



A Symbol of Status and Glamour in Islamic Cairene Houses: "The QA'A"

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ABSTRACT

Houses refer to a collection of spaces that are formed following natural conditions, production relations and style, population structure, urbanization, features of societies, lifestyles, code of conduct, and traditions. In the cultures of different geographical areas, houses entertain a main living site and reception area in which guests are welcomed and that indicates the social status of the house dwellers and hierarchy inside this house. Such spaces are acknowledged as a reflection of socio-economic and socio-cultural emblem of house users. Likewise, in Islamic Cairene houses, the Qa'a is the main living and reception site. The main Qa'a, where in traditional Cairo life weddings, celebrations, important meetings and feasts were performed, is decorated glamorously to reveal its user's social status. The Qa'a comprises a lot of elements and it is generally formed by two main sections; Durqa'a and Iwan. Gender, privacy, hierarchy, religious thoughts, and climatization do play a role in forming such spaces. Within the scope of this research the Qa'a, accepted as the main reception site in Cairene house built between the 14th and 18th centuries of Islamic rule and exhibits all the basic characteristics that should exist in a dwelling, has been evaluated through samples in line with the forming elements of space and spatial features. By analyzing these spaces, it is viable to comprehend architectural and interior architectural features of the houses, lifestyle, economic, cultural, political, religious and many other traits of the period when the houses were erected.

Keywords: Traditional House Architecture, Iwan, Durqa'a, Egypt, Cairo.

1.INTRODUCTION

Historically speaking house is an organized pattern across communication, interaction, space, time, and meaning. As reported in Gür's work (2000, 11) houses replicate features of their society, lifestyles, code of conduct, environmental choices, and images. House is formed by the physical and functional space that aims to meet sheltering instinct which is one of the basic human needs (Ertürk& Özen, 1987, 559-561). House takes form under the effect of natural conditions, social customs and traditions, culture, political structure, production relations and style, population structure, urbanization type, and various other features that occur within a complex process. Houses are supposed to offer certain features like privacy, comfort, adequate area, safety, protection from outside world, accessibility, durability, adequate lighting, heating, and ventilation (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020,6).

Rapoport (1969, 46) argues that house is not just a structure; rather it is a formation created to meet multiple purposes. House building is a cultural phenomenon; schematically and formally it is shaped to a large extend by its native culture. House goes far beyond sheltering function and designs a social area unit by creating an optimal environment that fits human lifestyle. According to Rapoport's hypothesis (1969, 47); the primary factor in formation of houses is a socio-cultural factor while all the rest are secondary factors. Humans' lifestyles and conducts influence house designs. Conducts, affected by culture, orient the way spaces are utilized, located, interrelated, and also affect the establishment and popularization of a system. Depending on societies and cultures, lifestyle and conducts



diverge (Rapoport, 2004, 51-55). In almost every culture, dwellings have a specific space used as a main living and reception area for welcoming guests. These spaces play an important role in reflecting the socio-economic and socio-cultural status of house users. Within the scope of this research the Qa'a, accepted as the main reception site in Cairene houses which exhibits all the explained characteristics of a typical Islamic Cairene house has been evaluated through samples in line with the forming elements of this space and its spatial features.

2.OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHOD

Different vernacular architectural structures owned by countries are known as a cultural legacy. It is suggested that familiarizing these architectural structures would be a guide in designing novel styles that could encourage humans to follow optimal house style of the future. Functioning to welcome guests, all houses possess a main reception site that shows its user's social status and esteem from a socio-cultural and socio-economic angle. By analyzing these spaces, it is viable to comprehend architectural and interior architectural features of the houses, lifestyle, economic, cultural, political, religious and many other traits of the period when the house was erected. In this particular paper, focus point of the research has been chosen as the Qa'a known as the main reception site of houses built during the Islamic Periods between the 14th and 18th centuries in the city of Cairo. Although there are other spaces to welcome guests in these wealthy Cairene houses, the Qa'a which is used to welcome special guests and to celebrate events is the most magnificent space of the house. The motive in selecting Islamic Cairene houses as research topic is that it contains a vast body of factors which causes the formation of a dwelling. These dwellings encompass socio-cultural (tradition- customs, religion, etc.) and climatic factors that mold house formation as well as optimal solutions for the said factors. The most significant reason is that despite the presence of Islam in many countries and adoption of a common viewpoint, houses and main halls possess dissimilar forms and views due to different cultural background. There are different countries practicing Islamic culture; yet it has been witnessed that every country owns a dissimilar historical background, traditions, customs, geographical structure, economic condition, and lifestyle. As expected, this divergence leaves impact on the architectural form of a house and its main hall. Despite the presence of several significant academic works about Islamic Cairene houses, this study deserves further notice since there are relatively few specialized researches that mainly focus on these houses concerning the spatial features of the Qa'a. Within the framework of this study different foreign and national publications focusing on this subject have been reviewed at universities, national and private libraries in Egypt. In addition to literature review in order to analyze Islamic Cairene houses, an on-site survey has been conducted by visiting the houses having partially or fully reached to present day. Among all these houses, six samples were selected through which the Qa'a could be examined in detail. Two of these samples belong to the Mamluk period, another one to Mamluk and Ottoman periods, and the other three belongs to the Ottoman Period. These houses are respectively named as; Amir Beshtak Palace (A.D 1334-1339), Amir Taz Palace (A.D 1352), Zeinab Khatun's House (A.D 1468), Gayer Anderson Museum /El Keritleya House (A.D 1540-1631), El Sehemy House (A.D 1648-1796), El Saadat House (A.D 1659-1754) (Fig. 1). Although quite a lot of houses managed to survive to date, since some of the houses are either undergoing restoration process or closed down, only the samples visited from inside are evaluated in the current study. The analysis was conducted in December 2018- February 2019, July 2019- September 2019 and December 2019 - February 2020. Upon detecting the way culture and geographical structure shapes the model of a house and the Qa'a, the research was expanded through by chosen and photographed samples.

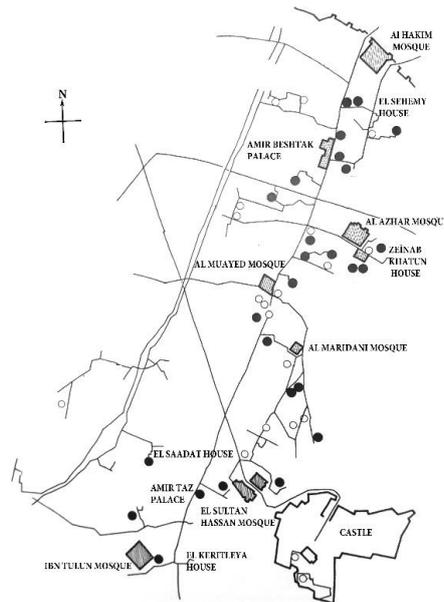


Figure 1. Interrelation across analyzed houses and major mosques and spaces in its surrounding (Maury et al., 1983,112, reorganized by authors).

3.GENERIC INFORMATION ON EGYPT

Functioning as the communication bridge across continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, Egypt has always played a critical role throughout history by virtue of its location. Nile River is the fountain of life for this country of which most parts of the land covered by deserts and affected by desert climate. As also noted by Herodotus "Egypt is the gift of Nile" (Şahin, 2017, 279). In the masterpiece of Roman poet Lucanus, *Pharsalia*; "Self-sufficient lands that ask for nothing from trade or luck gather power from the Nile", hence emphasizing great value of the Nile River for Egypt (Bond, 1932, 170). Evliya Chelebi wrote "Mubarak Nil" in his travel book, emphasizing its abundance and importance (Çetin, 2015, 4).

Currently, the most populated city in the country is the capital city Cairo with a population of about 10 million. A substantial majority of its population consists of Muslims, with Coptic Christians comprising the remainder. Egypt, due to its gravity in terms of geographical location and trade route for long centuries, has been governed by different countries and civilizations. During Pre-Islamic period Egypt was ruled under the authority of ancient Egyptian civilization, Ptolemaic dynasty, Roman and Byzantium civilizations; upon its conquest by Amr Ibn Al-As, it began to be governed by Islamic states: Rashidun Caliphate period, Umayyad period, Abbasid period, Tulunid period, Ikhshidid period, Fatimid period, Ayyubid period, Mamluk period, and Ottoman period. Accordingly, these periods are termed as "Islamic Periods". The Monarchy regime, proclaimed in 1922, was ended by the proclamation of the Republic in 1953. From the past to present day all of these periods have been influential in the development of life culture and house architecture of Egypt.

