

The Fatimid Cairo Religions Complex

Sarah Maher Halim Adel El. Gendy Asmaa Said Salama
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels- Suez Canal University

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ABSTRACT

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Egypt has always been the incubator of all religions, being a best example for tolerance, coexistence, and acceptance of the other throughout history. This can be indicated through the presence of places of worship for the three religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) in the same region on its land forming what is known by 'Religions Complex', which is a source of holiness and spirituality. The current research studies the idea of developing a proposed project for a new Religions Complex in one of the most important Cairo's historic sites (Fatimid Cairo), that was designated on the World Heritage Map and considered a place of worship for all religions.

The Objective of the Research

- Gaining insight into a New Religions Complex in Cairo.
- Examining selected historical monuments in Fatimid Cairo and determining the implications for its future development.
- Outlining a developing vision for the region's inclusion on the World Tourist Map.
- Seeking to better understand Egypt's History.

Introduction

On the recommendation of the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated Historic Cairo as a World Cultural Heritage Site, on the World Heritage List, under the title 'Islamic Cairo' in 1979. Cairo's historic city was cited in the nomination file as covering an area of around 32 square kilometers on the eastern bank of the Nile, including al- Fustat (the mosque of 'Amr Bin al-As, the Roman fortress, the Coptic churches), the Mosque of Ibn Tulun and the surrounding area, the Citadel area and the surrounding monuments, the Fatimid nucleus of Cairo from Bāb Zuwailah to the north wall with the city of gates (Bāb al Futuh and Bāb an Nasr) and with the concentration of major Ayyubid and Mamluk monuments, as well as the necropolis from al-Fustat to the northern limits of Fatimid Cairo. The UNESCO-

WHC Urban Regeneration Project for Historic Cairo was launched in July 2010 (URHC) ¹.

Fatimid Cairo refers to Cairo or Al-Qahira, the capital of Egypt, that was founded by Jawhar al-Siqilli (the General of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Mu'izz Li din Allah Al-fāṭmy) after his arrival to Egypt in 969 A.D/ 358 H., on the head of a Fatimid army², to become the seat of the caliphate, and said to be named Al-Mansuria after his father³. When Jawhar chose the region, it was empty of structures except for the orchards of Al- Ekhshid Mohamed Bin Zafg known as Al-Kafoury, a Coptic convent known as 'Dyr āl- 'zām', and a well that still in its place, and a Palace known as 'Qsyr ālšwk'⁴. In 359 H., Jawhar planned and divided the city into divisions known as 'ḥṭṭ' for each troop, then surrounded the city by a huge wall within gates from the four sides, built inside a palace, a mosque, and dug a trench⁵, then by the time the city expanded till it reached its complete shape.

Cairo's Fatimid nucleus can be considered an open museum, its history scattered widely along the streets, rich by its monuments each telling a story related to different era and religion including mosques, tombs, madrasas (old schools), palaces, houses, old gates, synagogues, churches, and more (fig.1). This study is concerned with the tourism development of Fatimid Cairo as a complete religions complex, starting from Ḥārṭ Zuwaila⁶ and the church complex, the synagogue of Musa Ibn Maimun, and the main Islamic monuments (Bāb Zuwaila, Al Mu'ayed Sheikh, Al Azhar and Al Hussain Mosques) as will be explained in detail.

I-The Church Complex of Ḥārṭ Zuwaila: This complex is situated in Ḥārṭ Zwyla, El Jamaliah district (fig.1), composed of three churches and two monasteries which are (the church of the Virgin Mary, the church of St. Philopater, the church of St.

¹ URHC (2012) *Urban Regeneration Project for Historic Cairo, First Report of Activities*, July 2010-June 2012, p.11, 105.

²The Fatimids were a religious dynasty thought to be descent from the prophet's daughter Fatima. In historical terms the Fatimids belonged to a section of Shi'a known as Ismailis. The Fatimids' first successes were amongst the Berber tribes of North Africa. During the reign of the Caliph Al- Mu'iz the empire was expanded westwards to include the whole of North Africa to the Atlantic Ocean and eastwards to Egypt and Palestine in 969. Egypt began a new phase in Fatimid history with the foundation of Cairo as the imperial capital. Petersen, A., *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, p.86.

³ Behrens-Abouseif, D., *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, the American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1989, p.3,5; ص ٧-١٠. أحمد فكري، مساجد القاهرة و مدارسها، الجزء الأول، الطبعة الثانية، القاهرة، دار المعارف، ٢٠٠٨، ص ٧-١٠. يقول المقرئ "لم يكن فيها بنبان سوى أماكن هي بستان الإخشيد محمد بن زفج المعروف اليوم بالكافوري من القاهرة، ودير للنصارى يعرف بدير: العظام.... وبقي الآن بئر هذا الدير، وتعرف ببئر العظام والعامية تقول بئر العظمة..... وفي هذه الرملة أيضاً مكان ثالث يعرف بقصير الشوك بصيغة التصغير تترله بنو عذرة في الجاهلية، وصار موضعه عند بناء القاهرة يعرف بقصر الشوك من جملة القصور الزاهرة، هذا الذي اطلعت عليه أنه كان في موضع القاهرة قبل بنائها بعد الفحص والتفتيش". تقى الدين أحمد بن على المقرئ. المواعظ والاعتبار في ذكر الخطط والآثار، ج ٤، ص ٤٠٩، ٤١٠. المقرئ. الخطط، ج ٤، ص ٤٠٩-٤١٢.

⁶ 'Zuweila' is the name related to the Moroccan Barbarian troop accompanied Jawher in his military campaign, and after dividing the city into 'ḥṭṭ', Ḥārṭ Zuwaila was their lain. It was situated to the north-western side of the Fatimid palace. ط. ابراهيم بن محمد بن ايدمر العلاني (ابن دقماق)، الإنتصار لواسطة عقد الامصار، ج ٥، ص ١، المطبعة الكبرى الأميرية ببولاق، ١٣١٠ هـ، ص ٣٧؛ المقرئ ص ٥٦٤، ٥٦٥.

George, the monastery of the Virgin Mary and the monastery of St. George) all returned to different dates.

