

Ahlul Bait's (as) Shrines In Egypt

Love & Glosification

By: Ali Abdul Ghaffar & Hoda Korani

One wonders: What Land has embraced that holy head? And what soul had the honor of winning it? And in what country was the heroine of Karbala, the great lady of the Hashim caln, Lady Zainab, was Buried?

Imam Hussein's head was taken from one country to another, and his women were taken prisoners as an act of schadenfreude of the Apostle household's misfortunes, but the plot backfired, for wherever they made a stop you can find a mausoleum or a shrine built to glorify this great Imam and to immortalize his revolution throughout the ages. As for Lady Zainab, the daughter of the leader of the faithful (as), the faithful hearts will dismount to visit her for the sake of Allah (be He Exalted) and for the love of the Prophet's Household (pbuh), be it in Damascus or Egypt, or even from behind the fences in Medina.

Regardless of the different accounts and the historians' disagreement about the site where Imam Hussein's (as) head and his sister Lady Zainab (as) were buried. The Prophet's Household has a special stature in Allah's (be He Exalted) eye; this was translated I their glorification in the believers' hearts. Therefore, you will find shrines in all the sites where the Holy Head has stopped along with the countries which are elieved to be the burial sites of Zainab (as), Imam Hussein's dautyers who had accompanied him to Karbala, or anyone of the Ahlul Bait (as) offspring.

In this reportage we will tour a number of Ahlul Bait's shrines and the sanctuaries of Imam Hussein's (as) head and his sister Zainab (as) in Egypt. Allah's Kinana (quiver) in His Land. First, however, we will take a glimpse at the history of Islamic Egypt.

Islamic Egypt

After short wars, Amr ibn Al-Ass was able to conquer Egypt in 22 AH during the reign of the second caliph, Omar ibn al-Khattab. The Byzantine rulers sent al-Moqawqis to Egypt to negotiate with Amr; it was agreed that the Byzantians render an annual tribute and Muslims leave the Christians' worship houses and do not interfere in running their social affairs. Upon this agreement the Byzantians withdrew from Alexandria which Muslims entered on September 17, 642. Amr ibn al-Ass built the mosque that still carries his name in al-Fustat, the part of the town which later became Old Cairo, thus heralding the spread of Islam in the Nile Valley.

Muslim Walis maintained ruling Egypt during the early Islamic era. During the reign of Imam Ali (as), for instance, it was ruled by Qais bin Saad who was succeeded by Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr. Malik al-Ashtar was sent by the Imam (as) to rule Egypt after Muhammad, but he was assassinated by Muawiyah at the border and could not enter Egypt.

Egypt remained under the Islamic caliphate throughout the Umayyad and Abassid (646-948) states. During the Fatimid caliphate, the fourth ruler, al-Moiz, sent his army commander, Jawahar, on February 5, 969 to enter Egyptian territory that was under Abu l-Fawaris (the grandson of Ibn Fajr). In July he conquered Egypt and built a capital that he named al-Mansouriah. When al-Moiz entered the country four years later he called it al-Qaihra (Cairo) al-Moizziah, that is the town of Moiz that defeats cities.

Under the Fatimid rule that extended for around 205 years, Egypt lived long times of remarkable prosperity thanks to the good administration and religious freedom that scholars and men of letters enjoyed. The Fatimids left great architectural marks, such as al-Hakim Mosque and al-Azhar Mosque (named after Fatima az-Zahraa (as) that still prospers as one of the great scientific institutions in the Islamic world and evidence to the Fatimids' high vigor.

Moreover, the Fatimids took interest in building Ahlul-Bait's shrines in Egypt, such as those of Imam Hussein and his sister Zainab (as) and other members of the Prophet's household. They have been able, furthermore, to revive the love for Ahlul-Bait (as) among the Egyptians, that love whose seeds were planted during the reign of Imam Ali (as) and grew into a towering tree that the Egyptians take pride in being under its shade.

