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## AMENDING THE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SOME CAIRENE MONUMENTS FROM THE CIRCASSIAN MAMLUK PERIOD

تعديل الترتيب التاريخي لبعض الآثار القاهرية

من الفترة المملوكية الشركسية

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### **Brief**

The Circassian Mamluk Period (784-923 A.H/1382-1517 A.D) represents a milestone in the progression of Islamic architecture in Egypt, in which its phenomenal artistic characteristics had reached a peak. The elegant monuments of this era were not only constructed by rulers but also by amirs, and prominent figures of society.

In previous research by the author studying the architectural features of several monuments of the Circassian Mamluk period, an interesting subsidiary topic projected out; that, the dates of some monuments were misplaced in their chronological order in both old and recent references and a need for a separate study is due. These monuments are :

- Mosque of Tamim Al-Rasafi (completed 867 A.H./1462 A.D.)
- Mosque of Ibn Bardabak (completed 872 A.H./1467 A.D.)
- Zawya of Fatime Umm Khawand ( CA.876 – 85 A.H/1472- 80 A.D)
- Madrasa of Abu Bakr (completed 884 A.H/1472 A.D.)
- Sabil – Kutab of Qaytbay at Al-Saliba (completed 884 A.H/1472 A.D.)
- Mosque of Qijinas (completed 886 A.H/1474 A.D.)
- Wikala at Bab al – Nasr (order for construction 885 A.H. /1473 A.D.)

By means of artistic comparisons and portraying the architectural similarities and differences along with studying the historical evidence of these monuments, the author sheds light on the

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subject and amends the dates of these monuments, placing them in the correct chronological order.

**Key words:**

Date; Slat; Inscriptions; Primary Sources; Artistic Resemblance; Decorative Panels; hoods; lintels.

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**Abstract**

The Islamic Architecture in Egypt witnessed great development since the beginning of the Caliphs Period (827 A.H./904 A.D.) till the end of the Ottoman Period (923-1265 A.H./1517-1848 A.D). The Mamluk Period (648-923 A.H/ ١٢82-1517 A.D) particularly represented a milestone in this progression where the phenomenal artistic characteristics of Egyptian medieval architecture had matured to a peak. In fact, some historians would refer to this period as the renaissance of Islam in Egypt (2, P.7)

The elegant buildings and monuments of this period were not only erected by the rulers of the period, but also by amirs and the prominent figures of the society.

The author depicts the architectural spectacle of the late Mamluk Period in an analytical study of several Cairene facades (9, PP.xi-xiv ). In the study, he discovers by means of artistic comparisons, and portraying the architectural similarities and differences, that some of the monuments were incorrectly dated and not in the right chronological order. In this short account, the author sheds light on the subject and proves more accurate dates of several monuments, placing them in the correct chronological order.

Some terms used in this research are common in the field of history of Islamic art and architecture. However, a short glossary will be provided.

**Research Question**

Doubting the accuracy of the dates of several monuments, and accordingly their chronological order within the history of Islamic architecture.

**Research Objective**

Re-dating the incorrectly dated monuments based on historic evidence and architectural comparisons.

**Research Method**

Deductive analysis for the historical aspects; and in situ, inductive method for the artistic and architectural aspects

**THE DATE OF MOSQUE OF TAMIM AL-RASAFI OR TINM RASAS (CA.867 A.H./1462 A.D) (fig.1)**

Ali Mubarak referred to this mosque as the mosque of Tamim al-Rasafi and pointed its location in Al- Saiyda Zaynab district. But he did not provide any information regarding the date of construction and the builder of the mosque ( 8, p.71).

Relying on the architectural resemblance to contemporary monuments, the Comite suggested a date for the construction before 1471 A.D. The minaret and the portal of this mosque were subject to major restorations (4, vol. 1946 – 53 PP.292-93 ).

