

HOWAYDA AL-HARITHY

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

The Four Madrasahs in the Complex of Sultan Ḥasan (1356–61): The Complete Survey

The Complex of Sultan Ḥasan in Cairo is one of the most celebrated works of Mamluk architecture. Since the publication of the monograph entitled *Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire* by Max Herz Pasha¹ in 1899,² several studies have addressed the building in terms of its typology, stylistic influence, patronage, and meaning. However, the monograph and the studies that followed remain without a complete survey of the four madrasahs attached to the complex. The ground floor plan of the complex, documented by the early monograph, reveals their essence and relationship to the main building but does not fully document the madrasahs as independent spatial units. This survey focuses on the four madrasahs and presents the results of a field survey with complete documentation of their floor plans and sections, published here for the first time (Figs. 1–20).³ The drawings are supplemented in this introduction by a brief analysis and information pertaining to the assigned functions and personnel for the madrasahs provided by the *waqf* document of Sultan Ḥasan.⁴

The complex had an elaborate functional program, with a *bimāristān*, a *sabil-kuttāb*, a congregational mosque, four madrasahs, and a mausoleum. Its plan follows the cruciform four-*iwān* type. Four great tunnel-vaulted *iwāns* flank the main *ṣaḥn* and constitute the major order of the complex. The four madrasahs are

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¹ Max Herz Pasha (1856–1919) was a Hungarian architect. He was in Egypt between 1880 and 1914. He worked for the Technical Bureau of the Ministry of Awqaf until 1890 when he joined the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, which he later headed. The complex of Sultan Ḥasan was one of the many monuments the Comité restored during his twenty-five years of service.

² See Max Herz, *La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire* (Cairo, 1899).

³ The initial survey and documentation were conducted as part of my dissertation field research in 1991 in Cairo. See Howayda Al-Harithy, "Urban Form and Meaning in Mamluk Architecture" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992).

⁴ Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyah in Cairo possesses two documents for the *waqf* with which Sultan Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn endowed his great complex in al-Rumaylah near the Citadel. The first (no. 40/6) is the original *waqfiyah* drawn up for Sultan Ḥasan. It is written on parchment, but most of it has been lost or is damaged. The second (no. 365/85) is a contemporary bound manuscript copy and a more complete document preserving the content of the original. It is this version that is fully published. See *The Waqf Document of Sultan Al-Nasir Hasan b. Muhammad b. Qalawun for his Complex in Al-Rumaila*, ed. Howayda Al-Harithy (Berlin/Beirut, 2001).

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of the single-*iwān* type and occupy the corners created by the cruciform plan. These constitute the minor order in the spatial organization of the complex. Although the four-*iwān* building type has roots in Cairo going back to its introduction by the Ayyubids, none of its predecessors utilize the type with such originality. By the time the complex was built in 1356, the type had matured and was widely used in a variety of religious buildings including madrasahs, *khānqāhs*, and *zāwiyahs*. Examples include the madrasah of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad on al-Mu‘izz Street (1295), its neighbor the madrasah of al-Zāhir Barqūq (1384–86), the *khānqāh* of Baybars al-Jāshnikir (1307–10), and the *zāwiyah* of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf (1295–1325). The plan of the complex uses a monumental version of the four-*iwān* plan in combination with the single-*iwān* type. It is therefore a masterful combination and a unique interpretation of the four-*iwān* plan. By inserting a single-*iwān* madrasah in each of the four corners as a minor order to the major cruciform one, the plan distinguishes the public zone from the private zone of each of the madrasah units and adjusts scale and accessibility. The public zone includes the *jāmi‘*, the major teaching *iwāns*, and the mausoleum, while the madrasahs and their living units remain separate and private.

The madrasahs are dedicated to the teachings of the four Sunni schools. According to the *waqf* document, dated Saturday, 15 Rabī‘ II 760 (1359), and Thursday, 2 Rajab 760 (1359),⁵ the largest of the major *iwāns*, that of the qiblah, is dedicated to the Friday *khutbah*, the reading of the Quran, and the meetings of the Shafi‘i students with their professor to conduct their general public lectures. The remaining three major *iwāns* are approximately equal in size. The southwestern *iwān* was dedicated to the sessions of the Hanbali School, the northwestern to the Hanafi School and the northeastern to the Maliki School.

. . . He also dedicated the *qibli iwān* to the delivery of the *khutbah*, the reading of the blessed Quran, and the meeting of the Shafi‘is with their professor to conduct their public lecture in it . . . and dedicated the *bahri iwān* as well to the meeting of the Hanafis with their professor to conduct their public lecture in it, and dedicated the eastern *iwān* as well to the meeting of the Malikis with their professor to conduct their public lecture in it, and dedicated the western *iwān* as well to the meeting of the Hanbalis with their professor to conduct their public lecture in it. . . . as to the place east of the mentioned *qibli iwān*, he endowed the *iwān*, at the end of which lies the mihrab, as a mosque for God almighty where prayers are to be held, worship is to be performed, the Quran to be read, good deeds are to be offered, and noble education is to

⁵ Published in its entirety in 2001; see *The Waqf Document of Sultan Al-Nasir*, ed. Al-Harithy.

be conducted. He endowed the rest of the mentioned place as a madrasah for the pursuit of education in accordance with the *madhhab* of al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, may God bless him, and for the lodging of the fifty individuals assigned to live in it . . . twenty five individuals from the seniors and twenty five individuals from the juniors.⁶

According to the *waqf* document,⁷ all four madrasahs are treated equally in terms of personnel assigned, salaries, number of students, and their stipends.⁸ Each madrasah is assigned a professor, three teaching assistants, a supervisor, and one hundred students, fifty of whom are residents. “A professor, who is a Hanafi jurist known for his piety, is to conduct the teaching of Hanafi *fiqh* in the *baḥrī iwān* designated for him above; three assistants are to be assigned to him who have the same qualifications as those required of the Shafi‘ī assistants, and a hundred students from his *madhhab*, on the condition that the professor, assistants, and students conduct themselves as required of the Shafi‘īs and in accordance with the restrictions and conditions outlined above. . . .”⁹ Besides their stipends, the *waqf* provided students with seasonal gifts and medical care. “The measure of two head of camels, twenty head of cattle, and ten head of sheep are to be slaughtered during ‘Īd al-Aḍḥā and divided in half. One half is to be distributed to the residents of the aforementioned places, including students and staff, as the *nāzir* sees fit. The second half is to be distributed to the orphans, tutors, supervisors, and the poor and needy outside the aforementioned places, both neighbors and strangers.”¹⁰

Though the design of the four madrasahs is a variation of the single-*iwān* plan, they vary a great deal in size and interior organization of living units. Each madrasah has a private teaching *iwān*, a courtyard with a fountain, latrines, living units, and a large room above the *iwān* that may have served as a library (figs. 21–25). The living units range in size. The average room has an area of 10 square meters. The Ḥanafīyah Madrasah has 56 living units, the Shāfi‘īyah has 52, and the Mālīkīyah has 44, while the Ḥanbaliyah has only 22 living units. Its *iwān* has an area of 30 square meters compared to the *iwān* of the Ḥanafīyah, which

⁶ Ibid., 149–50.

⁷ Ibid., 148–75.

⁸ For details on the salaries and stipends, see Muḥammad M. Amīn, “Maṣārīf Awqāf al-Sultān al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ‘alā Maṣāliḥ al-Qubbah wa-al-Jāmi‘ wa-al-Madāris wa-Maktab al-Sabil bi-al-Qāhirah,” in Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirat al-Nabih fi Ayyām al-Manṣūr wa-Banīh* (Cairo, 1986), 3:341–449.

⁹ *The Waqf Document of Sultan Al-Nasir*, ed. Al-Harithy, 151.

¹⁰ Ibid., 172–73.

has an area of 67.5 square meters. It is clear that though the *waqf* document treated the four madrasahs equally, the design seems to have accommodated the site conditions and the sizes of the madrasahs in a more hierarchical fashion that responded more to the actual following of the four madrasahs in Egypt. The Ḥanafīyah was most popular and the Ḥanbalīyah was the least popular at the time.

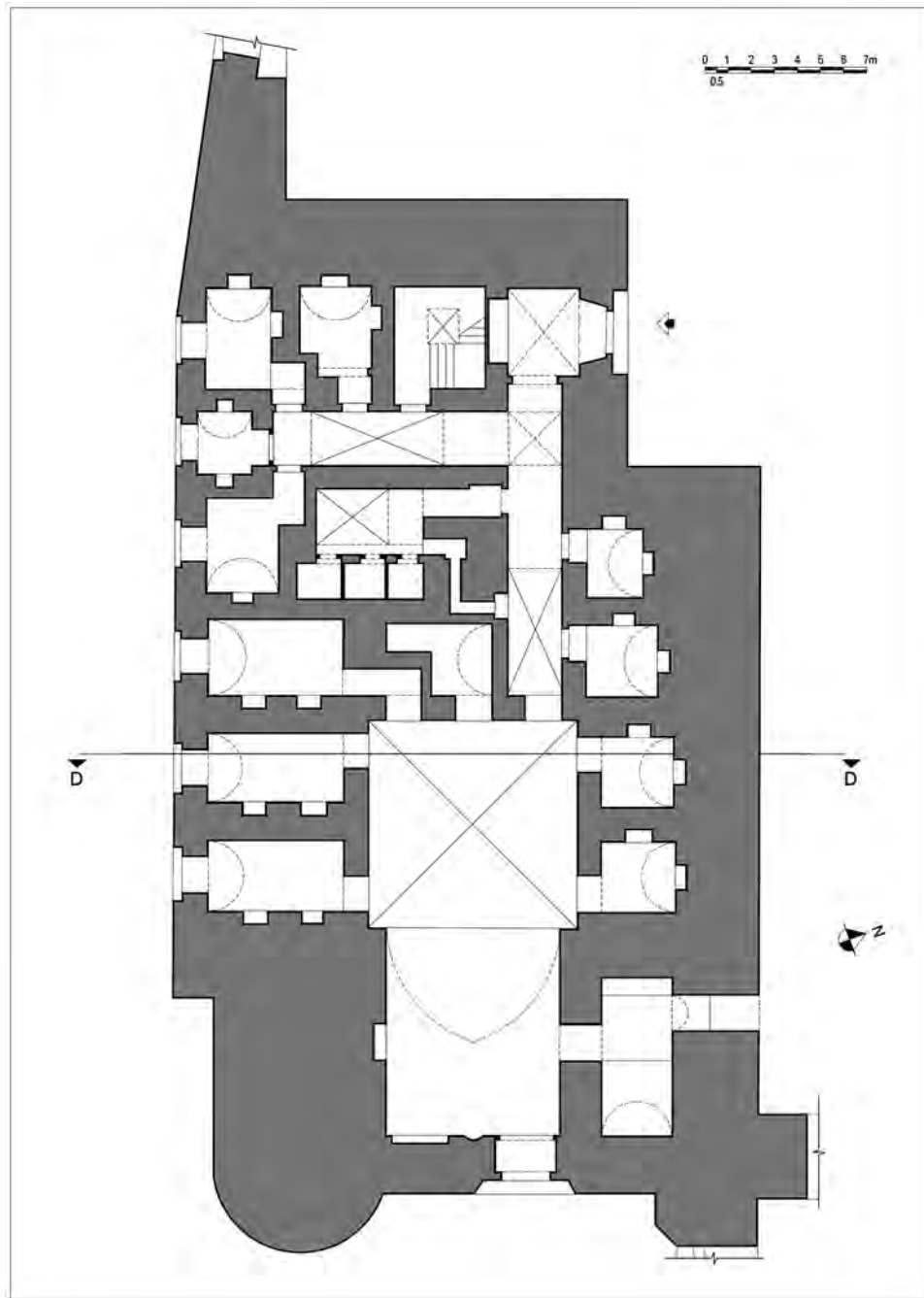


Fig. 1. Ḥanafiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, ground floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

