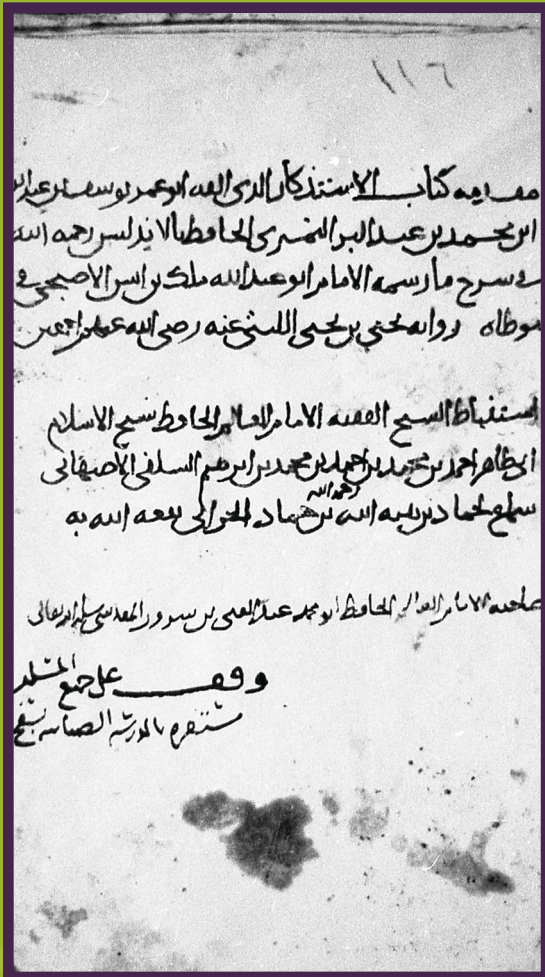


The Restoration of Sunnism

The Early History of
Islamic Law Schools
and the Professoriate
in Egypt, 495–647 /
1101–1249



By Gary Leiser

Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies

THE RESTORATION OF SUNNISM

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Number 14
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THE RESTORATION OF SUNNISM
THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAMIC
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GARY LEISER

‡ LOCKWOOD PRESS

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THE RESTORATION OF SUNNISM

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Series Editors' Preface

We are extremely pleased to publish Gary Leiser's *The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: Madrasas and Mudarrisun 495-647/1101-1249*, a lightly revised version of his 1976 University of Pennsylvania doctoral dissertation. Together with the *Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh University Press, 1981) by George Makdisi, Leiser's mentor at the University of Pennsylvania, *The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt* remains one of the most important works on the history of the premodern institution of the *madrasa* to date. There have, to be sure, been many publications on the *madrasah* in recent decades, but many have argued that medieval Islamic legal education was informal and lacked structure. Few scholars have followed the methods adopted by Makdisi and endeavored to detect the elements of structure and order in the institution of the *madrasa* and in its educational curricula and the practices associated with it. Leiser is the exception, and his ground-breaking work stands out for its attention to detail and its attention to the political, economic, and religious background of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Egypt. We are delighted to be able to make this work available to a wider audience and give it the attention it deserves, and we hope that it will inspire further detailed historical research on the *madrasa* in premodern Islamic societies.

We are grateful to Gary Leiser for agreeing to publish his work in our series and indebted to him for revising and updating both the text and the format. And we remain, as always, deeply grateful to our publisher Billie Jean Collins for her unwavering support of our series, to Susanne Wilhelm for designing such beautiful books, and to Ian Stevens for distributing them worldwide.

Joseph E. Lowry
Devin J. Stewart
Shawkat M. Toorawa

Preface

This work is a study of the early history of Islamic law schools (s. *madrasa*, pl. *madāris*) and their professors (s. *mudarris*, pl. *mudarrisūn*) in late Fāṭimid and Aiyūbid Egypt (495–647/1101–1249). It describes the origin and spread of these institutions, their teachers, and their role in the religious life of Egypt. I originally prepared it as a PhD dissertation in Middle Eastern history, which I submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania in 1976. Its original title was “The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: Madrasas and Mudarrisūn, 495–647/1101–1249.” I wrote it over a period of three years under the direction of George Makdisi, who had suggested the topic, and with support from the Foreign Area Fellowship Program of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. After the Graduate Faculty accepted the dissertation, Makdisi recommended that I submit it for publication. With one exception, the presses that I contacted found it to be too long, too complex, and, above all, too specialized to justify publication. The exception, Brill, offered to publish it for \$10,000, or about \$45,000 in 2021 dollars.