4.DWELLING DESIGN IN EGYPT

Just like the history of Egypt, house design in this country can be analyzed as pre- and post-Islamic periods. Adoption of Islamic faith not only affected life culture but also acted as a determinant factor in house design. Nonetheless, before all else, it is vital to mention Pre-Islamic houses. Pre-Islamic houses diversify based on stages but still main types of houses are known as mud-grounded quarters, rectangular-plan houses with one, two and three rooms, courtyard houses, two-storey city houses, farmhouses, large houses where high society lives in, and social houses. During Pre-Islamic period in the large houses where members of high society lived in, there was a harem section just as seen in palaces, yet



harem in these houses fail to exhibit the same traits witnessed in usual harem sections of houses of Islamic Periods. In such houses, privacy wasn't taken into consideration in the formation of harem spaces. Due to country climate, houses adapt to the climate and in order to offer space comfort masonry unit systems, courtyard and elements termed as "Malqaf" are the kind of features specifically monitored in inner-city houses in the pre-Islamic periods (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 31).

Nevertheless, upon the conquest of Egypt by Amr Ibn Al-As, the city of Fustat was founded and winds of changes were observed in architectural structures and houses. From the start of Islamic periods till its final dates house design continued to progress. Especially during Mamluk and Ottoman periods, transformation and advancement reached the peak point. Mamluk's lifestyle, reputed as fondness for fun and wealth, was, as expected, reflected on their houses which were developed both architecturally and artistically. During the Ottoman period, houses replicated the same architectural and artistic affluence. With the French invasion and specifically in the 19th century, house design and house life got under the influence of the West. Cairene houses built during Islamic period until the start of the 19th century hold value since they mirror to a large extend the lifestyle, cultural, socio-economic, and artistic features of Islamic period and there are significant samples that managed to survive to the present day. What comes to mind first when we mention Islamic period houses are Cairene houses. Many of the characteristics witnessed in Cairene houses are also monitored in houses of other Islamic states; hence by analyzing these houses it is feasible to obtain a better insight on other houses as well.

5.GENERIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC CAIRENE HOUSES

The main architectural elements of Mamluk and Ottoman periods that form Islamic Cairene houses managed to survive to date by its house and equipment samples of the period from 14th to 18th centuries. There are primary and secondary factors that enabled the formation and modeling of these houses. In Rapoport's definition for the function of houses, primary factors entail socio-cultural factors whilst in Islamic Cairene houses primary factors are categorized as climate conditions and religious values. In particular, structural measures taken against climate conditions and religious values also affected socio-cultural acts of humans. As was stated in the work of Fathy (1986) in the houses built in line with climatization solutions, utilized construct materials were selected to protect its user from hot and cold weather. Thanks to architectural elements mounted in the roof to offer climatic comfort, privacy could also be offered in the ventilation of interior space. The open inner court plans (courtyard houses) not simply offered climatic comfort but also enabled privacy. Another goal in inner court was to ensure communication inside the house (Gelil & Waleed, 2014, 7). Climate conditions, privacy and socio-cultural values formed the key elements termed as Mashrabiya, Shuksheika, Qa'a, Maqad and Malqaf in house architecture. Secondary factors on the other hand are political, economic, and social factors. In particular, power conflicts during the Mamluk period, attacks to the houses of power holders, kidnapping of women and children, and the experienced fear could be witnessed in the house architecture (El Sayed, 2018, 101-102; Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 119). As a result, houses generally fail to display a specific plan typology. In the interrelation of interior spaces, a labyrinth formation can be observed in the inner court layouts. For a stranger entering a house for the first time it is particularly difficult to locate harem section. Although there are specific spaces and elements forming the Cairene houses, each house portrays a unique typology of plan.

Despite all these challenges, thanks to accumulated wealth of Mamluks on trade activities and collected public taxes, the sultans, viziers and the wealthy competed in house building. Indeed, some of the large houses built by Mamluks are known as palaces. Economic rise played a role in decorating house structures with rich artistic characteristics. During the Mamluk period, the main Qa'a of the houses presented excessive and majestic ornaments. During the Ottoman period, however, there was an increase in the separation of private

sites for women and men inside the house. The biggest cause of that division was the extreme conservatism of Ottomans. In other respects, during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, houses were modeled based on the principle of building a suitable and comfortable space for its user (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 97-120).

These houses built by wealthy during the Mamluk or Ottoman period are mostly with two and three floors which faces the inner court of the house. Ground floor consists of an entrance site, reception site (Reception room, Takhtabush, Mandara etc.) and service areas (store, kitchen, toilet, stable, water well etc.). In upper floors there are the Qa'a or Qa'as, Maqad, Harem Section (the Qa'a of the harem, rooms, toilet etc.), rooms, hammam (Turkish bath), toilet, etc. The Qa'a is a reception space and shared living space of the house. Due to climatic causes, Maqad in Cairene houses is a space that offers thermal comfort in the interior space during summer months at most to its user (Fig.2).



Figure 2. Maqad Site, Amir Mamay Palace, Mamluk period (A.D 1495).

In Mamluk and Ottoman houses, Maqad is one of the most significant sites where male guests are welcomed and are designed as a balcony with a closed roof (Yaghy, 2004, 11). Reserved for women Harem section refers to the upper floors of a house. Islamic teachings mandate that women's privacy is to be protected from stranger men. The ground floor is reserved for men (Selamluk) and the reception areas are used to welcome man guests. The first and second floors are reserved to women and family members. In the first floor only the Maqad, the room connected to the Maqad and in case of celebration or meetings the main Qa'a which exists in the first floor was used to welcome men guests, depending on the will of the house male owner. Nonetheless, for the women freely walking in the house, secondary stairs were planned to ascend upper floors from the court whenever a guest arrived. These stairs allowed women to reach service areas like kitchen or toilet without harming their privacy. Displayed in Ottoman houses, Takhtabush is the seating site in which a wooden bank with long legs was placed as the seating element (Fig.3).



Figure 3. Takhtabush, El Sehemy House.

In these wealthy houses it is observed that there is more than one toilet. In order to abide by Islamic teachings, it was important to build toilets in houses in the opposite direction of Kiblah (El Başa, 1999, 208). In these houses that observed conditions for climatic comfort and privacy, Mashrabiya is the house section that extends towards the street or the courtyard with its wooden-caged oriel window and it is a common feature observed in Ottoman houses (Fig.4).

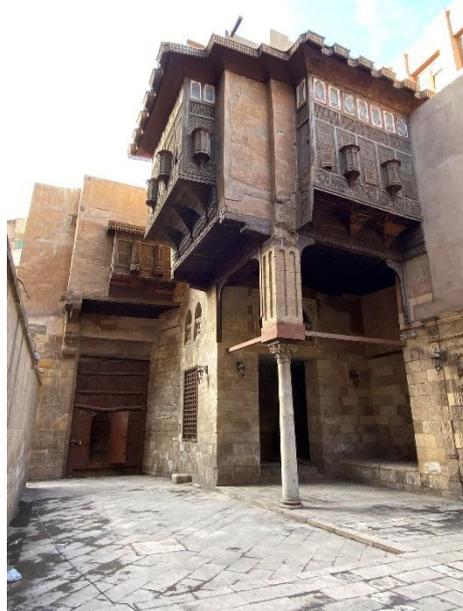


Figure 4. Mashrabiya, El Saadat House.

6.GENERIC FEATURES OF THE QA'A

In the Arabic language the word Qa'a means "hall". In wealthy Islamic Cairene houses it was obligatory to build the Qa'a which is considered to be the main section and was designed as the most magnificent space of the house. The main motive in building this area was making important meetings, wedding ceremonies and birth or religious celebrations. A wedding feast was held separately in bride's house and groom's house. At times these two feasts were held in the same house but in separate halls, thus utmost care was paid to design quite an eye-catching space. Social traditions like those also affected ornament form in the interior space. It is observed that even if there is more than one Qa'a in the Cairene houses, one of them is considered to be the main Qa'a. The main Qa'a can exist in the ground or first floor. While visiting a Cairene house it is easy to recognize the main Qa'a as it has the highest ceiling and glamorously decorated.

