

FROM COLLEGE TO MOSQUE: TABIA IN ASWAN AS AN EGYPTIAN HERITAGE

HANAN ISMAEL

FACULTY OF TOURISM AND HOTELS, MINIA UNIVERISTY

ABSTRACT

Aswan is one of the most strategic sites in Egypt. Muḥammad ‘Ali recognized its importance, therefore he ordered on 8 August 1821 A.D. the construction of the second military school there. Many races fused there together to form a strong Egyptian army. The remains of the college were documented by the UNESCO in 1959 as an important part of the Egyptian heritage. In this place ordered president Nasser in 1969-70 to build Badr mosque – Tabia mosque – to commemorate the Battle of Badr. The removing of the remains of the old buildings and the construction of the new mosque reformed also the population in the area and formed new inhabited areas in Aswan. The mosque was opened by Sadat in 1974. Due to its importance, the governorate opened a new street to connect it directly with the Corniche. Since its construction, all religious festivals and occasions are to be celebrated there.

INTRODUCTION

After the massacre of the Mamluks in 1811, all their sons and soldiers became the property of Muḥammad ‘Ali. He appointed their seniors in the irregular forces armies (*Al-Bashbzuq*) and gathered the young in the citadel to be educated in a school, such as those ones in the palaces of the Mamluks. He provided them with teachers to teach them reading, writing, Turkish language, martial arts, painting, mathematics, and Italian language, which was the most common European Language in the East.¹

However, Muḥammad ‘Ali recognized – especially after the defeat of the Ottoman forces in Abu-Qir – the importance of introducing modern methods in the military and naval forces to be able to administrate the country and defend against external raids. Therefore, he decided to establish a modern military school in Aswan and asked France to send him a military teacher to form his modern army. Joseph Anthelme Sève, called later Sulayman Pasha, who reached Egypt in 1819 A.D., was chosen for this task.² Later, Italian soldiers were employed to assist and help him.³

ESTABLISHING ASWAN MILITARY SCHOOL

Muḥammad ‘Ali ordered on August 8, 1821 A.D./ Dhul Qa'dah 9, 1236 A.H. the organization of the military school, its affairs and teaching sciences.⁴ Then he ordered on Muharram 6, 1237 the establishment of four barracks *qashlaqat* in Aswan rapidly. Each one of them is big enough to accommodate 2000 person and 15 minutes distance from each other.⁵ In addition to health center and health authority to supervise the health of the soldiers and officers.⁶

Muḥammad Bey Lazughly was appointed as head of Aswan school on Jumada al-awwal 2, 1237 to organize the students and the school affairs. He was considered as representative of Muḥammad ‘Ali in the school, so the students had to obey him and did their best in their study of science and arts to be promoted according to their performance.⁷

Muḥammad Bey Lazughly, as head of the school, had to cooperate with Joseph Anthelme Sève (Sulayman Pasha) to put things in order in the school according to the orders of Muḥammad ‘Ali to them. On Jumada al-awwal 14, 1237, they were ordered to elect the needed teachers and to promote the ready students to *Agassé, Blockbache or Pecupache* to motivate the other students.⁸

WHY IN ASWAN

Aswan was chosen by Muḥammad ‘Ali to house his new school because of its location that makes it away from intrigues and attention to work in secret. He was not sure of its success, so he thought that if it failed in Aswan that won't threat his position in Egypt. In addition to his desire to be away from Cairo, where having a European military teacher would urge the soldiers who are against order. Moreover, he wanted to keep his new soldiers away from temptations.⁹

THE STUDY IN ASWAN MILITARY SCHOOL

After failing with Turkish and Albanian, 1000 soldiers from the senior students of the citadel school and the mamluks of Muḥammad ‘Ali were sent to be educated in Aswan. In addition, Muḥammad ‘Ali included the Sudanes in the new military school. Muḥammad ‘Ali cared about the kind of training that the students would have more than their nationality.¹⁰

Some struggles faced Sulayman Pasha in his training and teaching at the begin. These problems represented in dealing with Mamluk soldiers who did not get used to military life which means respecting order and dignity during the military training.¹¹ They were used to noise and disturbance and

did not like order and silence which are inevitable in military maneuvers and exercises. Moreover, they were not used to learn the art of war from European officers. As a result, they rebelled against him and plotted twice to assassinate Sulayman Pasha.¹²

But he was brave, patient, active, intelligent, skillful in equestrian and horseback riding. Moreover, he joined them in their sports. All of that affected positively on his relationship with them and managed him to lead them.¹³ In addition, Ibahim Pasha accompanied him occasionally to Aswan, that encouraged the students to obey him and follow the new system.¹⁴

