

**The Dome of al-Sayyida Zaynab bint al-Ḥanafiyah at the Necropolis of  
Bāb al-Naṣr in Cairo  
The problem of function and dating**

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In the outskirts of Bāb al-Naṣr, a brick dome is located in the southeastern edge of the cemetery<sup>2</sup> dedicated to Sayyida Zaynab bint al-Ḥanafiyah<sup>3</sup>. The cemetery of Bāb al-Naṣr can be seen north to Bāb al-Naṣr and contains lots of tombs and graves for different characters such as historians such as the famous al-Maqrīzī, the Imām ‘Abd al-Raḥman ibn Ḥaldūn, the Imām Burhān al-Dīn ibn Zuqqā’ah in addition to the theologians, and *Āl al-Bayt* or the prophet’s Muhammad family<sup>4</sup>. The dome is attached to some remains of the tombs of the Sufis from its western side<sup>5</sup>. The mausoleum is wrongly thought by the neighboring people to be of the famous Zaynab, the daughter of Imām

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<sup>2</sup> al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā’izwa-l-i’tibar bi dīr al-ḥitatwa-l-Ālīār*, Released by Ayman Fu’ad Sayid, London, 2003, Vol.IV, Pt.II, p.918.

<sup>3</sup> The Aṣrāf al-Ḥanafiyah known as the Muhammadans *al-Muḥamadiyīn* they were directly related to Muḥammadibn al-Ḥanafiyah, the son of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib. See Muwafaq al-Dīn Ibn ‘Utmān, *Mursīd al-zuwwār ila qubūr al-abrār*, Released by Muḥammad Fathī Abu Bakr, Cairo, 1995, p.157. The sources mentioned the biography of the Sitt Zaynab from the Family of the prophet Muhammad and she is Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Ja’far ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyah ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib. Al-Maqrīzī says “The commons called it-Maṣhad al-Sitt Zaynab”. The commons called it *Ma’bad al-Sitt Zaynab* or the worship place. She was titled as *al-Sitt Zaynab al-Muḥmmadiyah*. She visited Egypt with her brother who named Muḥammad and she was buried in the cemetery of Bab al-Naṣr. See al-‘Ubaydalī al-Nassābah, *Tārīḥ wa manāqib wa ma’āṭir al-sitt al-tāhirah al-batūl al-Sayida Zaynab wa aḥbār al-zaynabāt*, released by Hasan Qāsim, Cairo, 1934, pp.86,87; Ibn al-Zayyīāt, *al-Kawākib al-saiyyārah fī tartīb al-ziyārah fī-l-qarāfatayn al-kubrāwa-l-ṣuḡra*, Cairo, 1907, p.242 ; al-Maqrīzī, *al-ḥitat*, Edited by Ayman Fu’ad Sayid, Vol.IV, Pt.II, p.918; al-Saḥāwy, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa buḡiyat al-tullāb fī-l-ḥitatwa-l-mazārātwa-l-biqā’ al-mubārakāt*, Released by Hasan Qāsim, Maḥmūd Rabī’, Cairo, 1937, p.40.

<sup>4</sup> Al- ‘Ubaydalī, *al-Sayida Zaynab wa aḥbār al-zaynabāt*, pp.86,87; Hasan Qāsim, *al-Mazārāt al-Islāmiyah*, Bibliothica Alexandrina, 2018, p.165 . The necropolis also housed the tombs of the famous Swiss Egyptologist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt who converted to Islam and changed his name to Ṣayḥ Ibrāhīm after he professed the Moslem Religion and he died in the year 1817AD at the age of 33. He was the one of the most enterprising and able of modern explorers of the East and the discoverer of the rock-hewn city of Petra. His tomb is purely Muhammadan character and his grave is a high oblong marble structure carrying his name. See Thomas. Edward and Mary Eliza, Syemour, George.L, *Cemeteries and Mosque Tombs*, Cairo, The Art Journal (1875-1887), New Series, Vol. 6 (1880), p.201; Galīla al-Qādī, Alain Bonnamy, *Architecture of the Dead*, Cairo’s Medieval Necropolis, AUC, Press, Cairo, 2007, p.133

<sup>5</sup> Al-‘Ubaydalī, *al-Sayida Zaynab wa aḥbār al-zaynabāt*, p.87.

‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib<sup>6</sup>. The grave is bordered to the east by the huge square *al-Qabaq*<sup>7</sup> which extends up to the citadel. Among the earliest domes built in the cemetery is the tomb of Badr al-Ġamālī and his son which is known as the dome of Šayḥ Yūnus 487AH/1094AD<sup>8</sup>.(Pl.I)

Al-Maqrīzī noted that “outside Bāb al-Naṣr was a vast area except for a prayer place *muṣala al-‘īd* which was built by Ġawhar al-Siqillī also the huge gardens of Raydān *bustān Raydān* with no traces of buildings until Badr al-Ġamālī was to be the first one who was buried in this place in 487AH/1094AD. The dome was prepared for him, later the people had their burials in this area for years after that”<sup>9</sup>. One well known landmark beyond the city walls is a small mosque known as the *musallah al-‘īd*. It used to attract its largest crowd at *‘īd al-fiṭr*, the festival of the Lesser Bairam, when the Fatimid caliph, leading a procession from the city, would come to pray with the congregation. It was here in the area surrounding the *muṣallah al-‘īd* that the first tombs of Bāb al-Naṣr were built.<sup>10</sup>The cemetery of Bāb al-Naṣr is bordered by the Muqattam hills from the east, al-Ġayīš square to the north, Bāb al-Ši‘riyah and al-Ḥusayniyah to the west and Bāb al-Naṣr to the south. The cemetery had various names according to the historical sources such as “the Sufīs graves, the cemetery of Bāb al-Naṣr, and the Sufīs graveyard *ḥawš al-šūfiyah*<sup>11</sup>. Many Sufīs wanted their burials to be closer to the *Āl al-bayt* to gain their blessing. Therefore a grave nearby indicated the spiritual meaning for the Sufīs and it is the place where the supplication for blessing was held<sup>12</sup>. It is this fact that made the people themselves want have their burials close to the tombs of Sufīs also in order to gain the blessing<sup>13</sup> from the Sufīs on the one hand, and from the honorable *Āl al-bayt* on the

<sup>6</sup>Muḥammad Zakī Ibrāhīm, *Marāqīd ahl al-Bayt fi-l-Qāhirah*, Cairo, 2003, p.84

<sup>7</sup>A square located outside Bāb al-Naṣr from the east and between *al-Tuġrah* today *Bulāq* and the Naṣr dome. It was named “the black square” or *al-Maydān al-Aswad*. It was prepared by Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars al-Saliḥī al-Naġmī for the game of al-Qabaq; a huge structure *mastabah* was prepared for the archery. This game was played by his successors like al-Masnūr Qalāwūn and al-Ašraf Ḥalīl. For details see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥitat*, III, pp.369-376.

<sup>8</sup>Al-Saḥāwy, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p.40

<sup>9</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥitat*, III, p.463. See also Muḥammad Ḥamzah, *Silsilat al-ġabbānat fi-l-‘imarah al-islāmiyah, wa Qarāfat al-Qāhirah mi al-faṭḥ al-islāmī ila nahāyat al-‘aṣr al-mamlūkī*, Cairo, 2006, pp.145,146.

<sup>10</sup>G.al-Qāḍī, A.Bonnamy, *Architecture of the Dead*, p.129

<sup>11</sup>Tartwat Faṭḥī al-Azharī ‘Abd al-Šamad, *Gabantbāb al-Naṣr wa ru’iyā šāmilah li wad’aha ‘alā ḥarītat al-siyāḥa al-diniyah wa-l-iršād al-siyāḥī*, PH.D thesis, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Menia University, 2016, p.22.

<sup>12</sup>M. Z. Ibrāhīm, *Marāqīd Ahl al-bayt*, p.84.

<sup>13</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥitat*, IV, Pt.II, p.919

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other hand<sup>14</sup>. So the location played a vital reason in distributing the neighboring tombs and graves for the Sufis and also for the rulers from different eras as well as the imams, historians and travellers. To cut it short, neither al-Maqrīzī, nor to our knowledge and any other historian has specified its exact boundaries. But it is fairly safe to say that it didn't cover the entire area between Bāb al-Naṣr and 'Abassiya because we are told that it became inhabited after 700AH/1301AD and the Mamluk worthies had their palaces, summer houses, and second homes which were built there. It is hard to tell whether those dwellings replaced any tombs or not as residential districts and burial grounds have always encroached upon each other in these parts.<sup>15</sup>

#### **The structure of the dome**

The dome is classified among the singular domes in Egypt which contains a grave inside and is covered by octagonal transitional zones and the dome's masonry which has eight semi-circular<sup>16</sup> windows. The top of the dome was once provided with a crescent but it is now lost<sup>17</sup>. The semi-circular structure is 3.40m high. The dome has six square opening used for the lighting purposes just to allow the sun light to come into the interior. (Pl.II). On the northern side, the dome structure is based on an octagonal drum acting as zones of transitions that are 1.50m high. The drum has six sides; the northern and the southern are 2.60m long, whereas the eastern and the western are 2m long, which means that the octagonal drum has unequal sides which is unusual in the Islamic architecture (Fig.1). The dome has a polished surface while some traces of the original casing can be seen. The northern façade begins with the ground level of 1.70m till the end of the square which is 5.40m wide. The lower square begins with a square blind window opening

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<sup>14</sup> In the outskirts of the cemetery, the Sufis of the Ḥānqāh *sa'īd al-su'adā'* took about two acres for building a new cemetery that was *turbat al-ṣūfiyah* and they enlarged the area after the year 790AH. The Mamluk emirs had their burials beside the tomb of Sufis such as Šams al-Dīn Qarāsunqur and the emir Sayf al-Dīn Kukāy, who had their graves facing the Sufis tombs, the emir Tājār al-Dawādār had also a grave in front of the Sufis tomb. Taštumur al-Sāqī had his burials beside the grave, in addition to the baths and the caravans that were built beside the Sufis graves. The Qabaq square *maydān al-qabaq* was still active until the death of sultan al-Nāsir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn. The scholars of Islam also had their burials bedside the tombs of Sufis and they were numerous in both Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥitat*, IV, Pt.II, pp.919-920; al-Saḥāwy, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, pp.31,32.

