CAIRO
FUNERARY COMPLEX
OF AMIR KEBIR QURQUMAS
Restoration Project Progress Report, 2000

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In view of the Polish-Egyptian Mission's continuous character, the period covered by this report extends from January 1 to December 31, 2000. During this time the mission proceeded with the restoration of the complex of the Amir Kebir Qurqumas, following a specially updated program prepared on the request of the Egyptian side. Work was carried out in all of the constituent parts of this big multifunctional complex. The intensity of execution of particular tasks varied, depending on the financial resources provided by the Egyptian side, and to a much lesser degree on the funds granted by the Polish Center of Archaeology of Warsaw University.

Building-conservation and reconstruction activities, as well as research were carried out in the Khanqah (Sufi monastery), Qubba (mausoleum) and Tabuna (ancient mill), but also the so-called Rab'a (located in the southeastern part of the complex at the edge of the protected area).

1) In 2000 the staff included, on the Polish side: Mr. Jerzy J. Kania, M.Sc.Eng., architect-restorer and head of the Mission (all the year except July); Dr. Maciej G. Witkowski, archaeologist-epigraphist (January-May); Mr. Krzysztof Ciuk, archaeologist-consultant (May-June); Mr. Ireneusz Niedziak, architect-consultant, former chief of the Project (September); Prof. Dr. Maciej Pawlikowski, geologist-mineralogist, consultant (November); Mr. Wiesław Kuczewski, civil engineer, Site Chief (all the year except July); Mr. Michał Smoła, architect (April-May, October-December); Mr. Aureliusz Pisarzewski, architect (October-December); Ms. Katarzyna Wodarska, student of archaeology-volunteer (February), Ms. Anetta Łyczwa, archaeologist-volunteer (November); Ms. Ewa Kuciewicz, student of archaeology-volunteer (December), Ms. Ewa Kuciewicz, student of archaeology-volunteer (December), Mr. Michał Bieńkowski, student of al-Azhar University-volunteer (December); Mr. Mariusz Dybich, technical auxiliary services-volunteer (all year except August-September). The Egyptian side was represented by Mrs. Fatin Hassan el Fayyez, archaeologist, Chief Inspector; Mr. Nazmi Daoud Attiya, engineer architect; Mr. Abdallah Saad, archaeologist, site inspector; Mr. Ibrahim Farag Ibrahim, conservator-chemist; Mr. Mustafa Anwar Khalifa, archaeologist-consultant, Chief of the Area; Mr. Medhat al Minabbawy, archaeologist-consultant, former Chief Inspector of the site.
Fig. 1. Khanqah. Upper part of the northwestern elevation crowned with a safety balustrade between newly reconstructed Mamluk-like sections (Photo J.J. Kania)

Fig. 2. Khanqah. Upper floor of the southeastern outer wall. Safety balustrade viewed from the interior (Photo J.J. Kania)
The last phase in the execution of the conservation formula of a "permanent ruin" was achieved. The main objective of the building-reconstruction and adaptation works was to open the monument to tourist traffic. This required the execution of protective structures in places where the safety of tourists could be endangered. Most of the task was carpentry work. The upper floor, which was meant to have only the functional division of the residential units delineated, was fitted out with wooden balustrades and safety grasps, installed along the top of the outer walls of the entrance facade (northwestern). In view of the fact that parts of the reconstructed wall, having received the form of Mamluk times, were now raised in certain sections of the facade, the level of the balustrades was also varied accordingly. Between the “Mamluk” stretches, a double-level balustrade, 1.10 m high for adults and 0.60 m for children, was installed (Fig. 1). A similar principle was followed along the

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Fig. 3. Khanqah. Lower part of the restored northwestern elevation. Two entrances leading to the separate residential units. State after mounting the wooden shutters (Photo J.J. Kania)

Fig. 4. Khanqah. Outer door with transom window and wooden lock in place (Photo J.J. Kania)
The stone-domed mausoleum is being returned to its former architectural glory in view of its sepulchral and religious function. One of the elements reconstructed this year were the so-called gamhariyyat or window screens. Very modest remnants of wooden frames and stucco edging had survived in the oculuses alone, flush with the transitional zone of muqarnas (Fig. 5). The surviving pieces of the gamhariyyat still in place were studied. The loose, broken pieces of stuccowork and colored glass found in the debris on the lower part of the window reveal were preserved. After the surviving frames had been taken down, a study of the gamhariyyat composition was carried out, identifying precisely the colors and ornament, as well as important technical guidelines for the designing work. The conceptual and technical designs, approved by the Egyptian side, were executed in the spring (Fig. 6). By end December all the openwork stuccowork for the openings situated above the ceiling-roofs of the neighboring madrasa and the adjacent side roofs of the funerary courts had been completed. The gamhariyyat will be installed once the glass elements have been restored.

The eastern building of the old “mill” was investigated archaeologically and architecturally. During the excavation work\(^2\) earlier installations were revealed under the stone flagging from the Ottoman period, thus providing evidence of the functional...
Fig. 5. Qubba. Northwestern outer wall. Oculus in the transitional zone of the dome. Relics of the original qammarriyya (Photo J.J. Kania)

Fig. 6. Qubba. Qammarriyyat workshop. Detailed view of a round qammarriyya being prepared for the oculus in the mausoleum dome (Photo J.J. Kania)
diversity of this structure over the ages (Fig. 7). The internal division into habitation units, domestic and industrial, the latter in the form of brick furnaces of unidentified function, has been delineated. The explorations brought to light chiefly kitchen pottery and skeletal material originating from domesticated animals.

The outcome of archaeological research did not modify in any way the architectural-conservation conception adopted for the tahuna. Relics of the discovered interior walls were fully recorded and then they were protected with a layer of sifted sand, which was at the same time the bedding for stone flagging of the Ottoman period, which is to be reconstructed in the future. The outer walls of the structure, especially the tops, were reinforced to support the thrust of the wooden ceiling, which was reconstructed based on research and parallels (Fig. 8). Detailed attention was devoted to the zone bordering the court of Guirbash Qashuq, the so-called hawš, where in the northwestern corner of the tahuna a reconstruction of the window opening of the old sabil was executed. This part of the tahuna is being reconstructed to serve as a stuccowork workshop producing reconstructed qammariyyat for mausoleums and madrasas of the Northern Cairo Necropolis.

Fig. 7. Tahuna. Eastern building. General view of the architectural discoveries made during excavations in 2000 (Photo J.J. Kania)
Fig. 8. Tahuna. Eastern building. The main structural timbers. State during roofing works
(Photo J.J. Kania)
RAB'A

The foundations of residential units and industrial installations discovered in 1993 were now protected. Fortunately, part of the foundations were included within the limits of the conservation zone established earlier and hence on the inside of the modern fence surrounding the complexes of Inal and Qurqumas. The layout of the walls can be traced on the ground; the remnants have been protected from the elements (Fig. 9). This architecture is proof of the existence of a road for merchant caravans and a pilgrims' road to Mecca.

OTHER WORKS

The grounds of both funerary complexes, that of Sultan Inal and of Amir Kebir Qurqumas, have been turned into a single joint conservation zone. A consequence of this step is the anticipated restoration program to be executed in the funerary complex of Sultan Ashraf Inal. In preparation for this stage, the mission has conducted some preliminary studies of the madrasa and mausoleum. A preliminary mineral and petrographic investigation was carried out in 2000, the results to be used for technical purposes at a later stage of building-conservation works.

Fig. 9. Rab'a. Uncovered foundation courses of habitation units. State during preservation works. View from the roof of the madrasa (Photo J.J. Kania)