

POLISH-EGYPTIAN MISSION FOR ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE IN CAIRO: AMIR KEBIR QURQUMAS PROJECT SEASON 1992-93

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The mission organized jointly by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization and the Polish Centre of Archaeology worked from 1 December 1992 to 30 June 1993.¹ This season was the first after the PKZ company withdrew from the project and the Polish Centre took full responsibility on the Polish side. All the restoration work was done by the mission and the EAO staff directly, with no contractors involved.

The main task was to install a new and independent roofing over the badly damaged original ceiling in the western *liwan* of the *madrasa* of Amir Kebir Qurqumas. The decorated panels of the original ceiling have been taken down for future conservation. The new roof was introduced over the entire western part of the *madrasa*, including passages in the outer walls. It rests on a grid of welded steel beams which is designed to compensate for the thermal movements of the structure. Special care has been taken to ensure proper water disposal. The space between the

¹ The mission comprised: Mr. Jarosław Dobrowolski (head of the mission), Mr. Błażej Małczyński, architects, Messrs Rafał Wiśniewski and Paweł Jackowski, restorers, Dr. Tomasz Scholl, archaeologist, and Mr. Henryk Hamulec. The EAO was represented by Mrs. Merwet Saad Badawy, Chief Inspector, and Mr. Hisham Abdel-Latif, Inspector. Special thanks are due Mr. Medhat El-Menabawy, Director General of the Foreign Missions Department in the Islamic and Coptic Section of EAO, for his deep personal involvement which was essential to the mission's success.

roof and the old ceiling is ventilated and accessible for inspection. Construction work ended in May 1993.

Eroded stones were replaced in the eastern wall of the ground storey of the *qasr* of Amir Qurqumas, including the lower parts of three *mihhrabs* decorated with corner columns. Eroded blocks were also replaced in a staircase between the *madrasa* and the western courtyard.

Excavations were continued east of the *qasr*, tomb and *madrasa*, with Dr. Tomasz Scholl in charge of the work.²

Cracks were discovered in the vaults, arches and pillars of the arcade forming the ground storey of the *qasr*. In one of the pillars the cracks demonstrated a tendency to open up. The structure's already disturbed equilibrium was further aggravated by the earthquake of 1992. The whole building requires comprehensive treatment. The endangered pillar has been braced provisionally with five steel rings of C-beams and threaded rods.

The mission's arrival in Cairo coincided with the strong earthquake of October 12, 1992. The Polish Centre offered help in coping with the aftermath and was assigned to assess the damage done to the area of the Eastern Cemetery. A report on the state of over thirty monuments in the area and suggested protective measures, prepared by Agnieszka Dobrowolska and Jarosław Dobrowolski, was presented to the EAO on October 26, 1992.

The report found the direct damage in most cases to be minor. However, earlier damage to the structure of many of the monuments was dangerously aggravated by seismic shock. Gypsum control seals, which were placed over cracks in endangered

² The results of the excavations are presented in a separate report on pages 52-54 in this volume.

POSITION OF A MARK		INSTALLED	13 DEC 22	29 DEC 27
18	MOSQUE + TOMB OF SULT. AL ASIRAF B northern wall: under western window	22-11-1992	15-11	✓
19	northern wall: under eastern window			✓
20	inside the entrance vestibule: eastern wall / in front of the entrance			✓
21	inside the mosque: qibla wall, northeastern corner			✓
22	northern inner wall of the mosque: over the entrance to the mausoleum			✓
23	same as 21, 1.5m below			✓
MADRASA + TOMB OF SULTAN QAITBAY				
24	western liwan, northern side: western wall, over the lintel			✓
25	as 24, northern wall over the lintel			✓
26	same as 25, crack left of the lintel			✓
27	same, under the window			✓
28	mausol. SITT HAUDA: springing of the southern corner pillar			✓
29	same, on the arch			✓
30	maus. SITT HAUDA: northern wall of hosh			✓
31	on the roof of the madrasa, crack at the base of the minaret			✓
32	same, near the crenellation			✓
33	mausoleum: eastern outer wall: under northern window			✓
SABIL SULT. QAITBAY				
34	southern wall: crack on the left side			✓
35	same, crack left of the lintel			✓
36	same, on the lintel			✓

✓ - mark intact
 X - mark broken, file a report

Fig. 1. Monitoring Sheet used in the Earthquake Damage Assessment project.

places were regularly monitored afterwards and found to be intact. However, the inspection made after the earthquake demonstrated that most of the monuments in the area are in dire need of prompt restoration.

A separate problem was the damage caused to the top storeys of four Mamluk minarets featuring colonnaded pavilions at the top. The monolithic marble columns of these pavilions have all been broken at the base, making the structures extremely vulnerable to any horizontal stress. One of the columns in the Amir Qurqumas minaret is missing altogether, having splintered into small fragments. The tops of the minarets of Amir Qurqumas, Sultan Farag ibn Barquq (two minarets) and Sultan Qaitbay were temporarily shored with wood in November 1992. At the request of the EAO, the Mission also assisted an EAO team in installing similar supports in the minaret of Abu Bakr Muzhir in the Gamaliya district.