<sup>15</sup> G.al-Qāḍī, A.Bonnamy, *Architecture of the Dead*, pp.129,131.

<sup>16</sup> The researcher ʿArwat al-Azhary noted that it contains eight semi-circular openings used for allowing the light entering inside the grave. See T.al-Azhary, *Ġabānatbāb al-Naṣr*, p.119.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately there is no any old photo for the original form of the upper crescent; the current one is now made of wood and it seems to be added recently in unknown period.

with four rows of circles. This window is unfortunately blocked and it seems that it was added in a later time. One meter higher, there is a small row of trilobed crenellations (Fig.1/b); each unit is 40cm high. To the east there is a *qandīliyah* or *šand* (Fig.1/a) with twin windows and a circular moonlike which is typically a Mamluk style. The oval opening is 40cm wide each, while they are 90cm high in each. The northern façade is overall 6.60m high and overlooking some modern graves; the area that was once occupied by the cemetery of the Sufis<sup>18</sup>. By looking to this façade, the lower base is set adequate to the ground level with no debris in the lower part.

The western façade (Fig.2) (Pl.III) is the main part from the structure and starts with the main entrance 2m high, and 90cm wide<sup>19</sup>. The main entrance is topped by an elegant row of trilobed crenellations. This row is set on the base of the octagonal drum of the dome which is the transitional zones which is 2m wide from the west side. The twin windows *qandīliyah* or *šand* is set within the western side of the drum and each

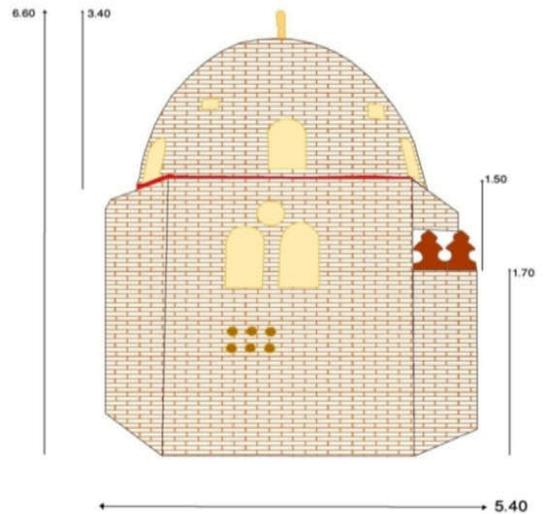


Fig.1  
The northern façade- elevation and details

oblong opening is 40cm wide and 90cm high. The twin window is similar to that of the northern wall and also equal in size. The lower square part from the dome is 5.40m wide while 2m are hewn by a modern grave that was once occupied by the graves of the Sufis.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Saḥāwī mentioned that on the north to the dome, there was a tomb for the Sufi *Šayḥ* Muḥammad al-Šaḥḥāta al-Ġīzāwī who was from the faithful men of his time as well as some other graves for unknown persons. See al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p.38.

<sup>19</sup> The researcher ʿArwat al-Azhary mentioned wrongly that the door is only 1m high and 60cm wide see (T.al-Azhary, *Ġabānatbāb al-Naṣr*, p.119 ), however, I gave accurate measurements with the help of a civil engineer while visiting the site and the dome.

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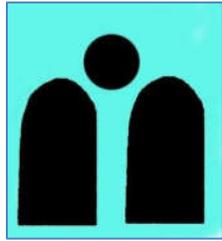


Fig.1/a



Fig.1/b

Details from the northern façade

The dome is set on the octagonal drum with no signs of decorations on its surface whilst three of the eight oval window openings are shown in this side. The portal's lower lintel is set higher than the interior of the building by 30cm high. The main entrance seems to be newly restored by the cemetery's inhabitants<sup>20</sup>. The main entrance is provided with a modern wood door while the original one is lost in unknown period, while al-Saḥāwy mentioned that the dome was provided with a door which had once the name of the rightly guided caliphs and other inscriptions carrying the date 1337<sup>21</sup> and located in the desert of *al-Mu'alim Haiyrallah*<sup>22</sup>. The façade is overlooking a modern grave<sup>23</sup> which was once a part of the ancient graves for the Sufis<sup>24</sup>. The façade is also overlooking Galāl Street and *Bāb al-Naṣr* specially from the southwestern part of the wall.

The debris is set to 30cm higher than the ground level and covers parts of the southern façade (Fig.3) (Pl.IV). The wall of the lower square part of the façade is 1.30m high and extends to the octagonal drum which is also 1.50m high. The overall façade is 6.20m high looking much shorter than the northern one because of the accumulation of the debris. The entire façade still has some features as the twin window *qandīliyah* appears from the middle of the façade; each oblong is 40cm surmounted by a moonlike *qamarīyah* to be 90cm high totally. The revetment of the octagonal drum is shown partly

<sup>20</sup> The entrance is paved with white encasement seems to have been restored in unknown period. By examining the type of casing it seems to be put in a modern ages over the original surface of the door's masonry.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Saḥāwy didn't mentioned the type of the date wither it is hijrī or Anno Dommini. But If we considered it in AD formula, it means that this dome was restored in the time of the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn because 738AH/1337AD that is the last years of his third reign (see Zambaur. Edward Von, *Mu'ḡam al-ansāb wa-l-usrāt al-ḥākimah ft-l-tārīḡ al-Islāmī*, Beirut, 1980, p.163). But when taking the date 1337AH/1918AD as it is the hijrī, that indicates that the date is the reign of King Fu'ad I (see Zambaur, *Mu'ḡam al-ansāb*, p.167) and the dome was restored within his rule.

<sup>22</sup> al-Saḥāwy, *Tuḡfat al-aḡbāb*, p.38

<sup>23</sup> T.al-Azhary, *Ġabānatbāb al-Naṣr*, p.119

<sup>24</sup> al-Saḥāwy, *Tuḡfat al-aḡbāb*, p.38

damaged especially from the western side whereas the eastern part from the façade is being covered with a modern wooden grave as the wall of the mihrab has also disappeared. Three from the eight oval window openings are shown in the façade while the upper semi-circular dome has a polished surface and nothing has remained from the original casing. The row of the crenellations is totally damaged. Parts of the rectangular window are shown in the lower part from the dome. As for the eastern part, it is completely hewn behind a modern grave<sup>25</sup> which is unreachable in the meantime. This part is fully covered from behind with the mud brick wall

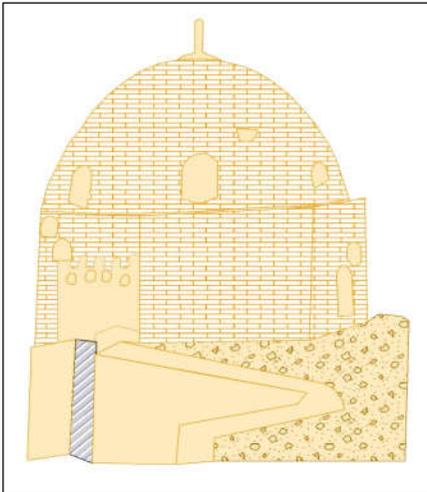


Fig.2. The western façade

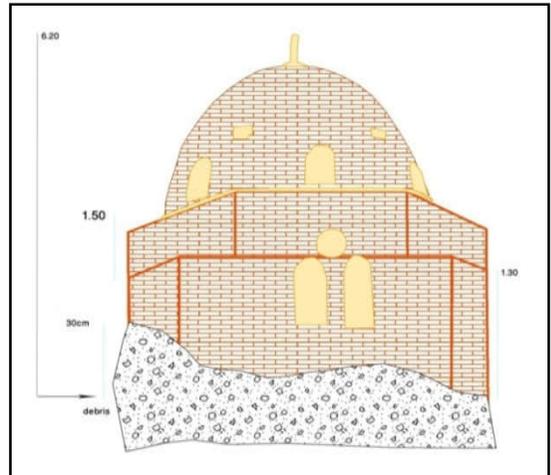


Fig.3. The southern façade

and a modern grave that makes the architectural elements disappeared. When observing the façade; great part of it is covered with a smoothed mortar casing while some trilobed crenellations which appears from the western side seems to have been newly restored.

The main entrance is on the southern side of the western façade and leads to the interior hall of the dome. The plan is almost square and the diameter of the dome is 3.75m. The western wall is void of decoration except for the twin window *qandīliyah*. The wall also has a square opening used for entering the light into the interior chamber. On the right side of the southern wall, two wooden benches for the Quran reciter are shown and are badly preserved. The first one is 110cm high and 160cm wide (Pl.V), has its upper balustrade is decorated with fine wooden inlays. The sides of the chair are

<sup>25</sup> In order to recognize the outer wall from the qibla, I need to remove a great part from the modern wooden graveyard that is mainly attached to the building and also it is hard to reach the inner wall to see if the mihrab has a protruding buttress or not. This façade must have contained the twin window *qandīliyah* such as the northern and the southern facades also to be in a harmony with the other remaining facades.

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decorated with vertical rectangular inlays. The other chair (Pl.VI) beside it is slightly smaller and 90cm wide, 1m high. It has only one back stand with no balustrade while the sides are void of decorations. In the center of the wall, a rectangular airshaft *malqaf* is shown with circular halls (Pl.VII) and it seems to have been added in a later period than the date of the dome and used for cooling the area of the reciter. A twin window *qandīliya* is shown above the airshaft. The same devices are shown on the opposite wall from the north side, while the twin window *qandīliyah* is shown above the square base. A rectangular recess is set underneath the window which seems to have been used as a cupboard *kutbiyah*<sup>26</sup> for the books and the Quran (Pl.VIII), or it was just a window opening and blocked in unknown time. The base of the dome rests over only four squinches as transitional zones. The style of the squinches seems to have been used in the early times mainly before the Mamluk period. (Pl.IX)

The eastern wall comprises the mihrab (Fig.5) which is a niche 180cm high, 90cm wide and 50cm deep (Pl.X), and it is of brick and the cavity is located in two recesses and topped by two semi-circular arches. The mihrab has some scratches which indicate that this mihrab was once covered by a marble coating. The mihrab is topped by a circular oculus that was once opened to the eastern part and is now blocked because of the grave that is mainly attached to the dome on the back side. It is hard to know whether this oculus was once filled with stucco grills or not. The oculus is surmounted by a square opening<sup>27</sup> and seems to have been used for entering the light like the other four sides from the hall. The hall of the dome doesn't contain a grave or any sign of a structure, but a marble slab has been found (Pl.XI) carrying *nashī* inscriptions indicated that this grave was constructed for a lady. The style of the inscription is somehow modern. The ceiling is vaulted while there are eight oval windows running all around the base of the dome. When observing the vertical sector of the dome. The entire plan is square 5.40m in the diameter of each side, then the octagonal drum 2.60m wide from south to north and 2m from east to west.

