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The Fatimid Viziers' Contributions to the Construction of Historic City Walls and Gates of Cairo (567-358 AH / 969-1171 AD)

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Abstract

The research examines the Fatimid viziers' contributions to the construction of the Cairo walls and gates. The Cairo Walls and Gates are among the most important remaining war buildings to date in Cairo. The importance of these gates is due to the fact that they are the first places of defense of Cairo from the invaders as the Fatimids involved into many campaigns and wars, both internally and externally. The most important of these were the crusades by the late Fatimid era.

The research also deals with the architects of the walls and gates of Cairo, the building materials that were used in the construction process, and the architectural description of the walls. It deals with Bab Al-Fath, Bab Al-Nasr and Bab Zuweila, as they are the most famous remaining gates of the Fatimid era. In addition, the research will shed light on the most important inscriptions on these walls and gates.

1. Introduction

The Fatimids relied on different races to form their army, which included the Sudanese, Armenians, militants from Moroccan tribes that formed their army's core, by which they took control of Egypt. This policy has been reflected in the country's security and stability because of the competition between these races. The threat of this policy did not emerge in the first half of the Fatimid era, under the wise powerful successors; however, it came to the scene in the second half of the Fatimid era, which was dominated by great viziers who diminished the caliphs' sovereignty. The era of the Fatimid caliph Al-Mustansir Billah is a turning point between the era of the caliphs deterrence to the danger of competing races of the army and the era of increasing sovereignty of viziers that surpassed that of caliphs.

Egypt's economic conditions during al-Mustansir's era, particularly in the period when the Nile decline began in 457 AH and lasted for seven years, had its apparent impact on this political transition. The decline in the Nile water led to an economic crisis and a famine that historians named as "al-Shidah al-Mustansiriyah" (al-Mustansiriyah plight) as it was one of the most severe famine that impacted Egypt. It casted its shadows upon the foods in Egypt and Cairo, increased prices and led to an economic collapse that threatened the state, especially from the southern Christian Nubian borders of Egypt¹.

1.1. Considering this topic, the current study aims to the following:

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. The extent of Fatimid viziers' contribution to war buildings in the Fatimid era.
2. Analysis and documentation of the architectural and decorative elements and details of the defensive architecture and fortified gates of the Fatimid era.
3. Providing the necessary historical and archaeological information on the fences and gates under study to bring their significance into focus.
4. Highlighting the role of Historic Cairo walls and gates in defending Cairo against the invaders' campaigns.

1 محمد عبدالستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، الحربية والمدنية والدينية، ط1، دار القاهرة، ص84

1.2. Importance of the Topic:

1. Shedding light objectively on the nature and essence of Islamic architecture in the Fatimid era.
2. Shedding light on the contributions of the Fatimid Viziers to military and defensive architecture in the Fatimid era
3. Shedding light on the most important materials used in building the gates of Cairo.
4. Identifying the architectural elements of the Cairo gates and studying the artistic value of these elements and the stages of their development.

1.3 . This topic was chosen for several reasons, including:

1. Knowledge of the contributions of the Fatimid ministers in military architecture
2. Identify the architectural elements of Cairo Gates
3. Identify about building materials for Cairo's walls and gates
4. Identify the importance of Cairo walls and gate in the Fatimid era

1.4. Research Methodology: It relied on the descriptive analytical Approach; it is based on describing their nature, and analyzing the architecture elements of the walls and gates.

2. Architects of Cairo Walls and Gates during Badr Al-Jamali's Era (466-488 AH):

The Cairo Walls are of the most important architectural works carried out by Badr al-Jamali in 358 AH. He was interested in the re-fortification of Cairo to protect it from any aggression, especially since the historic walls of Jawhar were demolished. In addition, he built in its north and south suburbs some architectural buildings that needed to be incorporated into the Cairo walls².

In the context of these crucial political and economic conditions, the expansion of Cairo at the time of Badr al-Jamali's construction of its walls was limited. It included an area of ca. 150 meters to the north - from the walls of Jawhar to those of Badr³. It is noted that the north wall of Badr al-Jamali was adjacent to the north wall of al-Hakim's Mosque. This reflects the economic orientation of building the defending walls and annexing the facilities outside the defending walls of Jawhar in this direction. Also, a similar area was added from the south from the walls of Jawhar. As

2 حسن الباشا ، مدخل الى الاثار الاسلامية، دار النهضة العربية، 1990، ص 148
3 حسن الباشا وآخرون، القاهرة تاريخها وفنونها وأثارها، مكتبة الاسكندرية تحت رقم (15309) 2000، ص 472

for the expansion to the west and east, it was limited due to the topographic features, as it expanded ca. 30 meters to the east and 15 meters to the west, due to the presence of the gulf⁴.

Historians' accounts of the architects of the historic Cairo gates were controversial among the archaeologists, especially since the architecture of the Cairo walls and gates was highly magnificent and luxurious in the art of war planning, the ingenuity of construction and splendid ornamentations that drew the attention of travelers, especially the Europeans. The remaining gates still bear witness to this glorious architectural achievement.

The first account of the architects of the Cairo gates, quoted by Abu al-Makarim in his book "Tarikh al-Kanaess wal- Adiyra" on the history of churches and monasteries. It stated that the architect who built Badr al-Jamali's walls was called "Mar Youhanna"⁵. As for the second account, it was Al-Maqrizi's, who also indicated that "three brother builders came from Edessa, assumed the construction of Bab Zuweila, Bab Al-Nasr and Bab Al-Futuh, each was responsible for building a gate."⁶

The construction of Cairo walls and gates followed the Islamic traditions. They were built of local materials and adorned with elements from the Islamic East or the West, considering the relations, culture, methods of combat and defense in the era of building these walls. Parts of Badr's walls, especially those to the north remained. those included Bab Al-Nasr and Bab Al-Futuh as well as other towers in addition to Bab Zuweila in the southern wall⁷.

