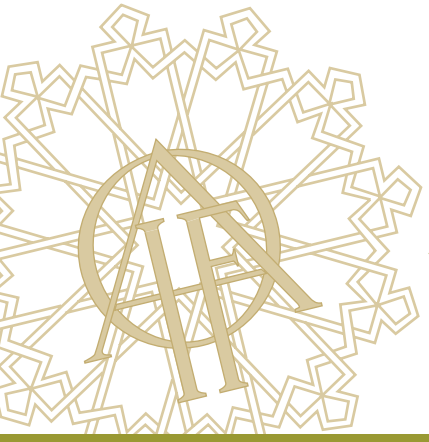
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AnIsl 23 (1987), p. 31-53

Ḥāzim I. Sayyid

The Development of the Cairene Qāʿa: Some Considerations [avec 5 planches].

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAIRENE *QĀʿA*: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

Hazem I. SAYED

In a lecture delivered at Princeton University in 1947, the late K.A.C. Creswell discussed developments in the study of Islamic art. One of the questions he presented for resolution was how the Fusṭāṭ type of house gave way to that known as the Cairene type [1]. Almost forty years later, the question remains unanswered. While more excavations have been conducted since those cited by Creswell, they have all taken place in Fusṭāṭ and have not revealed anything incidating a transition to the later Cairene type [2]. At the same time, a number of new studies have greatly improved our awareness and understanding of the Cairene residence dating from the Mamluk period [3]. The gap between the two — that is, the late Fāṭimid and the Ayyubid periods — has remained outside our grasp.

My aim here is not to answer the question posed by Creswell, at least not definitively. Rather, I would like to present new evidence that sheds light on the development in the residential architecture of Cairo and Fusṭāṭ [4]. This evidence has been gleaned primarily

[1] K.A.C. Creswell, « Problems in Islamic Architecture », *The Art Bulletin* 35, no. 1 (March 1953) : 1-7.

[2] Since the work of Aly Bahgat and Albert Gabriel, separate excavations have been conducted by Hassan al-Hawary, Gamal Mehrez, and George Scanlon. The archaeological evidence is well summarized in Antoni A. Ostrasz, « The Archaeological Material for the Study of the Domestic Architecture at Fustat », *Africana Bulletin* 26 (Warszawa : 1977) : 57-86.

[3] For an early survey, see Edmond Pauty, *Les palais et les maisons de l'époque musulmane du Caire* (Cairo : 1933). For a study of early Mamluk residences, see Alexandre Lezine, « Les salles nobles des palais Mamelouks », *Annales Islamologiques* 10 (Cairo : I.F.A.O., 1972) : 63-148. For an architectural survey of the medieval residences in Cairo, see Jacques Revault and Bernard Maury, *Palais et maisons du Caire du XIV^e^ au XVIII^e^ siècle*, 4 vols. (vol. 3 in collaboration with Mona Zakariya and vol. 4 by B. Maury only), published in the series : *Mémoires ... de l'I.F.A.O*, vols. 96, 100, 102, 108, (Cairo : Impr. de l'I.F.A.O., 1975, 1977, 1979, & 1983). For an analytical and synthetic study, see Jean-Claude Garcin et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire* (Paris : éditions du C.N.R.S., 1982).

[4] This paper comes out of my dissertation in progress on the *rabʿ* or multi-unit residential architecture of medieval Cairo : *The Rabʿ in Cairo : A Window on Mamluk Architecture and Urbanism*, (Department of Architecture, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology). The help of the following people has had a direct bearing on the preparation

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from archival sources, and has been complemented by the re-presentation of three extant buildings that are relevant to the subject at hand.

Let us begin with a brief characterization of the two types of dwellings we are tyring to relate in terms of development and transformation. The first in terms of chronology are the dwellings excavated in Fusṭāṭ (Figure 1). We know from the excavations by Bahgat, Scanlon, and others that each of these houses, built in the Tūlūnid and Fāṭimid periods, consisted of a large courtyard which could not have been permanently covered. The courtyard contained one or more of what we might call *īwān*-s opening onto it; that is recesses opening directly off the courtyard and having a slightly raised floor level. More important, however, was the presence of an element, which may be superficially described as an *īwān* separated from the courtyard by a tripartite portico. Creswell has called this arrangement the T-plan, or the Sāmarrā *bayt,* as it was found in Abbāsid Sāmarrā [1]. Typically there were two of them on opposite sides of the courtyard. The openings on the remaining sides of the court were often positioned so as to maintain a symmetry in the elevation of the courtyard walls. The spaces around the court depended on it for their light, as they were often surrounded by building on the other three sides. The size and arrangement of this T-plan element leads us to conclude that it was the most important element in the houses of Fusṭāṭ.

Laila Ibrahim, in concurring with Creswell in pointing out the similarity of the Fusṭāṭ plan with the plans of the residential units uncovered in Sāmarrā, has suggested that this plan was most likely introduced into Egypt from Iraq in the time of Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn, who had been sent to Egypt as representative of the Abbāsid Caliph in 254/868. If we are to believe the very interesting and unique account by the 10th century historian al-Masʿūdī (d. 346/957), this unit had been adopted in Sāmarrā from the Ḥīrā region of northern Iraq only a few years before, under the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (232-247 / 847-861). The importance of his account warrants its citation in full :

> « And al-Mutawakkil originated in his days a construction that people had not known. And it is known as the *ḥīrī* with two sleeves and porticos (*kummayn wa arwiqa*). And it is that one of his storytellers told him that a Nuʿmānī king of al-Ḥīrā from Banī Naṣr

of this article : Professor Muḥammad Amin, Khalid Asfour, Muḥammad al-Assad, Richard Brotherton, Dr. Zaynab Maḥfūẓ Hanā, Mrs. Laila Ibrahim, Patricia Peterson, Professor Carl Petry, Nasser Rabbat, Scott Redford, Professor Paula Sanders, Diane Singerman, the staff of the Dār al-Waṭā'iq al-Qawmiyya in the Citadel and the Daftarḫāna of the Ministry of Awqāf in Cairo, and the staff of the Papyrussammlung in the Austrian National Library.

[1] K.A.C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford : The Clarendon Press, 1932-40) 1 : 121, 128.

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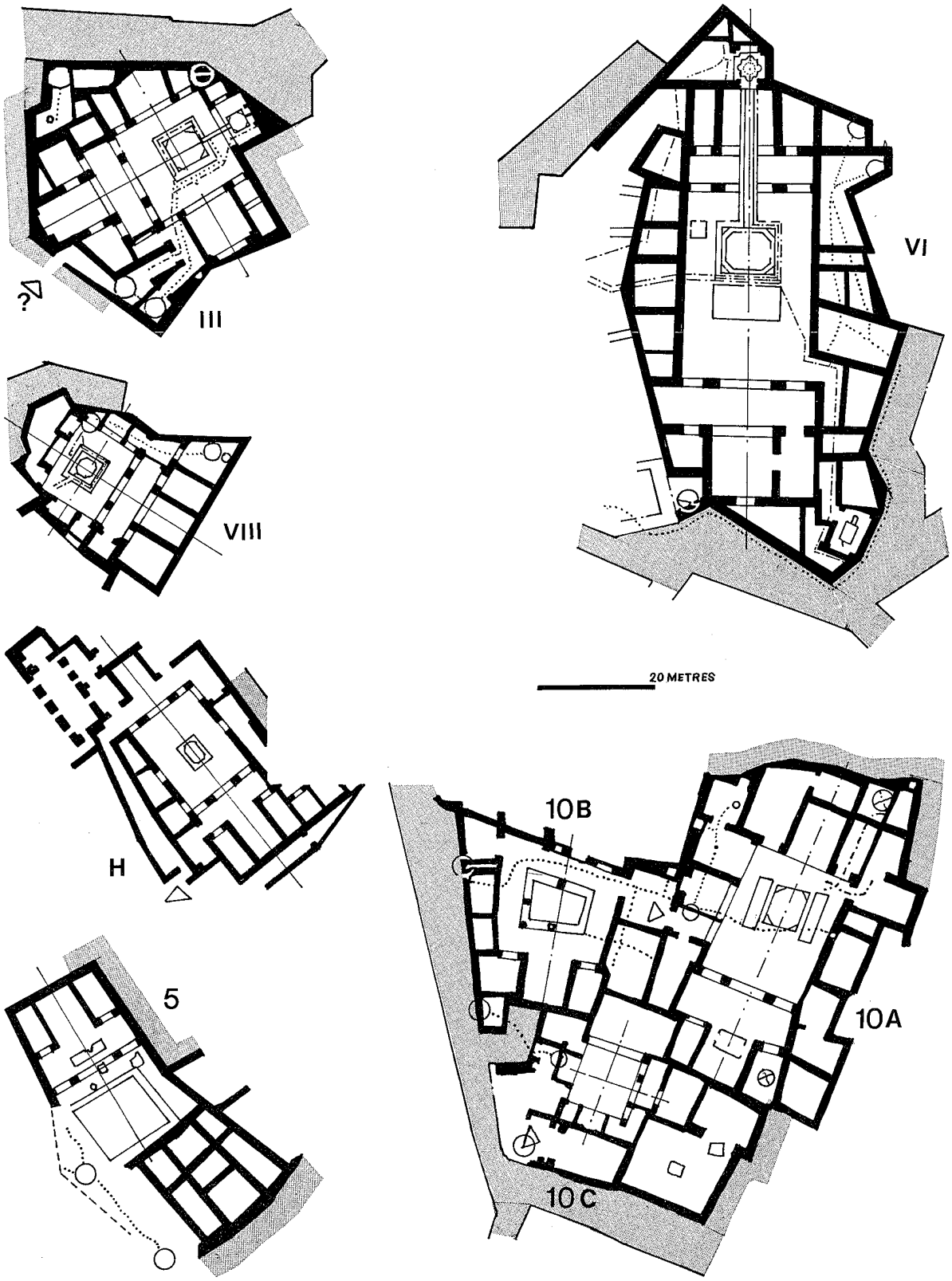


Fig. 1. — Houses of Fusṭāṭ. [Source : Antoni A. Ostrasz, « The Archaeological Material for the Study of the Domestic Architecture at Fustat », *Africana Bulletin* 26 (Warszawa : 1977) : 57-86, Figures 6 and 7].

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> introduced a building in his habitat which was al-Ḥīrā, in the image of war and its form because of his fascination with it and his leaning towards it, so that its memory would not part from him at all times. And so the portico had in it the seat (*mağlis*) of the king which is the chest (*ṣadr*) with the two sleeves (*kummān*) to the left and right. And in the two bayts that are the pair of sleeves would be his close attendants (*ḫawāṣṣ*), and in the right of the two of them is the clothing closet (*ḫazānat al-kiswa*) and in the left what is needed of drink. And the space of the portico is taken up/permeated by the chest (*ṣadr*) and the two sleeves, and the three doors are over the portico. And this construction was called to this day « the *ḫīrī* with two sleeves » in reference to al-Ḥīrā. And the people followed al-Mutawakkil's lead in this and it became famous to this end » [1].

The ramifications of this evocative account deserve extensive analysis. I cite it here, however, for the purpose of later showing that the connection between the type of residence described by al-Masʿūdī and that found in Fusṭāṭ was a contemporary one and not just the result of our finding similarities in the plans from Fusṭāṭ and Samarrā.