This hall is a space built during Mamluk and Ottoman periods but in reality, it started to be witnessed during the Fatimid period (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 108). After a visit in 1560 to Cairo, Venetian tradesman Alessandro Magno narrated his observations on Cairo house and noted the Qa'a, Durqa'a and fountain as three essential elements of these houses (Warner, 2004, 23). The Qa'a was constructed in both Selamluk (men only) and harem sections in the house. The Qa'a in the ground floor is named also the Mandara. The Qa'a consists of sites named as "Durqa'a" and "Iwan" (Fig.5). Depending on size of house, Iwan could be one, two or more in quantity. Durqa'a and Iwan's formal interrelation led to appearance of a T-form plan in specific samples (Salama, 2006,53). But in the examples examined it is noticed that the Qa'a mainly consists of one Durq'a and two Iwan.

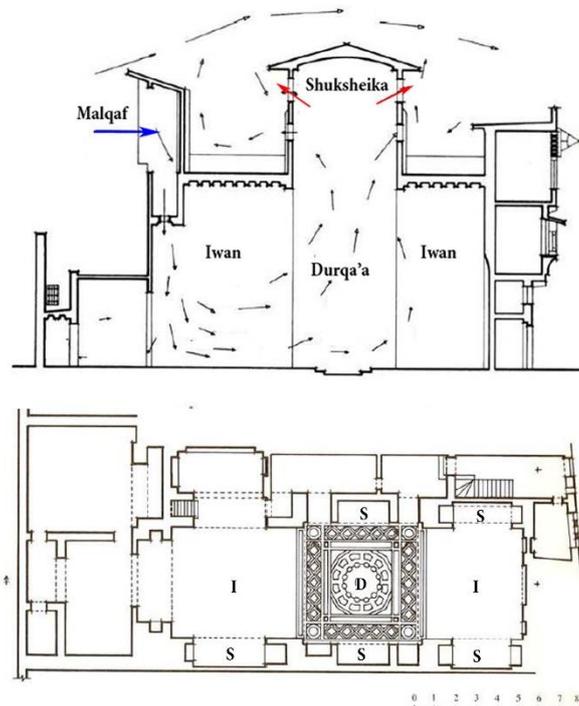


Figure 5. Sites forming the Qa'a (Durqa'a-Iwan) and ventilation methods Like Malqaf and Shuksheika-Moheb El Din House (Fathy, 1986, 115- 117).

Shuksheika is a type of roof skylight climbing to top from the exact center of the floor of space termed as "Durqa'a" which exists in the middle section of the Qa'a. It allows light entrance to the area and regulates air temperature. In general, they are octagonal, and occasionally in circular and square form. Thanks to its high wooden ceiling and embodied windows it becomes feasible to achieve release of hot air. Using Malkaf that accepts cold weather, the heated air can freely exit from the openings like Shuksheika and Mashrabiya (Fig.5).

In his work Fathy (Fathy, 1973, 95) stated that modeling this hall owes much to masonry unit architecture. Durqa'a of which ground is covered by motif marble is a high-ceiling inner court in square form and 3 or 4 m width and of which height is twice of its width and on both sides, there are one-step high and approximately in 2,5 m width Iwans (Ficarelli, 2009). The iwan's ceiling is wooden beamed or wood coated, in some examples it is vaulted. In Durqa'a's ceiling, as has been noted earlier too, there is a type of roof skylight "Shuksheika". Shuksheika provide ventilation and lighting in the Qa'a. Fathy in his work (1972, 135) stated that Durqa'a's ceiling symbolized the sky. In this area, a built-in closet and dents were arranged for sitting and the floor level of the Durqa'a was one step down of the seating site Iwan. Thanks to this step-height the guest of the house had an idea where to take off his shoes before stepping on invaluable carpets laid on Iwan floor. Furthermore, only special guests were welcomed to sit in the Qa'a.

In some instances, one of the Iwans faces the street via Mashrabiya for ventilation purposes. By the mihrab recessed on the wall of the Iwan, it was viable to determine the direction of kiblah. On the walls of the Iwans, stone- platform alcoves termed as "Sedelle" were built. 30 to 40 cm above the Qa'a's floor this stone or marble platform was furnished with cushions to function as the seating site (Fig.6) (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 105).



Figure 6. El Sehemy House –the Qa’as (Left image is the Harem Qa’a area- Right image is the Mandara). 1-Iwan 2- Built-in Storage 3- Mashrabiya 4- Sedelle 5- Upper window 6- The front beam of the wooden ceiling and the supporting shore 7- Durqa’a (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 107).

In general, multiple actions could be performed in the same space in a Cairo House and for every action, a suitable equipment was catered for. Small rooms connected with reception and welcoming sites like Qa’a and Maqad were used for accommodation, for sleeping or for keeping equipment used in daily life. In these periods, during the celebrations held in particular, it was vital to offer food to the guests and welcome them in the best way possible. Therefore, in addition to being used for celebrations, feasts and guest reception, the Qa’a also functioned as a central circulation site that enabled accommodation and passage to service areas (Fig.7).



Figure 7. A drawing on daily life in the Qa’a (Maury et al., 1983, 95).

For instance, besides having a private toilet, it can have a private stair to connect it with the kitchen and/or with the secondary entry of the house. As a result of Western world's wonder for Ottoman palace and Harem life in houses, a good number of artists illustrated

this space that was a specialized topic for Orientalist painters (Fig.8). Hence; contemporary architects like Hassan Fathy applied this Qa'a organization not only in house designs but also in the designs of structures like schools (Salama, 2006, 53).

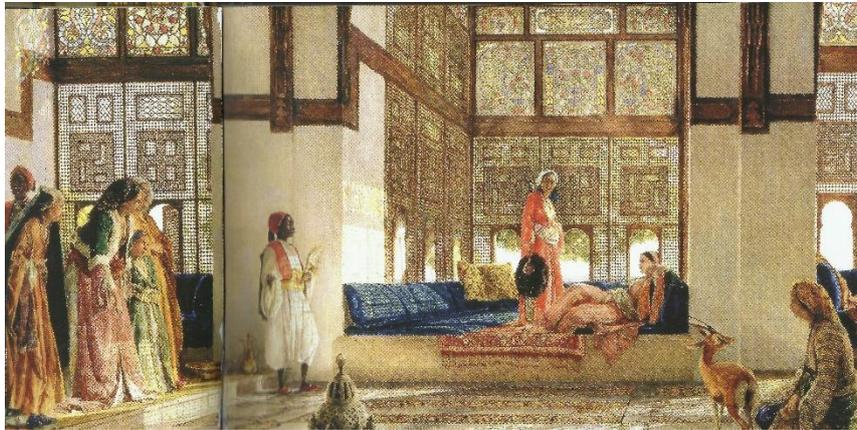


Figure 8. "The Reception", John Frederick Lewis, (1804-1871) (Harem in the Eyes of Western Painters, 2012, 12).

From Fatimid period till Ottoman period, Qa'a turned into a major component of houses. French scholars grouped this site under two sections; The Qa'a on the ground floor named as "The Lower Qa'a" or "The Mandara", the Qa'a' on upper floor termed as "Upper Qa'a". Between Upper Qa'a and the Mandara not any formal difference was observed in general; yet in "The Main Qa'a" ornament was more significant and valuable (Hosny and Demirarslan, 2019, 220; Okasha 1994, 93). The Lower Qa'a or in another saying The Mandara is a Selamlik (men only) site in which men guests are welcomed but if it is the main Qa'a then it is also used for special celebrations. If the main Qa'a exists in the first floor then in this case men only are allowed to sit there in case of celebrations. In both possibilities women were allowed to watch celebrations in this site only from a place termed as "Al Aghany" (Fig.9) which is connected to the Qa'a or rooms of the Harem area.