2.1. Construction Materials in Badr Al-Jamali's Walls:

2.1.1 Stone: Badr al-Jamali used stone in the construction of his walls and gates.

2.1.2 Marble: also he used marble columns as links in the construction of the wall. Examination of the northern wall of Badr shows the use of some Pharaonic-inscribed granite thresholds. This reveals that Badr Al-Jamali sought to speed up the construction at the lowest possible cost. Hence, he demolished many ancient Egyptian buildings on the west side of the Nile River to reuse their stone in construction. In addition, the Mukattam Hills on the east side was another source of construction

4 محمد عبدالستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، ص84
5 محمد عبدالستار، نقلا عن: ابو المكارم، تاريخ الكنائس والأديرة في القرن 12 بالوجهة البحري، تعليق صموئيل السرياني، ج1، مكتبة دير السيدة العذراء، النعام للطباعة، ص91 – أبو صالح الأرمني، تاريخ ابي صالح الأرمني، طبعة اكسفورد، 1895، ص65
6 ل.أسيمينوفا، تاريخ مصر الفاطمية، ترجمة وتحقيق حسن بيومي، نشر المجلس الأعلى للثقافة، 2001، ص125
7 عبد الرحمن زكي، بناء القاهرة في ألف عام، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، ص19

stones. This is evident from the different sizes and methods of building the stone blocks used to build the city walls, especially in their lower parts. These stone blocks were used in the construction of domes, vaults and precise architectural elements, especially in the upper sections of towers as well as the eastern tower of ladder adjacent to Bab al-Nasr, whose stones were carved in various forms and sizes confirming their difference from the large stone blocks that were transferred from ancient Egyptian buildings⁸.

There is no doubt that building the historic walls of Cairo out of stone lasted for a long period as the construction began in 480 AH up to 485 A.H., despite Badr Al-Jamali's interest in construction and use of stones and columns brought to speed up the process of building. Some archaeologists point out that Badr used mudbricks to build some parts of the walls, but the north gates and walls as well as both sides of Bab Zeweila were built of stone. Some maintained that these walls demolished, so Salah al-Din attempted to restore or reconstruct them in 566 AH⁹.

2.2. Description and Layout of the North Wall of Bader Al-Jamali

The north wall of Bader al-Jamali is the largest remaining part of these ancient walls. It includes the remaining part of Bab al-Nasr, the adjacent ladder tower from the east side, the sector that connects this gate to Bab al-Futuh. This sector includes two towers and a prominent latch before the first tower, that is located next to Bab Al-Nasr. In addition, there is the prominent sector of the north minaret of al-Hakim's mosque, in the form of a tower as the wrapping of the wall around this prominence and its machicolation within its inner passage provided it with the same defensive features as the tower. This is followed by Bab al-Futuh, which is located 34 meters to the west. Next to it, there is the west tower of ladder, a section of the wall followed by a tower in the form of three-quarter circle, a sector of the wall, the renovations of Salah al-Din. The wall sector after the second tower, to the west of Bab al-Nasr, there is a passage that extends along the wall and Bab al-Futuh until the west tower of ladder. This passage constitutes a second defensive line in addition to the line on top of the wall with its crenellations alternating with sites for throwing arrows¹⁰.

8 محمد عبدالستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، ص88
9 عبدالرحمن زكي، اسوار القاهرة من جوهر القائد الى الناصر صلاح الدين، مجلة المجلة، السنة الخامسة، عدد 51، 1961، ص120
10 محمد عبدالستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، ص90

3. Salah al-Din's Contributions to the Fatimid Walls of Cairo (564-589 AH)

Historical sources indicate that Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, who took over the Fatimid vizierate in 564 AH, restored the Cairo walls in 655 AH/1170, especially since the Crusader threatened the Fatimid State strongly. Salah al-Din started this restoration after the demolition of many parts of them and becoming vulnerable¹¹. This confirms that not all of Badr al-Jamali's walls were built of stone, otherwise, Salah al-Din would not need to build new walls after 80 years of their construction. It was enough, for example, to support or to rebuild the damaged parts as he did on the west end of the north wall. Salah al-Din undertook these restorations in his tenure, specifically in 566 AH/1170 A.D. Despite the short span between Salah al-Din's restorations of the Badr al-Jamali wall and initiating the construction of his wall that surrounded the Islamic capitals of Egypt and his Citadel, the examination of the remainder of Salah al-Din's facilities in both periods define clearly his works in the Fatimid defensive walls including the north wall, west of the tower of ladder and up to the half-rounded tower, ca. 50 meters to the west of this tower, as well as the sector to the east of Bab al-Nasr up to the corner tower in the north-east corner (Al-Muzaffar Tower), then the remains of the West Wall, near Bab al-Sha'riyah, as well as the corner tower in the North-East corner, the three towers between Al-Muzaffar Tower and Mansuriyah Street, and the burnt tower to the south until the south-east corner tower¹².

3.1. Bab al-Futuh (Monument No. 6)

3.1.1. Location, History and Founder

Bab al-Futuh is located in the northern wall of the old Fatimid city of Cairo.

Bab al-Futuh is located in Bab al-Futuh Square. This gate was not in its current place when Jawhar al-Siqilli initiated founding Cairo by orders of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz (358-365 A.D./969-975 A.D.) as it was close to (Sayarej Lane). When it was restored after the Cairo Wall (480 AH/1087 AD), this gate was moved to the current location¹³. It was built by Amir al-Juyush (Commander of the Armies) Badr al-Jamali in 480 AH. He was of Armenian ethnic origin, purchased as a slave (mamlūk) by

11 ابي شامة (شهاب الدين عبد الرحمن بن اسماعيل الدمشقي)، الروضتين في اخبار الدولتين النورية والصلاحية، ج1، تحقيق ابراهيم الزنيق، ط1، مؤسسة الرسالة، 1997، ص 488

12 محمد عبدالستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، ص136

13 ايمن فؤاد سيد، القاهرة خططها وتطورها العمراني، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، ص 126

Jamal al-Dawla ibn Ammar, ruler of Tripoli, whence he acquired his epithet of "al-Jamālī". Bab al-Futuh (Gate of Conquests) is considered one of the three remaining gates in the wall of the old city of Cairo¹⁴. It is said that the name of this gate reflects the main purpose in its construction, as it was the start point of armies to their conquests, while they return victorious to Bab al-Nasr (Gate of Victory) (Plate 1)¹⁵.

