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The Evolution of Birkat al-Fil
(From the Fatimids to the Twentieth Century)

by

Nadia Fouad Younes

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Abstract

This thesis will be exploring in depth the urban fabric of the area formerly known as Birkat al-Fil, or Elephant Pond, and its modern day transformation into areas such as Hilmiyya and Hilmiyya al-Jadida. Though the pond was eventually filled in the middle of the nineteenth century, the area will still be discussed in terms of its development within the modern era. I have defined the pre-twentieth century area of Birkat al-Fil by historical landmarks such as Bab al-Khalq to the north, the Mosque of Sultan Hasan to the east, and Sayyida Zaynab to the west. The pond area that will be studied and its transformation was encompassed within the triangular area defined as, in the modern era, the Muhammad ‘Ali spine, which runs from the north to the southeast corner; the *Saliba*, the southern boundary; and Shari‘ Port Said, the southwest to north boundary.

I have chosen to study this particular topic in depth because it is one of the most prominent physical urban transformations to have taken place in the city. During the reign of Muhammad ‘Ali, and later the Khedive Isma‘il, these ponds (including Azbakiyya, Ratli, Qarun etc), which were once numerous and plentiful, were filled and developed as prime real estate in a modernizing capital. It is through the significance of Birkat al-Fil that I have chosen to trace the history of its development as part of the larger urbanization of Cairo. This thesis will also give detailed descriptions of some of the domestic houses that would have appeared surrounding the pond throughout the various Muslim dynasties, culminating with the Muhammad ‘Ali dynasty. I will also discuss the eventual destruction of the pond, in the 19th century and examine the modern era by giving contemporary examples of some of the houses that can still be found in the area of Hilmiyya

Chapter One

History and Topography of the area of Birkat al-Fil

The topography of the city of Cairo has evolved very little over the centuries and its location was strategically chosen for habitation for one main reason: the River Nile. It is located at the apex of the delta, and “has obvious strategic and administrative, as well as commercial and industrial advantages which have justified the existence of an important town since ancient times.”¹ The city has experienced major topographical shifts in population, beginning first with the move from Fustat to al-‘Askar (‘the Army’) in 750/1349 during the Abbasid period, then later from al-‘Askar to al-Qata’i (‘the Allotments’) with the Tulunids, and eventually permanently to al-Qahira with the Ayyubids around 564/1168.

All of these locations were in close proximity to either the main flow of the Nile or one of its tributaries; near to underground wells; or allowed great engineering feats such as the building of aqueducts which allowed for consistent and permanent access to one of Egypt’s greatest assets (Pl. 1.1). Fustat was near the mouth of the *khaliq* (near present day Maydan Sayyida Zaynab), and was therefore “not only generously supplied with the waters of the Nile and the agricultural surplus of the Nile valley and delta, farms but was also an intercontinental commercial hub, controlling east-west caravan traffic across North Africa.”² When Jauhar first arrived in 359/969 with the new Fatimid dynasty, he happened to observe the Nile’s capabilities. He arrived in May, a time when the Nile was at its lowest point. He therefore “had time to observe the flooding of the low-lying areas

¹ Haswell, *The River Nile*, 171.

² Bloom, *Arts of the City*, 55.

west of the *khalij*, and naturally selected the more elevated areas east of the *khalij* as the site for his new town-al-Qahira.”³ He had to establish a camp for his troops (which he had originally named al-Mansuriyya)⁴ and by doing so, his troops created a fortress, or *qasr* in which to protect and contain themselves in. His location was also “a tactful distance from [Fustat’s] congregational mosque and the old government offices which Jauhar could have expected to be centers of anti-Fatimid resistance.”⁵ His choice also allowed for access to water by means of the Khalij al-Kabir, which was fed by Khalij al-Nasiri.

Various ponds were created in the city when the annual floods receded, and the depressions in the ground were filled with water during a high water table.⁶ It was because of this reason that the ponds were only filled for the majority of the year whereas during the other months, the ponds shrank, and became low-lying gardens. The numerous ponds that were in existence during the Muslim conquest included⁷ those of Birkat Batn al-Baqara⁸ in the north of the city (which would later be renamed Birkat al-Azbakiyya, after the Mamluk emir Azbak); Birkat al-Fil,⁹ which was encompassed within Fustat; Birkat Qarun¹⁰ which lay southwest of Birkat al-Fil; Birkat al-Habash¹¹ to the southeast of the city and Birkat al-Farayyin (in the present area of Bab al-Luq). These ponds were created as the annual floods receded, and the soil was left fertile and

³ Haswell, *The River Nile*, 174.

⁴ Abu-Lughod, “An Islamic Metropolis,” 21.

⁵ Bloom, *Arts of the City*, 55.

⁶ MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 88.

⁷ Pl. 1.2.

⁸ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 2.

⁹ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 7.

¹⁰ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 9.

¹¹ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 10.

abundant. Furthermore, “as the alluvial lands extended farther to the west, other ponds were formed and gardens added.”¹² Maqrizi mentions ten ponds that existed during the Mamluk period. Aside from the ponds previously mentioned they were Birkat al-Sabba‘in¹³ between Fustat and Cairo, Birkat al-Nasriyya¹⁴ south of Bab al-Luq, Birkat al-Shuqaf¹⁵ in Bab al-Luq, Birkat Jamaq north of Bab al-Futuh, Birkat Ratli north of Bab al-Shari‘a; Birkat Qaranja¹⁶ in the northern suburb of al-Khandaq, and finally Birkat Qarmut¹⁷ southwest of Maqs.¹⁸ However, although most ponds were naturally occurring depressions, sometimes ponds would be dug at the initiative of a member of the ruling class. This was the case for Batn al-Baraqa under the Fatimids, Azbakiyya under the Mamluks, or the pond of Radwan Bey Abu‘l-Sawarib under the Ottomans.¹⁹

Three major canals (khuljan singular *khalij*) fed the various ponds; the Khalij al-Qahira (which later became Khalij al-Nasir, established circa 789/1387)²⁰ which served the area between Qahira and Fustat, including the ponds of Birkat al-Fil and Birkat Qarun.²¹ The second canal was that of Khalij Bani Wa‘il which served the ponds of Birkat Shata, Birkat al-Shu‘aybiyya and Birkat al-Habash. The final canal was that of Khalij al-Dhikr which was a short canal feeding Birkat al-Baqara.

¹² MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 5.

¹³ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 5.

¹⁴ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 6.

¹⁵ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 8.

¹⁶ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 4.

¹⁷ Pl. 1.2 indicated as # 3.

¹⁸ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:151.

¹⁹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and its Environs*, 20.

²⁰ Haswell, *The River Nile*, 175.

²¹ However, MacKenzie directly contradicts this statement by saying that the two ponds “appear to have been fed by ground water rather than directly from the *Khalij*”, 89.

During the Fatimid period gardens and the occasional pavilion were established along the east bank of Birkat al-Fil. The shores of this pond were effectively free from population until 600-601/1203-1204.²² According to the author Salmon, the gardens tended to be based around the eastern bank of the pond, presumably to catch the prevailing winds from the north. During this time, the surrounding area was effectively developed for military purposes, and as many as eight military *haras* were built between the areas of Bab Zuwayla and the northern and northeastern banks of Birkat al-Fil.²³ During the Fatimid period, it has been said by travelers such as Nasir-i Khusraw, that because of the elevation of the city of Cairo (in contrast to the low lying region of Fustat), the air was cleaner, and was less infected and further from decay than the city of Fustat. They also state that the depressions between Fustat and Cairo (presumably Birkat al-Fil, Birkat Qarun, and Birkat Farayyin) were filled by ground leakage, which resulted in contaminated water and oppressive vapors.²⁴ As a result, the gardens and few houses in these areas were subject to the discomforts and diseases found throughout the area.

As the high volume of workers living in Fustat and commuting to Cairo for work increased, the “considerable distance between the earlier center and the new capital also made Qahira’s transformation into a full-fledged city almost inevitable.”²⁵ It was the further development of Qahira and the decline of Fustat that enticed those living in Fustat to migrate to the larger walled city. The city of Cairo was further developed to the north and to the south of Bab Zuwayla and al-Rumayla. The ponds remained pavilions and gardens, whilst the city of Fustat was left to gradually decline.

²²Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:100-1.

²³Salmon, *Topographie*, 50-51.

²⁴Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safar-namah*, 152-3.

²⁵Raymond, *Cairo*, 78-79.

With the arrival of the Ayyubids, the walled city was expanded to include the former capitals of al-Qata'i' and al-'Askar; Birkat al-Fil and Birkat Qarun; the Darb al-Ahmar area and the Citadel. The Citadel was for the time being the major focal point for construction "both in its immediate surroundings and on the two arteries connecting it with the *khalij* and Fustat (the Saliba), and Bab Zuwayla and al-Qahira (Darb al-Ahmar)."²⁶ The construction of the Citadel served as a magnet that encouraged settlements in the area between the existing southern wall and the approaches to it.²⁷ In order to fully establish the area as a commercial center, many of the markets (i.e. for horses, camels and donkeys) were all moved to Maydan al-Rumayla. The area of Darb al-Ahmar was formerly a cemetery dating from roughly 545-546/1150-51. This cemetery coincided with the *haras* that were built by the Fatimids. According to Maqrizi, with the construction of the Citadel came interest in the surrounding areas, such as Darb al-Ahmar, which allowed the people in the area to gradually build whilst removing the graves in the process of construction.²⁸

It wasn't until the year 600/1203, during the Ayyubid period, that the area of Birkat al-Fil was developed. Until then, the surrounding areas of the pond remained as pavilions and lush gardens.

The pond was bordered by two gardens of note: on the north Bustan al-Habbaniyya, dating from Fatimid times; and on the east Bustan Sayf al-Islam Tughtakin ibn Ayyub (the brother of Salah el-Din, and viceroy of the Yemen). The latter garden dominated the pond; it boasted spacious galleries (*dahaliz*) and was surmounted by kiosks (*jawasiq*) facing the four cardinal points.²⁹

²⁶Mackenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 41.

²⁷Abu-Lughod, "An Islamic Metropolis," 24.

²⁸Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:136.

²⁹Mackenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 43.

The development of the area for domestic purposes occurred soon after the population boom of 610-611/1213-14 and 656/1258, when many easterners were driven to Egypt before the onslaught of the Mongols. The immigrants settled around the area of Birkat al-Fil, and on both sides of the *khaliq*. Maqrizi claims that at the time, the houses there were some of the finest in Egypt.³⁰ It was also said that “the area resembled a little Venice, with its houses bathing in the water.”³¹

The death of the Sultan al-Salah Najm al-Din Ayyub in 647/1249 was followed by the succession of his wife Shajjar al-Durr. She was acclaimed with one of her husband’s mamluks, al-Mu‘izz Aybak as regent³². Due to the unusual circumstances, she was not very well liked by the masses who couldn’t fathom a woman ruling and making political and economic decisions for the country. Her reign therefore ended with the Mamluk emirs deciding to confer the sultanate on Aybak, who would inaugurate the Mamluk dynasty.

Sultan Baybars ruled after Aybak, until 676/1277. After him came Qalawun, the father of the most prominent Bahri Mamluks, most notably al-Nasir Muhammad who reigned over Egypt three times. This specific lineage, or hereditary succession, would culminate with the end of an era of enthusiastic and prolific expansion projects which were highly encouraged by the Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad who was said to have spent an average of 100,000 dirhams a day on his various building projects, according to Maqrizi.³³ Al-Nasir wished to expand his city, and therefore designated 600 hectares in between the two canals (Khalij al-Nasiri and Khalij al-Masri) for development. As a

³⁰ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:223.

³¹ Clerget, *Le Caire*, 167.

³² Raymond, *Cairo*, 106.

³³ *Ibid.*, 120.

result, “the banks of the *khalij* on either side were covered with houses, while behind them were gardens, markets, public baths, and mosques.”³⁴

With of the re-establishment of the Citadel, with all its newly built lavish structures, the surrounding area once again experienced a building boom, much more organized and well planned than the attempt made previously by the Ayyubids. The areas lying between the Citadel and the Bab Zuwayla were rapidly settled and an active commercial establishment prospered there. In terms of growth and commercial development, the area reaching from the Citadel to Bab Zuwayla was caused primarily by the “dense settlement of Mamluk emirs along its streets and by the shores of the Elephant Lake (Birkat al-Fil).”³⁵ As a result of the increased number of building programs, the area also served “an entire class of servants, civilian clients, and merchants who catered to the need of the military elite.”³⁶ When the mosque of ibn Tulun was restored after falling into disrepair for over a century, “the district around it came back to life.”³⁷ As al-Nasir had done previously with the 600 hectares in between the two canals, “once again grants were given to encourage the parceling and settlement of land near the large Birkat al-Fil, which was to become one of Cairo’s chic quarters.”³⁸

According to Raymond, the area of Kabsh Hill, which lay behind the Mosque of Ibn-Tulun became the residential area for the members of the sultans family, emirs, and ambassadors.³⁹ This was also an indication of the shift in demography of the people living in the area which no longer necessarily consisted of immigrants looking for refuge,

³⁴ Ibid., 127.

³⁵ Petry, *Civillian Elite*, 133.

³⁶ Ibid., loc. cit.

³⁷ Raymond, *Cairo*, 132.

³⁸ Ibid., 133.

³⁹ Ibid., 133-135.

but of the ruling class, elites, and those close to the sultan. Maqrizi wrote of the wedding of the daughter of al-Nasir to the Emir Arghun al-Kamili in 722/1322, that the numerous pavilions surrounding the Birkat al-Fil which had recently been refurbished for this occasion appeared as leaves surround the bark, they appear to the eye no less than the stars scattered around the moon.⁴⁰

As a result of the expansion in residential and commercial building that occurred in the fourteenth century, naturally, there came a boom in religious buildings. As the area immediately surrounding the Citadel became the main center of military, and political power, the area of Birkat al-Fil became a lush and enticing residential area. As far as religious buildings were concerned, al-Nasir once again encouraged his emirs to build extensively, and championed them to build in the areas directly surrounding the Citadel, and the encompassing pond. Of those that were constructed, many of them still remain today. Two of these mosques were in very close proximity to the pond; the Mosque of Qusun, 730/1329, which lay right at the very northern tip of the pond; the Mosque of Bashtak 738/1337 which was built on the northwest bank of the pond; and finally, the mosque of the Qadi Yahya in 856/1452. Other mosques which were built in the area between the Citadel and the pond include the Mosque of Ulmas al-Hajib, built in 730/1329; the Mosque of Shaykhu in 750/1349; the Mosque of Sultan Hasan which was built in 757-764/1356-61; and the Mosque-Madrassa of Azbak al-Yusufi which was built in 900/1494.⁴¹

Maqrizi, who wrote about Cairo during the crucial transition period between the Bahri Mamluks and the Burji Mamluks in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, states

⁴⁰ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:229.

⁴¹ Religious monuments will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

that in the southern zone, which encompassed the area from al-Qahira's Fatimid wall, to Kabsh Hill and the Citadel, there were 49 mosques in the area, which equated to a staggering 33.6% of all mosques in the city. This was an extremely high number considering that the area of al-Qahira, which was delineated by the Fatimid walls, had a slightly higher number with 69 mosques, equating to 47.3% of the city's mosques.

According to Maqrizi, during the period of 694-741/1293-1340, the southern district of Cairo contained a total of sixteen emiral palaces or residences, which constituted 35% of all residences in Cairo at the time. A total of six were in fact located on Birkat al-Fil.

To get a sense of the true nature of the dwellers of the area at the time of Maqrizi, it is important to look at other facilities that would have eased the lives of those living in the area. A simple way to do this is to look at Maqrizi's information on public baths (as reinterpreted by Raymond). The southern zone contained 4 public baths, or 7.8% of the baths in the city, which may seem low, however, considering that the northern suburb of Husaniyya contained no baths, and that the western zone contained only one bath, I believe this information to be a good indication of not only the structure of the city itself, but also of the growing importance and focus given to the area in question.⁴²

Under the reign of Barsbay (836-842/1422-38), and after him under Qaytbay (873-902/1468-96), Egypt experienced prosperity in which the various sultans patronized abundant constructions, and it is during the time between 815-922/1412-1516 that "no fewer than 20 mosques and madrasas were built in the area between the southern tip of

⁴² All figures including those for mosques and palaces in the preceding paragraphs are taken from Raymond, and are reconstructions based on Maqrizi's texts: Raymond, *Cairo*, 151.

Birkat al-Fil and the area of the Ramp on either side of the *Saliba* and around Rumayla square, representing a quarter of the total number built in Cairo during this period,”⁴³ It was also during the reigns of the aforementioned sultans that the tombs at Rumayla and the Ramp were to be transferred elsewhere, presumably to make room for growth in the area. According to Raymond, this transfer of tombs seems to coincide with the construction of markets and rental buildings during the reigns of Barsbay, Qaytbay and al-Ghuri in the area around the Citadel.⁴⁴

During the fifteenth century, after Egypt faced long economic decline and upheaval between the Mamluk emirs and the sultans, the Citadel was under siege. In 907/1501, the Sultan al-Ghuri assumed power and it is during this period that the country fell into disarray. Al-Ghuri was killed in combat by the Ottoman Sultan Salim I, in Syria on August 24, 1516.⁴⁵ It is this event that crushed the glorious reign of the Mamluks, who had presided over the country for over 250 years. With the defeat of the Mamluks, came the rule of the Ottomans, whose occupation has been described as “a tyrannical and obscurantist rule, responsible for the decline of Egypt and Cairo.”⁴⁶

With the Ottomans came little transformation to the city of Cairo itself. Though they chose to reside in and around the area of the Khan al-Khalili, they were still considered foreigners. They constituted the highest numbers of foreigners with roughly 10,000 out of 263,000 who resided Cairo at the time.⁴⁷ Only slight physical changes

⁴³ Ibid., 179.

⁴⁴ Ibid., loc. cit.

⁴⁵ Hassaballah, *Living Units*, 4.

⁴⁶ Raymond, *Cairo*, 189.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 211.

Although foreigners also constituted Copts, all other minority religions, and foreign Muslims.

occurred in the city. However, the “suburbs”, or the areas surrounding the city proper exhibited a lower average of wealth and lesser population densities, whilst the more affluent neighborhoods such as those of Birkat al-Fil and around various other ponds (Nasriyya and Azbakiyya), experienced little or no change from previous centuries; the wealthy still opted for the cool breezes and the spacious domiciles of the ponds.

When Malika Safiyya’s (mother of the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad III) chief eunuch ‘Uthman Agha chose to build a mosque in 1018/1610,⁴⁸ the question arose as to where to build it. Given that the city was densely populated, the options were limited. An order was given to buy the tanneries which had existed in the area for centuries located just north of Birkat al-Fil. Eventually the tanneries were moved, and four mosques were built in their stead: the Mosque of Malika Safiyya (1018/1610); the Mosque of ‘Ali al-Amiri (1024/1616); the Mosque of Yusuf Agha al-Hin (1024/1625) and the Mosque of Burdayni (1024-1038/1616-1629). Tanneries are rarely located within the heart of any city, and therefore can usually be found on the outskirts, the reason for this being that they produce foul smells due to the use of urine as a fixative. This was the reason why development of the northern area of the pond was minimal prior to their relocation, with few exceptions such as the Mosque of Qusun. However, with the tanneries relocated to Bab al-Luq this newly vacated area allowed a large number of emirs to settle along the northern shores of Birkat al-Fil, recreating the trend that was witnessed during the Mamluk period for the construction of large palaces and villas. During the 17th century, this ancient, newly expanded southern district became the number one area for settlement among the ruling classes; possibly due to the similarities of the pond offered to the banks

⁴⁸ He died before it was completed and it was appropriated by Malika Safiyya: Warner, *Monuments*, 124.

of the Bosphorus. During the period between 1059-1168/1650-1755 CE, 40 % of the emirs whose place of residence is known had palaces along the pond, which was surrounded by a continuous belt of houses.⁴⁹

Fulgence, a European living in Cairo in the 1700s described the pond as following;

The most beautiful houses in Cairo are situated around this *birka*. It is flooded for eight months of the year, and is a perpetual garden during the other four. During the flood, one sees a great number of gilded brigantines on which persons of consequence and their wives take the air at nightfall. There is not a day when fireworks are not set off and music is not heard. The latticed windows are filled with innumerable women of quality, whom one may constantly glimpse thanks to the illumination of these houses during festivities. It is one of the most beautiful spectacles the night has to offer.⁵⁰

Despite the lack of physical change to the main city during the Ottoman rule, the emirs decided to construct numerous *sabils*, animal troughs, and mosques in the southern part of the city. In Cairo, of the 111 *sabils* that were constructed during the rule of the Ottomans, 46 of them were built in the southern districts, whereas only 30 were constructed in the center of Cairo. In terms of religious edifices, fourteen mosques were built in the southern areas of Cairo, in contrast to only twelve in the main city.⁵¹ These figures represent a possibly more tolerant rule than that of the Mamluks, in a sense, because little or no destruction occurred to former mosques, madrasas and residential structures, as had taken place with the Ayyubids when destroying the Fatimid royal palaces on the Bayn al-Qasrayn. Instead of demolishing former buildings, the Ottomans instead chose to expand the city westward in the areas between the two canals, which also

⁴⁹ Ibid., 219.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 276.

⁵¹ Ibid., 220.

experienced an attempted expansion previously during al-Nasir's reign. Several events lead to the urbanization of the western district of the city which was previously sparsely inhabited. The area in the past had been inundated with "unveiled women, wine and illicit behavior,"⁵² leaving it undesirable to live in and to visit. The constructions that proved pivotal to the urbanization of the western district began in the fifteenth century with Azbak paving a promenade around the pond and erecting his palace in the southeastern corner.⁵³ Soon after, following Azbak's example, people started building elegant residences near the pond, and he was further encouraged to build a congregational mosque as well as commercial structures and dwellings.⁵⁴ Much later came the Mosque of Qasim al-Sharaybi in 1143/1731, and a fountain on the east bank of Azbakiyya, also built by the same patron. Following the lead of al-Sharaybi, 'Uthman Kathkuda Qazdughli built a mosque complex in 1146/1734 including a *sabil*, a public bath, shops and a *rab'* (apartment building). The construction of multiple mosques in the western district no doubt had an impact on the area's desirability to become inhabited. Also, the main *suq* (the Khan al-Khalili), became "somewhat less important as specialized markets on the western side of the Khalij al-Masri began to compete for business."⁵⁵ Naturally, as had happened in the previous centuries with the development of the area in terms of both residential and religious constructions surrounding Birkat al-Fil, the same occurred during Ottoman rule in the area of Azbakiyya. According to Raymond:

One of the most striking developments during the eighteenth century was in fact the migration of emirs from around Birkat al-Fil, long the most desirable residential neighborhood, to the western portions of the city. The growing urbanization of the southern sector of the city possibly

⁵² Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁵⁵ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 51.

hampered the wealthy who felt the need for space and un-congested streets.⁵⁶

The overcrowding and congestion of this particular area would lead to the eventual decline of Birkat al-Fil, and it would ultimately cease to be a haven for those seeking refuge from the city. This is surprising since this was an area in which less than fifty years previously, it contained 40% of all emirs' residences in the city. In 1798 CE, the new Azbakiyya banks contained 15% of all the emirs' residences. This new area experienced a construction boom. For example, between the years of 1517-1725 CE, the area had only six new mosques and two fountains built there, whereas, from 1726-98 CE, the area saw the construction of 15 new mosques, and 12 new fountains.⁵⁷

When the French entered Egypt in 1798 CE they commissioned the famous *Description de l'Egypte*, which was the first thorough, in-depth survey of the country of Egypt that had ever been compiled. At the time, according to Hanna, the estimated population of al-Qahira was between 250,000 and 260,000 inhabitants.⁵⁸ Hanna continues by stating that Cairo had an average density of over 50,000 persons per square mile.⁵⁹ This would mean that the southern district reached about 43,500⁶⁰ inhabitants and was simply becoming too crowded. At the time, the southern district (the area south of Bab al-Khalq) was 226 hectares, but was only marginally larger than the western district which was 215 hectares. Although development of this area around the Citadel had been occurring since the Mamluks, it continued with the Ottomans. While the commercial section of the city remained primarily in the Qasaba, the Citadel still remained the

⁵⁶ Raymond, *Cairo*, 222-3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁵⁸ Hanna, *Habiter*, 37.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁰ My calculations 226 hectares = 0.89 mile² X 50,000 inhabitants = 43,500

political seat of government, and retained the capacity of 11 markets and 17 caravanserais, and the area around the Mosque of Ibn Tulun still included 9 markets and 14 caravanserais.⁶¹ However, these markets still catered to specialized buyers such as that of the Suq al-Silah (arms market), and the horse market, which were near the Citadel for the benefit of the soldiers there.

Despite all the development of the southern section, residences in the area were in decline, as mentioned before, due to the attraction of the recently developed Azbakiyya area. Birkat al-Fil no longer held as much prestige as it once did in Maqrizi's time, or even at the beginning of the Ottoman conquest. The figures for the estates in both the southern and the western suburbs from 1679-1700 CE are clear indications of this shift and are as follows; in the southern suburb, there were 62 estates equaling 20.6 percent of all of Cairo's estates and reaching a total of 1.69 million paras (currency of the time); while the western suburb contained only 14 estates, constituting 4.6 percent of all houses in Cairo, totaling a mere .28 million paras. In contrast those of the period from 1776-1798 CE show the southern suburb contained 83 estates, or 21.2 percent of all estates, totaling a value of 2 million paras. In the western district during the same period, there were 37 estates, or 9.5 percent, totaling the amount of 1.46 millions paras.⁶² These figures show the growing popularity of the western district and the slow decline of the wealthy landowners in and around the Birkat al-Fil area. A reason for this may be that "some activities were pushed back to the edges of Cairo into areas that contained at the same time residential zones for the poor, elite residential neighborhoods, and un-built areas."⁶³

⁶¹ Raymond, *Cairo*, 261.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 262.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 263.

That described the entire southern suburb for it contained all three elements that would have enticed certain niche markets to establish themselves, in turn attracting different, possibly “less attractive” people to the neighborhood. This decline of Birkat al-Fil continued well into the 19th century, when it was eventually filled in and further developed.

Before that was to happen however, Napoleon’s armies entered the country in 1798 CE, and Muhammad ‘Ali came to power seven years later, ultimately changing the urban fabric of the city forever. The French reorganized the system of power by assigning people of their choice to fill positions in the newly formed *diwan*, or council. They did so by appointing nine prominent shaykhs who acted as intermediaries between the locals and the French. One major problem the French wanted to tackle was the matter of hygiene in the city. As mentioned before, the ponds were considered cesspools of disease and filth. As a result, lamps were ordered to be lit during the night, and instructions were given to sweep and water the streets in order to allow for garbage removal within the city.

With the withdrawal of the French troops came an officer in the Ottoman army named Muhammad ‘Ali, who would ultimately change not only the system of government of Egypt, but who would try to bring Egypt up to par on the western level. However, little changed in terms of development of the city from 1805 CE to 1849 CE. He established a Department of Buildings (1829 CE), and a Civil Engineering Office (1837 CE), which henceforth was in charge of the urban development of the city. It is in fact during the reign of his grandson Isma‘il Pasha who came into power in 1863 CE that the city experienced major urbanization and physical transformations to its topography. It is during this time that certain changes took place, including filling in the lowlands that

were so numerous in Cairo: Birkat al-Fil (partially), Birkat al-Ratli, Birkat of Qasim Bey and Azbakiyya pond, and generally 'modernizing' city. Although the filling up of the pond will be explored in more depth in Chapter Four, it is important to mention it here in order to complete the sequence of events that had occurred to Birkat al-Fil from the arrivals of the first Muslims to Egypt in 969 CE, until the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two

Tracing the Physical Development of Birkat al-Fil through the Interpretation of Maps

The shape of Birkat al-Fil has always been said to resemble that of an elephant's head with its trunk, therefore most assumed that it would have been named after its unique shape. However, that is not the case, in fact it was named after a man called al-Fil, who was a companion of Ahmad ibn Tulun (354-369/867-882), and the name of the pond is unknown before that date.⁶⁴

During the Fatimid period,⁶⁵ the north of the pond was bordered by Harat al-Hamziyyin (which would later be included into Bustan al-Habbaniyya); to the west by Harat 'Aydaniyya and Bustan al-Habbaniyya; to the east by Harat Halab and the Bustan Sayf al-Islam; and to the south by the dyke Jisr al-A'zam, which separated Birkat al-Fil from Birkat al-Qarun.⁶⁶ Maqrizi states that the area was populated during the Ayyubid period and it is clear that aside from these ancient *haras*, the area remained relatively undeveloped until the Mamluk period (pl. 2.1).

Following the fire of 564/1168, the crowded city of Cairo filled with refugees from Fustat. The major enlargements to the city included the extension of Husayniyya to the north and to the military *haras* (al-Yanisiyya, al-Hilaliyya, and al-Masamida)⁶⁷ south

⁶⁴ Sayyid, *Asma'*, 386

⁶⁵ Maqrizi however claims that construction didn't begin in the area until 600/1203, and the area became more populated than Misr itself.

⁶⁶ Salmon, *Topographie*, 73.

⁶⁷ Pl. 2.2: Ravaisse, *Essai sur l'histoire*, pl. 2.

of Bab Zuwayla.⁶⁸ At this time, the area of Birkat al-Fil and others such as Birkat Qarun and even Roda Island were still largely areas of gardens, promenades and pavilions.

When analyzing maps of Cairo and of the surrounding area that have appeared throughout the ages, Birkat al-Fil appears as one of the largest and most prominent ponds, rivaled only by that of Azbakiyya. Birkat al-Fil appears in many of the ancient maps; however, there are many inconsistencies of the area in question on travelers' maps of Cairo. For instance, the map drawn by Matteo Pagano, a Venetian wood-block-engraver of the middle of the 16th century, seems to have omitted Birkat al-Fil entirely from his interpretation of the city of Cairo.⁶⁹ This map may seem to be an inaccurate portrayal of the city of Cairo by having left out not only Birkat al-Fil, but also the Island of Roda, and the canals running through the city. Otherwise, according to Warner it is "a portrait of Cairo convincingly drawn in abbreviated form"⁷⁰ (pl. 2.3).

The pond is also missing from the map drawn by Brocado (927-999/1520-1590), whose viewpoint was atop the Muqqatam hills, which clearly would have given him the ability to see Birkat al-Fil as it was in such close proximity to Muqqatam and the Citadel. This in fact does not prove that it did not exist in the 16th century as he also omitted the Giza Pyramids, which would also have been clearly visible from the hills (pl. 2.4). A cause for the omission may have been that his direct view of the pond could have been blocked by both the Citadel and the Mosque of Sultan Hasan, which were two of the largest structures in Cairo at the time.

⁶⁸ MacKenzie, *Topographical Study*, 32.

⁶⁹ This bird's-eye view of the city was entirely imaginary, but remained the standard of western representation of Cairo for 250 years: Warner, *True Description*, 1:13.

⁷⁰ Warner, *True Description*, 1:32.

Birkat al-Fil was also excluded from the map drawn by Muhyi al-Din Piri Reis (875-962/1470-1554),⁷¹ the Ottoman admiral who was sent as part of the Ottoman expedition to conquer Egypt in 923/1517. His ‘Book of Maritime Matter’ (or *Kitab-i Bahriye*),⁷² collected a mass of information, including maps about places he visited which he supplemented with his own notes and sketches. In *Kitab-i Bahriye*, he not only sketched all the mosques in Ottoman architectural style, but omitted Birkat al-Fil, and also the walls of the city, the Nilometer, the canals and any recognizable streets (pl. 2.5).

The first appearance on a map of Birkat al-Fil that that we know of is that drawn by Richard Pococke in 1155/1743.⁷³ He was an English clergyman who travelled to Egypt in the middle of the eighteenth century and compiled a ‘plan’ of the city in which for the first time, “most of the vertical projection of buildings is replaced with a horizontally scaled plan.”⁷⁴ He included not only the pharaonic monuments (as they attracted the most interest), but also very important identifiable landmarks such as the aqueduct and the Citadel (which were also included in Piri Reis’ map); Bulaq; the settlements of Old Cairo and Giza; and finally Birkat al-Fil, although incorrect in shape (pl. 2.6).

The next map that included the pond was compiled by the Dane Carsten Niebuhr who published his copper engravings in 1187/1774. This map of Cairo uses a key in which numbers 1-55 indicate principle buildings, and A-Z indicate significant urban elements (Birkat al-Fil is indicated as Z). It also indicates various neighborhoods of the

⁷¹ Ibid., 1:82.

⁷² Ibid., 1:50.

⁷³ Warner states that the map compiled by Niebuhr was the first to include Birkat al-Fil (*Monuments*, 13). However I have found that Pococke’s earlier map included Birkat al-Fil before Niebuhr’s.

⁷⁴ Warner, *Monuments*, 10.

city (Bulaq, Toulun, Hanafi, which are also indicated on the *Description de l’Egypte*), along with the flow of the Nile and the various alluvial ponds in the city. Interestingly, it shows the agricultural fields around the city, and the ponds are “shown out of season, when they were used as pastures”⁷⁵ (pl. 2.7).

The area has endured many transformations and toponomical changes throughout the ages. Initially, all these changes in nomenclature would have occurred depending on who owned the vast gardens and orchards which surrounded the pond at the time.

According to MacKenzie;

When alluviation created new lands under the Ayyubids and early Mamluks, this territory was sold or assigned as *ahkar* to political and/or religious agnates; these *ahkar* in turn could be subdivided, sold, transferred or bequeathed... The income from these gardens, whether directly or by endowment, was assigned to individual proprietors, religious and charitable institutions, and government agencies.⁷⁶

It is due to this reason that the orchard was known originally as Abu’l-Husayn ibn Murshid al-Ta’i, then it became known as Bustan Namush,⁷⁷ and eventually the Bustan Sayf al-Islam Taftikin ibn Ayyub (brother of Salah al-Din, and viceroy of Yemen).⁷⁸ Maqrizi states that it was then given to a certain emir named ‘Alam al-Din al-Ghatami as a land to be leased and that people built houses on it in the time of the Turkish state, until it became known as Hikr al-Ghatami, then later Bustan Sayf al-Islam, and it is now known as Darb Ibn al-Baba.⁷⁹ The area was named after the emir Jankali ibn al-Baba,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁶ MacKenzie, *Topographical Study*, 77.

⁷⁷ Salmon contradicts this by stating that the *bustan* was originally known as Bustan ‘Abbas; Salmon, *Topographie*, 66.

⁷⁸ However, Maqrizi states that the Bustan of Sayf al-Islam was bought by Baybars I from the last Ayyubid who inherited them, and he later divided the land into building plots: Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:364.

