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Locations of Non-Muslim Quarters in Medieval Cairo.

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# LOCATIONS OF NON-MUSLIM QUARTERS IN MEDIEVAL CAIRO

Doris BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF

Cairo is still a challenge to historians. Although periods of its history and areas of the city have been investigated, there still are aspects of Cairo's history that remain uncovered. Among the subjects that have not yet received close attention is the location of non-Muslims' quarters in the medieval capital, which is the topic of this study. I will point out the areas of Cairo reported to have included non-Muslim inhabitants and try to follow up the crystallization of non-Muslim quarters during Cairo's urban development. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study to deal with the demography of the non-Muslim population of Cairo, a subject requiring quite a different scope of research.

Egypt's population was Christian, when conquered by the Arabs in 641. The Egyptian Christians i.e. the Copts at the time of the Arab conquest all belonged to the indigenous Coptic church under the Patriarchate of Alexandria. A second and much smaller Christian group were the Melkites (*Rūm* in Arabic) who adhered to the Byzantine Church of Constantinople and who were Egyptian Greeks and converted Copts. The Coptic (monophysite) and Byzantine (diophysite) churches had been in violent doctrinal confrontation particularly since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 <sup>(1)</sup>. Because of past religious oppression by the Byzantines, the Copts welcomed the Arab conquest which put an end to Byzantine rule in Egypt. Under Muslim rule, the two patriarchates continued to coexist, the Coptic (also called Jacobite) and the Melkite. The latter was a small community which throughout the centuries had lost its Greek character, in time becoming Arabic-speaking like the Copts and ethnically integrated with Copts despite the rivalry between the two churches. There was also a small Jewish community which never played an important role in medieval Egypt.

<sup>(1)</sup> For a general history of the Copts under Islam, Butcher, E.L., *The story of the church of Egypt*, London 1897; Wiet, G., art. « Kibt »,

in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden 1913-34; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār fī dīkr al-ḥiṭaṭ wa'l-āṭār*, Būlāq 1270 H., II, p. 492 ff.

Despite gradual conversion of the Copts to Islam, a significant proportion of Egyptians remained Christian until the 14th century. In 1321 <sup>(1)</sup>, during the reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, religious riots led to mass conversion of Copts, most likely reducing their demographic share to its present proportion of approximately 10 per cent.

Islamic medieval cities, like those in other cultures <sup>(2)</sup>, had populations segregated into quarters according to religious and ethnic identity. The nature of medieval society made religious group segregation more persistent than ethnic groupings, which tended in time to fuse. This was particularly true in Cairo where the Muslim population included elements from all parts of the Old World.

The non-Muslim communities or *ḍimmī(s)* such as the Christian and Jews, whose religions are respected by Islam, are entitled to certain rights of protection within the Muslim state, by definition of the term *ḍimma*. At the same time, they were subjected to regulations known as the *ṣurūṭ 'umariyya* or *al-'ahd al-'umari*, which tradition ascribes to the Caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb but which were in fact formulated much later. In Egypt, they do not seem to have been applied before the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil in the first half of the 9th century <sup>(3)</sup>.

Among the *ṣurūṭ* regulations were the duty of *ḍimmī(s)* to pay the *ḡizya*, a special tax, prohibition upon their carrying arms or riding horses, and the obligation to wear distinctive garments which differed between Christians and Jews. No new churches or synagogues were to be built under Muslim rule though old ones were restored with permission of the authorities. Houses of *ḍimmī(s)* should not be higher than those of Muslims and their cemeteries had to be remote from Muslim cemeteries; neither should the cross be publically displayed, nor church bells heard. In fact, churches in the town had no bell towers. The brewing of or trade in liquor should not be practiced in public. The employment of non-Muslims in public service was considered against Muslim law.

Historic evidence shows that not all of these regulations were systematically followed in Egypt. Repeated reiterations of the *ṣurūṭ 'umariyya*, especially the dress regulations,

<sup>(1)</sup> Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 498 ff.

<sup>(2)</sup> Wirth, E., « Villes islamiques, villes arabes, villes orientales, une problématique face au changement », in *La ville arabe dans l'Islam — histoire et mutations*. (Actes du 2<sup>e</sup> colloque de l'A.T.P. « Espaces socio-culturels et croissance urbaine dans le monde arabe », Carthage-Amilcar 12-18 Mars 1979), Tunis 1982, p. 193-226.

<sup>(3)</sup> Wiet, *op. cit.*; Ibn al-Uḡuwwa, *Kitāb al-qirba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, eds. Ša'bān M.M. & al-Muṭī'ī A.I., Cairo 1976, p. 92 ff.; Maqrizī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Ziyāda, M.M., Cairo 1970, I (3), p. 909 ff.; Qāsim, 'A.Q., *Ahl al-ḍimma fī miṣr al-'uṣūr al-wuṣṭā*, Cairo 1979, p. 25 f.

suggest that they were regularly neglected. The prohibition of non-Muslim cemeteries near Muslim cemeteries, however, was strictly followed in urban Cairo. The prohibitions upon founding new churches, displaying the cross and ringing church bells publically were variously applied throughout the medieval period. Up to the end of the Fatimid period, when non-Muslims still represented an important share of the population, new churches were built regularly (and some were demolished), and Christian religious feasts were publically celebrated by the whole population including the Fatimid court.

Mamluks and Ottomans were far more strict in such matters, expecting low key behavior on the part of the non-Muslims, who by that time were a minority.

The prohibition against brewing liquors in public was respected; the location of taverns shows that they were either outside the city or within Christian quarters.

