



## A COMPLETE READING FOR THE FOUNDATION INSCRIPTION OF AL-MADĀRES AL-ŞĀLEḤIYĀ AND ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME

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### ABSTRACT

This paper deals for the first time with the main foundation inscription on the western façade of Al-Madāres Al-ŞāleḤiyā (641 AH / 1243 AD); through a complete and correct reading, which modifies the preceding readings and translation. This paper will also explain the importance of this translation for archaeological studies in the field of Islamic architecture and particularly the “Al- Madāres Al-ŞāleḤiyā”. Through studying the complete reading of the foundation text of “Al- Madāres Al-ŞāleḤiyā”, it’s clear that there was another element established with the “Madāres” (Schools); this element had been known as “Iwān El -Ser”. This text holds vital information derived for the first time, from the foundation text on Islamic Architecture. This paper also intends to explain the functional and administrative dimensions of the “Madāres” (Schools) into a new context and place it among the most important architectural complexes in terms of Islamic architecture in Egypt. The Authors have applied a critique of Van Berchem's reading and corrected it through comparison to this new reading as a new perspective for the architectural context of this complex. The paper also dealt with a second foundation text on the panel above the entrance and compared it with the first reading by Van Berchem, then presented the new complete and correct reading for practical use within a field context and explained that by illustrating the reading. The study concludes with the importance of this new reading for the field of archaeological studies of Islamic architecture, concentrating on the Ayyūbid period in particular.

### KEYWORDS

*Ayyūbid architecture; Madāres, Foundation Text, Architectural Complex, Iwān El- Ser; Façades.*

### الملخص

تعرض هذه الورقة بالنشر لأول مرة لنقش الإنشاء الرئيس على الواجهة الغربية للمدارس الصالحية (٦٤١هـ/١٢٤٣م) في إطار قراءة كاملة صحيحة تصحح ما سبق من قراءات وتكملة لهذه القراءات السابقة. كما تبين هذه الورقة أهمية هذه القراءة بالنسبة للدراسات الأثرية في العمارة الإسلامية بصفة عامة والمدارس الصالحية على وجه خاص. ويتضح من القراءة الكاملة لنقش الإنشاء الرئيس أنه أنشئ مع المدارس الصالحية إيوان للسرى. وهو أمر في غاية الأهمية في إطار البعدين الوظيفي والإداري لهذه المنشأة ويجعلها في عداد المجموعات المعمارية بل وأهمها من حيث الترتيب في العمارة الإسلامية بمصر. واتبع الباحثون في عرض هذه القراءة نقداً لقراءة فان برشم وتصحيحها، كما عرضت الورقة أيضاً لنص الإنشاء الثاني في اللوحة التي تعلو المدخل وعقدت مقارنة بينهما، ثم عرضت القراءة الكاملة الصحيحة في إطار ميداني ووضحت ذلك بتفريغ القراءة، ثم انتهت إلى إبراز أهمية هذه القراءة الجديدة للدراسات الأثرية المعمارية بصفة عامة والعمارة الأيوبية على وجه خاص.

### الكلمات الدالة

*العمارة الأيوبية؛ المدارس؛ نص الإنشاء؛ مجموعة معمارية؛ إيوان السرى؛ الواجهات.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Al- Madāres Al-Şālehiyā* (641 AH / 1243 AD) (Monument, No. 38) belonged to Sultān Al - Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb, who established them in (639-641 AH / 1241-1243 AD) Al -Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn son of Sultān Al- Kāmel Nāsser Al-Dīn Muḥammad son of the Sultān Al- 'Adel Saif Al-Dīn Abū Bakr son of Prince Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb son of Shādī (Ibn Taghrī Berdī). He took over the Sultanate in Egypt in (637 AH / 1239 AD). He is one of the most prominent Sultāns in the era of the Ayyūbid State (567 – 648 AH / 1171 – 1250 AD), and he ruled Egypt for nine years, seven months and twenty days, Ibn Taghrī Bardi believes that he was the greatest ruler among Sultāns and Kings of the Ayyūbid State (Ibn Taghrī Berdī).

Sultān Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb had a distinguished architectural vision and great interest in architecture; so he established a significant construction program, overseeing many himself as sources cited (Sayyid 2015). Among his great architectural projects was “*El- Roda*” Citadel, where he later transferred his throne. He accomplished his administrative architectural vision by adding “*Twān El -Ser*” as an extension to the Citadel, as will be detailed in this paper according to the new reading. In addition, his architectural projects were enlarged to incorporate some deluxe constructions, such as his grand palace between Al-Fustāt and Cairo (Sayyid 2015), was called “*El-Kapsh*”. He established many palaces all over Egypt (Ibn 'Abd Al- Zāhir 1417 H - 1996 AD) that illustrated his interest in construction.

