Shiite Connotations on Islamic Architecture in Cairo in the Fatimid Era
(358-567 A.H/ 969-1171 A.D)
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Abstract
The city of Cairo is serving as the capital of Egypt since it was built by the Fatimids in 358 A.H/969 A.D. Fatimids were mainly “Isma’ili Shi’a” who attributed themselves as descendants of “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”; the cousin of the prophet “Mohamed” (PBUH) and the husband of his daughter “Fatima AL-Zahra”. Therefore, they were named after her as the “Fatimids”.
The Fatimids ruled Egypt for over 208 years (358-567 A.H/ 969-1171 A.D), in which they constructed a lot of buildings in the city. Most of these Buildings are still well-preserved till now with its magnificent decorations that were completely influenced by the Shiite concepts as a part of their plan to promote for Shiism among Egyptians secretly and publicly. Some of these elements are simply interpreted while the others aren’t as the Fatimids believed in “Azzahir” and “Al-Batin” which indicate that every obvious meaning has a hidden meaning, an idea that was widely employed by the Fatimids and allowed them to spread their thoughts among all the Egyptian society during their rule of Egypt.
The paper illustrates the hidden meanings of the Fatimid decorations preserved within the Islamic architecture of Cairo have been highlighted according to the Shiites’ thoughts during the Fatimid Period. The study also includes the additions of the Fatimids to the previous Islamic buildings in Cairo, e.g. (The mosque of Ahmed Ibn Tulun).

Key Words: Shiite Connotations, Fatimids, Fatimid architecture, Azzahir and Al-Batin, Kufic Calligraphy, Fatimid Ornaments.

The Fatimid policy to spread Shiism in Egypt
Once the Fatimids declared the establishment of their State in Efriqyiah (Nowadays in Tunisia) in (297 A.H/909 A.D), they insisted on invading Egypt to control both religious and political powers (Maged, 1994). Ruling Egypt means also controlling the Islamic holy lands (Mecca and Medina), which were under the domination of the Egyptian ruler (Hassan, 1932). Besides, the strategic location of Egypt at the center of the Fatimid empire would facilitate their mission in controlling all the far cities at East and West under their rule, unlike the far west Fatimid capital Al-Mahdyiah (Nowadays in Tunisia) (Gamal-eddin, 1991). It would serve also as a center for sending military campaigns against the Abbasid capital Baghdad which they defeated already in (449 A.H/1058 A.D) (Qutbuddin, 2011). However, after many unsuccessful trials, Fatimids realized that the military power is not the best
choice to conquer Egypt. So, they first sent their agitators (lay readers) to spread Shiism in Egypt and incite the Egyptians them to rebel on the Abbasid Caliphate ((Lev, 1988). It was a successful plan, because they founded a big Shiite community in Egypt, which played a leading role in the Fatimid crucial victory over the Abbasid army in Egypt in (358 A.H/969 A.D), and supporting the Fatimids in Egypt for over two following Centuries. (Taylor, 1992)

The commander of the Fatimid army- “Jawhar Al-Sikilli”- didn’t force the Egyptians to convert to Shiism and he built a new royal walled city in Egypt for Shia that was called later “Al-Qahira” (Tamer, 1982). Jawhar also built a private mosque for the Shiite rituals in Cairo, that later was called “Al-3zhar” and turned into a school for teaching Shiite Jurisprudence (Rabbat, 1996). He was pretending of being tolerant, while he was planning to attract new Egyptian followers to Shiism. So that, he adopted a wise policy by which he succeeded in surrounding the Egyptian community by the Shiite thoughts everywhere gradually (Maged, 1994). First, he ordered to mention the names of “Ahlulbait” on the minbar during the Friday sermon and to change all flags and clothes into the white color as it was the symbolic color of Fatimids (Maged, 1985, Vol. 2). Then, on (Jumada I 359 A.H/March 970 A.D) merely after eight months of the Fatimid rule to Egypt, Gawhar ordered to use the Shiite “Azan” (the Muslim call to ritual prayer) for the first time in Ibn Tulun mosque (Ibn Khaldun, n.d). The Fatimid Caliphs followed a new policy to confirm their right in Imamate by attributing themselves to “Ahlulbait” as grandsons of “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” (Maher, 1962). They built and restored the mausoleums of “Ahlulbait” in Egypt, especially during the period lasted from the reign of “Al-Mustansir” till the end of the Fatimid state (427-567 A.H/1036-1171 A.D) (Creswell, 2004), such as the restorations of Caliph “Al-Mustansir” to the mausoleum “Al-Sayyeda Nafisa” in (482 A.H/1089 A.D)**6, the nice Compartment (Pl.1) added by Caliph “Al-hafiz” for “Al-Sayyeda Fatima Al-Zahra” to “Al-izhar” mosque (Hassanin, 2003), the mausoleum of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah”**, that was built during the reign of Caliph “Al-3mir”, and lately the mausoleum that was built by Caliph “Al-Fa’iz” to bury the head of El-Imam “Al-Hussein” in (549 A.H/1154 A.D) (Al-Hosseiny, 2007), claiming that “Ahlulbait” ordered them on a vision to do that (Williams, 1985), while in fact they were seeking for the sympathy of the Egyptians towards them.