Then Muḥammad ‘Ali turned to form the new army from Sudanese. Therefore, he brought 30 thousand to be educated in Aswan. But his experience with them failed because of the death of thousands of them and their weakness in military service. In this point he ordered to collect the soldiers of his new army from the Egyptians. The Egyptians did not accept that easily at the begin and rebelled against that. But later they liked the military life. They enjoyed the good food and cloth, which they did not expect and got used to the military service, which they did not perform before.¹⁵

According to the educational plan of Muḥammad ‘Ali, the Egyptians, before being allowed to join military schools, were allowed to join medicine and engineering studies who are graduated from Al-Azhar.¹⁶ It is worthy here to mention that Muḥammad ‘Ali referred to the students of the military school with the word “slaves”.¹⁷ May be the Egyptian also considered serving in the army as a work of slaves, therefore, they refused to join the school.

The census of the military school was great. The infantry composed of 96999, the cavalry 11684, and the artillery 11600. The expenses paid to this army at Aswan school amounted to 754604 pounds. This money was for the regular army other than the irregular forces which consists of Arabs, Egyptian Bedouin, Syrians, Crete, Hijaz and Sudanese.¹⁸

Muḥammad ‘Ali considered the soldiers of the school his sons, and expected from them to be good students, and who do not obey must be punished. He regarded the service in the army as a service for religion.¹⁹ Sulayman Pasha trained these soldiers for three years till they formed the begin of the regular army.²⁰ He also collected, composed and wrote military maneuvers book from European books.²¹

SCHOOL'S EFFECT ON ASWAN'S POPULATION

The construction of this school led to the arrival of different human races to Aswan from Europe and Africa as soldiers and teachers. They mixed later with the indigenous peoples.²²

According to 'Ali Mubarak, Muḥammad 'Ali established in Aswan a governorate office overlooking the Nile. Muḥammad Bey Lazughly constructed there a palace and a garden in 1238 A.H. as a residence for him during his stay with the army soldiers. In addition to *qishlaq* for the residence of the soldiers and an office for the students, because of the site's blessing and abundance crops.²³

During the reign of Muḥammad 'Ali, Aswan was relatively quiet. But the resistance and struggle of Aswan's people emerged negatively. They believed that his intention from the new army is to suppress the independence movements and popular revolutions against him. They whispered among the Sudanese soldiers and instill in them the fear and horror that they would face from Muḥammad 'Ali and his commanders. They reminded them that they should not fight the Egyptians who are their brothers and cousins.²⁴ The Sudanese, who came to study and train in the military school in Aswan, lived in *Al-Qaṭania* to be near their school. This area now is *Al-Aḥmadia* and *Al-Bisharia* in Aswan.²⁵

UNESCO'S EFFORTS

Aswan was not suitable for military studies. Its location makes it difficult to settle there, in addition to the difficulty of transport to there, besides the hot weather and the plenty of ophthalmology diseases. Therefore, the school was moved after only three years to Esna.²⁶ All available references follow the military school and its location from city to another but not concentrating on the use of the building of the school in Aswan.

After moving the military school to Esna, the buildings of the school were completely abandoned. In 2005, the Defence minister Abu Ghazala wanted to build a museum in the place of the school, but he did not find any remains of the school.²⁷ According to Gamal Mish'al, and report of UNESO about Aswan, the remains of the fortifications of Aswan (Fig.1.) and the military school of Muḥammad 'Ali still exist on the knoll that overlooking Gabal Taquq south of the hotels area in Aswan.²⁸ But according to the former Head of the Aswan Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department Mr. Magdy Abdin these remains date back to an earlier period than that of Muḥammad 'Ali.²⁹



Fig. 1. Remains of fortifications overlooking Gabal Taquq (photo is taken by the researcher)

According to Dr. Ragih, the head of the documents center in the Nubian Museum in Aswan, the buildings of the school were photographed by the UNESCO in 1959.³⁰ They are very rare photos (Fig. 2, 3, 4), because the school now is demolished, and a new mosque was built on its site. These photos were not published by the UNSCO. Even the Courier focused only on the rescue operation of the Nubian temples and did not write about the fortifications and school of Muḥammad ‘Ali.