Today, many decades later, in light of the growing atomization of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, this work no longer seems so specialized. Furthermore, in the years after its completion, it was, in fact, one of only four modern monographs of any kind on Aiyūbid Egypt apart from some studies on Saladin. The others were Hans Gottschalk’s *al-Malik al-Kāmil* (Wiesbaden, 1958), Franz-Josef Dahlmanns’ “Al-Malik al-Ādil, Ägypten und der vordere Orient in den Jahren 589/1193 bis 615/1218” (PhD diss., University of Giessen, 1975), and Steven Humphreys’ *From Saladin to the Mongols* (Albany, 1977). Claude Cahen took note of this in *Orient et occident au temps des Croisades* (Paris, 1983), pp. 177, and 274, n. 1. Indeed, since then, this situation has not changed very much. Moreover, the major theses of this work have not been challenged. The most important of them were that *madrasas* were not used primarily to fight Shī‘ism in Egypt but to patronize the Sunnī religious class, composed chiefly of Mālikīs and Shāfi‘īs, and exercise some influence over it. In fact, to my knowledge there has been no significant additional scholarly research on the subject of this work since its appearance. Neil MacKenzie, in his *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study* (Cairo, 1992), describes the Aiyūbid *madrasas* in Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ, but he adds nothing to the present work, which he ignores. This work therefore stands today not simply as the principal study of the *madrasas* of late Fāṭimid and Aiyūbid Egypt but also perhaps as the only study of the intellectual, legal, and religious history of that period.

While scholarly research on the *madrasas* of late Fāṭimid and Aiyūbid Egypt has not advanced noticeably since 1976, the sources for their study have become much more accessible. Many works on which I had heavily relied were available only in manuscript and required research in London, Oxford, Dublin, Paris, Istanbul, Damascus, and Cairo. Today most of them have been published. They include al-Dhahabī's *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, al-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt*, al-Mundhirī's *al-Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala*, and Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij al-kurūb*. Others, such as al-Maqrīzī's *al-Sulūk* and relevant sections of Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil*, have been translated. Most importantly, there is now a new scholarly edition of al-Maqrīzī's *al-Khiṭaṭ*.

Over the years, I have published a few articles that have drawn on the material in the present work. They are "Ḥanbalism in Egypt before the Mamlūks," *SI* 54 (1981), 155–81; "The Madrasa and the Islamization of the Middle East: The Case of Egypt," *JARCE* 22 (1985), 29–47; "Notes on the Madrasa in Medieval Islamic Society," *The Muslim World* 76 (1986), 16–23; and "Muslims from al-Andalus in the Madrasas of Late Fāṭimid and Aiyūbid Egypt," *Al-Qanṭara* 20 (1999), 137–59. Somewhat related, but not based on this work, are "The Endowment of the al-Zahiriyya in Damascus," *JESHO* 27 (1984), 33–55; "The Madrasah and the Islamization of Anatolia before the Ottomans" in Joseph E. Lowry et al., eds., *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of George Makdisi* (London, 2004), pp. 174–91; and "The Life and Times of the Ayyūbid Vizier al-Ṣāhib b. Shukr," *Der Islam* 97 (2020), 89–119.

As presented here, the text of the dissertation is unchanged except for the correction of a number of minor errors, oversights, and infelicities of English usage. In order to make the text less stilted, I have also tried to minimize the use of the Arabic definite article for place names: thus "Fuṣṭāṭ" for "al-Fuṣṭāṭ," "the Ṣāliḥiyya Madrasa" for "the al-Ṣāliḥiyya Madrasa," and so forth. All transliteration has been retained in part because the many personal names have prosopographic value. In addition, the format has been changed to conform to standard publishing practices—Penn had a quirky format for dissertations—and the maps have been redone. Finally, I should note that the dissertation was originally written with a typewriter to which were added special keys for the Arabic letters used in transliteration, but the result was not always satisfactory. And the reproduction of the text by University Microfilms was often indistinct. This, of course, hampered its use. Now, thanks to modern digitalization, the present publication of the dissertation by Lockwood Press should make it not only much more accessible but also easier to read for interested scholars.

