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978-0-521-47137-4 - The Cambridge History of Egypt: Volume 1: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EGYPT

VOLUME I

Islamic Egypt, 640–1517



Volume I of THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EGYPT addresses the period from the Arab invasion in 640 to the Ottoman conquest of 1517. The volume opens with a discussion of the preceding centuries to illustrate the legacy of ancient Egypt, and then progresses chronologically according to the major dynastic episodes. While the focus of the volume is not restricted to politics, questions of political process and changes in regime are interpreted by the relevant experts in the light of recent research. Authors have been encouraged to conceptualize their topics around a variety of rubrics including communal interaction, financial development, diplomatic relations, and religious trends.

CARL F. PETRY is Professor of History at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. His research has focused on pre-modern Egypt, and his publications include *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (1994), *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of al-Ashraf Qaytbay and Qansuh al-Ghawri in Egypt* (1993), and *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (1981).

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EGYPT

General editor

M. W. DALY

Kettering University, Michigan



THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EGYPT offers the first comprehensive English-language treatment of Egyptian history through thirteen centuries, from the Arab conquest to the end of the twentieth century. The two-volume survey, written by international experts, considers the political, socio-economic and cultural history of the world's oldest state, summarizing the debates and providing insight into current controversies. Implicit in the project is the need to treat Egypt's history as a continuum and at the heart of any regional comparisons. As Egypt reclaims a leading role in the Islamic, Arab and Afro-Asian worlds, the project stands as testimony to its complex and vibrant past. Its balanced and integrated coverage will make an ideal reference tool for students, scholars and general readers.

VOLUME 1

Islamic Egypt, 640–1517

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CONTRIBUTORS



JONATHAN P. BERKEY, Associate Professor of History, Davidson College, North Carolina, is the author of: “Women and Education in the Mamlūk Period” (1991), *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (1992), and “Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East” (1995).

THIERRY BIANQUIS is Professeur d'histoire et civilisation islamiques, Université Lumière-Lyon II. Among his publications are “Les derniers gouverneurs ikhschīdides à Damas” (1970), “L’Acte de succession de Kāfūr d’après Maqrīzī” (1974), *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination fatimide (359–468/969–1076)*, 2 vols. (1986, 1989), and “L’espace ismailien et le régime du vizirat militaire en Égypte, le Yémen ṣulayḥīde et l’Ifriqiya zīride” (1995).

IRENE A. BIERMAN is Associate Professor of Art History and Director of the Middle East Center, University of California Los Angeles. Among her publications are “Urban Memory and the Preservation of Monuments” (1995), “Inscribing the City: Fāṭimid Cairo” (1997), and *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (1998).

MICHAEL CHAMBERLAIN is Associate Professor of History, University of Wisconsin. He has written *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (1994).

JEAN-CLAUDE GARCIN is Professeur in the Centre des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille I. His writings include “Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste dans le Ḥusn al-Muḥādarat de Suyūṭī” (1967), *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (1976), *Espaces, pouvoirs et idéologies de l’Égypte médié-*

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vale (1987), and “The Mamluk Military System and the Blocking of Medieval Muslim Society” (1988).

R. STEPHEN HUMPHREYS is ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Sa‘ūd Professor, Department of History, University of California Santa Barbara. His writings include *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (1977), *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (1991), and *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in Recent Times* (in press).

WALTER E. KAEGI, Professor of Byzantine History at the University of Chicago, is the author of *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471–843: An Interpretation* (1981), “Byzantine Logistics: Problems and Perspectives” (1993), and *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (1995).

HUGH KENNEDY is Professor of Middle Eastern History, University of St Andrews. His publications include *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: the Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (1986), and *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus* (1996).

DONALD P. LITTLE is Professor of Arabic Language and Islamic History, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal. He is the author of *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalā‘ūn* (1970), *A Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Ḥaram aš-Šarīf in Jerusalem* (1984), “Notes on the Early *nazar al-khāṣṣ*” (1998), and “Documents Related to the Estates of a Merchant and his Wife in Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem” (1998).

LINDA S. NORTHRUP, Associate Professor in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, is the author of “Muslim–Christian Relations during the Reign of the Mamluk Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun, AD 1278–1290” (1990), “Life in Jerusalem during the Mamluk Period as Portrayed in the Documents of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf” (in Arabic) (1994), and *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamlūk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689/1279–1290)* (1998).

ROBERT K. RITNER is Associate Professor of Egyptology at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. His publications include *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Medical Practice* (1993) and “Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: the Demotic Spells and their Religious Context” (1995).

