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## Contributions of the Fatimid Vizier al-Afdal Shahanshah to Internal Politics and Architectural Structures (487-515 AH/1094-1121 AD)

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### Keywords

Al-Afdal Shahanshah  
Jami' al-Fila (Elephant  
Mosque)  
Al-Rasd Mosque  
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'Ābidīn

### Abstract

The vizierate was one of the most important and crucial positions of the Fatimid state after that of the caliphate. The position of vizier began in the first Fatimid era as one of the functions of the supreme state. Viziers at that time had no actual force in the country, and many of them were subjected to isolation, imprisonment, confiscation of their money, torture, murder and escape, which led to an imbalance in the situation of the Fatimid viziers, and an imbalance in their functions. Later, it began to develop in the second Fatimid era until it matched the influence of the Fatimid caliphs. Hence, the research will highlight the situation in Egypt under the Fatimid Vizier Al-Afdal bin Badr Al-Jamali as Egypt witnessed many events during his tenure in the vizierate.

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## **1. Introduction:**

Al-Afdal is considered one of the most important Fatimid Viziers, His assumption of the ministry had special circumstances, and he participated in many state affairs, whether in internal or external policy, He also contributed to the architecture of the Fatimid era, where there are many monuments that belong to him.

### **1.1. Considering this topic, the current study aims to the following:**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Shedding light on the circumstances of the Fatimid Vizier Al-Afdal assumption of the ministry
2. Shedding light on the policy of the Fatimid Vizier Al-Afdal of Interior policy
3. Highlighting the role of the Fatimid Vizier Al-Afdal to architecture in the Fatimid era

### **1.2. Importance of the Topic:**

1. This study highlights the importance of the Fatimid Vizier Afdal in terms of his contributions to the internal affairs of Egypt
2. Shedding light on the contributions of the Fatimid Vizier AI-Afdal to the architecture in the Fatimid era
3. Shedding light objectively on the nature and essence of Islamic architecture in the Fatimid era.
4. the most important facilities that AL-Afdal contributed to their construction, and which still exist so far, but are not published and studied appropriately despite their architectural and tourism significance alike.

### **1.3 . This topic was chosen for several reasons, including:**

1. Identify the importance of the Fatimid Vizier Al-Afdal in the interior affairs in Egypt.
2. Knowledge of the contributions of the Fatimid Vizier Al-Afdal in architecture
3. Learn about the architectural elements of Al-Afdal monuments

**1.4. Research Methodology:** It relied on the descriptive analytical Approach; it is based on describing and analyzing the role of Al-Afdal in the interior affairs, also the architecture elements of Al-Afdal monuments.

## 2. The political situation before Al-Afdal took over the ministry

The state of dissolution and deterioration swept the country gradually after the death of al-Mustansir in Dhul-Hijjah 487 AH<sup>1</sup>. There were increasing internal revolutions, and competition between viziers, which weakened the state as the Ismaili call was exposed to severe political and doctrinal attacks after the death of al-Mustansir. This deterioration resulted from the intervention of Vizier al-Afdal bin Badr al-Jamali, and led to its division into two parts. In addition, it had grave effects, both in Egypt and abroad.

With regard to al-Mustansir, he had several sons, including Nizar, who was the eldest, Muhammad, Abdullah, Ismail, al-Muhsin, al-Hasan, Haidara and Ahmed, who was the youngest. Some of them died during his lifetime. After al-Mustansir's death, the sources stated the names of his sons: Nizar, Abdullah, Ismail and Ahmed, who were still alive<sup>2</sup>.

According to the Ismaili doctrine of the transfer of the Imamate from the father to the eldest son, Nizar had the legal right to succeed his father in assuming the Imamate. Nizar was nominated to succeed his father, but no ceremonies took place to install him as crown prince, but his name was minted on the coin, and he may have referred to his position<sup>3</sup>.

In fact, al-Mustansir before his death wanted to take the pledge of allegiance to his son Nizar from the statesmen, but the vizier al-Afdal procrastinated in doing so until he died, because al-Afdal hated Nizar. Al-Afdal also ignored this tradition and nomination, so he removed Nizar from ruling<sup>4</sup>, and crowned his younger brother, Abu al-Qasim Ahmad, and called him al-Musta'li Billah, on Thursday (18 Dhu al-Hijjah 487 AH/ December 29, 1094 AD). <sup>5</sup>

1 الذهبي (ابى عبد الله شمس الدين محمد بن احمد): سير اعلام النبلاء، ج2، تقديم حسان عبد المنان، بيت الافكار الدولية للنشر ، ص356

2 محمد سهيل طقوش تاريخ الفاطميين في شمالي افريقية ومصر وبلاد الشام، دار النفائس للطباعة والنشر، بيروت، لبنان، ط2، 2007، ص 390

3 السيوطي (جلال الدين عبد الرحمن)، حسن المحاضرة في تاريخ مصر والقاهرة، تحقيق، ج2، محمد ابو الفضل ابراهيم، ط1، 1968 ، ص 204

4 ايناس حسنى البهجي، تاريخ الدولة الفاطمية في شبة الجزيرة العربية، مركز الكتاب الاكاديمي، عمان، ص 200

5 محمد جمال الدين سرور، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر، سياستها الداخلية ومظاهر الحضارة في عهدها ، دار الفكر العربي، ص103

## 2.1. Al-Afdal's plan to dominate the caliphate

The vizier Al-Afdal took the opportunity of Al-Mustansir's death, and indicated to the princes to assign his youngest son, Abu Al-Qasim Ahmed and prefer him to the rest of his brothers. The historians mentioned that al-Mustansir called his son, Abu al-Qasim Ahmad, when he married the daughter of Badr al-Jamali as (Wali 'Ahd al-Muslimin), wrote this in the Marriage Agreement, and approved it with his hown handwriting. The vizier al-Afdal summoned al-Mustansir's sons, and informed them with their father's death and the necessity of their presence. When they came, they saw their younger brother putting on the caliphate's costumes, they resented and denied it, but Al-Afdal asked them to kiss the land for God Almighty and their Maula Al-Musta'li and to pledge allegiance to him. He added that Al-Musta'li was recommended by the Imam Al-Mustansir before his death to succeed him in the caliphate, but they refused to do so. Each of them said that his father promised him the caliphate. Nizar said that he would never pledge allegiance to someone younger than him. He added that his father wrote to him that he was his crown prince and asked for a time to bring the confirming document. He went out quickly to bring it, but he headed to Alexandria and never returned. It seems that a pretext from Nizar to get rid of the critical situation and some statesmen supported him, including one of Badr Al-Jamali's sons<sup>6</sup>.

