

## **The Ramses Hilton Hotel in Cairo: The Construction History of a Dramatic Symbol of Contemporary Cairo (1974-1982)**

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### **Abstract**

The Ramses Hilton Hotel is a substantial symbol of tourism and hospitality industry in modern Egypt. This Hotel should not only function as a luxury accommodation facility, but also as a local attraction because of its historic importance and outstanding architecture. Despite its publicity, the history of the Ramses Hilton Hotel has received scant attention, and there is a lack of valid framework to document its historical significance. This study explores the Hotel's history in a specific time frame from its schematic design in 1974 to its opening in the early beginning of 1982. This article focuses within the given time frame on the work of Hilton International Corporation in Egypt, the Ramses Hilton Hotel's design, its architectural description, interior design, and its luxury facilities. The paper depends mainly on studying primary sources represented in relative historical documents which are at Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

**Keywords:** Hilton International – Ramses Hilton Hotel – Modern Architecture in Cairo – Ramses Hilton's Architecture – Historical Hotels in Cairo

### **Introduction**

Egypt is not only historically decorated with temples, tombs, and museums, but even its hotels have a distinguished history. Among these historical hotels is the Ramses Hilton Hotel which is considered a substantial symbol of tourism and hospitality industry in modern Egypt. It is one of the iconic symbols of modern architecture in Cairo which combined modern design and ancient and Islamic artistic elements influenced by the Egyptian history from ancient times to Islamic Egypt.

The Ramses Hilton Hotel was described as a “masterpiece of modern architecture.” The hotel represented modernism and progressive of the Egyptian capital.<sup>1</sup> The designers of the Hotel were keen to build a unique structure fitting well into the ambience of Cairo, “the building should prove to be unique unto itself.”<sup>2</sup> The Hotel was shaping the

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<sup>1</sup> Ramses Hilton: Suggested Group Planner for visitors to Cairo – Grand Lady of the Nile, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>2</sup> Schematic Design for Cairo Hilton, on June 10.1974, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

cityscape of Cairo; it was centrally located, separated from the Nile only by a road. The Hotel boasts a unique design, a prime central location, exquisite suites, and excellent meeting, dining, and entertainment facilities.

Despite the historical importance of the Ramses Hilton Hotel, it has not been adequately studied from a historical point of view. There has been little discussion on the construction history of the Hotel and its early equipment. As the Hotel remains in good operation today and is a landmark in its destination, it should not only function as a luxury accommodation facility, but also as a local attraction because of its historic importance and outstanding architecture.

This paper outlines the historical importance of the Ramses Hilton Hotel within a certain time frame from its schematic design in 1974 to the Hotel's opening in the early beginning of 1982. The study focuses on the works of Hilton International in Egypt, the Hotel's design, and its architectural description. The research sheds light on the interior design of the Hotel and the strong sense of resemblance to Egypt's ancient monuments and Islamic art.

The article calls into question the Hotel's prime location, its views, the luxury facilities since its opening including its guestrooms, butlers, concierge, valet service, multiple high-end restaurants, rejuvenating wellness amenities, and convention facilities.

Our knowledge of the history of this Hotel is largely based on very limited data. The aim of this research is therefore to examine its history within the given time frame through investigating relative historical documents located at Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York. The research used the historical research method through examination and analysis of hundreds of relative historical documents.

