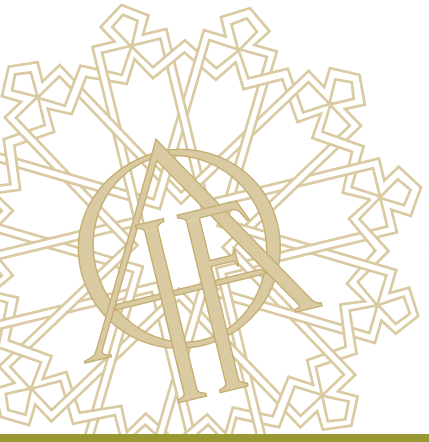
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Nairy Hampikian

Mu’ayyad Šayḫ and the Landscape of Power

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NAIRY HAMPIKIAN

Mu'ayyad Šayḫ and the Landscape of Power

Two imposing buildings in Historic Cairo bear the signature of al-Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ (r: 815-824/1412-1421). They are his mosque near Bāb Zuwayla (monument no. 190), and the Bīmāristān near Sikkat al-Maḥǧar at the foot of the Citadel (monument no. 257). The two buildings share more than just being erected by the same sultan as they are both located along the same street, al-Darb al-Aḥmar and both have enormously outsized main façades carrying the same stylistic stamps: the raised portals, the richly decorated dripping stalactite hoods, the crenellated pishtaqs, etc. So even though the two structures are different in the services they provide, worship and medical, they both share the sameness in the sumptuousness, splendor and unmistakable manifestation they possess within the urban fabric of present-day Historic Cairo (figs. 1-2).

Unquestionably, of all the extraordinary old buildings that have survived today in Historic Cairo, these two vestiges present two of the most imposing of all façades. Judging by the survival of this strong presence even after the lapse of more than five centuries on their erection, it is not difficult to contemplate the fact that their founder was consciously setting his footsteps on fifteenth century al-Qāhira by squeezing these two structures there to control over an already busy urban context. But this is just an ordinary observation and can be verified only when, by a magical stick, time is spooled back to snap a shot of al-Qāhira of the fifteenth century and frieze on the moment of the erection of these two buildings then. This article will challenge the regeneration of this magical glimpse to confirm the intentional and provocative addition of al-Mu'ayyad's two structures as a political device to control over fifteenth century al-Qāhira's skyline. To achieve the manifestation of this moment in history, I will follow three lines of investigation hoping to reincarnate the image of fifteenth century al-Qāhira:

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– First, I will explore the original size and borders of what is today demarcated as the mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ which, as will be proven later, was just a part of a much bigger complex;

– Second, I will recreate in theory the missing elements of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī which again will be proven to be much larger than its present borders;

– And, finally, I will portray the importance of al-Darb al-Aḥmar in fifteenth century al-Qāhira to highlight the reasons behind al-Mu'ayyad's choice to erect each of his buildings at the two ends of this particular pathway.

The Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ and its Adjacent Buildings

The Mamluk historian al-Maqrīzī [d. 846/1442] mentions that during the reign of Sultan Faraǧ ibn Barqūq [801-815/1399-1405 with shorts break in 808/1405], al-Mu'ayyad was held captive in the prison called Ḫāzinat Šāmū'īl, which was located near Bāb Zuwayla. During his imprisonment, he gave his word that if ever he survived this prison, he would tear it down and in its place erect a mosque.[1] And indeed, three years after his succession to the throne as a sultan, he tore down the prison, and two *qayṣariyya*-s, one which had been built by Sunqur al-Ašqar and the other by Bahā' al-Dīn Arslān.[2] Construction began in Ṣafar 819 / April 1416 and the inauguration ceremony was held in Šawwāl 822 / November 1419. On the evacuated terrain, he built a large institution of which whole sections have since disappeared leaving only a part of the mosque and a small section of hammam (fig. 3).

Fortunately, the *waqfiyya* (endowment document) of al-sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad[3] has survived and it gives us a full survey of the different sections originally belonging to this complex as well as the number of employees appointed in its service. It even mentions their salaries, the number of students, and the type of classes in full detailing of the subject taught in each class. Hence, we are informed that the original institution founded by al-Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ in the fifteenth century included:

– A Friday mosque, a *sabīl-kuttāb*, three minarets;

– A madrasa for *ṣūfī* students for the teaching of the four Sunni rites (50 *Ḥanafī* students, 40 *Šāfiʿī*, 15 *Malakī*, and 10 *Ḥanbalī*), a number of classes (for the teaching of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīṯ*, Coranic recitation, and legal studies), a library, a hammam;

– A *ḫanqāh*, which included a separate multi-storied residential structure around a central court for the resident *ṣūfī* students;

– A *rabʿ* used as the living quarters for the teachers and the imams of the mosque and the madrasa;

– Four entrances giving access to this huge religious/educational institution.

1. Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa al-iʿtibār* II, p. 328-330; Mubārak, *Al-Ḫiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya* II, p. 31; V, p. 124. See also Ibn Iyās, Ibn Iyās, M., *Bada'iʿ al-zuhūr* II, p. 316-317.

2. For a survey of the pre al-Mu'ayyad mosque see Hampikian, *The Bimaristan of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh*, p. 204-208.

3. Fahmī, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ*, p. 114-152. See also Swelim, *The Complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh*.

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Today, all that is left of that huge multi-functional institution built by Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad is the western façade, the mosque flanked by the two mausoleums, the two twin minarets erected above the towers of Bāb Zuwayla, and a part of the hammam.

It must also be mentioned that among what is defined today as the surviving elements of this institution, only some are original, while others are the result of later restorations as the complex has gone through great aggressions and restorations during its survival. Except for the hammam, the complex has lost all its annexes; moreover, the three side *riwāq*-s of the mosque proper had vanished, leaving only the sanctuary. Historians blame this destruction on the attack organized by the soldiers during the reign of ʿUmar Pasha (1076/1665) who had forced their entrance into the mosque with 12 artilleries, to catch al-Zirb, revolutionaries who had taken al-Mu'ayyad mosque as their place of refuge.[4]

Since that date, the mosque has been in a miserable condition, left defenseless to be engulfed by the aggressively growing city around it. It was so diminished and demeaned that at the end of the eighteenth century, the Savants of Napoleon failed to recognize it as an important building and did not document it in their encyclopedic work, *Description de l'Égypte*, just listed it on their map of Cairo. Later, in *al-Ḫiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyya*, ʿAlī Mubārak surveyed the history of the mosque, but did not describe it.[5]

The first to document this mosque in modern history was Pascal Coste, who has visited al-Mu'ayyad mosque between the years 1815 to 1818, documented its surviving sections and has even developed a reconstruction plan after inspecting the ruins.[6] This documentation triggered the interest of The Ministry of al-Awqāf, which initiated a major construction activity in the mosque. This included the rebuilding of the three missing façades of the mosque. Irrelevant of the architectural and decorative mistakes in their reconstruction, this action can be considered as the first salvage action to this mosque, protecting its ruins from further deterioration.

Next came the *Comité de conservation des monuments de l'Art arabe* (Comité), with its first intervention between the years 1884 and 1888, when it allotted the amount of LE 2282 381 to consolidate the different crumbling sections of the mosque, the restoration of the main portal, the reinforcement of the ceiling of the prayer hall, restoration and completion of the missing elements of the *miḥrāb*, rebuilding of the uppermost sections of the eastern and the western minarets (which included the open colonnade section, the uppermost balcony supported by stalactites, the bulbous stone finial and the top copper crescent), restoration of the carpentry, and the upgrading of the landscape.[7] In 2001, *al-Tā'riḫiyya* Project initiated an extensive conservation/restoration project and the three *īwān*-s around the courtyard are now rebuilt.[8]

4. Mubārak, *Al-Ḫiṭaṭ al-tawfiqiyya* V, p. 129-130.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 44-46.
6. Coste, *Toutes les Égypte*.
7. *Bulletins du Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe*, 1887-1888, p. 1-2; 1889, p. 117-11.
8. Details of this conservation action are documented in *Al-Qāhira al-ta'rīḫiyya*.

