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The ‘Aṭṭār Mosque in Tripoli

In the year 1112/1700 the scholar ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī¹ visited Tripoli in present-day Lebanon. In his travelogue *Al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah* he gives brief notices of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque,² reporting that the mosque is said to have been a church originally and that a perfume merchant had secretly paid to have it rebuilt as a mosque.³ With this brief passage, al-Nābulusī is the first author to posit a connection between the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque and a church. He can thus be seen as the originator of an idea that has influenced treatises on the architecture of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque ever since. Although al-Nābulusī did not supply any references for his statement that the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque was formerly a church, the preponderance of research on the mosque is based upon this assumption, even though it is not confirmed by any other written source nor have investigations of the building itself specifically examined this question. The following article aims to take a closer look at this hypothesis by analyzing the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque’s integration into the urban and social spheres as well as its decorative scheme, and by suggesting

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¹‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Al-Tuhfah al-Nābulusiyah fī al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah (Die Reise des ‘Abd al-Ganī al-Nābulusī durch den Libanon)*, ed. Heribert Busse (Wiesbaden, 1971), 72–73.

²Michael Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien (648/1250 bis 923/1517)* (Glückstadt, 1992), 2:165, 9C/320, and 215, 19A/30, listed as “Moschee des Badr ad-Dīn al-‘Aṭṭār.” In this article, in contrast, I shall use the designation “‘Aṭṭār Mosque,” for the following reasons: the lack of a definite determination of the commissioner’s name, the earliest reference to the mosque as the “jāmi‘ al-‘Aṭṭār,” and the mention of the mosque by this name in Ottoman travelogues.

³“Qīla inna aṣlahu kanisah, wa-qaḍ ‘amarahu rajul kāna ‘aṭṭāran, wa-kāna yunfiqū ‘alayhi min al-ghayb fa-nusiba ilayhi” (al-Nābulusī, *al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah*, 72–73).



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other interpretations for its special architectural features.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The ʿAṭṭār Mosque was built during the eighth/fourteenth century in the middle of today's old city of Tripoli, which is still relatively well preserved. The nucleus of the mosque consists of a prayer hall, a vestibule in the east, and a minaret.⁴ The prayer hall is situated longitudinally from south to north (fig. 1). A barrel vault takes up this axis and is interrupted in the northern section by a dome. To the north, west, and east of the area of the dome are the three entrances to the mosque.

Whereas the portal in the west opens directly into the prayer hall, the portal in the east opens into a vestibule leading to this room. The vestibule is flanked by a room for ablution in the north and by a further adjoining room in the south. Altogether, this group of rooms forms an eastern annex. To the east of the northern entrance arises the minaret.

The prayer hall is bordered to the south by the qiblah wall, which is distinguished by the minbar in the center and the mihrab in the east (fig. 2). Starting at the qiblah wall and extending as far as the dome, the east and west sides of the southern prayer hall are divided by three large niches, each of different size (fig. 3). The barrel vault and the wall division with niches⁵ continue to the north of the area of the dome. Today this area is encompassed by a gallery (fig. 4).

Altogether, with the longitudinal direction of the prayer hall, the position of the mihrab in the east and the minbar in the middle of the qiblah wall,⁶ the domed area, and the arrangement of the entrance and the annex in the east, the ʿAṭṭār Mosque displays architectural elements that do not permit a simple correlation

⁴ In this article I shall focus primarily on the core structure of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque. The latrine, the inaccessible adjoining room F, the blocked up niche C 1, and a room adjoining A 2 are not the immediate subjects of this study.

⁵ Whereas the eastern niche (C 2) is fully shaped, the western niche (C 1) seems to have been blocked up. This is indicated, on the one hand, by alterations in the course of the masonry and, on the other, by the similar front walls that are in both cases located above the gallery. A window blocks up the opening in the west (C 1), while the front wall continues in the vaulting of the niche in the east (C 2).

⁶ In addition, it is noteworthy that the present-day direction of the qiblah does not correspond with the original qiblah and is modified by means of lines spanned across the floor. Basing his calculations on Mamluk astronomical writings, King is able to determine a qiblah-orientation of ca. 30 degrees southeast in Tripoli. Yet he notes that the direction of the qiblah in Mamluk mosques in Tripoli actually ranges from 15 degrees southeast to 10 degrees southwest (David A. King, "The Astronomy of the Mamluks: A Brief Overview," *Muqarnas* 2 [1984]: 82). Thus, the ʿAṭṭār Mosque does not present an exception in Tripoli with the "inexact" orientation of the qiblah.



with the otherwise common typology of mosques.⁷

A CRUSADER CHURCH AS PREDECESSOR?

Various scholars have attempted to explain the peculiarities in the elevation and ground plan of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque with the hypothesis of a predecessor structure (often suggested to have been a church) located at the same site of the present-day mosque.⁸ The aforementioned passage in al-Nābulusī’s text and the history of the city of Tripoli are essential pieces of evidence used in the development of this hypothesis. The present-day old city of Tripoli emerged as a new creation of the Mamluks in the late seventh/thirteenth century, following Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn’s⁹ conquest of and complete destruction of the old port city of Tripoli in 688/1289, which had been under Crusader rule since 1109. The new city, given the same name, was built a few kilometers farther inland¹⁰ on the banks of the Abū ‘Alī river, at the site of a suburb (*mons peregrinus*). The latter had already developed after the building of the citadel at the beginning of the twelfth century¹¹ and thus has given rise to speculation about possible previous structures from Crusader times that might still have been preserved.¹²

The first suggestion of a church as predecessor to the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque is found in al-Nābulusī’s writings, as mentioned above. This hypothesis was initially taken up by the scholar Kurd ‘Alī, who surmised that the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque was preceded by a Crusader church.¹³ Two lines of argument have developed in research, which

⁷ Cf. Hayat Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture of the Mamluk City of Tripoli* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 76. For mosque typology, see, for example, Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh, 1994).

⁸ One exception is Meinecke, who views the present form as the enlargement of an “original” structure (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:165 and 215).

⁹ R. 678–93/1279–90.

¹⁰ Al-Qalqashandī, *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fi Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā’* (Cairo, 1914), 4:142–43.

¹¹ Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 6.

¹² Cf. for example, the Great Mosque: Max van Berchem and Edmond Fatio, *Voyage en Syrie* (Cairo, 1914), 1:118–19; Camille Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem: Architecture religieuse et civile*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1928), 434; and the mosque of the governor Ṭaynāl al-Ashrafī: Nina Jidejian, *Tripoli through the Ages* (Beirut, 1980), 86–87; Berchem and Fatio, *Voyage en Syrie*, 1:120–21. In order to attain substantiated information about Crusader structures that still exist in the city, more archaeological investigations are necessary. Until now excavations have been conducted only by Salamé-Sarkis in the area of the citadel and in al-Mīna (Ḥassān Salamé-Sarkis, “Chronique archéologique du Liban-Nord II: 1973-1974,” *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 26 [1973]: 91–102; idem, “Tripoli: Textes et Fouilles,” *Berytus* 31 [1983]: 129–49). Cf. Gunnar Lehmann, *Bibliographie der Archäologischen Fundstellen und Surveys in Syrien und Libanon* (Rahden/Westfalen, 2002), 561.

¹³ Kurd ‘Alī notes that it was well known among the inhabitants of Tripoli that during the time of



unlike Kurd ʿAlī, maintain explicitly that a Crusader church is still evidenced in the structure of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque of today.¹⁴ Whereas one view proposes that an original Crusader church was simply converted into a mosque,¹⁵ the other has developed the theory of an original Crusader church that was destroyed, whereupon a mosque was built in the same place, making use of parts of the predecessor structure.¹⁶

The main proponent of this second theory is Tadmurī. He augments the remarks of al-Nābulusī and Kurd ʿAlī with the assertion that the southern part of the Crusader church remained standing, while the newly erected mosque was adjoined to the northern part.¹⁷ Thereby Tadmurī makes the first attempt to support Kurd ʿAlī's reference to the common opinion of Tripoli's inhabitants about the mosque by providing arguments which he, however, presents only in the form of assertions without further facts or data; hence, his assumption of a cemetery¹⁸ or the existence of objects from Crusader times (now missing).¹⁹ Further, Tadmurī does not supply any arguments or references for his assumption that the former baptismal font forms the cupola of the present-day minbar.²⁰ Tadmurī's assertion

the Crusaders the ʿAṭṭār Mosque was a church and that after the conquest of Islam it was changed into a congregational mosque. Allegedly, after the structure had deteriorated, it was reconstructed (Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* [Damascus, 1928], 6:54).

¹⁴ Al-Nābulusī uses the phrase *wa-qad ʿamarahu*, which could be understood in this way if Herzfeld's reading of "amara, ʿammara" is followed: "reconstruire, en conservant une assez grande partie de ce qui existait avant, et, dans la plupart des cas, moins que cel: reparer" (Ernst Herzfeld, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum: Deuxième Partie: Syrie du Nord: Inscriptions et Monuments d'Alep* [Cairo, 1954–55], 162).

¹⁵ Al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sālim, *Ṭarābulus al-Shām fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī* (Alexandria, 1967), 414; Samīḥ Wajīh al-Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus Qadīman wa-Ḥadīthan* (Beirut, 1969), 423; Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 78; Dick Doughty, "Tripoli: Lebanon's Mamluk monument," *Aramco World* 51, no. 3 (2000): 9.

¹⁶ ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār Masājīd wa-Madāris Ṭarābulus fī ʿAṣr al-Mamālīk: Min al-Faṭḥ al-Manṣūrī ḥattā al-Ān (688–1394H/1289–1974M)* (Tripoli, 1974), 194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 194; idem, "Al-Āthār al-Islāmīyah fī Ṭarābulus al-Shām," *Al-Fīkr al-ʿArabī* 9, no. 52 (1988): 212.

¹⁸ Tadmurī, "Al-Āthār al-Islāmīyah," 212. Here he refers solely to the mosque keeper. With the lack of a thorough investigation in the area of the courtyard, which is paved with marble slabs, it can only be stated that today there are no signs of a cemetery.

¹⁹ ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus al-Siyāsī wa-al-Ḥadārī ʿabra al-ʿUṣūr: ʿAṣr Dawlat al-Mamālīk*, vol. 2, *Min al-Faṭḥ al-Manṣūrī 688h/1289m ḥattā Suqūṭ Dawlat al-Mamālīk 922h/1516m* (Tripoli, 1981), 291.

²⁰ Here in comparison reference should be made to two baptismal fonts from Crusader times in Lebanon, which Enlart presents: one in the cathedral in Byblos and one in the monastery church in Belmont. They do not display any similarity with the cupola of the minbar (Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés*, vol. 1, atlas [Paris, 1926], pl. 38, fig. 128; *ibid.*, vol. 1 [Paris, 1925], 163). On the



that the southern part of the roof does not look like an “Islamic building”²¹ cannot be accepted due to the lack of any details.

