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AL-AZHAR MOSQUE: AN ARCHITECTURAL CHRONICLE OF CAIRO'S HISTORY

In 1924, Martin Briggs, a British architect who was embarking on a study of Islamic architecture in Egypt and Palestine, had these words to say about al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo:

To a European, al-Azhar offers an oriental spectacle, unparalleled save by the Mecca pilgrimage, where one may realize at the same time the backwardness of Islam and its tremendous power. Nor does this picturesque scene lose anything by its staging. The dazzling white arcades that surround the *ṣahn* with their quaint battlements silhouetted against the brilliant blue sky, the duster of minarets above them — some bizarre, one at least graceful — all enhance the glow of color presented by the many hued robes of the students and their teachers.¹

To Taha Hussein, the pioneering Egyptian thinker and educator who came to al-Azhar in 1908 as a young blind *fellāh*, the mosque sparked a totally different feeling. He wrote about his impression in the third person, "It was enough for his bare feet to touch the stone paving, and for his face to be caressed by the fresh breezes in the *ṣahn* to have his heart filled with peace and hope."²

For a single structure to induce such powerful feelings a thousand years after its building is surely a sign of vitality. Over the centuries, al-Azhar has played a significant role in the cultural, intellectual, and political life of Egypt and the Islamic world generally. Its authority, sometimes rising sometimes ebbing, whether triumphant or vanquished, fought for or fought against, has survived the vicissitudes of history in Islamic Egypt from the end of the tenth century until today.

The mosque was first built in 970 by Jawhar al-Siqilli, the Fatimid general who had conquered Egypt for his master al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah a year earlier. He intended it to be the Friday mosque for the new city he had founded and named al-Mansuriyya, probably after the earlier Fatimid capital near Qayrawan in Ifriqiya (Tunisia) built by al-Mu'izz's father, al-Mansur (946–53).³ Soon afterward in 972, al-Mu'izz himself arrived in Egypt and the mosque underwent a face-lift. This was followed by a succession of expansions, additions, alter-

ations, and annexations of new dependencies and semi-independent institutions that went on until the twentieth century. The sequence of changes in al-Azhar's architecture reciprocates and reflects its rise to become the foremost institution of religious learning in Egypt and the concomitant political influence its denizens enjoyed among both the ruling classes and the general population. It also closely follows the fortune of the city of Cairo itself in its progress from capital of the self-consciously religious Fatimid dynasty to center of the aggressive and expansionist Mamluk military state, to provincial capital of the Ottoman Empire, and finally to contemporary metropolis.

By the end of the sixteenth century, if not earlier, al-Azhar had reached such a high degree of sanctity that it was considered Islam's fifth most important mosque, after those in Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Damascus.⁴ In the public mind, the mosque was both sanctuary and a space for spontaneous acts of civic resistance. Many riots against cruel or foreign rulers began there or converged in its courtyard, including the revolt of the people of the Hussayniyya quarter against the rapacious Mamluk amirs in 1785 and the uprising against the French occupation in 1798.⁵ But, although al-Azhar became the people's assembly place *par excellence*, and although it functioned as an independent institution with its shaykhs and students forming a self-governing community, its upkeep, expansions, and embellishments were initiated and paid for by Egypt's rulers. In fact, there seems to have been, and to a large extent still is, a discernible correlation between the political order in Cairo and the care and attention bestowed on al-Azhar both as a structure and as an educational and religious institution. With a few exceptions, one can read the intentions of the rulers in the type of work they effected at al-Azhar, or in the neglect they showed towards its maintenance. Consequently the architectural development of al-Azhar can be seen as a chronicle of the rise and fall of leaders and factions in the religious and political history of the city and the country.

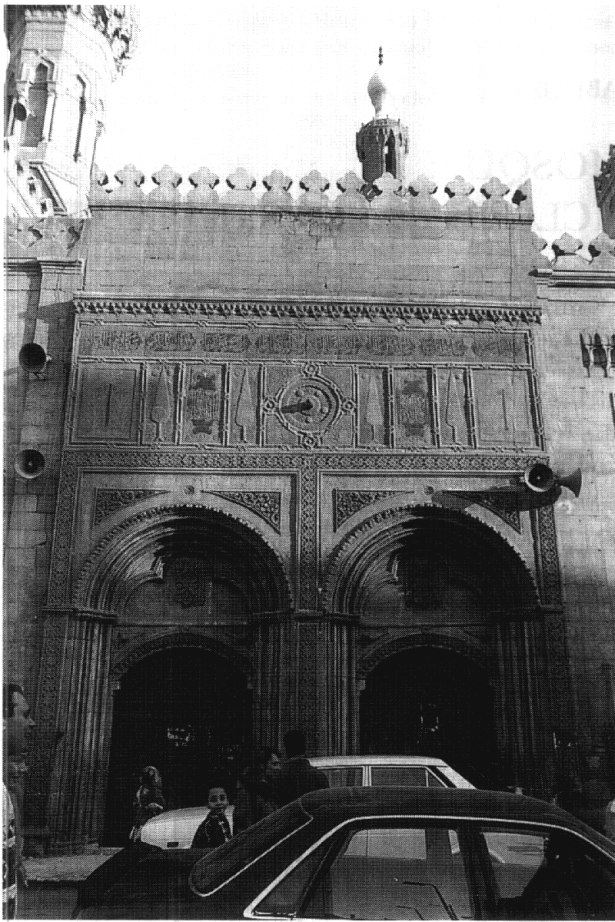


Fig. 1. Al-Azhar mosque. Bab al-Muzayinin (Gate of the Barbers) of ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda. Mid-eighteenth century.

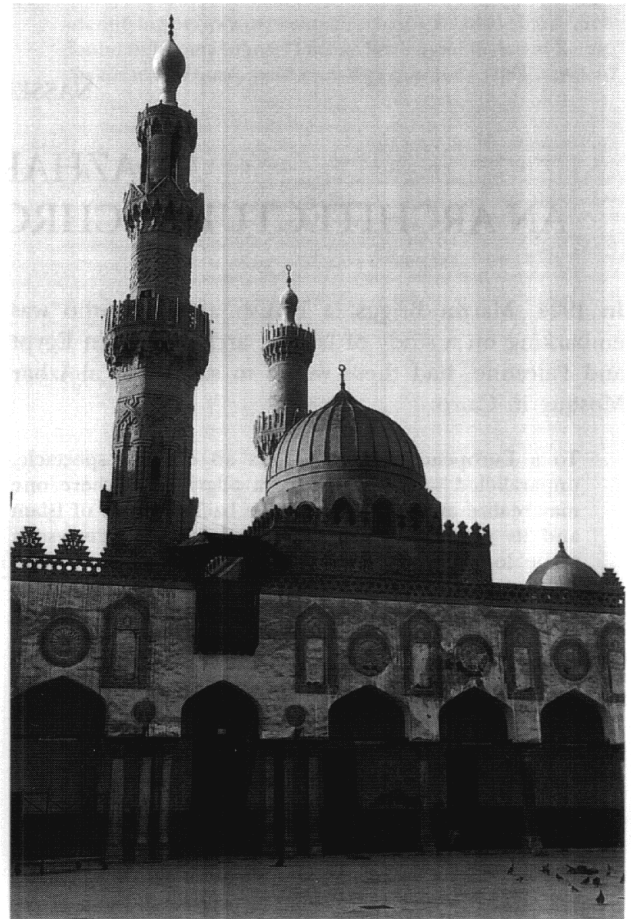


Fig. 2. Al-Azhar mosque. Minaret of Qaytbay (1495).

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MOSQUE

The mosque's original core is now totally enclosed in a cluster of later dependencies and secondary structures ranging in date from early in the fourteenth century to recent times. The expansion of the mosque could be described as following a spiral, that is, new structures grew up around its circumference until they completed a full circle, then, in the eighteenth century, a new series started to the south and east around the older circle. These additions continuously changed the mosque's perimeter and did not always respect the neighboring buildings, especially in the late nineteenth century. They also replaced sections of the mosque's original walls against which they were built. Consequently, only a tiny portion of the Fatimid western façade remains; it tells us

that the mosque was originally built of brick and was plastered over on several occasions.⁶

On approaching the mosque from the Maydan al-Azhar, which was laid out in the late nineteenth century, the northwestern façade displays an amalgam of pseudo-Mamluk patterns fashionable at the turn of the century. Above this façade, three minarets and one pointed dome frame the main entrance. They are, from north to south, the minaret and dome of the Madrasa al-Aqbaghawiyya (1339; rebuilt several times), the minaret of Qaytbay (1495), and the double-finial minaret of Qansuh al-Ghuri (1509). The present main entry for al-Azhar is the Bab al-Muzayinin (Gate of the Barbers), a double-arched portal built of stone with recessed arches surrounding the two doors and four panels of stone-cut, floriated ornaments with roundels in between. The gate is attri-

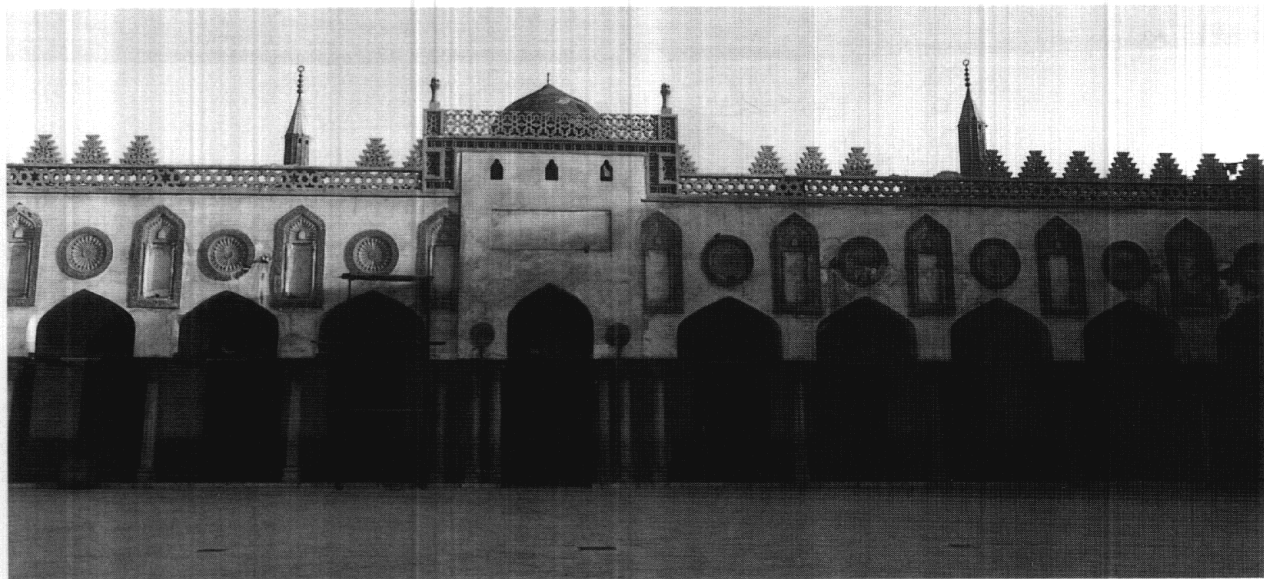


Fig. 3. Al-Azhar mosque. *Ḥarām*. Southeastern façade.

buted to ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda (d. 1776), and was constructed in the mid eighteenth century (fig. 1).

The Bab al-Muzayinin opens into a rectangular, marble-paved court flanked on the northeast by the main façade of the Madrasa al-Aqbaghawīyya, rebuilt in 1888 by the Khedive Tawfiq (1879–92), and on the southwest by the polychrome façade of the Madrasa al-Taybarsīyya. The fourth side is occupied by the Gate of Qaytbay, built in 1495 with the splendid minaret above it to the right of center (fig. 2). This gate leads to the court (*ṣaḥn*) of the mosque proper. The rectangular *ṣaḥn*, paved with white stone today, is surrounded by arcades on its four sides. The two lateral arcades are three aisles deep; the northwestern, or entry, arcade is one aisle deep. The southeastern arcade leads into the mosque's sanctuary. Its central arch is a little advanced and surmounted by a higher, rectangular panel, forming a Persian framing gate (*pīsh-tāq*), which visually marks the entrance to the sanctuary (*ḥaram*) (fig. 3).

The arches of the arcades are all keel-shaped (what used to be called a Persian arch). They are composed of two-centered arches at the beginning of the curves which are joined together by means of two straight lines forming the tangents of the two arches. They are credited to the Fatimid caliph al-Hafiz li-Din Allah (r. 1131–49) who sponsored a major refurbishing of the mosque. Two types of stucco ornaments, which stylistically belong to al-Hafiz's time but were redone in 1891, alternate along the wall's surface above the arches. The first con-

sists of shallow niches surmounted by a fluted hood on small, engaged columns and surrounded by a band of Qurʾanic inscription in a floriated Kufic script. The inscriptions were added to the original scheme at a later date, but still in the Fatimid period, and repaired in the late nineteenth century. The second type is a sunken roundel with a circular band of vegetal motifs (inserted in 1893) and twenty-four lobes. The roundels appear above the apex of each arch in the arcades (fig. 4). The upper cresting of the façades is made of an elaborate geometrical star-shaped band topped with the usual triangular, tiered crenellations. The ceiling of the arcades is lower than the level of the stucco facing which is used as a screen that gives the mosque's interior façades greater monumentality. But even with the addition of this fake height the proportion of the elevation to the *ṣaḥn*'s width is still one to five. Behind the central southeastern arch is a dome, attributed to the reconstruction of al-Hafiz, which rests on columns without any transitional zone. It is supported on four keel arches and elaborately decorated with stucco ornaments.