I. a: The Church of the Virgin Mary Ḥārī Zuwaila:

I.a.1: History: This church, also known as Al-‘drā’ ḥālī ālhdyd⁷ (العدرا حالة الحديد), is one of Egypt's oldest churches, according to Al-Maqrīzī, it was built by a famous doctor named (Zilon) around 270 years before the Arab's entry to Egypt⁸, which would put it in the middle of the Fourth Century, around 350-352 A.D at least. Despite some ambiguity regarding the status of the churches that existed within Cairo's walls at the time of its foundation, but all the reference refers to this church as one of the oldest churches in Cairo⁹, as will be explained.

Al-Maqrīzī during the 15th century emphasized the significance of this church to the Egyptian Christians, stating that it “was great to the Christians, had six fathers and hosted three ceremonies (the Palm Day, the Cross Day, and the Resurrection Feast). But the first mention received was from the writing of Abu Al Makarem who lived during the 12th century and described the church and its architecture and those who contributed to its decoration among of them was a prince known as Gamal Al Kafa Abu Saied during the reign of Caliph Al Hafez, as well as Abu Al Makareem Saad Allah and Sanea Al Khlafah Abu Zekri Yehia known as Al Akram, who used to pray in it (1135-1147AD)¹⁰.

Despite the fact that Al-Maqrīzī did not mention the source of his information, Amelineau (1893) mentioned a Coptic manuscript no. 53, and a manuscript of lord Crawford that contain first a list of the bishoprics of Egypt, and a second list of the principal churches and convents of Lower Egypt related to the Byzantine Period, which stated several churches in Cairo, one of which is the church of Ḥārī Zuwaila, referring to it as "the Church of the mother of God in Ḥārī Zuwaila "¹¹.

†ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΝΤΡΑΒΗ ΝΖΕ- ΒΥΛΩΗ. †ΘΕΟΔΟΚΟΣ ΘΘ †ΑΓΙΑ ΜΠΑΡΘ ΝΤΡΑΒΗ ΝΖΕΒΟΥΛΩΗ.		والدة الاله مريم حمارت زويلة 12 والدة الاله العذراء مريم العذرى حمارت زويلة 13
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⁷ Ḥālī ālhdyd, an Arabic ward means that is who melts the iron, referring to the story of melting the fetters of Matthias (the disciple who replaced Judas Iscariot). Wissa. M., Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4.

⁸ يقول المقرئزي عن كنيسة حارة زويلة بالقاهرة "كنيسة عظيمة عند النصارى اليعاقبة، وهي على اسم السيدة، وزعموا أنها قديمة تعرف بالحكيم زايلون، وكان قبل الملة الإسلامية بنحو مائتين وسبعين سنة، وأنه صاحب علوم شتى، وأن له كترأ عظيماً يتوصل إليه من بئر هناك". تقي الدين احمد بن علي المقرئزي، المواعظ والأعتبار في ذكر الخطط والآثار، ج ٤، مطبعة النيل، ١٣٢٦ هـ، ص ٤٢٣، ٤٢٤؛ المؤتمن سعد الله بن جرجس بن مسعود (ابو المكارم)، تاريخ ابو الكارم عن ما كتبه الأجانب و المؤرخون عن الكنائس و الأديرة، نشر القص صموئيل السرياني، ج ٤، ص ٤٣ نقلا عن المقرئزي، و ص ١١٢ نقلاً عن فانسلب؛ رءوف حبيب، الموجز التاريخي عن الكنائس القبطية القديمة بالقاهرة، مكتبة المحبة، القاهرة، ١٩٧٩، ص ٨٣؛ علي مبارك، الخطط الجديدة لمصر القاهرة ومدنها و بلادها القديمة و الشهيرة، ج ٦، الطبعة الأولى بالمطبعة الأميرية الكبرى ببولاق مصر، ١٣٠٥ هـ، ص ٧٦.

⁹ رءوف حبيب، الموجز التاريخي، ص ٨٣. Wissa. M., Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4;

¹⁰ علي مبارك، الخطط التوفيقية، ص ٧٤، ٧٥؛ رءوف حبيب، الموجز التاريخي، ص ٨٣، ٨٤.

¹¹ Amélineau, É., *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque Copte*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1893, p.577; رءوف حبيب، الموجز التاريخي، ص ٨٣، ٨٤.

¹² Amélineau, *La géographie de l'Égypte*, p.577.

¹³ Amélineau, *La géographie de l'Égypte*, p.579.

The church's first mention was received returns to the 12th century in the bibliography of Pope Makara (Makarios II no.69), who ascended the chair of St. Mark in 1102 A.D, on the occasion of the consecration of a new bishop for Old Cairo (Babylon), and the ceremony took place in the church of Ḥārī Zuwaila¹⁴. It is known that it suffered numerous destructions and subsequent restorations¹⁵, for example it's massive destruction in 1321 AD (721 H.) followed by rebuilding, after which it served as the patriarch's seat after the church of Abu Seifein in Old Cairo, as the patriarch John VIII (no.80) 1300- 1320 moved the patriarchal residence to Ḥārī Zuwaila¹⁶. It appears that the desire was to be nearer to the new capital, Cairo and stayed till the reign of Patriarch Mattaus IV (no.102) 1660 A.D, then it moved to the church of Ḥārī al Roum^{17,18} which means that it stayed for about three centuries and half in Ḥārī Zuwaila, which considered the longest period for the patriarchal chair in a place, contemporary 23 patriarch in total¹⁹ (Fig.2).

According to A. Butler he described the church by saying "this is without question earliest in the city of Cairo and differs from the church above and those in the Harat-ar-Rum in its basilica structure. In many points it reminds one of Al Mu'allakah, in others it is peculiar. According to his measurements "it lies about 14 ft. below the present average level of the neighborhood proof enough of its great antiquity"²⁰. Nowadays and according to M. Wissa they have sunk to a subterranean depth of about 18 feet (6.5 meters) on account of the accumulation of Nile silt through the centuries²¹ (fig. 3).

I.a.2: Architecture: The first description for the church came from Abu Al Makarem's writings, who lived in Ḥārī Zuwaila during the 12th century and left a manuscript published by Fr. Samuel Al Saurian, but unfortunately the first two papers were lost, and what is kept from the description begins with the third paper²². According to Abu Al Makarem, the church of the Virgin Mary was magnificent in terms of architecture and iconostasis made of ebony inlaid with ivory and golden

¹⁴ ساويرس ابن المقفع. تاريخ البطارقة، الأنبا صموئيل، القاهرة، ١٩٤٣-١٩٧٩، ج ٣، ص ١٦؛ بولا ساويرس، الكنائس والأديرة الأثرية بحارة زويلة بالقاهرة، رسالة دكتوراه، معهد الدراسات القبطية، القاهرة، ١٩٩٣، ص ٢٣، ٢٤. Grossmann. P.,

Churches in Dayr Abu Sayfayn, CE., Vol.4.