Sultān Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb died from a protracted illness during the Seventh Crusade in El- Maṣūra on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Sha bān (647 Ah /1249 AD), he was 40 years old. His wife, Shajar El-Durr, immediately seized power while concealing the death of her husband so as not to distract the army during the battle against Louis IX State (Ibn Taghrī Berdī). Then, Shajar El-Durr constructed a burial dome, occupied the “*Qa'et Shīkh Al-Malekkiah*” of *Al-Madāres Al-Şālehiyā* Complex. She then took complete control and ruled the country for a while (Sayyid 2015). She dedicated the Sultān Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb's burial dome as a museum containing his equipment and possessions. She then prepared Qur'an readers in honour of his soul, as she mentioned in her own endowment document “*waqf*” (Ibn Taghrī Berdī).

*Al-Madāres Al-Şālehiyā* (641 AH/1243 AD) will be studied in this paper within the new complete reading for the foundation text, which is published for the first time here. Construction began in (639 AH/1241 AD) and the finished structure opened in (641 AH/1243 AD). However, the main western façade, the minaret, two *iwāns* situated in the northern partition and the burial dome of Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb are the only elements still standing within the whole complex of “*Al- Madāres Al-Şālehiyā*” which is in ruins.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a field study by reviewing the inscription on the main foundation text and illustrating the inscription to clarify the integrity of this complete reading. The study also followed the descriptive and historical approach in presenting the basis for this research, which presented and criticized the previous readings, then presented the new complete reading for the first time, proving the importance of this later reading for archaeological studies.

## AL- MADĀRES AL-ŞĀLEĤIYĀ

### THE INSCRIPTION AND THE ARCHITECTURE

*Al- Madāres Al-Şāleĥiyā* (641 AH / 1243 AD) were the first model of Egyptian “*Madāres*” (Schools), which teach the four doctrines in the same place. Therefore, the complex was called “*Madāres*”, following the culture of that period (Sayyid 2015). The inscription in the band on the main western façade states that the Sultān Al-Şāleĥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb had added “*Iwān El-Ser*” as an extension. This shows an unusual yet, important addition to the components of “*al-Madāres*”, which makes it the first architectural complex to precede the complex of Al-Manşūr Qalawūn (684 AH/ 1283 AD) (Monument No. 43). The latter is widely considered as one of the masterpieces of historic Mamlūk architecture in Islamic Cairo, noteworthy for the scale and the extent of the richness of its architecture as well as for the charitable works. The Qalawūn complex includes a hospital “*Bīmāristān*”, a madrasa and the mausoleum of the Sultān himself (Northrup 1998).

*Al- Madāres Al-Şāleĥiyā* (641 AH / 1243 AD) acted in a religious role, such as praying and teaching as a primary role in its “*Iwāns*” side by side with administrative and judicial functions in “*Iwān El -Ser*”, especially after the death of Sultān Al-Şāleĥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb. (647 AH/1249 AD) and the transferring of the throne back to the *Citadel of Al-Jabal*. However, “*Al- Madāres Al-Şāleĥiyā*” continued to act for judicial functions until the end of the Ottoman period (923–1183 AH/1517–1805 AD) while it was known as *Al- Şāleĥiyā Al-Najmeiā Court*. It kept the Friday sermon which was held during the Mamlūk Period (648–923 AH/1250–1517 AD) by Amir Jamāl Al-Dīn Aqūsh (730 AH / 1329 AD) and continued until the modern age known as the *Al-Şāleĥ Mosque* (Al-Maqrīzī 2003) (Ibn Taghrī Berdī (Jamāl Al-Dīn Abū Al-Maĥāsen Yūsuf son of Taghrī Berdī Al-Atābekī 1413 H / 1992 AD, 641) (Mubārak 1305 AH, 64) (Creswell 1952-1959, 95: 103) (Fīkry 1389 AH / 1969 AD, 60: 72, 77: 81) (Milād 2008, 77:88).

