

IBN KHALDUN AND THE CITY:
A Study of The Physical Formation of Medieval Cairo

by

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 12, 1989
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This essay is an application of Ibn Khaldun's theories of culture and civilization to a study of the physical formation of medieval Cairo. The study is based on the premise that the city is an historical process governed by an underlying set of cultural conditions. Those conditions manifest themselves in the physical form of the city.

Ibn Khaldun formulated his theories as tools for investigating the nature of social phenomena. He considered such investigation a necessary step towards understanding and recording the historical events. His concept of history, stated in the first part of this study, is based on a cyclical pattern of cultural change which leads to the rise and fall of civilization. The city in his framework becomes an aspect of civilization following the same inevitable evolutionary pattern.

The first part of this study examines those theories and focuses on their important aspects. The second part introduces some historical facts about the evolution of medieval Cairo and analyses them using the premises of Ibn Khaldun's theories. The reports of al-Maqrizi - a fifteenth century historian of Cairo - provided the historical information necessary for this investigation. The study raised some issues concerning the use of Ibn Khaldun's theories in pursuing such kind of studies, and the knowledge of the Islamic city which need to be reassessed. Those issues are presented in the last section under Reflections.

Thesis Supervisor: Stanford Anderson

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TO THE MEMORY OF
Jaweed Jamal

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INTRODUCTION

The history of social thought is indebted to Ibn Khaldun for his formulation of the science of culture. This science, which is based on Ibn Khaldun's sensitive observations of the societies of North Africa and the Middle East, suggests a theory of history rooted in the understanding of the nature of social phenomena. Although a huge body of literature exists on Ibn Khaldun and his science of culture in the form of commentaries, no serious attempts were made to examine the applicability of his theories and the possibility of developing them into methodologies appropriate for historical investigation.

The importance of the science of culture (*'ilm-al-'Umran*) comes from its intended aim, as stated by Ibn Khaldun, that is to criticize the traditional Islamic historiography systematically and to show that the proper writing of history requires knowledge of the nature and causes of historical events. Therefore, it is an organized body of knowledge based on the study of social, economic, political and religious aspects of the society, as well as the ecological and geographical aspects of the environment. The central concept in the science of culture is the typical cyclical movement from primitive to civilized culture and back to primitive as a determined cycle of birth, growth and decay, underlying civilization in all its forms and aspects. The force behind such movement, deduced by Ibn Khaldun, is the power of *'assabiyah* (social solidarity). Ibn Khaldun saw this cycle in those

regions of North Africa and the Middle East which are situated between the desert and the settled culture.

The process of socialization and cultural change explained by Ibn Khaldun as the pattern of evolution of civilization, manifests itself in certain aspects which evolve parallel to the evolution of civilization. Such aspects include: the state, the city, economic life, and the sciences. Therefore, the city, physically and historically, can be argued to be in direct relation with the forces and laws that govern the process of cultural change. It is through historical data that this hypothesis can be tested both theoretically and practically.

Ibn Khaldun's theories are contemporary to the development of major 'Islamic cities' like Fez, Tunis and Cairo in North Africa and Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad and Jerusalem in the Middle East - cities which Ibn Khaldun had visited and to which he refers in his text - and can be utilized to explain certain complex processes underlay the evolution of the city, culturally and physically.

Thus, this study is an attempt to examine some of Ibn Khaldun's theories, and to apply those theories to certain aspects of the urban development of medieval Cairo. The text(s) of al-Maqrizi will provide the historical data necessary to understand the aspects of the city under investigation. The study, therefore, will consist of two main parts; examination and application.

In the first part, the circumstances which influenced the formulation of the science of culture are pointed out. Following, the theories relevant to this study are introduced. Those theories include: the cultural types and the gradual change from one type to another; the concept of *'asabiyah*; the rise and fall of civilization; and the concept of city. In the second part, the evolution of the early Arab settlements as well as the rise of the Fatimid walled city are analyzed and examined in the light of Ibn Khaldun's theories. The issues addressed and discussed in the analysis are reflected upon in the last section where new dimensions are proposed for further investigation both on the level of the theories as well as their application.

Finally, I should emphasize that this study, at this stage, is a preliminary essay shedding light on certain aspects of medieval Cairo, as well as suggesting the importance of the theories of Ibn Khaldun for the pursuit of historical investigations.

Note on transliteration

No specific system of transliteration was used with the exception of the use of (') for (ع 'ayn.), (Kh) for (خ), (Dh) for (ذ), (Th) for (ث), and (q) for (ق).

PART ONE: EXAMINATION: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first part of this study will introduce the relevant aspects of the science of culture *'ilm al- 'Umran*. Such aspects will comprise a theoretical framework for studying and analyzing some components of the evolution and development process of the physical environment of medieval Cairo.

My aim of this part is not to interpret neither the components, nor the methodology of the science of culture. It is rather meant to focus on concepts which I believe are relevant to urbanization. To this end, I will limit my discussion to introducing Ibn Khaldun's views stated by him in the *Muqaddimah* which will serve as the primary source for this study. Other sources will also be employed in explaining certain aspects of Ibn Khaldun's enterprise.

I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Background

Ibn Khaldun (*Abu-Zaid Abdulrahman ibn Muhammad al-Tunisi al-Hadrami*), was born in Tunis in 732 H./1332 A.D., and died in Cairo in 808 H./1406 A.D. His family was believed to be descendant of a Yamanite tribe from *Hadramowt*, who moved to Andalusia as part of the Muslim army during the conquest of Spain. Then they moved to Tunis after the defeat and decline of the Muslim state in Andalusia.

When Ibn Khaldun grew up, he received the same level of education as his contemporaries, and shared his family's active participation in the intellectual and, to some degree, political life of the city. He studied the Qur'an, The Traditions, Jurisprudence, Arabic language, as well as logic and philosophy at a later stage.

During the course of his life, he was appointed to several political positions. His participation in the politics of North Africa made him experience the good and evils of politics. Moreover, his personality was of a kind that allowed him to fulfill his ambitions to gain power and attain higher ranks.

Ibn Khaldun appeared during the most chaotic period of Muslim civilization both in the east and in the west. The Mongols divided and ruled eastern Islam. Tamerlane led his armies through Syria and Iraq. The Ottomans were struggling with Byzantium, and Andalusia was suffering from internal division due to Spanish invasion. The situation in al-Maghrib was extremely chaotic. It was suffering from division and political unrest. Many revolutions were taking place, and the pace of political change was rapid. The main characteristic of that period was the continual change of ruling dynasties. The division of the Muwahhidin's state into three weak states contributed to this instability. Only Egypt maintained a kind of political stability under the rule

of the Mamluks (A.D. 1250-1517). During this period Egypt was comparatively the most prosperous and glorious kingdom in the whole Islamic world.

Ibn Khaldun was acquainted with his contemporary history, and was knowledgeable of the important events taking place in the Islamic world at that time. He showed an interest in understanding the nature and causes of current events in the Islamic world and particularly in North Africa. As a result, he decided to quit his career in politics and live in isolation in the castle of Ibn Salamah. He meditated and analyzed what he learned from his life and career. He began to suspect that behind this continuously changing political scene, there might be an 'inner necessity', and the rise and decline of state 'might not be a product of human action nor contingent upon human knowledge or ignorance'.

Ibn Khaldun started questioning his successive failures to fulfill his ambitions and hopes. He tried to understand the factors which contributed to such failures, by investigating the nature of the life he had lived. This thorough investigation led him to think that the circumstances of his time should be recorded, and it was necessary that their nature and causes should be studied and revealed. He believed that writing (*Tadwin*)¹ is the right way to record historical conditions. Otherwise, they will be forgotten and misinterpreted, leading to errors in historical data.

When there is a general change of conditions, it is as if the entire creation had changed and the whole world had been altered, as if it were a new and repeated creation, a world brought into existence anew. Therefore, there is need at this time that someone should systematically set down the situation of the world among all regions and races, as well as the customs and sectarian beliefs that have changed for their adherents, This should be a model for future historians to follow. In this book of mine, I shall discuss as much of that as will be possible for me here in the Maghrib. . . . (This restriction is necessitated) by my lack of knowledge of conditions of the East and among its nations, and by the fact that secondhand information would not give the essential facts I am after.²

But Ibn Khaldun did not merely want to write down what he witnessed. He considered historical events as 'external' data behind which an 'internal'

¹ Nassar, p. 55.

² *Muqaddimah.*, v.I, p. 65.

rational structure existed to explain their causes. This belief could be a result of Ibn Khaldun's early training in the philosophic sciences.¹ The implications of such a proposition certainly led to something new in the writing of history, and as presented by Ibn Khaldun, it constituted a revolution in Islamic historiography.

This analysis of the background of Ibn Khaldun leads us to conclude that although he was trying to write the history of al-Maghrib, his own experience revealed to him the true forces that determined the historical process. Such forces have never been taken into consideration by anyone prior to him.

'Why' Science of culture

Ibn Khaldun, as stated earlier, was trying to understand the mechanism by which human society behaves. He wanted History to rely on demonstrated conclusions rather than on raw data. To achieve such a goal, demonstration should be based on certain rules that govern the social phenomena. Of these rules: for a historian to avoid errors and mistaken events, he should be precise and ready to examine (critically) the events 'externally' and 'internally' and not just rely on the impartiality of the reporter. Moreover, the historian must be able to judge the content of the report according to the knowledge available to him about the subject of such event.

Causality was the tool which Ibn Khaldun was looking for.² He believed that every event is an effect of a certain cause. He wrote:

Only knowledge of the nature of civilization makes critical investigation of them possible. If this is so, the normative method for distinguishing right from wrong in historical information on the grounds of (inherent) possibility or absurdity, is to investigate human social organization which is identical with civilization. We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature; the things that are accidental (to civilization) and cannot be counted on; and the things that cannot possibly attach themselves

¹ Mahdi, p. 48.

² Nassar, p. 55.

to it. If we do that, we shall have a normative method for distinguishing right from wrong and truth from falsehood in historical information by means of a logical demonstration that admits of no doubts. Then, whenever we hear about certain conditions occurring in civilization, we shall know what to accept and what to declare spurious. We shall have a sound yardstick with the help of which historians may find the path of truth and correctness where their reports are concerned.

Such is the purpose of this first book of our work.¹

From that we understand that Ibn Khaldun wanted historical knowledge to be demonstrated. History, according to him, should be dealt with like other rational sciences, which are based on rationally demonstrated conclusions. This means that demonstrated historical knowledge is based on scientific understanding of the nature and causes of the events that constitute the course of history. In order for an event to be true, it should be judged using a criterion. This criterion is a rational tool based on understanding the causes of that event.

This sequential reasoning led Ibn Khaldun to believe that a body of knowledge should be formulated as an aid to history. It is to be used in distinguishing true from false in testing the historical reports.

Ibn Khaldun realized that he created a new science. He called it the science of culture (*'ilm al-'Umran*). Then he distinguished it from other sciences and emphasized its importance in fulfilling its goal. He wrote:

(The subject) is in a way an independent science. (This science) has its own peculiar object—that is, human civilization and social organization. It also has its own peculiar problems—that is, explaining the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization, one after the other. . . . It should be known that the discussion of this topic is something new, extraordinary, and highly useful. Penetrating research has shown the way to it. In a way, it is an entirely original science. In fact I have not come across a discussion along those lines by anyone. I do not know if this is because people have been unaware of it, Perhaps they have written exhaustively on this topic, and their work did not reach us.²

To conclude, *'ilm al-'Umran* is a science that serves many goals. It has two benefits: first, it provides the historian with the tools necessary to rectify the

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 76-77.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 77-78.

historical reports, and second, it provides the knowledge about the nature and causes of the social process, which in itself is the backbone of history.

'What' is science of culture

Ibn Khaldun's investigation of the principles of society and social change seems unprecedented. By his formulation of the science of culture, (*'ilm al-'Umran*), Ibn Khaldun has created the laws which, although not as absolute as those governing the natural phenomena, are considered the forces behind the regular and well-defined patterns of the sequential social events.

The components of *'ilm al-'Umran* were stated by Ibn Khaldun in the *Muqaddimah*. He says in the very beginning of *Kitab al-'Ibar* :

It should be known that history, in matter of fact, is information about human social organization, which itself is identical with world civilization. It deals with such conditions affecting the nature of civilization as, for instance, savagery and sociability, group feelings, and the different ways by which one group of human beings achieves superiority over another. It deals with royal authority and the dynasties that result (in this manner) and with the various ranks that exist within them. (It further deals) with the different kinds of gainful occupations and ways of making a living, with the sciences and crafts that human beings pursue as part of their activities and efforts, and with all the other institutions that originate in civilization through its very nature.¹

So the subject matter of the science of culture, as depicted by Ibn Khaldun in the previous paragraph, are as follows:

1. The first component deals with forms of human association, and the general characteristics of culture (*'Umran*) as it exists in its primitive and civilized modes. It also includes the process of change and transformation from primitive culture (*'Umran Badawi*) to civilized culture (*'Umran Hadari*), and the different factors and forces contributing to this process. The importance of this component is that it deals with the phenomena of evolution, growth and decay of civilization, and the impact of this process on the different products of civilization.

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 71.

2. The second component important to Ibn Khaldun is the state (*Dawla*) and the different aspects attributed to it. He deals with it as the means by which civilization achieves its glory. In his framework, the state also follows almost the same rules of evolution, growth and decay which undergoes civilization.
3. The third component is the city (*Madina*) and the different problems attached to its origin, its age and development, its character and its destiny.
4. The fourth component is the economic life (*al-Ma'ash wal-Sana'i*) and the different arts and crafts existing in civilization.
5. The fifth and last component is the sciences (*al-'uloum*) and their methods. In this section Ibn Khaldun states his theories of knowledge and deals with epistemological problems faced him, as they facing his predecessor thinkers. He also includes in this section the different categories of sciences (*asnaf al-'uloum*), as well as the methods of teaching them (*at-ta'leem*).

For the purposes of my study, I will focus on Ibn Khaldun's views in the first three components. I will attempt to apply those theories of evolution, growth and decay of civilization and subsequently the city, to study some aspects of the physical development of the old city of Cairo. In the following chapter, I will deal with Ibn Khaldun's theories of cultural change including his concept of the city being a manifestation of the process of cultural change.

II

IBN KHALDUN'S THEORIES OF CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

Environment and Human Civilization

In his consideration of the major factors governing the social phenomena, Ibn Khaldun attached great importance to causality. His studies of the nature and causes of cultural change made him realize the impact of environment on the growth of culture. Although Ibn Khaldun such environmental influences, listed at the very bottom of the factors influencing culture, he felt the necessity to examine such influences before establishing other factors that have the greatest impact on the process of cultural change.¹ Another dimension that can be added to Ibn Khaldun's interest in studying the environmental influences on culture is his organismic concept of the development of human society. He reflected upon the fact that every social unit possesses the character of an organic unit. He wrote:

It should be known that the world of the elements and all it contains comes into being and decays. This applies to both its essences and its conditions. Minerals, plants, all the animals including man, and the other created things come into being and decay, as one can see with one's own eyes. The same applies to the conditions that affect created things, and especially the conditions that affect man. Sciences grow up and then are wiped out. The same applies to crafts, and to similar things.²

Ibn Khaldun ascribed certain distinctions between different societies to the direct influences of climate, topography, vegetation, and so on. His contribution centered around the concept of dividing the Earth into seven climatic zones. He characterized the physical aspects of those zones, and emphasized their influence on culture *'Umran* and the process of cultural change.

¹ For a detailed account of those prefatory discussions see Chapter I of the *Muqaddimah*, pp. 87-245.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.1, p. 278.

An important conclusion Ibn Khaldun arrived at was that no particular race is by nature endowed with superior qualities over another's, so that the differences between those qualities materially influence its culture.¹ Throughout the *Muqaddimah*, he considered differences in standards regarding cultures to be the outcome of historical differences in their respective social environments. Thus, he consistently opposed the view that attributes such differences to innate racial inferiority.²

The laws that Ibn Khaldun adduced from his observations of environmental features, and his analysis of their impact on culture, seem to have influenced, and sometimes worked as guidelines for, his primary discussions of different aspects of civilization.³ Ibn Khaldun considered the inevitable relation of environmental factors to man and society to be of great importance since it can be used in demonstrating the conclusions of the new science of culture.

Culture and Cultural Types

The term 'culture' in Ibn Khaldun's context appears to have a flexible domain. It is in this sense used as a close translation of the word '*Umran*'.⁴ As a technical term, '*Umran*' was used by Ibn Khaldun to describe the subject of his new science. Originally, it was used in the Qur'an in connection with place.⁵ It was also frequently used in the works of Muslim geographers,

¹ Ammar, p. 175.

² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³ It is through the examples which Ibn Khaldun used that one can understand what those factors are and how do they work. In the third and fourth prefatory discussions (*Muqaddimah*, v.1, pp. 167-76), he explained the influence of air and temperature on the color and behavior of human beings, and how that reflected on different aspects of their lives. One of the examples he gave was the Negroes: he maintained that their color is not innate in them, but rather an acquired character influenced by the climate of the zone they lived in (*Muqaddimah*, v.1, p. 170). Then he explained the influence of heat on their actions and subsequently, their cultures (*Muqaddimah*, v.1, p. 174).

⁴ The root-verb of the abstract substantive '*Umran*' is '*-m-r*', whose principal meanings are: 'live', 'inhabit', 'dwell', 'remain in a place', 'a place that becomes inhabited', 'stocked', or 'cultivated (with people, animals, or plants)'. Other meanings include: 'cultivate', 'build', 'institute', 'promote', 'observe', 'visit' (cited in Mahdi, p. 184).