The second type of residence is represented by the houses of the Mamluk period dating from the mid-14th century. Though this type was also generally organized around an open court, it would be more accurate to describe the open space as a yard with loosely arranged spaces around it. The kind of order seen in the Fusṭāṭ houses was found in another part of the Mamluk house known as the *qāʿa*. It generally consisted of two *īwān*-s opening off an enclosed volume known as the *dūr-qāʿa*. The *qāʿa* unit itself was generally extended along one axis, although there was an attempt at maintaining some symmetry around the other two facades of the *dūr-qāʿa*. Light entered from a number of sources, including the clerestory around the *dūr-qāʿa* and windows at the end of *īwān*-s along with other openings off the side of the *dūr-qāʿa* and the *īwān*-s. The parts ancillary to the *qāʿa* were distributed in a fairly irregular manner. It is this unit that is analogous to the heart of the Fusṭāṭ houses that we have seen.

My work on the change in the Egyptian house type has depended to a large extent on archival sources found in the *waqf* collections in Cairo, and to a lesser extent on documents in the Papyrussammlung in the Austrian National Library and published Geniza and Karaite Jewish community documents [2]. Since we are going to rely on documents that

[1] My translation from Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī, *Murūğ al-ḏahab wa maʿādin al-ğawhar* (Beirut : Dar al-Andalus, 1966) 4 : 4-5; Cited in L. Ibrahim, « Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo », *Muqarnas* 2 (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1984) : 59, n. 32. My translation is more literal than that of Ibrahim to leave open the interpretation of some of the terms.

[2] The waqf collections are housed primarily in Dar al-Waṯā'iq al-Qawmiyya in the Citadel and in the Daftarḫāna of the Ministry of Waqfs. For an index of the documents in the collections,

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span the period from the 11th century through the whole Mamluk period, it is important to identify the contemporary name of the so-called T-plan element or the Sāmarrā *bayt*. From the early Mamluk *waqf*-s and S.D. Goitein's work on the Geniza documents, it becomes quickly apparent that the primary candidate for the name of this unit is *mağlis*, an Arabic word from the root *ğalasa*, to sit.

The term literally means a seat, a place of sitting, or a gathering of people. As such, most scholars have interpreted its usage as referring to the act of gathering and not to the space that the gathering happened in. Those that took its usage as referring to a space generally did not see it as having a specific form and have simply translated it as an « audience hall » or « sitting room » [1]. In the even fewer instances where it was taken to be referring to a specific kind of space, it has been misinterpreted as some kind of *īwān* [2]. The main exception to this is Goitein who has correctly identified the term with the main element of the Fusṭāṭ house [3].

In a Geniza document dated by Goitein at around 1190 A.D., a house in Fusṭāṭ is described as containing a large *qāʿa* consisting of two *mağlis* opposite each other. According to the document, each *mağlis* was covered by folding doors with carved soffits and exteriors. Each also contained a marble panelled windcatcher (*bādāhanǧ*) with folding doors. In one *mağlis*, described as longish with marble covered walls, were two carved wooden *maqṭaʿ*-s (lateral section or screen ?), each of which had a door leading to a single sleeve (*fardat kumm*) adjacent to the *maqṭaʿ* (We note here the use of the word *kumm* or sleeve, which had appeared in al-Masʿūdī's account). The *qāʿa* also contained two *ṣuffa*-s facing each other — recesses in the remaining two sides of the courtyard which are probably

see Muḥammad Amin, *Fihrist waṯā'iq al-qāhira ḥatā nihāyat ʿaṣr salāṭin al-mamālīk*, 239-922 / 853-1516 (Index of the Archives of Cairo to the end of the Mamluk Period, 239-922 / 853-1516) (Cairo : I.F.A.O., 1981). For an extensive bibliography of work done on Geniza documents, see Shaul Shaked, *A Tentative Bibliography of Geniza Documents* (Paris : Mouton & Co., 1964). For a brief summary of the documents in the collection of the Karaite Jewish community in Cairo, see D.S. Richards, « Arabic Documents from the Karaite Community in Cairo », *JESHO* 14 (Leiden : E.J. Brill, June 1972) : 105-162.

[1] For example see J. Bloom, « The Origins of Fatimid Art », *Muqarnas* 3 (Leiden : E.J. Brill, 1985) : 28.

[2] For example see J.C. Garcin, « Habitat médiéval et histoire urbaine à Fusṭāṭ et au Caire », *Palais et maisons du Caire*, 1 : 143-216. The plan on page 172 labels both the *īwān* and the *mağlis* in a Cairene building (Dayr al-Banāt) as a *mağlis*. This building will be discussed below. The plan on page 179 labels the smaller of the two *īwān*-s in another Cairene building as a *mağlis*.

[3] S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 4 *Daily Life* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1983) : 65.

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what we have been understanding as the small *īwān*-s in the Fusṭāṭ houses —. The courtyard, which seems to have been unroofed, contained a fountain and had marble floors and walls [1].

Documents repeatedly mention folding doors of carved wood over the *maǧlis* and its sleeves (*ʿalayhī wa ʿalā kummayh abwāb manqūša* or *ʿalayhī wa ʿalā kummayh abwāb miṭwāh*) [2]. We may conclude, therefore, that doors were a common feature of this architectural element. In some cases a *maǧlis* is explicitly described as having no doors. Often this description explains that the facade of the *maǧlis* was supported on two columns or four double columns [3].

In two deeds dated 658/1260 and 684/1285, the *maǧlis* element is referred to by the full name of *al-maǧlis al-ḥīrī bi kummayn,* which would translate as « the Ḥīrī type of *maǧlis* with a pair of sleeves » [4]. This corroborates al-Masʿūdī's account in its indication that it was commonly accepted that this type of unit had been taken from al-Ḥīrā. Another confirmation comes from the thematic dictionary of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. after 395/1005), who defines the word *ʿaraqa* as « the piece of wood that crosses the door of the Ḥīrī ». In a footnote, the editor states that the word *maǧlis* appears near the word *al-ḥīrī* [5]. Since the manuscript he edited is a copy made in the 6th-7th century / 12th-13th century from an original that had marginal notes by Abū Manṣūr Mawhūb al-Ǧawālīqī, a Baghdadi linguist who died in 540/1145 [6], the word *maǧlis* is most likely a clarification from that date at the latest.

(1) Geniza document in the Taylor-Schechter collection TS K 25, f. 251. Published by S.D. Goitein, « A Mansion in Fustat : a Twelfth Century Description of a Domestic Compound in the Ancient Capital of Egypt », *The Medieval City,* edited by Harry Miskimin et al. (New Haven : Yale Univ. press, 1977) : 163-178. The description given is my translation from the Arabic text provided by Goitein of an Arabic document written in Hebrew characters, as is the case with most of the Geniza material. Here again, I present a more literal translation of the text.

(2) For mention of a *maǧlis* with doors over it and its sleeves, see in the Dār al-Waṯā'iq collection : Maḥkama 4 (24 Ḏūl-Qiʿda, 637/1240), Maḥkama 7 (12 Raǧab, 659/1261), Maḥkama 11 (24 Rabīʿ al-Aḫar, 668/1269). The date given with each document is that of the earliest deed in the document.

(3) For mention of a *maǧlis* without doors over it and supported on columns, see in the Ministry of Waqfs collection, Awqāf 706 (23 Ḏūl-Ḥiǧǧa, 684/1286).

(4) Karaite documents numbers 5 and 17 as summarized in Richards, « Arabic Documents », 109, 112.

(5) Abū al-Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Kitāb al-talḫīs fī maʿrifat asmā' al-ašyā'* (Book of Summary in the Knowledge of the Names of Things) edited by ʿIzzat Ḥasan (Damascus : 1969) 1 : 296 and n. 1. Incidentally, the word *ḥīrī* is not defined in this lexicon, which along with its citation as part of the definition of another term (*ʿaraqa*) indicates that it was wide known and therefore did not need explanation.

(6) *Ibid.*, editors' introduction, 1 : 18.

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In fact, rereading many of the well-known sources for Islamic history with the understanding of the word *mağlis* as referring to an architectural space of known characteristics and not as a generic seat or gathering, not only supports this interpretation, but more importantly results in a better understanding of those texts.

For instance, in his memoirs, the Syrian amir 'Usāma Ibn Munqiḏ, relates an incident that occured while he was in Cairo from 1144 to 1154. He was a guest of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ and was accommodated in a house in al-Qāhira. During a day of civil strife in the city, a Sudanese, fleeing some attackers, reached the top of 'Usāma's house and jumped off the edge of the *qāʿa* to a high fig tree growing in the court. He climbed down, entered from a sleeve (*kumm*) of a *mağlis* near him and, after stepping on a copper light fixture, hid behind luggage in the *mağlis* [1]. Clearly the court of this house that contained a *mağlis* was not covered.

We also find the word *mağlis* in a number of stories in *The Thousand and One Nights* in a number of contexts : one enters a *mağlis,* or someone is outside the door of the *mağlis.* The word *īwān* also appears, but in different stories and its context is quite distinct from that of *mağlis :* one ascends to the *īwān,* and doors are never associated with it [2].

Turning to the more established historical sources, we find that the *mağlis* appears repeatedly, for example, in the descriptions of the Fāṭimid palaces and ceremonials that have come down to us through the works of al-Maqrīzī and al-Qalqašandī. A *mağlis* is noted as the main element of what was called Qāʿat al-Ḏahab (Golden *Qāʿa*) in the Fāṭimid palace, built by the Caliph al-ʿAzīz (365-386 / 975-996) and renewed in 428/1037 by al-Mustanṣir (427-487 / 1036-1094). During the reign of al-Āmir (495-524 / 1101-1130), it replaced the great *īwān* as the site of the primary audiences of the Fāṭimid court. Ibn al-Ṭuwair's account of the Caliph's twice-weekly audience portrays him enthroned inside the *mağlis* while the *wazīr* and the rest of the court stand outside. The doors of the *mağlis* are closed and curtains are draped over it. At a signal given by the guardian of the *mağlis* (*ṣāḥib al-mağlis*), the drapes are pulled by two attendants and the Caliph is revealed inside. After verses from the Qur'ān are read, the *wazīr* enters the *mağlis* and greets the Caliph [3].

[1] Usāma Ibn Munqiḏ, *Kitāb al-iʿtibār* edited by Philip Hitti (Princeton : Princeton Univ. Press, 1930) : 9-10.

[2] *Kitāb alf layla wa layla* (The Book of a Thousand and One Nights) edited by Muḥsin Mahdī (Leiden : Brill, 1984) : nights numbers 166, 172, 149*, 151*, 158*, and 159* for *mağlis* and nights numbers 34 and 216 for *īwān.* I am indebted to Mr. Muḥammad Al-Assad for most of these references.

[3] As transmitted by Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī in *Al-mawāʿiẓ wa'l-iʿtibār fī ḏikr al-ḫiṭaṭ wa'l-āṯār* (Bulaq : 1853) 1 : 385-386, and Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Qalqašandī in *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā fī ṣināʿat al-inšā* (Cairo : 1910-20) 3 : 494-496.

