

## Entrances of the *takiyya* and *Sabil* of Sultan Mahmoud

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### Abstract

During the Islamic epoch, structures varied between religious - such as mosques- , secular - like houses, palaces, wakalas, baths, khan, and rab; funerary - like mausoleums and domes; military - like castles; and beneficent - like public fountains and *takiyya* - ones. Here is an example of the beneficent structures, the *Takiyya* and *Sabil* of Sultan Mahmoud, monument No. 308 in the index of Islamic structures that date back to 1164 H / 1750 A.D is among the beneficent structures that were erected for serving the public. This monument is a complex of structures, encloses an almshouse (*takiyya*) for teaching religious rites and civil studies, a public fountain for saving drinking water for the people, and a primary school (*kuttab*) for learning the holy Qur'an for the orphan children. Moreover, a small mosque is annexed to this complex.

This research aims at for describing the entrances of this complex, which has four entrances, one leading to the *takiyya* as the main one, the second leading to the prayer hall or mosque, the third to the public fountain, and the fourth to the primary school (*kuttab*).

This research is divided into an introduction followed by four items ended with a conclusion, besides some figures.

- Introduction: encloses general information about the structure's location and a brief detail of its founder, besides the date of erecting it.
- Item I: concerned with describing the main entrance of the complex
- Item II: encloses a description of the entrance of the annexed prayer hall or mosque
- Item III: describes the entrance of the annexed public fountain (*Sabil*).
- Item IV: describes the entrance of the annexed primary school (*kuttab*)

### Introduction

This is a great *madarasa* or *takiyya* to which a magnificent rounded shaped public fountain (*sabil*) is annexed. It is the second remaining Ottoman type *madrasa* in Egypt, that the first is *at-Takiyya as-Sulimaniyya* in *as-Surogiyya* Street that dated back to 950 H/ 1543 A.D.

This *madrasa* commonly known as the *tekke* and the public fountain (*sabil*) are located in the southwest of Cairo,<sup>1</sup> exactly in Port Said street (ancient *al-Khaliq al-Misry*), on the right hand side of the one who passes from *al-Sayyida Zaineb* towards *Bab al-Khalq* square.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the main façade of this *takiyya* is overlooking *Darb al-Gamamiz* Street. This part of the street was anciently termed as *Del' as-Samaka* street begins from the *qantarat All kafar* and ends at *Sekat al-Habaniyya* towards *Qantarat Soumgor*.<sup>3</sup>

This *takiyya*<sup>4</sup> and the public fountain (*Sabil*) are attributed to Sultan *Mahmud Khan I* the of sultan *Mustafa Khan I* who took over the rule of the Ottoman sultanate in 1143 H / 1731 A.D. He ordered the construction in 1164 H / 1750 A.D.<sup>5</sup> The actual founder is Amir Bashir Agha Wakil Dar as-Sa'adda, and it was inscribed on both the foundation text above the public fountain's or *sabil* entrance<sup>6</sup> and the foundation of waqfiyya that sultan *Mahmoud Khan* founded<sup>7</sup>

#### Item I: The main entrance of the complex

The structure's main façade is the northwest one (fig. 1), below which there is a group of shops. These shops are topped with a band of interlaced floral motifs. This façade encloses the main entrance.

It is a monumental entrance, flanked from both sides with two stone benches. The entrance is crested with a semicircular arch that is leaning on two combined

columns.<sup>8</sup> This arch is surrounded with a decorative frame in form of a fret with hexagonal buckles, and ends at the higher point of the arch with a circle of axial buckles. In addition, the whole entrance's mass is surrounded with a fret with hexagonal buckles.<sup>9</sup> The arch's two spandrels are decorated with arabesque technique, and the columns' abacuses are decorated with blooming or flowering floral stems and the *lala* flowers over a surface of arabesque decorations type. The central parts of these columns were adorned with dual floral stems with trefoil floral leaves coming out.<sup>10</sup>

In the center of the entrance there is an entrance opening portal topped with flat lintel topped with a *nafis* (fig. 2) ornamented with rectangular ceramic tiles, which are adorned with drawings of composite flowers and floral branches of which tiny notched leaves come out. These drawings are applied to dark blue color over a white surface. Moreover, red and green colors are used in adding some clear touches over the transparent glazed overlaying. In addition, the arch's two spandrels are coated with square ceramic tiles. The right side of spandrel decorations looks like arabesque ornaments being interposed by drawings of flowers and floral branches in blue and turquoise colors over a white surface. On the other hand, the left spandrel is decorated with floral branches from which flowers come out in a geometrical deviation around a central flower, interposed with decorations of Chinese clouds. Similar to those of the right spandrel; these decorations applied on blue and turquoise colors over a white surface.

