
WEKALAT AL- NEKHELY IN LUXOR BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

Wekalat (وكالة) AL-Nekhely is considered the only remaining Ottoman-era traditional commercial building in Luxor, it was used as a place to store goods and sell merchandise, fabrics, and crops, Merchants would come to it to rest in the rooms and wait for the scheduled market day, which was Tuesday of each week.

There were also designated areas for animals to rest from the fatigue of travel on the ground floor, the merchants came from various places, such as Esna, Asyut, Aswan, and other surrounding areas, Wekalat (وكالة) AL-Nekhely was distinguished from others by selling certain products, including "Al-Habra" or "Al-Malth," which is a wide garment worn by women in Upper Egypt, another unique feature of the Wekalat are the presence of what is known as "Al-Araqa," a small room with a specific temperature where unripe green bananas are placed for two days until they ripen and are sold to the Wekala's merchants.

The research aimed to explore the Wekala's (وكالة) architectural engineering, a layout design was created for it for the first time by researchers and specialists, through field visits and seeing the Wekalat (وكالة) on the ground, it was observed that local materials and traditional building methods were used, during the study note the use of locally available stone in building the walls due to its lightweight, in addition to the use of bricks in building the interior walls due to their ability to withstand high temperatures, unlike stone or marble, wood is also used in the ceiling with ventilation openings in the walls that provide natural ventilation, additionally, plant-based decorations with a local environmental character and Ottoman elements were used, the study depended on the field visits, Descriptive, Documentary, Comparative and Historical Approach

KEYWORDS: Luxor, Wekalat Al Nekhely, Al Araqa, Malath, Environmental.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) One of the most important goals is that the researchers developed a layout for the first time since its establishment by determining its total area and its internal and external divisions.
- 2) Introducing the historical buildings in Luxor such as Wekalat (وكالة) Al Nekhely and studying its architectural style, also mentioning the most important features that distinguish it from the rest of the Wekalat (وكالة).
- 3) Touristic Marketing the Wekala (وكالة) and maximizing the benefit from it.
- 4) Tracking the chronological history of the Wekala up till now.
- 5) Highlighting the importance of the commercial status of Luxor and the commercial goods that were popular at that time, such as "bananas, lentils and Habra".
- 6) Studying the possibility of reviving the monument in a manner consistent with the values and standards of Ottoman heritage.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

- 1) The scarcity of sources and references related to the Wekalat (وكالة) El Nekhely, as it was only mentioned in the book "Luxor in 100 Years" and has never been the focus of any prior research.
- 2) Field visits were used to gather scientific information; the researchers faced difficulty conducting personal interviews and lacked cooperation from Wekala's (وكالة) owners and current tenants of the Wekala's premises.

THE METHODOLOGY

The research depended on the field visits and interviews with the Wekala's (وكالة) owners, descriptive approach by describing the Wekala (وكالة) in detail, and analyzed its architectural elements, documentary approach by documenting information about Wekalat (وكالة) Al Nekhely including its history, commercial activities and architecture elements, comparative and historical methodology with Wekalat (وكالة) Shalabi in Asyut.

Time limit: from 1900 up till now.

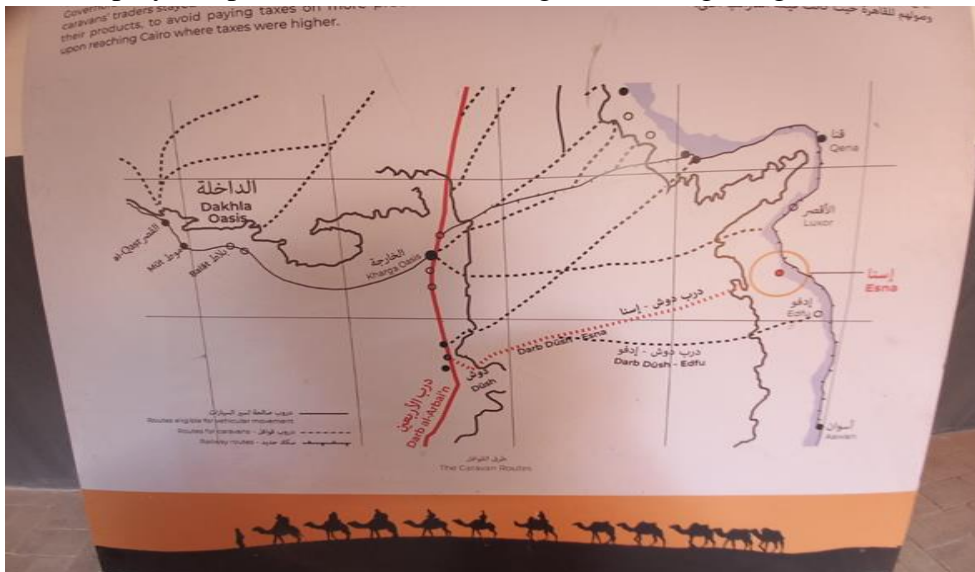
Spatial limit: Luxor, Abdel Hamid Taha Saudi Street, Tourist Market Street (El souq El siyahy).

LITERATURE REVIEW

- الحجاجي، عبد الجواد، ٢٠٠٥م، الأقصر من ١٠٠ عام حيث ذكر وكالة النخيلي بشكل عابر بدون تفاصيل معمارية.
- موسي، رفعت، ١٩٩٣م، الوكالات والبيوت الإسلامية في مصر العثمانية أشار في كتابه إلى أنواع الوكالات العثمانية وتكوينها خلال الحكم العثماني وتطورها.
- محي الدين، محمد محمود، محمد، ٢٠٢٣م، الأعمدة الأجرية بوكالة الجداوي في مدينة إسنا " دراسة أثرية فنية تحليلية " ١٢٠١هـ/ ١١٧٢، مجلة كلية الآثار بقنا، العدد ١٨، ج ٢، تناولت الدراسة الطراز المعماري لوكالة الجداوي والأشكال المختلفة للأعمدة، سواء أكانت أسطوانية أم مثمنة وهذا نفس النمط المستخدم في وكالة النخيلي كما أنه أشار إلى تصميم الوكالات في العصر العثماني في صعيد مصر.
- أحمد، أميمة ٢٠١٩م، المنشآت التجارية بأسبوط في العصر العثماني والعصر الحديث، دراسة أثرية معمارية، رسالة ماجستير، جامعة عين شمس، حيث تناولت شرحا للوكالات بمحافظة أسبوط ومنها وكالة شلبي وتم مقارنتها بوكالة النخيلي بالأقصر.