Assuming that the builder must had been a noted amir around this time. And with

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reference to the available sources of the period, assured date might be suggested.

Al-Sakhawi provided a biography of an amir called Tinn Rasas who built a mosque in the same location and district (1, III, P.43). It is most probable that this is the same mosque described by Ali Mubarak. According to Al-Sakhawi, this Amir died in 867 A.H./1462 A.D. which agrees with the Comite's suggestion, a date before 1471 A.D. As there is no reference to an amir called Tamim Al-Rasafi, it is most probable that the name Tinn Rasas was modified to Tamim al-Rasafi, and accordingly the two names refer to the same amir who built this mosque. So we suggest a date around 867 A.H./1462 A.D.

#### **DATING THE MOSQUE OF IBN BARDABAK (872 A.H./1467 A.D) (fig 2)**

Various arguments have been raised regarding the date of this mosque which is not of particular artistic value. It appears necessary to explore this issue anew because new practical evidence on the date has come to light when examining this mosque. This concrete evidence stemmed from architectural and decorative elements which through comparison with contemporary monuments, suggests that the mosque of Ibn Bardbak was in all probability constructed in the year 872 A.D/ 1467 A.D.

The five dates previously presented by other sources listed here in the order that they were proposed by the authors:

1. Ali Mubarak [902 A.H./1496 A.D] 8, II p.80.)
2. Van Berchem [652 A.H./1254 A.D] (3, PP.114-116)

3. Creswell and the Comite [ 880 A.H./1475 A.D] (5, XVI (1919), PP. 39-164. P. 141-142.)

4. Index to Mohammedan Monuments [ 865 A.H./1460 A.D] (7, No. 25)

5. Injy Shediac [ 895 A.H./ 1489 A.D.](10, PP.41-49)

From the historical point of view only four of the mosque's elements comprise clues to its date they are:

1. A slate that was originally on the door of the vestibule of the mausoleum at the mosque's southern end, and later moved inside. It bears the following inscription "This mausoleum of Umm Hussin, Fatima, restored by Badr Al-Din Bilbak Al-Alai in 902 A.D

2. A fragment of an inscribed frieze in the corridor leading to the mausoleum, on which the name Bardbak is written.

3. A blazon is containing the cup emblem in a frieze in the mausoleum's interior.

4. An inscribed tiraz at the summit of the minaret bearing only the full title of the sultan Qaytbay.

Our first two authors, Ali Mubarak and Berchem, both relied on the vestibule inscription to date the mosque. Van Berchem, however, misinterpreted the Arabic numerals as 652 A.H./1254 A.D., instead of 902 A.H./1496 A.D. He declared his dissatisfaction with the implication of this date, however, because the style of the mosque did not correspond with this date.

Ali Mubarak, on the other hand, considers 902 A.H., as the mosque's date of erection (not restoration). He named it the mosque of Umm Al-Ghulam or the mosque of Inal, relying on the popular way of referring to the mosque, as it was restored by Fatima,

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whose name appears on the slate, the daughter of the late Sultan Inal.

Our third author, Creswell, used 902 A.H. on the same slate as the date of restoration. He attributed the erection itself to one of the sons of Bardbak, because of the inscription of Ibn Bardbak on the frieze noted above. Creswell reasoned as follows.

Relying on Ibn Iyas and the date given by Bardbak's marriage (858 A.H./1454 A.D.), Creswell assumed that Bardbak's oldest son would have been eleven or twelve years old by the time of Bardbak's death (870 A.H./1465 A.D.). At this age any of Bardbak's sons would have been unable to build a mosque. Ibn Iyas mentioned a son of Bardbak named "Taqtbay" who was dismissed from his post as amir ashara, (amir of ten soldiers), in 902 A.H., the date of the mosque's restoration. Creswell assumed that Taqtbay built the mosque of Ibn Bardbak. It remained for Creswell to determine a date for erection between 870 A.H. and 902 A.D. It had to be early enough to allow 902 A.H. to be an appropriate restoration date, and late enough for Taqtbay to have reached maturity. He employed the following architectural analysis on this task.