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There are two important aspects for the survey of these conservation activities. On the one hand, one realizes that not only has the original institution lost much of its architectural parts by this time, but a lot of what is portrayed today as the mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ is indeed the result of later restorations and that the only documentation that we have of what had actually survived of the huge initial institution are the interior of prayer hall as documented by the Pascal Coste and the bases of the two minarets erected on Bāb Zuwayla. On the other hand, by following the details of these major conservation/restoration /rebuilding activities on the mosque in modern times, we come to understand that despite the fact that these have spared the structure from being completely engulfed by the invading growing city around it, they have also caused the isolation of the mosque from the its original context: the rest of its original annexes that together, they constituted a one entity, a gigantic religious/educational institution.

Therefore, the original structure was not a simple mosque but a complex that included a mosque and it stretched from Bāb Zuwayla until al-Ḫalīğ al-Miṣrī, near the second Bāb al-Farāj on the southern side and from Bāb Zuwayla to the northern edge of the mosque today on the eastern side. (Fig. 4 is an isometric depiction of the mosque with a theoretical zoning of the different sections of the whole complex as mentioned in the *waqfiyya* document).

Al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī

In its current condition, the *bīmāristān* of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ attracts an exceptional attention because of the contrast created by its modest urban setting and the particularly impressiveness of its massive stone façade, which juts out unexpectedly as one turns into the small alley, Sikkat al-Kūmī of Šāriʿ al-Maḥğar, where the *bīmāristān* is located. The factor of surprise is more accentuated by the sensational effect of its size which is a 48 m long majestic façade, standing 22 m above the level of the street on al-Suwwah (a high mound in front of the Citadel) on the site where al-Ašrāfiyya madrasa, built by the Sultan al-Malik al-Ašraf Šaʿbān in the year 770/1375 once existed. According to al-Maqrīzī, Sultan Barqūq ordered the demolishing of this madrasa in 814/1411, reusing some of its blocks in the building of some parts of the Citadel. The Sultan also cleared the area stretching from al-Suwwah to the skirts of the Citadel as far as Bāb al-Qarāfa. It is on this site already cleared by Barqūq that al-Mu'ayyad entrusted *al-muʿallim* Ibn ʿUmar with the construction of the *bīmāristān*. He was able to finish the construction very promptly, between the years 821/1418 and 823/1420.[9]

The accompanying illustration (fig. 5) presents all that remains of the *bīmāristān*, with its majestic main façade with a 17 m high monumentales entrance block, which receives mores height by the 5 m high *bištāq* raised above the rest of the façade. The intricate six-tiered stalactite dripping from the semi-spherical ribbed hood, placed below the pointed arch of the *bištāq*, adds to the monumentality of the entrance. This façade hides behind it what has survived from the interior of the *bīmāristān*: a vestibule (mentioned as *dihlīz* in the *waqfiyya* document), a mosque,

9. Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa al-iʿtibār* II, p. 408. See also Ibn Iyās, *Bada'iʿ al-zuhūr* II, p. 316-317.

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and a large majestic courtyard (app. 14 X 11 m) surrounded by four *īwān*-s formed by immense arches, each spanning 9 m and reaching a height of 12 m. This large space, which is a typical Mamlūk cruciform madrasa-mosque shape, served as a reception hall for the male patients.[10]

From what is left today, we realize that much of the original *bīmāristān* is lost. The *waqfiyya* document of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ reveals the detailed original borders of the *bīmāristān* and confirms that it stretched southwards from the location of its current ruins, until Ḫaṭṭ al-Rumayla, which is the *maydān* under the foot of the Citadel.[11] Besides the detailing of the original boundaries of the *bīmāristān*, the *waqfiyya* document surveys in detail, and in exact measurement the different spaces of the interior. In fact, we clearly informed that the *bimaristān* originally was composed of: a main entrance accessed through a spiral staircase, a *dihlīz*, a male reception *qaʿa* with four *īwān*-s, a mosque, 10 *tibaqs* and their service areas, a secondary entrance, a group of five *qaʿas* and another of 3 *qāʿa-s*, a female reception *qāʿa*, a *masṭaba*, a third entrance, a *mayḍa'a* surrounded by 25 *ṭabaqa*, 4 *ḫalāwī*, and a well, a *sāḥa* (105 by 100 *zirāʿ*), and a *šarābḫāna* (figs. 5 & 6). The *waqfiyya* document also mentions that the Sultan has appointed physicians, ophtalmologists (*kaḥḥālīn*), servants, etc., to provide the necessary service in the *bīmāristān*. It is interesting that al-Mu'ayyad insisted on having a new hospital although the big hospital of Qalāwūn was still working properly.[12]

So, if the *bīmāristān* was such an enormous medical institution, what happened to the rest of its parts? According to historians, when al-Mu'ayyad died in the year 824/914, services in the *bīmāristān* were held up for a while. Then members of a newly immigrated foreign sect occupied the place in the same year. Afterwards a *minbar* was installed and the *bīmāristān* became a mosque and was called the "*bīmāristān*-mosque". In 1123/1711 the northern façade of its imposing portal disappeared behind the small mosque of Abū Ġāliya al-Sukkarī, which rested against it. Parallel to this invasion on the façade, habitation units crawled in, on, and around the *bīmāristān*, thus completely defacing its majestic appearance.[13]

It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that Hertz Pasha, after having examined the *waqfiyya* of al-Sukkarī, the founder of the mosque built against the façade of the *bīmāristān*, (which by then was completely dilapidated and deserted), identified the building behind it as the *bīmāristān* al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ. At this point, the Comité started to be interested in the edifice, but could not attend to it until 1916, when an unexpected event threw a new light on this affair. The south-western angle of the mosque suddenly crumbled carrying away with it its four arches. The Comité ordered the clearing of the ground floor and with the unexpected clearing; the opportunity was seized to complete the demolition of the roof of the truss skirting the whole of the northern façade, thus opening a full view of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī façade. A series of expropriations and evacuations during the following years resulted in the evacuation of 9 dwelling units. In 1961 a governmental decree was finally obtained that allowed total

10. Hampikian, *The Bimaristan of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh*.
11. Fahmī, *Waṯīqat al-Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ*.
12. ʿIsa Bey, *Histoire des bimaristans à l'époque islamique*.
13. Mubārak, *Al-Ḫiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya* II, p. 104.

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expropriation of encroachments for 'public benefit' (*manfaʿa ʿāmma*), and finally conservation, consolidation, and reconstruction works were realized on the *bīmāristān*.[14] Thus, we owe the salvage of what has remained of the *bīmāristān* al-Mu'ayyadī to the Comité, as without their efforts nothing, most probably, would have been left of this prestigious structure today. The newest conservation works on the *bīmāristān* are in progression since 2008 by the *Al-Qāhira al-Tā'rīḫiyya* Project.

From this survey, and from the demarcation of the original boundaries of the *bīmāristān*, we conclude that only a small section of the originale *bimaristān* survives today (the entrance, the *dihlīz*, the *four-īwān*-s male reception *qāʿa*, and the mosque), while the rest of its components are completely devoured by the invading city growing organically inside and above its dilapidated ruins. Finally, it is interesting to survey the names of the alleys of the urban arena on the southern and western sides of the remains of the *bīmāristān*: Ḥārat al-Ḥākim, Ḥārat al-māristān, ʿaṭfit al-wālda Bāšā, etc. These names betray the original nature of this area before being transformed from being the interior spaces of the *bīmāristān* into becoming the public pathways of the city. Consequently, by juxtaposing the actual street patterns around the remains of the *bīmāristān* today with the theoretical zoning of its original components, as reconstructed from the *waqfiyya* document, we can conclude that what remains of the *bīmāristān* today is less than one sixth of its original area and that it must have originally stretched southwestwards until the skirts of the Citadel (figs. 7 & 8).