⁷⁹ Maqrizi, *Suluk*, 2:134.

who came to Egypt from Amid in 704-705/1304-5⁸⁰ and who purchased a piece of the *bustan* upon which to build his house. Although this *darb* constitutes only a small area surrounding the pond, we shall see that it was nonetheless intrinsic in reconstructing the neighborhood during the later Mamluk period. It was located on the southeastern side of the pond, and extended as far as the Complex of Sultan Hasan. Darb Ibn al-Baba was surrounded by two notable gardens; Bustan al-Wazir ibn al-Maghrabi, and Bustan Shajjar al-Durr.⁸¹ The eastern boundary of this *darb* was considered to be the Madrasa al-Bunduqdariyya. Other important buildings that were mentioned in this *darb* by Maqrizi included a *hammam*, the Madrasa al-Fariqani, and the palace of Taz. The street that exists today (which is in the same location that existed during the Mamluks) is called Shari‘ al-Suyufiyya and according to Maqrizi, was named Khatt al-Madrasa al-Bunduqdariyya. ‘Ali Mubarak says that Khatt Ibn al-Baba today encompasses Harat al-Alfi, and in the 11th/17th century was named Zuquq Halab.⁸²

The area of Hikr al-Khazin was an area frequently mentioned by Maqrizi and is also closely associated with Darb Ibn al-Baba. It could be found between Birkat al-Fil and Khatt al-Jami‘ al-Tuluni.⁸³ It was the area that was once a polo field, named Maydan Birkat al-Fil (also known as Maydan al-‘Adil) which was established by the Sultan Kitbugha in 695/1295. When the polo field was completed, it was reported that the emir ‘Alam al-Din Sanjar al-Khazin built his house there, of which no trace remains.⁸⁴ Sanjar

⁸⁰ Ibid., loc. cit.

⁸¹ Salmon, *Topographie*, 67.

⁸² Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:181.

⁸³ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:448.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2:135.

al-Khazin also built a mosque in the eponymous *darb*.⁸⁵ Also on this plot of land rose the very large palace of Baktimur al-Saqi which was built in 717/1317. This land was located directly north the Madrasa of Azbak al-Yusufi, and would have run along the southern spine of the pond, between the water and the Saliba, and between Darb Ibn al-Baba and Jisr al-A‘zam. This area would soon become populated by emirs and their palaces. This specific area during the Ottoman period would fall into decline, and the areas lying directly on the west and north banks of the pond would flourish. One cause for this could be that the area was far denser than the other sides, so in order to be able to build a large enough palace to suit the needs of the Ottomans they needed the space which was not available until the freeing up of land due to the removal of the tanneries:

The *birkas* came to flourish at the expense of the old city and the Citadel and the neo-Mamluk period saw the establishment of some new areas of elite residence. With the transfer of the tanneries to the Bab al-Luq area, the way was opened for expansion into the region between Birkat al-Fil and the Bab Zuweyla. By far the greatest percentage of aristocrats, included both bays and officers, had their dwellings on the right bank and almost two thirds of these surrounded the southern pond⁸⁶ (pl. 2.8).

‘Ali Mubarak identifies the area of Hikr al-Khazin as being on Shari‘ Nur al-Zalam. This street in the *Description* was named Sikkat al-Shaykh al-Zalam, named after a mausoleum of the Shaykh. Mubarak gives a further explanation to the name stating that it was often called Hikr al-Khazin, then Darb al-Khadim.⁸⁷

Jisr al-A‘zam was established by Sultan Najm al-Din and is the area in which the Manzara al-Kabsh once stood. This street was identified by Mubarak as Shari‘ Qal‘at al-

⁸⁵ Ibid., 2:135.

⁸⁶ Staffa, *Conquest*, 262.

⁸⁷ Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:335-6.

Kabsh⁸⁸ and by Sayyid as Shari‘ Abd al-Majid al-Labban, which was formerly known as Marasina.⁸⁹ This is the area in which the emir Arghun al-Kamali was said to have built his palace or *dar* in 747/1346.⁹⁰ This area is the southernmost tip of the pond, leading from it to Qanatir al-Siba‘ which divided Birkat al-Fil from Birkat Qarun.⁹¹ ‘Ali Mubarak locates this *dar* in front of the Jawliyya Madrasa, stretching to the Hawd al-Marsud⁹².

Another area that could be found around the pond and which was also mentioned by Maqrizi is that of Bustan al-Habbaniyya (originally named Harat al-Badayyin).⁹³ This *bustan* was located on the northwest side of the pond, between the tanneries and the pond, and between the pond and the *khalij*. This *bustan* and that of Sayf al-Islam are the two oldest in the area; this one in particular dated from the Fatimid times.⁹⁴ Several *haras* were located within this *bustan*. Those *haras* were Harat al-Hamziyyin and Harat al-‘Aydaniyya⁹⁵ (pl. 2.1). Harat al-‘Aydaniyya once joined the banks of Birkat al-Fil with the other side of the *khalij* by way of the Bridge of Aqsunqur.⁹⁶ This bridge once led to the Mosque of Bashtak. The bridge also crossed over a street which once ran parallel to the *khalij* which was at one time called Shari‘ Habbaniyya which lead from Bab al-Khalq to Shari‘ Darb al-Jamamiz.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3:316.

⁸⁹ Sayyid, *Asma’*, 387.

⁹⁰ Maqrizi, *Suluk*, 3:702.

⁹¹ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:444.

⁹² Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 3:321.

⁹³ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:45.

⁹⁴ MacKenzie, *Topographical Study*, 81.

⁹⁵ Although Salmon locates these two *haras* on the west bank, Staffa puts Harat al-Hamziyyin north of Qusun Mosque on the west bank (pl. 2.8).

⁹⁶ Salmon, *Topographie*, 64.

⁹⁷ Ibid., loc. cit.

The large Harat al-Mansuriyya (also known as Harat al-Sudan) lay just south of Bab Zuwayla and north of Birkat al-Fil, and was burned in the year 564/1168 during a Sudanese slave revolt and was eventually ploughed over and converted into a garden. This *hara* was unusually large and wide and probably reached from Bab Zuwayla until the northern tip of the pond.⁹⁸ Salmon identifies the Harat al-Mansuriyya⁹⁹ as being between Birkat al-Fil al-Sughra and al-Saliba on the southeastern side of the pond.¹⁰⁰

Harat al-Manjabiyya could be found just east of the previously mentioned *hara*. It is presumed that when Harat al-Mansuriyya burned, this *hara* was burned as well, as they were in such close proximity to one another.¹⁰¹

Harat al-Baqar¹⁰² was located between Jabal Yashbak and Birkat al-Fil. This *hara* contained Dar al-Baqar (see Chapter Three). The *dar* was established by al-Nasir Muhammad as a *dar* with a stable, and survived through the years and continued to house high ranking state officials.¹⁰³ At the time of al-Nasir Muhammad, the stable was inhabited by the emir Qusun until a conflict broke out between Qusun and other emirs in 742. The palace still remains and is known as Istabl emir Qusun,¹⁰⁴ This area lies on the cross streets of Shari‘ al-Suyufiyya and Shari‘ ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak. In fact, ‘Ali Mubarak was said to have lived in a house whose land once belonged to Dar al-Baqar.¹⁰⁵

Harat Halab is another *hara* briefly mentioned by Maqrizi and discussed by Salmon. The name Harat Halab would later be replaced by Harat Murad Bay and ‘Atfat

⁹⁸ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:53.

⁹⁹ He contradicts this in his diagram.

¹⁰⁰ Salmon, *Topographie*, 56.

¹⁰¹ MacKenzie, *Topographical Study*, 78.

¹⁰² Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:235.

¹⁰³ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:220-221.

¹⁰⁴ Revault, *Palais et maisons*, 2:33, monument # 266

¹⁰⁵ Shams El-Din, *Maqrizi on Dars*, 55.

Murad Bay. These modern *haras* were named after the palace that Murad built which was later removed in order to build the Palace of Hilmiyya (which is discussed in further detail in Chapter Four). ‘Ali Mubarak states that ‘Atfat Murad Bay is Harat Halab, and that in modern terms, it extends until Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali.¹⁰⁶

Hawd Ibn Hanas is another frequently mentioned area closely associated with Darb Ibn al-Baba. This *hawd* was slightly east of Birkat al-Fil and the adjoining Harat Halab. This cistern was under the *waqf* of Sa‘d al-Din Mas‘ud (647/1249), who was chamberlain to the Sultan al-Malik al-Salah Najm al-Din Ayyub. The water for the *hawd* was supplied by a neighboring spring well. MacKenzie writes that “in addition, he built a tall mosque above it.”¹⁰⁷ This area today is located on Shari‘ al-Hilmiyya and is mentioned by Mubarak as reaching from ‘Atfat Murad Bay until the end of Maydan al-Hilmiyya.¹⁰⁸

The most concise and accurately scaled map drawn of the city of Cairo to date was done by the French in 1203/1799, as part of the *Description de l’Égypte* (pls. 2.9-10). At the time, the town’s surface area was around 730 hectares¹⁰⁹ and when the French entered the city, they found that it was “vast and confusing. It had none of the regularity or formal elegance of a European capital: the streets were narrow and torturous; there were no grand avenues or major arteries; and the innumerable quarters were sealed off from one another by gates.”¹¹⁰ The task of mapping such a city, which before then had never been done, was an arduous task. A man named Jomard was charged with the task

¹⁰⁶ Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:147.

¹⁰⁷ MacKenzie, *Topographical Study*, 185.

¹⁰⁸ Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:147.

¹⁰⁹ Raymond, *Glory of Cairo*, 303.

¹¹⁰ Anderson & Fawzy, *Egypt Revealed*, 89.

and apparently “worked without a day’s interruption for two months, assisted by an interpreter, a public scrivener, and three or four other guides.”¹¹¹ The map unfortunately neglected many buildings and monuments that definitely would have existed during the time it was compiled; however one thing that it does not overlook is Birkat al-Fil. On the map of the city of Cairo, it (along with Azbakiyya) is very clearly delineated and can be identified by not only its shape, but also as one of the few open spaces in Cairo. By this time, attraction to the pond was in decline and although it still contained some of the wealthy houses in Cairo, the majority had already migrated to Azbakiyya. The few major palaces remaining around Birkat al-Fil that could be identified on the map without the use of a key were those of Murad Bay and Ibrahim Bay (pl. 3.28).

The main body of water was given the number 16, while the “trunk” of the pond was given the number 136. Interestingly, the French divided the city into eight territories, in which the pond is divided between territories I, II and III. East of the pond, roughly from the shore to the mosque of Sultan Hasan constitutes category I. The southernmost part of the trunk falls into category II which encompassed the Mosque of Ibn Tulun. The bulk of the body of water falls into III, which would have reached westwards towards the Nile. There is not only the detailed map of the pond, but also an engraving of a scene of a musician playing along the shores of Birkat al-Fil (pl. 2.11), which shows that in comparison to the engravings done of Azbakiyya, the pond was a calm, less built-up area than its more popular neighbor (pls. 2.12-13). The plates from the *Description* would not be published until 1809 CE due to the enormous quantity of information that had been gathered on the country. The plates showed, for the first time in history, streets and

¹¹¹ Ibid., 91.

squares, religious buildings, significant residential palaces, alleys, *haras*, sources of water for the ponds in the city, cemeteries, mountain ranges, agricultural lands and the division of lands (pl. 2.14). These plates would prove indispensable not only for the urban development that would come in the following centuries, but also to the civil engineers and urban planners who would subsequently contribute something to the fabric of the city.

The following names are the main streets that were indicated on the map of the *Description* that surrounded the pond. I will also show if the names of the streets have changed and if so, what they have been changed to (starting on the main exterior streets, and then moving from south to north).¹¹²

THEN	NOW
Khalij al-Masri	Shari‘ al-Khalij
Shari‘ Darb al-Jamamiz	No change
Sikkat al-Habbaniyya	No change
Existed but unmarked	Darb al-Fawakhir
Didn’t exist	Formerly known as Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali, now known as Shari‘ al-Qal‘a
Shari‘ al-Surujiyya	No change
Sikkat al-Qusun/Sali Bay	Shari‘ al-Hilmiyya
Darb al-Sali Bay	Shari‘ al-Suyufiyya
Shari‘ al-Sali Bay	al-Saliba

¹¹² All comparisons have been taken from D.E and the modern Map of Muhammadan Monuments 1948 ed. (pl. 2.15).

Didn't exist	Mathhab al-Din al-Hakim
Sikkat al-Shaykh al Zalam	Shari' Nur al-Zalam
'Atfat al-Zayadi	Shari' al-Khudayri
Sikkat al-Musalla	Shari' al-Shaykh Abd al-Majid Labban
Sikkat al-Surja	Now part of Darb al-Jamamiz
Suq al-Sughyar	Now part of Darb al-Jamamiz
Didn't exist	al-Qaraqul al-Manshiyya

The following are streets that appear on modern maps that didn't exist or were not indicated on the maps at the time of the *Description de l'Égypte*.¹¹³

NOW	THEN
Madrasa al-Habbaniyya	Didn't exist
Hawsh al-Hilmiyya	Didn't exist
Sikkat Ratib Pasha al-Kabir	Part of the north pond
Sikkat Abdel Rahman Bay	Part of north west of the pond
Sikkat al-Shaburi	Part of the north pond
Shari' Ahmad Bay 'Umar	Part of the north east pond
al-Shaykh Rihan	Just north of the pond
Maydan al-Hilmiyya al-Jadida	Part of center of the pond
Shari' al-Madaras	Part of center of pond
Shari' 'Ali Pasha Ibrahim	Part of the north east pond (on site of Bayt Ibrahim)

¹¹³ All comparisons have been taken from D.E and the modern Map of Muhammadan Monuments published by the Department of Survey of Egypt in 1948 (pl. 2.16).

Shari‘ Ilhami Pasha (now Ulmas al-Hajib)	Part of the north pond (on site of Bayt Murad)
Harat Murad	Location of Bayt Murad
Shari‘ ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak	Part of the north pond
Shari‘ Mustafa Bay Sirri	Part of center of the pond
Shari‘ Ahmad Taymur	Parallel to Mustafa Bay Sirri
Muhathab al-Din al-Hakim	Parallel to Ahmad Taymur
Sikkat Ibn Hanas	Part of center of the pond
Shari‘ al-Wafa’iyya	On south side of the pond
Shari‘ Mustafa Pasha Riyad	Part of trunk of the pond
Shari‘ Muhammad Qadri Pasha	Cuts through southern most tip of pond
Sikkat Birkat al-Fil	Would have cut through ‘trunk’ (from E-W)
al-Hawd al-Marsud	Part of western tip of the ‘trunk’
Sikkat ‘Adbullah Pasha Fikri	East spine of ‘trunk’

The next important map produced under the employment of Khedive Isma‘il was that of Pierre-Louis Grand in 1874 (pls. 2.17-18).¹¹⁴ This map was printed in color and “it showed Cairo not simply as it was but as it was intended to be after new avenues were cut through the fabric of the old city; most of these planned projects were never executed.”¹¹⁵

It is reasonable to state that without the initial work done by the French with the *Description*, the subsequent maps produced in the following centuries would have taken

¹¹⁴ Although Chapter Four will discuss the modern period in further detail, it is necessary here to discuss the cartography of the ages in one complete chapter.

¹¹⁵ Warner, *Monuments*, 18.

far longer to produce. In other words, the French laid out the framework for future projects and plans for modernization to take place (pls. 2.17-18). These maps would prove extremely important to urban planners and “the significance of Grand’s map for the history of recording the monuments of the city was confirmed by its rapid adoption as a reference by the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe*.”¹¹⁶

It is in the map by Grand produced in 1874 that we begin to see that the majority of the pond was no longer visible. The reason for its disappearance was that Prince ‘Abbas Hilmi I (1848-54) required a palace to be built in the vicinity of the Citadel. It was Hilmi who was responsible for completing urban projects that his predecessors had failed to do during the middle of the nineteenth century. The first was the construction of New Street in 1849 (also known as Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali), then came the Citadel Esplanade and later the drainage of Birkat al-Fil. In the nineteenth century the ruling family of Muhammad ‘Ali acquired the area and ‘Abbas Hilmi chose the recently drained pond for the location of his *saray*.¹¹⁷ However, instead of building upon the shore, he demolished many buildings and palaces that had existed long before the Muhammad ‘Ali dynasty. The two most significant palaces that were destroyed were those of Murad Bay and Ibrahim Bay. These plots of land and a large part of the pond were turned into gardens belonging to the palace. It is evident from the map that Birkat Azbakiyya had already been converted into Parisian style gardens. By this time, most of Birkat al-Fil had been filled in although it still retained a small section of water in between the ‘trunk’ and the ‘head’ of the pond.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁷ Asfour, “Domestication,” 125.

The Palace of Hilmiyya has since been destroyed and the encompassing area converted into the neighborhood now known eponymously as Hilmiyya. This palace is particularly difficult to reconstruct since there are few documented sources on the palace. Only a handful of nineteenth century photographs of the area remain, but by using them and the palatial examples that his predecessors favored, one can attribute certain similarities to Saray al-Hilmiyya.¹¹⁸ The plot of land for the palace and gardens was allocated around the 1840s and development began immediately to transform the northern section of the pond (i.e. the majority of the pond) into the palace surrounded on the west by vast gardens (See Chapter Four for further details). The original orientation of the palace was towards the Shari‘ al-Mu‘izz which was the north-south spine of old Cairo and which intersected in the south with the *Saliba*. However, the new Boulevard Muhammad ‘Ali was completed in 1873 and cut through not only the palace gardens, but also the Qusun Mosque. In 1893 the garden was declared public land and taken over by the Ministry of Public Works which redesigned it into a network of streets and plots for residential land.¹¹⁹ Incidentally, the Ministry of Public Works had recently been allocated to the palace formally belonging to Prince Mustafa Fadil in the neighborhood of Darb al-Jamamiz in 1868 which lay on the opposite side of the pond, across from Saray al-Hilmiyya. Arnaud states that the ministry had two tasks, the first to connect Darb Al-Jamamiz with Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali by means of a *maydan*, and the second to divide the gardens into rectangular lots to create a normal street pattern on a very irregular plot

¹¹⁸ See Chapter Four for further analysis of the palace and its transformation.

¹¹⁹ Asfour, “Domestication,” 125.

of land.¹²⁰ The result is the current Midan al-Hilmiyya which connects Shari‘ Darb al-Jamamiz on the west with Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali on the east (pl. 4.21).

Conclusion

The transformation of the area, which until the nineteenth century included the pond, was vast and dramatic. It began its development during the Fatimid period by serving the needs of the military and housing their barracks. During the Ayyubid period it became an area in which gardens and orchards could flourish and provide relief for the dwellers of the crowded city to enjoy. Later during Mamluk rule which lasted several centuries, the pond and its surrounding neighborhoods and *haras* became a haven for the ruling classes and wealthy elite to build their grand palaces and erect some of the most richly decorated and grand religious buildings in Cairo. It is during this period that the area reached the apogee of its popularity. Later, during the Ottoman rule the area experienced a decline and unfortunately never quite recovered from the abandonment of the area by the wealthy seeking a new, less crowded area to begin building their palaces once again. In the modern era, the destruction of many of the historical palaces in order to make room for the palace of ‘Abbas Hilmi proved to be a turning point not only with regards to the architecture of the area, but also to its general layout and accessibility. As the new palace was constructed in the European style, it dictated the architecture of the buildings to be constructed in the area from that period onwards.

¹²⁰ Arnaud, *Le Caire*, 336.

Chapter Three

Identifying Important Palaces and Religious Monuments from the Mamluks to the Ottomans

The Fatimids, as previously mentioned, established Fustat as their commercial city center, while al-Qahira housed the royal residences. The area of Birkat al-Fil was in close proximity to the city of Qata'i' which lay west of the Tulunid city which had once encompassed the Mosque of Ibn Tulun. This area would later be developed and come to include the Citadel on *Jabal Yashbak*, or Yashbak Mountain and Birkat al-Fil pond. Although development and domestic building construction around the pond had yet to take place, the locale remained one in which the inhabitants of the over-crowded city could walk and enjoy the gardens and pavilions.

It wasn't until the preliminary construction of the citadel by Salah al-Din in 571/1176 that the area of Birkat al-Fil first began to be populated by the military elite, civil servants, and later wealthy merchants. The area was initially developed for those seeking refuge from the city and as a result, the first established constructions were in the form of pavilions [*manzaras* and gardens *bustans*]. The word *manzara* comes from the word *nazara*, which means "to look at."¹²¹ The purpose of these structures was to take advantage of both the views and the breezes, especially at high Nile during the months of September and October.¹²² However, the *manzara* was not simply a structure built on ground level, but it should be "both high, and also have a view of the surrounding

¹²¹ Sabra, "Manazir," 376.

¹²² MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 83.

terrain.”¹²³ This presumably is where the origin of the word derives. Two known *manzaras* that were located at Birkat al-Fil belonged to two of Salah al-Din’s brothers: Sayf al-Islam Tughtakin (after whom the area was named) and Taj al-Muluk Buri. The pavilion of Sayf al-Islam was located on the eastern bank of the pond on the plot of land that would later be called Bustan Sayf al-Islam.

Many of these pavilions, which were scattered all around the city at the various ponds, included large porticos and would probably have included walled living quarters. Some of the larger pavilions, such as Qala‘at al-Kabsh (built by al-Malik al-Salih in 639/1242), and that of Taj al-Muluk Buri at Birkat al-Habash were de facto palaces.¹²⁴ The *manzara* at al-Kabsh was even at one point used to imprison 300 mamluks of al-Ashraf Khalil after his assassination in 693/1294. The site was eventually destroyed and rebuilt by al-Mansur Qalawun in 723/1323 to celebrate the wedding of his daughter. It continued to serve as a residence for Mamluk emirs until it was destroyed once again by al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha‘ban in 774-5/1373-4.¹²⁵

As previously mentioned, Sayf al-Islam Tughtakin and Taj al-Muluk Buri built pavilions around Birkat al-Fil (the latter having built as previously mentioned, on the shores of Birkat al-Habash, and at Birkat al-Fil). Both of these pavilions were thought to have been sumptuously decorated, that of Taj al-Muluk having marble and gilding, and that of Sayf al-Islam on the eastern bank of Birkat al-Fil boasting spacious galleries and kiosks.¹²⁶

¹²³ Reda, *Manzara*, 3.

¹²⁴ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:133-134.

¹²⁵ Reda, *Manzara*, 68.

¹²⁶ Mackenzie, 83.

It has been said that sultans would ride out to the pond at night, and the owners of the *manzaras* would light them up for the sultan. Because of this these *manzaras* have been described as stars surrounding a central moon.¹²⁷ However, no description of these two specific *manzaras* exists today, except for the accounts of travelers and historians such as Maqrizi and Ibn Duqmaq. Although the *manzara* at Birkat al-Fil has been attributed to the Ayyubid period, Reda states that “the Mamluk emirs continued to use and develop the Manzara al-Kabsh but added their own Manzara Birkat al-Fil.”¹²⁸ She also dates this *manzara* to 647/1250, which coincides with the end of the Ayyubid period and the beginning of the Bahri Mamluk period. The various *manazir* located in and around the various ponds of Cairo and along the shores of the Nile and *khalij* were for temporary occupation and were used for certain recreational functions¹²⁹ such as celebrations of feasts, weddings and other such occasions. Due to the fact that the two *manazir* in question could have been de facto palaces, I would classify them as *qasr*, or *dar manazir*, which would have “contained the *manazir* at the closest and highest part of the Nile, or pond’s shore, and would probably have been carried on a vault. The waters may also have passed right through a passage during peak flooding season, which would also explain their height.”¹³⁰

The types of houses that could be found around Birkat al-Fil during the Mamluk period were “adapted for their environment, with the principal elements of the houses opening onto the water.”¹³¹ Nelly Hanna also classifies Birkat al-Fil (and later Birkat al-

¹²⁷ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 1:367.

¹²⁸ Reda, *Manzara*, 77.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³¹ Hanna, *Habiter*, 217.

Azbakiyya) as a residential area where the wealthy people of the population had their houses. Birkat al-Fil became an area of choice for the aristocrats during the time of Maqrizi in the 14th century, a reputation that would be maintained for a long time.¹³² The houses that could be found on the *Khalij*, or around one of the ponds, have much in common. These houses had principle elements that distinguished them from others not found on the water.

Primarily, the main rooms in the house were all located facing the pond or *Khalij* in order to take advantage of the views and the breezes cooled by the water. This was particularly important for the main *qa'a* of the house. In other words, the main architectural living spaces of the house would have faced the pond, while the lesser elements (such as the entrance and stables, small rooms etc) faced the street. In some houses on the waterfront, there would be additional *maq'ads* facing the water, apart from the one overlooking the courtyard.¹³³ Other houses placed a *mastaba* on the entrance which lead from the pond, to provide the sitter with a direct view of the pond.

The other element that distinguished the waterfront properties was the *qaytun*. The *qaytun* was a hall directly facing the water, similar to a *qa'a*, but on a much smaller scale. It included a door that gave access to the water by a staircase which would have served as a point of embarkation from the water for those entering the house from the pond.¹³⁴ This element can be clearly seen in 19th century photographs taken of houses surrounding Birkat al-Fil (pls. 3.1-2). The proximity of the *qaytun* to the water has been described through a story about a shaykh who lost a slipper and his balance on the

¹³² Or at least until the development of Azbakiyya at the end of the 15th century: Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 23.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 103-4.

staircase of his *qaytun* on Birkat al-Fil while performing his ablutions, and fell into the pond and drowned.¹³⁵ Another feature that distinguished houses located on the water from houses built inland would have been that many waterfront properties were constructed on pillars (*da'a'im*). This was in order to allow the inhabitants to be even closer to the water.¹³⁶ This feature may have been found in earlier *manzaras* which, as previously mentioned, often would have allowed water to pass underneath which was crucial during the high water months.

The following are elements that would have been found in almost all waterfront properties: The first is the *qa'a*, or main space in the house would also have served as the reception hall for visitors and guests (pl. 3.3). It was normally the largest room in the house, and would have encompassed two floors of the house. It is believed that the *qa'a* originated in Fustat during the time of the Fatimids, and was developed further during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. The composition of the *qa'a* remained the same i.e.; a courtyard surrounded by two main *qa'as* which were at a higher level than the courtyard (later on, the courtyard became a covered *durqa'a* and was roofed by a lantern to allow for air and light); and a fountain or *salsabil* which would have cooled the room down during the summer months.¹³⁷

Large Mamluk residences may have had multiple *qa'as*, the main one being the *qa'at al-harim* (i.e., that of the private apartments)¹³⁸ or the master *qa'a*, and other lesser *qa'as* which would have been utilized during different seasons. Behrens-Abouseif states that “depending upon the situation of the house within the urban setting, this [the *qa'a*]

¹³⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹³⁶ Hanna, *Habiter*, 147.

¹³⁷ Sayed, “Development of Qa'a,” 34.

¹³⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 104.

could either be towards the street or towards a courtyard.” However in example of houses on the water, “the *qa‘a* would also have occupied the optimal orientation of the house, in relation to the waterfront, which meant that the *qa‘a* and its apartments always faced the pond, *Khalij* or the Nile.”¹³⁹

Another main feature of Mamluk architecture was the *maq‘ad*, or sitting room (pls. 3.4-5). The *maq‘ad* was a very prominent feature of wealthy property owners during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. It essentially was an arcaded loggia located above the ground floor facing north in order to take advantage of the prevailing winds. In the early Mamluk period the *maq‘ad* is described as a mezzanine loggia built to overlook the courtyard of the house.¹⁴⁰ In houses along the *Khalij* or ponds, the *maq‘ad* opened onto the view of water and gardens.¹⁴¹

Mashrabiyya windows were yet another element that was common in most wealthy homes dating from the beginning of the 16th century and which flourished during the Ottoman period (pl. 3.6-7). It is a method of turned wood, interconnected by other pieces without using nails, to create not only a decorative structure, but also a highly functioning element. The *mashrabiyya* allowed air and light to enter the building, whilst creating a screen of privacy from the outside world. The Mamluks also used *mashrabiyya* to decorate the balustrades in their homes such as those which adorned the *maq‘ad*.¹⁴²

Another feature which dates to the Mamluk period and which was commonly used in palaces and royal residences is the *aghani*. The *aghani* (pl. *aghaniyyat*) was incorporated into either the lower or upper floors (or sometimes both) of the *qa‘as* in the

¹³⁹ Ibid., loc. cit.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴¹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 37.

¹⁴² Orazi, “Mashrabiyya,” 719.

palaces. It is a screened in or *mashrabiyya* loggia in which “there sat musicians whose duty it was to wake the sultans and emirs with music in the morning and put them to sleep with music every night.”¹⁴³ By the time of the French Expedition, the use of woodwork had reached its pinnacle. The facades of houses and palace were often decorated completely with woodwork, especially when the residence overlooked a pond, such as those around Birkat al-Fil.

Another feature that might have been present in waterfront properties was the *takhtabush*. This was created during the 17th and 18th centuries and consisted of a raised open square area on the ground floor which would have faced a courtyard, and was common in both waterfront and non-waterfront houses; an example of this is in Bayt Sadat al-Wafa’iya.

Finally, an extremely common feature in most medieval Cairene houses would have been the *malqaf*, or windcatcher. This feature was placed on the roofs of home facing the direction of the prevailing winds in order to provide ventilation to the home by means of an airshaft.

Some of the earliest documented examples of houses built around the Birkat al-Fil area related to the period of the Bahri Mamluks (647-783/1250-1382). As mentioned before, the pond and its surrounding areas catered to the dignitaries of the military elite, their families, and other members of the upper class. Many of the houses surrounding the pond were documented by Maqrizi and were located within the neighborhood of Darb Ibn al-Baba, which was roughly located near the tomb of Aydakin al-Bunduqdariyya (which was where his *khanqa* stood, built in 682/1284) and the other end of the *darb*

¹⁴³ Raymond, *Great Arab Cities*, 73.

would probably have been located on Azbak street at the mosque of Azbak al-Yusufi.¹⁴⁴ This *darb* would have been located on the same plot of land that once was covered by the Bustan Sayf al-Islam, as they have both been identified (the orchard and the *darb*) by Maqrizi as the orchard extending over a vast plot of land located between Birkat al-Fil and the the *Saliba*.¹⁴⁵ Maqrizi identifies being able to reach the *darb* from a place in front of the Khanqa al-Bunduqdariyya (which would have been located on the Great Street) to the side of the bath of al-Fariqani¹⁴⁶ (pl. 2.1).

Houses and Palaces around Birkat al-Fil dating from the Mamluk Period

The following houses were located on either banks of the pond, in Darb Ibn al-Baba, or in the very immediate vicinity of the aforementioned locations:

The palace of Baktimur al-Saqi (around 716/1317): built on the *Saliba* and overlooking Birkat al-Fil al-Sughra.¹⁴⁷

The palace bought by Sultan Barsbay (825-841/1422-1438), previously belonging to emir Sudun Nafja, neighboring the palace of Baktimur.¹⁴⁸

The palace of Inal al-‘Ala’i, the future sultan in 856/1453, on Birkat al-Fil, adjacent to the palace of Baktimur.¹⁴⁹

The residence of Inal’s son-in-law Yunis al-Dawadar who lived nearby on Birkat al-Fil.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Bylinski, *Darb Ibn al-Baba*, 206.

¹⁴⁵ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2:134.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:133

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:73.

¹⁴⁸ Bylinski, *Darb Ibn al-Baba*, 207.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i al-Zuhur*, 3:155.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Tagribirdi, *Nujum*, 16:38.

The palace of Jaqmaq, who would later become sultan, on Birkat al-Fil.¹⁵¹

The house of Qansuh (future sultan and maternal uncle of Qaytbay) in Darb Hamman al-Fariqani.¹⁵²

A house belonging to Qaytbay was mentioned near Hammam al-Fariqani in 903/1498.¹⁵³

The house of Azbak al-Yusufi was in Darb Ibn al-Baba, near his mosque and madrasa.¹⁵⁴

The house of Tanibay Qara was near Hammam al-Fariqani.¹⁵⁵

The residence of Tumanbay, the last Mamluk sultan, was in Darb Ibn al-Baba.¹⁵⁶

Although most of these houses and palaces have since been lost, a few have been preserved and restored. In order to get a sense of the elements that could be found in the houses belonging to this area, the following is a description taken from *waqf* documents belonging to Qaytbay¹⁵⁷ (who had a multiple houses in the area). He owned a total of three properties which he purchased all at the same time. In the first house (which was located in Khatt al-Saliba al-Tuluniyya) there were two façades, a stable, three living units (or *tibaq*), an *iwan* and a *durqa'a*. The ceiling of the *iwan* was of “fine wood painted with gold and lazurite.”¹⁵⁸ There were also two pantries and a toilet. Another bigger *riwaq* (or apartment) was intended above the stable, but never completed. All corridors and entrances had wooden ceilings which would have been painted or carved. Qaytbay’s second property was also in Darb Ibn al-Baba and adjoined the first property on the east. Its façade had four doors, one which led to a staircase with two flights of

¹⁵¹ Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i al-Zuhur* 2:37.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 3:392-3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3:298.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:458.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:286, 386.

¹⁵⁷ Bylinski, *Darb Ibn al-Baba*, 208.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

stairs and one of these opened into a small flat (*tibaq*). From the second flight of stairs, one entered three older flats looking out on the same street. Each one consisted of an *iwān* and a *durqa'a* as well as a toilet. The second and third doors in this façade both led to shops while the fourth opened into a store.¹⁵⁹ The latter example is of a rental building probably intended to serve and house the various shop keepers and their families who were there to cater to the residents of Birkat al-Fil.

The houses owned by Aydaki had a *qa'a*, two separate apartments, with a *durqa'a*, an *aghani*, and an unfinished marble dado which ran around the walls of the *qa'a*, with windows opening onto a garden on Birkat al-Fil. His second property was much larger, and contained three stables, a large *riwaq* which consisted of two *iwāns* and a *durqa'a*. The windows of the apartment looked out onto both the courtyard and Birkat al-Fil. Each of the *iwāns* had a side room and one even had an arcaded loggia, or *maq'ad aghani* overlooking Birkat al-Fil. A toilet could be entered directly from the *durqa'a*. Steps led to the terrace from the court, and one could enter, via the staircase, the *maq'ad* and a passage which provided access to the pond which was probably a secondary entrance to the house for people arriving by boat (probably a *qaytun*). These two examples of houses belonging to Qaytbay and Aydaki were relatively modest in comparison to those of Tumanbay who owned a total of four houses in the area.¹⁶⁰

The houses belonging to Tumanbay all lay either on the *birka* or in the *darb* itself. The first house faced both Birkat al-Fil and Darb Ibn al-Baba. The ground floor had a large *qa'a* and beside it was a small *manzara*. There were three stables and instead of the usual *maq'ad* on the ground floor there was a *manzara* instead which boasted views into

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. loc. cit.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 210-211.

the inner garden and Birkat al-Fil. From the court, one could also enter another stable, the third in this house. Among many other elements to the house a staircase led to a *riwaq* arranged as two *iwans*, one of which had windows opening onto the court and Birkat al-Fil. Tumanbay's second house was connected to the first and was considered a "large princely mansion,"¹⁶¹ as it included all of the architectural features that one would expect to find in a waterfront palace such as two *maq'ads*, various *riwaqs* and multiple *qa'as* and *durqa'as*. The entire building was lavishly decorated including the *qaytun* which had quite a sumptuous finishing, "the floor was of marble and limestone mosaic, the ceiling was gilded and painted with lazurite and was equipped with a toilet and nearby two kitchens. The bigger kitchen had a passage to the *qasr*."¹⁶² The *qibla iwan* in the *qasr* had a "marble dado running around the walls, two *suffas* which were lit by ten stained-glass windows. The *bahri iwan* had two lateral recesses providing access to attached bedrooms. The *durqa'a* had two lateral recesses each surmounted by an *aghani*. The arcaded loggia (in this case called a *maq'ad qamari*) commanded a view of Birkat al-Fil. A wooden lattice lantern, or *shukhshaykha*, surmounted the *durqa'a*, and the openings of the *iwans* were finished *kurdis* (ornamental wooden framing), a marble dado ran around the entire *qasr*, and the ceilings had a profiled wooden finishing and an inscribed frieze."¹⁶³

Other houses mentioned by the various *waqfs* were clearly intended for rental purposes as they did not contain any courtyards or open spaces, and probably catered to lower officers and soldiers, shopkeepers, and servants of the elite. These houses were also further away from the banks of the pond (i.e. nearer to the *Saliba*), leaving the mansions,

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 211.