Inscriptions on archaeological materials, especially those on numismatics and foundation texts provide a context for historical knowledge. It also mirrors its era's economic, political, and religious characteristics (Ramadan and Ameen 2022). Foundation texts represent essential factors in studying the construction history and identifying its function through shedding light on the founder with his titles and functions. Also foundation text contain some architectural information on the monument from the architectural perspective, which is worth studying to understand the different components as well as the construction of the monument in order to understand each unit which made up each part of the complex of Al-Manşūr Qalawūn (684 AH/1283 AD), from the Mamlūk period. It also helped to explain the development of the “*Al-Madāres Al-Şāleĥiyā*” (641 AH / 1243 AD), which represents a turning point in the history of Islamic Architecture as the first model of the term “*Madāres*” which contained for the first time four “*Iwāns*” teaching four doctrines in the same place by dedicating one *Iwān* for each doctrine. The “*Madāres*” was built on the site where the Fatimid Eastern Palace once stood. Thus, an Ayyūbid architectural complex was built in the heart of Fatimid Cairo that offered the city a new architectural style. Much admired by the Mamlūks, the new design was imitated in the Mamlūk complexes that gradually extended along Al-Mu'izz Street, forming

the main artery, or *Qasba* of the City of Cairo. The primary purpose of these “*Madāres*” was to encourage students to delve deeply into the knowledge and the propagation of Islamic beliefs. They would also provide the propagation for the founder himself. The planning of “*Al- Madāres Al-Şālehiyā*” (641 AH/1243 AD) consisted of four *Iwāns* (Fig. 1, PL. 1) divided into two sections: each section consists of an open court between two *Iwāns*, this noticeable architectural development was completely different from previous models of “*Madāres*” in Islamic Egypt which were erected to teach one or two doctrines. The floor plan of the structure was then developed to take a cruciform plan during the Mamlūk Period as Al- Zāher Baibars (660 AH / 1262 AD), which contained one open court (*şahn*) flanked by four opposite “*Iwāns*”.

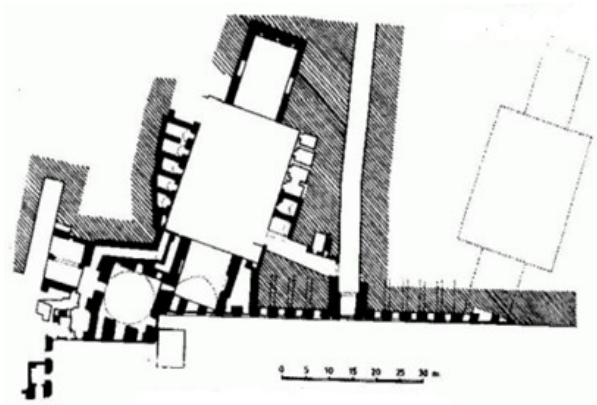


Fig. 1 (A) : Plan of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā  
After: K.A.C. Creswell

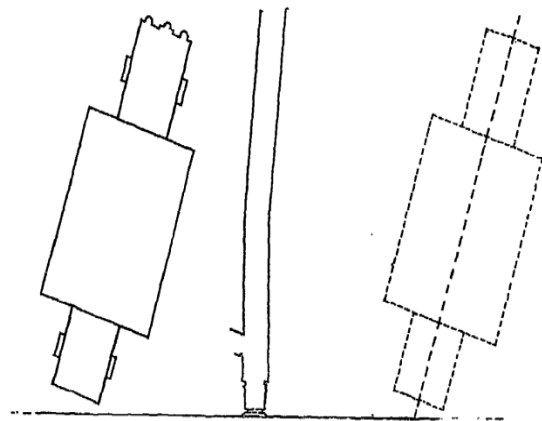


Fig. 1 (B) : Virtual Planning of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā. After: K.A.C. Creswell



Fig. 1 (C) : Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā and Mausoleum of Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūbī After: K.A.C. Creswell

Plate 1: Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā By: Authors Hence, the importance of “*Al- Madāres Al-Şālehiyā*”



(641 AH / 1243 AD) where planning became a clear and important, pivotal stage of *Madrasā* planning of Islamic architecture in Egypt, and the term “*Madāres*” was used in the foundation texts on the complex within the framework of the Ayyūbid period (567-648 AH / 1171-1250 AD). The culture is based on the establishment of the Sunni “*Madāres*” (schools) for each doctrine separately in the private “*Iwān*”. The idea had developed functionally, and “*Madāres*” (schools) were established to teach two doctrines and then developed further in the final stage to teach the four doctrines in one complex that included four “*Iwāns*”. Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb (637-647 AH/1239-1249 CE) was the first to do this, and that is why he named his establishment in foundation text “*Madāres*” the plural term from *Madrasa* given that it taught the four Sunni

doctrines, each of which was taught in an independent *Madrasa* before that.