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<sup>26</sup> A recess is the hall contained a wood cupboard used for preserving the books and also used for preserving the paper rolls and the artifacts. This device used in most of the religious institutions like the mosques, madrasas, and Ḥanqāwāt. See Layla 'Alī Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad Amīn, *al-Muṣṭalāḥāt al-mi'mārīyah fi-l-waṭā'iq al-mamlūkīyah*, The American University in Cairo, 1990, p.93.

<sup>27</sup> This device is rare to be found in Islamic architecture

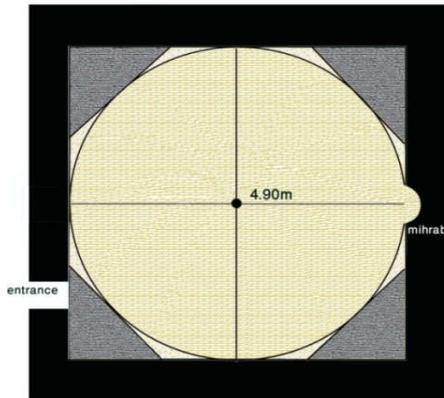


Fig.4  
Dome of Sitt Zaynab-Plan

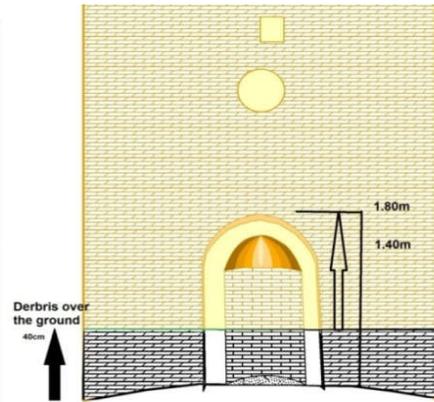


Fig.5  
the qibla wall-mihrab



Fig.6

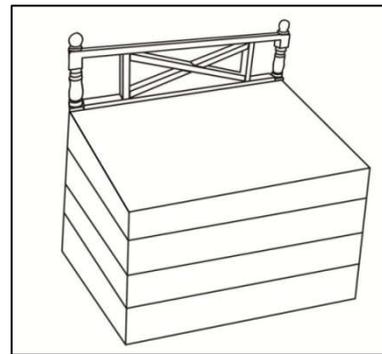


Fig.7

Chairs for the quran readers

The mihrab's cavity has no external projection. According to the plan, the entrance is located in the southwestern part, while the upper dome is resting on the octagonal drum. (Fig.4).The other remaining axial points of the octagonal drum are also 2m wide each. The last point of the sector is the circular dome structure which is 3m in diameter, while the base consists of a row of eight oval windows for the light. Three artifacts were found in the interior of the dome; the first is the marble slab contains an inscription. The second is two wood chairs for the reciter located attaching the southern wall of the interior dome. The first device is a marble slab which contains three lines of the nashī inscriptions reads: (Pl.XII) (Fig.7/a).

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- ١- يا زائري {لا} تنسني  
٢- من دع {وة} {لي} صالحة  
٣- ايسد {ط} {يدك الي السما} {ء}

- 1- *Oh, my visitor do not forget*  
2- *a true prayer for me*  
3- *hold your hands up to the heaven*

The slab is of marble (30 x 45cm). The words are inscribed in Nashī inscriptions which are partly damaged. It carries some invocations and demands from the deceased to who will visit his or her grave. This formula is very unique to be found in the Islamic Architecture especially the formula itself and the demand “*Oh my visitor don’t forget*” “*hold your hands up to the heaven*”. The style of writing here indicates that it was applied in later times may be a Mamluk or Ottoman times or even in the time of the Muhammad Ali dynast in the modern ages,

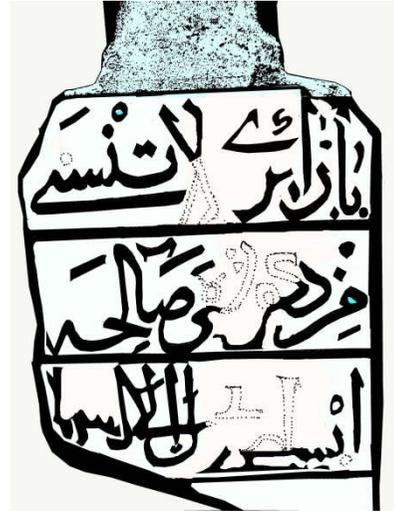


Fig.7/a marble slab with inscriptions

because the nashī was not found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century of hijrah the time when she came to Egypt. Moreover, the nashī inscriptions occurred in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century AH/12AD<sup>28</sup>. The second artifact is a chair for the reciter (Fig.6). The first one to the left is 110cm high and 160cm wide. It is made of wood but the question is when it was made and by whom? . From the style of the chairs they seem to have been made in a period after the Mamluks because the style is strange somehow.

<sup>28</sup> This type of cursive nashī inscriptions could be father estimated that it is occurred for the first time in Islamic architecture in India in the mihrab of the mosque of Quṭb Manār 590AH/1193AD which represents the witnessing formula (see Dominique Clévenat, Splendors of Islam, New York, 2000, pp.151, 153. Pl.210). In Egypt, the Nashī was used firstly in the end of the Fatimid Period, especially in the tissue fragments, onwards showing more evidence on these words as a beginning of using the cursive script Nashī or *al-Ḥatt al-Layīn* or *al-Muqawar* over artifacts displayed in the Fatimid tissue of the 3<sup>rd</sup> style in a tissue fragment from the 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> AD. see Shimmel, Annemarie, Calligraphy and Islamic Culture, New York, 1984, p.12; Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-Funūn al-Islāmiyah ḥata nahāyat al-‘Aṣr al-Faṭimī*, Cairo, 2006, p.192.

The chair has a small balustrade as a support for the reciter's back which is applied in a wood assembly technique. This type of chairs was known in the Mamluk period but it took different styles. According to the Mamluk documents, the imam has his special rank in the Mamluk period while the waqfiyah of the madrasah of the sultan Ḥasan mentioned the position of the *imām* who gained his monthly salary of about 60 dirhams<sup>29</sup>. The dome of the madrasah provides a chair for the imam that hasn't been mentioned in the document (Pl. XIII) which means that it was put in a later period than the date of the madrasah because the style is not a Mamluk<sup>30</sup>. According to the documents, none of them mentioned this device before. Also they have not been discovered in the Mamluk period which means that it was probably made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century AH, and they were given as a donation for the mosques. Another chair is behind the first with a primitive and simple style (Fig.7)

### The architectural analysis

The dome is classified as a separate burial dome<sup>31</sup> used to bury the honored persons and the structure is almost square from the lower edifice as seen in most of the ancient domes such as for the records like the ancient dome of al-Ṣulaībiyah 245AH/862 used for the burial of the Abbasid caliph al-Muntaṣir<sup>32</sup>. In Egypt, the oldest style of the separate domed mausoleums could be the separate dome of ṬabāṬabā 334AH/943AD<sup>33</sup>. In the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the plan and elevation (Fig.4) starts from a square 5.40m wide, then octagonal transitional zones, then ends with the circle of the dome which has a 4.90m in its diameter. The earliest types of separate domes have started with the square structure and are supported directly to the circle to be the

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<sup>29</sup>Huwayda al-Ḥārīṭī, *Kitāb waqf al-sultān Ḥasan bin Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn 'alā madrasatihī bi-l-Rumaylah*, Bairut, 2001, p.156, lines 15, 18.

<sup>30</sup> In the Mamluk style, the most elaborate designs shown are some inlaid star patterns especially that shown in the Quran chairs as seen in the inner dome of the madrasah of sultan Ḥasan. The Waqf mentioned that there were more than 60 Quran readers in the dome working in rotational shifts and they had their own salaries. Also there was a special reader for the Quran in Friday. See H.al-Ḥārīṭī, *Waqf al-sultān Ḥasan*, pp.158,159.

<sup>31</sup> T.al-Azhary, *Ġabānatbāb al-Naṣr*, p.119.

<sup>32</sup>Ṣāliḥ Lam'ī Muṣṭafa, *al-Qibāb fi-l-'Imārah al-Islāmiyah*, Cairo, no date, p.24; Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ṣāfi'ī, *Aḍwā' ḡadīdah 'ala al-qubbah al-ṣalībīyah*, Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Sohag University, April, 2018, No,47, Volume I, p.411.

<sup>33</sup>Creswell.K.A.C, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, Oxford, 1952, Vol.I, p.12; Muhammad Ḥamzah, *al-Qibab fi-l-'Imarah al-Miṣriyah al-Islāmiyah*, Cairo, 1993, p.39.

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earliest method of supporting dome<sup>34</sup>. The new device was added to separate between the square from the circle which are the zones of transition; this style occurred firstly in the Persian architecture<sup>35</sup>. The style is applied in most of the earliest Fatimid domes in Egypt in the seven Fatimid domes in al-Muqattam 400AH/1010AD<sup>36</sup>. The structure of those domes begins with two squares and an octagonal drum as a transitional zone which are built of bricks and consists of a window in the center of each face. The lower two squares are built of bricks with openings supported by semi-circular arches<sup>37</sup>. The dome of Sitt Zaynab was built on the same structure but with only one square, an octagonal drum and the dome. The construction of the square then the octagon are typically shown in the early Fatimid mausolea like that of al-Sayyida ‘Atikah and al-Ja‘farī 515AH/1121AD<sup>38</sup>. Also the style of the octagonal drum is seen in the dome of Iḥwat Yūsuf 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> AD<sup>39</sup>.