The old *ḥaram* of the mosque is oriented at 40 degrees south of east, which is slightly off the qibla. It is a great hypostyle hall, 85 by 24 meters (260 by 75 ft.), consisting of five aisles made up of four arcades on marble columns running parallel to the qibla wall (fig. 5). They are intersected by a central transverse aisle running from the outer portico dome to the mihrab.⁷ Its arches are supported on double columns. All the columns in the hall

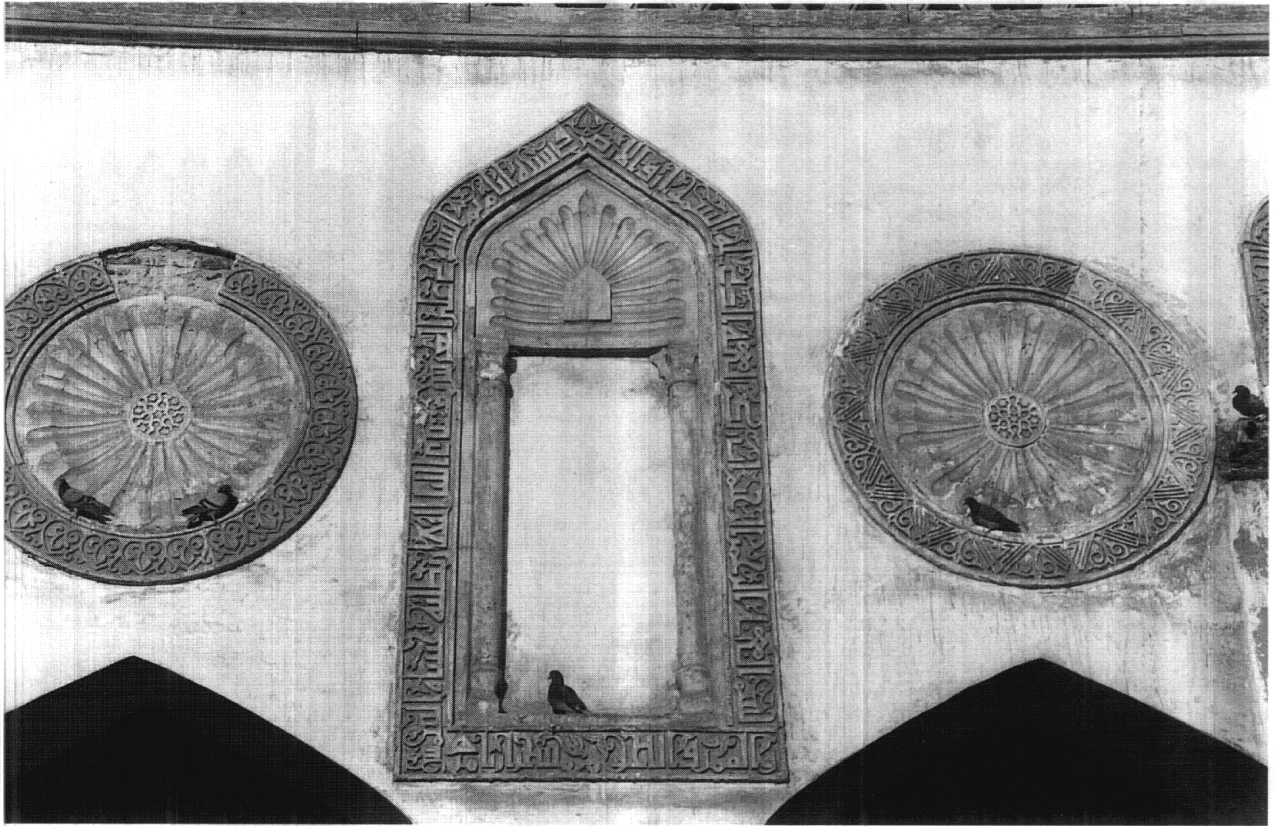


Fig. 4. Al-Azhar mosque. Roundels and niches. Stucco ornaments above the arches (1873).

are reused from old Roman, Coptic, and perhaps even Pharaonic monuments. They are of various heights, brought to the same level by raising them on bases of different thicknesses. The transverse aisle is made higher than the rest of the hall, probably to bring in light. The last arch of the transverse aisle is cut across by the first arcade of the *haram* to provide the four side supports for the dome in front of the mihrab, where two columns are added to provide more strength. Creswell dated this dome to Qansuh al-Ghuri's time (1501) on stylistic grounds.⁸ The inner spandrels of the two lateral arcades of the transverse aisle are decorated with foliated stucco ornaments; the edges of the curves have Qur²anic inscription bands in Kufic.

The mihrab is a round niche with a semi-dome and two marble columns flanking its arched frame. The stucco frame and inscription found there are probably Fatimid, belonging to the renovation of al-Hafiz, for the mihrab's conch and frame had been covered by wooden boards for seven centuries, from the reign of al-Zahir Baybars until 1933. The interior of the mihrab was mod-

ified at an unknown date in the early Mamluk period, and a polychrome marble facing was installed there over what may have been an earlier, stucco carved decoration. A photograph taken in 1985 shows that the Mamluk facing, which appears in earlier illustrations of the mihrab, was removed at some unknown but recent date and replaced by the plain marble facing with small golden pattern seen there today.

Three steps above this sanctuary and behind the mihrab area, which is the only part of the original qibla wall still standing, is the hall added by 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in 1751, and rebuilt by Khedive Tawfiq in 1888. It measures 69 by 20 meters (210 by 60 ft.) and consists of four aisles formed by three arcades. Its mihrab axis is almost 10 meters off the old axis. It has a transverse aisle dividing the longitudinal aisles, but its arches, unlike those of the old *haram*, are supported on piers. It, too, has a dome over its mihrab. On the eastern end of this hall, in the center of the fourth aisle from the qibla wall, a door opens to the Madrasa al-Jawhariyya. The qibla wall has a raised passage in its left side, half a meter high,

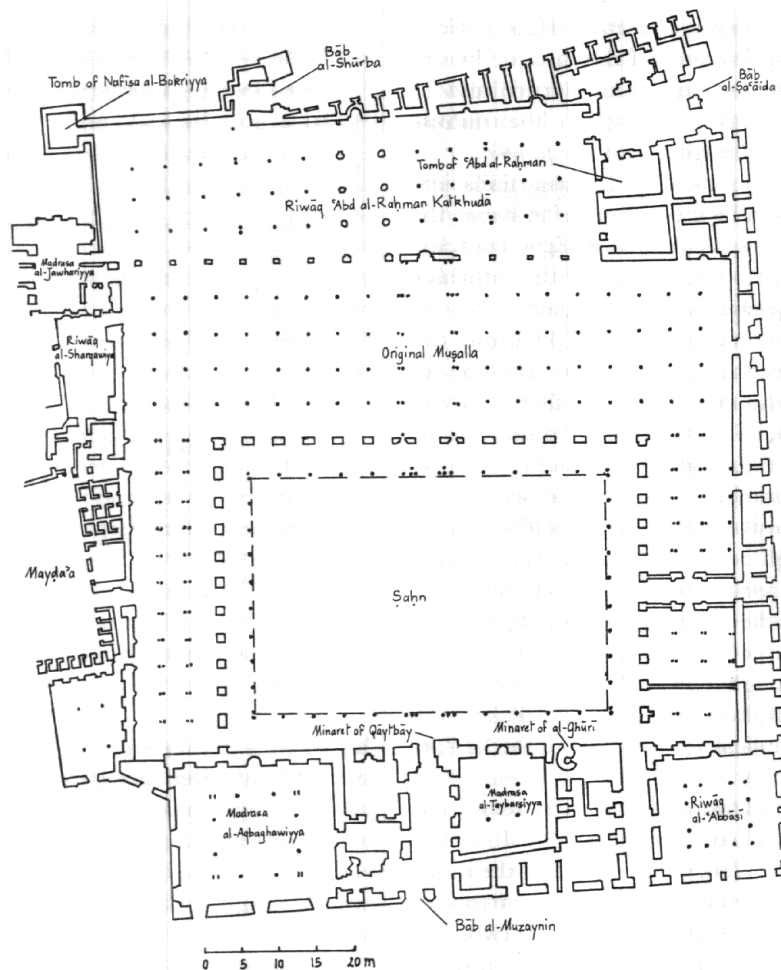


Fig. 5. Al-Azhar mosque. Plan of present mosque. (After Creswell)

which leads to the mausoleum of Sitt Nafisa al-Bakriyya, a mystic who died around 1588.⁹ On the right is the Bab al-Shurba (the Soup Gate), built by the same 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in the style of the period, through which food for the students (usually rice soup) was brought for distribution on the raised passage.

At the other, or western, end of the new hall stands the second main gate of al-Azhar, the Bab al-Sa'ayida (Gate of the Sa'idis, after the people of Upper Egypt). It is similar in form and decoration to the Bab al-Muzaynin; it was built at the same time and by the same patron, 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda. The other structures around the mosque are mostly *arwiqa* (pl.; sg. *riwaq*, used in the Azharite context to designate the residence halls for students) where the various ethnic or regional groups that formed the student body at al-Azhar lived. They were

built at various times and by various sponsors.¹⁰ These structures are of minor architectural importance, though they may be relevant to a study of patronage and social status in pre-modern Egypt.

AL-AZHAR IN THE FATIMID PERIOD

Creswell meticulously and methodically reconstructed the original plan of al-Azhar in his magisterial work on the Islamic architecture of Egypt. He showed that it was a simple rectangle composed of the five-aisled prayer hall bordered on the northwest by a rectangular court (*ṣahn*), which was framed by porticoes on at least the two lateral sides. Creswell also proved that the keel-shaped arches of the inner porticoes and the *pishtāq* and dome in the center of the northwest façade were the work of

al-Hafiz li-Din Allah. Sometime after 1125 al-Hafiz decided to unify the appearance of the mosque by surrounding its court with a continuous portico and by emphasizing the main axis leading to the mihrab through the addition of the dome and the *pishtāq*.

Creswell was correct in most of his assertions and interpretations, although he was too eager to locate the architecture of the mosque in a primarily Egyptian tradition, which caused him to underestimate the influence of earlier Fatimid Ifriqiyan examples.¹¹ Jonathan Bloom, in his thesis on early Fatimid architecture, identifies two aspects of Creswell's reconstruction where his emphasis on the local model led him to interpret or fill the gaps in his data wrongly.¹² First, he overlooked the possible articulation of the external façade and the existence of a projecting portal in the original mosque, and second, he postulated the clerestory of the *haram* to have been a later modification, though no source reports such an addition (fig. 6). Neither Creswell nor Bloom includes a minaret in the original scheme, nor do they discuss the location and function of the belvedere of al-Azhar (*manzarat al-Azhar*), though it formed the connection between the mosque and the caliphal Eastern Palace (al-Qasr al-Sharqi), the physical and political center of Fatimid al-Qahira.

The earliest reference I found to a minaret at al-Azhar is a passing remark in a chronicle compiled by Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir around the year 1280, which says that "the minaret of al-Azhar was increased in height during the time of the late judge (*qaḍī*) Sadr al-Din," who is otherwise unidentified.¹³ Two judges with this title were directly involved in al-Azhar's affairs before the date of the chronicle of Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir. The first is Sadr al-Din ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Dirbass, the first Shafiʿite judge of al-Qahira and al-Fustat (the old Islamic capital of Egypt) appointed by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, who is said to have banned the Friday prayer at al-Azhar around 1171.¹⁴ This makes him an unlikely candidate; a patron would not rebuild the minaret of a congregational mosque he had just downgraded to a neighborhood mosque.¹⁵ The second is the *qaḍī al-quḍāt* Sadr al-Din Suleiman al-Adhraʿī al-Dimashqi al-Hanafī (d. 1278), a Hanafite supreme judge whose school allows more than one Friday mosque in a city. He was a close confidant of al-Zahir Baybars; he accompanied him on several campaigns and was his tutor when Baybars went on his hajj in 1269. Baybars was apparently partial to him, since he authorized him to hold his court in any city of the sultanate.¹⁶ He may have solicited his legal opinion (*fatwa*) when he sought the agreement of the ulama about the restoration of al-

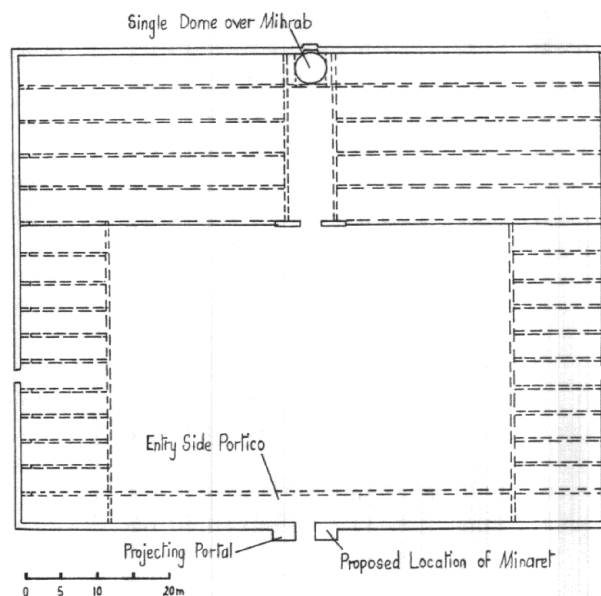


Fig. 6. Al-Azhar mosque. Proposed reconstruction of the original mosque plan.

Azhar to its former status as a Friday mosque, and may also have entrusted him with the repair of the minaret as part of the general program of renovation undertaken by a number of high officials in 1266.¹⁷ This is the more plausible, especially since the mosque would have needed a higher minaret after its reinstatement as a Friday mosque.

This reference proves that al-Azhar had a minaret by the end of the Ayyubid period. None of the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt could have built it, for they had neglected the mosque and closed it for Friday prayer. The brick minaret must therefore have been erected in the Fatimid period and probably was even included in the original scheme of the mosque. Most of the mosques built before al-Azhar in both Ifriqiya and Egypt that could have influenced its architecture had minarets.¹⁸ In Ifriqiya, the mosque of Qayrawan (rebuilt in 836) had an imposing minaret facing the mihrab axis across the court. In al-Fustat, the mosque of ʿAmru (ca. 684)¹⁹ and the mosque of Ibn Tulun (876–79) had minarets as well. The Ibn Tulun minaret was a prominent and original feature of the mosque that enhanced its character and connected it to Abbasid prototypes in Samarra.

