Historians usually prefer to work on texts. The specificity of their subject is to give a critical reading of these texts. Urban history however is not a subject in itself. It is part of history but deals with something that is concrete: the town which in some cases is still standing. In so far as the terrain still holds some traces of the past, it can, provided that you have a method, help the historian in his research work and add to the more usual type of material.

Taking examples concerning Cairo in medieval times, I would like to consider what one can understand about the town in the two cases that follow: when part of the town has disappeared and all we have left are texts and sometimes a collection of historical maps to help us find out what the place was; what do we know about its morphological aspects? And proceeding the other way round, when the ancient and yet still prevailing lay-out of the land still partly exists, what does it tell us on such and about a period in the history of the town?

Among the documents used for studying a town within its formal and even material aspects at a given period, one can include iconographic representations and historical maps. In the case of Cairo, the most often used historical map is that of the “Description de l’Egypte” of 1798. It is indeed the first “modern” and reliable map. And yet it describes the town nearly three centuries after the end of the Mameluke period. Concerning the medieval period, as one may guess, there are very few maps and they are not at all reliable. Of all those published in Europe until the XVIth century, the one drawn by the Venetian Mateo Pagano which was edited in Venice in 1549 is one of the most accurate. Jean-Claude Garcin considers this document was established at the very end of the XVth century—hence the end of the Mameluke period. An over-all glance at the Venetian map, compared to the one of 1798 and to another type of sources, the Hitat—which I shall present later, shows that it is all together reliable.

Within a well defined setting (the pyramids, the Nile, the Muqattam Plateau), the villages on the left bank (Giza and Imbâba) and the urban masses on the right bank (Fustât, Cairo, Bulâq, as well as the island of Rûdîj) are drawn as from a “standing model”. The town is situated within fairly clear boundaries, partly enclosed in its walls; to the East from Burg al-Zafar to the Citadel; to the north from Burg al-Zafar to Huji al-Nâširî; to the south, the wall of Saladin surmounted by the aqueduct of al-Nâšir, on which the draughtsman has not forgotten the arches, enclosing both the ruins of the eastern zone of Fustât and that part of the town which has not yet been ruined. Between the most southern part of the wall of Saladin that did not stand the weight of the aqueduct (which finds its supply in Fumm al-Hâlîj and not south of Fustât) and the part near the Citadel that was able to carry these arches, we can see how much the place was ruined and how difficult it was to extract any clear information from it. The urban mass that represents Fustât (unlike Bulâq) with its street network or separate buildings, is another sign, as are the ruins of the old town (between Cairo and Fustât-Miṣr) which are represented by hills of debris. Outside these urban zones the author has drawn the space which then was not the town and was at the time often covered by cleared gardens or wild vegetation (between Cairo and Bulâq, between the two canals, on the banks of the Nile). From the city, one can easily recognize the different districts: outside the northern wall, Ḥusayniyya, intra muros all the way to Bâb Zuwayla; Gâhira, south of that gate, the district of Birkat al-Fil (with no indication of the pond which I cannot explain); on the other side of the artery of Ṣâlîb, the district of Ḥûlûn, without the mosque with the helical minaret; between the two canals we see the more recent and less dense populated districts of Birkat al-Azbakiyya and Ḥûk al-Nâšir. To the east, extra muros, the tombs of the sultans and the graveyard of al-Qarâfa, to the south.

One can see few open spaces except for a few squares (“Romle” or Rūmayla under the Citadel), and ponds (Birkat al-Azbakiyya, B. al-Rîfîl, but strangely enough, as we have seen, not Birkat al-Fil). One can also see parts of the town in ruins (al-‘Uṭuf) and a space with horses, which could be the isfâb (stable) of the race-course of al-Nâširî and subsequently we notice a very high density of the urban network: the ground space leaves no empty patches and the buildings are at least one storey high.

