



CAIRO

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 Institue Francais D'architecture

Cairo is certainly not a city that offers itself up easily to the appreciation of tourists who are generally passing through on their way to the spectacular archeological sites which begin at the very gates of the city and can be seen rising at the end of unencumbered avenues. Moreover, the old city is not adapted to the requirements of groups of tourists. Apart from the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities (which no one can deny is one of the richest in the world), it is only sites such as al-Azhar and its nearby bazar, the Citadel and the recent Mohammad Ali mosque that appear therefore on the programmes of the rapid visitor.

More so than any other city perhaps, this one needs to be revealed by a series of itineraries which would, nevertheless, only begin to touch upon the riches of its streets, its network of tiny alleys, the variety of its squares, gates, monuments, palaces, and passageways; the same applies to the diversity of Cairo's urban patterns, which reflect successive cities that have transformed a site bordered by the desert, hills, cities of the Dead and the Nile, natural sources of richness for Egypt. A recent edition of the Cahier de la Recherche Architectural already invited us to discover the city of Cairo, however partially.

This guide offers us further encouragement for discovery, although it is clearly too brief for a city of 12 million inhabitants. It has been meticulously put together, with sound historical documenting, by Sawsan Noweir, architect, historian and researcher at the I.F.A. and A.D.R.O.S., and who is also involved in a Cairo "Workshop" with Jean-Charles Depaule, Philippe Panerai and Mona Zakariya. Ms. Noweir was assisted for those parts dealing with 19th century transformations of Cairo, by Mercedes Volait, who is also an architect and researcher at A.D.R.O.S. and at the CEDEJ. (A recent article by Ms. Volait appeared in MIMAR 13) - Pierre Clement, Institue francais d'Architecture, Paris.

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The seventh century : Fustat

The Arabs arrived in Egypt in 640 A.D. and founded their capital some 20 kilometers south of the tip of the delta, on a site where the Muqattam Mountains came closest to the Nile. 'Amr-Ibn-Al-As, the commander-in-chief of the Calif Omar's army, chose the site of the town on the banks of the Nile and in close proximity to the Byzantine fortress of Babylon. The town was built around a central core, the 'Amr Mosque (built in 641-42 A.D.), around which the conquerors settled. Then, ethnic settle-

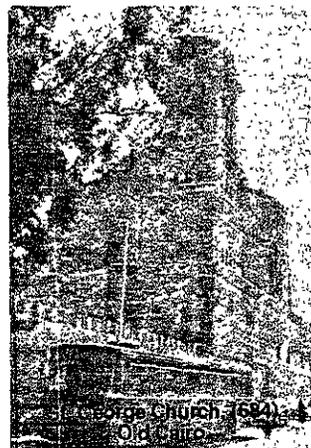


ments, each with their own sanctuaries, were formed on the periphery. The first Arab town took the form of a military camp, though lacking in fortifications hence the name Fustat (a camp). It consisted of three gates, situated in the north, the east and the south, market places and a mosque, which primarily served as a place of worship but was at the same time used as a watch-tower, a meeting hall and a court of justice. Fustat very rapidly developed into the administrative capital of the region and engulfed the ancient City of Babylon within its urban confines.

Though, Fustat was the first Arab town in the region, it was however not the first to occupy that site. Due to its strategic position, its geographic characteristics and its proximity to the Nile, the site had long before been considered an important one. This thoroughfare of all Asian invasions gave the towns in this region their omnipresent military characteristics. In the south, on the site of a fortress in Ancient Egypt, Roman Emperor Trajan had between 98-117 A.D. built fortifications and the Fort of Babylon, which the Arabs called 'Dasr al Shami'; it was thus through the mispronunciation of the older name 'Pi-Hapi-n-on', that the name Babylon came to be used. Situated directly on the banks of the River Nile, this important town of the Greek and Roman era, boasted a port, two kilometres of dockland and was joined to the Red Sea by a canal, which had previously existed in Ancient Egypt. Further south, about twenty kilometres from Babylon on the west bank of the Nile, stood Memphis;

Memphis had been the capital of the old empire and was one of the oldest and the most important towns of Egypt; it contained the Temple of the God Ptah, a royal palace and white impressive fortifications. It was also the seat of government. Though Memphis did not always retain its status as a capital, it nevertheless remained an important town, which was partly due to its strategic location between Lower and Upper Egypt. Within this same region and during the same era, there was also Heliopolis - or 'Ain Shams - the holy city of Ancient Egypt. As the capital city of one of the regions in Lower Egypt, Heliopolis had, for a very long time, played an undeniably important role. Its temple (of which there only remains an obelisk) had been the oldest and the most important temple devoted to the worship of the Sun.