Another Fatimid mosque in al-Fustat, the mosque of al-Qarafa (built in 976 and since destroyed), had a minaret and was said to have been modeled on al-Azhar Mosque, which implies that the original must have had a

minaret as well. The short text reporting the correspondence between the two mosques found in Maqrizi's *Khitat* is typical of this famous medieval topographer's tangled prose. It is presented in the form of a quotation from the Fatimid chronicler al-Quda'i (d. 1061) who says that "the mosque of al-Qarafa was built in the fashion of al-Azhar in al-Qahira. It had a lovely garden to the west and a cistern. Its door, from which it is entered, is a large one with mastabas. It is the central door under the high minaret built above it, and is covered with iron sheets" (*wa huwa 'ala nahuw binā' al-Jāmi' al-Azhar. Wa kana bi hadhā al-jāmi' bustānun laṭifun fī gharbihi wa šahrījun. Wa bābuhu alladhī yudkhalu minhu zū al-mašāṭib al-kabīr al-aṣṣaṭ taht al-manār al-ʿālī alladhī ʿalayhi mušaffahun bi-l-ḥadīd*).²⁰

The wording of this text needs reshuffling to be understood, but otherwise it is clear in stating that the mosque of al-Qarafa had a minaret and what its location and height were. If one accepts that the mosque of al-Qarafa copied al-Azhar in every detail, then one must also accept that the original al-Azhar had a minaret, and that it too stood above the central portal facing the axial transversal aisle of the *ḥaram*, an arrangement used in many early mosques.

The second text about the minaret, written around 1430, also comes from al-Maqrizi; he says that the short minaret at al-Azhar was rebuilt by Barquq in 1397, but he does not mention its location or its date of construction, though a few lines down, he offers further details that may help elucidate that point.²¹ In 1414, Barquq's minaret started to lean dangerously, and had to be torn down. An amir named Taj al-Din al-Shawbaki, who was the *wālī* and *muḥtasib* of al-Qahira, sponsored its rebuilding in stone and reconstructed the *bahrī* (northwestern or main) entrance gate, which supported it, with stone as well. Another rebuilding was undertaken in 1432, which lasted until 1495 when al-Ashraf Qaytbay (1468–96) rebuilt the mosque's main entrance and erected his marvelous minaret on a massive base which formed the southern frame of the portal.²² This place is probably where the earlier Fatimid minaret of al-Azhar must have been built. It was demolished and rebuilt not only to correct defects in its construction but also because it was a brick tower and probably not sufficiently high style to suit later Mamluk tastes.

Maqrizi's pivotal text about the mosque of al-Qarafa also states that there were mastabas flanking the gate. A mastaba is a low stone platform against a wall, usually used as a bench. In later Cairene practice, mastabas became ubiquitous features on portals, where two of them facing each other across the entrance space could

be found in religious and residential structures alike. But no such arrangement is attested in Fatimid al-Qahira, or in Mahdiyya, the Ifriqiyan Fatimid capital before Egypt was occupied. Alexandre Lézine, who excavated Mahdiyya, reconstructed its tenth-century mosque façade with a projecting portal like a Roman triumphal arch with niches on either side of the central door.²³ The same Mahdiyya scheme appears again in the mosque of al-Hakim, and in al-Aqmar Mosque (1125) in al-Qahira, which may be taken to indicate a continuous tradition of adapting the triumphal arch form to Fatimid monumental vocabulary.²⁴ In order to reconcile the textual reference with the architectural one and to posit the portal of the mosque of al-Qarafa in the same Mahdiyya pattern, the lower sills of the portal niches would have to be seen as mastabas to sit on.²⁵ But if the mosque of al-Qarafa followed the Mahdiyya example, the more proper term to use for its niches in the text would have been *kuwwa* or *ḥaniya*, two known words meaning niche.²⁶

Clearly, the question cannot be solved with so many lacunae in our data, though one fact is definitive: the mastabas in question, whether they were niches or benches, would have required that the gate project from the wall in order to accommodate either the thickness of the niches or the width of the benches. The gate of the mosque of al-Qarafa and consequently that of al-Azhar Mosque were thus more articulated than Creswell admitted the latter to have been: a portal projecting out to accommodate the two flanking mastabas and a minaret of brick built above it.

Another hypothesis about the outer appearance of the mosque which was advanced by Creswell and accepted by Bloom needs to be revised. This is the question of whether there were two small lateral domes; their presence was postulated by Creswell on the basis of a text by Maqrizi and the later appearance of two lateral domes on the mosque of al-Hakim.²⁷ Maqrizi says that "the foundation text of al-Azhar Mosque was inscribed by Jawhar al-Siqilli in 960 on the inner drum of the dome inside the *ḥaram* in the first aisle to the right of the mihrab and the minbar (*al-qubba allatī fī al-rivāqī al-awwal wa hīa ʿala yumnatī al-miḥrāb wa-l minbar*).²⁸ Creswell interpreted this text as referring to the lateral dome at the right end of the aisle, and supposed that it must have been balanced by another dome at the other end of the aisle. If they ever existed, these two domes have left no trace, not even of the columns that were supposed to have been added for extra support, as Creswell suggested. Besides, there are no precedents for this arrangement in proposed models, either Ifriqiyan or Egyptian,

of al-Azhar. The only known example comes from the mosque of al-Hakim in al-Qahira, built after al-Azhar, which introduced a number of innovations like the twin minarets and probably the lateral domes.

Another way of refuting this hypothesis stems from the significance of the text inscribed on the dome drum as reported by Maqrizi. Clearly, this was the foundation text for the mosque; it would have been an integral inscription with no conceivable equivalent or corresponding text to occupy a parallel position in the same structure. It is very difficult indeed to propose what the contents of an inscription on the suggested left side dome might have been to complement or echo the one on the right. It would be more plausible to suppose that the inscription band was on the initial central dome (rebuilt by Qansuh al-Ghuri in 1501), which was indeed in the first aisle, and which may be viewed as standing to the right of the minbar and mihrab. Such a location for a foundation text that identifies and honors the patron of the mosque would have been more prominent than on a lateral dome, which would have been seen only by someone standing at the end of a row of worshipers. Later Mamluk examples in Cairo, notably the mosque of al-Nasir Muhammad at the Citadel (built 1318 and 1335), have their foundation texts inscribed around the drums of their central domes.

ʿAli Pasha Mubarak locates the belvedere of al-Azhar next to the door of the Madrasa al-Jawhariyya. He states that the *bahri* (northwestern) gate through which the caliph entered the mosque is still extant, but blocked, and quotes an earlier chronicler, al-Sakhawi, who wrote that the Madrasa al-Jawhariyya was built near the secret gate (*bab al-sirr*) to the mosque on the *bahri* side.²⁹ This “secret gate” could not have been where the window of the Madrasa al-Jawhariyya is today, for this window was cut in the mosque’s wall when the madrasa was built, and Jawhar al-Qanqabaʿi, its patron, needed a fatwa from a judge to do it.³⁰ The only other possibility for the location of the caliph’s gate is the door of the Riwaq al-Sharqawiyya (Hall of the Sharqiyya Natives), attributed to Muhammad ʿAli al-Kabir (1780), which is adjacent to the northeastern wall of al-Jawhariyya. The door, however, has an inscription from the period of Qaytbay, which dates it to 1470, and the entire structure may be older. Creswell was puzzled by the two salients northeast of Qaytbay’s door. He dates them, unconvincingly, to the reigns of the khedives Tawfiq and ʿAbbas, having first proved that they were not meant to be buttresses of the wall since it was leaning forward and they were not. These two salients may be the bases which supported the

belvedere of al-Azhar where the caliph and his wife sat to watch the festivities in the mosque on the nights of illuminations and on Fridays. The door attributed to Qaytbay should then be considered a renovated rather than a new door replacing the original Fatimid gate of the caliph.

Jawhar established al-Mansuriyya when he first arrived in Egypt as an encampment (*manakh*) for the estimated thirty thousand Maghribi soldiers (this is the lowest estimate) in his army and their families and animals and as a fortress and stronghold (*hishnun wa maʿqalun*) in front of the capital al-Fustat on the road to Syria from where his enemies, the Qarmatians, were rumored to plan an attack.³¹ The original *manakh* for Jawhar’s army may have occupied the area of the maydan that Kafur, who ruled Egypt as regent for the young Ikshidid ʿAli and later as a prince shortly before the Fatimid conquest (961–68), had laid out next to his gardens, which were later incorporated into al-Qahira.³² Jawhar, following the tradition of early Islamic conquests in planning *amṣār*, started the building of the *qaṣr* — which should be understood here as the walled enclosure that would later become the royal palace — at once and allocated *khīṭaṭ* (pl. of *khīṭa*, lot or quarter) for the various groups in the army to build their homes inside its walls; he forbade them to live in al-Fustat.³³ He also built a *muṣalla al-ʿid*, or open space for the two holiday prayers, just outside the walls to the north of the planned Bab al-Nasr.³⁴ This may have been a practical decision. The Egyptian capital apparently lacked an open space at that time, although the Arabs had founded a *muṣalla* in it after the conquest, and Jawhar needed it in time to celebrate the prayer of the ʿId al-Fitr, which fell in the month following his arrival.³⁵ Unlike contemporary cities with a Sunni majority, where *muṣallas* had become a thing of the past, they appear to have been required in Fatimid cities, possibly as a sign of adherence to the prophetic custom of praying in the open on holidays and as another confirmation of the Fatimid claim to be the true descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and his cousin ʿAli.³⁶

Jawhar, however, in a clear departure from the traditional layout of the *amṣār*, does not seem to have included a congregational mosque in his plan for al-Mansuriyya. The Maghribi soldiers were able to perform their ʿId prayers at the *muṣalla*, but they had two choices for fulfilling their Friday prayer obligations: they could go either to the mosque of Ibn Tulun (one mile south) or to the mosque of ʿAmru (two miles to the south).³⁷

For at least three years (Shaʿban 358/July 969–Ramadan 361/June 972), they did just that, despite the antagonism of the Sunni Egyptians and their initial reluctance to accept the Shiʿite prayer rituals in both mosques. Jawhar’s policy was slowly but firmly to compel the unwilling *khatibs* and muezzins to institute the Shiʿite *adhān* formula with the Ismaʿili addition which exalts the Fatimid caliph. This he achieved nine months after the conquest (Jamada I 359/April 970). At the same time, he ordered the construction of a new congregational mosque in al-Mansuriyya, which was inaugurated the next Ramadan (22 June 971), almost two years after the establishment of the new Fatimid capital.³⁸ The completion of the mosque must have come as a welcome relief for the Maghribi inhabitants of the city, providing them as it did not only with an accessible and enclosed space for prayer but also with a symbol of their doctrine’s ascendancy and dominance that could stylistically and architecturally compete with the older congregational mosques in al-Fustat.

Maqrizi, who culled his account from the reports of at least four Fatimid historians of Cairo, does not offer any reason for Jawhar’s decision to build the mosque at that particular time, nor does he provide its original name. It is possible, however, that by then either al-Mansuriyya had developed into a fairly settled city that required its own congregational mosque, or that al-Muʿizz informed his general of his imminent arrival and ordered him to prepare the new city for the occasion by building royal palaces and a mosque. Both explanations are hypothetical and difficult to verify, because of the dearth of Fatimid sources.³⁹ But whether either proposition is correct or not, the late date of the mosque’s building suggests that the Fatimids first intended their new settlement to be temporary or an extension of the existing capital and then changed their minds and decided to develop it into a full-fledged city, with the requisite congregational mosque. This shift probably occurred after Jawhar secured Egypt for his master and al-Muʿizz decided to move there to pursue the Fatimid dream of winning the entire Islamic world to the Ismaʿili cause from a base more central geographically and closer to Abbasid Baghdad than his caliphal seat in Ifriqiya.

The mosque’s original name is not known, but, given earlier Islamic practices, it may have been the Jamiʿ al-Mansuriyya. When the caliph al-Muʿizz came to Egypt in 972 he changed the name of al-Mansuriyya to al-Qahira,⁴⁰ and the mosque consequently acquired the name Jamiʿ al-Qahira (the congregational mosque of al-Qahira), which is the name we first encounter in Arabic sources.⁴¹ The mosque acquired its current name, al-

Jamiʿ al-Azhar, at an even later date, but no later than the end of the reign of al-ʿAziz (975–96), the second Fatimid caliph in Egypt, for it appears in the waqf of his son al-Hakim, dated 400 (1009).⁴² Neither the origin of the name nor its intended association is quite clear. Scholars have proposed several explanations. The most widely accepted among them is that *al-azhar*, which means “the magnificent,” is the masculine form of *al-zahrāʾ*, the honorific title of Fatima, the prophet’s daughter and the eponym for the Fatimid dynasty.⁴³ But this possibility is weakened by the belated appearance of the name — the Fatimids would have asserted their affiliation with Fatima al-Zahraʾ from the start.