After the Fatimids the Ayyubids ruled and united Egypt and Syria (AD 1171-1249, 567-647AH); they were followed by the Mamluks (AD 1249-1517, 647-923AH) and the Ottomans (AD 1517-1879, 923-1297AH).

Since the French, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, invaded the country in AD 1798 (1297AH), Egypt has known times that ranged between revolutions, riots and calm.

Egypt was officially named the Arab Republic of Egypt on November 9, 1970, the day when the triplet union with Libya and Syria was signed, prior to that stage, it had been called the United Arab Republic, since February 1, 1958, when unity with Syria was declared.

Throughout all those times, the successive governments that ruled Egypt took care of the holy shrines which were frequented by Egyptians as an expression of their love for Ahlul-Bait (as) and belief in their Shafaat (intercession) and blessings along with the fact that dua in their shrines in answered by the Almighty.

What was said about the burial of the Holy Head:

Historians have disagreed about the burial site of Imam Hussein's (as) head. Among the many accounts we mention:

1. That it was buried along with his body when Imam Ali ibn al-Hussein (as) brought the head back to Karbala. Ibn Namaa said the head was reunited with the body and buried with it after it was taken from one place to another. Ibn al-Juzi said in "Tazkerat al-Khawas", "The most popular of the accounts is that Yazid has returned it to Madina along with the Sabaya (the women prisoners) and then it was reunited with the body in Karbala where it was buried.

2. it is said that the head was buried near the tomb of Imam Hussein's (as) father, Amir al-Mumenin (as), in Holy Nahaf near the father's holy head, according to some Ahlul-Bait (as) Hadiths mentioned in "al-Kafi", "al-Tahzeed" and other books, or it was buried in Kufa but not near the tomb of Amir al-Mumenin (as) as "al-Kafi" quoted Imam Sadeq (as) as saying.

3. It is buried near his mother, Lady Fatima az-Zahraa (as), in Medina after it was sent by Yazid ibn Muawiyah to his wali there, Amr ibn Saeed ibn al-Ass.

4. A number of historians say it is buried in Bab al-Faradees in Damascus. Ibn Abi Dunia said, "Al-Hussein's (as) head was found in one of

Yazid's closet in Damascus; and it as shrouded and buried in Bab al-Faradees." As thus asserted al-Balazri in his History and al-Waqidi as well.

5. It was buried in Egypt after it had been brought by the Fatimid caliphs from Ashqelon (in Palestine) to Egypt.

How the holy Head was Moved from Ashqelon to Egypt, According to some Historians:

Al-Sabban saus, "They disagreed about al-Hussein's head after it was taken from Damascus, as for where it ended and where it settled. Some said Yazid ordered that the holy head be taken from one city to another in an act of schadenfreude and to rejoice his victory over the Apostle's (pbuh) household, and it ended up in Ashqelon where the town's emir buried it. When the head was ransomed by as-Saleh Talaei, the Fatimid vizier, with a great deal of money. He moved to meet the traveling head at several spots, put it in a green silk sack on an ebony chair, spread under it musk and perfume, and built in the spot the known Hussein shrine in Cairo near Khan al-Khalili."

A number of historians support the account that the head had been in Ashqelon and was moved to Egypt, including: Ibn Maisar, al-Qalaqashandi, Ali bin Abi Bakr (as-Saih al-Harawi), Ibn Ayas and Sibt al-Jouzi.

Al-Miqreezi says al-Hussein's (as) head was taken from Ashqelon to Egypt on Sunday, Jumada al-Akhira 8, 548 AH (AD August 31, 1153); It arrived in Cairo on the tenth of the same month.

The Site Where it was Buried in Cairo

Ibn Abde Zaher says Talaeh bin Rizeik had built a mosque near Bab Zwaila to bury the head there and win that honor, but he was overcome by the Fatimid court men who buried the head in its current site Qast az-Zumurrud (the Emerald Palace), which used to be the Fatimid caliphate court during the reign of al-Faiz in 549 AH (AD 1154).