When the vizier Al-Afdal learned of Nizar's escape, he immediately arrested his two brothers, Abdullah and Ismail. They were imprisoned in the mosque in the palace, and each was kept under the eye of ten men. The official ceremony of allegiance was held for Al-Musta'li, so he sat on the king's bed in the great iwan with al-Afdal. The ceremony was attended by the chief judge, Ali bin Nafi' al-Kahhal and witnesses of Misr and al-Qahera. They took the pledge of allegiance from the elite and senior statesmen. Then, the vizier al-Afdal notified both Abdullah and Ismail, so they entered to al-Musta'li and kissed the land in his hands and greeted him with the imamate. The judge fulfilled their oath of allegiance. As for the vizier al-Afdal, he sent out a military force to arrest Nizar, but they failed to do so.<sup>7</sup>

The exclusion of Nizar from the imamate, despite his entitlement to it, had far-reaching consequences in the history of the Ismaili call and the Fatimid state. This exclusion and the assumption of al-Musta'li is a clear doctrinal and political coup

<sup>6</sup> محمد جمال الدين سرور، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر، سياستها الداخلية ومظاهر الحضارة في عهدها، ص 107

<sup>7</sup> محمد سهيل طقوش، تاريخ الفاطميين في شمالي افريقية ومصر وبلاد الشام، ص 390

carried out by al-Afdal in order to preserve his gains and powers that he had enjoyed unilaterally since the end of al-Mustansir's reign. It can be found that the Fatimid viziers, Arbab al-Soyouf (Men of Swords), played with the Ismaili doctrine, and did not care about it. Hence, they managed to appoint the imam they wanted, even if he was not entitled to it, according to the Ismaili doctrine in leadership.

It is worth noting that the Turkish commander, Aftakin was intimidating the Fatimid existence, as he clashed with the army of Al-Aziz Billah in Ramleh but he was defeated and retreated to Jerusalem, where he was arrested. He was brought before their ally in Palestine (Hassan ibn Mufarrij ibn al-Jarrah), who stripped him of his turban, tied him to it and publicized the news to reach his soldiers in the Levant. However, when he arrived in Egypt with his soldiers as prisoners, the Caliph Al-Aziz Billah was kind to him and pardoned him, rather he walked with him in one procession. In addition, the Caliph Al-Aziz honored him, and he gave him a lot of money, until he became the subject of many circles' talks in Egypt. It seems that Al-Aziz saw this as a way to benefit from the enemies<sup>8</sup>.

Nizar's revolt did not succeed due to the army's support for al-Afdal, who, after two attempts, managed to defeat him in a fierce fighting at Kom al-Rish near Cairo. It ended with the retreat of Nizar and Nasir al-Dawla Aftakin to Alexandria. The vizier al-Afdal besieged the city by land and sea, and struck it with stones and flames. The fighting continued from (Safar to Dhu al-Qa'dah 488 AH / February to November 1095 AD), i.e., about ten months, during which the residents were annoyed, and realized that they could not withstand more, especially since the supplies began to run out. Hence, Nasir al-Dawla asked for safety for him, Nizar and the natives. The vizier Al-Afdal secured them, but he arrested them later, and sent them to Cairo. As for Mahmoud bin Messal, he fled to al-Maghreb, and before his return to Cairo, al-Afdal made a change in state officials, especially those in the judiciary after he arrested Mahmoud bin Ammar, the judge of Alexandria and killed him, and appointed a governor he trusted<sup>9</sup>.

In recognition to the right of his vizier who preserved the throne for him while he was in Cairo, al-Musta'li sent him many gifts including his own costumes, crown,

<sup>8</sup> التشهير في العصر الفاطمي ( 358-427هـ / 968-1035م) دراسة تاريخية، مجلة كلية التربية للبنات للعلوم الإنسانية ، العدد 15 – السنة الثامنة 2014، ص 273

<sup>9</sup> محمد جمال الدين سرور، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر، سياستها الداخلية ومظاهر الحضارة في عهدها، دار الفكر العربي، ص104

and turban, and welcomed his return at Barkt al-Habash<sup>10</sup>. Nizar and Nasir al-Dawla were led the next day to al-Musta'li's council. When al-Musta'li saw Nizar, he shouted at him, rebuked him, and ordered his expulsion. Nizar was detained in the palace until he died. However, Nizar's death did not put an end to the dispute that arose between the Fatimids, as the call was divided into its two branches, the Nizari and the Musta'li, which was one of the main reasons behind the weakness of the Fatimid state<sup>11</sup>.

After eliminating the sedition raised by Nizar, Al-Afdal seized control of the affairs of government in Egypt, and usurped the power without Al-Musta'li. He became Wazir Sayf (Vizier of the Sword) as he became the Sultan of Egypt who predominated all princes, soldiers, judges, scribes and all the subjects. He controlled all the state affairs and positions whether the official or religious. His influence reached such an extent that when Al-Musta'li died in (495 AH / 1101 AD)<sup>12</sup>, he assigned his son Abu Ali Al-Mansur in his place in the Imamate and entitled him "Al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah) when he was five years (495-524 AH / 1101-1130 AD)<sup>13</sup>.

### 2.1.1 Moving the seat of government from al-Qahira

Al-Afdal took a bold unprecedented step in the Fatimids' history, as he moved the seat of government from al-Qahira. He built a house for himself on the Nile, to the south of Fustat, which he called Dar al-Mulk and left Dar al-Wizara in al-Qahira in (501 AH 1107 AD). He transferred the diwans to it from the Fatimid palace<sup>14</sup>. It had many pavilions that were held in the feasts and various occasions, and a majlis (council) that he called Majlis al-'Ataya (Council of Gifts). Moreover, and he placed the Diwans of Insha' (Chancery) and Mukhatabat (Correspondence) next to the great hall in Dar al-Mulk. Hence, he stripped al-Amir completely of all his powers, isolated him in his

<sup>10</sup> Birkat al-Habash is a large land located on the Nile behind the Qarafa (Necropolis), and it is one of the most beautiful parks in Egypt.

