

= Al @-@ Azhar Mosque =

Al @-@ Azhar Mosque (Arabic : ?????? ?????? al @-@ G?m3` al @-@ Azhar , " mosque of the most resplendent ") is a mosque in Islamic Cairo in Egypt . Al @-@ Mu 'izz li @-@ Din Allah of the Fatimid Caliphate commissioned its construction for the newly established capital city in 970 . Its name is usually thought to allude to the Islamic prophet Muhammad 's daughter Fatimah , a revered figure in Islam who was given the title az @-@ Zahr? ? (" the shining or resplendent one ") . It was the first mosque established in Cairo , a city that has since gained the nickname " the City of a Thousand Minarets . "

After its dedication in 972 , and with the hiring by mosque authorities of 35 scholars in 989 , the mosque slowly developed into what is today the second oldest continuously run university in the world after Al Karaouine in Umayyad Fes . Al @-@ Azhar University has long been regarded as the foremost institution in the Islamic world for the study of Sunni theology and sharia , or Islamic law . The university , integrated within the mosque as part of a mosque school since its inception , was nationalized and officially designated an independent university in 1961 , following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 .

Over the course of its over a millennium @-@ long history , the mosque has been alternately neglected and highly regarded . Because it was founded as a Shiite Ismaili institution , Saladin and the Sunni Ayyubid dynasty that he founded shunned al @-@ Azhar , removing its status as a congregational mosque and denying stipends to students and teachers at its school . These moves were reversed under the Mamluk Sultanate , under whose rule numerous expansions and renovations took place . Later rulers of Egypt showed differing degrees of deference to the mosque and provided widely varying levels of financial assistance , both to the school and to the upkeep of the mosque . Today , al @-@ Azhar remains a deeply influential institution in Egyptian society that is highly revered in the Sunni Muslim world and a symbol of Islamic Egypt .

= = Name = =

The city of Cairo was established by Gawhar al @-@ ?iqill? , a Fatimid general of Greek extraction from Sicily . He originally named it al @-@ Mansuriyya (?????????) after the prior seat of the Fatimid caliphate , al @-@ Mansuriya in modern Tunisia . The mosque , first used in 972 , may have initially been named J?mi ' al @-@ Mansuriyya (????? ????????? , " the mosque of Mansuriyya ") , as was common practice at the time . It was the Caliph al @-@ Mu ? izz li @-@ D?n All?h who renamed the city al @-@ Q?hira (??????? , " Cairo " , meaning , " the Victorious ") . The name of the mosque thus became J?mi ' al @-@ Q?hira (????? ????????? , " the mosque of Cairo ") , the first transcribed in Arabic sources .

The mosque acquired its current name , al @-@ Azhar , sometime between the caliphate of al @-@ Mu ? izz and the end of the reign of the second Fatimid caliph in Egypt , al @-@ Aziz Billah . Azhar is the masculine form for zahr? ? , meaning " splendid " or " most resplendent . " Zahr? ? is an epithet applied to Muhammad 's daughter Fatimah , wife of caliph Al? ibn Ab? ??lib . She was claimed as the ancestress of al @-@ Mu ? izz and the imams of the Fatimid dynasty ; one theory is that her epithet is the source for the name al @-@ Azhar . The theory , however , is not confirmed in any Arabic source and its plausibility has been both supported and denied by later Western sources .

An alternative theory is that the mosque 's name is derived from the names given by the Fatimid caliphs to their palaces . Those near the mosque were collectively named al @-@ Qusur al @-@ Zahira (??????? ??????? , " the Brilliant Palaces ") by al @-@ Aziz Billah , and the royal gardens were named after another derivative of the word zahra . The palaces had been completed and named prior to the mosque changing its name from J?mi ' al @-@ Q?hira to al @-@ Azhar .

The word J?mi ' is derived from the Arabic root word jama?a (g @-@ m @-@ ?) , meaning " to gather " . The word is used for large congregational mosques . While in classical Arabic the name for al @-@ Azhar remains J?mi ' al @-@ Azhar , the pronunciation of the word J?mi ' changes to G?ma ' in Egyptian Arabic .

= = History = =

= = = Fatimid Caliphate = = =

Caliph al @-@ Mu ? izz li @-@ Din All?h , the fourth Ism????li Imam , conquered Egypt through his general Gawhar , wresting it from the Sunni Ikhshidid dynasty . By order of the Caliph , Gawhar then oversaw the construction of the royal enclosure of the Fatimid Caliphate and its army , and had al @-@ Azhar built as a base to spread Ism????li Shi 'a Islam . Located near the densely populated Sunni city of Fustat , Cairo became the center of the Ism????li sect of Shi 'a Islam , and seat of the Fatimid empire .

Gawhar ordered the construction of a congregational mosque for the new city and work commenced on April 4 , 970 . The mosque was completed in 972 and the first Friday prayers were held there on June 22 , 972 during Ramadan .

Al @-@ Azhar soon became a center of learning in the Islamic world , and official pronouncements and court sessions were issued from and convened there . Under Fatimid rule , the previously secretive teachings of the Ism????li madh 'hab (school of law) were made available to the general public . Al @-@ Nu ? man ibn Muhammad was appointed qadi (judge) under al @-@ Mu ? izz and placed in charge of the teaching of the Ism????li madh 'hab . Classes were taught at the palace of the Caliph , as well as at al @-@ Azhar , with separate sessions available to women . During Eid ul @-@ Fitr in 973 , the mosque was rededicated by the caliph as the official congregational mosque in Cairo . Al @-@ Mu ? izz , and his son ? when he in turn became caliph ? would preach at least one Friday khutbah (sermon) during Ramadan at al @-@ Azhar .