¹⁶² Ibid., 214.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 215.

palaces and larger houses to remain prominently along the shores. All of the buildings served different purposes depending on the owner's needs. These needs included multiple stables, open courtyards, multiple bent and separate entrances, *qaytuns*, and *maq'ads* etc. This shows that although the area of Birkat al-Fil was intended for the wealthy ruling classes, it also contained on the peripheries, dwellings of those who were catering to the large residences.

Maqrizi's *Khitat* mentions a number of *dars* in the area of Birkat al-Fil. Although some would have been classified as *qasrs* (such as Dar Taz), it is nevertheless important to mention them, as they aid in recreating the area during the Mamluk period. The first is Dar al-Baqar¹⁶⁴ located in Hadrat al-Baqar, which Maqrizi identifies as being near the Madrasa of Sunqur al-Sa'di. Today, this area can be located between the Mosque of Sultan Hasan, and Shari' al-Suyufiyya and is better known as Istabl Qusun. Maqrizi stated that this *dar* was built in order to accommodate al-Nasir Muhammad's Arabian horses, since the location would have been optimal for this due to its proximity to the Citadel.

The palace (or *qasr*) of Baktimur al-Saqi was built in 716/1317 and encompassed a vast plot of land directly on the southern tip of the "trunk" of the pond, (also referred to as Birkat al-Fil al-Sughra),¹⁶⁵ and its southern boundary was the *Saliba* (pl. 3.8). Al-Saqi was one of al-Nasir's favorite emirs, and according to Maqrizi, the *qasr* was lavishly decorated, until Mu'ayyad removed all the marble and iron work from the windows to use for his own constructions.¹⁶⁶ The building was maintained by a *waqf* until 943/1537

¹⁶⁴ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:220-21.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:221.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:68.

when it was sold. It lay in ruins until 1172/1759 when one of Mustafa Bay's mamluks bought the dilapidated palace and built his *dar* on the site. Today this site can be found on Shari' al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Majid al-Laban and Shari' al-Hud al-Marsud.

Dar Ulmas was constructed beside the mosque of Ulmas, which today is situated on what is known as Shari' al-Hilmiyya (the northern section of Shari' al-Suyufiyya). It was constructed in 728/1328, during the same time that the mosque was being built. According to 'Ali Mubarak, Qawas Pasha later purchased this *dar*, however, modern buildings have since replaced it.¹⁶⁷

Dar Arghun al-Kamili was built in 746/1346 overlooking Birkat al-Fil in the area called Jisr al-A'zam.¹⁶⁸ It was demolished and the land was bought by Ibrahim Sharkas who owned the area from the *dar*, all the way to Harat al-Hud al-Marsud.¹⁶⁹

There are a few domestic buildings that can still be found in the area, also dating from the Mamluk period:

The palace of the emir Taz al-Nasiri, (who was one of the many son-in-laws to Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad and powerful emir of Sultan Hasan)¹⁷⁰ is located on Shari' al-Suyufiyya (pl. 3.9-12). Maqrizi locates this *dar* as being near to the Madrasa al-Bunduqdariyya and facing the hammam al-Fariqani.¹⁷¹ The palace dates from 753/1352, but was revitalized during the Ottoman period in 1089/1678 (in particular the *maq'ad* (pls. 3.13-14), and some of the ceilings in the various *qa'as*).¹⁷² It is contemporaneous to the Palace of Yashbak (Qusun), which explains the similarities between the two palaces.

¹⁶⁷ Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:39.

¹⁶⁸ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:239.

¹⁶⁹ Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:119.

¹⁷⁰ Warner, *Monuments*, 138.

¹⁷¹ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:240.

¹⁷² For more detailed information of the palaces, see Revault *Palais et maisons*, 1:33-60.

The similarities in the *qa'as* included the appearance of one, three or five ocular windows surmounted above a wooden lintel with two or four rectangular windows below them on the upper floors (pls. 3.14-16).¹⁷³ Also, as was common with other palaces in the area, both Taz and Yashbak required multiple entrances and stables. The area and its proximity to the citadel reinforces the importance of Darb Ibn al-Baba as the primary choice of residence for the emirs and the mamluks of the sultan (who would have resided at the Citadel). In 1362/1943, part of the palace was used as a school for boys, and was later abandoned after the earthquake in 1412/1992, but has since been restored by the Ministry of Antiquities.

The *Qa'a* of Azbak al-Yusufi (899/1494) was built in the neighborhood of Darb Ibn al-Baba, and can be located today on the corner of Harat Azbak and Shari' Jami' Azbak (pls. 3.17-18). When first constructed, it included the *qa'a*, a madrasa, a *sabil-kuttab*, and a *saqiyya* (waterwheel). The complex is an unusual building due to its chamfering of the *qibla* wall, thus allowing the building to have three facades facing the street instead of merely two. It remains today in its entirety and is a classic example of urban planning in reference to street versus *qibla* orientation which is unique to Cairo. Although Revault states that the reason is yet unknown as to why there is a *qa'a* attached to the mosque,¹⁷⁴ O'Kane states that in some cases, the *qa'as* which were incorporated within the religious buildings served as accommodation for the founder and for his descendants when visiting his foundation.¹⁷⁵ The funerary complex of Najm al-Din Ayyub which dates from 640-48/1242-50 is an much earlier example of a mosque

¹⁷³ Revault, *Palais et maisons*, 2:56.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:27.

¹⁷⁵ O'Kane, "Domestic and Religious Architecture," 168.

complex which uses the *qa'a* model. A later model which also incorporates a *qa'a* plan in the mosque is that of the Sultan al-Ashraf Inal complex which dates from 856-58-60/1451-54-56, and in the *ribat* of the wife of Inal (860/1496).

The building which was first constructed by the emir Qusun in 730-737/1330-37 was a highly elaborate palace whose main *qa'a* had a cross-axial four-*iwan* plan (pls. 3.19-20). Yashbak later bought the palace in 879/1475 and added his name to the foundation inscription, hence the two names of the dilapidated structure. What remains of the building can be found today on Shari' Manah al-Waqf. This palace however, is much larger than that of Taz and has been likened to the "gigantic pharonic palaces of the past."¹⁷⁶ It is also an example of a main *qa'a* situated on the first floor, as opposed to the ground floor. Other examples of a *qa'a* on the first floor can be found in Taz and Bashtak. These elevated *qa'as* have also been termed *qa'a mu'allaqa*.¹⁷⁷ This palace has one of the most spectacular monumental entrances in Cairo (pls. 3.21-22).

The palace of Shihab al-Din built in 888/1484 along the banks of Birkat Fahadin, (northwest of Birkat al-Fil) serves as a well documented example of wealthy house beside a pond that has a patron who was not royal, but close to the governing class (pls. 3.23-25). The *waqf*¹⁷⁸ details the importance of the decorative elements, i.e.: the *ablaq* dado in the *durqa'a*, the colored glass windows in the *iwan*, the gold and blue painted ceilings in the *iwan* and so on. This was not a multi-family residence (pl. 3.26), but a home built upon many floors with a clear separation between public areas (*qaytun*, *qa'a* and *riwaq*) and the private living quarters (upper living stories). This document shows

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1:33.

¹⁷⁷ Hanna, *Habiter*, 44.

¹⁷⁸ Waqf # 194 at the National Archives at the Citadel.

that every space corresponded to a specific function in the house (i.e. there was no wasted space on this irregular plot of land).¹⁷⁹ As with the houses that could be found surrounding Birkat al-Fil, they all share common features including stables, *qaytuns*, multiple entrances, *riwaqs*, multiple *qa'as*, *tabaqas*, fine decoration etc. However, not unlike many of the later houses surrounding Birkat al-Fil, this house did not incorporate an open courtyard into the plan. Part of the reason for this is that internal space in the house or palace was somewhat limited because of the unusual shapes of the plots of land or natural elements (for example, this house was built on a slope and that had to be taken into consideration in the planning) and in some cases, the courtyard was deemed unnecessary. Courtyards were desirable in the heart of the city where light and air were limited; however, on a pond the *qaytun* or *maq'ad* fulfilled that function. The areas surrounding ponds and the canals for the most part tended to be less congested and more private so they didn't require an internal open courtyard. It was also more cost efficient to eliminate the courtyard as it allowed for more rooms that could be used in their place.

It is partly due to the fact that the area was relatively unbuilt that residents could build such grand structures, and on such grand scales as compared to structures built inside al-Qahira. The plans of the buildings whether they be public (mosques, madrasas etc), or private (palaces, houses) had regular interior spaces and encompassed large plots of land. However, those constructed on or in very close proximity to the *Saliba* tended to have irregular exterior plans, whilst still maintaining their symmetry on the interior. Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, during his third reign (709-740/1309-1340) greatly encouraged his emirs to build palaces and mosques. Those emirs who built palaces

¹⁷⁹ Zakariya, *Deux palais*, 20.

between the pond and the citadel included the emir Qusun 730-737/1330-37 who, as previously mentioned, built his palace and mosque in 736/1336.¹⁸⁰ One reason given for al-Nasir's supervision and encouragement for his emirs to build near to the citadel was that:

As structures, they formed part of the network of princely palaces to the north and west of the Citadel that he had created as a symbolic ring around the royal residence [including the two palaces of Yalbugha and Altunbugha]. Their role was more important than that of other structures planned by the sultan and executed for his emirs because of their central location. They commanded the approach from the city of al-Qahira through the north-south Shari' al-A'zam south of the Zuwayla Gate. Strategically, these palaces controlled access to the horse market area (Maydan Rumayla), and defended the royal domain behind it. Aesthetically, they announced to the viewer the royal splendor that would fully unfold as one entered the open square of Rumayla.¹⁸¹

It is also necessary here to mention the various *hammams* in the area that would have existed during the Mamluk reign. The first that Maqrizi mentions is Hammam Ibn al-Baba, which was located in the neighborhood of Darb Ibn al-Baba.¹⁸² This bath was still present when the *Description* was compiled, and can be located on the map at number 180. Pauty describes this bath as "a large room of *iwans*. It is cruciform in plan, with *iwans* and lintels supported by columns. The *sahn* has a cupola (or dome) which is raised by pendentives and in the center of the *iwans* is an ocular-shaped *mastaba*."¹⁸³ This hammam was also mentioned by Mubarak as being 'old, and allowing both males and females to enter.'¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Revault, *Palais et maisons*, 1:27

¹⁸¹ Rabbat, *The Citadel*, 237.

¹⁸² Modern day Shari' Nur al-Zalam, and around the mosque of Azbak al-Yusufi.

¹⁸³ Pauty, *Hammams*, 59.

¹⁸⁴ Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:315.

Another bath mentioned by Maqrizi was Hammam Fariqani. This was located just north of the *Saliba* in a neighborhood called Harat al-Alfi.¹⁸⁵ Maqrizi however states that Hammam al-Fariqani later became Hammam al-Alfi.¹⁸⁶ Pauty describes this bath as “being small, with three *iwans*, having mosaic decoration in the pendentives. Four columns support the central cupola. The arches are perforated with interlacing design.”¹⁸⁷

Religious monuments around Birkat al-Fil dating from the Mamluk Period

The buildings in this section served different functions and were in close proximity to one another underlining the wealth and significance of the area. In other words, it was a very dense area in religious construction. In some cases, people who built their palaces around the pond also wanted to leave a legacy that would perhaps outlive their houses. Or perhaps they never imagined themselves or their families leaving the area, and therefore established charitable foundations in their names as a testament to the importance of the area.

The following is a list of Mamluk religious buildings still extant.¹⁸⁸

Khanqa al-Bunduqdariyya (682/1284: located on Shari‘ al-Suyufiyya).

Madrasa and Funerary Khanqa of Emir Sunqur al-Sa‘di (714-20/1315-21: located in

Hadarat al-Baqar, monument # 263, pl. 3.27 # 17.).¹⁸⁹

Mosque of Qusun (729/1329-30: located today on Shari‘ Surujiyya, monument # 202, pl. 3.27 # 27).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ It can be located today within the streets of al-Shaykh al-Zalam, Sikkat Darb Jamiza and the *Saliba*.

¹⁸⁶ Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 4:610

¹⁸⁷ Pauty, *Hammams*, 59-60.

¹⁸⁸ All the buildings below can be located on pl. 3.27.

¹⁸⁹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Mamluks*, 166.

Mosque and Funerary Complex of Ulmas al-Hajib (730/1330: located in Hadarat al-Baqar, monument # 130, pl. 3.27 # 10).¹⁹¹

Minaret and Mosque of Bashtak (736/1336: located on the northwest side of the pond, monument # 205, pl. 3.27 # 11,).

Mosque and Khanqa of Shaykhu al-'Umari (749/1349: located on both sides of the *Saliba*, monument # 147, pl. 3.27 # 32).¹⁹²

Mosque complex of Sultan Hasan (756-764/1356-1363: located in maydan Rumayla, monument # 133, pl. 3.27 # 28).

Madrasa of Bashir Agha al-Jamdar (760/1359: located on Shari' Nur al-Zalam, monument # 269, pl. 3.27 # 19).

Mosque and Funerary Complex of Taghribirdi (843/1440: located on northern side of *Saliba*, monument # 209, pl. 3.27 # 4).¹⁹³

Mosque of Qaraquja al-Hasani (844/1441-2, located on southwest side of the pond, near the *Khalij*, monument # 206, pl. 3.27 # 15).

Mosque of Qadi Yahya (847/1444: located in Habbaniyya district, monument # 204, pl. 3.27 # 13).¹⁹⁴

Façade and Mosque of Lajin al-Sayfi (852/1449: located on Shari' Abd al-Majid al-Labban, monument # 217, pl. 3.27 # 23).

Mosque and Madrasa of Azbak al-Yusufi (899-900/1494-5: his house was nearby in Darb Ibn al-Baba, mosque is located north of *Saliba*, monument # 211, pl. 3.27 # 22).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 171.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 180.

¹⁹² Ibid., 191.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 261.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 265.

Façade and Minaret of the Mosque of Taz (in close proximity to his palace, monument # 267, pl. 3.27 # 5).

In the short period of time of roughly two hundred years, this area experienced a high rate of construction, both in domestic and religious architecture. The majority of these monuments as well as the residential buildings occupied the prime location on the north and southeast banks of the pond, the area closest to the Citadel. This dramatic increase in construction emphasizes the prominence and significance of the area considering the fact that no pre-Mamluk structures remained in the area and that these buildings, though created in such a short period withstood the test of time.

Religious monuments around Birkat al-Fil dating from the Ottoman Period

The urban expansion and development of the city under the Ottomans in contrast to the Mamluks was much less vigorous and was concentrated primary in charitable foundations in the form of *sabils*, *wakalas*, and *rab*'s. For example, the figures for *sabil* construction during the Ottoman period increased all over the city. However, it is the southern section which experienced very high numbers totaling 54 *sabils*, in contrast to Qahira's 42 *sabils*. These figures also show a decline in the construction of *sabils* in the southern sections dating from the beginning of the 18th century up until the beginning of the 19th century, and this coincides with the population shift from the area into Qahira and the developing western section (the area between the *khalij* and the Nile). One of the leading reasons for the attraction of the Ottomans to the Birkat al-Fil area was the removal of the tanneries. This allowed the newly freed up area on the northern banks of

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 292.

the pond to be developed in the 17th century. This proved especially true for the area of Birkat al-Fil, which from the period of 1060-1168/1650-1755 had included some 40% of emirs' palaces (See Chapter One for more information). By the year 1212/1798, the area was in decline and housed a mere 20% of all emirs' palaces.¹⁹⁶ The decline of the area was a result of the area becoming over populated and congested, which was compounded by the shift in population from the southern sections. A reason given for this is that during the Ottoman conquest, the city of Cairo was reduced to a provincial capital; the real capital being Istanbul. The Citadel was no longer the home of the sultan, nor the seat of government of Egypt, as it had been for many centuries, but was now the home of the governor and the army's barracks. This consequently led the quarters in the neighborhood of the Citadel to continue to grow and expand, but resulting in a different type of resident in the area i.e. military personnel. This eventually caused "battles and fights between different military groups, creating insecurity in the quarters, which in turn affected the residential value of the area."¹⁹⁷

While the majority of the monuments and palaces surrounding Birkat al-Fil can be attributed to the Mamluk dynasty, there are some notable buildings that remain from the Ottoman era. The following are the remaining religious edifices in the vicinity dating from the Ottoman period (these can all be found on pl. 3.27):

Sabil of Yusuf al-Kurdi (16th century, monument # 213, pl. 3.27 # 16).

Sabil-Kuttab and Rab' of al-Qizlar (1027/1618, monument # 265, pl. 3.27 # 9).

Sabil-Kuttab Bashir Agha dar Sa'ada (1130/1718, monument # 309, pl. 3.27 # 25).

Sabil-Kuttab Sultan Mahmud (1163/1750, monument # 308, pl. 3.27 # 24).

¹⁹⁶ Maury, Raymond, Revault, Zakariya, *Palais et Maisons (Epoque Ottomane)*, 21.

¹⁹⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 54.

Façade of the Mosque of Hasan Pasha Tahrir (1224/1809, monument # 210, pl. 3.27 # 3).

Sabil Umm ‘Abbas (1284/1867, no monument #, pl. 3.27 # 26).

Mosque of Yusuf Shurbaji (monument # 259, pl. 3.27 # 30).

Sabil-Kuttab Shahin Ahmad Agha (monument # 328, pl. 3.27 # 31).

At the time of the arrival of the Ottomans, the area was already dense in terms of both residential and religious buildings. Therefore, the majority of the Ottoman structures lay primarily on the southern and western banks of the pond where land was newly freed up by the removal of the tanneries.

Houses and palaces around Birkat al-Fil dating from the Ottoman Period

The following description was written by the French consul in Cairo in the late seventeenth century about Birkat al-Fil:

The palaces surrounding the pond enhance its beauty, the pond, in turn, offers an enchanting view to their dwellers. Nothing is more pleasant than this place filled with water during eight months of the year, while during the remaining months, it turns into a smelling garden. As long as the pond is flooded with water, it is full of golden boats, in which the prominent people go out with their wives. There is not an evening without fireworks and concerts. A multitude of women are at their windows overlooking the pond, and the facades of all houses are lit during the evening. I think it is one of the great spectacles a night can offer to the eyes, while the freshness of the night is enhanced by that of the water, compensating for the heat of the day.¹⁹⁸

The massacre of many emirs by Selim led to their replacement by Turks, Georgians and Circassians. The remaining emirs still maintained great households in their palaces beside Azbakiyya and Birkat al-Fil.¹⁹⁹ The map of the *Description de l’Egypte*, which would have been compiled during the end of the Ottoman era, shows numerous houses of

¹⁹⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 21.

¹⁹⁹ Lane-Poole, *Story of Cairo*, 288.

notables around the pond. Some examples of these houses belonging to the emirs are (pl. 3.28):²⁰⁰

Bayt Murad Bay.²⁰¹

Bayt Ibrahim Bay.

Bayt Sulayman Bay.

Bayt Yahya Bay.

Bayt ‘Uthman Bay al-Tanburji

Bayt Jawhar Agha.

Bayt Mustafa Bay.

Bayt ‘Umar Kashif.

Bayt Radwan Kakhiya.

Bayt Ibrahim Kakhiya.

Bayt Sadat al-Wafa’iyya.

Bayt Shahin Ahmad Agha.

Multiple houses belonging to Qasim Bay.²⁰²

Unfortunately, of those mentioned, only Bayt Sadat al-Wafa’iyya (1010&1169/1679&1755)²⁰³ and Bayt Shahin Ahmad Agha remain today. Bayt Sadat however, is a fine example of both waterfront property and Cairene Ottoman architecture. When discussing residential architecture in Cairo during the Ottoman period, it was

²⁰⁰ All the following houses have been obtained from the map from the *Description de l’Egypte*.

²⁰¹ Pl. 3.29.

²⁰² Pl. 3.30.

²⁰³ Warner, *Monuments*, 158.

evident that towards the end of the period the influence of Ottoman architecture would not endure.

Bayt al-Sadat (pls. 3.31-32) is a classic example of a private residence (built in many phases with the last dating from the Ottoman era), which still employed the decorative techniques that were used hundreds of years earlier. The house was built on the west bank of the pond, near to the Mamluk mosque of Qaraqaja al-Hasani (845-6/1441-1442). It included many of the characteristic features of Mamluk architecture with modern additions such as extensive intricate *mashrabiyya* (pls. 3.6-7, 3.33-34), a *haramlik* (area designated for women only), and a *salamluk*. Elements that were carried over from the Mamluk period are the *maq'ad*, *takhtabus*, the *qa'a* with the usual *iwans* and *durqa'a* with a *salsabil* and a *malqaf*. The *mandara* and enormous *salsabil*²⁰⁴ are adorned with Iznik tiles imported from Turkey which epitomized the trend in interior decoration at the time in upper middle-class households (pl. 3.35). A major feature that distinguishes residential architecture from the Mamluk period from that of the Ottoman period is that although there is some evidence of *haramliks* in Mamluk architecture, the phenomenon of segregation proliferated with the Ottomans. It was much more common to find a beautifully decorated *haramlik* in a post-Mamluk house than in a house dating from the Mamluk period.²⁰⁵

The House of Shahin Ahmad Agha (pl. 3.36) is classified by Hanna as a middle class house, which gives us a better understanding of Birkat al-Fil by adding another type of living unit to the somewhat homogenized types already discussed. Many, if not all of

²⁰⁴ The house is classified as #463 in the list of Islamic Monuments in Cairo. For more information, see *Palais et Maisons du Caire à l'époque Ottomane*, 259.

²⁰⁵ This phenomenon will also be discussed in relation to the modern period in Chapter Four.

the houses previously mentioned dating from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods could either have been classified as a *qasr*, or as lying directly on the water. This house is neither, and yet shows that, at the time of its construction,²⁰⁶ the area was still appealing to those not requiring large plots of land, gardens, stables or multiple *qa'as*, which was a change from the norm that had previously prevailed in the area. Although the house is not numbered on the *Description de l'Egypte*, the *sabil* remains today. This *sabil* and house were built in close proximity to the Mosque of Malika Safiyya (1019/1610), which would indicate that this area (which would have been freed up only sixty-five years previously) contained apartment buildings and small private residences, but no longer had the capacity to accommodate larger palaces. In fact, the house and *sabil* occupied an area of only 100 m². The modest house, which has no interior courtyard, surrounds the *sabil* on two sides and has two exterior doors, one leading to the *sabil*, and one leading to the house.²⁰⁷ This is a very good example of the recent spatial pressures that the city, and in particular this area were experiencing at the time of construction.²⁰⁸ It also indicates the change in demographics to the area which once would only have catered to the wealthy elite from previous centuries and to their desire for less congestion, thus leaving the area and moving elsewhere.

Another building unit that dates from between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can be found today off Shari' Suq al-Silah on Shari' Hamman Bashtak (pl. 3.37), very near the Mosque of Sultan Hasan. Whilst this building is unnamed²⁰⁸ and it and the previous building were not indicated on the *Description de l'Egypte* (probably because of their relatively small size), they do date from the Ottoman period. Although, as we have seen, the area was very dense in terms of palaces, mosques, and *sabils* etc,

²⁰⁶ Most probably during the same time as the construction of his *sabil* classification # 328, which dates to 1086/1675.

²⁰⁷ Hanna, *Habiter*, 102.

²⁰⁸ Hanna refers to this house as "6 Rue Hammam Bashtak".

this building is free on three sides and lies on an unusually regular plot of land as far as Cairene urban construction goes. With the exception of the corbels protruding from the façade, it is minimally decorated from the outside.²⁰⁹ This house does however contain numerous *qa'as*, *durqa'as* and *iwans*, but they are all divided between three floors and a mezzanine. In other words, instead of being spread out horizontally on the land, they have been vertically constructed to take advantage of the small plot of land.

The Ottomans' predecessors tended to build charitable foundations primarily in the form of mosques, *khanqas* and *zawiyas*. The Ottomans also continued the tradition of endowing charitable institutions but with less emphasis on mosque construction, and more emphasis on building *sabils*, as they required less land and money to construct. By this time, those who chose to reside in the southern sections of the city would have felt not only the increasing sense of overcrowding in their area, but also witnessed a shift in the demographics of the people residing in the area. Hence the increase in *sabil* construction to fulfill the needs of the growing population in the areas in which potable water would have been crucial to the development and living conditions of those in the congested sections of the city.

This was the case for the following patrons during the Ottoman period who built charitable buildings and who also owned houses in the area (all dates refer to the charitable structures, not to the houses themselves pl. 3.27):²¹⁰

House and Zawiya of Radwan Bay (1060/1650, monument # 365).

Sabil and house of Shahin Ahmad Agha (1086/1675, monument # 328).

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 83.

²¹⁰ All the following houses have been obtained from the map from the *Description de l'Egypte*.

Sabil, hammam and house of ‘Ali Agha Dar al-Sa‘ada (1088/1677, monument # 268).

Takiyya and Sabil-Kuttab of Sultan Mahmud (1163/1750, monument # 308).

Sabil-Kuttab and house of Ibrahim Bay al-Kabir (1166/1753, monument # 331).

Sabil waqf Yusuf Bay (1186/1772, monument # 262).

Sabil and house of ‘Umar Kashif (Both no longer extant).

Sabil, hammam and house of Mustafa Bay (Both no longer extant).

House and hammam Mustafa Agha (Both no longer extant).

House and hammam Ibrahim Bay (Both no longer extant).

Conclusion

Initially during the Fatimid and Ayyubid period, construction in the area consisted primarily of gardens and *manzaras*. This was followed by the preliminary construction of the polo field also known as Maydan al-‘Adil or Maydan Birkat al-Fil, during the Mamluk period. Later came al-Malik al-Nasir’s encouragement for his emirs to build in the city, and around the Citadel which in turn increased the desirability of Birkat al-Fil. Large plots of land supporting large palaces sprung up along the banks of the pond and spread west, east and south of the pond. The north was not developed until the Ottoman period. The areas further away from the pond and along the *Saliba* were the locations of the apartment buildings (ex. Qaytbay’s second property), *rab*’s and *wikalas*, so consequently these areas were the first to become congested and over populated.

The area surrounding Birkat al-Fil remained the residential choice for the Mamluk aristocracy lasting well into the middle of the eighteenth century, whilst the area surrounding Azbakiyya tended to attract the bourgeois classes. Eventually, overcrowding

of Birkat al-Fil, and the fire of 1190/1776 in Azbakiyya²¹¹ (which resulted in newly freed up plots of land) led the Mamluk bays and high officials to purchase lots surrounding Azbakiyya allowing the area to become the ‘new’ fashionable and modern district of Cairo.

²¹¹ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 52.

Chapter Four

The Transformation of Birkat al-Fil into the Modern-day Neighborhood of Hilmiyya

The nineteenth century saw the construction of numerous palaces and *sarays* built by Muhammad ‘Ali and his decedents. One of the many buildings that were constructed was the Saray al-Hilmiyya in the area of Birkat al-Fil. The word Saray differs in meaning to that of Qasr. Although they both allude to the structure of a palace, the word *saray* ‘is the living complex which compromises the palace building itself, a large garden, and more often than not, grottos, kiosks and fountains as well as buildings scattered on the grounds.’²¹² Blair explains that “the word *saray* was extended to refer to the seat of government and the residence of a prince.”²¹³ That is exactly who this building was built for, ‘Abbas Hilmi ibn Tusun ibn Muhammad ‘Ali.

The construction of the *saray* was completed in 1268/1851 and the area from that year onwards was known eponymously as Hilmiyya.²¹⁴ After ‘Abbas Hilmi lived in the *saray*, the beginning of the street of Shari‘ al-Suyufiyya which intersected with Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali and ended al-Darih al-Musafir (Monument # 261) was also called from then on Shari‘ al-Hilmiyya²¹⁵ (pl. 4.1). From what can be seen from the photographs of the area Saray al-Hilmiyya shared architectural similarities with the earlier Palace of Muhammad ‘Ali in Shubra (1223/1808). It was built on the location of the house of ‘Ali Bay al-Kabir.

²¹² Mubarak, *al-Khitat* 1:212.

²¹³ Blair, “Saray,” 9:44.

²¹⁴ Salam Najm, *Qusur*, 341.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

The most clearly visible architectural element seen from the photographs of Saray Hilmiyya is the curved central hood which provided the roof for the structure. This curved roof upon pillars is reminiscent of the *kushk* (pavilion) at the Nymphaeum at the Shubra palace (pl. 4.2-4), but in the case of Saray al-Hilmiyya it is “carried on columns like the Bulgarian examples”²¹⁶ (pl. 4.5-14). From what can be seen from the late nineteenth century photographs, the palace is enclosed within a wall and on the northern and southern walls there are tall square towers which look like watchtowers. This feature is thought to have been present in ‘Abbas’ palace in ‘Abbasiyya, and may have been taken from his watch towers on the road to Suez (neither of which remain).²¹⁷ The layout of the building is horizontal with a large courtyard with the majority of the rooms facing east toward the Citadel. The structure appears to be on multiple stories with a loggia running the entire length of the upper floor of the palace. Tamraz also states “that it did not have a gabled roof, and its entrance could have been emphasized with the loop-like or semi-circular hood.”²¹⁸ This palace partially followed the “Rumi” style which Muhammad ‘Ali was said to have brought with him when he came to Egypt. It shares similar features with the *salamlik* on Roda Island built by Hasan Pasha prime minister to ‘Abbas Hilmi I in the 1860s, such as the undulating belvedere (pl. 4.15) running along the perimeter of the building. It is also similar in that it lies on the water and has large windows facing it. The Rumi style which is thought to have been imported from

²¹⁶ Tamraz, *Nineteenth Century*, 24.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

Albania and Greece prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century in Cairo and was characterized by:

A plain façade with several projections. They were usually two-stories buildings with a wooden frieze delineating the stories. They had vertically elongated windows. The projections were either built from the ground level to the top or projected on 45-degree brackets (as was the case for Saray al-Hilmiyya, pl. 4.33-34).²¹⁹

Muhammad ‘Ali banned the use of *mashabiyya*²²⁰ in favor of the use of windows and glass which could be accommodated more cohesively into the Rumi style of architecture.²²¹ These buildings focused less on external decoration and more on architectural form and internal decoration than anything else. Tamraz explains that the Rumi style “has a certain feature in common; none of their facades are straight, normally there are projections rising up from the façade, and when this is absent there is a protruding room supported by wooden brackets set on a 45-degree angle.”²²²

The following is a description of the palace and its grounds in 1874:

The gardens reached from Shari‘ Muhammad ‘Ali all the way to Saray Darb al-Jamamiz, in the south it reached all the way until the palace of ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak, and in the south west until the palace of Ahmad Pasha Tal‘ab and the whole garden was enclosed by a wall. The palace approximately covered most of current day Hilmiyya and the building of the palace was located north west of the palace of ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak and north of the palace of the emir Ahmad Pasha Tal‘ab (pl. 4.1)...They imported stones from the Island of Rhodes for the garden.²²³

²¹⁹ Tamraz, *Nineteenth Century*, 36.

²²⁰ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 94.

²²¹ Tamraz, *Nineteenth Century*, 37.

²²² *Ibid.*, 38.

²²³ Salam Najm, *Qusur*, 345.

This account gives an idea of the massive size and scope of the gardens and the plot of land itself, enough to span at one time the entire north-south part of the pond's 'head'.

Murad Pasha also had a house in Hilmiyya located on 'Atfat Murad Pasha which was west of Shari' al-Suyufiyya.²²⁴ This was one of the larger houses that was present when the *Description de l'Égypte* was compiled (pl. 3.28).

The emir Ahmad Pasha Tal'ab, who was the scribe of the *diwan* of Cairo during the period of Isma'il built his palace on Shari' al-Suyufiyya in Hilmiyya in 1286/1869 (pl. 4.1). The area was north of Qasr Emir Taz and stretched north of the *Saliba* to the mausoleum of al-Musafir. Ali Mubarak mentioned this house by saying that it was large and was at the head of 'Aftat Murad Pasha and had a spacious garden.²²⁵

Another notable resident of Hilmiyya was 'Ali Pasha Mubarak who built his house in the vicinity al-Musafir and Shari' al-Hilmiyya in 1287/1870. Mubarak later recalled "when I sought to build my house in al-Hilmiyya, I demolished the mausoleum of the Shaykh al-Musafir and rebuilt it anew." This confirms that 'Ali Mubarak's palace was in the vicinity of the mausoleum of al-Musafir and that it over-looked Shari' al-Hilmiyya.²²⁶

Some of the elements that most of the houses in Hilmiyya share are bent entrances (pl. 4.16), internal symmetry on asymmetrical plots of land, central halls flanked by various public and private rooms and above all for Hilmiyya, the concept of *salamliks* (pl. 4.17).

²²⁴Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, 2:182.

²²⁵*Ibid.*, loc. cit.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, 2:180.

Initially the Saray al-Hilmiyya's orientation was directed towards the historic *Saliba*. However, after the completion of Shari' Muhammad 'Ali in 1849²²⁷ (pl. 4.18) the northern parts of the garden had been reduced, and the new street sliced through the palace grounds (and through part of the Qusun Mosque). It wasn't until 1893 that the garden was declared public land and appropriated by the Ministry of Public Works. The civil engineers then divided the land into a network of streets, *maydans* and plots upon which to build apartment buildings and private villas. The planners first chose the intersection where Shari' Mu'izz intersected with the new Shari' Muhammad 'Ali and the first street was drawn cutting through the northern part of the garden and running from north to south (Shari' 'Ali Pasha Ibrahim, pls. 4.19-20). They then (under authority from the Tanzim), drew a street which ran from the Qusun Mosque (Shari' Ahmad Bay 'Umar), diagonally to an intersection which would be the east to west main road (Shari' Mustafa Bay Sirri). The palace was eventually torn down in 1903²²⁸ and the land that it was built upon was also divided into smaller plots for apartments buildings and small villas. Initially the roads were created to run at an angle to Shari' Muhammad 'Ali and connected to one another through the use of *maydans* which would allow perpendicular roads to intersect with one another and provide and a framework of roads and accessibility from east to west alongside the palace. After the palace was torn down, the street pattern was simply extended to allow for more transportation and access to the area (pl. 4.21). The roads that were created by tearing down the palace were those of Shari' 'Ali Pasha Ibrahim cutting north to south on the western end of the plot; Shari' Ilhami Pasha which was the longest of the north-south streets and that literally cut through the

²²⁷ Asfour dates the completion to 1893. "Domestication," 125.