3.1.2 General Outline and Construction

Bab al-Futuh is composed of two facades, one main and one sub-facade. The architect is concerned with the main facade, which consists of two towers with circular facades (Plate 2). There are five machicolations to throw arrows and two windows to the right. Also, there are four machicolations and two windows to the left (Plate 3). In the midst of both towers, there is a semicircular arch topped by a relieving arch surmounted by five arched openings that lead to a vestibule that is adjacent to two entries. All are topped by a shallow dome. The entrance is surmounted by corbels in the form of a ram with two horns.

The wall between Bab Al-Futuh and Bab Al-Nasr is surrounded by a band of inscriptions that starts from the left tower of Bab Al-Futuh and ends with the part surrounding the phrase of Al-Hakim Bi Amrillah where the architect recorded the date of its construction. The gate from inside includes three storeys. There are shafts for pouring boiling water or burning oil on attackers, and arrow slits (Plate 4)¹⁶

3.1.3. The Outer Facades of the Gate

This gate has two main facades, one to the north-eastern side and the other sub-located on the south-western side. The gate gives a clear idea of architecture in the Fatimid era in general, and at the end of the 11th C. AD in particular (Plate 5)¹⁷.

3.1.4. The Main Facade

It is located on the northeastern side, overlooks Bab al-Futuh Square with two round towers in the center. The right tower is topped by five machicolations to throw arrows, each preceded by a semi-circular arched opening. There are two rectangular windows without screens. The right tower on the south-eastern side consists of a

14 Rabbat, Nasser (1995). The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mameluk Architecture. Leiden ; New York ; Köln Brill. p. 13. ISBN 9004101241

15 سمير عبدالله سليمان، الدواوين في مصر خلال العصر الفاطمي، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، 2006، ص125

16 مشروع تطوير باب الفتوح ، دراسة أثرية وتاريخية، وزارة الثقافة، مكتب الوزير، مركز معلومات القاهرة التاريخية، ص 1

17 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bab_al-Nasr_\(Cairo\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bab_al-Nasr_(Cairo))

semicircular arched entrance. This tower is surmounted by a row of stone crenellations. As for the left tower, it resembles the right in its general form, but includes four machicolations to throw arrows and two windows. The tower is crowned by a row of stone crenellations, separated by several rectangular openings¹⁸.

On the right of the tower is a protrusion of the main facade topped by a row of stone crenellations. The left tower from the main façade is adjacent to a protrusion from the walls topped by a row of stone crenellations. Both minarets of al-Hakim's mosque rest on this section.

3.1.5. The Sub-Façade of Bab al-Futuh

The upper section of this sub-façade is topped by a pointed arch surmounted by stone frieze. There is a depressed part to the right of this facade with a stone staircase in its south end that leads to the interior of the gate. As for the part on the left of this facade, it consists of three semi-circular arched windows¹⁹. This facade extends to include a part that protrudes from the walls of the facade and a rectangular door opening surmounted by a window with a pointed arch, followed by four windows with semi-circular arches²⁰.

3.1.6. The Main Entrance

It is located to the middle of the two round towers, including an opening with a semicircular arch. The lower section has a rectangular gate with a two-shutters wooden door. Each shutter includes a number of laminated bands mounted with screws. The gate opening is surmounted by joggled-voussoirs. The entrance arch is adorned with geometric and plant ornaments inside squares. The arched design of these two towers differs from those of Bab al-Nasr (Plate 6)²¹.

4. The Materials used in the Walls Construction

- **Stones:** The architect used regular polished stones in elaborate and coordinated rows in horizontal courses. He used the common mortar as the workable paste which hardens to bind building blocks.

¹⁸ مشروع تطوير باب الفتوح ، دراسة أثرية وتاريخية، وزارة الثقافة، مكتب الوزير، مركز معلومات القاهرة التاريخية، ص 2

¹⁹ محمود احمد درويش، التراث المعماري الفاطمي والأيوبي في مصر، مؤسسة الأمة العربية للنشر والتوزيع، 2019م، ص 25

²⁰ مشروع تطوير باب الفتوح ، دراسة أثرية وتاريخية، وزارة الثقافة، مكتب الوزير، مركز معلومات القاهرة التاريخية، ص 4

²¹ حسن الباشا ، مدخل الى الآثار الاسلامية، دار النهضة العربية، 1990، ص 148

- **Mud-bricks:** The architect used them to cover the ceilings of the vestibule to main entrance or the sub-entrance as well as the defense room and observation rooms²².
- **Timber:** The architect used wood in the main and sub-entrance doors.
- **Metals:** The architect used them in making the laminated bands on the main entrance door shutters and they are fixed with screws.
- **Marble:** The architect used it to reinforce the outer walls of the gates that are supported by cylindrical marble columns incorporated horizontally into the courses.

The Archaeological Inscriptions

The archaeological inscriptions of this gate consist of a band of inscriptions in foliated Kufic script. It is implemented on the wall extending between Bab al-Futuh and Bab al-Nasr. It starts from the left tower of Bab al-Futuh and ends on the part surrounding the minaret of al-Hakim's mosque that is adjacent to this gate. It reads as follows:

- **In Arabic:**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ "الله لا إله إلا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الأرض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده إلا بإذنه يعلم ما بين أيديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه إلا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والأرض ولا يؤوده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم " ²³

Which reads: "Allāhu Lā 'Ilāha 'Illā Huwa Al-Ĥayyu Al-Qayyūmu Lā Ta'khudhuhu Sinatun Wa Lā Nawmun Lahu Mā Fī As-Samāwāti Wa Mā Fī Al-'Arđi Man Dhā Al-Ladhī Yashfa'u 'Indahu 'Illā Bi'idhnihi Ya'lamu Mā Bayna 'Aydīhim Wa Mā Khalfahum Wa Lā Yuḥīṭūna Bishay'in Min 'Ilmihi 'Illā Bimā Shā'a Wasi'a Kursīyuhu As-Samāwāti Wa Al-'Arđa Wa Lā Ya'ūduhu Ĥifẓuhumā Wa Huwa Al-'Alīyu Al-'Aẓīm" and means "Allah! There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who could possibly intercede with Him without His permission? He 'fully' knows what is ahead of them and what is behind them, but no one can grasp any of His knowledge—except what He wills 'to reveal'. His Seat1 encompasses the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not tire Him. For He is the Most High, the Greatest."