This functional connotation associated with the culture of teaching in the Ayyūbid period (567-648 AH / 1171-1250 AD) is apparent in this context. This matter was clearly reflected in the use of the word “*Madāres*”, the plural, in foundation texts instead of using the word “*Madrasa*”, the singular one. This explanation is quite clear to anyone who knows the history of the functional development of “*Madāres*” in Ayyūbid period (567-648 AH / 1171-1250 AD). However, it seems that it didn’t reach the first pioneers who recorded the inscriptions, such as Van Berchem, who, despite the clarity of the word “*Madāres*” in inscription, he reads it as a “*Madrasā*” and sees that the artist/engraver had made a mistake when he executed the inscription (Berchem 1894–1903, 103, 106).

This comment reflects the absence of correct knowledge or comprehensive vision of the history of the development of the “*Madāres*”, its function and its role. The lack of understanding of the meaning of the word “*Madāres*” which had been mentioned earlier in the text within the framework of this culture, and the predominance of the use of the subsequent meaning of the word “*Madrasa*” that was used in the Mamlūk period (648 – 923 AH / 1250 – 1517 AD) after the popularity and spread of “*Madāres*” that teach the four doctrines in a one establishment as practiced in “*Al- Madāres Al-Şāleḥiyā*” (641 AH / 1243 AD).

In this context, it is clear that the use of the term with its specific connotations within the framework of the culture of a particular period and the functional and architectural stage which announced the date for its establishment is important in achieving the correct archaeological recordings for the studies and readings of the inscriptions on the antiquities correctly. Thereby avoiding any misreading and providing incorrect justifications that assume the artist/engraver is either wrong or not.

There are two inscriptions on “*Al- Madāres Al-Şālehiyā*” (641 AH / 1243 AD) façade that represent the foundation texts. One of them is extended across the main western façade as a band above the entrance lintel. The second one is located within the vertical panel on the base of the minaret, which is designed to maximize its visual influence.

This position for both the foundation texts on the main façade reflects the vision to insist on the message which both inscriptions displayed to the reader, over the ages. Here the alignment / arrangement of inscription sequence should be read from the lower level to the upper level, this shows the correlation between the inscription’s alignment / arrangement and its content.

The first lower inscription which extended in the shape of a horizontal band on the western (Fig. 2, PL. 2) main façade, is carved in the stone in Ayyūbid *thuluth*. It appeared in the order of its architectural arrangement which came before the second inscription in the upper section of the entrance which carries advertising message referring to “*Madāres*” only as a main component of the complex as will be explained.

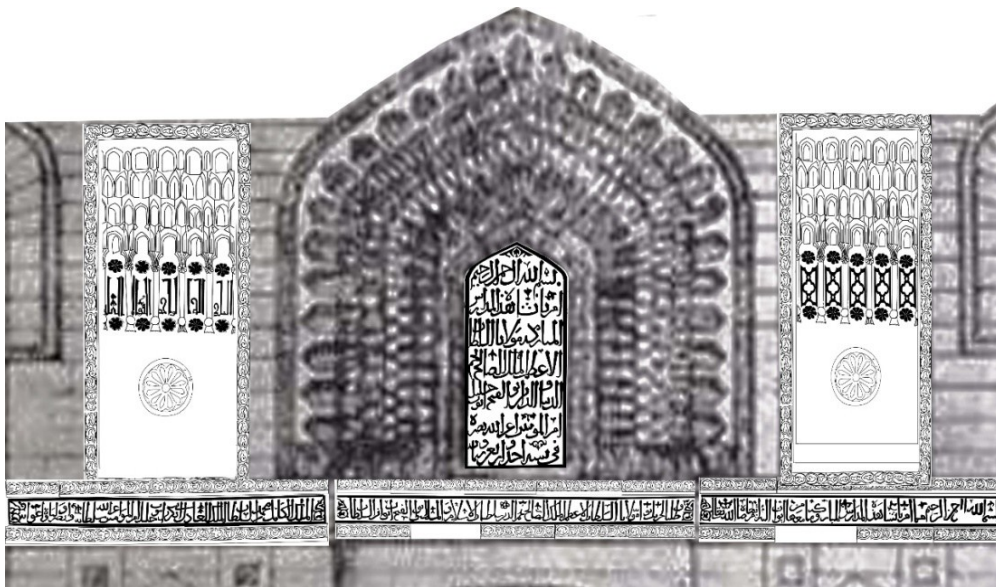


Fig. 2: Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā with two Foundation Texts By: Authors



Plate 2: Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā with two Foundation Texts  
After the K.A.C. Creswell Archive - Ashmolean Museum

Now it is necessary to review Van Berchem's reading which was depended on in all successive studies despite the mistakes and missing readings, and without going back to the original inscription in the field and reading directly from the monument. This research will then outline the new reading for the inscription in the framework of a review of the reading directly from standing in front of the inscription even if some of the words or letters had been damaged or abraded especially the part which was missed in Van Berchem's reading.