Al-Darb al-Aḥmar

The district known today as al-Darb al-Aḥmar occupies the southern side of the Fatimid walled palatial city of al-Qāhira that extends southeastwards towards the Citadel founded by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī. As dictated by its location, today it serves as the major conduit that links the southern gate of Fatimid Cairo–Bāb Zuwayla, to Mīdān al-Rumayla, the *mīdān* leading to the original Citadel entrance; a function which al-Darb al-Aḥmar has sustained since the foundation of the Citadel during the Ayyubid period. The urban setting of the city immediately before the succession of the Ayyubids was a city divided into two major parts: Fusṭāṭ-Miṣr in the South and al-Qāhira of the Fatimids in the North. Fusṭāṭ was considered as the productive center inhabited by the local people, while the foreign ruling elite—the Fatimids and their entourage, exclusively inhabited al-Qāhira. These two nuclei of the city were separated by *arḍ faḍā'* meaning "empty space", which was also used as funerary grounds for the underprivileged residents of al-Qāhira.

14. *Bulletins du Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe*, 1894, p. 121-122; 1896, p. 17-19, 38-39, 163-164; 1898, p. 36, 128; 1911, p. 15, 49, 60, 65, 104; 1912, p. 85; 1913, p. 13, 71, 72; 1914, p. 77, 101; 1915-1919, p. 124-27, 308, 319, 362, 399, 801; 1920-1924, p. 71, 75, 157, 258; 1925-26, p. 17, 21, 118, 122; 1936-1940, p. 224, 225, 226, 260; 1941-1945, p. 290; 1946-1953, p. 12, 14, 32, 46, 63, 185, 186, 197.

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Al-Maqrīzī mentions how Bāb Zuwayla was grasped by whoever stood at the door of Ibn Ṭūlūn.[15] Meanwhile, Fusṭāṭ had already become not a desired place to live in because of a period of famine and drought, which led its inhabitants to evacuate it and to find refuge in the north near al-Qāhira of the Fatimids. As a result, the southern parts of al-Qāhira itself were more open and merchants/inhabitants were allowed to settle there. This was the beginning of the occupation of the area known today as al-Darb al-Aḥmar.

In another context al-Maqrīzī confirms: "When al-vizir al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'iʿ built the mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ which is still there today outside Bāb Zuwayla, what was behind it in the direction of al-Qaṭā'iʿ of Ibn Ṭūlūn was a cemetery (*maqbara)* for the people of al-Qāhira up to the end of the Fatimid state when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn built the Citadel at the foot of the high grounds overlooking al-Qatā'iʿ. And a way began to lead to the Citadel on this side between the cemetery and the *jabal*… There came Ḫaṭṭ sūq al-Basātīn, Ḫaṭṭ al-Darb al-Aḥmar, Ḫaṭṭ ǧāmiʿ al-Māridānī, Ḫaṭṭ sūq al-ġanam, Ḫaṭṭ al-Tabānna, Ḫaṭṭ Bāb al-Wazīr, and al-Rumayla."[16] This was the urban situation that led to the slow rehabilitation of the empty space left between al-Qāhira and Fusṭāṭ-Miṣr, but what really boosted the expanding of this area to become a vital district was the establishment of the Citadel in 1171, when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn came to power and started to implement his ambitious plan vis-à-vis the urban growth of al-Qāhira, which included the indirect and yet deliberate disfigurement of the royal status of the Fatimid palaces in the heart of Fatimid al-Qāhira, the erection of a Citadel eastwards to be the seat of power for the new rulers, and finally, the erection of a large wall around the two cities al-Qāhira and Fusṭāṭ-Miṣr uniting them within one single enclosed area. In fact, in doing so, Cairo of the Ayyubids became a city with three nuclei within the boundaries of a single wall. Accordingly, it needed a suitable mechanism to connect between these three.

It is at this point that al-Darb al-Aḥmar, which existed only on the southern skirts of Badr al-Ǧamālī's Qāhira wall, gained its vitality as the indisputable artery joining al-Qāhira's al-Muʿizz Street directly to the main entrance of the newly founded Citadel.[17] Thereafter, there started the expansion of al-Darb al-Aḥmar zone to southeast, guided by the newly extended Ayyubid wall.[18]

Soon the area of al-Darb al-Aḥmar became the residential area for the new elite, which bridged between the new political and administrative hub at the Citadel and the economical and commercial heart of the rest of the city. Residential areas replaced the earlier burial grounds and these in their turn, were destroyed during the Mamluk period to make way to more powerful masters who build their high-status palaces, mosques, *madrasa*, etc. in the area.

15. Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa al-iʿtibār* II, p. 110.
16. *Ibid*., p. 408. See also Ibn Iyās, *Bada'iʿ al-zuhūr* II, p. 29-34.
17. Till then, a longer route linked al-Muʿizz Street to Fusṭāṭ southwards via al-Aʿẓam Street from where al-Ṣalība Street branched eastwards to arrive at the Citadel.
18. El-Rashidi, "The History and Fate of al-Darb al-Ahmar", p. 55-65.

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The whole of al-Darb al-Aḥmar became one vast building site, no less desired than the other arteries of Cairo such as al-Muʿizz, al-Aʿẓam, and al-Ṣalība streets, if not the more desirable and fashionable. Starting from the beginning of the fourteenth century al-Darb al-Aḥmar became the magnet attracting the attention of sultans, all of whom were eager to leave their imprint on this street. In the course of which al-Darb al-Aḥmar was to become an open arena of competition where amirs and sultans demonstrated their financial capabilities and artistic skills, through the extravagance of the details of their architecture.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, that is, by the time of al-sulṭān al-Muʾayyad Šayḫ's succession to the throne, the heart of al-Darb al-Aḥmar was already crowded with mosques which included the following: al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalāʾiʿ mosque (1160), mosque of Zāwiyat al-Hunūd (1315), al-Miḥmindariyya mosque (1325), the mosque and mausoleum of Abū al-Yūsufayn (1329), the mosque of al-Māridānī (1337), Āqsunqur mosque (1346), and the mosque and *rabʿ* of Farāǧ Ibn Barqūq (1408). There were also the following madrasas: the madrasa of Umm al-Sulṭān Šaʿbān (1376), the madrasa of Ašraf Šaʿbān (1375), and the madrasa and *funduq* of Ayatmīš al-Baǧāsī (1383). This list does not include a number of residential and commercial structures.[19]

Al-Darb al-Aḥmar had become a second Bayn al-Qaṣrayn where sultans exhibited their superiority by founding structures baring their names that were higher, wider, more ornate, and by implication, more visible than the previously existing ones on the same street. All in all, al-Darb al-Aḥmar housed nearly twenty royal structures when al-Muʾayyad came to power (fig. 9). If we consider Bayn al-Qaṣrayn on al-Muʿizz street as the arena of competition of royal *madrasa* constructions, it will not be exaggerated to consider the area of al-Darb al-Aḥmar as the arena of competition of royal mosque constructions. The erection of mosques and madrasa complexes one beside the other on al-Darb al-Aḥmar represents the newer version of the earlier practice of erecting similar buildings attached to one another on al-Muʿizz Street. Both exercises speak more about the power game behind their founders' desires than the religious motivation or educational needs behind the construction of these institutions.

It is to join this architectural challenge and urban dominance that al-Muʾayyad chose al-Darb al-Aḥmar as the ultimate location to build his two master constructions. Once in power his choices to proclaim his authority and supremacy over his predecessors was to establish his physical presence in this already crowded milieu in such a way as to impose extreme supremacy over the existing physical context and intimidate his successors.