- المقريري (تقي الدين أبو العباس أحمد بن علي): الخطط المقريري، تحقيق محمد زينهم وآخرون، ج1، مكتبة مدبولي، 1998، ص 269

<sup>11</sup> احمد مختار العبادي، في التاريخ العباسي والفاطمي، دار النهضة العربية، بيروت، ص 306 عبد الرحمن بن خلدون، تاريخ ابن خلدون، ج4، ص 84

<sup>12</sup> الذهبي (ابى عبد الله شمس الدين محمد بن احمد): سير اعلام النبلاء، ج1، تقديم حسان عبد المنان، بيت الافكار الدولية للنشر، ص495

<sup>13</sup> محمد جمال الدين سرور، تاريخ الدولة الفاطمية، دار الفكر العربي، ص 107، المقريري، الخطط المقريري، ج2، ص 196

<sup>14</sup> على صدام نصرالله، إنهاء الخليفة الأمر باحكام الله تسلط الوزراء في عهده وإنفرادة بحكم الدولة الفاطمية، مجلة دراسات تاريخية، كلية التربية للبنات، جامعة البصرة، 216، ص 66

palace in al-Qahira. He prevented the imam from riding during the seasons and feasts, and he began to act in the state like kings and sultans<sup>15</sup>.

Al-Afdal also built a palace and an orchard, which he called Al-Rawda, and since then the island on which it was built has been known as 'Gazirat Al-Rawda', and before that it was known by many names such as Gazirat Misr or Gazirat Al-Fustat due to its proximity to it. The era of al-Afdal is considered one of the finest literary eras witnessed by Islamic Egypt. It is said that he took a council in Dar al-Mulk known as Majlis al-'Ataya (Council of Gifts) to bestow blessings on poets and non-poets of the commons. In fact, this council was only the council of the vizier in which he was ruling, but the name of gifts prevailed over it because he was so generous<sup>16</sup>.

### 2.1.2. The Assassination of Al-Afdal

The actions of Al-Afdal aroused the Nizari Ismailis, so his fear of them intensified, and he took security precautions. He ordered to block Bab al-Zumrud, which reaches al-Bustan al-Kafuri and Manzaret al-Lu'lu' that lead to his place and assigned guards on them. It was opened only on the day of opening the gulf. In addition, he closed Dar al-Ilm (House of Science) in (315 AH / 1119 AD) for fear of people's gathering and forming a public opinion opposing his policies.

It seems that these precautions did not prevent the Nizaris from sneaking to Egypt<sup>17</sup> in large numbers until there were many strangers there. At the same time, Al-Amir decided, when he reached the age of majority, to restore his stolen authority from his tyrannical vizier, who tried to get rid of him more than once by poisoning him. Hence, both parties had a common interest to get rid of him, so a group watched him on his return from al-Qahera to Dar al-Mulk in Fustat, and struck him with swords near the bridge between Fustat and al-Rawda (on the night of Eid al-Fitr in 515 AH / December 1121 AD) <sup>18</sup>. Al-Afdal was carried to his house, where he died. When Al-Amir learned of this incident, he himself rushed to the house of al-Afdal,

<sup>15</sup> ايمن سيد فؤاد، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر، تفسير جديد، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، 2007، ص 228

<sup>16</sup> احمد مختار العبادي، في التاريخ العباسي والفاطمي، خميسي ساعد وآخرون، من قضايا التاريخ الفاطمي في دوره المغربي، تقديم بوبة مجاني، منشورات مخبر البحوث والدراسات في حضارة المغرب الإسلامي، ط1، دار البهاء للنشر والتوزيع، الجزائر، ص 308

<sup>17</sup> The year 483 AH/1090 AD is the year in which the Nizari Ismaili state was established in Syria and Iran. It lasted until 654 AH, after al-Musta'li's murder of his brother Nizar.

انظر: خميسي ساعد وآخرون، من قضايا التاريخ الفاطمي في دوره المغربي، تقديم بوبة مجاني، منشورات مخبر البحوث والدراسات في حضارة المغرب الإسلامي، ط1، دار البهاء للنشر والتوزيع، الجزائر، ص 11

<sup>18</sup> الحافظ الذهبي، العبر في خير من غير، ج2، تحقيق ابو هاجر محمد السعيد بن بسيوني زغلول، دار الكتب العلمية، بيروت، لبنان ، ص 405 ، ايمن فؤاد سيد ، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر ، ص 230

sealed the house, treasuries, safes and funds, then confiscated them. He also imprisoned al-Afdal's son who was called Abu Ali Ahmed<sup>19</sup>.

Fingers of accusation are pointed to the caliph al-Amir as the one who orchestrated the murder of his vizier in agreement with the leader Muhammad bin Faik Al-Bata'ih<sup>20</sup>. Perhaps, it was in agreement with the Nizari Ismailis due to the mutual interests<sup>21</sup>, as his authority was greatly weakened by the intervention of Al-Afdal, so he felt the need to get rid of him. However, Prince Abdul Majeed Ibn al-Mustansir, the cousin of Al-Amir, saw that this act would arouse people's anger against the Fatimid dynasty, who appreciated the works of Al-Afdal and his father for them and for Egypt. To abandon these suspicions, he persuaded Al-Amir to entrust Prince Abu Abdullah Al-Ma'mun bin Al-Bata'ih - one of those who were loyal to the Fatimids, and he was privy to his secret and his publicity, and he promised him to assume the position of the vizierate if he succeeded in improving his image before the commons. The Fatimid palace claimed grief for him and regret for his loss. It is worth mentioning that since the assassination of Al-Afdal in 1121 AD, the country has entered an endless cycle of violence, conspiracies and bloodshed as there was no strong ruler to control its levers of power. Hence the political situation deteriorated significantly<sup>22</sup>.