#### VAN BERCHEM'S READING:

"بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم [ ... قرابة مترين من الكتابة متآكلة ... ] الله تعالى وطلبًا لجزيل ثوابه مولانا السلطان الأعظم الملك الصالح نجم الدين سلطان الإسلام والمسلمين أبو الفتح أيوب بن السلطان الكامل محمد بن السلطان الملك العادل أبي بكر بن أيوب خليل أمير المؤمنين أعز الله سلطانه ونصر أوليائه وأعوانه". (Berchem 1894-1903, 103, 106)

*"Basmala, [ ... About two meters are abraded ... ] Allāh Ta'ālā Wa Talban Li Jazīl Thawābeh Mawlānā Al- Sultān Al- 'Aezam Al-Malek Al -Şāleḥ Najm Al - Dīn Sultān Al- 'Islām Wa Al-Muslimīn 'Abū Al-Faṭḥ ' Ayyūb Ibn Al - Sultān Al- Malek Al - Kāmel Muḥamad Ibn Al- Sultān Al - Malek Al- 'Adel 'Abī Bakr Ibn ' Ayyūb Khalīl 'Amīr Al- Mu'minīn 'A 'aza Allāh Sultānah Wa Nasr 'Awliā'ah Wa 'A wānah".*

Basmala, ... desiring God Most High's pleasure and seeking His abundant recompense, our lord, the great Sultān Al-Malek Al -Şāliḥ Najm Al-Dīn, Sultān of Islam and the Muslims, Abū 'Al-Faṭḥ Ayyūb son of Al- Sultān Al-Malek Al-Kāmel Muḥammad son of Al- Sultān Al-Malek Al 'Adel 'Abū Bakr son of Ayyūb, Companion of the Caliph, may God glorify his sultanate and grant victory to his followers and supporters.

It can be seen from this reading that he couldn't read the sentences between the words "*Al-Mubārakā*" and "*Ibtighā' Marḍāt Allāh*" and put dots between the terms to fill the space, the direct reason being that there are some unclear words although the words and letters were more readable then than now. Also, the pedigree of Al- Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn had been forgotten for no known reason or factor.

Unfortunately, successive studies depended completely on Van Berchem's reading and ignored the field reading without any serious trial to review the inscription directly from the monument and review Van Berchem in his reading to criticize his translation. In addition, these studies made mistakes when deleting the dots that marked the missing parts of the text, which were unreadable for Van Berchem. By recording the full reading without these dots mislead the reader in thinking that this reading by Van Berchem's is a complete reading of the inscription. The notable thing that Prof. O'Kane had corrected in Van Berchem's reading, but unfortunately he also could not decipher the missing part (O'Kane n.d.; Al-Maqrīzī 2003 ; Zakī, 2007, p. 50).

In the same context, Van Berchem had mentioned another reading after M. Mehren which recorded a different reading for one text only on a panel as following:

"بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم [...] أمر بإنشاء هذه المدرسة (Wrong Reading) المباركة مولانا السلطان الأعظم الملك الصالح نجم

الدين بن محمد بن أبي بكر بن أيوب في سنة إحدى وأربعين وستماية". (8, Mehren 1870, Berchem 1894-1903,

103, 106)

“*Bism Allāh Al Raḥman Al Raḥim Amr Bi 'Inshā' Hadhihi Al- Madrasā Al Mubāraka [...]' 'Ibtigha' Marḍāt Allāh Ta 'alā Wa Talban Lī Jazīl Thawābih Mawlāna Al- Sultān Al- A ḡam Al- Malek Al- Ṣāleḥ Najm Al- Dīn Sultān Al- Islām Wa Al- Muslimin 'Abū Al-Faṭḥ 'Ayyūb Khalīl 'Amīr Al- Mu'minīn 'A 'aza Allāh 'Anṣārah Wa Nasr 'Awliā'ah Wa 'A wānah*”.