Until 1415 the competition of erecting higher, bigger, more beautiful, more spacious, using new and better quality of workmanship on al-Darb al-Aḥmar was a practice, which could be traced back to the architectural competition between master builders of the sultans in Bayn al-Qaṣrayn or in the residential areas on the grounds of the Citadel. But, in 1415, al-Muʾayyad Šayḫ surpassed all the norms and broke all the rules of competition using an *esprit de grandeur* that surpassed all that was built before and intimidated all those who thought to add something on that same street after his reign. It was not until 1502 that another madrasa

19. Seton-Watson, *The Development of the Darb al-Ahmar*.

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and mausoleum, this one by of Ḫayr Bek, was built in the area. The rest of the constructions erected after Mu'ayyad are all houses with their introvert snobbishness and fascination which is a kind of hidden pretentiousness that could not compete externally with what the Sultan al-Mu'ayyad had created at the two ends of the street.

Conclusion

In his famous 1960 book, *Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch describes how the mental mapping of a city contains many unique elements defined as a network of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.[20] I have used Kevin Lynch's language in explaining how the master builders responsible for the erection and the urban setting of the two huge complexes of al-Mu'ayyad inside the existing layout of fifteenth century al-Qāhira were conscious in every decision taken to generate the most impressive architectural and urban expression on the people traveling on or near al-Darb al-Aḥmar Street. It is interesting to note how the fifteenth century master builders were aware of creating the modern "imageability" concept of the city as observed and analysed by Lynch.

Al-Mu'ayyad's team exerted great effort in creating the perfect setting for their buildings to gain full control over the most active stretch of the city at that time, al-Darb al-Aḥmar by taking the following steps:

– Visual control over the street level: The master builders of the Sultan were quite cognizant of the importance and vitality of al-Darb al-Aḥmar as the main pathway of fifteenth century al-Qāhira. Thus they have planted the two buildings on that same street, but not anywhere else. The mosque-*ḫanqāh*-hammam complex was erected near Bāb Zuwayla and extended to reach the northern borders of al-Darb al-Aḥmar near al-Ḫalīğ al-Miṣrī, while the *bīmāristān* was located on the southern edge of al-Darb al-Aḥmar stretching southwards to hit the skirts of the Citadel. Thus, anyone taking this busy thoroughfare, which as mentioned before was the most used and fashionable streets in al-Qāhira at that time, could not miss either of al-Mu'ayyad's two buildings. The two structures emphasized on the importance of al-Darb al-Aḥmar by marking its two edges or ends.

The erection of these two huge complexes on the two extremities of this relatively new pathway of al-Darb al-Aḥmar can also be considered as a successful strategy to deviate the attention of the passersby from the North-South pathway, which had been the main connection between Fusṭāṭ-Miṣr and al-Qāhira for centuries until Salah al-Din, when Al-Qāhira gained a third nucleus, the Citadel, which grew into the sole and only residential and administrative hub of the ruler. Thus, the growth of al-Darb al-Aḥmar was both a need and a desire to overshadow Šāriʿ al-Muʿizz and Šāriʿ al-Aʿẓam. From the appearance of these two huge al-Mu'ayyad sponsored structures, a hidden message was implied on the dwellers of al-Qāhira, which encouraged to deviate their travel away from the previously famous North-South main artery of al-Qāhira.

20. Lynch, *Image of a City*.

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This makes one believe that the engineering-wise taking over of Bāb Zuwayla, as the complementary architectural element of the mosque complex of al-Mu'ayyad for its minarets, was not a haphazard decision. Šāriʿ al-Muʿizz ended at Bāb Zuwayla and to proceed further south through Šāriʿ al-Aʿẓam, one needed to pass through the gates of Bāb Zuwayla and continue southwards. By creating a shockingly new charismatic architectural surprise at this node, the passersby would definitely be dazzled by it, and be indirectly encouraged, by the newly erected edifices, to choose the new pathway along al-Darb al-Aḥmar running perpendicular to the old main *qaṣaba* of al-Qāhira. Finally, one might acquire an explanation to a question asked before: Why build a new *bīmāristān*, when that of Qalāwūn was still functioning full power? Could it be again a discrete competition with the name Qalāwūn, the Sultan who was known for thinking and building big?

– Visual majestic presence on the skyline: The master builders of al-Mu'ayyad made sure that the two structures erected also reigned over the skyline of the city. For this purpose, two of the three identical minarets of the mosque were erected on the two semi-circular towers of Bāb Zuwayla thus gaining extra height and majesty. This was the final coup de grace over the "closed" nature of Fatimid al-Qāhira. The gate, with its two towers were used as an extension to the mosque and were re-equipped structurally to accept their new function, as the stone bases of the two minarets. Moreover, *tibāq*-s were erected on the upper platform of the gate, overlooking the southern portion of al-Muʿizz Street, a *bāb sirr* was carved out inside the core of one of the towers as a secondary entrance to the mosque, and, finally, a library was installed inside that same tower.

A similar strategy was used for the *bīmāristān*, which was built on the area called al-Suwwa which is a natural high plinth. Therefore, besides the fact that the two structures were oversized in their footprints, both were also higher than all that was around there, which made them function as remarkable landmarks overlooking over the city below them.

– Visual importance by their proximity to two of the most important nodes of fifteenth century al-Qāhira: The mosque-*ḫanqāh* complex stretched to the canal al-Ḫalīǧ al-Mīṣrī, while the *bīmāristān* stretched to the *mīdān* al-Rumayla, which led to the Citadel's main gate. The master builders were very much aware of the benefits of erecting their buildings near these two nodes. Following the routes taken by Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ inside the city and outside it, it becomes obvious how al-Darb al-Aḥmar served as the main pathway to access the Nile from the Citadel. There was no more the need for the sultan to proceed northwards through Bayn al-Qaṣrayn from al-Mu'ayyad mosque complex except for some traditional processions. Moreover, transportation means in al-Qāhira were impacted by new trends. If you were to go through the city, you could walk, ride a horse, or be carried inside a horse driven carriage. Parallel to this, the waterways, which included the canals, the river Nile proper, and the lakes, were starting to be used extensively. You would manifest power and wealth by owning horses, carriages, and boats. Al-Mu'ayyad's usual route was to ride or to be carried from the Citadel to al-Ḫalīǧ al-Mīṣrī, then to take his boat to reach further districts in al-Qāhira or to

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sail along the Nile to the outskirts of al-Qāhira. Thus, entering al-Darb al-Aḥmar from the Citadel to the Ḫalīğ to change his transportation means and vice versa was his usual route for nearly all the trips he made during his travels within or outside al-Qāhira. Knowing how sick al-Mu'ayyad was, and how often he had to be carried to his boat, the proximity of his complexes to these points where he had to change from a horse/carriage to a boat had a very valuable practical role.

– The two complexes of al-Mu'ayyad serving as welcoming gates to al-Qāhira: For all those approaching al-Qāhira by boat, at the junction of al-Ḫalīğ al-Miṣrī, the mosque complex of al-Mu'ayyad served as the most impressive welcoming panorama, while for those coming out from the Citadel towards the city, al- Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī competed with Sulṭān Ḥasan mosque and all the other residential and administrative palaces of the dignitaries lying on the skirts of the Citadel as a welcoming sign. Moreover, it served as an entrance gate to those choosing to ride or walk through al-Darb al-Aḥmar from the Citadel. Al-Mu'ayyad squeezed the buildings connected to his name into the two locations, had them built to such an oversized scale, and gave them such exaggerated height so that they served as the welcoming gates to al-Darb al-Aḥmar, and as the unmistakable reminders of the greatness, power, wealth and pride of their founder.

– Creation of a district: majestically enveloping the two ends of the pathway of al-Darb al-Aḥmar and by their unquestionable role as landmarks at the two most important nodes of the city, the two structures erected by al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ helped al-Darb al-Aḥmar gain the contentment of becoming a warm, welcoming district, a character which it still maintains today. Strangely, it seems that the master builders of al-Mu'ayyad structures intuitively fole lowed what would be the recommendations of Kevin Lync's concepts, created structures in such a way as to create a well-formed city, with high "imageability."