Explorers and Historians' Description of the Hussein Shrine:

Explorer Ibn Jubair visited Egypt in 587 AH (AD 1184), during the Ayyubids' times. He described the Hussein Shrine comprehensively and accurately. He said, "In that great shrine in the city of Cairo, under a beautiful building before which description falls short, the head of Hussein

bin Ali (May Allah e pleased with them) lies in a silver coffin that is buried underground.”

Al-Miqreezi says Saladin the Ayyubid created a teaching circle in the shrine. He entrusted it to jurist al-Bahaa ad-Dimashqi who used to sit at the mihrab in front of the mausoleum. In the reign of the good king Najm ed-Deen Ayoub, Vizier Muin ad-Deen Hussein bin Hamuieh took money from the shrine endowments and built a large studying hall and the jurists' upper houses. During the Ayyubid era also, in 634 AH (AD 1236), Abul-Qassim bin Yahia bin Nasser as—Sukkari (aka az-Zarzour) constructed a plaster-ornamented minaret with splendid inscriptions at the shrine's door.

The Fire and the Restoration

During the reign of the good king Najm ed-Deen Ayyub, in 640 AH, a huge fire burned down most of the shrine. Judge Abde-Raheem al-Bisani restored it and annexed more land to its endowment.

Gradual Enlargement

In 662 AH, during the reign of the Mamluk sultan Baybars I, the shrine was enlarged and more ornamentation was introduced.

King an-Nasser Muhammad bin Qalawoon in 684 AH (AD 1285) ordered that the mosque be enlarged and a new hall be built along with jurists' houses.

The Ottoman sultan Suleiman Khan had the mosque enlarged after he had seen the large numbers of worshippers and visitors. During his reign in Egypt between 1004 and 1006 AH (AD 1595-1597), the Ottoman wali Muhammad Pasha ash-Sharief, moreover, restored the Husseini shrine and renovated its ornaments. In turn, Emir Hassan Katkhda Azban al-Jalfi enlarged the shrine and placed an ebony coffin in it. Many restorations were also made by Emir abde-Rahman Katkhda.

When he came to Egypt and visited the Holy Husseini Shrine in 1279 AH (AD 1862), Sultan Abdel-Aziz ordered khedive Ismail to perfectly reconstruct it. The process that went on for ten years ended in 1290 AH (AD 1873).

In the year 1295 AH (AD 1878), the New Road was built near the shrine to cope with the multitude of the people who came to visit the site from all areas.

The Hussein Shrine in Modern Times

There is a wooden gilded pulpit in the Hussein Mosque. Marble columns had been brought from Constantinople. The mosque has three white marble doors to the direction of Khan al-Khalili and a green door near the dome. The mosque's nave has 44 columns that hold the bridges of the wooden ceiling which is ornamented with splendid multi-colored gilded vegetable and geometrical garnishes. There are three lofty roofed minarets in the middle of the roof. The mosque's four walls have thirty large gilded brazen windows that are topped by smaller ones with marble circle.

*The mosque has two minarets, the short old one that was built by Abul-Qassim bin Yahia in 634 AH (AD 1236) above the dome and the second lofty minaret at the end of the mosque that has been built in line with Ottoman architecture; the latter looks like an obelisk and has two boards with the handwriting of Sultan Abdel-Majeed Khan on which he wrote in 1266 AH the 90th verse of Sura al-Anaam **“These are they whom Allah hath guided therefore follow their guidance; Say (O’ our Apostle Muhammad) I ask not any recompense from you on it (the apostleship); it is naught but a reminder to the worlds.”** On one of them and an Apostle (pbuh) Hadith that reads “The dearest of my household (members to me) are Hassan and Hussein.”*

The Apostleship Relics Hall

In the eastern part of the mosque is a door that leads to the Apostleship Relics Hall which was established by Abbas Helmi II in 1311 AH (AD 1893). The vast hall's floor is covered with Persian and Turkish carpets, while its walls have dappled marble. It has a small mihrab, a ceiling of engraved wood and plaster windows that are perforated and riddled with colored glass. The hall is lit with rare crystal lanterns and chandeliers. In the cupboard of the holy relics there are items that are believed to be belongings of Allah's Apostle (pbuh) such as some of his clothing and other properties along with two copies of the Holy Quran written in Kufi calligraphy that are attributed to Imam Ali (as) and the third caliph Othman ibn Affan. The cupboard is a large opening in the hall's wall; its ceiling and floor have been covered with green broadcloth. On the interior marble walls of the hall are the Basmala (in the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate) and al-

Inshirah (the Expansion) Sura inscribed along with a list of the cupboard contents of the Apostle's (pbuh) belongings.