INTRODUCTION

The upper Egyptian region occupied a pivotal role in the historical development of Egypt during the period of Ottoman rule. This is primarily because it supplied the nation with vital crops and grains, thereby mitigating the effects of recurring economic crises, the oils were stored in skins or pottery jars. Luxor and other regions were renowned for their pottery; farmers played a pivotal role in facilitating the exchange of goods in Cairo.¹



(Fig.1) Map for commercial road
Source: Wekalat El Gedawi in Esna

¹ - جابر، أم هاشم، موسي، عبدالرحمن، ٢٠٢٢م، النشاط الاقتصادي في مدينة إسنا منذ بداية العصر الفاطمي حتي نهاية العصر العثماني، مجلة المعهد العالي للدراسات النوعية، مجلد ٢، العدد ١، الجيزة، ص ٤٢١.

The economic activities of Upper Egypt extended beyond foreign trade to encompass domestic trade, predominantly facilitated through weekly markets in urban and agricultural hubs; a notable example is the ongoing operation of Luxor's market, which is held every Tuesday.²

The Upper Egyptian region was renowned for its production of pottery, sugar and oil, particularly in the cities of Luxor, Esna and Qena³. Wholesale trade, particularly in the context of exports, was conducted in prominent inns designated as Wekalat (وكالة), which were situated in all major cities

Some Upper Egyptian cities were known as trade centers for goods traveling from Aden and Sudan,⁴ such as Qus and Luxor (Fig.1). Yemeni, Indian and Ethiopian merchants and pilgrims traveled there, as did Moroccan and Egyptian pilgrims. Luxor was also a center for trade, collecting cash and goods from India via pilgrims keen to sell their goods.⁵

The following goods were transported from Qena and Luxor to the port of Quseir: cotton fabrics, lettuce oil, wheat and pottery. In addition, Indian fabrics, spices, incense and gum, as well as silk from England, were also traded⁶, the objects were conveyed by caravan from Qena and Luxor to Cairo, Luxor functioned as a commercial center, facilitating trade from Sennar, Darfur, and beyond.⁷

²- Hanna, N.1998, Making Big Money in 1600 (The Life and Times of Ismail Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant), Syracuse University Press, USA.p.6.

³- Walz, T.2018, Egyptian Sudanese Trade in the Ottoman Period to 1882, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aef.p.33>.

⁴- Krätli, G. Lydon, Gh.2011, The Trans-Saharan Book Trade Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa, Walz, T. the paper of Egypt and the Sudan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its re-export to the Bilad Assudan, Copyright 2011AD by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.p.97.

⁵- Le Quesne, C.2000, Quseir - An Ottoman and Napoleonic Fortress on the Red Sea Coast of Egypt, American University, Cairo Press, p 28.

⁶- Shokry, E.2020, Heritage Sites Management Understanding the Interrelation among Heritage, Tourism, and Local Community Urban Demands in Luxor City in Egypt, Der Fakultät für Architektur, Bauingenieurwesen und Stadtplanung der Brandenburgischen Technischen Universität Cottbus-Senftenberg.Germany. p.95.

⁷- عبد المعطي، حسام، ٢٠١٥م، الكارمية في مصر خلال العصر العثماني (٩٢٣- ١٠٤٠ هـ / ١٥١٧ - ١٦٣٠م): أضواء وثائقية جديدة على تجارة التوابل، مجلة أسطور للدراسات التاريخية، عدد ٢، المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات، قطر، ص ص ٥-٦.

Luxor is one of the cities of Upper Egypt with a history dating back to ancient times and different civilizations passed through it, even in the Islamic era, due to the geographical location of the city of Luxor, this contributed to the prosperity of commercial activity through markets and Wekalat, ⁸ (وكالة) historically Luxor was administratively affiliated with the Qena governorate until it gained official governorate status in 2009 AD.⁹

In ancient times, a trade and expedition route was established across the River Nile to the African region, which began during the reign of Hatshepsut, as evidenced by the walls of Hatshepsut's Temple on the west bank, the expedition to Punt is described on a colonnade in her temple; the expedition to the south was a "testimony to the wealth of the country under Hatshepsut's rule and also to her ambition to revive the traditions and glories of the past."¹⁰

Luxor witnessed a period of relative calm during the Ottoman era, which extended from 1517 AD to the early twentieth century in Egypt;¹¹ it remained largely a rural area focused on agriculture, maintaining its importance primarily as an archaeological site with its temples and monuments that attracted the attention of travelers and scholars¹².

Development of infrastructure and architecture was minimal during the Ottoman era, as the empire focused on administrative and economic activities in other parts of Egypt, such as Cairo.¹³

Luxor contains many monuments, including the Omari Mosque, which is considered one of the greatest historical and archaeological mosques in southern Upper Egypt¹⁴, and the mosque and mausoleum of Abu Al-Hajjaj,

⁸ - Pischikova, E. Budka, J. Griffen, K.2014, Thebes in the first millennium BC, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, England, p 11

⁹ - الوقائع المصرية، ٢٠٠٩م، انشئت محافظة الأقصر طبقا للقرار الجمهوري رقم ٣٧٨ لسنة ٢٠٠٩م.

¹⁰ - Mahfouz, S.2023. New Perspectives On the Expeditions to The Land of Punt, Shedet Issue no 10, Faculty of Archaeology, Fayoum University, p149.

¹¹ - دقيل، حسين، ٢٠٢١م، مآذن أثرية من مصر العثمانية، ط١، ببلومانيا للنشر والتوزيع، القاهرة، ص ٦.

¹² - أحمد، عبد العظيم، ٢٠١٥م، التقسيم الإداري لمصر العليا في العصر العثماني، جامعة إفريقيا العالمية، مركز البحوث والدراسات الإفريقية، ص ٢٣.

¹³ - الحجاجي، عبد الجواد، ٢٠٠٥م، الأقصر من ١٠٠ عام، ص ١٠١.

