

Strongholds of the World

Interdisciplinary lecture series of the
Marburger Arbeitskreises für europäische Burgenforschung e.V., Germany,
and Aarhus University, research programme “Materials, Culture and Heritage”, Denmark
in 2021

3. meeting:

When: Thursday, June 24, 2021

Entry: 13:45 PM Copenhagen. Begin: 14:00 PM Copenhagen

Topic: Alexandria’s urban fortifications under Mamluk and Ottoman rule

Register in advance for this webinar:

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Kathrin Machinek, Alexandria, Egypt:

Alexandria’s urban fortifications under Mamluk and Ottoman rule

This session from our lecture series “Strongholds of the World” will shed light upon the defense systems of the Mamluk and Ottoman period Alexandria. Alexandria, Egypt’s main seaport on the Mediterranean shore, was often praised by travelers from the past for its impressive fortifications. Nowadays, only few remnants exist of the former urban defense system, the city walls, forts and watchtowers having almost entirely been demolished in the late 19th century by the rapidly expanding modern city.

As a coastal border town, medieval Alexandria was constantly a target for enemy invasions, thus the various Islamic rulers kept renovating and modernizing the fortifications. After the disastrous raid of Alexandria by the Cypriots in 1365, the Mamluk sultans repaired the damages and established new strongholds. In 1477, the entrance to the Eastern harbor was secured by a new majestic fortress, constructed on the ruins of the famous ancient lighthouse.

After the conquest of Mamluk Egypt by the Ottomans in 1516, Alexandria was located within the territory dominated by the Sublime Porte and therefore less exposed to seaborne attacks. The citizens started to settle outside the city walls between the two harbors and abandoned the old town *intra muros*. Nevertheless, the Ottoman governors preserved the urban fortifications and added new forts in the harbor zone.



Aerial view of the fort Qaitbay, Alexandria

Our Speaker:

Dr. Kathrin Machinek, research engineer at the French CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), is working as a building historian at the Centre d'Études Alexandrines, USR 3134, in Alexandria/ Egypt, under the direction of Dr. Marie-Dominique Nenna. [<https://www.cealex.org/le-cealex/annuaire/km/>]

She obtained a Phd in architecture at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany: « The Qaitbay fort in Alexandria – History and Architecture of a Mamluk fortress in the urban defense system of Alexandria » [<https://publikationen.bibliothek.kit.edu/1000047346>]



Research themes

- Military history and fortifications of Alexandria
- Islamic fortifications from the Middle Ages to modern time
- Medieval and Ottoman Alexandria
- Mamluk architecture
- Archaeological excavations at fort Qaitbay and fort Tabiyet Nahassin in Alexandria
- Features of Pharaonic architecture in Alexandria

Short Bibliography

K. Machinek 2020, « Deux citernes hypostyles dans le fort Qaitbay (Alexandrie) », in M.-D. Nenna (ed.), *Alexandrina 5*, ÉtAlex 50, Alexandria, 2020, p. 439-464 (to go to press).

K. Machinek 2018, « Alexandria – Ottoman fortifications in a Mediterranean trading town », Symposium *Fortifications of the Ottoman period in the Aegean*, Ephorate of Lesbos, 30th October – 31st October 2018, p. 239-250 (to go to press).

K. Machinek 2015, « Aperçu sur les fortifications médiévales d'Alexandrie. Histoire, architecture et archéologie », in M. Eychenne, A. Zouache (ed.), *La guerre dans le Proche-Orient: État de la question, lieux communs, nouvelles approches*, RAPH 37, Cairo, Damascus, 2015, p. 363-394.

K. Machinek 2014, « Hygiene in islamischen Festungsbauten », in O. Wagener (ed.), *Aborte im Mittelalter und der Frühen Neuzeit – Bauforschung, Archäologie, Kulturgeschichte, Studien zur internationalen Architektur- und Kunstgeschichte* 117, Petersberg, 2014, p. 292-301.

K. Machinek 2014, *Das Fort Qaitbay in Alexandria – Baugeschichte und Architektur einer mamlukischen Hafenseftung im mittelalterlichen Stadtbefestigungssystem von Alexandria*, PhD thesis, submitted at the Department of Architecture, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in 2014.

K. Machinek 2010, « Der Wandel der Stadtbefestigung Alexandrias vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart », in O. Wagener (ed.), *vmbringt mit starcken turnen, murn – Ortsbefestigungen im Mittelalter, Beihefte zur Mediaevistik* 15, Frankfurt a.M., 2010, p. 431-450.

K. Machinek 2009, *Le fort Qaitbay, Les petits guides d'Alexandrie*, Alexandria, 2009, edition in English, French and Arabic.