After the July 1952 Revolution

During that reign Imam Hussein's (as) Mosque was renovated and enlarged to take more worshippers (the old mosque, 1500 sq. m, used to be overcrowded with them especially on eid days and other religious occasions; after the enlargement it became 3340 sq. m). The enlargement came as a natural extension of the old mosque. The new windows and doors were made like the old ones; the dimensions of the corridors and the divisions followed the old model as well. Those in charge of the enlargement were keen on making the new buildings look similar to the old ones. A 35-sq. m space was added to the old mosque's façade to be in one line. Moreover, handmade carpets especially made for the holy shrine in al-Mahalla l-Kobra City covered the mosque floor.

Along with the renovations that began in 1959 and ended in 1963, the Egyptian Endowment Ministry built a new façade that befits the shrine owner. It stood before the older one, especially after all the buildings that screened the shrine from the square had been removed. The square itself was built for the shrine, and it was named after Imam Hussein (as). The façade is 45 meters long and 8 meters wide. It is shorter than the old one to make visible the old façade's balconies. The new façade is made of a wall ornamented with seven pointed arches each leaning on two marble columns and is surrounded by a tape of marvelous plaster decorations. Three of the arches are used as doors; the other four are windows filled with perforated bronze as are the upper parts of the doors.

A minaret was built in the southeaster part similar to the one in the southwestern part and in the same style. Besides, a new pulpit was built of beech and Turkish walnut wood that was inlaid with shell, ivory and ebony.

The Dome

It is likely that the dome dates back to the middle 19th century. It leans on semi-circular arches ornamented with extremely delicate oily inscriptions. A poem was written with gold by the calligrapher al-Balkhi in 1187 AH (AD 1773). The upper parts of the dome were ornamented with oily gilded inscriptions similar to the ones on the dome itself. The dome and its parts all

date back to the 12th Hegira century but were renovated in 1316 AH (AD 1898).

The Egyptians' Frequentation to Imam Hussein's (as) Mosque

Any time you go there, you will find large numbers of worshippers in Imam Hussein's (as) Mosque which is close to Al-Azhar Mosque that was built by the Fatimids and named al-Azhar after Lady Fatima az-Zahraa, the Apostle's daughter (pbuh). More worshippers come on eid days and other religious occasions. Egyptians love and glorify Ahlul-Bait (as); this is clear in their prayers and supplications to Allah at the Hussein Shrine and in their trust that Allah (be He exalted) will answer their prayers in that holy site.

The many vows made by the Egyptians and their supplication to Allah via Imam Hussein (as) to answer their prayers show the great dignity he (as) has in their hearts. On religious occasions they give banquets at the site as an expression of love for the Imam and Ahlul-Bait (as). Some religious groups have been trying to prevent the Egyptians from holding these ceremonies and traditions that they have had for hundreds of years at the Hussein Shrine.

As for the neighborhood where the shrine is located, it carries the Imam's name and so do many shops there in a bid to obtain the blessings of the Imam (as). You can also see crowds of people coming from all Egyptian cities and villages to visit him (as) with some conveying greetings from relatives and loved ones who could not visit him (as).

Shrine of Zainab bint Ali (as)

At the square that has been named after her (as) lies the Mosque of Zainab bint Amir al-Moumeneen (Zainab the daughter of the Leader of the Faithful, Ali bin Abi Talib). Egyptians insist that she (as) has been buried in their country. Some historians back this claim while others oppose it. Here are some of the arguments in this regard:

One. A number of Hadith narrators say Lady Zainab (as) was buried in al-Baqeeh, Medina and the location of her grave is unknown.