The previous statements show that when looking to the drum in the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the style occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AH/10-12<sup>th</sup> AD and could be seen clearly in the dome of ṬabāṬabā which is the earliest example. Also the style of the lower square structure is shown from the 3<sup>rd</sup> AH/9<sup>th</sup> AD century. The dome over the two lower levels over the grave of Sitt Zaynab has eight semi-circular windows; each one faces one side of the octagonal drum. The upper structure is not purely semi-circular as if it is spanning the center of few centimeters from the center of the circle as it is an oval dome not semi-circular; a prototype seen in the dome of ṬabāṬabā<sup>40</sup>. By this way, the style of the upper domed structure is mostly primitive somehow made in the early ages. The style of the second octagonal level has taken different style. The drum has an octagon that is mainly occurred in some

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<sup>34</sup> Ahmad Ali El Khateeb, Domes in the Islamic Architecture of Cairo city, A Mathematical Approach, in *Nexus Netw J* 14, Vol.14, No.1, Turin, Jan.2012, p.156.

<sup>35</sup> Jawdat Goussous, Wael al-Azhari, Domes Formation in Mediterranean Islamic Countries, Conference: “DOMES IN THE WORLD” International Congress November 3-6, 2011 - Florence, ITALY, pp.7-8.

<sup>36</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, I, p.13, fig.6; M.Hamzah, *al-Qibab*, p.40

<sup>37</sup> ‘Abdallah Kāmil Mūsa, *The Fatimid Architecture in Cairo*, Cairo, 1995, pp.45,46, Pls.59,60.

<sup>38</sup> Yūsuf Rāḡib, Les mausolées fatimides du quartier d’al-Mašāhid, *Annales Islamologiques* IFAO, Le Caire, 1971, Tome 17, p.12; A. K. Mūsa, *The Fatimid Architecture*, p.51.

<sup>39</sup> Mamdūh Muḥammad Ḥasanayn, *al-Mašāhid al-bāqiyah fi-l-‘Aṣr al-Fāṭimī*, M.A, Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo, University, 2003, pp.146,147, Pl.52.

<sup>40</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, I, p.13, fig.6.

Fatimid architectural buildings that is shown in the dome of Sayyidah ‘Ātikah and al-Ja‘farī while the drum is opened by a “Y” shaped window<sup>41</sup>. The lower square structure has taken also a different style, the only difference is the style of the windows like the *Šand* or *Qandīliya*<sup>42</sup> which also appears in the dome of Abu-l-Qāsim al-Ṭayib (mid 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> AD) from the Fatimid period, but the device here takes different form as the top of the *qamariyah* is triangular.<sup>43</sup> In the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the device is mainly Mamluk style and seen in one of the Bahrite separate domes in Egypt such as the dome of Tatar al-Hiġāziyah 748-761AH/1348-1360AD, while the *šand* or *qandīliyah* is set on the base of the octagonal drum<sup>44</sup>, and also in the dome of Tankazbuga 760AH/1359AD<sup>45</sup>. The same profile of windows is applied on some of the Mamluk domes at the northern cemetery *šaharā*; such as the dome of Ġānibak al-Ašrafī (before 831AH/1437AD)<sup>46</sup>. Similar to the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the *šand* is located on the basement of the octagonal drum and they are embedded in the masonry in each façade of the dome. Generally, the Idea of opening a window in the octagon drum of the dome appeared firstly in the Iranian domes such as the tomb of Imāzāda Yaḥiyā at Varāmīn, while

<sup>41</sup> Y. Rāġib, Les mausolées fatimides, *AnIsl*, 17, p.12 ;Williams, Caroline. “The Cult of ‘Alid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo Part II: The Mausolea.” *Muqarnas*, vol. 3, 1985, p.42, Pls.2,3;El Sandouby, A.,Ezzeldin Ismail, *The Ahl al-Bayt n Cairo and Damascus: The dynamics of making shrines for the family of the prophet*, PHD, University of California, Los Angeles, 2008, Figs.3.13,3.14.

<sup>42</sup> A Type of circular moonlike once covered with stucco grills. It has different forms and shapes; some have oblong shapes and the others are circular. The two oblong windows under a circular moonlit called in the Mamluk documents *šand*, whereas three oblong windows under three moonlikes called *dūst*. See L.A.Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad Amīn, *al-Muštalaḥāt al-mi‘māriyah*, pp.91,92.

<sup>43</sup> G.al-Qāḍī, A.Bonnamy, *Architecture of the Dead*, p.56

<sup>44</sup> Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, Un collège féminine dans l’Egypte Mamluke, *Journal of the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, Part III*, 1987,Pl.II/B ;Cipriani. Barbara, *Development of the Construction Techniques in the Mamluk Domes of Cairo*, M.A, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p.40. Fig.1.7

<sup>45</sup> M.Hamzah, *al-Qibab*, Pl.94.

<sup>46</sup> Hānī Hamza, *The Northern Cemetery of Cairo*, The American University in Cairo, 2001, Pl.16

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the drum is usually much thicker than the dome<sup>47</sup>, the same form here in the dome of Sitt Zaynab while the octagonal drum is almost thicker than the arch of the dome. Certainly, the arch of the dome is classified as pointed arch in the consideration of exact typology of external shell profile and this style occurred in the Middle East and central Asia<sup>48</sup>. The northern façade in the dome of Sitt Zaynab is enhanced by a small course of trilobed crenellations (Fig.1/a), and this device is certainly Mamluk because the style of the trilobed leaf in each unit occurred in the Mamluk period over their edifices as seen for example in the dome of Kuzal al-Nāṣirī<sup>49</sup>.

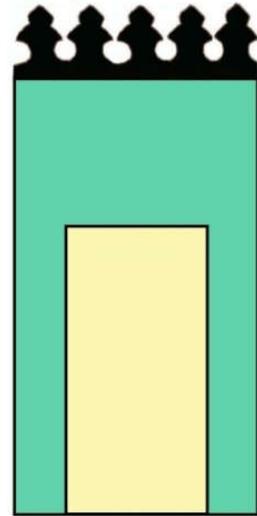


Fig.8

The western entrance

This course with the same style of ornaments could be also seen in the dome of Tatar al-Ḥiğāziyah<sup>50</sup>, because, this style of trefoil crenellation was never found before the Mamluk period and it occurred for the first time in the tulunid period in the mosque of Ibn Tulun but was such parapets that turns out to be a repetition of Samarra Stucco motifs<sup>51</sup>. In the dome of Sitt Zaynab,

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<sup>47</sup>D. H. Gye. "Arches and Domes in Iranian Islamic Buildings: An Engineer's Perspective." *Iran*, vol. 26, 1988, p.142, Pl.11a.

<sup>48</sup>Ashkan, Maryam. & Ahmad, Yahaya, Discontinuous Double-shell Domes through Islamic eras in the Middle East and Central Asia: History, Morphology, Typologies, Geometry, and Construction, Nexus Network Journal – Vol.12, No. 2, Turin, 2010, pp.304,307.

<sup>49</sup>M.Hamzah, *al-Qibab*, Pl.104. H.Hamza, The Northern Cemetery, Pl.35.

<sup>50</sup>A. 'Abd al-Rāziq, Un Collège féminin, pp.16,18, Fig.5, Pl.II/A ; O'Kane, Bernard. "The design of Cairo's masonry domes." *Proceedings of the Masons at Work Conference*. University of Pennsylvania, 2012, p.6, Fig.6.

<sup>51</sup>Doris. B.Abu Seif, Islamic Architecture, An Introduction, AUC, Cairo, 1989, p.53, Pl.40; Munazamat al-'awaṣim wa-l-mudun al-Islāmiyah, *Usus al-taṣmīm al-mi'mārīwa-l-taḥtīḥ al-ḥaḍarī fi-l-'uṣur al-islāmiyah al-muḥtalifah bi-l-'āṣimah al-Qāhira*, Cairo, 1990, p.21, Fig.3/220; Swelim. Muhamad Tarek Nabil, The Mosque of IbnTūlūn, A new perspective,=

here in the western main façade mainly over the main entrance, another course of crenellations occurred, and it seems that was restored and had a new painting. Thus the dome of Sitt Zaynab gathers different styles from different periods. Before entering the tomb, the style of the entrance is uncommon. The entrance masonry is located on the southwestern side of the western façade which is a rectangular opening (Fig.8) crowned by five units of trilobed crenellations. The style of this entrance is almost unique in Islamic architecture especially when finding an entrance with a course of crenellations over the lintel. But we are able to see some traces of these types of crenellations on the upper walls of the dome of al-Şawābī 684AH/1285AD<sup>52</sup>

The crenellations here are in the form of trilobed leaves and they are continued on the four walls of the tomb. Other traces of those types occur in the northern façade of the edifice (Fig.1/a). From the main entrance the interior chamber is almost square in shape and the most striking element to the eyes are the four squinches *muqarnas*<sup>53</sup> on the four corner of the drum as transition zones. The style of the squinches is mostly primitive which makes us confused about their dating and the dating of the grave. On the four corners of the interior hall, the dome rests over a drum of four simple squinches. The style of the squinches is almost simple with semi-circular top and curved lower edge (Fig.9) the style that occurred in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> AH/6<sup>th</sup> AD century specially in the *bab al-‘Āmah* in the palace of al-Mu‘taşim known as *Jawsaq al-Ĥāqānī* at Samarrā’ 221AH/836AD<sup>54</sup> like those of the

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=PhD, Harvard University, 1994, p.3 ; Ibn Tulun, His Lost City and Great Mosque, AUC, Cairo, 2015, Fig.8; Aĥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah al-Islāmiyah fī Mişr munḍu al-faṭḥ al-‘arabī ḥata nahāyat al-‘aşr al-mamlūkī*, Cairo, 2012, p.51.