²² محمود احمد درويش، التراث المعماري الفاطمي والأيوبي في مصر ص32
²³ قرآن كريم، سورة البقرة، آية 255

بعز الله الجبار يحاط الإسلام وتنشأ المعافل والأسوار أمر بإنشاء هذا باب الإقبال والسور المحيط بالمعزية القاهرة المحروسة حماها الله فتى مولانا وسيدنا الإمام المستنصر بالله إمام المؤمنين صلوات الله وعلى آبائه الأئمة الطاهرين وأبنائه الأكرمين السيد الراحل أمير الجيوش سيف الإسلام ناصر الإمام كافل قضاة المسلمين هادي دعاة المؤمنين أبو النجم بدر المستنصرى عدة فتحات مزاغل لرمى السهام وأمنح بطول بقائه أمير المؤمنين وأدام قدرته وأعلى كلمته الذي خصه الله بحسن تدبيره الدولة والأنام وثل صلاحه الخاص والعام إبتغاء ثواب الله ورضوانه وطلب فضله وإحسانه وصيانة كرسى الخلافة وازلافها إلى الله بحياته الكافة وأبدى بعمله بمحرم سنة ثمانين وأربعمائه من الهجرة الشريفة صلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم وعلى الأئمة الطاهرين وسلم تسليماً حتى يوم الدين وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل .²⁴

Be'iz Allah al-Jabbar Yohat al-Islam wa-Tansha' al-Ma'aqel wal –Aswar Amara B-Insha' Haza Bab al-Iqbalwas-Sour al-Muhit Bil-Mu'izziya al-Qahira al-Mahrousa Hamaha Allah Fata Maulana wa Sayidina al-Imam al-Mustansir Billam Imam al-Mu'minin Salawatullah wa 'Ala Abaeh al-A'emma at-Tahirin wa-Abnaeh al-Akramin as-Sayed ar-Rahel Amir al-Joyoush Saif al-Islam Naser al-Imam Kafel Qudat al-Muslimin Hadi Du'at al-Mu'minin Abu al-Najm Badr al-Mustansiri 'Eddat Fatahat Mazaghel leramy as-Seham wa Amnah betoul baqaeh Amir al-Mu'minin wa-Adam Qudrateh wa-A'la Kalemateh allazi khassahu Allah Behosn tadbirih al-Dawla wal-Anam wakoll Salahahu al-Khass wal-'aam Ibtogha' Thawabullah wa-Redwanah watalab Fadleh wa-Ihsanah wa-Seyanet Kursi al-Khilafa wa Izlafeha ila Allah B-Hayateh al-Kafa wa Abda B-'Amaleh B-Muharram sanat Thamanin wa Arba'uma'a men al-Hijra al-Sharif Salla Allahu 'Ala Sayidna Muhammad wa-'Ala Aleh wa-Sahbeh wasallam wa-'Ala al-A'emma al-Tahirin wasallam Tasliman Hatta Towm al-Din wa-Hasbuna Allah wa-Ne'ma al-Wakil.

It means: "By the Mighty Glory of God, Islam is surrounded, and its strongholds and walls are built. This gate (Bab al-Iqbal) and the wall surrounding the guarded place, Cairo, May God protect it, was built by orders of our master and Imam al-Mustansir Billah, the Imam of believers, may God's prayers and peace be upon his forefathers, the pure imams and his honorable sons. Abu Al-Najm Badr Al-Mustansiri made several machicolations for throwing arrows. He granted the Commander of the Faithful, May God prolong his life and perpetuate his power, and raised his word as God bestowed upon him with good management of the state and nations. He worked for the private and public goodness, seeking God's reward and Pleasure, as well as

²⁴ ابن عبد الظاهر، الروضة البهية الزاهرة في خطط المعزية القاهرة. تحقيق ايمن فؤاد سيد، ط1، الدار العربية للكتاب، 1996، ص17

His bounty and benevolence, to keep the throne of the caliphate. He can defend it with his whole life. Its construction initiated in Muharram in the year four hundred and eighty of the honorable migration. May God's prayers and peace be upon our Master Muhammad, his family and companions, and the pure imams, and may the peace and blessings of God be upon them until the Day of Judgment. "Allah 'alone' is sufficient 'as an aid' for us and 'He' is the best Protector."

5. Bab al-Nasr (Monument No. 7)

5.1.1. Location, Date of Establishment

Bab al-Nasr is located in Bab al-Nasr Square. Upon the time of building the city of Cairo, this gate was not in its current location, as al-Maqrizi inspected its remains by Madrassa Al-Qa'id School that only a small mausoleum near Wikalat Qaitbai in Bab al-Nasr is still in place²⁵.

5.1.2. General Outline and Structural Elements

The construction of Al-Nasr Gate consists of two facades, the first is the main and the second is secondary that was added by the architect and has two stone square towers inscribed from outside. It represents some warfare tools of swords and gears... etc. In the middle of this façade, there is a high gate with a decorative lintel made of stone joggled- voussoirs, topped by a latch to pour burning materials on the attackers²⁶. This is the oldest known example in Cairo of this type of joggled- voussoirs²⁷. Both towers are surrounded by a band of inscriptions carved in stone that records the date of the gate and the wall construction. The design of this staircase is considered the first of its kind in the history of the architecture of this period. This staircase leads to the towers, as well as to a group of rooms adorned with the most important group of stone arches²⁸. (Plate 7)

5.1.3. Archaeological Description from Outside

This gate has three main facades, the second and the third are secondary.