Another explanation for the name al-Azhar is that it derived from the nearby Fatimid palaces known collectively as al-Qusar al-Zahira (the Brilliant Palaces) to which the mosque was spatially and ceremonially connected.⁴⁴ The caliphal palace begun by Jawhar al-Siqilli before the arrival of his master al-Muʿizz in Egypt developed into an enclosure of eleven royal structures known collectively as the Eastern Palace. The Eastern Palace was ultimately linked to al-Azhar by a series of posterns, named al-Kuwakh al-Sabʿa (the Seven Posterns) although their number may have been less than seven.⁴⁵ The posterns opened onto a pavilion named the Manzarat al-Azhar (belvedere of al-Azhar) to which the caliph and his wife came from their palace to watch the festivities on the nights of illuminations.⁴⁶ The palaces of the caliph were not completed until some time during the reign of al-ʿAziz who finished the Eastern Palace and built the Western Palace complex opposite it, and who also renovated the mosque.⁴⁷ He called the entire palatial complex al-Qusur al-Zahira and may have renamed the mosque after the palaces to show that both spaces essentially framed the caliph, considered to be an emanation of God’s light and himself bearing the epithet *al-azhar* among several that conveyed the idea of brilliance and resplendence.⁴⁸ A similar phenomenon can be seen in the later proliferation of equivalent names for Fatimid mosques such as al-Anwar (the most luminous) for the mosque of al-Hakim; al-Aqmar (the moonlit) for the small mosque adjacent to the northern corner of the Eastern Palace built by Maʿmun al-Bataʾihi, the vizier of al-Amir (1101–30); al-Afkhar (the most splendid) for the mosque built by al-Zafir (1149), known today as the mosque of al-Fakahaniyyin; and, most telling, for three belvederes built by al-Amir known as al-Zahira, al-Fakhira (the luxuriant), and al-Nadira (the exhilarating) suggesting that the names referred to attributes of the caliph rather than the function of the structure.⁴⁹

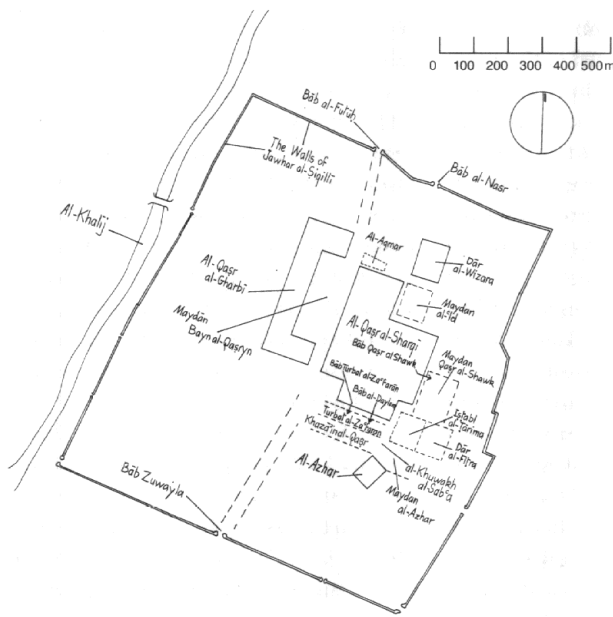


Fig. 7. Plan of Fatimid al-Qahira. (After Ravaisse)

The close symbolic connection between the palaces and al-Azhar Mosque was evident in the spatial relationship between them and in the kind of functions assigned to the mosque. Throughout the Fatimid period, al-Azhar alternated with the mosque of al-Hakim and the two older mosques of al-Fustat as the place where the caliph led the Friday prayers, competed with the mosque of al-Hakim as the dynastic mosque of the Fatimids, and played a major ceremonial role in the program for every caliphal procession.⁵⁰ An analysis of the layout of Fatimid al-Qahira would corroborate the significance of al-Azhar to its planning and function.

Though conjectural, a basic plan of al-Qahira's earlier stages can be reconstructed from textual sources, despite the fact that most of the city has been totally rebuilt since the time of the Fatimids and the caliphal palaces had disappeared shortly after the fall of the dynasty. Such a plan was attempted by Paul Ravaisse more than a hundred years ago.⁵¹ Ravaisse painstakingly collected the bits and pieces in Maqrizi's *Khitat* that pertain to the topography of the Fatimid city to produce his plan, but it still needs many revisions, for despite being the most complete source on Fatimid al-Qahira, Maqrizi's text is misleading. He combines quotations from early and late Fatimid sources indiscriminately and without regard for the chronology of construction in the city.⁵² Thus, in examining the urban relationship between the Eastern Palace

and al-Azhar Mosque the successive planning of the area and the dates of the few structures in it have to be taken into consideration.

In conflating the plan of the royal center of al-Qahira and the chronology of building, it becomes clear that the area was developed according to a ceremonial-religious theme attached to the person of the caliph (fig. 7). This must have happened early in the Fatimid period, probably during the caliphate of al-^cAziz who enlarged and monumentalized the palatial complex, and, with the help of his genius vizier Ya^cqub ibn Kilis, shaped the Fatimid ceremonial to enhance his semi-sacred image during the 970's and 980's.⁵³

Ravaisse's plan shows the palatial complex as it may have appeared at the end of the Fatimid period with the two major units, the Eastern Palace started by Jawhar for al-Mu^cizz and completed by al-^cAziz and the Western Palace which the latter ordered built, and the huge parade ground between them which received the convenient toponym Bayn al-Qasryn (Between the Two Palaces). The complex had acquired its general contour by the end of al-^cAziz's reign. Later caliphs implemented new minor structures, such as al-Aqmar Mosque built by al-Amir in 1125, or modified existing ones without any noticeable alteration to the overall spatial and urban arrangement of the entire complex.

The Eastern Palace had two gates on its southwestern side, the Gate of the Turbat al-Za^cfaran, and, to the east of it, the Gate of al-Daylam. The space between the two gates was originally the palace cemetery, Turbat al-Za^cfaran (Cemetery of Saffron), where the Fatimid caliphs and their families were buried beginning in the reign of al-Mu^cizz. Al-Mu^cizz even brought with him the coffins of his three predecessors from Ifriqiya for burial there, probably as a tangible mark of continuity of the imamate in the line of the Fatimids. This cemetery played a major role in instituting the cult of the Fatimid family, for the caliphs visited it after every religious procession and distributed alms there.⁵⁴ To the south of the cemetery were the palace storehouses (*khazā'in al-qasr*), which were apparently built during the reigns of the first two caliphs, al-Mu^cizz and al-^cAziz.

The next gate of the palace complex to the east, the gate of Qasr al-Shawk, was pierced in the eastern façade and opened onto the court named after it.⁵⁵ The court was bordered on the south by Dar al-Fitra, built by al-^cAziz, where the caliph distributed sweets and victuals to his soldiers and courtiers during religious ceremonies.⁵⁶ To the west of Dar al-Fitra was the Istabl al-Tamira (Rotunda Stables), where the caliph's horses were kept.

(Ravaise locates the Istabl al-Tarima to the east of Dar al-Fitra, but Maqrizi clearly specifies that the stables were adjacent to the Maydan al-Azhar and the Seven Posterns, which means that they were to the west of Dar al-Fitra.) South of Dar al-Fitra and Istabl al-Tarima stood the Maydan al-Azhar where the caliphal procession from the palace to the mosque on Fridays and holidays culminated. This court must have been open when al-Azhar was first built, but it was encroached upon by the later additions of al-^ḥAziz and al-Hakim. The Seven Posterns, or the seven private doors (depending on how the word *khukha* is interpreted), must have led from between the gates of Turbat al-Za^ḥfarān and al-Daylam on the southeastern side of the Eastern Palace to this court in a passage paralleling the Istabl al-Tarima.⁵⁷

Maqrizi's descriptions of Fatimid Cairo's layout reveal the ceremonial function in the siting of al-Azhar, its relation to the Eastern Palace and surrounding lesser structures, its architecture and furnishings, and even the monumental articulation of the mosque gates (the mosque had at least three gates), which served as points of entry for the various processions going into the mosque. A glance at the waqf attributed to the caliph al-Hakim (1009) for the benefit of al-Azhar, the Dar al-^ḥIlm which he established, and two other mosques shows that the first received more than half the shares of the deed (167 out of 300 shares).⁵⁸ This reflects the importance of al-Azhar in the ceremonial program of al-Hakim, who provided it with an income equivalent to that of the three other caliphal structures combined, even though he had completed his mosque shortly before as the new congregational mosque of the royal city.⁵⁹ The waqf shows also that most of the allocations for al-Azhar went to support ritual and ceremonial items, such as silver lanterns, incense, camphor, musk, candles, and so on.

Around the same time, a new function — religious education — was introduced at al-Azhar. From the scattered references to its early years, the mosque seems to have had a modest debut as a learning center. The first seminar in Isma^ḥili jurisprudence (*fiqh*) took place there in 976, four years after the mosque's inauguration. The supreme judge (*qāḍī al-quddāt*) ^ḥAli b. al-Nu^ḥman led the seminar in the mosque in a way common to any congregational mosque at the time. He read *al-Ikhtisār*, the book compiled by his father al-Qadi al-Nu^ḥman b. Muhammad, the foremost Fatimid theologian during the reign of al-Mu^ḥizz. The seminar differed from the usual only in the selection of the judge's audience. They were chosen from the upper echelons of Isma^ḥili Fatimid officialdom and from the royal family, to the exclusion of

Egyptians; they included women among them who had had their names written down and had drawn lots for the right to attend.⁶⁰

The next recorded instance of teaching at al-Azhar occurred in 988 when the crafty vizier, Abu al-Faraj Ya^ḥqub ibn Kilis, started reading a religious book he had compiled from the sayings of the two imams and caliphs, al-^ḥAziz and his father al-Mu^ḥizz, to a select audience once every fortnight. Later on in the same year, Ya^ḥqub ibn Kilis asked the caliph al-^ḥAziz to sponsor regular teaching in the mosque every Friday after the prayer by a group of thirty-five jurists, of whom Ibn ^ḥAbd al-Zahir reports only the name of the leader, a certain Abu Ya^ḥqub, known as *qāḍī al-khandaq* (qadi of the ditch, an area south of al-Qahira).⁶¹ The caliph even built a house for these jurists next to the mosque, but they nonetheless moved their lessons to the mosque of al-Hakim after its completion, suggesting that al-Azhar at the beginning was apparently not meant to be a center of religious learning.⁶² It was used by famous scholars to deliver their lessons in its *ḥaram*, but that was a common practice in congregational mosques everywhere.

A few years later, the mosque attained a new role: it was made the center for teaching and propagation (*markaz al-da^ḥwa*) of the official Isma^ḥili creed, where new missionaries were trained before they were sent out to the various regions of the Islamic world. Soon afterward, it vied for the position of supreme foundation of Fatimid propaganda with the more specialized institution, Dar al-^ḥIlm or Dar al-Hikma, founded by the third caliph, al-Hakim bi Amr Allah (996–1021), in 1005.⁶³ Dar al-Hikma ultimately became the official headquarters of Isma^ḥili teaching and jurisprudence with instruction in rhetoric, logic, and philosophy, while al-Azhar retained its role as a center of religious learning with few sectarian leanings. This was a status al-Azhar shared with all other congregational mosques in the joint Fatimid capital of al-Qahira and al-Fustat — the mosque of ^ḥAmru, the mosque of Ibn Tulun, and the mosque of al-Hakim — perhaps because most Egyptians remained Sunnis under the Fatimid regime.

When al-Azhar became the single most prominent center of Islamic teaching in al-Qahira and its reputation spread to the rest of the world is not quite clear. It could not have happened during the Fatimid period, since the mosque was still patronized mainly by the Isma^ḥili ruling class and could not have attained a universally acknowledged status in primarily Sunni Egypt and the Islamic world beyond. Nor could this efflorescence have occurred during the Ayyubid period, for the mosque was

then relegated to a minor status and was closed to Friday prayer through the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. It was not reinstated and refurbished until 1266 during the reign of al-Zahir Baybars.

The mosque had acquired considerable popularity in the fourteenth century, and may first have attained its eminent position as the foremost center of learning in Egypt around the year 1490. This hypothesis is based primarily on the architectural evidence, since the sources do not speak of how or when it became a famous institution, but only report a renewed and avid interest in its preservation and monumentalization. These started as a series of restorations and additions in and around it after its partial destruction during the earthquake of 1302 and culminated in the major royal interventions undertaken in the last quarter of the Mamluk period, especially under the two late and great sultans al-Ashraf Qaytbay and Qansuh al-Ghuri.

AYYUBID NEGLECT AND MAMLUK PATRONAGE

The teaching enterprise at al-Azhar and the seemingly impartial treatment of all Islamic schools of thought as pedagogical subjects may have saved it after the fall of the Fatimids and the abolition of the Isma'ili *da'wa*. Shi'ite doctrines were banned in Egypt by the Ayyubids, and Sunni teaching in all its branches was officially adopted and promoted. Madrasas, the new institutional type which promulgated the official Ayyubid brand of Islamic Sunni teaching, were constructed all over Cairo and endowed with hefty waqfs. Al-Azhar does not seem to have received any Ayyubid financial support, probably because of its former association with the Fatimids or because of its intractable independence, but it was at least left alone to function as a place of learning. It ultimately grew in vitality and in prestige under the Mamluks and Ottomans to become the leading center of Sunni studies. Sheltering what amounted to a religious university remains its main purpose until the present day, in addition to its more obvious function as a congregational mosque, a status it lost for a hundred years under the Ayyubids.

Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi eliminated the Fatimid caliphate and reinstated Sunni Islam as the state religion in Egypt in 1171. He founded two madrasas, one in al-Qahira for the Malikites and one in Fustat for the Shafites, and abolished the Isma'ili teaching in al-Azhar Mosque. He dismissed the Isma'ili supreme judge and appointed in his place Sadr al-Din ibn Dirbass, a fellow Kurd and Shafite qadi, who proceeded to ban Friday

prayer at al-Azhar ostensibly because the Shafi' school of jurisprudence, to which Salah al-Din adhered, prohibited the holding of more than one Friday sermon in each community. Inside the walls of al-Qahira, the Friday prayer was held only in the mosque of al-Hakim because it was considered larger than al-Azhar.⁶⁴ But this explanation is shaky, for we do not have a similar report on the two mosques of Ibn Tulun and 'Amru which by that time belonged to the same urban unit, Misr al-Fustat, and which both seem to have remained functional during the Ayyubid period. Furthermore, even if we admit that the Shafi'ite opinion dominated, the choice of al-Hakim as the congregational mosque is not fully justified. It is located on the edge of the city, while al-Azhar is central and easily accessible from all quarters.⁶⁵ The real intention behind the demotion of al-Azhar from a royal mosque to a minor role in the communal life of the city must have stemmed from Salah al-Din's attempts to erase the memories attached to the grandeur of his predecessors and, most of all, their religious heritage and claims.