¹⁴ - هريدي، صلاح، ٢٠٠٦م، الصعيد في العصر العثماني (٩٢٣-١٢١٣هـ - ١٥١٧-١٧٩٨م)، عين للدراسات والبحوث الإنسانية والاجتماعية، القاهرة، ص ١٥.

which is considered one of the most important and famous mosques in Luxor Governorate.¹⁵

There was a wekala (وكالة) next to the Al-Maqashqish mosque, and it was demolished in the Luxor beautification project in 1948 AD, and it was built in 1906 by Tawfiq Pacha Andraus¹⁶, there was another wekala (وكالة) in front of Luxor railway station.¹⁷ But it was also demolished, and only the Wekala (وكالة) of Al-Nekhely remains in Luxor which will be discussed in detail, as for the Esna center south of Luxor there is the Wekala (وكالة) of Al-Gadawi, which is older than Al-Nekhely and is located in Khan Al-Shanaqra and is registered as an antiquity.¹⁸

THE APPEARANCE OF WEKALA (وكالة) AND ITS MEANING

During the Ottoman era, Egypt paid great attention to merchants,¹⁹ so it allocated Wekalat (وكالة) for them as centers for trade exchange and established baths, ovens, and places of worship near them, The Arab trade caravans did not stop their journey from Egypt to Damascus and then to Europe, the trade exchange between the East and the West had great importance and influence on the development of industries and art.²⁰

From an architectural perspective the Ottoman era left behind a magnificent architectural legacy that demonstrates the greatness of this state²¹, which extended over vast areas of Europe, Asia and Africa, and influenced the development of urban planning and the addition of many architectural elements that did not exist before,²² The spread of these Wekalat (وكالة) is

¹⁵ - Samir, Sh. Sahry, M.2021, Abu Ayad Mosque in Luxor, Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality(JAAUTH), Vol22, No5, p19.

¹⁶ - Hesham, E.2020, Heritage Sites Management Understanding the Interrelation among Heritage, Tourism, and Local Community Urban Demands in Luxor City in Egypt, Faculty of Architecture, Construction Engineering and City Planning of the Brandenburg Technical University of Cottbus–Senftenberg, Germany.P104.

¹⁷ - أحمد، أميمة، ٢٠١٩م، المنشآت التجارية بأسبوط في العصر العثماني والعصر الحديث، دراسة أثرية معمارية، رسالة ماجستير، جامعة عين شمس ص ٧٥.

¹⁸ - الحجاجي، عبد الجواد، ٢٠٠٥م، الأقصر من ١٠٠ عام، ص ١٠١.

¹⁹ - أبو الحاج، رفعت، ١٩٩١م، تشكيل الدولة الحديثة: الدولة العثمانية من القرن السادس عشر إلى القرن الثامن عشر، جامعة ولاية نيويورك، ص ٢٢١.

²⁰ - زهران، جيهان، ٢٠٢٣م، مقارنة بين وكالة الغوري في العصر المملوكي ووكالة بازرة في العصر العثماني، مجلة التراث والتصميم مج ٣ عدد ١٧، جامعة حلوان، ص ١٥٣.

²¹ - حامد، عبير، عبد الرحمن، دعاء نجيب، ليناء، ٢٠٢٠م، التصميم الداخلي والعمارة الإسلامية في مصر بين الماضي والحاضر، ببلومانيا للنشر والتوزيع، القاهرة، ص ٥٣.

²² - محمد جاد، ناريمان، ٢٠٢٤م، العمارة العثمانية الإسلامية في مصر.

evidence of commercial prosperity which appeared in the cities of Lower and Upper Egypt, with some differences between them in the elements of space, building materials, and architectural formation.²³

Merchants used to come from all the countries of the East to Egypt, and they would stay in the Wekalat (وكالة) or Egyptian khans to sell valuable goods through barter and exchange operations,²⁴ Among the most important goods were precious incense and scented woods from India, silk and porcelain vessels from China embroidered textiles from the Levant while embroidered Persian carpets from Persia, All of these used to meet in the Egyptian khans and Wekalat.(وكالة)²⁵

At that time, merchant groups used to gather in one market, just like any craft group, each market had a craftsman who knew the ins and outs of the craft,²⁶ The richest merchants held the position of craftsman who was then called the "Shah Bandar of merchants"* The job of the Shah Bandar of merchants was to directly supervise all merchants, craftsmen and retail merchants spread across the market, His duties also included resolving disputes between merchants, and he also regulated the internal affairs of merchants in trade.²⁷

The "Wakala" (وكالة) is a type of building that first appeared in Egypt during the Fatimid era before the existence of the Wekala (وكالة), wholesale trade was carried out in markets and inns; it is a building to serve wholesale trade

(<https://www.rehla.academy/post/ottoman-islamic-architecture-in-egypt>.accessed in November 11.2024)

²³- ابن ابيك، ١٩٧٢م، كنز الدرر وجامع الغرر، الدر المطلوب في أخبار بني أيوب، ج٧، المعهد الألماني للأثار، القاهرة، الدوا دار، ص ٣٠٤.

²⁴-<https://gate.ahram.org.eg/daily/News/203541/1171/783180/%D9%8D8%A9.aspx>, accessed in October 5, 2024.

²⁵- ابن إياس، محمد، ١٩٤٨م، بدائع الزهور في وقائع الدهور، ج٥، تحقيق محمد مصطفى، الهيئة العامة للكتاب، القاهرة، ص ص ١٣٢ - ١٣١.

*It is a Persian word meaning chief merchant or sheikh of merchants. It was used during the Ottoman era in Egypt on permanent architectural monuments such as the house of Jamal al-Din al-Dhahabi, the holder of the title had to be of good conduct and reputation and his word was respected by merchants and the government (see Islamic Wekalat and houses in Ottoman Egypt).

²⁶- عبدالرحمن، عبدالرحيم، ١٩٨٥م، نشوء الرأسمالية المصرية المحلية خلال العصر العثماني، مجلة كلية الدراسات الإسلامية، جامعة الأزهر، القاهرة، ص ٥١.

²⁷- جمال الدين، أبي الفضل، ١٩٥٦م، لسان العرب، ج١٣، مادة خون، الفنادق والفندقة، دار صادر، بيروت، ص ١١٦.

especially imported trade²⁸, Its primary function was to receive merchants and store their goods provide places for them to stay and sell the goods through an agent for the merchants who represents them in selling trade and carries out all banking and commercial work from this came the name of the Wekala (وكالة).²⁹

The word "Wekala"(وكالة) is used in Egypt as a synonym for the words "Qaysariya" or "Fondaq" or as described by one of the travelers who visited Egypt in 12 AH/18 AD,³⁰The Wekala (وكالة) in commercial terminology in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages is not what is known as a commercial Wekala (وكالة) today but rather it is a large commercial store in which everything is sold.³¹

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN OF WEKALAT (وكالة) DURING THE OTTOMAN ERA IN EGYPT

Wekalat (وكالة) consisted of doors that may be multiple with multiple facades shops, three or four floors and rooms for their owners and the merchants who came to live in them,³²It also consists of separate warehouses on the ground floor of the Wekala (وكالة), all of which overlook an open courtyard from the inside.³³ It is equipped with all services and facilities for such purposes, Goods were also stored in the warehouses located on the ground floor in addition to places designated for animals in the Wekalat (وكالة).³⁴