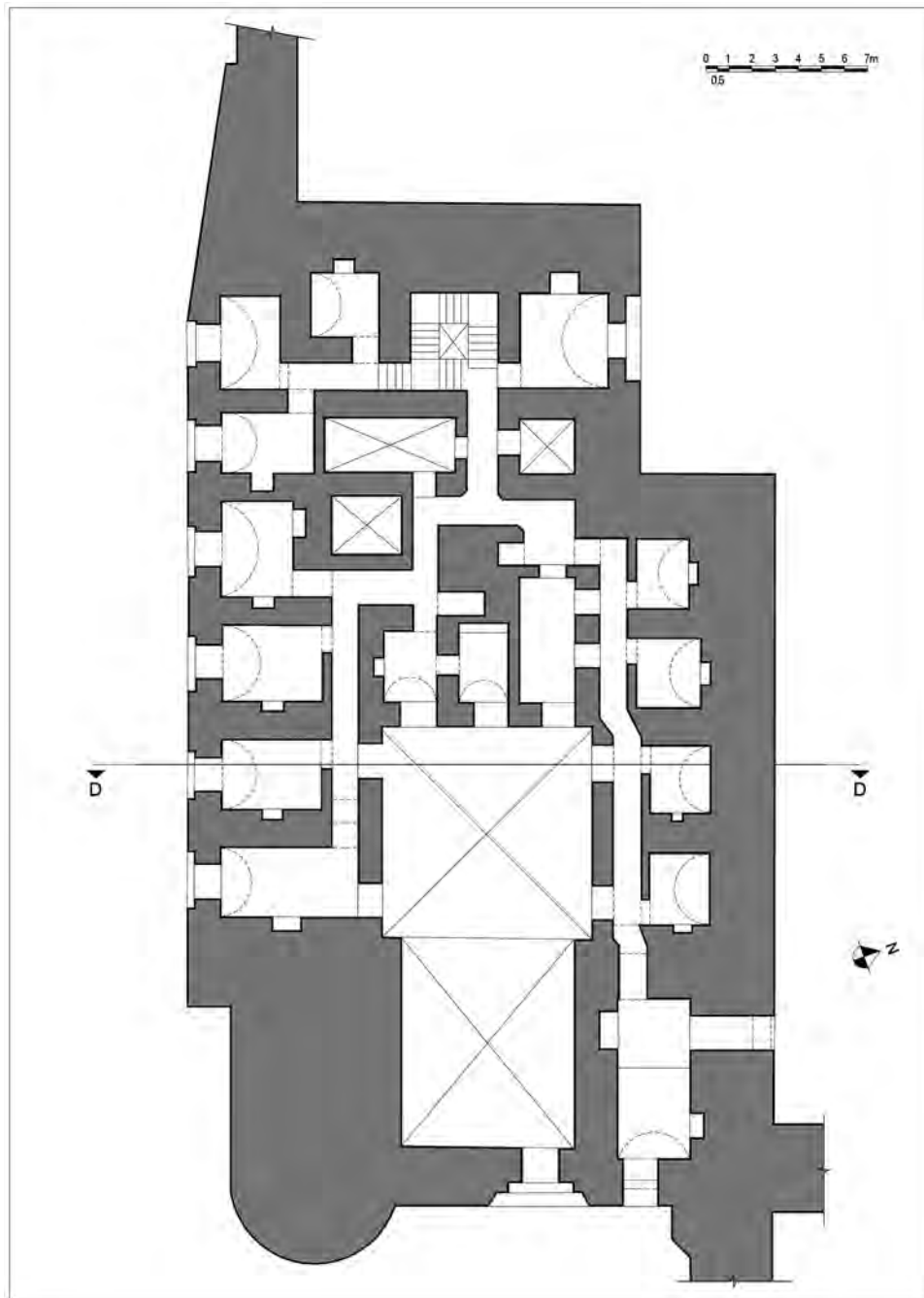


Fig. 2. Ḥanafiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, second floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

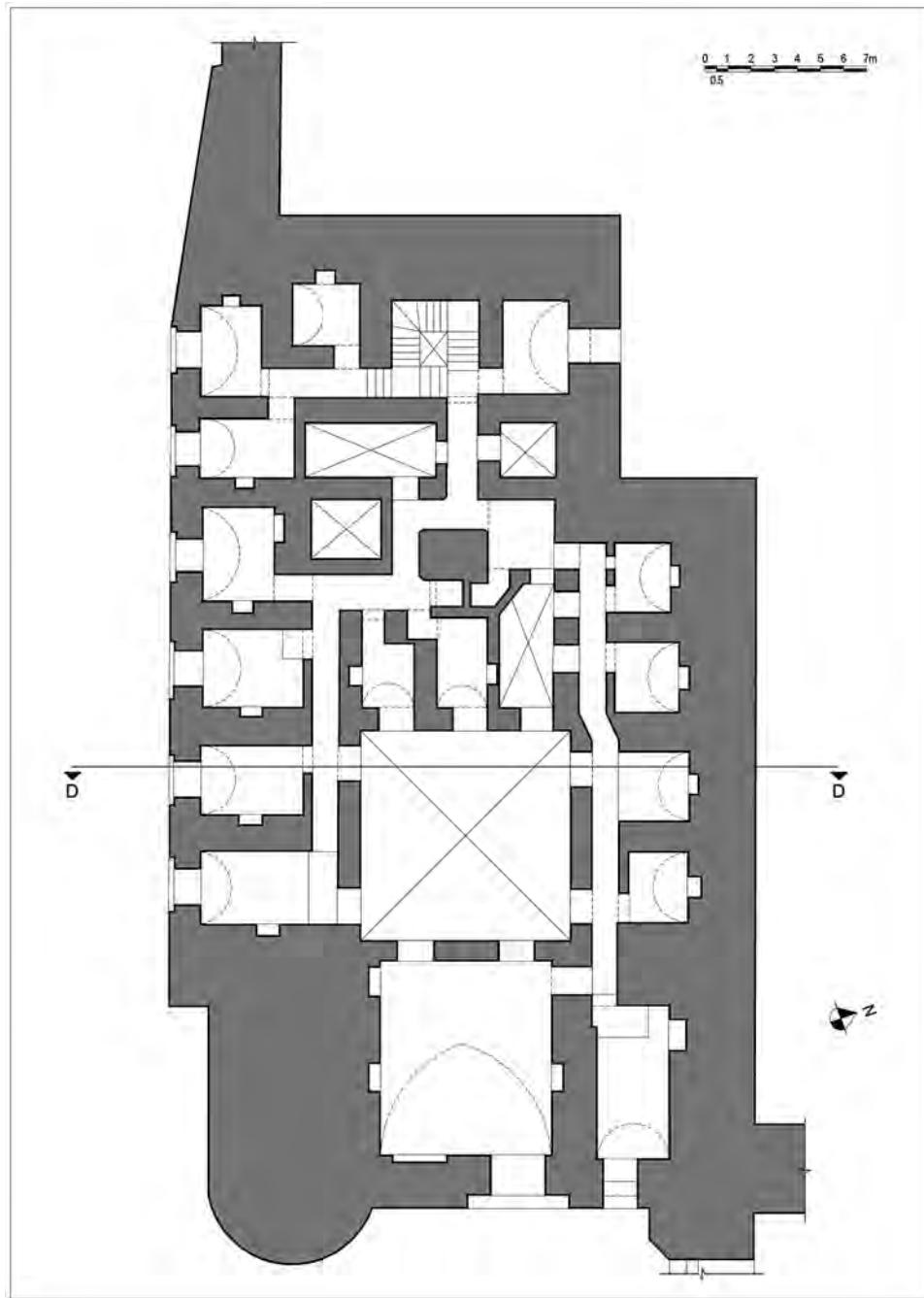


Fig. 3. Ḥanafiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, third floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