Additionally, the Fatimid believed in the idea of “Azzahir” and “Al-Batin”- which indicates that each obvious meaning has a hiding meaning too- that

5 ** (the people of the prophet’s house)
6 ** (located in the square of Al-Sayyeda Nafisa) (map 1)
7 ** (the prophet’s daughter and Ali’s wife)
8 ** (located at El-Khalifa street) (map 1)
enabled them to spread Shiism among Egyptians indirectly by carving their buildings and artefacts with hidden Shiite connotations and symbols (Gabr, 1999), which its interpretation required searching deeply in the roots of the Shiite doctrine thoughts, taking into account the successive religious and political events effected on Shia throughout their history, such as the martyrdom of “El-Imam Al-hussein”. So that, this study illustrates the hidden meanings of the Shiite Connotations on Cairo Islamic architecture as following:

**Written Connotations**

**Mohamed & Ali**

The names of the prophet “Mohamed” (PBUH) and his cousin “Ali”, have commonly inscribed together on most of the Fatimid architecture in Cairo, either to ensure that “Ali” deserves to be the first Caliph after the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) (Al-Qalla, 2013), or to highlight the importance of “Ali” as the heart of Shiism, which Fatimids thought that it is a part of the prophet’s message (Al-Hosseiny, 2007). Gabr (1999, 12) suggested that, “it may express the Shiite beliefs in the idea of Azzahir and Al-Batin”, that refers to the prophet (PBUH) as Azzahir (The Obvious) and refers to “Ali” as Al-Batin (The Hidden). While, Sayed (2007, 620) stated that “attaching the name of “Ali” to the prophet’s name, has a close relation to one of the Shiite thoughts that “Mohamed” (PBUH) is the prophet of “Allah”, while his Cousin “Ali” is the Walli (guardian) of Allah”.

The names of “Mohamed & Ali” have been carved on many mosques in Cairo. They were repeated at five different places on the main Façade of “Al-3qmar” mosque**, on the medallion over the main entrance of the mosque (Pl.2), on the northern (right) and Southern (left) niches (Pl.3) flanking the main entrance of the mosque and on the northern (right) side corner (Pl.4) of the main Façade (Williams, 1983), and inside two circles on the window (Pl.5) carved on both sides of Al-3qmar main Façade (Gabr, 1999). The medallion (Pl.6) located over the main mihrab in “Al-Hakim” mosque**, is inscribed with the names of “Mohamed & Ali”. As well as, the hexagonal star (fig.1) in the middle of the dome located over the main mihrab in “Al-Hakim” mosque consists of the names “Mohamed & Ali”. (Ziada, 2004)

Additionally, the names of “Mohamed & Ali” have been carved together on many Islamic mausoleums in Cairo. They were inscribed in the middle of the main dome located over the main mihrab in “Al-Giushy” mausoleum** (Abdelwahab, 1961) and on the top central part of the main mihrab (Pl.7) in

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9 ** (located in “Al-Moaez” street) (Map 2)
10 ** (located to the north of “Al-Moaez” street) (Map 2)
11 **( located on the top of Al-Moqattam hills) (map 3)
“Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum (Creswell, 2004). They are also inscribed twice in the mausoleum of “Al-Haswati”**, on the top central part of the main mihrab and on the capitals of the two elegant columns flanking it (fig.2) (Al-Hosseiny, 2007). While, in “Um Kalthum” mausoleum**, the names of “Mohamed & Ali” are inscribed in exchange inside Eight circles (Pl.8) in the middle of the main mihrab (Hassanin, 2003). Williams (1983, 60) also suggested that the decoration looking like a hexagonal star (Pl.9) on the main mihrab of “Al-Shabeih” mausoleum**, may had been inscribed with the names of “Mohamed & Ali” like that on the main mihrab in the mausoleum of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” (Pl.7).

Ali Walli Allah (Guardian)

According to the Shiite thoughts, the word “Walli” (Guardian) refers to the one who know all the religious laws (Al-Bastawisy, 2005). Shia believed that El-Imam “Ali” was the first one to know these laws from the prophet (PBUH) and he is considered its guardian (Al-Qalla, 2013). Therefore, believing that “Mohamed” (PBUH) is the prophet of Allah and “Ali” is the Guardian (Walli) of Allah –which is called “the guardianship testimony”- is the first pillar of the Shiite doctrine seven pillars. (Maged, 1985, Vol.1)

Shia believed that the guardianship testimony is inscribed on the Paradise gates (Al-Hosseiny, 2007). Thus, it has been inscribed on many of the Fatimid buildings and artefact- in two different forms, either as “Ali Walli Allah” (Ali is the Guardian of Allah)-accompanying the two testimonies of Islam, or as “Walliuh” (his guardian) accompanying the names of the Fatimid Caliphs (Marzoq, 1942), considering that Fatimid Caliphs are grandsons of El-Imam “Ali” as Shia claimed. Therefore, the Shiite guardianship testimony– with its two forms- has been carved on many of the Fatimid architecture, especially in its construction texts; as in the construction texts (pl.10) carved on Cairo gates: “Al-Nasr, “Zeweila”, “Al-Fotooh” and “Al-Barqyiah” (Creswell, 2004). In addition, it has been carved on the Fatimid flat mihrab (Pl.11) of “Al-3fdal”- the Vizier of Caliph “Al-Mustansir”- in “Ibn Tulun” mosque and in the construction text (fig. 3) of El-Imam “Ja’far Al-Sadek” mosque located near to “Al-hussein” mosque. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

Maher (1971, 324) stated that the Shiite guardianship testimony was carved on a medallion at the northern (right) side of “Al-3qmar” mosque’s main Façade, and may has been erased by “Sunnis” that it inconsistent with their beliefs. While, Abouseif (1992) suggested that the medallion was erased by Caliph “Al-3mir” because it was containing a praising for his Vizier “Al-Bta’iHy”, who was planning to get rid of “Al-Amir” and usurp the Caliphate.