Yaqub ibn Killis , a polymath , jurist and the first official vizier of the Fatimids , made al @-@ Azhar a key center for instruction in Islamic law in 988 . The following year , 45 scholars were hired to give lessons , laying the foundation for what would become the leading university in the Muslim world .

The mosque was expanded during the rule of the caliph al @-@ Aziz (975 ? 996) . According to al @-@ Mufaddal , he ordered the restoration of portions of the mosque and had the ceiling raised by one cubit . The next Fatimid caliph , al @-@ Hakim , would continue to renovate the mosque , providing a new wooden door in 1010 . However , al @-@ Hakim 's reign saw the completion of the al @-@ Hakim Mosque , and al @-@ Azhar lost its status as Cairo 's primary congregational mosque . In May 1009 the al @-@ Hakim Mosque became the sole location for the caliph 's sermons ; prior to this , al @-@ Hakim would rotate where the Friday sermon was held . Following al @-@ Hakim 's reign , al @-@ Azhar was restored by al @-@ Mustan?ir . Additions and renovations were carried during the reign of the remaining Fatimid caliphs .

Initially lacking a library , al @-@ Azhar was endowed by the Fatimid caliph in 1005 with thousands of manuscripts that formed the basis of its collection . Fatimid efforts to establish Ism????li practice among the population were , however largely unsuccessful . Much of its manuscript collection was dispersed in the chaos that ensued with the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate , and Al @-@ Azhar became a Sunni institution shortly thereafter .

= = = Ayyubid dynasty = = =

Saladin , who overthrew the Fatimids in 1171 , was hostile to the Shi ? ite principles of learning propounded at al @-@ Azhar during the Fatimid Caliphate , and under his Ayyubid dynasty the mosque suffered from neglect . Congregational prayers were banned by Sadr al @-@ Din ibn Dirbass , appointed qadi by Saladin . The reason for this edict may have been Sh?fi ? ? teachings that proscribe congregational prayers in a community to only one mosque , or mistrust of the former Shi 'a institution by the new Sunni ruler . By this time , the much larger al @-@ Hakim Mosque was completed ; congregational prayers in Cairo were held there .

In addition to stripping al @-@ Azhar of its status as congregational mosque , Saladin also ordered the removal from the mihrab of the mosque a silver band on which the names of the Fatimid caliphs

had been inscribed . This and similar silver bands removed from other mosques totaled 5 @, @ 000 dirhems . Saladin did not completely disregard the upkeep of the mosque and according to al @-@ Mufaddal one of the mosque 's minarets was raised during Saladin 's rule .

The teaching center at the mosque also suffered . The once well stocked library at al @-@ Azhar was neglected , and manuscripts of Fatimid teachings that were held at al @-@ Azhar were destroyed . The Ayyubid dynasty promoted the teaching of Sunni theology in subsidized madrasas (schools) built throughout Cairo . Student funding was withdrawn , organized classes were no longer held at the mosque , and the professors that had prospered under the Fatimids were forced to find other means to earn their living .

Al @-@ Azhar nevertheless remained the seat of Arabic philology and a place of learning throughout this period . While official classes were discontinued , private lessons were still offered in the mosque . There are reports that a scholar , possibly al @-@ Baghdadi , taught a number of subjects , such as law and medicine , at al @-@ Azhar . Saladin reportedly paid him a salary of 30 dinars , which was increased to 100 dinars by Saladin 's heirs . While the mosque was neglected by Saladin and his heirs , the policies of the Sunni Ayyubid dynasty would have a lasting impact on al @-@ Azhar . Educational institutions were established by Sunni rulers as a way of combating what they regarded as the heretical teachings of Shi 'a Islam . These colleges , ranging in size , focused on teaching Sunni doctrine , had an established and uniform curriculum that included courses outside of purely religious topics , such as rhetorics , math , and science . No such colleges had been established in Egypt by the time of Saladin 's conquest . Saladin and the later rulers of the Ayyubid dynasty would build twenty @-@ six colleges in Egypt , among them the Salihyya Madrasa .

Al @-@ Azhar eventually adopted Saladin 's educational reforms modeled on the college system he instituted , and its fortunes improved under the Mamluks , who restored student stipends and salaries for the shuyfkh (teaching staff) .

= = = Mamluk Sultanate = = =

Congregational prayers were reestablished at al @-@ Azhar during the Mamluk Sultanate by Sultan Baibars in 1266 . While Shafi 'i teachings , which Saladin and the Ayyubids followed , stipulated that only one mosque should be used as a congregational mosque in a community , the Hanafi madh 'hab , to which the Mamluks adhered , placed no such restriction . Al @-@ Azhar had by now lost its association with the Fatimids and Isma'ili doctrines , and with Cairo 's rapid expansion , the need for mosque space allowed Baibars to disregard al @-@ Azhar 's history and restore the mosque to its former prominence . Under Baibars and the Mamluk Sultanate , al @-@ Azhar saw the return of stipends for students and teachers , as well as the onset of work to repair the mosque , which had been neglected for nearly 100 years . According to al @-@ Mufaddal , the emir ' Izz al @-@ Din Aydamur al @-@ Hilli built his house next to the mosque and while doing so repaired the mosque . Al @-@ Maqrizi reports that the emir repaired the walls and roof as well as repaving and providing new floor mats . The first khutbah since the reign of the Fatimid caliph al @-@ Hakim took place on January 16 , 1266 with the sermon delivered on a new pulpit completed five days earlier .