### 2.1.3. Legacy of Al-Afdal

Anyhow, the legacy of Al-Afdal, which al-Amir Bi-Ahkamillah made inventory of it and transferred along forty days, indicates the extent of the blatant luxury and wealth of this powerful vizier who is in fact the real ruler of the country. It is said that al-Ammir went to Dar al-Mulk on the morning of al-Afdal's death. He confiscated it and transferred its holdings. It was said that Al-Afdal left after him such a quantity of wealth as was never heard of before. It consisted of six hundred millions of dinars; two hundred and fifty bushels of dhiraams<sup>23</sup>, all of full weight and coined in Egypt; seventy-five thousand satin robes; thirty camel-loads of perfume boxes in Irak gold; a

19 ابن خلدون (عبد الرحمن بن محمد الحرفي المغربي): تاريخ ابن خلدون المسمى ديوان المبتدأ والخبر في تاريخ العرب والبربر ومن عاصرهم من ذوي الشأن الأكبر، ج4، مراجعة سهيل زكار، دار الفكر للطباعة والنشر، بيروت، 2000، ص 89

20 إبراهيم الإبياري، نهاية المطاف، الموسوعة التاريخية الميسرة، ط2، مطبوعات الشعب، ص 73

21 على صدام نصرالله، إنهاء الخليفة الأمر بإحكام الله تسلط الوزراء في عهده وإنفراده بحكم الدولة الفاطمية، ص 67

22 قاسم عبده قاسم، في تاريخ الأيوبيين والمماليك، عين للدراسات والبحوث الانسانية والاجتماعية، 2010، ص 16

23 ابن إياس (محمد بن أحمد الحنفي)، بدائع الزهور في وقائع الدهور، تحقيق محمد مصطفى، ج1، مكتبة دار الباز، مكة المكرمة، ص



gold inkhorn mounted with a precious stone valued at twelve thousand dinars; one hundred gold nails, each weighing one hundred dinars, ten of which were in each of his ten sitting rooms; and on each nail was hung a turban ready folded and embroidered in gold; each of these turbans was of a different colour, and he selected from among them whichever he was inclined to wear; he possessed besides five hundred chests of clothing for the persons in his service, all of the finest stuffs which Tanis and Damietta could produce. As for the horses, slaves, mules, saddles, perfumes, ornaments for the person, and furniture which he left after him, God alone knew their quantity. Besides all that, were cows, sheep, and buffalos in such an incredible number that no person would dare to mention it; their milk was farmed out, and in the year of his death it brought in thirty thousand dinars. Among his effects were found two large trunks containing gold needles for the use of the female slaves and the women ". There were 8 life-size female sculptures wearing splendid clothes and bedecked with jewels, 4 black and 4 white, called amber and camphor respectively<sup>24</sup>.

### 3. The Internal Affairs of Egypt in the Era of Al-Afdal

In the twenty years that followed the death of al-Musta'li, the actual power in Egypt was in the hands of the powerful vizier al-Afdal ibn Badr al-Jamali. He was the vizier, army commander, and supervisor of judicial and the call affairs, and the caliph was a helpless child. At this stage, al-Afdal took a bold unprecedented step in the Fatimids' history, as he moved the seat of government from al-Qahira. He built a house for himself on the Nile, to the south of Fustat, which he called Dar al-Mulk and left Dar al-Wizara in al-Qahira in (501 AH 1107 AD). He transferred the diwans to it from the Fatimid palace. It had many pavilions that were held in the feasts and various occasions, and a majlis (council) that he called Majlis al-'Ataya (Council of Gifts). Moreover, and he placed the Diwans of Insha' (Chancery) and Mukhatabat (Correspondence) next to the great hall in Dar al-Mulk. Hence, he stripped al-Amir completely of all his powers, isolated him in his palace in al-Qahira. He prevented the imam from riding during the seasons and feasts, and he began to act in the state like kings and sultans<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> حسن ابراهيم حسن، الفاطميون في مصر و اعمالهم السياسية والدينية بوجه خاص، المطبعة الأميرية بالقاهرة، 1932، ص 242

<sup>25</sup> ايمن سيد فؤاد ، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر ، تفسير جديد ، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب ، 2007، ص227

Al-Afdal also recruited the Christian officials in abundance. For example, he appointed Sheikh Abu Al-Barakat Yohanna bin Abu Al-Layth al-Nasrani in the Diwan of Tahqiq (Bureau of Investigations), and he remained in post till 528 AH / 1134 AD<sup>26</sup>. Sheikh Abu al-Fadl, a.k.a. Ibn al-Askuf, was the scribe of al-Afdal, his representative in the financial and employees affairs, and he was in charge of all bureaus of taxes collection all over the kingdom. Al-Afdal surrounded himself with Armenian soldiers, and encouraged their emigration, which began since the advent of his father in the days of al-Mustansir<sup>27</sup>.

Al-afdal amended state conduct concerning inheritances with no legal heirs. The historian Ibn Maiser praises al-Afdal for his policy for keeping the money of inheritances with no heirs separate from other funds. He claims that the Chief Judge Thiqat al-Mulk Abu al-Fath Musallam ibn Ali al-Ras'ani informed al-Afdal that he moved 100.000 dinars of long-unclaimed inheritances to the Treasury. Al-Afdal was furious: he ordered the judge to concern himself with his judicial obligations and not to deal with matters which are of no concern for him. At the time of al-Afdal's assassination there were 130.000 dinars from long-unclaimed inheritances in the judge's depository (mawda' al-hukm). Thus, Al-Afdal was the first to separate the inheritances from other funds unlike before. He managed to keep the unclaimed inheritances until their heirs come and prove their right to them.

Al-Afdal's control over the state and his control of the diwans and government authorities were so influential that those in authority feared, after his death, that the officials would try to change some of his orders and violate the previous instructions and decrees, which might expose the state's facilities to turmoil and chaos. Hence, the Caliph ordered the establishment of a register to assure implementing al-Afdal's former policy and decisions. He signed it and stamped it with his seal for judgments and funds.