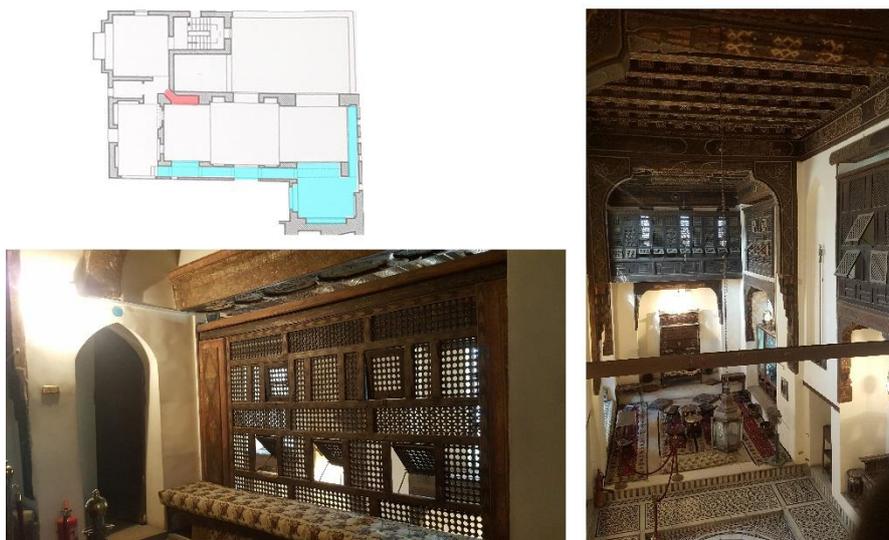


Figure 9. the main Qa'a and Al Aghany in the Harem section site of El Keritleya house. The blue zone in the plan indicates Al Aghany section and from that section it is feasible to view the main Qa'a area (Abdelhamid Hosny, 2020, 107).

7.THE QA'A AND ITS FEATURES IN ANALYZED SAMPLES

7.1. The Qa'a in Amir Beshtak Palace

Built in the fourteenth century (A.D 1334-1339) Amir Beshtak Palace is the oldest model among all of the analyzed samples. That house was erected by one of the Amirs of Sultan El Nasr Ibn Koloun; Amir Beshtak El Nasery. Of this two-storey house exterior wall in stone draws attention by virtue of its different window types. The exterior wall of the house is equipped with shops and a masjid in the ground floor. When moving upwards from the entrance section of the house, there is the upper Qa'a (Abdel Rezak, 2009, 269). In the main Qa'a on upper floor, Durqa'a's floor is 30 cm below Iwan's floor and there is a fountain designed with a colorful marble in its center. The wooden ceiling formed of octagonal alcoves are worthy of attention. Some of the remains show that the ceilings in the Qa'a were decorated with patterns of gold-foil artistry in the past. In the rising walls of the Durqa'a ceiling there are three windows in each side. Sedelle's ceiling was also decorated in gold-foil artistry. Iwan and Durqa'a are separated from each other by pointed arches. Two of the Iwan windows which are toward the street are covered with Mashrabiya and the third is woodturning made window. On the top of these windows there are stained glass plaster windows. The Mashrabiya or woodturning made windows protect from hot Egyptian climate, it enables natural ventilation and protect the house dwellers from the neighbor's eyes as a result it allows comfort in the interior space. There are also stairs which enables access to Al Aghany area (Fig.10,11,12).

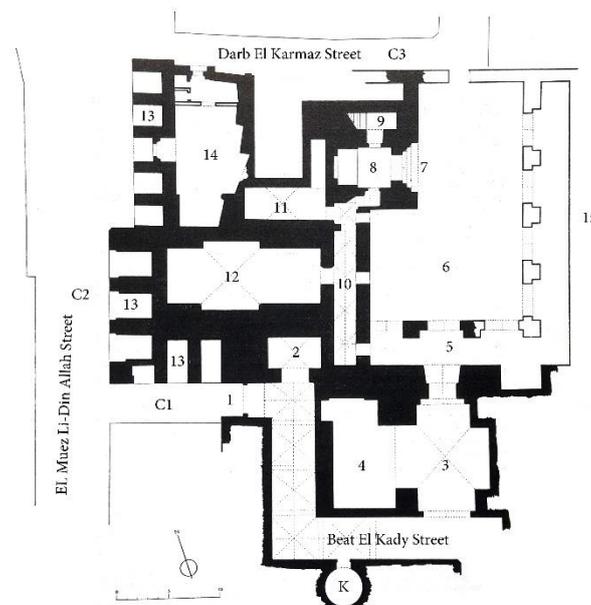


Figure 10. Beshtak Palace - Ground Floor (Revault & Maury, 1977, 17). 1- Palace Door (K- Guarding Castle) 2- Guarding Room 3- Main Entrance Site 4- Open Court 5- Cloister 6- Inner Courtyard 7- Palace Portal 8- Entrance area 9- Stairs 10- Corridor 11- Room 12- The Mandara 13- Shops 14- Masjid 15- Additional Structure.

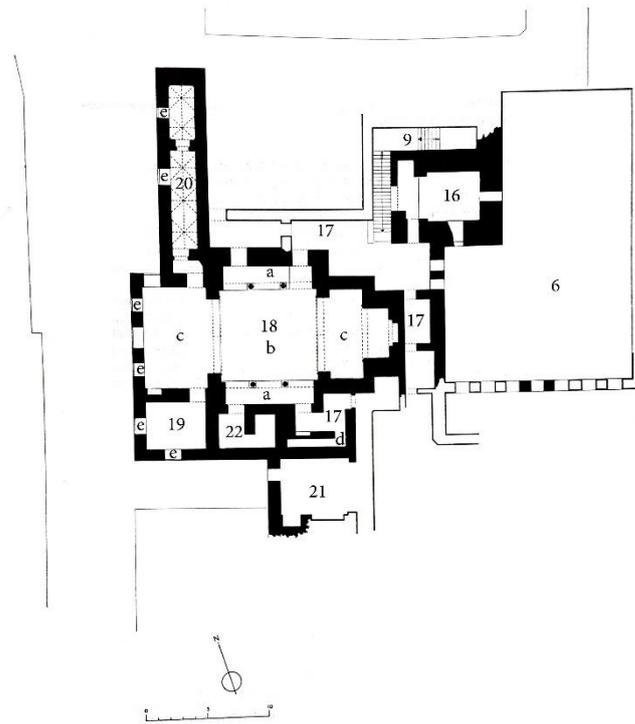


Figure 11. Beshtak Palace - First Floor (Revault & Maury, 1977, 19). 16- Guard Room
17- Corridor 18- The Main Qa'a A-Sedelle B- Durqa'a C- Iwan E-Mashrabiya 19- Room
20- Corridor 21- Small Qa'a 22- Interior Stairs.

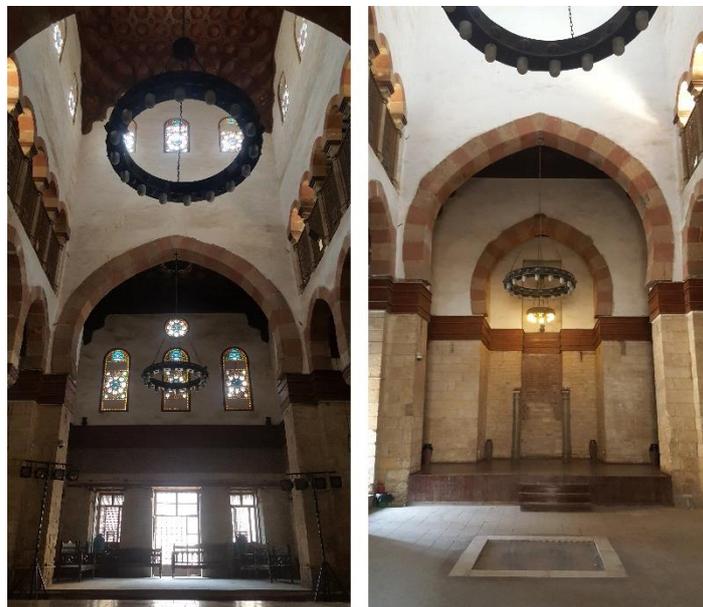


Figure 12. View of the upper Qa'a in Amir Beshtak Palace.

7.2. The Qa'a in Amir Taz Palace (MS 1352)

Built in the fourteenth century the house was erected by order of the Mamluk Amir Seyf El Din Taz. It is one of the largest and oldest palaces having survived from the age of Mamluks. The main spaces in the house are Harem Section, the main Qa'a, Maqad and adjoining rooms, stable and service areas. In this building especially famous for its Muqarnas portal, there exist two Qa'a areas. Through the secondary entrance door of the dwelling, a corridor is accessed and this corridor takes the visitor to the Mandara. In some

of the written documents, this space has been described as a reception site (Rezk, 2003a, 1035; Yaghy, 2004, 40, Shakwir, nd, 17). While on the upper floor there is the main Qa'a area; but after the earthquake in 1992, some parts of main Qa'a area were demolished. Thanks to the registrations done before the earthquake, the building had been renovated. It can be observed that the upper Qa'a consist of Durqa'a and two Iwans and at the center of the Durqa'a there is a fountain. According to the registration, its ceiling had a wooden-dome form, lower section of the Qa'a walls was made up of stone and the upper section made by mud-brick and the wall was plaster-coated. Thanks to the renovation the Qa'a was rebuilt similarly. There was a decorative wooden border passing through the walls of the Iwans, only parts of it survived and from the remaining parts it is possible to also see Amir Taz's name carved. Hammam, the bathing space, is connected to the Qa'a area (Fig.13,14,15,16).