The arguments made by Salam-Liebich in favor of a converted church, which are supported by Doughty,²² al-Zayn, and Sālim,²³ are, however, based upon observations of the building. Salam-Liebich views the disposition of the ground plan (fig. 1), the later addition of an ablution room, and the mihrab set in the east of the qiblah wall as decisive arguments in support of the prior use of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque as a church.²⁴

Salam-Liebich’s observation that the ground plan of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque cannot be assigned to any known classification of mosque can be affirmed. Yet, neither does the plan correspond with a Crusader church which has been converted but still basically preserved in its original structure. Whereas the core structure of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque is in a north-south direction, that of the typical Crusader church was orientated towards the east.²⁵ Furthermore, the mihrab contradicts Salam-Liebich’s argument in favor of a church. That is, the mihrab was integrated from the start into the present qiblah wall, as attested by the continuous masonry within the mihrab niche and the surrounding wall surface (fig. 5). Therefore, it must be seen as an original as well as fundamental endorsement of the building as a mosque. Even though accord must be given Salam-Liebich’s note that an ablution room is essential for a mosque, its later addition is not a compelling

contrary, the material, decoration, and technique of the minbar’s cupola are comparable to other contemporary minbars, as will be dealt with in detail below.

²¹ Tadmuri, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 194.

²² Doughty, “Tripoli,” 9.

²³ Although Sālim also refers to Kurd ‘Alī, he nevertheless reaches the conclusion—contrary to Tadmuri—that the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque was converted from a church (Sālim, *Ṭarābulus al-Shām*, 414). Al-Zayn shares this opinion, with reference to Kurd ‘Alī (al-Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 423).

²⁴ Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 78.

²⁵ Cf. for example Denys Pringle, *The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1998); Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés*, vol. 1, atlas; and Santino Langè, *Architettura delle crociate in Palestina* (Como, 1965), 129–74. Enlart emphasizes the orientation to the east again expressly (Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés*, 1:41–42). The possibility that a church might have stood there that was not built by the Crusaders can be dismissed, as both Maronite as well as early Christian churches in Syria are situated with the sanctuary towards the east (for Maronite churches, see Youhanna Sader, *Peintures murales dans des églises maronites médiévales* [Beirut, 1987]; for early Christian churches see Howard Crosby Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries: Edited and Completed by E. Baldwin Smith: Part One: History*, ed. E. Baldwin Smith [1929; repr., Amsterdam, 1969], 182; for churches of the Byzantine, Armenian, and Syrian rites see Raymond Janin, *Les églises orientales et les rites orientales: Cinquième édition avec compléments bibliographiques par Sandrine Lerou et Philippe Escolan: Préface par Etienne Fouilloux* [Paris, 1997], 28, 313, 366).



argument for the building's former use as a church.²⁶

Meinecke assumes as well that there was an “original structure,” but, on the contrary, dates it to the Mamluk period; according to his theory, a predecessor structure was erected before 735/1334–35, to which the west portal might have belonged. Later, the eastern portal and the marble minbar, both dated through an inscription to 751/1350–51, were added to this complex.²⁷ This sequence in building phases, which is implied in Salam-Liebich's and Meinecke's assertion that the ablution room or the portal was added at a later time to a building that was already present (Crusader church, “original structure”), will be discussed in the following.

RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BUILDING PHASES OF THE CORE STRUCTURE

Clearly recognizable in the masonry are joints which a recent restoration of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque brought to light from beneath the plaster of the interior room.²⁸ These joints have made it possible to formulate a relative chronology of several building phases (fig. 1). Construction of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque began in the south (I), continued in the north (II), and culminated in the construction of an annex consisting of the ablution room, vestibule, and adjoining room in the east.

One distinct joint is located to the south of niches A3 and A6 and runs on both sides from the top of the vault down to the floor (fig. 5). The course of the stone layers to the south and to the north of the joint differ. Moreover, great differences are noticeable in the composition of the vaulting on both sides. Whereas in the south the stones are almost ashlar-like and the vertical and horizontal masonry relatively flat and more tightly applied, in the north the stones resemble quarry stones and the joints appear to be deeper and more spacious, so that the surface seems to be essentially more uneven. The vaulting in the entire prayer hall of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque was constructed in *Kufverband* (one horizontal row at a time) (fig. 3). This construction technique is characterized by regular horizontal layers with an uninterrupted course of horizontal joints and alternating vertical joints from the base to the top of the vaulting throughout its entire length.²⁹ This, however,

²⁶ There is a possibility that there were temporary facilities for washing; however, this must remain a hypothesis at present.

²⁷ Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:165 and 215.

²⁸ My hypotheses on the relative chronology of the building phases are based on observations of the masonry which I documented photographically during my field trip in preparation of my Master's thesis in April and May 2004. The exact date of restoration is unknown to me, but on older photographs, the plastered wall surface is still to be seen.

²⁹ For the construction technique of vaulting with the use of scaffolds and *Kufverband*, see Franz Hart, *Kunst und Technik der Wölbung* (Munich, 1965), 16; Otto Warth, *Die Konstruktionen in Stein* (1903; repr., Hannover, 1981), 177–78. For the technique of vaulting using the runner (German:



is not the case in the vaulting under study here; thus, it must have been built in two stages.

As the vaulting to the north of the joint is lower than that to the south, it may be deduced that the section in the north (II) was built after the section to the south (I) (fig. 4). The continuation of the vault was first adjusted towards the height of the older, already settled, part of the vault and ultimately was lower after the setting of the masonry upon completion.³⁰ The hypothesis of a later erection of the northern section is supported by the observation that despite the otherwise even course of masonry, this section is joined denticulately in the southern section.³¹

The later northern section (II) also displays an uneven surface in the vaulting to the north, east, and west of the dome (fig. 4). Building phase II is distinguished from building phase I through the molding on the front of the pillars that does not continue in building phase II and a pointed form of the front wall of the niches (II) instead of a round one (I) (figs. 3 and 4). Yet, structural characteristics such as the direction and the approximate height of the vaulting are maintained.

In a further building phase (III) the annex consisting of an ablution room, vestibule, and adjoining room was set before the prayer hall (I, II). The mostly uniform course of the masonry on the portal, the exterior wall of the ablution room,³² and the adjoining room suggest that this building unit was erected all at one time.³³

In the interior, this annex (III) is clearly separate from the interior of the prayer hall (I, II). The presumption that it is a later addition is supported by the fact that the west wall of the ablution room seems to be just superimposed to the east wall of the prayer hall (fig. 6).³⁴ Furthermore, a joint is quite distinct on the north

Kufe), see Hans Koepf and Günther Binding, *Bildwörterbuch der Architektur* (Stuttgart, 1999), 291.

³⁰ I thank Dr. Stefan Weber for inviting me to the two international workshops of the German Lebanese Tripoli Project in 2002 and 2003 in Beirut/Tripoli, where this idea arose out of the discussion with different architectural historians.

³¹ Cf. Warth, *Die Konstruktionen*, 56–57. The corbelling can be ascribed to the northern section; it was incorporated into the south masonry at a later time.

³² In the lower area on the façade of the ablution room, the course of the masonry of the portal continues on the level of the window sill. Only beyond does the uncovered ashlar masonry begin.

³³ In addition, a corbelling of the portal frame extends into the façade of the ablution room, which would not have had a function without a planned adjoining building.

³⁴ This is suggested, on the one hand, by the stout jamb of the northern window and the door below in the west wall of the ablution room and east wall of the prayer hall. On the other, at this point a different course in the horizontal masonry can be recognized. Besides this, the arrangement of the west wall of the ablution room is adjusted to meet the features of the east wall of the prayer hall: the windows and the door in the back wall of the northern-most niche of the prayer hall (C 2) are integrated into the wall arrangement of the ablution room (fig. 6).



corner of the passage between the prayer hall (II) and the vestibule (III) (fig. 7),³⁵ and the eastern supporting pillar for the dome had to be modified (fig. 8) in order to permit access to the ablution room.

Thus, Salam-Liebich's and Meinecke's assumption of the later annexation of the ablution room or eastern portal is confirmed and can be expanded to include the south room as constituting building phase III. However, the possibility that the building (I, II), which was enlarged through the addition of the east complex (III), was originally a Crusader church is not supported, either typologically or by my analysis of the masonry. Instead, dating inscriptions and historiographic sources provide clues that the ʿAṭṭār Mosque was first erected in the seventh/fourteenth century and thus cannot be a Crusader church.

THE DATING

The single inscription that dates the ʿAṭṭār Mosque is located above the entrance in the eastern portal³⁶ and denotes the year 751/1350–51.³⁷ Yet, another date

³⁵ One building joint is formed on the northern corner of the passage between the prayer hall (II) and vestibule (III), which the wall of the ablution room adjoins. The joint runs from the floor to the beginning of the vaulting of the vestibule (fig. 7).

³⁶ The building inscription in the western portal does not display a date, but rather the signature of a craftsman: *ʿamala Abū Bakr ibn al-Ṣiṣ*. The name of a craftsman is mentioned here, yet Tadmurī must refer to the *Tārīkh Bayrūt* of Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá so that he can date the craftsman, and with him the portal as well, to the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century. In drawing upon Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, he does not read the latter's name as "Abū Bakr ibn al-Ṣiṣ," but as "Abū Bakr ibn al-Baṣiṣ (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 195). Tadmurī presents the inscription in the first rendition in writing, but maintains that the "correct" name should be "Abū Bakr ibn al-Baṣiṣ" (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 195, n. 1). This name is mentioned by Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, who writes about Abū Bakr ibn al-Baṣiṣ al-Baʿlabakī, an experienced engineer (*muhandis*) in coastal works who rebuilt a bridge over the Nahr al-Kalb and who undertook other important tasks in the region of Tripoli (Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt: Récits des anciens de la famille de Buḥtur b. ʿAlī, Emīr du Gharb de Beyrouth*, ed. Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi [Beirut, 1969], 103; L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Architects and Their Works* [Geneva, 1956], 37). Secondary literature since 1974 follows Tadmurī's reading of the craftsman's signature as "Abū Bakr ibn al-Baṣiṣ al-Baʿlabakī" (cf. for example Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 71; Robert Saliba, ed., *Tripoli: The Old City: Monument Survey: Mosques and Madrasahs: A Sourcebook of Maps and Architectural Drawings* [Beirut, 1994], Monument Number 13; Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḍinnāwī, *ʿAwdat al-Dhākirah ilá Tārīkh Ṭarābulus wa-al-Miṭṭaqah* [Tripoli, 1998], 256 [Abū Bakr ibn ʿAlī al-Balaʿbakī]; Muḥammad Kāmil Bābā, *Ṭarābulus fī al-Tārīkh* [Tripoli, 1995], 358). By contrast, only Meinecke takes into account the difference between the signature present on the structure and the name as interpreted by Tadmurī; he presents the name of the craftsman as "Abū Bakr ibn al-[Ba]ṣiṣ" (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:165).

