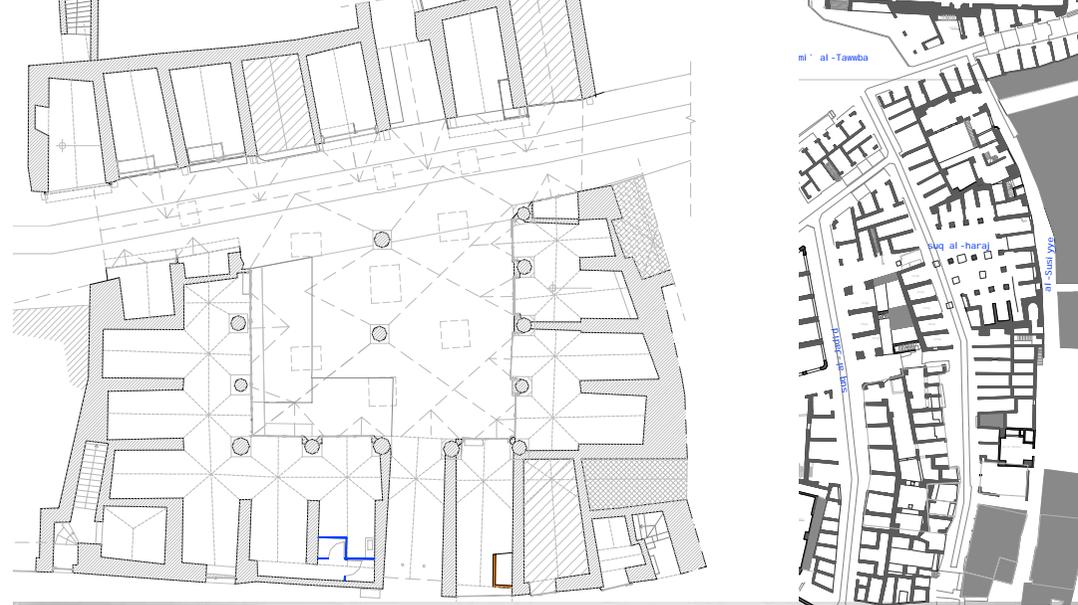


## THE SUQ HARAJ PROJECT

The Orient-Institute Beirut (OIB) of the "Stiftung Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland" ("Foundation German Humanities Institutes Abroad") is focussing on urban and social life in the Middle East during the Ottoman period. During the last years several international conferences were held and several books published. Two years ago, concentration shifted to Tripoli.

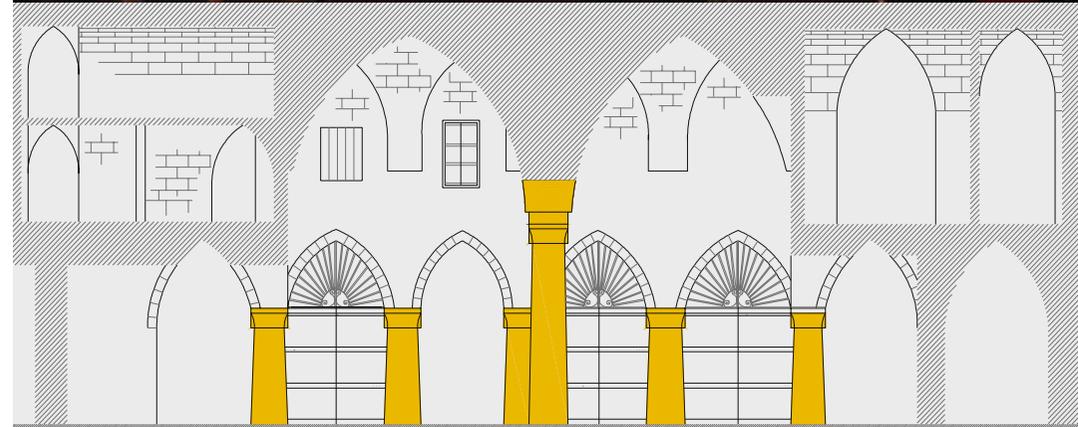
In addition to a research project on written and material sources on Mamluk and Ottoman Tripoli the Orient-Institute conceptualised and coordinated the restoration project of what might be the most important Mamluk (1289-1516) commercial building of the region: the Suq Haraj. The restoration is a Lebanese German co-operation, financed jointly by a generous donation of the German Foreign Office and the Lebanese Ministry of Culture. Also the Municipality of Tripoli contributed to the project.