¹⁵ فيقول المقريري في كتابه الخطط بعد اغلاق الكنائس في مصر "فبعث ملك برشلونة في سنة ثلاث وسبعمئة هدية جلييلة زائدة عن عادته، عم بها جميع أرباب الوظائف من الأمراء مع ما خص به السلطان، وكتب يسأل في فتح الكنائس، فاتفق الرأي على فتح كنيسة حارة زويلة لليعاقية، وفتح كنيسة البندقانيين من القاهرة، ثم لما كان يوم الجمعة تاسع شهر ربيع الآخر سنة إحدى وعشرين وسبعمئة، هدمت كنائس أرض مصر في ساعة واحدة" ص ١١٢٤، رؤوف حبيب، ص ٨٣.

¹⁶ Wissa, M., Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4

¹⁷ علي مبارك، ص ٧٦؛ الأنبا صموئيل، تاريخ ابو المكارم عن ما كتبه الأجانب و المؤرخين عن الكنائس والأديرة، ج ٤، ص ٦٨؛ رؤوف حبيب، الموجز التاريخي من الكنائس القبطية القديمة بالقاهرة، مكتبة المحبة، ١٩٧٩، ص ٨٣، John XVI, Al-Tukhi, R., CE, Vol.4.

¹⁸ Harit Zuwaylah is situated in the district of Al Jammaliyyah or Khurunfish. Together with Harit Al-Rum, probably considered the oldest quarter in Cairo. Wissa, M., Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4

¹⁹ بولا ساويرس، الكنائس والأديرة، ص ٤٠.

²⁰ Butler, A., *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, Vol. I, the Clarendon Press, 1884, P. 273

²¹ Wissa, M., Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4.

²² بولا ساويرس، الكنائس والأديرة، ص ١١٥.

inscriptions and decorations for Egyptian handcrafts, alabaster columns etc... According to al-Maqrīzī, who lived in the 15th century, “it was one of the churches destroyed in Cairo in 721 H. and what is found today are another two on the same site of the original two, but they lack the beauty of the original once”²³. This also was proofed by A. Butler when he visited the church and said that “the present entrance has clearly been cut through a second chapel from which the altar has been removed” and added there are signs of a later entrance in the middle of the south aisle²⁴.

The Church’s architecture features are similar to the hanging church²⁵, consists of a narthex (forecourt), nave and side aisles. The nave is flanked by two aisles with two rows of reused twelve grayish marble columns surmounted by Corinthian and Byzantine capitals adorned with crosses among foliage²⁶, more columns stand in the narthex, which is divided into four small sections by screens, beside those in the aisles, placed randomly, and four against the choir-screen²⁷ (fig.4, 5a,b,c), on the southern column is a beautiful, rare icon depicting the annunciation returns to 1355 A. D . The church is notable for its gabled ceiling and marble pulpit (Ambon) with a moveable ladder) supported by four slender twisted marble columns and with a wooden book holder in the shape of an eagle (fig.6). A unique large cross or rood surmounting the section between the choir area and the nave²⁸.

The southern aisle of the church is very narrow contains several icons depicting various topics, including icons drawn by John the Armenian in 1771 A.D. The southern sanctuary is dedicated to the archangel Gabriel in front of it there is a (well) containing water (fig.7) is said to have been blessed by the Holy Family during their flight into Egypt²⁹ (after the sycamore tree, at al-Matariyyah and before going to Babylon³⁰). A door to the right of the southern sanctuary leads to a shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary (fig.8) with several different icons, The principal painting represents Mary with the Child in the branches of a tree growing from her back and surrounded by prophets and angels. The north aisle has another chapel dedicated to the archangel Michael³¹.

²³ علي مبارك, الخطط التوفيقية, ١٨٨٦, ص ٧٥.

²⁴ Butler, A., *The Ancient Coptic Churches*, p. 273

²⁵ The building was once a basilica, today the church shows all the signs of various reconstructions with numerous alterations and additions on all sides. Grossmann, P., *Churches in Dayr Abu Sayfayn*, CE, Vol.4

²⁶ Wissa, M., Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4; Grossmann, P., *Churches in Dayr Abu Sayfayn*, *CE*, Vol.4.

²⁷ Butler, A., *The Ancient Coptic Churches*, p. 273, 274; Gabra G., & Van loon, G., *the Churches of Egypt from the Journey of the Holy Family to the Present Day*, the American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2007, p.136. ١٣٦, ص ٢٠١٦, جودت جبرا, الكنائس في مصر منذ رحلة العائلة المقدسة, القاهرة, ٢٠١٦, ص ١٣٦.

²⁸ Butler, A., *The Ancient Coptic Churches*, p. 273-277; Wissa, M., Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4. رءوف حبيب, الموجز التاريخي, ص ٨٤.

²⁹ رءوف حبيب, الموجز التاريخي, ص ٨٤.

³⁰ Gregorios, B., *Flight into Egypt*, *CE*, Vol.4; Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4.

³¹ Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches*, p. 275; Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4. رءوف حبيب, الموجز التاريخي, ص ٨٤.

The middle main sanctuary is raised a step and separated from the nave by a twelfth-century iconostasis constructed of old ebony divided into panels inlaid with ivory and sculptured with geometrical designs and animal figures and topped with 13 icons³². According to Butler the iconostasis is most likely from the 11th century, stands between two pairs of octagonal Saracenic columns, each of which has two well-cut consecration crosses³³.

The altar is covered by a wooden dome based on four marble columns, decorated from within with the image of the Christ (fig.9), all surmounted by a dome on three sides of it are colored windows of Byzantine form, its corner's decorations resemble stalactites, surmounting. Behind the altar is a marble tribune rising in six marble steps, the lower three of which are straight, the upper three curved parallel to the wall, covered with mosaic of colored marble in large panels. The apse or the Qibla niche is also located in the center of the eastern wall, where the patriarch's throne is placed, and the wall above the niche is decorated with old Damascus tilework . The rest of the haikal wall, north and south, is covered with eighteenth or nineteenth century inferior tiles, there is a fragment of white stone into the north wall, shows a border of dolphins enclosing three sets of figures between strapwork a pair of human-headed harpies, a centaur, and two human forms, the work is early Byzantine³⁴.