An earthquake in 1302 caused damage to al @-@ Azhar and a number of other mosques throughout Mamluk territory . The responsibility for reconstruction was split among the amirs (princes) of the Sultanate and the head of the army , Amir Salar , who was tasked with repairing the damage . These repairs were the first done since the reign of Baibars . Seven years later a dedicated school , the Madrasa al @-@ Aqbaghawiyya , was built along the northwest wall of the mosque . Portions of the wall of the mosque were removed to accommodate the new building . Construction of another school , the Madrasa al @-@ Taybarsiyya began in 1332 ? 1333 . This building , which was completed in 1339 @-@ 1340 , would also impact the structure of the mosque as it was built over the site of the midat 'a , the fountain for ablution . Both of the madrasas were built as complementary buildings to al @-@ Azhar , with separate entrances and prayer halls .

Though the mosque had regained its standing in Cairo , repairs and additional work were carried

out by those in positions lower than sultan . This changed under the rule of al @-@ Zahir Barquq , the first sultan of the Burji dynasty . The resumption of direct patronage by those in the highest positions of government continued through to the end of Mamluk rule . Improvements and additions were made by the sultans Qaytbay and Qansuh al @-@ Ghuri , each of whom oversaw numerous repairs and erected minarets . It was common practice among the Mamluk sultans to build minarets , perceived as symbols of power and the most effective way of cementing one 's position in the Cairo cityscape . The sultans wished to have a noticeable association with the prestigious al @-@ Azhar .

Although the mosque @-@ school was the leading university in the Islamic world and had regained royal patronage , it did not overtake the madrasas as the favored place of education among Cairo 's elite . Al @-@ Azhar maintained its reputation as an independent place of learning , whereas the madrasas that had first been constructed during Saladin 's rule were fully integrated into the state educational system . Al @-@ Azhar did continue to attract students from other areas in Egypt and the Middle East , far surpassing the numbers attending the madrasas . Al @-@ Azhar 's student body was organized in riwaqs (fraternities) along national lines , and the branches of Islamic law were studied . The average degree required six years of study .

By the 14th century , al @-@ Azhar had achieved a preeminent place as the center for studies in law , theology , and Arabic , becoming a cynosure for students all around the Islamic world . However , only one third of the ulema (Islamic scholars) of Egypt were reported to have either attended or taught at al @-@ Azhar . One account , by Muhammad ibn Iyas , reports that the Salihiyya Madrasa , and not al @-@ Azhar , was viewed as the " citadel of the ulema " at the end of the Mamluk Sultanate .

= = = Province of the Ottoman Empire = = =

With the Ottoman annexation of 1517 , despite the mayhem their fight to control the city engendered , the Turks showed great deference to the mosque and its college , though direct royal patronage ceased . Sultan Selim I , the first Ottoman ruler of Egypt , attended al @-@ Azhar for the congregational Friday prayer during his last week in Egypt , but did not donate anything to the upkeep of the mosque . Later Ottoman amirs likewise regularly attended Friday prayers at al @-@ Azhar , but rarely provided subsidies for the maintenance of the mosque , though they did on occasion provide stipends for students and teachers . In contrast to the expansions and additions undertaken during the Mamluk Sultanate , only two Ottoman wal?s (governors) restored al @-@ Azhar in the early Ottoman period .

Despite their defeat by Selim I and the Ottomans in 1517 , the Mamluks remained influential in Egyptian society , becoming beys (" chieftains ") , nominally under the control of the Ottoman governors , instead of amirs at the head of an empire . The first governor of Egypt under Selim I was Khai 'r Bey , a Mamluk amir who had defected to the Ottomans during the Battle of Marj Dabiq . Though the Mamluks launched multiple revolts to reinstate their Sultanate , including two in 1523 , the Ottomans refrained from completely destroying the Mamluk hold over the power structure of Egypt . The Mamluks did suffer losses ? both economic and military ? in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman victory , and this was reflected in the lack of financial assistance provided to al @-@ Azhar in the first hundred years of Ottoman rule . By the 18th century the Mamluk elite had regained much of its influence and began to sponsor numerous renovations throughout Cairo and at al @-@ Azhar specifically .

Al @-@ Qazdughli , a powerful Mamluk bey , sponsored several additions and renovations in the early 18th century . Under his direction , a riwaq for blind students was added in 1735 . He also sponsored the rebuilding of the Turkish and Syrian riwaqs , both of which had originally been built by Qaytbay .

This marked the beginning of the largest set of renovations to be undertaken since the expansions conducted under the Mamluk Sultanate . Abd al @-@ Rahman Katkhuda was appointed katkhuda (head of the Janissaries) in 1749 and embarked on several projects throughout Cairo and at al @-@ Azhar . Under his direction , three new gates were built : the Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n (the Gate of

the Barbers) , so named because students would have their heads shaved outside of the gate , which eventually became the main entrance to the mosque ; the Bab al @-@ Sa 'ayida (the Gate of the Sa 'idis) , named for the Sa 'idi people of Upper Egypt ; and , several years later , the Bab al @-@ Shurba (the Soup Gate) , from which food , often rice soup , would be served to the students . A prayer hall was added to the south of the original one , doubling the size of the available prayer space . Katkhuda also refurbished or rebuilt several of the riwaqs that surrounded the mosque . Katkhuda was buried in a mausoleum he himself had built in Al @-@ Azhar ; in 1776 , he became the first person (and the last) to be interred within the mosque since Nafissa al @-@ Bakriyya , a female mystic who had died around 1588 .

During the Ottoman period , al @-@ Azhar regained its status as a favored institution of learning in Egypt , overtaking the madrasas that had been originally instituted by Saladin and greatly expanded by the Mamluks . By the end of the 18th century , al @-@ Azhar had become inextricably linked to the ulema of Egypt . The ulema also were able to influence the government in an official capacity , with several sheikhs appointed to advisory councils that reported to the pasha (honorary governor) , who in turn was appointed for only one year . This period also saw the introduction of more secular courses taught at al @-@ Azhar , with science and logic joining philosophy in the curriculum . During this period , al @-@ Azhar saw its first non @-@ Maliki rector ; Abdullah al @-@ Shubrawi , a follower of the Shafii madhab , was appointed rector . No follower of the Maliki madhab would serve as rector until 1899 when Salim al @-@ Bishri was appointed to the post .