12 **(located in the cemetery of El-Imam “Al-Shafai”) (Map 4)
13 ** (located in the cemetery of El-Imam “Al-Shafai”) (Map 4)
14 ** (located in the cemetery of El-Imam “Al-Shafai”) (Map 4)
This is probably true, as if “Sunnis” erased it, why they left the rest of Shiite guardianship testimonies on the other Fatimid buildings?!

Afdal Al-Wassyein wa Wazir Khair Al-Morsalin

The titles “Afdal Al-Wassyein” (The best of curators), “khatam Al-3wsia” (The last of curators) and “Wazir Khair Al-Morsalin” (The vizier of the best messenger), were dedicated to El-Imam “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, the curator of the prophet (PBUH), according to the Shiite thoughts (Al-Hosseiny, 2007; Al-Qalla, 2013; Shahi, 2004). Shia based on the prophetic tradition: “O people, Allah is my Lord and I am the lord of the believers. I am worthier of believers than themselves. Of whomsoever I had been Master (Mawla), Ali here is to be his Master. O Allah, be a supporter of whoever supports him (Ali) and an enemy of whoever opposes him and diverts the Truth to Ali” (Gaber, 2008, 70). So that, once the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Moaez” had arrived to Egypt, he ordered to carve these titles on all Fatimid buildings and coins in Egypt (Hassan, 1932; Al-Pasha, 1989; Al-Bastawisy, 2005), as in the construction text carved on the main (Northern west) Façade (Pl.12) of “Al-Salih Tala’a” mosque, located outside “Zeweila” gate (Maher, 1971, Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

Al-Molk Lillah (The dominion is for Allah)

It is believed that the ring of El-Imam “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” was carved with “Al-Molk Lillah” (The dominion for Allah). (Othman, 2013; Marzoq, 1942) So, it was carved on many of the Fatimid architecture in Cairo, as the side frames of the pointed arches (Pl.13) of the colonnade on the main old mihrab in Al-Azhar mosque (Creswell, 2004), an original stucco window (fig. 4) to the east (right) of the main mihrab in “AL-Hakim” mosque and on twenty five wooden pieces were explored by the Egyptian archaeologist “Hassan Abdelwahab” fixed in the old minbar of “Al-3qmar” mosque. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

Verses of the holy Quran

Fatimids inscribed many verses of the holy Quran on their buildings; not only as a religious decorative texts, but also as indirect Shiite connotations (Ramadan, 2003). They have different interpretations of these verses according to their own beliefs (Al-Mhallawy, 2000). For example, Shia thought that verses which contain the term “Ahlulbait”, refer to (the prophet Mohamed (PBUH), his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Al Hassan and Al Hussein sons of Ali & Fatima) who are impeccable (Al-Maqrizi, 1972; Williams, 1983), as it was mentioned in the holy verse: “And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as (was) the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity
The term “Ahlulbait” is mentioned also in the verse “They said, Are you amazed at the decree of Allah?! May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you Ahlulbait Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honorable” (Hud: 73, Holy Quran), which has been inscribed in the central text carved on the western (left) Minaret of “Al-Hakim” mosque (Bloom, 1983), and at the end of the construction text carved on the main Façade (northern west) of “Al-Salih Tala’ia” mosque (Pl.15) (Hassanin, 2003). Also, it has been carved on the entrance (Pl.16) of “Al-Sayyeda Sokaina” mausoleum, located in Al-Khalifa Street. (Shahi, 2004)

Also, verses of the holy Quran that contain the term “Aulilqorba” (Kinship), have private Shiite interpretations, as Shia thought that it refers to “Ahlulbait” “The prophet Mohamed (PBUH), Fatima, Ali, Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein” (Al-Hosseiny, 1986). This term is mentioned in the holy verse: “It is that of which Allah gives good tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say, [O Muhammad]: “I do not ask you for this message any payment [but] only good will through kinship”. And whoever commits a good deed-We will increase for him good therein. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Appreciative” (Ash-Shura’: 23, Holy Quran). It is believed also that El-Imam “Ali”- the son of El-Imam “Al-hussein”- repeated this verse when he was captured during the battle of “Karbala”, to be treated as one of the Prophets’ relatives (Al-Maqrizi, 1972). However, Youssef (2003) and Aboudeia (2009) stated that both Omayyad and Abbasid Caliphs inscribed this holy verse on their coins to ensure their kinship to the prophet (PBUH). Then, Fatimids inscribed it on their buildings and artefacts to confirm that they are descendants of El-Imam “Ali”. It was inscribed on one of the two panels missing now- were fixed on the bottom of the old pencil shaped minaret, in “Al-Hussein” mausoleum. (Maher, 1971)