I.a.3: The Latest Excavations in the Church of Haret Zuwaila: the latest architectural examinations in the church of Haret Zuwaila in 2022 has revealed an empty space in its western part, a region that was connected to a room that was used as a cafeteria covered by wood, after its removal a hole leading to a Roman cistern was found. This cistern is considered one of the oldest from the Roman Period, consists of two rooms topped by a dome stands on arches. The floor of the cistern is lower than the floor of the church by 4 meters which means that it is lower than the street by 8 meters indicating its anciency (fig. 10a,b,c)³⁵.

I.b: The Church of Philopater Marcurius:

A door in the northwest corner of Al 'adra church opens into the adjoining church of Abu Safein, was mentioned by Abu El Makarem that is topping the church of the Virgin Mary³⁶, was founded by Ibrahim Al Jawhari³⁷, in 1773-74 A. D³⁸. This church

³² Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4.

³³ Butler, *Coptic Churches*, p. 273, 274. ص ٨٤, ٨٥.

³⁴ Butler, *Coptic Churches*, p. 276, 277. ص ٨٤, ٨٥.

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-KY836RSLc>; <https://www.youm7.com/story/2022/>;
<https://www.wataninet.com/2022/06/>

³⁶ ابو المكارم, ج ١, ص ١.

³⁷ Ibrahim al-Jawhari (d. 1795), minister of finance in Ottoman Egypt who was the most important Coptic political figure and personality in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Motzki, H., Ibrahim Al-Jawhari, *Coptic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4.

is said to be built on the remains of an Armenian church dedicated to St. John the Baptist^{39 40}, it was built on the traditional Coptic style with a nave and two side aisles separated by two rows of columns and surmounted by a dome lined with icons. To the east side is the choir area and the three sanctuaries that is raised by one step from the choir area, and a marble fountain like baptistry. The nave is covered by a dome, and another half dome surmounting the middle sanctuary, with an iconostasis inlaid with ivory topped with a group of icons in the middle of which is the icon of the Virgin Mary amidst angels and apostles (fig.11a, b, c)⁴¹.

The door is topped with Coptic and Arabic inscriptions reads as follows “greet, to the god’s Haykel”, and in Arabic” this made for the church of the great martyr loving his parents Mercurius in Hārī Zuwaila”. A small square alter inside the sanctuary embroidered with a figure of the Virgin and various crosses topped with a dome based on four granite columns, behind the alter is a marble amphitheater with five stairs. A wooden Ambon of rosewood in the nave carved in panels showing sunflowers, with starlike ivory centers, springing from vases, based on 6 wooden columns⁴².

I.c: The Church of St. George:

To the right side of the exterior entrance of the Virgin Mary church, is a door leads to the second upper church in Hārēī Zuwaila dedicated to St. George⁴³. Al Maqrizzi mentioned only two churches in Hārēī Zuwaila⁴⁴, and the only upper church mentioned by Abu El Makarem was dedicated to Marcurius. The first historical indication for the church was a manuscript that is now preserved in the British Museum with an explicit text came with it saying that it was for the church of St. George in Hārēī Zuwaila 1748 A. D⁴⁵. It is known that at first it was affiliated with the administration of the Great Church and the patriarchal house was adjacent to it from the upper level, then it became independent in its administration in 1764 and was renewed⁴⁶.

³⁸يقال عن دور ابراهيم الجوهري في الكنيسة "عمر من داخل هذه الكنيسة (المقصود كنيسة العذراء) من الجهة البحرية كنيسة صغري حسنة جداً انشأها سنة الف واربعمائة و تسعين للشهداء برسم الشهيد ابي سيفين ووقف عليها كتب مخطوطة و حبس عليها أماكن مخصوصة يعرف ايرادها في صالحها و لم تزل هذه الكنيسة موجودة" علي مبارك, التوفيقية, ج ٦, ص ٧٦.

³⁹ جودت جبرا, الكنائس في مصر, ص ١٣٦. ١36. Gabra and Van loon, the churches of Egypt, p.136.

⁴⁰ ابي المكارم ذكر كنيسة للقديس يوحنا المعمدان علو بيعة السيدة الطاهرة مريم بحارة زويلة قد افردت للأمرن و سكنها البطريرك في سنة ١١٦٩ م. أبو المكارم ج ٢, ص ١, و لكن في الجزء الأول ص ١ ذكر ان الكنيسة يعلوها كنيسة مارقوروريوس في قوله "مقطع خشب علي بيت النساء في كنيسة مرقوروريوس التي في علو هذه البيعة"

⁴¹ رءوف حبيب, الموجز التاريخي, ص ٨٦. 4. Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4.

⁴² رءوف حبيب, الموجز التاريخي, ص ٨٦. 4. Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, CE, Vol.4. يقول علي مبارك عن هذه الكنيسة " هذه الكنيسة العليا يصعد اليها بدرج متسع من المدخل الموصل للكنيسة الكبرى و هي بأسم الشهيد جاورجيوس لطيفة جداً محكمة الوضع و هي دون الكبرى في القدم" علي مبارك ٧٦؛ جودت جبرة, الكنائس في مصر منذ رحلة العائلة المقدسة, ص ١٣٦. ١36. Gabra and Van loon, the churches of Egypt, p.136.

⁴³ المقريزي, الخطط, ج ٤, ص ١١٤٣.

⁴⁴ بولا ساويرس, الكنائس و الأديرة, ص ٦٠.

⁴⁵ علي مبارك, الخطط التوفيقية, ص ٧٦.

The church is very small in size in comparison with the other two⁴⁷, squarish with a number of ancient and modern marble columns divide it into a nave, two side aisles, choir area and sanctuaries. A small room contains a shrine for the Virgin Mary is located outside this church with an icon for her with two saints, the oldest icon for St. George in the church dates to 1782 A.D. According to Habib. R, the church renewal caused the obliteration and loss of its archaeological features, only parts of the inlaid ivory iconostasis with plant decorations and some icons above the iconostasis (fig.12)⁴⁸.