Until modern times, the majority of the Coptic population, like their Muslim countrymen, were peasants. In the cities, however, Copts continued to hold the bulk of administrative posts at the level of secretaries, scribes and accountants, as the Arab conquerors had abandoned administrative affairs to the indigenous population. In addition to bureaucratic service, the Copts continued to play an important role as craftsmen. In the Ottoman period they were often mentioned as carpenters, jewellers, weavers, tailors and engineers <sup>(1)</sup>. They played no major role as merchants.

## I. AL-FUṢṬĀṬ.

With the Arab conquest of Egypt the first Muslim capital on Egyptian soil, al-Fuṣṭāṭ was founded by 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ near the Roman fortress of Babylon (Qaṣr al-Šam'). It was the garrison city of the Arab troupes which gradually acquired true urban features. The Copts i.e. the local population were permitted in the early years to build their churches on the periphery of the new capital <sup>(2)</sup>. Later, they were even allowed to erect churches

<sup>(1)</sup> De Chabrol, « Essai sur les mœurs des habitants modernes de l'Égypte », in *Description de l'Égypte*, 2nd ed., Paris 1818-28, XVIII, p. 13 ff.; Girard, P.S., « Mémoire sur l'agriculture, l'industrie et le commerce de l'Égypte », in *Description de l'Égypte*, op. cit., XVII, p. 256; Lane, E., *An account of the manners and customs of the modern Egyptians (1833-35)*, The Hague, London, Cairo 1978, p. 540; Raymond, A., *Artisans et commerçants*

*au Caire au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Damas, 1974, p. 546 f.

Legal documents of the *Maḥkama šar'iyya* of the 16th and 17th centuries registers of Maḥkamat al-Zāhid and Maḥkamat Bāb al-Ša'iriyya regularly refer to these professions in connection with the Copts.

<sup>(2)</sup> Kubiak, W., *Al-Fuṣṭāṭ, its foundation and early urban development*, Warsaw 1982, p. 123 f., 161 f., 171, s. also maps 1 & 4.

in more central areas, being thus not restricted to the suburbs. Kubiak in his history of early Fustāṭ refers to a « mass influx of the Coptic population into al-Fustāṭ due to the needs of the Muslim garrison city and its ruling class whom the Copts served as administrative clerks » <sup>(1)</sup>. At that time, the *ṣurūṭ 'umariyya* were not yet fully formulated; the Copts who had welcomed the Arab armies had only to pay the *ḡizya*.

Apart from the new churches at al-Fustāṭ, pre-Islamic churches continued to serve dense Christian populations in their traditional quarters. The areas around the fortress of Babylon, the Ḥamra suburbs (originally Greek quarters) between Ḡabal Yaškur (Ibn Ṭūlūn) and the Nile north of al-Fustāṭ and Birkat al-Ḥabaš <sup>(2)</sup> to its south were inhabited by Christians and Jews. Babylon, because of its numerous churches, developed into the main Christian quarter of al-Fustāṭ.

The Fatimid Shiite dynasty brought for the *ḍimmī(s)* of Egypt a period of comparative prosperity and tolerance, except in the reign of the eccentric caliph al-Ḥākim bi-'Amr Allāh (996-1021). At the beginning of this period, in 970, the new residential capital, al-Qāhira, was founded on the northeastern side of al-Fustāṭ and its satellites, including the two other residential cities of al-'Askar and al-Qaṭā'i'. Al-Qāhira was an exclusive residence for the Caliph, his court and army. It was not conceived of as substituting for al-Fustāṭ, which continued to play its role as the industrial and commercial capital. Al-Fustāṭ's Muslim subjects, the majority of whom remained Sunni under the *Ši'a* rule of the Fatimids, were not entitled to move to al-Qāhira. Those who worked in the Fatimid capital returned at the end of the day to al-Fustāṭ <sup>(3)</sup>.

Goitein's studies have shown that under the Fatimids, Christians and Jews dwelt near Muslims at al-Fustāṭ without strict segregation. Some areas such as Babylon continued to consist of a predominantly Christian population along with Jews, due to practical reasons related to the community's life and continuity rather than to Muslim regulations <sup>(4)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> Kubiak, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>(2)</sup> Abū Šāliḥ, *The Churches and monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries* attributed to Abū Šāliḥ the Armenian, ed. & trans. Evetts, B.T.A. Oxford, 1895, (with Arabic text), p. 33 f., 38 f., 50; Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, p. 343, 360, 363 f.; II, p. 152, 512; Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiṭat 'iqd al-amṣār*, Cairo 1314 H; IV, p. 4 f.; Salmon, G., « Etudes sur la topographie du Caire

— La Kalat al-Kabsh et la Birkat al-fil », in *Mémoires publiés par les Membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*, Cairo 1902, p. 2, 35; Kubiak, *op. cit.*, map 4.

<sup>(3)</sup> Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, p. 363 & 364.

<sup>(4)</sup> Goitein, S.D., *A Mediterranean society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1967-83, II, p. 290 ff., IV, p. 121.

