



Ibn Tulun: His Lost City and Great Mosque

By Tarek Swelim

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Ahmad ibn Tulun (835-84), the son of a Turkic slave in the Abbasid court of Baghdad, became the founder of the first independent state in Egypt since antiquity, and builder of Egypt's short-lived third capital of the Islamic era, al-Qata'i and its great congregational mosque. After recounting the story of Ibn Tulun and his successors, architectural historian Tarek Swelim presents a topographic survey of al-Qata'i, a city lost since its complete destruction in 905. He then provides a detailed architectural analysis of the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, which was spared the destruction and is now the oldest surviving mosque in Egypt and Africa, from the time of its completion until today. Rare archival illustrations and early photographs document the changing appearance and uses of the mosque in modern times, while extraordinary 3D computer renderings take us back in time to recreate its architectural development through its early centuries. Plans, drawings, and maps complement the history, while striking modern color photographs showcase the elegant simplicity of the building's architecture and decoration.

This definitive and generously illustrated book will appeal to scholars and students of Islamic art history, as well as to anyone interested in or inspired by the beauty of early mosque architecture.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The Mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo (876-79) is not only the most complete Abbasid-style mosque to survive anywhere but also one of the very few mosques Westerners can still visit. Mentioned in every survey of Islamic architecture, the mosque has never received due treatment . . . generously illustrated with 19th-century and newly commissioned photographs, 3-D reconstructions, and evocative drawings. In the first of the book's two parts, the author puts the mosque in its historical and urban contexts; in the second part he meticulously describes the building and its parts, indicating how it changed over time as it was used not only for worship but also to house pilgrims and the poor. Commendably--and unusually--the author takes the story right up to the present, showing how the "authentic" mosque that tourists see today is really the product of decades of repeated renovations and restorations."--*Choice*

About the Author

Tarek Swelim obtained his Ph.D. in Islamic art and architecture from Harvard in 1994. He leads and lectures to American tour groups from prestigious institutions throughout Egypt, the Middle East, and North Africa, and he is the author or co-author of a number of publications on Cairo's Islamic and Roman architecture. He has taught at the American University in Cairo and Ain Shams University and is currently associate professor of Islamic art and architecture at the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies of the Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha, Qatar.

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