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Important to my argument for the formal specificity of the term *mağlis* is that it practically disappears from the descriptions of buildings found in later deeds in Egypt. When used in later documents, it invariably refers to older buildings that are either in ruin or being renewed with the *mağlis* being converted into an *īwān* [1]. This implies that there was a close association between the term and the form, since the term dropped out of use with the gradual disappearance of the form. It was not forgotten, however, presumably in part because a number of examples of it did continue to exist.

We might even be justified in extending a typologically specific reading of the term further back in time. We may, for instance, interpret al-Masʿūdī's text as distinguishing the *ḥīrī* type from a type of *mağlis* built prior to al-Mutawakkil's innovation. With time, the *ḥīrī* qualifier would have been dropped as that type became the predominant form, and it was referred to simply by the term *mağlis*. It therefore becomes important to try to resolve what that pre-Ḥīrī *mağlis* looked like.

The Geniza document discussed earlier described a residential unit comprising two *mağlis* facing each other across a courtyard. In a number of early documents in the

[1] An example of such a renovation is found in Awqāf 627 (23 Ǧumādā al-Āḫar, 753/1352), which describes a house located outside al-Qāhira below the citadel. When the property is sold in 753/1352, it contained a « hanging » *qāʿa* that consisted of a *mağlis* and an *īwān*. When it is made *waqf* in 15 Šawāl, 832/1429, the same place is described as a *riwāq* consisting of two *īwān*-s. One of them is large and the second is smaller. The smaller *īwān* had a clothing closet in it. A small deed attesting to a sale dated 15, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 79(6)/1394 refers to « what was renewed » as part of the sale. The conversion of the *mağlis* into an *īwān* may well have been part of this renewal. If so, then it would have happened before 796/1394.

Another example is documented in Awqāf 624 (3 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 810/1407). Here, a recently renovated house is described in both its pre- and post-renovation states. The first description says that it consisted of a *qāʿa* and a large *ṭabaqa* and related spaces. Each of the *qāʿa* and the *ṭabaqa* consisted of an *īwān*, a *dūr-qāʿa*, and a *mağlis*. After renovation, the place consisted of a *qāʿa* and two *ṭabaqa*-s. The *qāʿa* seems unchanged except for the addition of doors that were missing over its *mağlis*. The *ṭabaqa*, on the other hand, is replaced by two *ṭabaqa*-s, each of the single-*īwān* type.

Another example is found in an endowment deed dated 1 Rabīʿ al-Āḫar, 837/1433. Here one of the properties had an *īwān* and a *mağlis*, and then became a double-*īwān* unit with the converted one described as small (*laṭīf*). Awqāf 188, 1 : 210.

Yet another case of the conversion of a *mağlis* into an *īwān* is documented in Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiṭat ʿaqd al-amṣār* (Bulaq : 1893) 4 : 96-7. Here the *ustadār* ʿAlam al-Dīn Sanǧar al-Maġribī rented a property in Fusṭāṭ in 654/1256 and built on it a house with an eastern *īwān* and a western *mağlis*. The property changed hands twice and ended up with *al-ṣāḥib* ʿIzz al-Dīn who tore down the *mağlis*, raised its roof and rebuilt it as an *īwān*. All of this was prior to the end of 677/1279 when the proprety changed hands again. I am indebted to Nasser Rabbat for this reference.

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Awqāf collections, the main parts of a house are described as consisting of an *īwān* and a *mağlis* with a *dūr-qāʿa* in between [1]. This means that at different points of time we had houses made up *mağlis*-es, houses made up of *īwān*-s, and houses made up of a combination of a *mağlis* and an *īwān*.

Before speculating on the reason for the change from a *qāʿa* made up of *mağlis*-es to one made up of *īwān*-s, it might be helpful to present a graphic summary of the information present in the archival collection concerning the constitution of houses during the late Fāṭimid, Ayyubid, and early Mamluk periods — that is, during the period when the changes are occurring —. So far, I have compiled descriptions for 917 residential units located within 88 residential properties or compounds [2]. A compound may be a large house, apartment building, or other structure and would normally consist of lower-level units, going by the name of *qāʿa,* and upper-level units, going by the name *ṭabaqa, riwāq,* or *manzil.* To deal better with the question of the change from one type to the next, I have summarized this information in two different formats.

The first format, shown in Figure 2, is simply a summary of the types of units as described in documents, dated by the dates of their respective documents. The information is aggregated into 50 year increments, except for the period 1150-1250 A.D. which is aggregated into 100 years because of the relative scarcity of descriptions from this period. The graph tells us what percent of the units mentioned in the documents within a given time period were of the single-*mağlis,* the double-*mağlis,* the *mağlis-īwān,* the double-*īwān,* or the single-*īwān* type. To maintain the distinction between the lower- and upper-level units, they are shown on two different lines. All the *qāʿa*-s described in one time period are represented by a bar of a unit dimension with its differently shaded subdivisions indicating the different types of *qāʿa*-s that fall in that time period. In other words, the shaded subdivisions of each bar indicate what percent of the *qāʿa*-s of a given time period are of the single-*mağlis* type, the double-*mağlis* type, the *mağlis-īwān* type, the double-*īwān* type, of the single-*īwān* type. The same system is followed in representing the information about the composition of the upper-level units (*manzil, ṭabaqa,* or *riwāq*) of each compound. The two numbers separated by a slash and appearing above each time period indicate respectively the number of units and the number of properties in that sample.

[1] Karaite 5, Karaite 17, Maḥkama 4, Maḥkama 7, and Maḥkama 11 as cited above.

[2] The descriptions are taken from the following 40 documents : Maḥkama numbers 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 26, 32, 33, 38, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 56, 229, 274, and 366; Awqāf numbers 67, 153, 184, 531, 610, 623, 627, 651, 706, and 1143 *mukarrar;* Karaite numbers 5 and 17; Geniza number TS K 25, f. 251; and document number A. Ch. 10727 in the Papyrussammlung of the Austrian National Library.

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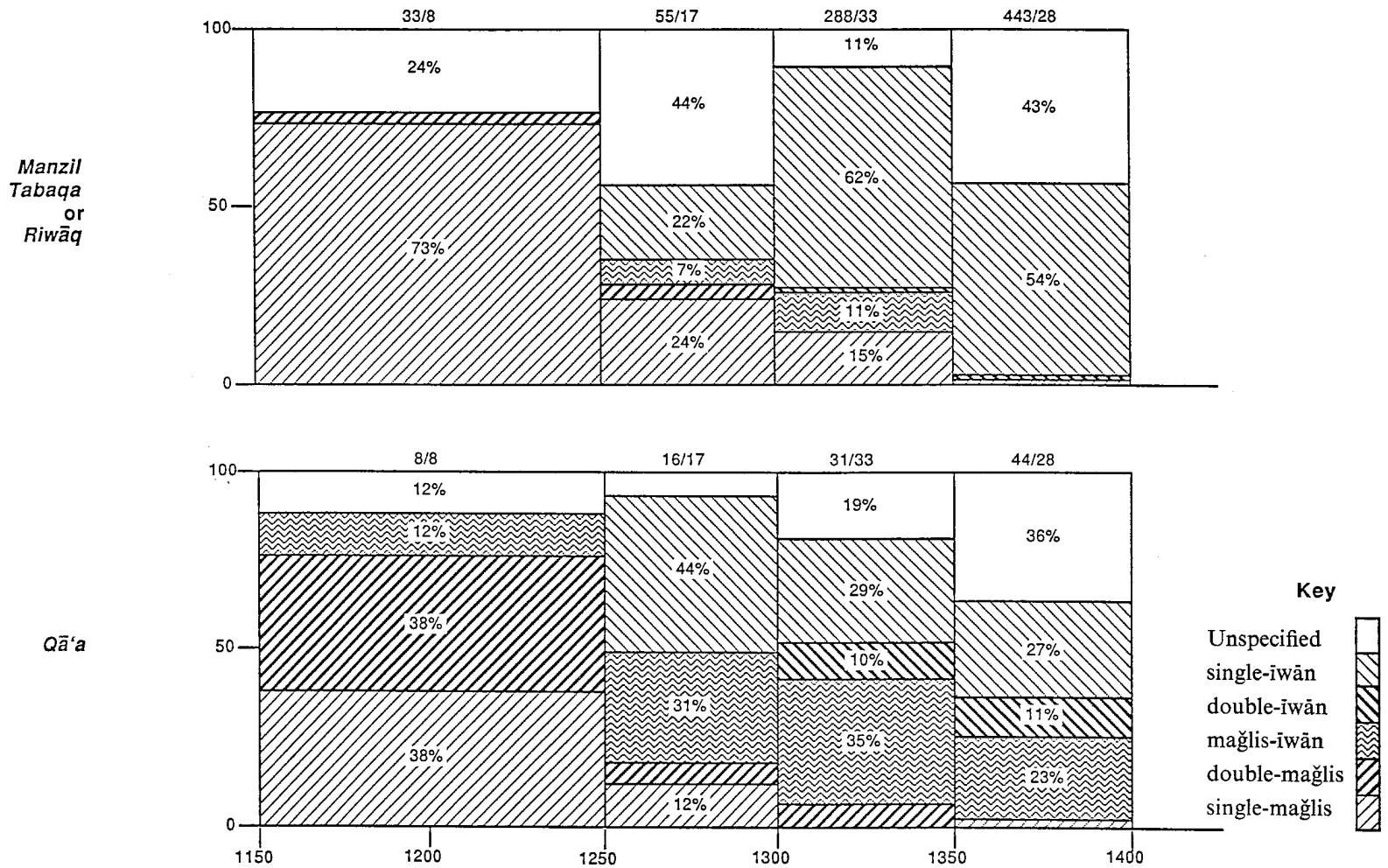


Fig. 2. — Housing stock in Cairo as reflected in deeds dating from 1150 to 1400 A.D.

We can see the information in this graph as potentially representing the constitution of the housing stock in Cairo at different points in time. I say potentially because we must first consider the extent to which the extant archives represent the housing stock in Cairo. The answer to such a consideration lies in two questions : to what extent were inhabited residential buildings represented in documents, and to what extent do surviving documents reflect the original archival collection ?

The different types of documents that were kept as records directly pertaining to buildings were many and include deeds of endowment (*waqf*), sale, rent, exchange (*istibdāl*), and inspection testimonials [1]. A rental property would appear repeatedly in rent contracts which were usually annual. As such, they would seem to be an ideal record for our purposes. Unfortunately, however, extremely few examples of this type of contract survive. Owner-occupied buildings did not appear in rent contracts, but it is likely that many of them were eventually made *waqf* and would therefore be represented in *waqf* deeds, which constitute the vast bulk of the extant archival collection. Although buildings appeared less frequently in sale contracts than in rental ones, a sizable number of sale contracts exists [2]. Those extant are almost always contracts of sale of properties that later become *waqf*. In a few cases, dilapidated *waqf* properties were returned to the open market. This return at the end of the property's life was documented in an exchange (*istibdāl*) deed; some of these deeds survive, for the same reason as sale deeds. When called for, inspections were conducted of properties by *muhandisīn*, with their testimonials recorded. A few of these exist in the collection, and most are part of an exchange deed.