The triple hood arch with stalactites, employed in this mosque, appeared previously in the portal of Qaytbay at al-Azhar [877 A.H./1469 A.D.] (fig. 7), reappeared in the portal of the madrasa of Qaytbay at Qalat ai-Kabsh [880 A.H./1475 A.D.] (fig.8), and then disappeared completely for thirty years.

Taking all of the above factors into consideration, Creswell preferred to refer the date of the portal of Al-Kabsh [880A.H./1475 A.D.] than to that of the portal of al-Azhar [88-1 A.H./1469 A.D.],

because at that point Taqtbay had reached the age of twenty one, and it was still twenty two years before the date of restoration.

The date given by our fourth source, the Index to Mohammedan Monuments, is five years before the death of Bardbak!, the father of the mosque's namesake.

Our fifth source, Injy Shediac, suggested 894 A.H./1489 A.D., based on the existence of another richer son of Bardbak, Al-Nasir Muhammad Ibn Bardbak [died in 898 A.H./1492 A.D.], who was praised by Ibn Iyas and cursed by al-Sakhawi (1, VII, p. 149). However, the date given is three years earlier to the restoration.

Of our various resources, Creswell presents the strongest case for a date of the mosque of Ibn Bardbak. Although he used general historical information to define a period for the mosque, in the end he relied on an architectural element for a specific date.

We follow similar strategy here, which was available through different decorative elements when relating the mosque with other contemporary monuments. The most significant decorative elements for dating Ibn Bardbak are the triple hood filling, the stone panel on the façade between the relieving arches, and the lintel. (figs. 7, 10, 12)

In this mosque, the upper lobe of the triple hood is filled with a typical triple sunburst motif. This motif had been common to the Bahari Mamluk period, but was abandoned by the time of the sultan Qaytbay. Furthermore, the muqarnas tiers in Ibn Bardbak display more resemblance to the muqarnas at the portal of Qaybay at al Azhar ( 873 A.H/1469 A.D ) than to those of the mosque at Qalat al- Kabash ( 880 A.H/1475 A.D.) (Figs. 7, 8 , 9)

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The powerful similarity of the façade panel at Ibn Bardbak to the panel in the N.E. façade of the mausoleum of the sons of Qaytbay ( 865 – 72 A.H./1460 – 67 A.D) strongly indicates that the mosque of Ibn Bardbak is contemporary with it (figs. 10,11) The façade panels of these two monuments are completely similar . They are both located between the two windows. They both employ chamfered stone cutting that project to the same degree in each panel they are both perfect squares, and they both employ geometrical patterns.

Relieving arches in the façade are of the simplest types, straight, angular stepped, and rounded and totally plain (fig. 12 ) rarely used in the rich period of Qaytbay , the only examples of plain relieving arches are, again, at the mausoleum of the sons of Qaytbay ( 865 A.H./160 A.D) and at the mosque of Timraz al – Ahmadi ( 876 A.H./1472 A.D.) (Figs. 11,13)

The straight lintel in the portal of Ibn Bardbak (fig. 12) is completely identical to those at the mausoleum of the sons of Qaytbay and those at the Zawiya of Fatima Umm Khawand (second half of the ninth century A.H./fifteenth century A.D.) (figs. 11,14)

All of these facts tend to pull the date of the mosque of Ibn Bardbak close to the date of the mausoleum of the sons of Qaytbay ( 865 - 72 A. D./1460 -67 A.D.) (the panels, the relieving arches, and the lintel), and as close as possible to the portal of Qaytbay at al-Azhar (873 A.H./1468 A.D.) (muqarnas hood). As the earliest possible date of construction is 870 A.H./1465 A.D . the year of Bardbak's death , therefore the suggested date is around 1465-1469 A.D .

