

ABSTRACT

Title: ***The house of the family Qurashi and its equipment (19th – 1st half of 20th century, Old Qasr town in the Dakhla Oasis)***

My paper aims to present the domestic material culture of Old Qasr town in the Egyptian Dakhla Oasis, dated to the late Ottoman-modern period (19th – 1st half of 20th century).

The subject of my presentation is the house of the family Qurashi (Bayt al-Qurashi) and its equipment (related to the last phase of habitation of this house, before it has been abandoned). The building was made from the mud bricks (dried on the sun) as well as objects of daily life, which were largely manufactured from local raw materials, by local artisans.

Based on the results of the archaeological and architectural research, along with comparative ethnographic studies, I will explain the plan of this house and functions of its rooms. The spatial organisation of this house mirrors the gender segregation typical of the Muslim world. It is split into two parts: the part for male daily activities – open to male guests; and that for female activities – this was private and isolated (*harem*) belonging to women and children. Some of these rooms switched their functions depending on the seasons, e.g. the same room was used as a bedroom during the winter, and during the summer, when family slept on the roof terrace, it was used as a storeroom.

I will present the daily activities of inhabitants of this house, showing the objects of daily life and explaining their functions.

The collection of domestic objects of daily life, which constituted the equipment of this house, has a unique character. It is therefore not only very important from scientific point of view, but reflects the diversity, richness, and high level of the local craft.

The house of the family Qurashi was erected in 1773 (according to the information on the wooden lintel which originally hung above the door leading to this building) in the central part of Old Qasr town, in the Harat al-Shihabiyya quarter. This house was originally a four-storey building, including the ground floor and the roof terrace. Thanks to the result of the studies on the archaeological material, the latest documents discovered at the house (dated to 1937) and the memory of the eldest inhabitants of Old Qasr, it was possible to establish that this building most probably collapsed in the late 30s of the 20th century. It is also known that its residents moved to the new house before the final event, abandoning this house. Based on the archaeological studies, it seems that the abandonment process had a permanent, planned, and rather gradual character. The ruins of Bayt al-Qurashi were treated by neighbours (like many other collapsed houses in Old Qasr town) as enclosures for donkeys and poultry, and ended up as a rubbish dump.

The archaeological material presented during this paper comes from the strata related to the primary usage of the site, the habitation of this building, specifically the last phase of habitation of this house by the Qurashi family. Based on the results of pottery studies retrieved from this building in correlation with the building history of this house, I assume that most of locally made objects discovered, which constituted equipment of the house of the family Qurashi after its rearrangement (which took place at the end of 18th or the beginning of the 19th century), can be preliminary dated to the 19th – 1st half of the 20th century. The material assemblage of the Bayt al-Qurashi included such goods as pottery vessels, cutlery, basketry (baskets and mats) and other daily life objects made

from wood, leather (e.g. shoes), metal, and textiles (including clothes imported from the Nile Valley, died in indigo and decorated with embroidery on the spot).