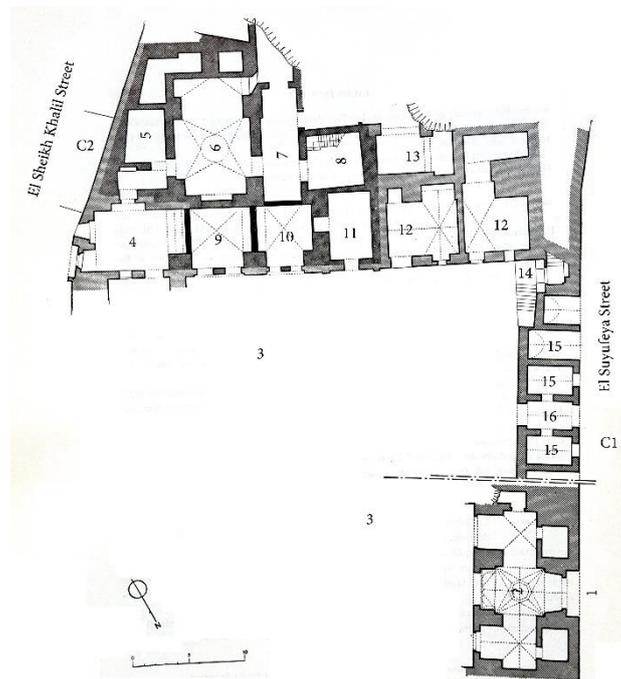


Figure 13. Amir Taz Palace -Ground Floor (Revault & Maury, 1977, 54). 1- Portal 2- Entrance area 3- Courtyard 4-Secondary Entrance Site 5- Front Room 6- Reception Area 7- Access Corridor to Service Area 8-Interior Stairs 9- Adjacent Room Area to The Reception Site 10- Adjacent Room to Corridor 11- Room 12- Storage Areas 13- Court 14- Maqad Stairs 15- Shops 16- Secondary Entrance.

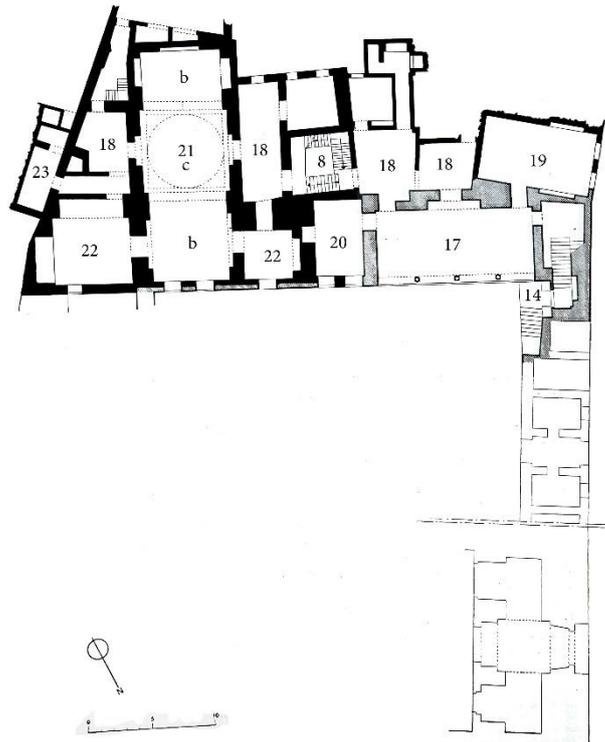


Figure 14. Taz Palace –First Floor (Revault and Maury, 1977, 57). 17-Maqad 18- Front Room 19-20- Adjacent Rooms to Maqad 21-The Main Qa'a B- Iwan C- Durqa'a 22- Room 23- Ruins of the Service Areas.



Figure 15. View of the main Qa'a.



Figure 16. Remaining wall ornaments in the main Qa'a.

7.3. The Qa'a in Zeinab Khatun's House (A.D 1468)

The most significant characteristic of this house is its quality to reflect architectural, artistic and cultural features of both Mamluk and Ottoman periods. It was built during Mamluk period and restored in Ottoman period. El Qa'a in particular was erected during Ottoman period. On the upper/first floor of this house there are two Qa'as, both Qa'as consist of two Iwan and Durqa'a areas. Since the Mandara in the ground floor is a small space in this house, celebrations could only be held in upper-floor halls. As mentioned before, the main Qa'a will welcome men guests and the harem small Qa'a the women guests. The main Qa'a is wider and glamorously decorated in comparison with the small Qa'a.

As a common feature of both Qa'as, there are Sedelles and/or built-in storage equipment by the Iwans. There are Mashrabiyyas facing the courtyard. Ceiling of the Iwans is wooden beamed. The ceilings of the Qa'as are plain or decorated with colored ornaments. The Durqa'a floor is decorated and covered by geometric shaped marble pieces. In Durqa'a's ceiling there is an octagonal Shuksheika. The doors are made by geometrical woodworking technique termed as Kundekari technique; these doors connected to the Qa'a can access to interior sections of the house. Right beside the main Qa'a, there is a hammam. (Fig.17,18,19,20).

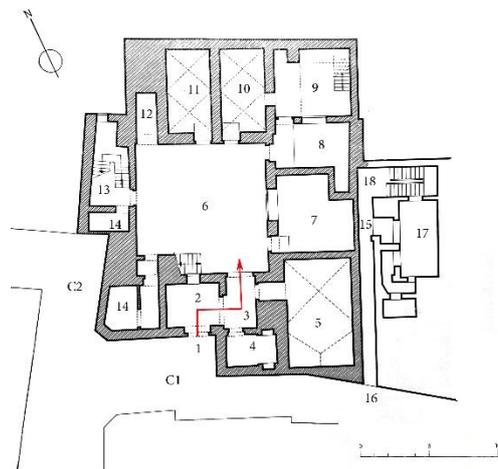


Figure 17. Zeinab Khatun's House - Ground Floor (Revault &Maury, 1979, 5).1- The Portal 2- Entrance area 3-Indirect Entrance 4- Room 5- Selamlik Meeting Rooms 6- Inner Courtyard 7-The Mandara 8- Intermediate Room 9- Kitchen-Back Courtyard 10-11- Storage Rooms 12- Corridor-Toilet 13- Secondary Stairs 14- Toilets 15- Passage 16- Secondary Entrance 17- Half-open ceiling area (For horses) 18- Stairs.

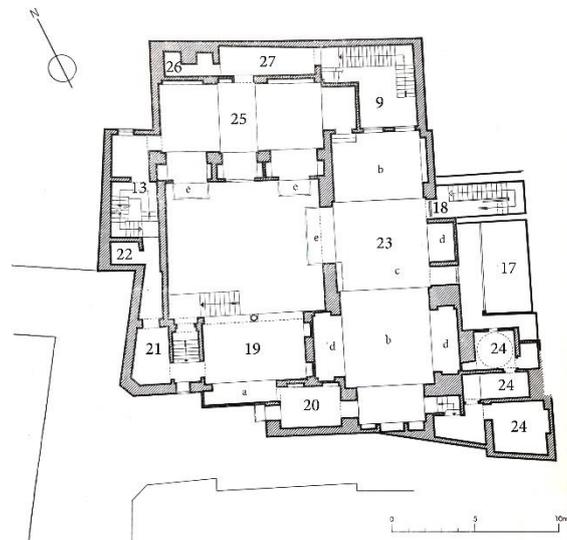


Figure 18. Zeinab Khatun's House – First Floor (Revault & Maury, 1979, 9). 9- Stairs-Kitchen-Back Courtyard 13-18-Secondary Stairs 19-Maqad a- Stepped Passing Area 20-21- Intermediate Rooms 22- Toilet 23- The Main Qa'a/ b- Iwan/ c-Dorqa'a/ d- Sedelle/ e- Mashrabiya 24- Hammam 25- The Small Qa'a 26- Toilet 27-Corridor.