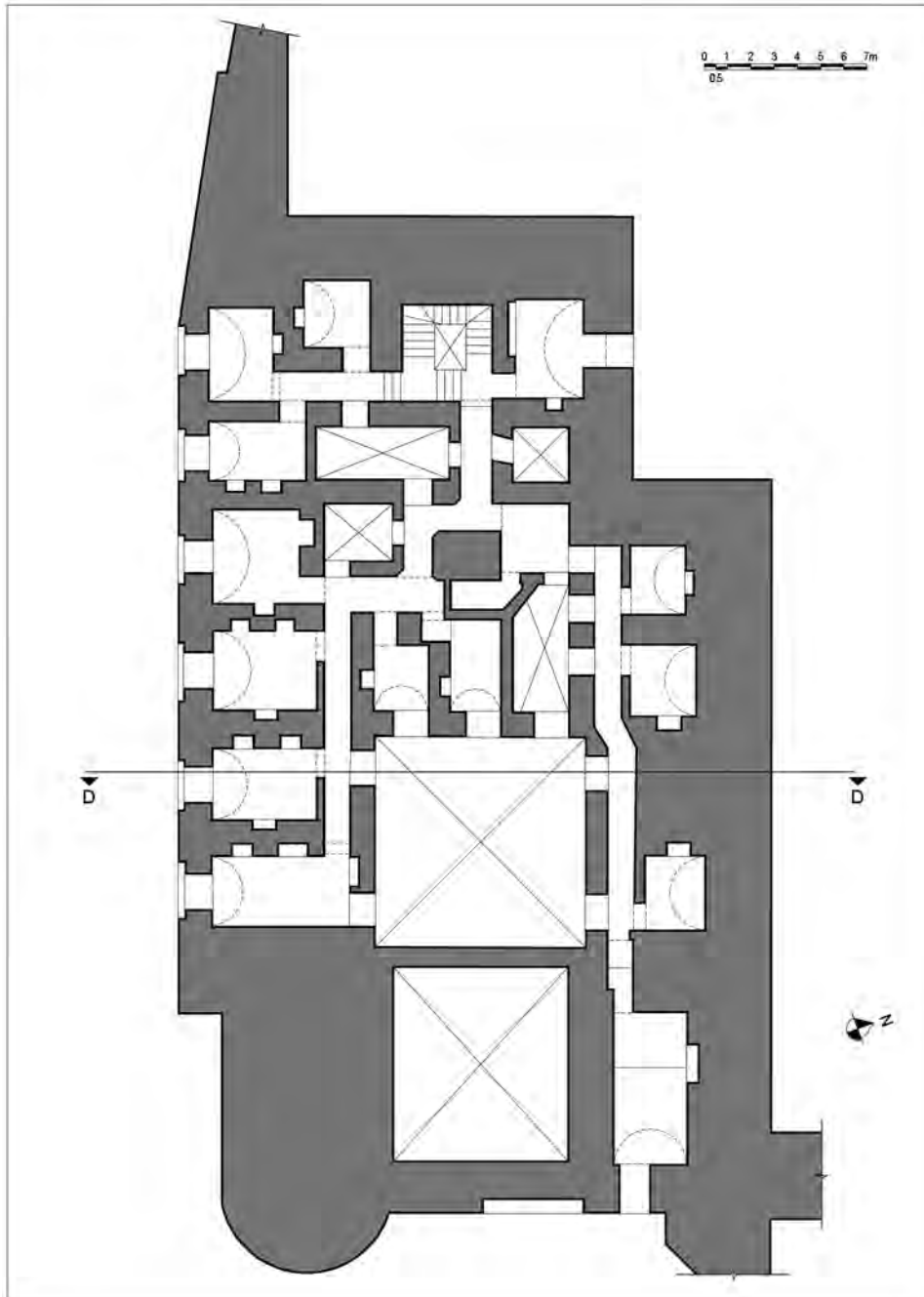


Fig. 4. Ḥanafiyyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, fourth floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

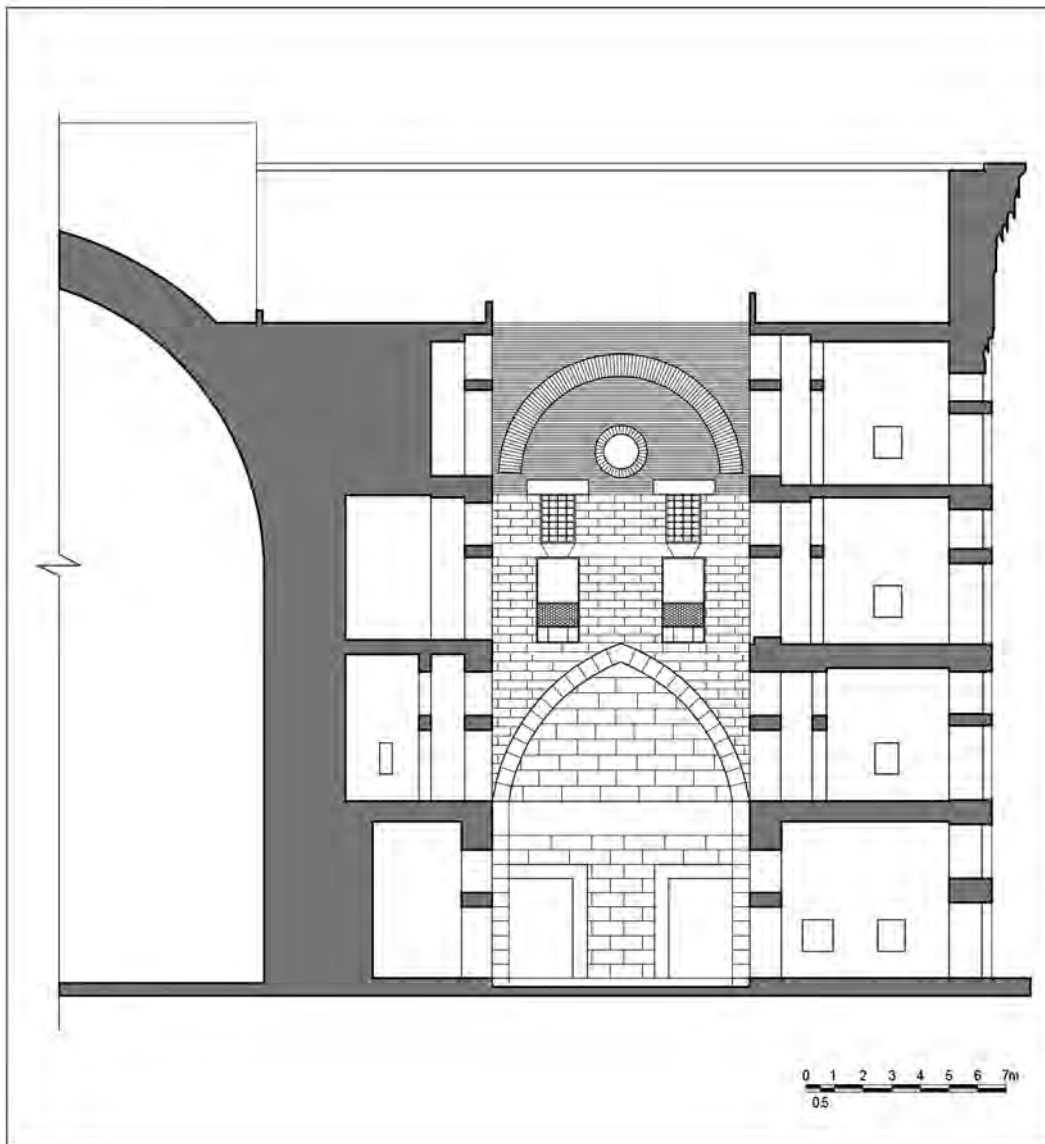


Fig. 5. Ḥanafiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, section DD
(H. Al-Harithy)

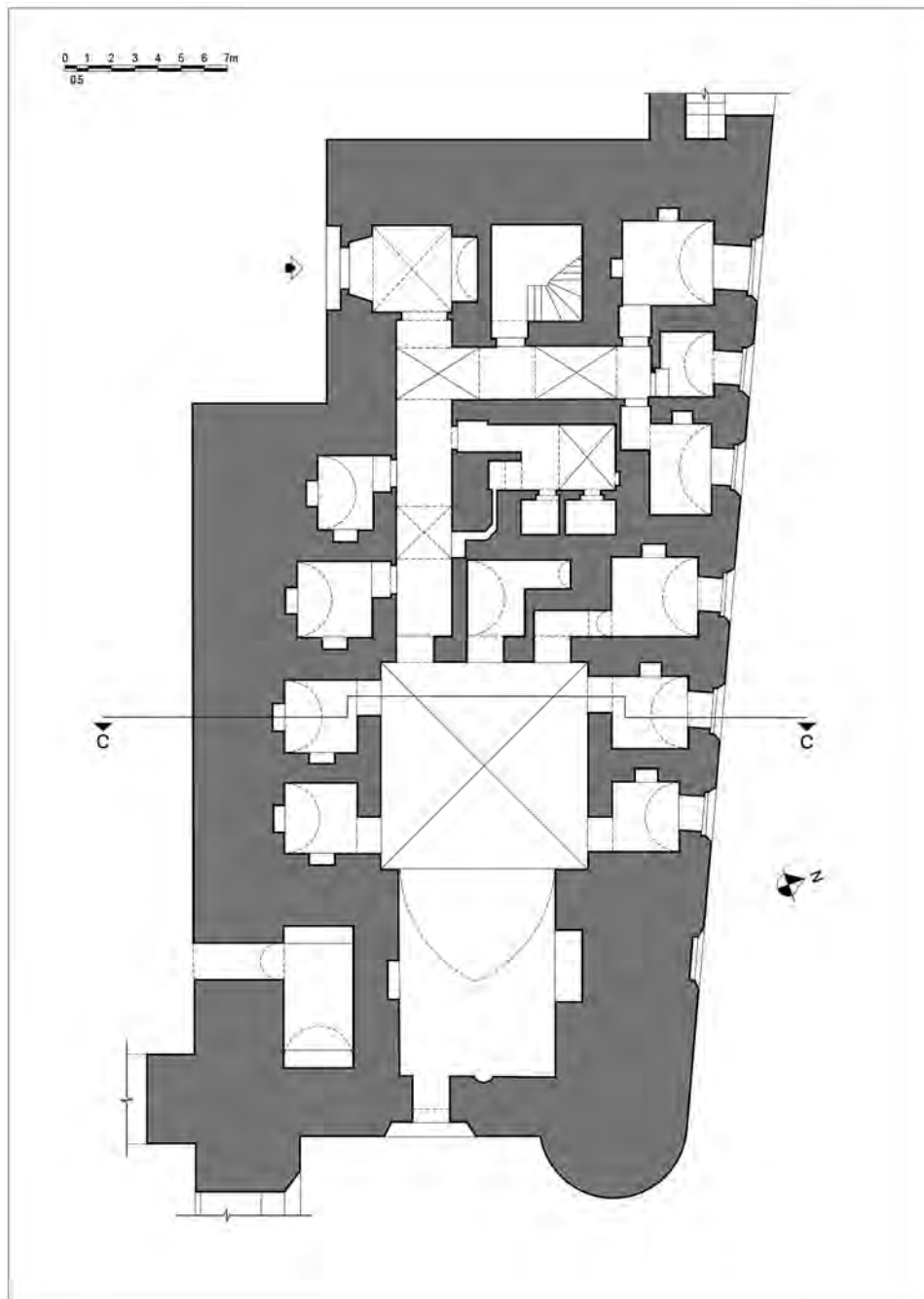


Fig. 6. Shāfiʿiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, ground floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

