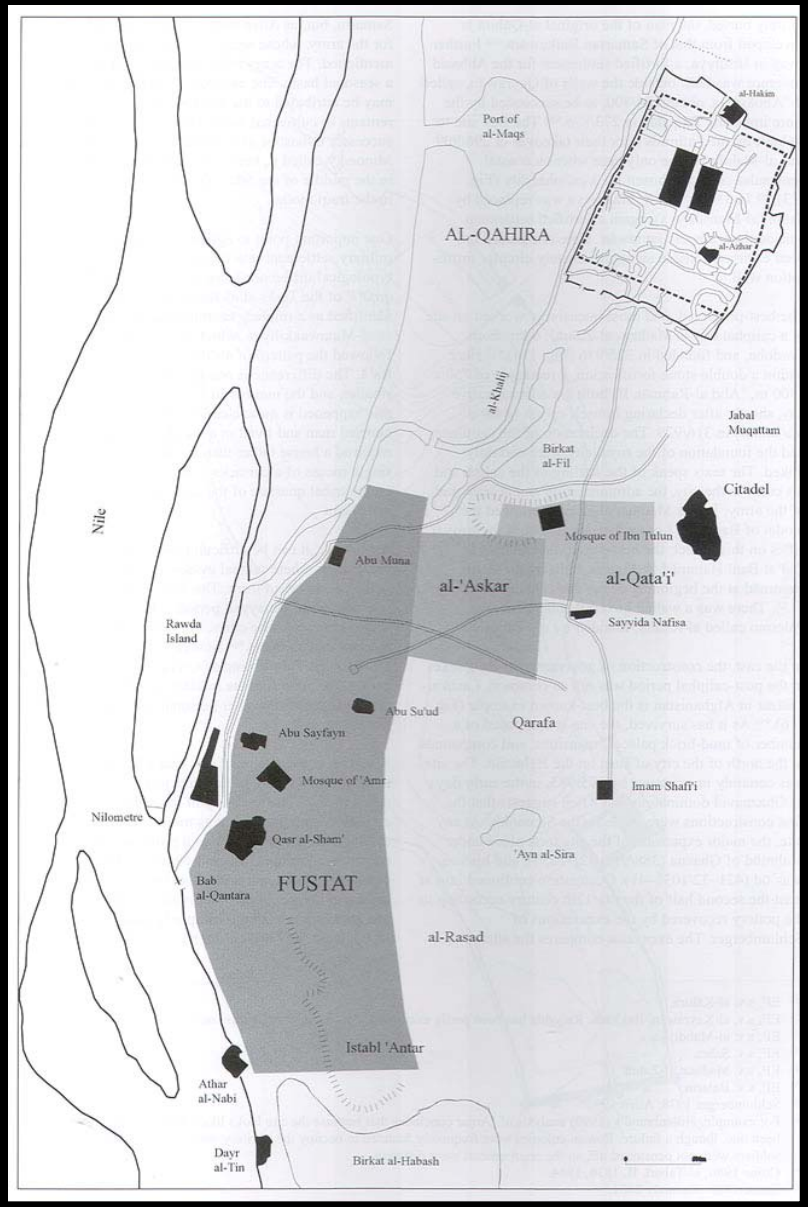
The *misr* of Fustat

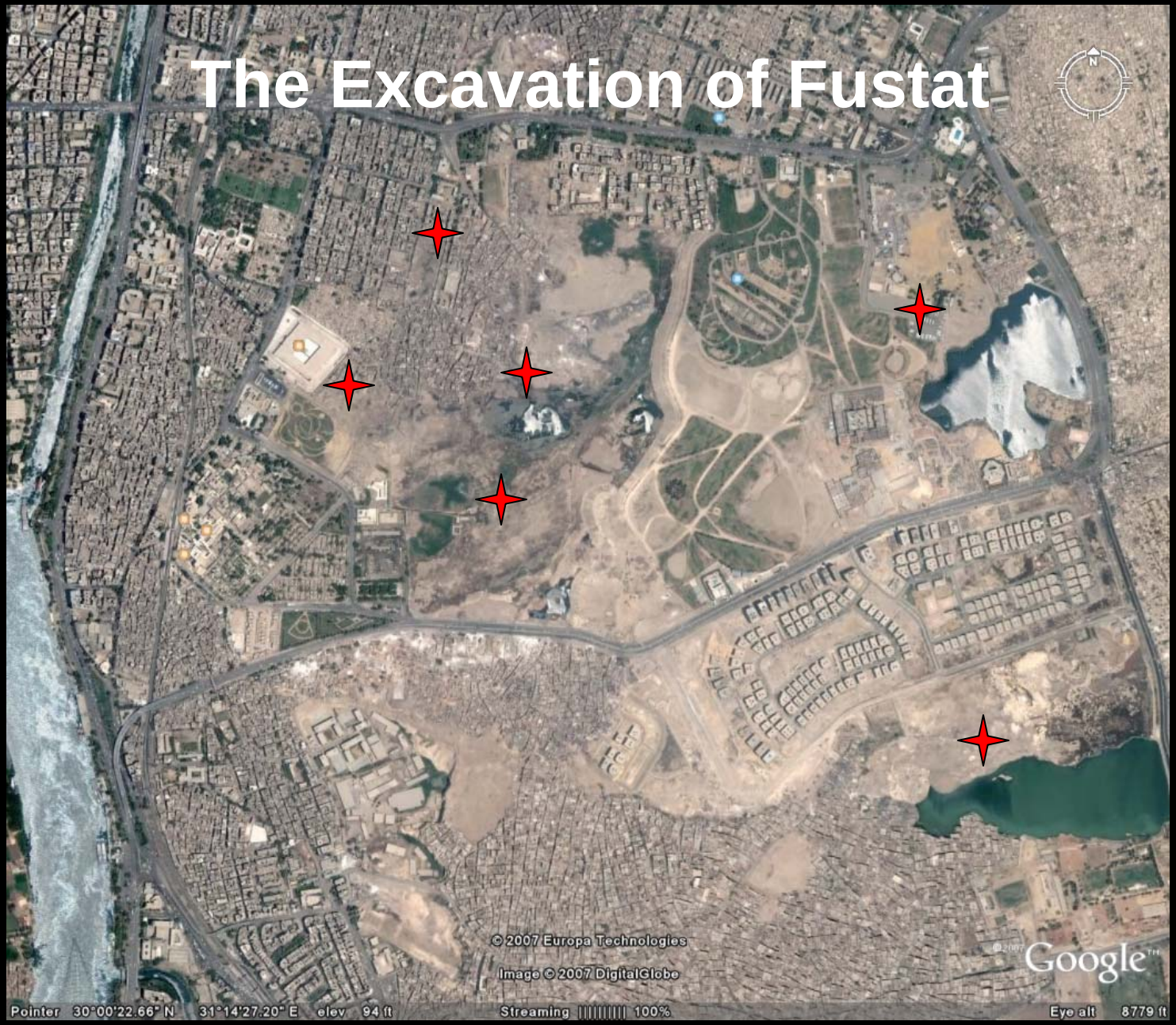
Islamic urbanism and the beginnings of Muslim Egypt

Fustat Issues:

- What was wrong with Alexandria?
- Tribal organization and the urban sensibility
- What does it take to make a good city? An Islamic city?
- Whose city is it anyway?
- Real estate bubble anyone…location, location, location