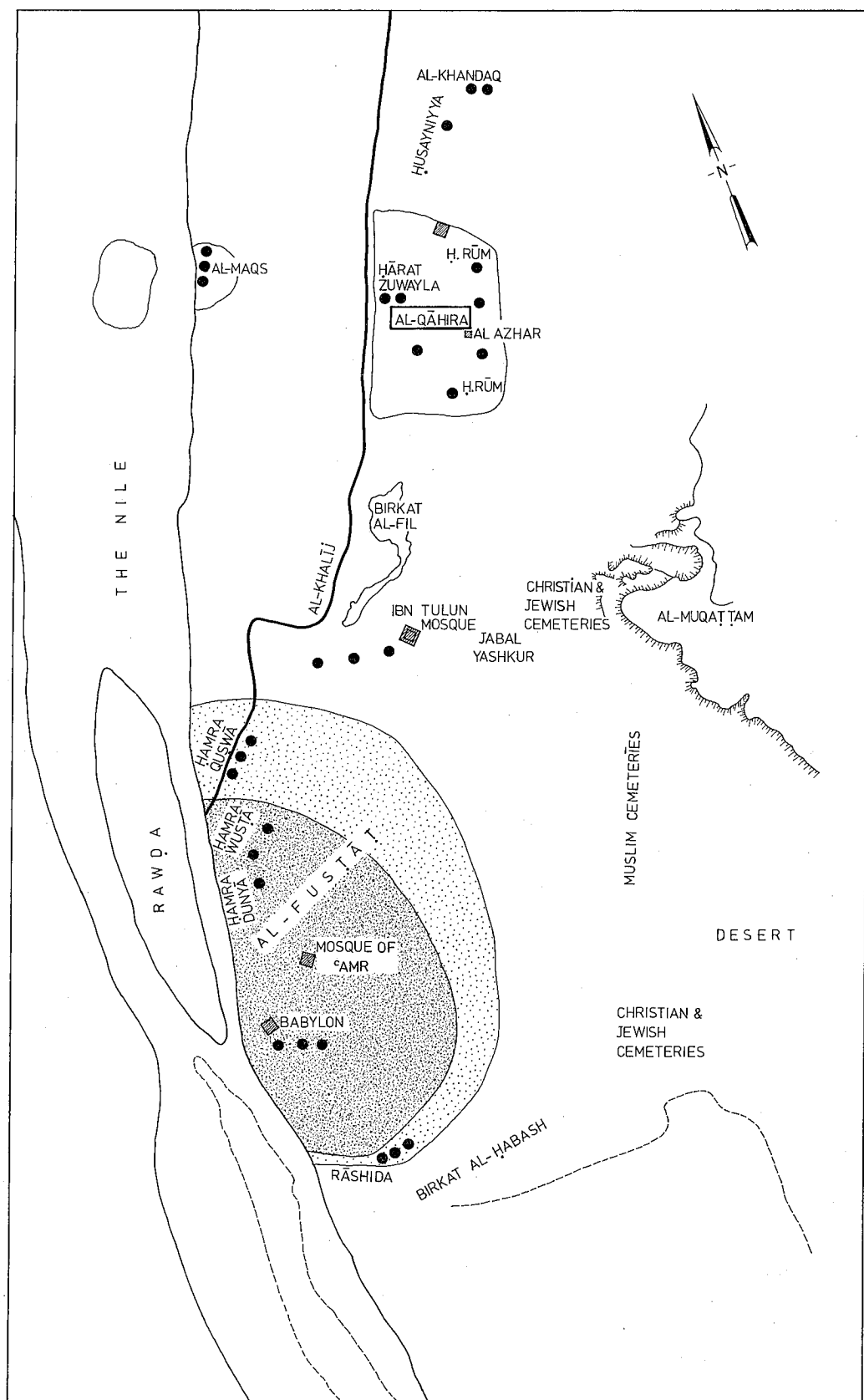


Fig. 1. — Location of Christian Quarters in and around al-Fuṣṭāṭ in the Fatimid period.

## II. AL-QĀHIRA.

## THE FATIMIDE PERIOD (969-1171)

Despite its royal and exclusive character, Al-Qāhira had from its beginning quarters inhabited by non-Muslims. Two such quarters called Ḥārat al-Rūm (Greek quarters). Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Sufā was northeast of Bāb Zuwayla, and Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Ġuwāniyya was south of Bāb al-Naṣr <sup>(1)</sup>. The *Rūm* were Greek mercenaries in the Fatimid army. The whole city, apart from the *Rūm*, was segregated into quarters reflecting ethnic identities. Franks working in the Fatimid armory lived near the Palace at Ḥazzānat al-Bunūd <sup>(2)</sup>. Further, there is mention of several other churches situated in various parts of the city <sup>(3)</sup>.

There was a Jewish quarter, first at Ġawdariyya <sup>(4)</sup>, which later moved to Ḥārat Zuwayla (not connected to Bāb Zuwayla; see map) after al-Ḥākim destroyed it. Ḥārat Zuwayla retained its Jewish character up to modern times, and also included a Christian quarter with the oldest Coptic Church of al-Qāhira, said to be pre-Islamic, where the Jacobite Patriarch resided <sup>(5)</sup>. In fact, the Patriarch of Alexandria continued to dwell in the pre-Islamic capital after the Arab conquest, and during the Fatimid period divided his time between Babylon (al-Fuṣṭāṭ) and al-Qāhira <sup>(6)</sup>.

During the reign of the Caliph al-Mustanṣir (1036-94), his Armenian vizir Badr al-Ġamālī allowed a large number of Armenians to settle in Cairo. They worshipped in Coptic churches at al-Ḥandaq north of Ḥusayniyya and at another a church in Ḥārat al-Rūm <sup>(7)</sup>. The Armenian Patriarch resided at al-Zuhri, which was part of the Ḥamra suburb <sup>(8)</sup>. The village of al-Ḥandaq had developed a Christian quarter at the time Caliph al-Mu'izz founded al-Qāhira. As he destroyed a monastery in order to build his palace complex, he compensated the Copts by allowing them to found a new church at al-Ḥandaq <sup>(9)</sup>. Later, when Caliph al-Ḥākim ordered the demolition of churches at al-Maqs, the Copts were again allowed to build churches at al-Ḥandaq in compensation <sup>(10)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ* II, p. 5, 8, 14, 464, 471, 511.

