides of the minbar. This is another example illustrating the movement of designs between mediums. The tie beams appear to have some floriated design on them. At the corners are multi-tiered muqarnas formations. The transition between the ceiling and the wall is made smoother by the curvature of the inscription below the ceiling. Interspersed within the latter inscription are a number of large muqarnas units with clusters of small muqarnas within them.

The northwest ceiling displays much of the same features except that there is no inscription below the ceiling, and so the area below the ceiling is made up entirely of clusters of muqarnas set within a larger muqarnas unit. The patterns of this ceiling differ from those on the qibla iwan ceiling, however, the multi-sided star design of the minbar with the central boss in relief features on this ceiling as well.

The very small lateral iwan ceilings are composed of three large inset rosette-shaped units, which are painted and gilded, and a small muqarnas pendentive at the corners (fig. 4.60). It is a very simple composition, suiting the available space.

4.3.5 The Lantern

Above the sahn is the Comité lantern (fig. 2.21). It is a wooden octagon. Separating the lantern from the wooden cornices of the sahn ceiling are rows of grille windows set vertically that provide light and ventilation into the mosque interior. The lantern is made up of a star and geometric unit design. Set against the wooden base of the lantern, the lines of the designs are gilded. The pattern is composed of a central 16-sided star with geometric motifs around it, ending in half-star designs on each side of the octagon. The wooden surface of the lantern is painted with a variety of motifs, including small trefoil and scroll designs. The light streaming in from the openings below the lantern highlights the gilding on the lantern, and give the painted wood a warm appearance.

The reason why a discussion of the decoration of the Qijmas mosque is so fascinating is because, aside from the unparalleled finesse and technique of its decoration, it thrives on the element of surprise. At first view, the decoration of a part of the mosque may appear straightforward, but as soon as one delves deeper into it, one is unfailingly met with an unexpected element of design often times subtly displayed. While the mosque displays innovative elements such as the mihrab design and the radiating inscription on the metal revetted door of the main portal, for instance, its lack of decoration in other areas such as the minaret and the dome lead us to question the intentions of the patrons. Just as the structure of the mosque is interesting in its fluidity and adaptation to the irregular plot of land, so is the decoration, in the goal of achieving maximum effect. Through a carefully chosen

repertoire of adornments, the decoration complements the unusual architecture of this mosque in the most effective way possible.

Conclusion

The mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi was one of the distinctive mosques of the late Mamluk period. It displayed the full decorative capacity of the Qaytbay repertoire, and it made optimal use of the available space. In this conclusion, I will sum up the more important aspects of this mosque, along with its peculiarities and some unanswered questions regarding it.

The *istibdal* transactions conducted by Qijmas to acquire the plot of land onto which he built his mosque can be explained in the following two ways: firstly, the attractiveness of al-Tabbana street as a site for amirial pious foundations until the end of the Mamluk period, and the importance of location for Mamluk patrons.

Starting with the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, al-Tabbana had become a main emirial thoroughfare – coming second in importance only to the royal al-Mu‘izz street. Added to that was the ceremonial character of the street during the reign of Qaytbay, which made it all the more attractive as a site for a powerful emir such as Qijmas al-Ishaqi. The trouble he went through in order to acquire his desired plot attests to the importance that patrons assigned to the question of location. The better the location, the more powerful the emir must be, and so emirs found themselves competing for the best spots in and around the city.

Through its structure, the mosque of Qijmas has shown how the Mamluks not only accommodated the street and its contours, but how they fully integrated it within the plan of the mosque. The staggered façade on al-Tabbana not only maximizes on the plot and the street it overlooks, but it also uses the street for its projections and the creation of urban pockets. The structural ingenuity of the mosque exterior shows how

the street contours were not treated as an obstacle, but rather as a challenge that was taken advantage of to further the architectural strength of the monument.

The maneuvering that the builders had to confront to include a kuttab as part of the mosque shows the importance that it had acquired by this time in the architecture of the Mamluks. By this stage, the kuttab was an essential element of a pious foundation, with its usual location above the sabil. In this mosque, however, it was moved to the other side of a lesser side street from the mosque, and assigned less importance than the sabil due to its secondary location.

The mosque displays a number of particularities, both in its structure and its decoration. Among the more remarkable features are the bridge that links the mosque to its dependencies on the other side of Abu Hurayba street, the distinctive mihrab decoration and the extensive and innovative inscriptions. The use of the bridge is unique in Cairene architecture. It is a practical solution to the space constraints imposed by the modest plot, allowing for the inclusion of additional elements such as the ablution court, the drinking trough and the kuttab. The bridge was indicative of the way the builders of the Qijmas mosque were thinking “outside the box” when conceiving the design for their monument.

The mihrab with its paste inlay scrolls, the rosette design in its niche and the signature of the craftsman are unique and distinctive decorative elements borrowing from a number of influences. The use of paste allowed for the creation of very fine scrolls in the niche of the mihrab, the finesse of which had not been seen before. The rosette design with the inscribed signature in its center is an example of the movement of designs between mediums.

The other remarkable element is the extensive inscriptions adorning all areas of the mosque (except the dome and the minaret). Qijmas' mastery of the art of calligraphy must have played a role in the considerable body of inscriptions in this mosque. The foundation inscriptions – aside from being numerous – can be found in unusual areas such as the stucco windows of the qibla iwan. This can be explained by the pride Qijmas took in the building of his foundation, as well as a need to assert his presence throughout the mosque. The mosque, however, also poses a number of unanswered questions, with its decoratively bare minaret and dome, the use of a sliding door at the entrance vestibule, the lantern and the decorated qibla façade portal.

The minaret and the dome are decorative misfits compared to the highly carved contemporary examples of the Qaytbay period. Their bareness can possibly be explained by the fact that after Qijmas assumed governorship of Damascus, he shifted his focus and efforts on the erection of his funerary madrasa there, and lost interest in completing the last touches on his Cairene mosque, resulting in the undecorated state of the minaret and the dome. This shows the impact that Qijmas' career may have had on the appearance and decoration of this mosque.

The use of the sliding door is difficult to justify in architectural terms. It was both a unique and unnecessary feature of this mosque. The only other example of a sliding unit in Mamluk architecture was in the windows of the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir, with which the mosque of Qijmas shares a number of similarities. It was unnecessary in the sense that the space could have accommodated a regular wooden door with flaps, but the architects chose this unusual design instead. This oddity is among the numerous surprising elements set within the mosque that forces the viewer to pause in front of certain elements and consider their rendering more carefully.

The qibla façade portal also causes us to question the decorator's intention in adorning this portal located on a secondary façade with as much decoration as it does. Considering the existing correlation between a façade's visibility and the extent of its decoration, it is surprising to find this degree of adornment on this portal. It remains unclear whether the alley, which this facade portal overlooks, preceded the mosque or whether it was the architects' creation.

Finally, the question of the lantern is difficult to resolve. Whether the mosque was originally adorned with a lantern or not is hard to tell given the fact that the waqfiyya of the mosque makes no mention of the existence of one. The Comité added an elaborate lantern above the sahn of the mosque. In my opinion it is likely that this mosque never had a lantern to begin with, and that the area above the sahn was made up of an opening covered by a net, which would allow light and ventilation into the mosque interior, as in the madrasa of al-Ghuri.

Due to the crowded nature of the city of Cairo by the end of the fifteenth century, the mosques of the Qaytbay period were generally characterized by their modest size and elaborate decoration, and not so much by architectural innovation. The mosque of Qijmas, however, succeeds in displaying both decorative ingenuity with its carved and inlaid panels and its inscriptions, and architectural innovation in its stepped southwest façade and the bridge linking the mosque to its dependencies.

The builders of Qijmas managed to strike the perfect balance between an innovative and traditional structure and an elaborate and complex decoration. Neither was overdone, and neither takes away from the other. The mosque of Qijmas is a work of art that deserves its place amongst the finest Qaytbay buildings. With the help

of the restorative work done, the mosque can still be fully appreciated as it remains in good condition nowadays.

Appendix: Excerpt from the Waqfiyya of the Mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi

In my search for the waqfiyya of the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi, I found it classified in *Atlas al-‘imāra al-islāmīyya wa al-qibtīyya bil-qāhira*, under the number 683 among the waqfiyyas found in the Ministry of Waqf. Following a visit to the Ministry of Waqf, however, it turned out that the waqfiyya was no longer filed under this number. I then found another mention of it in an MA thesis by Sawsan Suleiman Yehia conducted on the mosque, which classified it under number 760 also in the Ministry of Waqf. Unfortunately, I couldn’t find it under this number either, and my search for it amongst the list of archived waqfiyyas at the ministry yielded no result. This may mean that the waqfiyya no longer exists today, or that it was filed under a different number, making access to it difficult.¹⁷⁹

Luckily, in her thesis dating back to 1984, Yehia had transcribed the full text of the waqfiyya. There are, however, words and segments of sentences that were illegible to her, in the place of which she placed dots. The waqfiyya describes everything from the sabil, to the drinking trough, the cells above the level of the mosque and the interior. The description is tackled only in the last few pages of the waqfiyya, which is the segment I will be including in the text below, along with my translation of it.

The waqfiyya refers to the qibla or “qibly” side as the south side, its opposing northern side as the “bahary” side, and the lateral iwans are referred to as the western side (the one close to the entrance vestibule) and the eastern side

¹⁷⁹ I think that the waqfiyya most likely still exists, but that it has been misfiled.

(the side overlooking the mosque's dependencies). It is important to clarify this point given that I do not refer to the sides of the mosque in the same way as the waqfiyya does. A second important point to be made is that the first five lines of this excerpt do not follow the flow of the waqfiyya text. I selected the points that discussed the mosque from the waqfiyya and placed them one after the other. As of line six, however, the flow of the text is the same as that in the waqfiyya text.

The Text of the Waqfiyya

1. الوقف والبناء الموصوف أنشاء الجناب السيفي قجماس المشار إليه من ماله وصلب حاله مكان البنا العتيق الذي هدمه الذي كان جارياً بيده
2. وحبساً صريحاً مرعياً أنشأه نصره الله تعالى نصراً عزيزاً وفتح له فتحاً مبيناً على مصالح جامع المقر السيفي قجماس المعمور بذكر الله تعالى
3. الكاين بظاهر القاهرة المحروسة بخط الدرب الأحمر المعروف بإنشائه وعمارته وتربته الكاينة بالصحرا بظاهر القاهرة المحروسة قريباً من تربت
4. الكامل أرضاً وبنا المعروف بإنشائه وعمارته الذي عنه جامع ه المعمور بذكر الله تعالى المذكور اعلاه المعروف بالمدرسة (...)
5. بجوراه وحقوق ذلك وما يتعلق به الكاين ذلك بظاهر القاهرة المحروسة بخط الدرب الأحمر بالقرب من خط البياطرة وصفته
6. بدلالة المشاهدة أنه يشتمل على واجهة دايرة في الجهات الأربع القبالية والبحرية والشرقية والغربية ففي الجهة البحرية (...)
7. ثلاث (...) معدة للإيجار، والإستغلال يشتمل كل منها على بسطة مبنية بالحجر الكدان (...) باب يغلق عليه دراريب من خشب نقي
8. علو " قبواً" وهذه الحوانيت الثلاث تحت شبايك الجامع المذكور الثلاث التي في الواجهة البحرية كل حانوت بها تحت شباك (...)
9. سلم بثلاث درج وبسطة يتوصل منه إلى حوض لطيف معقود عقداً رومياً بالحجر أعد لصب الماء العذب به ليتوصل إلى الصهريج
10. ليسيل للشرب بللسبيل الآتي ذكره وهو تحت (...) شبايك الجامع المذكور على هذا السلم سلم آخر ثلاث درج (...)
11. ذكره وحقوقه يتوصل منه إلى محط كيزان السبيل الآتي ذكره (...)
12. ليتوصل المارون على ذلك من ساير الناس للشرب منه (...)
13. داخاه لسقي الما للناس سبلاً علي العادة كذلك يلي هذا السلم (...)
14. السبيل (...) على ما شرح اعلاه مركب على ثلاث ح رمدانات يلاصقه الشباك (...)
15. للسبيل على ما شرح اعلاه يلي هذا السلم سلم را بع ثمان درج يتوصل من الدرجة الخامسة منها إلى باب مربع عليه (...)
16. حجر أحمر منقوشة (...) خيط ورق يدخل منه الى سلم يتوصل من بعده الى باب مربع عليه (...)
17. الموعود بذكره اعلاه وهو مرخم بالرخام الملون ضرب خيط بين الشباكان المعدان للتسبيل المذكوران اعلاه (...) نحاس اصفر
18. الشباكين فسقية لطيفة برسم استقرار ما الشرب بها للتسبيل بوسط كل منها فوار من نحاس اصفر يجاور الشباك الغربي (...)