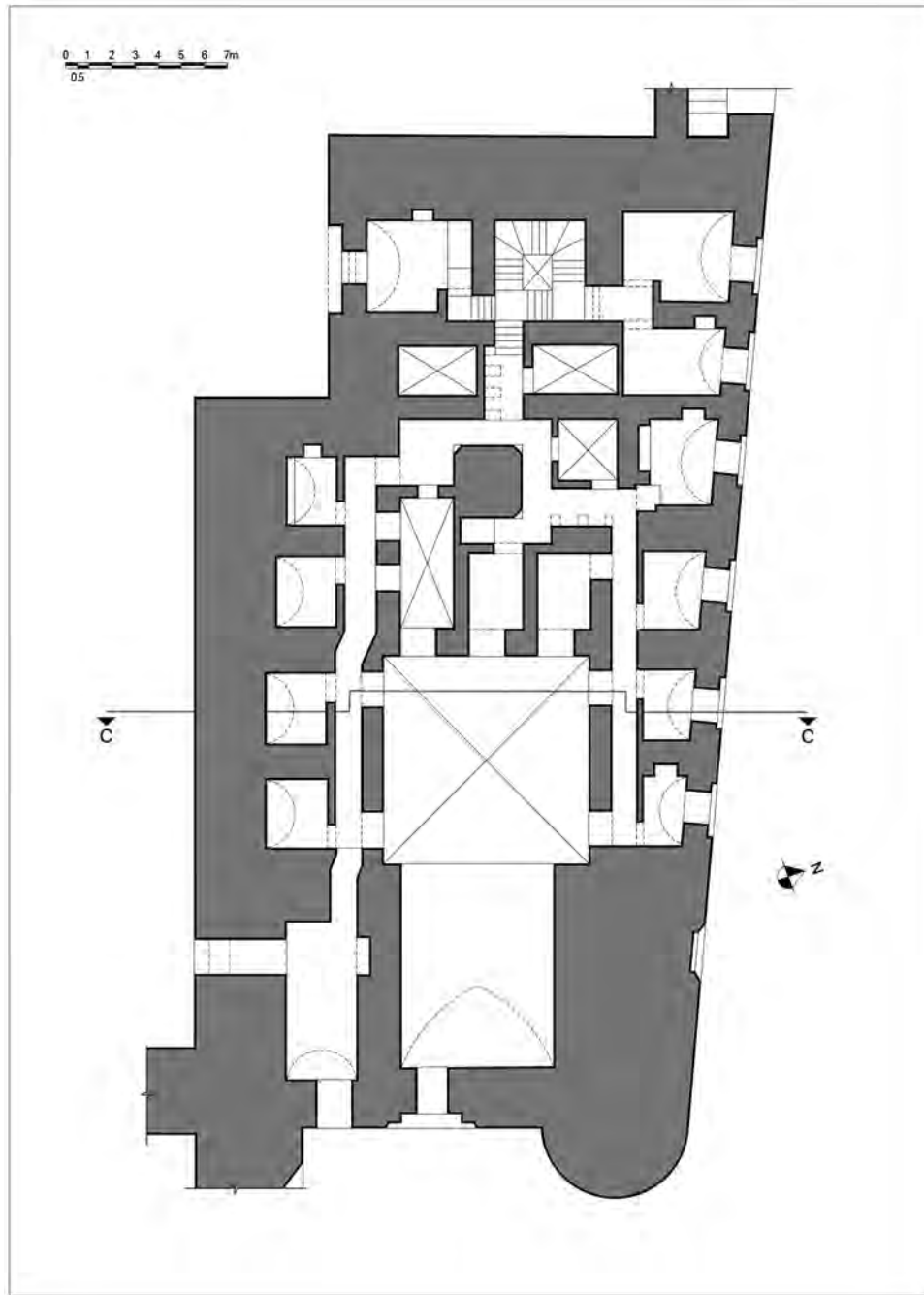


Fig. 7. Shāfi'iyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, second floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

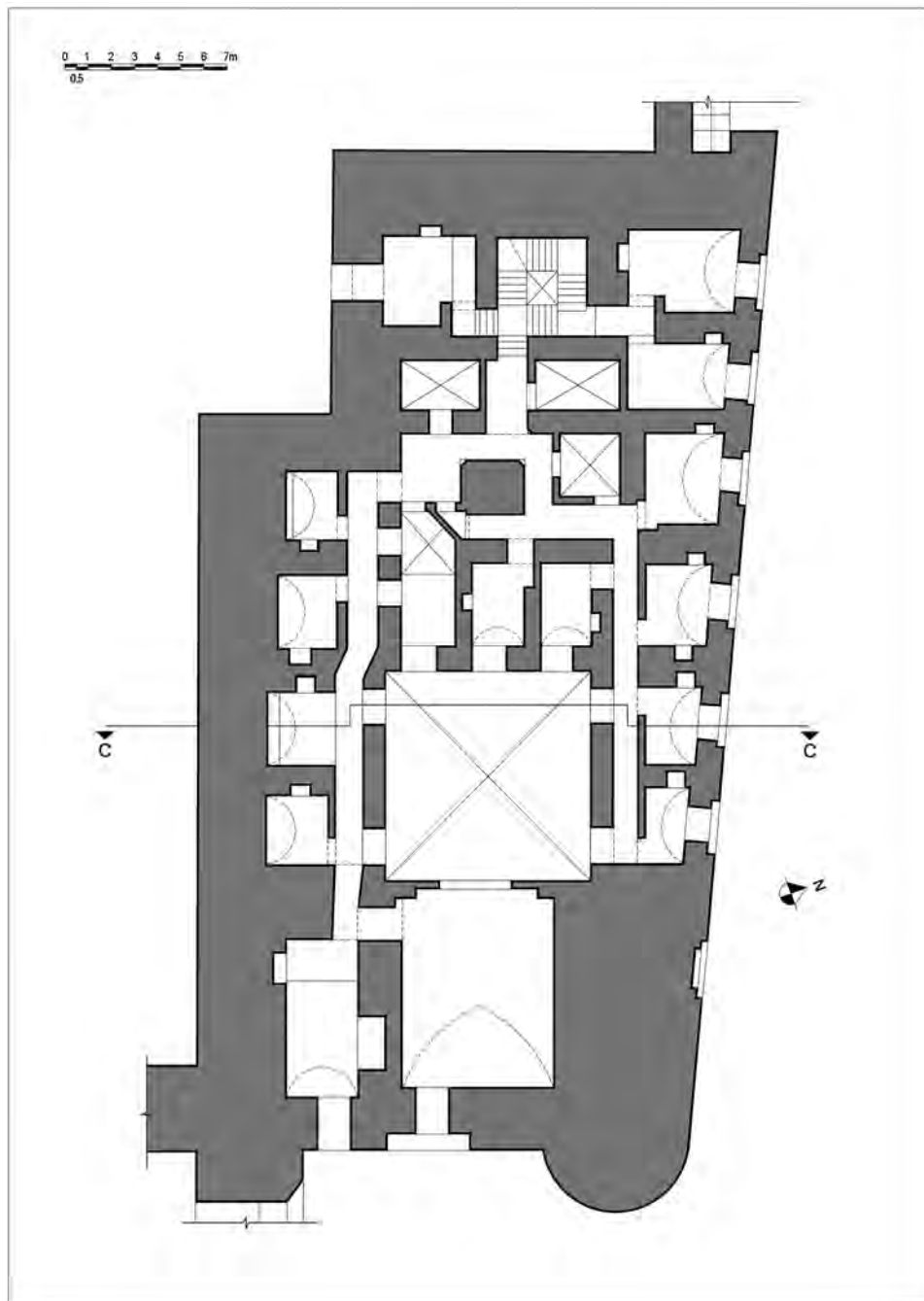


Fig. 8. Shāfi'iyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, third floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

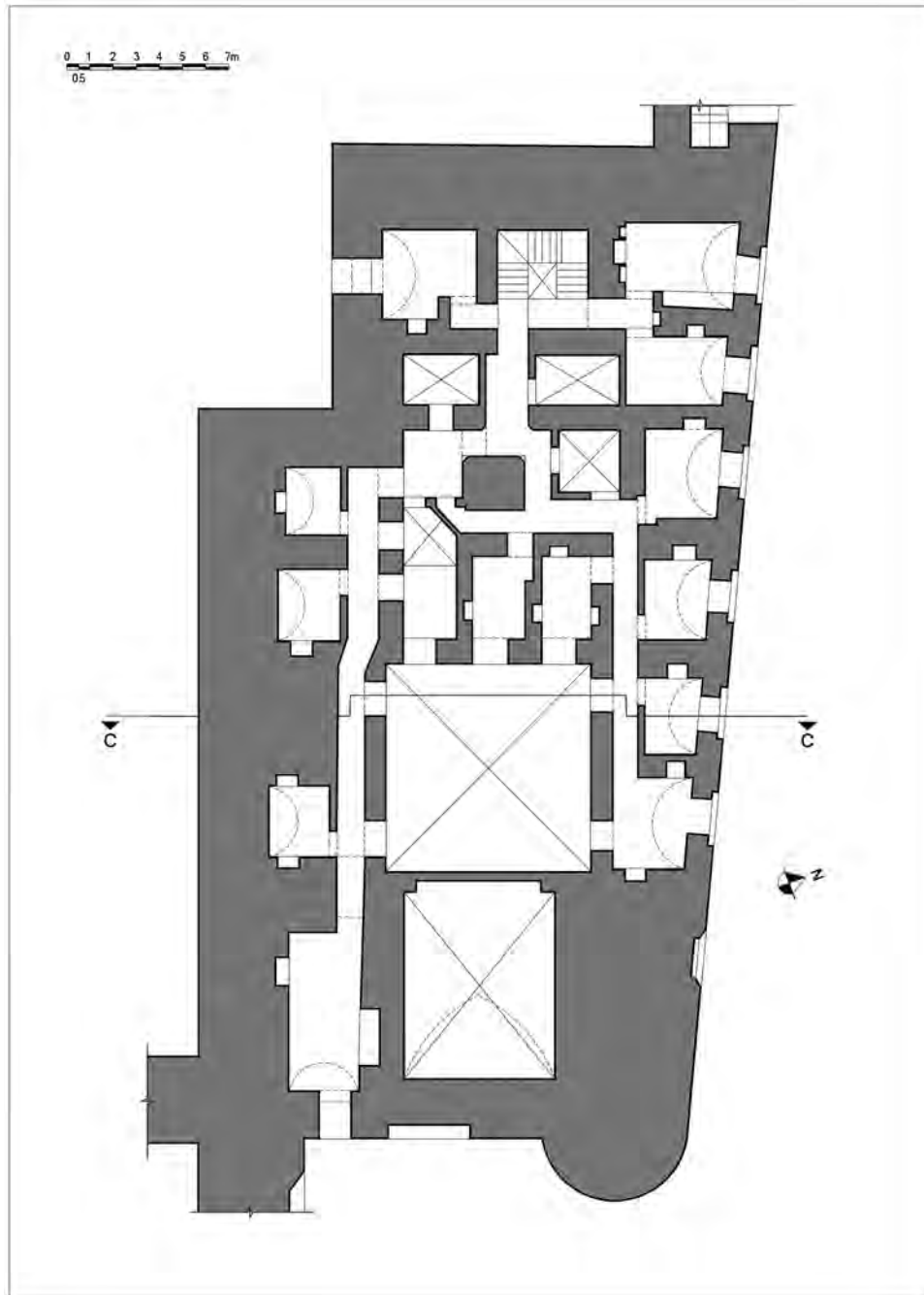


Fig. 9. Shāfi'iyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, fourth floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