## **1- History of Hilton International and Ramses Hilton Hotel**

Hilton International is a global hotel chain. It was founded in 1949 when it won a contract to manage the luxury Caribe Hilton in Puerto Rico's capital, San Juan. Initially, the global hotel chain was part of Hilton Hotels Corporation. The latter split off its foreign subsidiary in December 1964. In accordance with the agreements the two companies entered, Hilton Hotels Corporation was confirmed to have the exclusive right to use the name Hilton in the USA states, while Hilton International was confirmed to have the exclusive right to use the name Hilton for hotels anywhere in the world outside of the USA states as well as the right to keep using the name Kalaha Hilton in Honolulu, Hawaii. The only relationship the two businesses had since then was that they both own

Hilton Service Corporation, a third company that operated the global Hilton Reservation Service.<sup>3</sup>

Through a legislative merger, Hilton International became a wholly owned subsidiary of Trans World Airlines in May 1967. Trans World Airlines reorganized its corporate structure in January 1979, forming Trans World Corporation as a holding company. Trans World Corporation included Trans World Airlines, Hilton International Co., Canteen, Corporation Century 21, and Spartan Food Systems among its subsidiaries.<sup>4</sup>

Hilton International's first association with Egypt was in 1959 when the Nile Hilton was opened in Cairo. It was designed by the specialized company Welton Beckett and Associates, in conjunction with Ali Nour El Din Nassar<sup>♦</sup>, the same Egyptian Architect who participated in the Ramses Hilton design. The Nile Hilton was the second international Hilton hotel, the first was the 1955 Hilton in Istanbul.<sup>5</sup>

Hilton International operated two cruise ships in Egypt, Osiris and Isis which offered luxury and comfort facilities for tourists wishing to visit the tourism sites in Upper Egypt.<sup>6</sup> The two ships began their operation in 1965 to operate between Aswan and Luxor.<sup>7</sup>

As in all instances, when local investors desire to cooperate with Hilton International, they build and equip a hotel to Hilton International standards, while Hilton International

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<sup>3</sup> Background on Hilton International, 1, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>4</sup> Background on Hilton International, 1, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>♦</sup> **Ali Nour El Din Nassar** worked in the field of architecture and engineering consultancy. He founded Ali Nassar Consultants & Partners in Cairo in 1940. Nassar participated in the design of some notable buildings in Cairo such as the Nile Hilton in 1950s, Mena House extension in 1960s, Ramses Hilton in 1970s and the World Trade Center in 1980s.

Mercedes Volait, "Mediating and domesticating modernity in Egypt: uncovering some forgotten pages," *Docomomo journal*, special issue Modern Architecture in the Middle East 35, (September 2006): 31.

"Cairo, Egypt," 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture, last modified February 17, 2024, <http://architecture-history.org/schools/CAIRO.html>

<sup>5</sup> Nebahat Avcioğlu and Mercedes Volait, "Jeux de miroir: Architecture of Istanbul and Cairo from Empire to Modernism," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 1146.

<sup>6</sup> The Ramses Hilton Cairo – Egypt's Largest Hotel opens, 1, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>7</sup> Egypt plans bright future, 4, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

provides technical assistance in the planning and building of the hotel; then operates it.<sup>8</sup> The Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism was the owner of the Ramses Hilton Hotel. The project was financed by the Arab International Bank, Cairo, mostly owned by Gulf shareholders.<sup>9</sup> The Hotel was operated by Hilton International Hotels.<sup>10</sup> It was built by Mobag International Zurich, Switzerland as general contractor.<sup>11</sup> The Ramses Hilton Hotel was named after one of the most famous builders in Egyptian history, King Ramses II, the third King of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Ancient Egypt.<sup>12</sup>

The owner of the Hotel and Hilton International agreed in 1975 upon the name of the Cairo Hilton to be Ramses Hilton. The designer of the Hotel, Charles Warner, Jr. ♦ asked the Executive Vice-President of Hilton International, C. A. Bell, to inform him with the spelling of Ramses as he checked with museums in New York and found different spellings for the same name; Ramses, Rameses, Ramises, Ramesse, and Ramesside. They finally agreed on the name to be Ramses Hilton.<sup>13</sup>

The 72.000 square meter Ramses Hotel was built in the heart of Cairo<sup>14</sup>, on a relatively small site of approximately 6000 square metres, on the east bank of the Nile.<sup>15</sup> It is

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<sup>8</sup> Background on Hilton International, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>9</sup> Quake-Proofing the Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), 1975 Apr, 1975 13 Oct, 1976 Oct, 1979,1980/1981, 2005.004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>10</sup> Cairo Hilton – General Information, 3, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Zwicker, “Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs,” *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1090.