19. باب به فوهه الصهريج والصهريج المذكور اعلاه المبني في تخوم الأرض عقود اربع مقالي كامل (...)
20. وحقوقها لاسقرار الماء العذب بها وتسبيلها للمارين على ذلك والتمرد اليه من ساير الناس اجمعين سقف هذا (...)
21. مغرق بالذهب و للازورد بسراويل ووزرة كل منهما مقرنص على يمينه داخل السبيل المذكور (...)
22. وبه مقرنص مصرى رتب لعلو شانروان السبيل المذكور ثم يتوصل من بقية هذا السلم وهو سلم السبيل الى بيارة واصله (...)
23. من حقوقه واعدت لنشل الماء فيها من الصهريج المذكور إلى حوض لطيف بجوار البيارة يجرى منه قصبه من رصاص إلى حوض (...)
24. به قصبه رصاصا يجري منها الماء إلى شانروان السبيل وفسقيه المقدم ذكرها اعلاه ليقرب الماء للناس (...)
25. الحوض الرصاص المذكور قنطرة معقودة بالحجر الكدان ثم يتوصل من بقية هذا السلم إلى باب مربع عليه فردة باب يدخل منه إلى (...)
26. مسقفة نقيا على مربعات مدهون كافوريا وحريريا بازار دابر بها ثلاث شبابيك من الجهات الثلاث التي هي غير الجهة (...)
27. على الشارع والثالث مطل على الجامع المذكور ثم يتوصل من بقية السلم المذكور إلى باب مربع عليه فردة باب (...)
28. علو الخلوة الأولى مسقفة نقيا لوحا وفسقية بثلاث شبابيك من الجهات الثلاث غير الجهة القبليية التي تطل على الشارع (...)
29. على الجامع المذكور ثم يتوصل من بقية السلم المذكور إلى خلوه ثالثة علو السدلة الغربية التي بصحن الجامع المذكور (...)
30. شبابكان احدهم شرقي مطل على الجامع والآخر قبلي مطل على دهليز الجامع لينتهي بداخل باب مطلع الخلاوى والسبيل (...)
31. يتوصل من بقية السلم الرابع المذكور اعلاه ممر مرخم بالرخام الملون و هو رحاب باب الجامع المذكور (...)
32. بدرانوين خشبا خرطا مامونيا بالحجر واجهة باب الجامع المذكور وهو الباب الكبير الذي يفتح إلى الجهة البحرية (...)
33. الأبيض الصعيدي والأسود السويسي واصله الي اسفل العقد الحالي
34. المجرد المنقوش ضرب خيط وهو باب الجامع المذكور (...) إلى دركاه مرخمه بالرخام الملون
35. (...) على يمينه داخل الدركاه جلسته بها شبابك من نحاس اصفر مطل على (...)
36. زوجا باب وهذه الدركاه من حقوق الجامع المذكور بحافة هذا الشباك الذي بالدركاه (...)
37. الآتي ذكره وعلى يسرة الداخل من الدركاه المذكور باب مقنطر عليه باب بعتبة سفلي (...)

38. بالرخام الملون به مزمله اعدت لا استقرار أو افق ما الشرب للتسييل على ما شرح اعلاه وبابان احدهما على يمين
39. مربع بعته سفلي صوانا يدخل منه إلى بسطه بها سلم هبوط وهو الذي يتوصل إليه من بلب الجامع المذكور
40. الآتي ذكره بالبسطة باب مربع يدخل منه إلى سلم يتوصل إلى خمس خلوي ثنتين متطابقتين علو الدركاه احدهما وهي (...)
41. الشارع المرلوك وعلى دهليز الجامع المذكور والثانية علوها شباك واحد مطل على دهليز الجامع والثلاثة الباقية منها
42. الآتي ذكرها بكل واحدة من هذه الخلوي الثلاث شباك مطل على اتجاه الواجهة القبلية الآتي ذكرها مفروشا (...)
43. بعضها نقياً لوحاً وفسقية وباقي ذلك سقف عقود ثم يتوصل من بقية السلم المذكور إلى السطح العالي على الجامع (...)
44. للإعلان بالأذان عليها والتسييح على المادة وبالسطح المذكور عقد القبة المذكورة اعلاه والبلب الثاني (...)
45. الذين بدلهيز الجامع المذكور تجاه الداخل من مربع يغلق عليه زوجا باب مصفح بللخشب الاسمر والجوز بصفائح (...)
46. المذكور يشتمل على أيوانين قبلي وبحري وسدلتين شرقي و غربي بين ذلك صحن الجامع المذكور وسيشرح وصف كل (...)
47. ويتبين منه فأما الأيوان القبلي من الأيوانين وهو الكبير بصدرة محراب بصدر مرخم كامل (...)
48. والعلو ضرب خيط يكتفه عمودان رخاما أبيض بأربعة قواعد رخاما صع يديا (...)
49. يليه منبر ضرب خيط مطعم أعد لرقى خطيب الجامع للخطبة على العادة يغلق على هذا المنبر زوجا بلب مطبق (...)
50. هذا الأيوان القبلي شبابيك أربعة نحاسا اصفر مطلة على الشارع ثلاثة شبابيك كالشبابيك المقدم ذكرها بالأيوان (...)
51. مصفح بالخشب الأحمر والجوز وعلى يسره صاعد هذا الأيوان ثلاث شبابيك كالشبابيك المقدم ذكرها بالأيوان (...)
52. الأيوان شباك نحاسا اصفر مطل على بسطه سلم الهبوط الذي بدلهيز الجامع المذكور يلي هذا الشباك باب (...)
53. الاسمر والجوز يدخل منه إلى المدفن المذكور اعلاه يعلوه قبة المدفن ويشتمل على مدفتين (...)
54. المشار إليه لمواراته ومواراة من يتوفاء الله له من اولاده وذريته ونسله وعقبه وزوجاته ومن يلوذ به المدفن (...)
55. أرض قبة المدفن بالرخام الملون بوزره دايره رخاما ملون (...)

56. المذكورة من أيوان الجامع الكبير (...) يدخل إلي ذلك (...)
57. القبلي وبعضها يطل على الشارع الغربي (...)
58. وهذه الشبايبك كلها نحاس اصفر بجوار باب المدفن بأيوان الجامع الك بير باب مربع يدخل منه إلى (...)
59. ولا حراز كتب المدرسة المذكورة (...)
60. التي علو خلوة الخطابة المقدم ذكرها (...) مغرقة بالذهب واللازورد (...)
61. دائرة علوه وأما الايوان البحري وهو الصغير فهو (...)
62. كابواب الشبايبك المقدم ذكرها شباكين منهما في الجهة الشرقية تطلين على حوض (...)
63. احتسابا لله تعالى يتوصل إليه المآ من بير مسبله توجد بجوار الحوض (...)
64. سفلى قديم يعرف بالحوض والمسجد (...) تغمده الله برحمته فجدد الوقف المشار إليه (...)
65. والبئر والمسجد احتسابا لله تعالى واوسع في الحوض (...)
66. كتاب سبيل وجعل لذل ك من المعروف ما تذكر فيه (...) الشبايبك المسبقة بالايوان الصغير (...)
67. الشارع الذي يتوصل منه إلى البياطرة والشبايبك الثلاثة الب اقية بصدر الايوان الصغير (...)
68. الأحمر وطرف خط البسطيين يعلو هذه الشبايبك طراز وقمريات كالاويوان القبلي المذكور مشفق هذا (...)
69. (...) السدلتن المتقابلتان المذكورتان أعلاه
70. (...) مطل على الجهة الشرقية
71. صحن الجامع فهو مستدير بأربعة أبواب (...)

Translation of the Selected Waqfiyya Text

1. The waqfiyya and the building that is described was built by Sayf al-Din Qijmas al-Ishaqi at his own expense in the location of an old building that he pulled down.
2. There was an endowment that was respected; God gave him [Qijmas al-Ishaqi] great victory and he built the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi where the name of God is glorified.
3. It is built outside the city of Cairo on the Darb al-Ahmar thoroughfare and his building and tomb are located in the desert to the back of the city of Cairo close to the cemetery (...)

4. The whole land and the construction that includes the aforementioned congregational mosque where the name of God is glorified and is known as a madrasa
5. Next to it is another building in the same area outside the city of Cairo on Darb al-Ahmar thoroughfare near the thoroughfare of Al-Bayatira
6. On seeing it, we find that it has four facades: the northern, southern, eastern and western sides (...)
7. Three (...) are for rent and use; each one of them includes an outside area made of stone (...) a door that closes with wooden leaves
8. Above is a vault, and these three shops are below the three windows of the western façade of the aforementioned mosque, with each shop placed below a window (...)
9. A stairway of three steps and an outside area which leads to a basin that is vaulted and made of stone. The basin is prepared to carry the drinking water to be taken to the cistern
10. For this water to be drunk from the sabil which will be mentioned later. The sabil is under (...) windows of the aforementioned mosque. Above this stairway is another stairway of three steps (...)
11. This area leads to the place where they place the drinking cups of the sabil, which will be mentioned later (...)
12. So that the passersby can drink from them
13. In order to provide water to people. Following that is a staircase (...)
14. The sabil (...) as explained above stands on three structures next to the window (...)
15. To the sabil, as explained above. Next to this staircase is a fourth staircase with eight steps, the fifth step of which leads to a square door with (...)
16. Red stone that is painted (...) with geometric lines which leads to a staircase that in turn leads to a square door on which is (...)
17. The above mentioned vault is covered with colored marble made up of polygonal patterns between the two aforementioned grille metal sabil windows (...) yellow copper
18. The two windows is an attractive basin which contains potable water in the center of which is a fountain made of yellow copper. Near the western window (...)
19. A door which had the opening to the cistern and the above mentioned cistern is built at the edge of the plot on four substantial arches (...)
20. So that the potable water may be provided to the passersby and to all those who frequent it. Its ceiling is (...)
21. Is decorated with gold and lapis and the dado to the right of which is muqarnas in the interior of the aforementioned sabil (...) well painted wood (...)
22. It has Egyptian muqarnas in the hood of the aforementioned shadirwan of the sabil and the upper part of the sabil staircase leads to the well from which water is drawn (...)
23. Has been prepared to draw water from the aforementioned cistern to the attractive basin. From the well there is a lead pipe that connects the well to the basin (...)
24. It has a lead pipe from which water flows to the shadirwan of the sabil and to the basin to make the water more accessible to people (...)

25. The aforementioned lead basin. There is a stone vaulted bridge that leads to the remaining part of the stairway, which in turn leads to a square door with a single leaf that opens onto (...)
26. Wooden coffered ceiling that is well painted. It has three windows on the three sides other than the side (...)
27. Overlooking the street and the third overlooks the aforementioned mosque and through the aforementioned staircase, one reaches a square door with a single leaf (...)
28. The ceiling of the first cell is made of wooden planks and a basin with three windows from the three sides except for the southern side which overlooks the street (...)
29. On the aforementioned mosque and then the aforementioned staircase leads to a third cell above the western sidilla in the sahn of the aforementioned mosque (...)
30. Two windows, the eastern one overlooking the mosque and the southern one overlooking the vestibule of the mosque that ends at a door leading up to the cells and the sabil (...)
31. From the rest of the above mentioned fourth staircase is a passage lined with colored marble and it is the portal of the mosque (...)
32. With a wooden balustrade that has been worked into a grille-like assembly. With stone is the portal of the aforementioned mosque and it is the large portal that opens onto the northern side (...) and this façade
33. Black and white leading to the base of the vault
34. The portal has geometric designs (...) to the vestibule that has colored marble
35. (...) To its right inside the vestibule is the base of a window made of yellow copper overlooking (...)
36. Two leaves and this vestibule is part of the aforementioned mosque and next to the edge of the vestibule window (...)
37. Which will be mentioned later and to the left of the aforementioned entrance of the vestibule there's an arched door above which is a door with a lower sill (...)
38. With colored marble which has a mazmala which was set up to put the water pots of the sabil on it as was explained above and it has two doors, one of them to the right
39. Square with a sill made of stone which leads to an outside area with a stairway that descends, which leads to the portal of the mosque.
40. Which will be mentioned later has an outside area and in it is a square door which leads to a staircase leading to five cells, two of which are identical above the vestibule, one of them is (...)
41. The main street and in the vestibule of the aforementioned mosque and the second one has a window above it which overlooks the vestibule of the mosque and the remaining three
42. Which will be mentioned below. In each of these three cells is a window overlooking the southern façade, which will be mentioned later and it is furnished (...)
43. Some of them have a wooden ceiling made up of planks that are assembled together and in the center of which is a motif that resembles a basin, and the rest have vaults and through the aforementioned staircase one reaches the roof the mosque which lies above this (...)

