good example of the Bilhazdan style. The Mughal emperor Jahangir, a noted connoisseur, considered eight of them to be the early work of Bilhaz, but for modern scholars, the attribution is complicated by the retouching of the illustrations, probably in the Mughal period. An image such as Building the Mosque of Samarkand [84] displays the typical Bilhazdan interest in daily activities, variety of figure types, intricate composition, humor, and wit, as well as the sure draughtsmanship, carefully modulated cool palette punctuated with jets of bright color, and jewel-like finish associated with the Cairo Bisitun. While most scholars agree that the paintings in the Zafarnama are the work of Bilhaz, they disagree about when they were added to the manuscript, some putting them before the Bisitun and some after.

All the arts of the book – papermaking, calligraphy, illumination, and binding – flourished under the patronage of Husayn Bayqara. One of the most exquisite examples of bookbinding to survive covers the copy of Jalal al-Din Rumī’s Mathnawī made for the sultan at Herat in 1483.31 The exterior [80] has a rectangular field containing a central cartouche with small pendants above and below and quarter - cartouches in the four corners. Pomegranates and spiral arabesques decorate everything. The rectangular frame, the quarter - cartouches, and the central cartouche and pendants are recessed and painted with embossed gold; the field and the outer border are painted in black. The composition is typical of fifteenth - century bindings and was transferred to carpets. The technique of covering pasteboard with varnish, commonly but misleadingly known as Islamic lacquer, is an innovation that would become increasingly popular under the Safavids. Equally splendid are the doublures, made of leather filigree pasted over a royal blue ground [87]. While the lower cover maintains the traditional composition, the upper one and the flap depict deer, monkeys, wild geese, foxes, and birds sitting in a tree. The border is filled with flying geese; a serpentine dragon of Chinese inspiration artfully fills the triangular flap. Exquisite detail, including the fur and veins on the leaves, makes this one of the masterpieces of fifteenth - century art. Filigree had been used for bookbinding in Iraq and western Iran since the beginning of the century, as demonstrated by the inside covers of a copy of Ahmad Jalayir’s Divan ("Collected poems") made for the author in Baghdad in 1466 - 7. According to the sixteenth - century biographer Dust Muhammad, the technique (mussabahāt) was introduced to Herat by Qayum al - Din, the bookbinder from Tabriz, who was commissioned by Baysanqur to prepare a Missaljust like the one that had been produced for Ahmad Jalayir.32

Most of the accoutrements of everyday life in the Timurid period have disappeared over the centuries, but some can be reconstructed through illustrations. The double frontispiece to the Cairo Bisitun, for example, depicts the court of Husayn Bayqara. On the left side the prince is seated on a geometric medallion carpet beneath a canopy. Before him are Chinese blue - and - white ceramics and metal jugs on a low table. On the right, servants and courtiers fill bottles and flasks and carry dishes to and fro. Almost no textiles or rugs have survived from the period, and they can only be reconstructed from manuscript illustration.33 We are, however, better informed about metalwork. Almost one hundred objects made of brass, either inlaid or engraved and tinned, have survived. One of the most characteristic fifteenth - century shapes is the pot - bellied jug (average height 13.5 cm) with an S - curved dragon handle [88]. An early example was made by Habib Allah b. "Ali Bahurjani and dated 1461 – 2.34 Every surface has been ornamented, mostly with epigraphy. A broad band encircles the neck and invokes good wishes to its owner. Arabesque fronds enfold two mystic odes in praise of wine by the fourteenth - century poet Hafiz. Even the underside of the foot is inscribed with good wishes and the artist's signature. Although the owner of this vessel remains un-
dragon handle. The form was also imitated by Chinese potters, for a blue-and-white example of the Xuan period (1426–35) was made perhaps for the export market.14

Chinese blue-and-white ceramics were highly valued in fifteenth-century Iran, so judge from their appearance in manuscript illustration and the frequent copies of them by Iranian potters.15 Timurid blue-and-white wares, however, rarely equalled the achievements of their Chinese models: the potting is coarse and heavy, the glazes thick, the drawing is often uninspired. One of the few dated pieces is a plate made at Mashhad in 1472 [90].16 The well has three chrysanthemum flowers displayed on loose tendrils, the cavetto is inscribed with Persian verses, and the rim is decorated with a rather crude variant of the Chinese wave and rock pattern that was to become extremely popular in later Isfahani wares (see Chapter 16).