Al-Afdal followed the footsteps of his father and took full control of the state. During his long reign, he was able to spread prosperity, security and stability throughout the country. Al-Afdal was highly interested in the cultivation of land that he ordered dissolving all the fiefs when the owners of the small fiefs from the soldiers complained about the lack of their income compared to the princes' returns from their

<sup>26</sup> ربيعة عبدالسلام احمد خليفة، الفاطميون في مصر وسياساتهم الداخلية، مجلة كليات التربية، عدد 21، 2021، ص 453

<sup>27</sup> ايمن سيد فؤاد ، الدولة الفاطمية في مصر ، تفسير جديد ، ص228

fiefs. Then he surveyed the country and redistributed the fiefs to the increasing number of soldiers and princes. Thus, everyone was satisfied and began to cultivate the land.

When al-Afdal heard that some landlords in Upper Egypt had added to their lands from estates they had usurped from the diwans' properties that were adjacent to theirs by encroaching upon them, he ordered the issuance of a statement of recording all the properties and lands by granting it to their current owners without restoring anything from them. Then, it included determining the set kharaj (taxes). He approved their possession of the land to its current lords, prohibited usurping more lands and warned against getting more unless he would restore all lands from the transgressors and double their fines and penalty.

He permitted everyone who wants to cultivate the land of neighbors in an abandoned circle or manage a deserted well to get it provided measuring it. Also, he ordered not to collect a tax from him except after four years of handing it over to him and in the same ratios of similar properties. Hence, Al-Afdal ordered the approval of these lands in the hands of those who seized them, along with determining the tax due on them, as he ordered the punishment of those who later resort to such work, except to encourage the reclamation of waste lands and the cultivation of neglected lands. The landlord was to keep the full returns of his land for three years but to pay the due tax in the fourth.

Besides, Al-Afdal paid attention to irrigation, as he re-dug Khalij Amir al-Mu'minin in 102 AH, cultivated its orchards, and assigned a governor to it to prevent people from throwing anything in it. He also ordered digging the gulf, which was known as Khalij Abu Al-Manja, based on the advice of the Jew Abu Al-Manja ibn Sha'ya the Jew<sup>28</sup>, because the water did not reach it except from Khalij al-Sardous and other distant regions. The digging began Tuesday, the sixth of Sha'ban 506 AH, and was completed in two years. It is said that al-Afdal sailed on the Nile with his entourage, after he threw a bundle of reeds into it and followed it until the water threw it in the place where digging began. This gulf prospered the lands it watered and was called after Abu al-Manja despite al-Afdal attempted to name it after his name.

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<sup>28</sup>Abu Al-Manja bin Shi`a: He was the supervisor of the eastern countries belonging to the Caliphate Court

The agricultural progress in al-Afdal's reign reached its zenith as it extended to the whole land. He brought in two new types of wheat to be tested by cultivation, so he sent one of them to Upper Egypt and the other to the governor of Delta. One of them informed him that the whole land is cultivated and there is no place to sow this wheat, while the other mentioned that he sowed the ardebs. This showed that the first was highly concerned with agriculture until there was no uncultivated place to grow these seeds of wheat, while the other neglected growing until there remained an area in which this ardeb was planted. Hence, he rewarded the first and punished the second.

Al-Maqrizi mentioned that "when the wealth of Abu Al-Layth, Saheb al-Diwan increased, he wanted to boast before al-Afdal of his luxury, as he had seven hundred thousand dinars apart from what he spent on men. He put it in the boxes of the sitting council. When al-Afdal saw the money, he said, Sheikh, you are saving money, I swear if I heard that there is a waste land, or a ruined town, I would cut off your neck. Abu al-Layth replied: "By the way of your grace, God forbid your days to have a ruined country or a well that it's not working properly." It is not strange to find that the tax returns during his reign reached five million dinars, of which the princes paid one million ardebs<sup>29</sup>.

#### **4. AL- Afdal's contributions to Fatimid architecture**

##### **4.1. Contributions of al-Afdal Shahanshah in the Restoration of the Amr Ibn Al-Aas Mosque**

Amr ibn al-Aas built his mosque shortly after his conquest of Egypt<sup>30</sup>, and some of the Fatimid viziers contributed to the restoration and renovation of this mosque. Two minarets were built in 515 AH / 1121 AD, during the reign of the Fatimid vizier al-Afdal Shahanshah ibn Badr al-Jamali, one was known as al-Mi'zana al-Kabira (Great Minaret) to the left of the Qibla wall, where the tomb of (Abdullah bin Amr) is located now. As for the second minaret, which is called "al-Mi'zana al-Saidiya", it is located in the middle of the northern façade. Perhaps it was in place of the minaret surmounting the gate of the mosque<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> محمد حمدي المناوي، الوزارة والوزراء في العصر الفاطمي، دار المعارف، ص 231

<sup>30</sup> جمال الدين الشيبان، تاريخ مصر الإسلامية، دار المعارف، ص 37

<sup>31</sup> حسن الباشا وآخرون، القاهرة تاريخها وفنونها وأثارها، مكتبة الاسكندرية تحت رقم (15309)، 2000، ص 420

#### 4.2. Contributions of al-Afdal Shahanshah in the Tulunid Mosque

In addition to the great mihrab of the Ahmed Ibn Tulun Mosque, there are five other stucco mihrabs on the two walls<sup>32</sup>. The right mihrab in the Ahmed Ibn Tulun Mosque is the oldest mihrab, as it dates back to the era of Caliph Al-Mustansir Billah and the Fatimid vizier Al-Afdal Badr Al-Jamali, as it recorded inscriptions in their names<sup>33</sup>.

#### 4.3. Al-Fila Mosque

Al-Afdal Shahanshah ibn Amir Al-Joyoush Badr Al-Jamali built this mosque on the foothill overlooking Birak al-Habash, now known as al-Rasd, in Sha'ban 478 AH. The costs of its construction amounted to six thousand dinars<sup>34</sup>. It was called Jami' al-Fila or the Elephant Mosque because its qiblah consisted of nine arched domes that would seem from a distant as to with two armored soldiers on elephants, such as those used to march on feasts processions. They were surmounted by a bed and the armored during the days of the caliphs. It is said that al-Afdal found a treasure in the place of the mosque, so he moved it and built a cistern to build this mosque upon it<sup>35</sup>.