One may think that this extremely dense frame of buildings goes together with a network of narrow streets. On the contrary, we can see big axes more or less orientated. Those orientated north-south which are for the main ones: the street of Bâb al-Nâšr to Bâb al-Mâḥrûq (which should have
been slightly more to the north) or "Sūq al-Gamāliyya"; Bayn al-Qašrayn that goes to the north as far as the Husayniyya district and to the south towards Fustāt: the "Ṣāri' al-Aʿzam" and towards the Citadel the "Ṣāri' Bāb al-Wazīr"; and from there onwards and all the way to the furthest southern limit of the urban zone, we have Sūq al-Silāḥ; we can see the street that goes along the Ḥāliq al-Miṣri but only its southern part, the northern part Bayn al-Sūrayn being hidden behind the drawing of houses; the two canals the Ḥāliq al-Miṣri and the Ḥāliq al-Nāṣirī, and between the two, east of the Birkat al-Azbakīyya there is a street that can no longer be seen on the map of the "Description de l'Égypte" of 1798. The axes orientated east-west; along the northern wall extra muros, there is the very large artery now called "Street al-Faḡḡāla" linking the tombs of the sultans situated in the east of the town and the Nile, going through Bulāq; intramuros we see a very straight street called "Suwayqat Amir Quyūs" by Maqrīzī.

Several parts of this street can be found on the map of the "Description", on which we can read the names of the streets. Starting from the east: 'Aṭfāt al-Dubābiyya (which cannot be seen on Pagano's map), then, from Bayn al-Qašrayn to the canal, Sikkat al-amri and then, from the canal where one can see both the gate and the bridge, Darb Bāb al-Shāriyya, followed by Sikkat al-Arīyān, Sūq al-Zalāt and Sūq al-Ḥašāb, from then through Bāb al-Bahr which is clearly drawn; along the southern limit of Qāhirā and along Bāb Zuwayla which is clearly indicated, the street Taht al-Rab' as far as the Ḥāliq (the bridge Qanṭarat Bāb al-Ḥarq is clearly drawn), the artery that goes all the way to the north of Bulāq via Sūq Bāb al-Ḥarq and Sikkat Bāb al-Lūq; the fourth important axis orientated east-west, the Şālība takes you from the Citadel to the Ḥāliq at Qanṭārī al-Sība' and Qanṭarat al-Sadd, and to the Nile. Some other details of the urban structure include: ponds, bridges over the canals, closed gardens or open tree-planted areas, hills of rubbish around the town, cemeteries and a few noticeable buildings: the Citadel, the Maristān (hospital) of Qalāwūn and the madrasa nextdoor to it (al-Sālihīyya?); different places: Rumayla, the big square beneath the Citadel,
wide open spaces created by the flow of the Nile to the west, still sandy and not yet built on (these areas are often called: "Hān al-Ḥašlī, Bāb al-Nāṣr, Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, the Gamālūn"); technical details such as the sāqiyya (which is a sort of lifting machine used for rising the water of the Nile) and the "Nilometer" as well as a number of other details that don't quite concern the morphology of the town (boats on the Nile, a variety of trees, crocodiles, ladies' outfits and different mounts...).

The strictly morphological elements given by the Venetian draughtsman can also be found in other documents; we used the "scientific" maps of the "Description" to help us identify the main axes. Nevertheless, Pagano's map shows precisely what the other sources do not necessarily clearly indicate: how expansive Cairo was at the end of the Mameluke period. Indeed, we can see the sign of the different crises of the end of the XVIth century: the district of al-'Uṯuf, north-east of al-Qāhira is still in ruins on this representation; and one may notice the signs of recovered prosperity, before the big crisis of the very end of the regime. The town spreads out to the west, as far as the canal al-Nāšīrī, and reaches Bulāq passing through a zone of gardens. As for Fustāṭ, although it was separated from Cairo by hills of debris (we are no longer at the height of the Fatimid period), it is part of the general urban entity, within the walls of Salahūn.

A comparison with the map of 1798 is edifying: some districts have become more densely populated, such as al-'Uṯuf which has been rebuilt, Azbakiyyah and Būlāq where the new urban expansion has taken place; Fustāṭ on the other hand has considerably decreased during that time and all that is left between Cairo and the former big harbour, is a vast stretch of desert land.