44. To call for prayers and to say religious verses and on the aforementioned roof is the base of the above-mentioned dome and the second door (...)
45. That are in the vestibule of the aforementioned mosque towards the interior from a square which is closed by a revetted door with two leaves made from dark wood and walnut (...)
46. The aforementioned has two iwans, one on the northern side and one on the southern side and two sidillas, one eastern and one western. Between that is the sahn of the mosque (...)
47. The southern iwan is the larger one of the two iwans with a mihrab in its center that is completely covered in marble (...)
48. The above is decorated with geometric patterns with two white marble columns flanking it and four marble capitals (...)
49. Following that is a minbar with geometric designs for the preacher to stand in when he wanted to give his speech. There is a door with two leaves that closes on this minbar (...)
50. This southern iwan has four windows made of yellow copper overlooking the street on the southern side of the mosque (...)
51. Revetted with red wood and walnut and to the left of this iwan upwards are three windows similar to the windows of the above-mentioned iwan (...)
52. The iwan has a yellow copper window overlooking the staircase that goes down found in the vestibule of the aforementioned mosque. Following this window is a door (...)
53. Dark and walnut which leads to the mausoleum crypt above which is the dome of the mausoleum and it has two graves (...)
54. To bury him [Qijmas al-Ishaqi] and to bury his deceased descendents and his lineage and children and wives and whoever should need to be buried (...)
55. The floor of the mausoleum is covered with colored marble and a colored marble dado that goes all around (...) and a door and a mihrab (...)
56. Mentioned above the larger of the iwan of the mosque (...) leads into (...)
57. The southern and some of it overlooks the western street (...)
58. All those windows are made of yellow copper near the door of the mausoleum. By the grand iwan of the mosque is a square door which leads to (...)
59. To store the books of the aforementioned madrasa (...)
60. Above the cell of the preacher which is mentioned above (...) is decorated with gold and lapis (...)
61. A circle on top; but as for the northern iwan, it is the smaller of the two and it is (...)
62. Like the doors of the windows mentioned above, two of which are on the eastern façade overlooking the drinking trough (...)
63. With the grace of God, water reaches it through a well that is located near the trough (...)
64. An old lower one known as the drinking trough and the mosque (...) may God bless him, the above-mentioned waqif [Qijmas al-Ishaqi] (...)
65. The well and the mosque are for charity and he expanded the drinking trough (...)
66. Kuttab sabil and he also made this a charity where (...) the windows of the smaller iwan (...)
67. The street that leads to al-Bayatira and the three remaining windows in the middle of the small iwan (...)

68. Red and above these windows are friezes and circular windows as in the southern iwan (...)
69. (...) The above-mentioned sidillas that face each other
70. (...) Overlooks the eastern façade
71. The sahn of the mosque is round with four doors (...)

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Fig. 2.1: Departure of the *mahmal* (Lehnart and Landrock collection on cultnat.org)



Fig. 2.2: The mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi on al-Tabbana street (*The Monuments Of Historic Cairo: A Map and Descriptive Catalogue*)

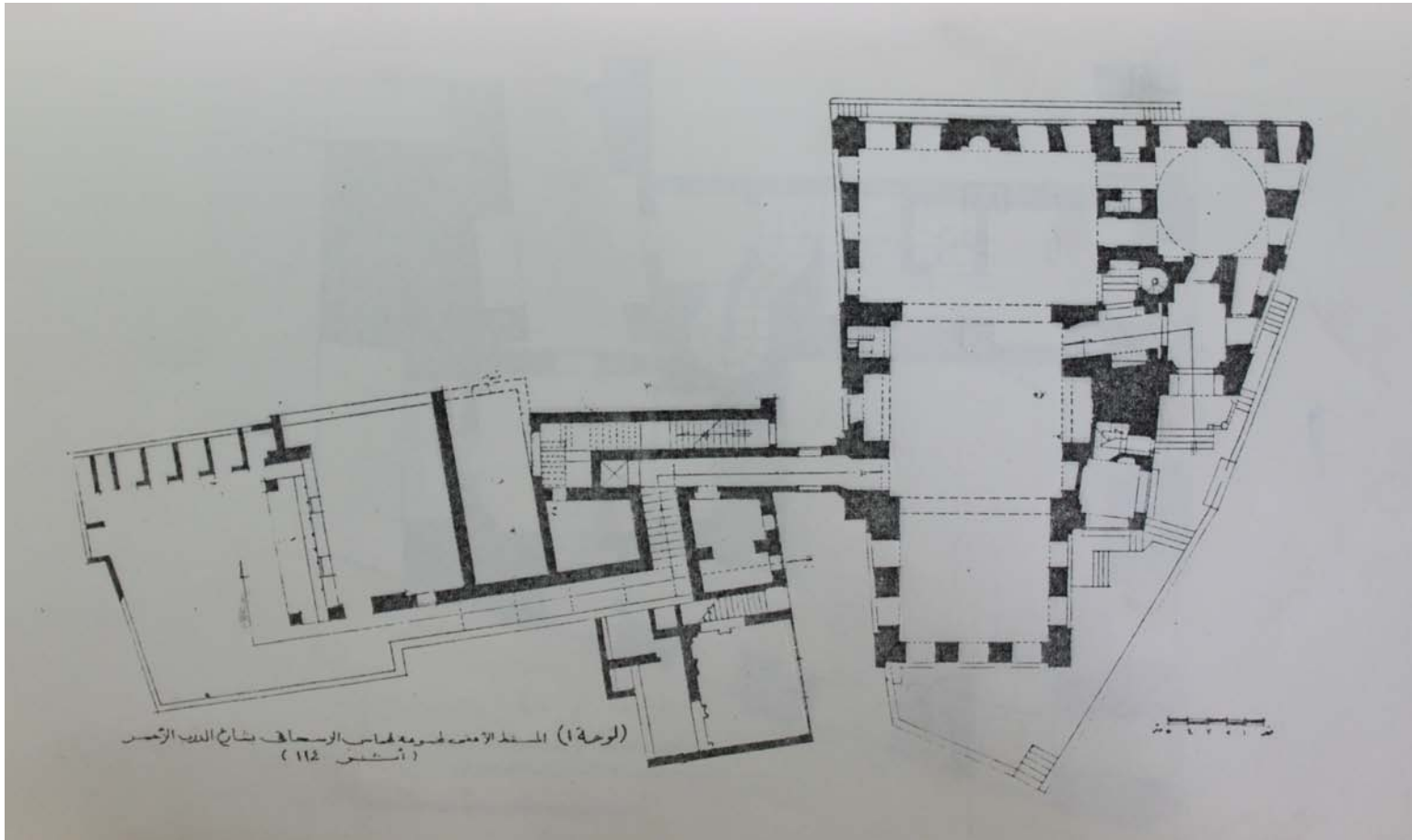
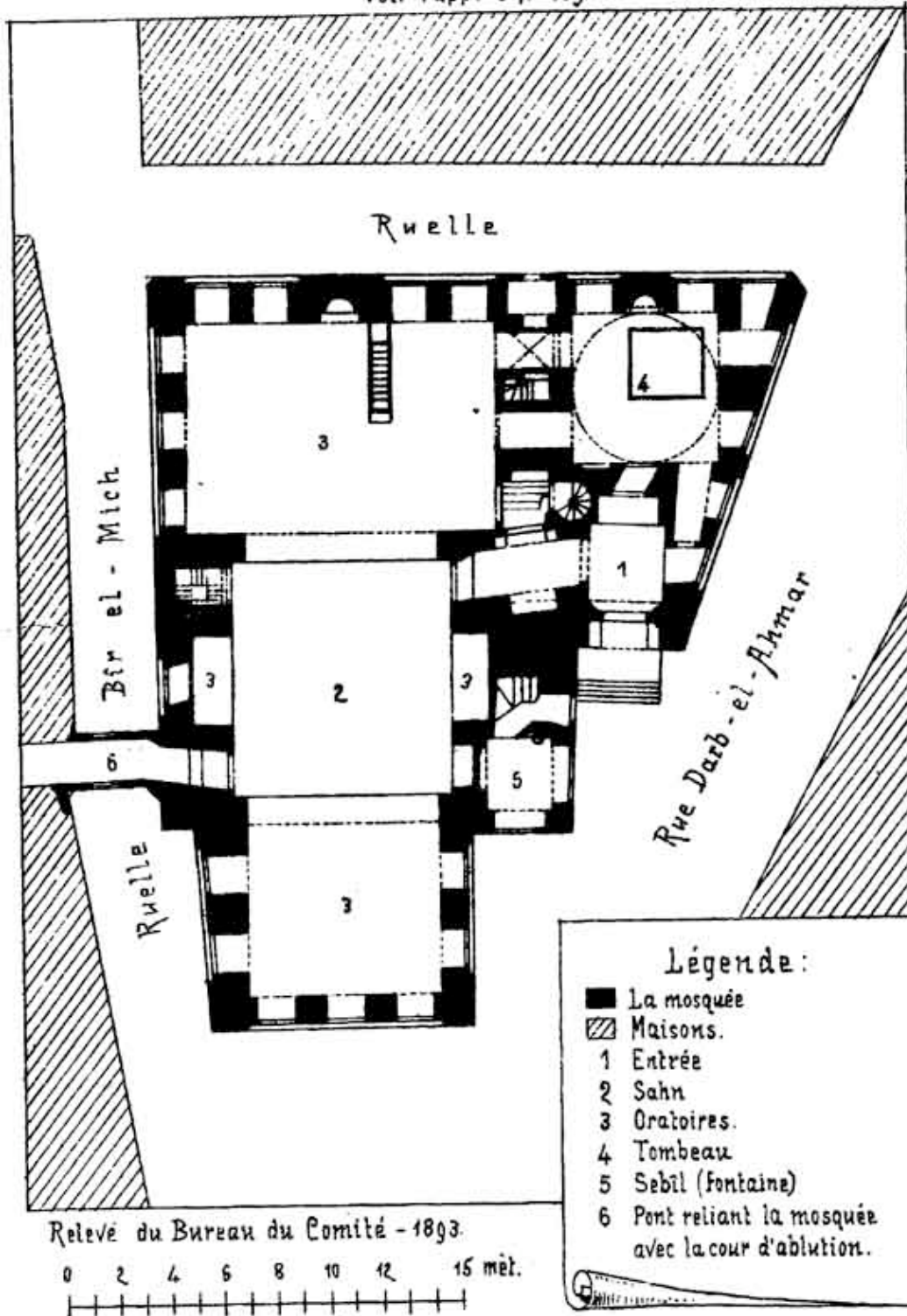


Fig. 2.3: Ground plan of the mosque and its dependencies (Supreme Council of Antiquities)



Plan de la mosquée Kismās el-Ishāki - Caïre.