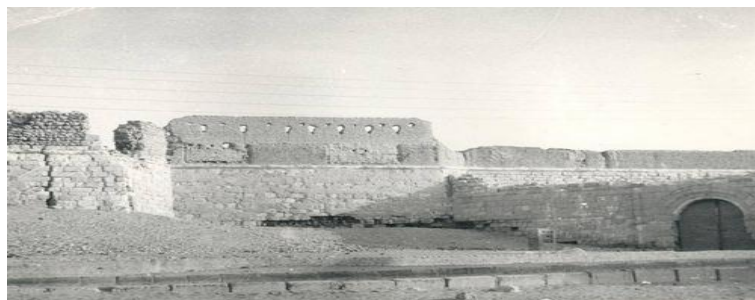


Fig. 2. Remains of the Military School in Aswan

(Source: <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/478044.aspx>, 28-9-2017, 12:06 pm.)



Fig. 3. Remains of the Military School in Aswan

(Source: <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/478044.aspx>, 28-9-2017, 12:06 pm.)



Fig. 4. Remains of the military school in Aswan

(Source: <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/478044.aspx>, 28-9-2017, 12:06 pm.)

NASSER AND THE NEW MOSQUE

According to Abdalrahman Abdeltawab, in 1964 the *tabia*, which was built in shaikh Haron to oversight the school, was demolished to construct Radio and TV building. In 1969-70 president Nasser ordered the construction of Badr mosque – better known as Tabia mosque – to commemorate the Battle of Badr in the place of the military school.³¹ The mosque was opened to the public by president Sadat in 1974 (see foundational text Fig. 5).

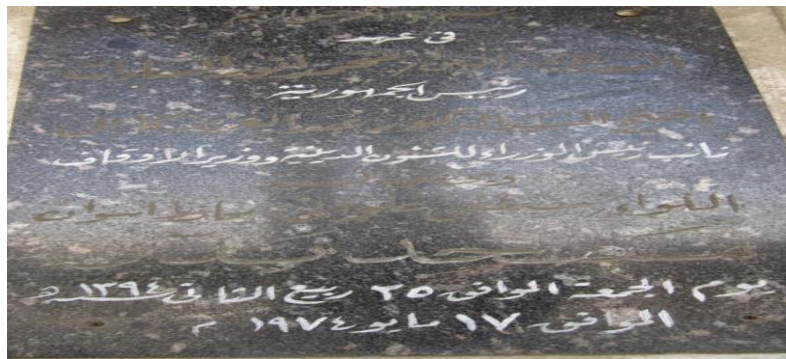


Fig. 5. Foundational Text of Badr Mosque (photo is taken by the researcher)

The mosque follows a style (Mamluk style of art and architecture) of group of mosques that were built in different cities in Egypt at that time: Sohag, Assuit (Nasser Mosque), Qina (El-Said El-Badawy), and Alexandria (Sidy Gaber). It measures 700 m², in addition to the garden surrounding the mosque.³² The mosque has two main entrances from the southern and western sides. In front of each entrance, a canopy which based on circular columns surmounted by pointed horseshoe-shaped arches (Fig. 6). The

columns inside the mosque are 24 ones distributed in architectural symmetry, decorated with stucco plaster motifs, with a distinctive huge dome in the center of the prayer hall (Fig. 7). The *Mihrab* in the qibla wall is made of marble interlocking with its homogeneous colors, and next to it is the beautiful wooden dome minbar, which is full of geometrical motifs (Fig. 8). On the two sides of the mosque are two minarets written with words of the square kufic calligraphy using red brick blocks in different positions.³³

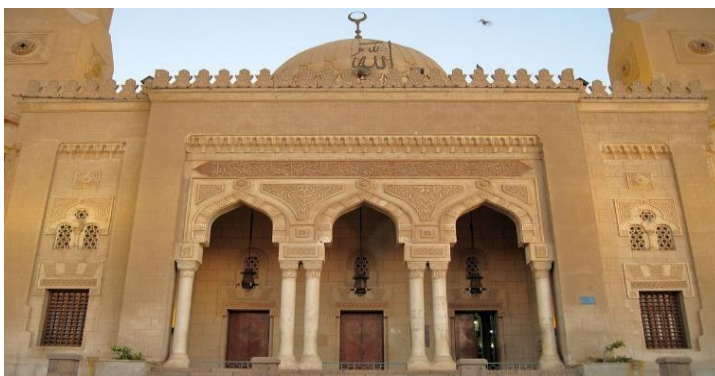


Fig. 6. Entrance of the mosque

(source:https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9#/media/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Assuan_el-Tabia_01.JPG, 4-7-2020, 12:19 pm)