This engraving of Cairo at the end of the Mameluke period can give us indications about the general structure of the city and its global expansion. As far as details are concerned however, it does not tell us much. The scale, the fact it is represented "standing", does not enable us to locate the narrow streets and monuments in a precise way except for a few noticeable exceptions. Even a modern map such as the "Description" (if one ex-
isted for the period we are dealing with would not instruct us on certain aspects including morphological ones about the town. The information given by a map is indeed limited because the whole of the town is being considered. In order to know these details, one would have to reduce our study to the scale of one of its parts, the district.

I have had the opportunity to work on one of these parts, Fustāṭ, whose first characteristic probably is that of being a historical town. The history of this place is so considerable that it is impossible not to take this fact into account when presenting this locality, which is why we have drawn the consequences mentioned previously. Founded by the Muslims during the Conquest in the XVIIth century, this city was deeply ruined at the end of the XIVth- beginning of the XVth century and the site was not rebuilt before the XIXth century. The breach was so radical and lasted so long, that it is impossible to envisage studying the morphological aspects of the medieval town using the terrain as it lies today (I am not talking about archeological excavations, we shall see later what information they can give). We are then left with the texts. What can one learn about the morphology of the town from looking into these sources? What can one learn about the urban forms of Fustāṭ (then called "Mišr") when reading authors that wrote in the XIVth century just before its decline?

The most important text describing Fustāṭ-Mišr during the Mameluke period is the Kitāb al-Intišār by Ibn Dūqmāq. This book belongs to the literary type of the Hitāt, in which the town is presented street by street, building by building. Is it possible to go from this description to a cartographic representation? Following the work of the Orientalist Paul Casanova, I have tried to make a reconstruction of Fustāṭ, which, considering the level of precision in the information given by Ibn Dūqmāq, could not be more than a diagram. It can nevertheless be useful in so far as it helps us locate the different names mentioned (the names of streets and buildings), or the functions of the town, giving the successive stages of urban growth (or decline) etc.

Considering the urban forms, what do we learn from the texts? Ibn Dūqmāq gives no details, whether in numbers or not, and since it is not possible to take the terrain into consideration, (because it has undergone too
many drastic changes since these historical times), one can but envisage a schematic reconstitution. The study of this text, however, does give us some indication on the organisation of the town. Thus, generally speaking, Fustât during the Mameluke period seems to be a rather open town, where both people and goods could circulate easily. We notice very few blind alleys, in fact in the western part of the town, we may notice several big axes lying parallel to the Nile (generally north-south) and others going from the Nile to the inside of the land (east-west).

It seems that there are no urban sub-entities, what we would call "districts". Indeed neither the toponymy nor what we could know about the morphology (for instance there is no mentioning of gates), nor even the functions or religious repartition enable us to suppose Fustât was divided into "districts". As far as Cairo is concerned, André Raymond has found in a document of the Mameluke period, the Sulūk of Maqrizi¹³, the mentioning of "huwarā I-hārāt". Does that mean district guards? Does this mean we can question their existence in the case of medieval Cairo?

In the case of Fustât, another type of document, the Geniza papers "reveal the interesting fact that six hundred years after the Muslim conquest, the main quarters were still called by the names of those ancient Arab groups, such as Banāna, Bani Wā'il".¹⁴ Ibn Dumāq uses the same names to locate the places contemporary to him. For example a street which is said to be situated "bi I-Tuğayb", named after one of the tribes having participated in the Conquest and having taken a dīrā, a tribal plot, in the Fustât of the time. It seems to me that if the sub-urban areas are named in reference to this period, though the morphology could not have altered (since until the VIIth century there were only settlements that then became a town in the XIVth century and that from one period to the next, there was the great crisis of the XIth century that ruined Fustât then followed a time of growth), it means that these sub-entities do not exist in the city at the time of the Geniza, described further on by Ibn Dumāq: the fact that the names have not changed since the XVIIth century is a sign that we are not dealing with entities of the XIVth century, which is what Goltein thinks too: "The topographic terminology in the Geniza documents is rather fluid, which seems to indicate that in practice the borders between the various parts of the city cannot have been too strict."¹⁵ As for the members of different confessions, they tend to come together but not in an exclusive way, there are never ghettos (in this respect both the texts of the Geniza and the one by Ibn Dumāq come to the same conclusion).

