

# **A Study of Three Unpublished Mausoleum Domes in Mit Ghamr City (Dakahlia Governorate)**

**“An architectural archeological study”**

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## **Abstract:**

This study examines the architectural archaeological analysis of three remaining mausoleum domes in MitGhamr City, which are the Domes of SidiKhalaf, al-Arbacen and al-Wa'ez. The importance of this study lies in shedding light on these domes, revealing their architectural and decorative elements.

This study is also an attempt to date these domes based on the oldest references to them in the documents so far and on a translation found for one of the owners of these mausoleum domes. This is in addition to tracing the different architectural elements of these three domes, in assimilation with other domes, whether in Cairo or the Delta cities, in different eras, in order to arrive at the accurate date of establishment of these domes.

The study tackles the architectural analysis of the different architectural elements of the three mausoleum domes to proceed with the architectural development of the domes of the Delta cities in general.

## **Keywords:**

Shrine – mausoleum – dome – Cairo – Mit Ghamr – Delta cities

## **Introduction:**

The burial facilities have been given several names, the most important of which are the dome, the grave, the mausoleum, the tomb and the shrine. Although they all refer to the cemetery in general, there are slight differences between them based on the purpose for which the dome was used: At the beginning, the dome was built to distinguish some sites that represent a sublime state for the souls of Muslims, such as the Rock of Jerusalem (Qibbat al-Sakhra), from which, as mentioned, the Prophet (peace be upon him) ascended to heaven on the night of Isra and Mi'raj. Accordingly, Caliph Abd al-Malik bin Marwan built the great dome known as the Dome of the Rock (Qibbat al-Sakhra) in 72 AH / 691 AD, which is considered one of the oldest existing Islamic domes. As a matter of fact, the establishment of domes evolved from being for the purpose of honoring holy sites to honoring graves that contain the remains of prominent religious and political figures, such as the Burmese Dome (Qibbat al-Barmakiyya), which was commissioned by Caliph al-Rasheed to Umm al-Fadl bin Yahya bin Khalid bin Barmak, whom he loved and honored. After her death on the way to Hajj, al-Rasheed ordered her burial and bought her ten pods of a garden at Wadi al-Qanater on

the Euphrates shore, where she was buried and upon which the Burmese Dome (Qibbat al-Barmakiyya) was built. Likewise, was the Crusader Dome (al-Qibba al-Salibiyya) established by the mother of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muntasir in Samarra City, Iraq, to bury her son after his death in Rabi 'al-Akhir 248 AH / June 862 AD and more. The construction of domes over most of the graves in Egypt has also become common, so that the grave and the dome over it have been collectively given the term dome (qibba), referring to the whole by part. These domes are also known as mausoleum domes (qibab darihiyya) by many scholars, while some others, headed by Dr. Muhammad Hamzah al-Haddad, prefer to use the term grave dome (qibbat madfan) because the grave is not a mausoleum unless it is split in the middle.

The term mausoleum (dareeh) is given to the whole dome, as it is to the split in the middle of the grave, as previously mentioned, and it is mentioned that the mausoleum is a grave without a sepulcher. It was called a mausoleum because it split the ground or because it was cut from the sides of the grave and became in the middle. The mausoleum and the shrine are two terms given to the graves of the clergy, including the righteous, sheikhs and the Prophet's household in the Ottoman era, which is a continuation of the same concept of the Mameluke era.

### **Aim of the research:**

This study examines the architectural archaeological analysis of three remaining mausoleum domes in Mit Ghamr City, which are the Domes of Sidi Khalaf, al-Arbæen and al-Wa'ez. The importance of this study lies in shedding light on these domes, revealing their architectural and decorative elements.

This study is also an attempt to date these domes based on the oldest references for them in the documents so far and on a translation found for one of the owners of these mausoleum domes. This is in addition to tracing the different architectural elements of these three domes, in assimilation with other domes, whether in Cairo or the Delta cities, in different eras, in order to arrive at the accurate date of establishment of these domes.

The study tackles the architectural analysis of the different architectural elements of the three mausoleum domes to proceed with the architectural development of the domes of the Delta cities in general.

### **Methodology:**

It is mainly a documentary analytical archeological study.