- **Main Facade:** Located on the northeast side, overlooks Bab al-Nasr Square, the main entrance to the gate is located in the center and is adjacent from the right

²⁵ فريد شافعي، العمارة العربية في مصر الاسلامية عصر الولاية، م1، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، 1994، ص 323
²⁶ مشروع تطوير القاهرة التاريخية، باب النصر، اثر رقم 7، دراسة أثرية وتاريخية، وزارة الثقافة، مكتب الوزير، مركز معلومات القاهرة التاريخية، ص 2

²⁷ حسن الباشا وآخرون، القاهرة تاريخها وفنونها وأثارها، ص474

<https://www.sffar.com> 28

and left sides by two square towers that their stones are engraved with shapes of warfare tools of swords and gears... etc. These are surmounted by a band of inscription in foliated Kufic script showing the date of establishing of the gate. Both towers are surmounted by four machicolations and two unscreened rectangular openings in the form of two windows²⁹. Both towers are surmounted by a rectangular window, with three stone corbels underneath. To the right of this part of the facade, there is a prominent part with several machicolations and rectangular openings. This facade extends to meet Bab al-Futuh. This part is crowned by a row of windows. There are also the names of the leaders of the French campaign written on Al-Nasr and Al-Futuh towers, which testify their residence in Egypt and their use of those fortresses during their campaign³⁰.

- **Southwest Facade:** It is mediated by a semi-circular arched aperture, with a wooden rectangular single-shutter gate in its south. This entrance is surmounted by three arched openings, and on the west end of this façade, there is a recessed part of the facade wall that is surmounted by a row of windows. This facade extends to include a prominent part of the facade wall that includes three machicolations and several rectangular windows³¹.
- **Southeast Facade:** There are several machicolations to throw arrows. It is surmounted by a row of stone windows.
- **Main Entrance:** It is located in the center of the main facade. (Plate 8), which is a rectangular two-shutter wooden gate opening. Each is adorned with several laminated bands mounted with screws. Between both sections of the door, there is a huge high door surmounted by an opening surrounded by a frieze revolving around the gate towers. On top of the gate, there is a ball mounted on the tip of an iron 1 m. long rod, at the top of the entrance arch from the west side. Such tools were used to resist the enemy trying to climb the walls with stairs³². When Badr al-Jamali moved Bab al-Nasr from the place set by Jawhar al-Qa'id, it became close to the Eid prayers place, and built an inner defensive wall to the opposite of the entrance³³ that remained in place until the sister of al-Malik al-Zahir Barquq

²⁹ محمود احمد درويش، التراث المعماري الفاطمي والأيوبي في مصر، مؤسسة الأمة العربية للنشر والتوزيع، 2019م، ص 24

³⁰ كمال الدين سامح، العمارة الإسلامية في مصر، مكتبة النهضة المصرية، ص 50

³¹ مشروع تطوير القاهرة التاريخية، باب النصر، ص 2

³² محمد بن منكلي الناصري، الحيل في الحروب وفتح المدائن وحفظ الدروب، تحقيق نبيل محمد عبدالعزيز، مطبعة دار الكتب المصرية، ص 399

³³ المقرئزي(تقي الدين أبو العباس أحمد بن علي): اتعاض الحنفاء بأخبار الأئمة الفاطميين الخلفاء، ج 2، تحقيق جمال الدين الشيبان وآخرون، المجلس الأعلى للشئون الإسلامية، القاهرة، ص 327

ordered building the tank to her sabil (public fountain) near Bab al-Nasr³⁴. The entrance is surmounted by a semicircular arch that its spandrels are identified by a decorative frieze in the form of repeated arches. On top of this door, there are five machicolations to throw arrows (Plate 9.).

5.2. Archaeological Inscriptions

The archaeological inscriptions recorded on Bab al-Nasr portal are as follows:

<p>A. A band of Inscriptions</p>	<p>Inside a rectangular area above the lintel of the main entrance. It consists of three lines in floriated Kufic script, which read as follows:</p>
<p>(بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله).</p> <p>It reads: (Bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm, la ilaha illallah wahdahu la sharika lah muhammadun rasoul Allah Ali Waliyullah) (Plate 10)³⁵ and means: (In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, There is no god but Allah, alone, without any partner, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, Ali is the Wali of Allah"</p>	
<p>B- A band of Inscriptions</p>	<p>Below the band of inscriptions in floriated Kufic script, it reads as follows:</p>
<p>(صلوات الله عليهما وعلي الأئمة من زريتها أجمعين)</p> <p><i>It reads: (Salawatullah 'Alayhema wa'ala A'emma men zurayatehema Ajma'een) and means: (May the Prayers of God be upon them and upon the imams of all their offspring).</i></p>	
<p>C- A band of Inscriptions</p>	<p>Both shafts of the gates towers are adorned with a foundational inscription in floriated Kufic script that reads as follows:</p>
<p>(بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم بعز الله العزيز الجبار يحاط الإسلام وتنشأ المعافل والأسوار وسيدنا الأمام المستنصر بالله أمير المؤمنين صلوات الله عليه وعلي آباءه الأئمة الأمام كافل قضاة المسلمين هادي دعاة المؤمنين أبو النجم بدر المستنصري عضد الله بحسن تدبيره الوله والأنام وشمس صلاحه الخاص والعام ابتغاء ثواب الله ورضوانه</p>	

34 سامي محمد نوار، المنشآت المائية بمصر منذ الفتح الإسلامي وحتى نهاية العصر المملوكي، ص 143

35 ايمن فؤاد سيد، القاهرة خططها وتطورها العمراني، ص 125

وطلب فضله وإحسانه وصيانة كرسي الخلافة وازدلافها إلى الله بحب طه المكافه ويرى بعمله في محرم سنة ثمانين وأربعمائة³⁶.