Both Creswell and Injy Shediac proposed relatively late dates for the mosque, assuming that a son of Bardbak, old enough to possess a post, would have financed the mosque primarily with his own resources, but this assumption could be questioned as we shall see.

First, neither Taqtbay nor al- Nasir Muhammad Ibn Bardbak is referred to by any of the primary sources (Ibn Iyas and al-Sakhawi) as builders of mosques . Although Ibn Iyas Mentions that Bardbak and his wife had little money after the sultan khushqadam exiled them to Macca in 1461 A.D. It is known that she was the daughter of the sultan Inal. ( Ibn Iyas, II, P. 367-69). We know that her sister Fatima, wife of Yunis al- Bawab al Dawadar Al-Kabir (chief secretary), restored the Mausoleum at the southern end of the mosque. Clearly, then, the mosque of Ibn Bardak could easily have been financed by Badriya, Bardbak's wife, or by her family.

In addition, the period 870-73 A.H./1465-1469 A.D. corresponds to the death of Bardbak's oldest son, Aly, in 1467 A.D (1, VII, p. 149) . We propose that his mother, having experienced the deaths of both her husband and her eldest son within two years, had a strong incentive to build a commemorative mosque, and thus we declare the year 872 A.H./1467 A.D. as the most cogent estimation of the date of the mosque of Ibn Bardbak.

#### **DELIMITING THE DATE OF THE ZAWIYA OF FATIME UMM KHAWAND TO 876 – 85 A.H/1472- 80 A.D**

The date of this Zawiva was Attributed to the third quarter of the fifteenth century A.D . This was based on the similarity of its lintels to those of three other monuments of the

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period 861-87 A.H/1456-78 A.D (5, P. 138). Using the arabesque in the portal's two upper panels, we can further delimit the date to the period 876 – 85 A.H/1472 – 80 A.D.

The distinct type of involved arabesque bears much resemblance to the arabesque panels of the 1470's, e.g., in the madrasa of Qaytbay at al-Qarafa, and in the madrasa of Abu Bakr (figs.14, 15, 16) . All these monuments share the regular arabesque panel with rich delicate engraving and characters, a type that was usually replaced in later monuments by the combined arabesque panels. Therefore, a suggested date for the construction of the zawiya should be after the date of the mosque of Timraz (876 A.H./1472 A.D ) but not later than the date of the madrasa of Abu Bakr (881-85 A.H./1479 – 80 A.D.)

#### **ADJUSTING THE CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE OF FOUR MONUMENTS FROM THE YEARS 884 – 85 A.H/1479 – 80 A.D.**

Dating the completion of the following four monuments possess particular difficulties because their construction coincided and overlapped over a two – year period. This re-ordering has been attempted for the sake of historical accuracy. The order given by Creswell differs only slightly from that suggested here (5,pp 144-45).

##### **Creswell's order is :**

The sabil-kuttab of Qaytbay at al-saliba (completed 884 A.H/1472 A.D.) (fig.3)

The madrasa of Abu Bakar (completed 884 A.H/1472 A.D.) (fig. 4)

The wikala of Qaytbay at Bab Al-Nasr (885 A.H. /1473 A.D.) (fig 5)

The mosque of Qijmas (completed 886 A.H/1474 A.D.) (fig 6)

##### **A more probable order is:**

The madrasa of Abu Bakr (completed 884 A.H/1472 A.D.)

The sabil – Kutab of Qaytbay at Al-Saliba (completed 884 A.H/1472 A.D.)

The mosque of Qijinas (completed 886 A.H/1474 A.D.)

The wikala at Bab al – Nasr (order for construction 885 A.H. /1473 A.D.)

A comparison of the generating lintel on the madras of Abu Bakr with the panels of the Sabil-Kuttab of Qaytbay at al Saliba and the mosque of Qijmas , implies that the madrasa finished first. The panels are almost precise copies of sections of the arabesque pattern on the madrasa larger lintel. It thus seems highly probable that the lintel in the madrasa of Abu Bakr was decorated first, and then used as a model for those of al-Saliba and Qijmas.