The abacus of the pillars on which the entrance's arch leaning are coated with ceramic tiles decorated with

crenels shapes that enclose arabesque ornaments or the blooming or flowering floral branches. These crenels are framed on the exterior with tulip flowers. These tiles themselves were surrounded with a frame of intertwined ornaments. These decorations were applied on blue, green and tomato red over a white surface. Both colors and decorations dated these tiles to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D or the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>11</sup> It was stated that these tiles either belongs to *Iznik* or to *Kotahiyya*.<sup>12</sup>

It is probable that the tiles where the tomato red and planting green colors applied over decorations being ascribed to *Iznik* manufacturing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while those of yellow, brown, pale green, and the brick red are ascribed to *Kotahiyya* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>13</sup> Over the *nafis*, there is a relieving arch of alternate white and black marble. Directly over the relieving arch, there is a panel that is inscribed with the following phrase;

"this blessed madrassa was constructed by the order of sultan Mahmoud Khan son of Sultan Mustafa Khan in 1164"

On each side of the panel there is a rounded shape, the southern one encircled the majesty term **الله**, and the northern one encloses the prophet's name **محمد**. Over this panel, exactly in the center of the entrance's mass; there is a window with two columns, on each side. This window has a screen of lathed wood, in the center of which a two word inscription is applied, this inscription says "يا الله". The entrance's recess is built of alternate white and black courses. The arch's two spandrels are adorned with blue ceramics. A horizontal row of *quintifoil* floral leaves shaped crenels is crowning the whole façade and the entrance's mass. This entrance mass is higher than the whole façade.<sup>14</sup>

This entrance leads to a *dirkah*, which followed the entrance, and in turn; it leads directly to the *takiyya*.<sup>15</sup>

#### Item II: Entrance of the annexed prayer hall or mosque

Another entrance is that of the prayer hall, It is also a monumental entrance, flanked with two stone benches, crested with a simple *mada'ini* arch. In the center of this entrance; there is the entrance portal that topped with a window that is adorned with stalactites from its upper part, this is beside the lathed wood. This portal leads to the prayer place.<sup>16</sup>

#### Item III: Entrance of the annexed public fountain (*Sabil*).

A third entrance is that of both the public fountain or *sabil* and the *kuttab* over it. It occupied the southwest part of the main – northwest- façade. It is an independent entrance mostly similar to that of the *takiyya*.<sup>17</sup> This entrance is within a niche of 200 cm. in width and 50 cm. in depth, crested with a pointed arch the intrados and borders of which are adorned with opposite buckles (*mimat*). In the center of this niche; there is a rectangular portal of 2.10 m. in height and 1.00 m. in width, being shut with one wooden shutter portal with geometrical decorations of assembled panels forming polygons. This entrance niche is flanked with two stone benches (*makasel*).<sup>18</sup>

This entrance portal is topped with flat lintel of marble enclosing the foundation text of three lines of salient *thulth* calligraphy saying;<sup>19</sup>

هذا سبيل قد بدا بالحسن قد تفردا  
أنشأه بشير أغا دار السعادة و الندى  
برسم سلطان الورى محمود خان المقتدى  
لا زال من رب السما  
مظفرا مؤيدا  
و قد اتى تاريخه فى ضمن بيت شيئا  
هذا سبيل ماؤه نيل حلا  
بجلو الصدى

Using the letters of the alphabet according to their numerical value, this structure is dated to 1164 H.<sup>20</sup>

This lintel is topped with a *nafis* coated with ceramic tiles, which are of identical design with those of the *nafis* that topped the main entrance of the *takiyya* that is in the main – northwest - façade.

Over the *nafis*, there is a relieving arch of unjoggled voussoirs. Over this composition (the lintel, the *nafis*, and the relieving arch), there is a rectangular window with bronze hollow coating in the form of zigzag floral branches from which carnation flower emerge. The entrance's arch and its two spandrels are encircled with two stone frames that joined over the key – voussoir of the arch, forming a large buckle (*mima*). Those frames are filled with arabesque decorations.<sup>21</sup>

This entrance leads to a square hall of 1.40 m. in length, to the left of which there is three-step staircase ending with a *basta*. To the left of this *basta* there is a niche of 1.00 m. in depth, 1.50 m. in height, and 1.40 m. in width, being shut with a two wooden shutters door, and to the right side of this *basta*, there is an opening of 1.40 m. in width leading to a room annexed to the *tasbil* room.