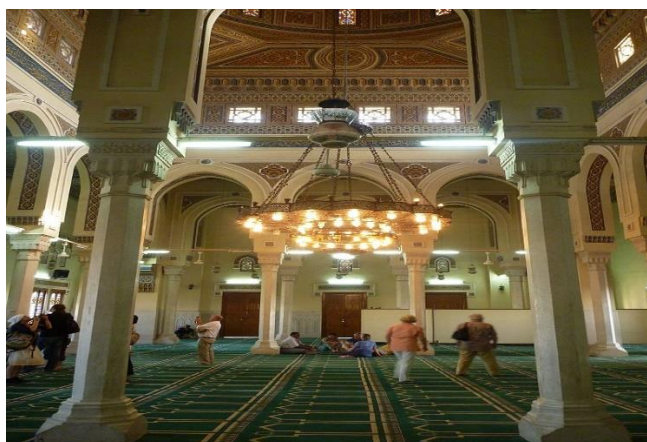


Fig. 7. Interior columns of the mosque

(source:[https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9#/media/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Interior_of_El-Tabia_Mosque_in_Aswan_\(Egypt\)_%281%29.JPG](https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9#/media/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Interior_of_El-Tabia_Mosque_in_Aswan_(Egypt)_%281%29.JPG), 4-7-2020, 12:29 pm)



Fig. 8. Mihrab and Minbar of the mosque

(source:[https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9#/media/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Interior_of_El-Tabia_Mosque_in_Aswan_\(Egypt\)_2_.JPG](https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9#/media/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Interior_of_El-Tabia_Mosque_in_Aswan_(Egypt)_2_.JPG), 3-7-2020, 13:30)

This area is one of the highest in Aswan, which makes the mosque visible from different sites in the city. The mosque is not considered as a monument, but it has a historical value due to the history of the site in addition to its high location in the center of the city. Most of the religious festivals and occasions are celebrated in the foot of the mosque (Fig. 6). It is now connected with the heritage of the city. On one side, the name is connected with the *tabia* of Muḥammad ‘Ali reminding with the original buildings and on the other side the place is connected with the religious festival ex: the night of the first day of Ramadan and the Birthday of the Prophet. Tourist programs include the visit of the mosque as an optional during the city tour.



Fig. 9. Celebrations of the Birthday of the Prophet 2017 at the Foot of the Mosque

(photo is taken by the researcher)

CONCLUSION

As Aswan played an important role in the Egyptian History, the military school of Muḥammad ‘Ali had also a great role in the formation of the population of the city and in the memories of the Aswanian. The modern military school of Muḥammad ‘Ali is credited with changing the Egyptians perception of military work and study. The problem is that these great buildings did not receive the care that they deserve to be preserved in the 1950s and 1960s. But they remain in the minds of the people who lived their childhood around while these buildings were still exist. They saw the last days of the remains of the school and the construction of the modern mosque. May be what we need know is the studying of the remains which are under debate; is it remains of Muḥammad ‘Ali fortifications in Aswan or dates back to earlier Islamic fortifications for the city.

ENDNOTE

¹ Aḥmad ‘Ezzat ‘Abdelkarim, *Tarikh Alta‘lim fi Misr I. ‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali* (Cairo: General Authority for Culture Palaces, 2011), 82.

² ‘Umar Ṭusun, *Ṣafaḥat min Tarikh Misr fi ‘Ahd Muḥammad ‘Ali*. Algish Almisri Albari w Albahari (Cairo: Madbuly, 1996), 3-4.

³ ‘Abdelkarim, *Tarikh Alta‘lim fi Misr I.*, 387.

⁴ Order 165 min Muḥammad ‘Ali ila naẓir almmadrasa alḥarbīa 9 Dhul Qa’dah 1236, *Al-‘awamir w al-mukātabāt alṣādira min ‘azīz miṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali*, Ra’wf ‘Abās Ḥāmid ed., (Cairo: National Library and Archives, 2010), 42.

⁵ Order 178 minhu ila Muḥammad bik naẓir al‘askarīa 6 Muharram 1237, *Al-‘awamir w al-mukātabāt alṣādira min ‘azīz miṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali*, Ra’wf ‘Abās Ḥāmid ed., (Cairo: National Library and Archives, 2010), 45.

⁶ ‘Abdelkarim, *Tarikh Alta‘lim fi Misr I.*, 387.

⁷ Order 222 minhu 2 Jumada al-awwal 1237, *Al-‘awamir w al-mukātabāt alṣādira min ‘azīz miṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali*, Ra’wf ‘Abās Ḥāmid ed., (Cairo: National Library and Archives, 2010), 52.