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PAULA A. SANDERS, Associate Professor of History, Rice University, Houston, is the author of *A Mediterranean Society*, VI (Cumulative Indices), with S. D. Goitein (1993), *Ritual, politics and the city in Fatimid Cairo* (1994), and “Writing Identity in Medieval Cairo” (1995).

WARREN C. SCHULTZ, Assistant Professor of History, DePaul University, Chicago, is the author of: “Maḥmūd ibn ‘Alī and the New *Fulūs*: Late Fourteenth-Century Mamlūk Egyptian Copper Coinage Reconsidered” (1998) and “Mamlūk Monetary History: The State of the Field” (in press).

NORMAN A. STILLMAN is Schusterman/Josey Professor of Judaic Studies, University of Oklahoma. Among his books are *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Sourcebook* (1979) and *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (1991).

PAUL E. WALKER is a research affiliate of the Middle East Center, University of Chicago. Among his publications are *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī* (1993), “The Ismaili Da‘wa in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim” (1993), and *The Wellsprings of Wisdom* (1994).

TERRY G. WILFONG is Assistant Professor of Egyptology in the Department of Near Eastern Studies and Assistant Curator for Graeco-Roman Egypt, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His publications include *Women and Gender in Ancient Egypt: From Prehistory to Late Antiquity* (1997), “Agriculture among the Christian Population in Early Islamic Egypt: Theory and Practice” (1998), “Constantine in Coptic: Coptic Constructions of Constantine the Great and his Family” (1998), and “Reading the Disjointed Body in Coptic: From physical modification to textual fragmentation” (1998).

MICHAEL WINTER, Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv University, has written *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī* (1982) and *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517–1798* (1992).

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PREFACE



The *Cambridge History of Egypt* attempts to fill a gap in English-language treatment of Egyptian history since the Arab conquest. Given the long and continuing outside interest in Egypt, that such a treatment is overdue seems surprising; the very length of Egyptian history has inevitably led to its compartmentalization and to the increasing specialization of scholars interested in it. Essential, underlying continuities have sometimes therefore been obscured, while superficial points of demarcation have sometimes been exaggerated.

Advances in research in the last half-century amply justified the editors in undertaking this task. An explosion of interest in Egypt, the development of new disciplines and methods of academic research and the increasing availability of Egyptian archival sources have led not only to important progress in the understanding of Egypt's past, but also to ever-increasing specialization in outlook, method, and, therefore, in the audiences to which historical writing has been addressed.

The *Cambridge History* is therefore an attempt to present a comprehensive survey for a general audience, to make use of recent advances in historical knowledge, and to synthesize from discrete sources – increasingly from fields beyond the traditional bounds of history – Egypt's political and cultural history since the coming of Islam.

Volume 1 of the *History* addresses the period from the Arab invasion in 640 to the Ottoman conquest of 1517. The volume proceeds according to the major chronological and dynastic episodes demarcating this lengthy era. The focus of individual chapters is not restricted to politics but questions of political process and reasons for changes of regime remain significant subjects of scholarly interest and debate, and continue to warrant explanation in the light of recent research. Chapter authors have been encouraged to conceptualize their topics under broad rubrics such as cultural pluralism, communal interaction, financial developments, military organization, diplomatic relations, intellectual controversy, popular culture and religious

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currents. Contributors were invited to incorporate recent scholarship on these issues rather than to summarize previous syntheses.

No such survey has been attempted, or at any rate published, in a European language since Gaston Wiet's *L'Égypte arabe*, part 4 of Gabriel Hanotaux's *Histoire de la nation égyptienne* (Paris, 1937). This new assessment balances solid political history and contemporary theory so that the interests of both the informed general reader and the specialist are considered. The volume begins with discussions of conditions in Egypt during the centuries preceding the Arab invasion, on the assumption that the rapid consolidation of Arab power in the Nile valley cannot be understood without a summary of the late roman and Byzantine legacies.

An enterprise of this nature draws upon the experience and assistance of colleagues and collaborators too numerous to acknowledge individually. But the advice of Fred Donner and Bruce Craig at the University of Chicago, Jere Bacharach at the University of Washington, and Ulrich Haarmann at the University of Kiel was too significant to pass over without comment. None of these colleagues was in a position to contribute a chapter for this project, but the editor found their opinions valuable at both its conceptual and procedural stages nonetheless. It has been a pleasure to work with Martin Daly and Marigold Acland in the transformation of an appealing idea into a finished product which, it is hoped, will serve to encourage those interested in the history of Islamic Egypt to explore this rich and complex era in greater depth.