Basmala, has ordered the construction of these blessed Madrasa ... Desiring God's most highpleasure and seeking his abundant recompense, our lord, the great *Sultān* Al-Malek Al-Ṣāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn, Sultān of Islam and the Muslims, Abū 'Al-Faṭḥ Ayyūb, Companion of the Caliph, may God glorify his sultanate and grant victory to his followers and supporters.

This wrong and incomplete reading for the first foundation text on the band of the main western façade was causing scholars to miss essential concepts or content which wasn't only limited to the term “*Madāres*”.

This research records a new and actual reading to explain the importance of purpose, which confirms the importance of this foundation text in a new and complete actual field reading.

### **A COMPLETE READING FOR THE FIRST FOUNDATION TEXT OF THE “AL- MADĀRES AL-ṢĀLEḤIYĀ”:**

”بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم أمر بإنشاء هذه المدارس المباركة وما معها من إيوان السر ابتغاء مرضات الله تعالى وطلبًا لجزيل ثوابه مولانا

السلطان الأعظم الملك الصالح نجم الدين سلطان الإسلام والمسلمين أبو الفتح أيوب ابن السلطان الملك الكامل محمد بن السلطان

الملك العادل أبو بكر أيوب خليل أمير المؤمنين أعز الله أنصاره ونصر أوليائه وأعوانه (Fig. No. 3)

“*Bism Allāh Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm 'Amar Bi Inshā' Hādhihi Al- Madāres Al- Mubāraka Wa Ma Ma 'ha Min Iwān El -Ser 'Ibtighā' Marḍāt Allāh Ta 'alā Wa ṭalbān Li Jazīl Thawābih Mawlāna Al-Sultān Al-Malek Al- Ṣāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Sultān Al Islām Wa Al- Muslimīn 'Abū Al-Faṭḥ 'Ayyūb Ibn Al- Sultān Al- Malek Al- Kāmel Muḥammad Ibn Al-Sultān Al-Malek Al- 'Adil 'Abū Bakr 'Ayūwb Khalīl 'Amīr Al- Mu'minīn 'A 'aza Allāh 'Anṣārah Wa Nasr 'Awliā'ahu Wa 'A wānahu*”.

Basmala has ordered the construction of these blessed “*Madāres*” together with their including the *Iwān El-Ser* desiring God most High's pleasure and seeking His abundant recompense, our lord, the great *Sultān* Al-Malek Al- Ṣāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn, Sultān of Islam and the Muslims, Abū 'Al-Faṭḥ Ayyūb son of Al- Sultān Al-Malek Al-Kāmel Muḥammad son of Al- Sultān Al-Malek Al- 'Adel Abū Bakr son of Ayyūb, Companion of the Caliph, may God



glorify his sultanate and grant victory to his followers and supporters.