Many of the splendid works of art produced in fifteenth-century Iran were made for descendants of Timurid and can correctly be called Timurid, but in other cases dynastic labels are inappropriate. An example is the well-known copy of Nizami’s Khamsa which was commissioned by the Timurid prince Abu'l-Qasim Babur (r. 1440–57) from the calligrapher ‘Azhar, but was unfinished at the prince’s death.6 After the Qaraqormanluk Jahanshah sacked Herat a year later, the manuscript passed to Jahanshah’s son Pir Badak. It then went to the Aqquyunlular Khalil Sultan, who commissioned the calligrapher ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kishtomi, known as Asisi, to finish copying the text and two artists, Shakhli and Davud Muhammad, to illustrate it. Still unfinished at Khalil Sultan’s death in 1478, the manuscript passed to his brother Ya’qub (d. 1490). He, too, died before the book was completed; it finally passed to Isma’il I (r. 1501–24), founder of the Safavid dynasty, under whose patronage it was finished.47 The illustration of Bahram Gar in the Green Pavilion [91] is probably the work of Shakhli, an artist of Herat origin. Added during Sultan Ya’qub’s possession of the manuscript, this example of the Aqquyunlular Court style contrasts markedly with the Herat style exemplified by Ilhrad, especially in its palette and the fantastic vegetation. The carefully modulated colors of Ilhrad have given way to acid greens set against brilliant blues. Nature has exuberantly burst from the frame’s constraints to engulf the nominal subject, the prince in the position, in a riot of anthropomorphic rocks among which grow lop-sided trees with imbricated leaves.

The Istanbul Khamsa represents the finest in court patronage, but over a hundred manuscripts were illustrated in related but more prosaic styles, apparently for sale in the marketplace. One style, the Turkmân Commercial style, has been localized in the city of Shiraz during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The style crystallized in the dispersed illustrations to a manuscript of the Khamsa, a folk rendition of the story of ‘Ali in imitation of the Shamsa, the Persian national epic.48 An illustration signed by the artist Farhad in 1476–7 [92] shows the general Sa’d defeating the divs. The painting shares the exuberance of the Istanbul Khamsa, but landscape has been simplified to a pale ground with grassy tufts and the occasional zoontorphic rocky outcrop. The high horizon is indicated by a white eyelet border below puffy comma-shaped clouds in white or gold. Other outdoor illustrations have a lush green or ochre ground with large masses of vegetation; indoor scenes have schematic, but meticulously detailed settings. The stocky figures, often wearing large lopsided turbans, are drawn with an extraordinarily fine line. Another twenty-six manuscripts with facial features and hair drawn in brown can be grouped in a related, but more delicate, style dubbed the Brownish (Turk. bmran) style.49

The legacy of the decorative arts in Iran and Central Asia during the fifteenth century passed not only through the splendid objects made for Timurid patrons but also through artists and artisans who carried the Timurid style elsewhere. The Timurid visual vocabulary which had been developed in Iran and Central Asia in the fifteenth century came to permeate the visual arts of other regions, notably Turkey and Mughal India, and there developed what has come to be called an International Timurid style. This style, characterized by chinoiserie floral motifs integrated into languid arabesques, became particularly important in the development of a distinct Ottoman style in the sixteenth century (see Chapter 16).
Architecture in Egypt under the Bahri Mamluks (1260–1389)