²²⁸ Asfour, "Westernization," 2.

northern side of the palace; Shari‘ ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak which ran from north to south and cut through the middle of the palace; Shari‘ Mustafa Bay Sirri running from west to east through the palace; Shari‘ Ahmad Taymur which cut east to west running parallel to Shari‘ Mustafa Bay Sirri; and finally Sikkat ‘Abd al-Rahman Bay which also ran parallel to the two previous roads but was located at the east of the palace and which was angled and then ran parallel to the Muhammad ‘Ali spine.²²⁹

Asfour argues that “the notion of accommodating the old and the new, the European and the native, was an indispensable criterion in the planning of Hilmiyya”.²³⁰ This concept would prove indeed to be the fundamental philosophy in the planning of Hilmiyya, not only in the urban framework of the new neighborhood, but also in the juxtaposition of Eastern and Western elements in its architecture, as we will see. By the time of the creation of the new Muhammad ‘Ali spine which was to link Azbakiyya to the Citadel (1845-75),²³¹ the Parisian Haussmanian model was the main example in trying to modernize the capital. As was evident when the *Description de l’Égypte* was created, the streets and *haras* proved to be a major obstacle for the cartographers who omitted many of the lesser streets, alleys and dead-ends because they were too numerous to record. This new ‘modern’ model however, “never considered, or even sympathized with the existing fabric.”²³² As a result, the old was all but abandoned and the new was highly regarded as the only road to progress. One of the casualties of the new method was when the

²²⁹ All the streets were named by the Ministry of Public Works after educational figures due to the exceptionally high percentage of schools that existed in Hilmiyya and Darb al-Jamamiz (multiple preparatory and secondary schools, School of Administration and languages etc.)

²³⁰ Asfour, “Domestication,” 126.

²³¹ Fahmy, “Two Cities,” 163.

²³² Asfour, “Domestication,” 126.

fourteenth century Qusun Mosque which was almost entirely demolished, and a new structure was built by the *Comité* in order to allow for the new road. In fact, it was not simply a number of historical buildings which were destroyed by the creation of the new boulevard, but according to Abu-Lughod, “to make room for the 2-kilometer-long street almost 400 large houses, over 300 smaller dwellings, plus mills, bakeries, baths, and not a few mosques had to be demolished.”²³³ The street was considered to be a huge sense of pride for ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak, the then Minister of Public Works. However, not all were in agreement. Lane-Poole, a long-time resident of Cairo described the street as follows:

It cut through some of the most beautiful quarters, ruined palaces and gardens, and chopped off half of a noble mosque in order to preserve the tasteless accuracy of the straight line. Along its side are ranged mean and uneven offices and tenements, neither European regular nor Orientally picturesque.²³⁴

In the late nineteenth century, the Austrian traveler George Ebers wrote in his guide:

This rash Europeanization, wide boulevards, macadam streets and alleys of trees did not have a positive effect. The shade, that the narrow streets and alleys used to give, disappeared, and the burning-hot surface of the new streets also proved a disadvantage. New Cairo was a city of two faces, not only in architecture, but also in lifestyle.²³⁵

While some criticized the new road and the implementation of the new ‘dual-city’, there were many who praised it and saw it more as a fanciful museum exhibition than as a deeply important historical actuality in the city of Cairo:

The Arab town must be preserved to show to future generations what the former city of the Caliphs was like, before there was built alongside it an important cosmopolitan colony completely separated from the native quarter...There are two Cairos, the modern, infinitely the more attractive one, and the old, which seems destined to prolong its agony and not to revive, being unable to struggle against progress and its inevitable consequences.²³⁶

²³³ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 112.

²³⁴ Lane-Poole, *Story of Cairo*, 26-7.

²³⁵ Narvrátílová, *Egyptian Bohemia*, 60.

²³⁶ Ahmad, “Pre-colonial Modernity,” 5.

The task for the town planners was to “combine the concept of a healthy, convenient, attractive and economic layout of towns with the principle of government intervention in the interest of the common welfare.”²³⁷ The division of the city of Cairo into old and new, or ancient and modern could be clearly seen on maps dating from the late nineteenth century. Not only did it affect the layout of the city, but it would undoubtedly affect the demographics and in turn the architecture of the dual-city forever. Abu-Lughod explains this phenomenon as:

The old native city has been left relatively intact from the premodern age...A new European-style city had developed parallel to it on the west and began to encircle it on the north, but this community remained socially and physically distinct. Each city had a predictable continuity of its own.²³⁸

Hilmiyya would become one of those ‘hinge’ neighborhoods and would be classified as being not quite modern, but not completely ancient either, but would not, as Pieron claimed, to be “unable to struggle against progress and its inevitable consequences.”²³⁹

The area in question has been sub-divided by Abu-Lughod and categorized as the “transitional zone of osmosis”. She continues by stating that even as recently as 1947, “the entire transitional belt occupies a status position somewhere between the polar cities it mediates.”²⁴⁰ This blending of two ideals i.e.: modern versus historic was exemplified by the city planners and those living in the area of Hilmiyya and Darb al-Jamamiz. They were neighborhoods which accommodated ‘numerous civil servants employed in the

²³⁷ Volait, *Architectes*, 44.

²³⁸ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 117.

²³⁹ Ahmad, “Pre-Colonial Modernity,” 5.

²⁴⁰ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 209.

government ministries along the western perimeter.^{241,242} Because of its proximity to the Ministry, Hilmiyya became a sort of an experimental canvas on which the graduates of the Polytechnic school could practice: “the book of Bourgoïn (1873) on Islamic patterns was the main book in use for the students for ornamentation. The Polytechnic School encouraged adding character to a building to suit its own locale.”²⁴³ Because of this, we can perceive decoration on some Hilmiyya houses as series of incoherent ‘plates’ which do not connect with the formal language of the building.²⁴⁴ With its creation in the nineteenth century, the Ministry of Public Works’ response to the full-blown western implementation of architecture and urban planning had changed in regards to Hilmiyya:

During the first decades of modernization, in Muhammad ‘Ali’s reign, any Western scientific theory was welcomed so long as it worked under the Egyptian sky. But in the later period an effort was made to “domesticate” it.²⁴⁵

The question of sanitation and health was a major problem for the city planners of the nineteenth century. It was during this time that Mustafa Pasha Sirri (after whom a street was named in Hilmiyya), complained of the vapors emanating from the lake in front of his house.²⁴⁶ Not only were the ponds serious hurdles to those who were attempting to expand and develop Cairo, but so were the canals that fed water to homes and government buildings, namely the *Khalij al-Masri* (pl. 4.22).²⁴⁷ For most of the year

²⁴¹ Ibid., loc. cit.

²⁴² The Ministry of Public Works had been allocated to the Palace of Mustafa Pasha Fadil in Darb al-Jamamiz in 1868 by ‘Ali Mubarak, Arnaud, *Le Caire*, 93.

²⁴³ Asfour, “Domestication,” 133.

²⁴⁴ Asfour, “Westernization within Context,” 10.

²⁴⁵ Asfour, “Domestication,” 129.

²⁴⁶ Fahmy, “Two Cities,” 177.

²⁴⁷ The *khalij* ran from north to south along the western side of Birkat al-Fil and during the annual floods of the Nile, the canal would experience a dam-cutting ceremony which began at Fum al-Khalij, or the mouth of the *khalij*. The annual ceremony continued until the early nineteenth century (pl. 4.23).

during the dry period, the *Khalij al-Masri* posed a serious threat and sanitary problem for those living near it as refuse was frequently disposed of on its banks. Around 1847, Clot Bay had noticed the hazards of the *khalij*, however, “what caused the delay [to draining the canal] was the acute opposition of those members of the upper class who had houses overlooking the canal and who drew water from it in the flood season to water their gardens.”²⁴⁸ The residents who lived in and around Birkat al-Fil owned large houses and palaces with gardens, and yet stubbornly resisted change and improved sanitation for the sake of convenience. More than fifty years later in 1898, the *khalij* was finally drained and filled in and became Egypt’s first tramway and is today known as Shari‘ Port Sa‘id (formally Shari‘ *Khalij al-Masri*).

The types of houses that could be found in the area of Birkat al-Fil prior to its destruction, in other words prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, would have been typical Ottoman houses of the style peculiar to Cairo. The domestic architecture which lasted until the early to mid-nineteenth century relied heavily on internal decoration, whilst the facades and exteriors of buildings were considered to be not as important as the internal spaces. There was a shift between the traditional Arab house and the soon to emerge ‘western’ house in that in the western models, attention was drawn to the exteriors of houses, as this was an overt expression of modernity. However, it was not until the construction of both the Saray al-Hilmiyya and the Palace known as Darb al-Jamamiz (which would later become the Ministry of Public Works) that the architecture in the area began to favor a more European style. It was during the reign of Isma‘il (1863-79) that the desire for a ‘Paris of the Orient’ became apparent. This dream was

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 172.

executed by the importation of foreign, specifically French models of roads, parks, bridges and palaces etc. This also meant the introduction of foreign ideals which were accessed by the wealthy Egyptian population in the form of French, Austrian, British, Italian and Greek architects who flooded into Cairo under the encouragement of Isma‘il. This was all occurring only a decade after the construction of the Suez Canal (1859-69).²⁴⁹ This event could be seen as one in many that catapulted Egypt into the global arena, whether the country was ready for it or not:

It was an event which altered the entire future of the country and, with Egypt onto the center of the world’s strategic stage, a position she had not occupied since the fifteenth century. But it also enmeshed her in the rivalries and machinations of the empire builders and led eventually to British occupation and the growth of “colonial” Cairo.²⁵⁰

A few years after the completion of the Suez Canal, Isma‘il appointed a new Minister of Public Works: ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak. He was given the task of supervising the execution of plans for the quarter of Isma‘iliyya; redeveloping the older and vacant lands peripheral to Azbakiyya; and drawing up a master plan for the entire city in accordance with the style of Paris.²⁵¹ As a result, a new governmental zone developed east of and parallel to Qasr al-‘Ayni. In order to house the numerous civil servants and employees working at the ministries, “Darb al-Jamamiz owed its upgrading to this new demand, and the Hilmiyya quarter was later developed in response to these same pressures.”²⁵²

The Darb al-Jamamiz District gained great popularity in the 19th century during which time it was inhabited by many emirs and Pashas who purchased and owned several

²⁴⁹ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 102, 105.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 116.

homes and plots of land in the area. It was inhabited by the emir Mustafa Pasha Fadil the brother of Khedive Ismail who bought Sami Pasha al-Marhali's Saray, demolished it and built in its place his saray which came to be known as Saray Darb al-Jamamiz.²⁵³

Other Notable houses in the Darb al-Jamamiz quarter were:²⁵⁴

Saray of Mustafa Pasha Fadil (1) (1267/1850). This building would later become the Ministry of Public Works in 1868. Its location was facing the *khalij* and the gardens reached until the garden of the Saray al-Hilmiyya (pls. 4.1, 24-26).

Saray of Mustafa Pasha Fadil (2) (1267/1850). Its location was facing Shari' al-Khalij and near to the Mosque of Bashtak (pl. 4.1).²⁵⁵

Saray of Hasan Pasha al-Tawil (1267/1850). Located near to Kawm al-Rish on the *khalij*.

Saray of Amir Muhammad Shirin Pasha (1282/1856). In Darb al-Jamamiz.

Saray of Khedive Isma'il (1287/1870). In Darb al-Jamamiz, in the 'Atfat al-Kurr.

Saray of the Amir Mustafa Bay Farhad, (1287/1870). Located in the Harat al-Hiyatam, before the Saray of Mustafa Pasha Fadil.

Saray of Amir 'Ali 'Alwi Pasha, (1291/1874). Located in Darb al-Jamamiz on a street that connected it to the high palace (presumably the Saray al-Hilmiyya).

The common features that all of these houses possessed were courtyards surrounded by very large gardens, bent entrances, multiple entrances, *diwans*,

²⁵³ Salam Najm, *Qusur*, 376.

²⁵⁴ All dates taken from Salam Najm, *Qusur*.

²⁵⁵ After being accused of treason, he was exiled from Istanbul to Paris. His mother Ulfat Qadin knocked down most of the Bashtak mosque and rebuilt it in 1280/1863; Warner, *Monuments*, 182.

dahlizes, *salamliks*, and some such as Mustafa Pasha Fadil and Hasan Pasha al-Tawil whose houses bordered the *khalij* had wooden *qaytuns* from which to launch a boat.²⁵⁶

Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century while still adopting the European models of architecture and decoration, “the Hilmiyya society rejected the arrangement of a central hall located behind the entrance porch and flanked by rooms with no intermediary space because it seriously hampered any hope of maintaining family privacy.”²⁵⁷ The solution, which was unique to Hilmiyya was to incorporate the traditional Ottoman *salamlik*. This was a room with an independent entrance that was either attached or detached at the entrance of the villa or house itself and would allow for visitors to be met and entertained separately from the main house or living areas in order to maintain the sanctity of privacy in the house (pls. 4.27-32). The meshing of tradition and modernization was epitomized in this phenomenon where “the main living quarters became a kind of *haramlik* (it could be an otherwise Western villa sometimes), and a sort of appendage was added, much smaller but strictly in a traditional idiom, as a kind of refuge for all one’s fantasies.”²⁵⁸ Asfour argues “that architects were willing to sacrifice symmetry to make room for traditional custom which was a major step toward domesticating foreign ideas.”²⁵⁹

The types of houses that were developed in Hilmiyya were far more diverse than in other neighborhoods, partly due to the inhabitants in the area being cultured

²⁵⁶ Salam Najm, *Qusur*, 379-415.

²⁵⁷ Asfour, “Domestication,” 133.

²⁵⁸ Ilbert and Volait, “Neo-Arabic Renaissance,” 30.

²⁵⁹ Asfour, “Domestication,” 133.

elites who were highly educated civil engineers, architects, notable reformers and literary figures. There were neo-Mamluk houses which were derived from mosque architecture (pls. 4.35-39). The vocabulary that was often used on facades included crenellations, *muqarnas*, geometric patterns, entrance portals, wooden arched balconies, and facades with horizontal stripes of two alternating colors (*ablaq*).²⁶⁰

Egyptians had developed their own attraction to Mamluk architecture. An interest in Mamluk and neo-Mamluk architecture was part of a new symbolic of power in the nineteenth century Egypt as Muhammad ‘Ali’s descendants sought to express political independence from the Ottoman Empire through the patronage of neo-Mamluk architectural programs.²⁶¹

This style was popular during the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century and eventually became juxtaposed with neo-Classical and neo-Baroque styles to create a style entirely unique to Cairo:

The neo-Baroque and Rococo styles (pls. 4.40-43) became popular in Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century, and were highly favored by Muhammad ‘Ali. They remained in favor as late as 1910 in some cases in Heliopolis. They are “characterized by over-elaboration of scrolls, curves and carved ornaments.”²⁶²

Later, the Art Nouveau movement began in the very late years of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century and revolved around the wide use of the “malleable properties of wrought iron and steel.”²⁶³ Stained glass, stucco, brass, copper and many other materials were also used (pls. 4.44-49). Art Nouveau architecture on the whole was however, not as popular as Art Deco architecture was in Cairo, despite this style accounting for a very large number of houses in

²⁶⁰ Ibid., loc. cit.

²⁶¹ Sanders, *Medieval Cairo*, 39.

²⁶² Sakr, *Early Twentieth Century*, 62.

²⁶³ Fletcher, *History of Architecture*, 1193.

Hilmiyya that are still extant today. Its lack of popularity could possibly be attributed to the high cost of construction and maintenance of the decoration on Art Nouveau buildings. Fletcher on the other hand attributes its disappearance to “its peculiar susceptibility to vulgarization and its essentially transitional character forced it to give place to forms more appropriate to the emergent age of mechanization.”²⁶⁴

Art Deco styles (pl. 4.50) became popularized in Cairo after the end of the Art Nouveau period which roughly ended after the First World War. Clean lines and geometric motifs replaced the scrolls and whimsical lines of Art Nouveau. It is however difficult to identify any one building as strictly belonging to one style as they all began to meld motifs and decorative elements from the past. At present, Art Deco buildings are few and far between in Hilmiyya (as opposed to its popularity in other neighborhoods in Cairo), and the dominant styles of the old villas in the area are neo-Mamluk, Rococo, Art Nouveau and finally, the style which combined elements of all the previous styles into a new form of architecture (pls. 4.51-52).

The sheer diversity of the architecture in the area, while still maintaining the traditional *salamluk*, was an ideal model of how Cairo should have developed. A reason for this is because as opposed to blindly accepting foreign models of architecture and adopting them as ones own, there could and should still exist ties to an Arab heritage. This concept was what enticed people back to the area who had otherwise forgotten about it in favor of more western neighborhoods such as Garden city and Heliopolis: “style did not mean much to the Hilmiyya society or

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 1246.

the public, so long as it was well executed, and that a house was able to preserve the family's privacy."²⁶⁵ This sense of privacy was extended to the windows as well:

The neo-classical buildings in al-Hilmiyya have a reception area at the front for men (usually a detached pavilion) whereas their Mediterranean-style balconies were enclosed by wooden parapets so that the women inside could maintain seclusion, just as in their previous traditional dwellings²⁶⁶ (pls. 4.53-55).

Although Asfour argues that the mix of European architecture with Arab influence was a result of 'domesticating knowledge,' Sedky states that the Western and Arab mix was simply a result of 'self-imposed orientalism: it affected only the elite who occupied European-style mansions in suburbs around the old areas, such as the local intelligentsia in Hilmiyya.'²⁶⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the design elements that included the bent entrances and axial tripartite symmetry of the houses became difficult to maintain. Therefore, for practicality reasons (as a result of the abandonment of the bent entrance in particular) the concept of the *salamlik* prevailed against the imposition of modernity and the two elements of tradition and change were able to coexist in Hilmiyya.

By the middle of the twentieth century, many of the private villas in Hilmiyya which were built in the foreign style were being replaced by multi-storied apartment blocks which could house more families²⁶⁸ (pls. 4.56-57). This was a necessity as the city of Cairo was expanding beyond its capacity and could no longer accommodate the ever-growing migration of citizens to the city.

²⁶⁵ Asfour, "Domestication," 134.

²⁶⁶ Sedky, *Heritage*, 13.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Marthelot, "Nouvelle métropole," 202.

Conclusion

Birkat al-Fil and its surrounding areas were once a flourishing garden which would flood annually due to the rising waters of the Nile. It would later be developed during the Mamluk period into a highly desirable neighborhood with many palaces, mosques, *hamams*, gardens and *manzaras*. It fell out of fashion during the late Ottoman period when its rival Azbakiyya began to attract the new upper classes to its shores. Birkat al-Fil had become too congested for landowners wanting to build large palaces with gardens on the shores of a pond or canal. It remained that way up until the middle of the nineteenth century when the pond was partially drained and city planners attempted to modernize the area after the Saray al-Hilmiyya was constructed for ‘Abbas Hilmi I.

By 1903 the palace ceased to exist and the neighborhood of Hilmiyya al-Jadida began to develop organically and in a unique way compared to the other neighborhoods in Cairo that were inhabited primarily by Europeans and wealthy Egyptians. The diverse architecture which remains in the area serves as a testament to the standards, education and culture of those who took up residence in Hilmiyya.

Hilmiyya and the ‘old city’ were systematically ignored (by the elite now living in the new sections of the city) since the days of the Khedive Isma‘il (1863-1879) when he was expecting foreign dignitaries for the opening of the Suez Canal. His solution to the area was simply to ‘clean, polish and give at least a façade of respectability [to the area]...the façade of a new Cairo on the western edge of the city would have to suffice.’²⁶⁹ Unfortunately, this ideology of masking problems is

²⁶⁹ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*, 105.

still being implemented today in Cairo and has led among other factors, to the gradual decline of the area of Hilmiyya.

During the middle of the twentieth century when most influential families had their properties sequestered by the regime, Hilmiyya remained relatively unscathed because the area was no longer occupied by the haute bourgeoisie (with the exception of some villas; most famously the one rumored to have been owned by Hasan al-Banna²⁷⁰ which was confiscated from him and is now the notorious Hilmiyya Police Station, pls. 4.29-30, 47-49).

One of the side effects of Nasser's revolution was the implementation of rent control on many of the historic building that had existed far longer than he had. Urban rent control was set in motion in 1954 and served as a means of redistributing wealth from the upper class (the bourgeoisie and the landlords) to the newly elevated middle-class, "this measure, while having an immediate equitable redistributive effect, was in the long run to have an adverse effect on the urban housing stock."²⁷¹ The shortsightedness of this initiative played a crucial role in shaping Cairo into the city it has now become. What was not accounted for in Nasser's plan was the inability of the new tenants (who were recently allocated apartments dating from the 1890s-1950s) to maintain, care for and take pride in their 'new' residences. This inevitably led to areas such as Shubra, Isma'iliyya, Abbasiyya, Bulaq and Hilmiyya (among many others) falling into disrepair and ultimate neglect due to the fact that neither the new landlords, nor the tenants were

²⁷⁰ In 1928, Al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood from his post in Isma'iliyya, and later moved to Cairo in 1932-9: Mitchell, *Muslim Brothers*, 8.

²⁷¹ Ibrahim, "Sociological profile," 27.

willing to admit that they were ill-equipped or incapable of assuming such a responsibility for these once glorious edifices.

This problem was exasperated by the massive population growth and urban migration into Cairo. According to one figure, Cairo's population in the year 1900 had reached 600,000, as compared with 3,747,000 only sixty years later.²⁷² This phenomenon added unanticipated pressures on the Government which simply could not accommodate such a large population, and resulted in the panic gripping those in charge and eventually, the misuse of land and houses. During the early years of the revolution, "public housing production remained small compared to the need. The resultant overcrowding could only accelerate the deterioration of both infrastructure and the standing housing stock."²⁷³ The old city (i.e the Islamic city) attracted families from the rural areas who wanted to live in the city, but who also desired to maintain a sense of tradition and heritage. As a result, "the buildings [in the old city] which had once been the homes of the rich and the powerful housed dozens of families crowded into rooms in the subdivided structures, and shacks in the courtyard and on the roofs."²⁷⁴

Another casualty of the buildings not only in Hilmiyya, but all around Cairo, was the concept of mixed land uses. In other words, "lower floors of apartment buildings were converted into shops and offices. The intensity of land utilization

²⁷² Ibrahim, "Sociological profile," 29.

²⁷³ Serageldin, "Towards the Challenge," 98.

²⁷⁴ Serageldin, "Towards the Challenge," 97.

increased, leading to the replacement of villas by high-rise apartments and office buildings.”²⁷⁵

The fate and survival thus far of the inhabitants of the Islamic city has puzzled scholars in that they are able to survive, not through Government aid, or even proper infrastructure, but by the inhabitants themselves creating a pseudo city within the larger city of Cairo. They have survived against all odds, in a city where they are still perceived to be burdens on society, ill-educated, poor and generally dismissed by the larger society almost entirely. Their disenfranchisement has resulted in the proliferation of manual occupations concentrated in areas of the old city where one can find a street filled with mechanics and auto repair shops, and turn down another street and find shop after shop dedicated to metal work, or furniture making, or plumbing etc. Saad-Eddin Ibrahim explains this by saying that “the Islamic core of Cairo has in fact become an enclave of remnant urban traditional culture. It [the enclave] continues to muddle its way through the ups and downs of modern Egyptian history...It is not clear as to whose hands the fate of this Islamic enclave lies.”²⁷⁶ More than a hundred years after the reign of Isma‘il, these areas are still being ignored and economically silenced, leaving them with no option but to live insular, self-governing lives because, after countless generations, they have been conditioned to believe that none will aid them. Building schools and clinics in neighborhoods is only effective when the children are not obliged to go out and make a living in order to contribute to the family income.

²⁷⁵ Serageldin, “Towards the Challenge,” 97.

²⁷⁶ Ibrahim, “Sociological profile,” 32.

Since the 1952 revolution, many more villas have been converted into public schools and government buildings, resulting in deterioration, in part due to the high cost of maintenance and neglect. Hilmiyya, once an extremely attractive and interesting neighborhood has since been all but forgotten and many of the once glorious residential buildings appropriated by the government have been put to inappropriate use or worse, left unused and abandoned. Some of the old villas still retain their original owners whose extended family members come to visit on Fridays and during Ramadan, but these are rare, infrequent cases.²⁷⁷

Since the 1960s, there has been a poor urban planning system in place, with the major focus and attention being given to the industrial areas such as Hilwan, and Shubra al-Khayma, and to the new governmental zones such as Nasr City (which was created to house the Ministry and National Institute of Planning, and the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics).²⁷⁸

In the 1950s and 1960s, [Cairo] was shaped by the lower-middle class and the technocrats. It may have been austere and lacking in aesthetics, but was not lacking in equity. In the 1970s, Cairo's development was more vulgar and replete with social inequities.²⁷⁹

When walking through Hilmiyya, one is taken aback by the amount of historic villas and apartment buildings that are derelict and it is quite easy to blame a number of governmental institutions for their demise. However, "the potential land values of the old city will continue to outpace the returns on investment which can be obtained by preserving present uses and values."²⁸⁰ In other words, while

²⁷⁷ Personal communication.

²⁷⁸ Ibrahim, "Sociological profile," 27.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁸⁰ Abu-Lughod, "Sociological profile," 34.

desire on behalf of the preservationists, or even the owners of the buildings may exist, as long as the houses sit empty, the market value of the underlying land increases and restoration becomes ever more unfeasible and out of reach. The exorbitant land values in the city is one of the fundamental problems facing conservationists today in Cairo.

The city of Cairo was created with good intentions and good aspirations. Unfortunately, the channels of welfare were poorly managed and inadequately funded to thoroughly carry out these visions. Abu-Lughod states that “cities exist for the people and not as ends in themselves. Cities in which social justice and equality are the guiding principle are those in which efforts are continually made to raise the standard of living for the poor, even if it entails lowering the standards of the rich. Cities are the result of policies adopted and choices made not on the urban level, but on the national, institutional and political level.”²⁸¹ In the twenty-first century, many if not most historical capitals have implemented a system of social justice and equality, whilst still adhering to the principles of preservation of historical monuments and neighborhoods. These two concepts are not mutually exclusive. There is no reason why governments must have to choose between either helping its citizens or creating heritage funds. Increasingly, governments around the world have found that civic pride through preservation of city’s heritage is a major component of their goals towards social justice and equality. Unfortunately, when a people lack a modicum sense of civic pride for their country, the other elements become difficult if not impossible to implement and adhere to.

²⁸¹ Ibid., loc. cit.

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Religious Monuments dating from the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods

Key to Pl. 3.27

Number on Map	Monument #	Monument Name	Period
1	322	Rab' Qansuh al-Ghuri	Burji Mamluk
2	216	Mosque Timraz al-Ahmadi	Burji Mamluk
3	210	Façade of Mosque of Hasan Pasha Tahrir	Ottoman
4	209	Mosque of Taghribirdi	Burji Mamluk
5	207	Façade and Minaret of Mosque of Taz	Burji Mamluk
6	267	Palace of Taz	Burji Mamluk
7	266	Palace of Yashbak	Burji Mamluk
8		Khanqa al-Bunduqdariyya	Bahri Mamluk
9	265	Sabil-kuttab and rab' al-Qizlar	Ottoman
10	130	Mosque of Ulmas	Bahri Mamluk
11	205	Minaret and door of Bashtak	Bahri Mamluk
12	463	House of Sadat al-Wafa'iyya	Ottoman
13	204	Mosque of Qadi Yahya	Burji Mamluk
14	540	House of 'Ali Katkhuda	Ottoman
15	206	Mosque of Qaraquja al-Hasani	Burji Mamluk

16	213	Sabil Yusuf al-Kurdi	Ottoman
17	263	Madrasa of Sunqur al-Sa'di	Bahri Mamluk
18	287	Remains of Rab' Tughugh	
19	269	Madrasa of Bashir Agha al-Jamdar	Bahri Mamluk
20	426	Minaret of 'Ali al-'Amiri	16 th century
21	200	Mosque of Malika Safiyya	Ottoman
22	211	Mosque of Azbak al-Yusufi	Burji Mamluk
23	217	Façade of Mosque of Lajin al-Safi	Burji Mamluk
24	308	Sabil-kuttab Sultan Mahmud	Ottoman
25	269	Sabil-kuttab Bashir Agha dar Sa'ada	Ottoman
26	No #	Sabil Umm 'Abbas	Ottoman
27	202	Mosque of Qusun	Bahri Mamluk
28	133	Mosque of Sultan Hasan	Bahri Mamluk
29	220	Mosque of Ibn Tulun	Tulunid
30	259	Yusuf Shurbaji	Ottoman
31	328	Sabil-kuttab Shahin Ahmad Agha	Ottoman
32	147	Mosque of Shaykhu	Bahri Mamluk

Ottoman houses at the time of the *Description de l'Égypte*

Key to Pl. 3.28

These houses were found on the northern side of the pond (between the pond and Bab al-Khalq)

144	Bayt Qasim Bay (3)
110	Bayt Sulayman Bay al-Shaburi
111	Bayt Qasim Bay (4)
20	Bayt 'Uthman Bay al-Tanburji (1)
17	Bayt Qasim Bay (1)

These houses were found on the eastern side of the pond (between the pond and Shari' al-Surujiyya)

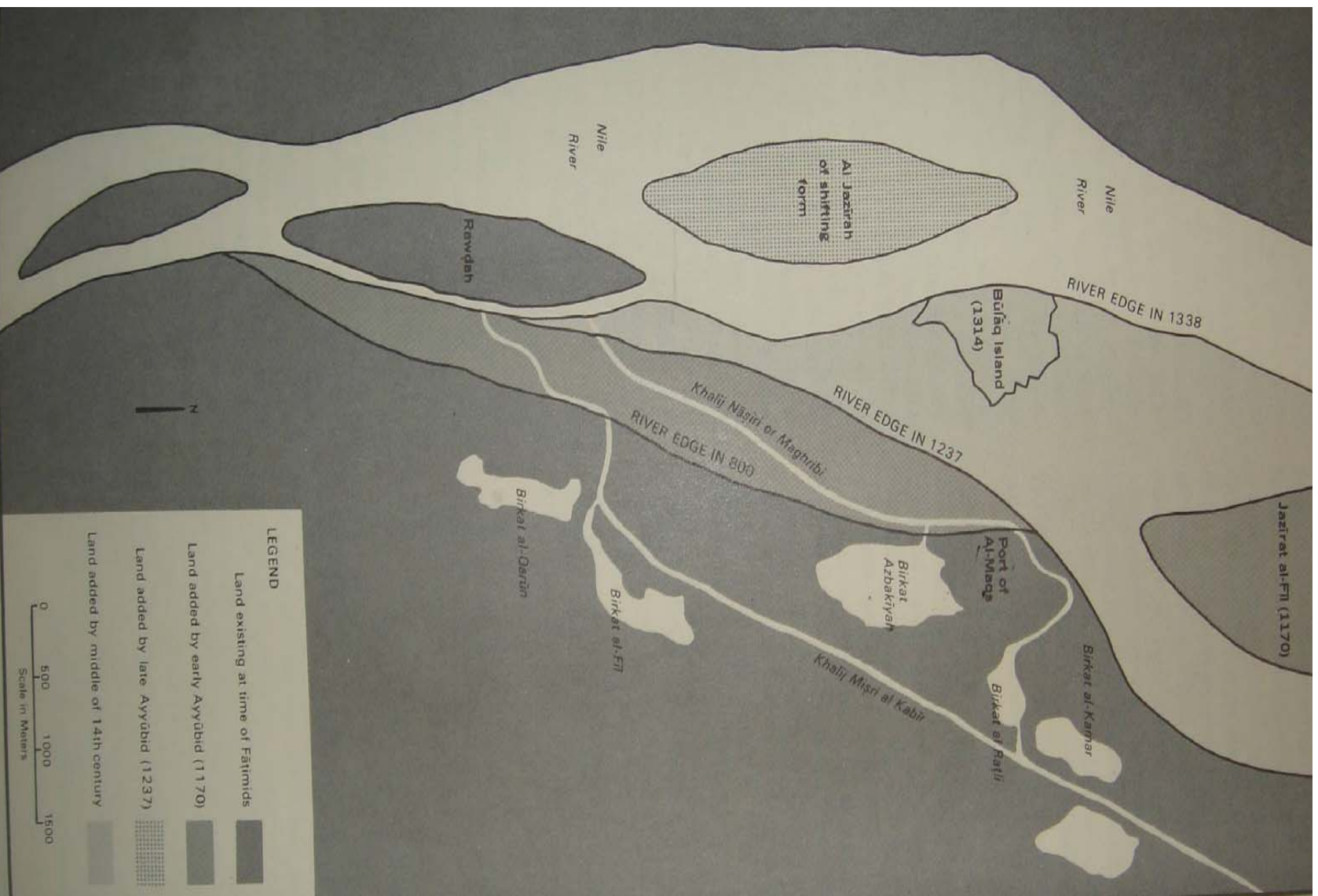
89	Bayt Ibrahim
88	Bayt Murad
79	Bayt Yusuf
72	Bayt Ibrahim Bay al-Wali (1)
142	Bayt Ibrahim Bay al-Wali (2)

These houses were found on the southern side of the pond (between the pond and the *Saliba*)

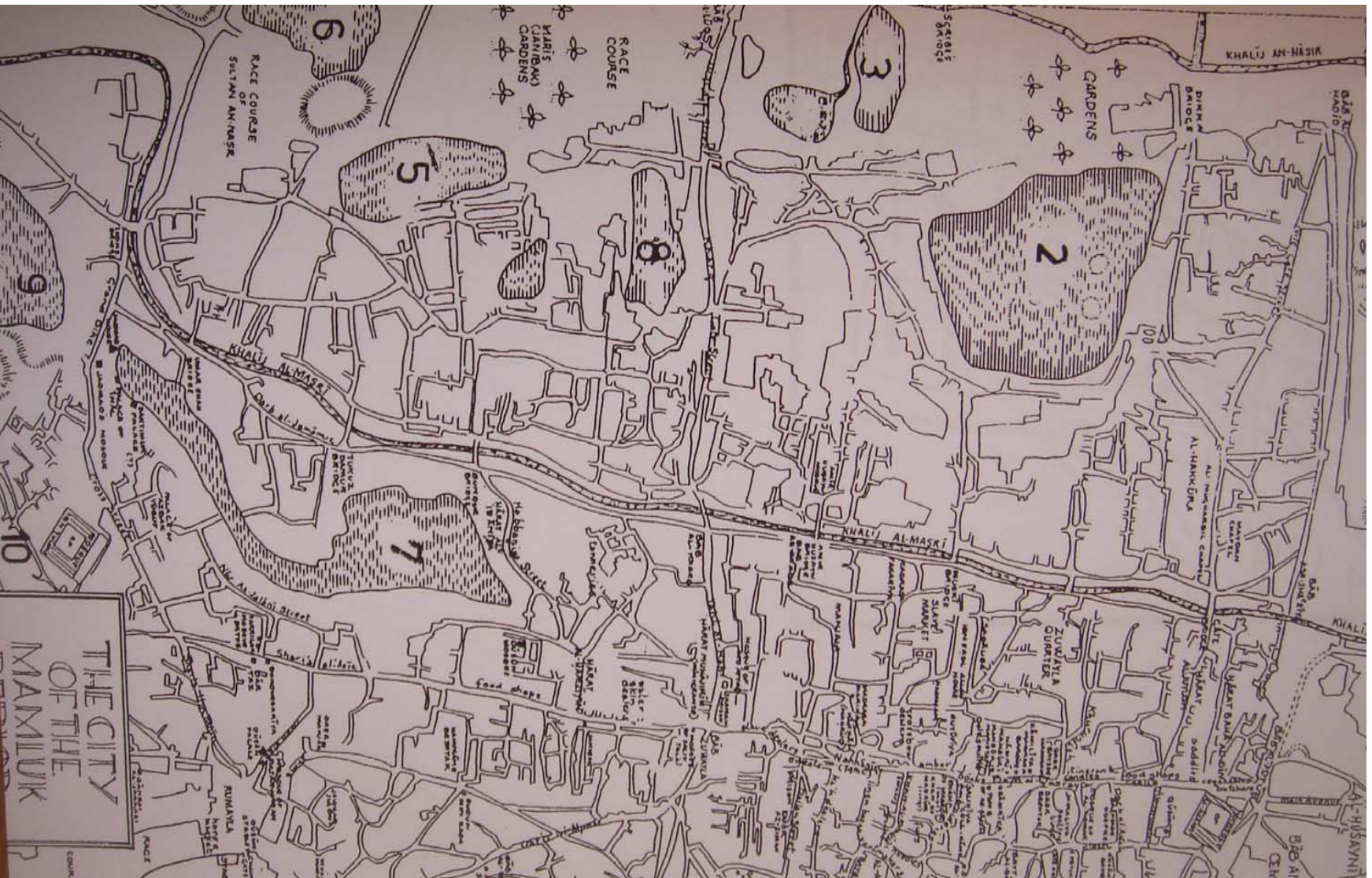
190	Bayt Mustafa Bay (1)
185	Bayt Mustafa Bay (2)
189	Bayt 'Umar Kashif
194	Bab Bayt Bakir Bay
192	Bayt Bakir Bay
191	Bayt Mustafa Agha
203	Bayt 'Uthman Bay al-Tanburji (2)
205	Bayt Yahya Bay