Al @-@ Azhar also served as a focal point for protests against the Ottoman occupation of Egypt , both from within the ulema and from among the general public . Student protests at al @-@ Azhar were common , and shops in the vicinity of the mosque would often close out of solidarity with the students . The ulema was also on occasion able to defy the government . In one instance , in 1730 ? 31 , Ottoman aghas harassed the residents living near al @-@ Azhar while pursuing three fugitives . The gates at al @-@ Azhar were closed in protest and the Ottoman governor , fearing a larger uprising , ordered the aghas to refrain from going near al @-@ Azhar . Another disturbance occurred in 1791 in which the w?li harassed the people near the al @-@ Hussein Mosque , who then went to al @-@ Azhar to demonstrate . The w?li was subsequently dismissed from his post .

= = = French occupation = = =

Napoleon invaded Egypt in July 1798 , arriving in Alexandria on July 2 and moving on to Cairo on July 22 . In a bid to placate both the Egyptian population and the Ottoman Empire , Napoleon gave a speech in Alexandria in which he proclaimed his respect for Islam and the Sultan :

People of Egypt , you will be told that I have come to destroy your religion : do not believe it ! Answer that I have come to restore your rights and punish the usurpers , and that , more than the Mamluks , I respect God , his Prophet and the Koran ... Is it not we who have been through the centuries the friends of the Sultan ?

On July 25 Napoleon set up a diwan made up of nine al @-@ Azhar sheikhs tasked with governing Cairo , the first body of Egyptians to hold official powers since the beginning of the Ottoman occupation . This practice of forming councils among the ulema of a city , first instituted in Alexandria , was put in place throughout French @-@ occupied Egypt . Napoleon also unsuccessfully sought a fatwa from the al @-@ Azhar imams that would deem it permissible under Islamic law to declare allegiance to Napoleon .

Napoleon 's efforts to win over both the Egyptians and the Ottomans proved unsuccessful ; the Ottoman Empire declared war on September 9 , 1798 , and a revolt against French troops was launched from al @-@ Azhar on October 21 , 1798 . Egyptians armed with stones , spears , and knives rioted and looted . The following morning the diwan met with Napoleon in an attempt to bring about a peaceful conclusion to the hostilities . Napoleon , initially incensed , agreed to attempt a peaceful resolution and asked the sheikhs of the diwan to organize talks with the rebels . The rebels , believing the move indicated weakness among the French , refused . Napoleon then ordered that the city be fired upon from the Cairo Citadel , aiming directly at al @-@ Azhar . During the revolt two to three hundred French soldiers were killed , with 3 @, @ 000 Egyptian casualties . Six of the ulema

of al @-@ Azhar were killed following summary judgments laid against them , with several more condemned . Any Egyptian caught by French troops was imprisoned or , if caught bearing weapons , beheaded . The French troops intentionally desecrated the mosque , walking in with their shoes on and guns displayed . The troops tied their horses to the mihrab and ransacked the student quarters and libraries , throwing copies of the Quran on the floor . The leaders of the revolt then attempted to negotiate a settlement with Napoleon , but were rebuffed .

Napoleon , who had been well respected in Egypt and had earned himself the nickname Sultan el @-@ Kebir (the Great Sultan) among the people of Cairo , lost their admiration and was no longer so addressed . In March 1800 , French General Jean Baptiste Kléber was assassinated by Suleiman al @-@ Halabi , a student at al @-@ Azhar . Following the assassination , Napoleon ordered the closing of the mosque ; the doors remained bolted until Ottoman and British assistance arrived in August 1801 .

The conservative tradition of the mosque , with its lack of attention to science , was shaken by Napoleon 's invasion . A seminal innovation occurred with the introduction of printing presses to Egypt , finally enabling the curriculum to shift from oral lectures and memorization to instruction by text , though the mosque itself only acquired its own printing press in 1930 . Upon the withdrawal of the French , Muhammad Ali Pasha encouraged the establishment of secular learning , and history , math , and modern science were adopted into the curriculum . By 1872 , under the direction of Jam?l al @-@ D?n al @-@ Afgh?n? , European philosophy was also added to the study program .

= = = Muhammad Ali Dynasty and British occupation = = =

Following the French withdrawal , Ali , the w?li (governor) and self @-@ declared khedive (viceroy) of Egypt , sought to consolidate his newfound control of the country . To achieve this goal he took a number of steps to limit , and eventually eliminate , the ability of the al @-@ Azhar ulema to influence the government . He imposed taxes on rizqa lands (tax @-@ free property owned by mosques) and madrasas , from which al @-@ Azhar drew a major portion of its income . In June 1809 , he ordered that the deeds to all rizqa lands be forfeited to the state in a move that provoked outrage among the ulema . As a result , Umar Makram , the naqib al @-@ ashraf , a prestigious Islamic post , led a revolt in July 1809 . The revolt failed and Makram , an influential ally of the ulema , was exiled to Damietta .

Ali also sought to limit the influence of the al @-@ Azhar sheikhs by allocating positions within the government to those educated outside of al @-@ Azhar . He sent select students to France to be educated under a Western system and created an educational system based on that model that was parallel to , and thus bypassed , the system of al @-@ Azhar .

Under the rule of Isma 'il Pasha , the grandson of Muhammad Ali , major public works projects were initiated with the aim of transforming Cairo into a European styled city . These projects , at first funded by a boom in the cotton industry , eventually racked up a massive debt which was held by the British , providing an excuse for the British to occupy Egypt in 1882 after having pushed out Isma 'il Pasha in 1879 .