It reads: "Bi-smi llāhi r-rahmāni r-rahīm *Be'iz Allah al-Jabbar Yohat al-Islam wa-Tansha' al-Ma'aqel wal –Aswar wa Sayidina al-Imam al-Mustansir Billah Salawatullah 'Alayhe wa 'Ala Abaeh al-A'emma al-Imam Kafel Qudat al-Muslimin Hadi Du'at al-Mu'minin Abu al-Najm Badr al-Mustansiri 'Adud Allah Behosn tadbirih al-Dawla wal-Anam washams Salahahu al-Khass wal-'aam Ibtogha' Thawabullah wa-Redwanah watalab Fadleh wa-Ihsanah wa-Seyanet Kursi al-Khilafa wa Izlafaha ila Allah Behob Taha al-Mokafeh wa Abda B-'Amaleh fe-Muharram sanat Thamanin wa Arba'uma'a).*

It means: "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful; By the Mighty Glory of God, Islam is surrounded, and its strongholds and walls are built. And our master and Imam al-Mustansir Billah, the prince of believers, may God's prayers and peace be upon his forefathers, al-Imam Protector of Muslim Judges, Guide of the Believers, Abu Al-Najm Badr Al-Mustansiri, the supporter of God with his sound judgment and good management of the state and people. He worked for the private and public goodness, seeking God's reward and Pleasure, as well as His bounty and benevolence, to keep the throne of the caliphate, for the cause of God. The construction initiated in Muharram in the year four hundred and eighty.

6. Bab Zuweila 485 AH / 1092 AD(Monument No. 199)

Bab Zuweila is one of the most beautiful gates in Cairo, and is attributed to Zuweila tribe of North African Berbers³⁷. Bab Zuweila is one of three remaining gates in the ancient Cairo Wall, and it was known in the Ottoman era as (Bawabet al-Metwalli)³⁸. Cairo's history is linked to this gate. Once it was established, it became the most widely used gates of the city as it was the link between the city and its southern suburbs up to Fustat. It was the only outlet to connect the city in the subsequent ages to the Citadel. It has been built by Amir al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamali in 485 AH. He ordered raising its towers but without erecting bent entrance as is the custom of forts so as not to be attacked by squadrons at the time of siege and prevents horses from

³⁶ مشروع تطوير القاهرة التاريخية، باب النصر، ص 4

³⁷ محمد بن ابي السرور البكري، الروضة المأنوسة في أخبار مصر المحروسة، تحقيق عبدالرازق عبدالرازق عيسى، ط1، مكتبة الثقافة الدينية، 1997، ص 73

³⁸ [Eyewitness Travel: Egypt](#). Dorlin Kindersley Limited, London. 2007 [2001]. p. 103. ISBN 978-0-7566-2875-8.

rushing at once. However, a sliding ramp of flint stones was established by its entry to prevent horses from entering in case of squadrons attack. This ramp remained in use until the era of Al-Kamil Muhammad bin Al-Adel when his horse slipped, he ordered demolishing it (Plate 11)³⁹.

The entrance at Bab al-Nasr also leads to an arena covered by a low dome carried on four spherical triangles⁴⁰. The outer part of which was surmounted by inscription of the name of Amir al-Juyush, the caliph al-Mustansir, and the date of construction. These inscriptions have been removed and there is now only a rectangular stone panel with some inscriptions. A new style was applied in building these three gates, that is similar to the construction style known in northern Syria and the Byzantine fortifications. Abu al-Makarim stated that the architect who designed it was called Abu Yohanna al-Raheb⁴¹, while Al-Maqrizi stated that three brother architects from Al-Raha assumed the construction as each built a gate⁴². In the fifteenth century AD/ 818 AH, Al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh also built the two minarets surmounting the two towers overlooking the gate (Figures 97-98). They now constitute the most prominent features of the gate⁴³.

The current Bab Zuweila is a huge construction, slightly larger than Bab al-Nasr and Bab al-Futuh, with a façade that is 25.72m wide, 25.36m deep and 20.10 m high.⁴⁴ The gate consists of two arched towers that are almost similar to those of Bab al-Futuh but they differ in the ornamentations of the facade of each tower⁴⁵. The facade is surrounded by an arched square frame surmounted by a pointed arch, and both confine an open passageway between them (Figs 99-100)⁴⁶.

6.1 The Memorial Inscriptions on the Gate:

It was mentioned that Bab Zuweila is adorned with two foundation inscriptions, the first of which was a marble panel that had vanished and its place was replaced, and the other surmounts the entrance arch and it has vanished, leaving only a small part of it. It was discovered by Hertz Bey in 1897 AD while cleaning this part of the gate.

³⁹ ايمن فؤاد سيد، القاهرة خططها وتطورها العمراني، ص 128 نقلا عن ابن ميسر، اخبار مصر، ص 51

⁴⁰ كمال الدين سامح، العمارة الإسلامية في مصر، ص 50

⁴¹ ايمن فؤاد سيد، القاهرة خططها وتطورها العمراني، ص 129

⁴² كمال الدين سامح، العمارة الإسلامية في مصر، ص 50

⁴³ <https://www.marefa.org>

⁴⁴ محمود احمد درويش، التراث المعماري الفاطمي والأيوبي في مصر، مؤسسة الأمة العربية للنشر والتوزيع، 2019م، ص 28

⁴⁵ وسام الدويك، أبواب القاهرة المنصورة، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، الإصدار الثاني، 2015، ص 46

⁴⁶ محمد عبدالستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، ص 121

• **The Inscription Surmounting the Entrance Arch:** It is located below the serrated windows of the watchtower and above the entrance arch. It consists of five stone courses with the remains of two lines of the founding inscription of Bab Zuweila in high-relief floriated Kufic script and the text is in very poor condition. It reads as follows:

1. (.....) لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله صلى الله عليهما [و على الأئمة من ذريتهما أجمعين الله الحي
2. (.....) ،،،،،، إلا بما شاء وسع) كرسية السموات

1- The First Line reads: (la ilaha illallah wahdahu la sharika lah muhammadun rasoul Allah Ali Waliyullah Salla Allahu 'aAlayhema) (*wa'ala A'emma men zurayatehema Ajma'een ... Allah ... al-Hay ...*) and means (There is no god but Allah, alone, without any partner, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, Ali is the Wali of Allah. *May the Prayers of God be upon them and upon the imams of all their offspring. Allah... the Ever-Living*).

2- The Second Line reads: ('Illā Bimā Shā'a Wasi`a Kursīyuhu As-Samāwāti) and means (save what He will. His throne includes the heavens...)