Two. Others say she was buried in Damascus where she had gone after famine struck Medina and since her husband Abdullah bin Jaafar had villages and farms near Damascus. Her shrine there is known and frequented by believers from all over the world.

Three. There are those who say she has gone to Egypt after Yazid bin Muawiyah told her to leave Medina because she delivered speeches that were an extension of Imam Hussein's (as) revolution at the informative and popular levels.

The Opinion that She (as) was Buried in Egypt

When the battle of Karbala ended with the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (as), another stage of the revolution began with the efforts of Imam Zain el-Abedeem (as) and his aunt Zainab (as) who kept on mourning Imam Hussein and reciting what had happened to him (as). Her presence in Medina was enough to stir up the people to avenge the killing of Imam Hussein (as) and punish the oppressors. Therefore, Yazid's wali in Medina told her to leave the city. She chose to move to Egypt as she had heard that its people loved Ahlul-Bait (as) and were loyal to the Prophet's near relatives (as). Zainab (as) had heard Um Salama, the wife of Allah's Apostle (pbuh), quoting him (pbuh) as commending the people of Egypt and saying, "You will conquer Egypt, a land that is also called al-Qirat. When you do, be good to its people, for they are ones of Zemma (compact) and kinship." During his caliphate, the great Amir al-Moumeneen Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb (ad), was able to implant the love of the Ahlul-Bait (as) in the Egyptians' hearts as he (as) was known to be just and righteous.

Her Arrival in Egypt

Lady Zainab (as) left Median for Egypt along with some of Ahlul-Bait members. When the news that she was about to get to Egypt arrived, the wali, Muslama bin Mukhallad al-Ansari, along with a group of his companions and Egypt's dignitaries and merchants came out to meet her (as) in a village to the east of Balbees which was later, during the reign of the Tulunids, called al-Abbasa. When the convoy arrived, Muslama offered her condolences. He cried, and so did she along with those present. She (as) said, "This is what the Beneficent God promised, and the apostles told the Truth." That was in Shabaan 61 AH (April 26, AD 681), six months and a few days after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (as).

Muslama hosted her (as) in his residence in Dar al-Quswa near Qatarat as-Sibaa, the site where her mausoleum is today. She stayed at that house for eleven months during which the house was a Mecca for visitors who came to

see her (as) until she died on Rajab 14, 62 AH (March 27, AD 682) and was buried there, according to the authorities saying she had gone to Egypt.

The Zainabi Shrine

As years passed, Muslama bin Mukhallad's palace faded away. Lady Zainab's mausoleum, however, remained a Mecca for believers who seek the blessings and lights of the Prophet's household (pbuh). During the reign of Ibn Tulun, the mausoleum was restored as part of a plan that included also the other shrines in Egypt.

When the Fatimids came to power, Caliph al-Moiz was the first to build a stately construction to mark the mausoleum. Later, Caliph al-Hakim Biamr-e-llah endowed it with several farms.

The Zainabi Shrine was looked after by the successive reigns that ruled Egypt after the Fatimids, such as the Ayyubids and the Mamluks. Besides, many faithful people and scholars served the mosque.

During the reign of King Saifuddeen ibn Abi Bakr bin Ayyub (sixth Hegira century), the mosque was restored by a-Shariff Fakhr Eddeen Thaala al-Jaafari.

The shrine maintained that construction until it was renovated by Emir Ali Pasha, the Ottomans' wali in Egypt, who added a mosque to the mausoleum in 956 AH (AD 1547). It was restored by Emir Abde-Rahman Katkhda who also built a pond and a tank for purity in 1170 AH (AD 1768). In 1210 AH (AD 1795), the compartment was renovated with brass. Two years later, the mosque walls were cracked; the Mamluk government assigned Othman Beck al-Muradi to restore and reconstruct the mosque. His job had to stop because of the French invasion of Egypt, but the restoration was finished later by Youssef Pasha al-Wazir.