Even if it can be established that the extant archives reflect a representative picture of the kind and relative number of properties built in Cairo, some of the newer buildings described would have to be excluded from the sample before it can be taken as a direct representation of the housing stock at different points in time. To understand why this is so, let us assume that all the extant deeds referred to buildings that had just been built, as is often the case with mosques or madrasas. In such a situation, the descriptions could

[1] For a more detailed discussion the use of documents as sources for Cairene architecture history and related methodological questions, see the essay on the subject in my dissertation. For a published overview of the same topic, see ʿAbd al-Latif Ibrahim, « *Al-waṯā'iq fī ḫidmat al-āṯār* (The Archives in the Service of Antiquities) », in *Al-mu'tamar al-ṯānī li'l-āṯār fī al-bilād al-ʿarrabiyya* (The Second Conference for Antiquities in the Arab Countries), held in Baghdad November 18-28, 1957, (Cairo : Arab League, 1958) : 205-288.

[2] For an extensive study of sale documents with texts of some sixty deeds, see the unpublished dissertation of Zaynab Maḥfūẓ Hanā, *Waṯā'iq al-bayʿ fī miṣr ḫilāla al-ʿaṣr al-mamlūkī* (Sale Documents in Egypt During the Mamluk Period), Ph.D. dissertation no. 2336 (Cairo : Cairo University, 1977).

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not be taken as indicating the general state of mosques or madrasas, but only the state of the new ones. Ideally, therefore, our sample for a given period would not include a greater proportion of newly built residences than would have been newly built at the time.

While it is not yet possible to know how representative our records are, it is my impression that they are biased toward newer constructions. This is due to the relatively greater number of *waqf* deeds, which do not give much information about those buildings several hundred years old that did continue to exist.

The first format, presenting a look at the housing stock in Cairo at different periods in time, imposes a number of limitations on the kinds of questions we can ask about the movement from a *maǧlis*-based to an *īwān*-based residential architecture. Though it demonstrates that the change did occur, it masks some information that could be relevant to understanding the reasons for the change. Because we are looking at the state of the housing stock at different periods of time, and not at the building activity, we do not know whether we are seeing the result of a sudden and universal change in building taste under slow building rates, or the result of a very slow change in building tastes under rapid building activity. Either could yield the same rate of change in the state of the housing stock.

Taking a more ambitious direction, we could consider what was being built at what time rather than what existed at a given point in time. This would require our looking at the dates of construction rather than the dates of description. With knowledge of these we could trace the era and location of changes as well as the pace at which they spread throughout the society. Such information could indicate how resistant the tradition was to change : did both types continue being built for some time, or was it a sudden shift as if following a decree or a building regulation ? The task, then, would be to find out the age of each building at the time of the deed, so that it could be put it in its proper chronological order. The obstacles to this are numerous, however. Unlike pious buildings, which were usually built by the founder, income-generating buildings, of which the houses are a part, were often purchased from someone else, inherited from a parent, or acquired in some other way; thus their age at the time of a deed could vary extensively.

We can make some headway by a close reading of the texts, which occasionally hint at the state of the building at the time of the deed. Some indicators are such descriptions as *al-dār al-mustaǧadda,* a « renewed residence », or *muzminat al-binā',* of « old construction ». In other cases, parts of a building are in some state of ruin, which we might in general ascribe to age rather than to some specific recent calamity. Relative descriptors are helpful, but they do not give a concrete indication of the number of years involved. In a few instances, however, the property discussed is famous enough to be mentioned

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in other historical sources that indicate its age. For example, the *qaysāriyya* of Ğaharkas is described in detail in a deed dated 707/1307 (1). We learn from Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir via al-Maqrīzī that this building is attributed to the amir Faḫr al-Dīn Ğaharkas, who built it in 592/1196, about 110 years before the deed that describes it (2). Another example is the *qaysāriyya* of Banī Hāšim, of which we have a description in a *waqf* deed dated 795/1393 (3). Again with the help of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir via al-Maqrīzī, we learn that this building was attributed to Šaraf al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn Qurayš, who had renewed it. He lived from 572-643 / 1177-1245, and so we can use the date of 1210 as an approximate date of his work, which is about 180 years before its deed (4).

At this point in the research, I have used an adjustment age of five years for renewed buildings, ten years for unspecified buildings, and fifty years for older buildings. Using these fairly conservative estimates, the result is Figure 3. The pitfalls of this method are numerous. I have already mentioned that it requires knowledge of the date of construction. It also assumes that we can ascribe a single date to a whole compound — a tenuous assumption —. It is clear from the documents that the upper floors were more likely to deteriorate than the lower levels. Given this, it is reasonable to assume that the upper parts of a house generally represent a later building date than the lower parts (5). To correct for this in our graph, we would have to show different dates for the two parts of the building. Similarly, to lump all the *qāʿa* units of a single residence in one time period may also be incorrect. The compound may have been assembled from a number of properties of different ages, and some may have been rebuilt more recently. These are all considerations that mitigate the usefulness of the information as presented so far (6).

Despite all of these qualifications, we can still see some clear developments. First, there was a gradual change from the *mağlis*-based residential unit to an *īwān*-based unit.

(1) Maḥkama 20 (14 Muḥarram 707/1307).

(2) Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-ḫiṭaṭ* 2 : 87-88.

(3) Awqāf 153 (18 Rağab, 795/1393).

(4) Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-ḫiṭaṭ* 2 : 93. The *qaysāriyya* is mentioned as one of the boundaries of a property in Maḥkama 2 (dated 19 Ramaḍān 613/1216), so the building was up by then.

(5) The fourth property described in Maḥkama 16 (dated 27 Rağab, 687/1288) contains a *qāʿa* and two *ṭabaqa*-s. The *ṭabaqa*-s are described as renewed and their construction was not yet complete (*mustağada lam takmal ʿimāratiha yawma'iḏ*).

(6) Actually two other considerations bias the data given above, stemming from the vicissitudes of my work on the Cairo archives on three different occasions. In the first two efforts, my emphasis was on later deeds (mostly after 784/1382) and descriptions of apartment buildings. During the third period of research, my emphasis was on the *mağlis* and its characteristics, resulting in less attention to descriptions of *īwān*-based units in the same deeds. This incompleteness keeps me from putting forth the further conclusions that one is tempted to read from the graphs. I hope to rectify this situation in a future encounter with the archives.

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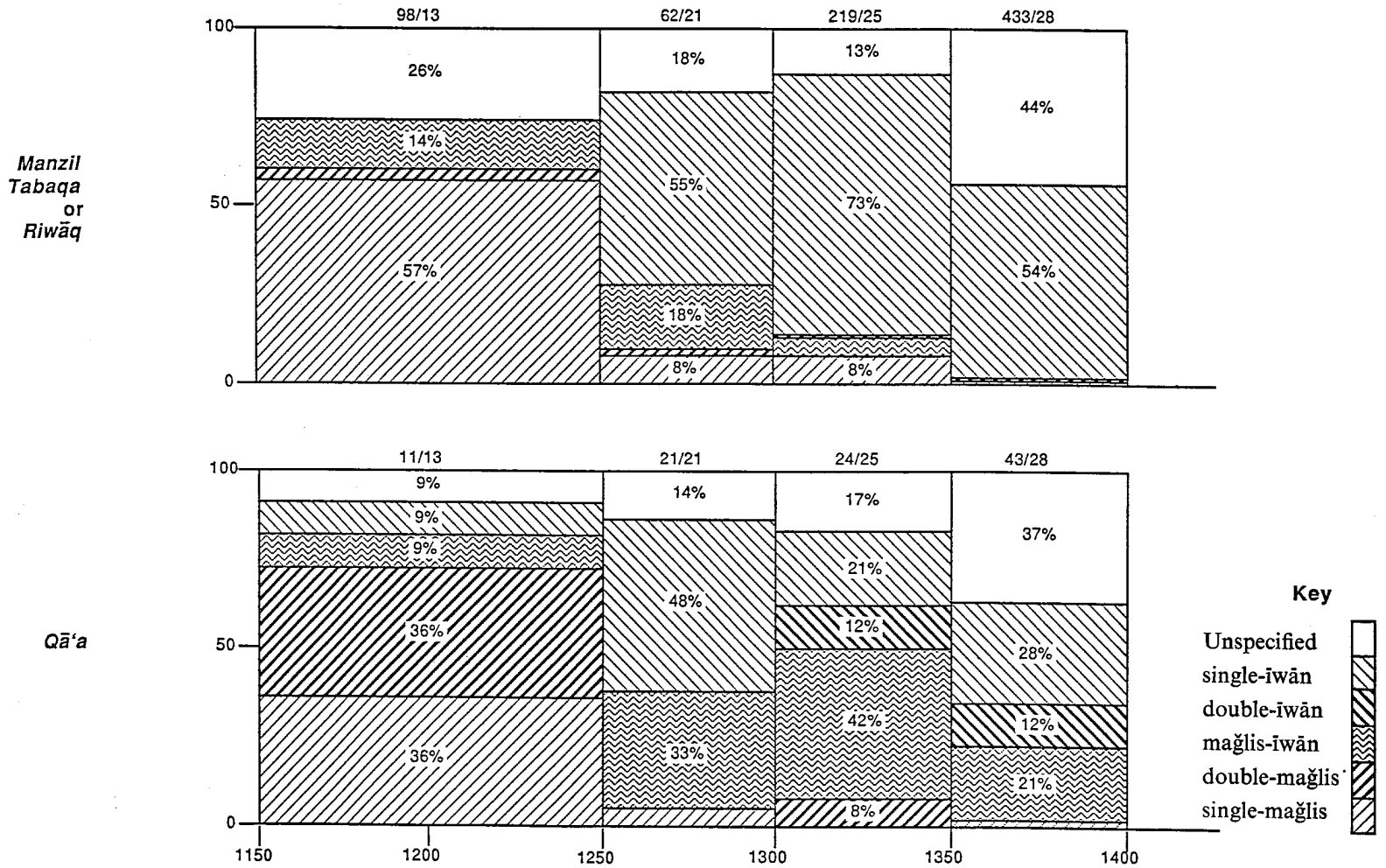


Fig. 3. — Types of Residential units built in Cairo from 1150 to 1400 A.D.

This transformation went through an intermediate form where the *maǧlis* and the *īwān* were both present in the same unit. Second, the upper-level units, which tend to be smaller, underwent a more immediate change from a single *maǧlis* to a single *īwān*. Third, the intermediate *maǧlis-īwān* configuration appears to have been the preferred configuration for large *qāʿa*-s built in the hundred years between 1250 and 1350.

Two buildings in Cairo fit the description of the transitional *qāʿa* to a remarkable degree : they appear to consist of both a *maǧlis* and an *īwān*. These are the Convent of St. George known as Dayr al-Banāt and the mosque of Aḥmad Bey Kohya [1].