The wikala of Qaytbay at Bab al-Nasr clearly must have follow and not preceded the mosque of Qijmas .Both architectural evidence and the inscribed dates support this view. First , the mosque of Qijmas most specifically resembles the madrasa of Abu Bakr and the Ssabil-Kuttab at Al-Saliba. It would not be too daring to suppose that decorative elements for these three monuments were laid out in a central atelier at the same time, overseen by same artist, and distributed to each monument in turn.

The wikala at Bab Al- Nasr , on the other hand, bears mark of the same craftsman's decorative concept. Therefore, it is unlikely that the workmanship in the wikala accompanied these connected chains monuments. Accordingly, it must have been finished later. Moreover, the date given by Ibn Iyas, Rabi I 885 A.H., is the date of the order of construction of the wikala and not the date of completion, while the inscribed date of the mosque of Qijmas, Muharram 85 A.H., is a date of completion (6, II, p. 192)12.

As the construction of this wikala must have taken more than ten months (from Rabi I to Muharram ) to complete, we are almost certain that this wikala was completed after the mosque Qijmas .

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## Conclusion

Relying on the historian Al. Sawhawi, the date 1462 A.D. could be suggested as the date of erection for the mosque of Tamim al. Rassafy. He named an Amir called Timn Rasas built a mosque in the same district and period. The closeness of the two names may suggest it could be the same person.

The mosque of Ibn Bardbak had raised an issue regarding the five different dates for its erection given by different references. Based on the comparison of some architectural and decorative elements in this mosque with similar elements of other contemporary buildings, the researcher was able to identify the date as 872 A.H./ 1467 A.D.

The date of the Zawiya of Fatima Um Khawnd was undefined between the years 861-87 A.H./ 1456- 78 A.D. Comparing two stone panels with similar ones in other contemporary buildings. We could diminish the period to the years 876-85 A.H./ 1472-80 A.D.

Four monuments were built within the same period of two years between 884 A.H. & 886 with no identification to their chronological order. Arguing some architectural and decorative elements the chronological order had been corrected.

## Glossary

Amir : a prince

Bab al-sirr : a secondary entrance

Kuttab : a school for orphans, usually associated with the sabil

Muqarnas : a stalactite

Sabil : a public fountain

Tiraz : an inscription band that runs along the façade.

Wikala : a building used for commercial activities

Zawiya : a small mosque located at the corner of a building

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Fig.1 Mosque of Tamim Al-Rasafi