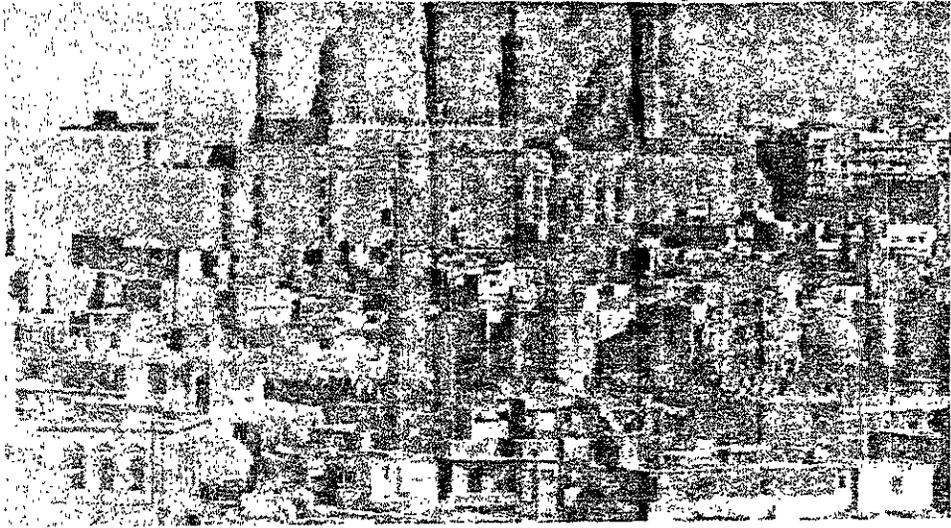
The two cities of Memphis and Heliopolis had, from the time of the Pharaohs, been linked by a route that was bordered with Sphinx. This road passed close to the fortress and the site that was later to become Babylon. This historic path played a very



Holy Church (684)
Old Cairo



Church of St. Barbelus
Old Cairo



Old Cairo

important role in the formation and the development of all the towns in this area; it showed the way to foreign invaders, and allowed for commerce and communication with Asia. Between the seventh and the tenth century, this path established the means of inter-communication between towns, and from the tenth century onwards, it became the principal artery of the Fatimid capital and was the axis along which the town expanded. By the seventh century, the commander-in-chief of the Arab army had therefore not founded the first town in an ahistorical region; it was a site which was to witness a succession of towns and capital cities and finally give birth to one of the largest metropolises of the world today.

The eighth century: Al-Askar

In 750 the political situation changed; the Ommayyades were overthrown by the Abbasids. When the Abbasid army reached Egypt, they abandoned Fustat and founded al Askar (the cantonment) in an area called 'Al Hamra al Kuswa', in the north of Fustat. A new cluster of settlements was formed around the Dar al - Imarah (the governor's palace) and around the mosque (which was built in 785 and of which there is no trace today). The military town of al - Askar spread out around this core composed of large buildings, numerous market places and houses built in regular patterns. The new city expanded, and like Fustat acquired the character of a big town, maintaining at the same time two distinct centres - the seat of power at al-Askar, and the centre for social activities at Fustat.

The ninth century : Al-Qata'i

The year 868 announced a new era and more changes. The new settlement of a Al-Qata'i was established around a colossal mosque in the North East, on the Yuchkar heights between al-Askar and the existing citadel.

The town took its name from the fact that the land in the area had been distributed in the form of allotments amongst the troops and palace officials. Though al-Qata'i was not fortified, its mosque with its high walls and its circular path as in a fortress, gave it a military character.

A large castle was built on the heights of Muquattam, at the foot of which stood a large Maydan (a square or a race course), with a big boulevard linking the two to the mosque of Ibn Tulun. The town, then, had an area of nearly 1 sq. mile. The northward extension of the town and the construction of the castle were signs that the town was expanding in that direction, and very soon al -Qata'i and al-Askar, that had previously been but sectors of Fustat, merged into one single town.

From the time that Fustat was founded through to 960 when the Fatimid arrived and al-Qahira was founded, the towns expanded northwards along the historical axis. Most often this extension came about when the principal core and the centre of power, i.e.: the mosque, the governor's residence and the homes of the elites changed place. These then went on to form the next clusters of settlement. This process was however equally influenced by the geographical configuration of the region and the role played by the Nile. After the Arab conquest, the Nile river bed changed its course a number of times each time directly affecting the town. In the seventh century it came as far as Qasr al-Sham flooding the Amr Mosque . The town had two bridges, one in the north at Al-Maqs (directly on the banks of the Nile where Bab al-Hadid stood), and the second at Misr to the north of the old Babylon. There was only one island (Rawdah) which was linked to Misr by a bridge.