Fig. 2.4: Ground plan of the mosque (Comité Bulletin dated to 1892)



Fig. 2.5: The shops at street level on the northwest facade



Fig. 2.6: The northwest facade



Fig. 2.7: The stepped southwest facade



Fig. 2.8: The kuttab and the drinking trough



Fig. 2.9: Door of the sabil on the southwest facade



Fig. 2.10: The shadirwan of the sabil with its muqarnas hood



Fig. 2.11: The ceiling of the sabil



Fig. 2.12: The cells above the sabil

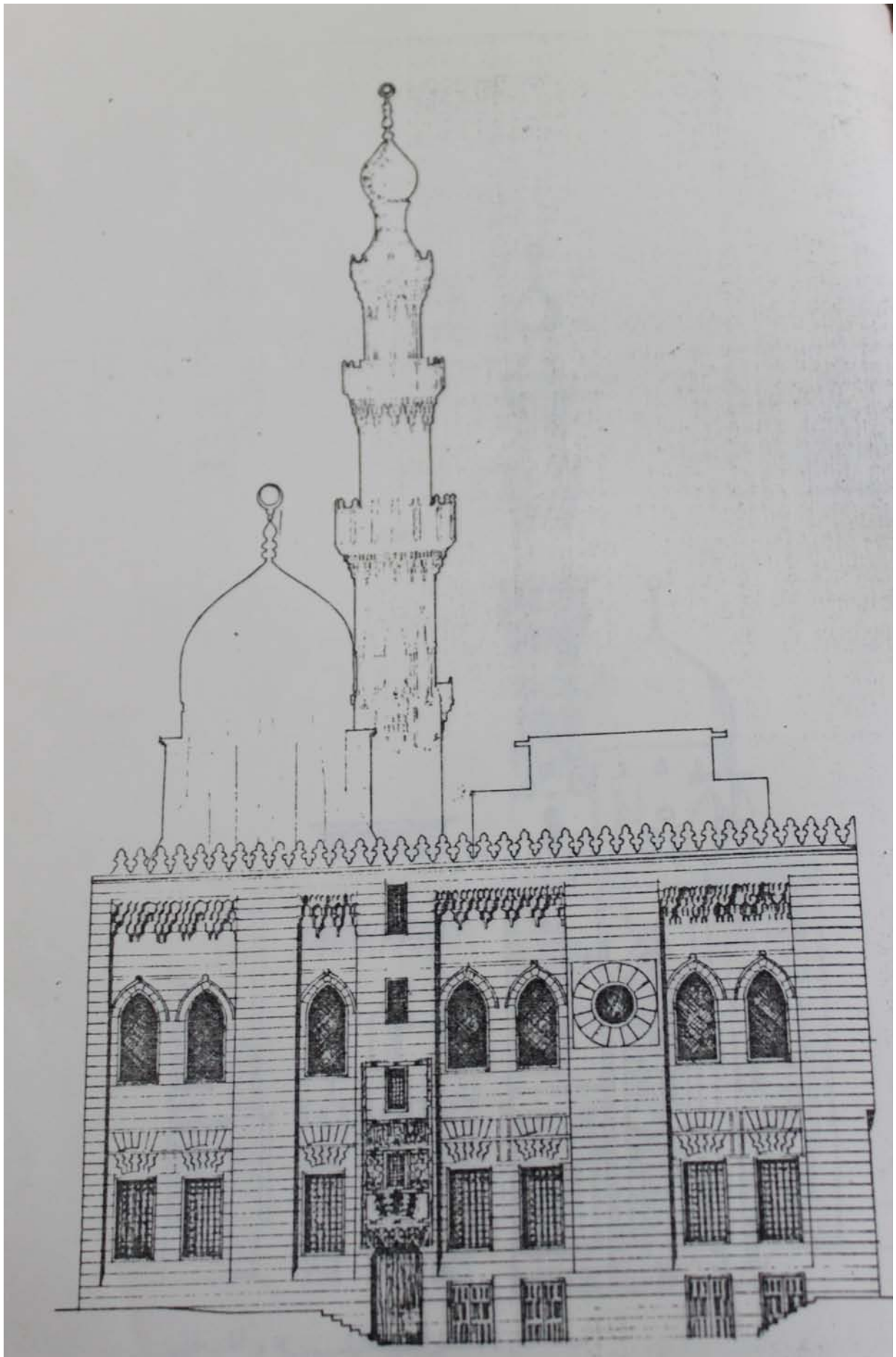


Fig. 2.13: Drawing showing the eastern qibla façade (Yehia's thesis on the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi)



Fig. 2.14 Qibla façade portal leading to the mausoleum crypt

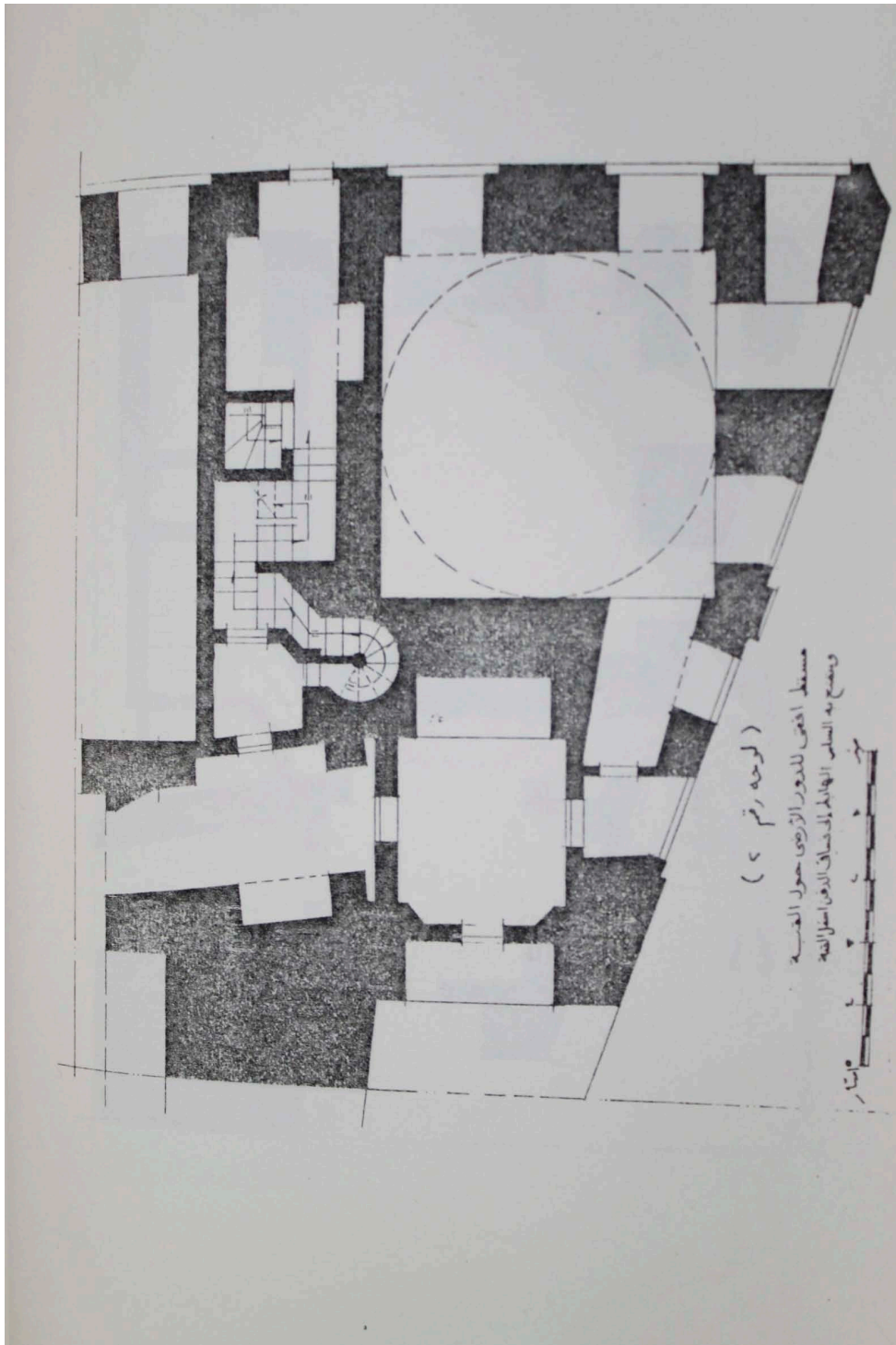


Fig. 2.15: Ground floor plan of the area around the mausoleum
(Supreme Council of Antiquities)