These considerations show in what way a descriptive historical text, such as the work of Ibn Dumāq, can add to the knowledge we have of urban forms. A fine analysis of the study of the author has made it possible to judge how far the town had spread towards the east during the prosperous period in the middle of the XIVth century and the surging of the ruin at the time when the author writes, at the beginning of the XVth century. If one wants to go further and compare the Mameluke town and the Fatimid city, (as far as their respective extensions are concerned, which means asking the question: did the town of the sunnite sultans stretch out as far as the one of the shi'ite caliphs?) We must then bring some answers combining the information given in the texts with other sources. Since the medieval city has not remained on the site of Fustât, we will have to deal with archeological excavations.

I have tried to bring together the diagram of Fustât drawn according to the Kitāb al-Intišār, and the street network carried out by two archeologists at the beginning of the century: Ali Bahgat and Albert Gabriel⁷. Their excavations have been redated thanks to modern methods (chronology established by the study of the stratigraphy) by the American archeologist George Scanlon⁹. Putting on the same level the excavated network and more theoretical the results of a study on the XIVth century documents, we see that the two meet, which means that the results obtained from the reading of the texts are satisfactory. However, they do not overlap one another, which could mean the following: as the archeologists have not discovered any material dating back after the XIVth century, the streets revealed are either contemporary or previous to this date, right in the middle of the Fatimid period. Knowing this, and since the two networks do not overlap, one may come to the conclusion that Ibn Duqmāq has not omitted any streets. If the town of the XIVth century had spread out further to the east and if the author had forgotten to mention some names, Scanlon would have found material from the XIVth century. If the excavated part has not been occupied after the XIVth century and, if the XIVth century au-
thors have not omitted any names and gave a precise account of the maximum expansion of the town towards the east, it means that during the great period of Fatimid prosperity, (beginning of the XIth c.) the city spread out to the east as far as the excavated zone and maybe even further to the east. The great crisis that hit Egypt in the years 1060 (from which we know that it ruined whole parts of its capital) has also affected Fustat that has never recovered despite the boom in the Mameluke and Ayyoubid period.

This work of bringing together the results obtained from the study of the text and those of the archæological excavations enables us to know the exact limit of the Mameluke rebirth, and thereby to work out a synthetic diachronic map of the different stages of prosperity and ruin of Fustat.

We can exploit the material traces that are still standing in order to adjust our knowledge of the history of the city. Since in the present case there are no visible remains of the medieval town, we shall have to use the help of the archeologists. Elsewhere in Cairo where the structure has been well preserved, we shall work on the terrain. Indeed Cairo being built with bricks and stones, did not suffer from fires which usually was the main cause of the destruction of towns having used wood as building material (such was the case of Istanbul). Moreover, this city was structured as early as the Ayyoubid rulers and the Mamelukes so that the main axes which can be seen on the Venetian map of the end of the XVth century are still prevailing in today's city. There are from the north to the south, from Bâb al-Futûh to Bâb Zuwayla the street still present today called al-Mu'izz and its extension, the Qaṣabat Ridwân and the Ḥayyâmiyya; going from Bâb al-Naṣr, there is the Gamâliyya; from Bâb Zuwayla to the Citadel, lies the street Darb al-Ahmar; from the Citadel to the Nile, the Ṣaṭība. All these axes were formed in the medieval period, and its expansion observed under Ottoman rule was a more dense quarters than an extension of the city (We noticed this when comparing the medieval map and the modern one). Furthermore, these old quarters (Qâhira, the Darb al-Ahmar, Bûlāq) have not, apart from a few exceptions, been integrated to the modern town in the XIXth and XXth century by what one might have called elsewhere a "haussmannisation". So we still have in Cairo, structured according to axes formed in the medieval period,

quarters which we may call "traditional". This prevailing factor is what makes the historical study possible taking the terrain into consideration.

Because the terrain gives us a great amount of information, it is a complex whole, difficult to deal with. Because they are selective, the graphic documents representing it make it easier to read. A reading of the terrain is what we are going to attempt, as a source which can be used in addition to the texts that is, the terrain or its mediatized representation: cartography.