Verses of the holy Quran that contain the terms “Imams” or “Khulafa” (Caliphs), have also private Shiite interpretation, because Shia used it to prove the legitimacy of their Imamate (Gabr, 1999) as they believed that it refers to their Caliphs and Imamate (Caliphate) which is the gift of Allah to them for withstanding misery till the announcement of their state in (297 A.H/909 A.D) (Al-Hosseiny, 2007). The term “Imams” is mentioned in the holy verse: “And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them Imams (leaders) and make them inheritors” (Al-Qasas: 5, Holy Quran), that has been inscribed on a marble panel fixed on the back side of the main entrance (Pl.17) of “Al-Hakim” Mosque (Bloom, 1983;
The term “Imams” is mentioned also in the holy verse: “And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And we inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakat; and they were worshippers of us” (Al-Anbya: 73, Holy Quran), that was mentioned in the construction text carved on the main (northern west) Façade (Pl.18) of “Al-Salih Tala’ia” mosque (Hassanin, 2003). While, the term “Khulafa’” (Successors) is mentioned in the holy verse: “It is He who has made you successors upon the earth. And whoever disbelieves - upon him will be [the consequence of] his disbelief. And the disbelief of the disbelievers does not increase them in the sight of their Lord except in hatred; and the disbelief of the disbelievers does not increase them except in loss” (Fatir: 39, Holy Quran) which has been carved on the top of the main mihrab (Pl.19) of “Al-Giushy” mausoleum. (Creswell, 2004)
Shia thought that believing in the guardianship (Wilayah) of El-Imam “Ali” is the “most trustworthy handhold” (Al-Moaez-Idinellah, 2006; Al-Hosseiny, 1986), mentioned in the holy verse: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing” (Al-Baqarah: 256, Holy Quran). Therefore, this verse has been carved on the interior walls (Pl.20) in the mausoleum of “Al-Sayyeda Atika”. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)
Shia believed that “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” was the only one who gave his ring as Zakat (Alms), while he was praying (Annisabory, 1996; Baqir, 2007; Al-Hosseiny, 1986). Therefore, Fatimids inscribed the holy verse: “Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed - those who establish prayer and give zakat, and they bow [in worship]” (Al-Ma’ida: 55, Holy Quran), on their building in an attempt to proof that “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” is “Walli” (The guardian) of Allah and deserves to be the first El-Imam (Caliph) after the prophet (PBUH). This holy verse has been carved in the outer frame of a medallion on the northern (right) Minaret (fig. 5) of “Al-Hakim” mosque (Bloom, 1983), and on the western (left) outer mihrab (Pl.21) flanking the main entrance of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)
Shia also described their Imams as the light of Allah upon the earth (Williams, 1983; Hamada, 1985; Al-Hosseiny, 1986; Maged, 1994) that was transmitted to them through their first El-Imam “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, who was entitled “The Fatimid light” and “Part of the divine light” (Bloom, 1983; Asheiby, 1982). Therefore, the holy verse: “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil
would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things” (Al-Nur: 35, Holy Quran), has been inscribed in the Quranic text carved around the keel arches (Pl.22) in the open court of “Al-3qmar” mosque (Al-Hosseiny, 2007), and around the four windows in the northern (right) minaret of “Al-Hakim” mosque. (Bloom, 1983)

Botanical Connotations
The Tree of Life
According to the Shiite thoughts, the tree represents the prophet Mohamed (PBUH), its trunk represents “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, its branch represents- the prophet’s daughter and Ali’s wife- “Fatima Azzahra”, its fruits represent “Al-Hassan, Al-Hussein and the successive Imams, while, its leaves represent Shia (Al-Moaez-Idinellah, 2006; Al-Hosseiny, 1986; Asheiby, 1982). Also, in one of the formal letter to the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Hakim”, “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” was described as the root of the tree (means the tree of Imams) (Hamada, 1985). Persians thought that the tree of life has a magical power and called “Homa” (Marzoq, 1975; Hassan, 2014). While, Fatimid believed that it explains the origin of their Imams (Al-Pasha, 1966), it is always depicted as a palm tree flanked by two men -who may represent “Al-ḥassan and “Al-ḥussein”- throwing pollen on it to enhance the quality of its fruits that may refer to Shia Imams. The tree of life is found depicted on the exterior space between two arches (fig. 6) in the open court of “Al-Azhar” mosque. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

The Basil Flowers
Williams (1983) recommended that two flowers -looking like “Basil” flowers- in the vase (Pl.23), which is carved on both sides of the main Façade of “Al-3qmar” mosque, may represent Ali’s sons; “Al-ḥassan” and “Al-ḥussein”, based on the prophetic tradition: “Al-ḥassan and Al-ḥussein are my two worldly life’s basil flowers” (Shahi, 2004, 67). While, Abouseif (1992) believed that the two flowers represent the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Amir” and his vizier “Al-Bta’iHy” to show the good relations between them at the beginnings of “Al-Amir’s” rule.

Geometrical Connotations
Stars
Stars have private Shiite connotations, as Shia believed that their Imams (Caliphs) are like stars, guiding people in the darkness (Williams, 1983; Asheiby, 1982), based on the prophetic tradition: “my friends are like stars, any one of them you follow you will be guided” (Gabr, 1999, 12; Al-Gabalawy, 2009, 116). As well as, El-Imam “Al-ḥussein” described himself as a star between two moons– referring to his father Ali and his mother
Fatima during “Karbala’” battle (Williams, 1983). So that, stars have been carved on many squares of 65 squares with different patterns decorating the arch (Pl.24) of “Al-Fotooh” gate (Creswell, 2004), and the middle of the main central mihrab in “Um Kalthum” mausoleum, is decorated with eight stars (Pl.8) contain the names of “Mohamed & Ali” in exchange. (Williams, 1985)

The Hexagonal star
The hexagonal star is an old decoration, used as a geometrical pattern through many ages such as the pharaonic, Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic arts, and then Jews called it “David star” and adopted it as a Jewish symbol since (1948 A.D) (Aboudeia, 2013). While, during the Fatimid period, it was used both as a geometrical pattern and as a Shiite connotation refers to the idea of “Azzahir” (the obvious meaning) and “Al-Batin” (the hidden meaning) (Al-Gabalawy, 2009), it consists of two triangles; one is directed upside towards the sky represents “Azzahir” (The obvious) referring to the Prophet “Mohamed” (PBUH) and one directed downside towards the earth represents “Al-Batin” (The hidden) referring to “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” (Yassin, 2006). So that, it has been carved on many of the Fatimid buildings in Cairo, such as the middle of the dome over the main mihrab in “Al-Gioushy” mausoleum, the same as in the middle of the main dome over the main mihrab at “Al-hakim” mosque (fig. 1) and the middle of the dome added by Caliph “Al-hafiz” (Pl.25) in the open court of “Al-3zhar” mosque (Creswell, 2004), also it has been carved on the middle of the window (Pl.5) carved on both sides of “Al-3qmar” mosque’s main Façade (Williams, 1983). In addition, it has been carved on the main mihrab (Pl.7), the two niches (Pl.26) flanking the main entrance of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum (Ziada, 2004.; Al-Hosseiny, 2007), and the main mihrab (Pl.9) of “Al-Shabei” mausoleum. (Hassanin, 2003)