The reign of Isma 'il Pasha also saw the return of royal patronage to al @-@ Azhar . As khedive , Isma 'il restored the Bab al @-@ Sa 'yida (first built by Katkhuda) and the Madrasa al @-@ Aqbaghawyya . Tewfik Pasha , Isma 'il 's son , who became khedive when his father was deposed as a result of British pressure , continued to restore the mosque . Tewfik renovated the prayer hall that was added by Katkhuda , also aligning the southeastern facade of the hall with the street behind it , and remodeling several other areas of the mosque . Abbas II succeeded his father Tewfik as khedive of Egypt and Sudan in 1892 , and continued the renovations started by his grandfather Isma 'il . He restructured the main facade of the mosque and built a new riwaq . Under his rule , the Committee for the Conservation of Monuments of Arab Art (initially formed under French occupation) , also restored the original Fatimid sahn . These renovations were both needed and helped modernize al @-@ Azhar and harmonize it with what was becoming a metropolis .

The major set of reforms that began under the rule of Isma 'il Pasha continued under the British occupation . Muhammad Mahdi al- ' Abbasi , sheikh al @-@ Azhar , had instituted a set of reforms

in 1872 intended to provide structure to the hiring practices of the university as well as to standardize the examinations taken by students . Further efforts to modernize the educational system were made under Hilmi 's rule during the British occupation . The mosque 's manuscripts were gathered into a centralized library , sanitation for students improved , and a regular system of exams instituted . From 1885 , other colleges in Egypt were placed directly under the administration of the al @-@ Azhar Mosque .

During Sa 'ad Zaghloul 's term as minister of education , before he went on to lead the Egyptian Revolution of 1919 , further efforts were made to modify the educational policy of al @-@ Azhar . While a bastion of conservatism in many regards , the mosque was opposed to Islamic fundamentalism , especially as espoused by the Muslim Brotherhood , founded in 1928 . The school attracted students from throughout the world , including students from Southeast Asia and particularly Indonesia , providing a counterbalance to the influence of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia .

Under the reign of King Fuad I , two laws were passed that reorganized the educational structure at al @-@ Azhar . The first of these , in 1930 , split the school into three departments : Arabic language , sharia , and theology , with each department located in buildings outside of the mosque throughout Cairo . Additionally , formal examinations were required to earn a degree in one of these three fields of study . Six years later , a second law was passed that moved the main office for the school to a newly constructed building across the street from the mosque . Additional structures were later added to supplement the three departmental buildings .

The ideas advocated by several influential reformers in the early 1900s , such as Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad al @-@ Ahmadi al @-@ Zawahiri , began to take hold at al @-@ Azhar in 1928 , with the appointment of Mustafa al @-@ Maraghi as rector . A follower of Abduh , the majority of the ulema opposed his appointment . Al @-@ Maraghi and his successors began a series of modernizing reforms of the mosque and its school , expanding programs outside of the traditional subjects . Fuad disliked al @-@ Maraghi , and had him replaced after one year by al @-@ Zawahiri , but al @-@ Maraghi would return to the post of rector in 1935 , serving until his death in 1945 . Under his leadership , al @-@ Azhar 's curriculum was expanded to include non @-@ Arabic languages and modern sciences . Al @-@ Zawahiri , who had also been opposed by the ulema of the early 1900s , continued the efforts to modernize and reform al @-@ Azhar . Following al @-@ Maraghi 's second term as rector , another student of Abduh was appointed rector .

== = Post 1952 revolution == =

Following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 , led by the Free Officers Movement of Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser , in which the Egyptian monarchy was overthrown , the university began to be separated from the mosque . A number of properties that surrounded the mosque were acquired and demolished to provide space for a modern campus by 1955 . The mosque itself would no longer serve as a school , and the college was officially designated a university in 1961 . The 1961 law separated the dual roles of the educational institution and the religious institution which made judgments heeded throughout the Muslim world . The law also created secular departments within al @-@ Azhar , such as colleges of medicine , engineering , and economics , furthering the efforts at modernization first seen following the French occupation . The reforms of the curriculum have led to a massive growth in the number of Egyptian students attending al @-@ Azhar run schools , specifically youths attending primary and secondary schools within the al @-@ Azhar system . The number of students reported to attend al @-@ Azhar primary and secondary schools increased from under 90 @,@ 000 in 1970 to 300 @,@ 000 in the early in 1980s , up to nearly one million in the early 1990s , and exceeding 1 @.@ 3 million students in 2001 .

During his tenure as Prime Minister , and later President , Nasser continued the efforts to limit the power of the ulema of al @-@ Azhar and to use its influence to his advantage . In 1952 , the waqfs were nationalized and placed under the authority of the newly created Ministry of Religious Endowments , cutting off the ability of the mosque to control its financial affairs . He abolished the

sharia courts , merging religious courts with the state judicial system in 1955 , severely limiting the independence of the ulema . The 1961 reform law , which invalidated an earlier law passed in 1936 that had guaranteed the independence of al @-@ Azhar , gave the President of Egypt the authority to appoint the sheikh al @-@ Azhar , a position first created during Ottoman rule and chosen from and by the ulema since its inception . Al @-@ Azhar , which remained a symbol of the Islamic character of both the nation and the state , continued to influence the population while being unable to exert its will over the state . Al @-@ Azhar became increasingly co @-@ opted into the state bureaucracy after the revolution ? independence of its curriculum and its function as a mosque ceased . The authority of the ulema were further weakened by the creation of government agencies responsible for providing interpretations of religious laws . While these reforms dramatically curtailed the independence of the ulema , they also had the effect of reestablishing their influence by integrating them further into the state apparatus . The 1961 reform law also provided the ulema with the resources of the state , though the purse strings were outside of their control . While Nasser sought to subjugate the ulema beneath the state , he did not allow more extreme proposals to limit the influence of al @-@ Azhar . One such proposal was made by Taha Hussein in 1955 . Hussein sought to dismantle the Azharite primary and secondary educational system and transform the university into a faculty of theology which would be included within the modern , secular , collegiate educational system . The ulema opposed this plan , though Nasser 's choice of maintaining al @-@ Azhar 's status was due more to personal political considerations , such as the use of al @-@ Azhar to grant legitimacy to the regime , than on the opposition of the ulema .