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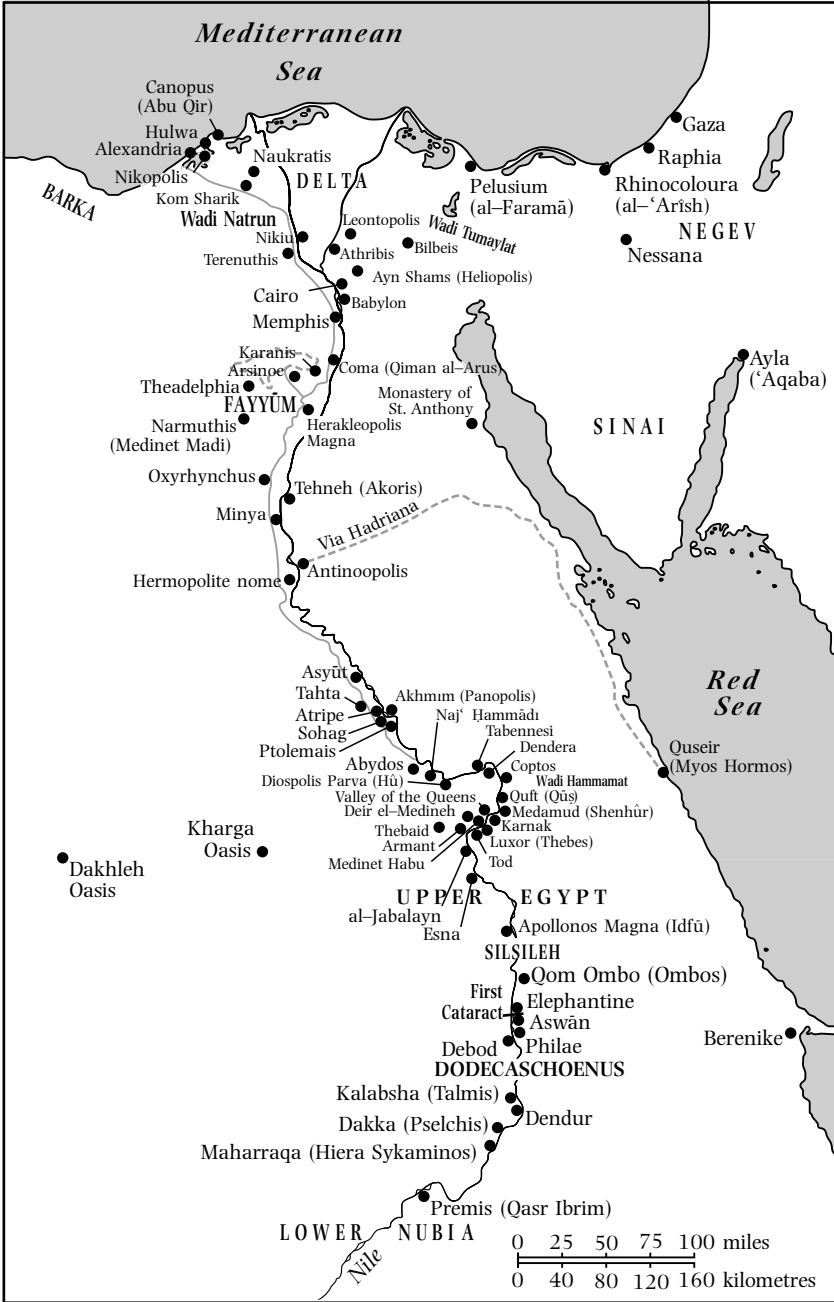
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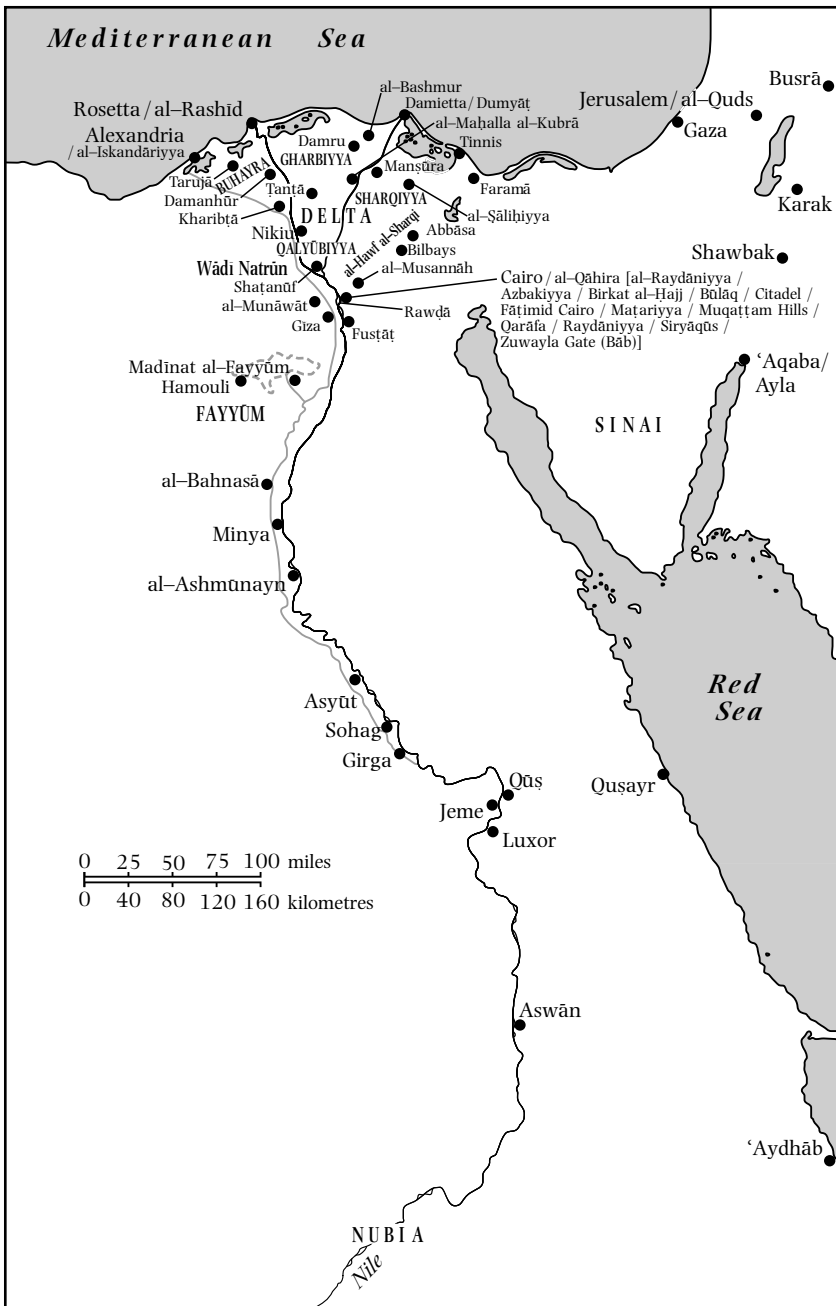