<sup>52</sup>M.Hamzah, *al-Qibab*, Pl.77

<sup>53</sup> An architectural stalactite vaulting in a form of a honey comb was used to embellish the buildings, cornices and the transitional zones of the domes. Each unit is called a squinch *ḥaṭah* in a form of a small niche with pointed or semi-circular arch. The *muqarnas* has several types like *al-şāmī* or from the Levant which has a semi-circular arch, and the native types *al-baladī* in a form of keel arched squinch. See L.A.Ibrāhīm, MuĥammadAmīn, *mal-Muştalahāt al-mi‘māriyah*, p.113. The first type of *Muqarnas* motif first appears in Egypt in the cornice of the minaret of Badr al-Ġamālī’s Maşihad on the muqattam hills 478AH/1085AD . See Bloom. Jonathan M, *The Introduction of the Muqarnas into Egypt, Muqarnas*, Brill, Vol. 5 (1988), p.21.

<sup>54</sup>Northedge Alastair “An Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph at Samarra (Dar Al-Khilafa or Jawsaq Al-Khaqani).” *Ars Orientalis*, Freer Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Institution and Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan vol. 23, 1993,=

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dome of Sitt Zaynab that means that this style of squinches occurred in the domes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AH in the same style of the semi-circular arch and only one squinch is set on the triangular pendentives and the squinch has a deep cavity to the walls of the drum from the other side (Fig.9/a). In Egypt, the oldest dated example could be seen in the dome over the mihrab of the mosque of al-Ḥākīm bi' Amr Allah 380-403AH/990-1131AD<sup>55</sup>.



Fig.9

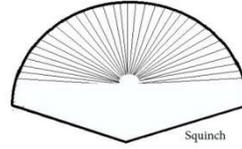


Fig.9/a

Squinches in the dome of Sitt Zaynab

Drawn by the researcher

This style of squinches also occurred from the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> AH century in the domes of the Fatimid period especially in the domes of *saba' banāt* in the outskirts of Muqattam<sup>56</sup>. The domes are represented in a simple form with almost one semi-circular squinch in the dome over the mihrab in the prayer hall of the *mašhihad* of al-Ġiyūṣī 478AH/1058AD<sup>57</sup>. One unit of squinches was put also in the transition zones of the Fatimid dome of al-Ḥafīz at al-Azhar mosque<sup>58</sup>, and the dome of Iḥawat Yūsuf 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> AD, the drum is embedded with only one unit of squinches in each side<sup>59</sup> also in some of the Fatimid domes in Aswan City that the domes has a drum of one unit of squinches without any external projection<sup>60</sup>. The same form of squinches are also seen in the dome of Mufy al-Dīn (mid 5<sup>th</sup> AH/11<sup>th</sup> AD), and the dome of Abu Turāb at al-Abbasiyah<sup>61</sup>; the style that resembling that of the palace of al-Mu'taṣim which is considered the first of its type in Islamic

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=p.146; Farīd Ṣāfi'ī, *al-'Imārah al-'arabiyah fī Miṣr al-Islāmiyah*, 'Aṣr al-wullāh, General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo, 1994, pp.144,402, Figs.91, 233.

<sup>55</sup>Delly. Wilfred Joseph, *al-'Imārah al-'arabiyah bi Miṣr, fīṣarḥ al-mumayzāt al-binā'iyah al-ra'isiyah li-l-tirāz al-'arabī*, Cairo, 1923, p.19.

<sup>56</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, I, p.13, Fig.6; Amāl al-'Imarī, *al-'Imarah al-faṭimiyah*, no date, pp.72,73. See also <http://www.islamic-art.org/CreswellExhibition/index.htm>

<sup>57</sup> Briggs. Martin.S, *Muhammadan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine*, Oxford, 1924, p.71, Fig.38.

<sup>58</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, I, Pl.113c; O' Kane, *Domes*, p.17, Fig.27.

<sup>59</sup> Creswell, , M.A.E, I, pp.234-235.

<sup>60</sup> F.Ṣāfi'ī, *al-'Imārah*, pp.547, 555, 561, Fig.374.

<sup>61</sup> Ibrahim.Layla.A, *The Transitional Zones of Domes in Cairene Architecture*, **Kunst des Orients**, Franz Steiner Verlag, Vol. 10, H. 1/2 (1975), p.6

Architecture<sup>62</sup>. To sum up, the muqarnas squinches in the dome of Sitt Zaynab has a style somehow primitive with smoothed cavity with no conical form and most probably recalls the style of the 3<sup>rd</sup> AH/9<sup>th</sup> AD century which is also continued in the 4<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> AD centuries. Obviously one can exclude the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods as periods of construction; such as the dome of Imām al-Šafī‘ī 608AH/1211AD<sup>63</sup>, and the dome of Šağar al-Durr 648AH/1250AD have three-tiered squinches as transition zones, while the two-tiered course of squinches could be seen in the dome of the Abbasid caliphs<sup>64</sup>. In the Bahari Mamluk period, more than two and three tiers of squinches can be seen in al-Manšūr Qalawūn’s dome (683-4AH/1284AD), which also resemble that of the mausoleum of al-Ašraf Ḥalīl(687AH/1288AD).<sup>65</sup>

Underneath is the main mihrab which is located in the center of the Qibla wall and surmounted by an oculus and a rounded window opening (Pl.)(Fig.5). The mihrab is made of brick and the inner core is of mudbrick, indicating that this mihrab was once restored in a certain period of time. The style of the mihrab and the oculus is mainly seen in the Mamluk qibla walls, while mostly all the separated domes in the Mamluk period had their mihrabs made of stone. The mihrab has almost one recess with a style somehow old with no external projection. If we look to the style of the Fatimid mihrabs, the upper hood has a keel arch as seen in the mihrab of the mausoleum of al-Lu’lu’ah<sup>66</sup>, also in the mihrab of the mausoleum of Iḥwat Yūsuf<sup>67</sup>, and they had a conch with ribbed hoods like sunrays as seen in the mihrab of al-Sayyida Ruqayyah<sup>68</sup>, and they are also covered with carved stucco ornaments as seen in the mihrab of the *mašihad* al-Ġiyūšī<sup>69</sup>. Here in the mihrab of the

<sup>62</sup>F. Šafī‘ī, *al-‘Imārah*, p.561

<sup>63</sup>Creswell Photo Archive in the Ashmolean Museum.

<http://creswell.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/archive/EA.CA.4406-0>; Mulder.Stephennie, The Mausoleum of Imam Al-Shafī‘ī, **Muqarnas**, Vol. 23 (2006), p.19, Fig.6; A. ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah*, p. 169.

<sup>64</sup>A. ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah*, p.201

<sup>65</sup>Ibrahim.Layla.A, The Transitional Zones, **KunstOr**, 10, p.9

<sup>66</sup>A. K. Mūsa, The Fatimid Architecture, p.47, Pl.66

<sup>67</sup>Creswell, M.A.E, I, pp.234-235; A. K. Mūsa, The Fatimid Architecture, p.58, Pl.74

<sup>68</sup>Y. Rāgib, Les mausolées fatimides, **AnIsl**, 17, p.21; Pruitt Jennifer. A, Fatimid Architectural Patronage and Changing Sectarian Identities (969-1021), PhD, Harvard University, 2009, p.295, Fig.5.7.

<sup>69</sup>The stucco revetment is now lost. See A. ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah*, p.110

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dome of Sitt Zaynab, the style is different. While the mihrab has a cupola enhanced by two semi-circular arches, without any sign of flanked columns; they may have been lost in an unknown period. Thus it is hard to estimate if this mihrab was built in the Fatimid period because the style is not Fatimid of course. In most of the Mamluk domes, the mihrabs are made of stone and they are surmounted by an oculus as seen in the dome chamber in the madrasah of sultan Ḥasan<sup>70</sup>. The style of the qibla wall is seen in the Mamluk period as a mihrab surmounted with an oculus and also seen in the late Mamluk period in the dome of Barquq inside the Ḥānqāh of his son Faraġ at the cemetery<sup>71</sup>, and in the qibla wall of the tomb of Qaytbāy in his madrasah at the cemetery<sup>72</sup>. The domes of the Mamluks also have the same style of the qibla wall. The mihrab in the dome of Sitt Zaynab is of stone and took mainly the Mamluk design as seen in the mihrab of the dome of Barsbāy al-Baġāsī in the Mamluk cemetery 860AH/1456AD<sup>73</sup>, and the mihrab in the dome of al-Ġulṣanī 879AH/1474AD<sup>74</sup>. The style of the stone mihrabs with single recess, and the oculus as parts from the eastern wall could be also seen in the dome of Azrumuk 909AH/1504AD<sup>75</sup>. Thus the style of the Mamluk qibla wall is composed of the mihrab in the central lower part, the oculus over the mihrab, and the windows *qandīliyāt* on the flanks of the upper wall (Fig.10). In the Qibla wall of the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the same Mamluk style is applied while the mihrab is located in the middle of the wall, and is covered by a rounded oculus in the center of the upper wall (Fig.5).

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<sup>70</sup>Herz. Max, La mosquée du sultan Hasan au Caire, Le Caire, 1899, Pl.XIII; Abdallah M. Kahil, The Sultan Hasan Complex in Cairo 1357-1364, PhD, The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2002, p.269, Pls.141,146.

<sup>71</sup> Coste. Pascal, Architecture arabe ou Monuments du Kaire, mesurés et dessinés, de 1818 à 1825, Paris, 1839, Pl.X.