⁵ *Mu'jam*, v.4, pp. 252-53.

particularly in *Nazhat al-mushtaq* by Idrisi (d. A.D. 1166), of which Ibn Khaldun summarized a section on geography.¹

The meaning of the term '*Umran*' as used in the *Muqaddimah* grew to convey a range of implications. It can signify the simplest association of people living together in a region, while at the same time, it can be used to describe all forms of human association.² The word implies a dynamic system of social organization. Although linguistically it can be defined and associated with a set of meanings, it is difficult to employ the word as a sort of label connected to a defined set of associations. In this sense, the equivalence between '*Umran*' and culture resides in the plurality and totality of the meanings they both convey. Their importance is in the range and overlap of meanings they can withstand. And, finally, their complexity is not in the words themselves, but rather in the problems and variations of use that pertain to both.³

In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun distinguished between two types of culture '*Umran*': primitive culture '*Umran Badawi*' and civilized culture '*Umran Hadari*'. By '*Umran Badawi*' Ibn Khaldun did not mean only the culture of those who inhabit the desert. His distinction was based 'materially' on the methods by which communities acquire their living, and 'immaterially' on the systems of social control that govern their association.

Primitive cultures '*Umran Badawi*' are associated by Ibn Khaldun with simplicity in all aspects of life forced by living conditions which require their continuous efforts to ensure survival. Their needs are simple, restricted to the very basics. A simple yet difficult life engenders in people certain physical and moral virtues. Physically, they are healthy and strong because they eat natural food. They practice many physical activities required to overcome the difficulties of life, and hence are better suited to defend themselves against the wilderness. As a result, they become brave, daring, and confident, and

¹ Mahdi, pp. 184-85.

² The meaning here can be traced from the Qur'an; God created man on Earth to inhabit it and civilize it (Hood; 11: 61).

³ For detailed analysis of the meaning of the word *culture* see Williams, pp. 87-93.

their simple life leads them to form "virtuous" habits which become characteristic of their social action and psychological attitudes.¹

Although simplicity of life created such "virtuous" habits and "good" characteristics, it produced a lack of institutional organization. This was due to living in small groups on one hand, and to the lack of need for complex systems of organization on the other. The basis of their existence was the simplest form of social solidarity or group feeling, which Ibn Khaldun called *'asabiyah*.

In contrast² with *'Umran Badawi* , Ibn Khaldun states the general characteristics of *'Umran Hadari* . He distinguishes it as sedentary culture, thought to be the natural development of primitive culture, although having different characteristics and attributes. It constitutes the end to which human nature has been moving ever since the creation of the most simple forms of communal life. Although *'Umran Hadari* is considered more complete than *'Umran Badawi* , both of them are two distinct aspects of one cohesive reality: culture *per se* cannot exist without both.

The most important characteristic Ibn Khaldun attributes to civilization is that it is like a living organism which has a beginning, grows and develops, and comes to an end. The aspects of civilization (the state, the city, economic life, and the sciences) rise and fall almost always in the same manner, i.e., they require causes for evolution, which are identical in their nature to the causes of evolution in civilization itself.³ Thus, in order to understand the dynamics of the rise and fall of civilization, its different aspects should be investigated and understood during different stages of its development.⁴

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 253-58.

² See chapter II of the *Muqaddimah*, pp. 247-310.

³ Mahdi, pp. 202-03.

⁴ Mahdi, p. 203.

The Concept of 'Asabiyah (Group Feeling)

'*Asabiyah*¹ is the core concept of Ibn Khaldun's general studies of the science of culture. Although he did not define the term '*asabiyah*, he ascribes to its power and strength the main causes of the process of cultural change. The original and most natural source of '*asabiyah* is blood and marriage relationships. It implies the natural bond amongst the members of the clan who share the sense of belonging and the feeling of cohesiveness and unity which is vital for the defense of the clan and its over all security.²

The word " '*asabiyah*" is derived from the root-verb ('*asab*), which means tie. The derivative ('*isab*), from the same root-verb, means bond, or something used to tie things together. So '*asabiyah* takes its meaning from the strong attachment which holds several persons closely united by the same interest or opinion.³

Ibn Khaldun examined this bond and emphasized its great significance as the element on which the entire mechanism of Bedouin organization depends. The understanding of the term in Ibn Khaldun's argument develops gradually in the *Muqaddimah*. This makes it difficult to understand its role by studying just one aspect of society or culture. It is a process that takes different forms, and becomes a formula whose power governs the social phenomena and plays a distinguished role in cultural change.

Before Islam, '*asabiyah* was confined to tribal societies and considered to be the measure of the strength of a tribe. It was not a measure of stability in the static sense, but rather an instrument of aggression which helped smaller groups emerge into extended associations. This feeling of extension, Ibn Khaldun argues, is a natural inclination to subjugate other groups with force. When groups are merged, it is not merely a coalescence of different and

¹ '*Asabiyah* in Arabic means tribal group feeling. It implies the commitment and zeal of an individual to his tribe.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 289.

³ Lane, *Lexicon*, p. 2059.

unique entities, but rather a thorough assimilation of weak *'asabiyahs* into a bigger and stronger one.¹

Having given *'asabiyah* a central role in the struggle for survival of human organization, Ibn Khaldun makes a detailed examination of the sources from which it derives its strength. Some of the factors that allow *'asabiyah* to be effective and dynamic, as listed by Ibn Khaldun, are :

1. Methods of making a living (*al-Ma'ash*) : the methods by which people earn their living determine to a large extent the character of civilization. For Ibn Khaldun, primitive cultures show maximum uniformity in the mode of living. Difficult living conditions force people to share each other's burden, and create uniform means of livelihood which would make such a cooperation feasible. Even in 'sedentary culture', the sense of belonging to a group in the same professional occupation would be measured on the same scale of the need for association. The tendency of people to defend the group which they belong to can be based on the sense of commitment made by the members of the group to keep its structure stable and surviving.

2. Power (*al-Ghalaba* or *al-Malaka*) : the desire for force and power is among the factors that lead a primitive culture to civilization. Such factors are needed by human beings to satisfy their desire for luxury, riches and leisure.

Ibn Khaldun believes that power is one of the important characteristics of *'asabiyah*.² The intensity and ability of power to hold people together in a group is an important factor in generating group feeling or *'asabiyah*. Power, in Ibn Khaldun's argument, is necessary for an authority in order to control people and to maintain social cohesion.

The weapons made for defense of human beings against the aggressiveness of dumb animals do not suffice against the aggressiveness of man to man, because all of them possess those weapons. Thus, something else is needed for defense against the aggressiveness of human beings towards each other. It could not come from outside, because all the animals fall short of human perception. The person who exercises a restraining influence, therefore,

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 295.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.1, p. 313.

must be one of themselves. He must dominate them and have power and authority over them, so that no one of them will be able to attack another. This is the meaning of royal authority.¹

It is through the influence of power that disruptive consequences of the heterogeneity of the social organization could be minimized. It strengthens the bonds of discipline and unity in society, and vastly reduces aggression and injustice.

3. Leadership (*al-Riyassa*): the main point that Ibn Khaldun raised was the ability of the leader to maintain his leadership through strengthening his *'asabiyah*. Ibn Khaldun realized that every human group tends to be heterogeneous in composition. Therefore, the job of getting loyalty from the largest number of followers would always be a difficult one. This fact implies that the leader should come from a majority that exists in a permanent manner in society. If he does, he will have the required power to carry out commands and the people would be more responsive to him. Ibn Khaldun described the relation between leadership and *'asabiyah* as follows:

This is because leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only through group feeling, as we have mentioned before. Leadership over people, therefore, must, of necessity, derive from a group feeling that is superior to each individual group feeling. Each individual group feeling that becomes aware of the superiority of the group feeling of the leader is ready to obey and follow (that leader).²

A leader, in order to establish indisputable superiority over the rest of the community, must show the ability to comprehend and mobilize the group feeling or *'asabiyah*. It is the personal qualities of the leader which would determine the length and strength of the *'asabiyah*. Moreover, there are several methods by which the leader can maintain and strengthen *'asabiyah*. According to Ibn Khaldun, the house of the leader (in other words his family and descendant) can be a justification for leadership. Ibn Khaldun says:

¹ *Muqaddimah*, V.I, pp. 91-92.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 269.

A "house" possesses an original nobility through group feeling and (personal) qualities. Later on, the people (who have a "house") divest themselves of that nobility when group feeling disappears as the result of sedentary life,, and they mingle with the common people.¹

Ibn Khaldun considered social prestige as the basic lubricant of leadership, which can be acquired only through *'asabiyah* and lasts as long as the group is convinced that the leader is superior to the rest of the members of that *'asabiyah*.

4. Religion (*ad-Deen*): agreement on religious views is one of the strongest bonds of human organization. It is to religion (*Deen*) that the creation of most of the morals and spiritual and material cohesion in society is ascribed. It facilitates oneness of thought and action.² Ibn Khaldun elaborates the importance of religion and considers it a very powerful thrust towards unification.³ Because of its sanctity, it is stronger than many other elements which constitute and strengthen *'asabiyah*

In his explanation, Ibn Khaldun ascribes the rapid spread of Islam under the prophet and his immediate followers to the strength of the tribal *'asabiyah* which existed among the Arabs. He argues that when *'asabiyah* coincided with religion, however, the Arabs became extremely religious.⁴

The Arabs before Islam were never unified, and their loyalty was to their tribes. This loyalty evoked among the tribes the desire for power and dominance of other tribes. Such was known of several tribes with different *'asabiyahs* which existed in Arabia before Islam. When Islam came, the prophet tried to suppress the 'narrow' tribal spirit (*'asabiyah*)⁵ of the Arabs and instill in its place the religious spirit. This spirit could unify the

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 274.

² Shaukat, pp. 129-31.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 319.

⁴ Baali & Wardi, p. 96.

⁵ The use of the term (*'asabiyah*) here is to refer to its original use before Ibn Khaldun employed it in his text. We should distinguish between Muslims' condemnation of *'asabiyah* (see *'asabiyah* in B. Lewis, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 681) and the role ascribed to it by Ibn Khaldun being the major force behind the social phenomena in the regions of N. Africa and the Middle East.

segregated tribes and, because of its intended universality, could exceed tribes to unify even larger groups such as nations of different origins. The main thing about religion is that whether it replaces *'asabiyah* and takes a new form of group feeling, or it strengthens *'asabiyah* and employs its power to spread Islam, it is 'superior' in unifying groups. The laws of religion are deemed to be of divine origin. The rigidity and universality of those laws insures uniformity, which in turn strengthens the bonds of oneness.

Having established the factors that call for group feeling and strengthen the power of *'asabiyah*, it is necessary for the purposes of this study to examine some of the major causes of the decay and lost efficiency of *'asabiyah*.

In his discussions of the cultural change which leads, in his theory, to what is called the 'rise' and 'fall' of civilizations, Ibn Khaldun arrives at the conclusion that when *'asabiyah* is strong it leads to the rise, and when it is weak it leads to the fall. Therefore, he makes a thorough examination of the causes which, in his opinion, lead to the decline of *'asabiyah*. His thesis in this matter was based on his assessment of the history of Islam, and his own observations of the contemporary Muslim world.

The 'misuse of power' (*istibdad*) by the rulers causes *'asabiyah* to decay. When group members get disenchanted with leadership, resentment and frustration builds and people lose faith in the group feeling. According to Ibn Khaldun, the misuse of power corrupts and demoralizes the social system, and produces a climate in which *'asabiyah* cannot survive.¹

The accumulation of too much wealth (*tharwa*) is another major cause that weakens *'asabiyah*, according to Ibn Khaldun. In his view, wealth itself is not the cause of decay, but it is the ill-gotten riches and their demonstrable misuse which creates social and economic strains in society. Luxury and extravagance produce the germs of decay and devitalize the creative and dynamic faculties of men.

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 383.

Ibn Khaldun must have witnessed such processes during his lifetime in the Muslim world. He noticed the rise of states with meteoric speed, but once their inhabitants were caught up in wasteful pursuits and started living in luxury, their *'asabiyah* (group feeling) would decay, a fact that led to difficulties of survival. Ibn Khaldun described the evil impact of luxury and extravagance on group life in the following words:

They thus invite (their) own destruction. The greater their luxury and the easier the life they enjoy, the closer they are to extinction, not to mention (their lost chance of obtaining) royal authority. The things that go with luxury and submergence in a life of ease break the vigor of the group feeling, which alone produces superiority. When group feeling is destroyed, the tribe is no longer able to defend or protect itself, let alone press any claims. It will be swallowed up by other nations.¹

The Rise and Fall of Civilization

Ibn Khaldun's views on the development of culture *'Umran* are considered the most important aspect of his enterprise. He describes this process of cultural change thematically as a determined cycle of 'rise' and 'fall' underpinning the development of human society. This cycle consists of four stages:² The first stage is the primitiveness (*Badawa*), and as mentioned earlier in this study, the tribe is the basic form of human association. The force that keeps the tribe as a group is group feeling, or *'asabiyah*, which enables the tribe to overcome difficulties and satisfy the basic needs of food and protection.

This *'asabiyah* in the tribe creates the necessity for power and leadership, which leads the tribe to adapt certain laws and principles that should be

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 287.

² This division of the cycle into four stages is based on Ibn Khaldun's of the modes of culture being 1. primitive (*'Umran Badawi*), 2. civilized (*'Umran Hadari*), 3. the process of development from primitive to civilized and finally, 4. the process of decay of *'Umran* which starts during the third stage of the cycle.

adhered to by the members of the tribe in order to keep the stability and survival of its structure. The ultimate goal of *'asabiyah*, as stated by Ibn Khaldun, is royal authority (*Mulk*).¹ This goal leads the tribe to strengthen their *'asabiyah* by subjugating other tribes and bringing them under their rule.

This process leads the development of culture into the second stage, which Ibn Khaldun called the stage of royal authority, or Kingship (*Mulk*). In this stage, *'asabiyah* is in its greatest mode. Leadership (*Riyasah*) possesses the great power (*Malakah*) necessary for the establishment or the conquest of cities, aiming at satisfying the natural desire accompanying authority and kingship, which is civilization (*Hadara*).

Such conquest enables culture to transform from primitive modes (*Badawa*) to civilized modes (*Hadara*). This transformation manifests itself in several aspects attributed by Ibn Khaldun to civilization such as the state, the city, the economic life, and the cultural and scientific life. Those aspects, which constitute the subject matter of Ibn Khaldun's science of culture, evolve with the evolution of civilization; they originate, grow and develop, and then decline on the steps of civilization itself.

During this stage, the power of the state determines the glory and prosperity of civilization and society. In this respect, I would like to go back to the discussion of the spread of Islam during the early stages of the Muslim state. Ibn Khaldun here ascribed the strength of the Muslim state to the strength of religion combined with the tribal *'asabiyah*, and the role they both played in unifying the different *'asabiyahs* which existed in Arabia before Islam. To illustrate how this process could be a great contribution to the strength of the Muslim state, Prof. Mahdi's words would be best used:

In order to be able to found a great civilization, or to conquer or build a great empire, they may need an additional force to eliminate their shortcomings, and to buttress and enhance their solidarity. This force is religion. Religion, like any other *social* cause, needs solidarity to establish it. It has, therefore, to rise, and it usually does rise, among a group with strong solidarity that propagates it by fighting for it. Once a religion is adopted and supported by such a group, it becomes a highly effective force. It creates a new loyalty: absolute belief in, and obedience to, the demands of the Law

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 284.

and the religious leader. This is the source of a solidarity superior to, and more lasting than, the solidarity based merely upon natural kinship and worldly desires. Religion does away with the competitiveness and envy resulting from pursuing worldly purposes, restrains its followers from immoral and unjust practices, commands them to obey their superiors, and establishes a divine Law regulating their political life. Those who believe in it act from inner compulsion and are motivated by the hope for the rewards it promises them in the world to come. Second to natural solidarity and based upon it, religion is the most powerful force in the creation of civilization and its commands are the most effective instruments for preserving it.¹

The third stage in the cycle of development Ibn Khaldun called the stage of civilization (*Hadara*). It is the ultimate goal of culture '*Umran* ,² and it is when '*Umran* reaches its highest progressive accomplishments.

In his discussions of the process of kingship (*Mulk*), and coming to power (*Taghallub*), Ibn Khaldun points out the importance of this process in the transformation of culture. The contact between the conquered people and their conquerors depends upon the level of the dominant culture in relation to that of the conquered people, i.e., whether the former is culturally superior, equal or inferior to the latter. It is also affected by the policy of the conquerors towards the culture of the people whom they rule. Ibn Khaldun in this sense pointed out the tendency of the conquered to imitate their conquerors in dress, food, habits and customs, and he ascribed that to a feeling of inferiority amongst the conquered.³

In this stage of the cycle, '*Umran* reaches a period of contentment. Towards the end of this stage, rulers and the ruled tend to be uncreative.⁴ They imitate their predecessors in enjoying the pleasures of life, ignoring the methods by which their predecessors achieved them.

¹ Mahdi, p. 201.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 291.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 299-300.

⁴ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 124-27.

'*Asabiyah*, which was the main force that contributed to the emergence of civilization, starts to weaken.¹ This weakening will result in an eventual weakening and disintegration of the state. People, accordingly, become ignorant and less eager to defend the state, a fact that forces the state to spend more money on defending itself by employing foreign soldiers and buying more weapons. This leads to financial problems, which force taxes to be raised, in order to pay for the means of self-defense and, at the same time, pay for the means of superficial signs of power, such as building more monuments and the like.

By the end of this stage, civilization starts to decline. It is the fourth and last stage of the cycle, during which the state has reached old age and is doomed to slow death. This period Ibn Khaldun described as the dissolution stage of the dynasty in power, when a new dynasty is now becoming strong enough to take over.²

This last stage of civilization was called by Ibn Khaldun the stage of senility (*Haram*).³ The name comes from his organismic consideration of civilization, that it comes to be, grows, and finally becomes old and dies. It is a definite step in the life of the cycle, which corroborates Ibn Khaldun's hypothesis that history and civilization are governed by certain laws that determine the course of humanity.