#### Item IV: Entrance of the annexed primary school (*kuttab*)

The entrance of the primary school (*kuttab*) is perpendicular to the public fountain's façade. This entrance mass is of the same width and depth of that of the *sabil*, but crested with a pointed arch of plain – none decorated- stone voussoirs, However the arch's intrados is embellished with stone decorations of lozenge shapes centered with fan wrapper shapes.

This pointed arch is leaning on two marble pillars leaning on two stone benches (*makasel*) that are flanking the entrance portal. Below the pointed arch, there is another foiled or lobed arch, the two pilasters of which are leaning on the entrance's two buttresses.

The entrance niche is centered with a rectangular portal, topped with a marble lintel enclosing the foundation text of the primary school (*kuttab*)<sup>22</sup> in three lines each of four hemistiches of poetic verses; saying;

انظر لمكتب حلا صفا و بالذکر علا . أنشأه حضرة الأغا . بشير  
موصوف الحلا .  
برسم خاقان الورى . محمود السامى العلا . و حين تم مشرقا . ضيازه و  
اكتملا .  
أنشأت فى تاريخه بيتا يروق النبلا . مكتب برنافع من حله ساد العلا .  
23

Over the lintel, there is a relieving arch of joggled voussoirs, topped with a rectangular window with brass coating. This window is flanked with two marble compacted pillars directly below the foiled arch.<sup>24</sup>

#### Conclusion

After describing the structure several of entrances, it seems that;

- This complex encloses a public fountain that is characterized by its bent façade, a type which appeared only in the Ottoman epoch in Cairo, and applied to other few examples such as the *Sabil- Kuttab* of Sultan Mustafa monument no. 314 that dated back to 1173 H / 1759 A.D, the *Sabil - Kuttab* of *Ruqqayya Dodo* monument no. 337 that dated back to 1174 H / 1761 A.D, the *Sabil- Kuttab* of *Hussein ash-Shou'eb*y monument no. 588 that dated back the 12<sup>th</sup> century H / 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D, and the *Sabil* of *Nafisa al-Beyda*

#### References

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- و قد تم ترميم هذه التكية سنة 1996 م، و هي الآن مقر نقاش آثار جنوب القاهرة.
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- 5- مرفت عيسى، الطراز العثماني في منشآت التعليم بالقاهرة ( 923 - 1987م، ص 222. 1213 هـ / 1517 - 1798م)، جامعة القاهرة، 6-
- Berchem, Berchem, Max Van, Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicum, (Memoire de la Mission Française au Caire) Egypt, Tome XIX, Paris, 1903, P. 623, Text 5, 444, 445.
- 7- حجة وقف رقم 908 بتاريخ 25 من جمادى الآخرة 1167 هـ، ص 3، سطر 2، 3، 10، 11. و هي حجة تركية لها ترجمة معتمدة من وزارة الأوقاف متضمنة بأنه عهد بإنشاء السبيل و الكتاب و المدرسة الى الأمير بشير أغا وكيل دار السعادة.

monument no. 358 that dated back to 1211 H / 1796 A.D.

- In most cases, both the *sabil* and the *Kuttab* over it were entered through one external entrance, while in these structures, each one has independent entrance.

- The four entrances within this complex presents three different types of entrances, The main entrance of the *takiyya* is crested with a semicircular arch, and the entrance of the prayer hall or the mosque is crested with a simple *mada'ini* arch, Both entrances of the public fountain and that of the primary school are crested with pointed arches.

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- 13- ربيع حامد، مخطوط الرسالة السابق، ص 240.
- 14- محمد أبو العمائم، المرجع السابق، ص 386.
- 15- علي ماهر متولي، مخطوط الرسالة السابق، ص 190.
- 16- محمد أبو العمائم، المرجع السابق، ص 386.
- 17- علي ماهر متولي، مخطوط الرسالة السابق، ص 191.
- 18- محمود الحسيني، الأسبلة العثمانية بمدينة القاهرة 1517 - 1798 م، مكتبة مدبولي، القاهرة، 1988م، ص ص 233، 234.
- 19- علي مبارك، المصدر السابق، ج 6، ص 180.
- 20- Berchem, op. cit, p. 445.
- 21- محمود الحسيني، المرجع السابق، ص 234.
- 22- المرجع نفسه، ص ص 236 - 238.
- 23- علي مبارك، المصدر السابق، ج 6، ص 181.
- 24- محمود الحسيني، المرجع السابق، ص 237.