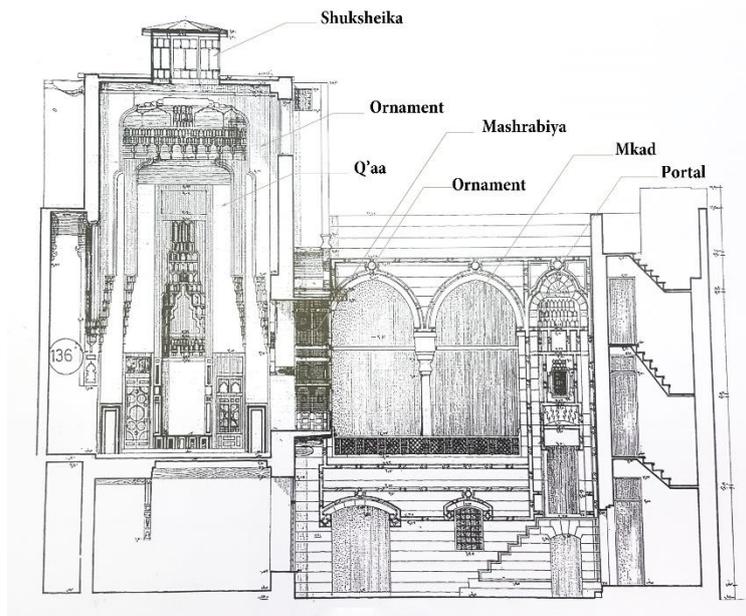


Figure 19. Zeinab Khatun's House –The Qa'a and Maqad Section (Shakwir, 2005, 41).

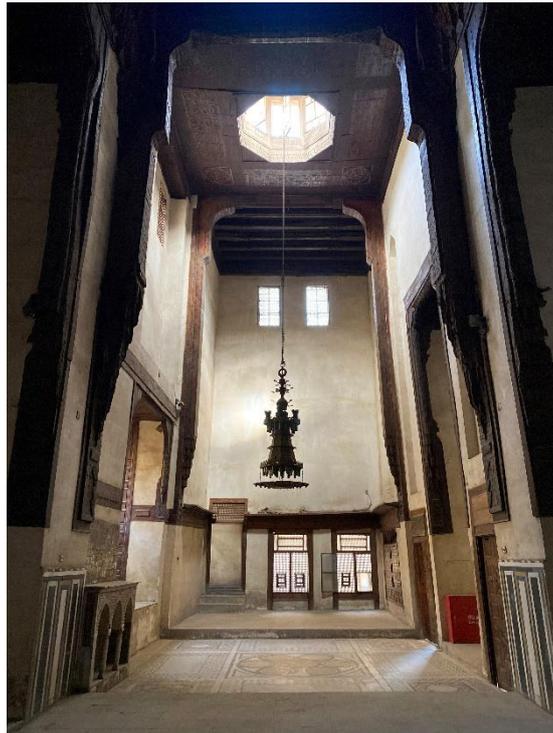


Figure 20. The Qa'a in Zeinab Khatun's House.

7.4. The Qa'a in Gayer Anderson Museum / El Keritleya House (A.D 1540-1631)

Currently used as a museum this house originally consists of two houses. The first one was built in 1631 by Mohamed El Gazar and second one in 1540 by Abdel Kader El Haddad. The reason for naming both of these houses as El Keritleya is that the last owner of the house was a lady from Crete Island in Greece. After being transformed into a museum it was named as Gayer Anderson. Anderson, a doctor in British Army, applied in 1935 to the Committee for Islamic Historical Works in Egypt to obtain license to live in this house; he even claimed that without modifying inside of this house that was erected in line with Islamic architecture he would refurnish it with artworks in Islamic style and equip with priceless antique works and fittings. Indeed, Anderson stayed true to his promises and actualized his commitments. Upon Anderson's death the house was transformed into a museum in 1942 by the Committee for Islamic Historical Works in Egypt. This house is exalted as a major sample that exemplifies how, from the 16th century onwards, houses from Ottoman period seemed and experience it to its visitors (Abdelhamid Hosny and Demirarslan, 2019, 225; Okasha, 2008, 78; Rezk, 2003b, 674; Yaghy, 2004, 114- 120). In the first house there are two Qa'a and in the second house one main Qa'a. In the first house, The Qa'a in the Selamlik section entails Durqa'a and two Iwans. In every Iwan, there is a turnery window. One Iwan faces the street while the other one faces Inner Court. Durqa'a's ceiling is wooden beamed whereas Iwan's ceiling is flat-wooden covered. The Qa'a draws attention with its illumination, colored plant and geometrical hand-drawn figured ornaments. Through passing from the door in second Iwan, it is possible to access Harem Qa'a right after leaving the small Intermediate Room. After entering Harem Section there are Sedelle areas on an indented stone-platform with Mashrabiya's facing the street and on the opposite wall the Sedelle areas are facing the inner court with woodturning made window. In the second house the Qa'a is wider and more splendid than the aforementioned two Qa'as. This Qa'a is connected with the Maqad as a Selamlik section. In the second floor after reaching the site termed as Al Aghany, it is viable to face the Qa'a area via Mashrabiya. Marble floor and water component fitted in both Durqa'a site of the Qa'a area and in the inner court of the house functioned to alleviate the hot climate of Cairo (Fig.21,22,23).

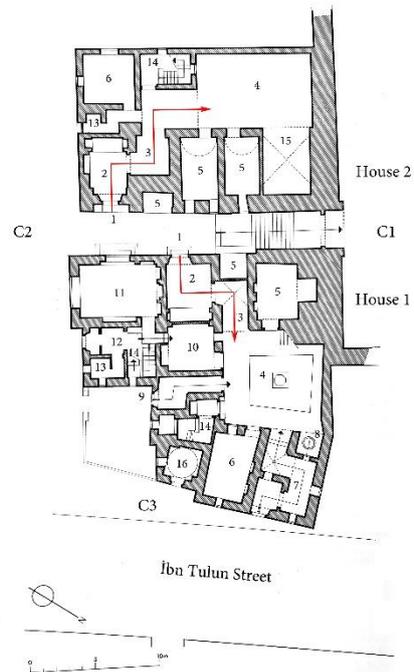


Figure 21. Gayer Anderson Museum -Ground floor (Revault & Maury, 1979,59). 1- Portal (Main entrance door) 2- Entrance Site 3- Indirect Entrance 4-Inner Courtyard 5- Storage Rooms 6- Rooms 7-Secondary Entrance 8- Water well 9-New Entrance 10- Intermediate Room 11- Public Drinking Fountain 12- Public Fountain Entrance 13- Toilet 14- Interior Stairs 15- Vaulted Porch 16- Monument Tomb.

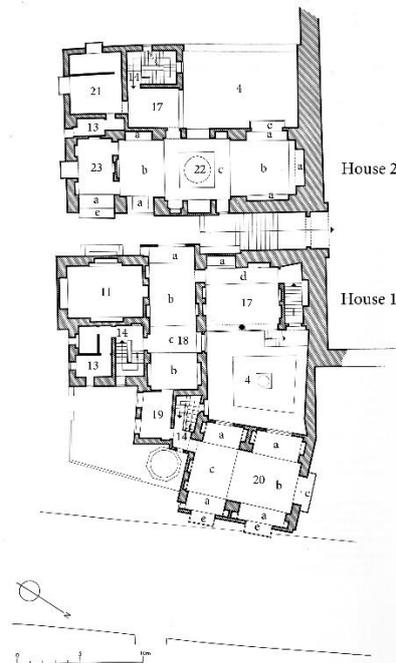


Figure 22. Gayer Anderson Museum – First Floor (Revault & Maury, 1979,63)- Qa'a, Maqad and Harem Connection. 17- Maqad 17a- Sedelle 17d- Passage 18- The Qa'a-Selamlik 19- Intermediate Room 20- The Qa'a Harem Section a- Sedelle b-Iwan c- Durqa'a e- Mashrabiya 21- Room 22- The Qa'a 23- Resting areas.



Figure 23. View of Harem Qa'a from the first house.