• There is an inscription on the east side of the ladder leading to the top of the two gate towers. It consists of two similar marble panels inscribed with the renovation text in high-relief thuluth script that reads as follows:

1. هنا كانت نقطة تلاقى باب زويلة هذا بسور القاهرة بناء الأيوبيين وقد هدم سنة ثمانية
2. عشر وثمانمائة بسبب بناء الجامع المؤيدى وتماه عام أربعة عشر وثلثمائة وألف بمعرفة لجنة حفظ الآثار العربية في عصر الخديوي الأعظم عباس حلمي الثاني الأفخم أدام الله أيامه أمين.

1. Huna Kanat nuqtat talaqi Bab Zuweila haza besour al-Qahira Bena al-Ayyubiyin waqad hudema sanat thamaniyat
2. 'Ashr wa thamanima'a besabab bena' al-Jami' al-Mu'ayyadi watamamih 'am arba'at 'ashr wa-thulthuma'at wa-Alf be-ma'refat lajnat hefz al-athaar al-Arabiya fe-'Ahd al-Khedewi al-A'zam Abbas Helmi al-Thani al-Afkham Adamallahu Ayamah Amin. (Plate 12)⁴⁷

They means

1. Here was the meeting point of Bab-Zuweila and Cairo wall that was built by the Ayyubids and was demolished in the year of eighteen ...

47 حسين محمد احمد عثمان، الكتابات التذكارية على اثار القاهرة الإسلامية بشارع المعز لدين الله وكيفية توظيفها في حفل الارشاد السياحي، رسالة ماجستير في الارشاد السياحي، كلية السياحة والفنادق ، جامعة المنيا، 2014 ، ص61

2. eight hundred due to the construction of al-Mu'ayyad Mosque. It completed in 1314 by the Arab Monuments Conservation Committee in the Era of the Great Khedive Abbas Halimi II, the most Luxurious, May God perpetuate his days (Plate 12).⁴⁸

7. Conclusion:

After studying the role of Fatimid viziers in the construction of historic Cairo's walls and gates, their importance in defending Cairo from many hostile campaigns has become clear. The research highlighted the role of the Fatimid viziers in war architecture in Cairo and how they used many types of construction materials to achieve the required safety while building these defensive buildings and gates. It became clear that each of Cairo's historic gates aimed to achieve a particular objective and function that is indicated by determining a specific designation of each gate.

7.1. Results:

- The Fatimid Viziers played a prominent role in the defense of Cairo by building defensive gates and walls
- The Fatimid focused on preparing a strong and gigantic army.
- The Fatimid Viziers used many building materials during the construction of the Cairo gates, and therefore to fulfill the purpose of these construction.
- The Fatimid Viziers took care of building forts to defend Cairo
- The gates and walls contain unique architectural elements
- The Fatimid Viziers paid attention to the decorations on the walls and gates of Cairo.

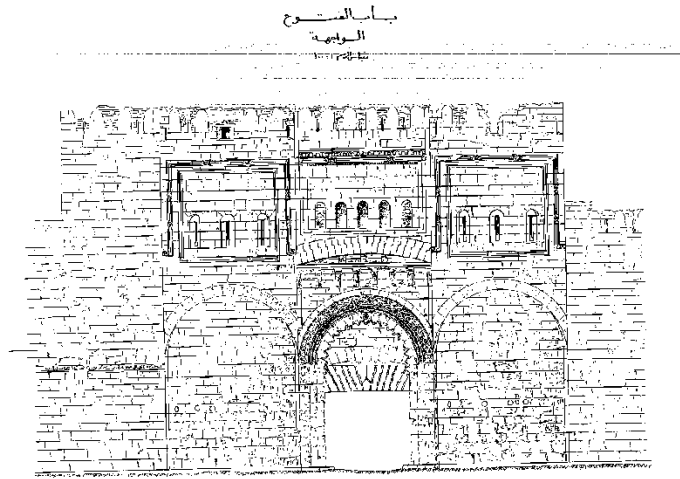
7.2. Recommendations:

- Paying attention to the Fatimid viziers' antiquities and preserving them is a national duty to preserve this heritage to the contemporary and future Egyptian people.
- Preventing any operations of demolishing or removing any of these antiquities and working on restoring any damages they exposed to.
- Developing new programs for tourist places and focusing on the Fatimid viziers' heritage and promoting them in all tourism operators in the world.
- Include the gates and walls of Cairo in the educational curricula to increase students' awareness of the civilization of their country

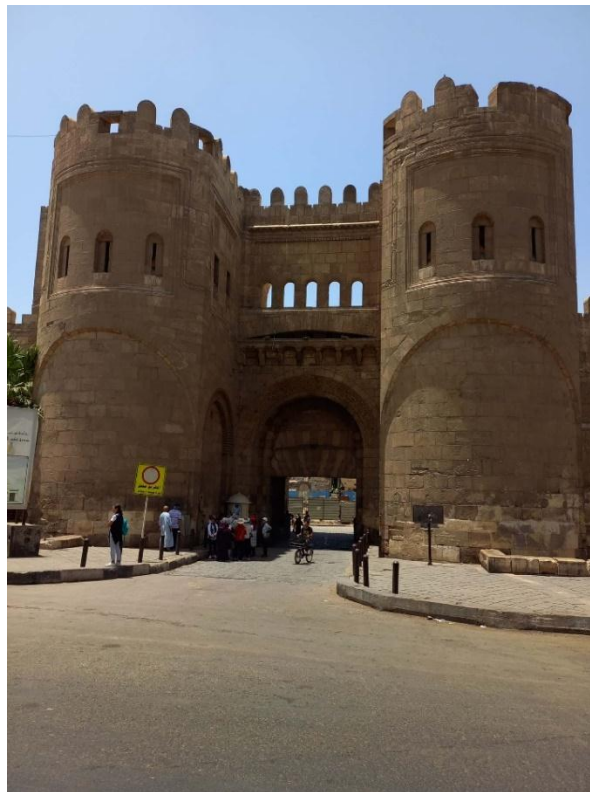
48 حسين محمد احمد عثمان، الكتابات التذكارية على اثار القاهرة الإسلامية بشارع المعز لدين الله وكيفية توظيفها في حفل الارشاد السياحي، رسالة ماجستير في الارشاد السياحي، كلية السياحة والفنادق ، جامعة المنيا، 2014 ، ص61