During the rest of the Ayyubid period, al-Azhar at least maintained one aspect of its function as a major mosque; it remained a teaching institution. The famous Baghdadi doctor, 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, taught there between 1192 and 1198.⁶⁶ Musa ibn Maymun, the physician of Salah al-Din, also gave some lectures there in medicine and astronomy. But this activity must have been modest in the context of Ayyubid Cairo, for the members of the ruling family were more interested in sponsoring madrasas. Introduced into Egypt shortly before the fall of the Fatimids, madrasas became the main vehicle during the Ayyubid period for the preparation of a new class of Sunni jurists to staff the administration. This preparation had two goals: to eradicate the Isma'ili doctrine from the ruling class and to diminish the Christian presence in the government, which was very strong during the late Fatimid period.⁶⁷ Contrary to the officially regulated madrasas, whose curriculum and budget were supervised by the Ayyubid patrons and sponsors, al-Azhar seems to have remained relatively independent of both interference in the type of teaching taking place in it and official financing. The lack of royal patronage, however, may have contributed to the decline in its reputation and its physical maintenance, as evidenced by the emphasis on its sorry state in the sources of the early Mamluk period.

Friday prayer was restored to the mosque in 1266 during the reign of al-Zahir Baybars after one of his major amirs, 'Izz al-Din Aydamar al-Hilli, interceded and convinced him to authorize its restitution. He was reportedly

moved by piety, for he lived near the mosque and was outraged by the miserable state into which it had sunk after almost a hundred years of neglect.⁶⁸ But the spirit of the times must have greatly facilitated his task. Al-Azhar's association with the Fatimid regime had become only a dim memory; reopening it to Friday prayer was thus politically safe. It was also a popular move and may have been intended as another sign of the coming of age of the Mamluk sultanate under Baybars as an autonomous entity rather than just an inept imitator of the Ayyubid state.⁶⁹ Moreover, al-Qahira's population was growing so rapidly that mosque space for Friday prayer was greatly needed. Aydamar sponsored some repair work at al-Azhar that put it back in functioning condition. He and Baybars's vicegerent, Baylabak al-Khazindar, each constructed a *maqṣūra* in the mosque intended for study gatherings and endowed it with waqfs for the sponsorship of Qur'anic and legal studies.

In 1302, during the second reign of al-Nasir Muḥammad (1298–1308), a powerful earthquake struck the Mamluk territories, destroying many large structures in Cairo and cracking many minarets, including those of al-Azhar, al-Hakim, 'Amru, and the dome of al-Mansur Qala'un in Bayn al-Qasryn. Al-Nasir Muhammad and his amirs divided up the damaged mosques, and took it upon themselves to rebuild them, with al-Nasir reserving for himself the restoration of his father's complex and minaret.⁷⁰ Al-Azhar's reconstruction was undertaken by Amir Salar the *atābek al-ʿasākir* (the head of the army). This, however, was part of a general effort on the part of the ruling magnates to alleviate the damage caused by the earthquake to the major mosques and madrasas in Cairo. In fact, between the refurbishing effected under Baybars in 1266 and the rebuilding after the earthquake, al-Azhar was left alone amid the frantic construction taking place all over Cairo in the early Mamluk period. Teaching and praying went on in it as usual, while new and stately madrasas and khanqahs, sponsored by sultans and amirs, were being erected around the city and in its adjacent cemeteries, al-Qarafa al-Kubra and al-Qarafa al-Sughra, to the east and south. Nonetheless, al-Azhar ended up by indirectly benefiting from the steady rise of Cairo's reputation as the foremost center of Islamic learning, as the city's geographical and political importance grew, especially after the fall of Abbasid Baghdad in 1258 and the consolidation of a powerful Mamluk empire in Egypt and Syria.⁷¹

The flurry of madrasa building in Cairo led to the next step in al-Azhar's architectural history shortly after 1302. Two madrasas, the Madrasa al-Taybarsiyya (1309) and

the Madrasa al-Aqbughawiiyya (1339), were built against the exterior wall of the mosque on opposite sides right outside the main gate.⁷² Taybars al-Waziri, the founder of the Taybarsiyya, stipulated that this structure was to function as a complementary mosque (*ziyāda*) to al-Azhar and a Shafi'ite madrasa. Al-Aqbughawiiyya, which stood on the site of the house of Aydamar al-Hilli, al-Azhar's first benefactor in the Mamluk period, was instituted by its founder, Aqbugha 'Abd al-Wahid, as a mosque and a madrasa as well. It was designed by Ibn al-Siyufi, the master architect during al-Nasir Muhammad's reign, and had a dome and an elegant stone minaret attached to it which still survives today. Another small structure, the Madrasa al-Jawhariyya, was built in 1440 along the northeastern wall of the mosque by the amir Jawhar al-Qanqaba'i, supervisor of the privy purse for Sultan Barsbay, for which he cut a door into the wall of the *ḥaram*.⁷³

This situation, unparalleled in Cairo but encountered in illustrious mosques elsewhere such as the Haram of Mecca and the Great Mosque in Isfahan,⁷⁴ is probably a reflection of the importance of al-Azhar both as a central structure and as a venerated sanctuary, so that patrons would wish to build next to it while other large congregational mosques in the city were left alone.⁷⁵ But, although the three structures were significant architectural additions to al-Azhar's surroundings and contiguous with its outer walls, they were clearly and conspicuously meant to be physically and functionally separate. They stood outside the mosque proper and were entered through separate doors, though they provided more space for congregational prayer, the first explicitly as a *ziyāda*, the second as an independent mosque with its own minaret and its own *adhān*, and the third as a small oratory (*masjid*). The three structures also served as independent madrasas right outside the door and in full view of this prestigious center of learning. Mamluk historians treat them as independent institutions and list them separately. Until today, each remains physically detached from the mosque and known after its founder, unlike the earlier *maqṣūras* of the amirs of al-Zahir Baybars built inside the mosque, which seem to have disappeared soon after their institution.

This change in the pattern of patronage at al-Azhar from the time of Baybars to that of al-Nasir Muhammad reflects the harshly competitive milieu Mamluk amirs lived in at that time, where building charitable institutions and attaching their names to them had become a prerequisite for amirial status. But up until that time, no Mamluk sultan had shown any interest in sponsoring any architectural work at al-Azhar. Only amirs built in and

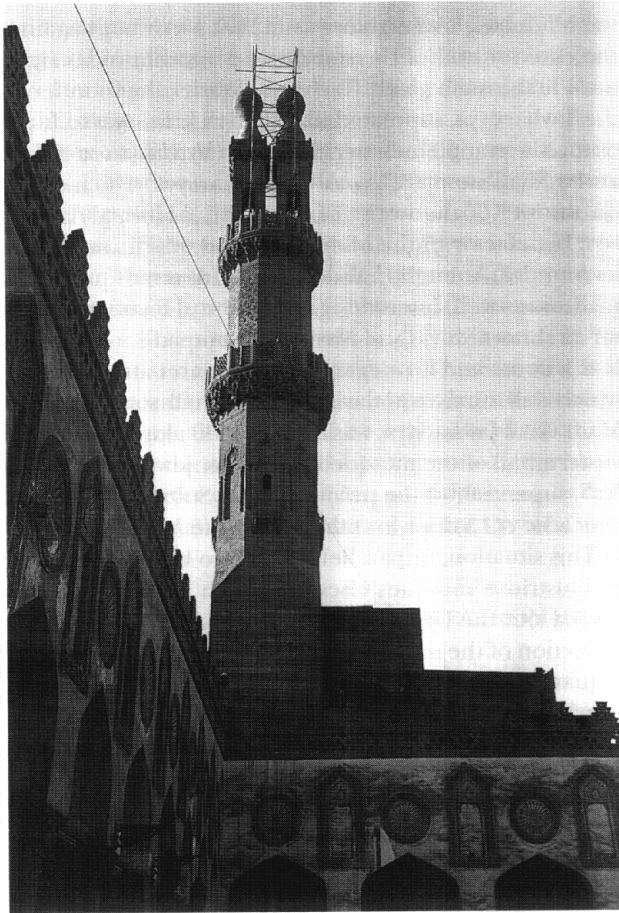


Fig. 8. Al-Azhar mosque. Double-finial minaret built by al-Ghuri (1509).

around it, and even those were of the second rank. Taybars was the chief of staff in Egypt (*naqīb al-juyūsh*) for twenty years (1298–1319), a position subordinate to that of the *atābek*. Aqbugha was the master of the household (*ustādār*) of al-Nasir Muhammad, a powerful position, for it provided easy access to the sultan, but it was also second rank in the Mamluk hierarchy. Jawhar, who died in 1440, was head of the household eunuchs under Barsbay, obviously a position lower than that of the great amirs.⁷⁶

It was not until the fifteenth century that direct Mamluk royal patronage was extended to al-Azhar. Three powerful sultans — Barquq, Qaytbay, and Qansuh al-Ghuri — patronized al-Azhar during the Mamluk Circassian period. In 1397, al-Zahir Barquq, the first Circassian sultan, rebuilt the minaret and spent fifteen thousand dirhams of his own money in the undertaking. His mina-

ret had to be reconstructed again in 1414 during the reign of al-Mu³ayyad Shaykh, this time in stone, as we have seen. But even this minaret did not last for long. It started leaning dangerously and had to be dismantled and rebuilt anew in 1423, during the reign of Barsbay, though we do not know if he himself was the patron.⁷⁷ Al-Ashraf Qaytbay intervened at the mosque at least three times during his long reign (1468–96), in 1469, 1476, and 1495. He razed a number of parasitical shacks, repaired the porticoes, rebuilt the main entry, the Bab al-Muzayinin, and erected a new stone minaret on top of its arched opening.⁷⁸ He also built at least two *riwāqs* along the periphery of the mosque to lodge the Turkish and Syrian students. Qaytbay's minaret, with its shaft typically divided in three sections and topped with a bulb, is among the most exquisitely carved and masterfully proportioned late Mamluk examples. The effect of this extraordinary minaret apparently instigated Qansuh al-Ghuri to order a new minaret built for al-Azhar in 1509 to the southwest of Qaytbay's minaret.⁷⁹ But the inability of his architect to surpass Qaytbay's minaret may account for the unusual huge and double-finial minaret he erected (fig. 8).

It is important to note that the Mamluk sultans favored minarets over any other addition; they either built them directly or through some amir, probably acting as their agent. Minarets were the ultimate symbol of power and dominion and the most effective proclamation of the buildings and their patrons in Cairo's cityscape.⁸⁰ Sultans and great amirs in the Mamluk period always wanted to emphasize the size and location of the minarets in their complexes as a means of setting them off from the others. The competition is very obvious in the case of the last two minaret builders at al-Azhar — Qaytbay and al-Ghuri — for the latter did not demolish the minaret of his predecessor but simply tried to outdo it by building a new one next to it that was larger, taller, and with two heads rather than one (in vain it has to be admitted, for his minaret lacks the grace and balance of Qaytbay's). The succession of minarets built at al-Azhar, where liturgically one would have been enough, shows that these sultans sought a highly visible association with this specific mosque, which had by then become a most eminent university, attended by scholars from all over the Islamic world.

The *terminus ad quem* proposed earlier to mark the mosque's rise to prominence as a religious university is based on the royal architectural intervention under Qaytbay and al-Ghuri. These two sultans bestowed their sponsorship on the mosque after it had become the pri-

mary institution of learning in Cairo and in recognition of this status. This proposition diverges from the generally held opinion that al-Azhar, venerated as it was as an old and somewhat independent mosque, did not play a prominent role as a center of teaching during the Mamluk period, primarily because of the profusion of generously endowed royal and amirial madrasas.⁸¹ An analysis of the biographical data available for the members of the Egyptian civilian elite who died in Cairo between 1397 and 1495 shows that indeed al-Azhar did not occupy the first place in many of the classified categories: place of birth, of education, and of occupation. But it is significant to note that, although its competitors were extremely well-endowed royal madrasas, such as al-Zahriyya Madrasa (of al-Zahir Baybars) and al-Mu²ayyadiyya (of al-Mu²ayyad Shaykh), it did consistently come in second, and in a few significant categories — notably among people coming from the Delta and from North Africa — it was an emphatic first.⁸² There is no comparable analysis to prove that the situation rapidly changed in favor of al-Azhar at the end of the Mamluk period that could explain the sudden royal patronage, but another study — admittedly limited to one source — strongly supports such a conclusion. The analysis of ‘Abd al-Wahab al-Sha‘rani’s famous biographical compendium *Lawāiqih al-Anwār fi Tabaqāt al-Akhyār* showed that one third of the Egyptian ulama mentioned in it had either studied or taught at al-Azhar.⁸³ Sha‘rani (1491–1565), a famous sufi and scholar whose life bridged the Mamluk and Ottoman period, compiled his book before 1554. This means that his data reflect the situation at the end of Mamluk times, when most of his ulama must have received their education, rather than the early Ottoman period.⁸⁴

Royal patronage was abruptly interrupted after the fall of the Mamluk sultanate to the Ottoman Sultan Selim I in 1517. Selim acknowledged al-Azhar’s status by attending Friday prayer there in his last week in Cairo, but he did not donate anything to the mosque.⁸⁵ Ottoman *wālīs*, who were appointed from Istanbul, all regularly attended Friday prayer there and many presented the mosque with cash gifts for its ceremonies and as stipends for its ulama. But only a handful of them ever contributed to its upkeep, and none added any significant structure to it, probably because their terms of office were very brief and generally too unstable to encourage extensive patronage. In fact, until the beginning of the eighteenth century, only two *wālīs* — Muhammad Pasha al-Sharif (1596–98) and Hasan Pasha (1605–7) — are known to have restored al-Azhar during their governor-

ships. Hasan Pasha also constructed the *riwāq* of the Hanafis (the Hanafi *mazhab* was officially sanctioned by the Ottomans) in 1605.⁸⁶