Once the symptoms of senility start to appear, they cannot be cured or made to disappear. Even attempts to reform and give the impression that the symptoms have disappeared do not prevent the cycle from ending.⁴

¹ In the previous section (The concept of *asabiyah*) the causes of decline of *asabiyah* were discussed. Also see Subhi, pp. 68-85. (Authors translation from the Arabic text): 'the dialectical role of *asabiyah* can be described as follows: a) it leads to kingship (*Mulk*) through the support of people to their leader whom they share *asabiyah* with. b) when the leader gets established, he tries to protect himself and his regime from the *asabiyah* which brought him to power. So he destroys it. This shows how *asabiyah* is necessary for the evolution of the state, while it is dangerous after then, and subsequently not necessary.'

² *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 124.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 117.

⁴ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 118.

The studies of Ibn Khaldun on the decline of civilization are first-hand information considered to be of great value, since they are based on his personal observations of the circumstances in North Africa during his lifetime. On contrast, his other studies on the rise and development of civilization are mainly based on documentary sources, which required careful examination and verification by him, to ensure their accuracy and reliability.

The Concept of City in Ibn Khaldun's Project

Based on his concept of *'Umran*, Ibn Khaldun viewed the city (*Madina*) as part of the phenomena of the human development. The city was considered by him as a natural stage in the evolutionary cycle of civilization. It is the physical manifestation of the social growth.

In Ibn Khaldun's view, the development of the city is the next stage in hierarchy following primitive culture *'Umran Badawi*.¹ Either founded or conquered, the city emerges in the process of cyclical cultural change underlying society in its struggle for power and dominance. The city constitutes the first step towards sedentary culture. The character and size of the city are influenced by the power and strength of the state which determine the character and the degree of prosperity of the civilization. "City" in Ibn Khaldun's framework complies with the thematic cycle of evolution, growth and decay governing civilization. Thus, the forces that contribute to its evolution are typical of those involved in the emergence of the state (*Dawla*) and consequently civilization (*Hadara*).

As an historical process of multi-dimensional aspects, Ibn Khaldun considers the city as a phenomenon rooted in society, and therefore inseparable from the social condition. To test Ibn Khaldun's view, one needs to investigate his view of the city against historical data on cities contemporary to him. However, I think this testing should begin with an elaboration on the cyclical pattern which, for Ibn Khaldun, defines the city as an aspect of civilization. In this sense I could distinguish four stages constituting the life cycle of the city:

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 235.

1. The first stage in the life cycle of the city is its establishment and evolution in relation to the desire of the bedouins for comfort and conveniences. It is this shift and increase in material desires which leads them to reconsider their way of life and look toward the city. It becomes the place where their ambitions and hopes can be met. Therefore, the evolution cycle begins, and the desires of the bedouins for city life assumes two main aspects: the first is economic, related to production and the methods of making a living (*al-Ma'ash*); the second is political, related to royal authority and the rise of the state which materializes the desire of the bedouins for restfulness and conveniences.

When primitive cultures '*Umran Badawi*' reach a degree of satisfaction in terms of their basic needs (whether from cultivation or from animal husbandry), they tend to reach a state of restfulness and relaxation. This state of contentment dictates a certain way of life that does not exist in the desert (*Badiyah* or *Badawa*). Moreover, the desire for restfulness and tranquility dictates two kinds of requirements in the city:

- a) protection and accessibility considering enemies and natural phenomena,
- b) providing modes of living considering trade, agriculture and so on.

Thus, the need for new forms of association arises, which, consequently, produce new habits and practices that fulfill the emerging needs and desires.

It should be known that differences in condition among people are the result of the different ways in which they make their living. Social organization enables them to co-operate toward that end and to start with the simple necessities of life, before they get to conveniences and luxuries.

Those who live on agriculture or animal husbandry cannot avoid the call of the desert, because it alone offers the wide fields, acres, pastures for animals, and other things that the settled areas do not offer. . . . Subsequent improvement of their conditions and acquisition of more wealth and comfort than they need, cause them to rest and take it easy. Then they co-operate for things beyond the (bare) necessities. . . . They build large houses, and lay out towns and cities for protection. This is followed by an increase in comfort and ease, which leads to formation of the most developed luxury customs.¹

The second factor contributing to the evolution of the city, according to Ibn Khaldun, is the establishment of a state (*Dawla*). Since it was considered the

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 249.

first step towards civilization (*Hadara*), and comes as a result of a strong 'asabiyah, the state plays a decisive role in the character of civilization and, consequently, in the evolution of the city. Royal authority (*Mulk*) was considered by Ibn Khaldun a pre-requisite to the establishment of the city because it guarantees and sustains a steady and peaceful progress in civilization. The royal authority obtained by tribes and groups forces them to take possession of cities for two reasons: first, royal authority causes people to seek tranquility, restfulness and relaxation, and to provide the aspects of civilization that are lacking in the desert; second, enemies can be expected to attack the realm, and the city must be defended against them.¹

In presenting this view of the origin (*Asl*) of the city, Ibn Khaldun predicts what modern scholarship has achieved.² He considers the economical factors and royal authority the main forces which influence the evolution of the city.³ In addition to the economical and political factors contributing to the evolution of the city, Ibn Khaldun also points out geographical and strategic factors. His emphasis on the first set of factors is based upon predominant circumstances of the Muslim world during his lifetime.

Another major aspect Ibn Khaldun dealt with was the influence of location, geography, and zoning⁴ on the city and its character. The setting of a city requires certain favorable natural factors for future expansion, protection, and relations with other neighboring cities. Ibn Khaldun says:

Therefore, it is necessary in this connection to see to it that harmful things are kept away from the towns by protecting them against inroads by them, and that useful features are introduced and all the conveniences are made available in them.

In connection with the protection of towns against harmful things, one should see to it that all the houses of the town are situated inside a protective wall. Furthermore, the town should be situated in an

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 237.

² See Leonard Woolly: *The History of Humanity* . pp. 359-465.

³ For modern views of the influence of religion and royal authority on the evolution of the city see L. Mumford: *The City In History*.

⁴ For a detailed account of location and zoning, see (*Requirements for the planning of towns and the consequences of neglecting those requirements*) *Muqaddimah*, Chapter IV/[5], v.II, pp. 243-49.

inaccessible place, either upon a rugged hill or surrounded by the sea or a river,

In connection with the protection of towns against harm that might arise from atmospheric phenomena, one should see to it that air where the town is (to be situated) is good, in order to be safe from illness.¹

Prior to Ibn Khaldun, al-Farabi (d. A.D. 950) had dealt with the requirements of location of the city. Yet, Ibn Khaldun's empirical and social considerations made his contribution more valuable.² These considerations did not develop into more elaborate principles. What he achieved resulted from his careful analysis of the environmental factors affecting culture *'Umran* in general, and the location of towns in particular.

Another aspect of location, Ibn Khaldun points out, is the proximity of the city to desert and rural areas. First, they supply the city with a constant influx of settlers; second, they provide the city with the necessary products and crops. This preserves the city from destruction even after the decay of the ruling dynasty.³

2. The second stage in the life of the city is its development and expansion. During this stage, the urban society undergoes change and attempts to reach stability. This change and stability result from the transformation, within society, of the power of *'asabiyah* into other forms. The tribal *'asabiyah* has started to disappear and other forms of association emerges. Blood relations are no longer the decisive factor in the progress of society. Political stability requires a new type of efficient bureaucracy that has the knowledge of administering the state.⁴ New practices develop in the city. Specialized groups start to appear due to the demand for new kinds of goods and skills. Such practices create different professional occupations which require new forms of association and group feeling. This group feeling is considerably weaker than the tribal *'asabiyah* which led to civilization.⁵

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 243-44.

² Enan, pp. 140-42.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 236.

⁴ Mahdi, p. 213.

⁵ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 302-03.

The size of the city during this stage increases both physically and demographically. The scale and number of activities in the city increases also in accordance with the increase of the customs of sedentary culture and requirements of luxury conditions. Ibn Khaldun, in this sense, distinguishes between different types of cities according to their size. There are small-sized 'towns' exhibiting a slight improvement over the nomadic life, medium-sized cities with just a few luxuries developed, and large-sized cities existing as expressions of superior civilizations.¹

3. When the city reaches a state of luxury and prosperity, its inhabitants gradually become accustomed to having their desire for luxurious living satisfied. This leads to the loss of physical and moral virtues, and the dependance on the walls of the city and on paid mercenary troops to protect the inhabitants. During this stability and contentment stage of city, in accordance with the third stage of civilization, it has reached its apex. Civilization, in all its aspects, has manifested itself in the life of the city. Sciences and crafts have reached a high level of development and prosperity. They are prosperous and developed to the extent that the signs of decay and disintegration start to appear.

4. The destruction of society becomes inevitable due to their plunge into luxuries and extravagances. Religious laws lose their effectiveness because of the easily acquired luxuries and a royal authority becoming distracted from enforcing and defending those laws. This senile (*Haram*) or decline stage of the city, as Ibn Khaldun calls it, is characterized by the development of poor and neglected areas within the large and developed urban centers.

The decline of the state during this stage of civilization enhances the destruction of the city. It is sharply reflected in the deteriorating economic conditions of the city.² This decline of the economic life spreads squalor and poverty. Factions arise in the city and struggle to wrest power from one another. In this struggle, the city witnesses its physical and psychological destruction. As a result, all aspects of the life of the city will be influenced and

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 434.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 292.

doomed to eventual decline. The city starts to lose its features as a city. Its character deteriorates, its functions diminish in quantity and quality, and its inhabitants start abandoning it and moving to other 'booming' cities.

Ibn Khaldun's observations on the ruins of Damascus, Marrakesh and Baghdad during his time provides him with the positive proof for his general concept and enable him to conclude:

We have found out with regard to civilization that, when a dynasty disintegrates and crumbles, the civilization of the city that is the seat of the ruler of (that dynasty) also crumbles and in this process often suffers complete ruin. There hardly ever is any delay. The reasons for it are several:

First: At the beginning of the dynasty, its necessary Bedouin outlook requires it not to take away people's property and to eschew (too great) cleverness. This causes the taxes and imposts, which provide the dynasty with its substance, to be kept low. The expenditures are small, and there is little luxury. When a city that has been a royal capital comes into the possession of a new dynasty that knows little of luxury, luxury decreases among the inhabitants of that city controlled by it, because the subjects follow the dynasty.

Second: Royal authority and power are obtained by a dynasty only through superiority, which comes only after hostilities and wars. Hostility requires incompatibility between the people of the two dynasties and mutual disapproval with regard to (luxury) customs and conditions. The victory of one of the two rivals causes the disappearance of the other. Thus, the conditions of the previous dynasty, especially the conditions of luxury, are disapproved of and considered detestable and evil by the people of the new dynasty. . . .

Third: When the realm expands and its influence grows, it is inevitable that the seat of government be amidst the provinces belonging to the dynasty, because it is a sort of center for the whole area. Thus, the (new seat of government) is remote from the site of the former seat of government. The hearts of the people are attracted to the (new seat of government), Civilization (the population) moves there and disappears slowly from the city that was the former seat of government. (With the transfer of population,) the sedentary and urban culture (of the former seat of government) decreases. This is what is meant by its disintegration.

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Fourth: When the new dynasty achieves superiority over the previous dynasty, it must attempt to transfer the people and partisans of the previous dynasty to another region where it can be sure that it will not be secretly attacked by them.¹

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 297-99.

Nothing will stop the decline of the city unless a new dynasty takes over and starts a new life cycle of the city.¹ Other important factors that need be considered here, which are noticed by Ibn Khaldun, such as the shift of the authority's attention from one city to another. This leads to the decline of the former and the rise of the latter. Also, the city might be able to survive by virtue of its economical or strategic position. After its establishment, the city might acquire trade or military importance, which contributes to the survival of the city under several dynasties. The decline of the state in the previous examples might influence some aspects of decline in the city, but when a new dynasty takes over, the city starts to new life cycle.²

This stage completes the cycle of the city in parallel to civilization, which makes the destiny of the city a determined fact in the history of humanity. In the following paragraph, Ibn Khaldun describes the different stages of the city and its life, correlating civilization to the physical aspects of the city:

It should be known that when cities are first founded, they have few dwellings and few building materials, such as stones and quicklime, or the things that serve as ornamental coverings for walls . . . Thus, at that time, the buildings are built in Bedouin (style), and the materials used for them are perishable.

Then, the civilization of a city grows and its inhabitants increase in number. Now the materials used for (building) increase because of the increase in (available) labor and the increased number of craftsmen. (This process goes on) until (the city) reaches the limit in that respect, . The civilization of the city then recedes, and its inhabitants decrease in number. This entails a decrease in the crafts. As a result, good and solid buildings are no longer practiced. Then, the (available) labor decreases, because of the lack of inhabitants. (building materials) become unavailable. The materials that are in the existing buildings are re-used for building and refinishing. They are transferred from one construction to another, (The same materials) continue to be used for one castle after another and for one house after another, until most of it is completely used up. People then return to the Bedouin way of building. They use adobe instead of stone and omit all ornamentation. The architecture of the city reverts to that of villages and hamlets. The mark of the desert shows in it. (The city) then gradually decays and falls into complete ruin, if it is thus destined for it.³

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 297.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 297-301.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 270-71.

This vivid description of the city emphasizes Ibn Khaldun's view of it being an evolutionary process considered by him as part of his organismic concept of the evolution process of societies, and subjected to the same 'rules' and 'forces' governing that process.

Summary

The city is considered by Ibn Khaldun as the concrete manifestation of the rising level of human civilization. He fully appreciates the social and political basis and the economic character of the urban order. Therefore, he pays considerable attention to the character and development of these features.

In the constantly shifting scenes of city development, Ibn Khaldun tries to observe the general laws and principles operating in the growth and development of the city structure. He pays considerable attention to the several factors involved in the evolution of the city, a fact which makes us believe that Ibn Khaldun considers a pattern of rules underpinning the phenomenon of the city. This system, conditional to the process of cultural change and the rise and fall of civilization, requires for its evolution the same conditions which determine the character and attributes of culture and society. This system, accordingly, is not a mere material realization of planned and organized set of objects.

The city, as well as 'culture' '*Umran*', are understood by Ibn Khaldun, based on the set of meanings that the term '*Umran*' implies, as 'meanings' of growth and fullness, and their 'materiality' is a product and manifestation of that process of growth and fullness.¹ The level of 'materiality' and its intrinsic value reflects the level of civilization and the 'meanings' associated to it.² This clarifies Ibn Khaldun's concentration on the 'structure of meanings' of civilization in order to reveal the forces and causes behind its 'material' phenomenon.

¹ Mitchell, p. 53.

² White, p. 124.

The next part of this study is an elaboration on the aforementioned aspect of 'meanings' versus 'material' in the city. Through the application of the cyclical pattern of evolution explained in the previous section (The concept of city . . .), the development of the physical environment in medieval Cairo, as a 'material' aspect, will be realized through understanding the 'structure of meanings' behind such development. Therefore, the analysis is structured following the historical sequence of the evolution of the city. A fact which provides a better understanding of the city as well as the theoretical framework.

PART II: APPLICATION: THE PHYSICAL FORMATION

Observing the historical development of medieval Cairo, one could argue that the city had evolved through a thematic pattern of rise and fall over the long period of its history. Several dynasties had ruled Cairo and left their impress on its physical environment. Whatever the degree of influence of each dynasty on the city, I argue that each dynasty had followed almost the same inevitable cycle of rise and fall. Parallel to this process of evolution, the city had always been the 'stage' where this process of evolution took place and 'materially' manifested itself.

This part of my study attempts to demonstrate the above hypothesis. Ibn Khaldun's theories of culture and civilization, outlined in the previous part of this study, are used as a framework to understand and throw light on some aspects of the physical environment in medieval Cairo.

I should emphasize that the issues addressed in this part do not attempt to give a comprehensive survey of the history of Cairo. The aim is to emphasize the possible importance of Ibn Khaldun's theories in understanding some of the historical forces that shaped the physical and cultural environments in the city. Moreover, the evolutionary pattern of the city will be organized according to the four stages of establishment, development, stability, and decline - constructed in the previous part. To this end, the text(s) of al-Maqrizi, a fifteenth century historian of Cairo, will be employed to provide the historical data essential to this investigation.

III

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Early Arab Settlements

The Muslim conquest of Egypt in A.D. 639 was marked by the establishment of the first government town (*Daru Imarah*) founded by the Muslims in Africa. It was the first in a series of four successive cities, namely al-Fustat, al-'Askar, al-Qatai', and al-Qahira,¹ established by the successive dynasties that ruled Egypt. These cities consisted initially of quarters for the ruler and his assistants, his slaves, and his the army. They also served as the governmental and administrative capitals of Egypt under the 'flag' of the Caliph who was seated either in Egypt (the Fatimids) or in distant regions of the Islamic World ('Umar ibn al-Khattab in Medina,² the Umayyads in Damascus, and the 'Abbasids in Baghdad).

After completing the conquest and almost settling in Alexandria, 'Amr ibn al-'As received the orders from the Caliph 'Umar ib al-Khatab in Medina not to settle where water could isolate the city from the capital in Arabia.³ Accordingly, al-Fustat rose outside Babylon, the Byzantine fortress where 'Amr had pitched his tent during the conquest. The location of al-Fustat, although reflecting an awareness of the environmental factors, was not, according to al-Maqrizi, the best choice. He stated that the depressed location of the city among the natural surroundings caused its air to become

¹ Al-Maqrizi described the four successive cities in different locations of his book *al-Mawa'iz wal-I'tibar fi Dhikr al-Khitat wal-Athar*. He accounted for their locations, environmental aspects, different rulers, and social and economical activities.