There is no doubt that the two buildings founded by al-Mu'ayyad's team were cleverly located in the city to dominate the streetscape and reign over the skyline to demonstrate the superiority of the Sultan, as sponsor, owner, and founder of these two structures. But, I also believe that they have also made a clever interaction with the citizens of al-Qāhira by the creation of an additional pleasure, they created a sense of surprize and awe for them. Thus, no matter how politically motivated and egocentric the reasons behind the erection of these two buildings may have been, their real success then and now lies in how they have addressed the emotions and city-street-edifice relations of the users of fifteenth century al-Qāhira.

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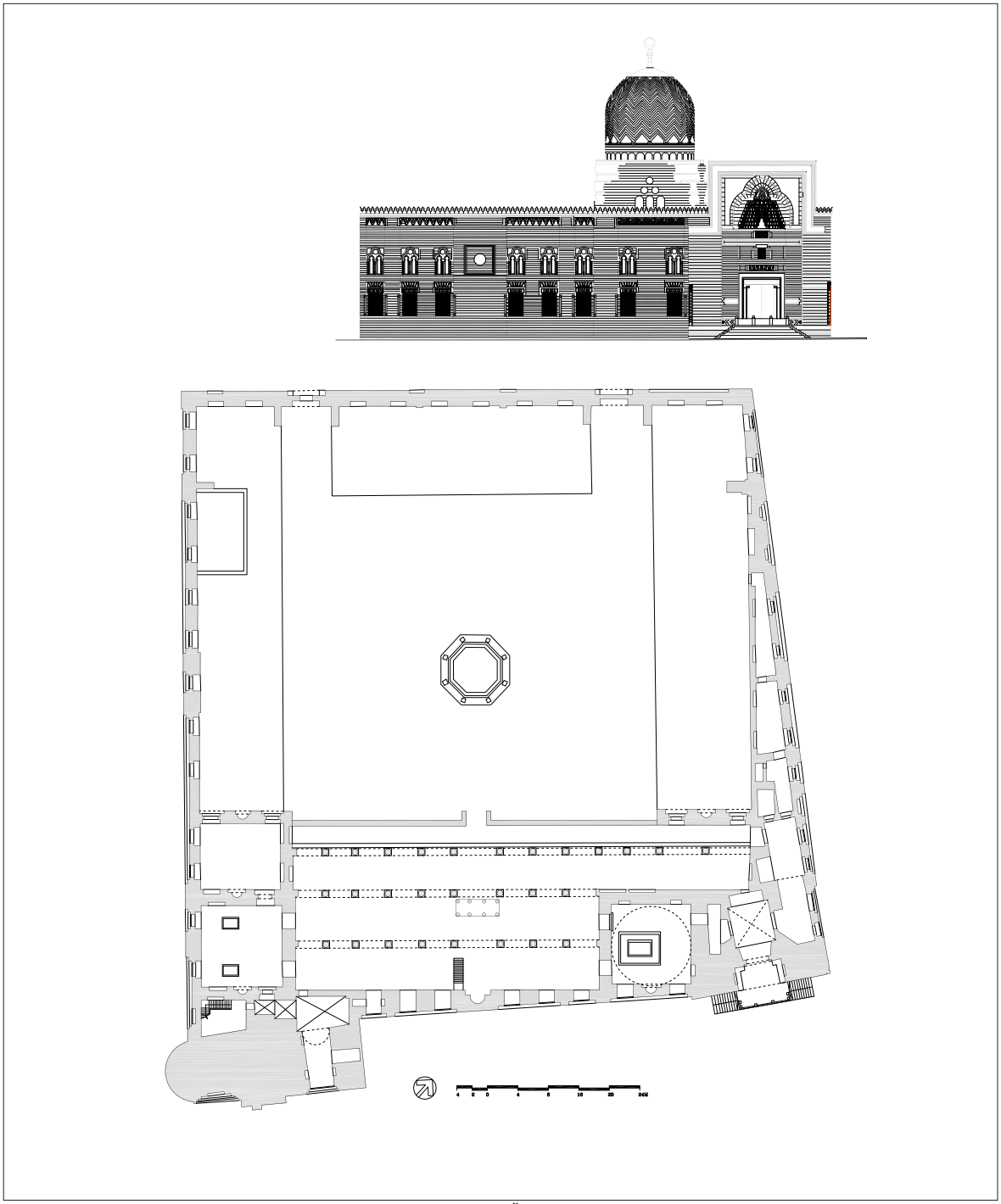


Fig. 1. Main façade and ground plan of the mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ near Bāb Zuwayla.

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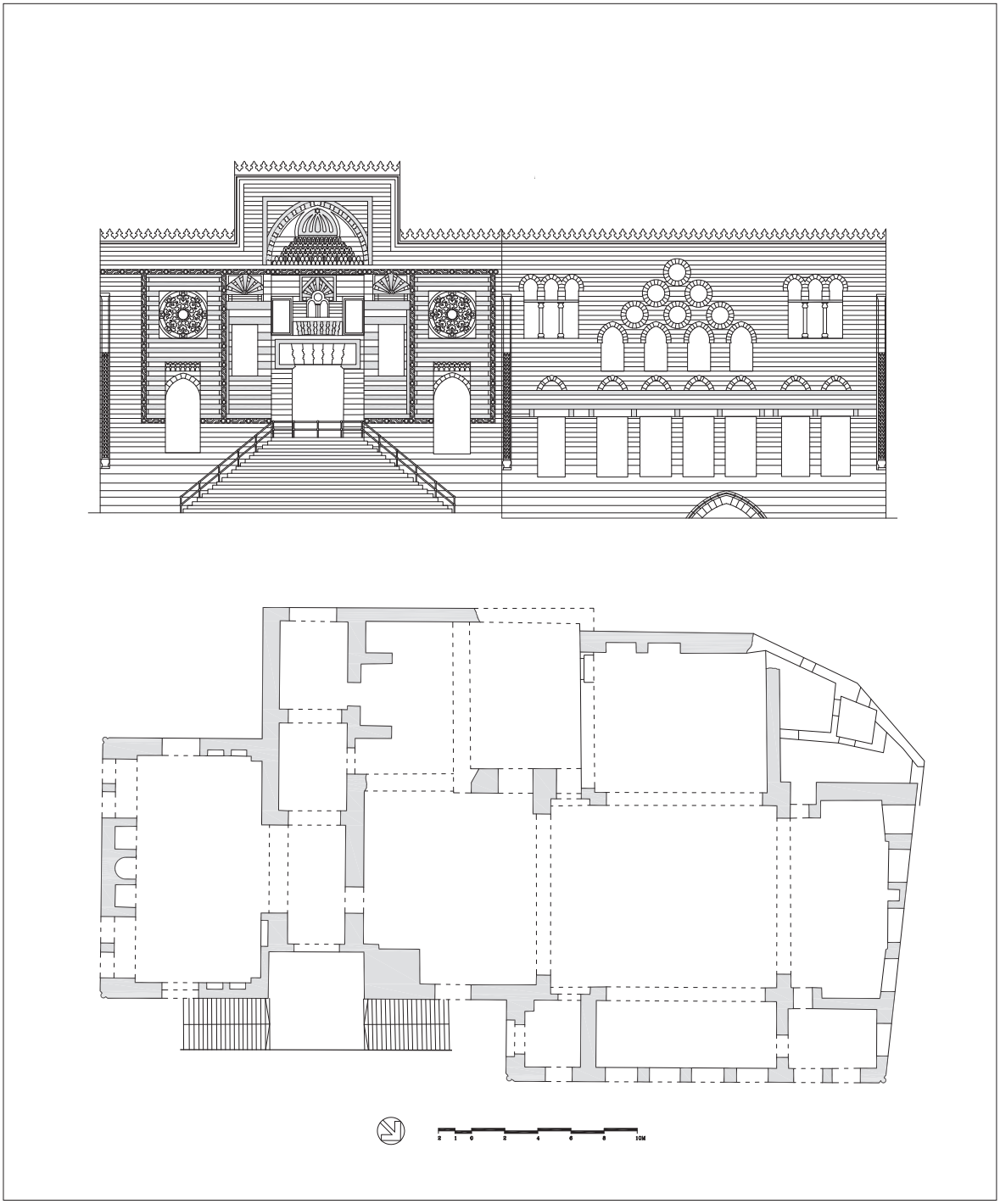


Fig. 2. Main façade and ground plan of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī.