Its library comprises a number of rare manuscripts, some of them are prayers and stories of saints, and perhaps the oldest of them: Manuscript contains the biography of Saint Cyprian dates to 1109 M/ 1391 A.D, another with the biography of St. Bartholomew 1156 M/ 1438 A.D, and more for the miracles of St. George, Anba Nehru, St. Mina, Mercurius Abu Sefein and Jacob Al-Maqta dated 1060 M, also the Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril 1062 M/ 1344 A. D⁴⁹.

I.d: The Monastery of the Virgin Mary for Nuns: this monastery is located a few meters from the entrance of Ḥāreġ Zuwaila. The exact date of its foundation is unknown, but al Maqrizi mentioned a monastery for nuns in this region but without mentioning its name⁵⁰, another opinion supposing its foundation might between 370-557 AD⁵¹. This monastery's renovation was mentioned during the reign of the patriarch Marcus no. (101)⁵² (fig.13).

I.e: The Monastery of St. George for Nuns: neither Abu El- Makarem nor El-Maqrizi mentioned this monastery, and the reason still unknown. According to Abd al Masih Salib its size is bigger than that of the monastery of the Virgin Mary Ḥāreġ Zuwaila. Two of the monastery superiors were mentioned Mariam and Afrosia, and mentioned the renovations done in 1597 M under the beholder Ibrahim El Wahaby⁵³.

II: The Synagogue of Mûsâ Ibn Maimûn:

The second destination in the complex will be the synagogue of Musa Ibn Maimun which is locates about 220 m from the church of the Virgin Mary, 3 minutes walking or 1 minute by car (fig.14). Musa Ibn Maimun al-Qurthubi al-Yahudi (ابو عمران موسى بن ميمون بن عبد الله القرطبي) known as Mûsâ Ibn Maimûn or Moses Maimonides), was born in Cordoba 1135 A.d/ 529 H where he studied medicine, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and law. He came to Egypt and stayed in Al-Fustat during the late

⁴⁷ Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4

⁴⁸ Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4. ص ٨٦؛

⁴⁹ Wissa, Harit Zuwaylah, *CE*, Vol.4. ص ٨٧؛

⁵⁰ يقول المقرزي " و للنساء ديارات تختص بهم فمنها دير الراهبات بحارة زويلة من القاهرة، وهو دير عامر بالأبكار المترهبات وغيرهن من نساء النصارى " المقرزي، الخطط، ص ١١٣٤.

⁵¹ بولا ساويرس، الكنائس و الأديرة، ص ١٢٠.

⁵² علي مبارك، الخطط التوفيقية، ص ٧٦.

⁵³ عبد المسيح صليب المسعودي البرموسي، تحفة السائلين في ذكر أديرة رهبان المصريين، ١٩٣٢، ص ١١٦.

Fatimid era, he remained in Egypt after it was ruled by the Ayyubids. During his life, he carried out various professions such as philosopher, scientist, and doctor⁵⁴.

It is known that he was a doctor in the Fatimid court, and after the Fatimids, he retained his job as a doctor of the royal court, as he gained a special position with the vizir Salah Elden and the Ayyubids. Mûsâ Ibn Maimûn died in Egypt 1204 A.D and was buried in a temple in Cairo and then transferred his remains to Tiberias according to his will⁵⁵.

III: Bâb Zuwaila:

The third destination in the same region is Bâb Zuweila, which is about 2.2 km from the last destination about 11 minutes by car (fig.15). Cairo was surrounded by brick walls with several gates on each side when it was founded by Al Mu'izz's general Jawhar Al-Siqilli. Later, Badr al-Jamâli vizir of the caliph Al- Mustansir and Amir Al-Juyush, replaced these walls with walls of stone between 1087-92. The new enclosure was slightly larger than the previous one, and the majority of the new gates bears the names of those they replaced⁵⁶. Bab Zuwaila is one of the remaining gates of Fatimid Cairo with Bab al-Nasr (Gate of Victory), Bab al-Futuh (Gate of Conquest). The remains of the walls and the gate of Bâb Zuwaila is located on the southern side and according to Al Maqrizi, they were Badr al-Jamâli's outstanding achievements⁵⁷.

Bâb Zuwaila that has survived is located on the southern wall of the city, dates back to 11th century 1091-92, its name returns to a north African tribe named Zuwaila accompanied the Fatimid army to Egypt. According to Al Maqrizi Bab al- Futuh, Bab al-Nasr and Bab Zuwayla, were built by three Christian monks from Edessa who came to Egypt fleeing from the Saljuq conquest of eastern Anatolia⁵⁸. The gate has a pair of semicircular stone towers for two thirds of their height, and the inner flanks of the two towers near the entrance are decorated with lobed arches. Inside the vestibule to the right, there is a half- domed recess with two exquisitely carved arches at the corners. The left side of the building was modified when sultan Al Mu'ayyad sheikh built his mosque about 1415 near the gate and had his minarets placed on the towers (fig. 16)⁵⁹.

^{٤٤} عمر سلهم صديق و حمد ميسر محمد, موسى بن ميمون (ت ٦٠٤هـ/ ١٢٠٤ م) نسر اليهود الأعظم الرابي و الفيلسوف العربي اليهودي, مجلة كلية تربية جامعة واسط, العدد الثالث و الثلاثين ٢٠١٨, ص ٤٤١, ٤٤٣.

^{٥٥} عمر سلهم صديق, موسى بن ميمون, ص ٤٤١, ٤٤٣.

^{٥٦} يقول المقرئزي عن باب زويلة " و باب زويلة الكبير ليس هو من المدينة التي أسسها القائد جوهر, وإنما هي زيادة حدثت بعد ذلك" المقرئزي, الخطط, ص ٤١٢.

⁵⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, D, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, p. 67, 68; Petersen, A., *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, Taylor & Francis e-Library 2002, p. 46; J. Dunford, *eyewitness travel Egypt*, London, 2007, p.104.

^{٥٨} وينكر المقرئزي " أن ثلاثة إخوة قدموا من الرها بنائين بنوا: باب زويلة, و باب النصر, و باب الفتوح, وكل واحد بنى باباً, و أن باب زويلة هذا بني في سنة أربع وثمانين و أربعمائة, و أن باب الفتوح بني في سنة ثمانين و أربعمائة". المقرئزي, الخطط, ص ٤٣٣.

⁵⁹ Behrens-Abouseif, D, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, p. 69-72; Dunford, J., *Eyewitness Travel Egypt*, London, 2007, p.104.