Al @-@ Azhar , now fully integrated as an arm of the government , was then used to justify actions of the government . Although the ulema had in the past issued rulings that socialism is irreconcilable with Islam , following the Revolution 's land reforms new rulings were supplied giving Nasser a religious justification for what he termed an " Islamic " socialism . The ulema would also serve as a counterweight to the Muslim Brotherhood , and to Saudi Arabia 's Wahhabi influence . An assassination attempt on Nasser was blamed on the Brotherhood , and the organization was outlawed . Nasser , needing support from the ulema as he initiated mass arrests of Brotherhood members , relaxed some of the restrictions placed on al @-@ Azhar . The ulema of al @-@ Azhar in turn consistently supported him in his attempts to dismantle the Brotherhood , and continued to do so in subsequent regimes . Despite the efforts of Nasser and al @-@ Azhar to discredit the Brotherhood , the organization continued to function . Al @-@ Azhar also provided legitimacy for war with Israel in 1967 , declaring the conflict against Israel a " holy struggle . "

Following Nasser 's death in 1970 , Anwar Sadat became President of Egypt . Sadat wished to restore al @-@ Azhar as a symbol of Egyptian leadership throughout the Arab world , saying that " the Arab world cannot function without Egypt and its Azhar . " Recognizing the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood , Sadat relaxed several restrictions on the Brotherhood and the ulema as a whole . However , in an abrupt about @-@ face , in September 1971 a crackdown was launched on journalists and organizations that Sadat felt were undermining or attacking his positions . As part of this effort to silence criticism of his policies , Sadat instituted sanctions against any of the ulema who criticized or contradicted official state policies . The ulema of al @-@ Azhar continued to be used as a tool of the government , sparking criticism among several groups , including Islamist and other more moderate groups . Shukri Mustafa , an influential Islamist figure , accused the ulema of providing religious judgments for the sole purpose of government convenience . When Sadat needed support for making peace with Israel , which the vast majority of the Egyptian population regarded as an enemy , al @-@ Azhar provided a decree stating that the time had come to make peace .

Hosni Mubarak succeeded Sadat as President of Egypt following Sadat 's assassination in 1981 . While al @-@ Azhar would continue to oblige the government in granting a religious legitimacy to its dictates , the mosque and its clergy were given more autonomy under Mubarak 's regime . Under Jad al @-@ Haq , the sheikh of al @-@ Azhar from 1982 until his death in 1994 , al @-@ Azhar asserted its independence from the state , at times criticizing policies of the state for instigating extremist Islamist sects . Al @-@ Haq argued that if the government wished al @-@ Azhar to effectively combat groups such as al @-@ Gama 'a al @-@ Islamiyya then al @-@ Azhar must be

permitted greater independence from the state and for it to be allowed to make religious declarations without interference . Under Mubarak , a number of powers of the state were ceded to al @-@ Azhar . During the 1990s , modifications to existing censorship laws gave al @-@ Azhar the ability to censor both print and electronic media . Though the law stipulates that al @-@ Azhar may only become involved following a complaint , in practice its role has been much more pervasive ; for example , television scripts were routinely sent to al @-@ Azhar for approval prior to airing .

Al @-@ Azhar continues to hold a status above other Sunni religious authorities throughout the world , and as Sunnis form a large majority of the total Muslim population al @-@ Azhar exerts considerable influence on the Islamic world as a whole . In addition to being the default authority within Egypt , al @-@ Azhar has been looked to outside of Egypt for religious judgments . Prior to the Gulf War , Saudi Arabia 's King Fahd asked for a fatwa authorizing the stationing of foreign troops within the kingdom , and despite Islam 's two holiest sites being located within Saudi Arabia , he asked the head sheikh of al @-@ Azhar instead of the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia . In 2003 , Nicolas Sarkozy , at the time French Minister of the Interior , requested a judgment from al @-@ Azhar allowing Muslim girls to not wear the hijab in French public schools , despite the existence of the French Council of Islam . The sheikh of al @-@ Azhar provided the ruling , saying that while wearing the hijab is an " Islamic duty " the Muslim women of France are obligated to respect and follow French laws . The ruling drew much criticism within Egypt as compromising Islamic principles to convenience the French government , and in turn the Egyptian government .

= = = Post 2011 revolution = = =

Al @-@ Azhar was not unaffected by the 2011 Egyptian revolution that saw the removal of Hosni Mubarak as president of Egypt . Student government elections in the months following the revolution resulted in an overwhelming victory for the once banned Muslim Brotherhood . Protests demanding that the military junta ruling Egypt restore the mosque 's independence from the state broke out , and the mosque itself commissioned the writing of a draft law that would grant al @-@ Azhar greater independence from the government . Within al @-@ Azhar , debate on its future and rightful role within the state has replaced what had been a mollified single @-@ voice in support of the policies of the Mubarak regime . The various views on al @-@ Azhar 's future role in Egypt come from several parties , including leading Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood , liberal voices that wish to see al @-@ Azhar stand as a bulwark against ultra @-@ conservative Islamists (known as Salafists) , and those that hope to see al @-@ Azhar become wholly independent from the state and in complete control of its finances , leadership , and further that it be placed in charge of the religious ministries of the state .