The first floor consists of an entrance leading to a corridor with a kitchen and a bathroom on one side, and on the other side a staircase leading to the upper floors of the residential unit, this corridor ends with an entrance to the hall, which consists of a hall floor with a single iwan opening onto it, the upper

²⁸- الباشا، حسن، ١٩٩٠م، مدخل إلى الآثار الإسلامية، دار النهضة العربية، مطبعة جامعة القاهرة، ص ١٥١.
²⁹- هاشم، علا إبراهيم، أحمد، أميرة، ٢٠١٦م، دراسة تحليلية للعمارة الإسلامية في العصر المملوكي وكيفية الاستفادة منها في مجال التصميم الداخلي (وكالة السلطان الغوري بحى الأزهر)، مجلة العمارة والفنون والعلوم الإنسانية، العدد ٢، القاهرة، ص ٥.
³⁰- موسي، رفعت ١٩٩٣م، الوكالات والبيوت الإسلامية في مصر العثمانية، الدار المصرية اللبنانية، القاهرة، ص ٥٣.

³¹- لمعي، صالح، ١٩٨٤م، التراث المعماري الإسلامي في مصر، جامعة بيروت، بيروت، ص ٦٠.
³²- موسي، رفعت، مرجع سبق ذكره، ص ص ٦٦-٦٧.
³³- زهران، جيهان، ٢٠٢٣م، مقارنة بين وكالة الغوري في العصر المملوكي ووكالة بازعة في العصر العثماني، ص ١٥٩.

³⁴- Al-Zoheiry, M.2019, The former Wekala of Dawood Basha in Rosetta – Egypt, As an example of Islamic agencies, International Journal of Cultural Inheritance & Social Sciences (IJCIS), Vol. 1 Issue 2, p81.

floors of each unit consist of only a bathroom and a hall, The residential unit may consist of only one floor with another residential unit above it.³⁵

(1) THE LOCATION OF WEKALAT (وكالة) AL NEKHELY

If one were to be granted the opportunity to select a location for their commercial activities, it would prove challenging to identify a more distinguished site than that of "Wekalat Al Nekhely" (وكالة النخيلي) in Luxor (fig.2).

The Wekala (وكالة) is positioned in such a manner that it commands a direct view of the site which formerly constituted the city's primary market square. The Wekala (وكالة) is situated a short distance from both the Luxor Temple and the Abu El-Hajjaj Mosque, and is located along the city's primary commercial axis. This location is indicative of its status as one of Luxor's most prestigious buildings. Wekalat (وكالة) Al Nekhely is a renowned heritage landmark in Luxor, his construction of the building predates 1900. The establishment was host to a considerable number of merchants and guests, and could be considered a hotel for merchants. It offered accommodation, overnight stays and storage facilities for goods.³⁶



(Fig.2) The main entrance of Wekalat Al Nekhely

Source: Luxor in 100 years, El Hagagy, 2005

The site is situated in Luxor City on Abdel Hamid Taha Street (El Berka Street) *, in the Tourist Market Street (El Souq El Siyahy), approximately 400 m from the mosque of Abu Elhagag and parallel to the Sphinx Avenue, which connects the Luxor Temple and the Karnak Temples, one of the

³⁵- ناصر، أحمد، ٢٠٢٠م، الوكالات الأثرية، مجلة حراء، العدد ٨١، (https://hiragate.com).

³⁶- A telephone conversation was conducted on December 28, 2024, with Professor Dr. Abdel Gawad El-Hagagy, former Director General of Islamic and Coptic Antiquities in Luxor.

residents in the area stated that Luxor was divided into old Luxor and New Luxor in the past, with the Wekala (وكالة) located in the New Luxor area, which was recently built compared to the houses. The subjects were already positioned adjacent to the Sphinx Street.³⁷

(2) THE OWNER OF WEKALAT (وكالة) AL NEKHELY

The Wekala (وكالة) was owned by one of the sons of Nakhila in Asyut, Abd al-Rahman Al-Nekhely, who settled in Luxor Governorate and is considered one of the prominent figures in the history of trade in Luxor, as he contributed to the development of trade relations between Luxor and other cities, which made the Wekala (وكالة) a vital center for trade.³⁸



(Fig.3) over view of Wekalat Al Nekhely
Source: taken by researcher

³⁷- The researcher conducted a field visit on 28 November 2024.

*It was named El Beraka Street because in the past there was a pool of water in this area from which animals would drink.

³⁸ -An interview was conducted with Professor Nermeen Muhammad Najdi, a renowned journalist and heritage researcher and official Media Spokesperson for Luxor Governorate, on 12 January 2025.

It is also known that Asyut was famous for its commercial Wekalat (وكالة) in the Mamluk and Ottoman eras, due to the distance of the Upper Egypt cities from the trade movement in the capital to the north, and also due to its proximity to merchants coming from Sudan, such as the Darfur and Kordofan regions via the Forty Road (Darb- Elarbeen),³⁹ The wekalat (وكالة) are inhabited by merchants from the lower middle class who are immigrants from the cities.

It seems that this wealthy merchant who established the Wekala (وكالة) of Nekhely was influenced by the wekalat (وكالة) in Asyut in the Qaysariya area adjacent to the Sidi Jalal Mosque area, which still has a several wekalat (وكالة) such as Wekalat (وكالة) Lofty, Wekalat (وكالة) Thabet, and Wekalat (وكالة) Shalabi, which suggests that the founder was influenced by these wekalat (وكالة) and established Wekalat (وكالة) Al Nekhely in Luxor, in addition to Wekalat (وكالة) Al-Jaddawi in Esna, this is very similar to Wekalat (وكالة) Al Nekhely in design and architectural elements.⁴⁰ (Fig3).

When the researcher recorded with Mattah the son of Elia he said that; Abdul Rahman rented the Wekala (وكالة) to a person named Elia Matta for 5 Egyptian pounds, then sold it to the Zakhari family for 3,000 pounds and it is still rented to Elia to this day.⁴¹

(3) ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN OF WEKALAT AL NEKHELY

The Wekala (وكالة) is distinguished by its wonderful architecture, as it contains beautiful arches. This is distinguished by its unique architectural design that reflects the Ottoman style, the Wekala (وكالة) is built approximately on an area of 480 meters. (The layout of the Wekala (وكالة) is made by the researchers).