Dayr al-Banāt (Fig. 4 and Pl. I) is not firmly dated but is believed to be from the Ayyubid period. It is presumed to have been a house that was converted to a convent [2]. On one

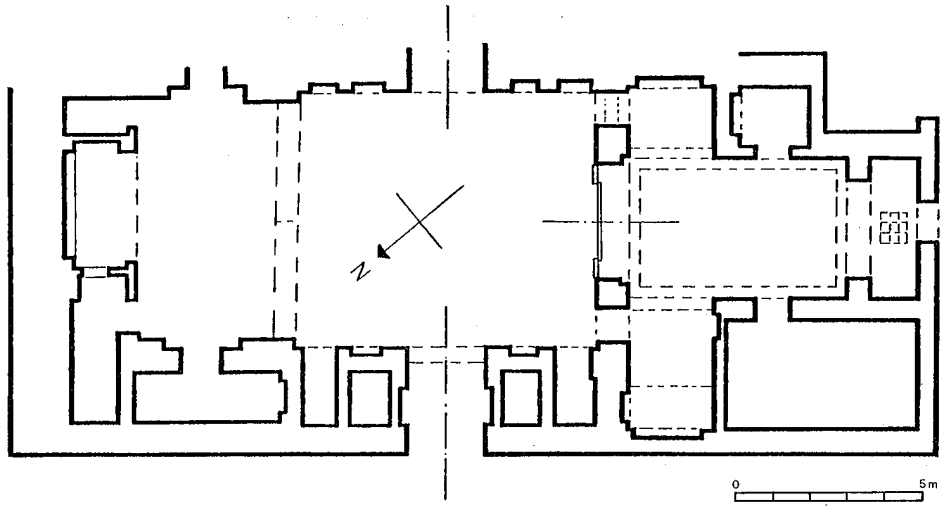


Fig. 4. — Dayr al-Banāt. Plan. [Source : Plan by B. Maury in A. Lezine, « Les salles nobles des palais mamelouks », *Annales Islamologiques* 10 (Cairo : I.F.A.O., 1972) Fig. 7 on p. 74].

side of the *dūr-qāʿa* is an *īwān* and on the other side is a tripartite facade with doors over the three openings. The middle opening is the largest and its doors are of the folding type. The central section of this tripartite division is presently a chapel. We now can be sure that this space is a *maǧlis*.

The mosque of Aḥmad Bey Kohya is one of a number of examples in Cairo of residential *qāʿa*-s that were subsequently converted to a mosque/madrasa (Fig. 5, 6, and Pls. II, III).

[1] I am indebted to Mrs. Laila Ibrahim for bringing the existence of the *qāʿa* of Kohya to my attention, and to Khalid Asfour for assistance in its survey.

[2] Ibrahim, « Residential Architecture », 53.

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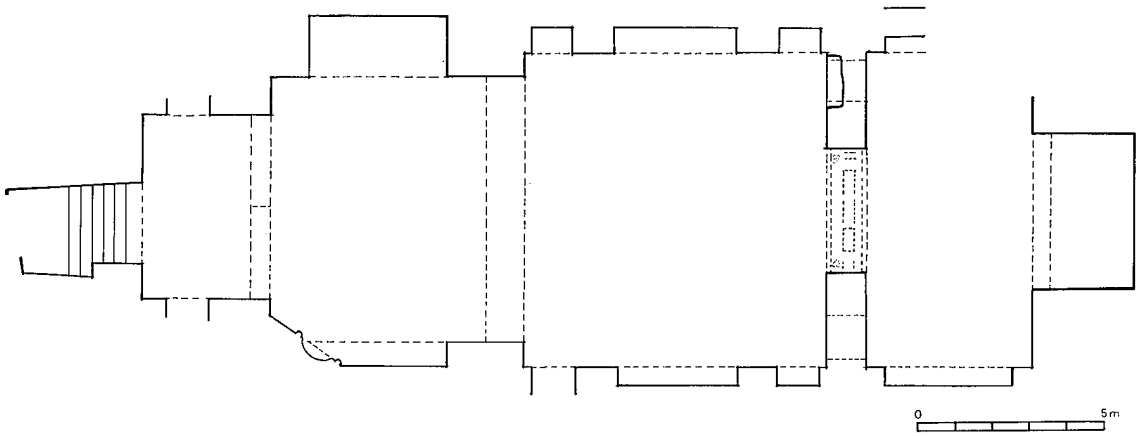


Fig. 5. — *Qāʿa* of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. Plan (present condition).

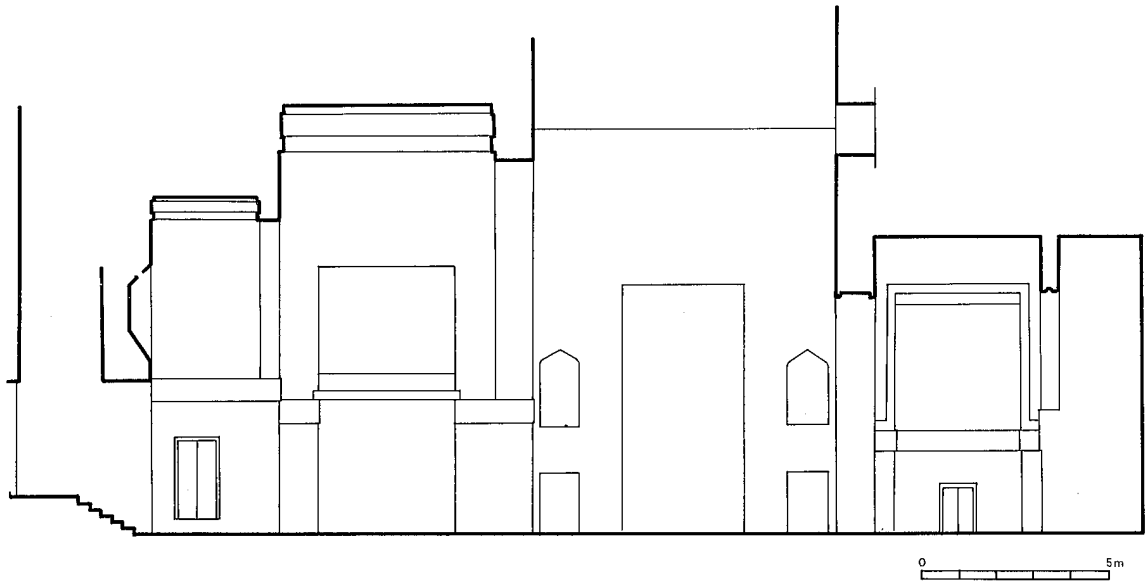


Fig. 6. — *Qāʿa* of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. Section (present condition).

This is in contrast to those *qāʿa*-s built initially as mosques or madrasas which are therefore properly oriented toward Mecca. This *qāʿa*, dated by the Comité de Préservation des Monuments Arabes to 710/1310, is similar to Dayr al-Banāt in that it consists of an *īwān* on one side and a tripartite facade on the other side. Presently there are no doors over the three openings (Pl. III), but there is strong reason to believe that such doors originally existed. A close inspection of the soffit of the central opening reveals two quarter-circle recesses with a circular hole in each that corresponds in location with hinges for two doors (Pl. IV).

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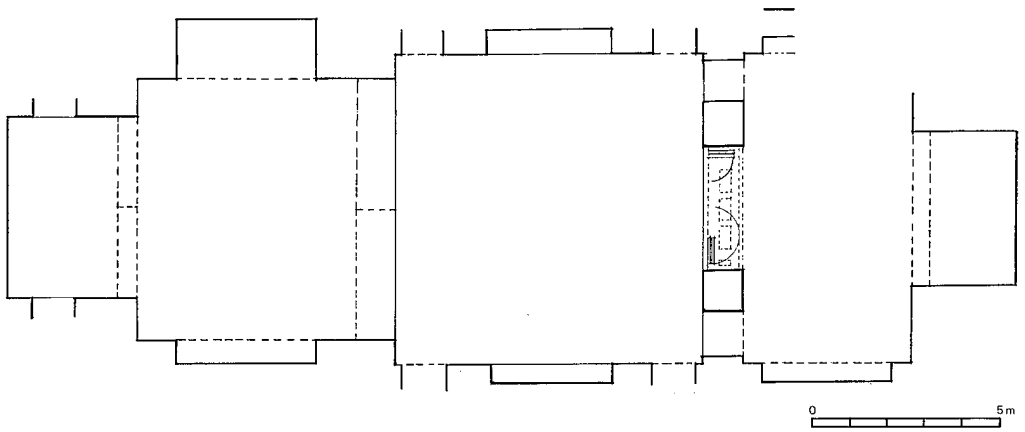


Fig. 7. — *Qāʿa* of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. Plan (reconstruction).

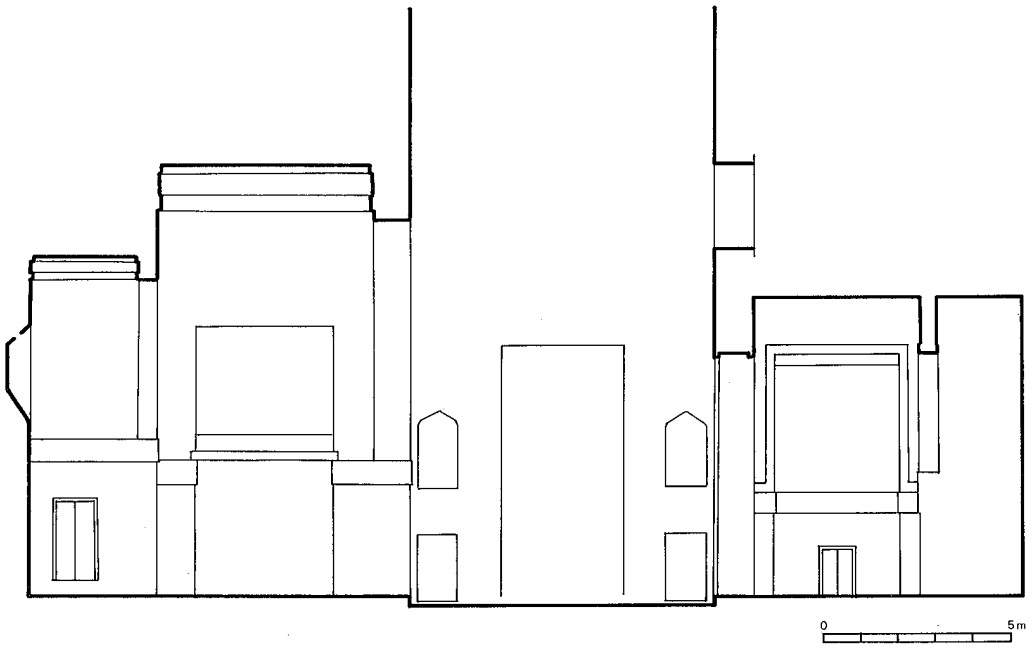


Fig. 8. — *Qāʿa* of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. Section (reconstruction).

It can be confidently said that this arrangement was for folding doors because of the distance of each recess from the side of the soffit. This offset of the hinge location from the side wall would have allowed the first fold of the door to tuck behind the second fold when the door was completely open (Fig. 7, 8), as is the case in the doorway of the *maǧlis* at Dayr al-Banāt. Here again, the walled-off space facing the *īwān* across the courtyard must be a *maǧlis*.

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The plan of the space behind the portico is typologically identical to that of the Fusṭāṭ houses, but its parts are proportioned differently. Since it is the only example, it is difficult to say whether it represents a development of the plan of the *mağlis* that was typical at the time, or represents later modifications. Also not clear is whether there were originally small rooms on either side of the central part of its *mağlis*.