The holy site was restored and reconstructed from time to time; another renovation took place in 1276 AH (AD 1859). In 1294 AH (AD 1877), the door opposite the mausoleum's was renovated. The dome and the minaret were restored in 1302 AH (AD 1884), and the mosque was enlarged to become 3000sq. m at the turn of the 20th century.

The Zainabi Mosque in Modern Times

In 1940, the Endowment Ministry built the Zainabi Mosque which is made of seven corridors parallel to Qibla with a domed nave in the middle.

Opposite the Qibla is the mausoleum's dome. There are two halls with two main entrances separated by a rectangular hall at the mosque's northern façade.

The Endowment Ministry has added a 17x32 piece of land to the main mosque. In 1969, the ministry added a plot equal to the original size of the mosque. The first addition now separates between the original mosque and the latest annexation. Although a new mihrab was built in the middle of the new mosque during the first addition, the old one was maintained. An open space, similar to the nave, was created opposite Lady Zainab's (as) mausoleum in the second renovation. There are two entrances at the first enlargement and the second in the middle of the latest annexation.

Believers and visitors come to Lady Zainab's (as) shrine day and night, for the Egyptians' love for Ahlul-Bait (as) is conspicuous. Prayer and supplication to Allah (be He exalted) at her honorable shrine love and belief in Ahlul-Bait's (as) Shaffat (intercession).

To Lady Nafisa's Shrine

We have to note that Lady Nafisa (May Allah be pleased with her) is the daughter of al-Hassan bin Zain, the son of Imam Hassan (as) bin Amir al-Mumeneen Ali bin Abi Taleb (as). She had come to Egypt along with her husband Isaac bin Imam Jaafar as-Sadeq (as) in 193 AH. They stayed in al-Masousa in the house of an Egyptian lady called Um Hani. Her coming to Egypt was a great event; men and women (the women in their howdahs) crowded to meet her and ask her to pray for them.

When she felt that she was about to die, she wrote her husband Isaac a letter, and dug her grave with her own hands in her house; she used to stay in that grave and pray to Allah. When she died, her husband wanted to take the body to Medina in order to bury her in al-Baqieh. The people of Egypt asked the wali, Abdullah bin as-Sari, to dissuade him from doing so, but the wali declined. However, he changed his mind when he dreamed of Allah's Apostle (pbuh) telling him to do the request. Lady Nafisa (mabpuh) was buried in her house in Darb es-Sibah between al-Qataieh and al-Askar which was later named Koum al-Jarihe.

The Mausoleum

In Khotat al-Moqrezi it is written, "The first to build her grave was Abdullah bin as-Sari bin al-Hakam, the Umayyad wali of Egypt. The

mausoleum was rebuilt during the Fatimid caliphate in the reign of al-Mustansir Billah, the fifth Fatimid caliph. He also restored and rebuilt the shrine in 482 AH (AD 1089).

The shrine was restored once again during the reign of the Fatimid al-Hafez Ledeenillah in 532 AH (AD 1137) after the dome cracked; besides, the mihrab was covered with marble.

In 714 AH (AD 1314), during the Ayyubid reign, king an-Nasser Muhammad bin Qalaoun renovated the dome and built a mosque near the shrine.

North African Explorer Khaled al-Balwa's Description of the Shrine

In 737 AH (AD 1336), North African explorer Khaled al-Balwa visited Lady Nafisa's shrine in Egypt. He wrote, "I saw the great shrine, Lady Nafisa's (may Allah be pleased with her). It is a great splendid mosque that has numberless pieces of gold and brass. In the mosque's Qibla gate there is a door that leads to a wonderful dome that shines and illuminates with gold and beauty. Under the dome lies the blessed mausoleum was is surrounded by marvelous dappled studded marble. There are also the gold and silver chandeliers and lanterns made of pure gold nuggets."

Constant care of the Shrine

In 1170 AH (AD 1756), Egypt's wali, Ali Pasha, built a gate between the square and the mosque that is still there today in the middle of the piazza. He inscribed on the gate poetry verses about the blessings he got from Lady Nafisa (mabpwh).

