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Cairo: Funerary Complex of Amir Kebir Qurqumas

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CAIRO

FUNERARY COMPLEX OF AMIR KEBIR QURQUMAS

Jerzy J. Kania

The present report covers the period from 1 January through 31 December 1997.¹ Work included restoration and rebuilding operations within selected parts of the complex, research studies, development of technical designs for further realizations and some minor publications.²

KHANQAH (Sufi habitation quarters)

In 1997, the Mission centered its attention on completing the finishing works in the ground-level structures of this part of the complex (Fig. 2). Considerable parts of the vaults had to be dismantled, despite the apparently good condition of the facing ashlar. The weakened mortar bonding them was replaced with a specially developed substance,³ and the blocks in *opus emplectum* remounted in their original position.

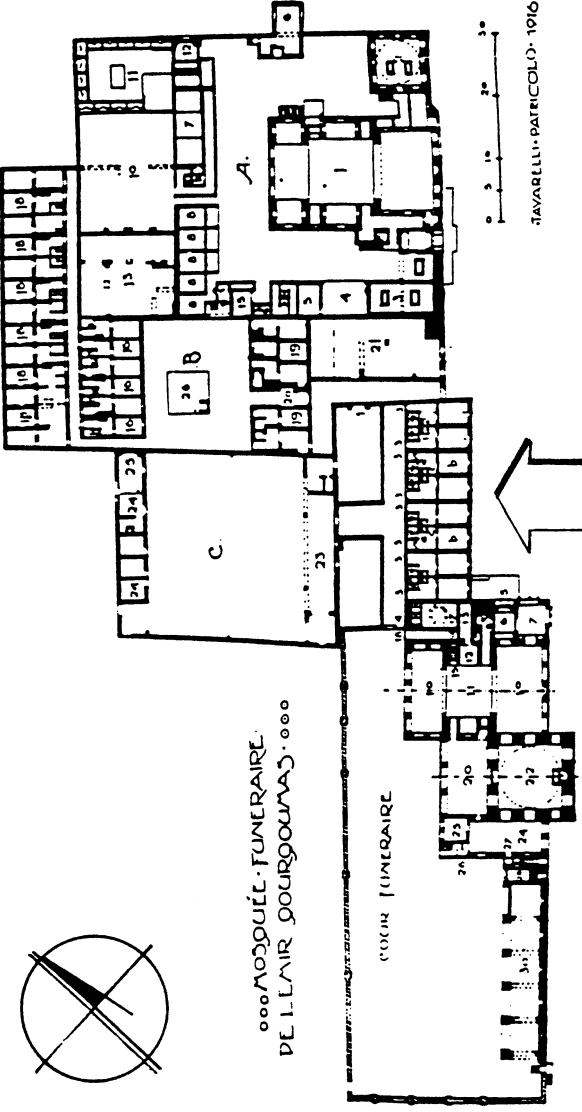
On the upper floor of the Khanqah, the vaults were secured from above with a waterproof course, and the preserved remains of the partition walls were restored to the height of the third layer of blocks. This permitted a clear view of the plan of the upper story and exposed it well in the form of a permanent, arranged and protected ruin. Special attention

¹ Previous report in: *PAM VIII*, Reports 1996 (1997), pp. 40-45.

² The Polish members of the Mission were: Mr. Jerzy J. Kania, M. Sc. Eng., architect-restorer, Project Head, Director of the Mission (since September 1996, on a year-round basis); Mr. Zdzisław K. Raster, D. Sc. Eng., Architect, Chief Designer (November 1996-June 1997); Mr. Andrzej Kwiatkiewicz, M. Sc. Eng., Civil and Structural Engineer, Site Chief (February-April 1997); Mr. Maciej Kwaśniewski, Arabist (volunteer, August 1996-July 1997). The Egyptian side was represented by Mrs. Fatin Hassan el-Fayyez, archaeologist, Site Inspector, and by Mr. Nazmy Daoud Attiya, Eng., architect.

³ Cf. *PAM VIII*, 1996 (1997), p. 41.

○○○ MOSQUÉE FUNÉRAIRE ·
DU SULTAN AL-A'CHRAF · IMAL ·○○○



TAVARELLI · PATRICIOLI · 1916

khanqah — reconstruction of staircases

○○○ MOSQUÉE FUNÉRAIRE ·
DE L'AMIR QURQUMAS ·○○○

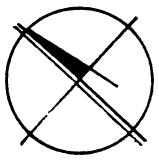


Fig. 1. Funerary Complex of Amir Kebir Qurqumas (162) in Cairo.
General location plan.

was paid to the proper reconstruction of the lavatories and sanitary installations of this building, with a view to presenting adequately the unique sewage system dating from Mamluk times.⁴

Inside units nos. 1, 2 and 4, the counterclockwise staircases were restored to their original Mamluk form, following a previously developed project (slightly modified in view of modern structural exigencies), matching the Mamluk facade of these units already restored in 1994-1995.⁵ Reinforced concrete was used in the reconstruction, "concealed" by an outer casing of masarani slabs, thus reproducing the typical appearance of a Mamluk staircase in modern materials.

