

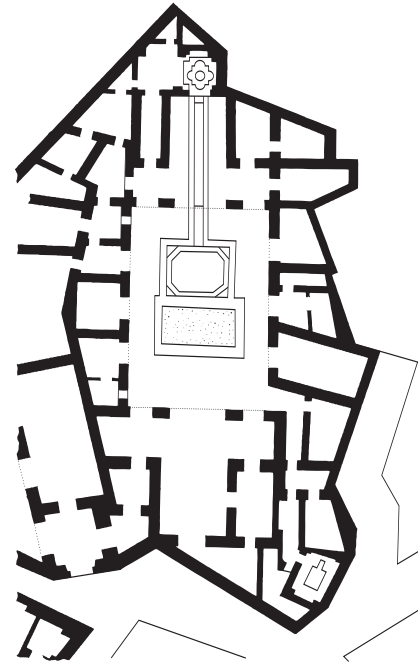
CIVIL WORKS

Al-Qahira was developed within the nearly square compound defended by the walls and divided by a north–south axial artery which may still be traced. The great palaces of state in the centre and the suburban garden pavilions, to which the caliph resorted for relaxation, have disappeared but several houses datable to c. 1100 have been uncovered in old Fustat. Related to the palace as described by contemporaries – but naturally on a much smaller scale and ingeniously distributed on irregular plots – these are invariably centred on a courtyard and some have opposed iwans beyond lateral halls like the bayts of Samarra and the throne room of Mahdia. The type had doubtless been translated to Fustat at least as early as the Tulunid era.^{1.74}

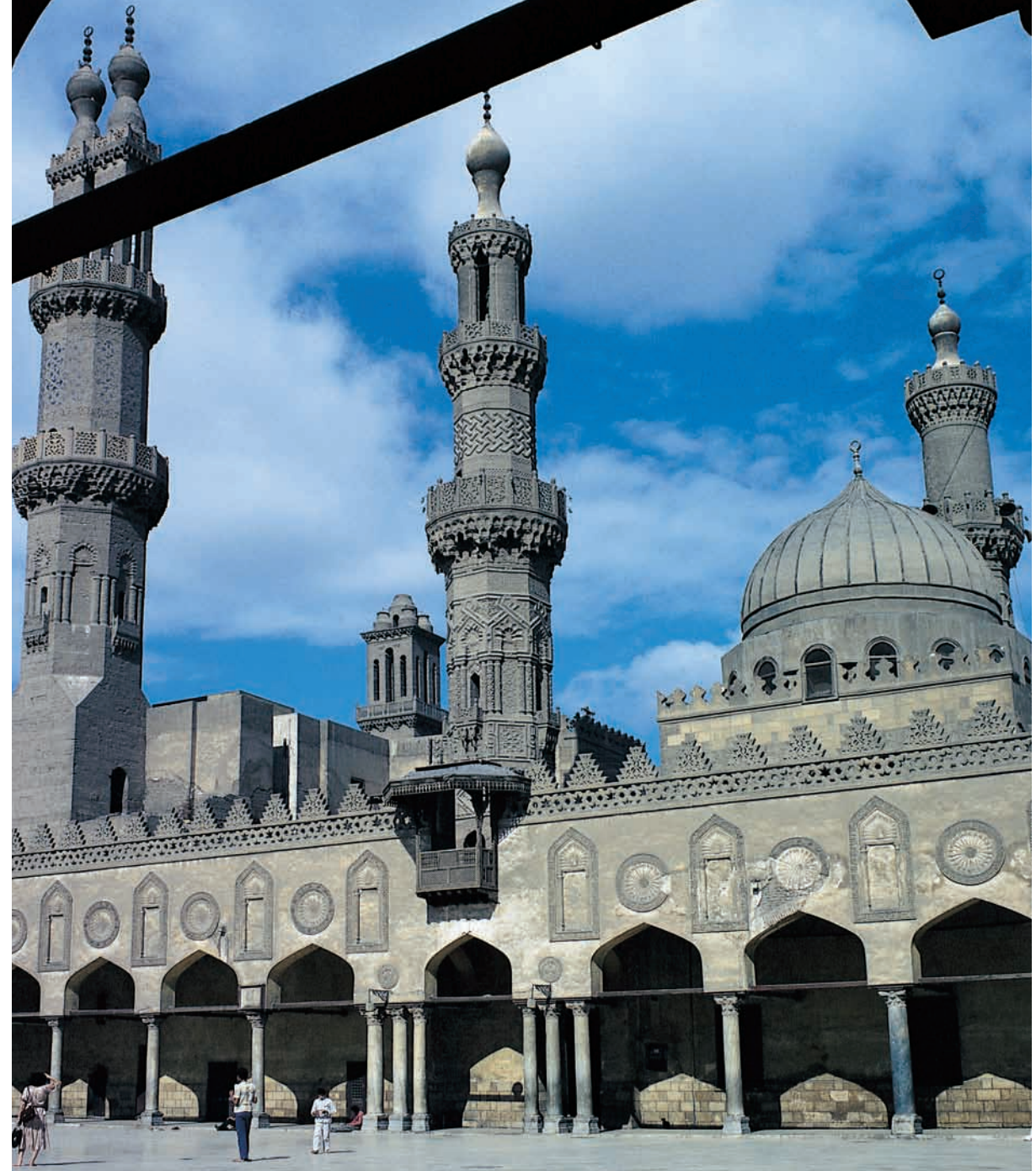
METROPOLITAN MOSQUES

The Fatimids renovated the several important mosques in the Holy Lands of their conquests, notably al-Aqsa in Jerusalem where they were responsible for the lavish mosaics of the mihrab bay. In Cairo three outstanding mosques survive from their era. Two of these were of imperial scale: al-Azhar, founded before the transfer of the capital in 972 and thereafter the collegiate centre of radical Shi'ite propaganda in the new empire, and the even larger al-Hakim built outside the north gate from c. 990 evidently to accommodate the retinues of caliph and vassals participating in the perennial ceremony of allegiance renewal.^{1.75}

After the mid-11th-century crisis the regime lacked means and motive for grand projects. In contrast to self-assertive structures on distinct sites, mosque building was reduced to the intimate scale of local centres of prayer confined to restricted sites in the existing warren of streets: a prime example is the al-Aqmar Mosque of c. 1125. A generation later, the mosque of al-Salih Tala'i was able to impose regularity on its extra-mural commercial site.^{1.76}



1.74 @ 1:500
1.74 CAIRO, LATE-FATIMID HOUSE FROM AL-FUSTAT: plan.



1.75a