The hexagonal star has been carved also on the main old gate (Pl.27) of “Al-hussein” mausoleum which is famous for “the green door” and on the spaces between the pointed arches (Pl.28), in the South-eastern section of “Al-Salih Tala’i” mosque. (Creswell, 2004)

The Closed Door
The closed door decoration on the Fatimid architecture in Cairo may refer to “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, who was described as the door of “Ka’ba” (The sacred house at Mecca), while the “Ka’ba” itself represents the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) (Al-Ghazaly, 1964). Williams (1983) recommended that the closed door decoration was carved on both sides (Pl.29) of the main Façade of “Al-3qmar” mosque to represent the holy Quran, which hides many secrets and laws not known to anyone except “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”- according to the Shiite thought- then were inherited by his sons and grandsons. While, Abouseif
(1992) stated that it may represent “Al-Bta’iHy” – the vizier of Caliph “Al-Amir” – regarding that the opposite window (Pl.5) on both sides of the Façade represent Caliph “Al Amir” himself. But, most probably it refers to “Alì Ibn Abi Talib”, who was described as the door of the knowledge city in the prophetic tradition: “I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door” (Maged, 1994, 278-279; Al-Gabalawy, 2009, 119; Al-Hosseiny, 1986, 662). And in one of Friday sermons, the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Moaez” said: “O, Allah. May you bless your prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and may you bless his door and his guardian “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” (Al-Moaez-Idinellah, 2006, 72). The closed door decoration has been carved also on the modern wooden panels (Pl.30) - typically designed as the old main door- of “Al-Hakim” Mosque door. (Gabr, 1999)

The lamp (Mishkah)
According to the Shiite interpretation of the holy verse: “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth, the example of his light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to his light whom he wills, and Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is knowing of all things” (Al-Nur: 35, Holy Quran), Fatimids thought that the light of Allah upon the earth represents their Imams (Yassin, 2006; Abdel-Raziq, 2002), while, the lamp may represent the prophet “Mohamed” (PBUH), as he was entitled “The lamp of guidance” in the poetry of El-Imam “Al-Hussein” during the battle of “Karbala”” (Williams, 1983), or it represents the Fatimid Caliphs, who were described as lamps which guide people to the right way in darkness (Abouseif, 1992; Khesrw, 1993; Al-Shayial, 2002). But most probably, the lamp represents “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, whose Shia entitled him “The lamp of believers” and “the lamp of Ahlulbait” (Bloom, 1983; Gabr, 1999). Thus, the lamp has been carved on both windows (Pl.5) on the main Façade of “Al-3qmar” mosque, hanging from a pointed arch, and it is considered the first example of its kind on the Islamic architecture in Egypt. (Yassin, 2006)

The Medallion and rays
The first Fatimid Caliph “Ubaidullah Al-Mahdi”- the founder of the Fatimid state- was described as the sun which enlightened the earth (Emad-eddin, 1985), while, the Fatimid Caliphs were described as the rays of the sun everywhere (Al-Shayial, 2002; Al-Hosseiny, 2007). In addition, “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” was described as the sun that illuminates the way of believers (Al-Hosseiny, 1986). So that, the decoration of the rays emerging out of a medallion like sun- inscribed with the names of “Mohamed & Ali” on the
Fatimid buildings most probably refers to El-Imam “Ali” and the Fatimid Caliphs. However, Abouseif (1992), O’kane (2006) and Othman (2013) mentioned that the medallion looks like the Fatimid dinar, which is divided into an outer circular frame represents “Azzahir” (the obvious meaning) and an inner circular frame represents “Al-Batin” (the hidden meaning). Commonly, the decoration of the rays emerging out of a medallion-like sun-inscribed with the names of “Mohamed & Ali” is found carved on the top of mihrabs or niches, such as the main central mihrab in the mausoleum of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” (Pl.7), the main mihrab in the mausoleum of “Al-Haswati” (fig.2) and the niches on the main Façade of “Al-3qmar” mosque (Pl.2, 3). (Gabr, 1999; Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

The Shield and Swords
When the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Moaez” arrived to Egypt in (361 A.H/ 972 A.D) coming from North Africa, he brought with him many artefacts of which was an oval gilded shield; belong to “Hamza Ibn Abdel-Mottalib” the prophet’s uncle (Shalem, 1996). Additionally, Fatimids owned other precious gilded swords, such as the sword called “Zulfaqar” that was used as a Fatimid emblem during the processions of the Fatimid Caliph, it was belonging to the prophet (PBUH), then inherited by “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” and later by the Fatimid Caliphs (Maged, 1985, Vol.2). The swords of both Imams “Al-hussein” and “Ja’far Al-Sadiq” also were owned by the Fatimid Caliphs “Al-ḥakim” and “Al-Mustansir”. (Hassan, 1932; Sayed, 2007)