The system of Arabic transliteration employed is that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Terms in other languages and styles of elision have been rendered according to the usages of individual chapter contributors.

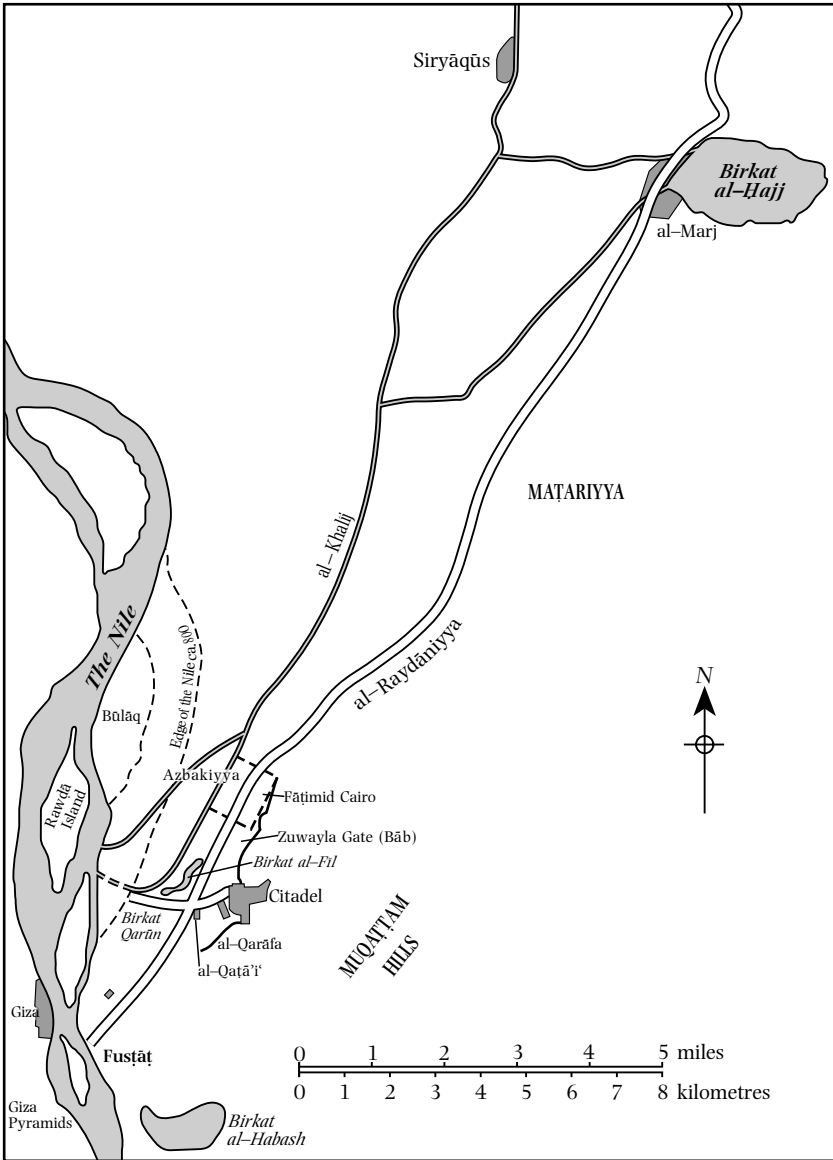
The glossary in volume 1 and the maps throughout have been prepared by the volume editors in consultation with chapter contributors. The dynastic tables in volume 1 rely on C. E. Bosworth's *The New Islamic Dynasties. A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (New York, 1996).