³⁷ "Bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm hādhā al-bāb al-mubārak wa-al-minbar ʿamal al-muʿallim Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-muhandis fī sanat ihdā wa-khamsīn wa-sabʿi miʿah." Moritz Sobernheim, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum: Deuxième Partie: Syrie du Nord I: Akkār, Ḥiṣn al-Akrād, Tripoli* (Cairo, 1909), 105; Nikita Elisséeff, David Storm Rice, and Gaston



can be gained from the chronicle of Ibn al-Dawādārī,³⁸ *Kanz al-Durar*.³⁹ In his list of construction works during the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, Ibn al-Dawādārī mentions the foundation or beginning of the building of a mosque (*jāmiʿ anshaʿahu*) by one Badr al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār in Tripoli. However, he does not supply an exact date for this undertaking. Thus, Ibn al-Dawādārī’s information opens up a broad scope of interpretation regarding the date of the mosque’s construction. On the basis of the chronicle, which ends with the year 735/1334–35 and the actual writing of which was completed in 736/1335–36,⁴⁰ the event described can be dated prior to 735–36/1334–36, during the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (first regnal period: 693–94/1293–94; second regnal period: 698–708/1299–1309; third regnal period: 709–41/1310–41). The verb “*anshaʿa*” that Ibn al-Dawādārī used in this reference implies a formal act of founding, that is, the foundation of a *waqf*, but also the actual beginning of construction of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque itself.⁴¹

Wiet, *Répertoire Chronologique d’Epigraphie Arabe*, vol. 16 (Cairo, 1964), 106, no. 6158; Amine Bizri, ed., *La calligraphie Arabe dans l’architecture: Les inscriptions dans les monument Islamiques de la ville de Tripoli à l’époque mamelouke* (s.l., 1999), 99. The building inscription is engraved on a stone in the back wall of the portal; the stone is integrated into the masonry so that its coevalness with the portal can be assumed.

³⁸ Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmiʿ al-Ghurar*, pt. 9, *Al-Durr al-Fākhir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, ed. Hans Robert Roemer (Wiesbaden, 1960), 391.

³⁹ Until Tadmuri’s study in 1974, which introduces Ibn al-Dawādārī, the dating of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque was based primarily upon the building inscription in the eastern portal. Sobernheim first published the inscription on the eastern portal, noting that this inscribed date of 751/1350–51 could refer either to the foundation or to a restoration of the mosque (Sobernheim, *Matériaux*, 105). Sālim had already drawn upon Ibn al-Dawādārī’s chronicle and, relying thereupon, arrived at the date of 751/1350 for the mosque, a date that Tadmuri explicitly contradicts (Sālim, *Ṭarābulus al-Shām*, 413). Tadmuri rejects the date 751/1350–51 with reference to Abū al-Fidāʿ and Ibn al-Wardī, according to whom the donor of the mosque had already died in 749/1348–49 (Tadmuri, *Tārikh wa-Āthār*, 190–91). While al-Qaṭṭār (Ilyās al-Qaṭṭār, *Niyābat Ṭarābulus fī ʿAhd al-Mamālik [688–922 H/1289–1516 M]* [Beirut, 1998], 490) and Sharif (Ḥikmat Bik Sharif, *Tārikh Ṭarābulus al-Shām* [Tripoli, 1987], 184–85) follow Tadmuri in his opinion about the date 735/1334–35, Ḥimṣī (Naḥdī Ṣubḥī Ḥimṣī, *Tārikh Ṭarābulus min khilāl Wathāʿiq al-Maḥkamah al-Sharʿiyah fī al-Niṣf al-Thānī min al-Qarn al-Sābiʿ ʿAshar al-Milādī* [Beirut, 1986], 68), al-Bakhīt (in Yahyá ibn Abī al-Ṣafáʿ Ibn Maḥāsīn, *Al-Manāzil al-Maḥāsiniyah fī al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAdnān al-Bakhīt [Beirut, 1981], 67), and Salam-Liebich (*The Architecture*, 69) support Sālim’s date of 751/1350–51.

⁴⁰ From Ibn al-Dawādārī’s introduction to the first volume, Roemer infers that the chronicle was begun in 709/1309–10, and, in view of the colophon in the ninth volume, that it was completed in 736/1335–36 (Roemer, ed., *Kanz al-Durar*, 14).

⁴¹ See, for instance, Lane, who explains one of the meanings of “*anshaʿa*” as: “he founded or began to build a house.” (q.v., E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*). Cf. Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, 119, and Sheila Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions* (New York, 1998), 32.



Hence, this results in two possibilities for the dating of the construction of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque. If Herzfeld's reading of the word "*ansha'a*" as a formal founding act ("l'institution abstraite du sanctuaire") is followed,⁴² then merely a *waqf* was established during the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn before 735–36/1334–36 and the actual construction began later. For this interpretation, attention should be drawn to Abū al-Fidā' and Ibn al-Wardī, who are to be dated before 749/1348–49, and who mention an endowment and do not refer expressly to the erection of a mosque.⁴³ Therefore, only the building inscription of 751/1350–51 can be viewed as a fixed date for the actual construction work.

On the contrary, if the verb "*ansha'a*" is understood to denote the actual beginning of construction, then based upon the dates at hand the construction began during the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, yet before 735–36/1334–36, and was still going in 751/1350–51.⁴⁴ This relatively long time span can be viewed in association with the three phases of building. However, their precise temporal fixation and the duration of possible interruptions in building cannot be determined on the basis of the sources at hand and my analysis of the masonry. The postulated erection of the southern part of the prayer hall (I) prior to 735–36/1334–36 would, nevertheless, confirm the designation of the eastern annex with its inscribed date of 751/1350–51 as the latest section of the building. Therefore, Meinecke's assumption of an original structure that comprised the entire prayer hall that was erected before 735/1334–35 and that was later enlarged with an annex (III) can be expanded through the identification of a third building phase (II), so that the prayer hall was not erected in one single building phase, but in two (I, II).⁴⁵

Following the theory that the southern part is the oldest section of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, that its erection took place before or after 735–36/1334–36, and that the mihrab was originally integrated into the qiblah wall, it can be maintained that the building was initially a mosque. This is further supported by the chronicles of Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn al-Wardī and the travelogue of Ibn Maḥāsīn, which are contemporaneous, and which in contrast to al-Nābulusī do not mention a

⁴² Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, 119.

⁴³ Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn 'Alī, *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Cairo, 1325/1907), 153; Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar ibn al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar (Tārīkh Ibn al-Wardī)*, ed. Aḥmad Rif'at al-Badrāwī (Beirut, 1970), 2:500.

⁴⁴ This seems unusually long when compared to other structures such as, for example, the madrasah of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan in Cairo, the construction of which began in 757/1356 and was completed after 761/1360, and which was considered to be exceedingly laborious and expensive (cf. Mayer, *Islamic Architects*, 23; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Muhandis, shad, mu'allim—Note on the Building Craft in the Mamluk Period," *Der Islam* 72, no. 2 (1995): 305.

⁴⁵ Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:165 and 215.



previous structure or a church as predecessor. All in all, they weaken Salam-Liebich's argument that the mosque is a converted Crusader church with the later addition of an ablution room, and also Tadmuri's suggestion that the southern part is the remnant of a Crusader church.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE 'AṬṬĀR MOSQUE IN ITS URBAN SETTING

Since the analysis of the building of the 'Aṭṭār Mosque does not confirm the hypothesis of a present-day structure in which a (preceding) Crusader church can be recognized, al-Nābulusī can be assumed to be the creator of this particular topos. Yet, the "unusual" disposition of this mosque still remains unresolved. As an alternative hypothesis for explaining its atypical layout, the relationship of the mosque to its urban setting⁴⁶ will be considered here.⁴⁷ Thereby attention should be directed to other architectural features of the 'Aṭṭār Mosque that have not yet been noted, namely the incorporation of the dome and the remarkable situation of the passageways (fig. 1).

The 'Aṭṭār Mosque lies north of the citadel of Tripoli on the left bank of the Abū 'Alī river.⁴⁸ It is located in the Bāb al-Ḥadīd quarter and enclosed by the Sūq al-Bāzirkān to the east and the Sūq al-Jadīd to the north.⁴⁹

The immediate urban surroundings (fig. 9) seem to have developed at about the same time as the 'Aṭṭār Mosque. Both the Khān al-Miṣriyīn to the south of the mosque and the Khān al-Khayyāṭīn adjoining in the east date from the eighth/fourteenth century.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ To date, the immediate urban environs of the 'Aṭṭār Mosque have not been investigated in detail, or the results have not been published. With all necessary caution, here an attempt will be made, departing from the present town's structure and by means of individual datable buildings, to determine the urban situation in the eighth/fourteenth century. Thereby, the possible interdependence of the mosque's architecture and the urban setting should be seen as a reciprocal interaction.

⁴⁷ Cf. in this regard Howayda Al-Harithy, "The Concept of Space in Mamluk Architecture," *Muqarnas* 18 (2001): 73–93. Hillenbrand points to the interaction of external and internal space in mosques, using the inward shift of the façade in the form of the qiblah as an example (Robert Hillenbrand, "Some Observations on the Use of Space in Medieval Islamic Buildings," in *Studies in Medieval Islamic Architecture* [London, 2001], 1:165). This interaction of the 'Aṭṭār Mosque with its urban setting can be seen as the example of an exception, if its ground plan and its integration into the urban landscape are compared to the Great Mosque, for instance. In its design as a court mosque, the latter interacts less with its surroundings; it displays a regular rectangular ground plan and no through passageways.

⁴⁸ Cf. a plan of the city in Paul Collart, Maurice Chehab, and Armando Dillon, *Liban: Aménagement de la Ville de Tripoli et du Site de Baalbek: Rapport de la mission envoyée par l'UNESCO en 1953*, Paul Collart, Chef de Mission, Emir Maurice Chehab et Armando Dillon (Paris, 1954), 11.

⁴⁹ Cf. Tadmuri, "Al-Āthār al-Islāmiyah," 212; Jidejian, *Tripoli*, 93.

⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the date of both khans is controversial. Luz views the Khān al-Miṣriyīn and the



The ʿAṭṭār Mosque is closely integrated into this urban setting through the neighboring houses, surrounding passageways, and the course of streets. A street leads to each of the three entrances of the mosque. Thus, the northern portal of the mosque⁵¹ is connected to the Zuqāq al-Tarbiʿah and the western portal to the Khān al-Jāwīsh.⁵² In the east a small street leads on a slightly divergent line to the eastern portal of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, so that all in all there is a distinct east-west axis in the network of streets.⁵³

Likewise, the ʿAṭṭār Mosque interacts with its urban setting, especially with regard to the course of streets, through its architectural design and its decorative scheme. The streets running from the east, west, and north directly towards the entrances converge in the mosque's interior in the area of the dome (fig. 4). The dome distinctly marks this "intersection of streets" and "thoroughfare" situation in the interior and exterior of the mosque. This might be an explanation for the off-center position of the dome within the mosque, for which there are no parallels, either in Tripoli or in other cities. Domes of madrasahs and mosques in Tripoli emphasize the liturgically central places in front of the mihrab and the qiblah wall,⁵⁴ and in such buildings which vary the multi-*iwān* scheme, they mark the

Khān al-Khayyāṭīn as endowments established prior to 750–51/1350 (Nimrod Luz, "Tripoli Reinvented: A Case of Mamluk Urbanization," *Towns and Material Culture in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. Yaacov Lev [Leiden, 2002], 66, map 5). This date for the Khān al-Khayyāṭīn can also be found in Salam-Liebich (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 178), Jidejian (Jidejian, *Tripoli*, 92), and Ḍinnāwī (Ḍinnāwī, *ʿAwdat al-Dhākirah*, 255), whereas Meinecke does not list it among the Mamluk structures. On the contrary, he agrees with the date of the Khān al-Miṣriyīn to the mid-eight/fourteenth century (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:226). This view is also held by Salam-Liebich (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 175) and Tadmurī (ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Wathāʿiq Nādirah min Sijillāt al-Maḥkamah al-Sharʿīyah bi-Ṭarābulus: Dirāsah Taḥlīliyah li-Aḥamm al-Nuṣūṣ al-Tārīkhīyah [1666–1780m]* [Beirut, 2002], 39), while Scharabi dates the building to the sixteenth century (Mohamed Scharabi, *Der Bazar: Das traditionelle Stadtzentrum im Nahen Osten und seine Handelseinrichtungen* [Tübingen, 1985], 203).

⁵¹ Tadmurī notes that the north entrance is of recent date (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 195); Salam-Liebich makes no mention of this portal. My analysis of the masonry in the area of the northern entrance did indeed reveal irregularities there, which makes the later addition of this entrance a possibility.

⁵² Tadmurī dates the building to the Ottoman period (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 290; idem, "Al-Āthār al-Islāmiyah," 212; idem, *Wathāʿiq*, 40. Cf. Jidejian, *Tripoli*, 92).

⁵³ At the eastern end of this small street there is a building with an inscription dating to Mamluk times, in which an Amir Sayf al-Dīn Ṭaṇṭash/Ṭuṇṭash is named (cf. Tadmurī, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 290; Bizri, *La calligraphie Arabe*, 165–66, nos. 56–58).

⁵⁴ Examples to mention here are the Great Mosque, the Tawbah Mosque, the Madrasat al-Burṭāsī, the Ṭaynāl Mosque, the Madrasat Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī, and the Madrasah al-Khātūniyah. For the use of the dome as a designation of central places, cf. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 53–54.



center.⁵⁵

While the line of the street leading to the northern entrance ends at the qiblah wall in the prayer hall, the street from the west towards the portal diverges slightly from its course in the east. This “external” east-west axis in the street network is incorporated architecturally into the plan of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque through both of the opposite portals and the area of the dome as an “internal” east-west axis. Whereas the massiveness and verticality of the face of the barrel vault of the prayer hall to the north and south of the dome pose a boundary in these directions, the cap-like parts of the vault to the east and west of the dome (B 1, B 2) emphasize this way through the axis.

The entrances as crossing points between interior and exterior space likewise emphasize the way through the east-west axis. Correspondingly, the eastern and western portals are distinguished by ornamentation, while the northern entrance is not decorated. Thus, in contrast to the western portal, the eastern portal, with its essentially larger decorative scheme and size, is clearly marked as the main portal (figs. 10 and 11).⁵⁶ The prominence of the main portal is augmented by the integration of the entrance in the north and the portal in the west into (likely, formerly existing) vaulted passageways, so that there was no distant effect.⁵⁷

The fact that the eastern entrance is distinguished with a free-standing high

⁵⁵ Examples are again the Madrasat al-Burṭāsī, the Ṭaynāl Mosque, the Madrasat Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī, and the Madrasah al-Qadiriyyah. In addition, sepulchres can also be covered by a dome. Examples in Tripoli include the sepulchres of the Madrasat al-Burṭāsī, the Ṭaynāl Mosque, the Madrasah al-Nūriyyah, the Madrasah al-Khātūniyyah, and the Madrasah al-Qadiriyyah, among others. For domes in sepulchres, cf. R. Stephen Humphreys, “The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay,” *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 113–14.

⁵⁶ The eastern portal can be divided into four zones, one above the other, of which the lowest two display *ablaq*. The first zone is defined by a door in the center of the back wall of the portal, which is flanked by two stone benches that fill almost the whole width of the portal. Above this is the second zone: above the relieving beam of the door is a lintel decorated with stylized lily motifs in marble incrustation. This zone is followed by the third zone: the aforementioned panel with the inscription and above this a square field with marble incrustation. The fourth zone is constituted by a section of four levels of *muqarnas*, which lead to the concluding calotte of the eastern portal. The design of the portal extends beyond the jamb and is incorporated into an encompassing framework. The decoration of the western portal is less elaborate. It is distinct from the accompanying masonry not through its height, but through its projection and the uncovered ashlar. The door is situated in the middle of the portal, and above it rises a three zoned frieze of *muqarnas*.

⁵⁷ The continuation of the roofing above the northern portal in a northerly direction is suggested by the consoles that are still preserved on both sides of the small street. Regarding the western portal, bases of vaults to the north and south indicate that this portal was vaulted. Furthermore, the western portal displays a rather flat *muqarnas* frieze, whose smaller size might be on account of the above vaulting (fig. 11).



portal and extensive decoration, as well as the fact that it draws attention to the east-west axis through the mosque, supports the reconstruction of the major street network in Mamluk Tripoli presented by Salamé-Sarkis.⁵⁸ In this reconstruction, he assumes the existence of a main street that runs south to north through the entire city, supposedly also passing by the ʿAṬṬĀR Mosque in the east.⁵⁹ The main street passed by the Great Mosque, the Khān al-Ṣābūn, the Khān al-Miṣriyīn, and the Khān al-Khayyāṭīn to the ʿAṬṬĀR Mosque, farther to the Sūq al-Ḥarāj and the Khān al-ʿAskar, and ultimately led out of the city via the Jisr al-Jadīd or Jisr al-ʿAtīq.⁶⁰ The north-south direction of the ʿAṬṬĀR Mosque corresponds approximately with the course of this main street to its east and thereby blocks direct access to the street that leads to the Khān al-Jāwīsh (fig. 9) to its west. Nonetheless, a direct connection between the khan and the main street is provided by the portals of the mosque that lie opposite each other to the east and west and by the continuation of the street’s course through the interior, which is emphasized by the architecturally distinct axis.⁶¹

Finally, the main street’s course, which has not yet been ascertained conclusively, might help to explain the divergent position—in view of the setting of the entire mosque—of the eastern annex. Possibly the axis with the divergence in relation to the prayer hall was made in order to adjust the east part of the mosque to the main street’s course and thus enable the outer façade to be clearly visible and as large as possible.⁶²

⁵⁸ However, caution is advised when following this theory. Salamé-Sarkis reconstructs the network of streets based upon important buildings, so that the network deduced from a building might actually be the result of circular logic (Ḥassān Salamé-Sarkis, *Contribution à l’histoire de Tripoli et de sa région à l’époque des croisades: Problèmes d’histoires, d’architecture et de céramique* [Paris, 1980], map no. 4, legend).

⁵⁹ This assumption might possibly be confirmed if one accepts Al-Harithy’s argument that the vestibules served as “transitional space” that provide a transition to the more “private” zone of the mosque, especially in the case of busy streets (Al-Harithy, “The Concept of Space,” 85–86). By contrast, in the north and west there is no vestibule, but instead a direct entrance to the prayer hall.

⁶⁰ Thereby, the course of this street resembles that of the ancient street network, which was supposedly retained by the Crusaders (cf. Salamé-Sarkis’ reconstruction of streets at the time of the Crusaders [Salamé-Sarkis, *Contribution à l’histoire de Tripoli*, 4, and map no. 3]; also Guy Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500: Translated from the Works of Medieval Arab Geographers* [1890; repr., Beirut, 1965], 350–51).

⁶¹ A further example of a dominant east-west axis is found in the nearby Khān al-Miṣriyīn, whose entrances lie only in the east and west.

⁶² Cf. also Humphreys, “The Expressive Intent,” 98, and Al-Harithy “The Concept of Space,” 87. Comparable examples of this can be found in Cairo as well as in Tripoli. In Cairo, cf. for instance the mosque of Amir Shaykhu (Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction* [Leiden, 1989], 117) and the Mosque of Amir Aqsunqur al-Nāṣirī (Meinecke, *Mamlukische*



THE JĀMI' AL-^ʿATTĀR: ITS POSITION BETWEEN FUNCTION AND INTENT

Yet another architectural peculiarity which led Salam-Liebich to presume a converted Crusader church is the placement of the mihrab in the east section and not in the center of the qiblah wall (fig. 2).⁶³ As could be discerned above, this positioning took place during the construction of the qiblah wall and, therefore, cannot be ascribed to a facility built at a later time, which for instance might have been necessary when converting a church into a mosque. Instead, the minbar is obviously interjoined in the center of the qiblah wall. In order to explicate this peculiarity, here the edifice will be examined according to its social and religious function as “*jāmi' al-^ʿAttār*,” which was built by a non-Mamluk person.

THE MOSQUE AND ITS COMMISSIONER

In determining the commissioner of the ^ʿAttār Mosque, reference can be made to the name of the mosque, “*jāmi' al-^ʿAttār*,” as well as to the Mamluk chronicles and descriptions in Ottoman travelogues. The decree of 821/1418 inscribed in the northern jamb of the eastern portal confirms the historicity of the mosque's name of “*jāmi' al-^ʿAttār*.” Although contemporary sources⁶⁴ report that the mosque was named after its donor, the absence of a name in any inscription on the building⁶⁵

Architektur, 1:108, fig. 67). In Tripoli, cf. the Madrasat al-Burṭāsi, along whose northern façade the street via the Jisr al-^ʿAtīq (today demolished) once ran (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 1:75).

⁶³ Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 78. Of almost the same age is the mausoleum of Amir Arāq al-Silāḥdār in Damascus (750/1349–50), where the mihrab was likewise built in the east of the qiblah wall (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:213–14). The reason for the position of the mihrab seems to be that a window (Karl Wulzinger and Carl Watzinger, *Damaskus, die islamische Stadt* [Berlin, 1924], 100, fig. 22) or a passageway (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 1:111, fig. 71) was built into the qiblah wall instead of a mihrab.

⁶⁴ Abū al-Fidāʿ, *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar*, 153; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2:500.