After the death of the last effective Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, Salih Najim al-Din Ayub (r. 1240–49), his former con-
cubine, Shaharaj al-Durr, led a jury of his trusted advisers and generals until his son Turanshah could be brought back from abroad; but Turanshah was so hated that he was assassinated two months later and Shaharaj al-Durr elected queen. For the next decade, a conspiratorial elite maneuvered for control of Egypt. In 1260 an army of former slaves (Arab. 
umal) from the Mamluk forces that ruled in Syria, and Baybars I al-Bunduqdar, one of the former mamluks of 
Salih, emerged as the most powerful of the conspirators and assumed the title of sultan. The sequence of sultans he 
initiated ruled from Cairo over Egypt, Syria, western Arabia, 
and parts of Anatolia for the next two hundred and fifty years. They are, somewhat artificially, divided into two lines. 
The first, mainly Kipchak Turks from southern Russia, are 
often called the Bahris, since they originally had their bar-
acks on the island of Rawda in the Nile (al-bahri). The 
second, mainly Circassians from the Caucasus, are known as the 
Burijs, since they were quartered in the caidat (Arab. 
bayr). The Mamluks had a peculiar political system in which the 
governing class was recruited largely from Turkish slaves 
who were converted to Islam, educated in the arts of war 
and peace, and attached to the service of the sultan or other high 
notables. These slaves rose in the ranks, were manumitted, 
and eventually one among them was elected sultan. The 
sons of Mamluks occupied a lesser social status as they 
were free-born Muslims they were excluded from the 
Mamluk corps and were consequently unable (at least in 
thory) to inherit their fathers' high political rank, although 
the descendants of Qali'un (r. 1280–90) reigned for much 
of the fourteenth century. The system was inherently un-
stable; many sultans, particularly in the fifteenth century, 
reigned only months, while others reigned several times 
successively. Family fortunes were always subject to 
corruption by the state, and many Mamluks turned to architec-
tural patronage to insure the survival of their wealth and 
perpetuate their names.

Money and property established in trust for a pious foun-
dation (Arab. maqād) were protected by religious law from 
collection, so many Mamluks established such trusts in 
which their descendants were executors and beneficiaries. 
Usually the foundation centered on the tomb of the founder 
and incorporated other religious and charitable elements, 
such as a mosque, theological college (Arab. madrasa), 
hospital (maṭān), hospice (akīn), drinking-water dispensary (khubtā) and elementary school (khatūb), as conserva-
tive ulama continued to disapprove of such impious display. These charitable functions were combined in large and 
impressive ensembles in order to glorify the founder's memory 
through architecture. The complexes were pro-
minently sited on increasingly small and irregular plots 
along the main streets of Mamluk cities, particularly Cairo,
Damascus, and Aleppo. Any space intended for prayer 
had to be oriented towards the qibla, and patrons required 
that such elements as tombs, minarets, and portals be 
displayed on the street façade, which was usually at some 
vantage to the direction of Mecca. Three of these conflicting 
constrains of irregular sites, internal orientation, and desire 
for exterization led to the creation of an astonishing range 
of ingenious plans, one of the most characteristic features of 
Mamluk architecture. Familiar types of buildings and forms 
were combined behind ashlar-clap rubble walls in novel 
ways which give Cairo and other Mamluk cities their distinctive 
urban aspects. The preeminence of Cairo made it 
the most important locus of Mamluk patronage, but distinct 
regional styles were developed in other cities where lesser 
Mamluk amirs were assigned.

