PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF A LIVING HERITAGE

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Rosetta location:

Rosetta It situated in lat. 31˚24` N., long. 30˚ 24` E.,on the western bank of the western branch of the Nile at a distance of 65 km north east Alexandria. Its location had been of great strategic importance.

The town which is situated near the site of the ancient Bolbouthio (Greek Bolbitine\(^2\)) seems not to have existed before the Arab conquest. Even at the beginning of the 8\(^{th}\) century A.D., the papyri mention only the name of Bolbitine as emporium for merchandise from Upper Egypt (Bell, The Aphrodite papyri, 1414, 1. (59), 102, etc. Till the 9\(^{th}\) century A.D., ships sailed direct to Fuwwa; but owing to the excessive depositing of the silt in this region, Rashîd began to take its place.

Amelino mentioned it in his book, as the name was deriven from the old name Rachit found in coptic papyri\(^3\). Rashîd is first mentioned in 132/750 when the Copts of the town revolted against the caliph Marwan II who had taken refuge in Egypt from the ʿAbbāsids\(^4\). In 278/891-2, al-Yaʾkūb (Buldān, 338) mentioned its port. When the Fātimid heir-apparent (the future caliph al-Qāʾim) tried to conquer Egypt in 307/920, his fleet was prevented by an ʿAbbāsīd squadron from sailing into the mouth of the Rashîd branch of the Nile, and was then annihilated (Al-Kindi, Wulat, 276).

Rosetta is distinguished by its national history and unique decorative and architectural heritage. It is considered a large open museum for the Islamic architecture and that is clear in its religious and profan buildings (mosques and houses).

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1 Encyclopaedia Britannica: p438
2 Encyclopaedia de L’Islam- p1246.
4 Al-Kindi: Wulat, p96
Most of the monuments were neglected for several years, beside being surrounded by the modern building that almost deprived them of their distinguished monumental character and damaged the aesthetical view of its architectural features. 

The study will take us through the history of the city development during the Fāṭimid period, Mamlūk, Ottoman, the 19th and the 20th century as well as its architectural and technical characteristics of its old houses.