⁶⁵ Herzfeld and Allen suggest that the absence of a founder inscription is possibly due to the premature death of the founder (Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, 275). Allen points out that buildings often remained “uninscribed” at the time of death of the founder; further, it was the obligation of the founder's descendants not only to put the donated structure to use, but also to complete the decorative scheme with an inscription of the *waqfiyah*. This, however, was not always carried out (Terry Allen, “Madrasah al-Farrūkhshāhīyah,” chap. 3 in *Ayyūbid Architecture*, 6th ed. [Occidental, CA, 1999], <http://sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/ayyarch/index.htm>). See especially the sub-section entitled “Missing Inscriptions and Blank Places”). There Allen refers in particular to uninscribed *tabula-ansata* cartouches and lintels in Ayyubid architecture. Thus, the absence of an inscription naming the commissioner might be explained by the mention of the death of the commissioner in 749/1348–49, as reported by Ibn al-Wardī and Abū al-Fidāʿ. The death would have occurred two years before the erection of the eastern portal, which would have been the most appropriate place for the placement of his name (Abū al-Fidāʿ, *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar*, 153; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2:500). Cf. the location of such inscriptions in the Great Mosque, the Madrasat al-



might help to explain al-Nābulusī's assumption that it was endowed in secret (*min al-ghayb*⁶⁶). As far as the structure itself is concerned, only the name “*al-ʿAṭṭār*” in the inscription can be presumed to be a reference to a commissioner. Thus, the designation *al-ʿAṭṭār* affords several interpretative possibilities: literally “*al-ʿAṭṭār*” denotes the occupation of a perfume merchant and pharmacist.⁶⁷ As a component of the name (*laqab*) of a person, *al-ʿAṭṭār*—aside from the actual occupational designation of its bearer—can also be understood as a name which no longer connotes its original meaning.⁶⁸

Sobernheim and Condé point to the first reading of “*al-ʿAṭṭār*” as solely an occupational designation and suggest the interpretation of the mosque's name according to the urban context that they reconstructed. Whereas the present-day ʿAṭṭār Sūq is in the vicinity of the Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī madrasah,⁶⁹ Sobernheim views its location in Mamluk times as being confirmed by inscriptions in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque and a nearby house.⁷⁰ Therefore, Sobernheim understands the ʿAṭṭār Mosque as the “mosque of the perfume merchant” (Mosqué du Parfumeur), and “*al-ʿAṭṭār*” not as the specific *laqab* of the commissioner.⁷¹ Condé's translation of the mosque's name as “Perfumers' Mosque” corresponds with this theory as well.⁷² Ibn Maḥāsin's travelogue confirms the theory of Sobernheim and Condé,

Burtāsī, and the Ṭaynāl Mosque in Tripoli (for inscriptions, see Bizri, *La calligraphie arabe*).

⁶⁶ Al-Nābulusī, *Al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah*, 72–73.

⁶⁷ Cf. the dictionary entries in Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, and Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*; and A. Dietrich, “*al-ʿAṭṭār*,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM, edition v. 1.0 (Leiden, 1999), 1:751b–752b.

⁶⁸ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Names* (Edinburgh, 1989), 54.

⁶⁹ Cf. Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 117.

⁷⁰ Sobernheim, *Matériaux*, 107; cf. Gaston Wiet, “Répertoire des décrets mamlouks de Syrie,” *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud par ses amis et ses élèves*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1939), 524; Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 197–200. Tadmurī considers this assumption as being confirmed by Ottoman court documents (Tadmurī, *Wathāʾiq Nādīrah*, 152, n. 4).

⁷¹ Sobernheim further assumes that the mosque was a gathering place for the guild of the perfume merchants (Sobernheim, *Matériaux*, 104, n. 2).

⁷² Condé (Bruce Condé, *Tripoli of Lebanon* [Beirut, 1961], 92–93) apparently considers that the ʿAṭṭār Mosque was the kind of mosque meant for a specific quarter in the city. The fact that “*al-ʿAṭṭār*” is a singular form argues against his translation of the mosque's name and its interpretation. An example of a mosque whose name is in the plural form (“*al-ʿAṭṭārīn*,” meaning “mosque of the perfume merchants”), and which is read by Müller-Wiener as “Moschee (des Viertel) der Drogisten” (mosque in the pharmacists' quarter), can be found in Alexandria (Martina Müller-Wiener, *Eine Stadtgeschichte Alexandrias von 564/1169 bis in die Mitte des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: Verwaltung und innerstädtische Organisationsformen* [Berlin, 1992], 269; cf. Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:182). Salam-Liebich argues against the location in the perfumers' suq as well as against Sobernheim's interpretation of the edifice as a mosque of the perfumers' guild and implicitly also Condé's interpretation of a mosque for an urban quarter. She instead propounds



insofar as the mosque must have stood in the perfume merchants' suq, at least in the eleventh/seventeenth century (*fi nafs sūq al-buzūriyīna*), yet Ibn Maḥāsīn makes explicit mention of the person Shaykh al-ʿAṭṭār as commissioner.⁷³

Nevertheless, the earliest chronicles pertaining to the ʿAṭṭār Mosque imply an association between the name of the mosque “Jāmiʿ al-ʿAṭṭār” and a commissioner with the *laqab* “al-ʿAṭṭār.” Whereas Ibn al-Dawādārī mentions a person by the name of “Badr al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār,” who supposedly founded a mosque in Tripoli, Abū al-Fidāʾ and Ibn al-Wardī confirm a direct tie between a “Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār,” who endowed a congregational mosque in Tripoli, and the mosque’s name, as this edifice had been named after him (*wa-huwa wāqifu al-jāmiʿ al-maʿrūf bihi bihā*).⁷⁴

The mention by name of a commissioner with the *laqab* “al-ʿAṭṭār” in chronicles written around the time of the mosque’s erection is supportive of the existence of a person known by name who endowed the ʿAṭṭār Mosque. Due to the limitations of the available written sources, this still does not answer the question as to whether the name of the commissioner was “Badr al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār” or “Nāṣir al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār.”⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the component of the mosque’s name, “al-ʿAṭṭār,”

that the name of the mosque should be ascribed to the *laqab* of a person named as commissioner in the chronicles. The person’s name was al-ʿAṭṭār, who merely by coincidence was a perfume merchant, and the mosque was named after him (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 69). She thereby refers to Ibn al-Dawādārī’s introduction in Sālim (Sālim, *Ṭarābulus al-Shām*, 413. Al-Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 422, follows the passage almost precisely).

⁷³ Ibn Maḥāsīn, *Al-Manāzil*, 82.

⁷⁴ Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar*, 153; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2:500.

⁷⁵ Various deliberations about the commissioner of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, which are based upon these three Mamluk chronicles, have appeared in the secondary literature. One group of scholars maintain that either Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār, mentioned by Ibn al-Wardī and Abū al-Fidāʾ (Bābā, *Ṭarābulus fi al-Tārīkh*, 358), or Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār (Sulaymān ʿAbd al-ʿAbd Allāh al-Kharābishah, *Niyābat Ṭarābulus fi al-ʿAṣr al-Mamlūkī* [Amman, 1993], 156), or Badr al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, traceable to Ibn al-Dawādārī (Ḥimṣī, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 200, n. 2; Sharif, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 174; al-Bakhīt, *Al-Manāzil al-Maḥāsiniyah*, 67; Ḍinnāwī, *ʿAwdat al-Dhākīrah*, 256), is the commissioner. Other scholars prefer the reading of Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār as found in Ibn al-Dawādārī, which is not documented and is presumably wrongly bequeathed. Whereas Salam-Liebich mentions both Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār and Badr al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār as commissioner (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 68–69), Meinecke and Saliba decided in favour of Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:215, and 1:76; Saliba, *Tripoli*, Monument No. 13). Referring to three different variations, Tadmurī reflects the broadest scope of interpretations of the commissioner’s name: Badr al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭṭār (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 191–92), Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (idem, *Wathāʾiq Nādirah*, 105; idem, “Al-Āthār al-Islāmiyah,” 212; idem, “The Plans of Tripoli Alsham and its Mamluk Architecture,” *ARAM* 9–10 (1997–98): 476) and “undecided,” Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār, and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (idem, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 291. Cf. also al-Qaṭṭār, *Niyābat Ṭarābulus*, 490).



is so closely tied to the specific personage of a commissioner that still in the eleventh/seventeenth century al-Nābulusī reported that the mosque was named after its commissioner, without supplying this person's full name.⁷⁶ Instead, he goes beyond the information of his contemporaries and identifies the person as a wealthy perfume merchant and therefore views the *laqab* “al-ʿAṭṭār” as denoting the person's occupation as well.⁷⁷

Whether the commissioner was actually a merchant in perfumes, as the *laqab* and al-Nābulusī maintain, cannot be ascertained on the basis of the available source material. It can, however, be assumed that the person was likely wealthy in order to be able to endow the building of a mosque.⁷⁸ The first explicit reference to the endowment of the mosque (*waqf*) occurs in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century in the writings of Abū al-Fidāʾ and Ibn al-Wardī,⁷⁹ but the kind and extent of the *waqf* are not specified.⁸⁰ A *waqf* is also mentioned in the decree on the eastern portal of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, so that an endowment can likewise be assumed in the ninth/fifteenth century. Al-Nābulusī writes in more detail about a *waqf* during the

⁷⁶ Al-Nābulusī, *Al-Rihlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah*, 72–73.

⁷⁷ “Wa-qad ʿamarahu [jāmiʿ] rajul kāna ʿaṭṭāran, wa-kāna yunfiqu ʿalayhi min al-ghayb fa-nusiba ilayhi” (al-Nābulusī, *Al-Rihlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah*, 72 f.).

⁷⁸ Fernandes ascertained that anyone, regardless whether a member of the civil or military elite, could be a commissioner (Leonor Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture and the Question of Patronage,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 [1997]: 108). The sole decisive criterion was the person's financial standing. Thus, Fernandes explicitly includes women and merchants in the group of commissioners.

⁷⁹ Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar*, 153; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2:500.

⁸⁰ Tadmurī attempts to connect the Madrasat Sibṭ al-ʿAṭṭār and a Ḥamām al-ʿAṭṭār and the commissioner of the mosque (Tadmurī, *Tāriḫ wa-Āthār*, 309; idem, *Tāriḫ Ṭarābulus*, 287–88; idem, “The Plans of Tripoli,” 476–77; idem, *Wathāʿiq Nādirah*, 181). Although an inscription dated to 862/1457 has been documented in the Madrasat Sibṭ al-ʿAṭṭār (Sobernheim, *Matériaux*, 124–25; Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:381), and although both structures are named in Ottoman sources (cf. al-Nābulusī, *Al-Rihlah al-Ṭarābulusiyah*, 73; *Sijillāt Maḥkamat Ṭarābulus al-Shām al-Sharīʿiyah*, *sijill* 2, p. 135 [Ḥimṣī, *Tāriḫ Ṭarābulus*, 271–73; Tadmurī, *Wathāʿiq Nādirah*, 112 ff.]), Tadmurī's assignment of this data to supposedly extant buildings as well as the relationship of the respective commissioners to the commissioner of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque—which Tadmurī assumes—must nevertheless be carefully thought about. Whereas at first view the inference of a connection between mosque, *ḥamām*, and madrasah by means of a name may seem reasonable, the subsequent assumption that therefore a connection must have existed between the commissioners is unfounded, based upon the sources at hand. Only one single tie can be reconstructed between the Ḥamām al-ʿAṭṭār and the Madrasat Sibṭ al-ʿAṭṭār: an Ottoman court document from the year 1079/1668 mentions that the Ḥamām al-ʿAṭṭār was connected with the madrasah through a *waqf* and located in its vicinity (*Sijillāt Maḥkamat Ṭarābulus al-Shām al-Sharīʿiyah*, *sijill* 2, p. 135; dated to the beginning of Rabīʿ II 1079/September–October 1668 [Ḥimṣī, *Tāriḫ Ṭarābulus*, 271–73; Tadmurī, *Wathāʿiq Nādirah*, 112 ff.]).