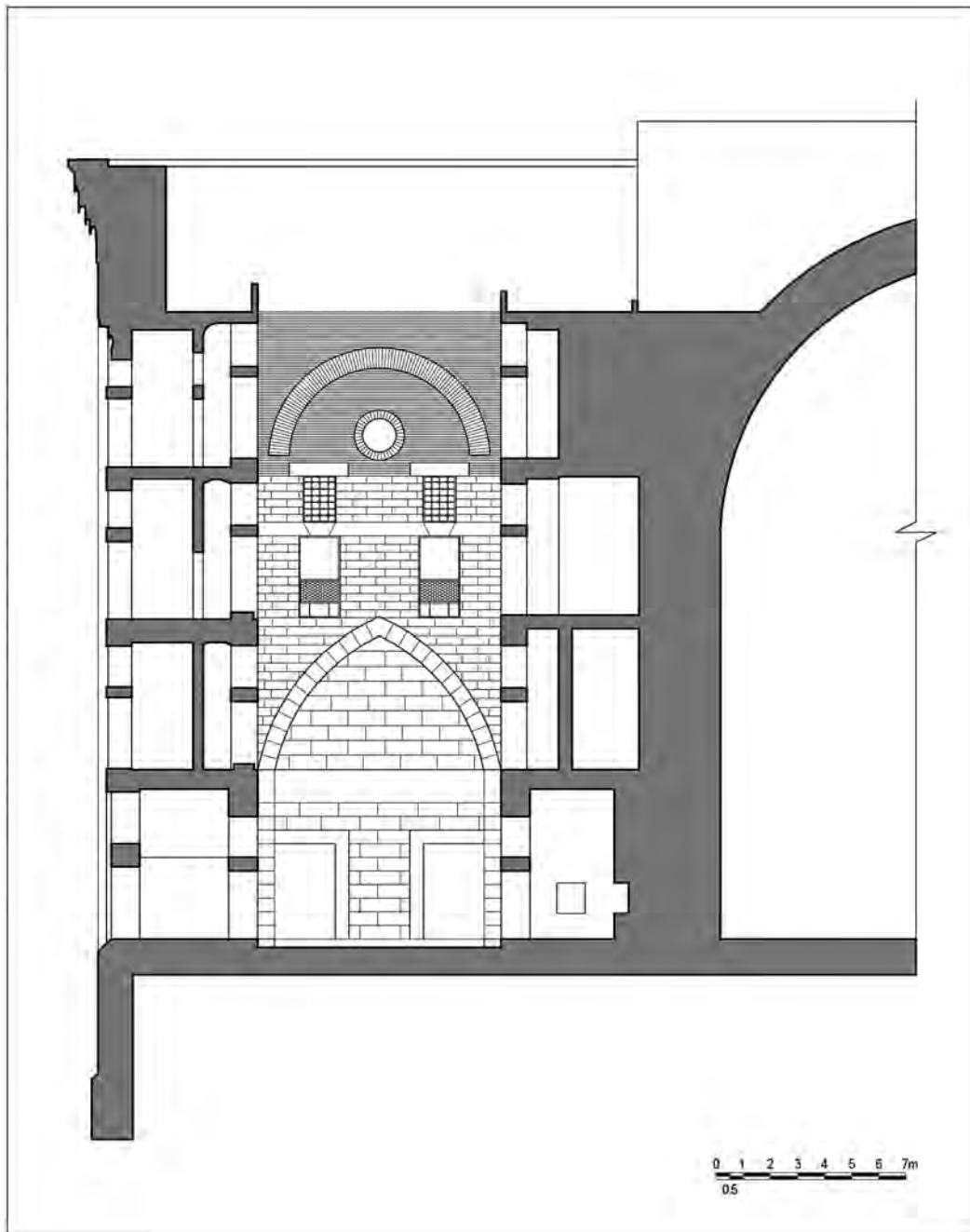


Fig. 10. Shāfi'iyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, section CC (H. Al-Harithy)

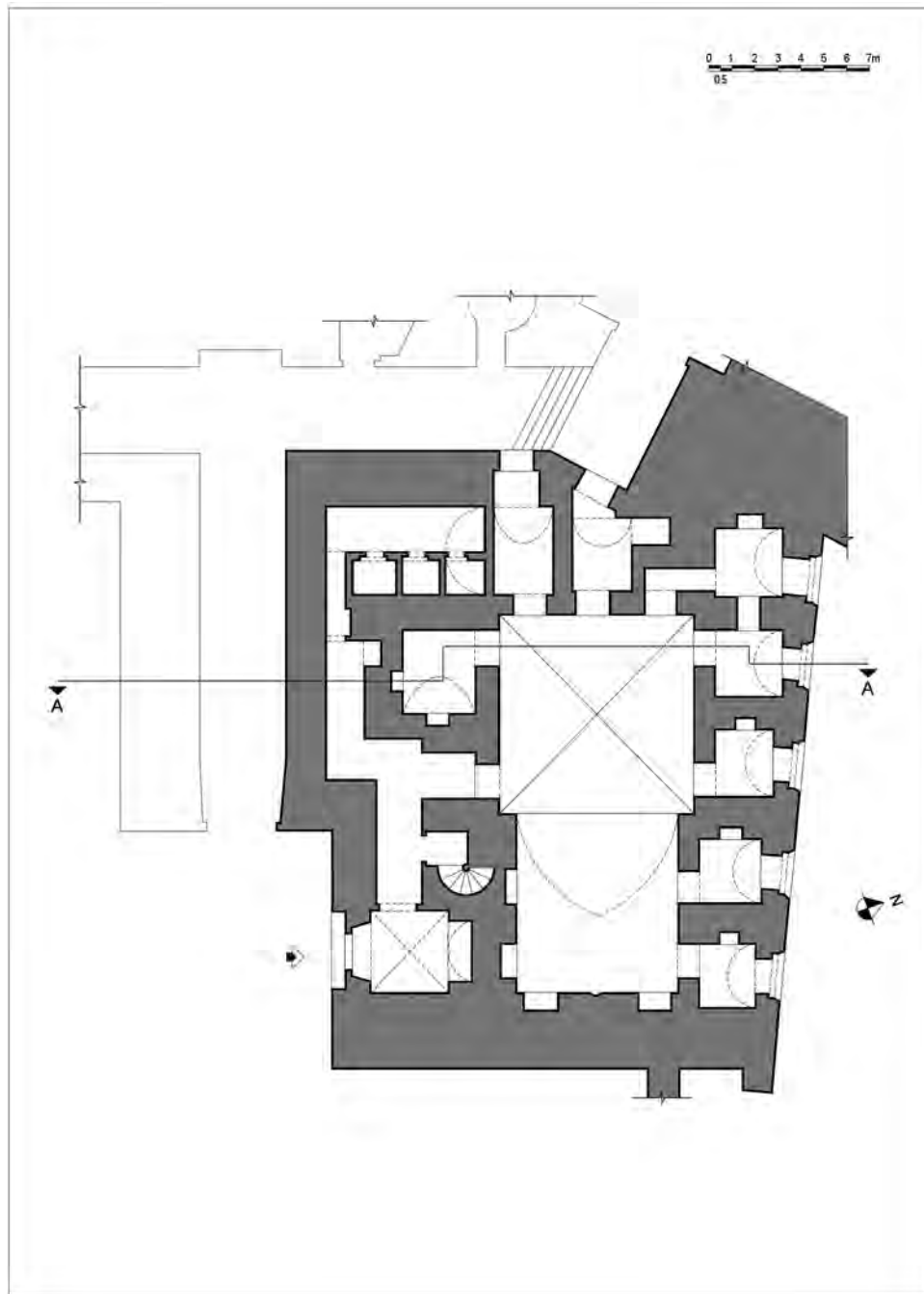


Fig. 11. Mālīkiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, ground floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

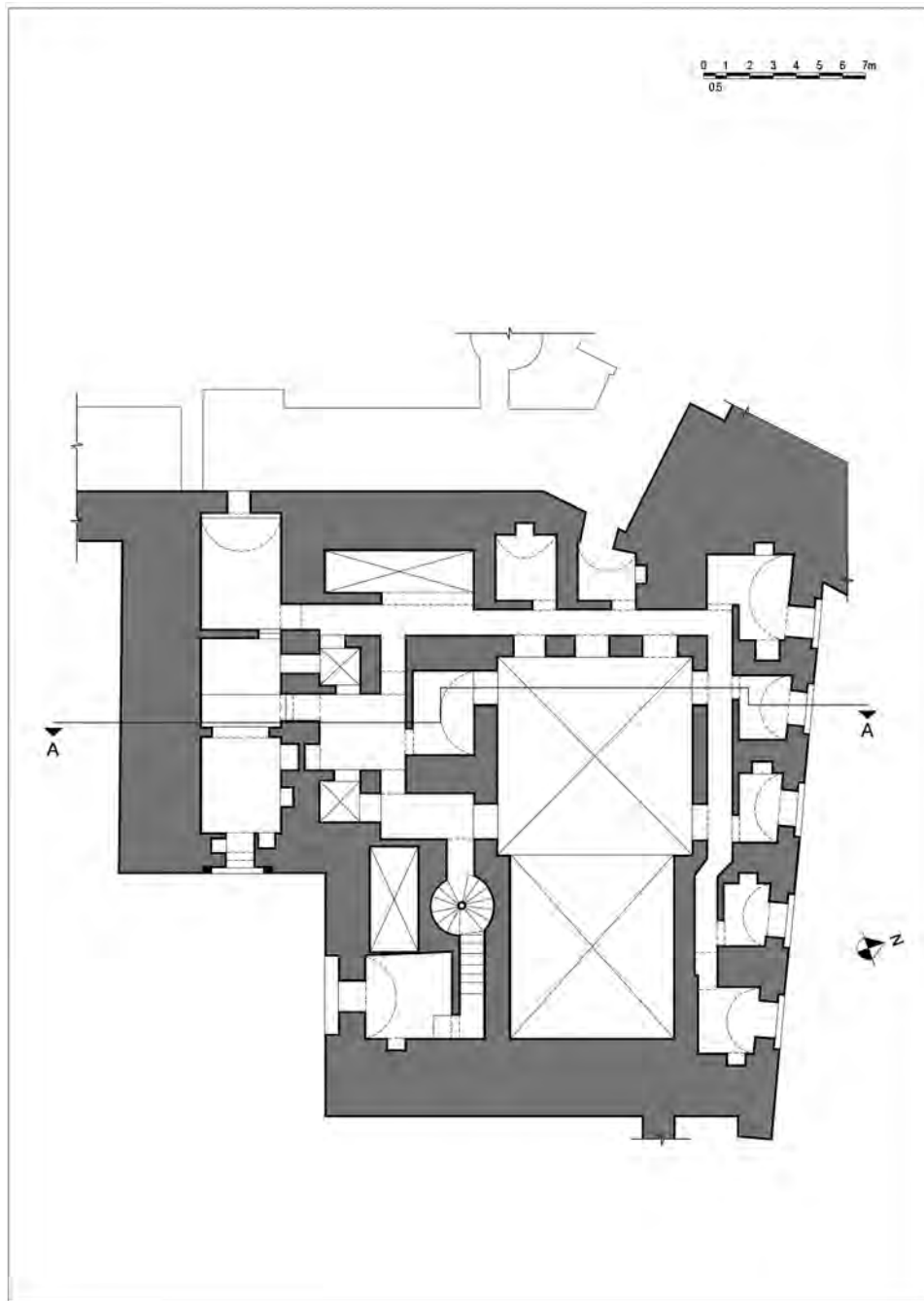


Fig. 12. Mālikīyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, second floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