<sup>72</sup>Coste, Architecture arabe, Pl.XXXIII

<sup>73</sup> For the photo of the mihrab, open this link <http://islamic-art.org/PhotoArchive/DisplayImages.asp?photoid=3008&qualityID=5>

<sup>74</sup>For the photo of the mihrab, open this link <http://www.islamic-art.org/PhotoArchive/DisplayImages.asp?photoid=3120&qualityID=5>

<sup>75</sup> Open the links <http://www.islamic-art.org/PhotoArchive/DisplayImages.asp?photoid=3316&qualityID=5>, and the mihrab in the link <http://www.islamic-art.org/PhotoArchive/DisplayImages.asp?photoid=3313&qualityID=5>

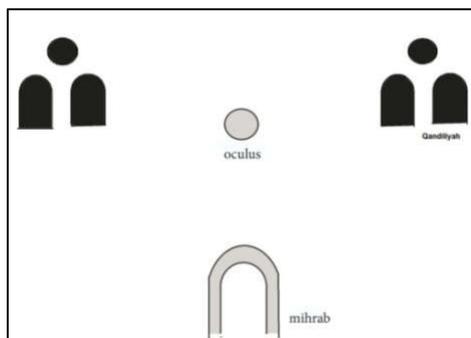


Fig.10

The formal style of the Mamluk qibla wall

It typically resembles those of Barsbay al-Bağāsī, Ğulšanī, and Azrūmuk. Thus the style of the Qibla wall in the dome of Sitt Zaynab is typically Mamluk, and they are shown in most of the Mamluk buildings such as the domes, madrasas, and mosques<sup>76</sup>. In the northern wall of the tomb, the recess in the wall *kutbīyah*<sup>77</sup> could be easily seen (Pl.VIII). When looking to the earliest domes in the Abbasid or the Fatimid period, this device is not seen apparently<sup>78</sup>, and is shown however in the Mamluk constructions such as the

<sup>76</sup> This style of the qibla is shown in the qibla wall in most of the religious buildings such as the mosque of Šayhū al-Nāširī 750/1349, the qibla wall in the madrasah of sultan Ḥasan, the Ḥānqāh of al-Nāšir Farağ ibn Barqūq, 801-803/1359-1411, the qibla wall in the Zāwīyah of Farağ ibn Barqūq known as *zāwīyah al-dihayšah* 811/1409, the mosque of al-Muʿayyad Šayh 818-823/1415-1420, the madrasah of al-Ašraf Barsbāy 829/1425, the madrasah of al-Qāḍī Yaḥiya Zayn al-Dīn 848/1444, the madrasah-Ḥānqāh of sultan Ināl 855-860/1451-1456, the madrasah of Qāyṭbāy 877-879/1472-1474, the madrasah of Abu Bakr Muzhir 884/1379, the madrasah of Amir Kabīr Qurūmās al-Sayfī 911-913/1506-1507, the dome of the sultan Qanšuh Abu Saʿīd 904/1498. For more details see Munazamat al-ʿAwāšim, *Usus al-tašmīm al-miʿmārī*, pp.114,174,181,185-186, 190,197,202,208,214,230,242, Figs.147/2,147/7,133/1/133/4,149/1,203/1,175/1,182/2,158/1,99/1,49/1,162/1,164/2. For more details on the style of the Qibla wall in the Mamluk Cairo see also Fernandez, y. Espinosa, *The visual composition of the Circassian period qibla wall in Cairo*. (volumes I and II). Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988.

<sup>77</sup> For the term see note 47

<sup>78</sup> Many researchers such as K.A.C Creswell, Yūsuf Rāğib and Muḥammad Ḥamzah wrote many researches on the Fatimid mausolea of Egypt whither they are for the family of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) or not and the never mentioned this device in any of the Fatimid domes. See Creswell, K. A. C. *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt, I. Ikhshīds and Fatimids, A.D. 939–1171*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952; Yusuf Rāğib, *Les sanctuaires des gens de la famille dans la cité des morts au Caire*, *Rivista de glistudi orientali*, Università di Roma, Vol. 51, Fasc. 1/4 (Giugno 1978), pp. 47-76. See also Y.

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dome of Azrumuk. Concerning the plan of the dome of Sitt Zaynab; it is a little bit confusing when looking at the style of the square plan (Fig.4). The square coverage is opened to only one entrance in the southwest side of the edifice. When observing the earliest domes, like that of ṬabāṬabā, it has multiple entrances seen from the remains of the plan that was given<sup>79</sup>. The Fatimid mausolea underwent various transformations, especially in the walls of the tombs, while the tombs have a square plan and more than one entrance and sometimes it reached four as seen in the Fatimid seven domes in the vicinity of al-Muqattam<sup>80</sup>. The Fatimid mausolea are varied in their number of entrances. Sometimes we have a square plan with only one entrance as seen in the domes of al-Jā‘farī and Sayyida ‘Ātikah<sup>81</sup>. Other Fatimid domes have a square plan with almost three entrances, especially in the Fatimid domes in Aswān<sup>82</sup>. Therefore, the Fatimid domes are varied between two to four entrances especially the domes in Aswan with almost a square plan. In the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the rule has been changed while the entrance is located in the southwest side (Fig.4); a style that comes with confusion about the date. In the Ayyubid period, the style of the plan remained with few changes, especially when looking to the plan of the dome of Imām al-Šāfi‘ī, it has three openings; only one use as entrance<sup>83</sup>. The square plan with three entrances also occurs in the dome of the Abbasid caliphs 640AH/1242AD<sup>84</sup>.

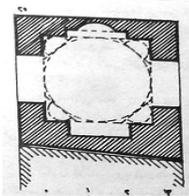


Fig.11/a

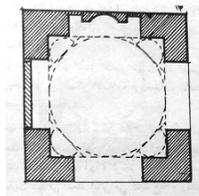


Fig.11/b

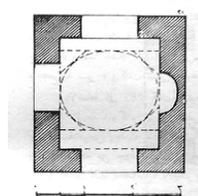


Fig.11/c

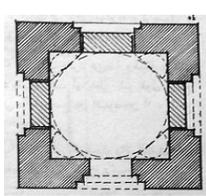


Fig.11/d

Examples of domes with two, three, and four entrances in Aswān cemetery

After Farīd Šāfi‘ī, *al-‘imārah*

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Rāgīb, Les mausolées fatimides, *AnIsl*, 17, pp.1-30. See also M.Ḥamza, *al-Qibab*, pp.55-176.

<sup>79</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, I, p.12; F.Šāfi‘ī, *al-‘Imārah*, Fig.229

<sup>80</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, I, p.13, Fig.6

<sup>81</sup> A.K.Mūsa, *The Fatimid Architecture*, Fig.13

<sup>82</sup> F.Šāfi‘ī, *al-‘Imārah*, pp.528-570.

<sup>83</sup> Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt, Ayyubids and Early Bahrite Mamluks*, Volume II, New York, 1978, Fig.30; Munazamat al-‘Awāšim, *Usus al-tašmīm al-mi‘mārī*, Pl.281/1.

<sup>84</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, II, Fig.40; A.Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah*, p.199

In the dome of al-Šāliḥ Nağma l-Dīn Ayyūb 648AH/1250AD, the plan is almost a square with only one entrance located on the northwestern corner of the interior hall<sup>85</sup>. In the Mamluk period, the design of the square plan and multiple entrances also occurred, especially the dome of Šağar al-Durr which has a square plan with three entrances<sup>86</sup> (Fig.12/b), and the same design occurred in the dome of Faṭimah Ḥātūn<sup>87</sup>(Fig.12c). Domes with one entrance could be seen in the Circassian domes like that of the dome of Yūnus al-Dawādār 783-4AH/1382AD<sup>88</sup> (Fig.12/d). But in other cases, the late Mamluk domes could be provided with more than one entrance with a square plan as seen in the dome of Ġānibak al-Ašrafī<sup>89</sup>.

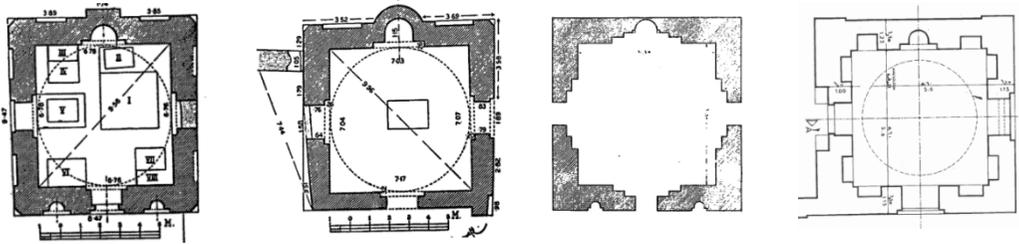


Fig.12/a Abbasid caliphs Fig.12/b Šağar al-durr Fig.12/c Fatimah Ḥatun Fig.12/d Yūnus al-Dawadar , After Creswel, M.A.E, .M.Hamzah, *al-Qibab* After, Munazamat al-‘Awāsim

In the late Mamluk period, the square design occurred with one entrance on the west side especially that in the dome of Ḥadijah Umm al-Ašraf 835-845AH/1430-1440AD)<sup>90</sup>, and the dome of the Rifā‘ī in the northern cemetery<sup>91</sup>. In the interior design of the dome of Sitt Zaynab, the northern wall is provided with remains of a rectangular recess may be a *kutbiyah* or a recess for a blocked entrance (Pl.VIII). However, when observing the outer northern wall of the façade, remains of a window recess can be seen with no signs of a blocked entrance while the lintel of the opening could be observed. For that reason, one can concludes that the design of the dome resembles that of the Mamluk domes especially from the late Mamluk period as it is a dome with a

<sup>85</sup> M. Ḥamzah, *al-Qibāb*, Fig. 8; Munazamat al-‘Awāsim, *Usus al-tašmīm al-mi‘mārī* ,p.69; Pl.38/1; A.Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah*, p.203.

<sup>86</sup> Creswell, M.A.E, II, Fig.71; Munazamat al-‘Awāsim, *Usus al-tašmīm al-mi‘mārī* ,p.77; Pl.169/1.