It is worth noting that despite the archaeological importance of these domes, they are not registered in the census of Islamic and Coptic antiquities. The lack of registration had a great impact on the infringement of these domes by the people, as well as the residential encroachment that surrounded al-Arbæen and al-Wa'ez Domes, which naturally led to concealing many of their architectural details. This represented a difficulty in studying these mausoleum domes and in taking their pictures with the required accuracy, for it was often swiftly done. Therefore, the study recommended the necessity of registering these domes due to their architectural and decorative importance, and for their distinctiveness in having some important architectural elements that assist in tracing the historical graph of the development of mausoleum domes in Egypt during the different Islamic eras.

### Major Findings and Recommendations:

- The research dealt with the publication and study of three domes in Mit Ghamr City, which have not been previously studied, but were even considered among the effaced domes by one of the researchers. They were reached through research and field visits, examining them and their alterations.
- Rereading the document of al-Ghamry endowment which is preserved in the Ministry of Endowments and republishing the section on the three domes, being the oldest document in which they were mentioned.
- The study is publishing two documents for Sidi Khalaf and al-Arbaeen Domes for the first time.
- This study is considered to be a continuation of a number of studies that tackled mausoleum domes in the Delta cities, through which it is possible to identify and proceed with the general architectural development of mausoleum domes in the Delta cities in general.
- Bricks are the main building material for the three domes under study, and this is due to their availability in the Delta cities in general.
- The study proved through the endowment document dated 905 AH / 1500 AD, and through the comparison between the architectural units and elements of Sidi Khalaf Dome and other Mameluke domes, whether in the mausoleum domes in Cairo or in the Delta cities in general, that they date back to before 905 AH / 1500 AD.
- Sidi Khalaf Dome in Mit Ghamr City (Dakahlia Governorate) is distinct by the presence of a row of folios in the form of a triple leaf adorning the octagon of the dome, which was previously seen in Imam al-Shafi'i Dome, even though in the latter the octagon falls back inside by three quarters of a meter. The study revealed another example in Wahib al-Ansari Dome (Faraskour, Damietta Governorate – 13<sup>th</sup> AH / 19<sup>th</sup> AD century), with different forms of folios.
- The study identified the presence of the refracted al-Arbaeen Dome cupola, following the style of Ayyub mausoleum domes, and also indicated its presence in the Ottoman mausoleum domes in Cairo, such as Altai Burmak Dome (1033 AH / 1623 AD) and Sheikh Yunus Dome in Mansoura City - Daqahlia Governorate (before 1058 AH / 1649 AD).
- The interior of al-Arbaeen Dome is characterized by being octagonal, similar to Fatima Khatun Dome (Umm al-Saleh 682-683AH / 1283-1284 AD), followed by Sidi Khattab Dome (Miniyat al-Ashraf - 1308 AH / 1890 AD).
- The study revealed that the mausoleum domes in the Delta cities in general are distinguished by having semicircle shaped bends in the transition area, with variation and difference in the arches of the semicircle. This was found in many mausoleum domes of the Delta cities in contrast with those in Cairo, where it was found in a small number of domes, especially those attributed to the Ottoman era, such as Yusuf al-Farghal Dome (Badr al-Din al-Wanae Street near Sayyida Aisha Square - 1109 AH / 1697 AD) and the transition area in Sheikh Muhammad al-Kahki Dome (in the north-eastern part of Salah al-Din al-Ayyub Citadel - 10 AH / 16 AD).
- The study identified a new type of external dome cupola decoration, which is the disconnected ribbing that did not appear in Egypt before the 13<sup>th</sup> AH / 19<sup>th</sup> AD century, and was accordingly attributed to Muhammad al-Wa'ez Dome.

- The study proved that Muhammad al-Wa'ez Dome dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> AH / 19<sup>th</sup> AD century.
- Some mausoleum domes in the Delta cities are generally characterized by the presence of a pentagonal crescent above the series of domes, unlike those in Cairo, where it was rarely found on top of the domes.
- In view of the apparent encroachments on the three domes through the figures annexed to the study, especially Muhammad al-Wa'ez Dome, it is highly recommended to register the three domes in the census of Islamic and Coptic antiquities for their archaeological and historical significance.

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