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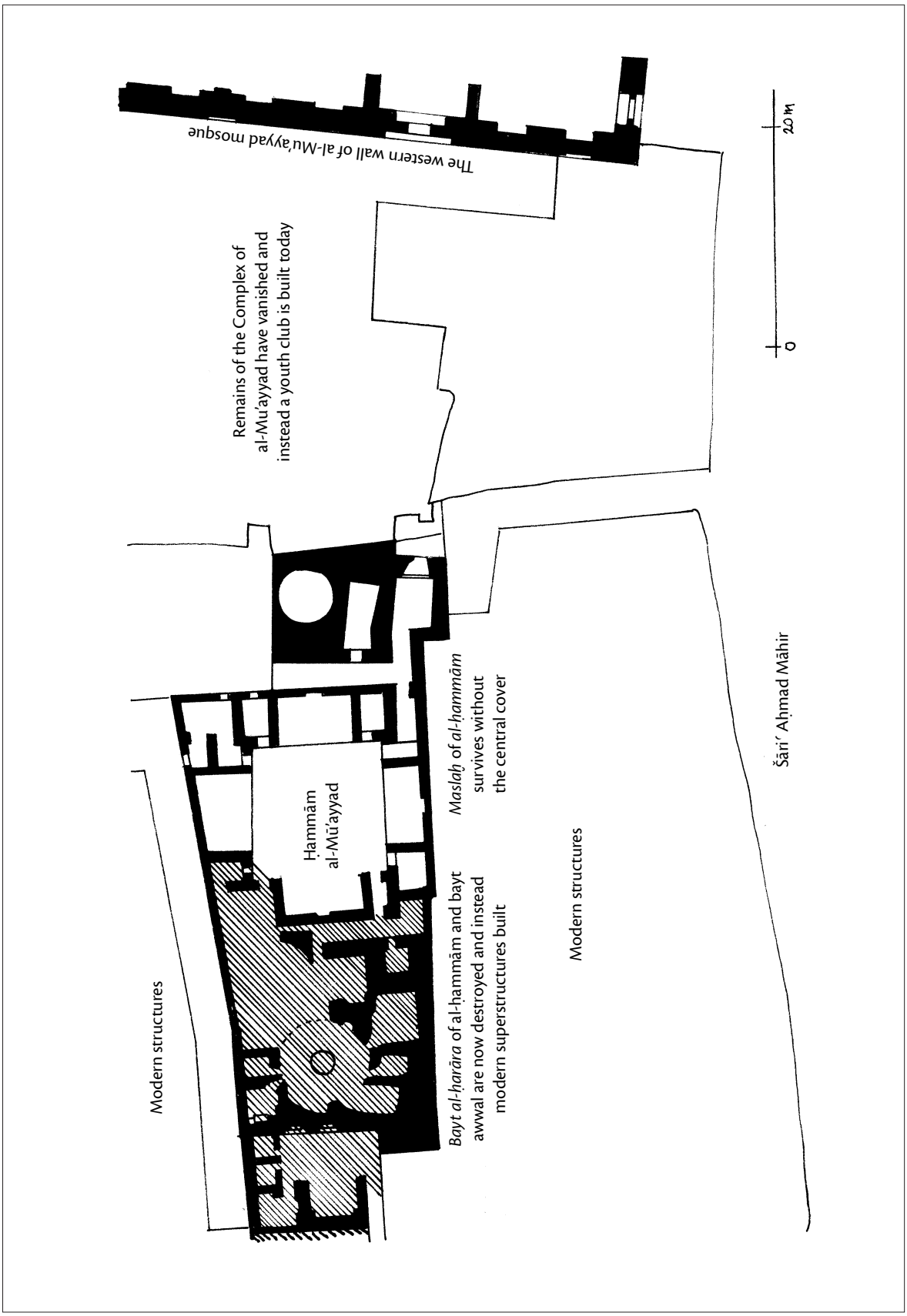


Fig. 3. Ground plan of the remains of *ḥammām* al-Muʾayyad with its only surviving section and a survey of the superstructures invading its destroyed sections.

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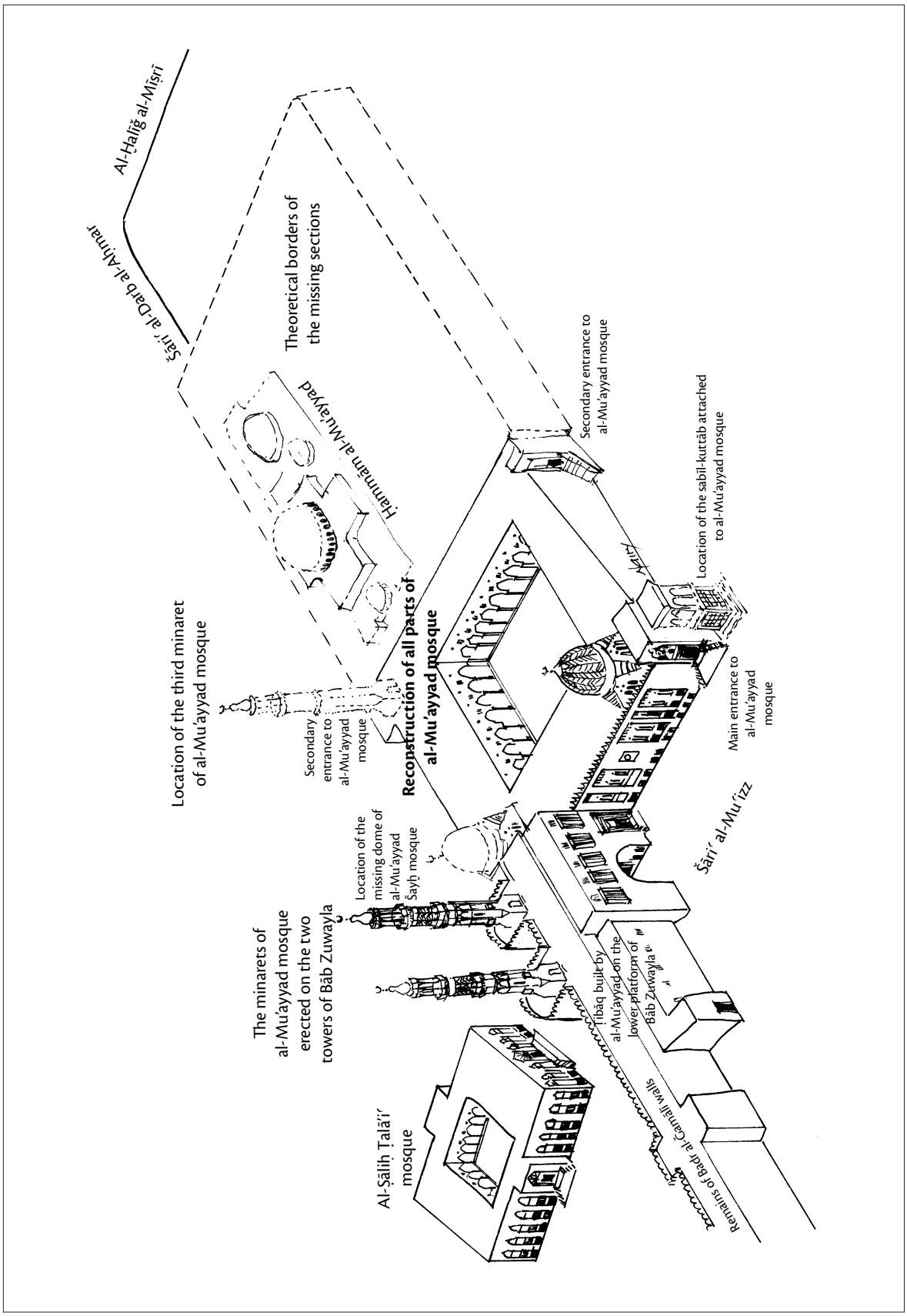


Fig. 4. Isometric view of al-Muʾayyad mosque and *hammam* al-Muʾayyad with a sketchy theoretical reconstruction of the missing sections of the whole complex as it is described in the *waqfiyya*.