About ten years after the Arab conquest, the

Nile shifted towards the west leaving open land around the fortress, on which new constructions rose. The Nile then ran much further to the east than today, and the present Ibn Tulun area lay submerged under water, which is what gave it its wealthy suburban features. This area today stands at about one kilometre of the Nile. The dried and filled up marshlands that existed in the fourteenth century bear witness to the constant erosions of the river bed.

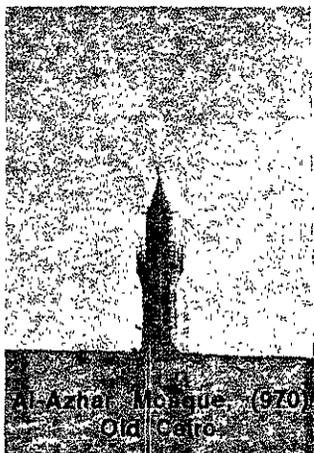
During the eighth century, the Nile changed its course once more, this time pulling further to the west. At this time there were four islands: the isle of Tawdah which faced Fustat, the isle of jaziraha little further to the north, the isle of Bulaq in the north east (which later became part of the mainland), and finally the isle of al-Fil. The reclaimed land was put to use stage by stage. First it stood as islands in the middle of the river. Later the waterways separating them from the mainland got out off from the principal river bed causing them to dry up and become part of the mainland - only when the river swelled did this area go under water. They therefore came to be known as Birkat (swamps or marshland). Large country houses were built around these marshes and this was to be the start of urbanisation. Then the swamps were dried or filled up and they became gardens and orchards, and in the process they were further split up by the canals and the irrigation systems. Plots of land were left as they stood and large mansions with gardens were built on them. Others were cut up and used for building smaller homes. This explains how at the end of the nineteenth century, the city of Ismail (the present city centre) came into being on a land that had witnessed the upheavals of the seventh century.

The tenth century : al-Qahira (Cairo)

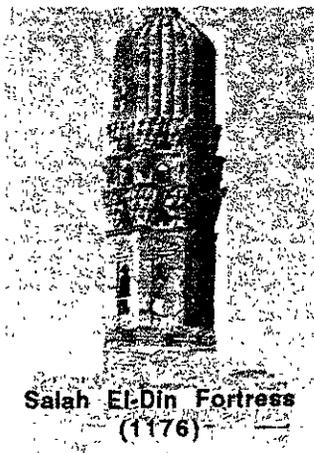
In July 969, al-Mu'izz arrived in Egypt with the Fatimid army coming from Tunisia. He settled in the north of the three towns that had previously been built by the Arabs. This was the start of a long period, which culminated in the construction of a town of imperial proportions. Djawhar, the Fatimid Vizir, was given the task of creating this new town. This new city was to be named Misr Al-Dahira (the triumphant). The site chosen by the Fatimids stood midway between Fustat and Ain Shams. The historical path that linked Ain Shams to the old Babylon went through the length of