Let us take as an example of this reading the analysis one can make using the map of the street network around the Mamâluke mosque al-Mâridâni (1340). If we look at the map of the mosque in its surrounding site, we immediately notice it is orientated towards Mecca as it should according to one of the essential obligations of Islam. On the other hand the rest of the network is not; there's no reason why the houses which constitute most of the network should (when one wants to pray at home, no matter how the room is orientated) so long as the faithful prostrates himself towards the holy city and all you need is to set

AN EXAMPLE OF DARRÂBA FROM E.W. LANE, MANNERS AND COSTUMES OF THE MODERN EGYPTIANS.
a little carpet facing Mecca). The northeastern corner of the building has been built in order not to encroach on the street, which means it did not come later than the mosque. Furthermore, we notice there is a slight curve in the street at this level, as if trying to avoid the mosque, which means it did not come after the street. If neither of them came after the other, it means they are concomitant. We know when the mosque was built (1340). Through this analysis we learn that this was when the street was formalized, at least that part of it. We can then replace its history back into its context which we find in the written documents. When the Citadel was built, from 1171 on, there had to be a way leading to the ancient princely town of Qāhira. Did they then use a preexisting lane that then became a street or did they create a new one? All we know is that the study of the plan of the mosque Maridānī in its surrounding site gives us a more precise idea on when the street which then became the "Darb al-Ahmār" was formalized.

In some cases it is possible and useful not only to make use of the terrain as we have seen, but also to combine its study with an analysis of the text. That is what we have tried to do in a collective research work dealing with the historic centre of Cairo on both sides of a main axis represented by the street al-Mu‘izz in the quarters of the Hān al-Hallī and the Sāqā, taking into account for the historical periods both the texts and the terrain. While the architects drew a "section" at the ground level of the buildings in today’s town according to cadastral maps to the scale 1/500th, the historians gathered systematically the texts available (chronicles, āḥābat, archives) in order to confront the information obtained from the two sources so that we could locate the names and monuments described in the archives, and also understand the general topography of the quarter according to its historical expansion. An act of endowment gives the hudūd (set boundaries) of the plots built-on or not, which belong to it; once we have read the Hīṭat of Maqrizi which is a general description of the town, we know the medieval toponymy and are able to locate them and sometimes reconstitute them in today’s urban network.

Of course a reconstitution is more easily made when the building is still there (nevertheless we have also made assumptions concerning buildings that now exist only in the texts). It is the case of the endowment on the Maristān of Qalāwūn to which the sultan includes a certain number of buildings that he lets out among which three qaysāriyya-s. Here is the description of one of them: 21

1.136 – …the whole of the qaysāriyya
1.137 – situated in al-Qāhira at the beginning of Bayn al-Qaşrayn; it is orientated in the bahrī direction when facing the madrasa al-Sālihiyya and to the right
1.138-of the one that goes towards Bayn al-Qaşrayn and Bāb al-Naşr, the Ḥanqāh / Sa‘ād al-Śu‘ādā‘, Ḥān Mīrgawān, the paths (turuq)
1.139 – split up and other places, and to the left of the one going from the places mentioned to al-Suyūfīyyīn,
1.140 – and Hān Māsūr, al-Suqūtiyyīn and other places. There are many boutiques, each one closing with a door with two shutters
1.141 – and some of them are weather boards (darārib) each one with a round frame (manābili) with on top a šurfa. On the qiblī side,
1.142 – there are seventeen shops and two maq‘ād-s. In the bahrī part on this side there
are six shops, at the back of each one of them is a door.

1.143 - without a door over it; two of them have a chancel (rufūf) in the round part. There are six shops adjoining them, each one closing.