These houses were found on the western side of the pond (between the pond and the *khalij*)

30	Bayt Hasan Kashif
31	Bayt Qasim Bay Ibrahim
9	Bayt 'Uthman Bay al-'Askar
2	Bayt Radwan Kaksiyya
3	Bayt Sadat al- al-Wafa'iyya
7	Bayt Qasim Bay (2)
64	Bayt Ibrahim Kaksiyya
65	Bayt Salah Bay



Pl. 1.1 The westward shift of the Nile throughout the ages, after Abu-Lughod



Pl. 1.2

Ponds around Cairo, after Staffa



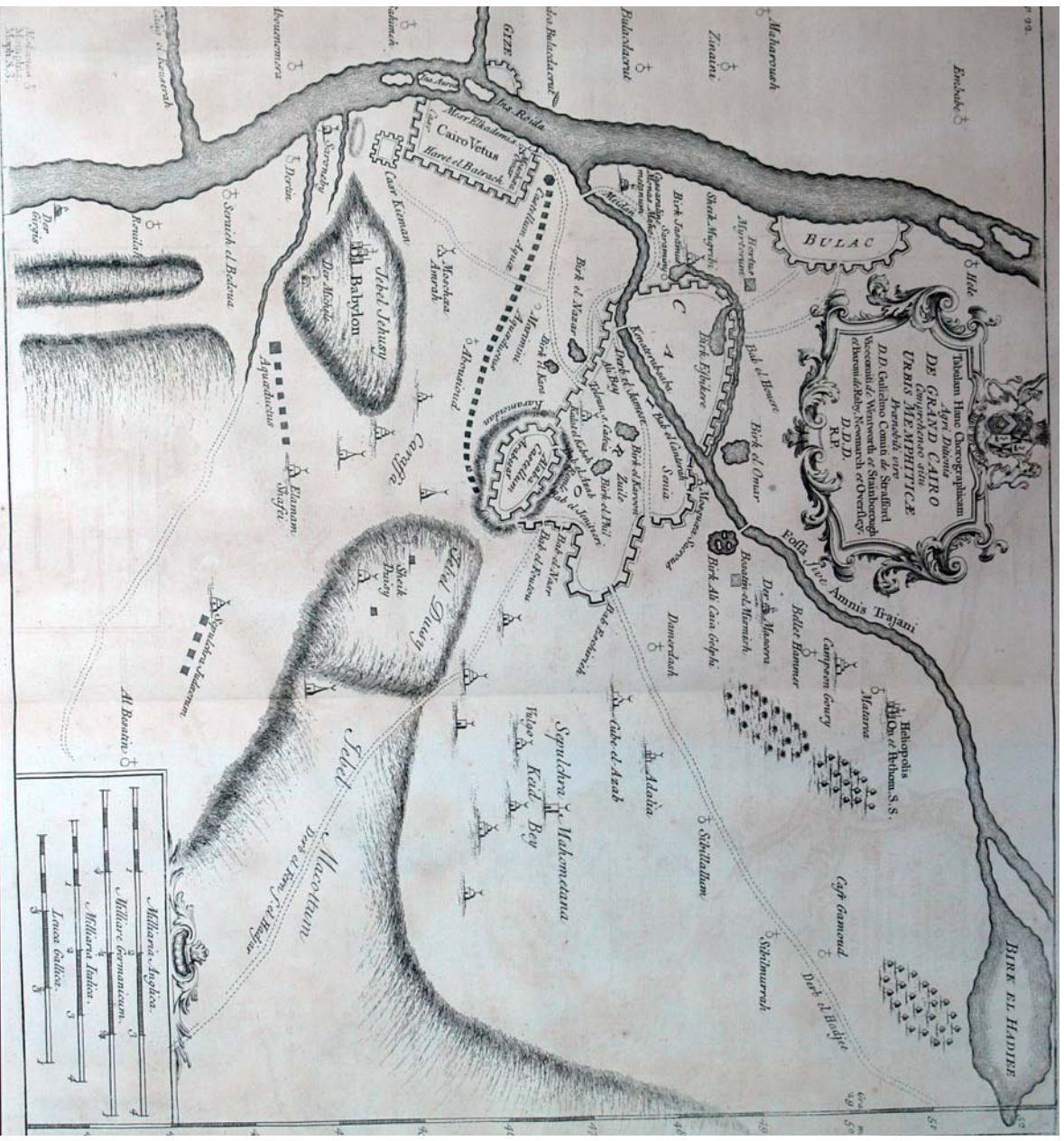
Pl. 2.3 Map of Cairo by Pagano, after Warner



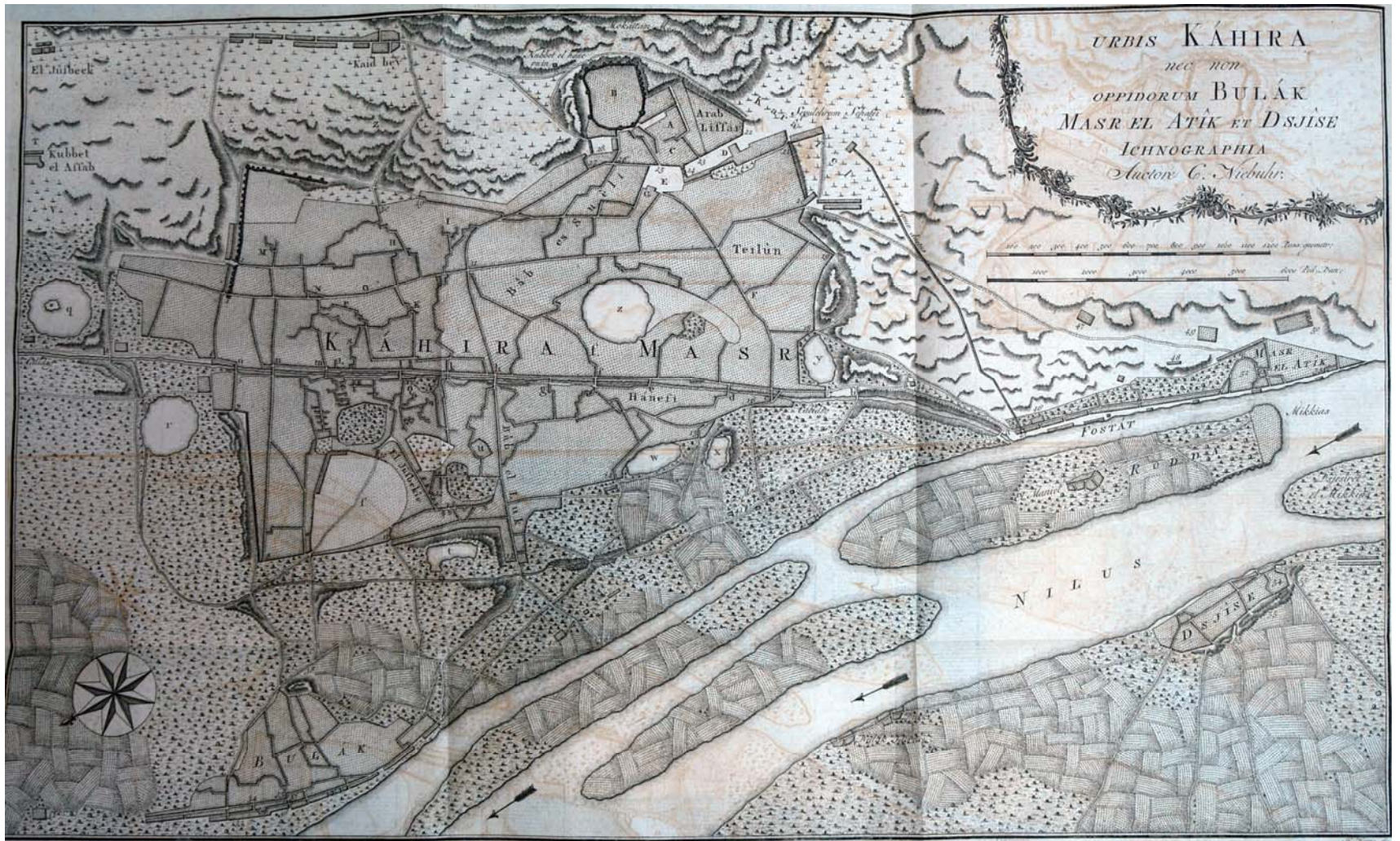
Pl. 2.4 Brocado's map of Cairo, after Warner



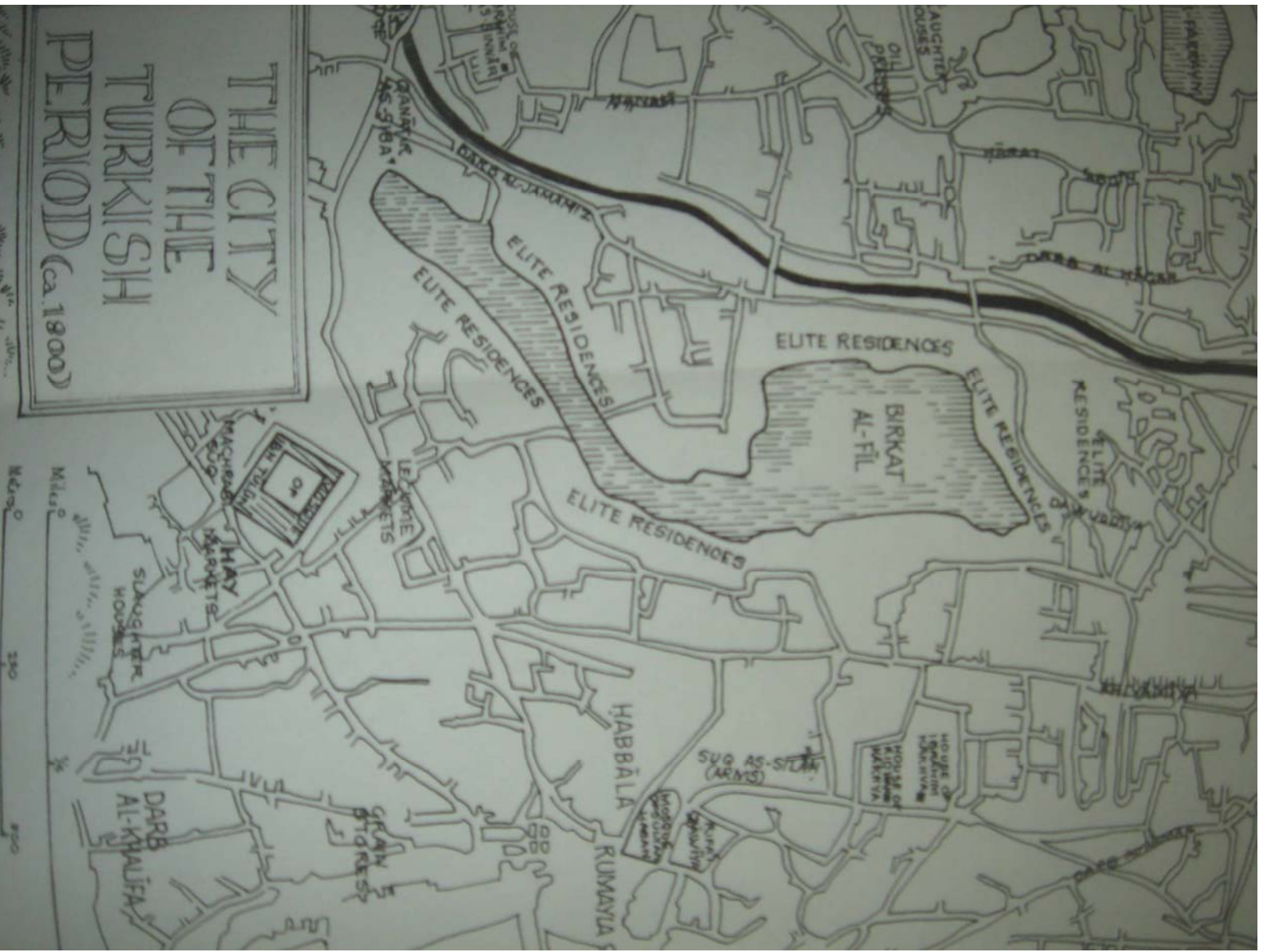
Pl. 2.5 View of Cairo by Piri Reis, after Warner



Pl. 2.6 Map of Cairo by Pococke



Pl. 2.7 Map of Cairo by Niehbur



Pl. 2.8

Ottoman residences, after Staffa



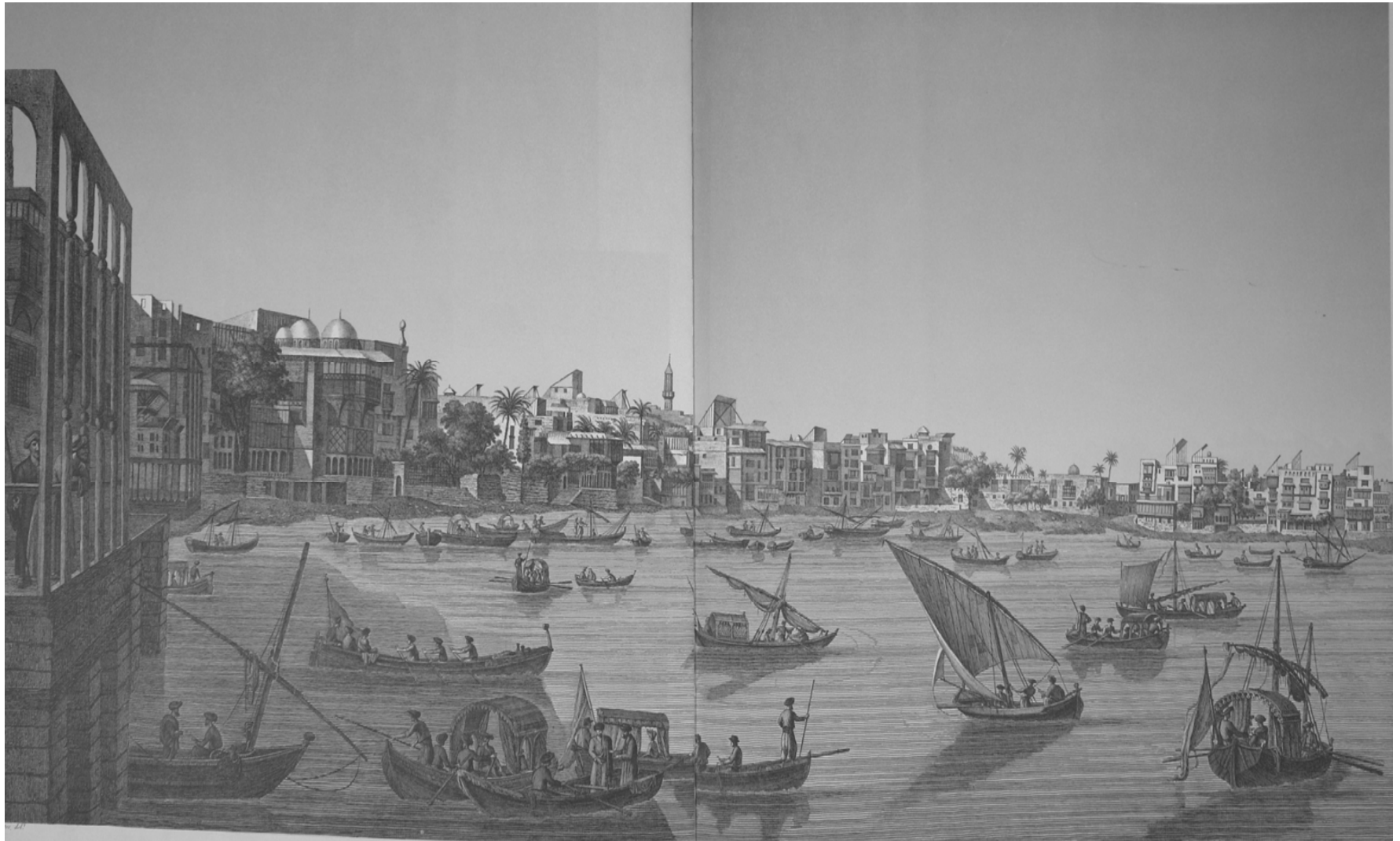
Pl. 2.9 General view of Cairo, after the *Description de l'Égypte*



Pl. 2.10 Close-up of Birkat al-Fil , after the *Description de l'Égypte*



Pl. 2.11 Engraving of Birkat al-Fil, after *Description de l'Égypte*



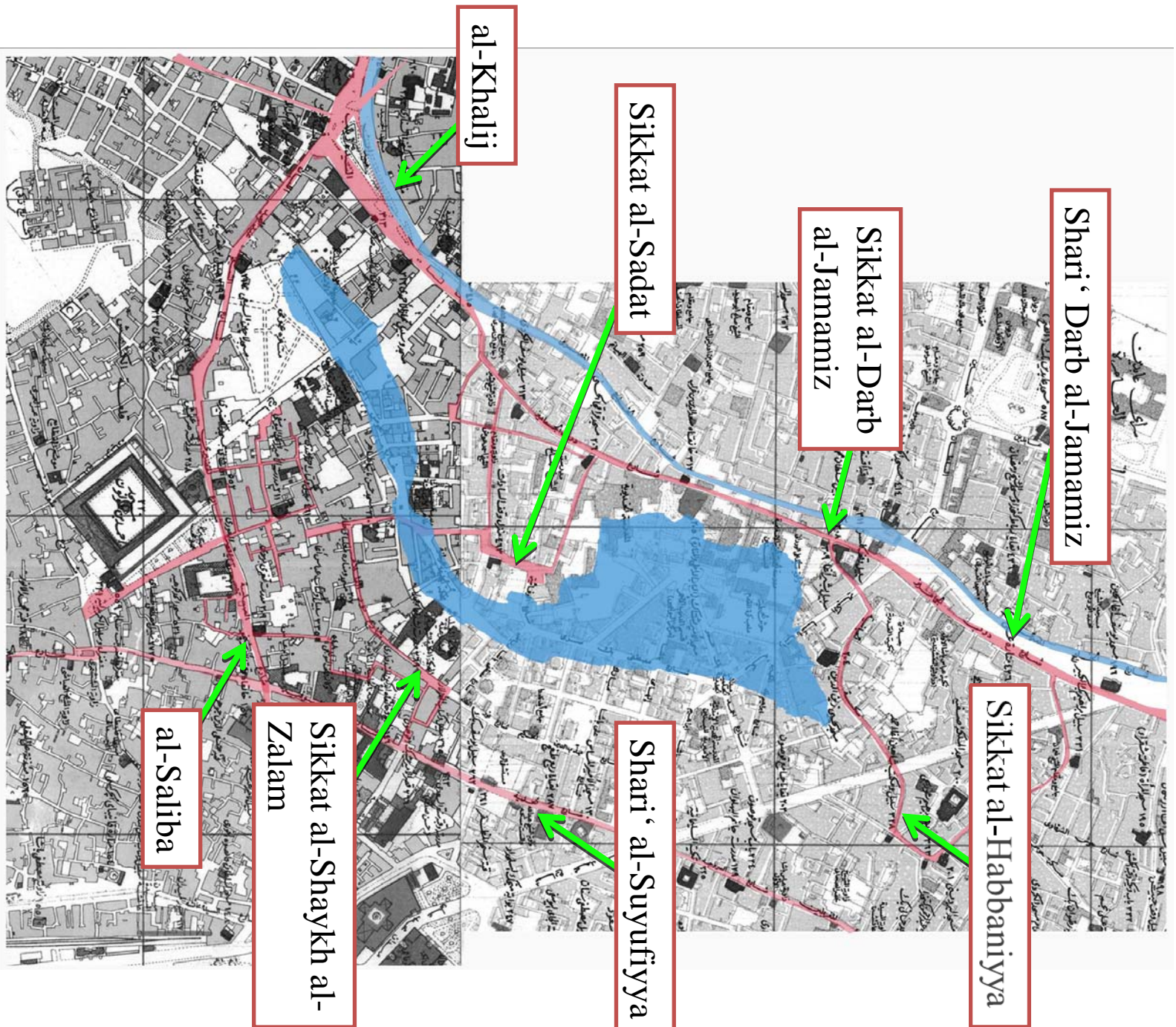
Pl. 2.12 Engraving of Birkat Azbakiyya from the southern coast,
after *Description de l'Égypte*



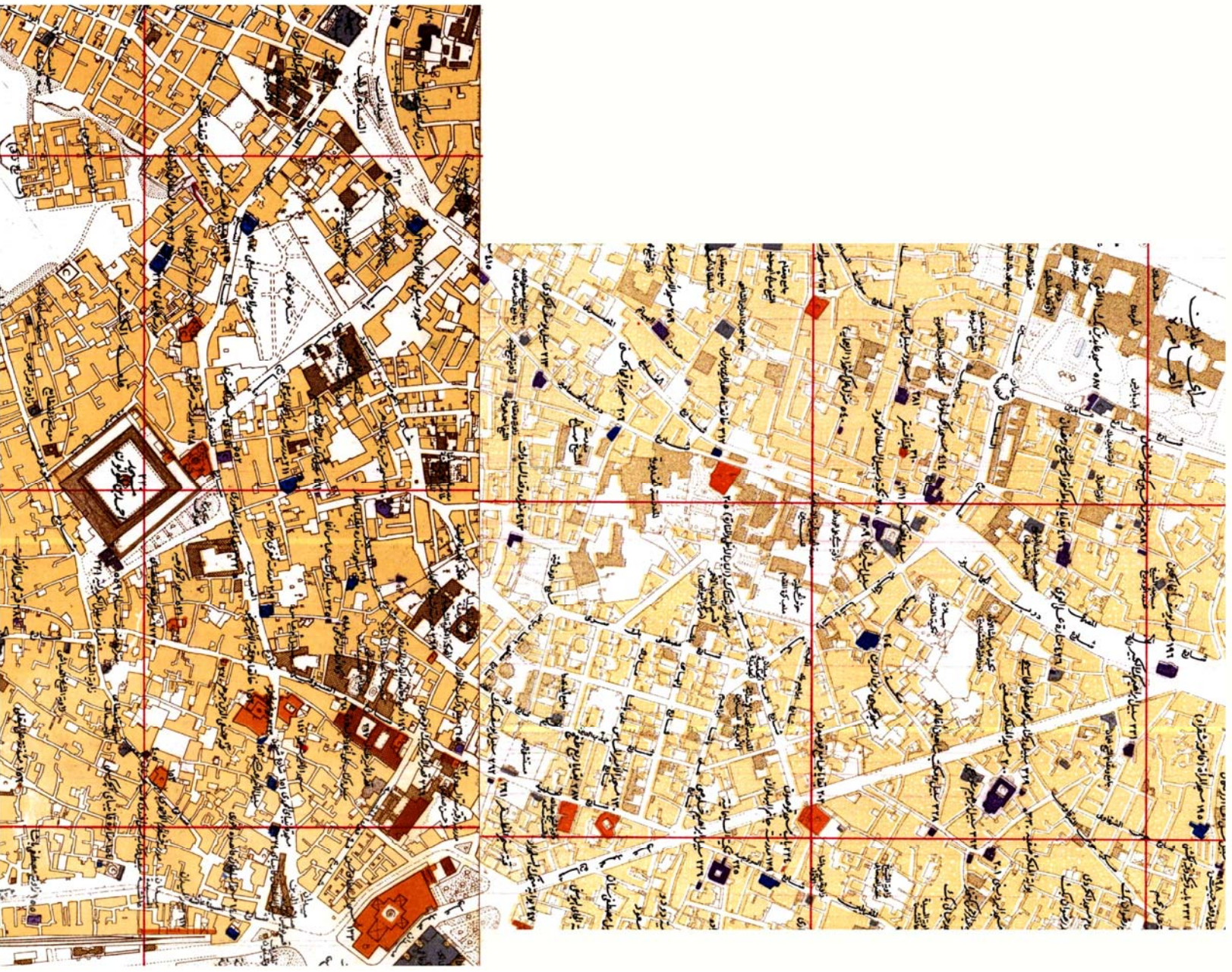
Pl. 2. 13 Engraving of Birkat Azbakiyya from the west coast,
after *Description de l'Égypte*



Pl. 2.14 Map showing Bulak and Roda Island from the *Description de l'Égypte*

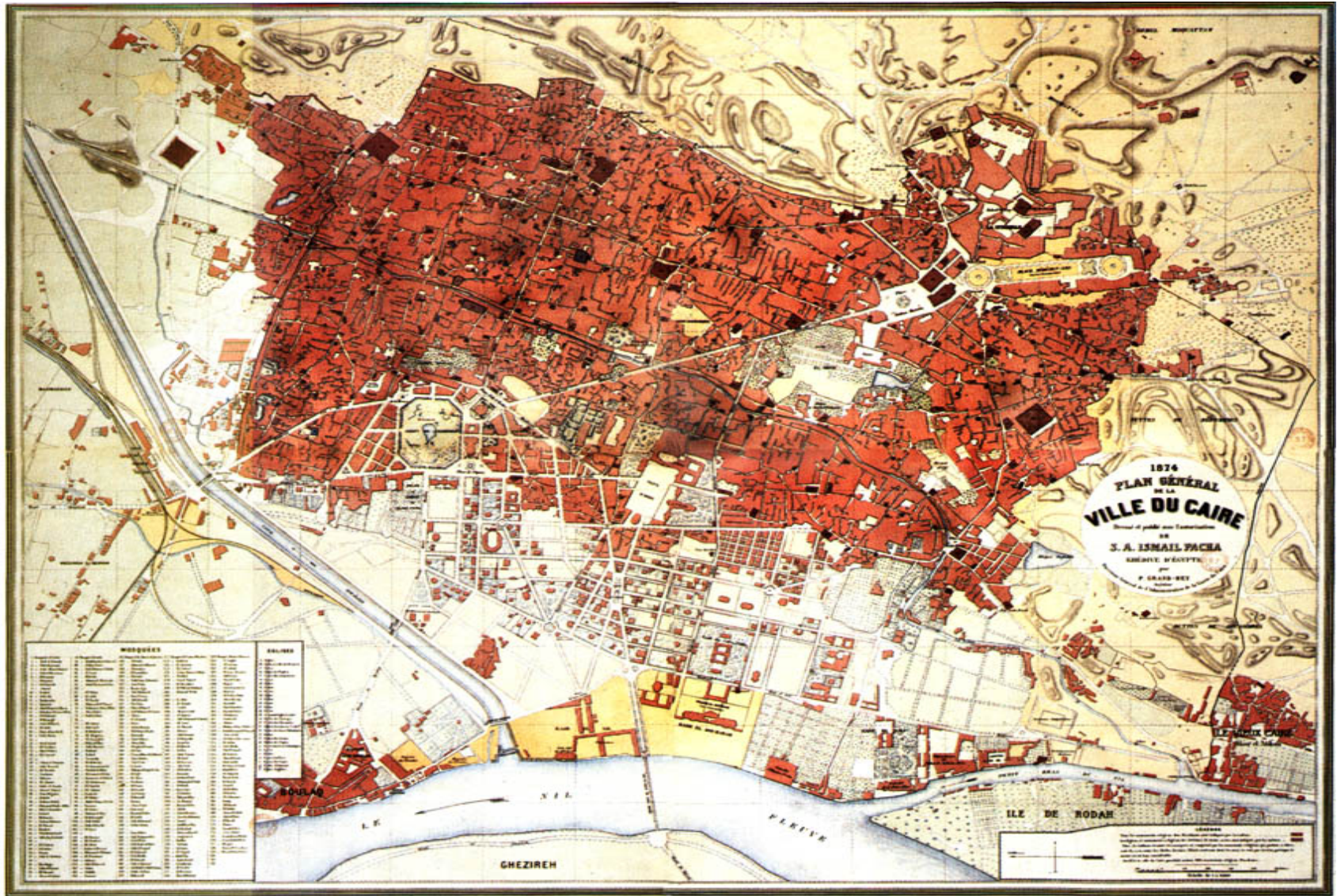


Pl. 2.15 Map showing streets that existed at the time of
Description de l'Égypte

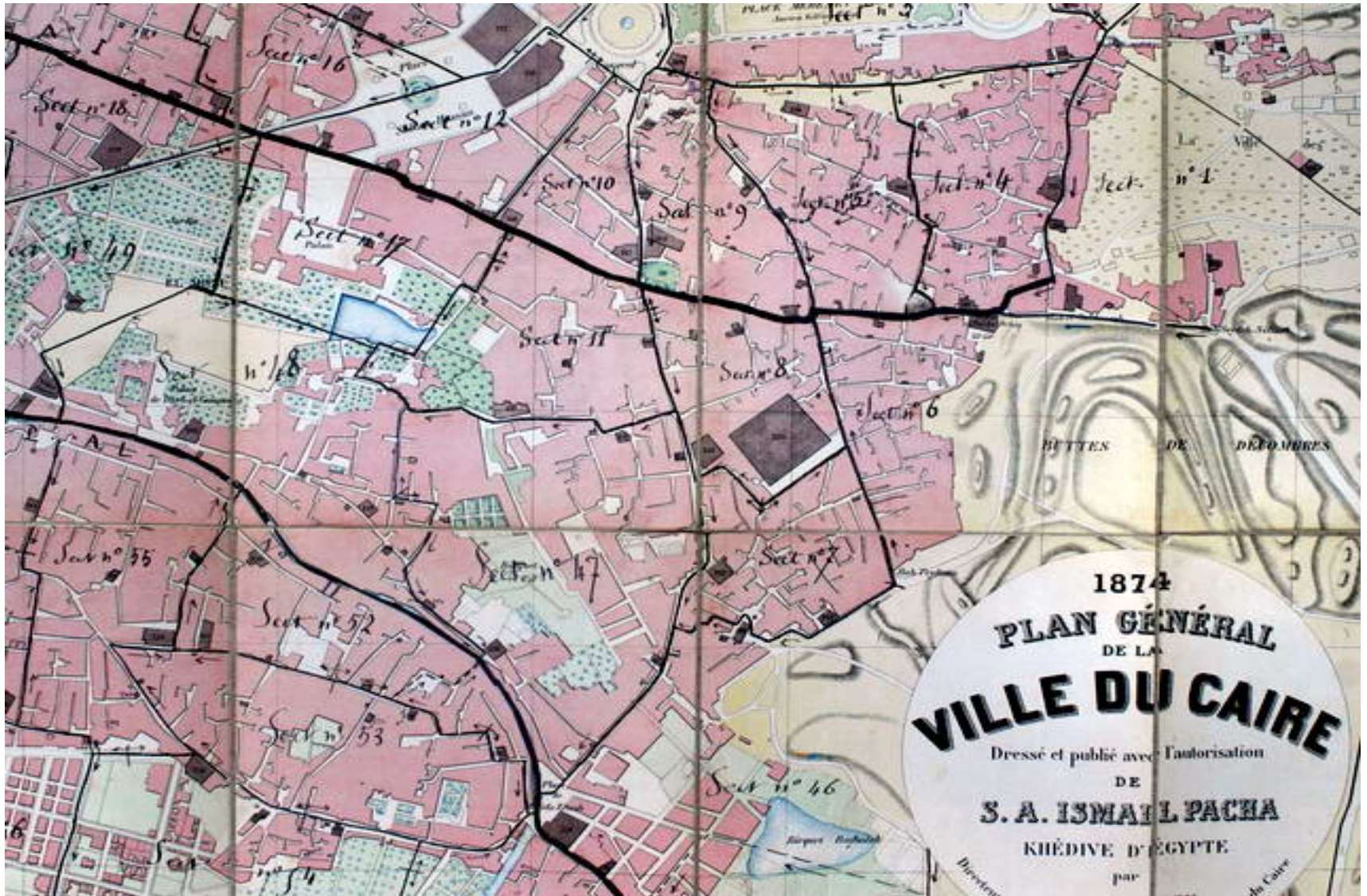


Pl. 2.16

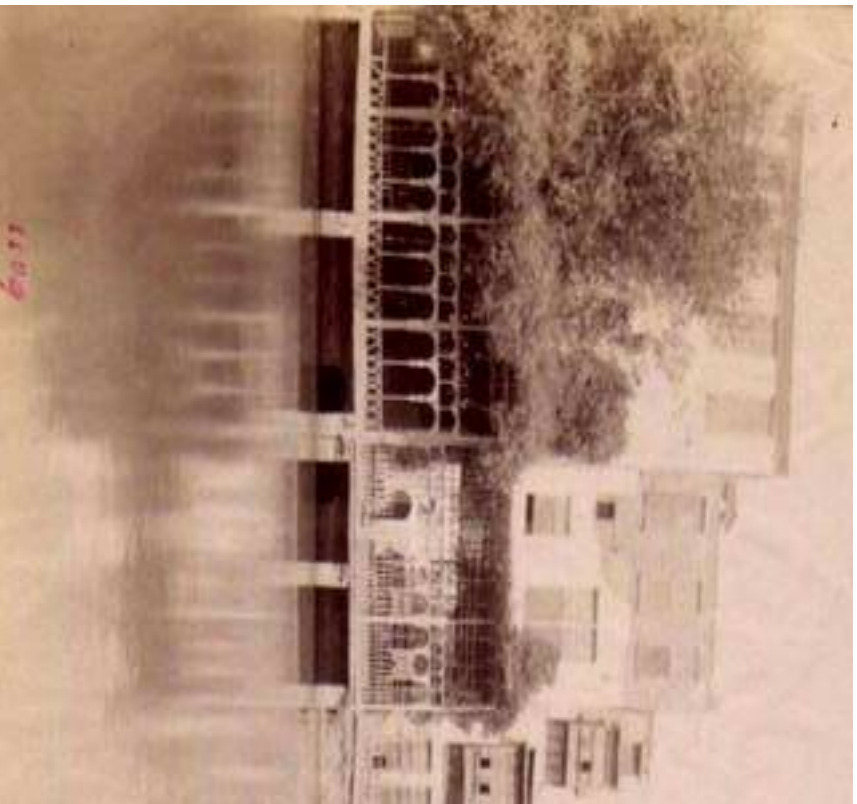
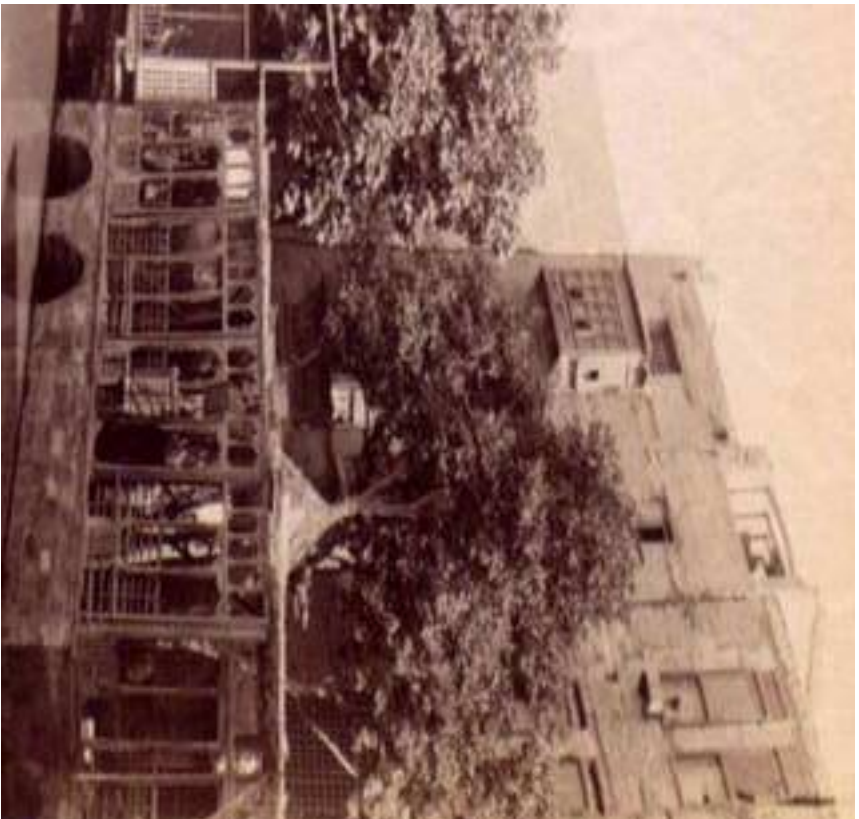
Map from Department of Survey of Egypt