Gary Leiser
Sisters, Oregon
2021

Introduction

It has become commonplace to speak of the *madrasa*, usually translated as “college,” as an institution that played an important part in Saladin’s successful efforts to overcome the Fāṭimid-Shī‘ī dynasty in Egypt and restore Sunnism as the government’s official version of Islam. In this study, I will examine the first 150 years of the history of the *madrasa* in Egypt in order to determine the extent to which it was, in fact, used to combat Shī‘ism and to gauge its influence on the native Sunnī population. I am interested in the *madrasa* only in its Egyptian context and not in its origin or development in other parts of the Islamic world.

I begin with a discussion of the most important sources for the early history of the *madrasa* in Egypt followed by a description of the political and social milieu in which it appeared. Next comes an account of the first *madrasas* established in the country. As far as possible, I identify them and examine their locations, dates, founders, legal rites (s. *madhhab*, pl. *madhāhib*), and professors, income, and operations. Afterwards, Saladin’s role in the history of this institution is investigated and his *madrasas* analyzed along the same lines. This leads, in turn, to a comparative discussion of all the known colleges built by his contemporaries and successors down to the end of his dynasty. The concluding chapter describes the role of the *madrasa* in Egyptian society. Apart from providing as many details as I can about the individual colleges, my emphasis throughout is on the professors. I am concerned with their origins, education, travels, rites, ideologies, family connections, and relationships with the ruling authorities.

This study reveals, among other things, that the *madrasa* came to Egypt from the East fairly soon after the Seljuk Vizir Niẓām al-Mulk began to create his system of Niẓāmiyya *madrasas* in Nīshāpūr in 450/1058, long before the arrival of Saladin. There were close ties between the colleges in Egypt and the Niẓāmiyya colleges throughout the period in question. We will see that Sunnism had reasserted itself and dominated the Muslim community in Egypt in all but name well before Saladin put an end to the Fāṭimids and that he set no precedents when he established colleges in Egypt and did not set up any “system” of *madrasas*. After him, not all of the Aiyūbid sultans bothered to found such institutions, and never more than one. Most important, the *madrasa* was not meant to fight Shī‘ism but to exercise patronage and control over the Sunnīs.

Few modern works on the *madrasa* or Muslim education pay much attention to medieval Egypt. Instead, they generally focus on the Niẓāmiyya schools. The most noteworthy exception is an article by Ira Lapidus entitled “Ayyūbid Religious Policy and the

Development of the Schools of Law in Cairo,”¹ although it is only a partial introduction to the subject and needs to be modified in several respects. Ahmad Shalaby, in his *History of Muslim Education*,² claims to place a certain emphasis on Egypt, but he is often misleading, makes improper generalizations and many mistakes. In addition to trying to compensate for these shortcomings, I hope that the present study will also serve, to some degree, as a guide for students to the intellectual, religious, and social history of Egypt in late Fāṭimid and Aiyūbid times.

With regard to technical terms, those of importance to us have already been defined elsewhere.³ Nevertheless, it is necessary to state here exactly what I mean by a *madrassa*. In Egypt, during the period under consideration, a *madrassa* was an educational institution created to teach Islamic law (*fiqh*) according to one or more Sunnī rites. It had an endowment providing for a single chair for a single professor of law, income for other faculty or staff, scholarships for students, plus funds for maintenance of the building. The *madrassa*, furthermore, contained lodgings for at least the professor and his students. Side by side with *fiqh*, other subjects were frequently taught, but there could be no *madrassa* without *fiqh* as technically the major subject. Thus, the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyya was not a *madrassa*, although it is often described as such. *Fiqh* could be taught in a mosque (*jāmiʿ* or *maṣjid*) even with an endowment for the *mudarris* and stipends for the students, but I do not classify them as *madrassas* in the full sense because they lacked the necessary accommodations. Besides, the primary purpose of a mosque, of course, was not to teach

1. *Colloque internationale sur l'histoire du caire, 27 mars-5 avril 1969* (Cairo: Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1972), pp. 279–86.

2. Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim Education* (Beirut: Dār al-Kashshāf, 1954). The best general work on the *madrassa* in Arabic is Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ghunaima, *Taʾriḫ al-jāmiʿāt al-islāmiyya al-kubrā* (Tetuan, Morocco: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Maghribiyya, 1953). In English, Max van Berchem's discussion in *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Égypte*, 1/254–69, is still useful, to which compare Ahmad Fikry's ideas in his *Masājid al-Qāhira wa madārisu-hā*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1965–69), summarized in his “Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿimārat al-Qāhira fī l-ʿaṣr al-aiyūbī,” in *Abḥāth al-nadwa l-duwaliyya li-taʾriḫ al-Qāhira*, Ministry of Culture, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1970–71), 1/163–92, to be used skeptically. More interesting is Youssef Eche's theory of the development of the *madrassa* in his *Les Bibliothèques Arabes Publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au moyen âge* (Damascus: IFAO, 1967). The most recent work has been done by George Makdisi, “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,” *BSOAS* 24 (1961), 1–56, “Madrassa and University in the Middle Ages,” *SI* 32 (1970), 255–64, “The Madrasa as a Charitable Trust and the University as a Corporation in the Middle Ages,” in *Correspondance d'Orient*, no. 11, *Actes du V^e congrès international d'arabisants et d'islamists* (Brussels: Centre pour l'étude des problèmes du monde musulman contemporain, 1970), “The Madrasa in Spain: Some Remarks,” *ROMM* 15–16 (1973), 153–58, and “The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology,” *Speculum* 49 (1974), 640–61. For the Ottoman Empire, see İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletini İlmîye Teşkilâtı*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından VIII Seri-Sa. 17 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1965). For a working bibliography on Muslim education, see A. S. Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages* (London: Luzac, 1930).

3. Makdisi, “Muslim Institutions,” 10–17.

fiqh. A *madrasa* could be in any kind of building as long as it fulfilled the above qualifications. With a few exceptions, only those institutions adhering closely to the aforesaid definition will be discussed in this study.

As for transliterating Arabic words, I have used the method of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* with the following changes: “j” instead of “dj” and “q” instead of “ḳ.” I have also used “ai” instead of “ay.” Although I have tried to be consistent, this is not always possible, especially when quoting material in various Western languages. Finally, the place name “Miṣr” in the contemporary and many later sources for our subject almost always means Fuṣṭāṭ and sometimes Egypt, but not Cairo except where noted.

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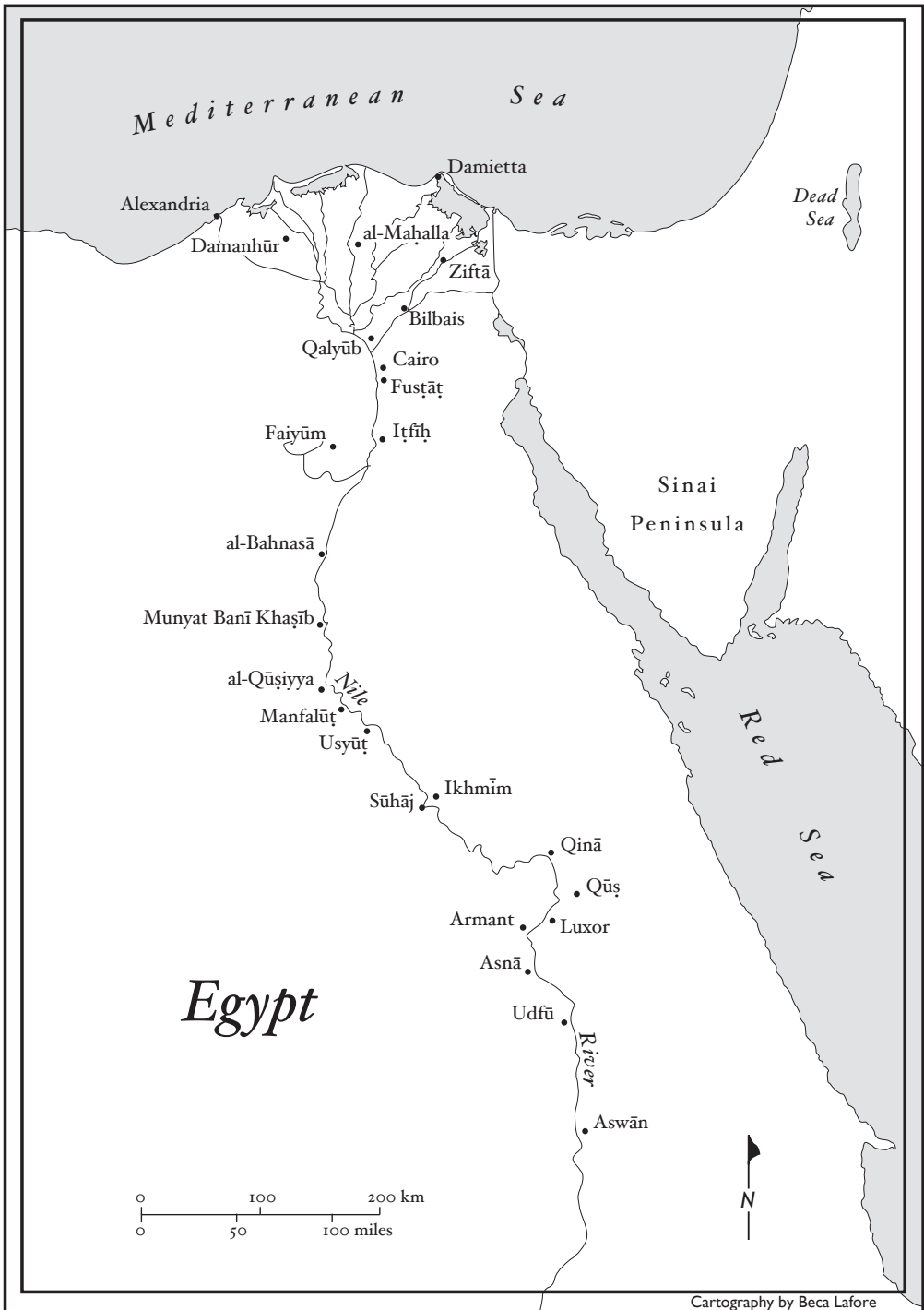
Manuscript Folios