The Orient-Institute Beirut pinpointed Suq Haraj as a place of core importance. First fundraising preparations took place in cooperation with Dr. Rawiya Majzoub head of the Institute of Restoration (Lebanese University), Juren Meister and Nabil Itani in Tripoli in 2002. This involved the German embassy and the DGA [Direction Générale des Antiquités / Ministry of Culture, here the director general Frédéric Husseini and Samar Karam] with Antoine Fichfich, who prepared the first cost accounting for the application.



## Suq Haraj

Suq Haraj is situated in the historical center of Tripoli, in the *Hadid* quarter, to the east of Suq al-Bazerkan, not far from Khan al-Askar and the Tawba-mosque. Suq Haraj is a market from the Mamluk period which was probably donated by the Amir Manjak. It has mercantile structures on the ground floor and living units on the upper floor. The western raw of shops might be of an older phase and integrated into the construction of Suq Haraj. The Suq Haraj area is entered via a north-south oriented passage and through an entrance to the east and to the west of which is the open hall of the structure. The building consists mainly of an irregularly cross vaulted hall supported by two central granite reused columns of 4m height and twelve other shorter ones. The shorter ones are distributed on the northern, eastern, and southern sides, where the hall is nearly rectangular. These columns open up on the ground floor into a cross vaulted gallery on the north, east, and south sides. This gives to the main hall a U-shaped structure, which to the west faces a linear street. The living units on the first floor are accessed from the Sussiyye street on the east side and from a passage to the Suq al-Jadid on the west side, and from an entrance on the southwest side. Suq al-Jadid was maybe linked during the building of Suq Haraj by transforming one shop of the western (older) side into a passage; hence, one could access the main hall of Suq Haraj from four sides. Parts of the first floor in the northern side of the building are divided by mezzanines which may have been an original part of the construction. The mezzanines may have been used as storage rooms, whereas the other full height spaces, as living units. The roofing system of the building is characterised by skylight openings that illuminate the main hall on the ground floor, as well as the living units on the first floor.



## The project

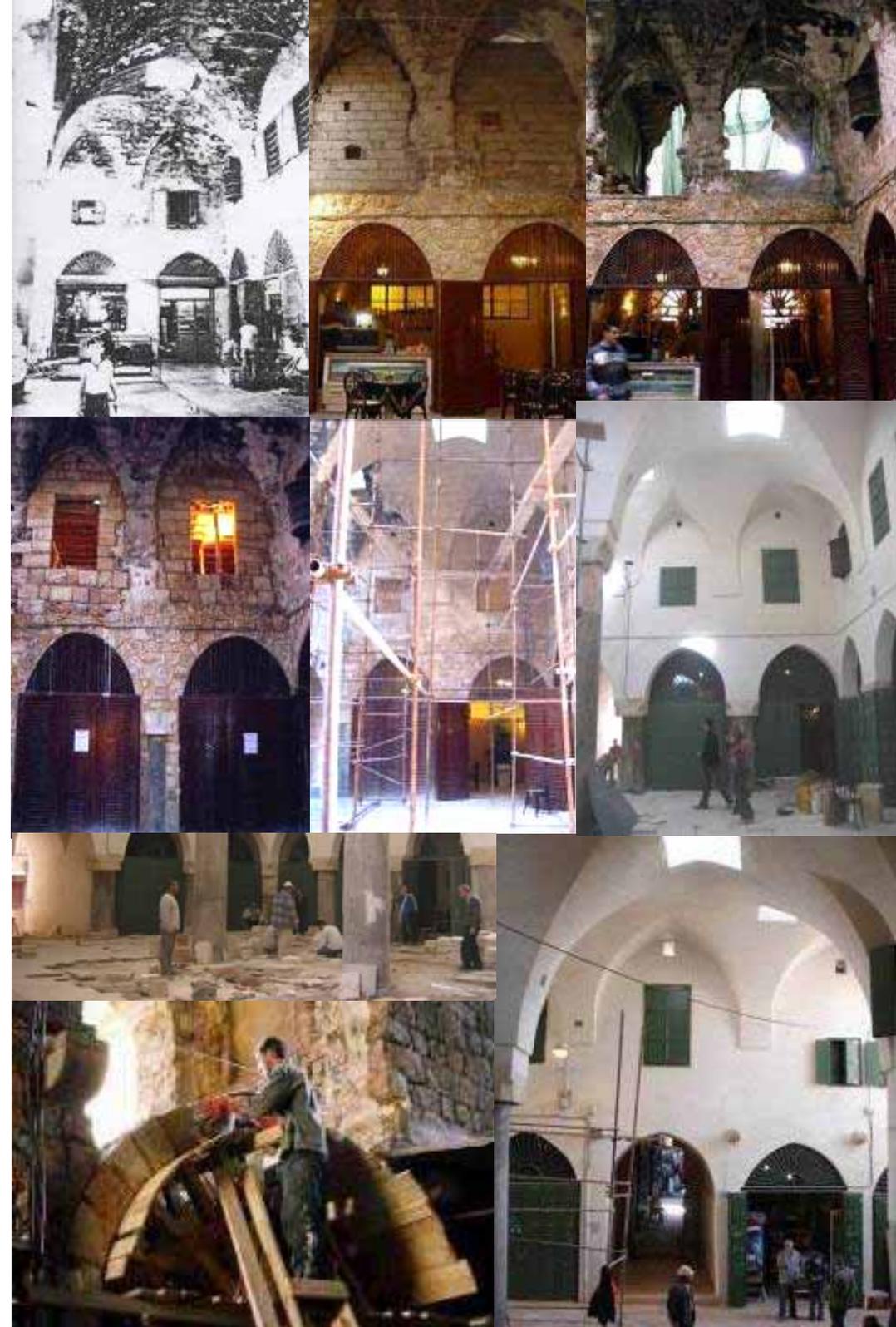
The survey and excavation of archaeologists have proved that the building is probably of Mamluk planning and construction. However the columns that carry the vaults and the arcades are reused antique material. Between two large columns in the center of the hall a fountain was placed which may date into the Mamluk period.