² During his caliphate, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph after the prophet's death, employed the tribal '*asabiyah* in spreading Islam outside Arabia. He exploited the Arab's tribal '*asabiyah* in strengthening their zeal to support and defend Islam (Baali and Wardi, pp. 97-101). Thus 'Umar was able to build a strong military ready to sacrifice this life for the happiness in the life after. The achievement of 'Umar in bringing the tribal spirit under the control of the religious spirit had the greatest effect on accomplishing the conquests of the surrounding regions and setting the base for the Muslim civilization flourished afterwards.

³ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 296. 'Amr was probably thought of having Alexandria as his capital since it was an already established city with a high level of civilization.

unhealthy, which influenced the environment of the city.¹ Reflecting on that, I think many reasons had contributed to the choice of the location of al-Fustat, the more important of which could be inferred from the Bedouin origin of the Arabs. In their nomadic way of life, the Arabs had little experience in making the right choice with regard to the site of the city. The lack of experience resulted from their nomadic life which reflected their interest in settling where pastures for their animals were available.² Thus, it was apparent, I believe, that the only consideration 'Amr made, when choosing the location for his camp, was the existing fortress: the first place where he and his army settled during the conquest of Egypt. (Plate 1/a)

The argument that the Arabs, in their nomadic mode of life, had showed a lack of experience in crafts and environmental issues, could be also applied to the life duration of their buildings and, subsequently, their monuments and their cities.³

Nonetheless, In the case of al-Fustat, unlike the other military cities (*Amsar*) built in Iraq, the Arabs had undergone a process of acculturation caused, I assume, by two factors. First was their abandoning the nomadic ways of life and starting to experience the taste of settling and restfulness. Second was the influence of the already existing culture in Egypt (the Copts) who possessed aspects of urban civilization. However, the process of acculturation was two-way in the sense that both groups (the Muslim Arabs and the Christian Copts) were trying to adopt each others culture and superior qualities. To rationalize this phenomena, it should be emphasized that in any contact between two different cultures the outcome would mainly depend upon the

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 339.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 269. The use of the term 'Arabs' by Ibn Khaldun in several locations of the *Muqaddimah* raised a controversy among the modern interpreters of Ibn Khaldun. 'Arabs' had been used by him alternatively with Bedouins. The state of being bedouins according to him took a whole range of levels but retained its attributes as to those societies who live outside the city. The degree of bedouinism varies according to the methods of living and specifically the means of transportation (Ammar, p. 180). Thus camel riders are more primitive than horse riders, and peasants are more civilized than shepherds. Yet they were all considered by Ibn Khaldun as Bedouins (*Badw*). Accordingly, the term 'Arabs' were used by Ibn Khaldun to refer to the culture that rooted most in bedouinism (Wardi, p. 87). In this regard see also *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 302-10.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, p. 269.

levels of both cultures and, at the same time, is affected directly by the attitudes of the conquerors to the conquered.¹

The process of cultural interaction which took place in al-Fustat during the different stages of its life was enhanced by the continuous migration of Arabs and Egyptians who moved into the city either as soldiers under the successive Umayyad rulers, or as craftsmen and business professionals who looked forward to the growing capital and its increasing opportunities. Such events had influenced al-Fustat and turned it into a glorious city in its size, its physical character, and its cultural and economic aspects.²

On the level of the physical environment of al-Fustat, we should bear in mind that since the urgent needs for shelter and praying had to be met first, the mosque was erected. Next, the different groups of the 'Muslim Army' were settled around the mosque in quarters (*Khitat*)³ according to their tribal and ethnic affiliations. Each tribe or ethnic group was assigned a location in which they built their quarter (*Khittah*). The different quarters, afterwards, were named after the tribes or groups who lived in them.⁴ This fact of the city, I feel, suggests that from the beginning, the city had followed a planning pattern. A pattern which, although it might not had been physically pre-conceived, represented the immediate needs of the communities which accompanied the conquest.

The 'planning pattern' discussed above reflects an interesting phenomenon about the kind of society constituted the early Arab settlement. It is important to notice here that although a great '*asabiyah*' (group feeling) or religious spirit had dominated and motivated the conquest, there were 'smaller' '*asabiyahs*' operating and influencing the character of the society inhabiting

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 299-300.

² Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp.330-34.

³ In al Fustat the name of the quarter was *Khittah* (pl. *Khitat*) which is equivalent to *Hara* (pl. *Harat*) in the later al-Qahira (al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 296-97).

⁴ In this sense al-Maqrizi gave a detailed account of the different *Khitat* and the process of allocating them. He stated that 'Amr had appointed four of his men to take care of assigning locations for people. It was just *Khittat Ahl al-Rayya* 'the quarter of the flag people' that was not named after a tribe because the members of this group belonged to different tribes yet their group feeling was derived from the fact that they were assigned *al-Rayya* 'the flag' by 'Amr during the conquest (al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 296-99).

the early settlement. Ibn Khaldun suggested that the existence of 'asabiyah in different groups does not exclude the existence of a larger 'asabiyah which dominates among such different groups.¹ In early Islam the two forms of group feeling, namely tribal 'asabiyah and religious spirit, were not as much conflicting as working in support of one another.²

The Physical form of the early settlement, I speculate, would probably have resembled a bedouin camp. On one hand it started as a military camp, while on the other hand, it reflected the dominant culture of the communities that accompanied the conquest. In this sense, I think that the organization of the quarter (*Khittah*) and the locations of the quarters in relation to each other had suggested a certain organization pattern. To explain that, I would suggest that the shape and organization of the quarter (*khittah*) was dictated by the social hierarchy of the tribe (the basic social unit). In other words, a typical organization of a quarter consisting of one tribe would physically center around the residence of the head of the family or tribe, while the members would dwell around the head's house in a hierarchical order. Since the members of the tribe share a stronger sense of association with each other than with other tribes', they tend to enclose themselves and express their feeling of belonging either to their clan or tribe,³ or to the global Muslim community (*Ummah*). This morphological pattern would result in cluster-like quarters separated by open spaces. The physical setting of the different quarters (*Khitat*) had reflected a certain degree of hierarchy in terms of proximity from the mosque.⁴ Those two aspects of the early settlement were the principal variables which, I believe, contributed to the formation of the urban fabric of al-Fustat.

Accordingly, I can see two kinds of forces that had played the significant role in shaping the city. The first depended upon the location of the mosque and

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 295.

² Baali & Wardi, pp. 97-101.

³ Staffa, p. 18.

⁴ Al-Maqrizi in his description of the different *Khitat* pointed out the territorial arrangements around the mosque which "followed political organization which was inseparable from religiously defined privilege" (Staffa, p. 18). *Khittat ahl al-Rayya* was located centrally around the mosque since they were the basic group in the army. While late stragglers were located on the peripheries (al- Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 296-99).

the desire of the different groups to live as close as possible to it. And the second force reflected the tribal individuality influenced by the tribal *'asabiyah*. This force seems to have worked at the beginning in distancing the quarters from each other. The two forces worked as if the mosque was the 'positive charge' in the middle creating a force of attraction, while the different quarters were the 'negative particles' competing to reach the middle.

Since the process was evolutionary and not static, considering the process of socialization and cultural change, one would expect the quarters to have undergone a certain amount of growth and expansion. It was due to the increase of population and the need for more structures that the quarters expanded. Although this process of growth might have been different from one quarter to the other, it was materialized by minimizing the spaces separating the quarters. The more those quarters grew, the narrower the spaces became, and eventually the more dense the city turned out to be. Although the process might have involved certain hierarchical levels of decision making on the side of inhabitants and on the side of some regulating laws,¹ I could still maintain that the 'street pattern' was highly influenced by socio-cultural processes.

The process of socialization and cultural change from tribal and primitive to urban and civilized due to the transformation of *'asabiyah* could be demonstrated in the case of al-Fustat. When people became acquainted with the life of the city, tribal *'asabiyah* began to weaken and to transform into other forms based on the new kinds of associations that arose in the city.² This movement towards social stability and homogeneity, I propose, manifested itself in the 'growth' and 'closeness' of the quarters of the city. The growth and contiguity of the original units (*Khitat*) of al-Fustat had reached the state described by al-Maqrizi as:

. . . and the size of al-Fustat was almost one third of that of Baghdad. She (al-Fustat) was on a high level of civilization (*Hadara*), fertility (*Khasb*), and pleasantness (*laththah*). The houses of her people were on

¹ Akbar, pp. 71-84.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 302-5, 347-51. Also see the discussion of this point in Chapter II of this study.

five, six and seven stories. One house might be inhabited by two hundred people . . .¹

Although the character of al-Fustat, as well as the other early Muslim towns (*Amsar*) like al-Kufa and al-Basra in Iraq, was believed to have resembled Madina,² since the communities that accompanied the conquest had originated from there, I argue that one should not dwell merely on such facts to seek the explanation for the evolution phenomena of the city.

Applying Ibn Khaldun's views, the fall of the Umayyads showed in the life of al-Fustat and occasioned decline in some aspects although it was not the capital of the dynasty.³ However, the rise of the 'Abbasid dynasty contributed to a new cycle in the life of the city by founding a new neighboring town (*Daru Imarah*) al-'Askar, the seat of the 'Abbasid governors of Egypt.

It is a natural event that the decline of a dynasty would cause its civilization to decline, and when a new dynasty takes over it will cause a different civilization to take place or develop out of the previous one.⁴ However, the evolution of al-'Askar in A.D.750 as a 'natural stage' in the life cycle of Cairo imposed a new social experience on al-Fustat. Al-'Askar was a closed cantonment segregating the citizens from the ruling dynasty. A mosque was constructed in the city in A.D. 785 and the city had developed so that it contained many great suqs and houses and, as al-Maqrizi reported, the city had expanded till it reached al-Fustat.⁵

The prosperity of al-'Askar was believed to be of lesser degree than that of al-Fustat due to two reasons, I emphasize. The first is the inclination of the 'Abbasid caliphs not to permit any governor to remain long in rule. This was

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 330-34.

² S. al-Hathloul stated that Madina at the time of the Prophet was consisting of *Khitat* inhabited in the same manner to what happened in al-Fustat and the other *Amsar*. In Madina, the Prophet's house was assuming the role as the center of the city and the different *Khitat* surrounding it (al-Hathloul, p. 41).

³ See Ibn Khaldun's views on this (*Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 271-76, 286-91, 297-301, 302-5, 235-6).

⁴ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 128-130.

⁵ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 304. Al-Maqrizi reports that the location of al-'Askar used to be inhabited by three tribes during the establishment of al-Fustat. It was used to be named The Far Red '*al-Hamra' al-Quswa*'.

evident from al-Maqrizi's exposition of the different governors who ruled al-Fustat as well as the other towns that succeeded it. For al-Fustat and during the last sixty years of the Umayyad dynasty, twenty governors ruled the city as opposed to forty-two in sixty years of the 'Abbasid dynasty from the establishment of al-Askar to the death of the Abbasid caliph Harun ar-Rashid.¹ The second decisive factor contributing to the level of civilization of al-'Askar was its remoteness from the capital of the caliphate. Al-Fustat was comparatively close to the capital of the Umayyad dynasty (Damascus), while al-'Askar was comparatively farther from Baghdad. In this sense Ibn Khaldun pointed out that the degree of prosperity of the city depends on the continuation of a dynasty and their group feeling on the one hand, and the remoteness of the city from the seat of the Caliphate on the other. He emphasized that the closer the city was to the center of government, the more attention it gains and, subsequently, the higher the level its civilization will be.² Therefore, I think that the argument concerning the differences in the degree of prosperity between al-'Askar and al-Fustat could be settled by knowing that both cities were capitals of a province (Egypt) and not capitals of a caliphate.

The fall of al-'Askar came as a consequence of the aforementioned aspect of appointing a governor who has a strong *'asabiyah* (group feeling). It was due to the dissent of the Turkish ruler of Egypt, Ahmed Ibn Tulun, who was appointed by the 'Abbasids in A.D. 868.

The 'Abbasids were known for their interest in developing their military power depending more upon non-Arab elements. Turks, Persians, Kurds, and Khurasanians were attracted as patrons and clients. The use of clients by the ruler against the men of his own *'asabiyah* was a kind of general rule which, I believe, applied to many ruling dynasties in Islam. When the 'Abbasids came to claim all the glory for themselves, they dispensed with their *'asabiyah* and kept the Arabs from aspiring to administrative positions, and attracted non-Arab clients and followers to acquired the high ranks in the state.³ This

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp.299-304, 306-13.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp.286-91.

³ For a better understanding of this aspect read Ibn Khaldun's discussion on clients and followers in *Muqaddimah*, vI, pp.372-74.

explains, I think what was meant by the dialectical role of *'asabiyah* emphasized by Ibn Khaldun.¹

Al-Maqrizi reports tell us that the caliph al-Mu'tasim appointed Ahmad Ibn Tulun as the governor of Egypt in A.D. 868.² Ibn Tulun possessed strong diplomatic skills due to his upbringing in the palace of the caliph. In al-'Askar, and based on the strong support he entertained from his regime, Ibn Tulun created a center of power in Egypt after overcoming many difficulties facing him. He was able to establish his empire which reached Tarsus and the Euphrates, rivaled only by the caliph himself.³

Having expanded from a mere governor to an absolute monarch of Egypt and Syria, Ibn Tulun perceived al-'Askar as insufficient to accommodate him and his extended Army. Therefore he founded a new quarter for himself and his officers, and ordered the building of *Qatai'* (Fiefs) for his soldiers. The newly founded town was called al-Qatai' and its location was to the north east of al-'Askar. The establishment of al-Qatai', following the pattern, symbolized a new regime in rule. It followed the establishment of Tulunid state (*al-dawla al-Tuluniyah*) in Egypt and Syria, and was meant to be the seat of the ruling dynasty - this time the dynasty of Ibn Tulun and his subjects.

The new city, al-Qatai', witnessed a remarkable development and acquired great importance over its two predecessor cities, al-Fustat and al-'Askar. It developed to contain many palaces, suqs, baths, mosques and a hospital (*marestan*) built by Ibn Tulun in A.D. 873. Its architecture was distinguished from the other two cities, and its planning was similar to that of Sammara in Iraq, the place where he grew up.⁴ Similarity can also be sensed clearly in the features of the Ibn Tulun Mosque built in A.D. 876-878. Its famous minaret had its roots in the spiral minaret of the mosque of Sammara. The Ibn Tulun

¹ See the note on the dialectical role of *'asabiyah* discussed by Dr. Subhi, pp.68-85 and mentioned in Chapter II of this study.

² Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 313. Al-Mu'tasim, a son of Harun al-Rashid who preferred the Turks, since his mother was from Turkish origin and they were close to him more than the Arabs.

³ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 314-15.

⁴ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 315.

Mosque was one of the very few structures that survived marking the legacy of the early settlements of Cairo. (Plate 2/a, b)

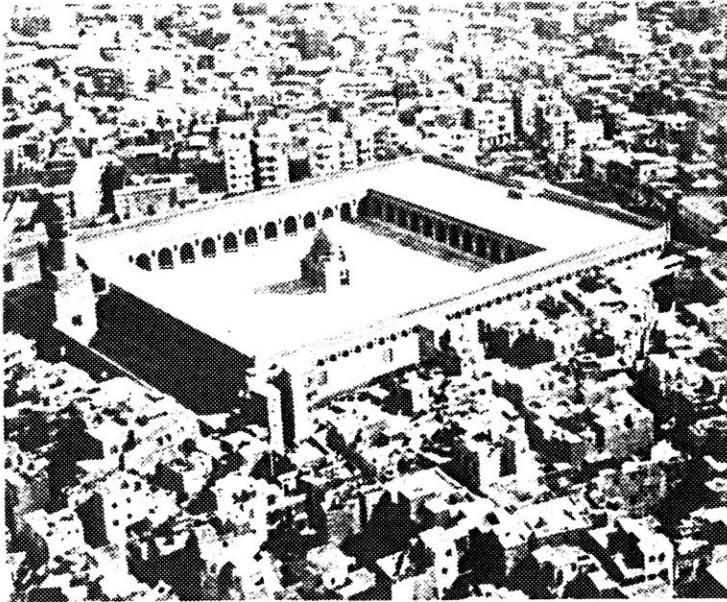


Plate 2: The Mosque of Ibn Tulun with its spiral minarate. Built A.D. 876.
Source:
Abu-Lughod, Cairo: 1001..

Al-Qatai' continued to prosper until the successors of Ibn Tulun failed to maintain their rule. The dissolution began with lavish spending on building and beautifying the environment of the palace and its surroundings, by Khumarawyh, Ibn Tulun son and first successor. Al-Maqrizi gives us a detailed account of the conditions prevailing in al-Qatai' during the time of Ibn Tulun's immediate successors and the degree to which they indulged in luxuries and extravagances,¹ a fact that shortened their ruling life and contributed to the destruction of the whole city at the hands of 'Abbasid troops in A.D. 904.²

The Tulunid dynasty (state) remained in power for less than forty years. If we are to investigate the reasons and factors behind the short rule of the Tulunids in the history of Cairo, Ibn Khaldun's insights, I believe are informative. When a dynasty loses its *'asabiyah*, it will seek the help of clients who do not share the same group feeling with the ruler. The power of the

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 316-26.