Its layout is a square open central courtyard and consists of 3 floors and 30 rooms. The ground floor is for storing goods and sometimes for tying camels, donkeys and mules that merchants used to move between countries in the past to sell their goods and collect their money. (Fig4) Mud bricks and bricks were used in the construction

³⁹ - عبد الرؤوف، عماد، ١٩٩٣م، الوكالات العثمانية الباقية بمدينة القاهرة دراسة أثرية معمارية، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ص ٢٥.

⁴⁰ -Telephonic conversation with Professor Ahmed Al-Jard, author and archaeological researcher in Luxor, on 25 December 2024

⁴¹ -A personal interview was conducted on 28 November 2024 AD by the researcher with Mr. Mattah Elia, son of the current tenant of the Wekalat Al-Nekhely.



(Fig.4) using mud brick and qasmral in Wekala

Source: taken by researcher

Bricks were used in arches, doors, frames, windows, columns, supports and external walls, palm trunks, palm fronds and wood were used for the ceilings. The mortar consists of silt, straw and fermented Qasmral⁴² together as an adhesive between the molds and the courses.

⁴²-Qasmral is the ash resulting from burning kilns or waste from burning garbage in baths or ovens and lime kilns. Qasmral consists of silane, alumina, iron oxide and other materials. (محي الدين، محمد. محمود، محمد. ٢٠٢٣،) الأعمدة الأجرية بوكالة الجداوي في مدينة إسنا "دراسة أثرية تقنية تحليلية" ١٢٠١هـ/١١٧٢م، مجلة كلية الآداب بقرقا، العدد ١٨، ج٢، ق٢٢٢. ص. ٦٢٢.

WEKALAT SHALABI IN ASYUT:

Wekalat (وكالة) Shalabi situated in Asyut (fig.5) Governorate (Qaysariyah, west of Asyut City), is considered to be one of the oldest commercial wekala (وكالة) the Wekala's history dates back to the Ottoman era, and it was influenced by the same Ottoman architectural style; it was built by Muhammad Jalabi in 1824 AD, then owned by Naila Khatun and Amna Mohammed Bekzada.⁴³



(Fig.5) Over view of Wekalat Shalabi in Asyut

Source: <https://www.babmsr.com>

The wekala (وكالة) was a destination for merchants travelling from distant lands, where they would find rest from the wear and tear of their journey, particularly as the market was situated along Darb al-Alarbaeen, the oldest trade route. This wekala is currently under the jurisdiction of the Islamic Antiquities Authority.⁴⁴

The wekala (وكالة) was built as a shelter for merchants travelling between trade caravans, it has a rectangular central courtyard for animals with containers on the first floor for storing goods, the upper floor has rooms for the merchants to live and rest also can found a group of shops on the main

The wekala (وكالة) includes 19 rooms on the first floor, these are small rooms, some of which have circular domes covered by shallow brick domes, each room has a rectangular door opening covered by semi-circular domes for ventilation.

⁴³ - طاهر، عادل، ١٩٩٨م، السياحة ماضيها وحاضرها ومستقبلها، ط١، مؤسسة روز اليوسف، القاهرة، ص ١٧٣.

⁴⁴ - A telephone conversation was conducted with Dr. Azza Abdel Nasser, on 5 March 2025 who is employed as an Antiquities Inspector in Asyut.

The second floor consisted of another 19 rooms of varying sizes, (fig.6) some square and some rectangular, roofed with palm trunks, the ottomans designed the second floor as a rest area for the men and sultans' harem, it also includes a wooden balcony overlooking the entrance to the wekala (وكالة) to allow the sultan's harem to look outward without being exposed to passersby.⁴⁵

The wekala (وكالة) is unique in that it has a wing for the merchant's family and children. It is separate from the rest of the wekala (وكالة).



(Fig.6) Rooms in second floor in Wekalat Shalabi

Source: <https://www.babmsr.com>

⁴⁵ - <https://www.babmsr.com/%D9%88%D9%83%D8%A7> accessed on 25 April 2025.

COMPARATIVE BETWEEN WEKALAT (وكالة) AL NEKHELY AND WEKALAT (وكالة) SHALABI

Comparisons	Wekalet el Nekhely	Wekalat Shalabi.
Location	Luxor	Asyut
Date of Establishment	1900 AD	1824 AD
The owner	Abd E Rahman el Nekhely then rented to Elia Mattah	Muhammad Jalabi Mustafa Al-Kashif Bey Zada then became owned by Nailakhatun and Amna Mohammed bekzada
The design	It consisted of 3 floor	It consisted of 2 floor
Number of rooms	30 room with 5 shops	38 room with 6 shops
Building materials	Mud brick with palm trunks in ceiling	Red brick with palm trunks in ceiling
The most distinguishing feature of the wekala	Al araq room and sell products such as "al-Habra which known as "al-Mallaz	The wekala is unique in that it has a wing for the merchant's family and children. It is separate from the rest of the wekala.

4) INTER-SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

The way the builders have crafted the Wekala's (وكالة) creativity in using local, recyclable building materials reflects their ingenuity and awareness of the surrounding context, resulting in an environmentally sustainable and climate- responsive building. (fig.7).



(Fig.7) preparing mud bricks in the sun in 1923
Source: Stratton.U<https://www.ebay.com/itm/1>



(Fig.8) using the palm trunks in ceiling and the malqaf for ventilation
Source: taken by researcher

If you happen to enter the Wekala (وكالة) on a hot summer day, you will feel that the temperature inside the building is cooler than outside, this is no coincidence, but rather the result of the Wekala's (وكالة) builders' craftsmanship, (fig.8) for example, the courtyard's shape and semi-covered roof allow for adequate ventilation and lighting of the building, while providing just the right amount of shade to reduce the internal temperature, this is what is called the "malqaf", which was one of the distinctive elements in buildings, especially in hot regions.⁴⁶



(Fig.9) The open court yard of the Wekala

Source: taken by researcher

In addition to this climate-responsive design, the use of locally available and recyclable building materials reflects a degree of environmental sensitivity. Given the scarcity of building materials, the Wekala's (وكالة) builders used

⁴⁶ - Lotfy, Sh.1998, Islamic architecture in Egypt (Theory and Practices) a Thesis submitted to obtain Ph.D. Faculty of Engineering, Asyut University.p.145. (<https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/ss-48112301/48112301>).