Fig. 2.16: Windows of the cells above the southern lateral iwan

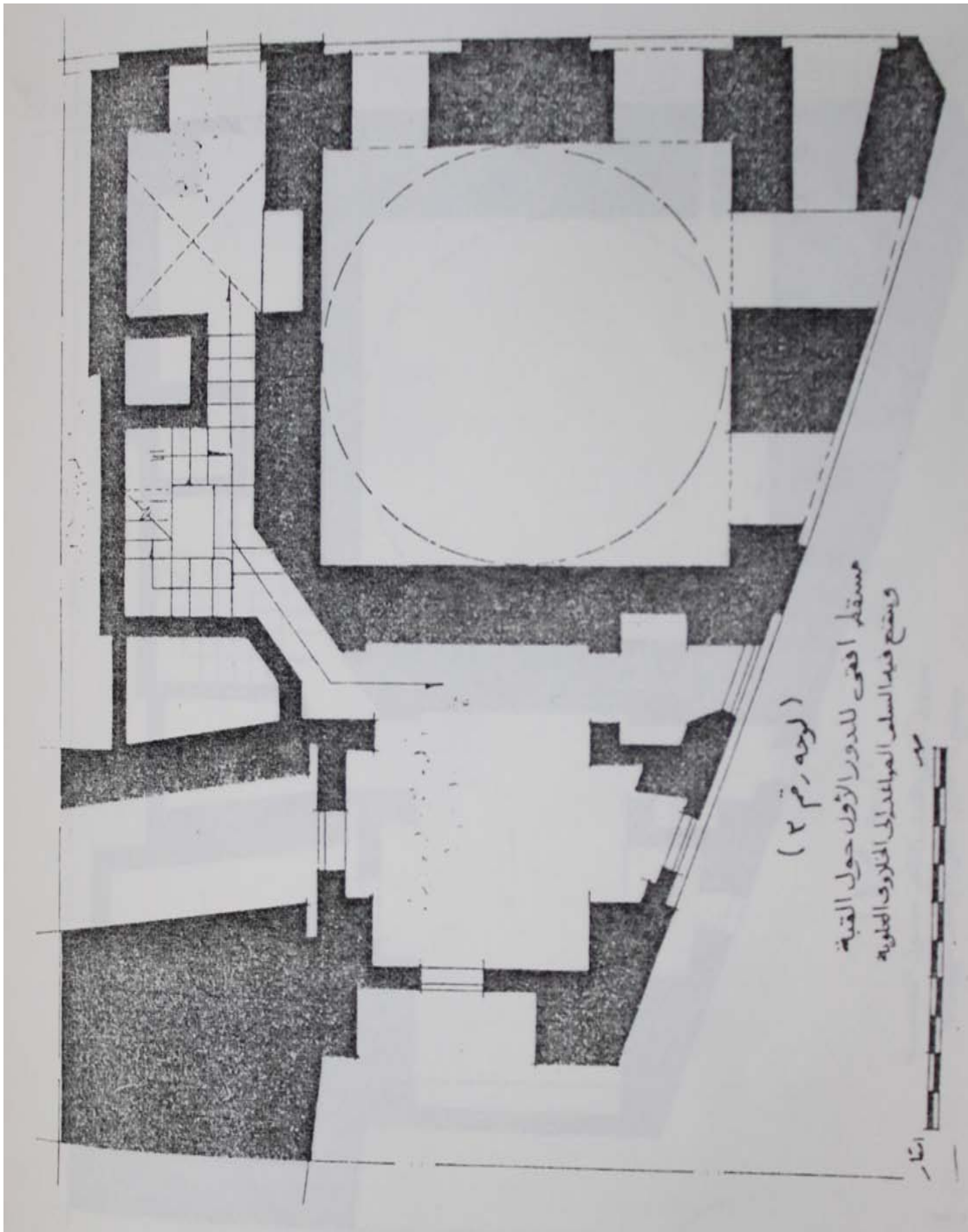


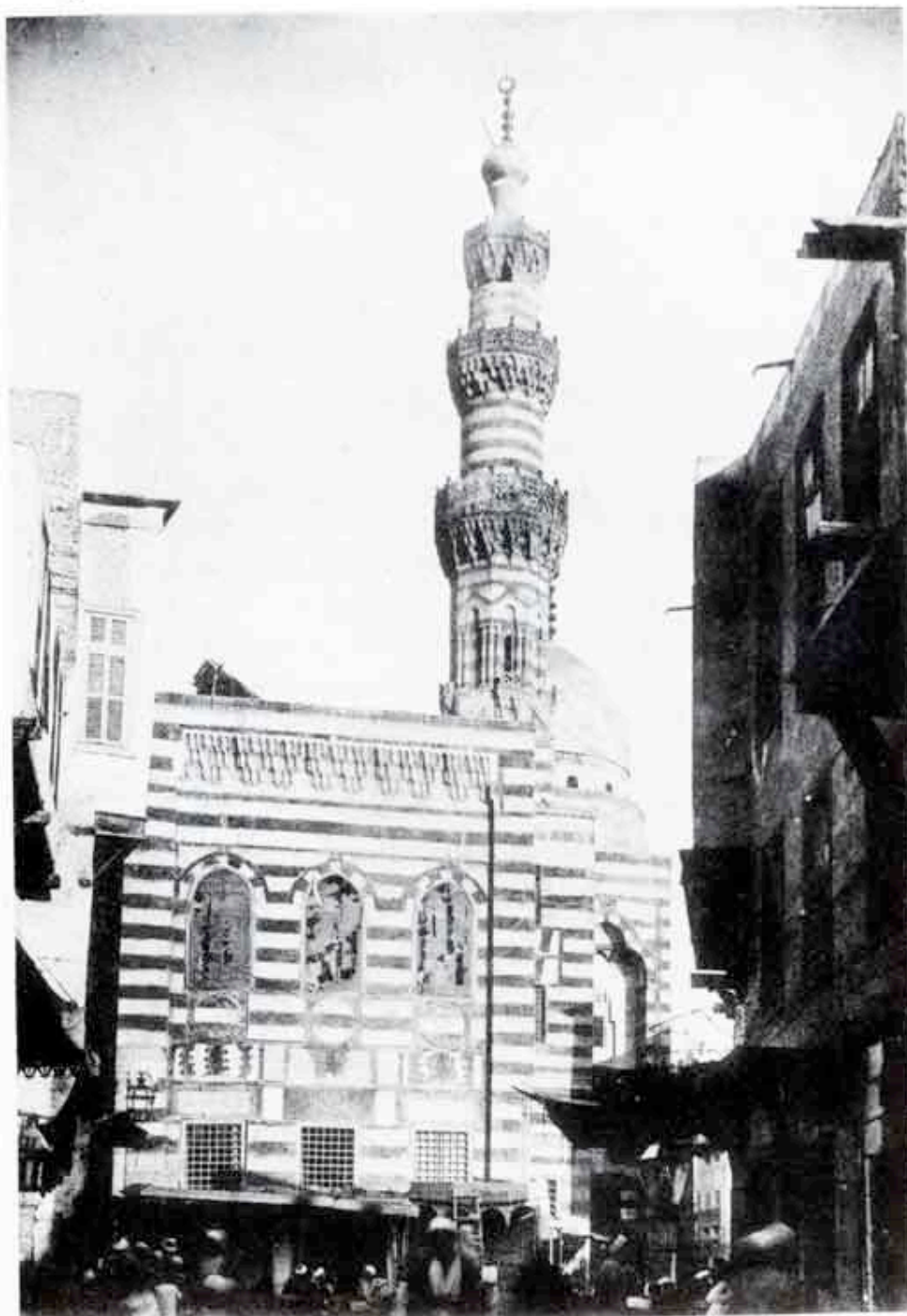
Fig. 2.17: Plan of the upper floor of the mosque around the mausoleum (Supreme Council of Antiquities)



Fig. 2.18: The bridge leading to the mosque's dependencies



Fig. 2.19: The groin vaulted corridor of the ablution court



Photogr. artistique G. Lékegian et Co.

Phototypie de l'Imp. Nat.

MOSQUÉE KISMAS EL-ISHAKI, CAIRE

FAÇADE OUEST

Fig. 2.20: Comité picture of the mosque taken in 1892



Fig. 2.21: The Comité lantern in the mosque of Qijmas

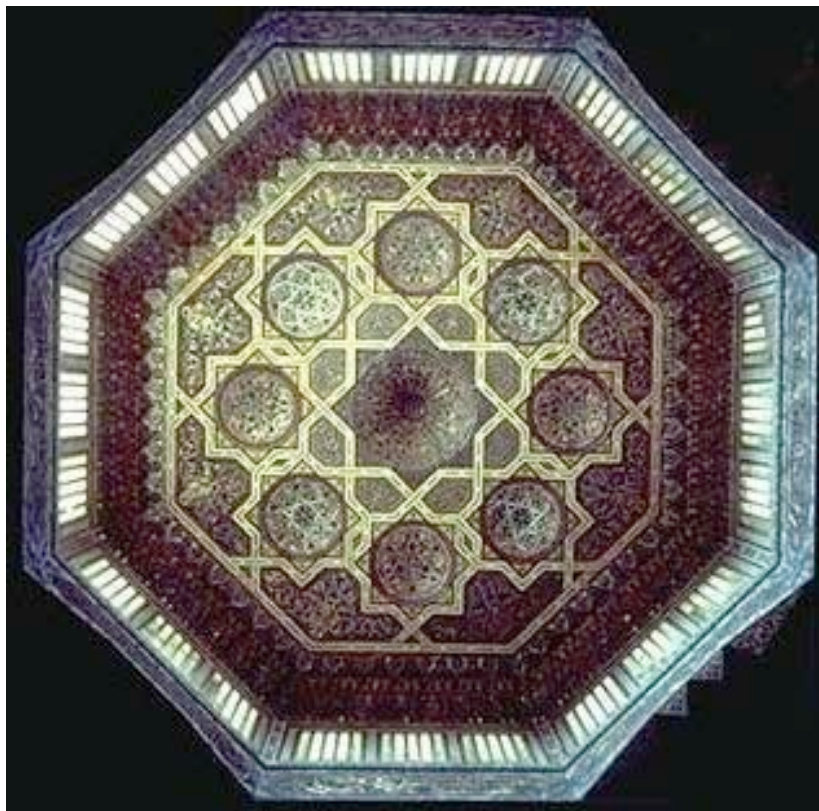


Fig. 2.22: The Comité lantern in the funerary complex of Qaytbay in the Northern Cemetery



Fig. 2.23: The opening above the sahn in the madrasa of al-Ghuri



Fig. 2.24: The restoration inscription on the minbar below the crenellations



Fig. 3.1: The northern façade overlooking Abu Hurayba street



Fig. 3.2: The eastern façade overlooking the narrow Sikkat Abu Hurayba



Fig. 3.3: The northern lateral iwan



Fig. 3.4: The sliding door leading from the entrance vestibule to the sahn of the mosque of Qijmas

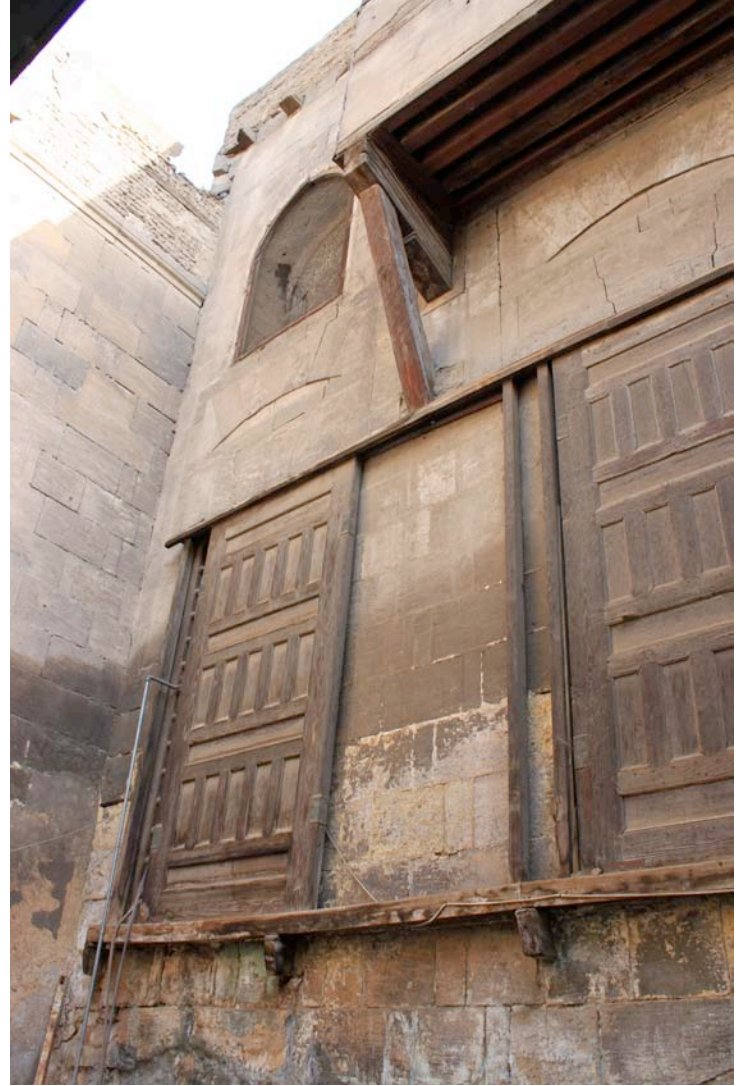


Fig. 3.5: The sliding windows of the iwan of the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir



Fig. 3.6: Window of the entrance vestibule overlooking al-Tabbana street



Fig. 3.7: The mausoleum overlooking al-Tabbana and Sikkat Abu Hurayba



Fig. 3.8: The view of the southwest façade coming from the Citadel towards Bab Zuwayla

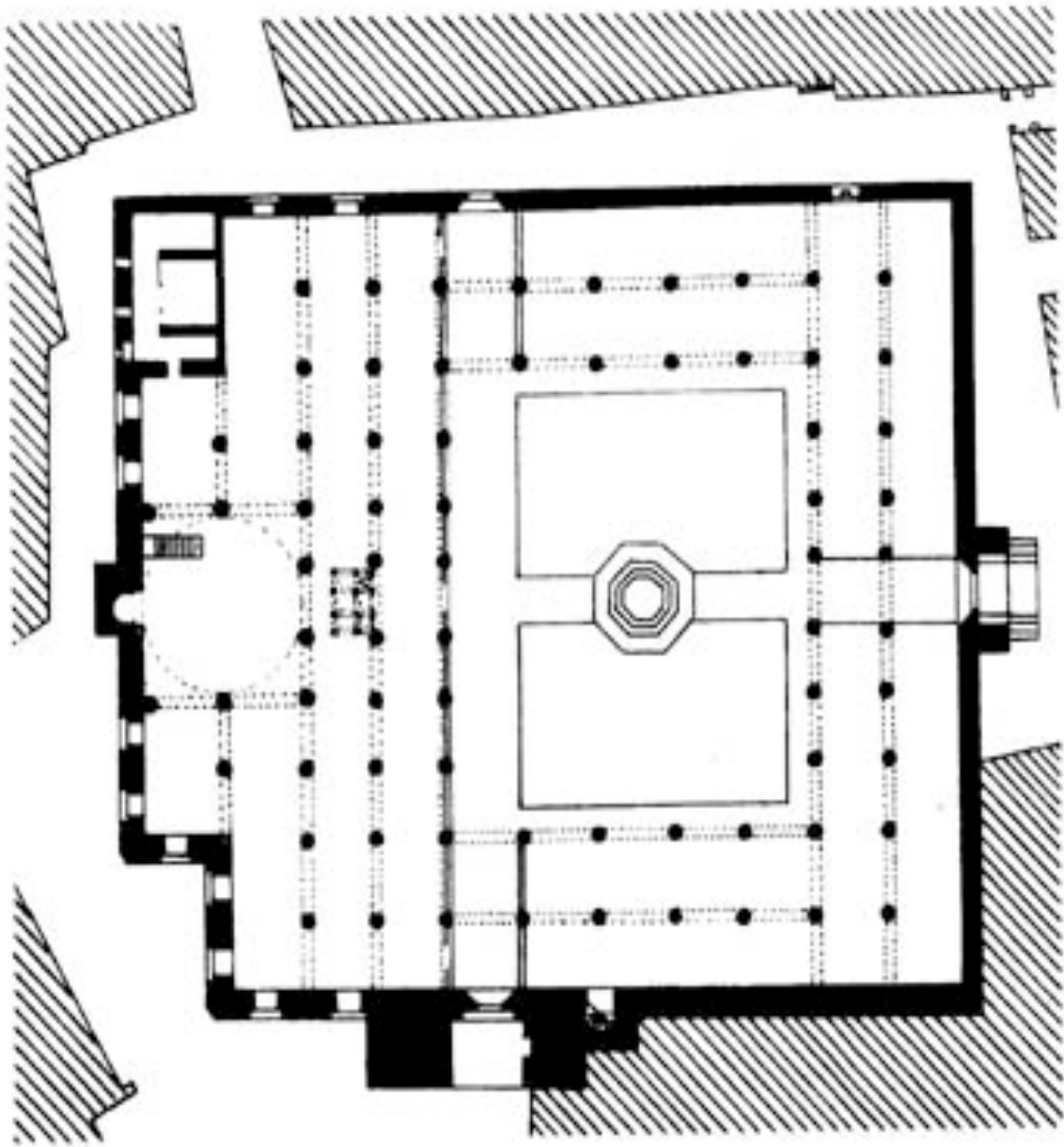


Fig. 3.9: The plan of al-Maridani mosque showing the stepped façade on al-Tabbana
(*Cairo of the Mamluks*)