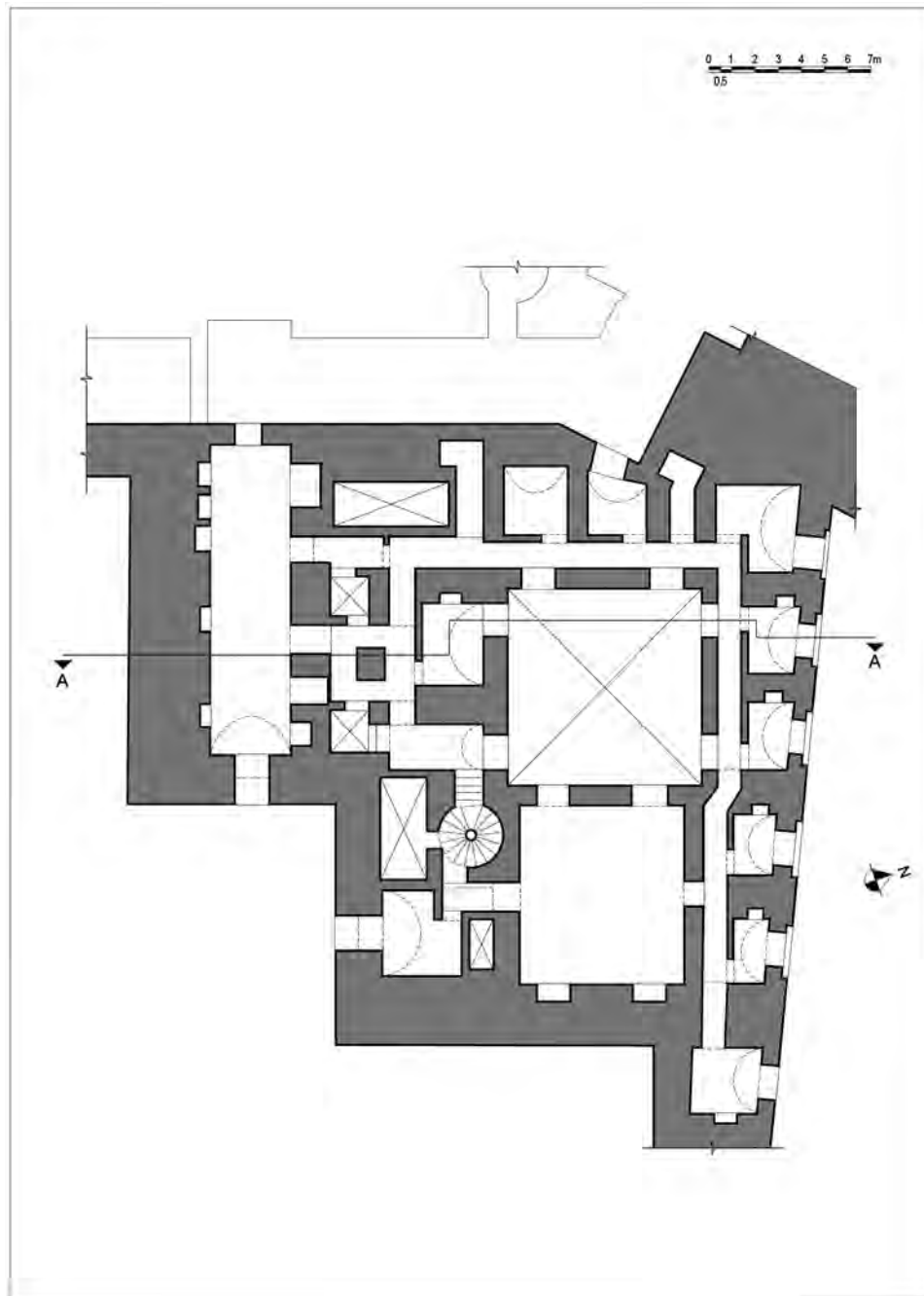


Fig. 13. Mālīkiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, third floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

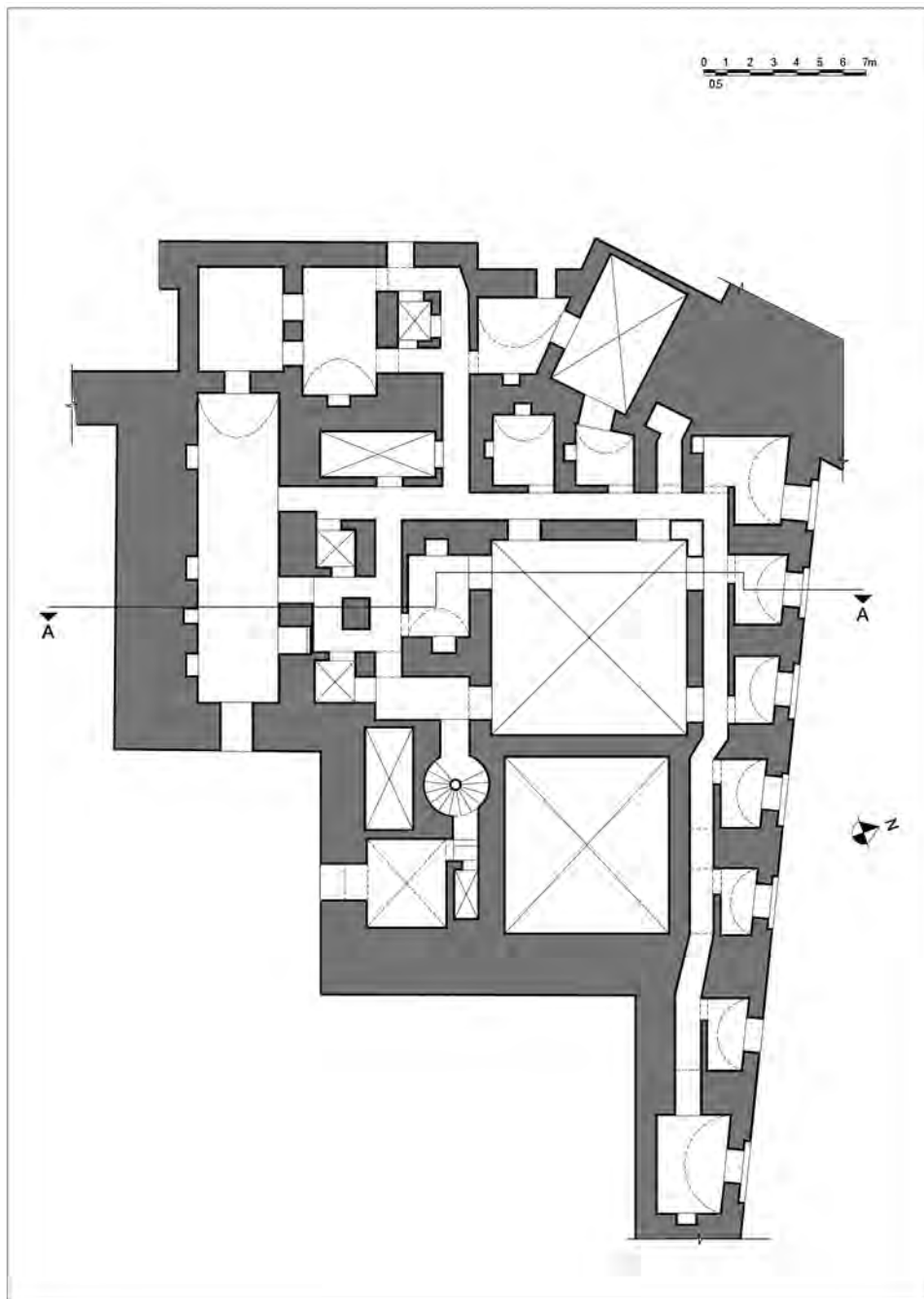


Fig. 14. Mālikīyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, fourth floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

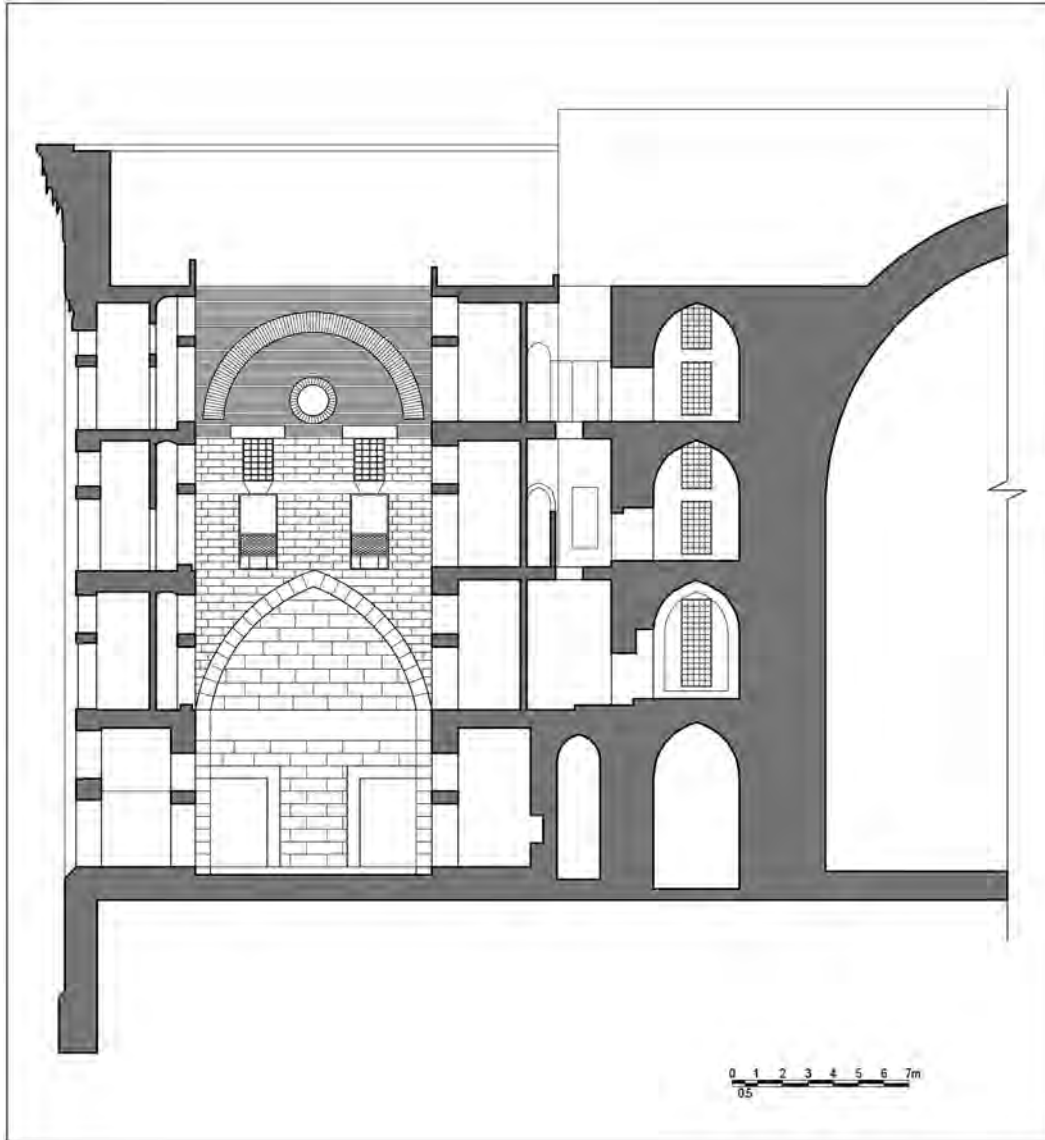


Fig. 15. Mālīkiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, section AA
(H. Al-Harithy)