<sup>(2)</sup> Maqrizī, *op. cit.*, I, p. 444.

<sup>(3)</sup> Mubārak, 'A., *Al-Ḥiṭaṭ al-ḡadīda al-tawfi-qiyya*, Būlāq 1306 H, VI, p. 77.

<sup>(4)</sup> Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 5, 464.

<sup>(5)</sup> Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Tārīḥ baṭārikat al-kanisa al-miṣriyya*, ed. Suryal, 'Aṭiya; Burmester, Khs-; 'Abd al-Masiḥ, Y., Cairo 1959, II (3), p. 169, 210; Butler, A.J., *Ancient Coptic Churches of*

*Cairo*, Oxford 1884, p. 283.

<sup>(6)</sup> Ibn al-Muqaffa', *op. cit.*, II (3), 219, 225.

<sup>(7)</sup> Abū Ṣāliḥ, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Ibn al-Muqaffa', *op. cit.*, p. 169, 219.

<sup>(8)</sup> Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, p. 363 f.; II, p. 114, 165.

<sup>(9)</sup> Maqrizī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 290, 507.

<sup>(10)</sup> Maqrizī, *op. cit.*, p. 511; Mubārak, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, VI, p. 78 f.

## THE AYYUBID PERIOD (1171-1250)

Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (1171-94) contributed significantly to Cairo's urban development. He erected the Citadel on the Muqaṭṭam hill on the southeastern side of al-Qāhira, to be the residence of rulers after dismantlement of the Fatimid palaces, and also opened al-Qāhira to all dwellers, thus abolishing its exclusive royal status. Both agglomerations, al-Fuṣṭāṭ and al-Qāhira, were to be encompassed by one great wall that was never completed. Al-Maqs, the Nile river port where the Fatimid fleet had anchored, was incorporated within the city walls. This village, which included a Christian community <sup>(1)</sup> during the Ottoman period, had already become the main Coptic quarter of Cairo. Although the western shore of the Ḥaliġ was not urbanized until the Ottoman period, the area of al-Maqs continued to be active due to its connection first to the Nile, and later after the Nile withdrew and al-Maqs was left inland, to the port of Būlāq.

With the Ayyubid dynasty (1171-1250) <sup>(2)</sup>, al-Qāhira began its ascendancy at the expense of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, already partly ruined by the fire set by the last Fatimid vizir, Šawār, to defend the old capital against the Crusader attacks of King Amaury. An important factor in al-Qāhira's development was the Citadel, which attracted the city's bulk of expansion southwards between Bāb Zuwayla and the royal residences. Thus, under the Mamluks (1250-1517), al-Fuṣṭāṭ was reduced to a mere port, while al-Qāhira expanded on all sides and especially southwards, particularly under the rule of the ambitious Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1293-1341).

## THE MAMLUK PERIOD (1250-1512)

During the 14th century, the eastern border of the capital developed as cemeteries with some important religious buildings. To the west of the Ḥaliġ, Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's attempts at urbanization were not realized, and decay followed the economic crises of the early 15th century.

With al-Fuṣṭāṭ's surrender of importance to al-Qāhira, the Copts, who were craftsmen and clerks, also had to move northwards. The Christian quarters established in al-Qāhira under the Fatimids with several areas including churches were no longer able to absorb the increasing Christian community of al-Qāhira, due to the intense royal building activity that took place there during Mamluk rule. The one square-kilometer rectangle of the Fatimid foundation witnessed a concentration of royal religious foundations unparalleled

<sup>(1)</sup> Maqrīzī, *op. cit.*, p. 121 f., 145, 164 f., 195, 495. — <sup>(2)</sup> Maqrīzī, *op. cit.*, I, p. 364 f., 379 f.



in any other Islamic city. The Mamluk regime was in general comparatively hostile to the Copts, who were accused of accumulating wealth and displaying it with arrogance, and of disregarding the *šurūṭ 'umariyya*.

The Jews were less affected than the Copts in persecutions under the Bahri Mamluks; the Christians were far more numerous, and therefore more exposed. Hostility during this period might also have been stimulated by the Crusader wars. In fact, it was under the Bahri Mamluks that most persecutions of the Copts took place. Thus after the decline of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, there was preclusion of Christian expansion within the confines of the Fatimid city, while the Jewish quarter remained at Ḥārat Zuwayla.

Under the Mamluks, the Fatimid city had integrated ethnically, with religious communities remaining distinct around their churches and synagogues. Urban pressure on Christian quarters resulting from expanding building activities of the ruling class is illustrated by two episodes. When Amīr Baštāk built his religious complex along the Ḥaliḡ at Qabuw al-Kirmānī (near Qanṭarat Aqsunqur), a Christian community was forced to move<sup>(1)</sup>. This area remained one of the main Christian quarters, however, until the eve of modern times<sup>(2)</sup>. Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, in order to dig his Nāṣiriyya pond, destroyed a church in the al-Zuhri<sup>(3)</sup> quarter (Nāṣiriyya; al-Marīs; Ḥārat al-Saqqāyīn), leading to catastrophic Muslim-Christian relations which resulted in the riots of 1321. Both these episodes illustrate pressure on certain Christian quarters outside the urban core. Pressures within the main part of the city must have been much stronger.