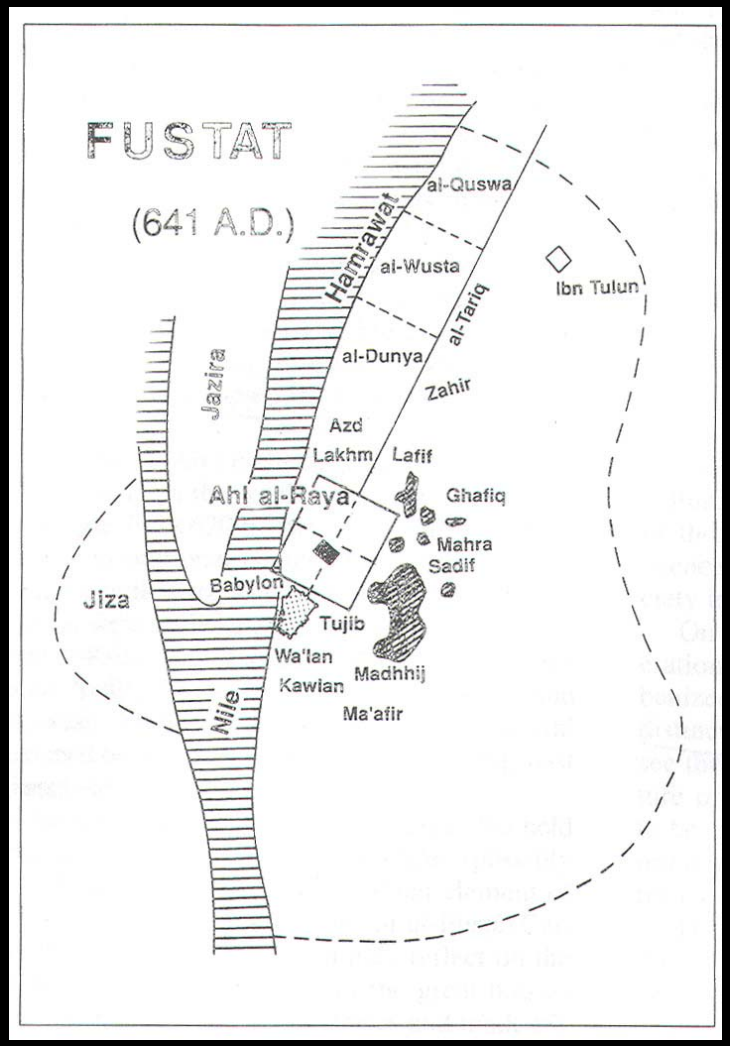
The Excavation of Fustat

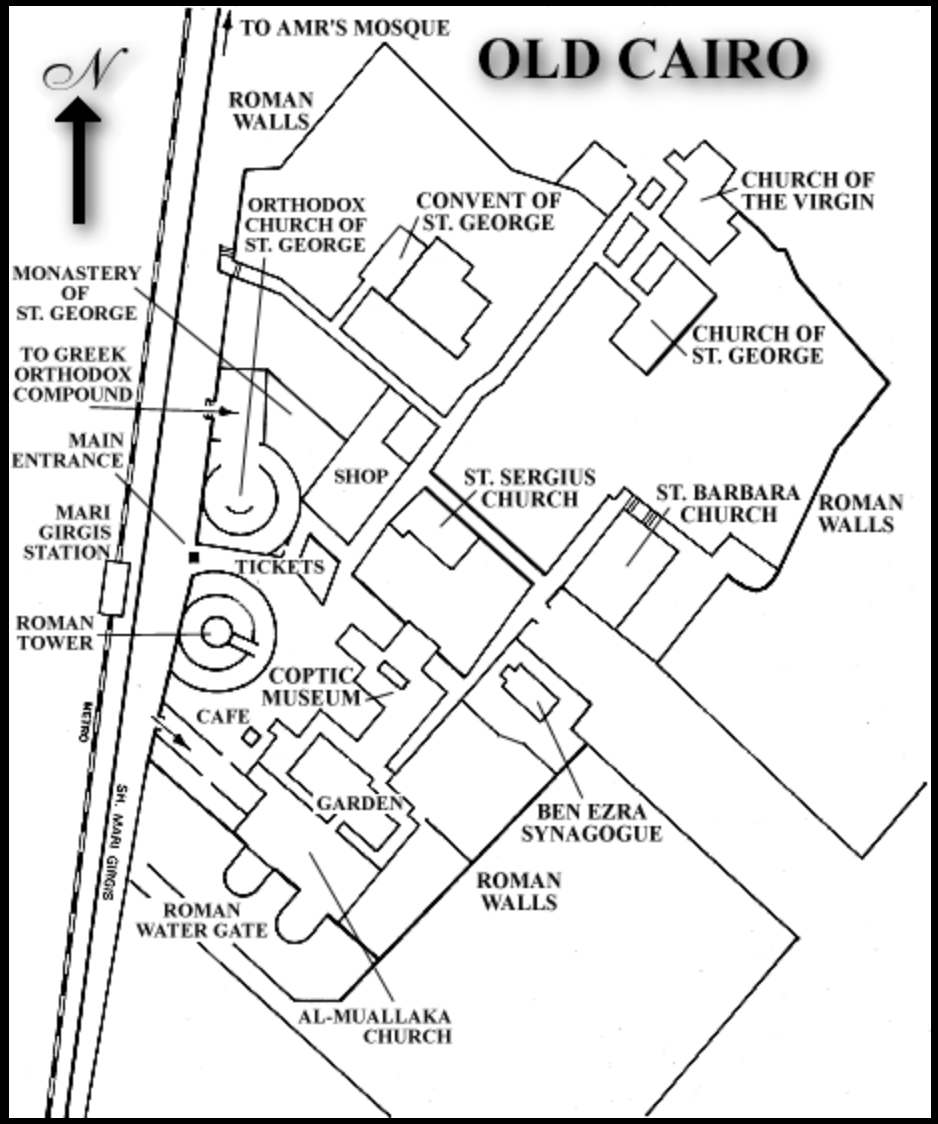


Categories of Early Islamic Cities

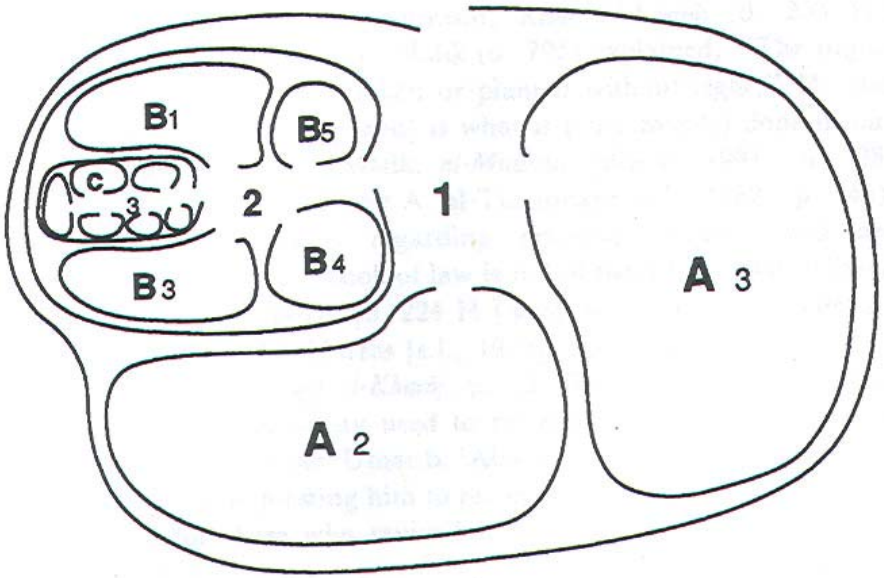
- *De Novo* cities
  - *Amsar*
  - *Qusur* and planned towns (e.g. Ayla, Anjar)
  - The royal cities (Baghdad, Samarra, Cairo, Raqqa etc.)
- Existing Cities
  - Cities of the Byzantine and Sasanian territories
  - Expansion of the *hadir* and adjacent cities
  - *Ribat, thughur* and *awasim* or frontier towns (esp. Mediterranean coast and Anatolia)