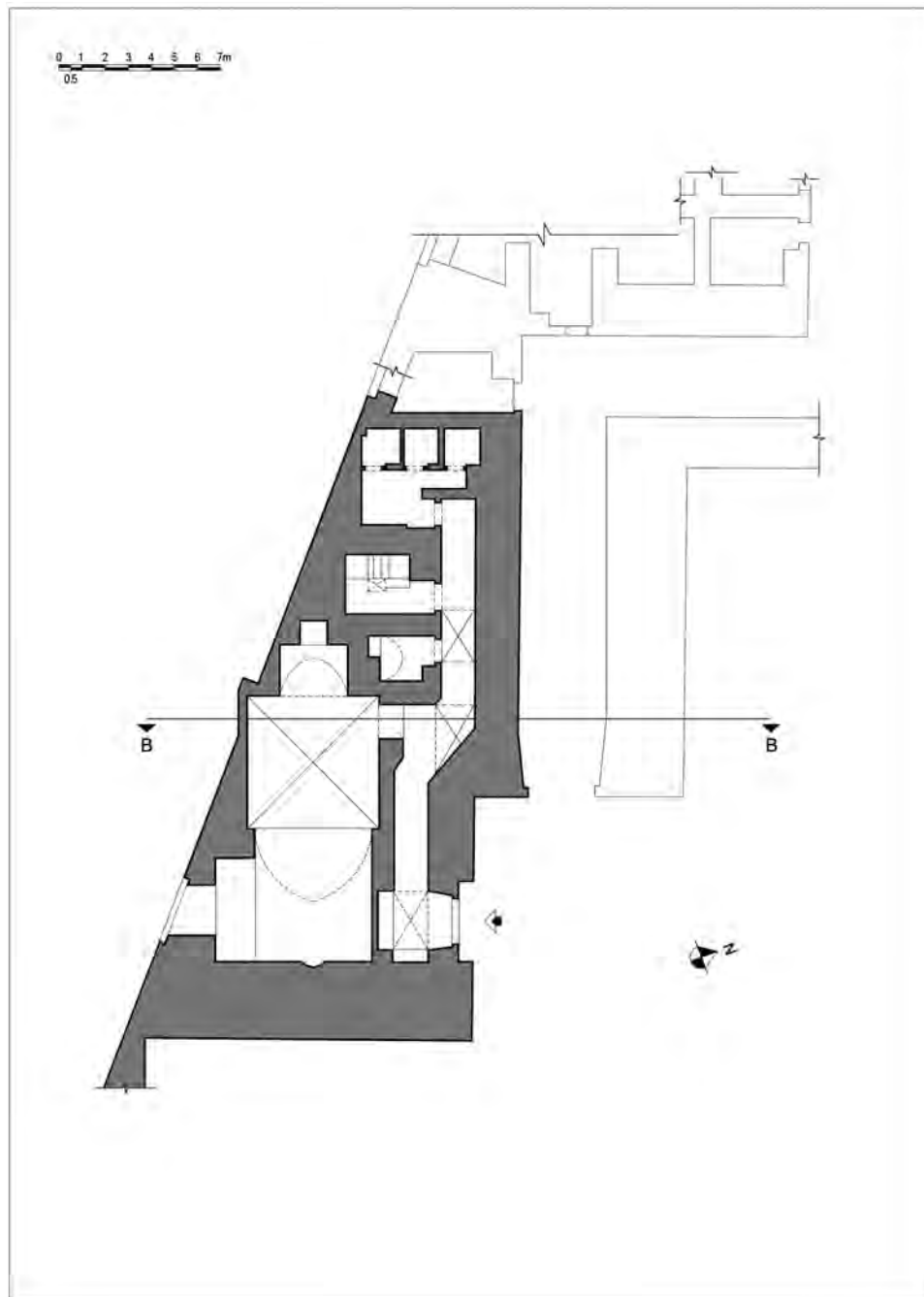


Fig. 16. Ḥanbaliyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, ground floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

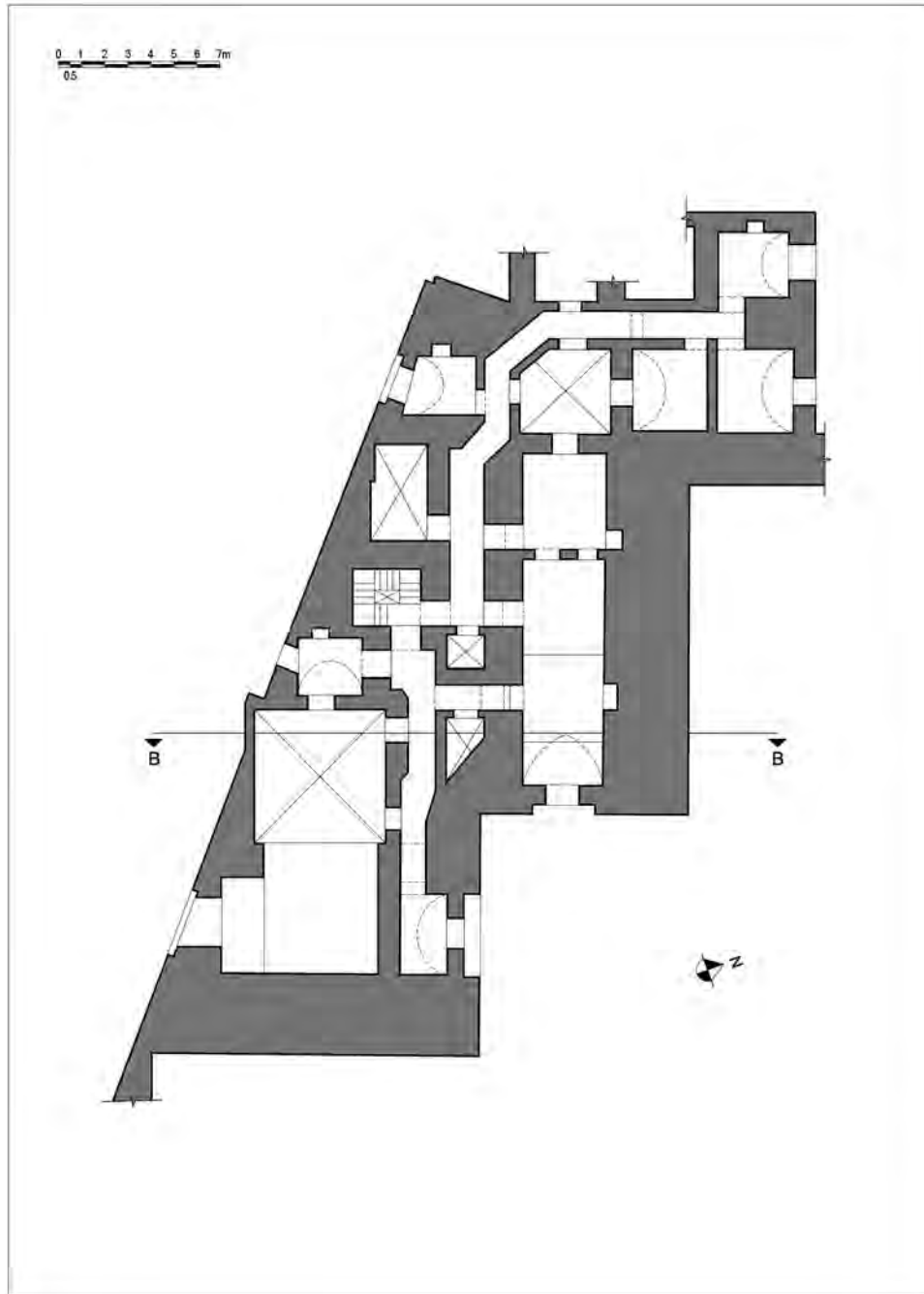


Fig. 17. Ḥanbaliyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, second floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