The religious riots of 1321 following the destruction of the church of al-Zuhri led to demolition of most of the churches of Egypt, and a mass conversion of Copts to Islam. Maqrizī<sup>(4)</sup> reports destruction of churches in the following areas : al-Zuhri, al-Saba' Saqqāyāt and Qanāṭir al-Sibā', which correspond respectively to the northern suburbs of al-Fuṣṭāṭ (Ḥamra Dunyā, Ḥamra Wustā, and Ḥamra Quṣwā areas); Fahhādīn (Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Ḡuwāniyya); Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Suflā; Ḥārat Zuwayla; Ḥazzānāt al-Bunūd (site of the great Fatimid palace near al-Azhar); Bunduqāniyyīn (Suwayqat al-Šāḥib, Ḡawdariyya), and also at the Citadel, a church in the Tartar quarter in which Christians were apparently living. At the time Maqrizī wrote (second quarter of the 15th century), only two Coptic Jacobite churches were left in al-Qāhira, at Ḥārat Zuwayla and Ḥārat al-Rūm. The Coptic Patriarch resided at the church of Ḥārat Zuwayla.

<sup>(1)</sup> Maqrizī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 309.

<sup>(2)</sup> Mubārak, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, III, p. 10.

<sup>(3)</sup> Maqrizī, *op. cit.*, p. 512.

<sup>(4)</sup> Maqrizī, *op. cit.*, p. 512, 517.

While the location of churches mentioned above indicates that Christians were dwelling in those neighborhoods <sup>(1)</sup>, destruction of the churches should not imply that the Christian communities immediately disappeared, even though it may be assumed that after these events more remote quarters were on the long run preferred. Interestingly, according to Maqrīzī's account, the churches of Babylon, remote and secluded, were on the whole less affected by these upheavals than those of al-Qāhira, and indeed, this area has kept its Coptic continuity until modern times.

As Islamic law does not allow, theoretically, the foundation of new churches, the churches that existed had to be maintained by any means even if their surrounding communities moved to other areas; old churches could more easily be restored than new ones founded. For example, the quarter of al-Maqs which had an important Coptic community, had no churches since their destruction by al-Ḥākim; the Coptic inhabitants must have worshipped in churches in other parts of the city.

Mamluk and Ottoman historic sources <sup>(2)</sup> show that from the 15th century onwards the western outskirts of the city attracted Christian inhabitants. The development of Christian quarters on the western fringes of al-Qāhira was the result of pressure from within the city, spreading into areas with less royal building activity. Villages on the outskirts of the capital that already had Christian populations, such as al-Ḥandaq and al-Maqs, Miniāt al-Sayraġ <sup>(3)</sup>, and al-Fuṣṭāṭ's northern suburbs of al-Ḥamra, by then the southern outskirts of al-Qāhira, must have absorbed parts of the urban Christian population.

The shores of the Ḥalīġ, and its western bank in particular, were not fully urbanized until the late Ottoman period. Under the Mamluks, the west bank of the Ḥalīġ had a « *plaisance* » character with its many orchards and gardens. The Ḥalīġ itself, filled in summer (beginning with the flood in July) by early Nile floods, was a recreation center for Cairo's population, with pleasure boats for hire and tents lining the shores. After withdrawal of the flood, its beds turned green.

The location of the Christians in the vicinity of the Ḥalīġ was probably associated with certain trades for which the Ḥalīġ was famous, particularly taverns. Christians were the brewers of liquor, which the *ṣurūṭ 'umariyya* allowed only on condition that it be private. On one occasion, liquor was confiscated by the authorities in certain areas

<sup>(1)</sup> Mubārak, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, VI, p. 73 ff. : list and history of Cairo's churches.

<sup>(2)</sup> The registers of the Maḥkama Ṣar'iyya, al-Zāhid and Bāb al-Ṣa'iyya for the period in

question, further *waqf* documents in the Coptic Patriarchate (not catalogued).

<sup>(3)</sup> Maqrīzī, *op. cit.*, p. 114, 130, 161.

of Cairo <sup>(1)</sup>, most of which correspond to the location of Christian quarters : Ḥārat al-Rūm, Ḥārat Zuwayla, Ḥārat al-Daylam (near Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Suflā). Maqrīzī also mentions in his account of this incident that the *kuttāb* (scribes) made wine at Bāb al-Lūq, and we know that the profession of *kātib* was virtually confined to Copts. Ibn Iyās <sup>(2)</sup> reports that the village of Šubrā near Cairo had tax revenues deriving mainly from the consumption of wine made from grapes grown there by Copts. A 15th century book on pleasures of liquor drinking enumerates the quarters in Cairo where taverns were to be found <sup>(3)</sup>. Most of these quarters were outside the urban core, but those within the city were also in Christian quarters :

Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Ġuwāniyya, al-Ġawdariyya (near Bunduqāniyyīn and Suwayqat al-Šāhib), al-Bāṭiliyya (near Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Suflā), Ḥārat al-Sūdān (outside Bāb Zuwayla), Ḥārat 'Akkā (Ḥusayniyya), al-Ġazīra (on the Nile), al-Marīs (Nāširiyya), Šubrā, Miniāt al-Sayraġ, Suwayqat Šafiyya (al-Maqs), Qanṭarat al-Faḥr (on the Nāširī canal), Kawm Dīnār (Fusṭāṭ), Ḥārat al-Šāšā and also Birkat al-Yaqṭīn, which I cannot locate.

In his list of houses where the *masālīma* (i.e. Copts recently converted to Islam) of the 15th century lived, Donald Richards <sup>(4)</sup> queried whether these quarters were the traditional Christian [Coptic] quarters, listing the following : Birkat al-Raṭli (north of Bāb al-Ša'iriyya near the Ḥaliġ, Ḥārat Zuwayla (Suwayqat al-Šāhib), Fum al-Ḥawr (at al-Maqs), Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Ġuwāniyya, Qanṭarat Aqsunqur (southern part of the Ḥaliġ), and al-Maqs. In fact, this list shows that the *masālīma*, who as Richards shows were not fully integrated into Muslim society, continued to live in their original quarters and did not move to Muslim sectors of the city.