<sup>87</sup> M. Ḥamzah, *al-Qibāb*, Fig.9

<sup>88</sup> Munazamat al-‘Awāsim, *Usus al-tašmīm al-mi‘mārī* ,p.141, Pl.157/1

<sup>89</sup> M. Ḥamzah, *al-Qibāb*, fig.36

<sup>90</sup> H.Hamzah, Northern Cemetery, Fig.6

<sup>91</sup> M. Ḥamzah, *al-Qibāb*, fig.38

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square plan and only one entrance. Finally the researcher found a small slab of marble carrying three lines of inscriptions in nashī. The style of nashī writing was never found before the 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> AD century. When we look at the slab (Pl.XII), the upper part and some traces of the lower edge have been lost, only some traces of the letters had been preserved. From the style of the letters, it was inscribed in the Mamluk or the Ottoman period during the restoration of the dome or maybe it was an addition that was added in modern times in the time of Muhammad Ali's dynasty or later. The last thing we have to mention is the material; by observation, the inner layer of building masonry is or burnt brick *al-Ağur*; the type of bricks that was used mainly in the first two centuries AH. In the mosque of 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀş for example the material was used during the renovation by the Umayyad governor Qurra ibn Šurayk in 93AH/712AD<sup>92</sup>, and it is used widely in the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn and continues to be used in the Fatimid period<sup>93</sup>. Here in the tomb of Sitt Zaynab, each part of the walls are embedded with full course of burnt bricks which gives us evidence about the time of the construction. It means that the dome was built before the 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> AD century because the stone was known in the constructions for the first time in the western façade of the mosque of al-Ḥākim bi' Amr Allah<sup>94</sup> especially in the minarets<sup>95</sup>. The Ayyubid and Mamluk domes were made of full stones as can be observed in the cemeteries or in the vicinity. Thus it is unlikely to consider that this dome was built in the Mamluk period; we might assume though that Mamluks renovated the structure and added own elements to the dome. The plan of the dome therefore changed in the times by the Mamluks but the dome was present before.

## **Conclusion**

After studying the dome and its architectural analysis; one can conclude that this dome was built in two distinct periods. The first period is the third century AH/9<sup>th</sup> AD and this is the period when the lady came to Egypt as

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<sup>92</sup>Creswell.K.A.C, La mosquée de 'Amru [avec 12 planches] traduit de l'anglais par Mme R. L. Devonshire, Bulliten de l' Institut français d'archéologie orientale *BIFAO*- Le Caire, 32 (1932), p.124 ; A.Abd al-Rāziq, *al-ʿImārah*, p.49

<sup>93</sup> al-Maqrīzī, *al-ḥitat*, Edited by Ayman Fu'ad Sayid, Vol.IV, Pt.I, p.64; Maḥmūd 'Akūš, *Tārīḥ wa waşf al-ğāmi' al-ṭūlūnī*, Cairo, 1927, pp.37-39; A.Abd al-Rāziq, *al-ʿImārah*, p.49.

<sup>94</sup>A.Abd al-Rāziq, *al-ʿImārah*, p.49.

<sup>95</sup>D.Abu Seif, *Islamic Architecture*, p.64

mentioned before; the second period is the Mamluk period from the 7<sup>th</sup> AH to the 9<sup>th</sup> AD and this for many reasons:

1-The name of the common people for this monument is obviously *ma'bad al-sitt Zaynab* which means that this monument was used as a place for worshipping for a particular *ṭarīqah* for Sufis as witnessed also in the *ma'bad* of Sīdī Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī which is located nearby the Ḥānqāh of al-Ašraf Barsbāy in the northern Mamluk suburb of Cairo<sup>96</sup>. Therefore, the tomb of *Sitt Zaynab* was used as a *ma'bad* or place for worshipping by Sufis mainly starting with the Mamluk period.

2-The style of the upper oval construction of the dome gives an interpretation of the style of the third century AH, like the Persian domes and the dome of ṬabāṬabā in Egypt while the upper half circle spanning the center of the dome makes an oval shape not a half circle.

3-The style of the oval windows on the basement of the half circle is a style that occurred mainly in the domes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AH and extended to the fourth found also in many of the Fatimid domes in Egypt and outside.

4-The style of the stalactites as transitional zones is very simple with semi-circular pointed arches, void of any decoration. The style that occurred in the early domes of the third century AH, also in the fourth to the fifth centuries AH. This indicated that the interior design of the dome was made during the early three centuries before the Ayyubid and the Mamluk period. The style of the Ayyubid and the Mamluk transitional zones is different and contains more than one row of stalactites

5-The material of the masonry dome is the brick which is used in the early four centuries of Hijra as mentioned before, so the dome's walls are embedded with courses of bricks in its three parts: the upper dome – the octagonal drum, and the four walls.

6-The dome's outer wall was once surrounded by a course of crenellation in trilobed forms which means that the dome was restored in the Mamluk period; only some traces now could be seen in the northern and the western facades of the dome, and they are made of stone different from the masonry dome itself.

7- The dome is mainly provided with a style of windows that occurred in the Mamluk period which is the *qandīliyāt* as can be observed in the northern, western and the southern facades. This style of windows never occurred before the Mamluk period which means that those windows were added to the tomb in the Mamluk period. The material of windows is also different from the masonry dome itself.

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<sup>96</sup> For more details, See Frenandes. Leonor, Three Sūfī Foundations in a 15th Century Waqfiyya, *Annales Islamologiques*, Le Caire, 17 (1981), pp.146-150.

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8-The style of the qibla wall appeared also in the Mamluk period which is the central mihrab surmounted by the oculus. When looking at the mihrab, the inner course of bricks can be seen, while also some traces of the outer plaster revetment appear. That gives us a conclusion that this mihrab is the original mihrab of the dome, and the outer mortar and the oculus were added to the dome. That is because of the inner masonry of the mihrab which is the bricks and the outer casing of mortar was added in the Mamluk period.

9-Few changes were made to the actual mihrab. The style is in a form of a recess with semi-circular arch and once flanked by two columns; only the place of the columns remained. By observing the main mihrab of the qibla wall, the style is apparent in the early Islamic constructions. The style here could be seen in the Mamluk Domes especially those in the Mamluk cemetery such as the mihrab in the dome of Barsbay al-Bağāsī, and the dome of al-Ġulšanī as mentioned before.

10-One of the Mamluk features of the dome is the recess of the northern side of the tomb chamber which could be a recess for a window or a *kutbiyah* for the books. The recess is now blocked; only a window with circular openings was put on the outer side.

11-The plan of the dome is almost square which is shown on the early Fatimid domes. It seems that the plan slightly changed in the Mamluk period, while only one entrance is provided on the southwestern wall of the dome chamber.

12-The dome of al-Sayyida Zaynab wasn't used only as a grave. Several circles of *dīkr* were held for the Sufis and also the *ḥalaqah* was organized according to the rituals of the Sufis. That's because of the existence of the quran reader's chair (Figs.6,7), and they were used by the *ṣayḥ* for giving the lessons to his disciples, and the chairs were shown in the Mamluk *ḥānqās* for Sufis such as the Ḥānqāh of al-Aṣraf Barsbāy in his dome, the Ḥānqāh-madrasah of sultan Qāyṭbāy at the cemetery. This device was also used in the mosques and seen in the mosque of Qānībāy al-Rammāḥ. When saying that the style of the chairs wasn't Mamluk that means that the Sufi rituals continued even after the end of the Mamluk period and went on in the Ottoman times.

13-In the dome a slab of marble was found carrying nashī inscriptions first published by the researcher. The text is clarifying invocations and supplications like demands from the deceased to his visitors (Pl.XII) (Fig.7/a). The style of writing is somehow applied in later times may be in the Ottoman or in the modern ages.

To sum up, the dome of al-Sayyida Zaynab at Bab al-Naṣr cemetery is considered one of the unique structural domes in the Islamic period because of its formation and style that is rarely to be found in the Islamic monuments of Cairo. So we can conclude that this dome was built within the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AH, when, the rulers and sultans venerated the lady and its *mašihad* or *darīḥ*. Because of the importance of the place the Mamluks had restored the dome although it was made as a grave for one of the *Āl al-Bayt* who came to Egypt in the 212AH/827AD or 213AH/828AD with her brother, while the year of her death was unknown. So the Mamluks hadn't taken the doctrinal point of view into their consideration when they restored the dome otherwise they would have demolished the dome as occurred in *turbat al-za'farān* in the time of the Circassian sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq. By this conclusion, this dome may be the oldest grave in Egypt being venerated by the Mamluk sultans who had mostly given their awareness to the *hawš al-ṣūfiyah* especially from the time of the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn who had developed this area but later abandoned it and the cemetery in 720AH/1320AD. In this area which is called *al-Rayidāniyah* or *Maydān al-qabaq* as mentioned by al-Maqrīzī. He noted as well that the first Mamluk who built his tomb here was Šams al-Dīn Qarāsunqur joining the tombs of Sufis *turab al-ṣūfiyah*. Later on more Mamluks added their tombs. So the *turab al-ṣūfiyah*, and the tomb of Sitt Zaynab al-Ḥanafiyah had raised the awareness of the Mamluks sultans and emirs also the Mamluk such as Sayf al-Dīn Kūkāy, Ṭājār al-Dawādār, Sayf al-Dīn Ṭaštumur al-sāqī, prince Mankalībugā who also developed the area and built graves.

The area was also inhabited and developed in the Circassian period by sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq and his son Farağ<sup>97</sup>. This argument moved us to a conclusion that this dome after it had been built within the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AH/9<sup>th</sup> AD was restored and renovated by the Mamluks who had also their burials in the *saḥarā'* either in the north or in the south cemeteries started from *bāb al-barqiyah* up till the cemetery of *bāb al-wazīr* and *Sīdī Ġalāl* to the south vicinity of Cairo,<sup>98</sup> and built their burials in the cemeteries, so it is logic to say that they were keen on representing their generous care to the

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<sup>97</sup> al-Maqrīzī, *al-ḥiṭaṭ*, Edited by Ayman Fu'ad Sayid, Vol.IV, Pt.II, pp.918-921.

<sup>98</sup> For more details see H.Ḥamza, *The Northern Cemetery*, pp.1-18.

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constructions of the *Āl al-bayt*, as seen in the dome of Imām al-Šāfi‘ī which has been given a special awareness by the Mamluk sultans Qāyṭbay and al-Ġawrī<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>99</sup> For more details see Creswell, M.A.E, II, pp.73,74; Mulder. S, The Mausoleum of Imam Al-Shafi‘ī, **Muqarnas**,23, pp.41,42.