It is bordered on the south side by Birkat al-Habash, Bustan al-Wazir al-Maghribi, Al-Adawiya, the Nestorian Monastery, the well of Abu Salama, which provided water for the residents, and to the east of this mountain is Jabal Al-Muqattam, the cemetery, and Al-Qarafa; to the west of this mountain, there is the Nile, Bustan al-Yahoodi, and the pyramids. To the north of this mountain, there is the Bustan of Prince Tamim, the bridge of Banu Wael, and Deir al-Moadalin. No Friday of congregational prayers are held in this mosque due to the destruction of the surrounding area of the cemetery<sup>36</sup>.

#### 4.4. Masjid al-Rads

This mosque was established by the Fatimid vizier Abu al-Qasim Shahanshah bin Amir al-Juyoush Badr al-Jamali, in Sha'ban 498 AH, after building Al-Fila Mosque in order to observe the planets<sup>37</sup>. The cost of its construction amounted to six thousand

<sup>32</sup> كمال الدين سامح، العمارة الإسلامية في مصر، مكتبة النهضة المصرية، ص 43

<sup>33</sup> حسن الباشا وآخرون، القاهرة تاريخها وفنونها وأثارها، مكتبة الاسكندرية تحت رقم 15309، 2000، ص 452

<sup>34</sup> محمد شاكر مشعان، الأرمن في خدمة الدولة الفاطمية (468-558هـ/1073-1162م)، مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية، جامعة بابل، العدد 33، 2017، ص 775

<sup>35</sup> سعاد ماهر محمد، مساجد مصر وأولياؤها الصالحون، ج2، المجلس الأعلى للشئون الإسلامية، مطابع الأهرام التجارية، ص 104

<sup>36</sup> المقریزی، الخطط، ج4، مطبعة النيل بمصر، ص 74، 76

<sup>37</sup> المقریزی، الخطط، تحقيق محمد زينهم وآخرون، ج1، مكتبة مدبولي، 1998، ص 356-361

dinars. It is likely that Al-Afdal built Al-Rasd Mosque in the place of the observatory of Al-Hakim Bi-Amrillah, on Mount of Al-Rasd, which is currently known (Mount Establ Antar). This supports the belief that Al-Afdal Shahanshah was interested in astronomy and wanted to establish an observatory that was superior to that of al-Hakim<sup>38</sup>.

Al-Rasd Mosque was of great religious importance to the Fatimid state as it is well known that the Ismaili Shiites differ from the Sunnis in determining the beginning of Ramadan as the majority of Sunnis necessitates seeing the crescent to begin fasting. Hence, the Fatimids resorted to astronomy and arithmetic to make a lunar calendar, according to which they calculate the movement of the moon, and estimate its phases to see the crescent of Ramadan<sup>39</sup>.

#### 4.5. Al-Omari Mosque in Al-Mahalla Kubra

It is worth noting that the remaining Islamic monuments in the Lower Egypt governorates are relatively few compared to those in Upper Egypt, as many of them demolished completely. The reason is that they were built in an agricultural area that underwent continuous repair operations to dig canals and build bridges, which is followed of course by a change in planning the cities and villages<sup>40</sup>.

A Fatimid inscription was found in this mosque. It indicates that the mosque underwent an architectural renovation in the days of Al-Afdal Shahanshah in 508 AH / 1114 AD. This inscription was executed on a marble panel (50 cm x 100 cm), fixed to the right of the mihrab. It is adorned with eight-lines of inscription in bas-relief Kufic script that read as follows:

( بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم إِنَّمَا يَعْزُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ  
فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَن يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ<sup>41</sup> ، مما أمر بعمله السيد الأجل الأفاضل أمير الجيوش سيف الإسلام ناصر الإمام كافل  
قضاة المسلمين و هادى دعاة المؤمنين عضد الله به الدين وأمتع بطول بقائه أمير المؤمنين وأدام كلمته و انفذ في البسيطة  
أوامره وأحكامه على يد عبده ومملوكة القاضي..... أبو الفتح المسلم بن علي بن الحسن الرصعنى متولى الحكم الشريف  
..... الغربية في المحرم سنة ثمان وخمسائة )

It means: ("In the Name of Allah—the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. The mosques of Allah should only be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the

<sup>38</sup> المقرئى، الخطط ، ج4، ص 321

<sup>39</sup> سعاد ماهر محمد، مساجد مصر وأولياؤها الصالحون ، ج2، ص 106

<sup>40</sup> سعاد ماهر محمد، مساجد مصر وأولياؤها الصالحون ، ج2، ص 106

<sup>41</sup> قرآن كريم، سورة التوبة، آية 18

Last Day, establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and fear none but Allah. It is right to hope that they will be among the 'truly' guided"... From what was implemented by command of the Most reverent Master al-Afdal Amir al-Joyoush, Sword of Islam, Advocate of the Imam, Insurer of Muslim Judges, Guide of dai's of Believers, May God use him to raise the word of religion, prolong his life as the Commander of the Faithful! May his word be perpetuated, and may His orders and Rulings carried out everywhere at the hand of his servant the judge..... Abu Al-Fath Al-Muslim bin Ali bin Al-Hassan Al-Ras'ani, who assumed the honorable rule..... Gharbia in Muharram in the year five hundred and eight).

This inscription reveals the political situation that viziers enjoyed in the second half of the Fatimid era. The vizier mentioned his name in the inscriptions and there was no reference to the name of the caliph al-Amir, which emphasized the power of the vizier. The inscription confirms that the construction of mosques was one of the judges' tasks, as previously maintained by other Fatimid inscriptions and historical sources. The inscription recorded the name of the judge of the Gharbia province who oversaw the renovation of al-Omari Mosque in Mahalla al-Kubra. He was called Ali ibn al-Hassan al-Ras'ani<sup>42</sup>.