Fustat's "nucleus" – Old Cairo or Ahl al-Raya

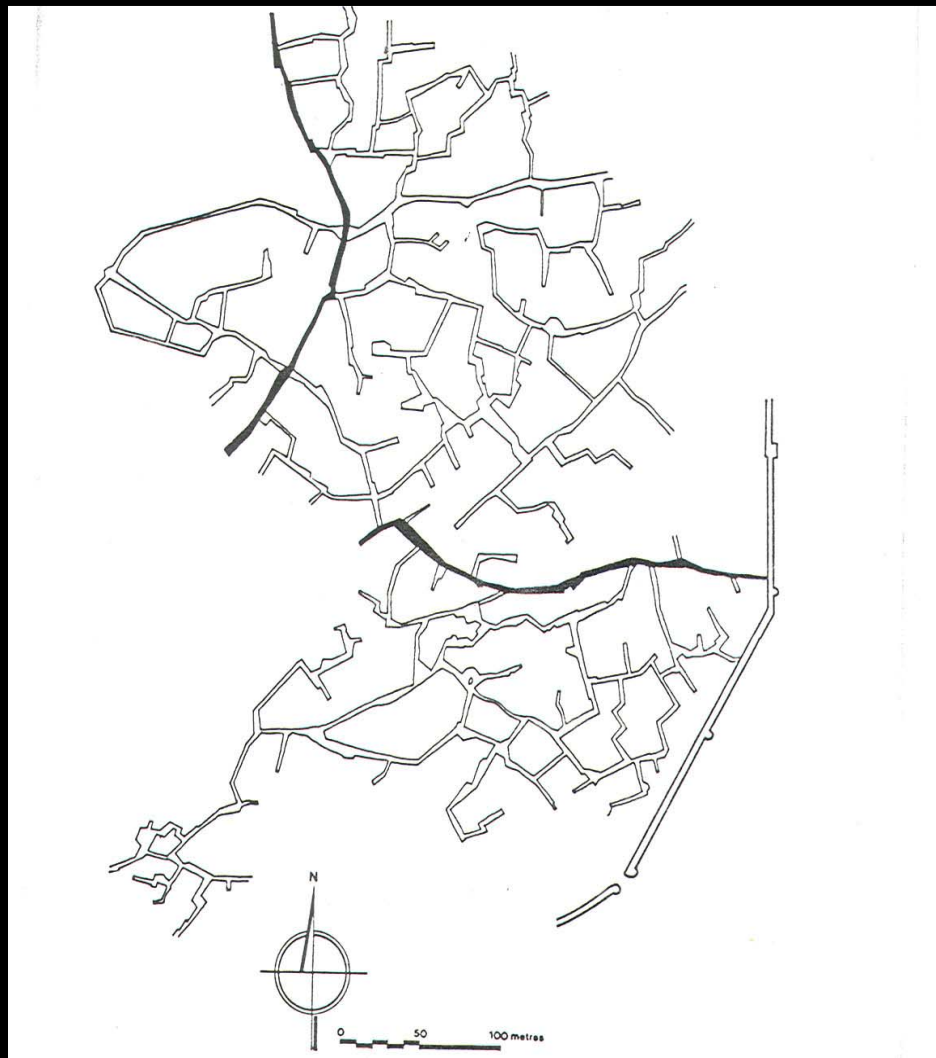




From Khitta to Quarters:



1. Territorial structure of the early Muslim garrison town. Letters refer to group (A), subgroup (B), and private holdings (C); numbers refer to vacant or shared space.



Map 2: The street network excavated by Ali Baghat. (from Kubiak 1987 page 177)