#### THE OTTOMAN PERIOD (1517-1798)

Unlike the Mamluks, the Ottoman rulers of Egypt made little disturbance in the status of the *ḍimmi*(s). The Christian quarters evolved along with the city without abrupt changes. Cairo under the Ottomans became more dense, rather than further extended; its primary extension was urbanization of the western quarters (west of the Ḥaliġ) which

<sup>(1)</sup> Maqrīzī, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, ed. Mostafa, M., Cairo-Wiesbaden 1975, I (1), p. 565.

<sup>(3)</sup> al-Nawāġi, Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan, *Kitāb ḥilbat al-kumayt fī 'l-adab wa'l-nawādir al-muta'alliqa bi'l-ḥamriyyāt* (824 H),

Cairo 1299 H, p. 48.

<sup>(4)</sup> Richards, D., « The Coptic bureaucracy under the Mamluks », in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, printed in DDR 1969, p. 373-381, s. Appendix p. 379.

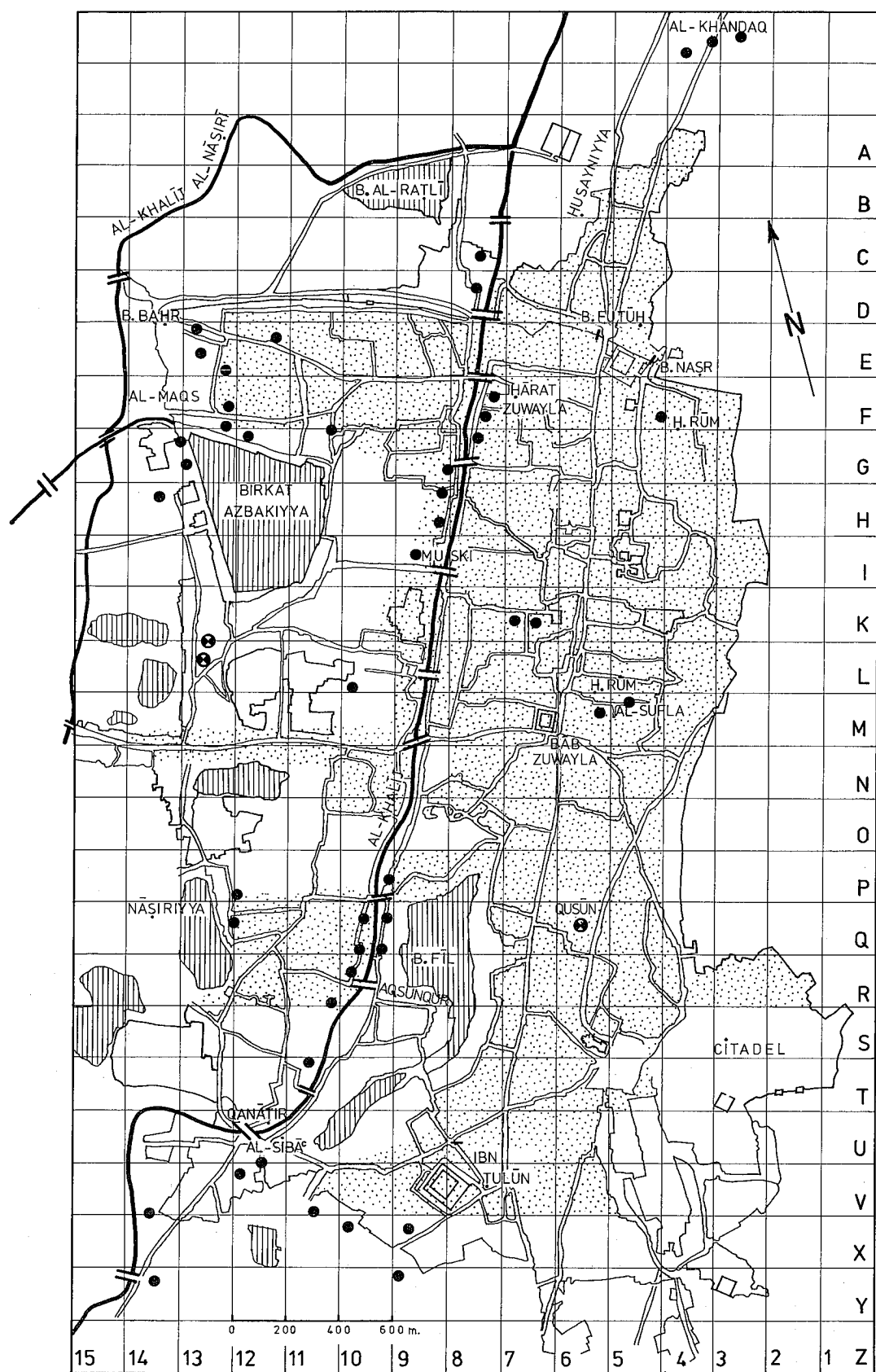


Fig. 2. — Location of Christian Quarters at al-Qāhira. (Black-and-white dots indicate quarters mentioned only in the Ottoman period), (based on A. Raymond).

the Mamluks had left in a semi-urban state. Legal documents of the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods (*waqf* deeds and court registers) <sup>(1)</sup> refer to Copts dwelling in the neighborhoods of Bāb al-Ša'iriyya and Bāb al-Baḥr; the area south of them or al-Maqs, which covers approximately the space between the Ḥaliḡ to the east, Šalāḥ al-Dīn's wall to the north and the Azbakiyya pond to the south. Al-Darb al-Wāsi', al-Darb al-Ibrāhīmī, and Darb al-Qabīla at al-Maqs are especially often mentioned in connection with Copts.