7.5. The Qa'a in El Sehemy House (A.D 1648-1796)

The house consists of two sections; the southwest section was built by Abdel Wahab El Tablawy in 1648 and the northeast section by El Haj Ismail Sheleby in 1796. These two houses were united as one single house by Ismail Sheleby. Both houses were built during the Ottoman period. Since ownership of the house was later transferred to El Sehemy's family and their grandchildren, the house was named as El Sehemy House in which two courts existed; one inside and one outside of the house. By the means of the corridor adjacent to the Takhtabush the passage across both courts is ensured. The house possessed four Qa'a areas which faced the inner court and was located on the ground floor. The first hall was on the left side of indirect entrance and its most distinguishing feature was having three Iwans. On the ceiling base of the Iwan on the south direction there are inscribed Koran verses. The second hall is placed on the right of the entrance space and composed of two Iwans and one Durqa'a of which floor displays marbles in different colors and has a Shuksheika in the middle of the ceiling. Lower sections of walls are covered by wooden. The third hall faces northwest direction and has the largest square meter among the other Qa'as. This hall has two Iwans and one Durqa'a. On the ceiling base of main area, the name of house builder Ismail Sheleby and date of construction can be read. The fourth hall is composed of one Iwan and a Durqa'a. Thanks to the Mashrabiya which passes the wind blowing from the north, a cool area in summer is formed. The Durqa'a contains a marble fountain. In the first floor which is the Harem section, there are five Qa'as. The walls of one of the Qa'a is covered with tile work as an effect of Ottoman Art hence termed as "The Tiled Qa'a" and it is the most remarkable one (Fig.24,25,26,27).

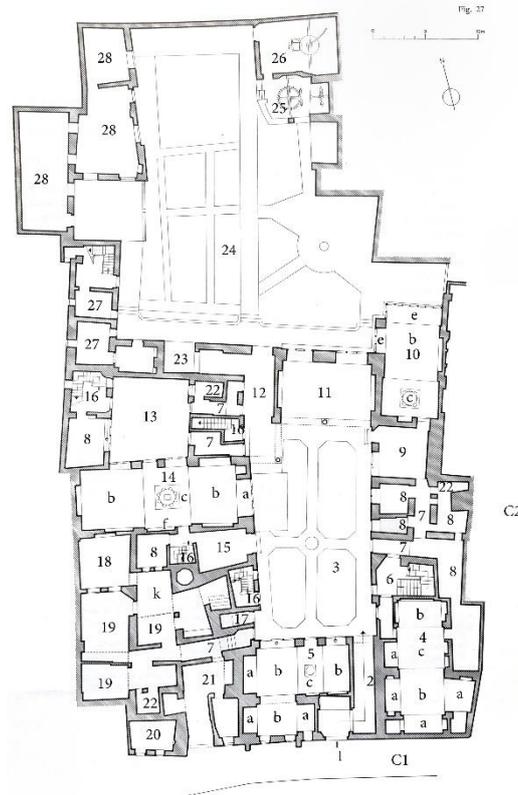


Figure 24. El Sehemy House - Ground floor (Revault &Maury, 1979,99). 1-Portal 2- Indirect Entrance 3-Inner Courtyard 4-The Mandara (The Lower Qa'a) 5- Small Mandara- Reception Site 6- Interior Stairs 7- Corridor 8-9 Front Room 10- Small Mandara 11- Takhtabush 12- Access Corridor Between The Two Courtyards 13-Front Room-Koran Reciting Rooms 14- Large Mandara 15- Front Room 16- Interior Stairs 17-Stairwell 18- Background Service Courts K- Airwell 19- Common Service Areas with Kitchen 20-El Sehemy's mausoleum 21-Secondary Entrance 22- Toilet 23- Second Entrance to the Back Courtyard 24- Back Court-Garden 25-Water wheel 26- Grain Mill 27- 28- Accommodation Sites-Common Service Areas (Servants' Rooms, Stable, Grain Silo etc). A- Sedelle B-Iwan C- Durqa'a F- Saffa (A marble shelf supported by decorative small columns) E- Mashrabiya.



Figure 27. Mashrabiya, built in cabinets and Iwan site of the Harem Qa'a (45). The photo displays an inner space sample reflecting seating style in the Islamic periods.

7.6. The Qa'a in El Saadat House (A.D 1659-1754)

The house was built by Ahmed Ibn Ismail Ibn Muhammed El Saadat who belonged to a well-established family. The house owner was a sheikh who was also a renowned scholar. Reportedly, the house belonged to his ancestors and additions were made over time. When Ahmet Bey took hold of, a site with a tall ceiling and connected with the large Qa'a was added; he also included a number of additions like storage areas and a semi closed balcony. Prevalence of polygamy and high number of kids and marrying daughters of the house with a freed man to ensure that she would keep staying in the father's house were common practices in those ages (Rezk, 2003b, 966; El Sayed, 2018, 163-164). As expected, all of these factors cumulatively played a role in the house planning.

The main Qa'a is on the north side of the house and on both ends of the Durqa'a site two Iwans exist; one Iwan large and the other one small. On the wooden beam carrying the ascending Durqa'a walls, there is the name of house patron written in white letters on a blue band in addition to the 191st verse of Al Imran Surah. The First Iwan has a rectangular form. On all of the three sides of the Iwan there is a Sedelle. These dents were designed as stone platforms above the ground. By placing pillows and cushions they were utilized as stone divan. Lower sections of wide Iwan's walls were undecorated but its upper part was covered by a white floor and plant-figured tile works in color. Between the lower and upper sections of the Iwan a wooden framework was designed. This wooden framework, enclosing the Iwan, is a wooden border divided into rectangular frames in which white pray scripted written on a blue floor (Rezk, 2003b, 968). The wide Iwan ceiling is wooden beamed forming rectangular and square areas. The Sedelle ceilings were designed as a flat wooden ceiling on which geometrical figures were displayed. Yet in the mid-section of one of the Sedelle ceiling, there are star figures in a rectangular area and windows covered with iron bars functioning for lighting and ventilation purposes. On the ceiling of the Durqa'a a square Shuksheika exists. Fountain extends over a large part of the Durqa'a (Fig.28,29,30). The small Qa'a in the Harem section in the first floor has an eye-catching wooden dome and Mashrabiya windows (Fig. 29, 31).

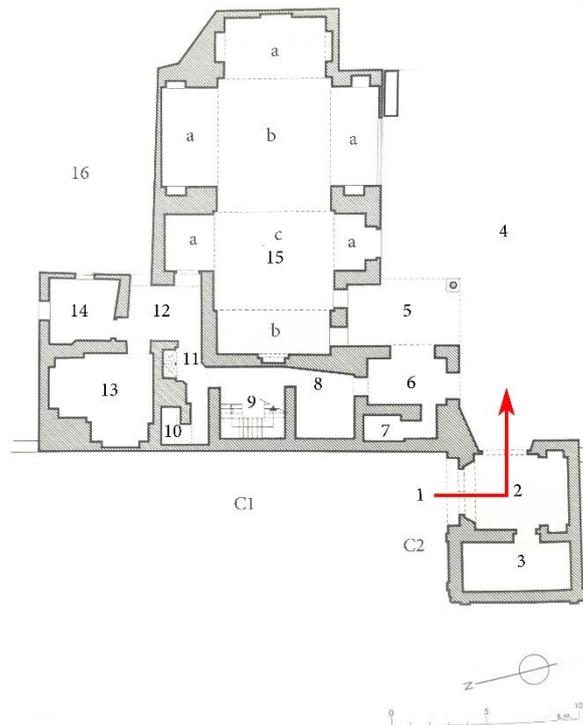


Figure 28. El Saadat House - Ground floor (Maury et al., 1983, 262). 1-Portal 2-Indirect Entrance 3-Public Drinking Fountain 4-Inner Courtyard 5- Takhtabush 6- Hall 7-Old Stairs 8-Corridor -Room 9- Harem Stairs 10-Toilet 11- Mazyara 12-13-14- Service Areas Supposedly (Kitchen, Store etc.) or Possibly The Guest Rooms 15-El Mandara A- Sedelle B- Iwan C- Duqa'a 16- Back Courtyard.

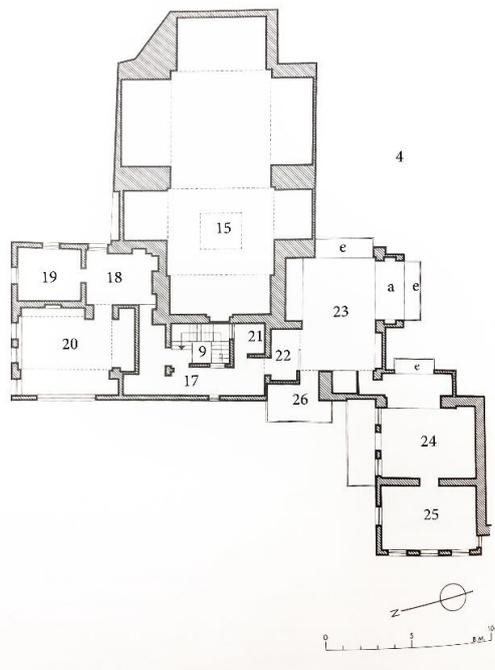


Figure 29. El Saadat House - First floor (Maury, 1983, 262). 17- Corridor 18- Intermediate Room 19-20- Rooms 21- A Small Room 22- Entrance area-Malqaf 23- The Small/Harem Qa'a 24-25 Rooms .26- Room with Mashrabiya Looking to The Main Entrance (the Portal) of The House A- Sedelle E- Mashrabeaya.