Nile silt in various forms as mud bricks,⁴⁷ (fired) clay bricks, floor tiles (gypsum bricks), and mortar and white paint for the walls, They also used readily available palm trunks and fronds for the roof, (fig.9)given the scarcity of wood in Luxor they used it carefully to

give the building elegance and splendor, these builders were creative in using the limited building materials available to them to produce such a magnificent product. (fig.10)

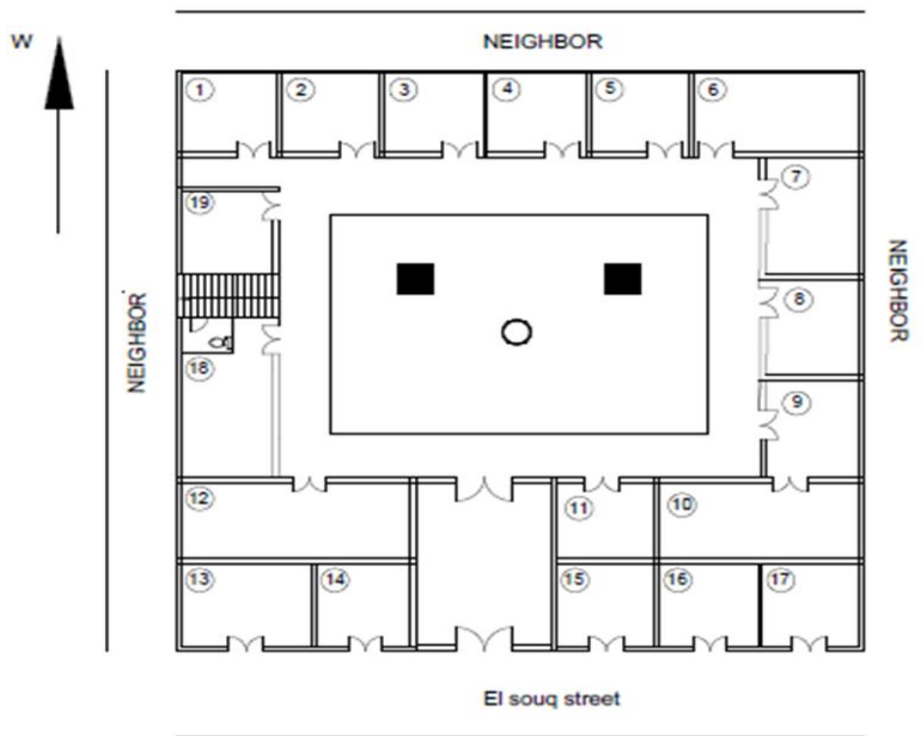
In addition, cost-effective materials such as brick and timber were used in areas of the building where they were most needed, Because of their load-bearing properties, builders used them in areas requiring higher structural performance and because of their aesthetic appeal, and they were used in areas most visible to Wekala (وكالة) users such as the entrance and courtyard areas.⁴⁸



(Fig.10) using the wood in doors
Source: taken by researcher

⁴⁷ The field visit was conducted by the researcher on 17 January 2025 AD.

⁴⁸ -The field visit was conducted by the researcher on 25 December 2024 AD.



(Fig.11) the plan of Wekalat el Nekhely (first floor)
Made by researcher

(5) THE MAIN FACADE OF THE WEKALA (وكالة)

The main entrance of the Wekala(وكالة) located on the eastern side and overlooks the main street (El Souq Street), (fig.11)bordered to the west, north and the south sides by local neighbors and modern buildings, the eastern side has 5 shops, distributed as follow 3 of which are to the right of the gate and 2 are located to the left, these shops made of double-leaf a wooden door, its area about 3*3 m, these shops were designated for selling fabrics in Arabic and are called (Mini Fatoura) but now for touristic Bazar, the entrance facade takes the shape of rectangular entrance made of brick courses with a door topped by a semicircular arch written with the Wekalet (وكالة)AL Nekhely on it.

(6) THE WEKALA (وكالة) FROM THE INSIDE

The Wekala(وكالة) contains a first floor with an open central courtyard and 14 rooms. The second floor contains another 14 rooms, while the third floor consists of an open roof but contains two rooms made of mud bricks, The

Wekala (وكالة) rests on two main brick columns. Columns are one of the most important architectural structural elements in buildings. The brick columns on the ground floor are the main base that carries the ceiling of the upper floor; there is water well in the middle to supply the Wekala (وكالة) with water and for the animals to drink.⁴⁹

A) THE OPEN COURTYARD

The architect was interested in establishing the columns of the courtyard with a strong foundation because they carry a high and huge architectural weight, so a foundation was built for them in the interior of the ground.

This base with its circular shape which is much larger in circumference than the circumference of the column to distribute the load of it and consider it the best strength to bear the enormity of the building.

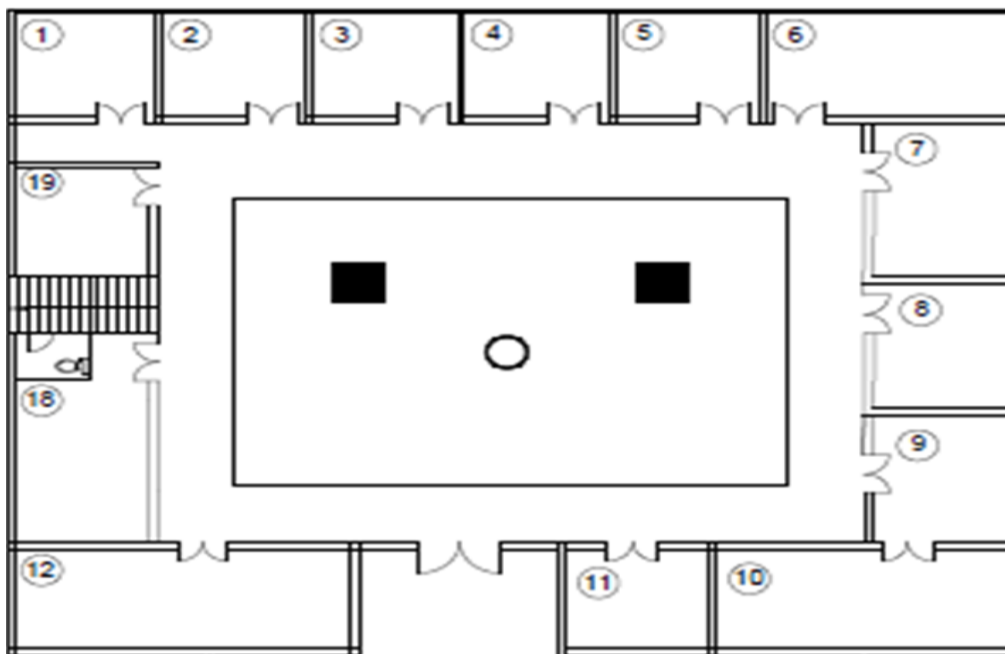


(Fig.12) the lower part of the column in the courtyard
Source: taken by researcher

⁴⁹ - The field visit was conducted by the researcher on 15 December 2024 AD.