² The tragic scene of al-Qata'i destruction of was presented by al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 321-22.

clients increases and their desire to express this power will increase too. Therefore, the power of the ruling dynasty will decrease and become inefficient, and the new clients will seek authority (*Mulk*) and build their own civilization (*Hadara*).¹ But, at the same time, the strength and power of a dynasty, and the length of its duration in rule depend upon the numerical strength of its supporters, which is also a measure of the group feeling of the dynasty and its existence in rule.² The Tulunids were strangers to the community they ruled. By the death of the second ruler after Ibn Tulun, following rulers did not pay attention to gaining the support of the community which was necessary for the continuation of the dynasty. This fact made it easier for a new strong *'asabiyah* to take over after destroying the ruling dynasty.

This cycle in the history of Cairo is a typical "Khaldunian" cycle in terms of its structure and duration. It resembles to an extent the situation of some North African cities during the time of Ibn Khaldun. This fact contributed to Ibn Khaldun's formulation of his theories. The most profound characteristic of this cycle is that it lasts from three to four generations. After the death of the founder, the successors start to lose their *'asabiyah* and, subsequently, lose their control over the state until they decay and a new dynasty comes and starts a new cycle.

After the fall of al-Qatai' and the Tulunids, Misr (singular of *Amsar*; a name which was given to the three successive cities: al-Fustat, al-'Askar and al-Qatai') continued to be the capital of Egypt, but this time under the 'Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. By that time, the city had already established an economical importance by virtue of its location on trade routes between east and west, and the continuation of its inner civilization enhanced by the continuous migration of new settlers (Arabs and Egyptians) who enriched the city's social structure and contributed to its survival.

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 314-19, 372-74.

² *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 330-32.

The Rise of the 'Walled City'

Due to the weakness of the 'Abbasid dynasty towards the middle of the tenth century, their rule reached a profound decadence and made it easier for the Shi'i Fatimids -founded in Tunis by al-Mahdi in A.D. 909- to conquer Egypt and center their caliphate there. Such events marked a turning point in the history of Cairo, considering the ideology of the new dynasty to rule the city. Moreover, the Fatimids ascendance to power gave rise to many important physical features in the city, the most prominent of which was the building of al-Qahira 'The Victorious', the nucleus for the medieval as well as the modern city of Cairo.

The Fatimids most apparent characteristic, necessary for the main argument of this study, was their use of religion as a cover to accomplish their political purposes. This led the Fatimids to conquer Egypt, as suggested by al-Maqrizi's report, during a period of distress between the Egyptians and the Ikhshidi rule.¹ It also made them (the Fatimids) appear as rescuers rather than usurpers.² In his letter to the people of Misr justifying the Fatimid conquest, Jawhar al-Siqili -the commander of the Fatimid Army- promised them that:

the soldiers of the caliph al-Mu'iz had not come to conquer but simply to protect and fight for the Egyptians against the infidels who wanted to attack the country as they had attacked others in the East, the caliph wants to defend the Muslims of the East and to organize the pilgrimage and secure liberty, the caliph wants to reestablish security in commerce by a sound currency, abolish illegal taxes, and assure freedom of exercise of religion to all.³

After granting peace to the inhabitants of Egypt, Jawhar completed the conquest in A.D. 969 and laid down the foundations of the city where the Fatimid caliphate would be seated.

¹ Ikhshid is the title of the ruler during the Ikhshidi state who ruled Egypt after the fall of the Tulunid state (A.D. 935-969). As soon as they established their state, internal rebellions against their rule had weakened their structure and led them to decay (Hasan Ibrahim Hasan; History of Islam, v.3, pp. 135-42).

² Al-Maqrizi, It'az al-Hunafa, pp. 148-53.

³ Al-Maqrizi, It'az al-Hunafa, pp. 148-49.

When discussing the Fatimid's ascendance to power, we should not dissociate that from the religious connotation they attached to themselves. Being Shi'is, I believe, they needed to convince people of their legitimate right in the caliphate as the direct descendants of the Prophet. Thus, in order for this message to be delivered, a propaganda network spread from the Atlantic to central Asia, utilizing a period of unrest and decline of the life under the decaying 'Abbasid dynasty. Religious propaganda, as considered by Ibn Khaldun, is superior in unifying and strengthening the people of the same '*asabiyah*. It causes the conquered people, I believe, not to offer strong resistance to the conquerors who possess a religious coloring.¹ For the Fatimids, who were Shi'is, in order to rule over a Sunni population, they needed to gain more clients and followers from within the population they were intending to rule.

The rise of the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt marked the establishment of al-Qahira -the fourth princely city in the chain of capitals. This time, the city became the seat of caliphate (*Daru Khilafah*) and not merely a government town (*Daru Imarah*). Al-Qahira was built, I believe, to emphasize the Fatimids political standing as well as separate them from the population of Misr. Moreover, they intended to build a city which, when utilized Misr's civilization, would rival Baghdad, the Abbasids capital, and become the capital of the aspiring Fatimid empire. In this sense, and as I stated earlier in this study, the establishment of al-Qahira was a 'natural stage' that succeeded the dynasty's achievement of royal authority (*Mulk*) and the emergence of a Shi'i state (*Dawla Shi'iyah*) in the history of Islam.

As for the location of al-Qahira, Jawhar made his choice of the site to satisfy military as well as commercial considerations. However, when al-Mu'iz arrived at the city, he criticized Jawhar's choice of location and blamed him for not building the city either on the Nile or on top of the Rasd hill which would have made it the castle of Misr.² (Plate 1/a)

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, p. 320. Also see the discussion of religion and its influence on '*asabiyah* in Chapter II of this study.

² Al-Maqrizi, *It'az al-Hunafa*, pp. 160-61.

Symbolizing the power and dominance of the new regime, and at the same time, because the Fatimids possessed a religious connotation which made them distinguish themselves from the rest of the population, the wall was built first to mark the line between what was inside the wall - the caliph and his subjects '*al-Khassah*', and what was outside - the community '*al-'Ammah*'.

Inside the wall, Jawhar constructed the symbols of power represented in the Eastern Palace (*al-qasr al-Sharqi*) which consisted of many small palaces termed the blooming palaces (*al-Qusur al-Zahirah*), al-Azhar mosque (*al-Jami' al-Azhar*) which soon made the foundation of Al-Azhar University, and quarters for slaves and soldiers belonging to the caliph and his Army. The wall had gates along the four sides of the city, beyond which access was restricted to the caliph and his subjects. (Plate 3/a)

The important thing about the symbolic elements mentioned above and their organization inside the city, as I see it, is that they all served the same notion of propagating the religious denotation of the Fatimids. The Eastern Palace acquired the center of the city with its ceremonial spaces (*Qa'at*), greatest of which was *Qa'at ad-Dhahab*. Later, the Western Palace was built for the *harim* and located along the main spine *Qasaba* right opposite from the Eastern Palace. Between the two palaces a huge space was left to be used for feast festivals. This royal space called 'Between the Two Palaces (*Bayn al-Qasrayn*) was said to be so large that 10,000 soldiers could parade within it.¹ During later stages and under the succeeding dynasties that ruled the city, *Bayn al-Qasrayn* had changed wholly due to the attitudes of the successive Sunni rulers towards the Fatimids and their edifices.

Other spaces of important connotations used to exist inside the city during the Fatimids, such as the magnificent Kafur Gardens to the west of the Western Palace, the festival space called (*al-Maydan*) to the north east of the Eastern Palace, and the space in front of al-Azhar Mosque. (Plate 3/a)

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, p. 97.

The planning of the quarters inside the wall followed almost the same ethnic pattern that underlay al-Fustat. After running the main street (*Qasaba*) parallel to the canal¹ connecting the northern gates of *Bab al-Futuh* and *Bab an-Nasr* with the southern gates of *Bab Zuwala*, different groups of people settled according to their tribal and ethnic relationships.² In the case of al-Qahira, unlike al-Fustat, quarters were called (*Harat* pl. of *Hara*). Each *hara* was named after the tribe or group of people that occupied it. Al-Maqrizi defined the *hara* as the place where people settle and their dwellings come close to each other.³ The number of those quarters which al-Maqrizi described were fifteen.⁴ (Plate 3/b)

To explain this aspect of the early Muslim settlements, one could argue that because tribal affiliation was the most dominant form of association, it dictated and implied the basic forms of the social structure in the newly founded cities. Attachment and belonging were still based on the individual's obligation to his clan or to the Muslim community (*Ummah*), rather than to any social class or professional occupation that developed in a later stage in the city. This reminds us of Ibn Khaldun's view that in the beginning of any civilization, primitive aspects of life predominate and precede sedentary culture. It is after people come to interact on the individual and the communal levels that aspects of primitivity are increasingly civilized.⁵

The quarters of al-Qahira constituted the nucleus of the physical growth of the city inside the wall. They retained their tribes' names despite the vast increase of their size during the subsequent periods. The growth that took place inside the walls was paralleled by a development occurring outside. From al-Maqrizi's description of the limits of the city outside the original walls of al-Qahira, one would expect that parallel to the growth and

¹ Some scholars believe that the design of al-Qahira was influenced by the Roman cities existed in North Africa during the time of al-Mu'iz and Jawhar. The aspects of similarity were believed to be the in two main intersecting streets and the elements which exist inside the city (Zaki, p. 12).

² Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 361.

³ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.II, p. 2.

⁴ J. Abu-Lughod mentioned the different opinions offered by scholars about the number of those *Harat* (J. Abu-Lughod, p. 24).

⁵ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 252-53.

expansion that took place inside the city, there was a development occurring outside the wall.¹

Similar to al-Fustat, al-Qahira was first inhabited according to the tribal and ethnic groups that accompanied Jawhar during the conquest of Egypt. After building the wall and deciding on the locations of the important edifices of the city, Jawhar assigned the rest of the city to the different groups to settle and build their quarters (*Harat*).²

As the city developed, I suggest that two kinds of quarters existed: the first was inside the wall, following a tribal and ethnic subdivision, while the second accumulated outside the walls as an extension of the quarters of Misr which followed, by that time, diversified occupational groupings and were adapted to the requirements of craftsmanship and trade.

The differentiation between the 'insiders' and the "outsiders" were based on the cultural content of the groups settled inside and outside the wall at that time. In other words, we should bear in mind that people who moved from Misr to settle around al-Qahira were city dwellers who came from a sedentary culture and civilization which existed in Misr before the Fatimids' conquest. In contrast, the structure of the community that came with the Fatimids and settled inside the wall city was of tribes and soldiers with a comparatively primitive cultural content.

The process of interaction between the two communities was a continuous movement from primitive forms of association reflecting the tribal community to a more civilized and coherent society responding to the diversified occupations that arose and developed as a result of the process of acculturation. This led, in my view, to the dominance of the occupational groupings. The characteristics of the *harat* changed accordingly.

The phenomena of socialization and cultural change were reflected in the physical form of the city. To clarify this fact I emphasize that stability and

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 360.

² Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 361.

Misr continued to flourish and prosper and to acquire its commercial and manufacturing importance¹ even after al-Qahira was built and became the capital of the Fatimids. At the time of its establishment, al-Qahira was treated first as a closed governmental and administrative center, a fact which led the Shi'i caliphs to feel their possible seclusion from the Sunni society and the dominance of Misr over al-Qahira on one hand. On the other hand, the segregation between the caliph and the community seemed to have worked against the Fatimids religious propaganda. Thus, the caliph must have realized that he must become more exposed to the public at certain occasions through his generous banquets held in the palace, or the ceremonial festivals, especially those of the Shi'i, which he hold in the 'royal square' *Bayn al-Qasrayn* in front of the palace.² (Plate 3/c) This encouragement of interaction between the new city and the existing life of Misr through cultural and commercial exchange led al-Qahira to gain popularity and, eventually, become more prosperous and dominant. This reflects the relationship between the city and the ruling dynasty on one hand, and the attitudes of the new dynasty towards the city they conquered on the other. In this sense one could refer to Ibn Khaldun's view concerning such phenomenon, he wrote:

It is the nature of a new dynasty to wipe out all the traces of the previous dynasty. Therefore, it transfers (the population) from the capital city (of the old dynasty) to its own home, which is firmly in its possession. Some are brought there as exiles and prisoners, others as honored and well-treated guests, so that no antagonism can arise. Eventually, the capital city (of the previous dynasty) holds only salesmen, itinerant farm workers, hoodlums, and the great mass of common people.³

The attitude of the Fatimids towards Misr could be interpreted further.

¹ J. Abu-Lughod had constructed an image of the two cities (al-Qahira and Misr) during the eleventh century based on the descriptions provided by Nasir-i Khusraw -a persian traveler who visited al-Qahira towards the middle of the eleventh century (J. Abu-Lughod, *CAIRO: 1001 YEARS OF THE CITY VICTORIUS*, pp. 18-20). Although she was able to conceive the many dimensions of the reality, I believe one needs to add another level of interpretation by investigating the phenomenon in association with its cultural content. The two cities were realities attached to a social system dictated by the political connotations of the two cities and the intentions of the dynasties built them.

² Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 384-87.

³ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 299-300.

The political inclinations of the Fatimids led them to create their capital al-Qahira next to the 'Abbasid regional capital (Misr). They aimed at establishing a great civilization utilizing and exploring that of Misr. Their intention was to make a rival to the 'Abbasid caliphate capital in Baghdad, which reflected their underlying intention of propagating Shi'ism as rival and even superior to Sunni'ism. This fact contributed to an eventual yet gradual decline of Misr until it was burned to the ground by Shawar in A.D. 1168.¹ This tragic incident in the history of Cairo, I believe, gave al-Qahira its absolute "rise" as a medieval metropolis exceeding the measures of its time.

Thus far, the important dimension of the Fatimids, which is of concern to my study of the physical formation of medieval Cairo, is the issue of legitimization of the Shi'i rule and caliphate. The controversy between Shi'ism and Sunni'ism is centered around the issue of who the caliph should be. The tenet of Shi'is is that the imamate is not a general public interest to be delegated to the Muslims for consideration and appointment of a person to fill it. They believe that the Imam or the caliph should be a descendant of the Prophet Mohammad, and that Mohammad appointed 'Ali -the prophets cousin and the fourth caliph after the prophet- as his successor in ruling the Muslims (*Ummah*).

Thus, in order for the Shi'i Fatimids, who claim to be descendant from 'Ali,² to legitimize and justify their rule over the Sunni population of Misr, they had to propagate their right through many ways, one of which was the use of the Qura'nic verses that can be interpreted in support of their claim.(Plate 4) In her study of the inscriptions rendered on the surfaces of the Fatimid mosques and mausolea - the largest category of surviving monuments from the Fatimid period - Caroline Williams³ pointed out the various Qur'anic verses and the keywords - like Mohammad, Ali, 'People of The House' *Al al-Bayt* - emphasized in those inscriptions which convey the meanings intended

¹ Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 337-39.

² See al-Maqrizi and his exposition of the different stories about the origins of the Fatimids (Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp.348-49).

³ For a detailed analysis of the use of inscriptions on the mosques and mausolea, see the study of Caroline Williams, *The Cult of 'Alid Saints in The Fatimid Monuments of Cairo, Part I: The Mosque of al-Aqmar, Muqarnas 1*, pp. 37-52, & Part II: The Mausolea, *Muqarnas 3*, pp. 39-60.

by the Fatimids.(Plate 5/a, b, c) A verse like the Throne Verse had served as a kind of usual quotation both by Shi'is and by Sunni's on several religious monuments. Part of the Verse which is "Those who intercede with Him by His leave"¹ could be interpreted as the Prophet and the People of his House.² Through the use of many such examples, Williams was able to assess the importance of such monumental funerary architecture as a political expression and a tool used by the Fatimids to legitimize their rule over a Sunni population.³

Religious coloring proved and is still proving to have the strongest influence in unifying and evoking mutual jealousy among people. In a community which is based on the Law, it is important for the ruler to demonstrate either a religious denotation or a descendant as in the case of the Fatimids, or a religious piety and good qualities as we will see in the case of the Mamluks, in order to satisfy and gain the support of the community. In this sense Ibn Khaldun says:

Only those who share in the group feeling (of a group) can have a "house" and nobility in the basic sense and in reality, while others have it only in a metaphorical and figurative sense. This is because nobility and prestige are the results of personal qualities. A "house" (*Bayt* pl. *Buyutat*) means that a man counts noble and famous men among his forebears. The fact that he is their progeny and descendant gives him great standing among his fellows, for his fellows respect the great standing and nobility that his ancestors acquired through their (personal) qualities. Wherever the group feeling is truly formidable and its soil kept pure, the advantage of a (common) descent is more evident (than elsewhere), and the (group feeling) is more effective. A "house" possesses an original nobility through group feeling and (personal) qualities. Later on, the people (who have a "house") divest themselves of that nobility when group feeling disappears as a result of sedentary life, . . . and they mingle with the common people.⁴

¹ Qur'an, 2:255-56.

² Williams, *Muqarnas* 3, p. 43.

³ The Fatimids used several methods to legitimize their rule over the Sunni population including the use of built form. The Fatimids had used their personal qualities as a tool of legitimization. Their strive to establish personal relations with the population reflected in their sharing with the community the religious celebrations by using their intentional generosity. Al-Maqrizi presented us with so many aspects of this kind of showing generosity by the Imams and the use of his palace to insure this generosity (al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 387-88, 490-92).

⁴ *Muqaddimah*, v.I, pp. 273-74.

Knowing such a fact could help us understand the Fatimids exploitation of the physical form to propagate their group feeling and legitimize their rule over the Sunni Egyptians.

Despite the continuous attempts of the Fatimid Shi'i caliphs to prevail by their ideology upon the Sunni society, the seeds of disagreement were still dominating and even growing to the extent that they created political conflicts between the population and the ruling dynasty. This conflict grew and reached its apex during the rein of the caliph al-Hakim (ruled A.D. 996-1021) who evoked the anger of Sunni's by trying to impose his strict Shi'i-biased rules and regulations on the population. Soon, he lost the regard and respect of the people, and the city became an unpleasant place to live. I believe that the tyrannous rule¹ of al-Hakim contributed to the decline of the city. From the reports of al-Maqrizi on al-Hakim, one can conclude that during and after his rule the problems in the city never settled. People began to abandon the city. Factions arose in the city such as the Berbers and the Turks as rivals to the regime. Such circumstances led to the shrinkage of the Fatimid empire by A.D. 1046 to only the Nile valley in North Africa.