Nor did the local Mamluk beys (the title assumed by the local Mamluk grandees in place of the old title amir) contribute much to the maintenance of the mosque/university throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some did designate a share of their waqfs for some charitable donation to the institution such as the sponsorship of students, but it was not until the eighteenth century that a number of great amirs took it upon themselves to restore al-Azhar and to add new structures to its periphery. This two-century gap in patronage is primarily a consequence of the decline in power and wealth the Mamluk class suffered after the Ottoman conquest. After their devastating defeat in 1517, the Mamluk survivors strove to restructure their households and recover their power base under a new regime in which they did not hold the sovereign authority over the country. After an initial period of adjustment, Mamluk households began to emerge as the de facto power brokers in the city, each in control of its own urban area, while the overall administration was in the hands of the pashas who resided at the Citadel with their Ottoman troops. For a long time Mamluk beys focused their attention on neighborhood improvement projects which were at the same time profitable; they established commercial foundations, restored religious complexes, and, in many instances, added *sabīl-kuttāb* units to them.⁸⁷

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the hold of the central Ottoman authority was weakened enough to permit the Mamluk class to interfere more forcefully in the governing of Egypt, with the pashas sent from Istanbul playing the role of arbitrators in power struggles among the dominant households. A number of Mamluk beys who had accumulated wealth and power began to act as true leaders and as benefactors of the city at large, restoring and renovating many of its most famous monuments.⁸⁸ Al-Azhar was one such major Cairene landmark in dire need of repair. The mosque was resting on its accumulated glory and continuous fame, but its state of preservation and its capacity had become inadequate for its role as the prime educational center in the Islamic world. In 1735, Amir ‘Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, the leader of a dominant Mamluk household, established there a hall for the blind, who constituted a large component of al-Azhar’s student body and were usually destined to become *qurrā’* (Qur’an reciters) and muezzins. He also built — or more accurately rebuilt — the two *riwāqs* attributed to Qaytbay, the Turkish and the Syr-

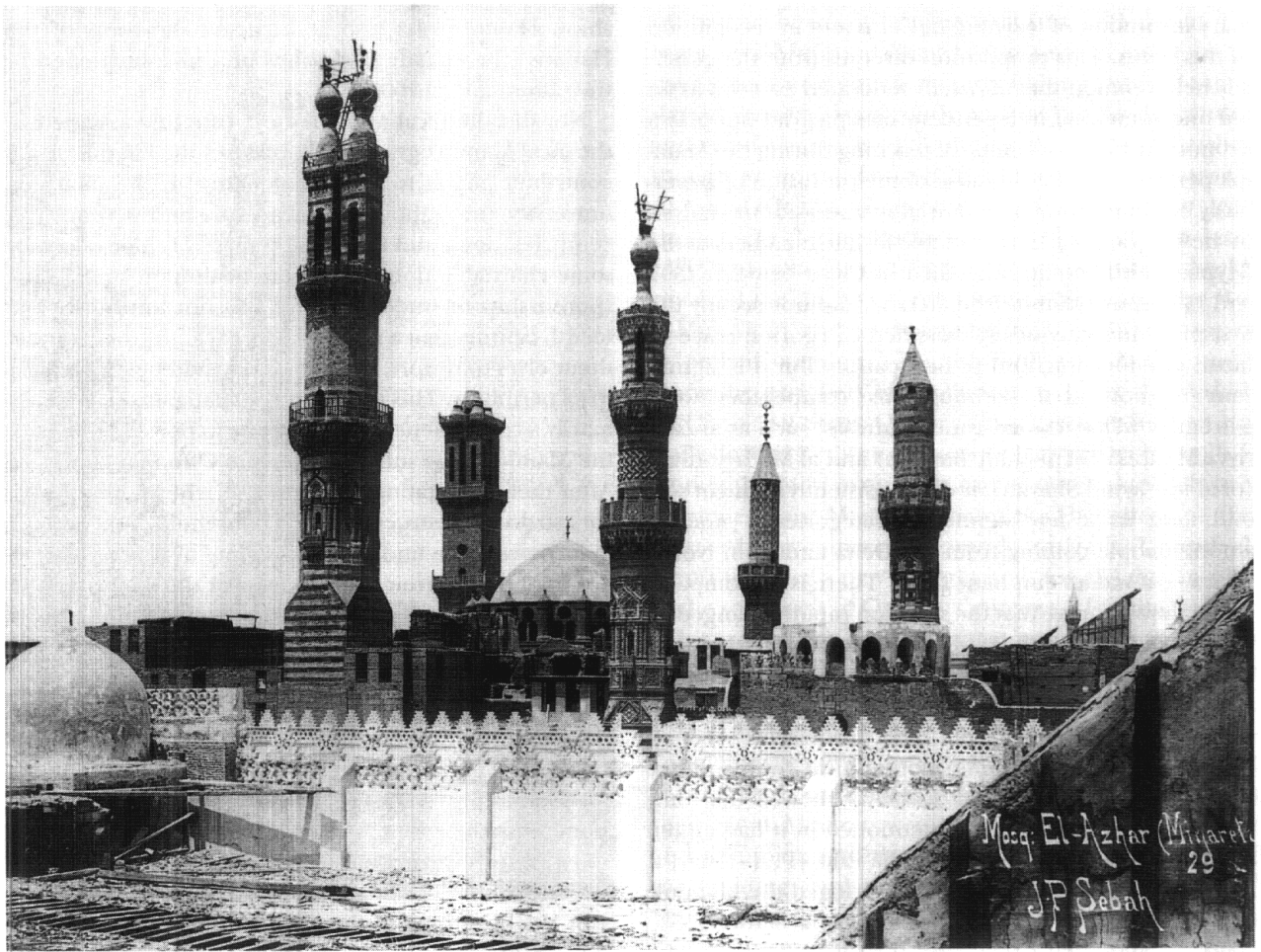


Fig. 9. Al-Azhar mosque. Minarets, including the two Ottoman minarets of ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda at Bab al-Muzayinin and al-Aqbaghawiyya (1749). Photograph by Pascal Sebah, ca. 1887. (Photo: courtesy Fine Arts Library, Harvard University)

ian *riwāq*. ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, the main source for Cairo’s history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, explains that ʿUthman Katkhuda craftily amassed huge sums of money from the unclaimed inheritances he collected after the plague of 1735, which permitted him not only to sponsor the *riwāqs* at al-Azhar, but also to construct a new mosque in al-Azbakiyya, the posh new residential quarter where most beys resided.⁸⁹

But it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that al-Azhar received its first major face-lift since the fall of the Mamluk sultanate. This was done by Amir ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda, the son of ʿUthman Katkhuda’s master Hasan Katkhuda, who was called *ṣāhib al-ʿamāʾir* (the master of building) because of the large number of buildings he sponsored in Cairo.⁹⁰ Between 1746 and 1763, he renovated most of the major shrines

in the city and as a patron singlehandedly altered al-Azhar more than anyone else since Jawhar al-Siqilli first built it. He began in the 1740’s by building two gates — Bab al-Muzayinin and Bāb al-Saʿayida — with *sabil-kuttābs* and minarets and then bought a number of properties south of the mosque to expand its prayer hall.⁹¹ After his appointment as *katkhudā* (head of the Janissaries) in 1749, ʿAbd al-Rahman embarked on a large-scale refurbishing and enlargement program at al-Azhar. He added a new prayer hall south of the original one, so large that it doubled the surface area of the *ḥaram*, and built or refurbished a number of dependencies and residence halls around the mosque that put it back in functioning order and accommodated the rising number of students. He also tried to give the mosque a unified urban aspect by delimiting its enclosure and regulating the circula-

tion in and out of it through the three new gates he had constructed — the two early ones and the Bab al-Shurba (Soup Gate) — and by creating a new main façade through the remodeling of the minaret of the Madrasa al-Aqbughawiyya to make it look like the two Ottoman minarets he had built (fig. 9).⁹² Finally, ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda gained great honor by building himself a mausoleum in this most prominent religious institution, an act that has not been done for almost two centuries before him (Nafisa al-Bakriyya was interred in her mausoleum there around 1588; he was buried in his in 1776), and never after him.⁹³

MODERNIZATION AND REFORM

Al-Azhar's role as the center of resistance in Cairo intensified during the brief but influential French occupation (1798–1801). Despite a mutually rather beneficial first encounter between al-Azhar's ulama and Napoleon Bonaparte which resulted in the formation of a *dīwān* made up of nine Azharite shaykhs to govern Cairo, the popular uprising on 21 October 1798 started from the mosque and ended with its bombardment, temporary closing, and the disbanding of the *dīwān* (which eventually was twice reinstated, with Azharite shaykhs forming a sizable portion of its members). After the slaying of General Kleber by an Azharite, Sulayman al-Halabi, in March 1800, the mosque was closed and its entrances bolted until the return of the Ottomans with the help of the British in August 1801.⁹⁴

The French occupation indirectly had two effects on al-Azhar that were initially promising but ultimately detrimental to maintaining its pedagogical and social dominance in Cairo. The involvement of the Azharite shaykhs in the *dīwāns* set up by the French and in the Cairene revolts made them aware of the potential political power their position conferred upon them.⁹⁵ They tried to put their newly discovered capacity to effective use after the departure of the French. Under the energetic ʿUmar Makram, *naqīb al-ashraf* (head of the descendants of the Prophet), they became involved in the political struggle that finally brought Muhammad ʿAli (1805–48), the founder of modern Egypt and of the khedival dynasty, to power. But the ulama were reluctant to go all the way in assuming political power and the canny Muhammad ʿAli was not going to share with them his hard-won authority, so their alliance was shortlived. In 1809, he dealt a heavy blow to their hesitant attempt at organizing themselves, imposed a tax on, and ultimately confiscated, their *iltizām* (tax-farmed) agricultural land,

which cut deeply into their financial base, and exiled their leader and his erstwhile ally ʿUmar Makram to Damietta.⁹⁶ This was the first among a series of actions undertaken by Muhammad ʿAli and his descendants that over the next century curtailed al-Azhar's independence and subordinated its ulama and students to government authority.

For centuries, al-Azhar, as a center of learning, had lagged behind the times. It had neglected the natural sciences and dealt only with the time-honored religious sciences, such as Qurʾanic exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence. Even in these fields, teaching has generally deteriorated into pedantic exercises in verbal sophistries and scholasticism.⁹⁷ This state of affairs did not change because of the French expedition, despite the repeated assertion that the work of the French acted as a catalyst for modernization in the country.⁹⁸ Some of the experiments pursued by the French savants engaged in collecting and studying all the available material on Egypt did in fact pique the curiosity of a few ulama, but they were totally incomprehensible to the majority among them. Those few who realized the limits of their scholarly enterprise, steeped as it was in outdated medieval tradition, urged reform at al-Azhar, but their arguments went unheeded.⁹⁹ It was not until two generations later that change was introduced to al-Azhar, promoted and facilitated by the same early advocates of reform.

But Muhammad ʿAli did not have the patience to wait until the Azharites came around to accepting change. Being a practical man who had just embarked on a program of intense economic, social, and military restructuring after Western models, he soon established a new school system independent from al-Azhar to train the new cadres for his army and administration. He also sent a number of students to France to acquire their higher education. The graduates of this new system were clearly destined to occupy the choice positions in the new governmental structure, thus excluding the ulama, but this does not seem to have been intentional. In fact, although al-Azhar did not receive any direct support from the pasha's educational reforms, Muhammad ʿAli needed to hire Azharite teachers, who were the most educated in Egypt, to fill the positions in his new schools where Arabic was the language of instruction. He also sent some Azharites with his missions to Europe, among whom Rifaʿa al-Tahtawi (1801–73), who was the religious tutor of the 1826 mission, was to become one of Egypt's leading intellectuals and reformers.¹⁰⁰

Starting with the Khedive Ismaʿil, Muhammad ʿAli's grandson and Cairo's modernizer, the mosque was again



Fig. 10. Al-Azhar mosque. Riwaq al-Abbasi. Façade (1901)

patronized by the ruling family. Ismāʿil rebuilt ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda's Bab al-Saʿayida, renovated the additional structures attached to it, such as the *sabīl* and *maktab*, and restored the Madrasa al-Aqbaghawīyya.¹⁰¹ Khedive Tawfiq renovated the prayer hall added by ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda, aligned the southeast façade behind it with the street, remodeled the façades of the Madrasa al-Aqbaghawīyya, and built a new ablution area along the northeastern façade of the mosque. Khedive ʿAbbas Hilmi II (1882–1914) refurbished the main façade of the mosque and built his own Riwaq al-Abbasi in a neo-Mamluk style along the eastern end of that façade (completed in 1901) (fig. 10). He also constructed a three-story façade in front of the original southwestern façade of the mosque with several *riwāqs* tucked in between the two walls. During the same period, the Committee for the Conservation of Monuments of Arab Art (commonly known as the Comité, an abbreviation of its French name), the mostly European agency responsible for the architectural conservation of Islamic monuments

in Egypt, sponsored the restoration of the old Fatimid sanctuary which resulted in some of the discrepancies noted by Creswell, such as the addition of a circular band of vegetal motifs in the sunken roundels above the arcades in 1893, and the alteration of some of the contents of the Qurʾānic inscriptions.¹⁰²

Three reasons can be advanced to explain this official architectural patronage by the three successive khedives, the last two of whom were neither distinguished nor inspired rulers. The first was the straightforward requirement to maintain the adequate functioning of this major pedagogical institution. The second was the desire of Ismāʿil, and to a lesser extent his two successors, Tawfiq and ʿAbbas Hilmi II, to modernize and regularize this central site in their capital. The task became more urgent with the opening of al-Azhar Street and Maydan al-Azhar in 1890–92; the entire northern façade needed to be aligned with the street and the minaret of ʿAbd al-Rahman Katkhuda had to be demolished, since it stood alone outside the Bab al-Muzayinin. The third was the

effort to win the acceptance and boost the popularity of the rulers among the Azharites and the general population by endowing this respected center of learning with visible additions that would celebrate and perpetuate their names. The same religious policy lies behind the restoration of popular shrines and the launching of grand mosque projects — the Rifāʿī mosque (1869–80 and 1906–11), the Sayyida Zaynab mosque (1885), and the Sayyida Nafisa mosque (1897) — by the same khedives, to express their social and cultural commitment to the country.¹⁰³

Khedival architectural patronage, however, was preceded and accompanied by an increasing interference into the institutional independence of al-Azhar and its methods of education. Sometimes shrewdly and sometimes crudely, al-Azhar has been used by successive regimes to achieve their own ends by sanctioning decisions and making them acceptable to a people that still trust the authority of this revered institution, a kind of political manipulation that has persisted until the present time. But the main impetus for intervention in al-Azhar's internal affairs has ever since then been the drive for modernization (*tajdīd*)¹⁰⁴ — and its inherent component Westernization — the overarching goal pursued by various parties in the recent history of Egypt.