Ottoman period, naming teachers as beneficiaries for the first time.⁸¹

The mention of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque and the commissioner in chronicles and travelogues emphasizes the commissioner’s performing a devout act in endowing a *jāmi‘*. The mention of the name of the commissioner of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque in supra-regional Mamluk chronicles leads to the conclusion that the name seems to have been widely known, or it was meant to designate an important personage in the city. As an inscription containing his name is absent on the mosque itself, the chronicles serve to preserve his *memoria*. Thereby the chronicles determine the personage of al-‘Aṭṭār primarily as commissioner and founder of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque. The construction of the *jāmi‘* is then cited as an attribute of the commissioner as a person, which underscores his outstanding achievement, his service and—over and above that—his devoutness.⁸² At the same time the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque gains widespread renown. In a list of construction projects carried out during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad,⁸³ Ibn al-Dawādārī cites the mosque, along with the madrasah of Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī (716–26/1316–26),⁸⁴ as the only *jāmi‘* and the solitary edifice erected by a non-Mamluk in Tripoli.⁸⁵ This in turn could lead to deductions regarding the mosque’s local prominence as a *jāmi‘* and to the social status of its commissioner.

THE ‘AṬṬĀR MOSQUE AS JĀMI‘

The ‘Aṭṭār Mosque’s function as a congregational mosque or *jāmi‘* is documented in

⁸¹ Al-Nābulusī, *Al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusīyah*, 72–73. That instruction was held in the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque during the Ottoman period is confirmed by published court documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Tripoli (cf. Ḥimsī, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 200, with reference to *sijill* 1, p. 4 [from 1077/1667], in which the pay for a teacher in the *jāmi‘* al-‘Aṭṭār is mentioned).

⁸² Cf. Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517* (Cambridge, 2000). Cf. also the religious as well as social significance of a *jāmi‘* in Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture,” 113.

⁸³ Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 9:391.

⁸⁴ Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 107. Ibn al-Dawādārī refers to the Madrasat Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī as a *jāmi‘*, but its use as such is unknown. The latter might be explained by the madrasah’s location directly next to the Great Mosque.

⁸⁵ If the importance of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque during the Ottoman period were to be judged by its place in the sequence of Tripoli’s mosques named in travelogues, then the picture becomes less clear. Accordingly, al-‘Uṭayfī mentions only the Great Mosque, the madrasah/mosque of al-Burṭāṣī, and the Tawbah and the Ṭaynāl Mosques (al-‘Uṭayfī, *Riḥlah min Dimashq al-Shām ilā Ṭarābulus al-Shām*, in *Riḥlatān ilā Lubnān, Ta‘līf ‘Abd al-Ghanī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Nābulusī wa-Ramaḍān ibn Mūsā al-‘Uṭayfī*, ed. Stefan Wild and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid [Wiesbaden, 1979], 21). Al-Nābulusī and Ibn Maḥāsīn, on the other hand, deal with the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque extensively. Ibn Maḥāsīn lists it in fourth place (Ibn Maḥāsīn, *Al-Manāzil*, 82). Although the mosque is only eighth in al-Nābulusī’s sequence, compared with the other mosques mentioned it receives a relatively detailed description (al-Nābulusī, *Al-Riḥlah al-Ṭarābulusīyah*, 72–73).



the inscription on the building itself and further verified through its designation as “*jāmiʿ*” in Ottoman travelogues as well as through its name today. Contemporary chronicles and the building inscription on the eastern portal indicate this function as being the original one. Although the building inscription above the entrance in the eastern portal does not explicitly designate the ʿAṭṭār Mosque as a *jāmiʿ*, this function can be deduced indirectly through the allusion to the minbar, erected by Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm in 751/1350–51 (fig. 10). The Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*), part of the Friday prayers (*ṣalāt al-jumʿah*) conducted in a mosque and obligatory for every adult male Muslim, is delivered from the minbar. Thus, the minbar also serves as a characterizing element of the *jāmiʿ* as a mosque in which the Friday prayers are held.⁸⁶

In addition to the inscription on the main portal that refers to the minbar, the minbar becomes the liturgical center of the prayer hall through its decorative presence in the otherwise (present-day) plain interior room as well as its placement in the middle of the qiblah wall (fig. 2). The role of the minbar as the place for the *khaṭīb* and the *mawʿiẓah* is declared by the inscription on the minbar.⁸⁷

A hypothetical interpretation for this emphasis on the ʿAṭṭār Mosque as a *jāmiʿ* might be gained from the urban setting and the social position of the commissioner. Here it should be emphasized that the ʿAṭṭār Mosque is the only structure in the immediate vicinity that is designated expressly (by a decree) on the building as being a *jāmiʿ*. The Madrasat al-Burṭāsī, which is used for the Friday prayers, lies farther to the southeast;⁸⁸ the Tawbah Mosque (*jāmiʿ*) lies to the north.⁸⁹ Thus, in this developing economic center,⁹⁰ the ʿAṭṭār Mosque takes on a supportive function both ritually as well as socially for the population that lives and works there. It is the place where the congregation can attend daily prayers and Friday prayers, and hear the *khuṭbah*.⁹¹

The function of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque as the only *jāmiʿ* in the immediate urban

⁸⁶ J. Pedersen, “Masjid,” *El*, CD-ROM, edition v. 1.0, 6:655.

⁸⁷ The inscription panel on the east flank of the minbar reads as follows: “Anā maraḍ li-khaṭīb wa-muʿadd lil-mawāʿiẓ” (I am the base for a *khaṭīb* and intended for sermons). Cf. Bizri’s translation: “I am the threshold [sic] for a speaker and a deviser of preaching [sic]” (Bizri, *La calligraphie arabe*, 102, no. 12). The inscription on the west flank reads: “Fa-iʿtabir fiya wa-finafsik talaqqā kull wāʿiẓ” (Contemplate upon me, and accept every preacher unto yourself). Cf. translation: “Take advice from me and in yourself consider every preacher” (Bizri, *La calligraphie arabe*, 102, no. 13).

⁸⁸ Cf. the building inscription that alludes to the building’s twofold function as madrasah and place for Friday prayers (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 35).

⁸⁹ The exact date is unknown, but Tadmuri and Salam-Liebich reckon an approximate date between 693 and 715/1293–94 and 1315–16 (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 97).

⁹⁰ Cf. Luz, “Tripoli Reinvented,” 56.

⁹¹ Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture,” 109.



environs⁹² is corroborated by its architectural layout, which is designed to enable easy access. This is provided in the first place by the three entrances and their interaction with the course of the streets. Further, the portals, the minaret, and the dome of the almost completely enclosed ‘Aṭṭār Mosque serve as distinguishing features of the mosque in general⁹³ and of the entrances in particular. They thus act as a kind of guide in the urban setting.⁹⁴ While the east portal draws the attention of passers-by with its extensive decoration and its high visibility on the main street as reconstructed, and is thus easy to find, the minaret directs attention towards the adjacent northern portal. The minaret’s function as a guide to the mosque relies upon its visibility from afar, as is shown in the decorative plan, which only begins in the third storey.⁹⁵

Finally, the building of a *jāmi‘* is likewise of political significance. On the one hand, the construction of a *jāmi‘* in a certain area encourages further urban development.⁹⁶ In the case of the Mamluk reestablishment of Tripoli, this means of urbanization was applied by al-Ashraf Khalil and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad—among others—with the Great Mosque in the city’s center, and by Amir Ṭaynāl

⁹² Cf. Baybars al-Manṣūri’s description, furnished by Fernandes, of the erection of the *jāmi‘ al-jadīd al-Nāṣiri* by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad on the island of al-Rawda in Cairo. The *jāmi‘* was built for the inhabitants of this *maḥallah*, who did not have their own *jāmi‘* and who wanted one so that they would not have to attend Friday prayers in another mosque (Baybars al-Manṣūri, *Al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah*, quoted in Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture,” 113).

⁹³ For the significance of these structural components and their effect upon the urban environment, see also Al-Harithy, “The Concept of Space,” 89, who studied the effect of the dome and the minaret from near and afar, using the building complex of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn as an example. Humphreys, “The Expressive Intent,” 111–12, notes that minarets would assume a kind of “advertising” function in an environment in which many smaller and anonymous buildings attempted to attract attention. Hillenbrand points in general to the association between densely populated urban areas, the lack of space, and the resultant limited size of mosques, which consequently led to an elaborate design of façades in order to attract the attention of passers-by (Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 99).

⁹⁴ For the function of main portals, domes, and minarets as distinguishing signs of mosques, see Al-Harithy, “The Concept of Space,” 87 ff.

⁹⁵ Although the lowest zone of the minaret (floors 1–2) takes up the largest surface, the minaret’s emphasis through decoration starts only in the third floor with columns in the corners and twin arcades in the balcony above in the fourth floor. Correspondingly, the mouldings that separate the floors into the first and second stories are in a simple design, while the cornice between the second and third stories is decorated with tongued leaves and between the third and fourth floors—the balcony of the minaret—is supported by an expanding *muqarnas* cornice in two zones.

⁹⁶ Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and al-Aṣraf Qāyṭbāy—Patrons of Urbanism,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd International Colloquium organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, May 92/93/94*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and D. De Smet (Leuven, 1995), 268.



(736/1336) with the Ṭaynāl Mosque in the south of Tripoli.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Friday prayers are held in the *jāmiʿ* in the name of the ruler, for which reason the erection of the *jāmiʿ* must be viewed as a privilege granted by the sultan and confirmed by religious scholars.⁹⁸ As can be seen from the examples above, this privilege was allotted foremost to members of the military elite at this time.⁹⁹ In this respect, no information could be gained from the available sources concerning the identification of the commissioner of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, that is, whether or not he was a member of the Mamluk military elite.¹⁰⁰ Instead, it seems that the person was a civilian, whose influential position and/or wealth permitted him the privilege¹⁰¹ of erecting the *jāmiʿ* and thus also of making a significant contribution towards the development of the infrastructure of the city.¹⁰²

THE DECORATIVE SCHEME OF THE ʿAṬṬĀR MOSQUE

The decorative scheme of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque proves to be a cosmopolitan assemblage. The form of the portal, the minbar, and the minaret have parallels in contemporary structures in Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Gaza. The question thus arises as to the mastermind(s) behind these decorative elements in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque. Meinecke explains the phenomenon of the appearance of the same decorative forms in different places based on his concept of itinerant craftsmen or workshops,¹⁰³ which he maintains were responsible for the exchange of forms in architecture and ornamentation between Cairo, the provinces of the Mamluk empire, and other dominions.¹⁰⁴ He follows the theory that itinerant craftsmen adopted formal and decorative elements characteristic of one locale and then carried them to new locales. Thus, the presumed “itinerant craftsmen” can be deduced on the basis of the appearance of similar design characteristics

⁹⁷ Cf. Luz, “Tripoli Reinvented,” 56.