Istabl ‘Antar excavations

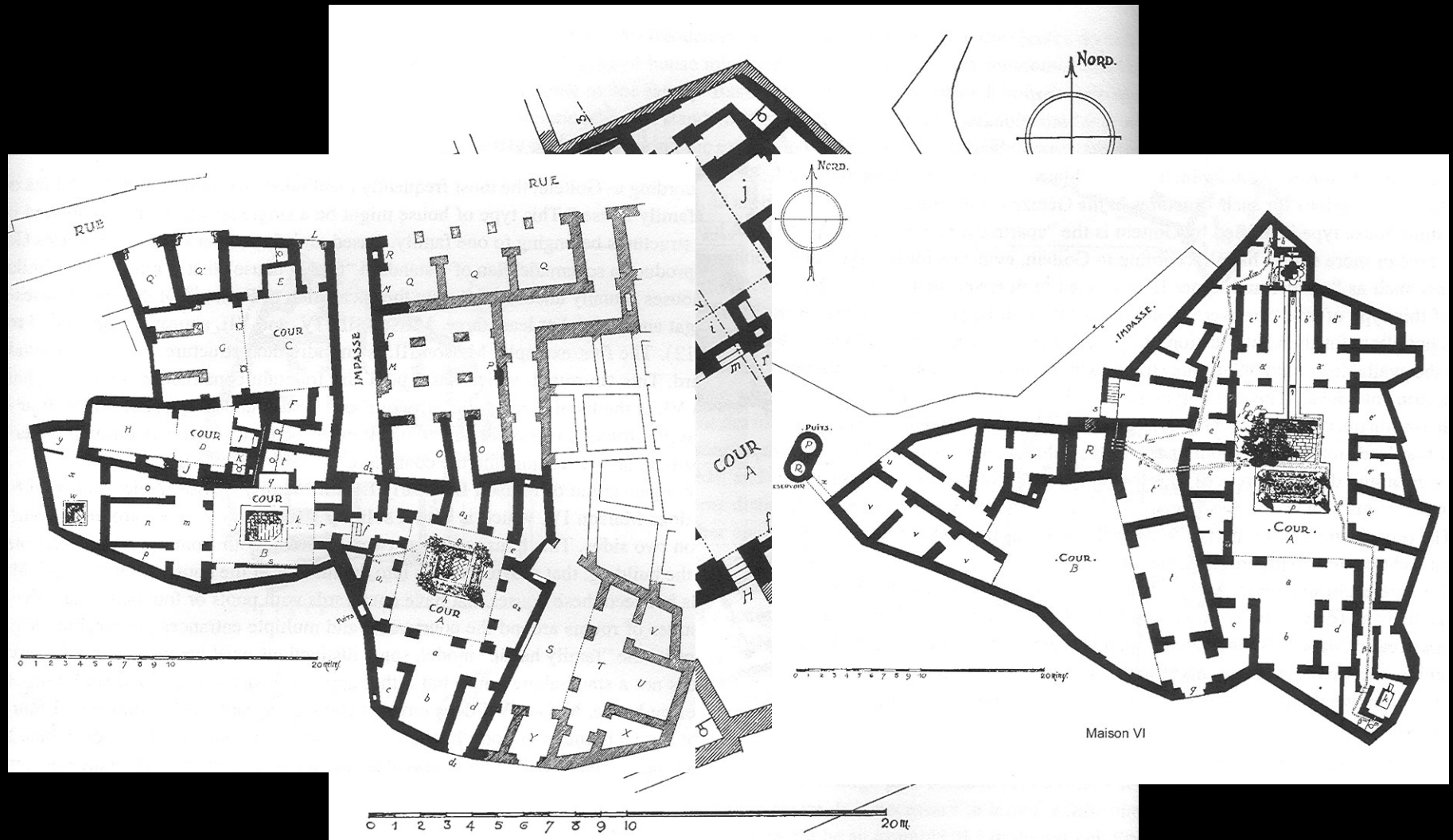
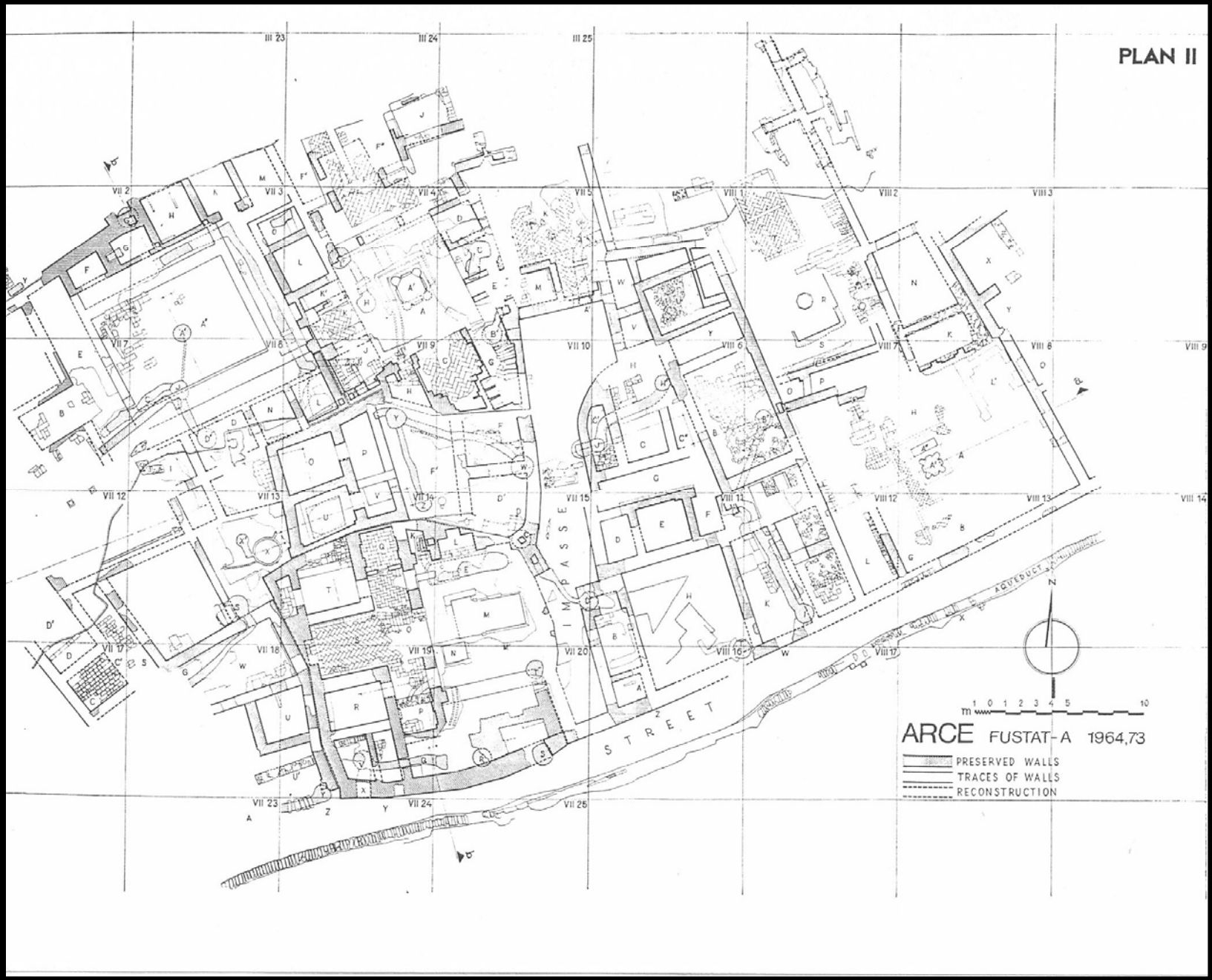
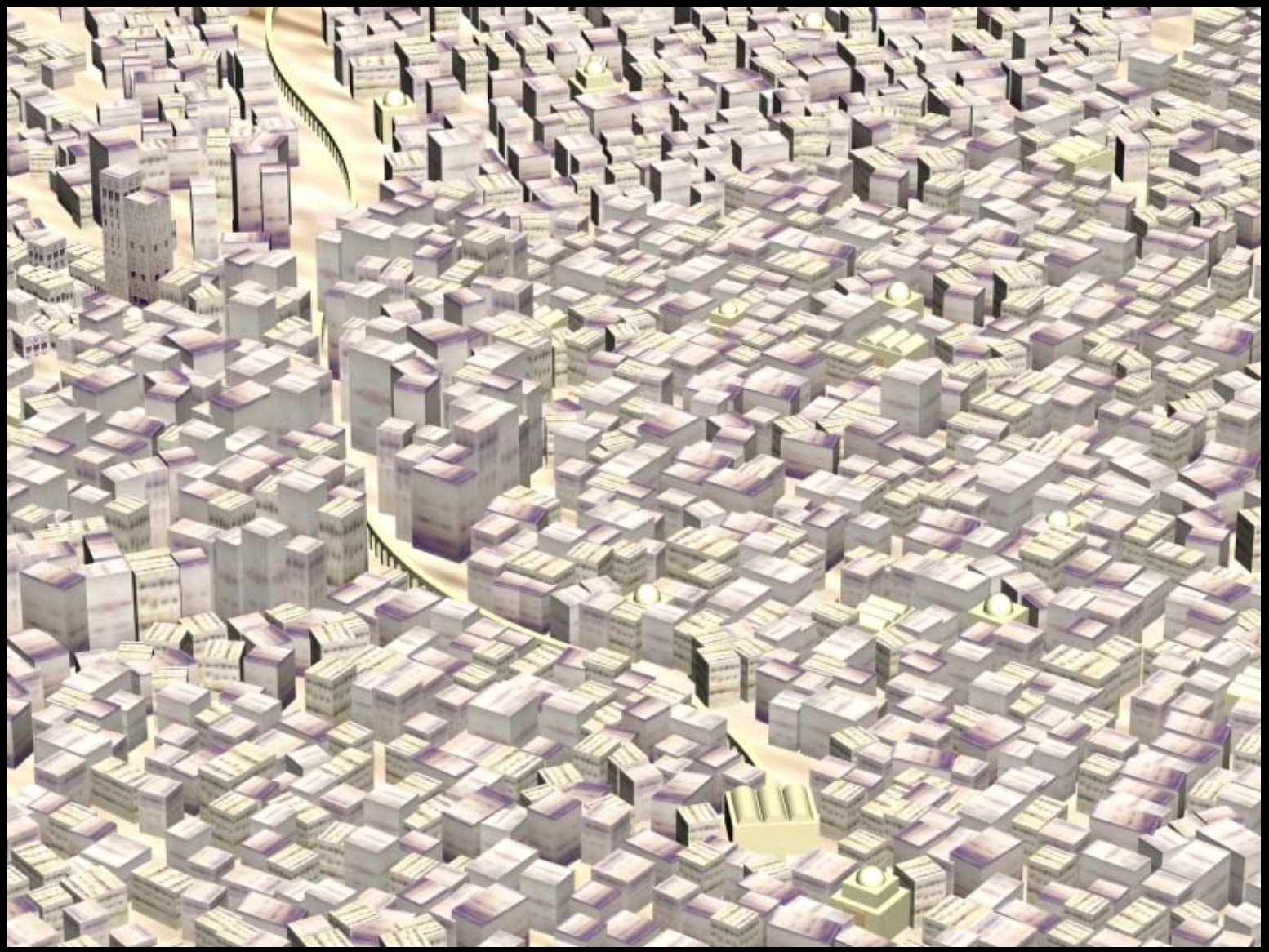


Figure 2.13. "Apartment house": Maison II. Fustat (after Bahgat and Gabriel, *Fouilles d'al Fustat*)


PLAN II
IMPASSE
STREET
AQUEDUCT
N
m 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 10
ARCE FUSTAT-A 1964,73
PRESERVED WALLS
TRACES OF WALLS
RECONSTRUCTION

14 Story Apartment Blocks?



Fustat Timeline:

- 640 CE Conquest of Egypt, Foundation of Fustat
- 750 Abbasid takeover – administrative center moved north to al-Askar
- 868 CE Ibn Tulun, Abbasid governor and development of al-Qatai
- 969 CE Fatimid conquest of Egypt, foundation of al-Qahira (Cairo)
- 1168 Amalric I of Jerusalem engulfs Fustat in flames
- Late 12th century remains of Fustat enclosed in Ayyubid wall