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# The Dome of al-Sayyida Zaynab bint al-Ḥanafiyah at the Necropolis of Bāb al-Naṣr in Cairo

## The problem of function and dating

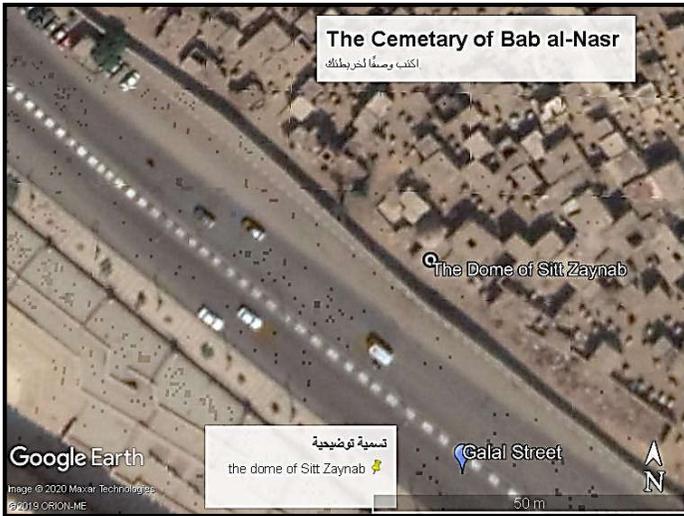
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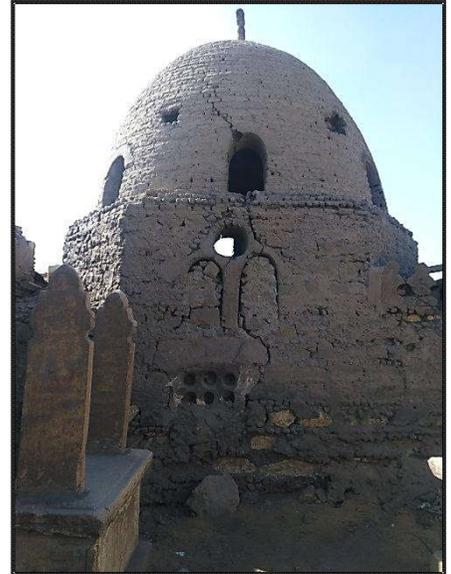
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- Creswell Photo Archive in the Ashmolean Museum.  
<http://creswell.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/archive/EA.CA.4406-0>
- <http://islamic-art.org/PhotoArchive/DisplayImages.asp?photoid=3008&qualityID=5>
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- <http://www.islamic-art.org/PhotoArchive/DisplayImages.asp?photoid=3316&qualityID=5>
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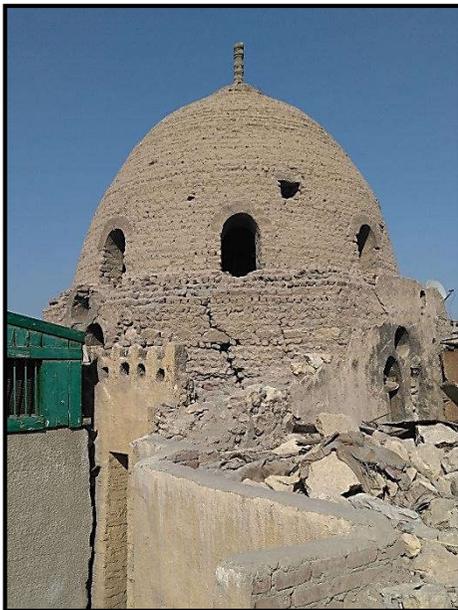
The Plates



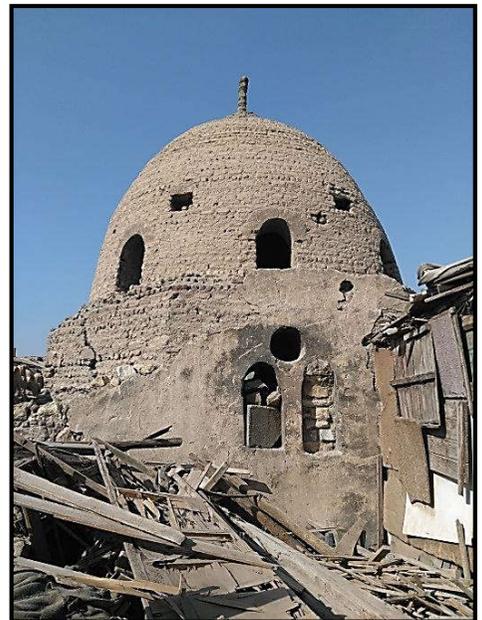
Pl.I  
After google earth 2020



Pl.II  
the northern façade



Pl.III  
The western façade



Pl.IV  
The southern façade

Photographed by the researcher

**The Dome of al-Sayyida Zaynab bint al-Ḥanafiyyah at the Necropolis of  
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Pl.V



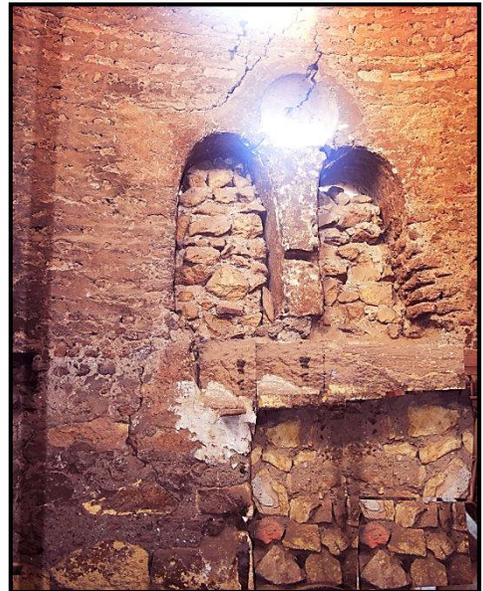
Pl.VI

Chairs in the southern part  
Photographed by the researcher



Pl.VII

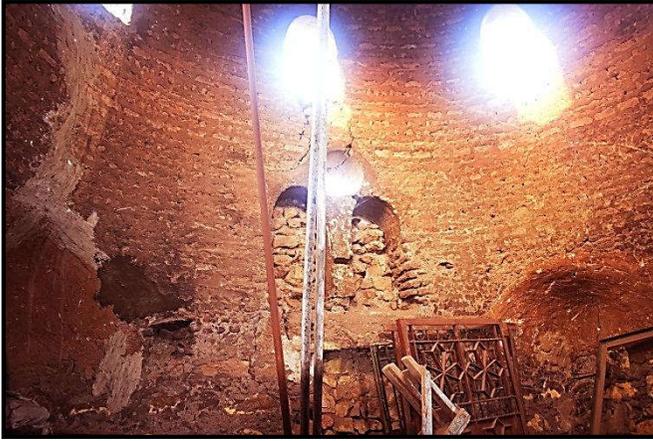
A window opening in the southern wall



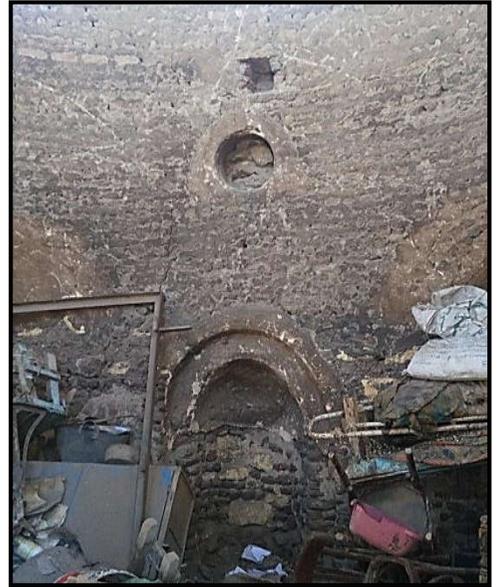
Pl.VIII

The northern wall

Photographed by the researcher



Pl.IX  
Squinches in the northern wall



Pl.X  
The mihrab and the Qibla wall

Photographed by the researcher



Pl.XII  
Marble slab contains inscriptions  
Photographed by the researcher



Pl.XIII  
a chair for the quran reader in the  
Dome of the madrasah of  
Sultan Hasan  
After. [www.islamic-art.org](http://www.islamic-art.org)

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**قبة السيدة زينب بنت الحنفية بجبابة باب النصر بالقاهرة  
اشكالية التأريخ والوظيفة  
ملخص البحث  
وليد أحمد صلاح الدين عبدالله  
مدرس- كلية الآداب قسم الإرشاد السياحي – جامعة عين شمس**

ترجع أهمية البحث هنا إلى محاولة تأريخ هذه القبة الفريدة الطراز حيث انها صنفت من القباب المنفردة وطرازها فريد من نوعه وقد حاول الباحث جاهدا ان يؤرخ هذه القبة من خلال المقارنات المعمارية بينها وبين نظائرها من قباب العصر العباسي والفاطمي والمملوكي. وقد استخلص الباحث من هذه الدراسة أن هذه القبة قد بنيت في اواخر القرن الثالث الهجري وبداية القرن الرابع الهجري/ العاشر الميلادي وذلك من خلال طراز القبة القديم من الخارج وايضا شكل وطراز الحناية والحطات الركنية ونوع الطوب المستخدم في البناء كما انها لاقت عناية المماليك وقامو بترميمها والدليل علي ذلك طراز النوافذ والمحراب والتخطيط العام للقبة ومناطق الإنتقال الثمانية الطراز. كما اوضح الباحث ايضاً ان هذه القبة كانت تستخدم في العبادات وحلقات الذكر المختلفة والدليل علي ذلك انه يوجد بداخلها كرسيين للمقرئ هذا فضلاً عن وقوع القبة نفسها داخل حوش الصوفية الأمر الذي يجعل المتصوفين يتبركون بوجود السيدة زينب الحنفية وهي من بيت النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم ومن نسل الإمام علي بن علي بن ابي طالب اويقيمون الشعائر بجانبها. هذا فضلاً عن وجود لوح من الرخام يحمل نقش عليه كتابات بخط النسخ ترجع اغلب الظن الي عصور متأخرة ربما الي العصر العثماني او الحديث وهذا النقش لم يسبق نشره من قبل حيث يعتبر فريد من نوعه، وهذا يبين انها ايضا لاقت عناية ولاة مصر سواء من العصر العثماني او عصر أسرة محمد علي.

**الكلمات الدالة:** القبة - العمارة الإسلامية - الآثار الإسلامية