⁹⁸ Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture,” 109.

⁹⁹ The madrasat/*jāmiʿ* al-Burṭāsī was likewise donated by a member of the military elite, whose death date, 725/1325, provides an *ante quem* date for the mosque: ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿĪsā, al-Amīr Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-Burṭāsī al-Kurdī (cf. Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 39). The Tawbah Mosque is associated with the Great Mosque by a *waqf*; Salam-Liebich and Tadmurī consider its commissioner to be one of the ruling elite (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 135–38; Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 97). Yet Meinecke does not list it among the Mamluk buildings.

¹⁰⁰ For names of Mamluks, see Schimmel, *Islamic Names*, 70–72.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture,” 116.

¹⁰² The position and prosperity of these commissioners, however, cannot be determined on the basis of the sources at hand.

¹⁰³ Cf. for example Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, vol. 1, and idem, *Patterns of Stylistic Changes in Islamic Architecture: Local Traditions versus Migrating Artists* (New York, 1996).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Michael Meinecke, “Mamluk Architecture: Regional Architectural Traditions: Evolution and Interrelations,” *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 174–75.



in different localities. Meinecke sees an example of this in the signature of the craftsman, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, on the eastern portal, whose workmanship he (Meinecke) attempts to discern, to the limited extent that his overview of Mamluk architecture permits, through the comparison of decorations and motifs. However, Meinecke has no larger preliminary works on the stylistic assessment of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque within the local tradition in Tripoli and the Mamluk realm to which he can refer.¹⁰⁵ He sees parallels to the use of *ablaq* and the variations in the polychrome marble panel on the eastern portal of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque (fig. 10) in the madrasah of the merchant Afrīdūn al-‘Ajāmī (744/1343–44) in Damascus.¹⁰⁶ Further, he considers the design of the minbar in the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque as having been influenced by the minbars in Aleppo.

Meinecke’s concept of itinerant craftsmen makes it possible for him to postulate an itinerary. Accordingly, the marble minbar of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque, “inspired” by Aleppo, would indicate that Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm originally belonged to a workshop in Aleppo. From there via Cairo he could have joined the workshops of the Madrasat al-‘Ajāmī in Damascus,¹⁰⁷ which Meinecke attempts to prove with a comparison of the portal of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque and the Madrasat al-‘Ajāmī.¹⁰⁸

Meinecke’s comparison of decoration and motifs found in the polychrome marble panel on the portal of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque and the Madrasat al-‘Ajāmī¹⁰⁹ seems conclusive, but only at first glance. The number of parallels observed in

¹⁰⁵ Stylistic comparisons of prominent decorative elements such as the eastern portal, the minaret, and the minbar are only implied and refer solely to Tripoli. Thus, Sālim, al-Zayn, and Dīnnāwī merely make note of the similarity between the decorative scheme of the eastern portal and the Madrasat Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī (Sālim, *Ṭarābulus al-Shām*, 414; al-Zayn, *Tārīkh Ṭarābulus*, 423; Dīnnāwī, *‘Awdat al-Dhākīrah*, 256). Regarding the minaret, note is only made that it can be considered as one of the most important and magnificent minarets in Tripoli (Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture*, 75; Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 201; Sālim, *Ṭarābulus al-Shām*, 414; Condé, *Tripoli*, 94). The minbar has also received little attention. Tadmurī notes at least that it is the only marble minbar in Tripoli from the Mamluk period (Tadmurī, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 200).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 1:109.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 112, n. 208.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁰⁹ Both are square and display knots radiating out from a central circle and stylized lilies as well as colored marble incrustation. Whereas the center of the zone of patterns in the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque is inscribed in three octagons, of which the outermost forms in parts the frame, the central circle of the panel of the Madrasat al-‘Ajāmī is encircled by two squares standing on end, which are knotted with the frame by trefoils at the corners. Furthermore, as a whole the work on the portal of the Madrasat al-‘Ajāmī displays finer workmanship. The vines have an additional darker framework and the lilies in the corners are clearly distinguished from the other blossoms. By contrast, compared with the vines, the blossoms in the panel on the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque are not placed in the foreground. Finally, the ornamentation of the Madrasat al-‘Ajāmī does not present the predominant triangular elements in decorative patterns as found in the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque.



motifs and materials in the panels of the Madrasat al-ʿAjami and the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, which initially seem so similar to one another, diminish when they are compared to other structures. For instance, the structure and motifs in panels found in the gate room of the northern portal of al-ʿUmarī congregational mosque in Gaza, built under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, show greater parallels to the ʿAṭṭār Mosque than does the Madrasat al-ʿAjami.¹¹⁰

The Madrasat al-ʿAjami may not be viewed as the sole example of the use of a particular model of polychrome marble panel and the *ablaq* technique at the same time.¹¹¹ This scheme can also be seen in the southern portal niche of the mosque of Aṣlam al-Bahāʾī al-Silāḥdār (746/1345)¹¹² in Cairo, where aside from the *ablaq*, a variation of the square panel—with a motif of knots and blossoms—is carried out in marble incrustation. Finally, with regard to the design of frames around entrances,¹¹³ a fine example is offered in the portal of the *turbah* of Turkān Khātūn in Jerusalem (753/1352–53),¹¹⁴ not the Madrasat al-ʿAjami. When attempting to explain the motifs of the panel of marble incrustation and the simultaneous use of *ablaq* in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, these examples indicate even more that in his works Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm was not oriented exclusively towards the Madrasat al-ʿAjami nor was he necessarily employed there.

Likewise, the marble minbars in Aleppo need not have been the sole “inspiration”¹¹⁵ for the design of the marble minbar in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque.¹¹⁶ The

¹¹⁰ Like the panel in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, this field is organized around an octafoil, which however resembles a form of blossom and is not inscribed within a circle, as in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, but in an octagon. As in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, the three encircling octagons are formed by “triangular elements” with a central lily blossom (Mohamed-Moain Sadek, *Die mamlukische Architektur der Stadt Gaza* [Berlin, 1991], 54). Two later examples consist of ornamental panels on the exterior of the minbar in the mosque of Kātib Wilāyah, erected in the mid-fifteenth century (ibid., 133–34) and on the façade of the prayer hall of the congregational mosque al-Zufurdimrī, dated to 762/1360 (ibid., 152).

¹¹¹ The portal of the Madrasat Qarāṭāy al-Manṣūrī can be viewed as a local comparison displaying the use of both the knot pattern and *ablaq* at the same time.

¹¹² Chahinda Fahmi Karim, “The Mosque of Aṣlam al-Bahāʾī al-Silāḥdār (746/1345),” *Annales islamologiques* 24 (1988): 233.

¹¹³ The frame of the portal of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque is decorated with a border composed of an astragal between two grooves, which is accompanied on the inner zone by a frieze. The latter consists of alternating positive and negative forms in relief that swell in volume below and gradually run out above; the crown is pointed.

¹¹⁴ Michael Hamilton Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study* (Buckhurst, 1987), 321.

¹¹⁵ Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 112, n. 208.

¹¹⁶ A local tradition of the marble minbar in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque can be ruled out on the basis of the Mamluk minbars preserved today. As Tadmuri ascertains (*Tārīkh wa-Āthār*, 200), the ʿAṭṭār Mosque’s minbar represents a singular case among the Mamluk minbars found in Tripoli. The



decoration on Aleppo's minbars¹¹⁷ differs essentially from that on the 'Aṭṭār Mosque's minbar. Compared to the latter, the minbars in Aleppo display marble incrustation over a greater surface area. The marble minbar¹¹⁸ of the *jāmi'* Alṭunbughā al-*ʿAlā'i*, which was erected in 718/1318, corresponds somewhat to this tendency.¹¹⁹ Although this minbar may be the earliest preserved example in marble,¹²⁰ marble minbars are not a phenomenon that is restricted to Aleppo alone in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century. On the contrary, many examples that are similar in decoration, design, and technique are found outside of Aleppo.

The marble incrustation, used primarily on the cupola of the minbar in the 'Aṭṭār Mosque, can be compared with the fragmentary marble minbar of the Khaṭīrī Mosque¹²¹ in Cairo (built in 736/1336), specifically with respect to the small-sized, geometrical decorative patterns. The minbar in the 'Aṭṭār Mosque, however, shares the same kind of small-sized, extensive decorative stone cutting

other two examples that are of earlier date, the minbar in the Great Mosque (726/1326) and that in the Ṭaynāl Mosque (736/1336), are made of wood.

¹¹⁷ Meinecke does not supply any concrete examples to support this idea, but only mentions Aleppo's minbars.

¹¹⁸ Michael Meinecke, "Die Moschee des Amīrs Āqsunqur an-Nāṣiri in Kairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts in Kairo* 29, no. 1 (1973): 33.

¹¹⁹ Jean Sauvaget, "Inventaire des monuments musulmans de la ville d'Alep," *Revue des études islamiques* 5 (1931): 88; cf. also Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, 1:324–25. The sides are taken up by a capacious marble incrustation, which displays a triangle composed of dark marble; this is encircled by a lighter-colored border and again by a darker stone. This generous use of marble incrustation technique differs decisively from the moderate marble incrustation in the 'Aṭṭār Mosque, for instance on the cupola of the minbar. Later examples of expansive use of marble incrustation are found on the minbar in the Mankalībughā al-Shamsi Mosque, founded in 763/1393–94 (Jean Sauvaget, «*Les Trésors d'or*» de Sibṭ ibn al-*ʿAjami: Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire de la ville d'Alep* [Beirut, 1950], 40), and in the *Jāmi'* Taghrībirdī (796/1393–94) (Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, 1:355). They as well exhibit the central triangle enclosed by more triangles, some in different colors, on the staircase.

¹²⁰ Meinecke, "Die Moschee des Amīrs Āqsunqur," 33.