Fig. 3.10: The silhouette of the mosque with its upward projections



Fig. 3.11: The open-air passageway leading from the entrance vestibule into the sahn



Fig. 4.1: Carved naskhi inscription on the qibla façade portal



Fig. 4.2: Radial inscription on the metal revetted door of the main portal



Fig. 4.3: Radial inscription on the main portal of al-Aqmar mosque

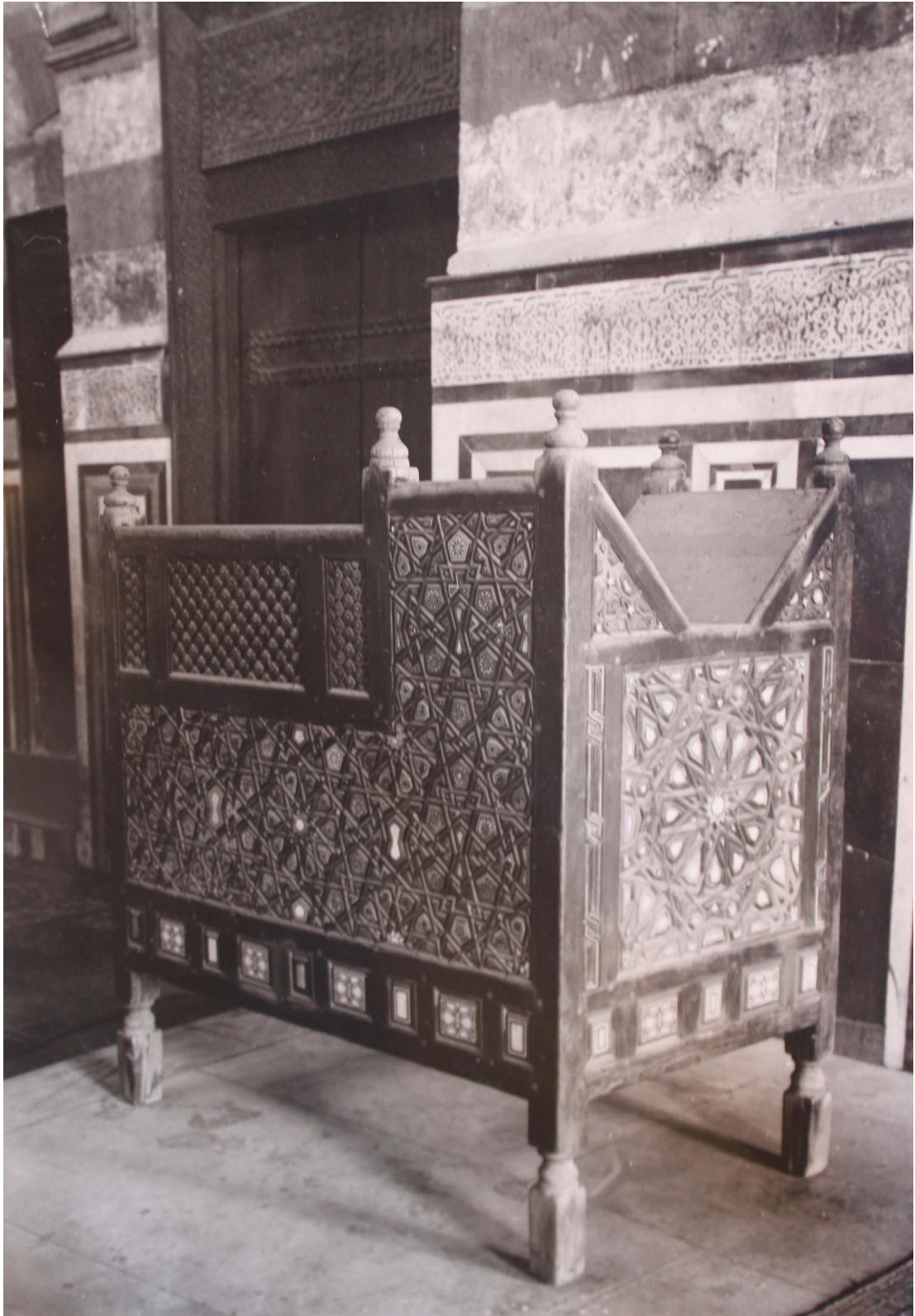


Fig. 4.4: The kursi of the mosque (Creswell Special Collection – Rare Books and Special Collections Library – American University in Cairo)



Fig. 4.5: The inscription on the side of the minbar



Fig. 4.6: The inscription on the upper band of the metal revetted door of the main portal



Fig. 4.7: The inscription below the ceiling of the sahn



Fig. 4.8: The stucco window of the southern lateral iwan



Fig. 4.9: The craftsman's signature in the qibla window spandrels



Fig. 4.10: The craftsman's signature in the mihrab niche



Fig. 4.11: The main portal of the mosque



Fig. 4.12: The hood of the main portal



Fig. 4.13: Window with muqarnas hood in the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi



Fig. 4.14: Window with muqarnas hood in the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir



Fig. 4.15: Framing band around the main portal (Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum – Harvard College Library)



Fig. 4.16: Roundel on the main portal

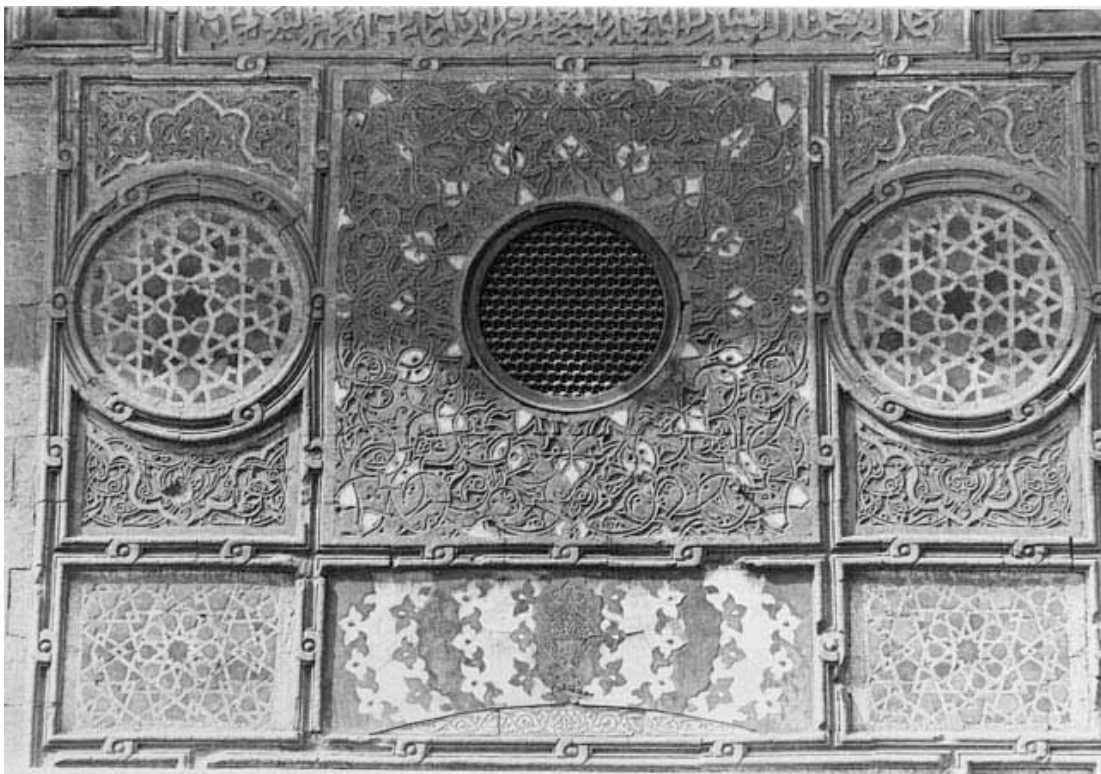


Fig. 4.17: Roundels on the façade of the sabil/kuttab of Qaytbay on al-Saliba (Fikret Yegül – Harvard College Library)



Fig. 4.18: Panel next to the main portal of the zawiya of Faraj ibn Barquq



Fig. 4.19: The metal revetted door of the main portal



Fig. 4.20: The knotted design on the bottom panel of the metal revetted door of the main portal