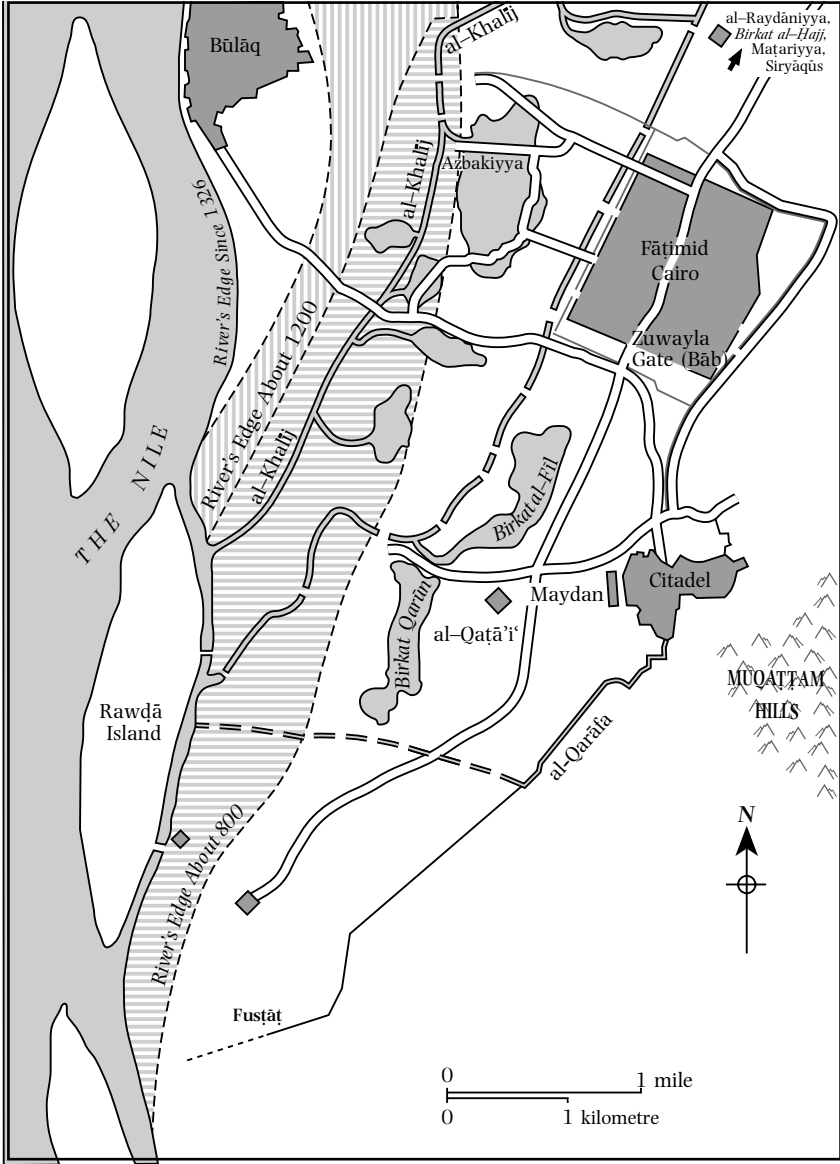
Map 1 *Ptolemaic and Byzantine Egypt*



Map 2 *Islamic (post-conquest) Egypt*



Map 3 Medieval Cairo environs



Map 4 Medieval Cairo