The *ḫanqā* of Baybars al-Ǧāšankīr (706-09 / 1306-10) near Bāb al-Naṣr is the only extant building in Cairo with a *mağlis* whose contemporary description has also survived (Fig. 9). It is described in its foundation deed as consisting of two *īwān*-s (*qiblī* and *baḥrī*) and two *mağlis*-es (*šarqī* and *ġarbī*) [1]. In this case, the *mağlis* refers to each of the two halls with tripartite openings off the longer sides of the courtyard (Pl. V) ! The space behind the three openings is a single rectangular hall. Here again, we wonder whether its plan shape represents a development of the plan from the Fusṭāṭ examples. I think that it is likely that the rectangularity of the plan was specific to this building, with the term *mağlis* applied to the resulting form because it was the closest one applicable to this layout, which was somewhat peculiar in Cairo. What is important to take from this example is that it seems that the presence of a screen wall with three openings leading to a space behind it was generally the necessary, and perhaps in this case the sufficient, condition for applying the term *mağlis* to an architectural space in relation to a courtyard.

Now, let us turn to the question of why the *mağlis* ceased to be part of the core of the Cairene residence by the Mamluk period, be it a large private residence or a small apartment (*qāʿa, riwāq,* or *ṭabaqa*). What kinds of factors led to what was clearly a dramatic change in living environment ?

If we accept al-Masʿūdī's account of the appearance of the *mağlis al-ḫīrī,* we must be open to an equally whimsical reason for its replacement by the *īwān.* At the moment, however, we have no indication of what such a reason might be.

If we are working within a framework of influence from the top down, we might try to relate the change to the contrast of Mamluk ceremonial to that of the Ayyubids and that of both of them to Fāṭimid ceremonial. One commonly accepted view falling within this framework is that « the *īwān* was transplanted from Mesopotamia to Egypt during the Ayyubid period », and that « the introduction of those proud princely vaults into Egypt marked the rise of a military aristocracy » [2]. This could be seen as part of the process of Turkofication of Egypt beginning in the 12th century as evidenced by the increasing

[1] Maḥkama 22 and 23, both dated 26 Šawāl, 707/1308.

[2] Goitein citing Aḥmad Fikrī, *A Mediterranean Society* 4 : 67 and n. 107 on p. 366.

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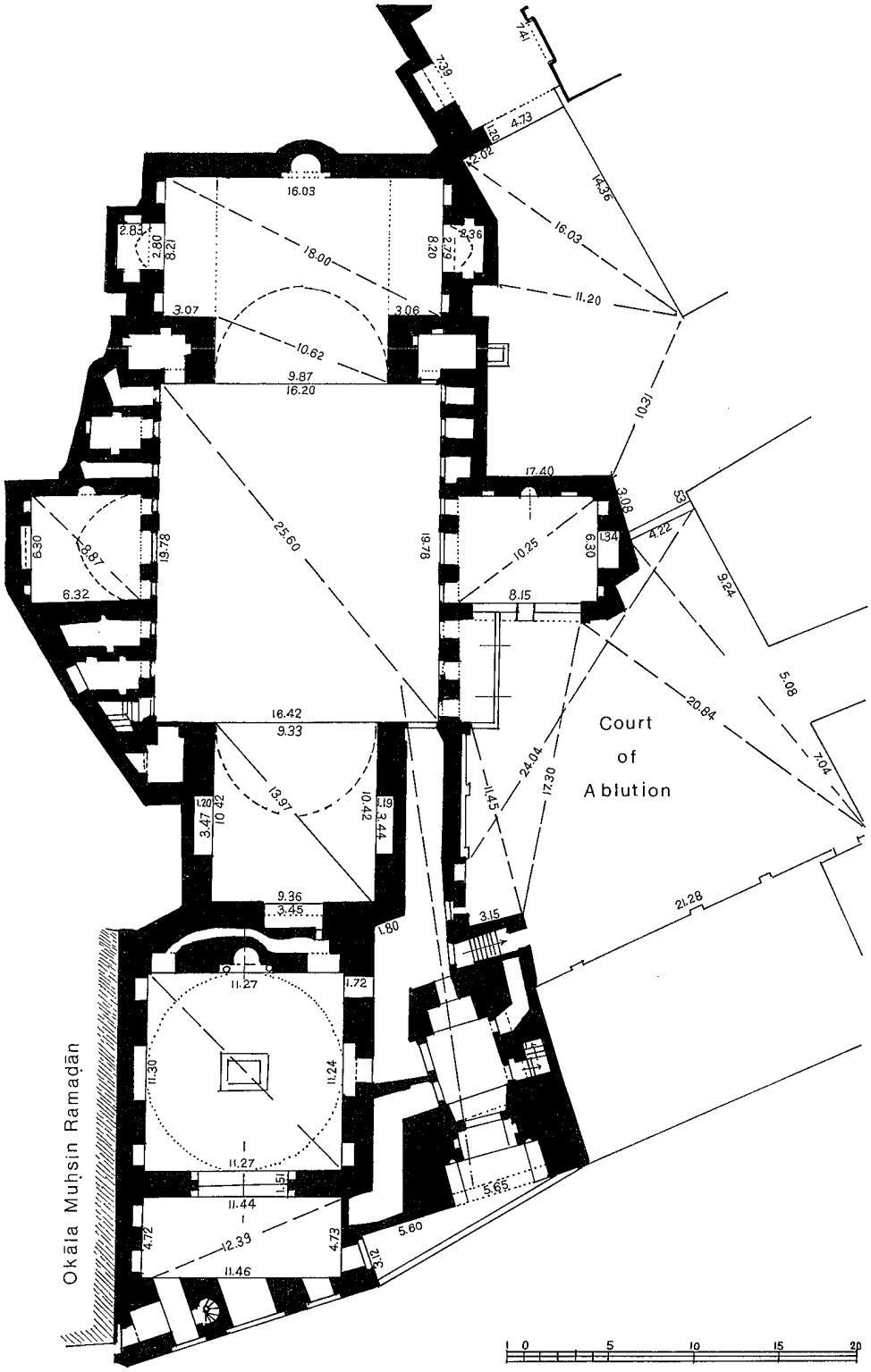


Fig. 9. — *Ḫānqā* of Baybars al-Ǧāšankīr. Plan [Source : K.A.C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford : The Clarendon Press, 1952-59) fig. 142].

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introduction of non-Arabic terms into the language especially in reference to household objects. In other words, the *īwān* was brought in from outside Egypt by a new ruling elite also coming in from outside. To accept this viewpoint in relation to the *īwān*, we need to see evidence of *īwān*-based residential architecture in Syria and the Ǧazīr predating those in Egypt — that is, before 1150 —.

This approach could probably be developed further, but I hold several reservations about it, which I present as considerations to be addressed by those pursuing this line of explanation. When working with extant material in the form of palaces on one hand and texts describing courts of rulers on the other, it is tempting to explain the specifics of the palace setting in terms of royal lifestyle and court ceremony. Without the presence of contemporary small-scale residential buildings, I think the tendency has been to over-ascribe the forms of the palatial units to the court ceremonial. If we then argue that inhabitants of smaller residences modeled them on palatial forms, are we saying that they also adopted some version of their rulers' lifestyle ? Otherwise, we would have to imagine people living in spaces that have become merely symbolic rather than useful and livable, unless of course it can be shown that the forms at issue are sufficiently resilient to be adopted for different uses at different scales in the same society. In our case the question would be this : if the rulers adopted the *īwān* to fulfill some ceremonial or lifestyle, did the lower classes also adopt aspects of the ruler's lifestyle along with their forms, or was the form of the *īwān* so resilient as to be workable at a reduced scale — and for a lifestyle different than that for which it was initially introduced — ?

I would argue that the explanation of the differences and similarities between the palatial and common residential settings is more complex than is implied by a unidirectional line of influence. I see the distinctions between the two as falling generally into two categories : distinctions of scale and distinctions of typology.

When we see a doorway or a window in a small residence, we do not say that it came from a palace simply because there was a gate in the palace through which the monarch rode or a window from which he looked at his city. Rather, we understand the door and window as elements present in the buildings of the society at large, and we see the difference between the two settings in terms of the difference between a simple unembellished opening and a monumental aperture. Similarly, we don't explain the corbelling of upper stories of Cairene residences on stone or wood brackets as the result of a reduction of corbels found in royal palaces, such as the monumental ones remaining from the palace of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in the Citadel.

In other elements, on the other hand, the distinction between the palace and the common residence is not in terms of scale or embellishment, but in terms of the presence of the

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element in one and its total absence in the other. For example the *maqʿad,* found in the houses of the well-to-do of the Mamluk period, houses containing an open yard, was completely absent from smaller dwellings that did not contain an open yard at all. Similar distinctions might be found in the presence or absence of such dependencies as a stable or a place for a musical band, a prerogative of amirs of a certain rank.

I think the question of the *īwān* and its presence in residential architecture falls into the former category of distinction between the palatial and the residential — the category, in which the difference is one of scale and extent of embellishment and not one of type —. This is because the *īwān* became a constituent element of all residential units in Cairo from the large palace to the smallest apartment unit. Clearly, more was shared here in terms of lifestyle and use of space than can be accounted for by the notion of lower class emulation of upperclass forms.

This perspective justifies my searching for reasons for the replacement of the *maǧlis* by the *īwān* in trends operating within the whole society and not just in the upper echelons of a new elite. In addition, it seems that the *īwān* was known in Egypt throughout the Fāṭimid period when the *maǧlis* was predominant [1]. Therefore, my pursuit is of explanations within Cairo for the emergence of an *īwān*-based architecture as a replacement for the *maǧlis*-based residences.

If we remember that the early houses had uncovered courts, we might reasonably say that the large folding doors over the *maǧlis* served, among other purposes, a climatic one. That is to say, the doors would have been closed at times when the outside conditions were too cold, too windy, dusty, etc., particularly at night when they did not need to serve another of their functions, that of illumination.

This situation changed probably in response to two underlying and related factors; land pressure and greater externalization of the house. As the plot of land decreased in size, the central courtyard could no longer serve as the main focus of its surrounding spaces. This resulted in a greater dependence on the outside or the street for light and interest. At some point, decreases in the size of the *dūr-qāʿa* and the resulting verticality due to land pressures began to change the role of the *qāʿa*. It became possible to roof it permanently and thus acquire it as an indoor space to a greater degree than when it was open to the sky. As its character changed from an open to an enclosed volume, the character of the spaces around it could also be changed. The doors to the *maǧlis,* which had provided a means of separating the *maǧlis* from the exterior elements, were no longer necessary.

[1] An example is the *īwān* in the Fāṭimid palace mentioned above. Also the presence of another element known as the *ṣuffa* which was a smaller, and often shallower, version of an *īwān.*

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Furthermore, as the area became smaller, the *mağlis* with its tripartite subdivision of a side of the *dūr-qāʿa* became smaller, providing to a lesser and lesser degree a central sitting area flanked by lateral wings. Given these trends, the *īwān* became a more favorable space. It was protected from the elements and it provided a larger area.

I submit this line of argument realizing that it can be easily turned on its head. That is, it is possible to say that the incorporation of the *īwān* was the cause and not the effect of the transformations I've just described. An *īwān* in an open courtyard was workable but not ideal in Cairo, requiring a roofing of the court and thus the reduction in its size if the roofing was to be widely feasible. A roofed and reduced courtyard might have rendered the *mağlis* anachronistic and then obsolete. From this perspective, the considerations of urban pressure and reduced courtyard size would contribute to an explanation of the wide acceptance of the *īwān* and not provide the actual reason for its introduction in Egypt.