IV: The Mosque of Al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh:

After visiting the two minarets of Al Mu'ayyad over the towers of Bāb Zuwails, the visitor will be directed to the mosque itself, which is about 280 meters away, about 2 minutes by car or 2 minutes walking. This mosque is one of the most famous ancient mosques in Cairo, replaced a prison which originally stood next to Bab Zuwaila. Its construction began in 818 AH / 1415 AD by order of the Sultan Al- Mu'ayyad one of the rulers of the Mamluk and completed in 1421. On its southeastern border, the mosque overlooks Al Mu'izz Street, the southern corner of the mosque overlapping with the western tower of Bāb Zuwaila⁶⁰.

The mosque's architect took advantage of the presence of Bab Zuwaila adjacent to the mosque, which is about two minutes' walk away as mentioned before, so he made it as a base for his two minarets (fig. 16). The mosque is adjacent to many other ancient mosques, such as Al-Saleh Tala'a Mosque, 2-minute walk away.

V: AL- Azhar and Al- Hussain:

From al Mu'ayyad's Mosque, the visitor will move to al-Azhar region, which is about 10 minutes' walk or 4 minutes by car. al- Azhar the most celebrated of all Cairo's medieval mosques, its importance returns to being the first mosque built in fatimid Cairo (970), and the first theological college, and played a continuous role in the history of the city from its foundation to the present day, al- azhar is an epithet meaning "the flourishing", one medieval sources call it simply the great mosque. Caliph al Mu'izz li- Din Allah, after conquering Egypt and founding al- Qahira, assigned his general and visir Jawha al- Siqilli the task of building Al- Azhar, the establishing of the mosque started in 359 H/970 A.D, and finished in 972 A.D, known as Cairo's mosque⁶¹. The first *khutba* (Friday prayer) were held in the mosque in 972, and in 989 the mosque acquired the status of a collage with the appointment of 35 scholars to teach the isma'ili shi'a theology⁶².

A writing on the dome of the Riwaq was left but unfortunately now it is demolished can be read as follows According to Al. Maqrizi "بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مما أمر ببنائه عبد الله" ووليه أبو تميم معد الإمام المعز لدين الله أمير المؤمنين صلوات الله عليه وعلي ابائه و أبنائه الأكرمين علي يد عبده جوهر الكاتب الصقلي وذلك في سنة ستين و ثلاثمائة"⁶³.

⁶⁰ See Behrens-Abouseif, D., *Cairo of the Mamluks, a History of the Architecture and its Culture*, Cairo: AUC Press, 2008. p 239-244.

⁶¹ يقول المقرئزي " هذا الجامع أول مسجد أسس بالقاهرة، والذي أنشأه القائد جوهر الكاتب الصقلي، مولى الإمام أبي تميم معد الخليفة أمير المؤمنين المعز لدين الله لما اختط القاهرة، وشرع في بناء هذا الجامع في يوم السبت لست بقين من جمادى الأولى سنة تسع وخمسين وثلاثمائة، وكمل بناؤه لتسع خلون من شهر رمضان سنة إحدى وستين وثلاثمائة وجمع فيه، وكتب بدائر القبة في الرواق الأول. المقرئزي، ص ٨٧٨.

⁶² Behrens-Abouseif, D., *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, p. 58; Hoag, J.D., *Islamic Architecture*, London, 1987, p. 70.

⁶³ المقرئزي، الخطط، ص ٨٧٨؛ حسن عبد الوهاب، تاريخ المساجد الاثرية، الجزء الأول، دار الكتب المصرية، القاهرة، ١٩٤٦، ص ٤٨، ٤٩.

Following the mosques of ‘amr, Al-‘askar and Ibn Tulun, Al-Azhar was the fourth congregational mosque in Egypt, and become the center of Islamic scholarship in Egypt and one of the principle theological universities of the muslim’s world especially after the ottoman conquest when the mamluk collages were in decline. The mosque has gone several enlargements and restorations throughout its history. Today all styles and all periods of cairo’s hity are represented in its architecture. The original mosque of al- Azhar was much smaller than the present building, and it wasn’t at the exact centre of the capital it had three arcades or *Iwans* surrounding the courtyard, the eastern one with five *riwaqs* while the rest had three *Riwaqs* while the western with no *Riwaqs* in the middle of it is the main gate that was surmounted by the minaret⁶⁴. The arcades are all carried on pre-Islamic columns with Corinthian capitals. Its original arches are round, There were three domes, two at the corners of the qibla wall, and one over the prayer niche but none has survived. This feature of three domes in the sanctuary must have been introduced to Egypt by Fatimid craftsmen. The original minaret was a small construction standing above the main entrance and built of brick. Also from the original mosque parts of the stucco decoration, including the conch of the prayer niche and a few window grills have been preserved, then the mosque undergone many enlargement, additions and restorations during the Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottomans⁶⁵.

Al Qahira itself didn’t occupy much more than one square kilometer, the great Fatimid palace complex dominated the entire city. Al Azhar is at a short distance from what was the main avenue Bayn al-Qasrayn. Many Fatimid additions were added, many restorations, additions and donations during the Fatimid dynasty took place. Different periods of Fatimid decorations are represented in the stuccos of Al-Azhar⁶⁶.

From Al Azhar the visitor will be directed to Al-Hussain area and Al-Hussein Mosque, which is 950 meters away (fig. 17). This area has several historical Islamic places, famed by its main landmark Al-Hussein Mosque and Khan Al-Khalili area. Al Hussain Mosque and the surrounding area was built during the Fatimid era 549 H. the mosque is in the middle of the area with its famous unique minaret. Looking at Khan al Khalili which is one of the famous Egyptian and oldest markets, and by the end of (al Sagha street) one reaches the famous street of al Mu’izz Ldin Allah al Fatmi with its famous buildings and the mosques of al Mu’izz, and El Ghory, Kalawaan, and by the end of the street is the gate of victory (Bab al Nasr).

Analysis:

- Cairo’s architecture monuments rank among humanity’s great achievements, recognizing that their preservation is a matter of importance to the whole world, “UNESCO” has listed the Egyptian capital as one of the “cities of

^{٤٩}حسن عبد الوهاب, تاريخ المساجد , ص ٤٩.

⁶⁵ Behrens-Abouseif, D., *Islamic Architecture*, p. 58, 59-64.

⁶⁶ Behrens-Abouseif, D., *Islamic Architecture*, p. 58.

human heritage” such recognition is well justified, for few cities on earth display such a dense concentration of historic architectural treasures as does Cairo.