Fig. 4.21: The carved knotted design on the northwest façade



Fig. 4.22: The lotus flower design on the metal revetted door of the main portal



Fig. 4.23: The doorknockers of the metal revetted door of the main portal



Fig. 4.24: The lozenge-shaped boss of the sabil grille



Fig. 4.25: Metal band doors of the interior



Fig. 4.26: The minaret

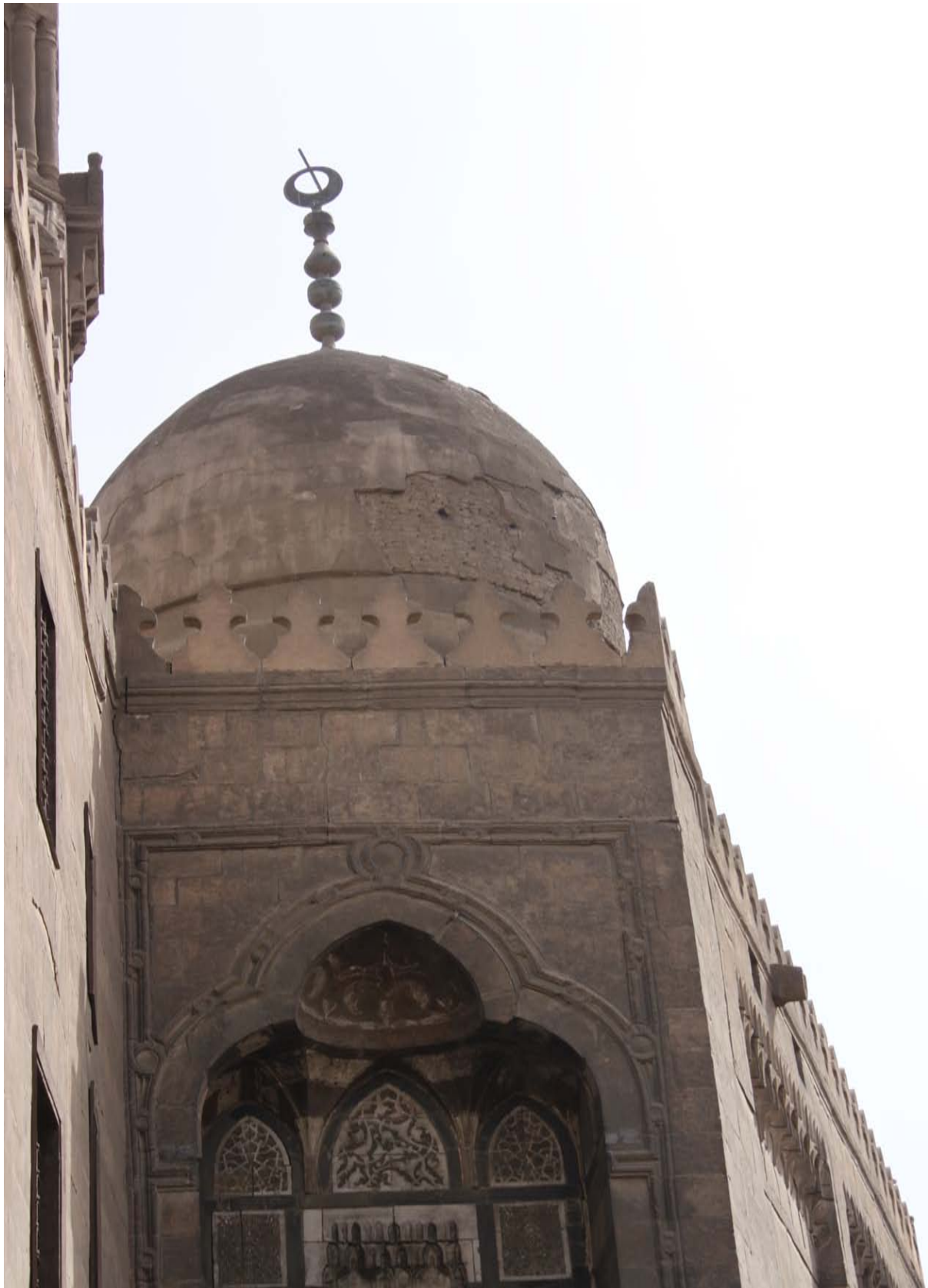


Fig. 4.27: The dome of the mausoleum

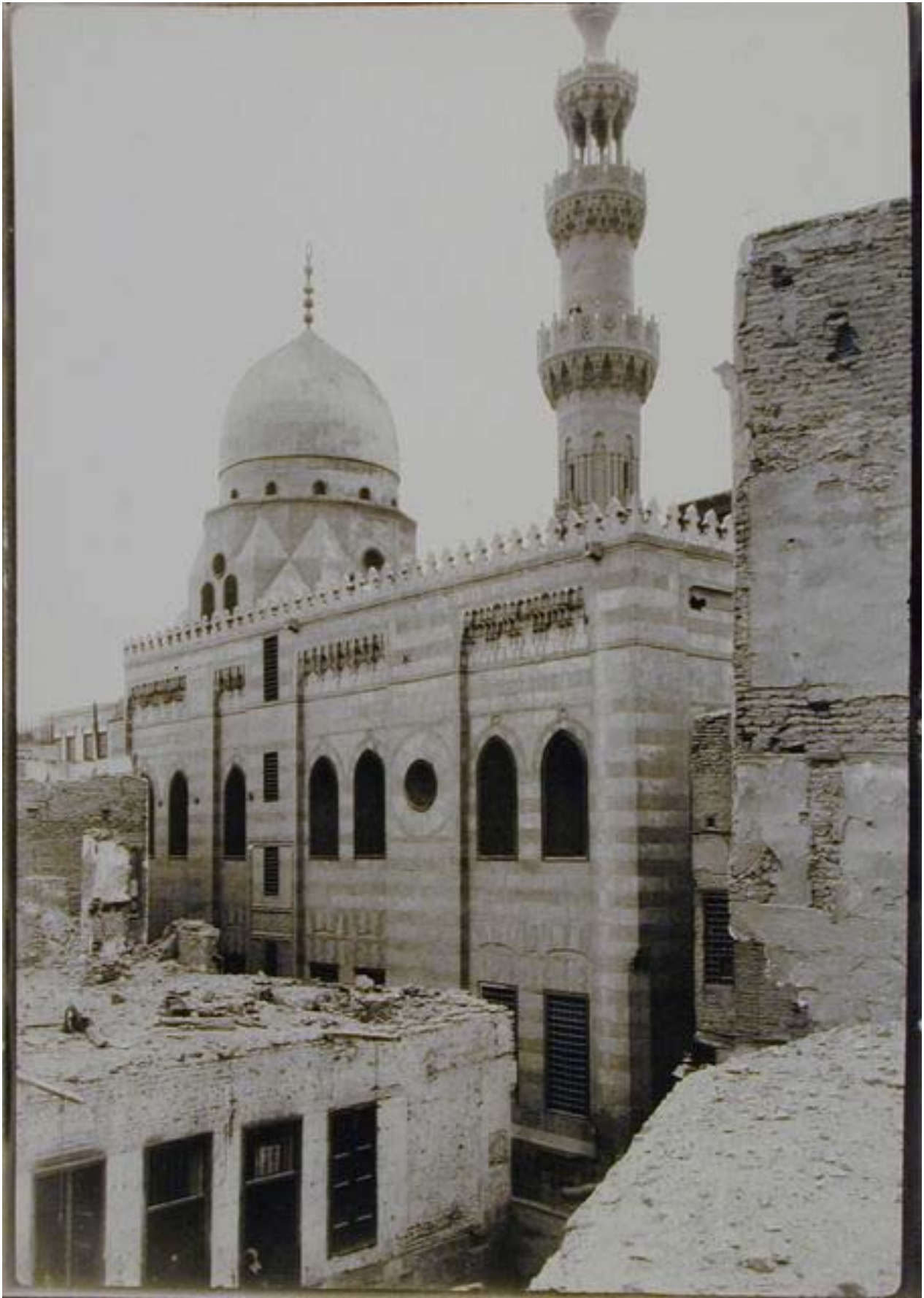


Fig. 4.28: The dome and its transitional zone (Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum – Harvard College Library)



Fig. 4.29: The mausoleum dome viewed from the interior



Fig. 4.30: The mihrab of the mausoleum

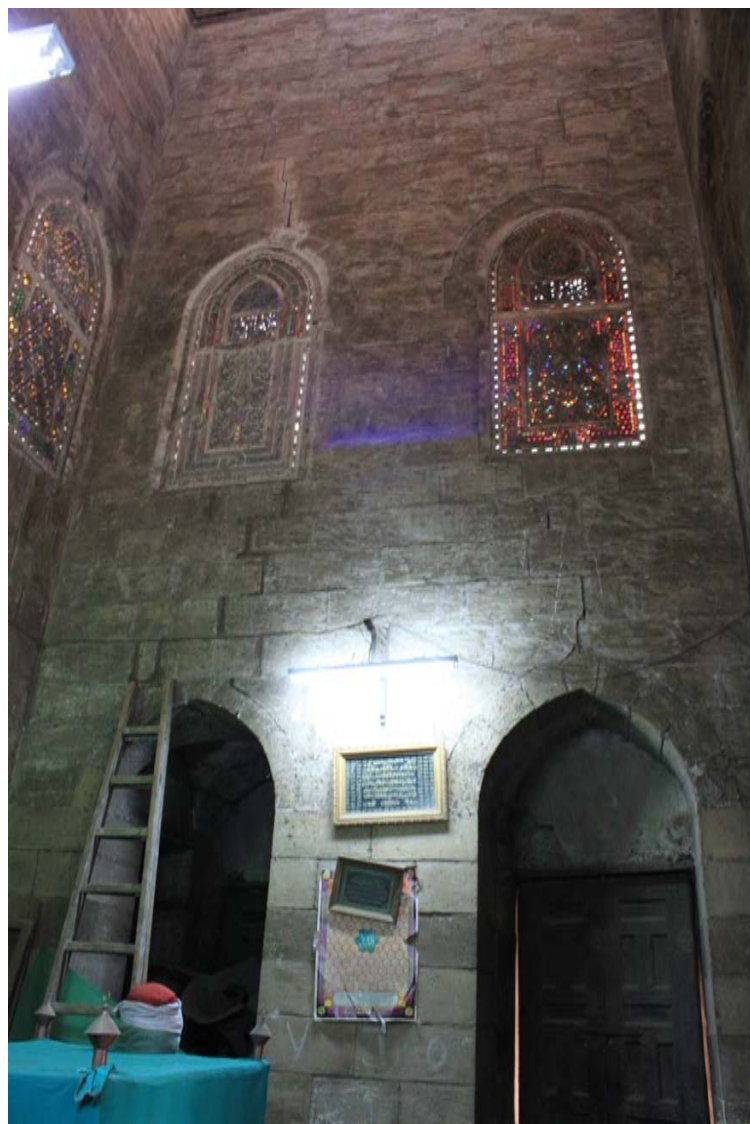


Fig. 4.31: The mausoleum interior



Fig. 4.32: The inlaid marble floor of the mausoleum



Fig. 4.33: Engaged column of the northwest façade

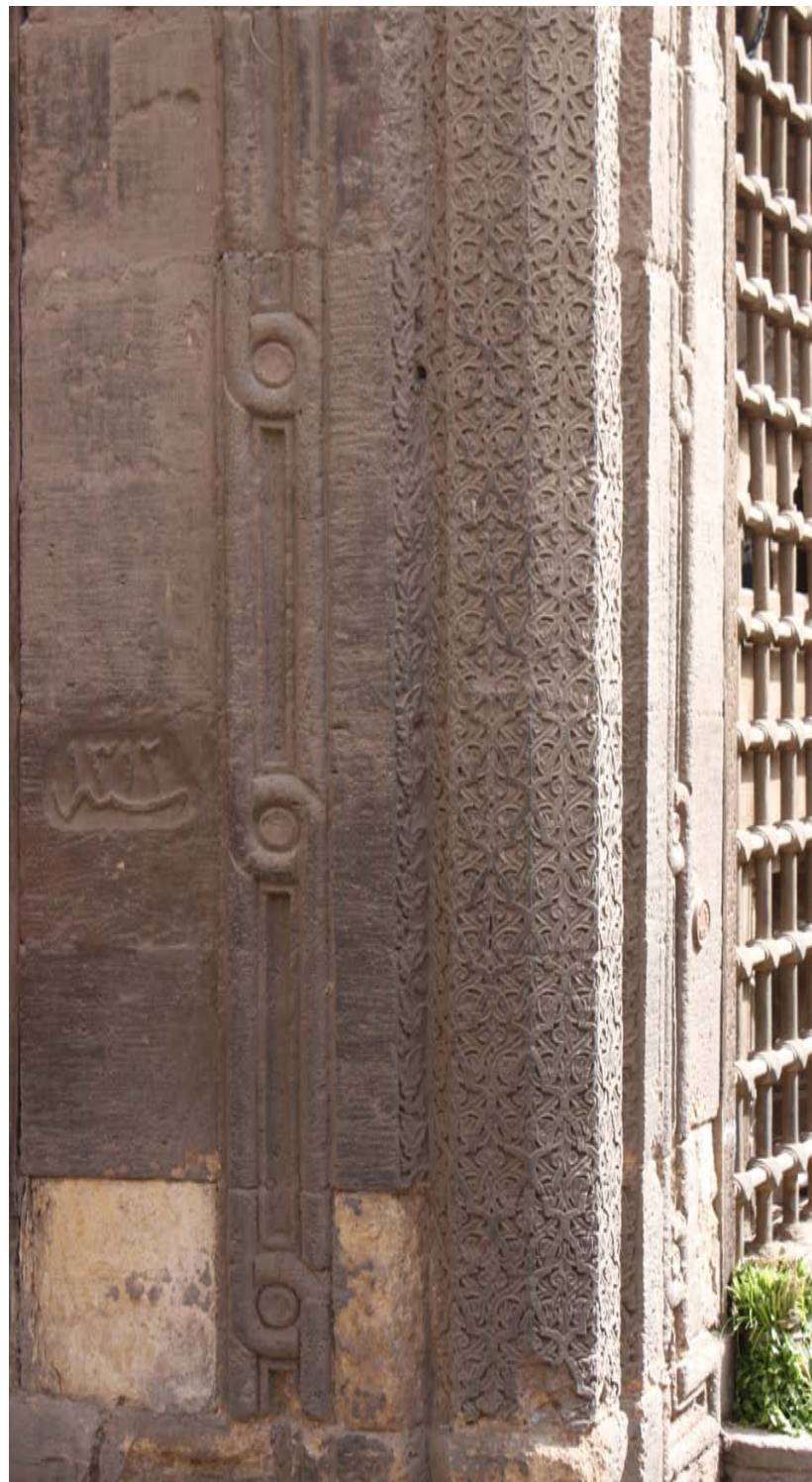


Fig. 4.34: Engaged column of the sabil corner on the southwest façade



Fig. 4.35: Carved horizontal panel on the northwest façade



Fig. 4.36: Inlaid marble panels on the northwest façade



Fig. 4.37: Trefoil panel on the sabil façade



Fig. 4.38: Inlaid marble panel on the northwest side of the sabil



Fig. 4.39: Inlaid marble panel on the southwest side of the sabil



Fig. 4.40: The mihrab of the mosque



Fig. 4.41: The spandrels of the mihrab of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh mosque



Fig. 4.42: The conch of the mihrab of Qijmas



Fig. 4.43: Dotted geometric patterns on the main portal of the zawiya of Faraj ibn Barquq



Fig. 4.44: The kufic inscription in the mihrab of Qijmas



Fig. 4.45: The kufic inscription in the domed mosque of Yashbak (*Cairo of the Mamluks*)