1.144 - with a door with two shutters. In this qaysāriyya there are two passages (tariqān) each one giving access to /this qaysāriyya/. They have not

1.145 - got a door. There are two maq'ad-s on the bahri side. On the sarqi side are three shops on top of which is a surfa and round manābil-s;

1.146 - each one of them closes with a door with two shutters. On the garbi side there are nine shops each one closing

1.147 - with a door with two shutters with surfa and round frame (manbaḥ). The number of shops which are inside

1.148 - the qaysāriyya is of twenty-two; each one closing with a door with two shutters

1.149 - and some have darārib with each time a surfa and a round frame (manbaḥ). The top of the inside (the ceiling) of this qaysāriyya

1.150 - are gmalūnāt of cane covered with wood. All the shops (inside and outside) of this qaysāriyya

1.151 - add up to sixty-three shops and four maq'ad-s. All this is enclosed within four limited orientations (hudūd): the qibli limit

1.152 - is given by the lane (tariq) passing between them and the madrasa al-Sāḥiḥiya al-Naqīmiyya; the bahri limit

1.153 - is given by the main street (al-tariq al-Udmā) passing between this qaysāriyya and the Sağa and the shops

1.154 of al-Suyūṭiyin which are a waqf of the madrasa al-Sāḥiḥiya al-Naqīmiyya; the sarqi limit

1.155 - is towards the rest of what is left of Bayn al-Qāṣrayn and the ġarbi limit is given by the street through which one reaches

1.156 - the two funduq-s Sams al-Ḥawaš Masrūr between this qaysāriyya and the shops

1.157 - one of which is called "the dwelling of the Sarif al-‘Aṭṭār and the one which remains" the two dwellings in its limits and in its rights.

As well as all the other goods registered in this endowment’s act, this monument is first situated in the general urban context (1. 136 to 140) and having been described (1. 140-151) within the limits of its four orientated boundaries (1. 151-157). These two groups of information, especially the more accurate second have made it possible to locate and find the monument which today holds jewellers shops on the outside and inside a souvenir shop that sells mainly copper items. Thanks to the description made by the document, and with the help of the plan of the building as it stands today, we can assume a restitution.

The reading of the documents alone would certainly have given us a theoretical model of qaysāriyya, at the survey of the terrain would have given us some undetailed information as to the history of the building. A confrontation of the two types of information gives us a more precise idea of this building from a morphological point of view (we notice that during the Qalāwūn period, we had to deal with a "bar-shaped" type of building with closed shops inside and outside, one went in through two open passages).

If the restitution of this building was easily achieved because it was still there and had not been altered much, for others where all we have is the description we have had to make do with hypothetical reconstructions. Indeed different degrees of reliability depend on the state of the terrain.

The noticeable buildings we were able to find on the terrain and that are described with sufficient details so that we can reconstitute the plan for the period concerned, usually fit into a "complex" of several other buildings that work in symbiosis: on the one hand the religious institutions that cost money (mosque, madrasa, maristān...), on the other, those that were let out and brought in money (qaysāriyya, funduq, rabʾ...); the whole of these buildings forming a diversified urban substructure. Thus, the waqf of Qalāwūn to which belongs the qaysāriyya presented above was established in 685/1286 to cover the needs of the Maristān. Indeed, it is able to function thanks to a certain number of let out establishments that are all, except for a garden situated in the north of Cairo, very close to this institution. There are three qaysāriyya, one rabʾ, three hammam-s and the ground for a fourth, a great number of maq’ad-s and a āīrba which is a wasteland resulting from the ruin of former buildings. So we see that the sultan, by applying this waqf does not only allow the functioning and existence of a pious foundation, his maristān, but he also, thanks to the whole of the establishments, manages to equip the town.

He achieves this it both by building a religious edifice and also with places that have a
commercial lodging function. It is this effort of localisation that made us become aware of this aspect of "urban promotion" which characterizes the urban investment of the Mamluk sultans.

If from one building to the other it difficult to make a reliable restitution, one can easily understand that it is impossible to reconstitute a whole quarter and present successive chronological stages; "Han al-Hallîî in the XIth century, "Han al-Hallîî in the XIVth century", and so on. The system of waqfs does not "cover" all of the quarter, and we do not have written documents for all the buildings. Which means we can go by, for some parts of town, "striking" dates corresponding to the great historical ruptures that took place in the history of the town. The greatest destruction was the ruin at the end of the Fatimid period and the destruction of the old palaces of the Caliphs by the Ayyoubids. Some very few hypothetical traces can be found in the detailed plot structure of the area, â€“ Fawwaz Baker has tried to register them. To try and reconstitute the plans of the Fatimid palaces more precisely seems to be going too far. The quarter has been far too perturbed throughout the centuries that followed. We could come out with a general truth: it is possible to make an urban restitution only when the network has not been destructured (which occurs when the plot structure has been modified) by ruins or considerable foundations. Practically, as far as that quarter is concerned, it first means that in the time of ruins that followed the Fatimid period adding to that the destructions caused by the Ayyoubids, one cannot use the terrain to study the history of this area. It can only be dealt with through the texts as far as the Fatimid period is concerned (that is what Ravaisse did, using the Hâta of Maqrîzî exclusively for his assumed reconstitution of the palaces of the shi'ite caliphs).