The first Mamluk sultan, Baybars al-Bunduqdar (r. 1260– 
77), repaired a great many fortresses in Palestine and Syria, 
but only a handful of the many buildings he commissioned in 
Egypt has survived. The largest is his congregational mosque in Cairo, which is located north of the Fatimid city 
in the new suburb of al-Husayniyya [93]. The building measures some one hundred meters square internally; three 
sharply projecting, monumental entrances in the middle of the 
north-east, north-west, and south-west walls give access to 
the interior, an open courtyard some sixty by seventy-five meters 
surrounded by covered arcades. The two arcades on the 
sides are three bays deep, that in the direction of the 
qibla is six bays deep, and that opposite is only two bays 
deep. Although much of the exterior remains in reasonably 
good condition, the interior is largely destroyed and only 
fragments of its stucco decoration remain. In most respects, 
the general plan, proportions, projecting portals, corner bas-
tions, and support systems — the mosque repeats the Mosque 
of al-Hākim, built some two hundred and fifty years before. 
The Mamluk mosque differs, however, in three significant 
ways: the single minaret that originally stood over the main 
portal opposite the mihrab, the enormous dome covering the 
nine bays in front of the mihrab, and the axial bays leading 
from the three monumental entrances to the court. The 
arrangement of a single minaret opposite the mihrab hark-
ened back to the great Abbasid mosques of the ninth cen-
tury, most notably that of Ahmad ibn Tulun, also in Cairo. 
The huge dome (diameter 15.5 meters), built of wood taken 
from the Crusader fortress at Jaffa, is the first example of a 
monumental dome in a Cairene mosque. Slightly larger than 
the largest dome then existing in Cairo, that over the tomb 
of the noted jurist corrupt Imam al-Shafi’i (d. 820), it signaled 
both Baybars’ affiliation with the rival Hanafi sect and his 
victory over the Crusaders. The dome and the emphasis 
on cross-axisity were a local interpretation of the type of 
mosque fashionable in the Islamic east at that time, which 
had four iwans arranged around the court and a dome over 
the bays in front of the mihrab (see Chapter 2). This type of 
plan was probably brought to Cairo by Iranian immigrants 
who settled in the region.

This freestanding congregational mosque is something of 
an anomaly in Mamluk architecture, for most other Mamluk 
buildings were multi-purpose structures wedged into the 
dense urban fabric. Baybars himself erected a madrasa 
largely destroyed on an irregular site facing the qasba, 
the main street of the former Fatimid city. Once occupied 
by two halls of the great Fatimid palace, the site was adjacent 
to the madrasa and tomb of the Ayyubid sultan Salih Najim al-
Din, Baybars’ former master. By following the example of 
the building next door, Baybars linked himself with the 
previous regime and established a precedent that would be 
followed throughout the Mamluk period. Choice sites along 
the qasba were snatched up by the most powerful indi-
viduals, usually sultans, for pious foundations to perpetuate 
their names. Baybars may have also intended to be buried 
in a tomb to be erected beside his madrasa, but he died sud-
denly in Damascus and was buried there. Of this building, 
all that survives is the portal with a marmara hood, and the 
square tomb chamber (nine by nine meters) immediately to 
its right was erected between 1277 and 1281 by Ibrahim ibn 
Ghanim al-muhambidi (the engineer). The decoration of the 
tomb [94] is particularly fine, with a marble dado sur-

93. Cairo, Mosque of Baybars al-Bunduqdar, 1266–69, axonometric view.
mounted by an unusual frieze of glass mosaic. The frieze, depicting architectural vignettes and acanthus scrolls framed by trees, imitates the splendid eighth-century mosaics of the nearby Great Mosque, although the Mamlik mosaics are coarser and bolder in execution. Both the marble dadoes and, to a much lesser degree, the glass mosaics are features that would be continued in the decorative repertory of Mamlik builders in Cairo.

Baybars' eventual successor Qalun, also one of Salih's former mamliks, incorporated his own tomb within his complex located on the west side of the qa'aba opposite the madrasa of his former master (95, 96). The west side of the street may have been favored because the mihrab wall coincided with the street façade; windows flanking the mihrab could have been opened to let passers-by hear recitations and prayers from within. The imposing scale and lavish decoration of this building, which combines a madrasa and a mausoleum with a hospital, is the earliest example of the new Mamlik style of architecture to survive in something like its original state. Having once been treated by drugs supplied by the hospital of Nur al-Din in Damascus, Qalun had vowed to build a similar institution in Cairo should he ever come to the throne. In December 1283 he used monies from his private purse to buy the land and buildings from the occupants of the site, once part of the western, or smaller, Fatimid palace. The site is shaped like a great L, measuring roughly one hundred meters in each direction. The building was completed by July—August 1285, an unusually short time; after preparation of the site, the hospital was completed in five months, the mausoleum in four, and the madrasa in another four. Although little remains of the hospital, which continued to operate until the mid-nineteenth century, its plan was recorded in the early twentieth century, when much more of it still stood. The hospital occupied the base of the L; its major feature was a court with iwans in the centers of each of the four sides. On the east and west were deep iwans with fountains (shadwan) at their ends, and on the north was a T-shaped iwan with a triple-arched façade; the largest iwan lay on the south. In the corners between the iwans were wards for the sick and convalescent, storerooms, latrines, and mortuaries, with separate quarters for men and women. Fragments of carved stucco decoration around the windows and exquisite marble mosaic from the fountain show that no expense was spared in the building.