- The selected region for the religions complex project is Fatimid Cairo, a region rich in its different religious historical monuments, enhancing the opportunity for this idea.
- At the time of constructing the church of the Virgin Mary, this area may have been still relatively open ground utilized by the Copts as a *dayr*, in the sense of a cemetery rather than a regular monastery inhabited by monks.
- The church complex of Bab Zuwaila has not received sufficient scientific studies in comparison to its archaeological importance as one of the points of the Holy Family's journey to Egypt and as a cathedral for more than three centuries, which is considered a long period for a patriarchal seat to be remained in one place.
- The Church of the Virgin Mary Zuwaila is considered from the researcher's point of view, and based on the information published on it, one of the two oldest churches in Fatimid Cairo, if not the oldest. Supporting this thought the new exploration in the church (the ancient Roman cistern that is found this year 2022 under the church which is lower than the street level with about 8 meters and still not undergone any research only mentioned in Statements of some officials.
- Many restorations and renovations were directed by the government to the church and the problem of the underground water was solved by making tunnels for the water surrounding the church (Fig.18a, b).
- The researcher puts more focusing on the Coptic antiquities, because it is the part that did not receive sufficient scientific research in comparison to the Islamic antiquities. The focus was on clarifying the idea of the research, which is idea of a religions complex in Fatimid Cairo.

Recommendations

- Completing the study of the Aga Khan Foundation, for developing Al-Azhar and Al- Hussain Regions including the religion complex (the Church of the Virgin Mary, the synagogue of Musa ibn Maimoun, and the area including all the Islamic monuments.
- The problem of accessibility to the area of the Religious Complex in Fatimid Cairo as a result of the presence of constructional overlaps in uses that must be refined, such as al-Hussein University Hospital and al-Hussein Axis in the center of the country.
- Provide ways for the accessible tourism as the disciples are the targeted slide.
- Completing the excavations in the church especially after the latest excavations in the church.
- The church’s restorations or excavations should be carried out by specialists so that the restoration or modernization does not overshadow its archaeological value.

- Encouraging the scientific and training trips to this religions complex by the universities and institutes.
- Global promotion of the region by Egypt.

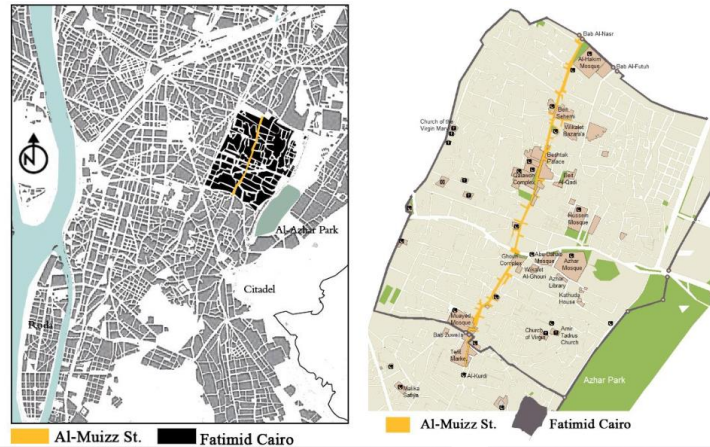


Fig. 1: The Fatimid Cairo location and Al-Muizz Street (the main city spine)

After: Mahgoub, M.H., [“Urban morphology impact on microclimate of the Fatimid city, Cairo, Egypt”](#): *Proceedings of the International Conference on “Changing Cities”*: Spatial, morphological, formal & socio-economic dimensions, Aspa Gospodini (ed.), Skiathos island, Greece, June 18-21, 2013, Fig. 1.

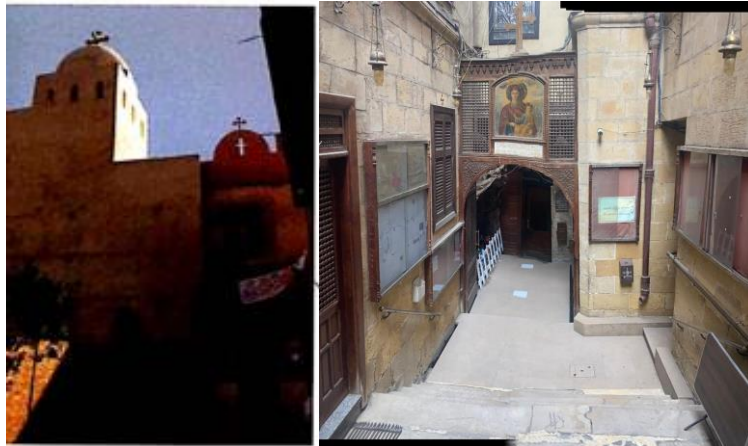


Fig. 2a, b: the church complex from outside; The entrance to the church of the virgin Mary which is lower than the level of the street

After: Garba, G., *the Churches of Egypt*, 2007, p. 134; A photo taken by the researcher.



Fig.3: A marble panel with the names of the 23 patriarchs who left the patriarchal chair of St. Marcus in the church of Haret Zuwaila. A photo taken by the researcher. 4/1/2022

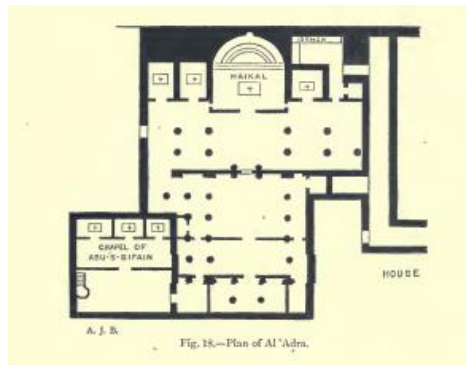


Fig.4: plan of Al'adra church haret zuwaila After: Butler, A., *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, Vol. I, p. 273, fig.18.