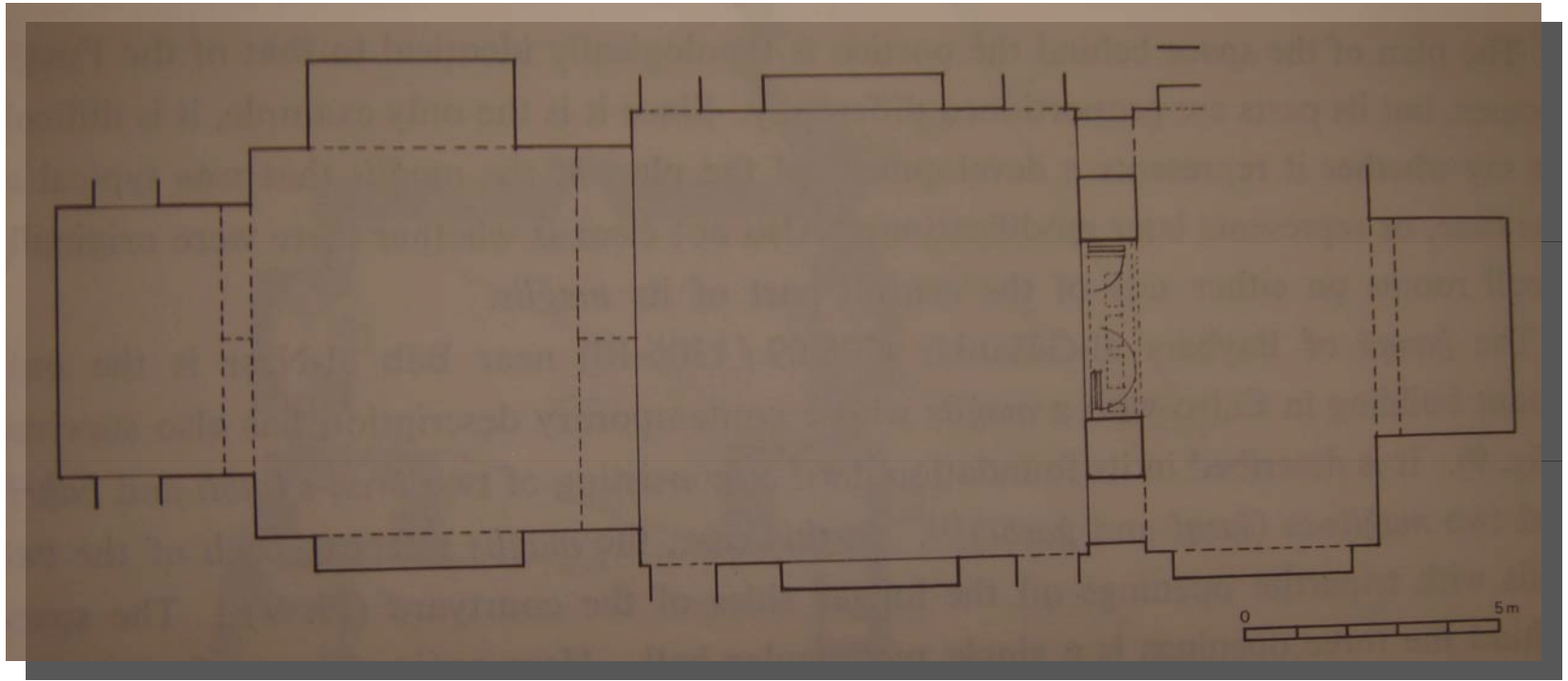
Pl. 2.17 Map of Cairo by Grand Bay



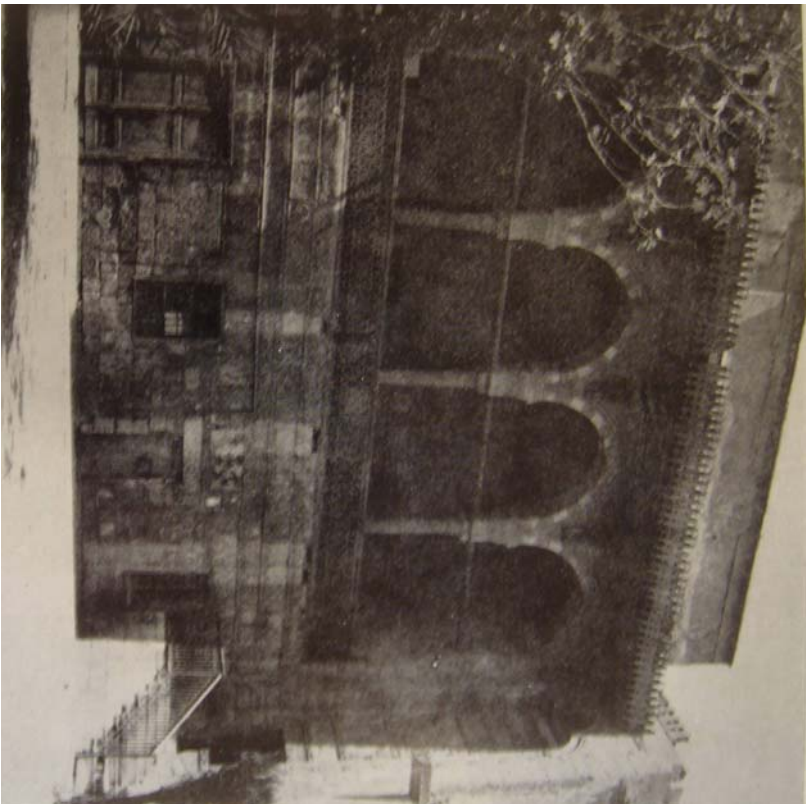
Pl. 2.18 Close-up of Hilmiyya from Grand Bay's map



Pls. 3.1-2 Photographs of *gaytuns* on Birkat al-Fil, after
egyptedantan.com



Pl. 3.3 *Qa'a* of Ahmad Bay Kuhya, after Sayed

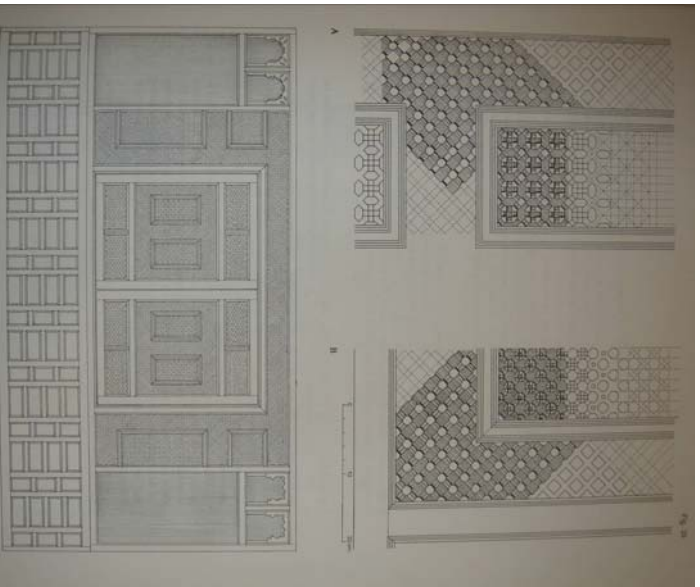


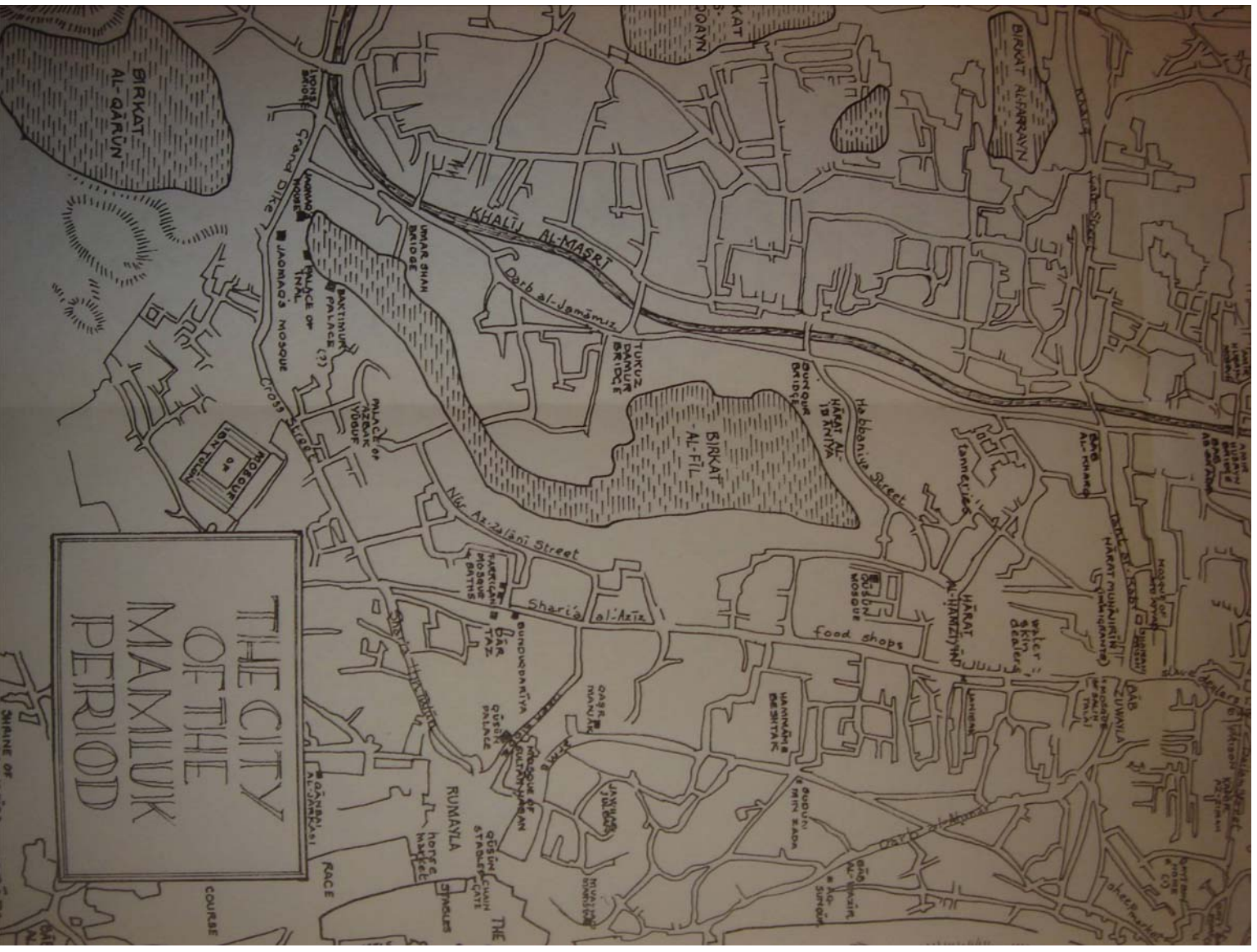
Pls. 3.4-5 *Maq'ad* at Taz Palace, after Revault



Pls. 3.6-7

Mashrabiyya in large
qa'a at Bayt Sadat,
after Revault



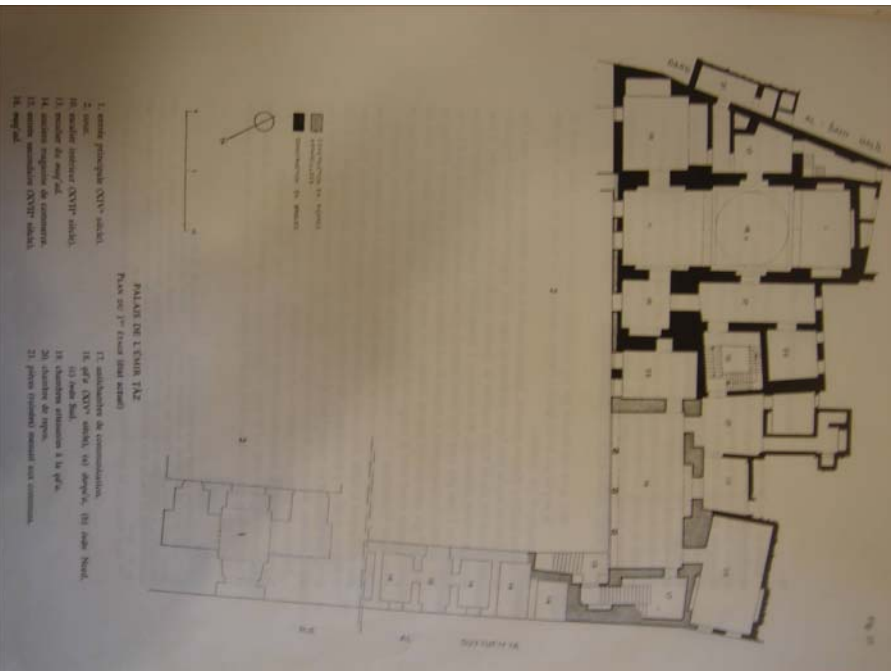
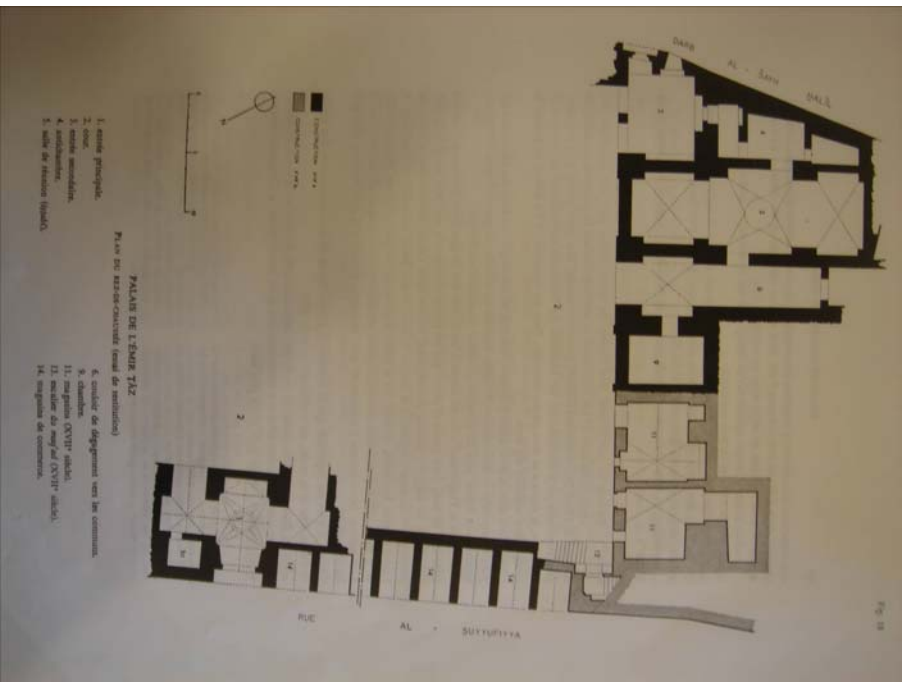


Pl. 3.8 Palaces surrounding Birkat al-Fil during the Mamluk period, after Staffa

Pls. 3,9-10

Floor plans of Taz
Right: Ground floor

Below: First floor,
after Revault





Pls. 3.11-12

Details of portal of Taz



Pls. 3.13-14

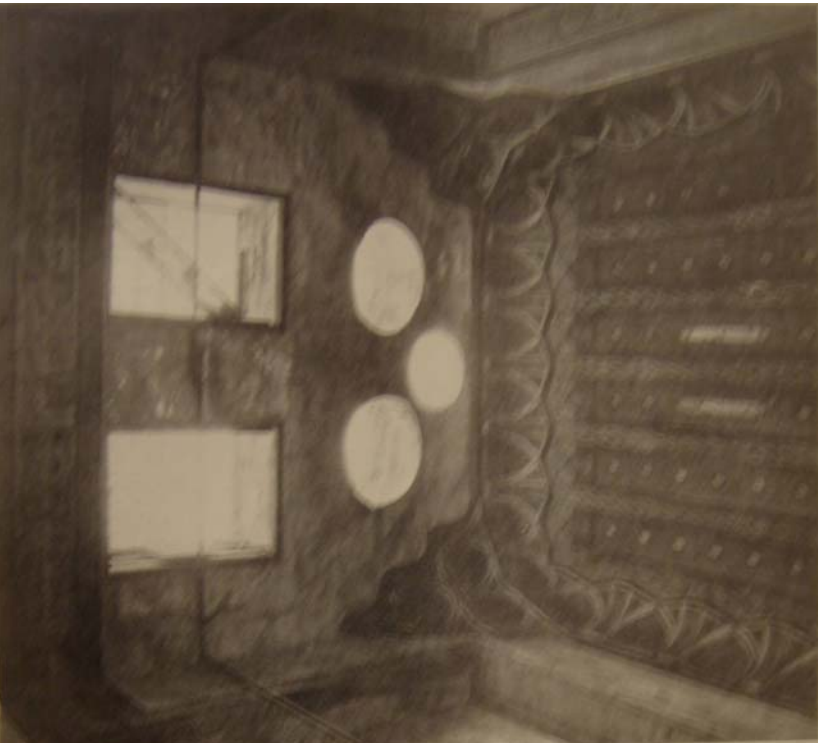
Ceilings in *maq'ad* at
Taz (right, original)

Qa'a (below, not
original)



Pls. 3.15-16

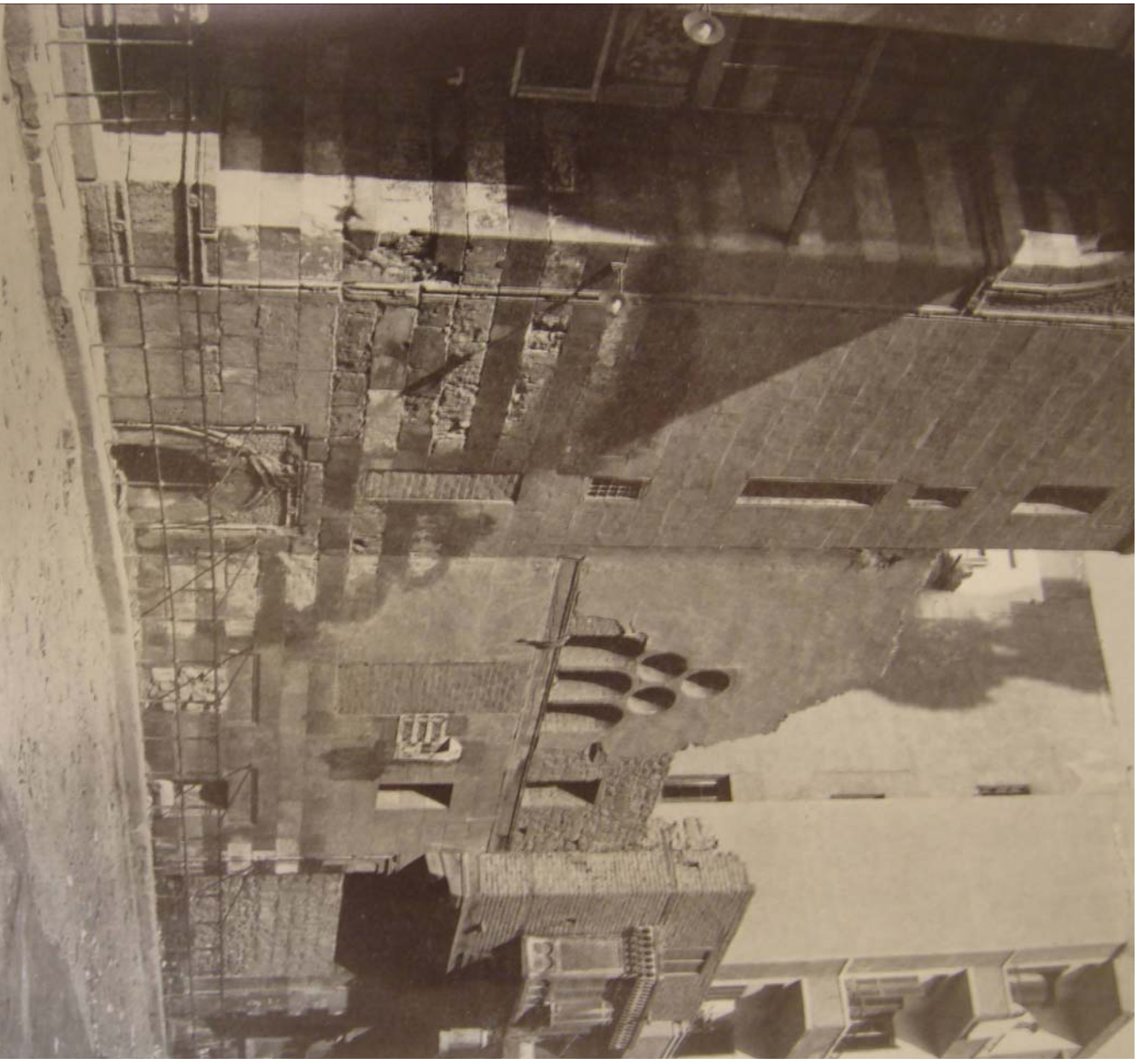
**Right: ocular windows at
Qusun Palace,
after Revault**



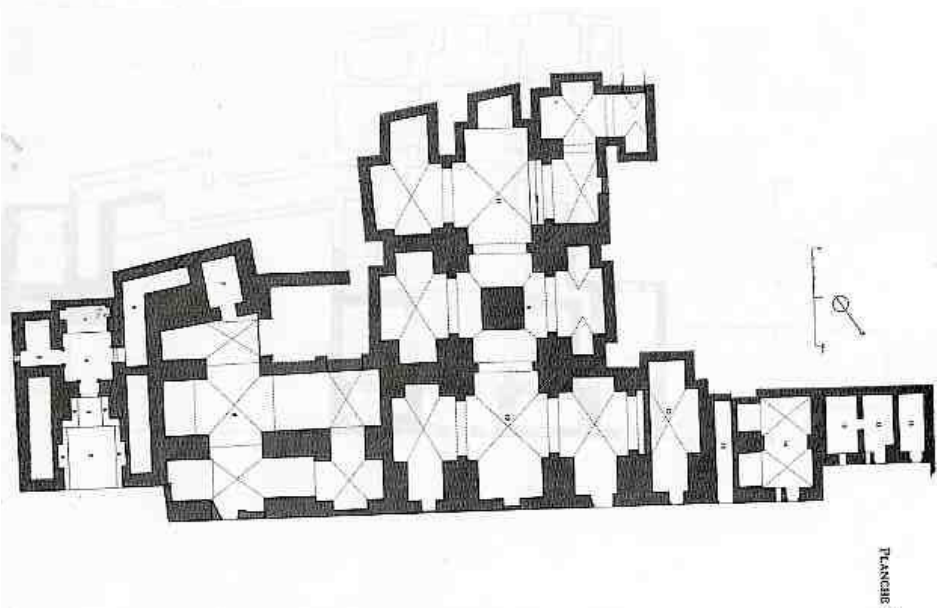
**Left: ocular windows at
Taz Palace,
after Revault**



Pl. 3.17 *Qa'a* of Azbak al-Yusufi, after Maury



Pl. 3.18 North-east façade showing the *qa'a* of Azbak al-Yusufi,
after Maury

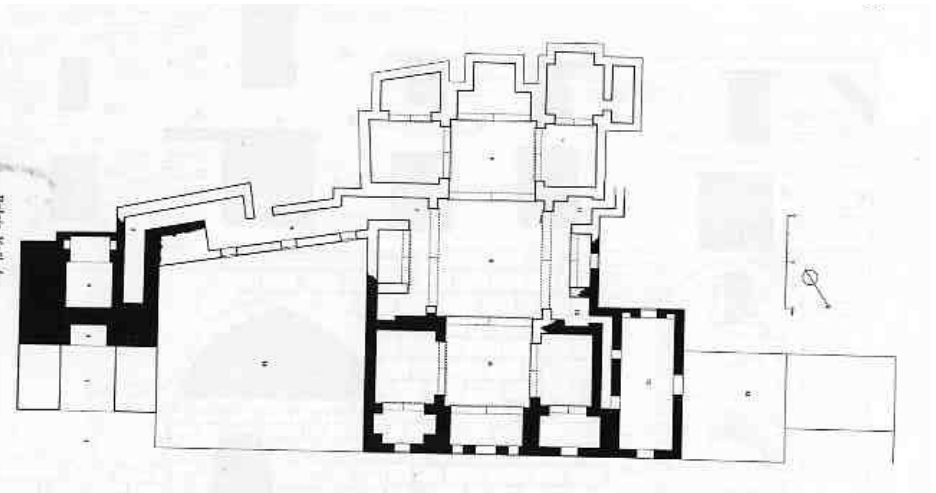


Pls. 3.19-20

Floor plans of Qusun, after Revault

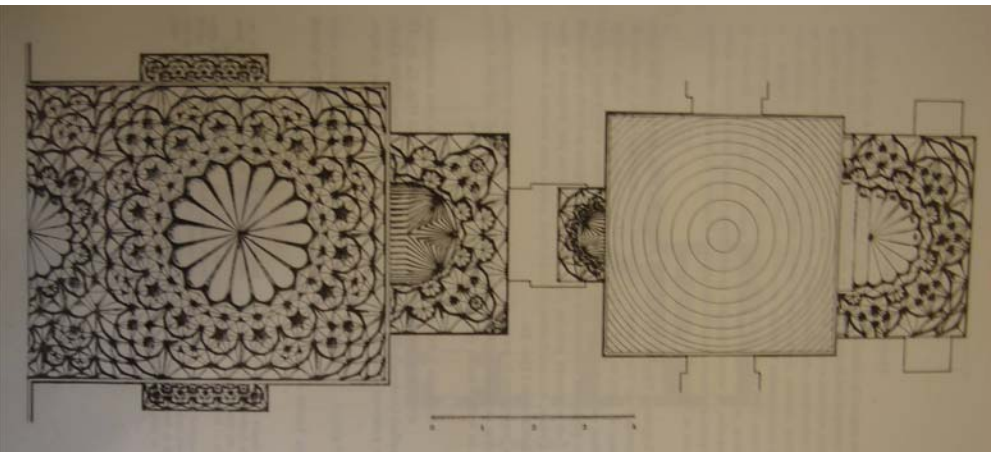
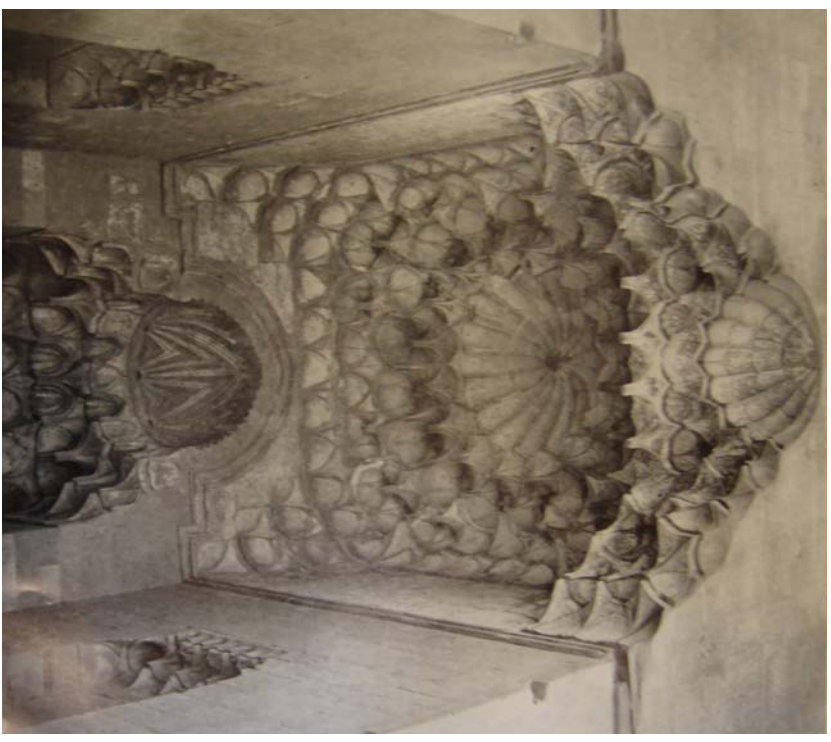
Above: Ground floor

Left: First floor



Pls. 3.21-22

**Portal at Qusun,
after Revault**



**Drawing of portal at Qusun,
after Revault**

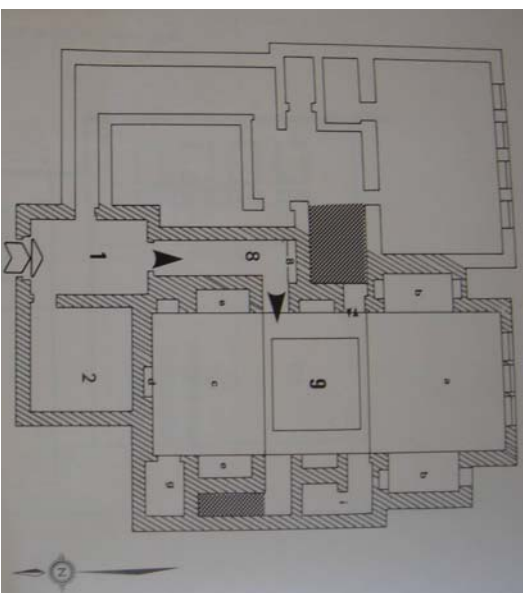
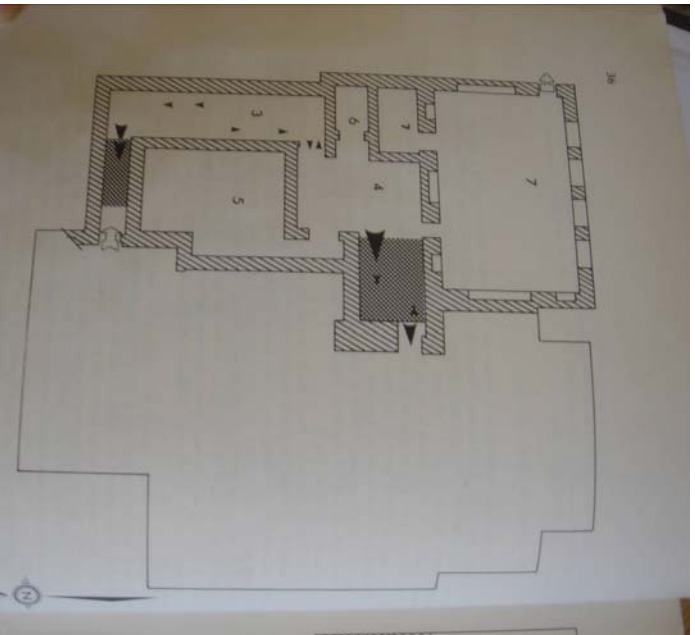
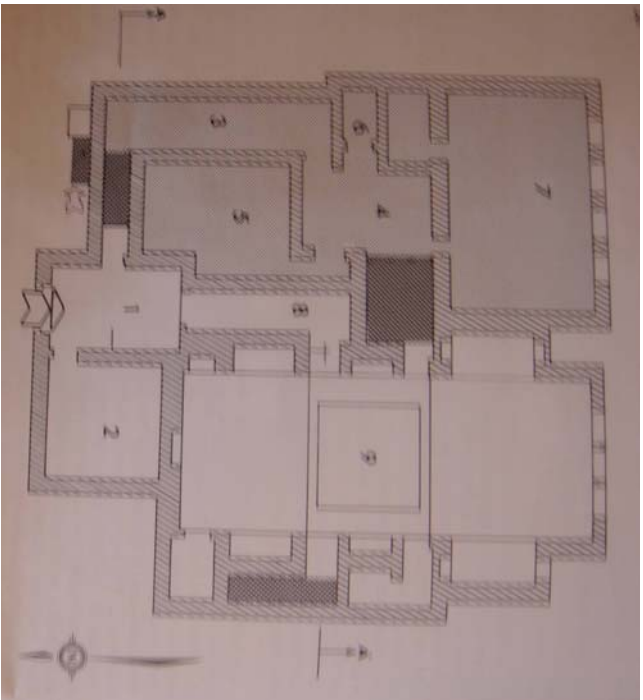
Pls. 3.23-25