The status of education at al-Azhar itself became the battleground for the two sides of the issue — the modernizers and the traditionalists.¹⁰⁵ From the reign of Ismaʿīl to the revolution of 1952 and Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser's republic after that, rulers generally supported modernization for political reasons. But within al-Azhar itself, homegrown reformers sought to put the institution on a par with contemporary educational establishments so it could maintain its status as the first center of learning in the country.¹⁰⁶ The maneuvering on both sides resulted in a succession of organizing laws, the first of which was issued under Ismaʿīl in 1872 by the *shaykh al-Azhar* (rector) Muhammad Mahdi al-ʿAbbasi, which sought to regulate the appointment of teachers at the institution and organize the examinations for its degrees, but did not attempt to reform its curriculum. During the reign of ʿAbbas Hilmi II under the British occupation, laws were promulgated in 1895, 1896, 1908, and 1911. ʿAbbas Hilmi had in Shaykh Muhammad ʿAbdu (1849–1905), an Azharite revolutionary reformer and one of the most outspoken critics of conservative systems of thought, an ally to organize the administration and educational policy of al-Azhar.¹⁰⁷ The laws of 1908 and 1911 were passed when Saʿd Zaghlul, the leader of the Egyptian revolution against the British occupation in

1919, was minister of education.¹⁰⁸ Under King Fuʿād (1917–36), two complementary pieces of legislation were passed in 1930 and 1936 that attempted to arrange al-Azhar along the same lines as the newly instituted secular university. Another law was passed under the republican reform in 1954, and, finally, a sweeping reform was forced upon al-Azhar in the law of 1961.¹⁰⁹

For the architectural history of the mosque, the last four acts are the most important. Starting with the law of 1930, al-Azhar was rearranged as a modern university and split into three departments — of shariʿa, Arabic language, and theology. In 1932, these three new departments were accommodated in three new buildings scattered around Cairo.¹¹⁰ In 1935–36, al-Azhar's administration was moved into a new building located across from the mosque on Azhar Street and designed by Ahmad Charmi using an eclectic Islamic style which resonates well with the concoction of styles represented at al-Azhar itself.¹¹¹ A number of buildings for the primary and secondary institutes and a medical complex were constructed to the north of it. Between 1950 and 1955, several properties around al-Azhar were bought and their structures demolished to make room for the creation of a modern campus. Two structures in a bland neo-Islamic style were added near the mosque to house the faculties of shariʿa and Arabic language which were moved from their old buildings. A residential complex for international students was then constructed in an open space in ʿAbbasiya, to the northeast of old Cairo, thus extending the University of al-Azhar away from the immediate surroundings of the mosque.¹¹² The pedagogical apparatus of al-Azhar itself was reduced and eventually totally eclipsed when all of its teaching functions had been transferred to the new structures.

Today, al-Azhar still stands in the heart of the old city of Cairo. Its *ṣahn* is no longer a place where turbaned, robed, barely bearded students would sit or pace back and forth while memorizing their antiquated treatises. Nor are its porticoes and aisles any longer the settings for *halaqas* (study circles). Some students of the new Azhar University go there every now and then to review their lessons, either to keep the old tradition alive or to find a quiet space — at least until the restoration of 1993–94 turned it into a construction site.

The content of the mosque's only authentic and self-contained Fatimid inscriptions echoes its present situation. Creswell proved that most of the beautiful writings inside the mosque and around its courtyard were redone after 1891 as part of the renovation and restoration program undertaken by the Comité under ʿAbbas Hilmi II.

He has shown that many of these inscriptions were not always repaired according to the original text, nor were they put back in their original locations.¹¹³ Consequently, no iconographic program could be deduced from the extant bits and pieces since their present arrangement is only a hundred years old.¹¹⁴

Two lines in the conch of the original mihrab, which were uncovered in 1933, form the only complete and sure Fatimid inscriptions in the mosque. They contain two Qurʾanic quotations. The first has the first three verses of the Sura of the Believers (23). "Prosperous are the believers — who are humble in their prayer — and who turn away from idle talk." The second comprises verses 162–63 of the Sura of the Cattle (6). "Say my prayer, my piety, my living and my dying all belong to God the Lord of all beings — no associate has He and thus I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims." Both inscriptions establish a straightforward reference to the essential function of the space, namely prayer, and both were used in mosques around the Islamic world about the same time.¹¹⁵ Their exposition around the time of the 1930 law and its 1936 supplement, which reorganized the new Azhar University and practically dislodged it from the old mosque to the newly built schools to the east, was so timely as almost to be prophetic. The mosque functions today only as its name implies: as a house of prayer for the throngs of students in the new university, merchants, and inhabitants of the crowded quarters around it, and as an attraction for the scores of visitors who tour it in search of its old glory or to marvel at the pell-mell architectural styles confined within its walls. This monument, however, is not only an important part of the rich heritage of Cairo, but also a gauge for detecting major trends in its political, religious, and social history during its first millennium.

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NOTES

1. Martin S. Briggs, *Muhammadan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine* (New York, 1924; repr. 1974), p. 67.
2. Ṭaha Ḥussein, *Al-Ayyām*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1962), 2: 16.
3. Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz al-Hunafā bi-Zikr al-Aʿimma al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-Khulafā*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1967–73), 1: 111, quoting Ibn Zūlāq (918–97) who saw al-Mansuriyya while it was under construction. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, editor of vol. 1 of *Ittiʿāz*, suggests in his note 1 that the name of the Ifriqiyān city may have been reused in Egypt because the new Fatimid cities bore a similar topographical relation to the older capitals, Qayrawān and Fustat.
4. Mustafa ʿAlī, *Mustafa ʿAlī's Description of Cairo of 1599*, trans. and ed. A. Tietze (Vienna, 1975), p. 32.
5. For a list of popular movements that began at al-Azhar, see André Raymond, *Le Caire* (Paris, 1993), pp. 239 and 259; also Mustafa M. Ramaḍān, *Dawr al-Azhar fī al-Ḥayāt al-Miṣriyya* (Cairo, 1986), pp. 111–52.
6. The mosque's architecture and its development over time are described in great detail in K.A.C. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1959), 1: 36–64.
7. Aḥmad Fikrī, *Masājid al-Qāhira wa Madārisaha: al-ʿAsr al-Fāṭimī* (Cairo, 1965), pp. 127–40, argues that it is wrong to use the word "transept" for this transverse aisle, and proves that it never functioned in a mosque as a transept does in a church.
8. Creswell, *M.A.E.*, 1: 45.
9. *Ibid.*, 1: 46, mistakenly identified this Nafisa as the daughter of ʿAlī ibn Abi Taleb. For the correct identification of the Nafisa buried at al-Azhar, see ʿAlī Pāshā Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyya al-Jadida*, 20 vols. (reprt. Cairo, 1969), 2: 92.
10. Mubarak, *Khiṭaṭ*, 4: 49–58, and K. Vollers, "Azhar," *EI*, 1st ed., 1: 533, offer detailed lists of these *arwiqa*.
11. On Creswell's methods, see J.M. Rogers, "Architectural History as Literature: Creswell's Reading and Methods," *Muqarnas* 8 (1991): 45–54.
12. Jonathan Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture: Islamic Art in North Africa and Egypt in the 4th c. AH/10th c. A.D.," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980, pp. 99–105.
13. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. A.A. al-Khuwaṭīr (Riyadh, 1976), p. 278; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *The Minarets of Cairo* (Cairo, 1985), p. 62, reports the same instance without any reference.
14. Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-ʿtibār bi-Diḥr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*, 2 vols. (Bulaq, 1854), 2: 276; idem, *Ittiʿāz*, vol. 3, pt. 2, ed. M.H.M. Aḥmad (Cairo, 1973), p. 320, says only that the sessions for missionaries (*majālis al-daʿwa*) at al-Azhar were eliminated.
15. Idem, *al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. M.M. Ziyāda et al., 4 vols. (Cairo, 1934–73), 1: 150, reports that Ibn Dirbass built several shops and stables in the *ziyāda* of al-Azhar next to his own house, showing how intent he was on downgrading the mosque by appropriating its *ziyāda* for his personal use.
16. Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, ed. K. Zurayk (Beirut, 1942), 7: 119–20; see also the biography of Suleimān al-Ḥanafī in Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafiyāt*, vol. 15, ed. Bernd Radke (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 404–5.
17. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 277; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2: 275.
18. For a different interpretation of the "towers" in pre-Azhar Cairene and Ifriqiyān mosques, with which I disagree for reasons that will become apparent, see Jonathan Bloom, *Minaret: Symbol of Islam* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 125–44.
19. This is the date given by Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2: 268, for building the first minaret (*manār*) at the ʿAmrū Mosque.
20. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2: 318. Jonathan Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo," *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 7–8, misinterpreted Maqrīzī's text and reconstructed the plan of both mosques as having a clerestory (which is how he understood *manār*) in the middle of the *haram* and no minaret. The same assertion is repeated in idem, *Minaret: Symbol of Islam*, p. 130.
21. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2: 276.
22. The minaret is dated by Qaytbay's inscriptions, Max van Ber-

- chem, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum (C.I.A.), Egypt* (Cairo, 1894), vol. 1, no. 21.
23. Alexandre Lézine, *Mahdiya: recherches d'archéologie islamique* (Paris, 1965), p. 93.
 24. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," pp. 187–94; also, idem, "The Mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 24–26, offers a more elaborate explanation of the monumental Fatimid portals than the one based on a re-adapted classical model, first suggested by Lézine.
 25. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," p. 103, reached this point, but opted for the correct linguistic interpretation.
 26. For definitions of the three terms *haniya*, *kuwwa*, and *mastaba* with references to medieval Arabic lexica, see Laila Ibrāhīm and M.M. Amin, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Miṣriyya fi-l-Wathāʾiq al-Mamlūkiyya* (Cairo, 1990), pp. 38, 97, 106.
 27. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," p. 105.
 28. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 273.
 29. Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 48.
 30. Ibn Taghrī-Bardī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣafī*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1956–88), 5: 41.
 31. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 348, 359, 377.
 32. *Ibid.*, 1: 360, states in passing that Jawhar incorporated the garden and maydan in his new city. The existence of this planned open ground, which would have provided the best accommodations for an army camp, may have been what attracted Jawhar to the site in the first place, for otherwise we read echoes of al-Muʿizz's dissatisfaction with the site after he came to Egypt and pointed to two better sites nearby, al-Maqs for its proximity to the river and al-Raṣd for its defensibility; see Maqrīzī, *Ittiḥāz*, 1: 112–13.
 33. Idem, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 138; Abū Bakr ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmiʿ al-Ghuwar*, vol. 6, *al-Durra al-Muḍiyya fi Akhbār al-Dawla al-Fāṭimiyya*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1961), pp. 137–42, elaborates more on the *khīṭaṭ* of Cairo as established by Jawhar's army around the *qaṣr*, and specifies that he is copying from a manuscript of Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir's *al-Rawḍa al-Bahīyya fi Khīṭaṭ al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya*, dated by the author to 647 (1249), which was the source for Maqrīzī as well.
 34. The existence and location of this *muṣalla* is first reported in 985 by al-Muqqadasi, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fi-Maʿrifat al-Aqālim*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1906), p. 200; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 451–57, describes the varying ceremony of ʿId prayer in the *muṣalla* at three different instances during the Fatimid period. The *muṣalla* lost its ceremonial role after Fatimid times and became a space of prayer for the dead, probably the one known throughout the Mamluk period as the *muṣalla* of Bab al-Nasr; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 5, 138.
 35. *Ibid.*, 1: 125, 454–55.
 36. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," pp. 90–93; see also Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, N.Y., 1994), pp. 45, 50.
 37. On his first Friday in Egypt, Jawhar and his soldiers prayed at the mosque of ʿAmru; nine months later, he prayed at Ibn Tulun's mosque on the occasion of the introduction of the Shiʿite phrase, "*ḥayy ʿala khayr al-ʿamal*," to the *adhān*, Maqrīzī, *Ittiḥāz*, 1: 114, 120.
 38. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," p. 94, uses Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 270, 273, to establish the chain of events that led to the institution of the Shiʿite prayer in Egypt after the arrival of the Fatimids.
 39. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," p. 79, quotes Maqrīzī, *Ittiḥāz*, 1: 133, to argue that Jawhar started the building of the caliphal palace in Rabiʿ II, 362 (972) when he heard that his master was coming to Egypt, almost a year after the reported date of the mosque's consecration. Maqrīzī's text (*wa akhadha fi-ʿamārat al-qaṣr wa-l-ziyāda fihī*) clearly indicates that Jawhar expedited the building of the *qaṣr* and added to it, which, contrary to Bloom's explanation, means that the construction had begun earlier but may have slackened until the news of the imminent arrival of al-Muʿizz. This date would have given Jawhar only four months to complete the palace, hardly enough time to build a royal structure.
 40. Ibn al-Dawādārī, *al-Durra al-Muḍiyya*, p. 143, cites a poem recited to mark al-Muʿizz's arrival at his new capital in which the *quṣūr* are qualified as *qāhira*, the victorious, and otherwise unusual attribute for palaces in Arabic poetry.
 41. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," pp. 95–96. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 362, says that the name al-Azhar is recent and that the mosque's name appears as Jāmiʿ al-Qāhira in "history books."
 42. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, p. 278; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 273.
 43. Creswell, *M.A.E.*, 1: 36.
 44. *Ibid.*, 1: 62; Muḥammad ʿAbdallah ʿInān, *Tārkh al-Jāmiʿ al-Azhar fi ʿAsr al-Fāṭimī* (Cairo, 1942), p. 20.
 45. The significance of the number seven in Egyptian Islamic architecture has yet to be deciphered. We encounter the seven *qāʿas* and the seven *ḥadarāt* at the Citadel of Cairo (Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 59), the seven domes (a series of Fatimid domes in the desert near Cairo that apparently only numbered six, Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 459), and the tower of the seven *qāʿas* in Damietta (Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-l-Durr al-Farīd fi-ma Baʿd Tārkh ibn al-ʿAmīd*, ed. E. Blochet, in *Patrologia Orientalis* [Paris, 1919–20], 20: 180), among other names incorporating the number seven. Omar al-Daqqaq, "Manzil al-ʿadad sabaʿa fi al-fikr al-ʿarabi," *ʿAdi-yāt Ḥalab* 1 (1975): 53–108, suggests that the number seven may have stood for completeness and totality, and was not meant to be a literal count of the components.
 46. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 362, and 465–67, for a detailed description of the four nights of illuminations (*layālī al-wūqūd*) and the procession of the caliph and his family to al-Azhar.
 47. *Ibid.*, 2: 273.
 48. Sanders, *Ritual in Fatimid Cairo*, p. 41.
 49. Bloom, "Mosque of al-Hakim," p. 17, shows that the mosque of al-Hakim did not acquire the epithet *al-anwar* until 1024–25; Caroline Williams, "The Cult of the ʿAlid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo, Part I: The Mosque of al-Aqmar," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 37–52, suggests that the name is a reference to Husayn, the model of martyrs for the Shiʿites who was likened to the moon. For al-Afkhar Mosque and the three belvederes, see Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 193 and 1: 404, respectively.
 50. Sanders, *Ritual in Fatimid Cairo*, pp. 46–73, for a succinct description of the rituals developed in early Fatimid al-Qahira which either centered on or involved the mosque and the palace.
 51. Paul Ravaisse, "Essai sur l'histoire et la topographie du Caire d'après Maqrīzī," *Mémoires publiés par les Membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire* (Cairo, 1887–90), pp. 1, 3, plate 3.
 52. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," pp. 79–81.