Whichever scenario is closer to the truth, it can be said that the existence for a period of about 150 years, as revealed by the documents and represented by Dayr al-Banāt and the *qāʿa* of Aḥmad Bey Kohya, of an *īwān-mağlis* combination served as a transitional form between what we have come to know as the Fusṭāṭ type of house and the Cairene *qāʿa*. It is transitional not just in that it was an average of two extremes, but more importantly, in that it probably provided the framework in which the patterns of the household evolved from the habitation of one kind of space to habitation of another — that is, from a space that could be closed off from its courtyard, with all of the consequences of such a separation, to a space that is almost always open to the court in front of it —.

What new vantage point do we now have to explain the changes that occurred in the residential fabric of Cairo during the Ayyubid period ? The use of archives has both necessitated and permitted a clearer understanding of the contemporary terminology for residential spaces. The recognition of the word *mağlis* as a term referring to a space of a specific typology has served as a key to the use of historical sources for tracing developments in building styles, extending our sample far beyond the number available in extant buildings [1]. For somewhat didactic purposes, I have advocated an explanation for the

[1] The widespread misunderstanding of the *mağlis* is an interesting case that is worth reflecting on for the lessons it might offer about textually based architectural reconstructions. The misunderstanding seems to be the result of two factors. The first is that the form had a purely Arabic name which refers to an action or use. Its being so easily understood as an Arabic word contributed to our overlooking its having a specific architectural meaning. In contrast, non-Arabic words

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changes in Cairene terms based on factors affecting not just the society's upper echelons, but the society as a whole. Much work remains to be done, however, before this view or others are borne out or modified.

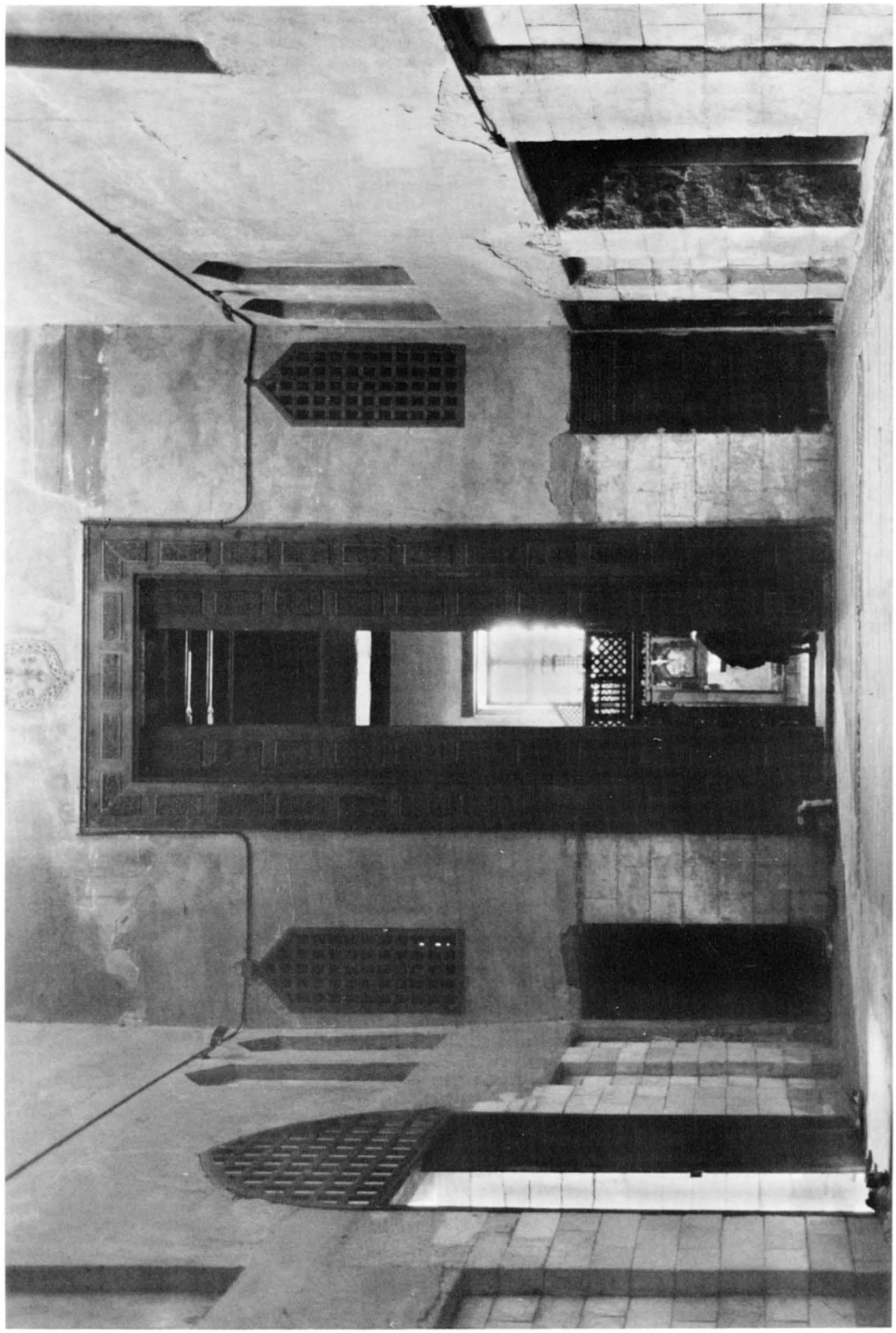
To my mind, further research in two directions, archaeological and textual, would be helpful. Greater archaeological knowledge of the residential architecture in Syria and Iraq in the later Abbāsid period is needed. On the textual front, we can apply the new understanding of the word *maǧlis* to a re-reading of historical sources with the aim of identifying further distinctions between the *maǧlis* and the *īwān,* particularly in terms of differences in lifestyles associated with each of them. Using both the archaeological and textual evidence, we can map out the geographical extent of the appearance of the two forms in the Islamic world, and to see how this mapping changed with time. This would result in a better understanding of Egypt's role in these changes; be it as recipient or as innovator.

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used in Arabic such as *īwān* and *dihlīz* fared better precisely because their foreignness has prompted early attempts to understand them.

The second is that the form that the word *maǧlis* described disappeared from the vocabulary of forms of central Islamic architecture by the 14th century to be replaced by the *īwān.* Therefore, it was not part of the legacy of forms that came down to us and were documented by early orientalists such as Lane. Another architectural form having a name with a linguistic construction similar to that of *maǧlis* that has not had the same fate is the *maqʿad* from the Arabic root *qaʿada.* Its prevalence in late Mamluk and Ottoman architecture in Cairo has allowed the word to be properly understood as referring to a specific form.

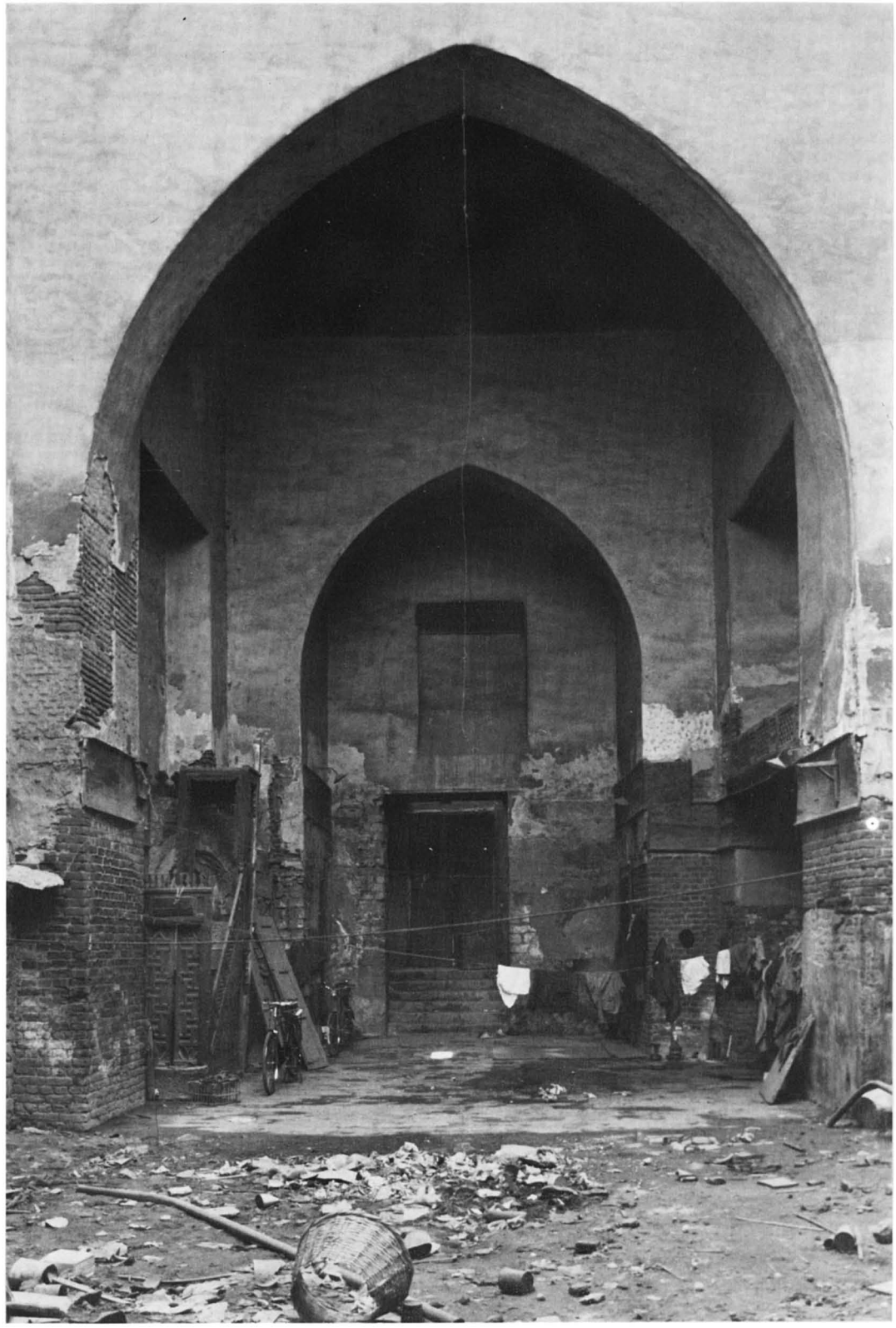
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Dayr al-Banāt. View of the *maǧlis* with central folding doors.