In the remaining units, that is, nos 3,6,7 and 8, the later Ottoman staircases of red brick and irregular limestone blocks will be preserved, completed and restored (wherever necessary) in the coming season.

THE QASR (founder's residence)

Major intervention in this part of the Complex during the season in question included the restructuring of the inner staircase. After removing the modern two-flight arrangement, the original three-flight staircase structure, as described in the *Waqfiyya*⁶ was restored. The original height of the steps was calculated on the grounds of archaeological and architectural evidence. Some original Mamluk steps of stone blocks covered with thin limestone slabs (*masarani*) were re-installed; otherwise, the staircase was completed with new hard-limestone one-block steps of appropriate dimensions.

⁴ I. Nieduziak, La fondation waqf de l'emir Qurqumas au Caire, *EtTrav* XIV, 1990, pp. 239-281.

⁵ Cf. *PAM* VI, 1994 (1995), pp. 21-22; *PAM* VII, 1995 (1996), pp. 23-24.

⁶ *Waqfiyya*, p. 48, fig. 5-1.

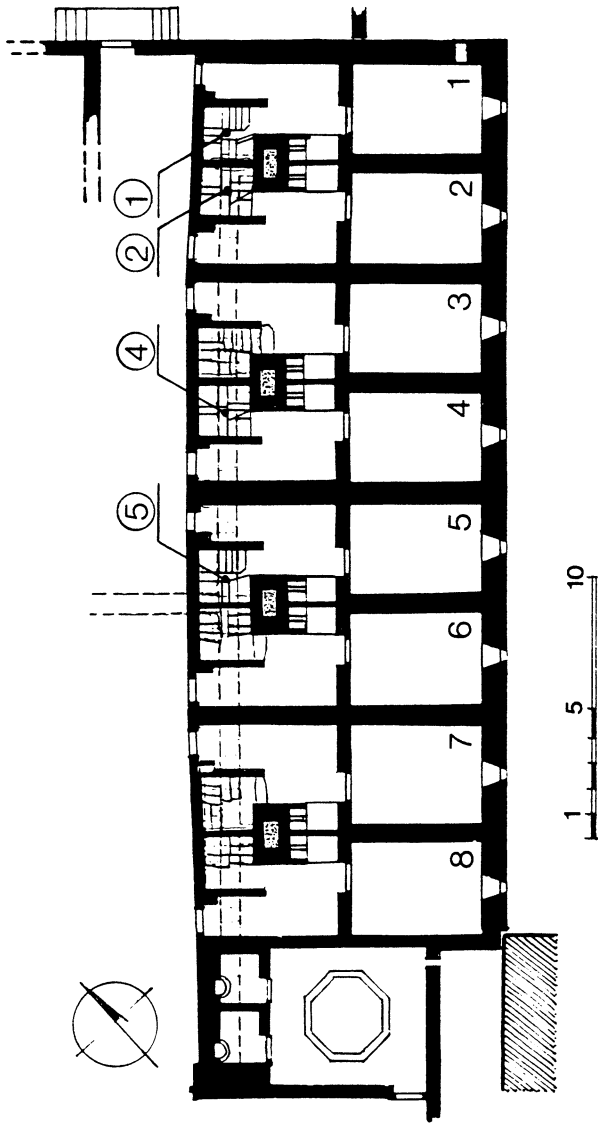


Fig. 2. Khanqah. Ground Floor (reconstructed Mamluk staircases nos 1, 2, 4 and 5).

Final reinforcement works on the domes over the Qasr and the re-arrangement of pavements inside the residence had to be postponed due to difficulties in procuring appropriate materials.

HAWSH (funerary courtyard in front of the Qasr)

Leveling works were carried out as the first stage of the landscaping project designed to arrange the immediate surroundings of the Complex. Some structures of later Ottoman times, already known from previous excavations (1985-1987), were uncovered again and temporarily secured. In the future, the area will be used for a display of pieces of stone architectural decoration collected from the site.

MADRASA (Mosque and Quranic school)

In the Madrasa, the existing remnants and traces of the external roofing structures over the room adjacent to the body of the main building on the northeast (storeroom for carpets) were meticulously examined, measured and photographically recorded. A technical design for the new roofing of this section was developed.

The technical documentation for completing and protecting the vault over the corridor between the complexes of the Khanqa and Madrasa was also prepared.

Both project designs (intended to be realized in the coming 1998 season) deal with all the required aesthetical, structural and protective measures of the reconstruction/restoration operations (waterproof insulation, rainwater run-off, etc.).

ILLUMINATION PROJECT

A further step in improving the aesthetic value of the monument was the provisional installation and testing of external lighting on the Minaret and Qubba, following a project

design prepared in 1996.⁷ The general view of this part of the Northern Cairo Necropolis, as seen from Salah Salem Street and from the Desert Road running at the foot of the Muqattam Hills, has thus been enhanced.

⁷ Cf. *PAM* VIII, 1996 (1997), p. 44. 42