Several documents also refer to Coptic houses along the Ḥaliḡ shores near Qanṭarat al-Mūsķī, Qanṭarat Aqsunqur, and at Bayn al-Sūrayn, the street along the Ḥaliḡ on the western border of al-Qāhira, Ḥārat Zuwayla, and also Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Suflā. The quarter near the mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn (al-Kabš) is often quoted in legal Coptic documents, and corresponds to the northern al-Fuṣṭāṭ suburb of al-Ḥamra al-Quṣwā. Miṣr al-'Atīqa (Babylon), with its numerous old churches, remained a Coptic quarter, though its population must have decreased with Fuṣṭāṭ's lessening commercial importance.

At the end of the Ottoman period, al-Maqs included the strongest Coptic community of al-Qāhira.

#### *The French Quarter (Ḥārat al-Faraṅḡ)*

Under the Mamluks, European merchants were not allowed to dwell permanently in Cairo, but were restricted to living in Alexandria. In the 16th century, the Ottomans allowed European merchants and their consuls to settle in Cairo <sup>(2)</sup>. This dispensation contributed to the establishment of the French quarter west of Qanṭarat al-Mūsķī in the 16th century. Located on the western Ḥaliḡ shore, north of Qanṭarat al-Mūsķī, this French quarter was apparently chosen because it was not at the time densely inhabited by Muslims (confirmed by the absence of important Muslim religious foundations in the area), and possibly also because non-Muslims already dwelt there. Fabri, reporting upon al-Qāhira during the reign of Sultan Qāyṭbāy, says that the Venetian consul had a Cairo residence where he stayed during his visits to the capital <sup>(3)</sup>. Several other Europeans are reported to have lived in Cairo in the late Mamluk period, though it is not clear exactly where they stayed. A late Mamluk document <sup>(4)</sup> refers to a Ḥārat

<sup>(1)</sup> See n. 1, p. 125.

<sup>(2)</sup> Clément, R., *Les Français d'Égypte aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Cairo (IFAO) 1960, p. 2 ff.

<sup>(3)</sup> Fabri, F. (1483), *Le voyage en Égypte*, Cairo (IFAO) 1975, II, p. 427; III, p. 907.

<sup>(4)</sup> Waqf of Azbak min Ṭuṭuḡ, d. 890/1485-6, Dār al-waṭā'iq al-qawmiyya (Citadel : ḡuḡḡaḡ al-mulūk wa'l-umarā') Nr 198, also documents of the Coptic Patriarchate (Mūsķī register, uncatalogued) refer to this place.

al-Turğumān, near Qanṭarat al-Mūsķi, implying that foreigners visiting Cairo stayed in this *hāra*, or quarter, under the supervision of a *turğumān*, an official in charge of foreign merchants.

During the 16th century, the French and Venetian consuls lived at Ḥārat al-Faraṅğ. Legal documents of the Ottoman period regularly mention Coptic dwellings in the neighborhood of Ḥārat al-Faraṅğ and in the 18th century, Armenians and Christian Syrians attached to the service of European merchants also resided there <sup>(1)</sup>.

*Christian Quarters According to the « Description de l’Egypte »*

On the map of Cairo made by the French Expedition scholars at the end of the 18th century <sup>(2)</sup>, the first modern map of Cairo, the following areas are indicated to have been inhabited by Christians :

- al-Maqs/Azbakiyya (F/12-13, 257)
- Raḥabat al-Tibn southwest of Azbakiyya pond (K/13)
- Ḥārat al-Faraṅğ (G/8-9, 42; J-K/9, 21)
- Ḥārat Zuwayla, with the two principal Coptic churches (G/8, 257)
- Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Ġuwāniyya (F/4-127)
- Ḥārat al-Rūm, residence of the Greek Melkite Patriarch (M/5-6, 204-206)
- Ḥamzāwī, with Greek dwellings <sup>(3)</sup> (K/7)
- Qūṣūn (Q/6, 25)
- Nāṣiriyya (P-Q/12, 210) <sup>(3)</sup>
- the Ḥaliğ shore (Q/10, 48)
- the Ṭulūn-Kabš area (X/9, 158)
- Ġayṭ al-‘Idda (L/10, 66).

This list does not include Miṣr al-Qadīma (Babylon).

The quarter K/7, which included Ḥān al-Ḥamzāwī, the center of European trade, had many Christian Syrian and Egyptian Copt inhabitants <sup>(4)</sup>. This area corresponds to the location of the Bunduqāniyyīn quarter to which Maqrīzī refers in the context of the

<sup>(1)</sup> Raymond, *op. cit.*, p. 495, 501; Ibn al-Muqaffa, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Description de l’Egypte*, map I, pl. 26; see Jomard, M., « Description de la ville et de la citadelle du Kaire », *Etat Moderne XVIII*, (2. p.)

p. 114-509 with legend of the Cairo map, p. 141-281, also p. 327.

<sup>(3)</sup> Mubārak, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, III, p. 34; Raymond, *Artisans*, p. 495, Jomard, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>(4)</sup> Mubārak, *op. cit.*, III, p. 92.

demolition of a church in 1321. Greeks continued to dwell in Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Ġuwāniyya (F/4). The Raḥabat al-Tibn quarter can be seen as an extension of al-Maqs, while the Coptic quarter at Qūṣūn was most likely an extension of the quarter further west on the Ḥaliġ. Six of the ten quarters mentioned above were situated on the western bank of the Ḥaliġ.