#### 4.6. Mosque of Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (Monument No. 599)

He is Imam Zayd ibn ‘Alī, a.k.a. (Zayn al-‘Ābidīn ibn al-Imam Al-Husayn ibn Al-Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, may God be pleased with them)<sup>43</sup>. The Fatimid vizier Al-Afdal built this mausoleum. It was narrated that when he became prominent in the days of Hisham ibn Abdul Malik in 122 AD, Yusuf Ibn Omar al-Thaqafi, the wali of Iraq, a man shot him with an arrow that hit his forehead, and he died. His friends dissipated and he crucified him and sent his head to Alamsar. Others believe that his friends dug a waterwheel and buried him in it for fear of mutilating his corpse. Then, Yusuf ibn Omar, the Emir of Kufa, guided to his place. The corpse was brought out and burnt, then his ashes were scattered in the Euphrates.

Al-Kindi said that the corpse was brought to Egypt by Abu Al-Hakam ibn Abu Al-Abyad Al-Absi, and placed on the minbar of the mosque, and the people of Egypt buried it in the Mahras Al-Khassi Mosque. When the Fatimid vizier Al-Afdal heard

<sup>42</sup> محمد عبد الستار عثمان، موسوعة العمارة الفاطمية، الحربية والمدنية والدينية، ط1، دار القاهرة، ص 491

<sup>43</sup> حسن عبد الوهاب، تاريخ المساجد الاثرية التي صلى فيها فريضة الجمعة حضرة صاحب الجلالة الملك الصالح فاروق الأول، ج1، مطبعة دار الكتب المصرية، 1946، ص 94

this story, he ordered excavating the mosque of which the mihrab only was still in place. This honorable organ (the head) only was found, so it was perfumed and carried to the house until the construction of the mausoleum ended in 525 AH. (Plate 1-5) 44.

#### 4.7. Bahr Abu al-Munja (al-Bahr al-Afdali)<sup>45</sup>

Most of the eastern provinces could not get water except from remote places, and Abu Al-Munja, the Jew, was the superintendent of these provinces. Hence, the farmers asked him to dig a gulf for them to provide them directly with the water. Abu Al-Munja communicated the Fatimid vizier al-Afdal and informed him with the matter. Al-Afdal ordered to dig a canal to this country, and its site was chosen. Digging began on Tuesday, the sixth of Sha'ban, in the year 506 AH<sup>46</sup>. Al-Afdal and the sheikhs sailed on boats (EL- Asharri) 47. They were holding sheaves of reeds to throw them into the water of Nile. These sheaves stopped in the place from which the canal was dug. The digging lasted for two years, and a lot of money was spent on it. When Al-Afdal knew of these great expenses spent on this gulf, he said, "We spent all this money, and its name is attributed to Ibn Al-Munja." So, he changed its name and called it "Al-Bahr Al-Afdali."

Later, Al-Afdal exiled Abu Al-Munja to Alexandria after arresting and imprisoning him for a long time. The cell had a huge snake, that Abu al-Munja saw. When the soldiers brought him milk, the snake drank it and entered its hideout, which made Abu Al-Munja ask every day for milk for this snake so that it would drink it and not harm him. Abu Al-Munja wrote a letter to his supporters and ended it with (Written by Abu Al-Munja Al-Yahoudi- in reference to his religion as a Jew), so the people revolted against al-Afdal, which forced him to release Abu al-Munja<sup>48</sup>. When Al-Ma'mun Al-Bata'ih took over the vizierate during the era of al-Amir, they discussed opening this gulf, so al-Amir opened it, and ordered designating a day to celebrate it such as Khalij al-Qahera. Therefore, Al-Ma'mun assigned Abu Al-Barakat

44 ابن عبد الظاهر، الروضة البهية الزاهرة في خطط المعزية القاهرة- تحقيق ايمن فؤاد سيد، ط1، الدار العربية للكتاب، 1996، ص96

<sup>45</sup> The word "Bahr" in this context denotes the bridge of Abu al-Munja that was built on the Nile during al-Afdal's era.

46 حسن الباشا، موسوعة العمارة والآثار والفنون الاسلامية، ص 386

47 EL- Asharri: A type of boat that the caliphs were traveling in

48 ابن دقماق، الانتصار لواسطة عقد الامصار، ذخائر التراث العربي، المكتب التجارى للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع، بيروت، ص 47



ibn Othman, his deputy, and ordered him to build on the dam's place (a Manzara that is a place with a view) so that the Caliph and the vizier could watch the celebrations of opening the dam (Plate 6) 49.

Al-Zahir Baybars was highly concerned with agriculture and providing water to irrigate the land, which prompted him to build many aqueducts and bridges. The most important of these were the aqueducts and bridges located on Bahr Abu al-Munja in 665 AH, under the direct supervision of Prince Izz al-Din Aybak. Here, there may be another narration to designate it as Qanatir Abu al-Munja. There was a man from Qalyub who worked in the spinning industry. He was called (Ali Al-Ghazouli). He had three daughters and a son called (Hassan), He was coming from al-Qahera to sell the yarns and took his son with him. They crossed Bahr Abu al-Munja on a boat whose owner was known as (Abu Al-Munja). The owner of the boat took a fee from the man and his son and asked for a fee for the spinning. The man told him that he had no money, so the boatman threatened to drown the boy. The man told him, "Do not fear God and Amir al-Mu'minin Baybars." The boatmen slaughtered the child, and said to his father: "Let Baybars bring him again into life or bring him to you." The man put the dead child in a scuttle and was able to meet Baybars in al-Qutn Square at Bab al-Sha'ria. He complained from Abu al-Munja, so Baybars traveled to Qalyub and made sure of the incident after meeting Sayyid Muhammad al-Shawarbi, the ruler of Qalyub. Hence, he ordered the construction of Abu Al-Munja's bridge, and to put Abu Al-Munja and his followers' alive underneath to resume the construction on them. This bridge aimed to reserve the water to raise its level at the time of the flood of the Nile.