To the east of the hospital (at the top of the L) lie the mausoleum and the madrasa, which face each other across a great corridor leading from the street to all three buildings. The long street façade (87 meters [97]) is divided by the entrance to the great corridor. To its left the exterior wall of the madrasa projects 10.15 meters into the street; to its right the exterior wall of the mausoleum is extended across the base of the minaret, a tower of three receding stories. The lower two are cubic and of fine masonry; the cylindrical upper story of brick was added by Qalun's son al-Nasir after the earthquake of July 1303. The façade, constructed
in fine ashlar, consists of blind, pointed-arched panels of varying sizes enclosing single windows and coupled windows surmounted by an oculus. Subtle variations distinguish the façade of the madrasa from that of the mausoleum, but the entire expanse is unified by crenellated cresting along the top and by a magnificent inscription band which runs at the level of the first story. The inscription, which was once gilded, prominently displays the names and lofty titles of the founder and the dates of the inauguration and completion of the work. The inscription band jumps over the tall and narrow entrance bay, which consists of two superposed horseshoe arches over the doorway itself. The upper arch is rounded, the first of its type in Egypt, while the lower arch is slightly pointed. The arch has jogged voussoirs of alternating black and buff; the spandrels above it are revetted with geometric knot-like motifs in the same colors of marble.

It encloses a coupled window and an oculus, whose iron grilles are Crusader spoils. The valves of the door are covered with bronze plates magnificently decorated with a geometric interlace pattern based on eight-pointed stars. They open onto a lofty corridor (four by ten by thirty-five meters) with a carved and painted wooden ceiling. The paneled recesses of the exterior façade are repeated along the walls of the corridor.

Since the tomb had to be sited behind the street façade, which also served as the qibla wall of the tomb, the architect was forced to place the main entrance to it on the opposite (west) side. The visitor thus passes along the corridor, turns right up three steps, and passes through a domed vestibule to enter an arched court. The center of the court is open to the sky, and medieval sources state that it contained a basin with a richly decorated fountain. On the east side of the court is the main entrance to the mausoleum, a (largely restored) grille of turned wooden spandrel (mashrabiyas) surmounted by one of the finest stucco ensembles surviving in Egypt [99]. Its composition incorporates many of the elements of the façade, such as coupled windows surmounted by an oculus and interlacing based on star patterns. Other elements, such as the lobed cartouches enclosing arabesque motifs, are logical developments of earlier work, for example the fragmentary stuccoes of the Mosque of Baybars. The interior of the tomb [98] consists of a great rectangle (21 by 23 meters) in the midst of which four piers and four columns are arranged to form an octagon and support a high drum surmounted by a dome. A mashrabiyya grille connecting the four piers encloses the sultan’s tomb. The grille was donated by Qala’un’s son Muhammad in 1303–4. The rich interior decoration includes marble mosaic and carved stucco on the walls, painted and gilded wooden coffers on the ceilings, opus sectile on the floors, and glass mosaic in the mihrab. [99]
The madrasa, which is poorly preserved, lies opposite the tomb; entrances opposite those to the tomb lead from the great corridor to a rectangular court (20.5 by 16.78 meters). On the east, a triple-arched façade screens the prayer hall, divided into three aisles by two arcades of four arches each. On the opposite side is a deep iwan which has also lost its original ceiling; the exigencies of the site left space for only the shallowest of recesses on the south. The surviving decoration in the prayer hall is simpler than that of the mausoleum, but the wall over the mihrab is encrusted with stucco finely carved with strapwork and arabesques.