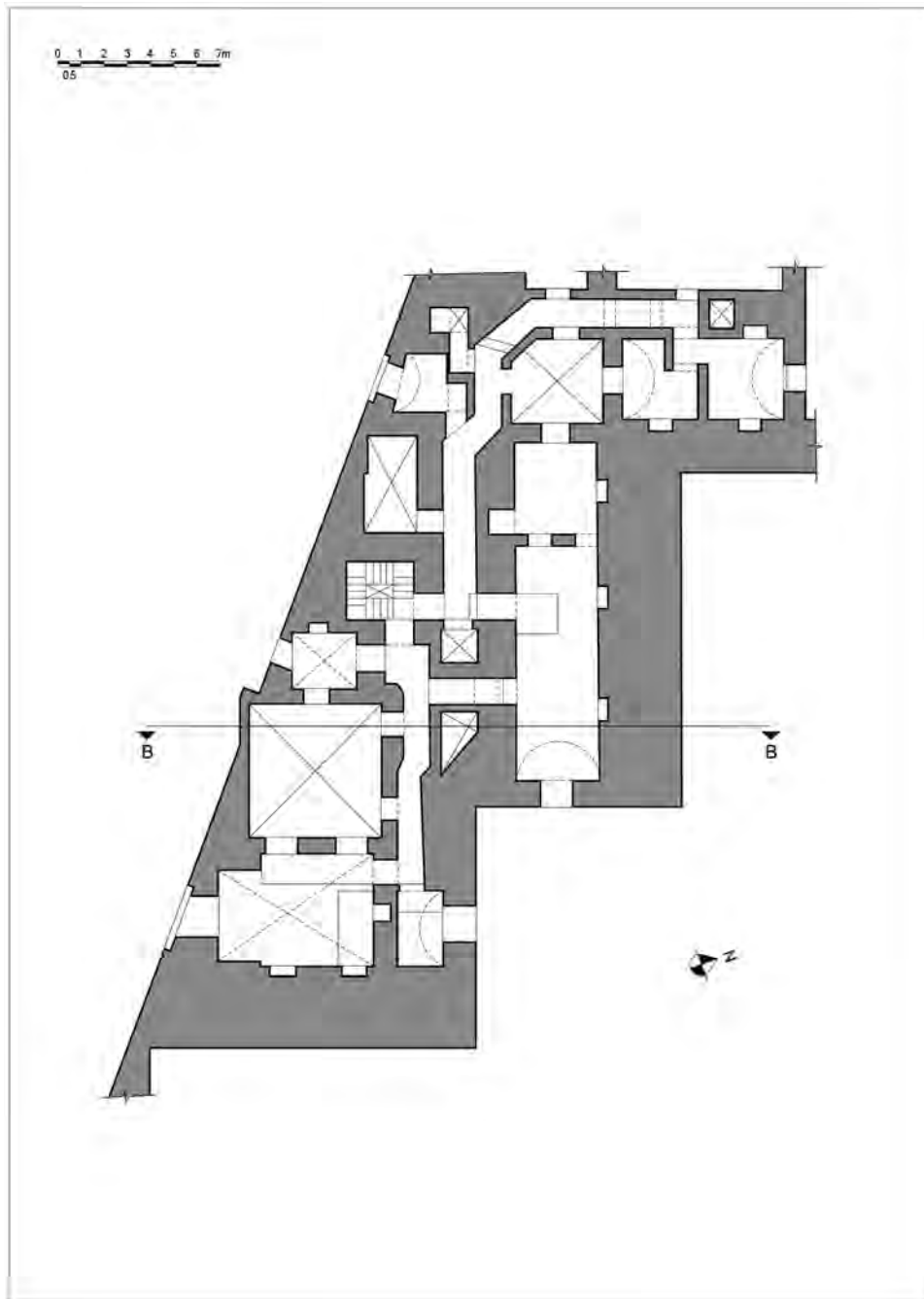


Fig. 18. Ḥanbaliyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, third floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

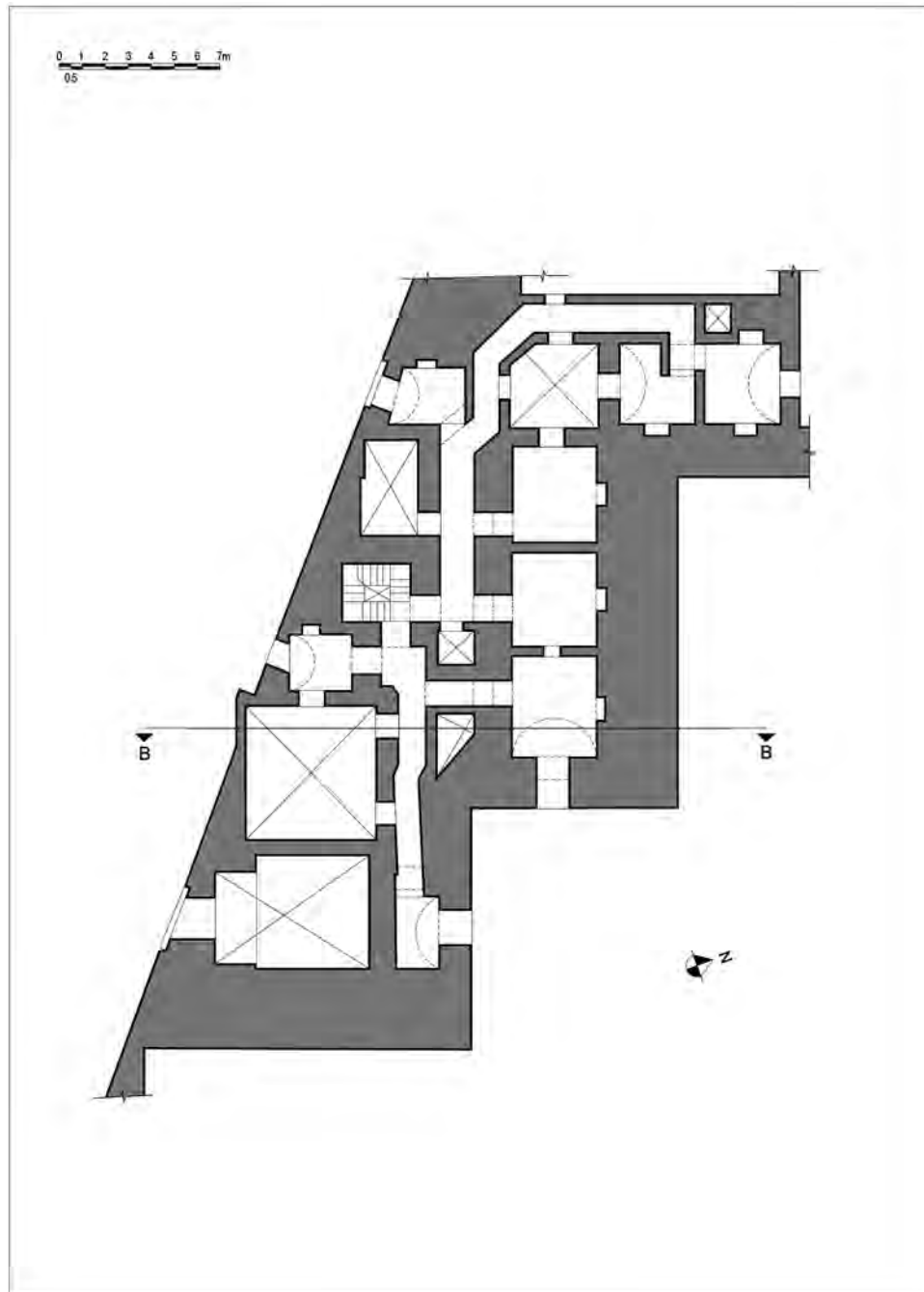


Fig. 19. Ḥanbaliyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, fourth floor plan (H. Al-Harithy)

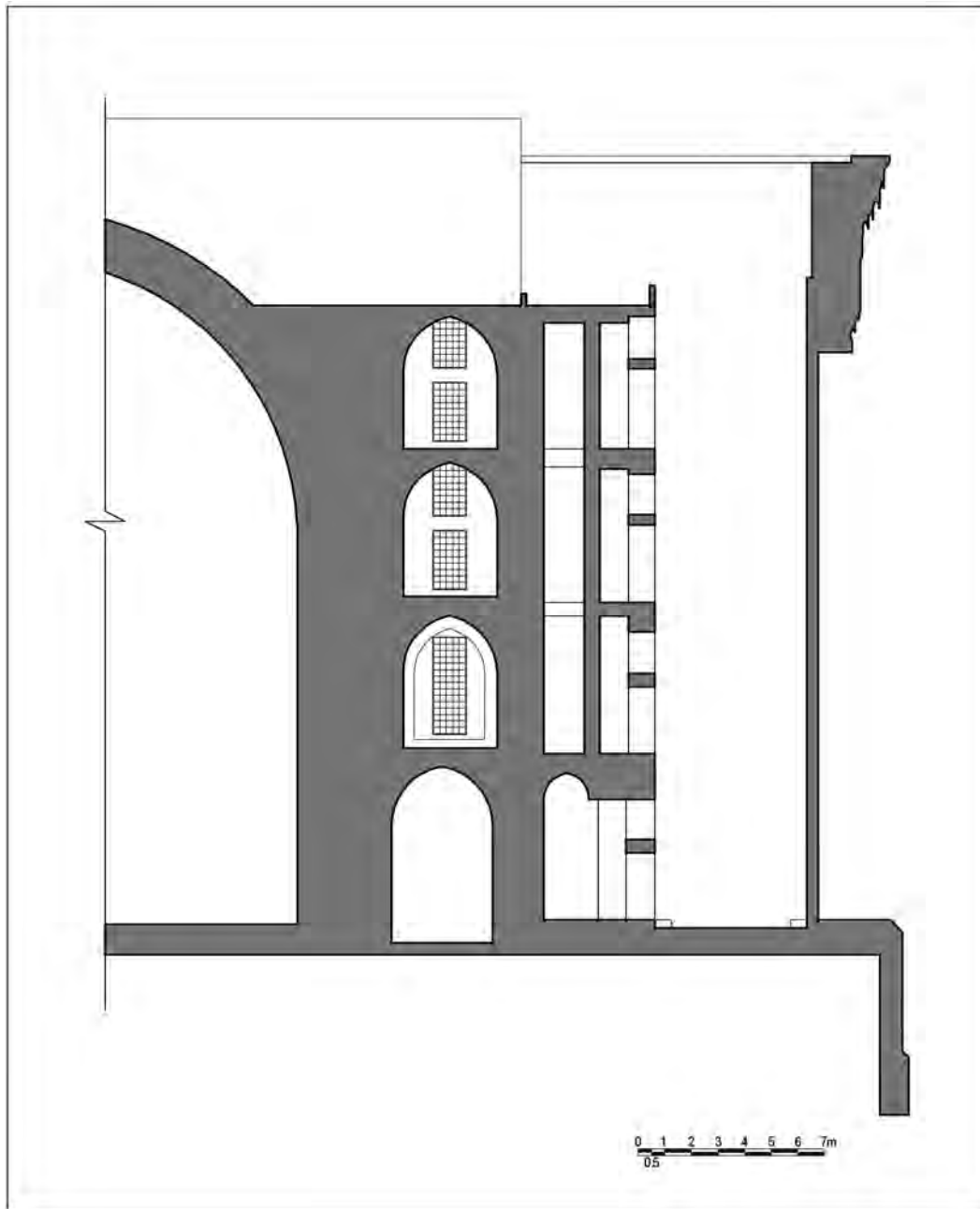


Fig. 20. Ḥanbaliyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, section BB (H. Al-Harithy)



Fig. 21. Ḥanafīyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, interior view of courtyard (H. Al-Harithy)



Fig. 22. Ḥanafīyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, interior view of *iwān* (H. Al-Harithy)



Fig. 23. Ḥanafiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, interior view of living unit (H. Al-Harithy)



Fig. 24a. Ḥanafīyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, interior view from living units (H. Al-Harithy)



Fig. 24b. Ḥanafiyah Madrasah, Complex of Sultan Ḥasan, Cairo, interior view from living units (H. Al-Harithy)