Fig.2 Mosque Ibn Bardbak



Fig.3 Sabil-Kuttb of Qaytbay, Al-saliba



Fig.4 Mosque of Abu Bakr

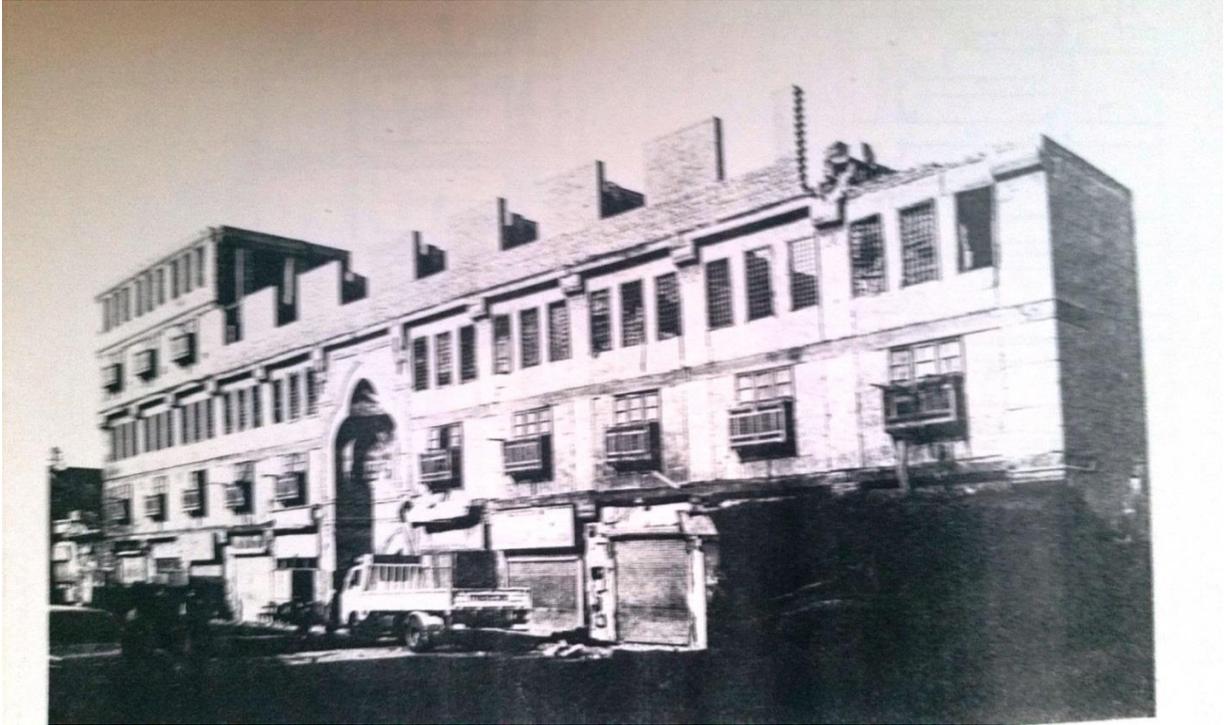


Fig.5 Wikala of Qaytbay at Bab Al-Nasr



Fig.6 Mosque of Qijmas at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar



Fig.7 Mosque of Ibn Bardbak



Fig.8 Entrance of Qaytbay, mos. Of Al-Azhar

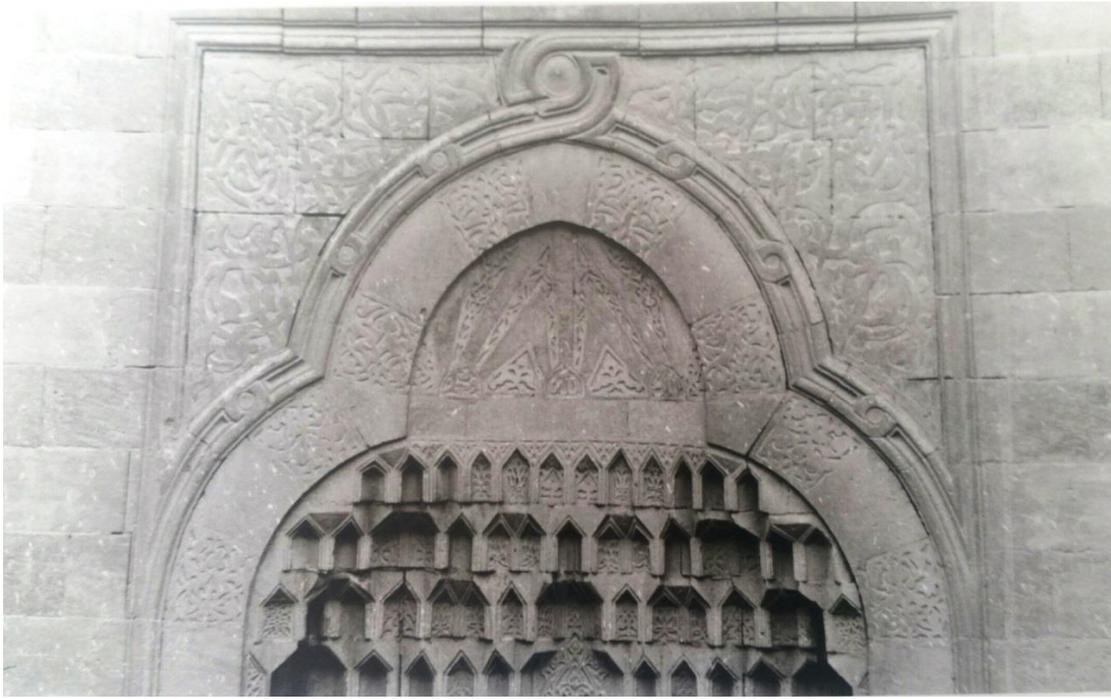


Fig.9 Madrasa of Qaytbay, Qalat Al Kabsh, main entrance



Fig.10 Mosque of Ibn Bardbac, main facade



Fig.11 Mausoleum of Sons of Qaytbay



Fig12. Mosque of Ibn Bardbak, Portal



Fig.13 Mosque of Timraz



Fig.14 Zawiya Fatima Umm Khawand, Portal



Fig15. Madrasa of Qaytbay, Al-Qarafa, Babal-Sir



تعديل الترتيب التاريخي لبعض الآثار القاهرية

من الفترة المملوكية الشركسية

Fig16. Madrasa of Abu Bakr, main entrance

- مدرسة أبو بكر ( اكتملت ٨٨٤ هـ / ١٤٧٢ م )
- سبيل كتاب قايتباى بالصليبية ( اكتمل ٨٨٤ هـ / ١٤٧٢ م )
- مسجد قجماس الاسحاقى ( اكتمل ٨٨٦ هـ / ١٤٧٤ م )
- وكالة قايتباى بالأزهر ( اكتملت ٨٨٥ هـ / ١٤٧٣ م )