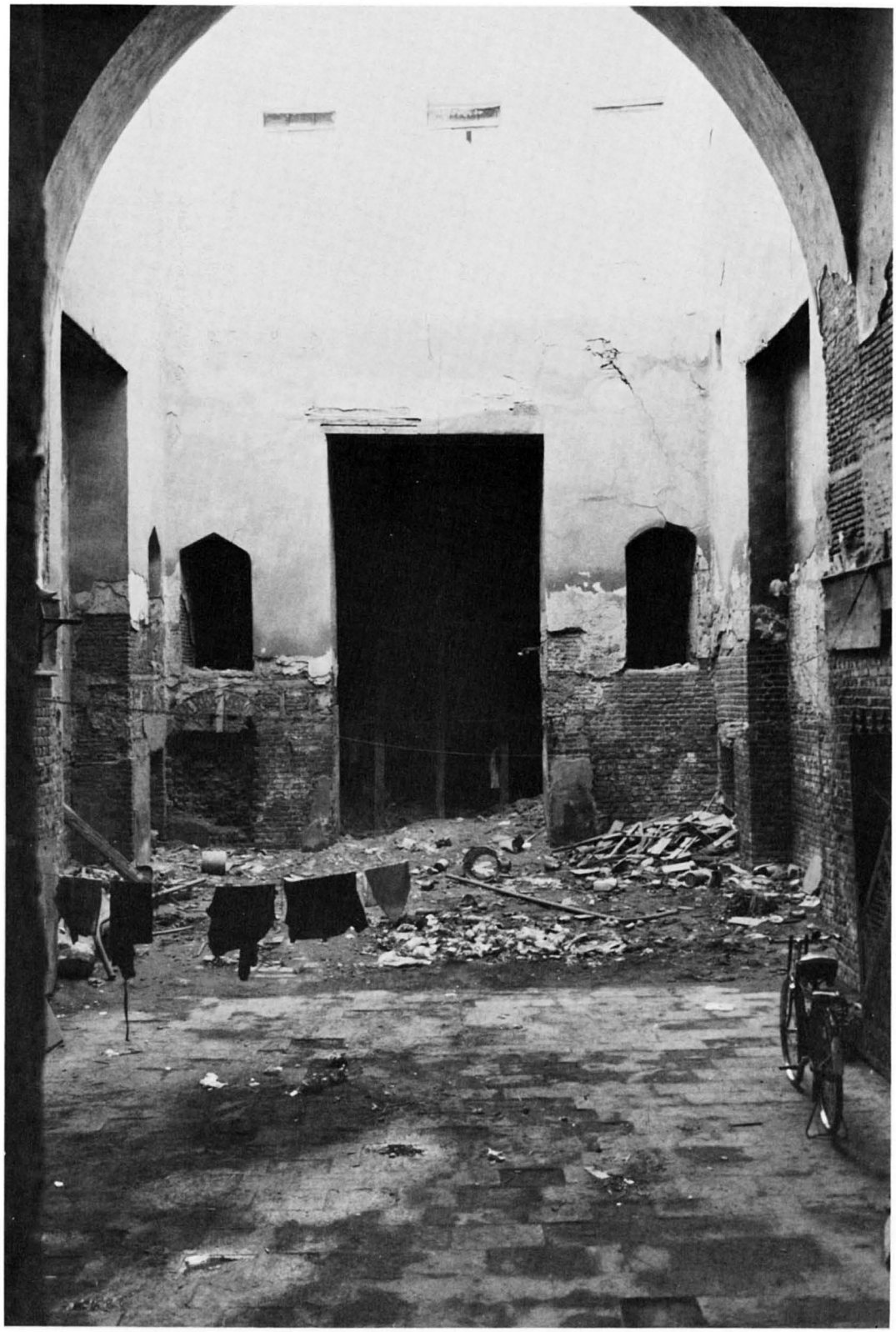
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Pl. II



Qāʿa of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. View of the *īwān*.

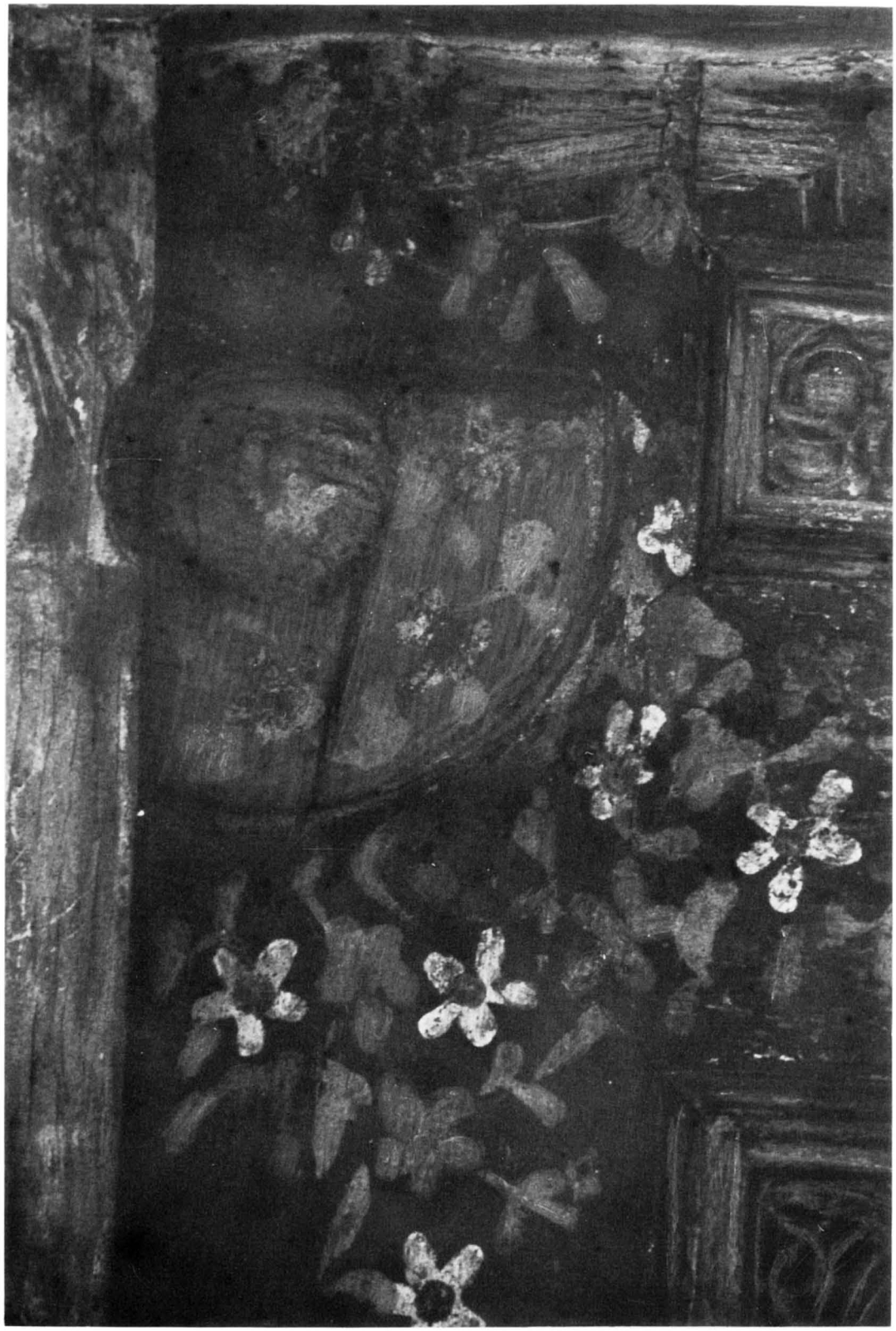
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Qāʿa of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. View of the *mağlis*.

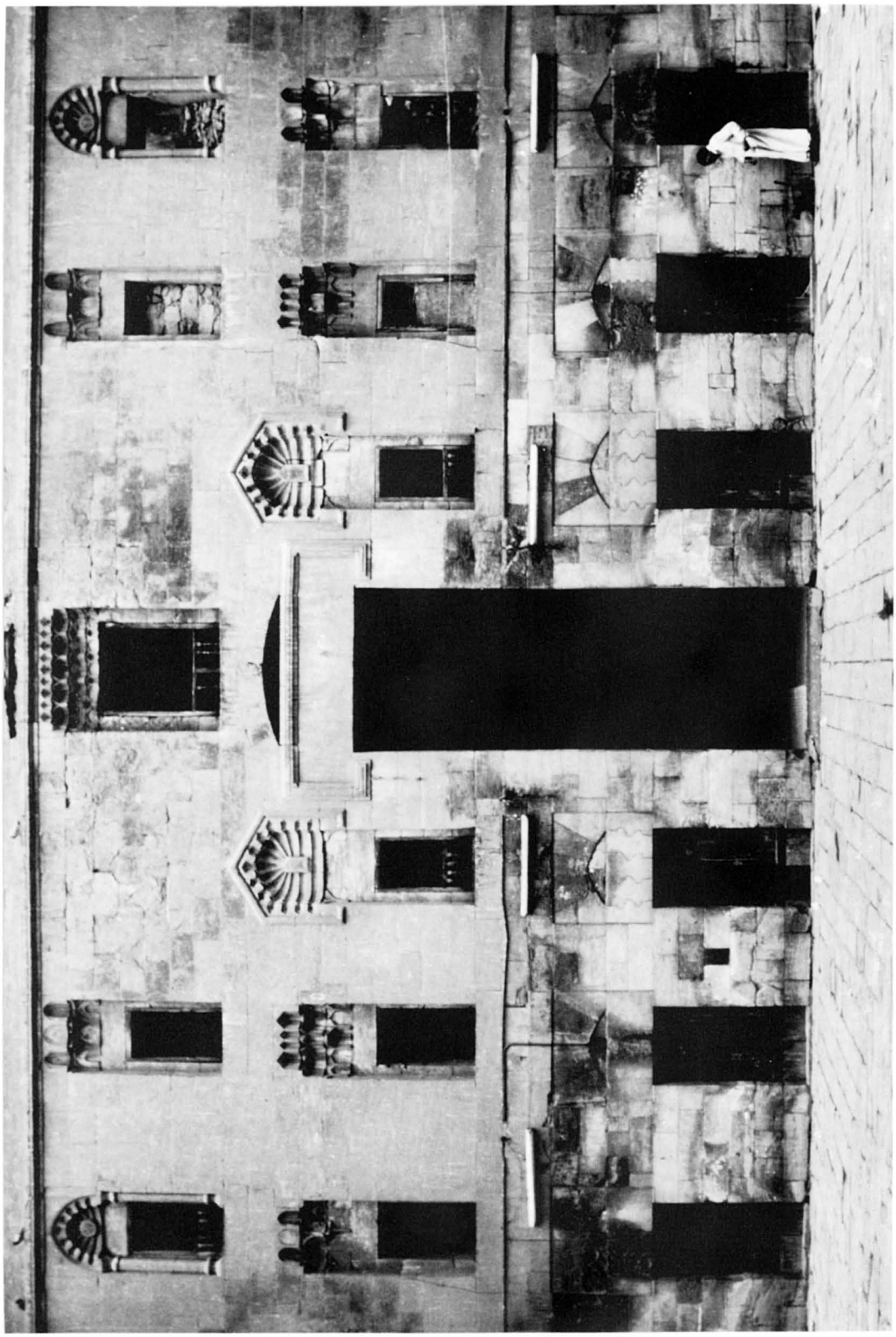
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Pl. IV



Qāʿa of Aḥmad Bey Kohya. Detail of soffit of the *maǧlis* showing recess for door hinge.

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Ḫānqāh of Baybars al-Ǧāšankir. View of *maǧlis* in courtyard facade.

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