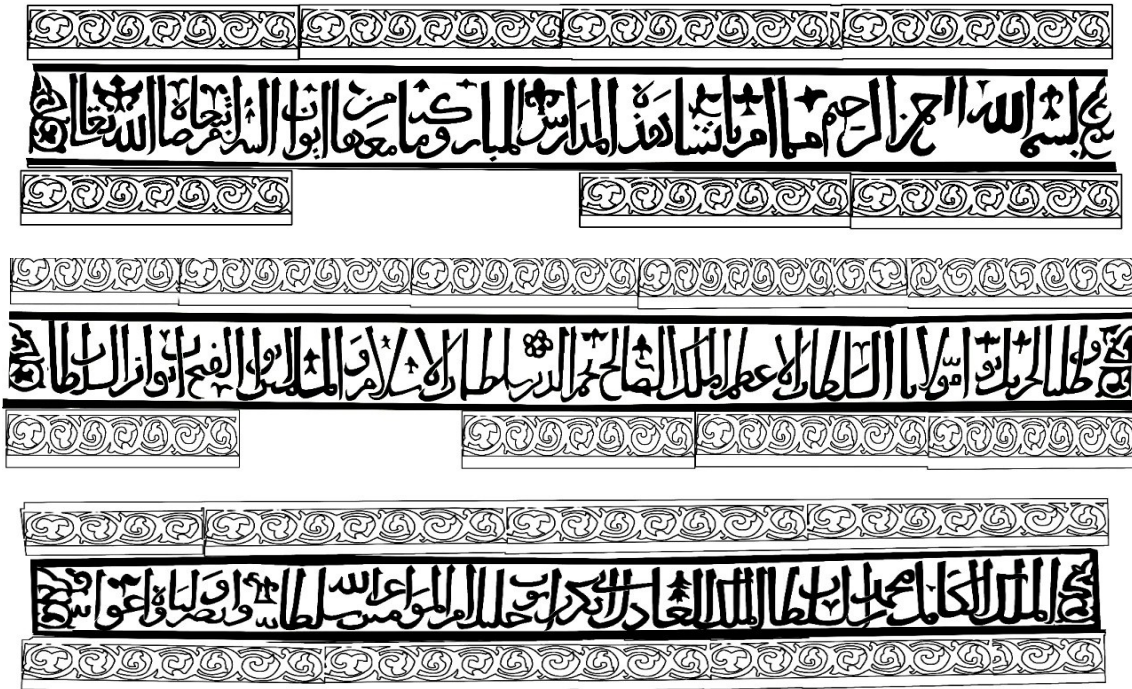


Fig. 3: First Foundation Text on Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā By: Authors



Plate 3: First Foundation Text on Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā By: Authors

This complete reading of the inscription is different in every aspect, even in the expressions and messages, than the second foundation text above the entrance, as mentioned. The second foundation text is in seven lines carved onto a marble panel above the main portal of *Al-Madāres Al-Şālehiyā* (641 AH / 1243 AD), the text is as follows:

- ١- بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 ٢- أمر بإنشاء هذه المدارس  
 ٣- المباركة مولانا السلطان  
 ٤- الأعظم الملك الصالح نجم  
 ٥- الدنيا والدين أبي الفتح أيوب خليل  
 ٦- أمير المؤمنين أعز الله نصره  
 ٧- في سنة إحدى وأربعين وستماية

(Fig No. 4 , Plate No. 2)

Transliteration	Translation
1. Basm Allāh Al - Raḥmān Al - Raḥīm /	Basmala
2. 'Amr Bi 'Inshā' Hadhihi Al -Madāres /	Has ordered the construction of these Blessed Madāres
3. Al -Mubāraka Mawlānā Al- Sultān /	Our lord Sultān
4. Al- A' zam Al- Şāleḥ Najm /	The greatest Sultān Al-Şāleḥ Najm
5. Al- Duniyā Wa Al-Dīn Abī 'Al-Faṭḥ Ayyūb Khalīl /	Al-Duniyā Wa Al-Dīn Abī 'Al-Faṭḥ Ayyūb Companion
6. 'Amīr Al- Mu'minīn 'A' za Allāh Anāsrāh/	Of the Caliph may God glorify his victory
7. Fī Sanat 'Iḥdā Wa 'Arba' ein Wa Sutomāya	In year six hundred and forty-one



Plate 4: Second Foundation Text on Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā.



Fig. 4: Second Foundation Text on Western Façade of Al- Madāres Al- Şālehiyā.

By: Authors

By: Authors

From the comparison, there are many differences:

1- It did not mention what was built with “*Madāres*”, even extensions or other architectural units which were referred to in clear words within the first and main inscription.

“وما معها من إيوان السر” « **together with their including the *Iwān El-Ser***» and this clarifies that the content of the second inscription refers only to “*Madāres*” regardless of any other annexes or architectural units in the complex which had been established by Sultān Al-Malek Al-Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn Ayyūb (637 - 647 AH / 1239- 1249 AD).

2- This inscription did not include Al- Şāleḥ Najm Al-Dīn’s pedigree as one of Ayyūbid Sultans.

3- The date (641 AH/1243 AD) had not been mentioned in the first Foundation Text, it may be this inscription had been finished before the finish date for the *Madāres*.

According to the above mentioned, it should explain the meaning of “*Iwān El-Ser*”, providing a clear definition and explaining its role.

### “*Iwān El- Ser*”

The term “*Iwān El-Ser*” is an administrative term that was mentioned here for the first time in the Arabic Monumental Foundation Text, as it was not mentioned in any historical sources before. “*Iwān El-Ser*” as a functional term consists of two parts; the first part is “*Iwān*”, which is known by its functional indication from the Fatimid Period (358 – 567 AH / 969 – 1171 AD) (Othman 2006, 116: 117). This is where the Fatimid Caliphs ruled from within the residence in Eastern Palace, and this tradition continued into the Ayyūbid Period (567–648AH/1171–1250 AD) when Sultān Al-Kāmel (635 AH/1238 AD) constructed an “*Iwān*” in the Citadel to be his seat instead of the Fatimid Ministry House in Cairo which was the throne residence until Sultān Al – Kāmel completed the Citadel (Metwally 2007, 28).