Some remains of this bridge are still in place, even if they are unused due to diversion of the watercourse. They are adorned with several statues of lions that were the blazon of Al-Zahir Baybars. They are 41; most of them are in good condition. Sultan Qaytbay renewed these bridges in 892 AH (Plate 7), under the supervision of Prince Badr al-Din Hassan ibn al-Tuluni, where he placed his blazon (Plate 8). In addition, the Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments of Arab Art also restored it. This is recorded on top of the wall as follows:

(رمت لجنة حفظ الآثار العربية المؤسسة بالقاهرة سنة ١٢٩٩ هجرية ما تشعث من هذه القناطر في سنة ١٣٢١ في عصر خديوي مصر عباس حلمي الثاني أدامه الله، وفي الآخر توقيع الكاتب اسمه يوسف احمد)

It means ("The Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments of Arab Art, established in Cairo in 1299 AH, restored the remains of these bridges in 1321 in the era of the Khedive of Egypt Abbas Helmy II, may God prolong his life. At the end is the signature of the scribe called Yusuf Ahmed"). (Plate 9) 50.

## 5. Conclusion:

This research highlights the importance of the position of vizierate in the Fatimid era, and its development. The researcher shed light on one of the most prominent Fatimid viziers called Al-Afdal ibn Badr Al-Jamali as evidence of the strength of the viziers in that era. Hence, the researcher dealt with al-Afdal's contributions to internal politics, and the importance of his assumption of the vizierate at that time. It became clear that the Fatimid viziers were not interested only in politics but also in architecture. It can be seen that al-Afdal built many religious and civil structures alike.

### 5.1 Results:

- The Fatimid vizier AL-Afdal played an important role in the internal politics of Egypt
- The Fatimid vizier AL-Afdal contributed to agriculture
- The Fatimid vizier AL-Afdal transferred the seat of the caliphate from Cairo to Fustat for the first time in the history of the Fatimid state
- The Fatimid vizier AL-Afdal contributed to many Fatimid antiquities

The Fatimid vizier AL-Afdal left behind a huge treasure

### 5.2. Recommendations:

- Paying attention to the Fatimid vizier AI-Afdal antiquities and preserving them is a national duty to preserve this heritage to the contemporary and future Egyptian people.
- Preventing any operations of demolishing or removing any of these antiquities and working on restoring any damages they exposed to.
- Developing new programs for tourist places and focusing on the Fatimid viziers' heritage and promoting them in all tourism operators in the world.

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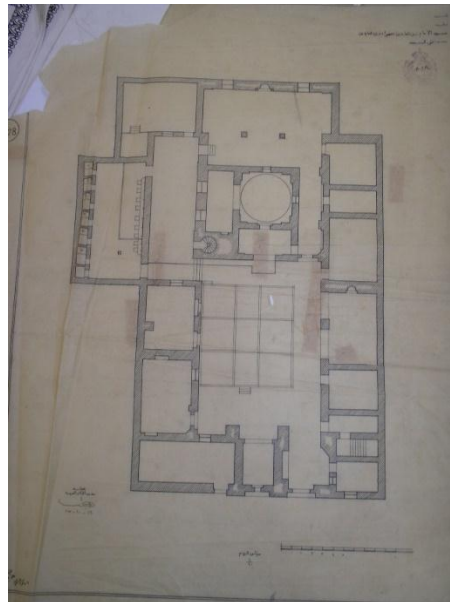
50 سامى محمد نوار، المنشآت المائية بمصر منذ الفتح الإسلامى وحتى نهاية العصر المملوكى، دراسة أثرية معمارية، دار الوفاء لدنيا الطباعة والنشر، ص117

- Include the Fatimid vizier AI-Afdal antiquities in the educational curricula to increase students' awareness of the civilization of their country

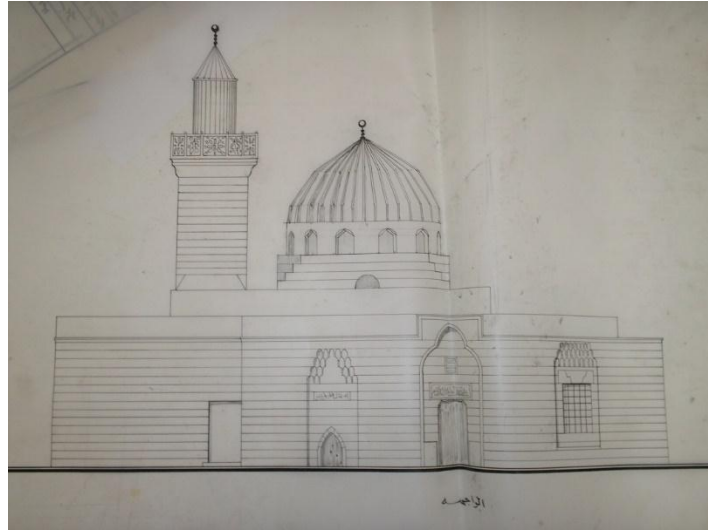
## Plates



(Plate1- A scene showing the current dome of the mausoleum of Saiida. Nafisa, photographed by the researcher)



(Plate2- Horizontal section of Imam Zine El Abidine Mosque - Supreme Council of Antiquities, Coptic Islamic Antiquities Registration Center)



( Plate3- Sketch of the facade of the Zain El Abidine Mosque showing the dome and minaret - Supreme Council of Antiquities, Coptic Islamic Antiquities Registration Center)

الجلس الاعلى للآثار مركز تسجيل الآثار الإسلامية القبطية			
رقم الرسم ٢	مسجد علي زين العابدين	اندر رقم ٥٩٩	رقم التسجيل ٢
مقياس الرسم ١ : ٥٠	الواجهه	تاريخ ٩٩/٤/٢٤	رقم تسجيل ٣/١٤٦٦
رسم مرافقها	مدرسة الفقيه انال ايم	مديرية المركز ن علم رزق	٩

(Plate4- Data of Zine El Abidine Mosque from the reality of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Coptic Islamic Antiquities Registration Center)



(Plate5- Dome of Sheikh Zine El Abidine - Photograph by researcher)



(Plate6- Bahr Abu al-Munja, Qalyubia Antiquities Inspection Authority)



(Plate7- Rank Al-Assad on the northern facade of Bahr Abu al-Munja,  
Qalyubia Antiquities Inspection Authority)



(Plate8- The rank of Sultan Qaitbay of Bahr Abu al-Munja, Qalyubia  
Antiquities Inspection Authority)



(Plate9- Restoration record of the Antiquities Conservation Committee of Bahr Abu  
al-Munja, Qalyubia Antiquities Inspection Authority)

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