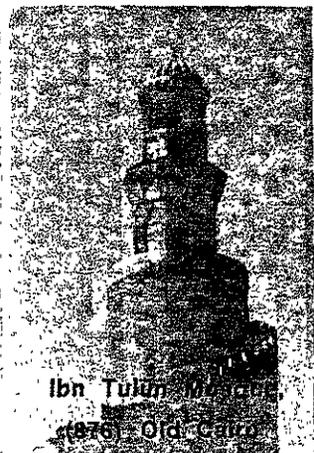
Church of Mo'azz (1176) Old Cairo



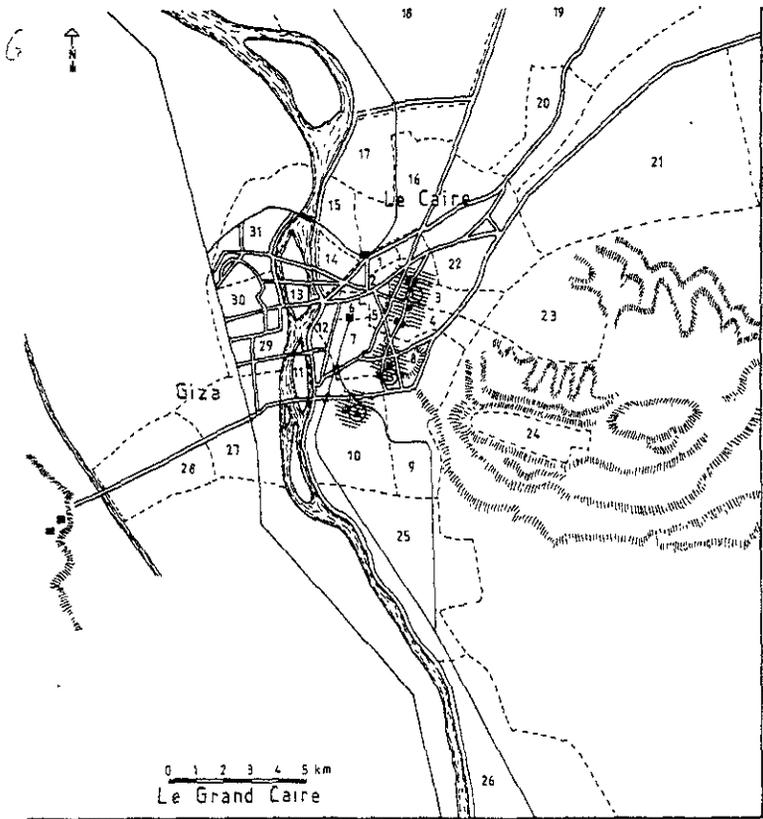
Al-Azhar Mosque (970) Old Cairo



Salah El-Din Fortress (1176)



Ibn Tulun Mosque (976) Old Cairo



1. Azbakya
 2. Bal al Charrya
 3. Gamaliya
 4. Darb al Ahmar
 5. Mousky
 6. Abdine
 7. Sayida Zalnab
 8. Ibn Tulun
 9. Al-Kalifa
 10. Misr Qadima
 11. Roda
 12. Qasr al Nile
 13. Zamalek
 14. Boulaq
 15. Rod al Farag
 16. Choubra
 17. al Sahel
 18. Choubra al Khayma
 19. Matariya
 20. Zaitoun
 21. Heliopolis
 22. Al Walyil
 23. Madinet Nasr
 24. Madinet al Moqattam
 25. Maadi
 26. Helouan
 27. Giza
 28. Pyramides
 29. Dokki
 30. Agouza
 31. Embaba
- A. Fustat (640)
 B. Al Qata'i (868)
 C. Al Qahira (969)

this site. Places such as Omm Dounien, next to Al-Maqs (which had served as Amar's army's first camp site during the seventh century) already existed. There were also some constructions such as the large park called 'The cafour Gardens' with its menagerie and stables. The garden, which was to room one of the Fatimid palaces, stretched as far as the canal, which flowed on the west. There was also a convent belonging to the Copts and a small village, Basr al-Chouq (which has lent its name to a sector, that still exists today, in the north-eastern section of the old town). The new town was built on a practically square shaped plot of land about a mile away from the river. The town's boundaries were defined by natural landmarks: on the east rose the Muqattam heights, on the west, the canal (the Khalij had originally been a silted up tributary of the Nile, which from the Ancient days had turned into a canal connecting Babylon to the Red Sea). Al-Djabal al-Ahmar were in the north and the towns of Fustat and al-Qata'i in the south. The city of al-Qahira was constructed on the basis of a well thought-out plan. Paralled to the canal, through the length of the town, ran a wide road with a series of side-streets cutting across and leading towards the canal. The town was made up of two parts: one to the west of the main axis, the other to the east. The section of the street that ran between the two palaces was called 'Bien al-Qasrine' (the street between two palaces). The street in its entirety was called 'Qasbat al-Qahira'. The town contained two mosques, one in the north -the al-Hakim- and the other in the south -the al-Azhar- as well as houses and mansions belonging to princes and dominant castes. Al-Qahira, very quickly took on the characteristics of a fortified town -a feature that had so far been unprecedented. On the western side a wall bordered the Khalij, which in turn served as a ditch. The name of the road, 'Bien al-Sourien' (road between two walls), which has survived to this day, seems to indicate that there were probably two walls. The surrounding walls of the