= = Architecture = =

The architecture of al @-@ Azhar is closely tied to the history of Cairo . Materials taken from multiple periods of Egyptian history , from the Ancient Egyptians , through Greek and Roman rule , to the Coptic Christian era , were used in the early mosque structure , which drew on other Fatimid structures in Ifriqiya . Later additions from the different rulers of Egypt likewise show influences from both within and outside of Egypt . Sections of the mosque show many of these influences blended together while others show a single inspiration , such as domes from the Ottoman period and minarets built by the Mamluks .

Initially built as a prayer hall with five aisles and a modest central courtyard , the mosque has since been expanded multiple times with additional installations completely surrounding the original structure . Many of Egypt 's rulers have shaped the art and architecture of al @-@ Azhar , from the minarets added by the Mamluks and the gates added during Ottoman rule to more recent renovations such as the installation of a new mihrab . None of the original minarets or domes have survived , with some of the current minarets having been rebuilt several times .

= = = Structural evolution under Fatimids = = =

Completely surrounded by dependencies added as the mosque was used over time , the original structure was 280 feet (85 m) in length and 227 feet (69 m) wide , and comprised three arcades situated around a courtyard . To the southeast of the courtyard , the original prayer hall was built as a hypostyle hall , five aisles deep . Measuring 260 feet (79 m) by 75 feet (23 m) , the qibla wall was slightly off the correct angle . The marble columns supporting the four arcades that made up the prayer hall were reused from sites extant at different times in Egyptian history , from Pharaonic times through Roman rule to Coptic dominance . The different heights of the columns were made level by using bases of varying thickness . The stucco exterior shows influences from Abbasid , Coptic and Byzantine architecture .

Ultimately a total of three domes were built , a common trait among early north African mosques , although none of them have survived Al @-@ Azhar 's many renovations . The historian al @-@ Maqrizi recorded that in the original dome al @-@ Siqilli inscribed the following :

In the name of Allah , the Merciful , the Compassionate ; according to the command for its building from the servant of Allah , His governor abu Tamim Ma 'ad , the Imam al @-@ Mu ? izz li @-@ D?n All?h , Amir al @-@ Mu 'minin , for whom and his illustrious forefathers and his sons may there be the blessings of Allah : By the hand of his servant Jawhar , the Secretary , the ?iqill? in the year 360 .

Gawhar included the honorific Amir al @-@ Mu 'minin , Commander of the Faithful , as the Caliphs title and also included his nickname " the Secretary " which he had earned serving as a secretary prior to becoming a general .

The original mihrab , uncovered in 1933 , has a semi @-@ dome above it with a marble column on either side . Intricate stucco decorations were a prominent feature of the mosque , with the mihrab and the walls ornately decorated . The mihrab had two sets of verses from the Quran inscribed in the conch , which is still intact . The first set of verses are the three that open al @-@ Mu ? minoon :

Successful indeed are the believers ? who are humble in their prayers ? and who avoid vain talk

The next inscription is made up of verses 162 and 163 of al @-@ An 'am :

Say : Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah , the Lord of the worlds ? No associate has He ; and this am I commanded , and I am the first of those who submit .

These inscriptions are the only surviving piece of decoration that has been definitively traced to the Fatimids .

The marble paved central courtyard was added between 1009 and 1010 . The arcades that surround the courtyard have keel shaped arches with stucco inscriptions . The arches were built during the reign of al @-@ Hafiz li @-@ Din Allah . The stucco ornaments also date to his rule and were redone in 1891 . Two types of ornaments are used . The first appears above the center of the arch and consists of a sunken roundel and twenty @-@ four lobes . A circular band of vegetal motifs was added in 1893 . The second ornament used , which alternates with the first appearing in between each arch , consists of shallow niches below a fluted hood . The hood rests on engaged columns which are surrounded by band of Qu 'ranic writing in Kufic script . The Qu 'ranic script was added after the rule of al @-@ Hafiz but during the Fatimid period . The walls are topped by a star shaped band with tiered triangular crenellations . The southeastern arcade of the courtyard contains the main entrance to the prayer hall . A Persian framing gate , in which the central arch of the arcade is further in with a higher rectangular pattern above it , opens into the prayer hall .

A new wooden door was installed during the reign of al @-@ Hakim in 1009 . In 1125 , al @-@ Amir installed a new wooden mihrab . An additional dome was constructed during the reign of al @-@ Hafiz li @-@ Din Allah . He additionally ordered the creation of a fourth arcade around the courtyard and had a porch built on the western end of the sahn .

= = = Mamluk additions = = =

The Fatimid dynasty was succeeded by the rule of Saladin and his Ayyubid dynasty . Initially

appointed vizier by the last Fatimid Caliph Al- ' ??id (who incorrectly thought he could be easily manipulated) , Saladin consolidated power in Egypt , allying that country with the Sunni Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad . Distrusting al @-@ Azhar for its Shi 'a history , the mosque lost prestige during his rule . However , the succeeding Mamluk dynasty made restorations and additions to the mosque , overseeing a rapid expansion of its educational programs . Among the restorations was a modification of the mihrab , with the installation of a polychrome marble facing .

A dome and minaret cover the Madrasa al @-@ Aqbaghawiyya , which contains the tomb of Amir Aqbugha , which was built in 1339 . Intended by its founder , Aqbugha ' Abd al @-@ Wahid , to be a stand @-@ alone mosque and school , the madrasa has since become integrated with the rest of the mosque . The entrance , qibla wall , and glass mosaic in the mihrab are all original with the dome dating to the Ottoman period .