53. Ibid., 84–85; Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz*, 1: 294–95, for a list of al-ʿAziz's buildings.
54. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 407; Sanders, *Ritual in Fatimid Cairo*, p. 42.
55. The name Qasr al-Shawk (made famous by the novelist Naguib Mahfouz) predates the building of al-Qahira and was reportedly the name of a structure that belonged to the clan of ʿAzra, an Arabic tribe that participated in the Islamic conquest of Egypt. Jawhar incorporated the structure in the new palace, Ibn al-Dawādārī, *al-Durra al-Muḍiyya*, p. 138.
56. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 425.
57. Ibid., 1: 362; Ravaisse, "Essai sur l'histoire du Caire," 1, 3: 430–32.
58. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, pp. 278–79, copied the section on al-Azhar from an original document; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 273–74, reproduces what appears to be a more complete text from the same source.
59. Ibn al-Dawādārī, *al-Durra al-Muḍiyya*, p. 286, reports that al-Hakim banned the *khuṭba* from al-Azhar after the inauguration of his new mosque, but this decision is not corroborated by any other source.
60. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 341, and *Ittiʿāz*, 1: 227.
61. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir, *Rawḍ*, p. 278, credits the story to Ibn Zulaq, who reported it on the authority of the Fatimid historian al-Musabihī (977–1029), but disputes the use of jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), because for him Ismaʿīlī *fiqh* is not considered valid *fiqh*. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 273, 341, and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿsha fi-Ṣināʿat al-Inshāʾ*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1918–22), 3: 367, copy either Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir or Ibn Zulaq.
62. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 277, on the authority of the same al-Musabihī, probably from his still missing *Akhbār Miṣr* (only vol. 40 has been discovered and published [Cairo, 1978]).
63. On Dar al-ʿIlm or Dar al-Hikma, Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1: 458–60; Qalqashandī *Ṣubḥ*, 3: 366.
64. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 275–76.
65. Ibid., 2: 274, a few lines after he reported the choice of the mosque of al-Hakim for its size, reiterated the centrality of al-Azhar when he noted that the people of Cairo were pleased when the Friday prayer was reinstated in it because it was then more accessible to them.
66. See the biography of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī in Ibn Abī Uṣaybuʿa, *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ fi Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibāʾ*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut, n.d.), p. 689.
67. Ira Lapidus, "Ayyubid Religious Policy and the Development of the Schools of Law in Cairo," in André Raymond et al., *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire (27 mars–5 avril 1969)* (Cairo, 1969), pp. 279–86; Gary Leiser, "The Madrasa and the Islamization of the Middle East: The Case of Egypt," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 22 (1985): 29–47.
68. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, p. 277; Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arb fi-Funūn al-Adab*, vol. 30, ed. M. Shaʿira (Cairo, 1990), pp. 135; Maqrīzī *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 275; idem, *Sulūk* 1: 556–57.
69. This move was preceded by other decisions in the same vein, such as the one in 1265 to appoint four chief judges rather than the one Shafiʿite judge, which had been the practice during the Ayyubid period; see J.S. Escovitz, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamluk Empire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102 (1982): 529–31.
70. Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1: 944. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fi-Waqāʾiʿ al-Duhūr*, 5 vols. in 6 books, ed. M. Mustafa (Wiesbaden, 1960–75), 1, 1: 416–17, says that al-Nasir ordered each of the amirs to restore the mosque of which he was the supervisor (*nāzir*). This is not corroborated by earlier reporters, and it is very difficult to imagine how amirs could have been the supervisors of major congregational mosques such as al-Azhar.
71. Jacques Jomier, "al-Azhar," *EI*, 2nd ed., 1: 813.
72. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 383–84.
73. Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 48. This madrasa caused heated debate among the major legal authorities of the time for having a door into the *ḥaram*; see al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafi, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-l-Abdān fi Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. Hasan Ḥabashī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1970–94), 4: 225–26.
74. On the analogous development in the Great Mosque in Isfahan, see Oleg Grabar, *The Great Mosque of Isfahan* (New York, 1990), pp. 36–41, 49–59.
75. With the qualified exception of the two madrasas endowed by Salah al-Din around the mosque of ʿAmru when he was still the vizier of the Fatimid caliph and eager to promote Sunni Islam in Egypt; see, Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 263–64. Another exception is the madrasa of Sarghatmish (1356) built next to the northwestern wall of the mosque of Ibn Tulun. None of these madrasas, however, was built along the entrance of the mosque; they all merely used the existing walls as support and benefited from proximity to a center of worship.
76. For biographical notes on the three men, see Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 44–49.
77. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2: 276.
78. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3: 124, for the work of 1476; 3: 306 for the renovation of 1494–95 which was sponsored by a certain Mustafa ibn Mahmud al-Rumi (the Anatolian).
79. Ibid., 5: 94; Van Berchem, (*C.I.A.*) *Egypt*, vol. 1, nos. 26–27.
80. R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture in Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 111–12.
81. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)* (Leiden, 1994), p. 89.
82. Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 145–64, esp. nn. 35–37, and the conclusion on al-Azhar's position, p. 334.
83. Jean-Claude Garcin, "L'insertion sociale de Shaʿrānī dans le milieu Cairete (d'après l'analyse des Tabaqat de cet auteur)," in André Raymond et al., *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire (27 mars–5 avril 1969)*, pp. 159–68.
84. Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 91, uses the same study to conclude that al-Azhar attained its prominent position in the first half of the sixteenth century.
85. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 5: 205; Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 90, reads Ibn Iyās's text as saying that the donations were given to al-Azhar. The reference, however, clearly indicates that the sultan gave out alms to the people (*ṭasadaqa bi-māl lahu ṣūra*).
86. Aḥmad Chalabī ibn ʿAbd al-Ghanī, *Awḍaḥ al-Ishārat fi-man Tawala Miṣr al-Qāhira min-l-Wuzarāʾ wa-l-Bāshat*, ed. A.R. Abdel-Raḥīm (Cairo, 1978), pp. 158, 162; Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 180.
87. Ibid., pp. 165–72, and references.
88. Other monuments that were restored in the same period include the mosque of ʿAmru, the mosque of al-Fākhani, and the shrines of al-Shafiʿī and of ʿUmar ibn al-Farid, see *ibid.*, p. 168; ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār fi-l-Tarājīm wa-l-Akhbār*, 3 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 1: 250.
89. Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār*, 1: 251; Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 49, 52, 53.

- This explanation is reminiscent of that given by some chroniclers for the madrasas of Sultan Hasan in 1356, built with money collected from unclaimed inheritances after the Black Death of 1348.
90. Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār*, 1: 490.
 91. Aḥmad al-Damardāshī, *Kitāb al-Durra al-Muṣāna*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm A. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (Cairo, 1989), p. 250.
 92. Today, the minaret has regained its Mamluk top that reproduces the familiar silhouette typical of a minaret built in 1339, but this rebuilding cannot be dated from the available sources. It must have been put there after 1932, because the photograph in Hauteceur and Wiet, *Les mosquées du Caire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1932), shows the minaret of al-Aqbughāwiyya to have had an Ottoman third shaft and a finial.
 93. Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār*, 1: 490–95, gives a biography of ʿAbd al-Raḥman Katkhuda and a list of his architectural works. The list is reproduced in all later Arabic sources such as Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 34–35. See also André Raymond, “Les constructions de l’émir ʿAbd al-Raḥman Katkhudā au Caire,” *Annales Islamologiques* 11 (1972): 239; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The ʿAbd al-Raḥman Katkhudā Style in 18th-Century Cairo,” *Annales Islamologiques* 26 (1992): 117–26.
 94. ʿAbdulaziz M. al-Shināwī, *Ṣuwar min dawr al-Azhar fī muqāwamat al-iḥtilāl al-faransī li Miṣr* (Cairo, 1971), pp. 100–76; ʿInān, *Tārīkh*, pp. 151–86.
 95. Anwar Louca, “La renaissance égyptienne et les limites de l’oeuvre de Bonaparte,” *Cahiers d’histoire égyptienne* 7, 1 (Feb. 1955), pp. 1–20; Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid Marsot, “The Role of the *Ulama* in Egypt during the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, ed. P.M. Holt (London, 1968), pp. 264–80.
 96. Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār*, 3: 365; Vollers, “Azhar,” *EI*, 1st ed., 1: 535. For a review of events between 1801 and 1809, see Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad ʿAlī* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 36–70; Jamal Mohammad Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 1–9.
 97. For a brief analysis of al-Azhar’s teaching method, see Jacques Berque, *Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution*, trans. J. Stewart (London, 1972), pp. 76–83.
 98. Louca, “Renaissance égyptienne,” pp. 15–18.
 99. Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 82–84; see also, Ahmed Abdul Wahab Azmy, “University Tradition and Continuity in Architecture as a Stimulation for the Future Development of al-Azhar University and Old Cairo,” Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1966, pp. 196–97; for a translation of a very revealing passage from one of the first reformers, Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (1776–1834), *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār ʿala Jāmiʿ al-jawāmiʿ* (Beirut, 1983), 1: 225–26.
 100. Jack A. Crabbs, Jr. *The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Detroit, 1984), pp. 88–89; P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt from Muhammad Alī to Mubarak* (Baltimore, 1991), pp. 93–101; for Taḥṭāwī, see Anwar Louca, “Rifaʿa al-Taḥṭāwī (1801–73) et la science occidentale,” in *D’un Orient à l’autre: les métamorphoses successives des perceptions et connaissances*, ed. Marie-Claude Burgat, vol. 2. *Identifications* (Paris, 1991), pp. 201–18.
 101. Mubārak, *Khīṭaṭ*, 4: 38.
 102. Creswell, *M.A.E.*, 1: 52; Azmy, “University Tradition,” pp. 212–16.
 103. For the Sayyida Zaynab and Sayyida Nafisa mosques, see the Ministry of Waqfs, *The Mosques of Egypt*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1949), 2: 122–23, figs. 180–81, for the first, and p. 124, figs. 184–85, for the second; for the Rifaʿi Mosque, the most recent study is Muhammad al-Asad, “The Mosque of al-Rifaʿi in Cairo,” *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 108–24.
 104. *Tajdīd*, a term used in the nineteenth century to signify modernization, was equally applied to designate the renovation of any old building. This semantic correlation perhaps reveals something about the notion of modernization in the mind of nineteenth-century reformers: they were renovating an existing system, not remaking it; see Berque, *Egypt*, p. 82.
 105. A recent critical analysis of the contrast between the traditional and new methods of education is Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 74–92.
 106. They were also prompted by the loss of al-Azhar’s monopoly on the legal and educational professions with the rise of a new class of graduates from the European-inspired secular schools; see Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt* (London, 1990), pp. 11–14; Vatikiotis, *Modern Egypt*, p. 302.
 107. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–200; Ahmed, *Egyptian Nationalism*, pp. 33–43.
 108. Vatikiotis, *Modern Egypt*, pp. 301–4.
 109. *Ibid.*, pp. 472–77; Berque, *Egypt*, pp. 508–10. A melancholy review of al-Azhar’s recent history is ʿInān, *Tārīkh*, pp. 218–66.
 110. Azmy, “University Tradition,” pp. 256–72.
 111. Tarek Sakr, *Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Architecture in Cairo* (Cairo, 1992), pp. 60–62.
 112. Jomier, “al-Azhar,” *EI*, 2nd ed., 1: 815.
 113. This displacement of the original inscriptions may have occurred earlier than the nineteenth century since the mosque’s wall surfaces were repaired and whitewashed several times; see Creswell, *M.A.E.*, 1: 37–38; Bloom, “Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture,” pp. 113–17.
 114. *Ibid.*, pp. 117–22; Bloom nonetheless goes to great lengths to try to read two levels of meaning in the original inscriptions, while recognizing that they are fragmentary and incomplete.
 115. Some of the examples are listed in Erica Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1981), 2: 40, 83. Another (comprising the first three verses of sura 23) is in the southern dome of the mosque of Isfahan built between 1072 and 1075 by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk, the pioneer of the Sunni revival that ultimately swept away the Fatimid presence in Egypt and reduced the Ismaʿīlis to an underground movement.