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Fig. 5. The remains of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī with the actual street pattern around it on which, a theoretical reconstruction of the original borders and internal spaces of the *Bīmāristān* are juxtaposed according to the information recruited from *al-waqfiyya* of al-Mu'ayyad.

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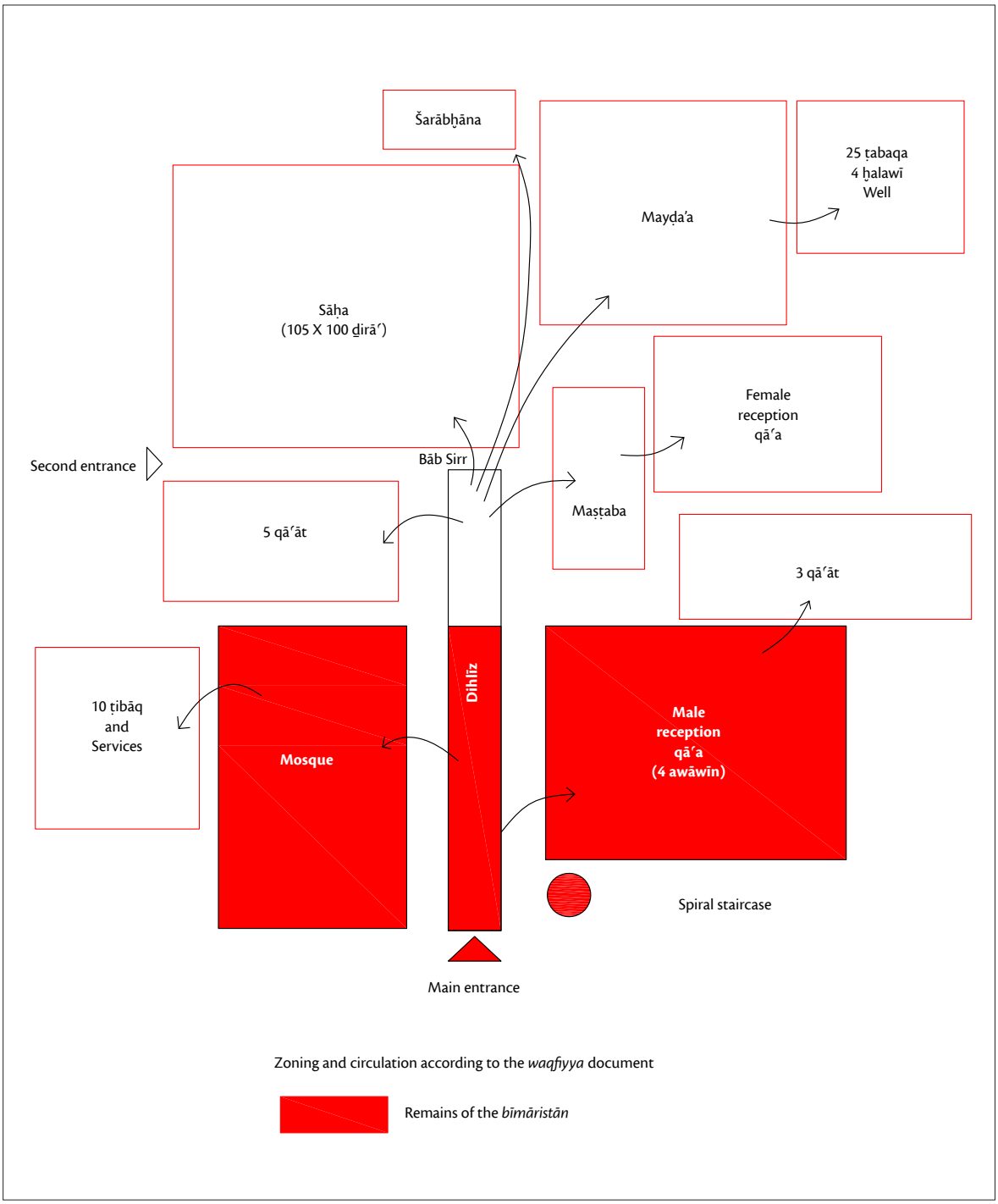


Fig. 6. Zoning and circulation of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī according to the information recruited from *al-waqfiyya* of al-Mu'ayyad

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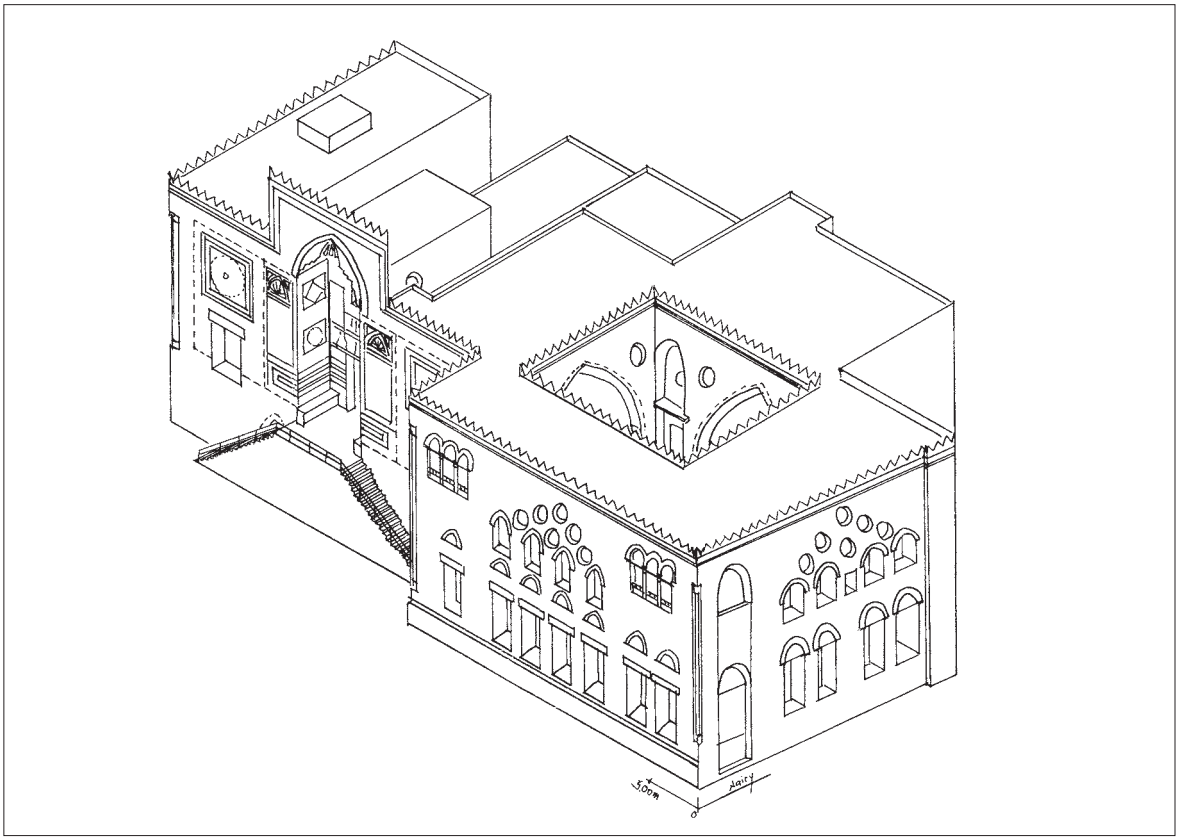


Fig. 7. Isometric view of the remains of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī.