The term “*El-Ser*”, which adds to “*Iwān*”, clarifies the point of this architectural unit as a part of the complex. Available Arabic sources haven’t mentioned a specific definition or clear job description for the term “*El-Ser*” which means, “secret.” However, the research can explain the meaning of this term from the rank of “*Kāteb El Ser*” in the age of Prophet Muḥammad (Peace upon him). This job means secretary; who is responsible for the current every day correspondences to the ruler. The words “*Kāteb El-Ser*” referred to the critical task of this job which requires honesty, sincerity and complete confidentiality due to the political element of the position. A separate future paper will dedicated to identify the “*Iwān El-Ser*” and its role, architecture and function.

This profession of “*Kāteb El-Ser*” was equal to the rank of “*Saḥeb Dīwān Al- Inshā*” in

English means the owner of the Articulation Department. This profession was also developed during the Abbasid Period (132 – 923 AH / 749 – 1517 AD) and the Fatimid Period (358 – 567 AH / 969 – 1171 AD). It was known as “*Ṣāḥeb El- Dest El- Shārīf*” which means the owner of a high ranking seat, and in this period, the title of “*Kāteb El-Ser*” was established as a synonymous for this position and “*Kāteb El-Ser*” sometimes replaced the vizier.

In Ayyūbid Period (567 – 648 AH / 1171 – 1250 AD), the sources hadn't mentioned any clear information about “*Kāteb El- Ser*” or “*Dīwān Al-Inshā'*”. However, the historians have agreed that Fakhr Al-Dīn Ibn Loqmān was head of “*Dīwān Al- Inshā'*”, successor to Bahā' Al-Dīn Zohīr and he held the position until the reign of El- Maṣṣūr Qalwūn (689 AH / 1290 AD) (Darrāg, Marsūm Al- Sultān Qāyṭibay Al-Khāṣ Bi Kuttāb Al- Ser Wa Al -Qudāt Wa Al- Ṣāder Fī Shahr Shawāl 874 AH 1980, 275: 282) (Darrāg, Tarājīm Kuttāb Al-Ser Fī Al- 'asr Al-Mamlukī (648 - 329 AH) 1981, 315: 330).

According to the inscription on the western façade of *Al- Madāres Al-Ṣāleḥiyā* (641 AH / 1243 AD), the title of “*Iwān El-Ser*” appeared clearly to shed light on the formal functional term of this rank in Ayyūbid Period (567–648 AH/1171–1250 AD) as an equivalent for the “*Dīwān Al-Inshā'*” as mentioned before to be a common functional term, used later in the Mamlūk Period (648–923 AH/1250–1517 AD).

The first reference to the expression “*Iwān El-Ser*” according to the new reading of the main inscription of the “*Al- Madāres Al-Ṣāleḥiyā*” is the main finding of this study, in addition to the historical and archeological importance of this term.

## CONCLUSION AND RESULTS

The paper provides the first complete reading for the main inscription on the western façade of the “*Al- Madāres Al-Ṣāleḥiyā*” along with the reviewing of the previous readings. This inscription discusses new ideas to study “*Al- Madāres Al-Ṣāleḥiyā*” in a new context as an architectural complex with all the functional elements. In this regard, this study completes an important part in explaining Ayyūbid Architecture through a Religious & Administrative context. This reading has great value for archeological & historical studies as will be mentioned in next points:

- 1- The importance of this reading to the Corpus of Arabic Inscriptions, in which the expression of “*Iwān El-Ser*” recorded here being the first.
- 2- This inscription has its importance for studying the functional influence in “*Al-Madāres Al-Ṣāleḥiyā*” as a Complex.
- 3- This inscription helps in the reconstruction of an archeological development sequence for the concept of the architectural Complex The existence of the inscription gives an impression that it was carved after construction of the “*Madāres*” as a next extension; so the studying for the complex in this context gives another possibility as to how the complex was built through new analytical & architectural vision.

- 4- The Mention of “*Madāres*” in the second inscription and certain visual focus, confirms that the main purpose from the construction of this architectural complex was for teaching in “*Madāres*”. The fact that it was also confirmed in the second inscription when it mentioned that the main components was the “*Madāres*” which was added by “*Iwān El-Ser*” as an extension. This represented the overall effect of the first real coexistence of Ayyūbid Architecture with its urban context. This indication also refers to need to consider the context of multi foundation texts on the same monument which contain several elements and signs for other architectural extensions including the importance of foundation text position.

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