بمقارنات ميدانية واستدعاء أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين هذه الأثار وغيرها ، ومن خلال دراسة استنباطية للمصادر التاريخية، أمكن للباحث فى هذه الدراسة الموجزة أن يصل باطمئنان إلى تعديل تواريخ بعض هذه الأثار وإعادة ترتيب الأخرى ووضعها فى سياقها التاريخى الصحيح .

#### كلمات أساسية

تاريخ ؛ لوحة تأسيس ؛ كتابات محفورة ؛ مصادر تاريخية ؛ تشابه واختلاف فنى ؛ حشوات زخرفية ؛ أعتاب ؛ "طاقية" المدخل، مقرنص، طراز.

تمثل الفترة المملوكية الشركسية ( ٧٨٤-١٣٨٢ هـ / ١٥١٧ م ) ظاهرة معمارية وعلامة بارزة فى تطور العمارة الاسلامية فى مصر حيث نضجت فيها وتبلورت ملامح الشخصية الفنية المحلية. وقد ساهم فى تشكيل هذه الظاهرة ليس فقط منشآت الحكام بل شاركهم فيها الأمراء والشخصيات البارزة فى المجتمع.

فى دراسة سابقة للباحث عن الملامح الفنية للعديد من المنشآت المملوكية الشركسية برز من خلال هذه الدراسة موضوع جانبى شيق وهو ان تواريخ بعض أثار هذه الفترة غير دقيق و موضوع فى ترتيب تاريخى غير صحيح سواء فى المراجع القديمة أو الحديثة ومن ثم يحتاج إلى دراسة منفصلة. وهذه الأثار هى:

- مسجد تميم الرصافى ( اكتمل ٨٦٧ هـ / ١٤٦٢ م )
- مسجد ابن برد بك ( اكتمل ٨٧٢ هـ / ١٤٦٧ م )
- زاوية فاطمة بنت خوند ( حوالى ٨٧٦ - ٨٨٥ هـ / ١٤٧٢ - ١٤٨٠ م )