One important physical development that happened to Cairo was during the time of the vizier Badr al-Jamali² who rebuilt new fortifications around the city, enlarging it towards the north and south.(Plate 6) Badr al-Jamali also reconstructed the three gates: *Bab al-Futuh*, *Bab al-Nasr* and *Bab Zuwayla*, which still exist today. This implies that the city, by the time of al-Jamali, had lost its walls and thus its privacy.

It is inevitable that during the periods of political unrest, the city starts to show signs of decline. This was what happened to al-Fustat, which was always the most susceptible to epidemics, even during its prosperity. A physician (Ibn Radwan) described al-Fustat in time of prosperity:

¹ See the description given by al-Maqrizi regarding al-Hakim's unfavored rule which led to more political unrest between the population and the regime (al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.II, pp. 286-89).

² An armenian general who was appointed by the caliph al-Mustansir to put an end to the Turkish oligarchy (Staffa, p. 78).

One of the practices of the people of al-Fustat is to throw into the streets and alleys everything that dies in their houses: cats, dogs, and other domestic animals of that kind. They rot there, and this putrescence spreads through the air. Another one of their habits is to throw into the Nile, whose water they drink, the remains and corpses of their animals.¹

Thus, with governmental disintegration, the city of al-Fustat could not resist its eventual decline.

Political and governmental disintegration, I believe, comes as a result of a weak ruler and/or a strong opponent. In the case of al-Qahira, the Fatimids were weakening and at the same time, the whole Muslim empire was suffering from the threats of the Crusaders. Thus, besides their weakening, the Fatimids were involved in the Crusades wars, which took place around A.D. 1167. Moreover, The Turks in al-Qahira had strengthened to a degree that made them acquire the most sensitive positions in the city. The new Turkish regime, represented by vizier Shawar, feared the fall of al-Fustat in the hands of the Crusaders. Therefore, they evacuated the city and burned it to earth in A.D. 1167.² This event made al-Qahira the center of habitation and, although al-Fustat witnessed a partial revival under the following Ayyubid dynasty, it never regained its former significance.

Understanding such (interesting) scene of the city calls for Ibn Khaldun's argument about the determined cycle of civilization and the city. The (planned) pattern of rise and fall worked well in the case of the Fatimids and their capital al-Qahira. In other words, the city had risen to fulfill meanings of power and leadership through establishing royal authority (*Mulk*). Those meanings had manifested themselves in means of justification of the dynasty's right to rule over the community. Thus, *'asabiyah*, which was the real cause of ascending to power, needed to be supported. Religious propaganda (*Da'wa Diniyah*) had served as the tool for strengthening *'asabiyah*. Therefore, the material as well as the immaterial aspects of the new

¹ For more description of the city by Ibn Radwan see al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, pp. 339-42. The English translation of the quotation was cited in Staffa, p. 77.

² Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.I, p. 286.

civilization were exploited to propagate the dynasty's religious denotation. Thus, a certain symbolic value was attached to their monuments which served their political purposes.

The existing population in Misr helped materialize the desires and ambitions of the dynasty. The 'high' cultural content of the existing population, when combined and interacted with the potentials of the new communities came with the Fatimids, a unique character evolved in the city encompassing the social, cultural, and physical aspects.

Following the law seen by Ibn Khaldun, sedentary culture with its excessive luxuries and tranquility (invited) the senility and destruction of civilization. Rulers (caliphs) had lost control over the population due to either their indulgence in luxuries or their hostile attitudes to the population. New foreign clients were sought to participate in the affairs of the state, new attitudes developed towards the local inhabitants, and new ambitions and qualities evolved within the ruling dynasty itself. Thus, progress reversed direction and the dynasty began to lose its control over the state. A fact which encouraged internal as well as external authority aspirers to strengthen their *'asabiyahs* and cause pressure on the existing regime.

In this regard, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the strong association of civilization to dynasty and royal authority, he wrote:

In sum, the primary natural reason for this (situation) is the fact that dynasty and royal authority have the same relationship to civilization as form has to matter. (The form) is the shape that preserves the existence of (matter) through the (particular) kind (of phenomenon) it represents. It has been established in philosophy that the one cannot be separated from the other. One cannot imagine a dynasty "*Dawla*" without civilization "*Umrān*," while a civilization without dynasty and royal authority is impossible, because human beings must by nature co-operate, and that calls for a restraining influence. Since the two cannot be separated, the disintegration of one of them must influence the other, just as its non-existence would entail the non-existence of the other.¹

¹ *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 300-301. Also see *Muqaddimah*, v.II, pp. 270-71 quoted in Part I of this study.

Such a statement by Ibn Khaldun could be inferred from his acquaintance with philosophy and his utilization of its premises to frame his enterprise. In other words, Ibn Khaldun emphasized the fact of his philosophical inference when adducing his rules concerning the issues under investigation. Concluding this chapter, I quote Ibn Khaldun:

This secret should be understood, because it is not known to the people. It should be known that these are related matters: The strength and weakness of a dynasty, the numerical strength of a nation or race, the size of a town or city, and the amount of prosperity and wealth. This is because dynasty and royal authority constitute the form of the world and of civilization, which, in turn, together with the subjects, cities and all other things, constitute the matter of (dynasty and royal authority).¹

¹ *Muqaddimah*, pp. 290-91.

IV REFLECTIONS

The application of Ibn Khaldun's theories of culture to the study of the physical formation of Medieval Cairo was two-fold. On one hand, the theories of culture, as tools formulated by Ibn Khaldun to criticize historical reports, were used to reveal and interpret the 'internal meanings' of the historical information on Cairo - the external form of history - provided by al-Maqrizi through the descriptions of the physical aspects as well as the socio-cultural, political, and economical content of the city. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun's theories were used in order to examine and reassess their validity and accountability in pursuing historical investigations relevant to the nature of this study.

Following Ibn Khaldun's distinction, the historical process consists of two interrelated aspects. It has an 'external' form which is the compiled data about events of particular times and places, and an 'internal meaning' which is a rational investigation of origins and causes. When this notion of external versus internal (form versus meaning) was applied to the study of the city as an historical process, it revealed a pattern of evolution consistently repeated in its nature (meaning) yet completely diverse in its form. One important aspect of this pattern is that it attaches itself to the global and more comprehensive pattern of civilization, since the underlying structure of laws governing civilization and city, according to Ibn Khaldun, is identical. In this sense the city cannot evolve autonomously, but rather it necessitates the evolution of civilization as a pre-requisite for its evolution.

Another distinction can be made between the city as an organismic phenomenon, an entity which attaches itself to civilization and follows its pattern of rise and fall, and the city as an accumulation of physical interventions influenced by forces almost identical to those governing the city as an organismic phenomenon, i.e., the physical form as a means of expression. To modify this point, I would like to reflect on the analysis I made in the previous chapter of this study, and raise some issues concerning

subsequent stages in the city which, I believe, could be included in the investigation using Ibn Khaldun's theories.

On the level of the city as an organismic phenomenon, Cairo developed, as I see it, through a series of successive cycles which marked its physical character. Each cycle was associated with a dynasty which ruled the city and whose power and degree of civilization were reflected in the life of the city. The power of *'asabiyah* was the decisive factor in attaining kingship and fulfilling the desires of the dynasty in establishing civilization. Thus, since each dynasty possessed different *'asabiyah*, the impress of each dynasty was reflected on the city's physical aspects.

Even when no new cities were built, the dynasty which attained authority would appropriate the conquered city so that it met their standards.¹ The Ayyubids (A.D. 1171-1250) and the Mamluks (A.D. 1250-1517), who were the heirs of the Abbasids Sunni ideology, built no new cities. Yet Cairo, under the Ayyubids, witnessed a radical physical transformation. It became a unified entity due to the building of the Citadel and the surrounding of al-Qahira and Misr by a fortified wall to assure its defensive stand position the Crusaders' threats.(Plate 1/c, 8/a) New types of monuments were introduced in Cairo such as the *Madrassa* (colleges) which the Ayyubids took after the tradition of their Sunni parallels in Iraq and Iran. The *Madrassa* was dedicated for teaching the Sunni doctrines of Islam, by which was symbolized the restoration of the Abbasid Sunni Caliphate in Egypt after the defeat of the Fatimid Shi'i regime.(Plate 8/b)

Another contribution of the Ayyubids to Cairo, based on their complete rejection of the Shi'i doctrines, was their continuous attempt to obliterate the

¹ The phenomenon of the city in Ibn Khaldun's conception, as mentioned earlier in this study, does not necessitate the city's physical birth. The city could evolve from an already existing one. The new dynasty conquering the city gives it a new cycle and determines its new life. Ibn Khaldun writes:"Frequently it happens that after the destruction of the original builders of (a town, that town) is used by another realm and dynasty as its capital and residence. This then makes it unnecessary for (the new dynasty) to build (another) town for itself as a settlement. In this case the (new) dynasty will protect the town. Its buildings and constructions will increase in proportion to the improved circumstances and the luxury of the new dynasty. The life (of the new dynasty) gives (the town) another life. This has happened in contemporary Fez and Cairo." (*M.*, v.II, p. 237)

glory of the Fatimid city and its edifices. Such attempts were represented in the opening of the Fatimid city (al-Qahira) for general residence, and thus changing its glittery garden-like character. Soon the city had become a densified settlement with a high level of commercial and manufacturing activities. Another example is the attitude of the Ayyubids towards the Fatimids monumental plaza (*Bayn al-Qasrayn*) which had witnessed a huge building activity in subsequent stages of the Ayyubid rule as well as their heirs the Mamluks.¹ (Plates 9, 10)

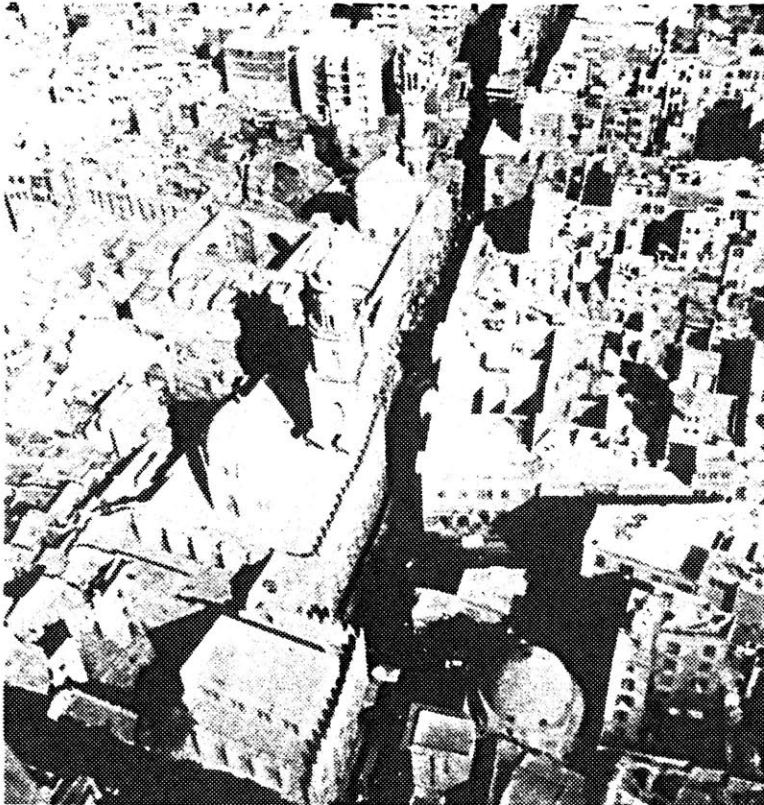


Plate 9: Areal view of the *Bayn al-Qasrayn* area. The portion of the spine *Qasaba* which passes through the area is called now *Suq al-Nahhasin*. Source: Abu Lughod, Cairo: 1001 Years of . . .

The Mamluks were slaves and mercenary soldiers who accompanied the Ayyubids during their conquest of Egypt. They were the heirs of the Ayyubids' Sunni ideology. Therefore, the process of development in the city had taken almost the same ideological direction. The Mamluks did not transform the city nor did they build a new one. The Citadel continued to be the governmental center; and the major change was in the growth and expansion of the physical as well as the economical city.(Plate 7)

¹ See al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, v.II, pp. 96-7.

The main aspect of the Mamluks to be noticed in the context of this study is the source of their *'asabiyah* (group feeling). I argue that since they were slaves, with neither religious connotation nor descendance from a family or a noble 'house' which could legitimize their rule, they had to give expression to their good qualities to gain the support and loyalty of the community. Piety, generosity, and glory were 'meanings' that a Mamluk amir would need to communicate in order to justify his leadership.¹ Those 'meanings' were manifested in the 'form' of monuments serving related functions. A *madrasa*, for example, carrying the name of the amir who built it, would be dedicated to the community for teaching the disciplines of Islam and other sciences. Attached to the *madrasa*, a water fountain with a school for teaching and reciting Qur'an on top (*Sabil-Kuttab*). (Plate 11) The name of the amir was carved at a visible corner so that a passer-by would drink water, hear the Qur'an recited from a window overlooking the main street, and ask God to bless the amir whose name is carved on the wall of the edifice. Through such building the Mamluk patron hoped to communicate with the community and get closer to them in order to assert his personal qualities.

In the case of the Mamluks, the level of patronage exceeded the measures of any other dynasty in Cairo. Physical form was employed both functionally and formally as a means of communication. The character and the location of the monuments played an important role in conveying the message to the beholders (Plate 12/a, b), while morphologically, they affected the urban fabric which responded to the setting of the monuments.² Even on the formal and stylistic level, the Mamluks were able to develop their own distinct architectural language which, I believe, was also dedicated to the communication of their glory and magnificence to the community.³

¹ Ibn Khaldun provided the frame which applies to the Mamluks in his exposition of the sources and causes of *'asabiyah*, ; he wrote: ". . . in the case of people who have no group feeling to make themselves feared, and who have no rank (to bestow) for which one might hope, there can be no doubt as to why they are respected, and it is quite clear that one wants (to find) through them, namely, glory, perfection in personal qualities, and total progress toward (a position of) political leadership." (*M.*, V.I, p. 294)

² For an account of the relation of the monuments to fabric in Mamluk architecture read H. Sayed, *The Rab' in Cairo*, unpublished Ph.D dissertation, 1987, pp. 179-81.

³ The issue of style and the interpretation of the stylistic language of the Mamluk Architecture was explored by H. al- Harithy in her study 'Architectural form and meaning in Light of al-Jurjani's Literary Theories', unpublished Master's thesis, MIT, 1987.

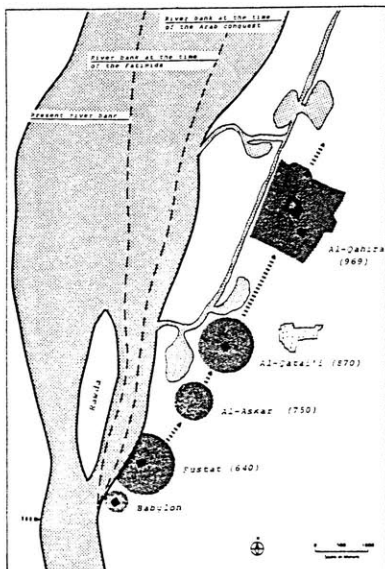
To reflect on this, I would like to go back to the argument of the external form of history versus its internal meaning. The city, I emphasize, should be perceived as a manifestation of this notion of external form versus internal meaning. To explain that, I will consider the physical form as well as the socio-cultural economic, and political aspects of the city as its 'external form'. Simultaneously, I will consider the pattern of evolution which is identical and parallel to the process of change and transformation of the society from primitiveness to civilization as the essence or the meaning of the city. However, it should be realized that the process of change was ascribed, according to Ibn Khaldun's views, to the dialectical role of '*asabiyah* or group feeling, discussed earlier in this study, rather than to its kind or source. In this sense one can distinguish between the process of change and the outcome of change considering '*asabiyah* and its role. The example of Cairo may illustrate this notion.

In analyzing the different stages of physical development of Cairo, I noticed that each stage has different typological and stylistic characters. Those characters were specific to the dynasty that produced them. However, each that dynasty that ruled the city came from a different origin, achieved superiority in a different manner, and lost glory and prosperity under different conditions. Thus, I believe, two main determinants had created the diversity in the physical character of the city. On one hand, the original attributes and characteristics of the culture of the dynasty that achieved kingship (*Mulk*), i.e., Arabs, Berbers, Turks, Turkish slaves, Kurds, and so on; and, on the other hand, the basis of their group feeling (*'asabiyah*), i.e., tribal, religious, 'house' and nobility, descendant, or any kind of occupational relationships.

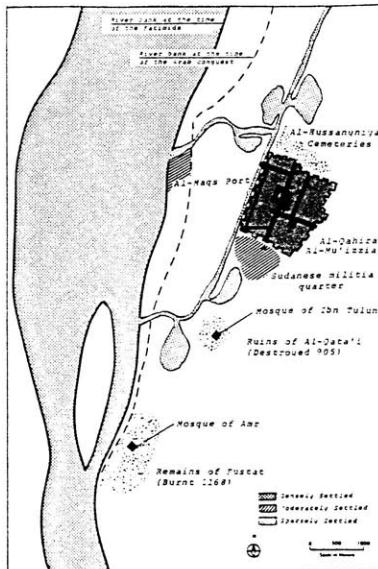
Finally, I believe that modern scholarship of the 'Islamic city' has missed the point when it considering merely the external aspects of the city, looking for explanations of its evolutionary patterns while ignoring the real essence of the process by which cities come to exist, develop and grow, and eventually decline. Whether it was a physical form, a socio-cultural content, or a universal legal Law which governed the evolution of the city, it would be rather insufficient, I argue, to claim that the city is 'Islamic' because of such aspects. Therefore, I emphasize that the process of continuous change, with its

determinants in culture, are what constitutes the 'reality' of the pattern behind the evolution of the 'Islamic city'.