The construction work was divided into two phases. Phase one, from winter to spring 2003/04, was to safeguard the structure by dealing with the most important structural problems including the roofs, restoring damages caused by war which meant rebuilding the eastern section of the suq. This phase was finished in spring 2004 and inaugurated by the mayor of Tripoli and the German Ambassador.

Phase two, from winter to spring 2004/05, concentrated on the interior space of the Suq: up valuation of the façades of Suq Haraj, doors, windows, floors, ceilings and lighting, in addition to the necessary infrastructure works.

For the preparation of the project international experts in restoration and architecture were invited to participate in two workshops financed by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Orient-Institute and the Municipality of Tripoli. The workshops were designed for an international academic exchange and the training for Lebanese students and helped to develop the restoration concept. The detailed restoration plan was composed by two architect-restorers, Antoine Fishfish and Michel Daoud, who conducted an intensive survey of the building with their diagnosis to determine the task schedule on a scientific basis.

Prior to the execution of works, a complete archeological survey, using the most modern equipment was undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute



(Juren Meister, DAI) and OIB along with extensive photographic documentation. This was furthered by more works undertaken during the restoration by a DAI, DGA and OIB team that clarified the building's original layout, older then the structures and alternations made during the centuries.

To achieve best results for the project, a multi disciplinary team was gathered where international experts gave their assessment of the building and an extensive and detailed restoration plan was done entirely by the two architect-restorers Antoine Fishfish and Michel Daoud. This comprehensive and detailed study was evaluated by the DGA, by the municipality and by German experts. The outcome of the research of the building archaeology was integrated in the concept of restoration where five aspects were taken into consideration:

- (a) the original Mamluk building,
- (b) its history, alternations, reasons of neglect through different centuries,
- (c) the meaning of the building and its surrounding today, its future use and functional needs by today users,
- (d) the architectural safeguarding of the monument,
- (e) an architectural aesthetic treatment.

The outside eastern façade was totally rebuilt in traditional techniques. Concrete and modern blocks were dismantled and the entire façade and the vaulting above reconstructed. The barrel vaulted western access was reconstructed. The eastern elevation of the main hall was also reconstructed with the same traditional building material of the building in question (sandstone). Decayed stones were replaced with stones of the same characteristics in order to preserve the physical and architectural coherence of the building. Roofing of the building was restored by making it waterproof. The main hall was retiled using lime stone tiles that are similar to the original flooring of the Suq. The walls were



redone where lime plaster was only applied on the surfaces of the façades of the hall, and the eastern elevation (i.e. in the public spaces). In some locations, the original plaster which is in relatively good shape, was kept as evidence of the original situation. A small joint was added in-between the old and new lime-plaster to distinguish them. Other works concerned the infrastructure where water tanks and restrooms were added and connected to the cities main drainage system. Wooden work included the replacement of windows and doors that were constructed similarly to the old, yet protecting residents and shop owners by placing iron cores to the doors. Canopies and shamsiyyat (grills) were set as a modern interpretation of the 1900 situation of the spatial lay out, the proposed shamsiyyat are a simplified copy of the ones belonging to the 1900 period. The canopies were also simplified and built as a light wooden structure inspired by historical models and techniques, without copying details of canopies of one particular period.

Altogether the project of the Suq Haraj was a great success of interdisciplinary and international cooperation that aims at preserving a core part of the history of Tripoli.

This project was initiated and coordinated by Stefan Weber

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