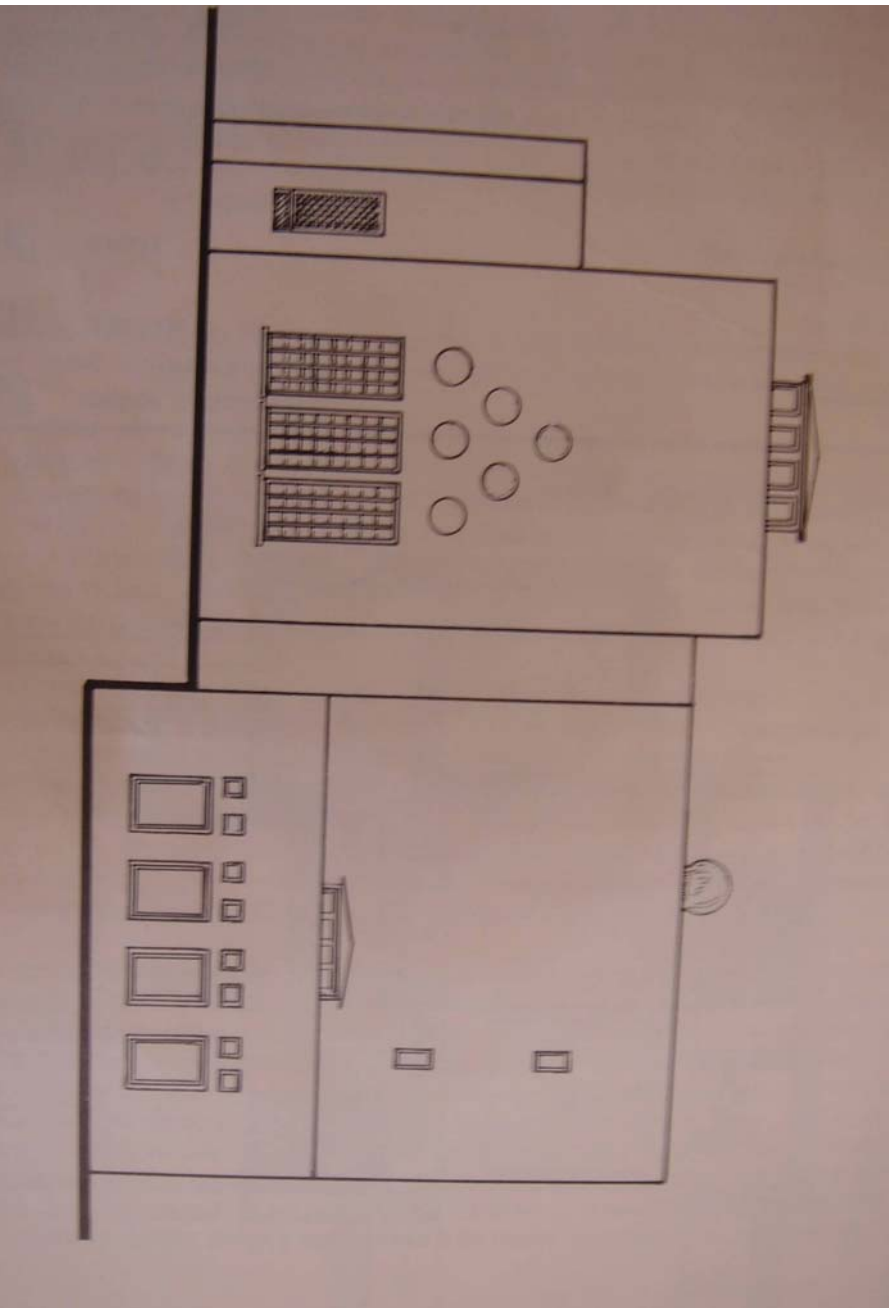
Floor plans of
Shihab al-Din,
after Zakariya

Left: Ground floor

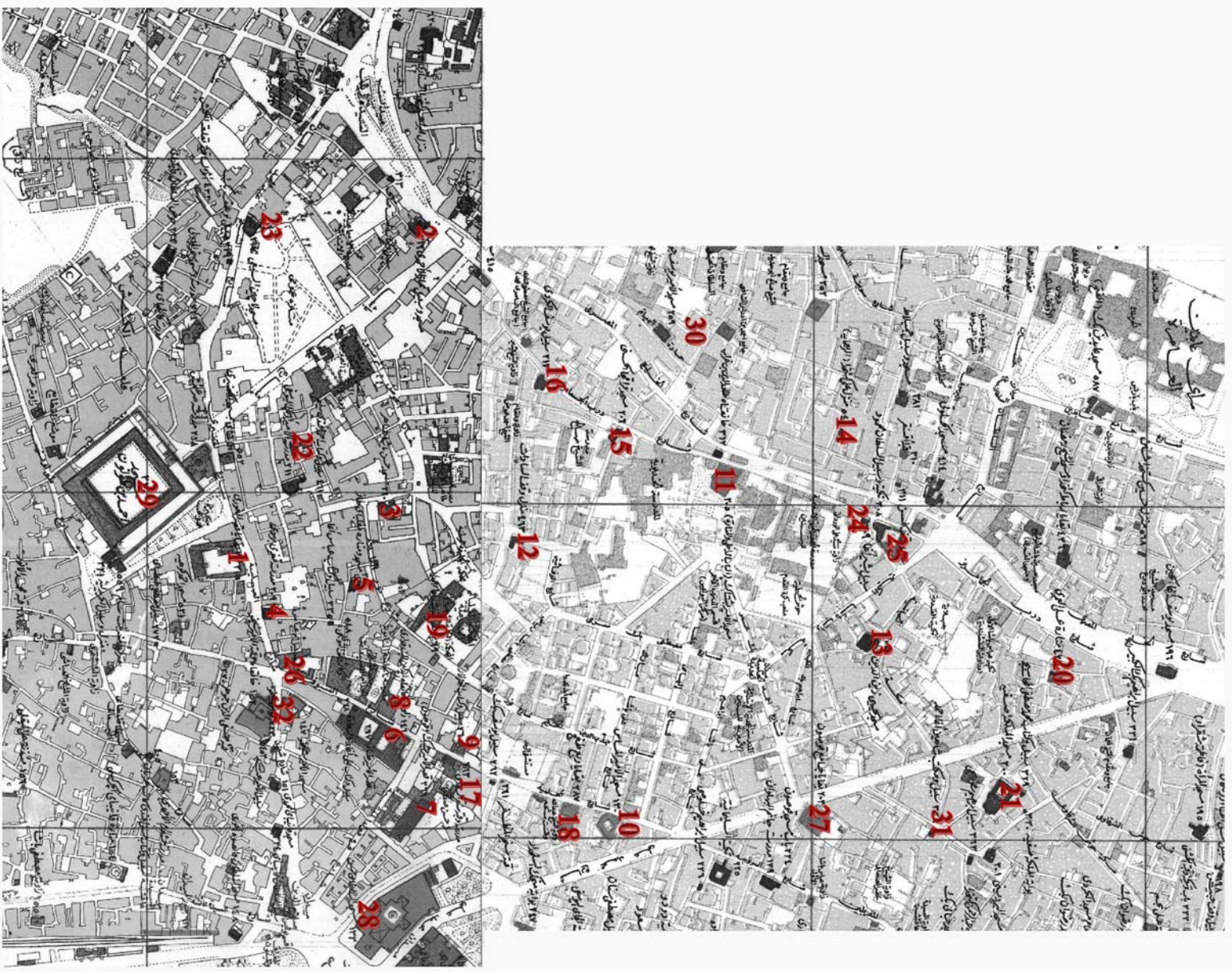
Below left: *Qaytum*
(indicated on both
plans as # 7

Below: *Qa'a*,





Pl. 3.26 Elevation of façade Shihab al-Din facing the pond,
after Zakariya



Pl. 3.27

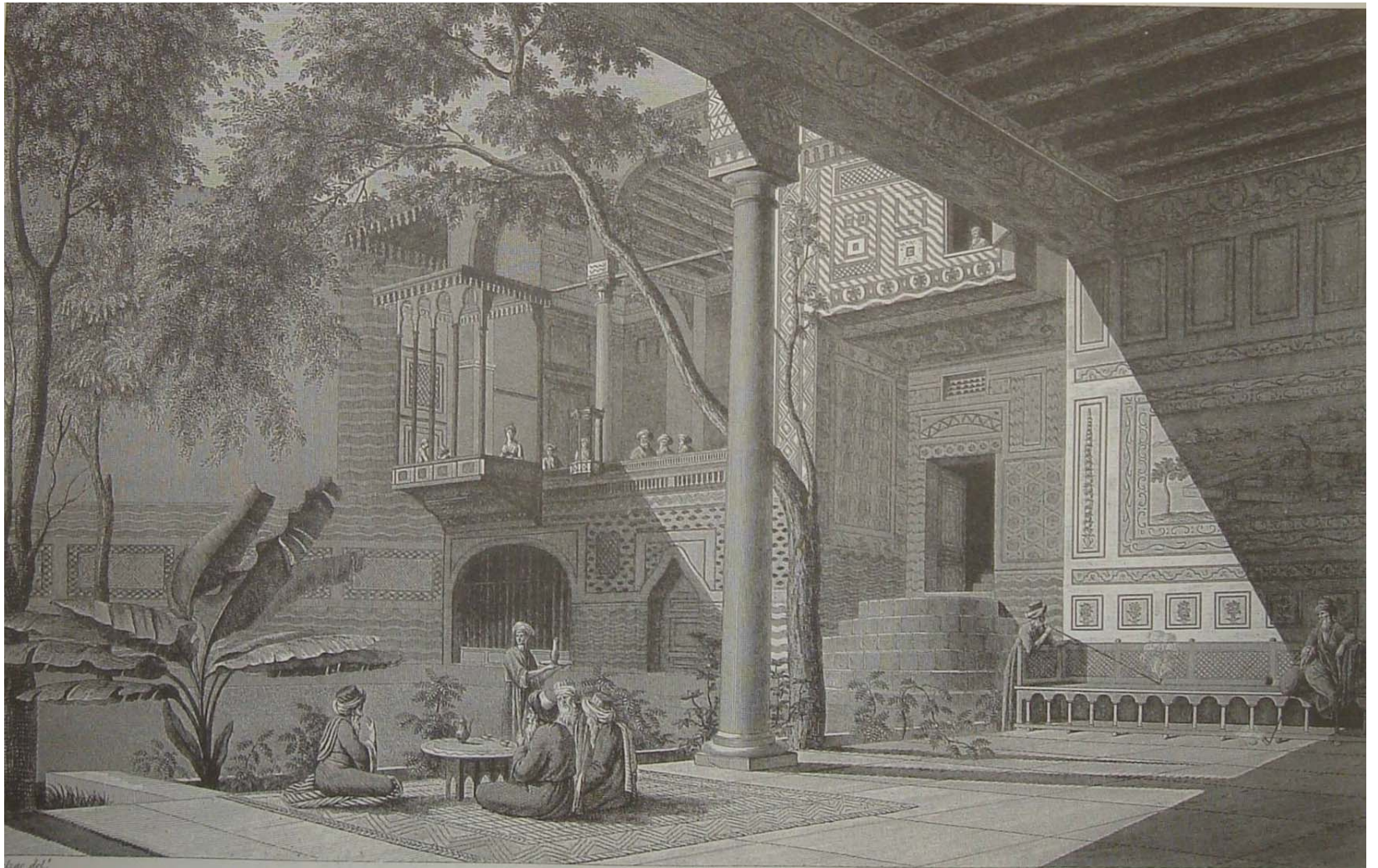
Mosques still extant



Pl. 3.28 Ottoman Houses and palaces, after *Description de l'Égypte*

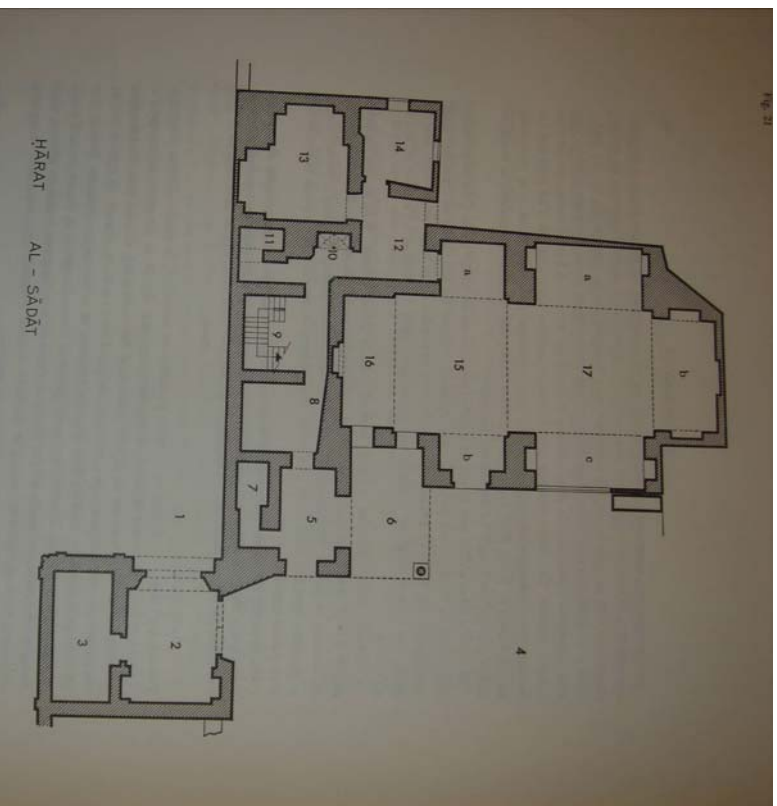


Pl. 3.29 Engraving of Murad Bay with Birkat al-Fil in the background,
after *Description de l'Égypte*



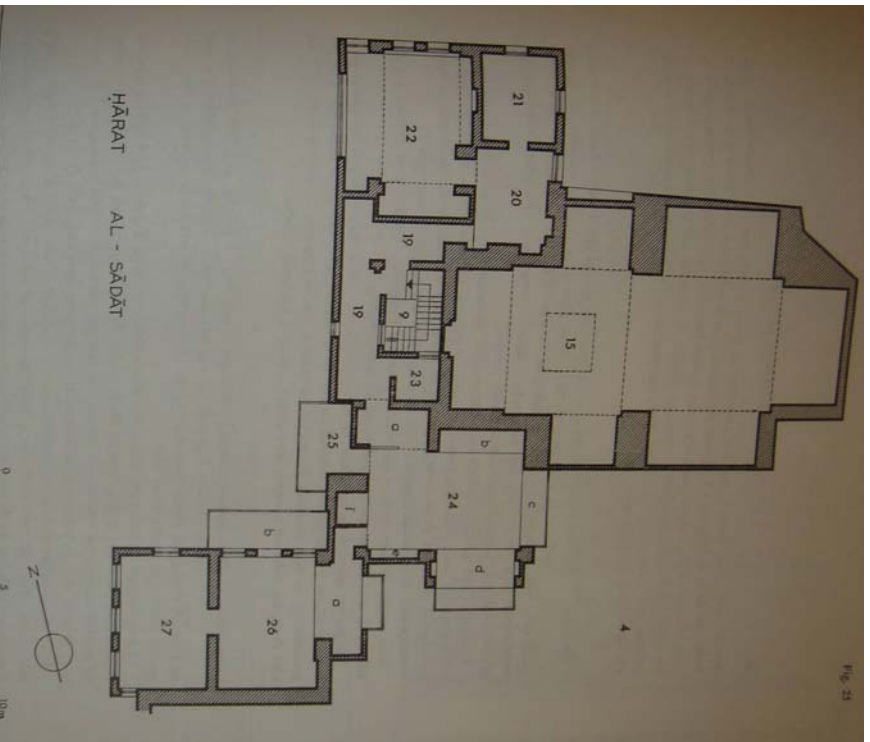
Pl. 3.30

Interior of Qasim Bay's house, after *Description de l'Égypte*



Pls. 3.31-32

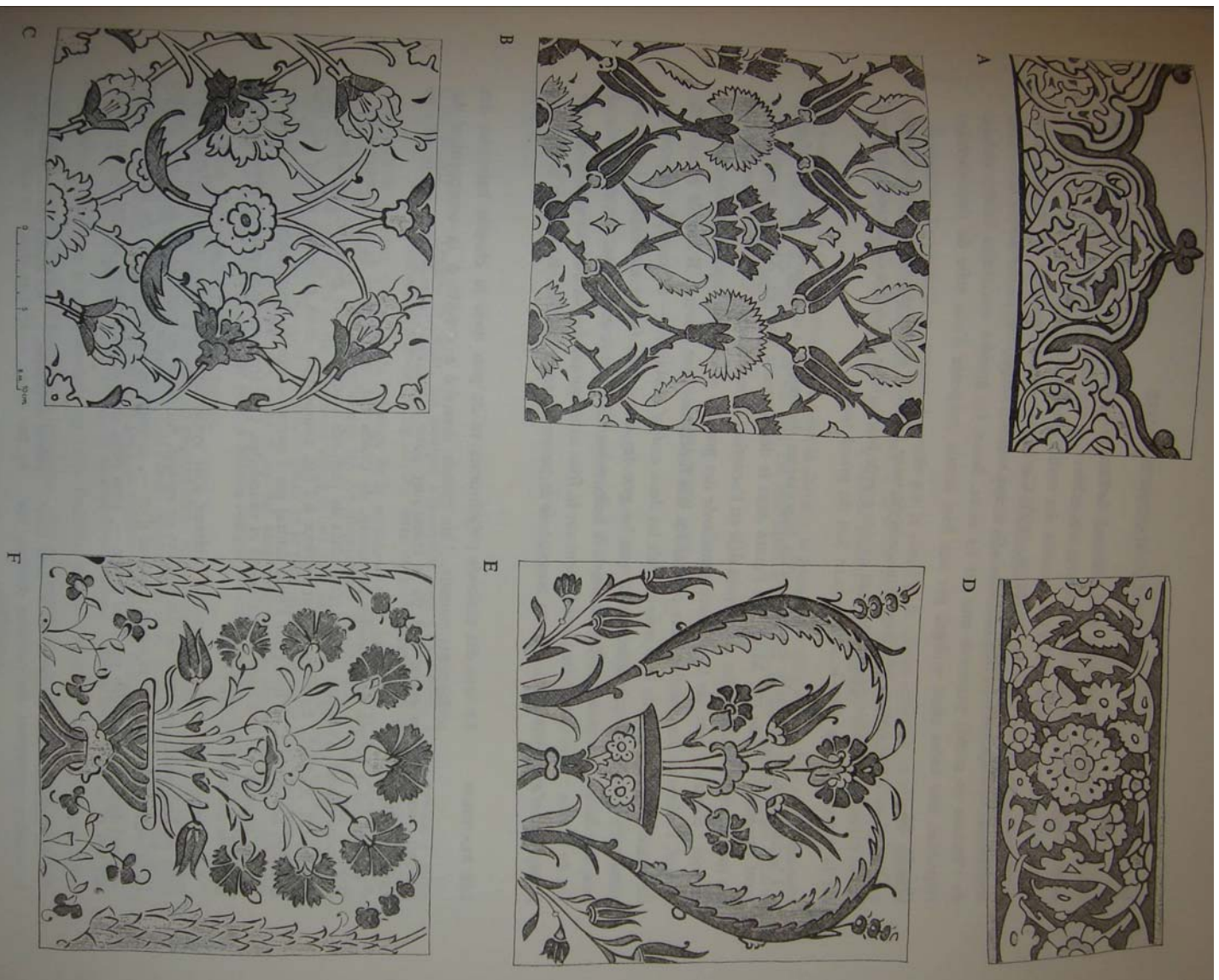
Floor plans of Bayt
Sadat al-Wafa'iyya,
after Maury



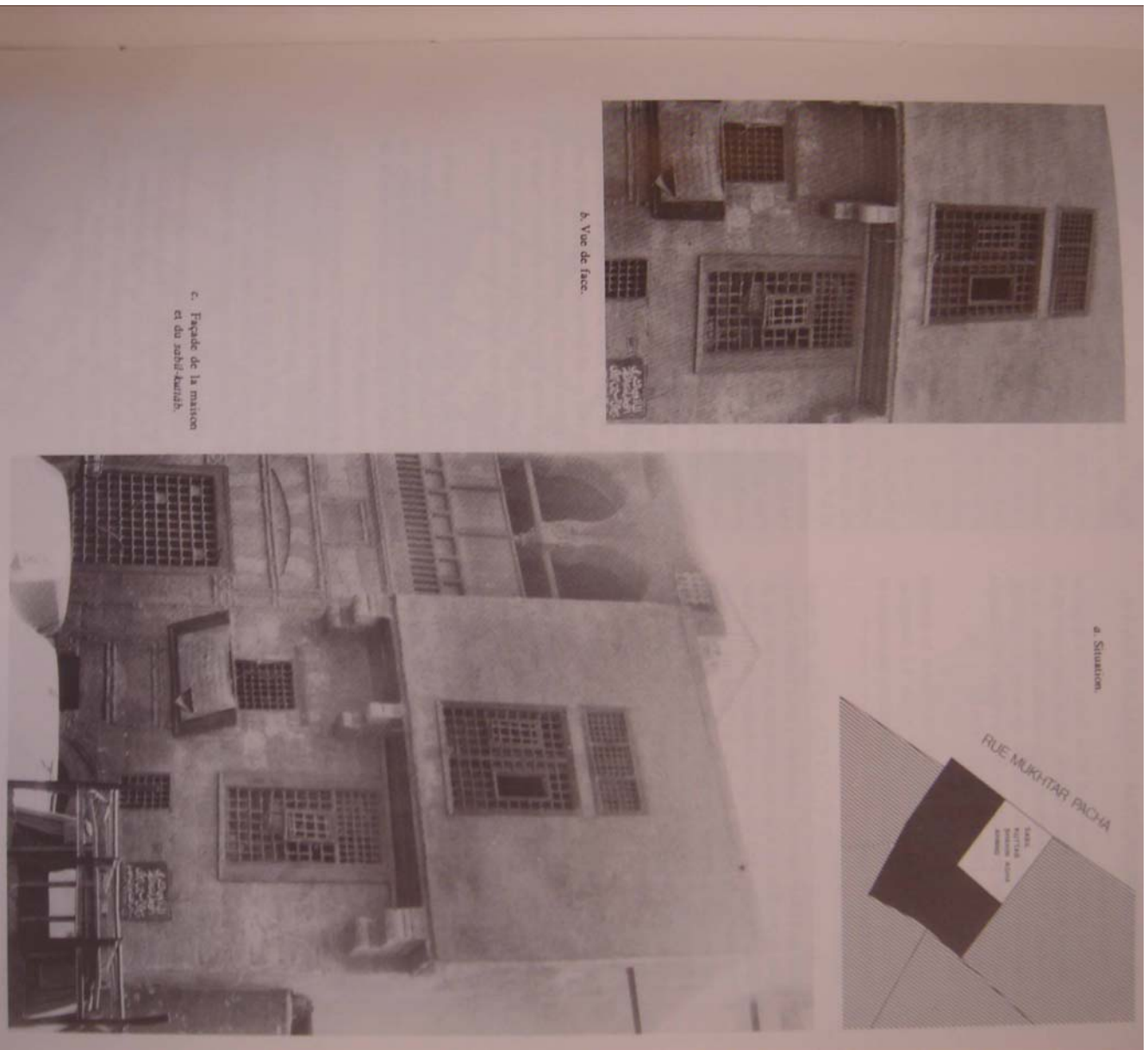
Pls. 3.33-34

**Restored exterior
mashrabiyya at
Bayt Sadat al-
Wafa'iyya**

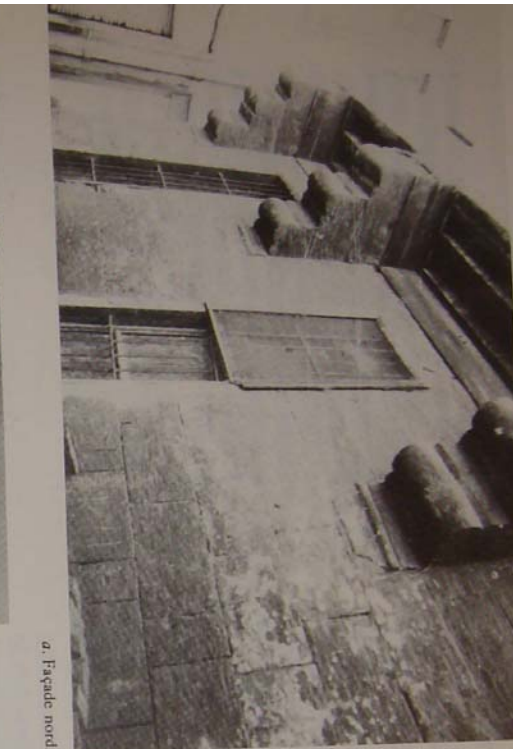




Pl. 3.35 Detail of Iznik tiles at Bayt al-Sadat al-Wafa'iyya, after Maury



Pl. 3.36 Façade and location of Bayt Shahin Agha,
after Hanna



a. Façade nord.



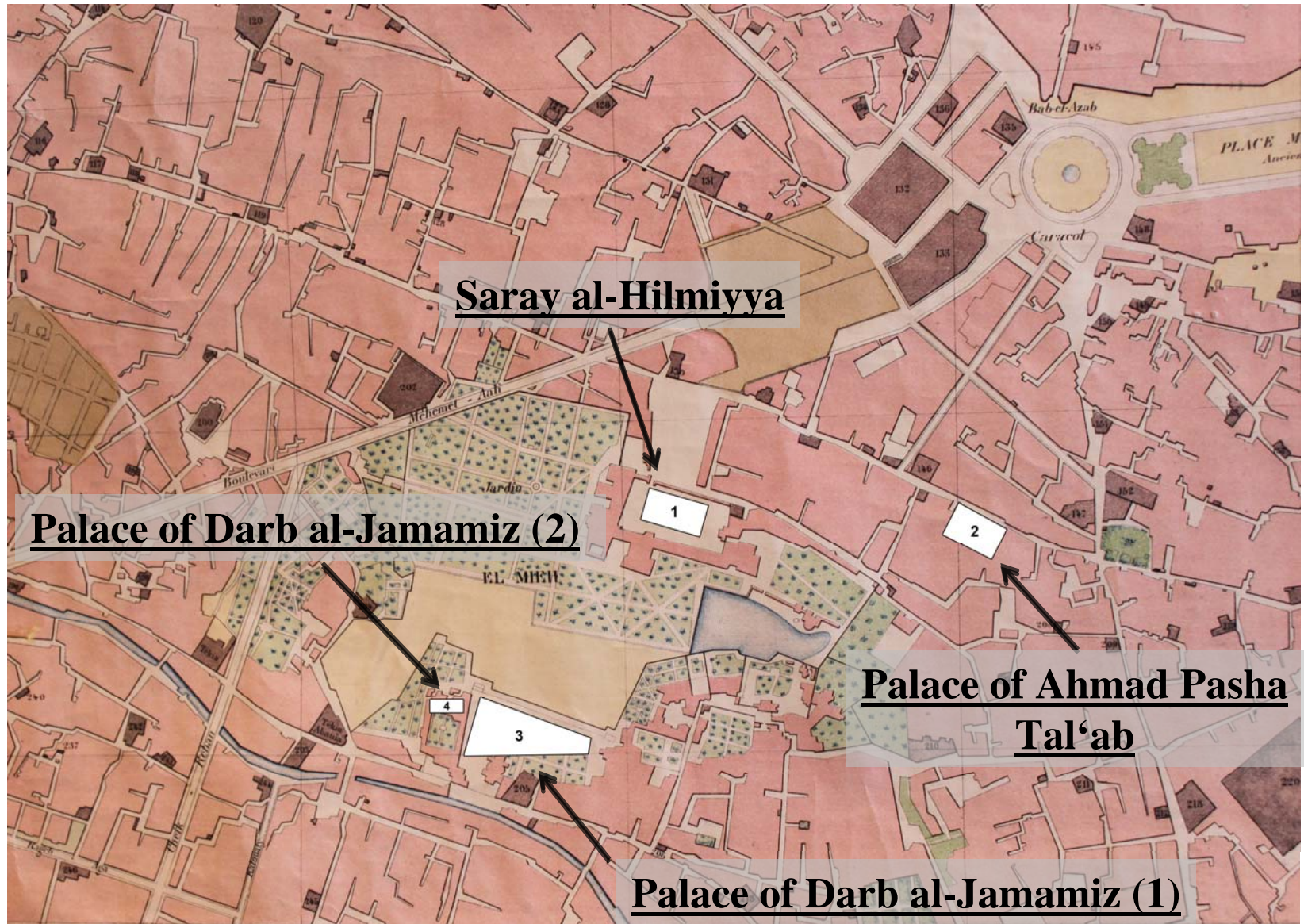
b. Arche dans le couloir du rez-de-chaussée.



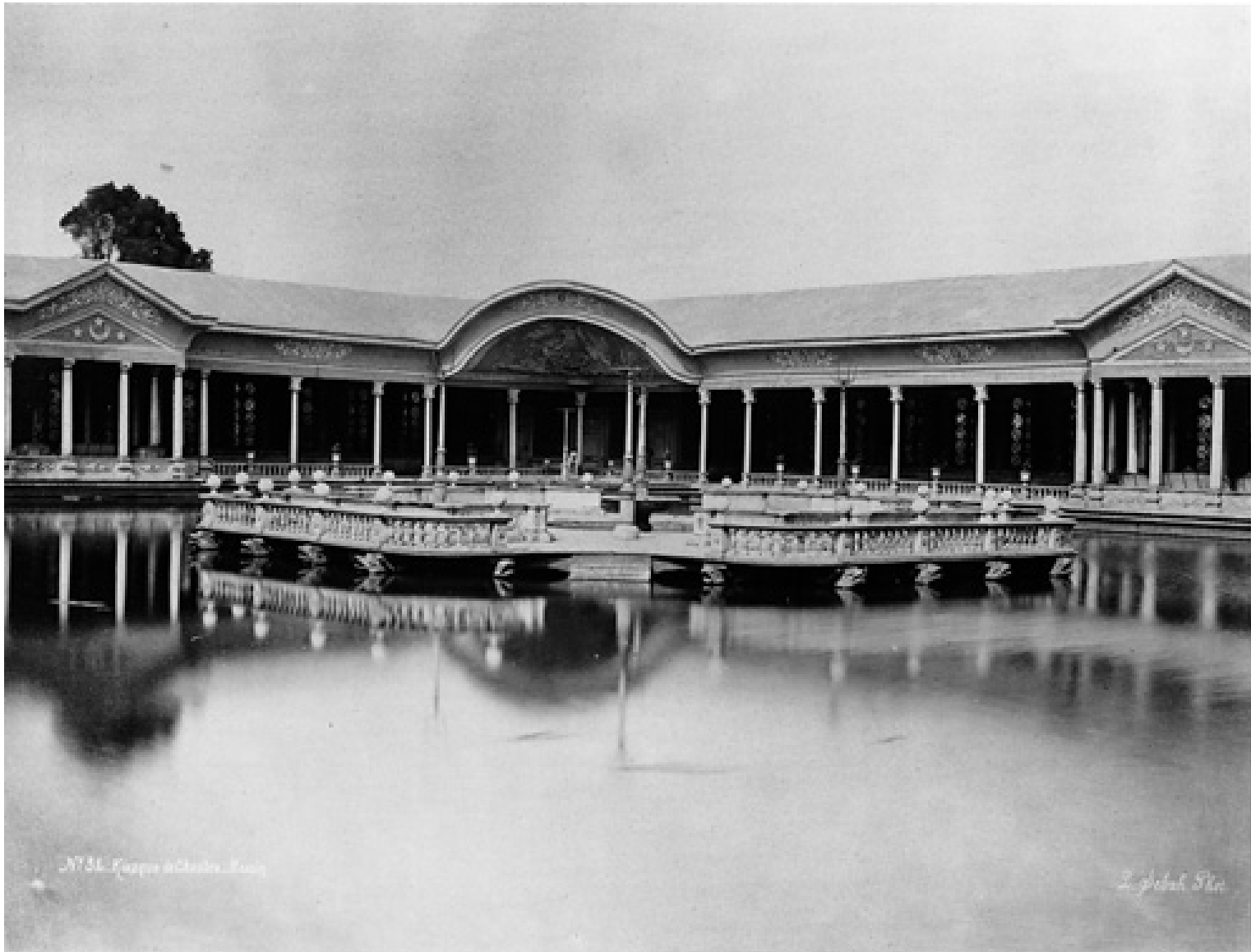
c. Façade sud.