- Increasing citizens' awareness of the importance of Cairo's historical and cultural walls and gates in order to preserve them

8. Plates



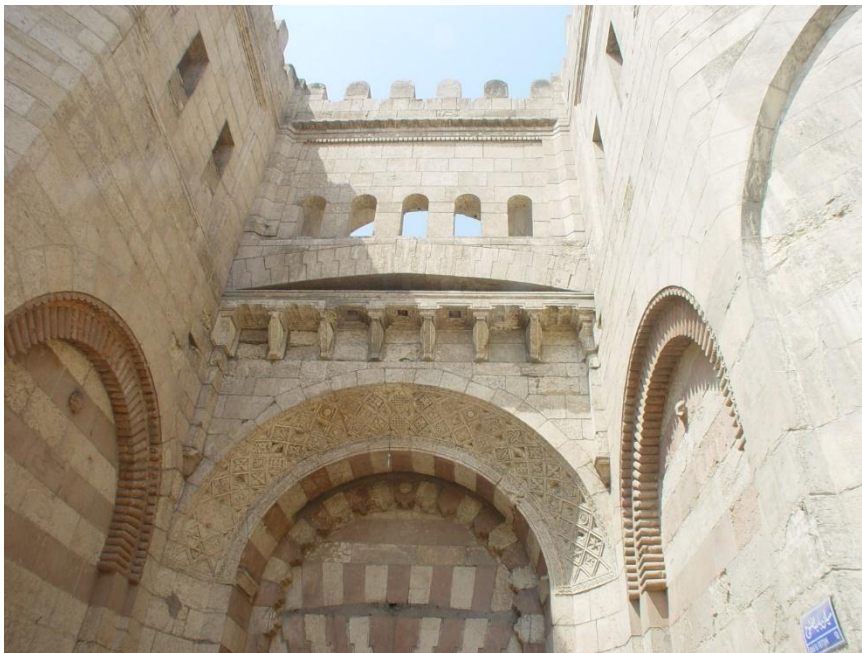
(Plate 1- An outline showing the Facade of Bab Al-Futuh - Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments)



(Plate 2- Bab Al-Futuh from the outside - Photographed by the Researcher)



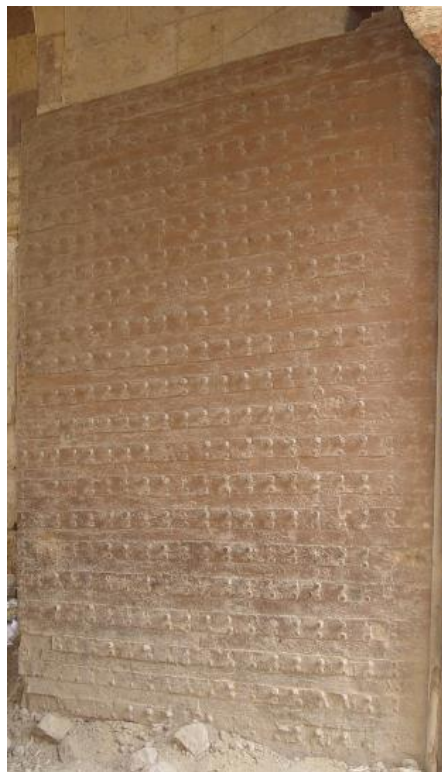
(Plate 3- Machicolations of Bab Al-Futuh Tower - Photographed by the Researcher)



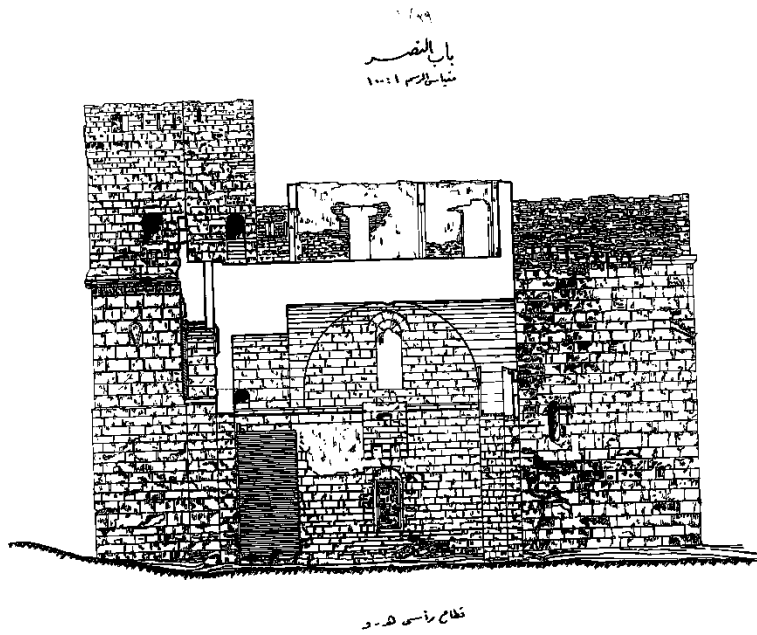
(Plate 4- The Upper Part of the Entrance to Bab Al-Futuh - Photographed by the Researcher)



(Plate 5- The Right Wall of Bab Al-Futuh from the inside and al-Hakim's Minaret can be seen upwards - Photographed by the Researcher)



(Plate 6- One of the gates of Bab Al-Futuh - Photographed by the Researcher)



(Plate 7- A Vertical Section of Bab Al-Nasr - Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments)



(Plate 8- Bab Al-Nasr from the outside - Photographed by the researcher)



(Plate 9 - Five Machicolations to throw arrows surmounting the semi-circular arch above the entrance to Bab al-Nasr - Photographed by the researcher)



(Plate 10- Panel of the inscriptions above Bab al-Nasr - Photographed by the researcher)



(Plate 11 - Bab Zuweila from the outside – Potographed by the Researcher)



(Plate 12, Qur'anic Inscription on Stone Courses in High-relief Floriated Kufic Script
- Bab Zuweila)

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