It is said that during the battle of “AuHod” somebody shouted saying: “There is no sword but Zulfaqar and there is no boy but Ali” (Asheiby, 1982, 524). So that, there is a decoration of a shield over a sword (Pl.31) carved twice in high relief on the gate of “Al-Nasr”, that may represent the shield of “hamza” over one of the swords of El-Imam “Al-ḥussein”, El-Imam “Ja’far Al-Sadiq” or the sword of “Zulfaqar”. While, Shalem (1996) recommended that, it may refer to the Fatimid state as the shield of Islam, as it is mentioned in the construction text of Cairo Fatimid gates that: “Islam is guarded by the honor of Allah the exalted and irresistible”. (Al-Maqrizi, 2004, 271-273, 283; Al-Hosseiny, 2007, 200, 207- 210)

Animal Connotations
The Ram
There are two ram-headed stones (Pl.32) on “Al-fotooḥ” gate, either to strengthen the spirit of victory of the Fatimid army (Abdelwahab, 1965) or, because Fatimids believed in occultism (Creswell, 2004). When they decided to build a private city for the Fatimid tribes in Egypt, they waited for a good astronomical event (Creswell, 2004) hence, the city was built during the appearance of “Mars” which was famous for “Al-Qahir” (the unconquerable)
and symbolized by the ram-headed (Gabr, 1999). The ram headed stones may represent the prophets’ companions, as it is said also that the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Qa’im” ordered his Soldiers to hang ram-heads on shops, symbolizing the prophet’s companions. (Al-Sallaby, 2006)

**Names Connotations**

**Al-3zhar** (The Most Brilliant)
Fatimids built their first mosque in Cairo and called it “Jami’ Al-Qahira” (The mosque of Cairo) (Marzoq, 1942), then it was called “Al-Jami’ Al-3zhar” (The most brilliant mosque), since the reign of the Fatimid Caliph “Al-3ziz” (Rabbat, 1996). It may have been named after “Fatima Azzahra” (Creswell, 2004; Abdel-Raziq, 2002; Al-Atroqji, 1979) or after “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, who was entitled “Al-3zhar” (The most brilliant) in one of the formal letters sent to the Fatimid Caliph “Al-3jakim”. (Hamada, 1985; Al-Qalla, 2013) While other scholars stated that, it was either named after the Fatimid palaces in Cairo which were called “Al-Qsoor 3zzahira” (The most brilliant Palaces) (Maged, 1994; Abdel-Raziq, 2002) or because of the white brilliant motifs, which were covering most of its walls, representing the main symbolic color of Fatimids. (Ziada, 2004)

**Al-3nwar** (The Most Illuminating)
The Fatimid Caliph “Al-3ziz” started to build his mosque, that was called “Jami’ Al-Khotba” (The mosque of sermon) in (379 A.H/ 989 A.D) (Maher, 1971), but it was finished by his son “Al-3jakim”, then it was called “Al-Jami’ Al-3nwar” (the most illuminating mosque) since (415 A.H/1024 A.D) (Bloom, 1983), either because Fatimids preferred the names which are related to the light, referring to their Imams according to their own interpretations (Rabbat, 1996), or because it was enlightened by too many lamps hanging from its ceiling. (Abdel-Raziq, 1999)

**Al-3qmar** (The Most Moonlit)
The Fatimid Caliph “Al-3mir” built his own mosque near the Fatimid Palaces and called it “Al-3qmar” (The Most Moonlit), maybe after “Fatima Azzahra”, whom her son El-Imam “Al-hussein” described her as Al-Qamar (The moon) during the battle of “Karbala” (Williams, 1983), or after “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” who was entitled “Al-3qmar”, (Gabr, 1999; Yassin, 2006). While, Ziada (2004) attributed the title of “Al-3qmar” to “Al-Bta’ihiy”, the vizier of the Fatimid Caliph “Al-Amir”.

**Numbers Connotations**
Fatimids had influenced by the Pythagoras theory, believing that numbers have private symbolic connotations (Abdel-Rahman, 2010). Consequently, among the numbers which have Shiite connotations are the following:
Five
Shia believed that, the term “Ahlulbait” refers only to “Ashab Al-kisa’” (the five of the garment), whom the prophet (PBUH) embraced them beneath his garment (Williams, 1983), these five are: “The prophet Mohamed (PBUH), his daughter Fatima, his cousin Ali, Al-hassan and Al-hussein” (Ghalib, 1965; Emad-eddin, 1985). Consequently, many scholars recommended that, the five niches (Pl.33) on the main entrance of “Al-3qmar” mosque (Williams, 1983), the five stalactites (Pl.4) on the northern (right) corner of “Al-3qmar” mosque’s main Façade and the five niches (fig.7) in the mausoleum of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah”, may refer to the five of the garment. (Williams, 1985; Gabr, 1999)

Seven
Seven is the most important number to Fatimids because they believed in the Imamate of “Isma’il Ibn Ja’far” the Seventh and the last obvious El-Imam of Ism’ili Shia Imams. In addition, they were famous for “The Seventh” (Anan, 1983), as well as the pillars of Ismaili Shi’ite (Fatimid) doctrine are seven (Maged, 1985, Vol.1), based on the fact that all the skies, the earth, the week days, the planets, the head slots and the Arabic letters of the two words “Mohamed & Ali” are seven (Al-Ghazaly, 1964; Al-Qalla, 2013). Hence, there are seven niches (Pl.33) on the main Façade of “Al-3qmar” mosque which may represent the seven obvious Imams of Ism’ili Shia (Abel-Raziq, 2002), and the name of the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) was inscribed six times around the name of “Ali” (Pl.7) on the Main Central mihrab of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum as well. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

Nine
It is cited that the main stages of the Fatimid “Dawa” (call) are nine (Anan, 1983). Also, the great (Eastern) Fatimid palace (fig.8) and the mosque of “Al-3hakim” (fig. 9) once had nine doors (Zaki, 1966; Abdel-Raziq, 2002), which may were representing the nine stages of the Fatimid doctrine.