¹²¹ Islamic Museum in Cairo, Inv. No. 2983 (Gloria S. Karnouk, "Form and Ornament of the Cairene Bahri Minbar," *Annales islamologiques* 17 [1981]: 138). Only the sides of the minbar are preserved. They display a pattern that is based upon a star with twelve rays, which is made of stones of diverse colors and set in marble (*ibid.*, 136; *idem*, "Cairene Bahri Mamluk Minbars: With a Provisional Typology and a Catalogue" [M.A. thesis, American University of Cairo, 1977], 125–27). Although other stars and geometric forms are also used here, it should be noted that the decorative pattern found in the 'Aṭṭār Mosque's minbar appears to be more clearly organized geometrically through its more angular forms than that of the minbar fragments in Cairo. The latter also contains round forms, in addition to the star-pattern and polygons. Karnouk therefore has doubts about the early date of the fragment. Round decorative elements do not appear on wooden minbars before the fifteenth century (*ibid.*, 125–26).



as the minbar in the Mosque of Āqṣunqur (dated 748/1347) in Cairo.¹²² The cupola, baldachin, and banister of the Āqṣunqur minbar exhibit decorative stone cutting; this technique is present on the portal and flanks of the minbar in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque. On the other hand, close parallels in the structure can be observed on the minbar in the Jāmiʿ Ibn Marwān in Gaza.¹²³

Meinecke's concept of itinerant craftsmen as a medium for the transfer of different forms, insofar as it is applied to the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, must therefore be called into question. This model does not suffice to explain all of the similarities in decoration and motif found in the "work" of Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm or in reconstructing stations in his travels.¹²⁴ Only in the case of a very unlikely "itinerary" via Aleppo, Gaza, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus, which could be enlarged with other stations, would further comparisons be found. The attempt to personalize the motifs and decorations as representing the signature of the craftsman is not sufficient for an understanding of the forms used to ornament the ʿAṭṭār Mosque.

Instead, here the function of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque as a *jāmiʿ* and the decisive role of its commissioner in the choice and objective of the decorative scheme should be asserted. This assertion concentrates on both central elements of the mosque within the townscape: the portal and the minaret. In the mosque's interior the marble minbar, which distinguishes the ʿAṭṭār Mosque as *jāmiʿ*, is accentuated by its decorative scheme. This restricted use of decoration only on exposed and significant elements might imply a purposeful choice of ornamental forms.

The ʿAṭṭār Mosque thus takes on both local and supra-regional features from buildings which were erected by Mamluk as well as non-Mamluk commissioners.¹²⁵

¹²² Karnouk "Form and Ornament," 137; cf. also idem, "Cairene Bahri Mamluk Minbars," 41.

¹²³ Sadek dates it to the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century on the basis of a donation inscription (Sadek, *Gaza*, 113). It resembles the squat form of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque's minbar. The baldachin of the Jāmiʿ Ibn Marwān is similar to that of the ʿAttar Mosque, in that they both share octagonal and relatively thick columns, a hemispherical cupola, a similar proportional relationship between cupola and baldachin, and openings formed by round arches. Here, as in the minbar of the ʿAṭṭār Mosque, the baldachin and the cupola appear to have been well understood architecturally: the cupola is carried by pendentives and supported by arcades. A later example of this understanding of the construction of cupolas can be seen in the minbar in the Madrasah of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (Karnouk, "Cairene Bahri Mamluk Minbars," 27).

¹²⁴ The exclusive comparison of the minbar in the ʿAṭṭār Mosque with marble minbars in Aleppo does not suffice for its stylistic attribution, especially since both the decoration and the technique do not appear alone in a tradition that is restricted to Aleppo. Thus, the assignment of Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm to an "Aleppan workshop" based solely upon formal criteria of the minbar cannot be assumed.

¹²⁵ For instance, a Mamluk commissioner: Aṣlam al-Bahāʾi al-Silāhdār; a non-Mamluk commissioner: the merchant Afridūn al-ʿAjāmī.



The employment of similar decorative motifs might be viewed as the claim for equivalence in rank between these buildings and their commissioners.¹²⁶ The claim of the ‘Aṭṭār Mosque can thus be based upon its being the first *jāmi‘* in Tripoli that was commissioned by a non-Mamluk.

¹²⁶ Dieter Kimpel and Robert Suckale, review of *Bau und Überbau: Soziologie der mittelalterlichen Architektur nach den Schriftquellen*, by Martin Warnke, *Kritische Berichte* 4/5 (1977): 63–64.



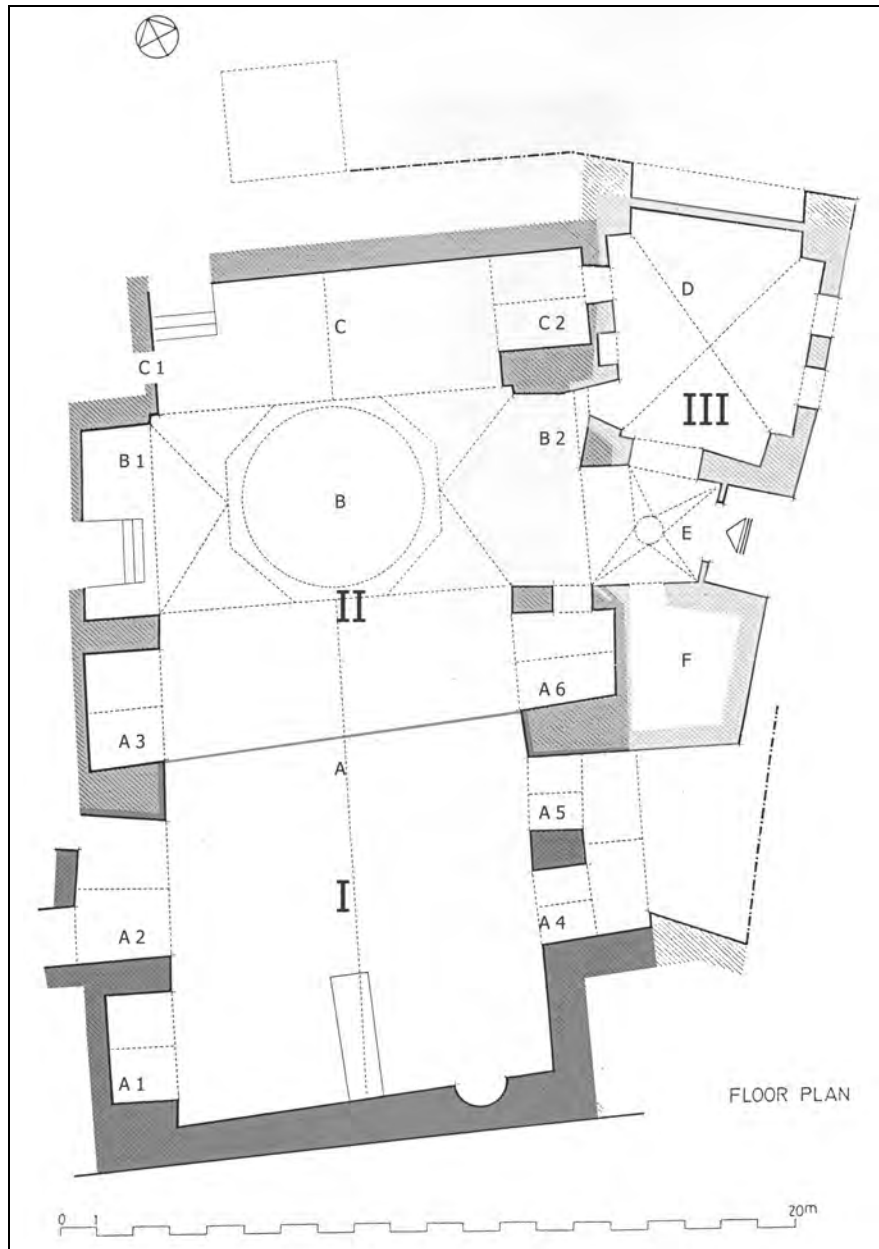


Fig. 1. Tripoli, ʿAṭṭār Mosque. Ground plan with a schematic division of the interior of the mosque (A–F) and a schematic suggestion for the reconstruction of the three building phases (I–III) (after R. Saliba et al., *Tripoli, the Old City: Monument Survey—Mosques and Madrasas; A Sourcebook of Maps and Architectural Drawings* [(Beirut): American University of Beirut, Department of Architecture, 1994], Monument No. 13).



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Fig. 2. Tripoli, Ṣaṭṭār Mosque. General view of the interior with the prayer hall: southern area (A) and qiblah. Photograph courtesy of Tripoli project of the Orient-Institute in Beirut: *Zur Stadt und Architekturgeschichte von Tripoli/Libanon*, Stefan Weber, 2003.



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Fig. 3. Tripoli, ʿAṭṭār Mosque. View of the interior with the prayer hall, southern area (A): west wall with three niches (A 1, A 2, A 3). Photograph: Miriam Kühn, 2004.



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Fig. 4. Tripoli, 'Aṭṭār Mosque. View of the interior with the prayer hall: area of the cupola (B) and the northern section (C). Photograph courtesy of Tripoli project of the Orient-Institute in Beirut: *Zur Stadt und Architekturgeschichte von Tripoli/Libanon*, Stefan Weber, 2003.



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Fig. 5. Tripoli, ʿAṭṭār Mosque. View of the interior with the prayer hall, southern area (A): qiblah wall with mihrab. Photograph courtesy of Sven Jentner, 2003.



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Fig. 6. Tripoli, 'Atṭār Mosque. View of the interior with the ablation room (D): west wall with entrances to the prayer hall. Photograph courtesy of Tripoli project of the Orient-Institute in Beirut, *Zur Stadt und Architekturgeschichte von Tripoli/Libanon*, Team Weber, 2003.



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Fig. 7. Tripoli, ʿAṭṭār Mosque. View of the interior with the vestibule (E): northwest corner to the prayer hall, southern entrance to the ablution room (D). Photograph: Miriam Kühn, 2004.



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Fig. 8. Tripoli, 'Aṭṭār Mosque. View of the interior with the entrance to the ablution room from the prayer hall (B2): inserted muqarnas on the supporting pillar of the cupola. Photograph: Miriam Kühn, 2004.



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Fig. 9. Tripoli, ‘Aṭṭār Mosque–A. Ground plan: a–minaret; b–latrine; c–courtyard; d–room bordering to the southwest; e–enclosing passageways. B–Sūq al-Bāzirkān; C–Khān al-Miṣriyīn; D–Khān al-Khayyāṭīn; E–Khān al-Jāwīsh; F–Zuqāq al-Tarbī‘ah.

Courtesy of Tripoli project of the Orient-Institute in Beirut, *Zur Stadt und Architekturgeschichte von Tripoli/Libanon*, Team Weber, 2004.



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Fig. 10. Tripoli, 'Atṭār Mosque. View of the exterior with the upper part of the eastern portal (detail). Photograph courtesy of Tripoli project of the Orient-Institute in Beirut, Zur Stadt und Architekturgeschichte von Tripoli/Libanon, Team Weber, 2003.



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Fig. 11. Tripoli, ʿAṭṭār Mosque. Exterior, view of the entire western portal from the west. Photograph courtesy of Tripoli project of the Orient-Institute in Beirut, *Zur Stadt und Architekturgeschichte von Tripoli/Libanon*, Team Weber, 2003.



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