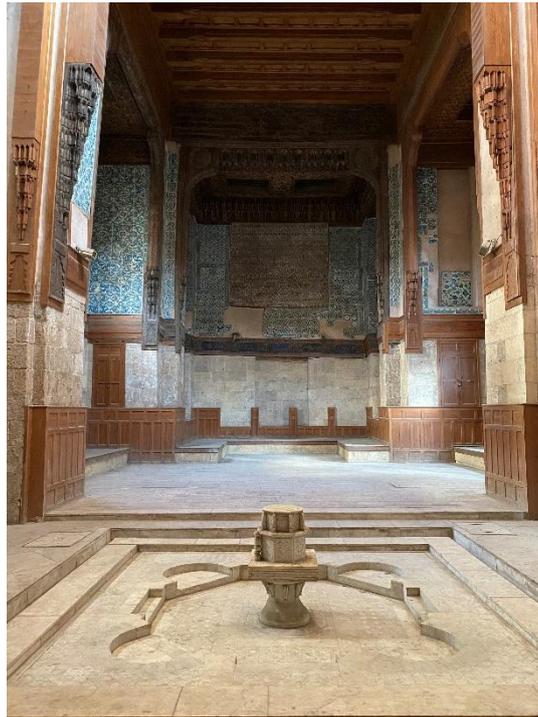


Figure 30. El Sadaat House- The Mandara.



Figure 31. El Saadat House - Mashrabeya and decorated dome in the Harem Qa'a.

8. FINDINGS

As can be seen in the analyzed samples as well, the Qa'a;

-It was designed by using showy ornaments and ornamental materials that symbolized the social status and financial power of the user.

-Every house possessed two or more quantities of the Qa'a. In some of the samples, the Mandara was absent (or small) in ground floor and in such samples the main Qa'a in the first floor, in case of celebrations or meetings, is used as a Selamlik and the harem Qa'as in the upper floor, in case of celebrations or meetings, is used as a Selamlik and the harem Qa'as in the upper floor were used to welcome women guests separately due to privacy concerns (Fig.17,18,21,22). The main Qa'a is the widest and the most glamorously ornamented Qa'a in the house.

- Privacy is the main factor to consider in the planning of any Qa'a. Underlying motive in building separate Qa'a in Harem-Selamlik sections and using Mashrabiya, upper windows and the Aghany applications is related to the importance given to privacy.



- Spaces reserved for accommodation and bathing are opened towards the Qa'a; thus, this hall, next to being a reception site for special guests, functions as a circulation space and a living area.
- The Qa'a is a collection of spaces consisting of one Durqa'a and Iwan sites which can amount to 1,2, or more. Iwans inside the Qa'a area may not always be at equal sizes.
- The upper Qa'a and the Mandara resemble concerning plan diagram but in some of the analyzed samples, it was detected that there was also an Mandara built without an Iwan. Nevertheless, in all upper Qa'as there is a Durqa'a and Iwan formation.
- In order to store objects that are essential in daily life and books, Iwans are fitted with shelves, niches, and built-in closets. As experienced in other Islamic nations, the interior equipment of Iwans is reminiscent of interior space organizations of these nations.
- Mashrabiya and Sedelle are vital elements of the Qa'a and symbolize not only privacy but also status of the house owner.
- Shuksheika on Durqa'a's ceiling mostly has an octagonal form. Not all the Qa'as contain Shuksheika, this depends on the location of the Qa'a inside the plan by taking into consideration the air flow inside the area.
- Ceiling section of the Qa'a is particularly quite elaborated. In essence ceiling of Durqa'a, as the symbol of sky, is decorated glamorously. The Iwan ceiling was decorated with colorful patterns or left plain. The ornaments were created in a balanced way in the space without going to the extremes.
- Generally, in the Qa'a, the name of the person who built the house or the area and Koran verses were inscribed.
- Scriptures, geometrical motifs, plant motifs are employed in line with the features of Islamic art in the ornamentation works. As an effect of Ottoman Art, some of the ornaments exhibit samples that have tile work. Although there is none among the samples examined within the context of this article, it was seen after the analyses that in the halls of 18th-century houses (Ali Labib House) there were wall paintings drawn under the effect of the Ottoman decorating style used in those years.
- To minimize the impact of hot weather in the Qa'a, there is decidedly a fountain placed in the Durqa'a' and in order to diminish negative effect of hot weather, marble material was used as floor cover. On the floor, through colored marbles and geometrical motif ornaments, it became feasible to obtain a rich view to the interior space of structures. In Iwans, stone floor was used with precious carpets laid on. In some examples the lower part of the walls were also covered with colored marble.
- During the periods that analyzed samples belonged to, there is not a mobile stuff in the sense of Western style in Qa'a area. Except cushions, storage wooden boxes, tiny tripods designed in nacre art style or copper work and floor tables almost all furniture is formed in line with the structure.
- During Mamluk and Ottoman periods houses differed with respect to Mashrabiya and ornament in the Qa'a but aside from that, there is not a noticeable divergence. As an effect of Ottoman art style, tile work was used to augment the spatial richness and make it more magnificent.
- As Rapoport mentioned in the factors that affect house formation, primary and secondary factors are likely to vary with respect to societies and cultures. In the formation of socio-cultural values in Cairene houses religious rules and climatic factors played role to a large extent.
- During Mamluk and Ottoman periods houses were designed on the basis of the principle on creating a suitable and comfortable space for its user.
- As can also be seen in the analyzed samples that characteristics and functions of the Qa'a and its forming elements have remained intact throughout centuries. In modern day as well, spatial and functional characteristics of that area is taken as reference point in the studies and work by some of the contemporary architects.



9. CONCLUSION

Having survived from the past to present-day architectural structures mirror lifestyles and beliefs of different cultures. Every country has its unique architectural formation and authentic underlying causes in architectural preferences. This architectural formation is a reflection of the lifestyle, socio-cultural features, religious, political, geographical and economic conditions. As house development in Egypt is explored it can be detected that from ancient Egyptian period till the end of Islamic periods, house architecture was established upon the basis of climate, life, and culture. Houses built in Egypt during the Islamic periods were under the influence of Islam faith and Egypt's architectural past. As also stated by Rapoport in his work (2004, 8), a house is expected to align with its culture. In another saying, it must be unique to a culture and this is one quality neatly reflected in Islamic Cairene houses. In almost every culture, a house has a main living and reception area while also revealing house user's social status and these spaces are also a reflection of the socio-economic and socio-cultural status of house users. In that sense the Qa'a is the most noteworthy space that designates social status of its user in Islamic Cairene houses via its space organization and ornament while also reflecting Islamic way of life and artistic requirements. In the modeling of this area climatization solutions which aligned with climate conditions and privacy as a rule of Islamic lifestyle have been accentuated. In the ornament of halls, it was vital to perform the kind of applications that matched with the qualities of Islamic art. Construction of these halls started during Fatimid period and continued effectively till the Ottoman period. Even if few contemporary architects have been taking benefit of the climatic solutions and planning form of the Qa'a, buildings constructed show its importance and that it can be used in different building types not only in dwellings. Nowadays, designers are getting inspired in a wide range by the elements form and ornaments used in decorating the Qa'a or the house. As a result, it is possible to see modern Islamic styled interior space and furniture designs. But architects and interior designers should take more advantage of the climatic solutions which offer an ergonomic interior space for the users.

In sum, the Qa'a is one of the building blocks of planning in Islamic Cairene houses and a further analysis of its architectural design and details evidences that all of the design principles and solutions responded to specific objectives in line with Islamic way of life. Many other samples can be added to the aforementioned architectural formation and employed equipment elements. By means of this research that exemplified reflections of imbedded values of Cairo's culture of life from the past to date on traditional houses, it is aimed to underline that Islamic Cairene houses which are acknowledged culture heritages achieve to portray an authentic and esteemed stance with its dedication to authentic values.

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