Twelve
Number Twelve is more related to the “Twelver” Shia, Who believed in the Imamate of “Twelve” obvious Imams (Sayed, 2007). However, it has also a Fatimid Symbolic connotation, because Fatimids divided the world into twelve islands and appointed “Daai” (caller) for Shiism in each island (Al-Maqrizi, 2004; Maged, 1985, Vol.1), based on the fact that the months of year are twelve and the two testimonies of Islam consist of twelve Arabic letters
Therefore, the two testimonies of Islam were carved on the top of the western gate (Pl.34) of “Al-Fkahany” mosque\textsuperscript{15}, (Maher, 1971; Bloom, 2008), and on a Fatimid flat mihrab (fig.10), in “Ibn Tulun” mosque. (Al-Hosseiny, 2007)

**Colors connotations**

**The white color**

When Fatimids conquered Egypt in (358 A.H/ 969 A.D), they changed all the black flags and clothes into white, because the black color was the symbol of their enemies; Abbasids (Maged, 1985, Vol.2). Consequently, the white color is considered the main symbolic color of Fatimids (Maher, 1971; 1962) that was widely employed in painting most of the Fatimid buildings, such as “Al-\textsuperscript{13}zhar” mosque.

**The green Color**

The main old door (Pl.27) of El-Imam “Al-hussein” mausoleum in Cairo\textsuperscript{16}, was famous for the door of “Al-hassanin”- referring to both Imams “Al-hassan and Al-hussein” sons of “Ali Ibn Abi Talib”- till the end of the French campaign on Egypt in (1801 A.D) (Creswell, 2004). While, Shahi (2004) stated that, it was called the green door because it was built on the ruins of the Fatimid “Emerald” palace, which was painted in green colors. But, most probably, it was called the green door as the green color was the symbolic color of “Ahlulbait” (Yassin, 2006), and it was also stated that, when “Al-Salih Tala’i’” brought the head of El-Imam “Al-hussein” to Egypt in (548 A.H/1153 A.D), it was wrapped in a piece of green silk. (Russel, 1964)

**Other Connotations**

**Additions of Al-Bohra**

The “Bohra” is an Indian Isma\textsuperscript{i}li Shia who claimed of being descendants of Fatimids— and cared about restoring the Fatimid monuments in Egypt, Yemen and Palestine (Sayed, 2007), trying to save the heritage of their ancestors (King, 1984). They restored many Islamic buildings in Egypt, such as the mausoleum of “Al-Gioushy”, the mosques of “Al-hakim” and “Al-\textsuperscript{3}qmar” (Abdel-Raziq, 1999; Ziada, 2004). Besides, they added precious silver chapels to the mausoleums of El-Imam “Al-hussein” (Pl.35) and “Al-Sayyeda Zainab”. (Shahi, 2004)

**Conclusion**

Fatimids employed their buildings in Cairo to announce their own Shiite thoughts for Egyptians through few direct connotations, such as (Ali is the

\textsuperscript{15}** (located to the south of Al-Moaez street) (Map 2)

\textsuperscript{16}** (attached to Al-Hussein mosque) (map 5)
guardian of Allah) and many indirect connotations, such as (Verses of holy Quran, Numbers, Colors...etc.). Such acts prove that Fatimids were too smart to break the ice in order to attract new followers of Egyptians to the Shiite doctrine by surrounding them with Shiite connotations everywhere, even on the Sunni buildings, such as “Ibn Tulun” mosque in an attempt to convince them with the Shiite thoughts.

It is noticed that most of the Shiite connotations on the Islamic architecture in Cairo, revolve around the idea that “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” is the rightful of Imamate after the prophet (PBUH) and the legitimacy of the Fatimid Caliphs Imamate, considering that they are the descendants of El-Imam “Ali” and his wife “Fatima”. Additionally, the mausoleums that were built by Fatimid for the members of the prophet’s family in Egypt, had less direct Shiite connotations than mosques because Fatimids were looking forward to gain the Sunnis sympathy towards them, especially during the weakness of the Fatimid state (427-567 A.H/ 1036-1171 A.D).

Most of the holy Quran verses, which have been carved on the Fatimid architecture in Cairo, were chosen carefully to be based on the Shiite interpretation of such verses according to the idea of “Azzahir” (The obvious meaning) and “Al-Batin” (The hidden meaning), to consolidate the conception of the Fatimids’ right in Imamate.

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Maps

Map 1: El Khalifa Street in Cairo

(The Egyptian Survey Authority)

Map 2: El-Moaez Street in Cairo

(The Egyptian Survey Authority)

Map 3: El-Giushy mausoleum

(The Egyptian Survey Authority)
Map 4: the cemetery of El-Imam “Al-Shafā'i”

Map 5: Al-Azhar Area

(The Egyptian Survey Authority)
Figures

Figure 1: Hexagonal star on the dome over the main mihrab of “Al-Hakim” mosque.

(After: Ziada)

Figure 2: The main Mihrab of Al-Haswati.

(After: Al-Hosseiny)

Figure 3: The construction text of El-Imam “Jaafar Al-Sadek” mosque.

(After: Al-Hosseiny)

Figure 4: The original stucco window in “AL-Hakim” mosque.

(After: Al-Hosseiny)

Figure 5: The medallion on the northern Minaret of “Al-Hakim” mosque.

(After: www.Archnet.org)

Figure 6: The tree of life in the court of “Al-Azhar” mosque.

(After: Creswell)
Figure 7: The five niches in the mausoleum of “Al-Saieda Roqayiah”

(After: Creswell)

Figure 8: The nine doors of the great (Eastern) Fatimid palace.