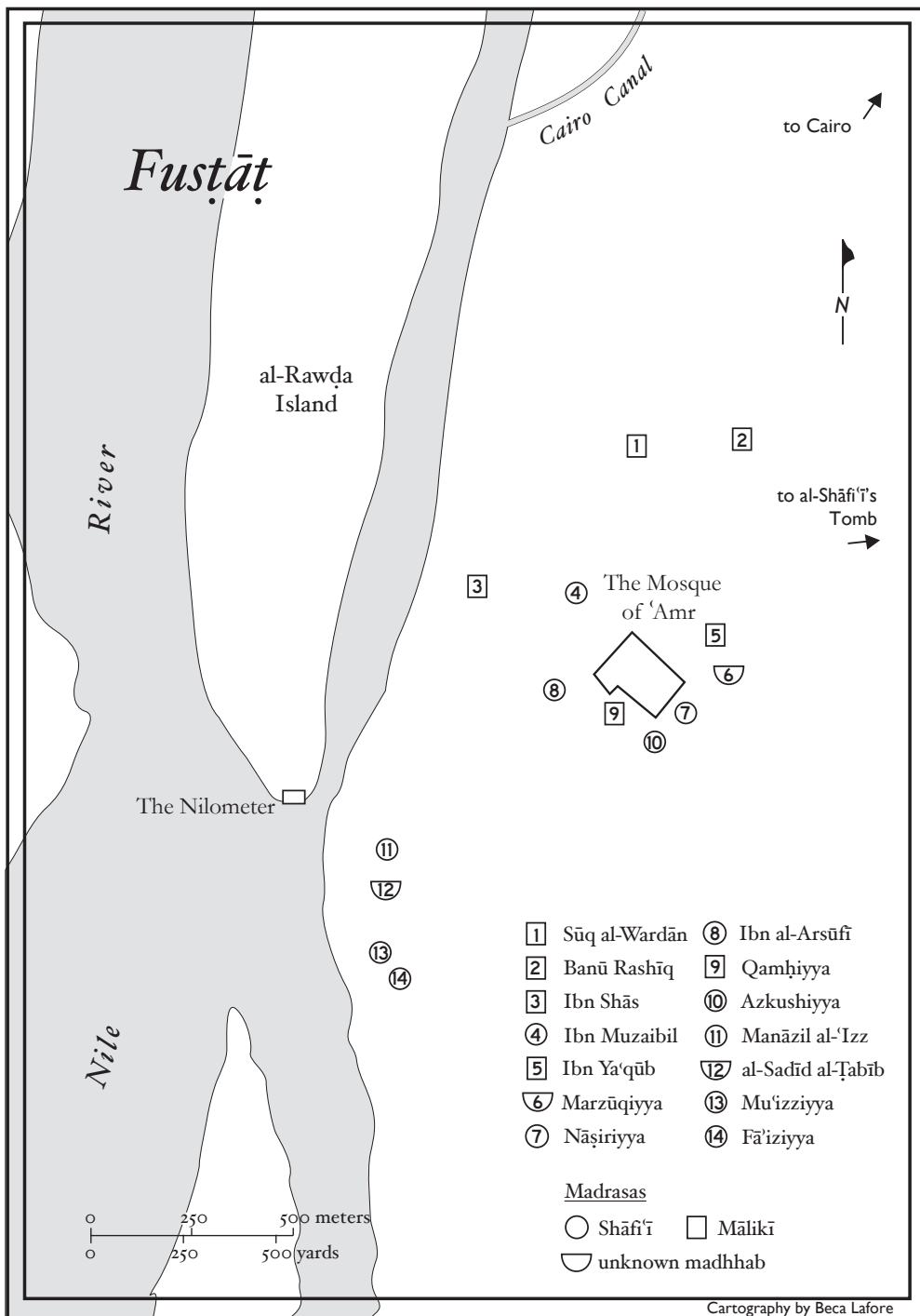
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Abbreviations