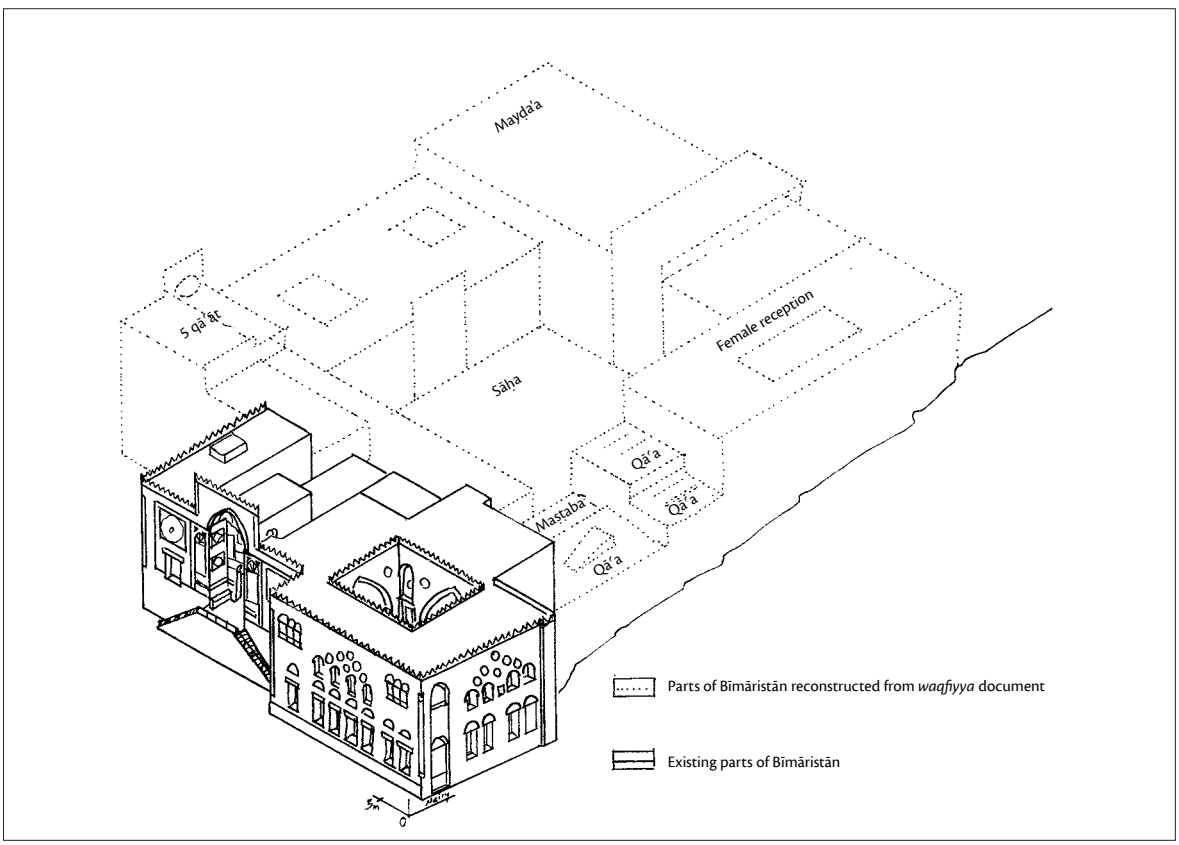


Fig. 8. Isometric view of the remains of al-Bīmāristān al-Mu'ayyadī with a theoretical reconstruction of its original spaces according to the details mentioned in the *waqfiyya*.

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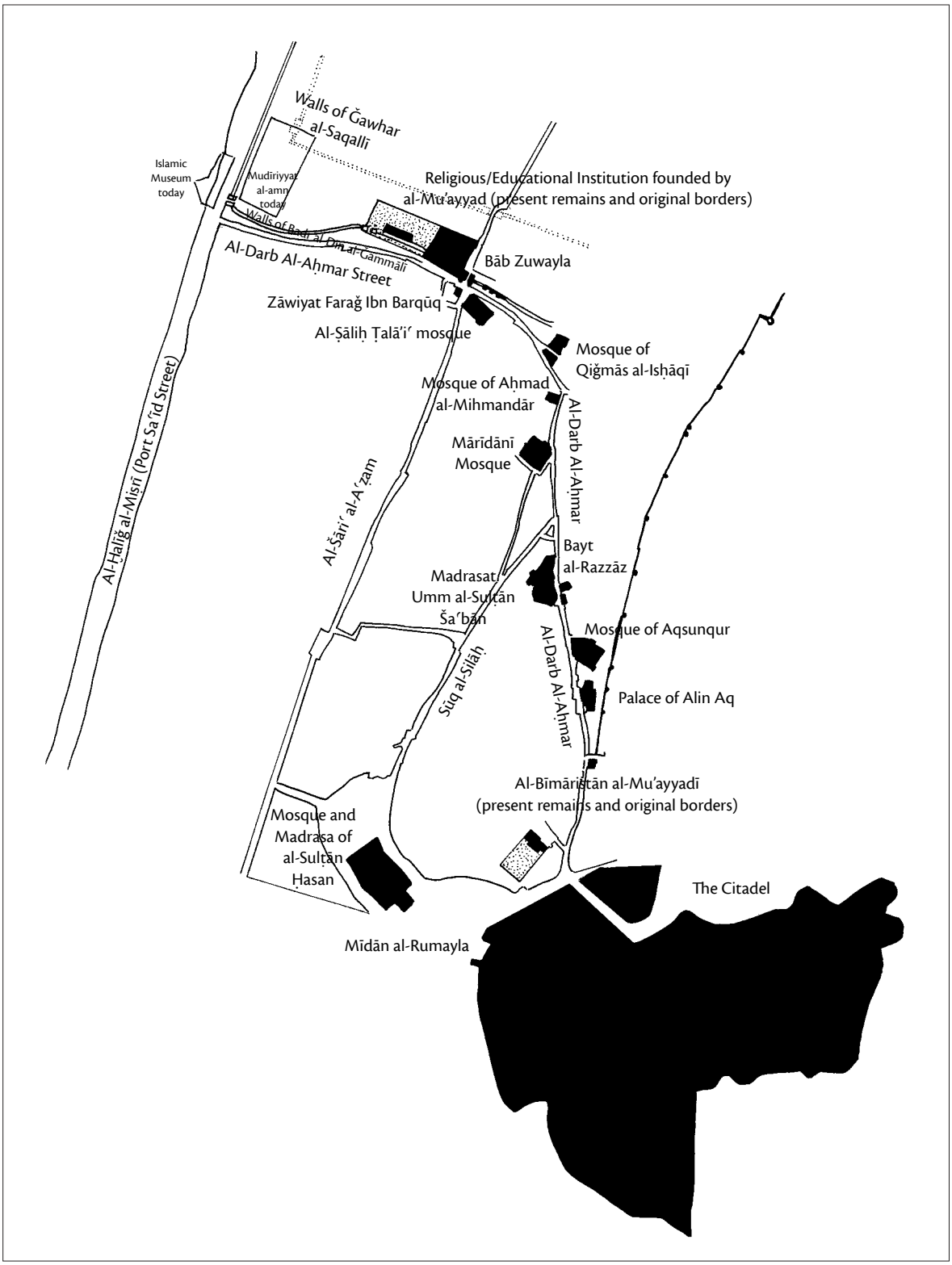


Fig. 9. Buildings on al-Darb al-Aḥmar Street in the fifteenth century.

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