In 1173 AH (AD 1759), Emir Abde-Rahman Katakhdha renovated the mosque and the shrine comprehensively; he built the shrine in its current form and separated the place from which women visit the mausoleum from that of men.

A fire broke out in the mosque and burned down its eastern half. Egypt's Khedive (Ottoman viceroy) Abbas Hilmi II rebuilt the mausoleum and the mosque in 1313 AH (AD 1896). It was restored in modern times by the Endowment Ministry that observed the Islamic architecture basics.

This is the least that can be said about the shrine of Lady Nafisa (mabpwh) who had honored the land of Egypt by her residing and being buried in the site where her pure has been for 12 centuries, as all historians agree.

The Mosque of Lady Aisha bint Imam Jaafar as-Sadeq (as)

Wherever anyone of the Prophet's (pbuh) offspring resides, a shrine is built and frequented by believers and visitors from all over the world.. Here is the mosque of Lady Aisha an-Nabawia (the one related to the Prophet, pbuh), another Ahlul-Bait (as) landmark in Egypt.

Historians agree that Lady Aisha, the daughter of Imam Jaafar as-Sadeq, had visited Egypt; most of them say that she died in 145 AH and was buried in Bab al-Qarafa (southern Cairo). As-Sakhawi wrote in Tohfat el-Ahbab that he had seen Lady Aisha's grave that had a marble tablet with the following inscribed on it "This is the grave of the noble Lady Aisha, one of the daughters of Imam Jaafar as-Sadeq, son of Imam Muhammad al-Baqer, son of Imam Ali Zain al-Abedeen, son of Imam Hussein, son of Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb (May Allah honor him); she died in 145 AH." Until the sixth hegira century, Lady Aisha an-Nabawia's tomb had been a simple shrine made of a square hall overtopped by a dome based on two lines of foundations.

During the Ayyubid times, Saladin encircled Egypt's four Islamic capitals, al-Fustat, al-Askar, al-Qataieh and Cairo, with a 15-km long wall in order to fortify the country against the crusaders' attacks. The wall separated Lady Aisha's (mabpuh) Shrine from the rest of Qarafa. Saladin then decided to build a school near the shrine and opened a gate in the wall calling it "Aisha's Gate"; today it is known as the Qarafa Gate.

As years passed by, Lady Aisha's mosque was destroyed, but it was rebuilt by Emir Abde-Rahman Katkhda in 1176 AH (AD 1762). The mihrab then was not in the middle of the Qibla wall but in the southeastern corner. There are two doors separated by a minaret at the mosque's western façade.

The New Mosque

Nothing is left of Lady Aisha's old mosque, for after it had been about to collapse due to car accidents (cars used to hit it), it was decided that the old mosque be pulled down and a new one be built its place. The new mosque is 1500 sq. m, and the engineers that built it benefited from its height above the ground level and made the Wudhu place under the mosque.

As it was possible to use the old mosque's bricks that had been too old, the bricks, marble, windows and minaret of the ancient Awlad Anan Mosque

were brought and used to build this Mamluk-style mosque that is regarded as an architecture masterpiece of recent times. The minaret and the dome are filled with writings. The doors, windows, columns and the ancient pulpit are made of rare marble. However, the engineers have made an antiquarian error, for the new shrine, or rather the new design of the dome, has left out an important aspect. When the old shrine was destroyed, an important pillar was removed, that is what distinguishes Ahlul-Bait's (as) shrines in Egypt and elsewhere. That pillar that used to distinguish the shrine was meant to add grandeur and glory and certify that the buried lady is a Ahlul-Bait (as) member. The engineers did not pay attention to that fact.

We leave the Ahlul-Bait (as) oases in Egypt with hearts filled with longing to come back, for Ahlul-Bait (as) have filled the places were they lived with light, and wherever they stayed, they were glorified and honored; they dwell the hearts and consciences, and are always in mind.

Whether it is true that they have come to Egypt or not, the whole issue only asserts the rank they have in the hearts of Egyptians and non-Egyptians who still seek their blessings and follow their pure lights.