Moreover, from the Ayyoubid period on, and for more than three centuries, (which is not long on the scale of the history of the town), we can observe some considerable foundations, (such as for instance the waqf of Qalâwûn), each one obliterating what there was before, leaving only the latest ones to be taken into account. This dynamical aspect, rather than a set vision clearly dated, is what the historian who is a witness of this progressive reurbanisation can see. For period-of great urban expansion such as the Mameluke period, it seems more appropriate to study the process of this evolution rather than trying to mark strata stages in a town that is not. Why try to stop time, why "fix" the town when what defines it under the rule of these sultans is its extraordinary mobility? The methodological limit we come across has the advantage of making us aware of the specificity of this quarter which is to have attracted the great foundations and to have been throughout the whole period of expansion from the end of the XIth century to the beginning of the XVIth, in permanent evolution. It brings into relief a phenomenon which I would be tempted to call "building promotion". This particular urban expansion first took place on the ruins of the great Fatimid palaces. Then, as the texts say, the quarter having more or less reorganized its urban structure, the support for the new foundations was probably a fairly loose urban network. We may notice sales (of properties), exchanges and despoiling to make important transactions possible. But they do not take place to the detriment of one another. The despoiling seldom concerns important waqfs. On the contrary, the "promoters" (sultans and great emirs) deal with buildings isolated, often bankrupt, because of some crisis that periodically affects medieval Egypt, and not with one of the units of the fairly sound "complex" which has been created recently (economically sound, since we are dealing with wealthy waqfs, and morally speaking, can one rob the Maristân of one of his waqfs ?). The expansion of this quarter takes place according to the historical axis which had already imposed its structure, though differently under Fatimid rule. As far as that period is concerned, if one can only make assumptions as to the implantation of the palaces that disappeared as early as the XIth century, we notice that the facade of mosque al-Aqmar, still in place, is not parallel to the wall of the qibla which stands opposite and must have been set by the lay-out of the road. And despite their importance and great number, the mosques that have been built later on have not modified this lay-out but have "adapted" themselves, the builders using the "thickness of the walls to make up for this so as to respect the ritual orientation towards Mecca. From this we see that the axes have an impact on the structure. Another element is that these foundations follow a certain pattern of construction, taking place in successive phases from the principal axis to the secondary streets inside of the quarter. Within the "continuous pro-
cess” which is the urban form\textsuperscript{29}, the most central part of Qāhirah has always been the pole of expansion. In an ultimate phase (starting in the XVIIIth century), the expansion will take place by densification and no more by extension.

Different types of sources can be useful to a historian of towns: material sources, (archeology, the terrain) or written documents. The ideal is when one can use both in a complementary way. When it is possible to consider the terrain, its particular history is what guides the method: the quarter of the centre of Qāhirah has been marked by successive sultanid and emirial foundations, it can be defined by its dynamic expansion, by the strong desire of the political group to promote the urban network. Its study can on no account be a succession of static descriptions. This is the process that would be wise to bear in mind when attempting to analyse growth.

Sylvie Denoix

\textsuperscript{1} Cf for Istanbul, the work of J.-L. Arnaud, Sources iconographiques d’histoire de l’espace urbain, l’exemple de Galata à Istanbul, thesis of CEAA of Oriental Cities, DESS in urban studies, School of Architecture of Versailles, April 1986, not published.


\textsuperscript{5} “Une carte du Caire vers la fin du sultanat de Qaytubây”, in the article quoted in note 3, p. 272-286.