AI	<i>Annales Islamologiques.</i>
AIEO	<i>Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'études orientales</i>
BIE	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte</i>
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i>
B. M.	British Museum
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
EI ¹	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam.</i> 1st ed., eds. M. Th. Houtsma et al., 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1913–34. <i>Supplement</i> , 1938
EI ²	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam.</i> 2nd ed., ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al., 4 vols. to date, Leiden: Brill, 1960–
CIA, Égypt, I	Berchem, Max van. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Égypte.</i> Vol. 1. MMAF 19. Paris: Leroux, 1894–1903.
CIA, Égypt, II	Wiet, Gaston. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Égypte.</i> Vol. 2. MIFAO 52. Cairo: IFAO, 1929.
CIA, Syrie du nord	Herzfeld, Ernst. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Syrie du nord.</i> 3 vols. MIFAO 76–78. Cairo: IFAO, 1954–56.
CIA, Syrie du sud	Berchem, Max van. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Syrie du sud.</i> 3 vols. MIFAO 43–45. Cairo: IFAO, 1922–25.
Colloque	<i>Colloque International sur l'histoire du Caire</i> , 27 mars–5 avril, 1969. Cologne: Böhlau, 1974
Comité	<i>Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe.</i> Cairo, 1882–1951
GAL	<i>Geschichte der arabischen Litterature.</i> See Brockelmann
IAM	Institute of Arabic Manuscripts, Cairo
IFAO	L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
IFD	Institut Français de Damas
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
MAE	<i>The Muslim Architecture of Egypt.</i> See Creswell