Fig. 4.46: The mihrab niche

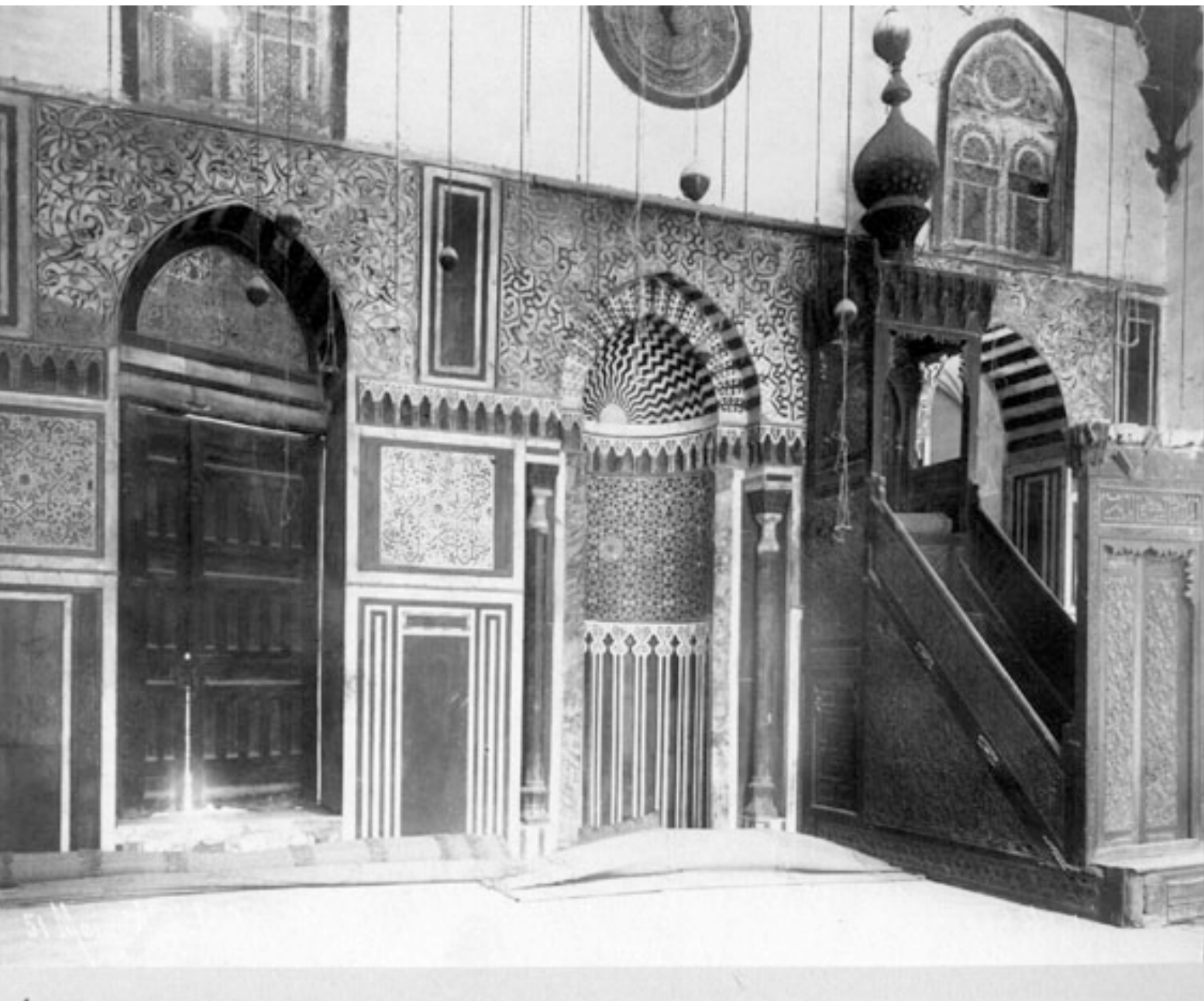


Fig. 4.47: The qibla wall of the mosque of Abu Bakr Muzhir (J.P. Sebah – Harvard College Library)



Fig. 4.48: Example of Mamluk metalware in the Veneto-Saracenic style (“Veneto-Saracenic Metalware”)



Fig. 4.49: The decoration of the interior



Fig. 4.50: Keel arches of the interior

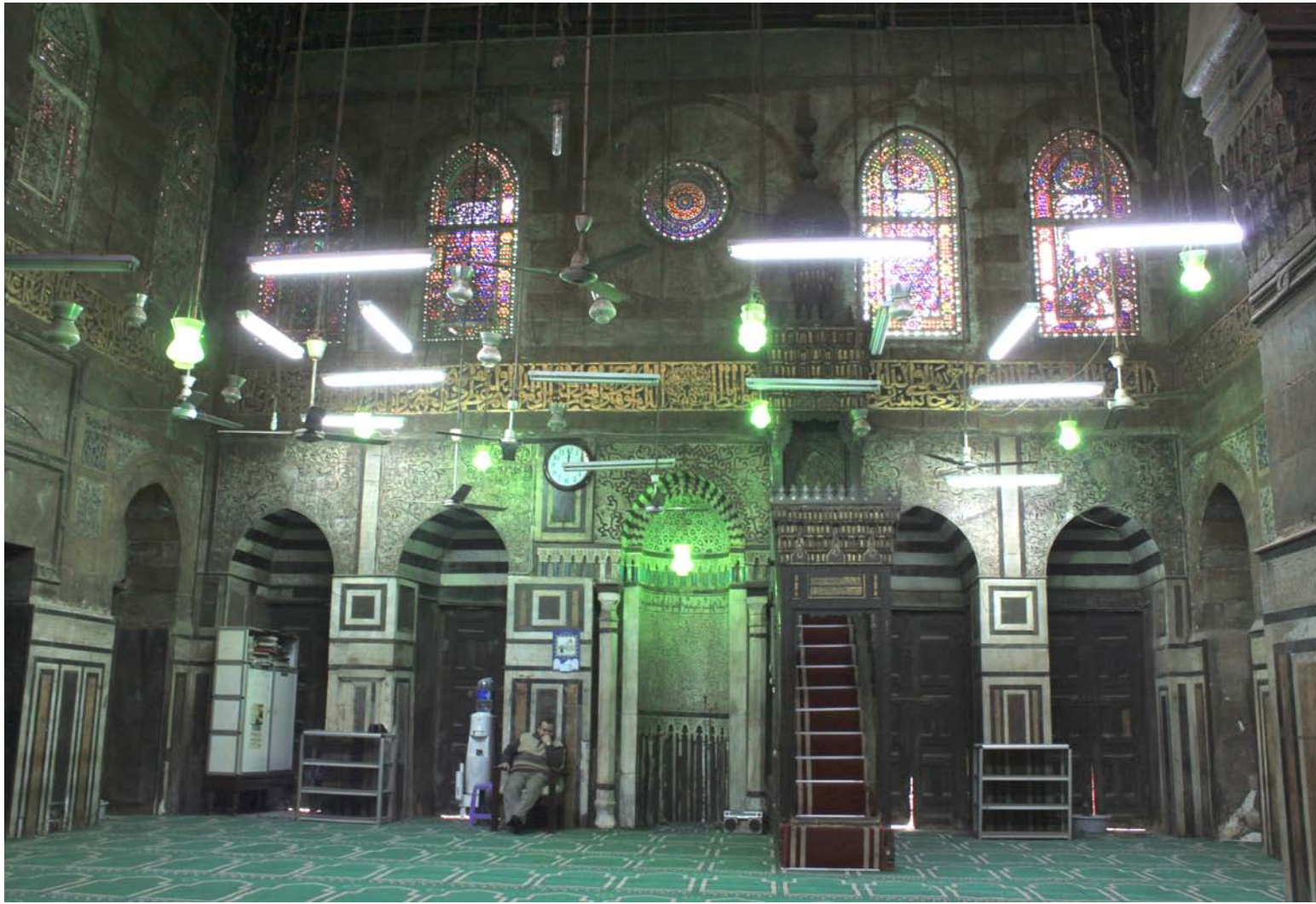


Fig. 4.51: The qibla wall

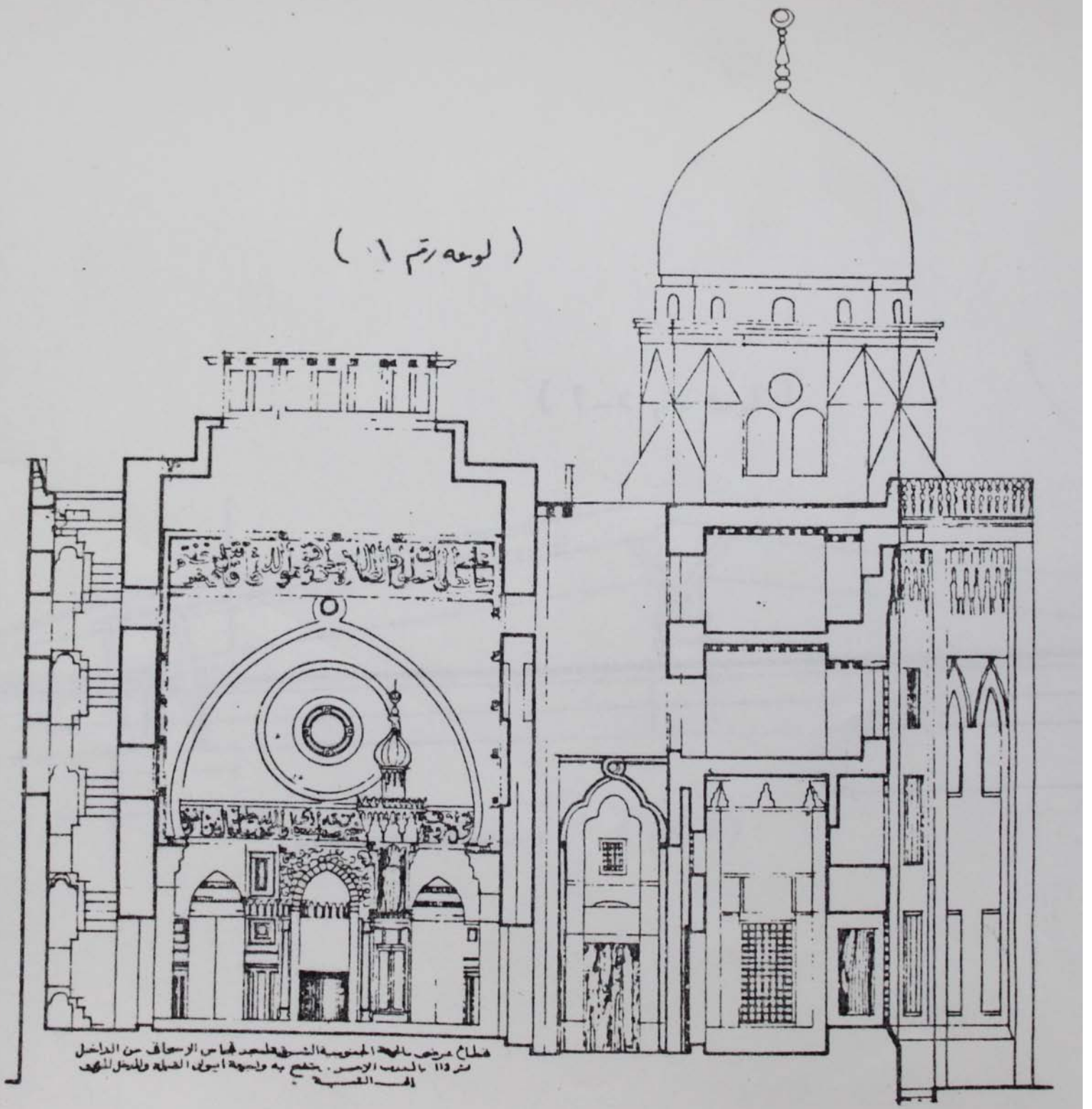


Fig. 4.52: Section drawing from the middle of the sahn looking onto the qibla wall (Supreme Council of Antiquities)



Fig. 4.53: Ending of the iwan arches



Fig. 4.54: Groin vault with the cruciform on the ceiling of the stairs leading to the ablution corridor



Fig. 4.55: The minbar



Fig. 4.56: The door of the minbar (*Documentation of the Inscriptions in the Historic Zone of Cairo*)



Fig. 4.57: The inscription in the interior of the minbar below the crenellations



Fig. 4.58: The bulb top of the minbar



Fig. 4.59: The qibla iwan ceiling



Fig. 4.60: Lateral iwan ceiling



Fig. 4.61: Detail of the area below the roundel of the main portal