Built in 1440 , the Madrasa Gawhariyya contains the tomb of Gawhar al @-@ Qanaqba 'i , a Sudanese eunuch who became treasurer to the sultan . The floor of the madrasa is marble , the walls lined with cupboards , decoratively inlaid with ebony , ivory , and nacre . The tomb chamber is covered by small arabesque dome .

= = = Madrasa al @-@ Taybarsiyya = = =

The Madrasa al @-@ Taybarsiyya , which contains the tomb of Amir Taybars , was built in 1309 . Originally intended to function as a complementary mosque to al @-@ Azhar it has since been integrated with the rest of the mosque . The Maliki and Sh?fi ? ? madh 'hab were studied in this madrasa , though it now is used to hold manuscripts from the library . The only surviving piece from the original is the qibla wall and its polychrome mihrab . Al @-@ Maqrizi reported that the madrasa was used only for studying the Sh?fi ? ? while the historian Ibn Duqmaq reported that one of the liwans in the madrasa was reserved for Sh?fi ? ? teachings while the other was for Maliki teachings .

The madrasa was completely rebuilt by Abd al @-@ Rahman Katkhuda , leaving only the southeastern wall and its mihrab untouched . The mihrab was described by K. A. C. Creswell as being " one of the finest in Cairo " . The niche of the mihrab is 1 @.@ 13 meters (3 @.@ 7 ft) wide and 76 centimeters (30 in) deep . On each side of the niche stands a 2 @.@ 78 meters (9 @.@ 1 ft) high porphyry column . Above the columns are impost blocks decorated with colored geometrical designs . The semi @-@ dome at the top of the mihrab is set within an outer arch . Surrounding this arch is a molding that forms a rectangular outer frame . This is the first mihrab in Egypt to have this type of frame .

= = = Minaret of Qaytbay = = =

Built in 1483 with two octagonal and one cylindrical shafts , the Minaret of Qaytbay also has three balconies , supported by muqarnas , a form of stalactite vaulting which provide a smooth transition from a flat surface to a curved one (first recorded to have been used in Egypt in 1085) , that adorn the minaret . The first shaft is octagonal is decorated with keel @-@ arched panels on each side , with a cluster of three columns separating each panel . Above this shaft is the second octagonal shaft which is separated from the first by a balcony and decorated with plaiting . A second balcony separates this shaft with the final cylindrical shaft , decorated with four arches . Above this is the third balcony , crowned by the finial top of the minaret .

The minaret is believed to have been built in the area of an earlier , Fatimid @-@ era brick minaret that had itself been rebuilt several times . Contemporary accounts suggest that the Fatimid minaret had defects in its construction and needed to be rebuilt several times , including once under the direction of Sadr al @-@ Din al @-@ Adhra 'i al @-@ Dimashqi al @-@ Hanafi , the qadi al @-@ qudat (Chief Justice of the Highest Court) during the rule of Sultan Baibars . Recorded to have been rebuilt again under Barquq in 1397 , the minaret began to lean at a dangerous angle and was rebuilt in 1414 by Taj al @-@ Din al @-@ Shawbaki , the wal? and muhtasib of Cairo , and again in 1432 . The Qaytbay minaret was built in its place as part of a reconstruction of the entrance to the

mosque .

===== Bab al @-@ Gindi =====

Directly across the courtyard from the entrance from the Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n is the Bab al @-@ Gindi (Gate of Qaytbay) . Built in 1495 , this gate leads to the court of the prayer hall .

===== Ghuri minaret =====

The double finial minaret was built in 1509 by Qansah al @-@ Ghuri . Sitting on a square base , the first shaft is octagonal , and four sides have a decorative keel arch , separated from the adjacent sides with two columns . The second shaft , separated from the first by a fretted balconies supported by muqarnas , is also octagonal and decorated with blue faience . A balcony separates the third level from the second shaft . The third level is made up of two rectangular shafts with horseshoe arches on each side of both shafts . Atop each of these two shafts rests a finial , with a balcony separating the finials from the shafts .

===== Ottoman renovations and additions =====

Several additions and restorations were made during Ottoman reign in Egypt , many of which were completed under the direction of Abd al @-@ Rahman Katkhuda who nearly doubled the size of the mosque . Three gates were added by Katkhuda , the Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n , which became the main entrance to the mosque , the Bab al @-@ Shurba , and the Bab al @-@ Sa 'ayida . Several riwaqs were added , including one for the blind students of al @-@ Azhar , as well as refurbished during the Ottoman period . Katkhuda also added an additional prayer hall south of the original Fatimid hall , with an additional mihrab , doubling the total prayer area .

===== Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n =====

The Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n (??? ????????? was built in 1753 . Credited to Katkhuda the gate has two doors , each surrounded by recessed arches . Two molded semi @-@ circular arches with tumpanums decorated with trefoils stand above the doors . Above the arches is a frieze with panels of cypress trees , a common trait of Ottoman work .

A free @-@ standing minaret , built by Katkhuda , originally stood outside the gate . The minaret was demolished prior to the opening of al @-@ Azhar street by Tewfik Pasha during modernization efforts which took place throughout Cairo .

===== Current layout and structure =====

The present main entrance to the mosque is the Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n , which opens into the white marble @-@ paved courtyard at the opposite end of the main prayer hall . To the northeast of the Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n , the courtyard is flanked by the façade of the Madrasa al @-@ Aqbaghawyya ; the southwestern end of the courtyard leads to the Madrasa al @-@ Taybarsiyya . Directly across the courtyard from the entrance to the Bab al @-@ Muzayin?n is the Bab al @-@ Gindi (Gate of Qaytbay) , built in 1495 , above which stands the minaret of Qaytbay . Through this gate lies the courtyard of the prayer hall .

The mihrab has recently been changed to a plain marble facing with gold patterns .

===== Endnotes =====