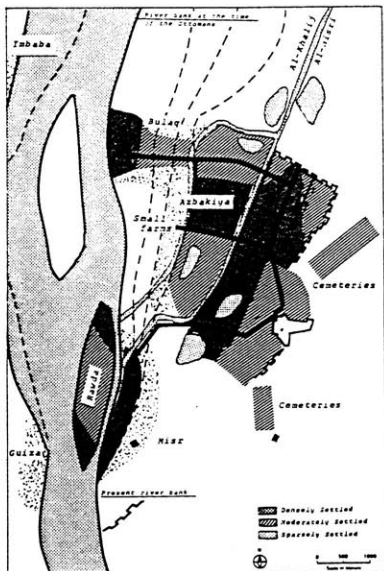
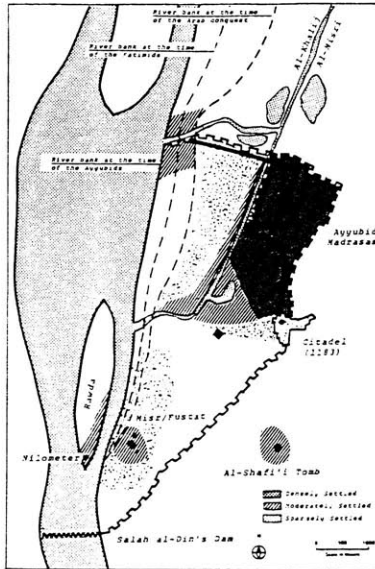
a. The first stage A.D. 642-969. The map shows the four Muslim settlements as well as the Early Fatimid city.



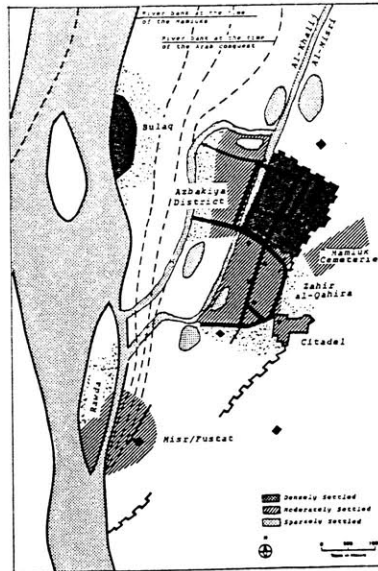
b. During the late Fatimid rule A.D. 969-1171



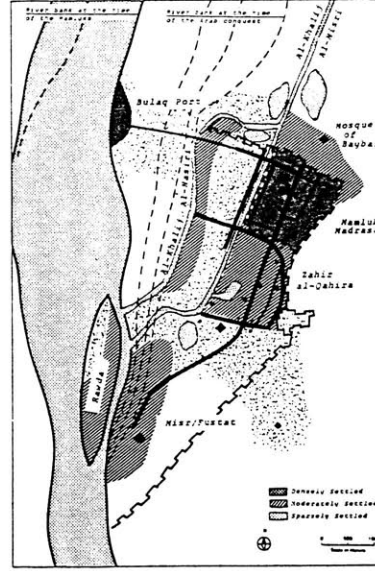
c. The city during the Ayyubids with the new fortified walls and the Citadel A.D. 1171-1250



f. Cairo towards the end of the Ottomans A.D. 1517-1798



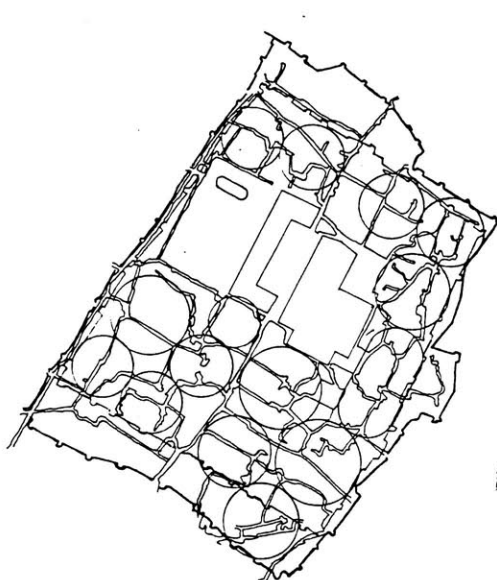
e. Cairo of the Burji Mamluks A.D. 1348-1517



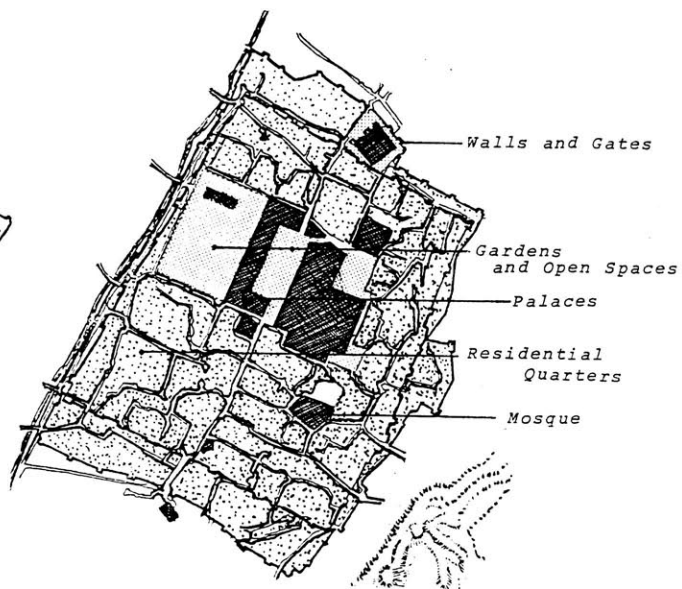
d. Cairo of the Bahri Mamluks A.D. 1250-1348

Plate 1: The different development stages of the physical fabric of Cairo.

Source: Al-Sayad, The Streets Of Islamic Cairo



b. The quarters of the city spread around the main edifices of the city.



a. The elements of the city as it was first built by Jawhar in A.D. 969.



c. A Fatimid Festival.

Plate 3: The Fatimid Walled City : al-Qahira.
Source: Al-Sayad, The Streets of Islamic Cairo

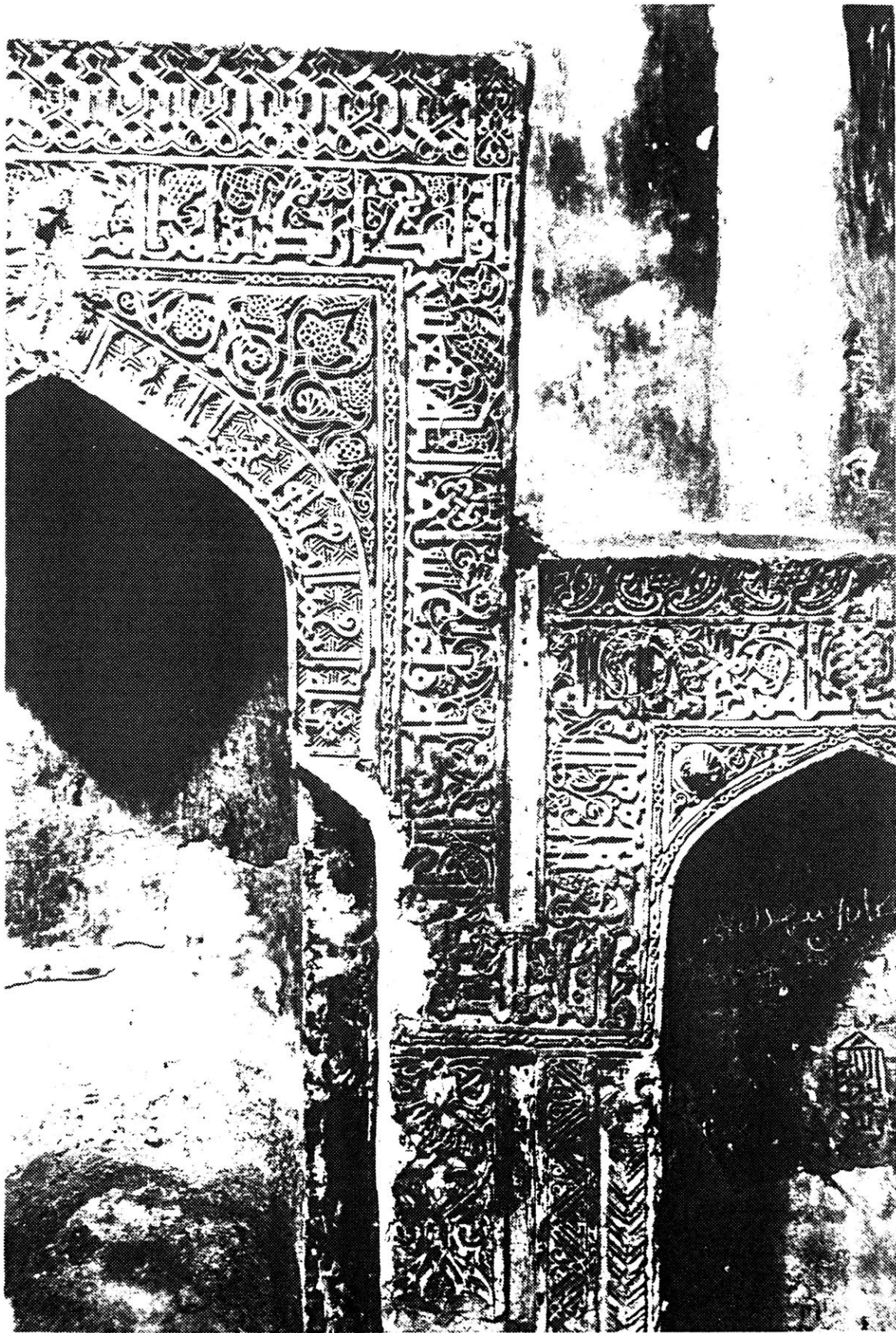
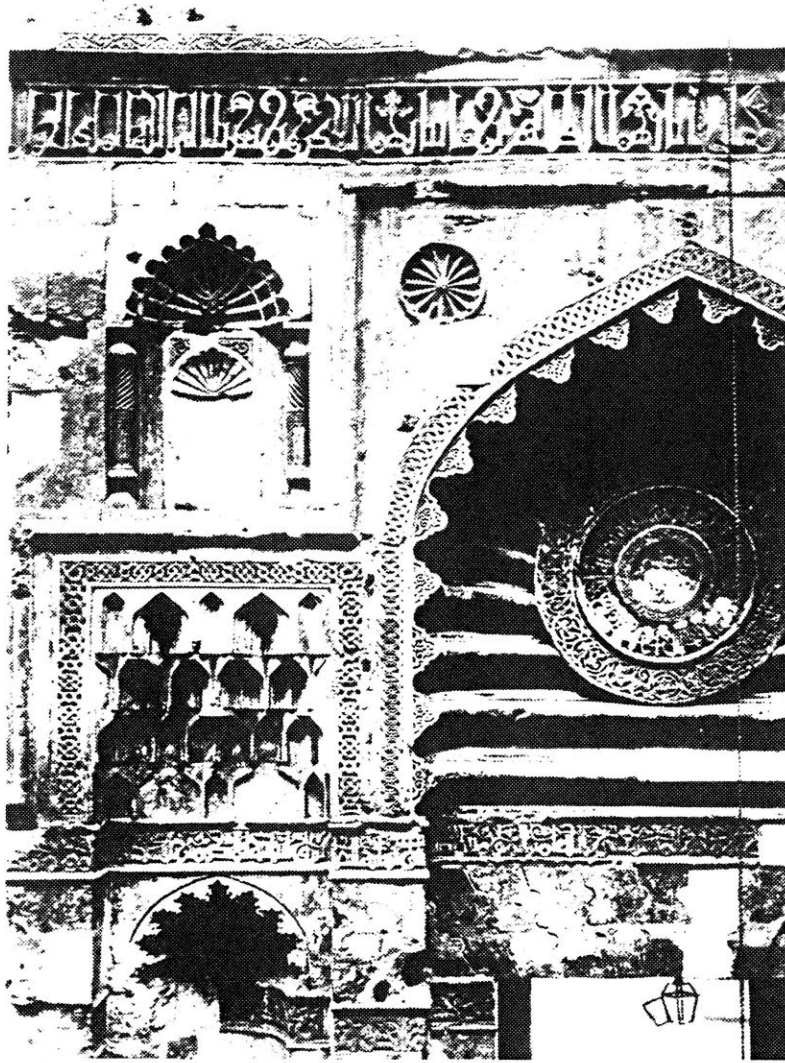


Plate 4: Central niche of a triple *mihrab* of the Ikhwat Yusuf mausoleum.
Source: Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*.



a. The entrance facade on the main *Qasaba* .



b. A panel with the names of Muhammad and Ali in the center of the circle surrounded by a Qur'anic verse.

Plate 5: Inscriptions on the facades of al-Aqmar Mosque. Built A.D. 1125.

Source: Creswell, The Muslim Architecture of Egypt

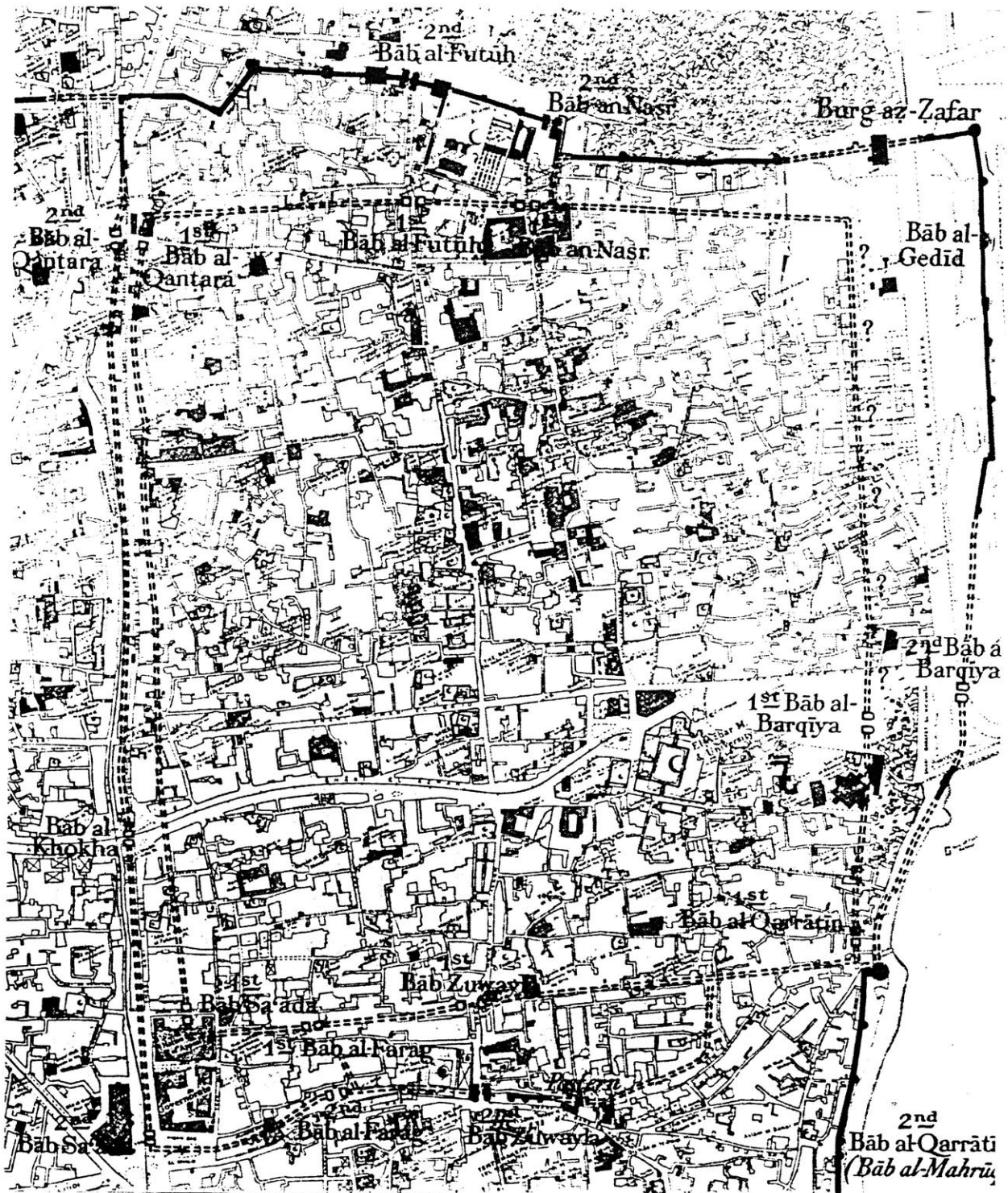


Plate 6: Creswell's map of the Fatimid city as it exist today with the three successive walls : Jawhar's A.D. 969 (the dotted inner wall), al-Jamali's A.D. 1087-92 (the dotted outer wall), and Salah ad-Din's A.D. 1171 (the solid outer wall). Source: Hoag, *Islamic Architecture*