The ensemble is one of the finest and most complex erected under the Mamluks. The speed with which it was constructed necessitated the assembly of a large corps of workmen. Although some of the features, such as the panelled façade, derive from a long tradition of architecture in Cairo, many others are more typical of Syria. Planimetric and decorative features are paralleled in the earlier monuments of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo. The plan and elevation of the mausoleum, for example, are loose quotations from the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and the plan of the hospital is indebted to that of Nur al-Din in Damascus. The arcading in the mihrabs, the marble mosaic, the glass mosaic, the marble knotwork on the façade, and the square Kufic inscriptions on the interior of the mausoleum are all typical of the Syrian tradition. It was once believed that the Mongol destruction of Syria sent craftsmen scurrying to safety in Cairo, but it now seems more likely that the Mamluk campaigns in Syria and south-eastern Anatolia familiarized Mamluk patrons with the rich architectural heritage of the region, and their wealth and power enabled them to attract to Cairo the finest craftsmen available.

In the two decades following Qala'un's death on 10 November 1290, the Mamluk amirs fought viciously for power, while rival factions installed the sons of Qala'un on the throne. Al-Ashraf Khalil (r. 1290–94) was murdered and succeeded by Qala'un's last surviving son, the eight-year-old Muhammad, who took the name al-Nasir. In the following year Khusugta (r. 1295–7), a Mongol who had been Qala'un's mamluk, usurped the throne from al-Nasir Muhammad and ordered that the bath to the north of Qala'un's tomb be replaced with a madrasa and mausoleum for himself. Work was begun, foundations were laid, and the building rose to the level of the inscription band on the façade when the sultan was removed from power by another claimant. When al-Nasir Muhammad returned to the throne in 1299, he ordered that the madrasa be completed in his own name, and it was finished five years later. He buried his mother and son in the mausoleum and intended to be buried there as well, although he was actually interred in his father's mausoleum next door. The plot is a rectangle some thirty-one by fifty-three meters, but the madrasa is inscribed in it at an angle so as to be correctly oriented toward the qibla. Like the complex next door, this complex has a central corridor leading to the madrasa on the south and the tomb on the north. Although the tomb is far smaller and the complex much less ambitious than that of Qala'un, the madrasa is approximately the same size as the one next door. It has four iwans arranged around an open court and is the first example of a cruciform madrasa intended for teaching the four orthodox schools of law. The interior is largely ruined except for some marvelous stucco work over the mihrab [150]. The high relief, particularly in the arches over the mihrab, the multiple levels of arabesque, and the techniques of punching and stamping clearly belong to the Iranian tradition of stucco carving that culminated in the mihrah al-Ishāyū added to the Friday mosque in Isfahan in 1310 [13].

The exterior of the complex of al-Nasir Muhammad preserves more of its original aspect: the Gothic portal of white marble inserted in the middle of the façade [101] had been removed from a Crusader church at Acre, transported by sea to Cairo, and eventually installed. Above the portal rises the minaret, whose square lower shaft of brick is decorated with superb stucco ornament much like that at the top of Qala'un's minaret next door. Some features, such as the keel-shaped blind arches with ribbed hoods, clearly belong to the local tradition, while others, such as the arcade of coved blind arches on paired colonnettes, the intricate geometric patterns within them, and the interlaced arches at the top of Qala'un's minaret, resemble contemporary work in North Africa (see Chapter 9). The successes of the Christian reconquest of Spain meant that craftsmen from the Islamic west were also available for work in the Mamluk capital.
Other powerful mamaliks also ordered funerary complexes in Cairo, but these patrons were not able to secure the prime sites along the quays available to those at the pinnacle of power. The amirs Salar (d. 1310) and Sanjar al-Jawli (d. 1344–53), for example, obtained a site for their funerary complex adjacent to Salar’s palace near the Mosques of Ibn Tulun on an outcropping of the Musqatim hills. The two amirs had undoubtedly met while in the service of Qala’un and his sons. Despite their different backgrounds, many mamaliks who served the same masters developed strong bonds of loyalty (Arab. khaṣṣā, ḥiṣā), which often explain actions in these turbulent and bloody decades, although this spirit of unity was often honored more in the breach than in reality. In 1299, at the beginning of al-Nasir Muhammad’s second reign as puppet of the powerful amirs, Salar was vice-regent of Egypt, sharing power with Baybars al-Jashangir, and Sanjar was major-domo (wālī) for al-Nasir Muhammad. Salar built the complex in 1301 at the height of his power, but when al-Nasir Muhammad returned to the throne for his third reign in 1310, Salar was sent to prison, where he died of starvation. Sanjar, however, became governor of Palestine and a major patron of architecture there, until he fell out of favor in 1320 and was imprisoned, dying in 1344–5. The historian al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) credits Sanjar with the foundation of the building, although at the time the complex was built Salar was more important and was accorded a bigger and more lavishly decorated tomb.