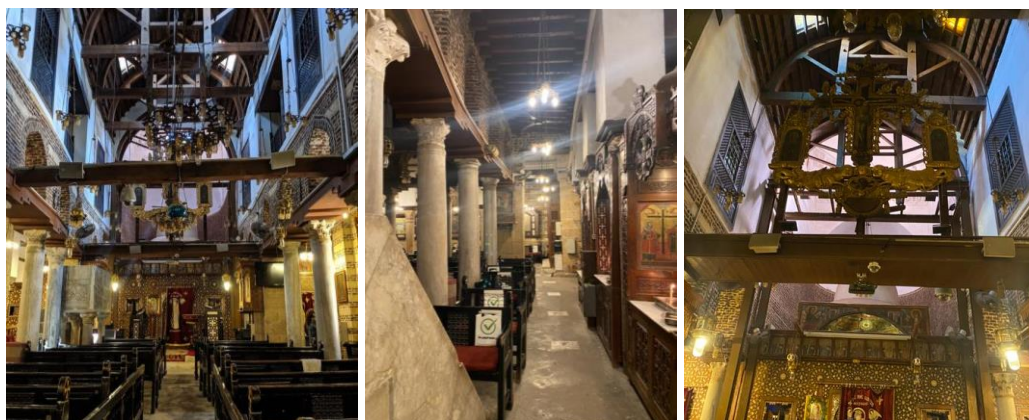


Fig.5a, b, c: The church of Haret Zuwaila (nave, two side aisles, the choir area, the main sanctuary with the iconostasis and the ceiling) After: Gabra, G., *the Churches of Egypt*, 2007, p. 138; A photos taken by the researcher

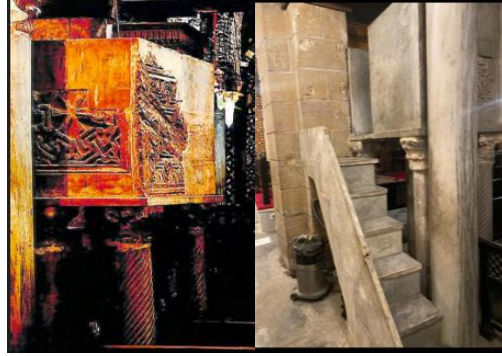


Fig.6: The marble *Ambon* from two sides in the church of the virgin Mary
 جودت جبرة، الكنائس في مصر منذ رحلة العائلة المقدسة، ص ١٤٢.
 A photo taken by the researcher 4/1/2022.



Fig.7: The well of the holy family in the church of the virgin Mary.
 A photo taken by the researcher 4/1/2022.



Fig.8: The shrine dedicated to the virgin Mary and its painted ceiling
 After: Gabra, G., *the Churches of Egypt*, 2007, p. 139; A photo taken by the
 researcher



Fig.9: The wooden dome covering the alter in the church of the Virgin Mary
After: Gabra, G., *the Churches of Egypt*, 2007, p. 137.



Fig. 10a,b,c: the latest excavations under the church an ancient Roman cistern.
After: <https://www.wataninet.com/2022/06/>; photos taken by the researcher.
28/6/2022



Fig.11 a, b, c: The church of Marcurious Haret Zuwaila
A photo taken by the researcher. 4/1/2022



Fig.12: The church of St. George Haret Zuwaila
A photo taken by the researcher. 4/1/2022



Fig.13: The monastery of the Virgin Mary for Nuns from outside.
After: Gabra, G., *the Churches of Egypt*, 2007, p. 134; A photo taken by the
researcher 4/1/2022

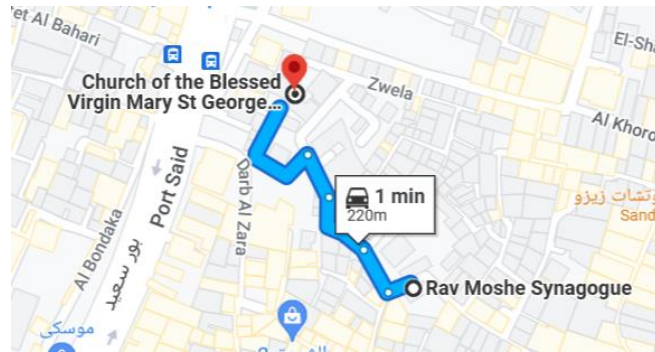


Fig.14: the distance between the church complex and the synagogue of Musa ibn Maimun

After: <https://www.google.com/maps/> 13/1/2022



Fig.15: the distance between the synagogue of Musa ibn Maimun and Bab Zuweila

After: <https://www.google.com/maps/dir>

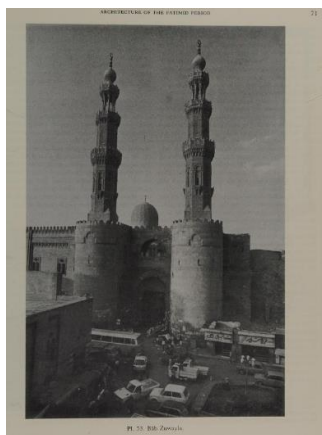


Fig. 16: The two minarets of Al Muayyed Sheikh from Bab Zuweila

After: Behrens-Abouseif, D, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, pl. 53.



Fig. 17: the mosques of al Azhar and al Hussain and the surrounding areas
After: <https://earth.google.com/web/search/Al-Azhar+Mosque,+El-Darb+El-Ahmar>



Fig.18a, b: Restorations and renovation in the church; Tunnels for the underground water inside the church
A photo taken by the researcher 4/1/2022.

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عادل الجندي

سارة ماهر حليم
كلية السياحة والفنادق

المخلص	معلومات المقالة
<p>طالما كانت مصر حاضنة لجميع الأديان السماوية، كونها خير مثال على التسامح والتعايش وقبول الآخر عبر التاريخ. ويمكن الإشارة إلى ذلك من خلال وجود دور عبادة للأديان الثلاثة (الإسلام، المسيحية واليهودية) في نفس المكان على أرضها مُشكلة ما يعرف بـ "مجمع اديان". يدرس هذا البحث تقديم فكرة تطوير مشروع مقترح لمجمع اديان في إحدى المناطق التاريخية الرئيسية في القاهرة التاريخية كواحدة من أهم المناطق التراثية القديمة التي تم تصنيفها علي مواقع التراث العالمي و اعتبرت مكاناً لعبادة الأديان السماوية الثلاثة و هي القاهرة الفاطمية لتكون نواة لفكرة "مجمع أديان القاهرة الفاطمية".</p>	<p>الكلمات المفتاحية مجمع أديان؛ القاهرة الفاطمية؛ كنائس؛ مساجد.</p> <p>(JAAUTH) المجلد ٢٢، العدد ٣، (يونيو ٢٠٢٢)، ص ١٦٧-١٨٨.</p>