(After: Al-Maqrizi)

Figure 9: The main old nine doors of “Al-Hakim” mosque

(After: www.Archnet.org)

Figure 10: Fatimid flat Mihrab in “Ibn Tulun” mosque.

(After: Al-Hosseiny)
Plates

Plate 1: The Compartment of “Fatima Al-Zahraa” in “Al-Azhar” mosque.

Plate 2: The medallion over the entrance of Al-Aqmar mosque.

Plate 3: The niches on both sides of the main Facade of Al-Aqmar mosque

Plate 4: The northern corner of the main Facade of Al-Aqmar mosque.

Plate 5: The window on both sides of Al-Aqmar Mosque’s main Façade.

Plate 6: The medallion over the main mihrab of “Al-hakim” mosque.
Plate 7: The medallion on main mihrab of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum

Plate 8: The central part of the main mihrab of “Um kalthum” mausoleum.

Plate 9: The main Mihrab of “Al-Shabeih” Mausoleum

Plate 10: The construction text carved on Al-Fotouh gate.

Plate 11: The Fatimid flat Mihrab of “Al-Afdal” in “Ibn Tulun” mosque.

Plate 12: The Construction text on the (Northern east) Façade of “Al-Salih Tala’i” mosque.

Plate 13: the frame of arches before the

Plate 14: The Quranic text on the
old mihrab in Al-Azhar mosque

main mihrab of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum

Plate 15: The construction text on the (northern east) Façade of “Al-Salih Tala’i” mosque.

Plate 16: The entrance of “Al-Saieda Sokaina” mausoleum.

Plate 17: A panel fixed on the back side of “Al-Hakim” Mosque’s main entrance of.

Plate 18: The construction text on the (northern east) Façade of Al-Salih Tala’i” mosque
Plate 19: The main Mihrab of “Al-Giushy” mausoleum.

Plate 20: The Quranic text on the interior walls of “Al-Sayyeda ‘atika” mausoleum.

(After: creswell)

Plate 21: The western outer mihrab flanking the main entrance of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayiah” mausoleum.

Plate 22: The Quranic text around the arches in the court of “Al-3qmar” mosque.

(The Researchers)

Plate 23: The vase of flowers on both sides of “Al-3qmar” mosque’s main Façade

Plate 24: Stars decorating the arch of “Al-Fotooh” gate.

(The Researchers)
Plate 25: The hexagonal star on the dome added by Caliph “Al-HafIz” in “Al-Azhar” mosque

Plate 26: Hexagonal stars on both niches flanking the entrance of “Al-Sayyeda Roqayah” mausoleum

Plate 27: The stars on the main old gate of “Al-Hassein” mausoleum

Plate 28: Stars between arches in “Al-Salih Tala’i” mosque.

Plate 29: The closed door decoration on the main Façade of Al-Aqmar mosque.

Plate 30: The closed door on the door of “Al-ahkim” Mosque.
Plate 31: The shield and sword on the gate of “Al-Nasr”.

Plate 32: The ram-headed stones on “Al-fotooh” gate.

Plate 33: The five niches on the main entrance of “Al-Aqmar” mosque

Plate 34: The two testimonies of Islam carved on the western gate of “Al-Fkahany” mosque.

Plate 35: The silver chapel in the mausoleum of El-Imam Al-Hussein
الملخص العربي

الدلاليات الشيعية على العمائر الإسلامية بمدينة القاهرة من العصر الفاطمي (358-567 هـ/969-1171م)

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لقد أدرك الفاطميون أن القوة العسكرية ليست هي السبيل الأمثل للإستيلاء على مصر، ولذلك نجحت سياسة أخرى، وهي الترويج للمذهب الشيعي بمصر سراً خلال الحملات الحربية، وقد نجحت خطتهم في تكوين مجتمع كبير من المصريين الذين انضموا إلى الدعوة الشيعية مما كان له أكبر الأثر في تسهيل مهمة القائد "جوهر الصقلي" بالإستيلاء على مصر عام (358 هـ/969 م)، وفي إطار السياسة ذاتها فقد قام الفاطميون بتوظيف العمائر الدينية لنشر تعاليم المذهب الشيعي سواء بطريقة مباشرة أو غير مباشرة، وذلك من خلال الزخارف المنتوحة التي نُقتِّشت على تلك العمائر والتي قد تبدو للمجدر مجرد زخرفة اعتاد نقشها على العمائر الإسلامية، إلا أنها في الواقع تحمل في طياتها العديد من الدلالات المرتبطة بالفكر الشيعي، استناداً إلى فكرة "الظاهر والباطن" لدى الشيعة الإسماعيلية.

وقد فطن إلى ذلك الجانب الفقيه عدد من الدراسات السابقة، إلا أنها أغفلت العديد من الدلالات الشيعية، خاصة الدلالات غير المباشرة التي تتطلب بحثاً معمقاً في الفلسفة الباطنية والتي كانت مصدر التأويل الرئيسي للمذهب الشيعي الإسماعيلي خلال العصر الفاطمي، ومن ثم تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إبراز المغزى اللذني الشيعي المبكر وظل البارد من الزخارف المنتوحة البارزة على العمائر الإسلامية البارزة بمدينة القاهرة والتي ترجع إلى العصر الفاطمي، بالإضافة إلى إضافات الفاطميين إلى العمائر الإسلامية بالقاهرة السابقة، بالإضافة إلى إضافات الكلمات الدالة: الشيعة الإسماعيلية، الدلالات الشيعية، الزخارف الفاطمية، العصر الفاطمي، الظاهر والباطن.