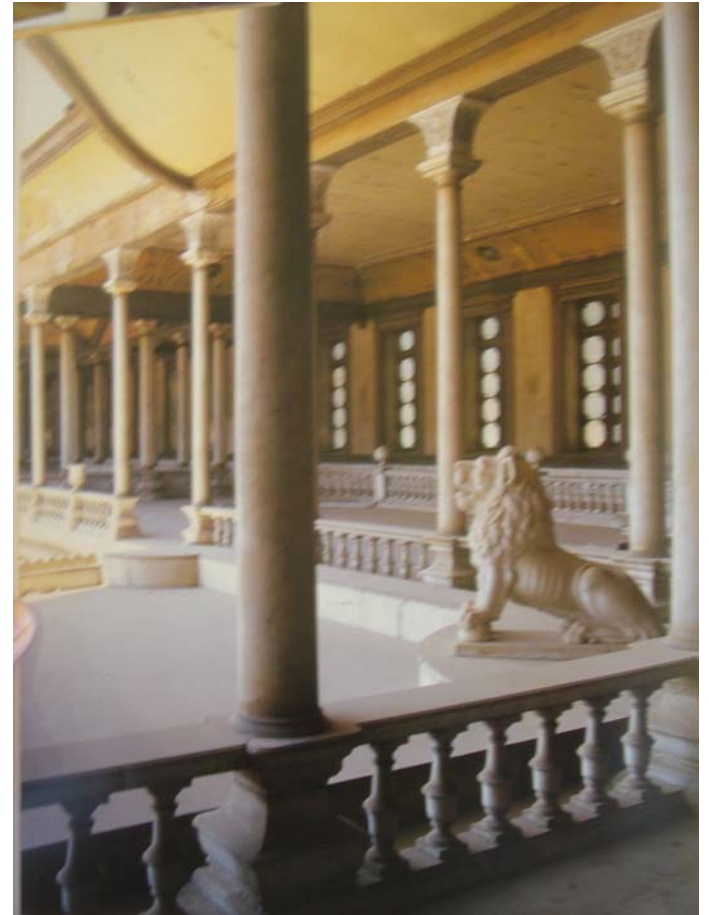
Pl. 3.37 Details of the façade at the house at Shari' 6
Hammam Bashtaq, after Hanna



Pl. 4.1 Map showing palaces in Hilmiyya and Darb al-Jamamiz, after Pierre Grand



Pl. 4.2 Nymphaeum at Shubra Palace, after Sebah



Pls. 4.3-4
Photographs of Shubra Palace, after Johnson



Pl. 4.5 Drawing of Birkat al-Fil and Saray al-Hilmiyya, after Hay



Pl. 4.6 Drawing of Birkat al-Fil and Saray al-Hilmiyya, after Lane-Poole



Pl. 4.7 1857 photograph of Saray al-Hilmiyya,
after Francis Frith

Courtesy Library of Congress



Pl. 4.8 1857 photograph of Saray al-Hilmiyya by Francis Frith,
after Tamraz



Pl. 4.9 1861 photograph by Hammerschmidt of Saray al-Hilmiyya, courtesy of Karkégi



Pl. 4.10 c. 1870 photograph with Saray al-Hilmiyya in background by Sebah, after Tamraz



Pl. 4.11 Nineteenth century photograph of Saray al-Hilmiyya, after Tamraz
(watchtower is very prominent in this photograph)

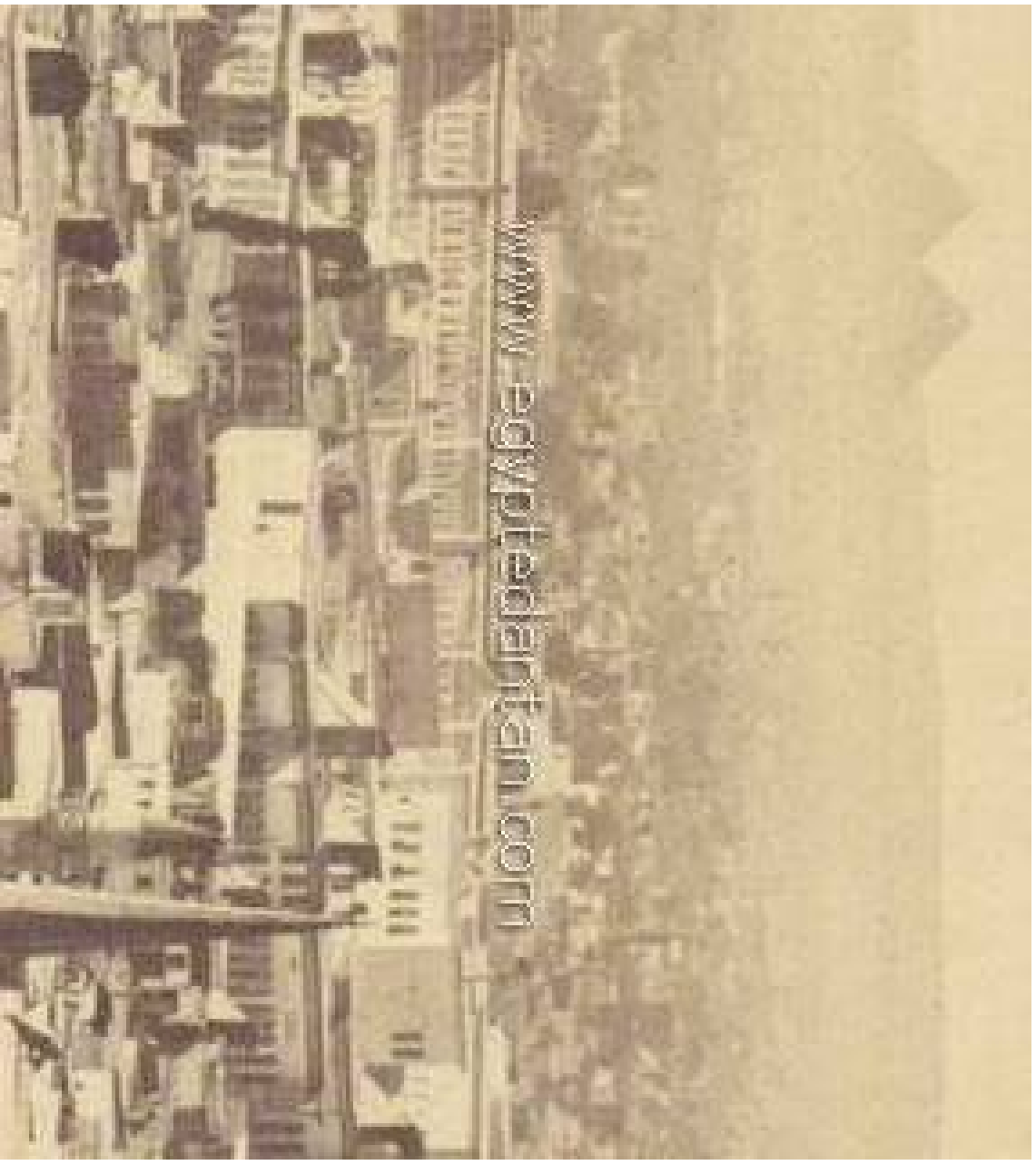


Pl. 4.12

Detail of watchtower and courtyard, after Tamraz



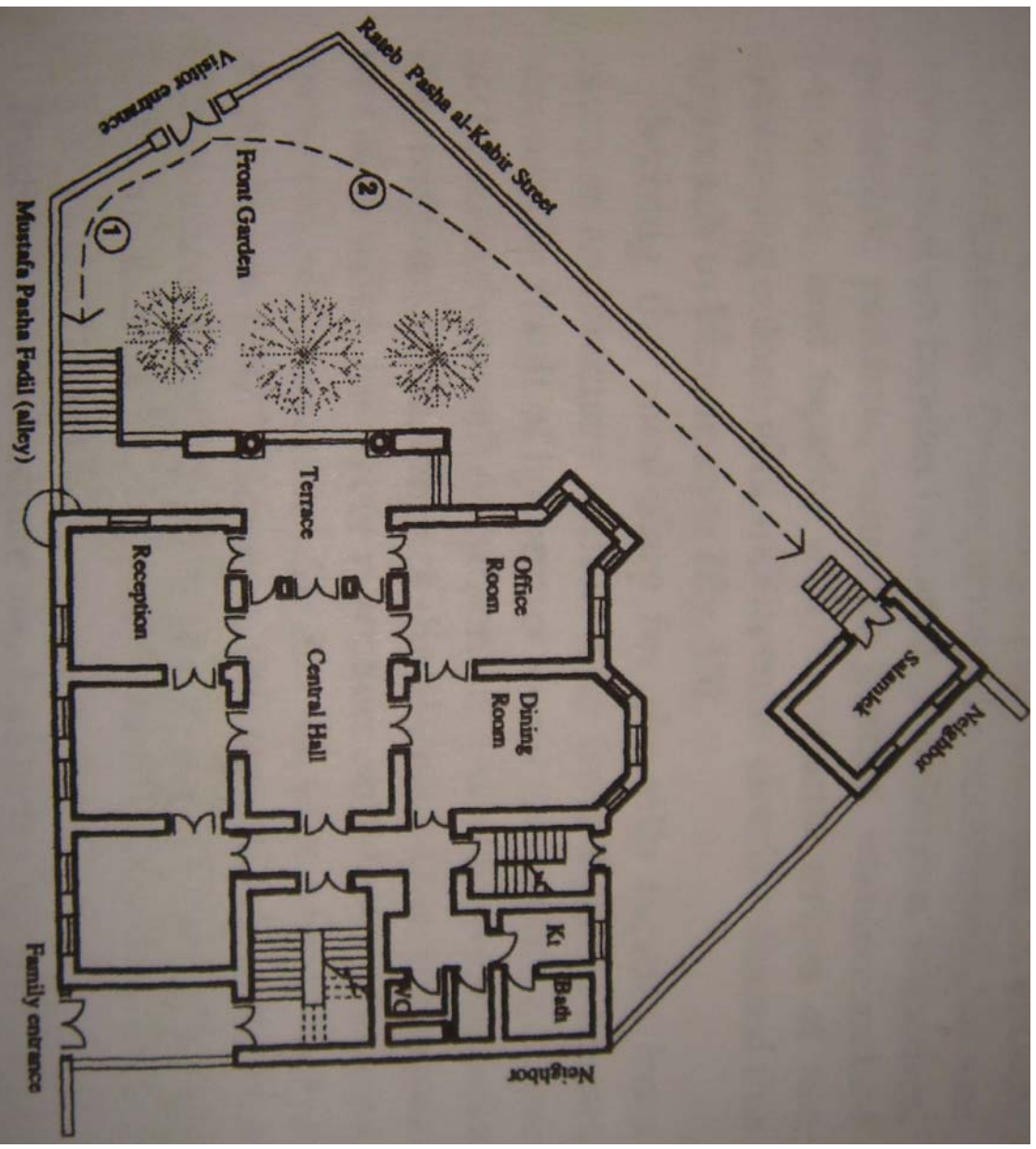
Pl. 4.13 Saray al-Hilmiyya behind Sultan Hasan, courtesy of Creswell Collection



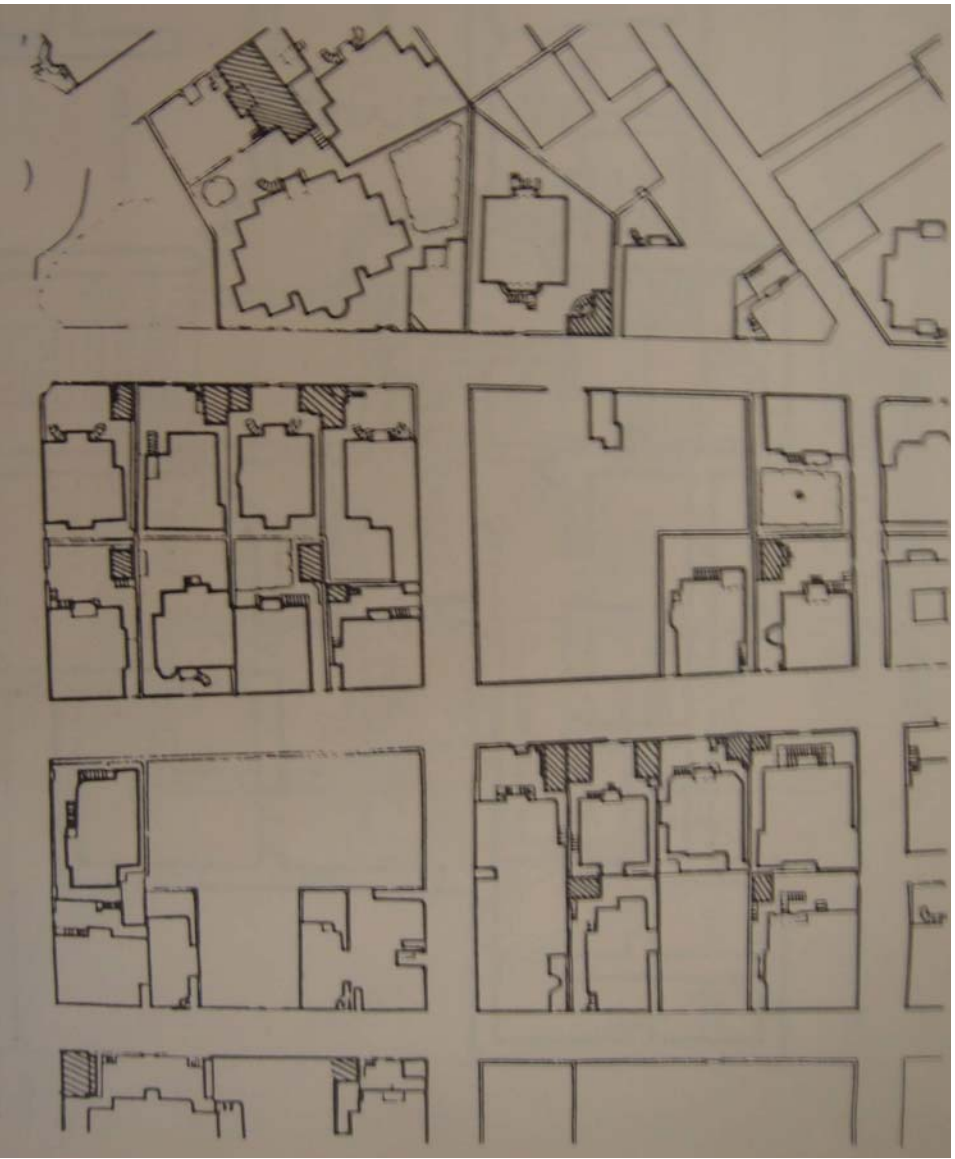
Pl. 4.14 Photograph of Saray al Hilmiyya,
after egyptdantan.com



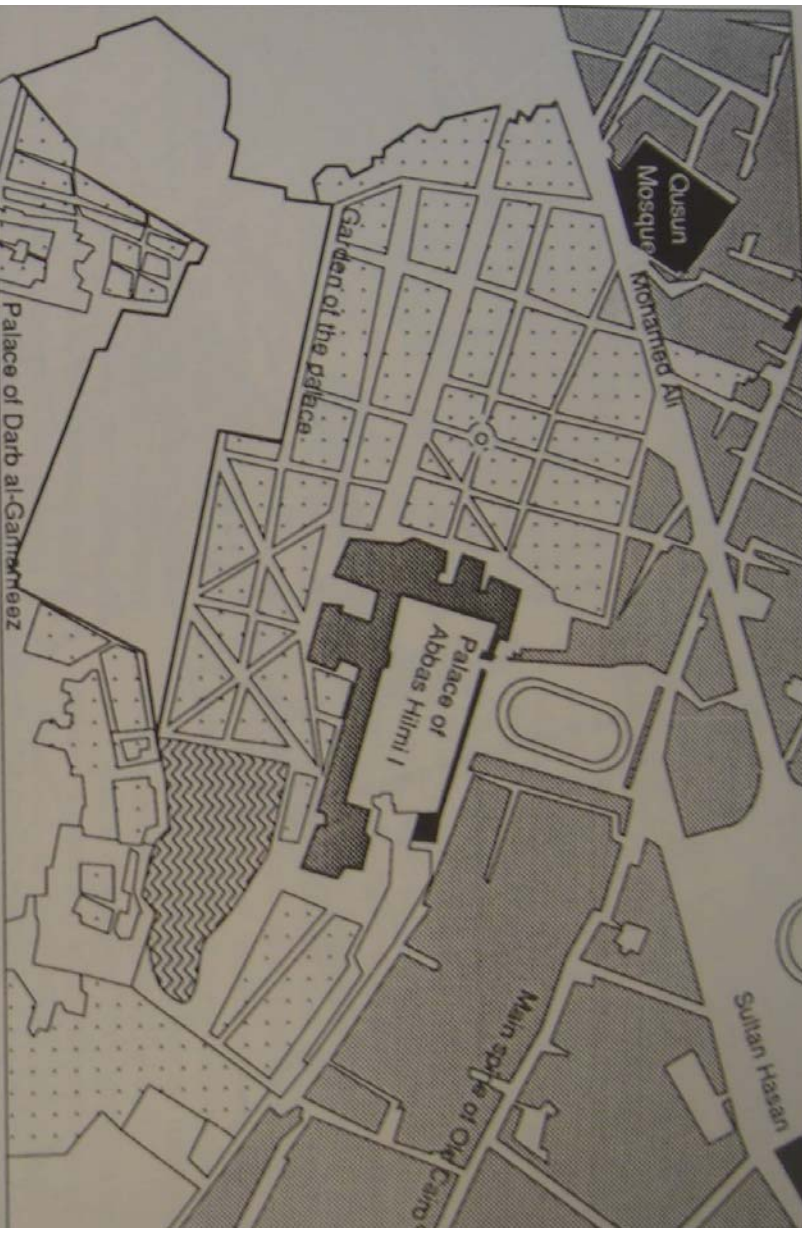
Pl. 4.15 Photograph of Hasan Pasha's *salamlik* at Roda Island,
after Johnston



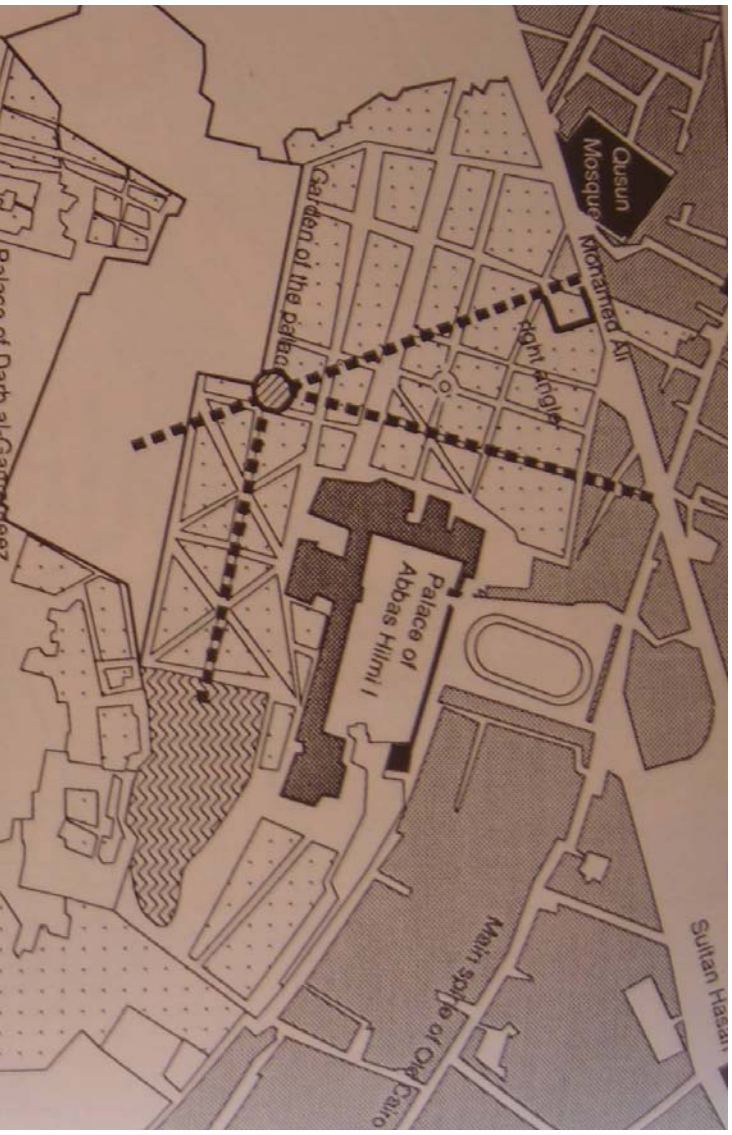
Pl. 4.16 Floor plan showing bent entrance, after Asfour



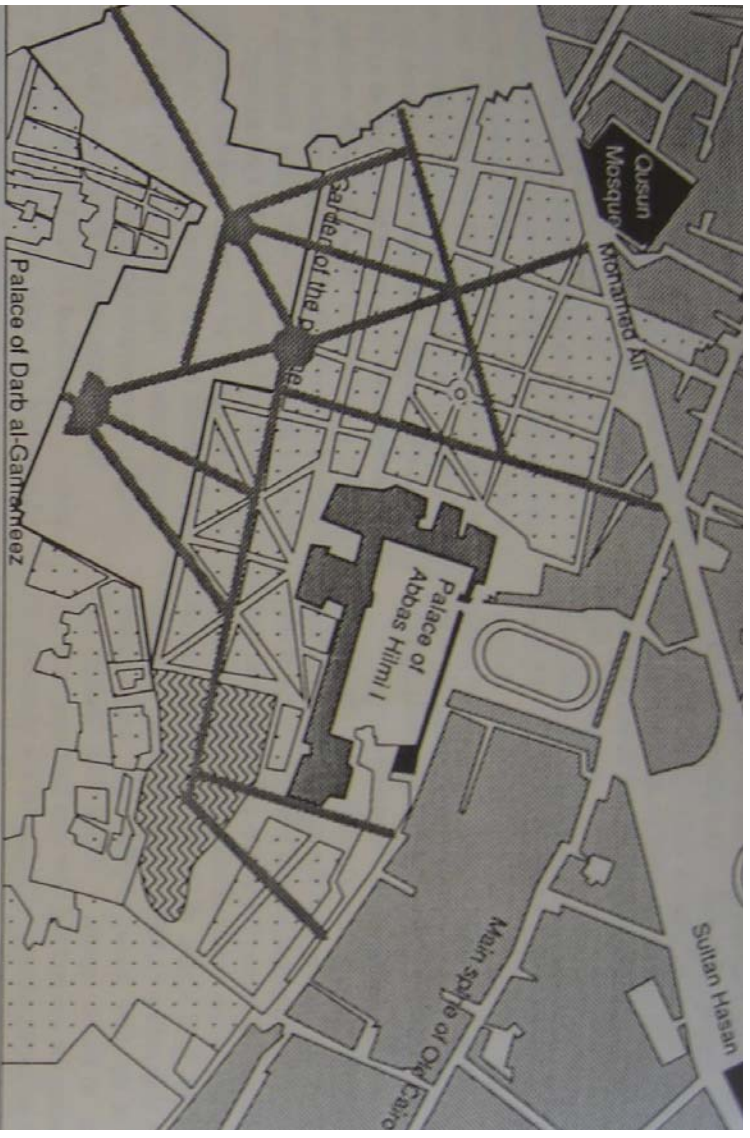
Pl. 4.17 Map from 1911 showing *salamliks*,
after Asfour



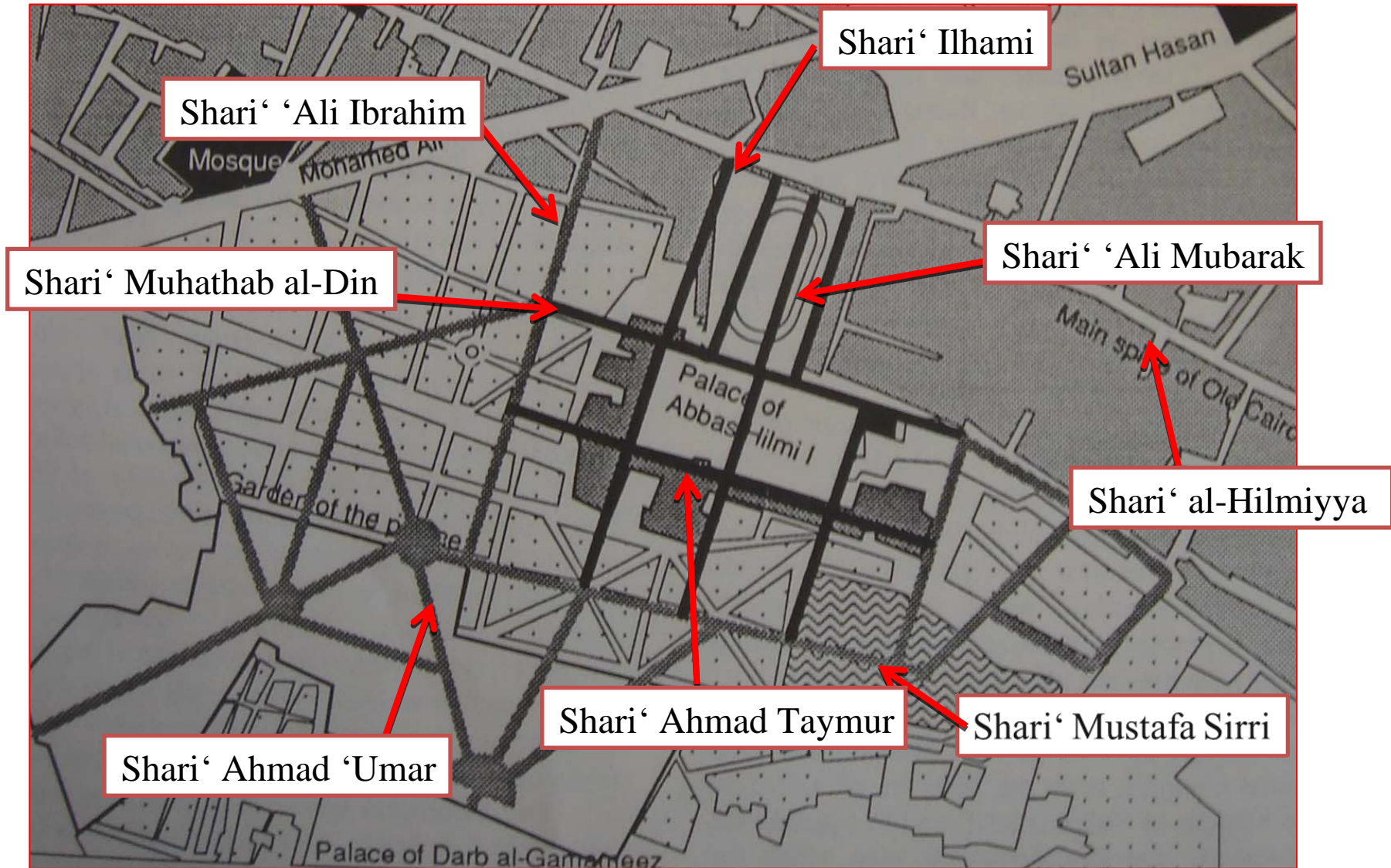
Pl. 4.18 Grand Bays map showing Saray al-Hilmiyya, after Asfour



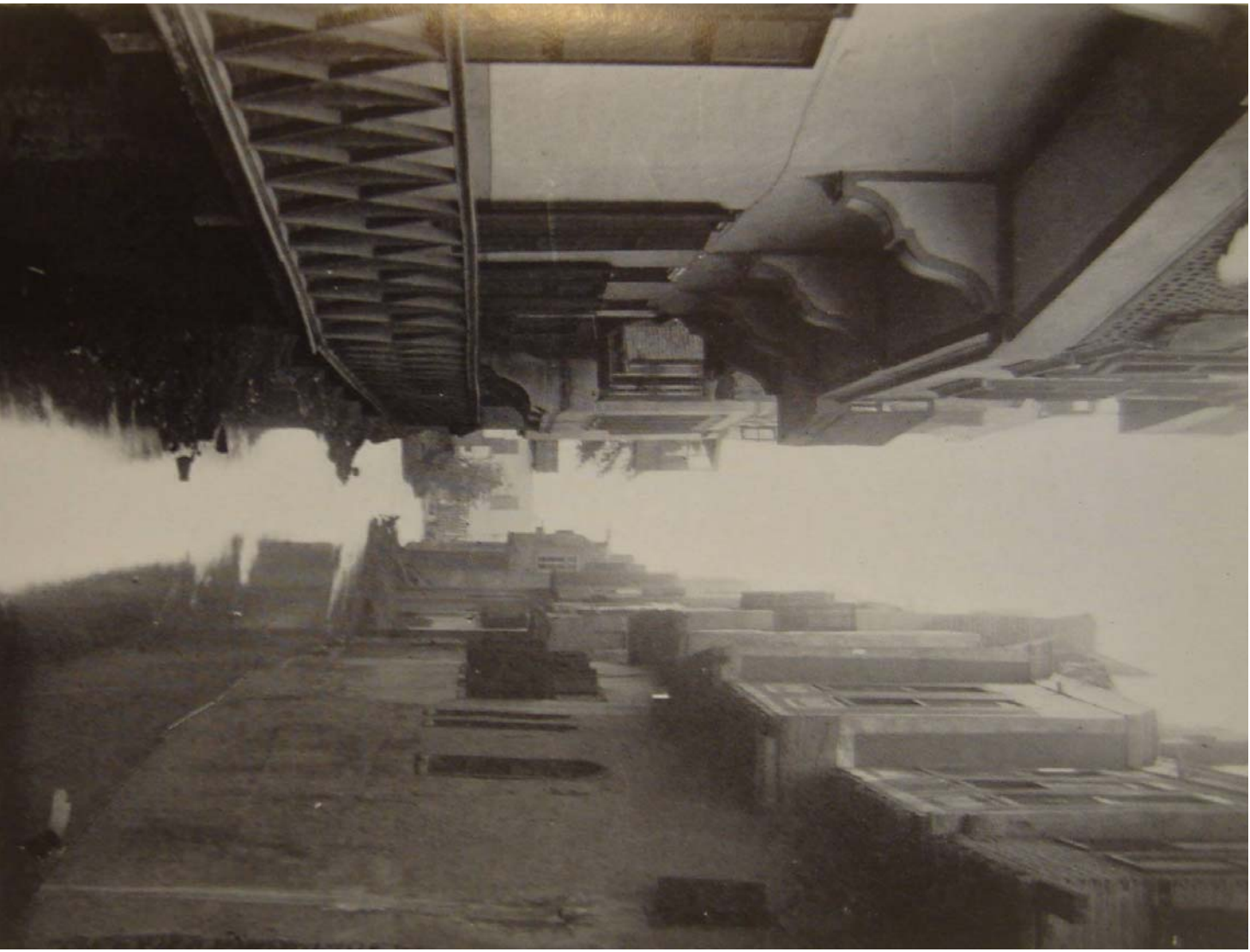
Initial plan of streets cutting through the gardens of the Saray, after Asfour



Plan showing first phase of development, after Asfour



Pl. 4.21 Plan showing final scheme of streets in Hilmiyya, as it remains today, after Asfour



Pl. 4.22 c. 1895 photograph of the Khalij al-Masri,
after Moore Russell

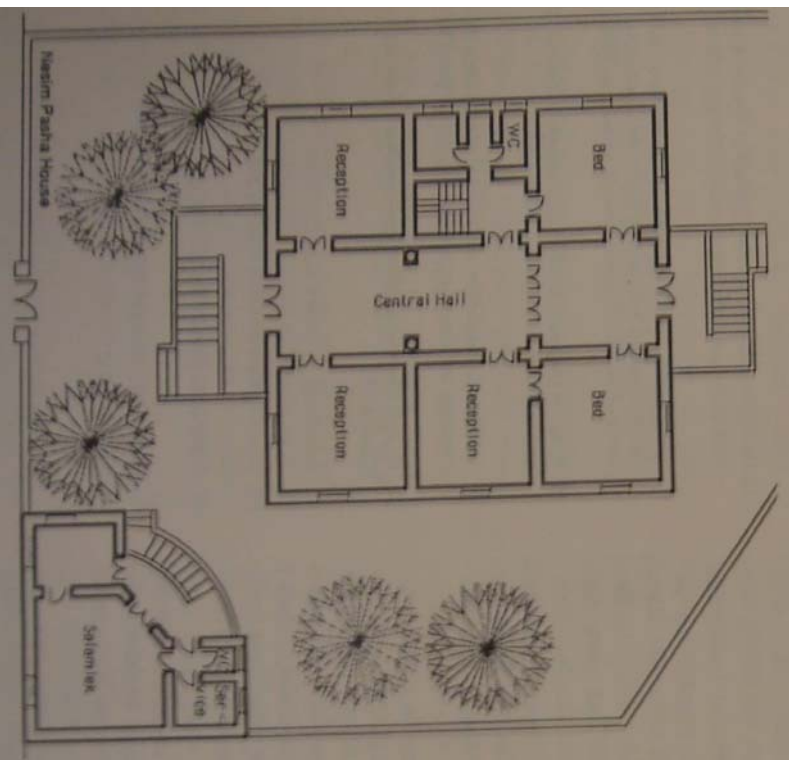
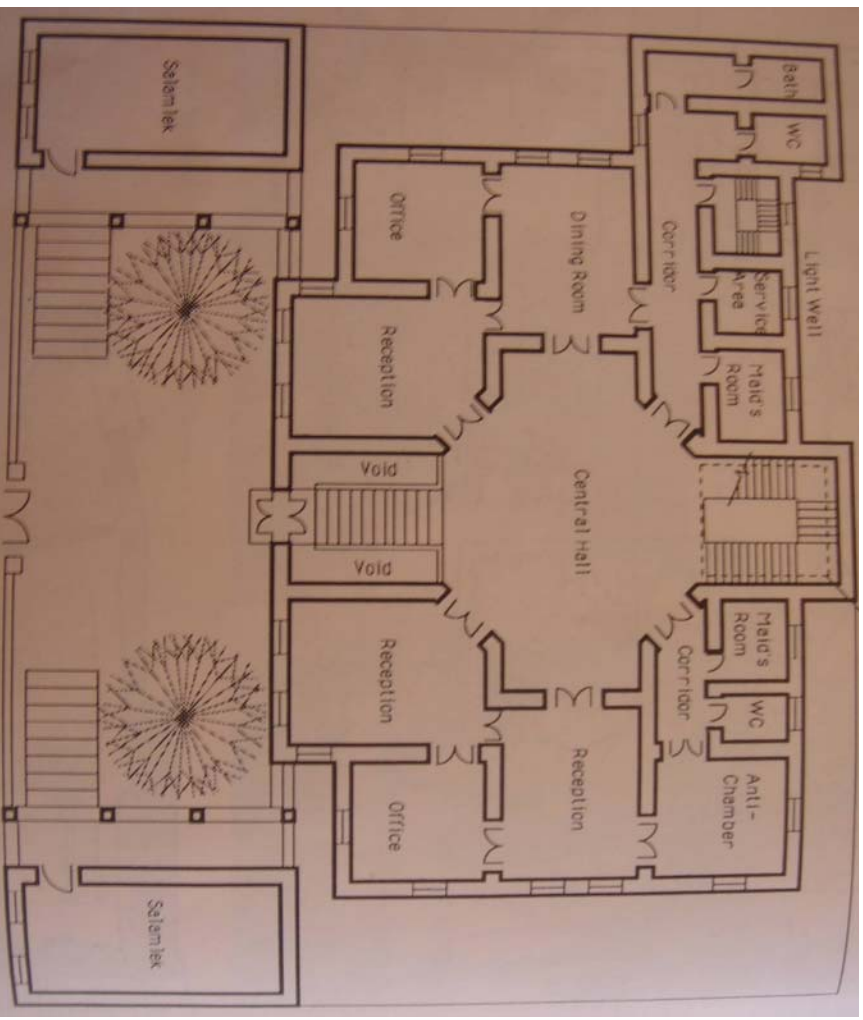


Pl. 4.23 Ceremonial dam-cutting,
after Norden

Pls. 4.24-26

Photographs
of the Palace
of Mustafa
Fadil
in Darb al-
Jamamiz,
after
egyptdantan.
com





Pls. 4.27-28

Floor plans showing
salamluks in
 Hilmiyya,
 after Asfour



Pls. 4.29-30

Photograph of
salamlik on the
corner of
Shari' Mustafa
Sirri and Shari'
Ilhami





Pls. 4.31-32

Photographs of
salamlık on
Shari ' Mustafa Sirri



Pls. 4.33-34

Rumi style architecture,
Left: Building on Shari' 'Ali
Mubarak (except for the
arches which are influenced
by Mamluk architecture)

Below: Building on Shari'
Muhammad 'Ali





Pls. 4.35-36

**Neo-Mamluk
style villa on
Shari' 'Ali
Ibrahim**



**Elements of Neo-
Mamluk decorative
techniques on buildings
in Hilmiyya**

Pls. 4.37-39



Baroque style house on Shari 'Ihhami





Baroque style
house on Shari'
'Ali Ibrahim

Pls. 4.42-43



Pl. 4.44 Art-Nouveau style villa on Sikkat ibn Hanas

Pls. 4.45-46

Right: Villa showing *salamlik*
on bottom left hand corner



Left: Villa showing
mashrabiyya windows





Pl. 4.47 Entrance of Art Nouveau style Building

Pls. 4.48-59

**Details of Art
Nouveau
villa on
Shari ' Ilhami**





Pl. 4.50 Art Deco style building in Sikkat ibn Hanas



Pls. 4.51-52

Mixture of architectural styles in villas in Hilmiyya



Pls. 4.53-55

Mashrabiyya screens
within
Neo-Classical buildings
in Hilmিয়া





Pls. 4.56-57
Recent architecture of Hilmiyya