town comprised of several gates: in the north the Bab al-Futuh and the Bab al-Nasr, in the south the Bab Zuwayla and in the west the Bab al-Mahrong. Several bridges linked al-Qahira to the other parts of the town: the al-Qantra, which crossed the Khalij and joined the Fatimid town to the old port of al-Maqs and the other (which had already been there) connected Fustat to the isle of Rawdah. The town of al-Qahira had certain uncommon features. Already the fact that it was a fortified residential town constructed around the residential palace, distinguished it greatly from previous towns. The mosque had lost its importance and was no longer the central core around which the town developed. Under the Fatimids, the mosque was no longer considered the centre of political and religious power. This had somewhat shifted towards the residential palace. In return, the mosque was situated either in the north or the south of the town. This change can be explained by the fact that the Fatimid were a Shi'ite foreign power from Tunisia, who felt hostile to the traditions set previously by the Sunnite Califs and so wanted to impose great changes. The town of Fustat was not neglected and continued to grow. The Persian traveller, Nasir-I-Khrosrow in the tenth century described its market place, which stood next to the 'Amr mosque as the richest in the world. He also spoke of the height of the buildings and described having seen gardens built onto the roof of seven storey houses as well as narrow streets with beautiful protruding constructions. Al-Qahira expanded very rapidly and overran its limits. The surrounding wall of the town was extended and rebuilt by Badr and Gamali to encompass the new clusters of settlements in the north and the south of the old wall. The three gates, Bab al-Nasr, Bab al-Futuh in the north and Bab Zuwaylah in the south were rebuilt. In spite of a new rampart, a new sector called Husayniyah emerged in the north on the other side of the Bab al-Futuh wall. In the south the town of Fustat also continued to grow.

Synopsis

• **Subject of the Issue :**
Organizing Architecture Competition
 Preparing the terms of reference for any architecture competition is considered to be one of the main stages of organizing the competitions. The subject of the issue reviews in details all the steps and procedures which must be taken in consideration to enhance the success of the competition. (P. 10)

• **Projects of the Issue :**
 - **Nile Showroom for Performing Arts**
 Pro. Arch. Abdelhalim Ibrahim
 This building was constructed in the twenties of this century where it was designed by Mostafa Pasha Fahmy. It was among the building of the International Fair land in Gezira, then it was changed in the sixties to a showroom for Performing Arts but according to its design, it wasn't efficient enough for this function. When the earthquake of October 1992 occurred, there were collapses and cracks which made the National Center for Performing Arts taking the chance to re-design the building to suit its function. The project consists of many elements including showrooms for Performing Arts, an artistic library - the biggest of all in its kind in Egypt - with a garden for reading, a cinema, an important visitors hall, cafeterias, a symposiums hall, administration, stores for artistic works with an open court, besides a group of other facilities. (P. 12)
 - **Taba Hilton Development & Expansion Project**
 Arch. Dr. Zakaryia El-Dars

The project consists of : - a commercial building on an area of 10,000 m² - a casino building which comprises a ground floor as a dining hall for employees and first & second floor for the casino halls - restaurants and playgrounds in two floors - administrative offices and a power station - a swimming pool, a jacuzzi & an anchorage - an accommodation for 240 employees in 120 rooms with private bathrooms - sanitary drainage treatment unit. (P. 30)

- **Mummification Museum - Luxor.**
 Arch. Gamal Bakry
 Mummification art is considered the top secret of the Pharoanic civilization which couldn't be discovered by modern science inspite of all technologies it has got to probe the depth of this amazing secret ... The remarkable thing about the matter is that Egypt, the country of mummification, had no museum for this art, so it was natural to think of establishing such a museum trying to bring this art close to people and visitors minds. Therefore when Ministry of Culture had received the opposite building to Luxor Temple to change it for cultural purposes, it had been decided to transform one of its halls to be the Mummification Museum. (P. 34)

- **Ataturk Library**
 Arch. Sedad Eldem
 Istanbul Ataturk Cultural Center was conceived for the Koc Foundation as a project incorporating library, museum and exhibition halls on the hexagonal grid of the site plan but only the library was built 1973-75. The acknowledged reference for the library is Eldem's unbuilt project for the Turkish Restaurant of Istanbul Hilton Hotel. (P. 50)

• **From Heritage**
Renovation of Bayt El-Suhaymi
 Among the most important examples of Cairo traditional architecture are private houses. A few of these houses still survive and provide us with valuable information concerning the character of traditional architecture. Bayt El-Suhaymi is a vivid example. It was first built in 1648, and a substational addition was made to the structure in 1796. (P. 38)

• **Technical Article :**
Islamic perspective for urban arrangement
 Dr. Abdelbaki Ibrahim
 Introduction to restoring the urban balance for Arabic city. (P. 53)