⁸ Order 227 minhu ila naẓir almmadrasa alḥarbīa biaswan 14 Jumada al-awwal 1237, *Al-‘awamir w al-mukātabāt alṣādira min ‘azīz miṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali*, Ra’wf ‘Abās Ḥāmid ed., (Cairo: National Library and Archives, 2010), 53.

⁹ ‘Abdalraḥman Alraf‘i, *‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali* (Cairo: Dar Alma‘arif, 1989), 327, Ṭusun, *Ṣafaḥat min Tarikh Misr*, 4.

¹⁰ ‘Abdelkarim, *Tarikh Alta‘lim fi Misr I.*, 82-83, 386-387.

¹¹ ‘Abdelkarim, *Tarikh Alta‘lim fi Misr I.*, 387.

¹² Alraf‘i, *‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali*, 327-328.

¹³ Ṭusun, *Ṣafaḥat min Tarikh Misr*, 8.

¹⁴ Alraf‘i, *‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Ali*, 327-328.

¹⁵ Ṭusun, *Ṣafaḥat min Tarikh Misr*, 4-6.

¹⁶ Hassan El-Fiqy, *Altarikh Althaqafy lillta‘lim fi miṣr* (Cairo: Dar Alqalam, 1997), 37.

¹⁷ Order 222 minhu 2 Jumada al-awwal 1237, *Al- 'awamir w al-mukātabāt alšādīra min 'azīz mišr Muḥammad 'Ali*, 52 ; Order 227 minhu ila nazir almmadrassa alḥarbīa biaswan 14 Jumada al-awwal 1237, *Al- 'awamir w al-mukātabāt alšādīra min 'azīz mišr Muḥammad 'Ali*, 53.

¹⁸Biālšwar ālnādīra.. 'anš'aha Muḥammad 'Ali liḥimaīth .. madrasat aswan alḥarbīa taḡzw almiksīk w 'aka w bilad almanābī' fī alḥabaša, Qina, Maḥmwd Aldiswqy, Al-Ahram <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/478044.aspx>, 28-9-2017, 12:06 pm.

¹⁹ Order 319 minhu ila Muḥammad bik nazir ālḡhādīah bi'āšwān 13 Muharram 1238, *Al- 'awamir w al-mukātabāt alšādīra min 'azīz mišr Muḥammad 'Ali*, 70.

²⁰ Alraf'i, *'Ašr Muḥammad 'Ali*, 327-328.

²¹ Order 1989 minhu ila Sulayman Pasha 6 Jumada al-Thani 1250, *Al- 'awamir w al-mukātabāt alšādīra min 'azīz mišr Muḥammad 'Ali*, 402.

²²Biālšwar ālnādīra .. 'anš'aha Muḥammad 'Ali liḥimaīth .. madrasat aswan alḥarbīa taḡzw almiksīk w 'aka w bilad almanābī' fī alḥabaša, Qina, Maḥmwd Aldiswqy, Al-Ahram <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/478044.aspx>, 28-9-2017, 12:06 pm.

²³ Ali Basha Mubarak, *Alkhiṭaṭ algadida li mišr alqahira w mudanaha w biladha alqadīma w alshahira* (Cairo: Amiri Press, 1305), 67.

²⁴Su'ād Māhir Muḥammad, *Madīat Aswan w 'tārha fī āl'ašr āl'islāmy* (Cairo: Central Agency for University and School Books and Educational Resources, 1977), 19.

²⁵ Interview with the former Head of the Aswan Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department Mr. Magdy Abdin, 13 January 2018.

²⁶ Abdelkarim, *Tarikh Alta'lim fī Misr I.*, 387-388.

²⁷ Interview with the former Head of the Aswan Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department Mr. Magdy Abdin, 13 January 2018.

²⁸ Aswan Magic of the Valley and the Spirit of History; Gamal Mesh'el, Maoso'at albildan al mašria. muḥafazat al wagh alqibly Qina – Luxor – Aswan (vol. IX) (Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 2013), 352.

²⁹ Interview with the former Head of the Aswan Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department Mr. Magdy Abdin, 13 January 2018.

³⁰ Interview with Dr. Ragih, the head of the documents center in the Nubian Museum in Aswan 22 November 2017.

³¹ Interview with the former Head of the Aswan Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department Mr. Magdy Abdin, 13 January 2018.

³² Interview with the former Head of the Aswan Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department Mr. Magdy Abdin, 13 January 2018.

³³

https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9, 3-7-2020, 19:30.