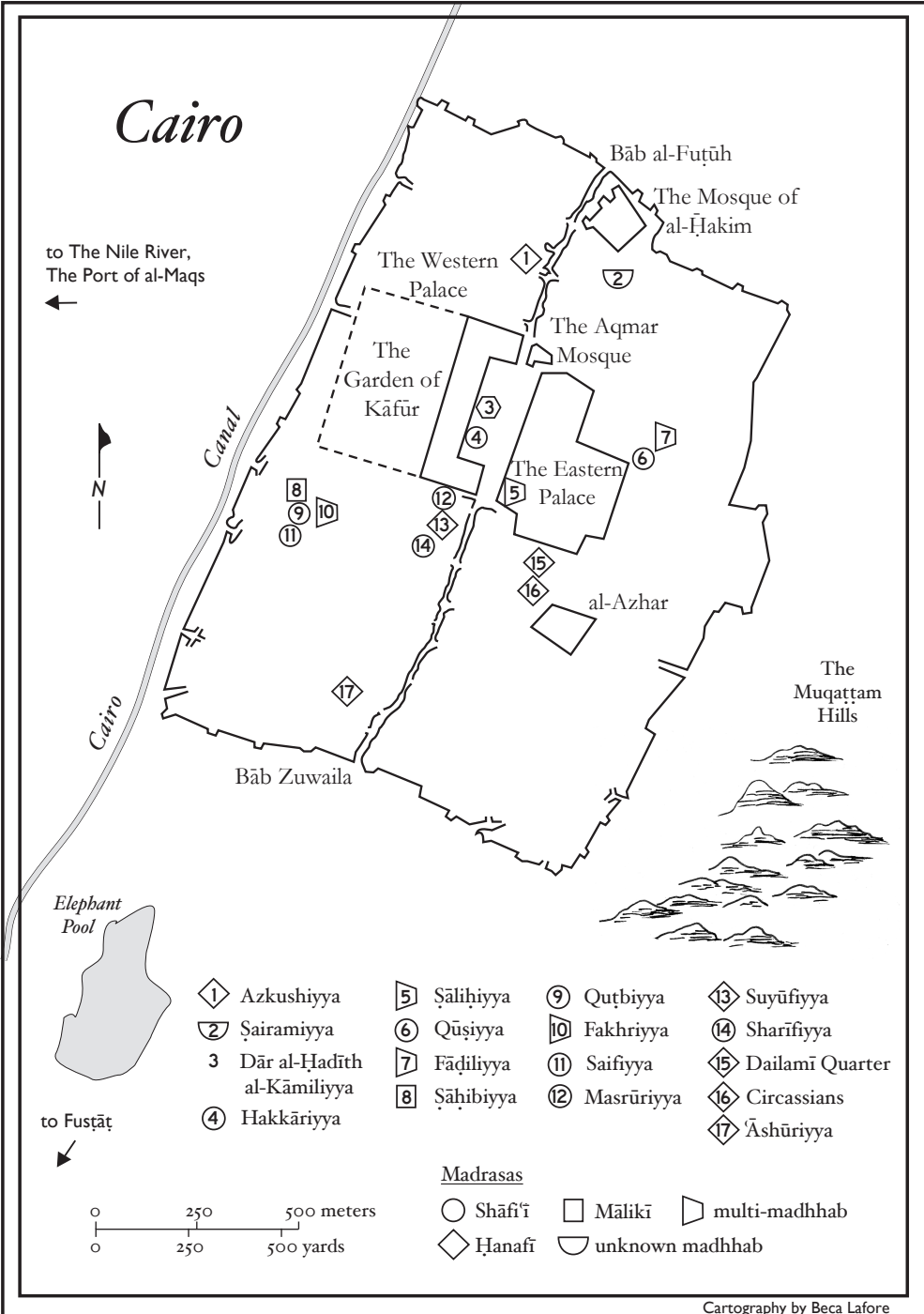
MIFAO	Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
MMAF	Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire
MS(S).	manuscript(s)
MTM	<i>Al-Majalla al-Ta'rikhiyya al-Miṣriyya</i>
RCEA	<i>Répertoire Chronologique d'épigraphie arabe</i> . Ed. É. Combe et al., 16 vols. Cairo: IFAO, 1931–64
REI	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i>
Rend. Accad. Lincei	<i>Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei</i>
RHCHor	<i>Recueil des historiens des croisades, historiens orientaux</i> . Farnborough, UK: Gregg Press, 1967
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
ROMM	<i>Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée</i>
RSO	<i>Rivista degli Studi Orientali</i>
S	Supplement. See Brockelmann
SI	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
WdO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>





Cairo

to The Nile River,
The Port of al-Maqs



- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|
| ① Azkushiyya | ⑤ Ṣālihiyya | ⑨ Quṭbiyya | ⑬ Suyūfiyya |
| ② Ṣairamiyya | ⑥ Qūṣiyya | ⑩ Fakhrīyya | ⑭ Sharīfiyya |
| ③ Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyya | ⑦ Fāḍiliyya | ⑪ Saiḥiyya | ⑮ Dailamī Quarter |
| ④ Hakkāriyya | ⑧ Ṣāhibiyya | ⑫ Masrūriyya | ⑯ Circassians |
| | | | ⑰ 'Ashūriyya |

Madrasas

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| ○ Shāfi'ī | □ Mālikī | ▵ multi-madhhab |
| ◇ Ḥanafī | ◐ unknown madhhab | |