#### Figures :

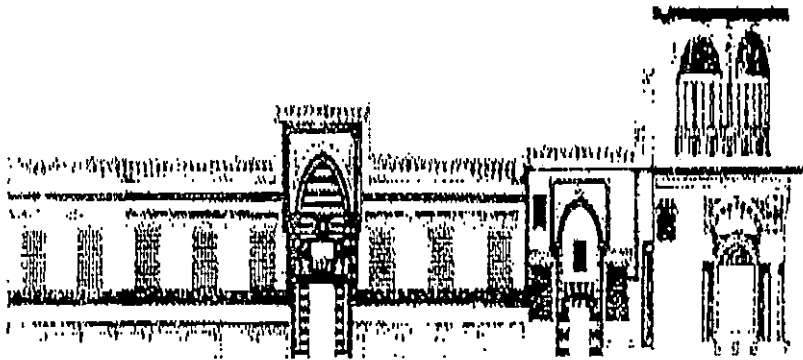


Figure (1)  
The western façade of the *takiyya* of Sultan Mahmoud  
1164 H / 1750 A.D

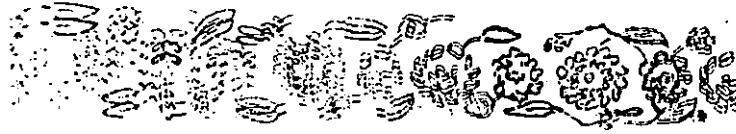


Figure (2)  
The compact flower, the pomegranate flower, and the notched flower on the *nafis* of the entrance of the *Takkiyya* and *Sabil* of Sultan Mahmoud (1164 H / 1750 A.D)

مداخل تكية و سبيل السلطان محمود أثر رقم 308  
(1164 هـ / 1750م)

الملخص العربي:

تنوعت العمارات الإسلامية ما بين عمارات دينية كالمساجد والمدارس، و عمارات مدنية كالمنازل والقصور والوكالات والخانات، العمارات الجنائزية كأضرحة والقباب، العمارات الحربية كالقلاع والأبراج والحصون، بالإضافة إلى عمارات المنافع العامة كالأسبلة والتكايا والحمامات. وقد ركز هذا البحث على مثال لعمارات المنافع العامة وهو "تكية وسبيل السلطان محمود أثر رقم 308" والذي يؤرخ إلى 1164 هـ / 1750م. وهذا الأثر عبارة عن مجموعة معمارية تتكون من التكية التي كانت تستخدم لتدريس المذاهب الدينية والعلوم الدنيوية، وسبيل لتوفير مياه الشرب لقاطني المنطقة المقام بها بالإضافة إلى المارين بها. كما تضم هذه المجموعة المعمارية كتاباً لتعليم وتحفيظ القرآن الكريم للأطفال الأيتام، بالإضافة إلى مسجد صغير.

وقد عنى البحث بوصف مداخل هذه المجموعة المعمارية، وهي أربعة مداخل، الأول وهو الرئيسي يؤدي إلى التكية، المدخل الثاني يؤدي إلى السبيل، مدخل ثالث يؤدي إلى الكتاب، ومدخل رابع يؤدي إلى المسجد الصغير الملحق بالمجموعة. وقد تم تقسيم هذا البحث إلى المقدمة، أربعة عناصر رئيسية، يليها الخاتمة، هذا بالإضافة إلى بعض الأشكال المرفقة حسب ترتيب ذكرها في المتن.

- المقدمة: وتضم معلومات أساسية عن موقع هذه المجموعة المعمارية، والمنشئ وتاريخ الإنشاء.

- العنصر الأول: يضم وصف المدخل الرئيسي للمجموعة المعمارية وهو نفسه مدخل التكية.

- العنصر الثاني: يضم وصف مدخل المسجد الصغير الملحق بالمجموعة المعمارية.

- العنصر الثالث: يضم وصف مدخل السبيل

- العنصر الرابع: يضم وصف مدخل الكتاب

- الخاتمة: في نهاية هذا البحث نخلص إلى ذكر بعض النقاط الهامة وهي:

1- السبيل الملحق بهذه المجموعة المعمارية يتميز بواجهته المقوسة وهو شكل لم يظهر قبل العصر العثماني.

2- في كثير من الأحيان يكون السبيل ويعطوه الكتاب ذا مدخل واحد، أما في هذه المجموعة المعمارية فقد كان هناك مداخل مستقلة لكل من السبيل والكتاب الذي يعطوه.

3- أظهرت مداخل هذه المجموعة المعمارية ثلاثة أشكال مختلفة ذات عقود؛ منها ما يتوج بعقد نصف دائري، ومنها ما يتوج بعقد مدائني ثلاثي الفصوص، ومنها ما يتوج بعقد مدببة.