The long list of real estate properties in different areas of Cairo owned by Mu'allim Ibrāhīm al-Ġawharī, a Copt notable of the late 18th century, is interesting for its indication of the areas where Copts dwelt at the time<sup>(1)</sup>. Though al-Maqs (i.e. Azbakiyya) is by far the quarter most often mentioned, including the Bāb al-Baḥr and Bāb al-Ša'iriyya areas in the northwestern and northeastern extremities of al-Maqs, Ibrāhīm al-Ġawharī also had properties in the French quarter, at Ḥārat Zuwayla, near the mosque of Ibn Ṭulūn, Ḥārat al-Saqqāyīn (Nāširiyya), Ḥārat al-Rūm, and Miṣr al-Qadima (Babylon).

The quarters listed here correspond almost entirely to the locations mentioned earlier in the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods.

In summary, the geographic locations of non-Muslim quarters in Cairo show the following development. At al-Fuṣṭāṭ after the Arab conquest, Muslims had their own city, surrounded by a Christian population. Copts, then on the periphery, were later allowed to move into more central areas of the capital where they were needed to fill the administrative functions of the Egyptian province. While the capital grew, it fused with pre-Islamic Christian agglomerations, so that these became the Christian quarters of al-Fuṣṭāṭ simply through continuity, rather than by restriction to these areas. Religious tolerance characterized the rule of the Šī'a Fatimid dynasty, whose caliphs permitted many Christians and Jews within their city. No systematic religious segregation was practiced at al-Fuṣṭāṭ. At al-Qāhira, however, the various ethnic and religious groups of the Fatimid army occupied distinctive quarters, as in other medieval and Islamic cities. Nonetheless, Fatimid al-Qāhira included churches, and non-Muslims dwelt in several quarters.

During the 11th century, the Coptic Patriarch left Alexandria for the first time and settled between al-Fuṣṭāṭ and al-Qāhira. With Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his Ayyubid successors, al-Fuṣṭāṭ fell into decay while al-Qāhira flourished. Al-Maqs village, with a Christian population, was incorporated into the greater al-Qāhira complex and gradually became the capital's primary Coptic quarter. Under the Mamluks, al-Qāhira's Christian

<sup>(1)</sup> Iskārūs, T., *Nawābiġ al-aqbāṭ wa-mašāhiruhum fī 'l-qarn al-tāsi' 'ašar*, (Part I), Cairo 1910, p. 286-313.

quarters were massively reduced, only two churches being left within the confines of the Fatimid city. As in the case of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, Christian agglomerations in the capital's environs tended to absorb the Christians of the city. Especially notable was the tendency of Christians to dwell along the shores of the Ḥalīḡ bordering the city to the west, which remained beyond the sphere of the Mamluk building boom.

Under the Ottomans, a European community settled on the Ḥalīḡ west bank between al-Maqs and the bridge of al-Mūskī. During this period and until the early 19th century, there is no mention of new churches being built in the capital. The Europeans were, however, entitled to their own churches, by agreement between the Ottomans and European powers.

Continuity played an important role in the location of non-Muslim quarters. Ḥārat Zuwayla, from al-Ḥākim's reign to modern times, included the Jewish quarter as well as an important Coptic quarter. Ḥārat al-Rūm al-Suflā was a Greek quarter since the city's foundation and was also inhabited by Christians up to modern times. Another case of continuity is the presence of Coptic quarters in the neighborhood of the Ibn Ṭūlūn mosque and the fortress of Babylon, quarters that date to pre-Islamic times. Maqrīzī (15th century) and 'Alī Mubārak (19th century) mention areas around Qanṭarat Aqsunqur with important Coptic quarters. Al-Maqs, called Tandunias or Umm Dunayn in pre-Islamic times, and later Azbakiyya, was mentioned as having a Coptic quarter throughout the medieval period. In the 19th century it acquired a patriarch's cathedral. Al-Ḥandaq, an ancient episcopal village, was enlarged under the Fatimids with churches and monasteries, and also included a Christian cemetery. Today, it is the home of the Coptic patriarchal cathedral.

Another interesting point is that the non-Muslim communities tended to dwell together despite their religious rivalries, such as Greeks with Copts, the Jewish-Coptic neighborhoods at Babylon and Ḥārat Zuwayla, and the mixed quarters of Copts, Syrians and Armenians.

While demographic analysis of the various Christian quarters is beyond the scope of this outline, one notes that the number of quarters mentioned as having Christian communities were quite numerous, some of them covering large areas such as al-Maqs, the Ibn Ṭūlūn and Ḥamra quarters, the Ḥalīḡ shores, etc. As the total population of Copts after the Bahri Mamluks could not have greatly exceeded their present demographic proportion of about ten percent, we may conclude that there was no strict segregation in medieval al-Qāhira. Rather, there were areas such as the main arteries of the capital and in the vicinity of Muslim cemeteries with their concentrations of religious monuments where Christians tended not to live; elsewhere legal documents



often reveal Christians living in close proximity to Muslims. Professionally, there was very little segregation : Copts were jewellers at the Şāğa or owners of shops in the city, while they dwelt elsewhere. Those in administrative positions of course worked amongst the ruling class <sup>(1)</sup>. Jomard, in the *Description de l’Egypte*, stresses that religious segregation in Cairo was not as strict as Europeans imagined. Christians lived in unfortified quarters and moved and worked freely in various parts of the city.

<sup>(1)</sup> Raymond, *op. cit.*, p. 524.