The lower part of the columns (fig.12) was restored by the current owner of the Wekala (وكالة) with a layer of cement, the upper part of the columns which is the original part remains clear.

There is a corridor in front of the rooms on the ground floor, and the ceiling of this corridor is made of wooden blocks. Behind the corridor is a group of rooms surrounding the four sides, which were used for trade, buying and selling products that were displayed by merchants coming and passing through the city, they are rectangular rooms closed by a double-leaf wooden door, the rooms from 1 to 6 roofed with palm trunks and palm fronds (fig.13) while from 7 to 19 roofed with wood, the area of rooms about 3*5. We can notice that the room number 10 opened on room number 9. While rooms numbers 1 and 6 almost destroyed with a partially collapsed roof. Room number 18 used for selling Geba and Habra*⁵⁰. What distinguishes the Wekala(وكالة) is room number 19, known as “al-Arqa”, which is a small room with a specific temperature in which, unripe green bananas are placed for two days until they ripen and are sold to the Wekala's(وكالة) merchants.



(Fig.13) the plan of first floor with 2 columns and a well
Made by researcher

⁵⁰*Geba and al-Habra or what is called "al-Mallaz", which is a wide robe worn by the women of Upper Egypt

All rooms do not have any decorations and we note that above each room is a small window to provide natural ventilation and it was called the Malqaf*,⁵¹ We clearly see from the pictures that the courtyard was seized by the current owners of shops and tourist bazaars and used the courtyard as warehouses for them to put their goods. From the left side there is a staircase leading to second floor with a sided bathroom to serve the merchants in this floor. (fig.14)



(Fig.14) staircase leading to second floor
Source: taken by researcher

(B) THE SECOND FLOOR

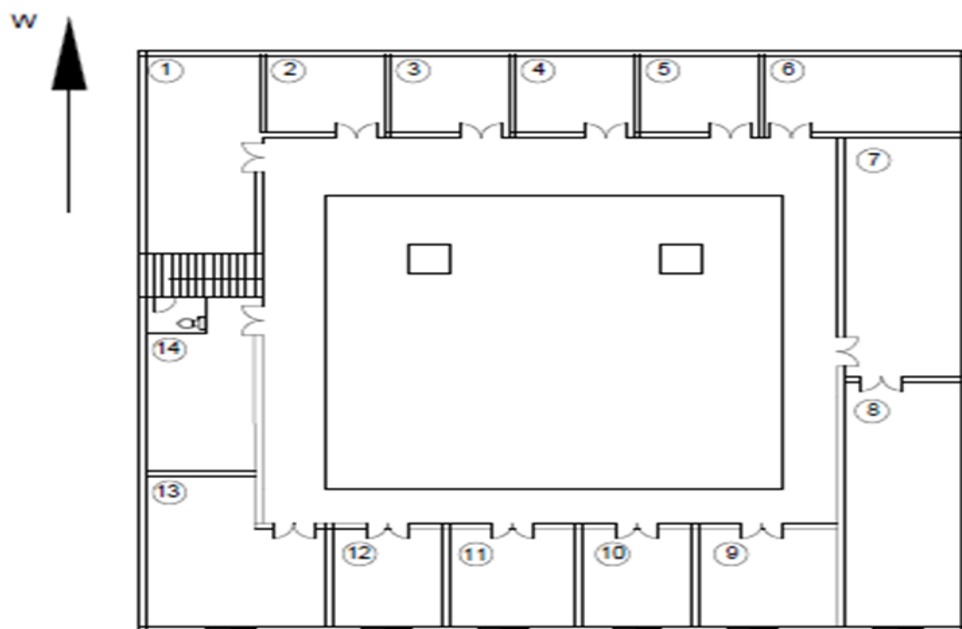
From the southern side we go up to the upper floor through a door made of wood leading to a staircase, each step of which consists of a frame made of wood and mud bricks, before reaching to the upper floor we found a small bathroom, here we see the extent of the builder's keenness to provide a

⁵¹- The Malqaf is an element of environmental treatments to attract cold air and quickly enter the space to create a difference in the temperature of the space (for details see)

عكاشه، ثروت. ١٩٩٤م، القيم الجمالية في العمارة الإسلامية تاريخ الفن العين تسمع والأذن تري، ط١، دار الشروق. ص٨٣.

simple building of a special nature with a bathroom to serve those who carry out all commercial activities through the Wekala and shops, as some of them include strangers and travelers, from the Egyptian who stay for a period to complete the sale and purchase of the goods they brought, or those they buy to return to their countries, which requires washing and purification for prayer, or from the fatigue of travel.

When we reach to this floor, (fig.15) we find a corridor that precedes the rooms and is exposed. This corridor has a wooden railing consisting of three parts: the upper part is semicircular and open, and the middle part consists of plant decorations resembling tree leaves.⁵² As for the lower part, it consists of rectangular and square units cast from wood. Unfortunately, some parts of the railing are destroyed. The rooms numbers 7 and 8 are the biggest rooms in this floor about 8*6 m while the others about 3*4 m. The rooms from number 9 to 13 are overlooking on the main street with double- wooden windows. Also we find another bathroom in this floor to serve residents of merchants inside the rooms.⁵³



(Fig.15) plan of the second floor
Made by researcher

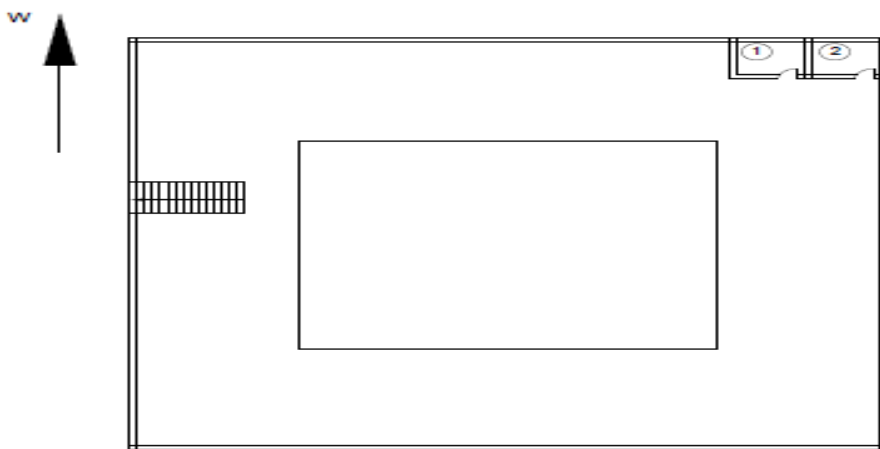
⁵² - The field visit was conducted by the researcher on 20 December 2024 AD.