While the complexes of Qala’un and Kābiğha of al-Nasir Muhammad are regular buildings wedged into irregular but flat plots within the already dense urban fabric, the complex for Salar and Sanjar had to overcome the steep terrain of the site [102]. By ingeniously terracing the complex on several levels, the designer turned the problematic site into an advantage. A flight of steps leads from the street to an elevated portal, to the right of which stands a minare of three stories separated by muqarnas cornices. The first is a tall square shaft of stone decorated on the south and west with mock balconies supported on muqarnas corbels and surmounted by horseshoe arches with cushion voussoirs. The upper shaft is of brick; the octagonal second story has eight keel-shaped arches with fluted hoods, and the cylindrical third story is crowned with a fluted dome. The harmonious composition of the façade [103] masks the complexity of the interior. From the portal one passes into a cruciform vestibule and ascends an internal staircase to a small domed vestibule at the center of the complex. A short cross-vaulted passage on the left leads to an interior court (now roofed over) with two stories of arcades and small chambers; on its east is a slightly raised large room with a tunnel-vaulted iwan lit by a window overlooking the portal. The court was also accessible from the street above via a stair and bent corridor. The portal there is crowned with an elaborate muqarnas hood and may have marked the entrance from Salar’s palace. The domed vestibule at the center of the complex also gives access to a long cross-vaulted corridor leading to a small mausoleum (diameter 4.93 meters) containing a raised cenotaph and covered with a stone dome, the first of its kind in Cairo. On the left of the corridor, three arched openings into a courtyard are screened with exquisite pierced and carved stone grilles. On the right of the corridor lie the mausoleums of the founders: the first, which is slightly larger (diameter 7.06 meters), bears an inscription to Salar. It has carved wooden door and cenotaph panels, muqarnas squinches, and fine marble paneling on the qibla wall. The second mausoleum (diameter 6.47 meters) is inscribed to Sanjar; its decoration is simpler. Both tombs are crowned with fluted brick domes covered with stucco.

The foundation inscription only identifies the building as a “place” (Arab. madrīs), and the function of the rooms to the left of the vestibule is unclear. Unlike other major complexes of the time, only the tombs are oriented to the qibla; the rooms to the left of the vestibule are at a 45° angle to it, an extremely unusual arrangement which necessitated the addition of ungraceful minbars. Given the ingenuity of these architects in dealing with the site, it is hard to explain why this is so. Al-Maqrizi, writing more than a century later, identifies the complex as a madrasa for Shafi’is and a hospice for Sufis (Arab. khanaqa). Some scholars have designated the interior court as the center of the hospice and the large room as the madrasa, with an iwan for teaching and possibly another iwan opposite for prayer.

Contemporary khanaquis commissioned by high-ranking mamalik amirs and sultans, however, are significantly larger. The institution of the khanaqa had been introduced into Egypt by Salih al-Dīn in 1272, and under the Mamalik Sufism was integrated into Egyptian society. Salar’s colleague Baybars al-Jashangir, while still an amir, began a khanaqa, tomb, and residence on the site of the former.