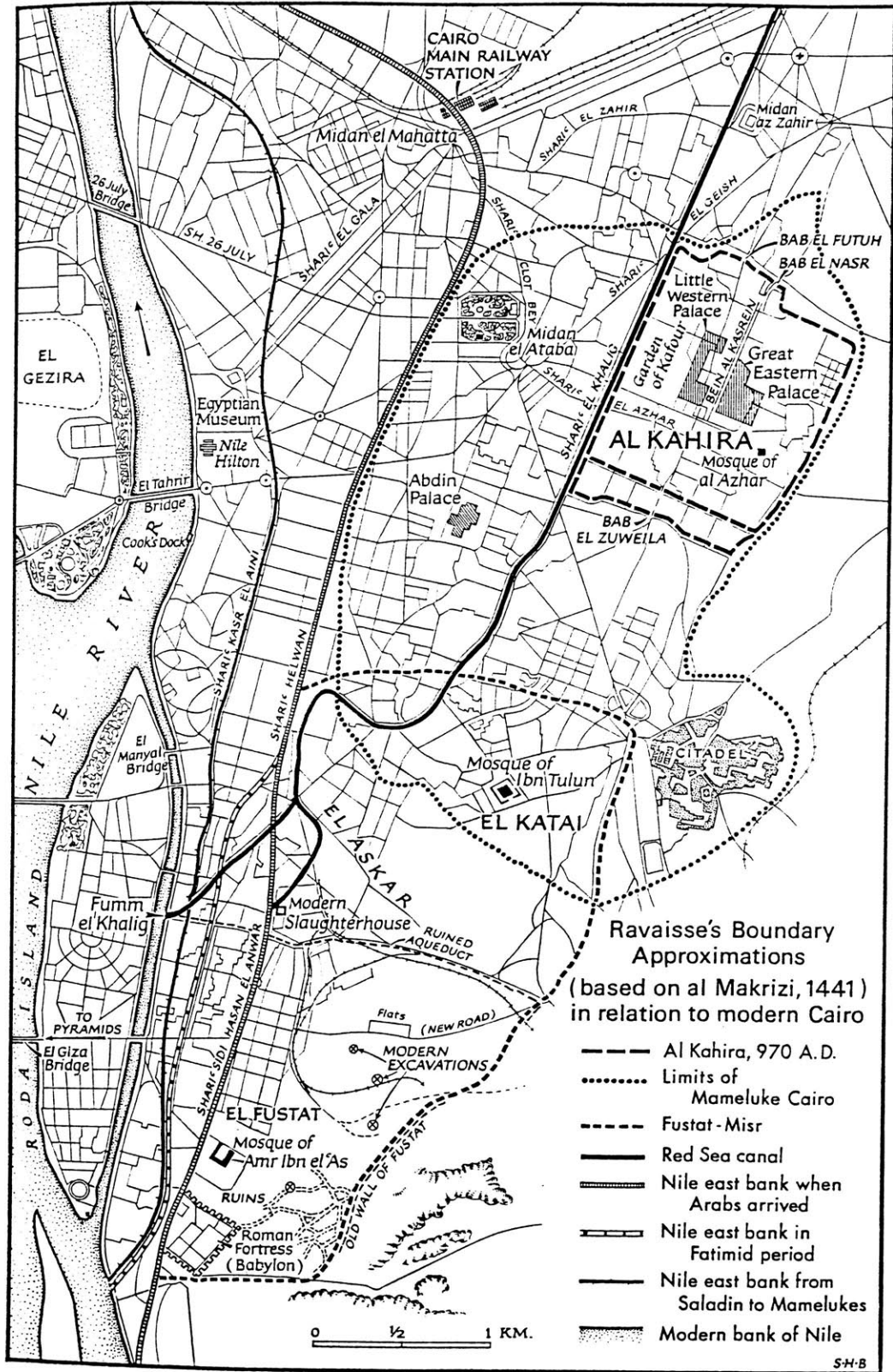


Plate 7: The expansion of the city during the time of Ibn Khaldun.
 Source: Aldridge, Cairo

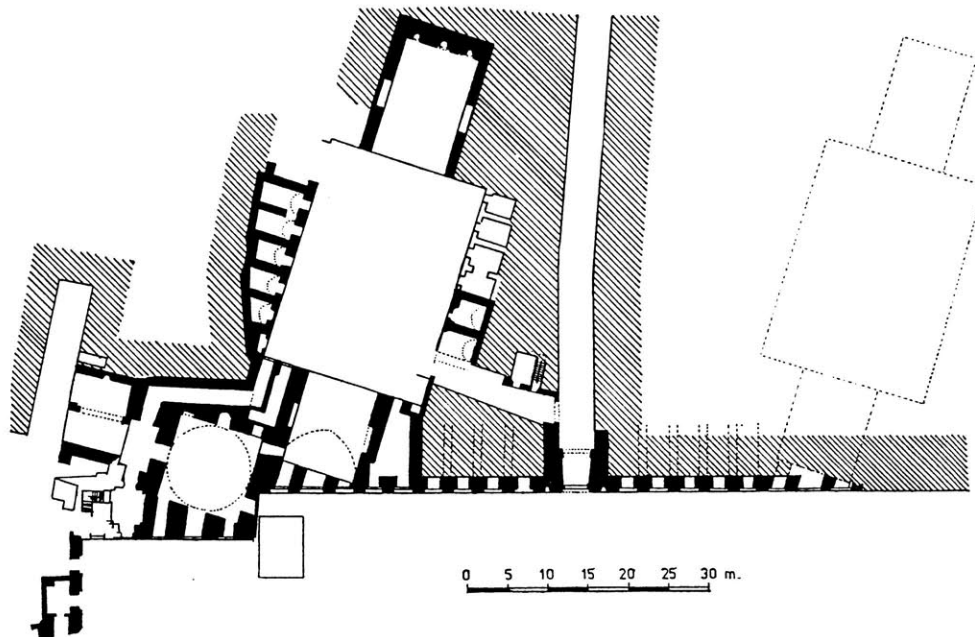


Plate 8/b: Madrasa of al-Malik al-Salih Najm ed-Din, an Ayyubids monument which survived today. Built by Nejm ad-Dean A.D. 1241-1243.

This madrasa had set the precedent for the Mamluks and their monuments formally and ideologically. Source: Doris AbouSeif, *Change in function and Form of Mamluk religious institutions*

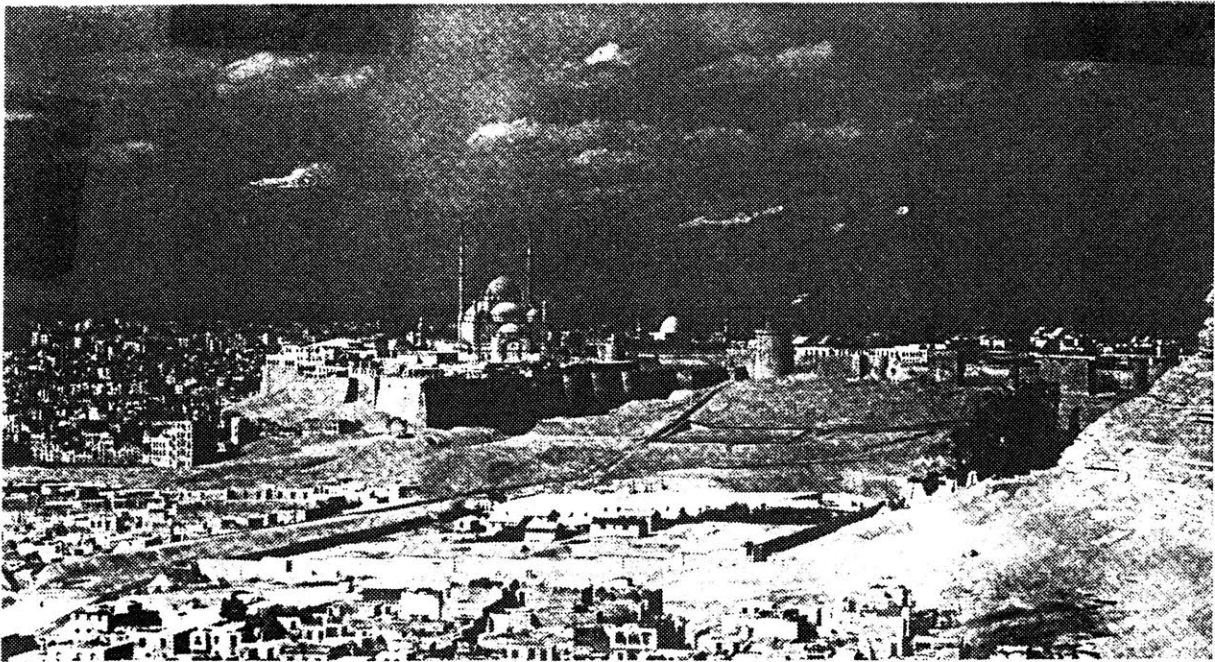
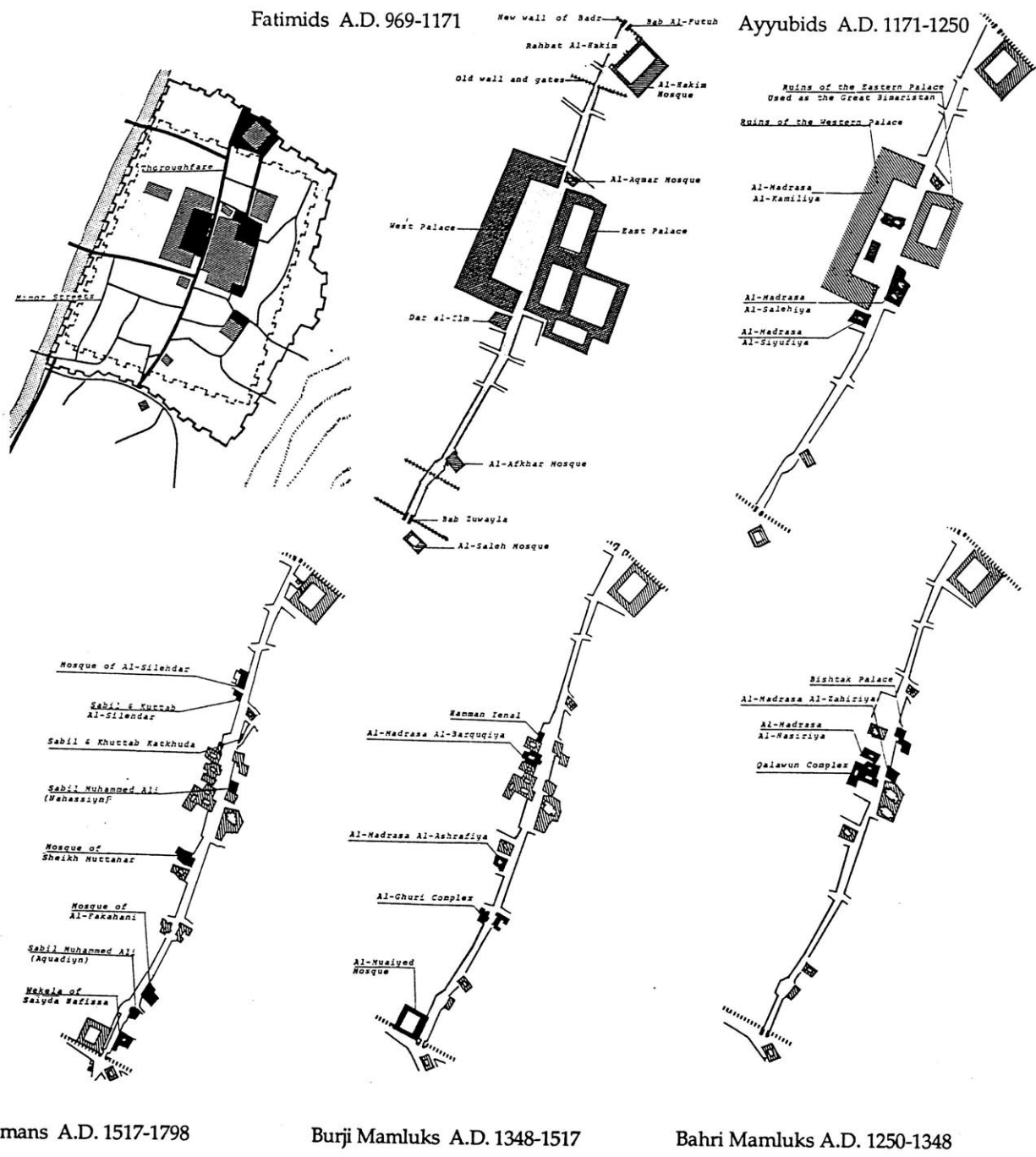


Plate 8/a: The citadel on the Muqattam dominating the skyline of Cairo.
Built by Salah ad-Din. Source: Mitchell, *Architecture of the Islamic World*



Ottomans A.D. 1517-1798

Burji Mamluks A.D. 1348-1517

Bahri Mamluks A.D. 1250-1348

Plate 10: The transformation of the royal plaza of the Fatimids Bayn al-Qasrayn. The process started by Salah ad-Din by building the madrasa al-Kamiliyah.

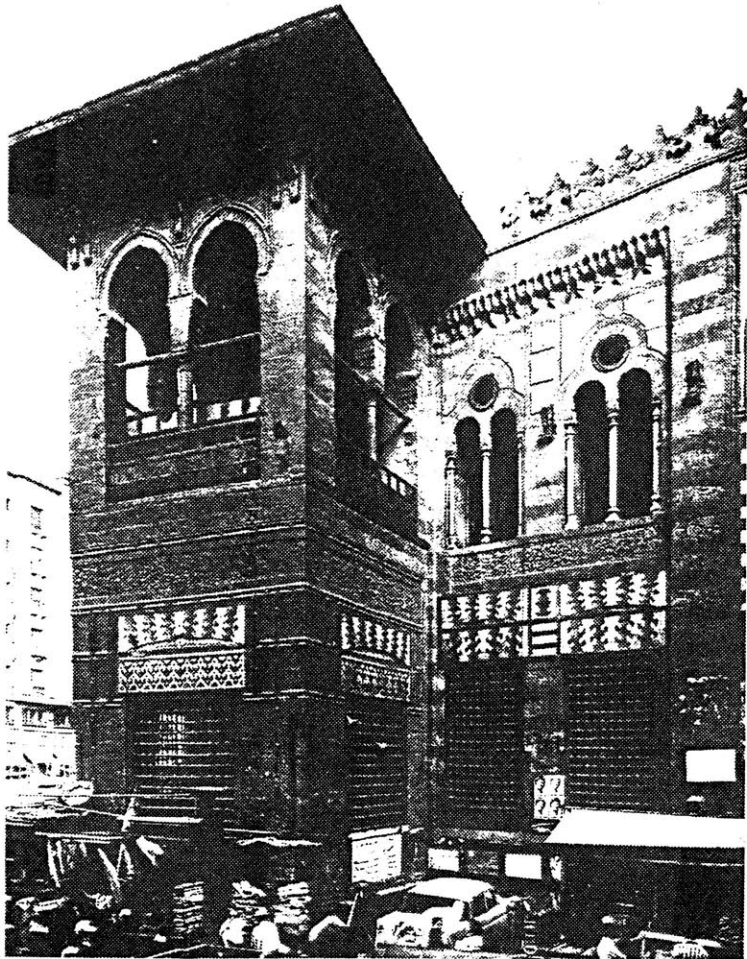


Plate 11: Maq'ad and Sabil-Kuttab of the Sultan al-Guri.
A statement of generosity and piety.
Source: Revault and Maury, Palais et Maisons
du Caire

Plate 12/a: Tomb and Madrasa of Sultan Qayt Bay.
Source: David Roberts Painting.

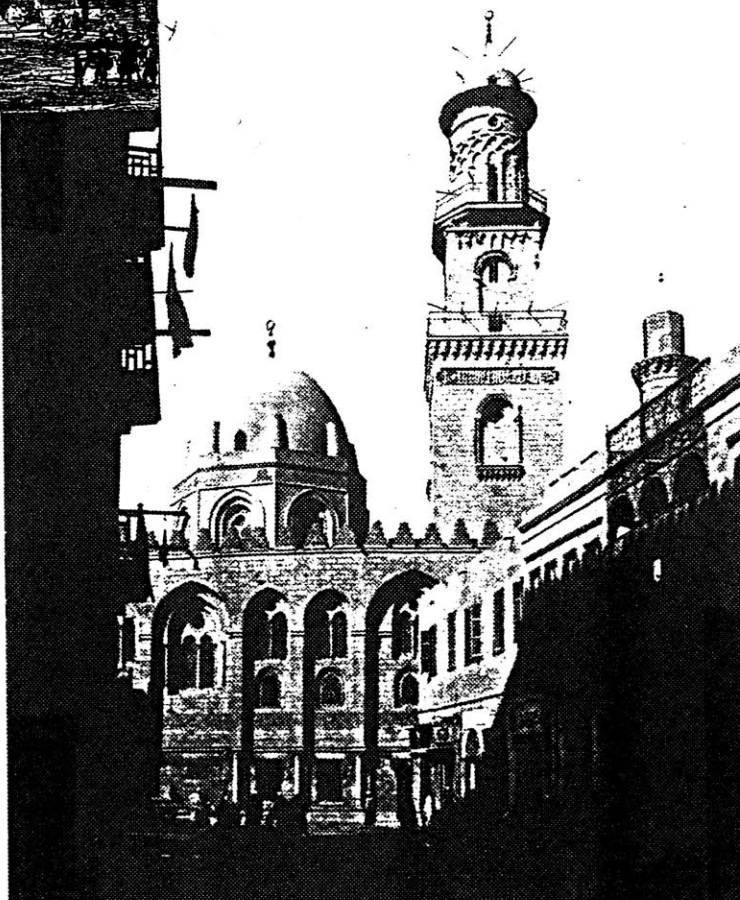


Plate 12/b: Tomb of Sultan Qala'un. Bayn al-Qasrayn area.
Source: Hoag, Islamic Architecture

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