⁵³ -The field visit was conducted by the researcher on 25 December 2024 AD.

(C) THE THIRD FLOOR

This floor (fig.16) is reached by a staircase with a wooden railing. (fig.17) the floor is an open roof with two unroofed mud brick rooms may be were roofed in ancient time, these rooms used for bathing, one of them for showering and another for ablution.

We see in this roof some wooden benches and chairs that were probably used in the Wekala (وكالة) and are considered its furniture. (fig18, 19) There are also small windows overlooking the main street through this floor.



(Fig. 16) plane of the third floor
Made by researcher



(Fig.17) A wooden railing in the corridor of the second floor
Source: taken by researcher



(Fig. 18, 19) rooms of the third floor
Source: taken by researcher

CONCLUSION

The Wekala (وكالة) of AL Nekhely represents a significant historical landmark as the sole extant heritage commercial edifice in Luxor that dates back to the Ottoman era and continues to stand as a testament to the city's architectural heritage up to the present day.

Merchants were wont to visit the Wekala (وكالة) on Tuesdays, the designated commercial market for the sale of fabrics and crops. Some came the day before and rested. In addition, a designated area was allocated for animals to seek respite from the fatigue associated with travel. The merchants hailed from various locations, including Esna, Asyut, and Aswan, among others. The Wekala (وكالة) was distinguished by its commercial activities, which included the sale of various products. Among these was "al-Habra", also referred to as "al-Mallaz", a robe of a particularly wide nature that was traditionally worn by women in Upper Egypt. The Wekala (وكالة) is distinguished by the presence of "al-Arqa", which is a chamber at a specific temperature where unripe green bananas are placed for a period of two days until they reach full ripeness. At this point, they are sold to the merchants of the Wekala (وكالة).

The study revealed the use of building materials in the Wekala (وكالة) according to their function. Stone, available in the local environment, was

used in the construction of walls due to its light weight. Bricks were used in the construction of interior walls due to their ability to withstand high temperatures, unlike stone or marble. Finally, wood was present in the ceiling, with ventilation holes in the walls that worked to provide natural ventilation. The decorative elements of the plant life depicted herein are characterized by their incorporation of local environmental features and ottoman elements, in addition to geometric shapes.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development and restoration of the Wekalat (وكالة) AL Nekhely in Luxor could have a significant impact on the local economy and tourism in general. It will help to increase the area's tourist appeal and transform it into a leading tourist destination that reflects the beauty and rich history of Luxor. Here are some recommendations to achieve this:

1. Restoring the Wekala (وكالة), modernizing its infrastructure and preserving its historic character will help attract tourists to the area.
2. Organize cultural and artistic events, such as exhibitions and musical performances, that highlight the local heritage and attract visitors.
3. Provide guided tours that highlight local history and culture.
4. Use social media and digital platforms to promote Wekalat (وكالة) Al Nekhely as a unique tourist destination.
5. Work with tourism companies and travel agencies to integrate the Wekala (وكالة) into tourism programs.
6. Establish tourist information centers and provide them with maps and brochures in different languages.
7. To recommend to the Luxor Governorate and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to intervene quickly to save the Agency building and to register the Wekalat (وكالة) AL Nekhely as an archaeological site. The building witnessed a significant commercial era and is the only remaining agency in Luxor. Previously, two agencies existed but were demolished: one was next to the Mashqash Mosque and the other was in front of Luxor railway station.
8. Develop visitor facilities such as restaurants, cafes and shops selling local handicrafts.
9. Strengthen partnerships with the local community and investors to develop the area in a sustainable way.

10. Get locals involved in tourism and run awareness programs on heritage conservation and interacting with tourists.

DOCUMENTATION OF FIELD COLLECTION

Name	Age	Date
Raafat Naeem Ebiad	65	2/11/2024
Nabil Naeem Ebiad	63	2/11/2024
Adel Nazeem Adly	65	5/11/2024
Megalea Mekheel Ebiad	57	25/12/2024
Elia Mattah Bebawy	66	25/12/2024
Gorge Shafeek Amin	58	15/12/2024
Mattah Elia Mattah	40	28/11/2024
Zakhary Twadres Naseem	50	5/11/2024
Naseem Salama Adel	59	17/1/2025
Nermeen Mohamed Nagdi	38	12/1/2025
Abd El Gawad El Haggahi	77	20/12/2024
Azza Abdel Naser	37	5/3/2025
Ahmed Al-Jard	45	28/12/2024

Interview Template

GENERAL INFORMATION

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee Name (optional): _____

Location of Interview: _____

Building Name/Location: _____

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Question	Response
1. How long have you lived in this area?	
2. Do you know when this building was constructed?	
3. Has the purpose of the building changed over time? If yes, how?	

SECTION 2: PERSONAL CONNECTION

Question	Response
4. What does this building mean to you personally?	
5. Do you have any stories, memories, or experiences related to it?	
6. How do people in the neighborhood feel about the building?	

SECTION 3: CULTURAL & HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Question	Response
7. Are there any historical events associated with this building?	
8. Is the building connected to any famous person or local figure?	
9. Do you know of any legends, rumors, or folklore about the building?	

SECTION 4: CURRENT CONDITION & COMMUNITY USE

Question	Response
10. What is the building used for today?	
11. Is it well maintained? Who looks after it?	
12. Has it ever been used for public events or community activities?	

SECTION 5: PRESERVATION & FUTURE

Question	Response
13. Do you think the building should be preserved? Why or why not?	
14. What changes (if any) would you like to see?	
15. Are there any preservation or renovation plans you're aware of?	

SECTION 6: COMMERCIAL PART

Question	Response
16. What kinds of goods or services were traded in this building?	
17. Was this building used as a caravanserai or inn for traveling merchants?	
18. Were there storage rooms, shops, or offices inside the building?	
19. Did the building include residential spaces for traders or workers?	
20. Was this building an important center of trade in the area?	
21. Did merchants from other cities or countries come here?	
22. How did the building affect the local economy or market activity?	
23. Were there specific days for trade or markets held near this place?	
24. Did local residents interact with merchants or workers in the building?	
25. Were there any conflicts, agreements, or historical events related to the building's commercial activity?	

26. Were there any traditions or cultural habits associated with trade in this location?	
27. Do people still remember the building's commercial role?	
28. Are there any old signs, inscriptions, or markings left from its trading days?	
29. Do you think its past as a trade center is still visible or known today?	

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