\textsuperscript{6} Located on one of his maps by Popper, Ibn Taghri Birdi’s chronicle, University of California, Publications in Semitic Philology, vol. 15, map 12, “The Nile at Cairo”, between the two canals: Sultân’s Nâshr race course.


\textsuperscript{9} Cf Doris Behrens Abou-Set, Azbakiyya and its environs from Azbak to Ismâ’îl, 1476-1879, Cahier des Annales Islamologiques n. 6, Cairo, IFAO, 1985.

\textsuperscript{10} Cf Nelly Hanna, An urban History of Bû‘lân in the Mamluk and Ottoman period, Cahier des Annales Islamologiques n. 3, Cairo, IFAO, 1983.

\textsuperscript{11} In my “Décrire la ville, Fustât-Mîr d’après Ibn Duqmâq et Maqârizî”, Cairo, IFAO, coll. “Etudes urbaines”.


\textsuperscript{13} Kitâb al-sulûk bi ma’ârin duwal al-mulûk, Cairo, Maṭâ’îa li ḡinân al-ta’lîf wa l-ta’argama wa l-nâsîr, Cairo, 1971, T. 1, p. 351 (ramadan 791). I thank him for having given me these references.


\textsuperscript{15} S. Goltien, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{16} Décrire la ville, op. cit., second part.

\textsuperscript{17} Excavations published in Fouilles d’al Foustat, Paris, E. de Bocard, 1921.


\textsuperscript{19} Cf André Raymond, “L’activité architecturale au Caire à l’époque ottomane”, Annales Islamologiques, XXV, pp. 343-362.

\textsuperscript{20} Deals with a program of IFAO-CEDEJ-IREMAME whose developments will be published in IFAO, entitled “Le Hân al-Halîf et ses environs, un centre commercial et artisanal, I. Espaces urbains”, under the direction of J.-Ch. Depaula, M. Tuchscherrer and myself.

\textsuperscript{21} Kitâb al-Mawâ’iz wa-l-Wâlab fi al-Hîdâyat wa l-áâr, Cairo, Bulâq ed.; this famous work is what gave its name to the literary genre of the šâlat, texts “consisting in a description of historical topography” (Claude Cahen, EL2, p. 20, “ört.”)

\textsuperscript{22} All the texts of archives concerning the foundations of the quarter studied will be published by Hussâm al-dîn Ismâ’îl in the work quoted supra, note 13. Here act of waqf of the sultan Qâlîwân of the 128th Safar 885/9th April 1286. Document of the Ministry of waqfs n. 1010. In the egyptian waqfs, the bâher orientation indicates towards the river (al-bahr), to the west; the qibl orientation gives the direction towards Mecca; so garbî and šardî are respectively the south and the north.

\textsuperscript{23} In their book Architectural terms in mamluk documents, (Cairo, American University Press, 1990, p. 46), M. Amin and L. Ibrahim give the definition of Butrus al-Bustânî in Muhît al-Muhtâr: “the darrâba of a shop is one of the two panels of a door, the one of top adjusting to the one below”. See also A. Barthelemy, Dictionnaire..., “the closing of the shop consists of two boards one going up, the second coming down to open and then come together describing the reverse move to close. In addition to these two vertical panels, a shop could have a shutter opening horizontally. Dozy in his Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes, I, p. 429, writes: “When the door of a shop is split in two in the width, each one of the two boards is called darrâba”. We can see two illustrations of shops with this type of closing system in E.W. Lane, Manners and customs of the Modern Egyptians, p. 305 and 318. I thank Jean-Paul Pascual for his help in finding out the definition of this technical term.

\textsuperscript{24} M. Amin and L. Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 115.

\textsuperscript{25} In Lebanon, now, this term means a "balcony": in the mamluk texts, it is rather a marble decoration placed over a door, cf. M. Amin, L. Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 80.

\textsuperscript{26} Cf his article and especially his map in our collective study: Le Hân al-Halîf ...

\textsuperscript{27} Essai sur l’histoire et la topographie du Caire, Cairo, IFAO, MMAF I and II, 1897-1890.

\textsuperscript{28} Cf Philippe Panerai, chapter “Croissances” (p. 15-37 from Panerai et al., Éléments d’analyse urbaine, Bruxelles, AAM, 1980).