<sup>12</sup> The Ramses Hilton Cairo – Egypt’s Largest Hotel opens, 1, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

♦ **Charles H. Warner Jr:** Architect, worked in New York from the 1940s to the 1990s. Warner designed many structures for American and international college campuses. Warner also constructed many hotels, collaborating closely with Hilton Hotels to construct new buildings across the globe. His overseas projects highlight his fundamental architectural tenet of "in context," or fusing local customs and culture into his structures. Among his most well-known hotel designs are the Caribe Hilton in San Juan and the Ramses Hilton in Cairo.

“Charles H. Warner Jr. architectural records, 1940s-1990s,” Columbia University Libraries, Accessed December 27, 2023, [https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-a/ldpd\\_11415461](https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-a/ldpd_11415461)

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Charles W. Warner, Jr., Warner Burns Toan Lunde, to C. A. Bell, Executive Vice President of Hilton International, on June 11, 1975, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>14</sup> Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects Planners, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

located near the shopping district, the Egyptian Museum, and the Nile Hilton just north of the Sixth of October Bridge. It commands views of the Nile, the city, and the pyramids. The Hotel is 22 km from Cairo International Airport and 2.4 km from Cairo Railway Station.

## **2- The Ramses Hilton Hotel Design**

The American Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects company from New York, assisted by the Egyptian architect Ali Nour El Din Nassar from Cairo designed the Ramses Hilton Hotel and provided all the architectural design, engineering, and interior design on a joint-venture basis. Some researchers believe that the work of a foreign architect side by side with an Egyptian one in developing building designs in Egypt in the latest of 20<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in buildings that have no connection to the Egyptian climate, traditions, and cultural contents. Some scholars claimed that the Ramses Hilton Hotel's design orientation depended on western thoughts and far from the Egyptian constant heritage.<sup>16</sup> Instead of not showing the Egyptian character in the Hotel's exterior design, this was remedied in its interior design using some decorative elements inspired by ancient Egyptian and Islamic art as will be demonstrated in this research.

In March 1975, *The Progressive Architecture* magazine - American magazine on architecture, design, and drafting - showed interest in the Hotel construction project from the beginning of its planning. The Editorial Assistant of the journal, Barbara McCarthy, asked the project's details from the American designers. Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects sent to her a photograph of the rendering of the Hotel, a site plan, and three sketches done by Charles Warner, Jr. which provided an impression of some of the interior spaces of the proposed Hotel.<sup>17</sup>

Charles Warner sent drawings of the proposed Ramses Hilton Hotel to the Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism as the owner and received their comments on these drawings in April 1978.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>16</sup> Mohamed Adel Salama, "The Identity of Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," *International Journal of Advanced Engineering and Business Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2021): 85.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Jean Hatton Duffy, Warner Burns Toan Lunde, to Barbara McCarthy, *Progressive Architecture*, on March 5, 1975, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Hassan Naghy, Managing Director of the Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism, to Charles W. Warner, Jr., Warner Burns Toan Lunde, on April 24, 1978, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

The project's financing was based on the USD 62,737,000 contract sum. Hilton International requested specific modifications to be made to the employee laundry, locker rooms, the food service and kitchen areas. The Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism had agreed to cover additional costs for the changes that Hilton International specifically asked. These modifications added to the contract about USD 100,000 and caused more changes in the variations to the mechanical and electrical plumbing installations.<sup>19</sup>

On June 18, 1978, representatives of the owner of the Hotel including Hassan Naghy, Managing Director, Charles Bell of Hilton International, and Charles H. Warner Jr. held a meeting in the Nile Hilton in Cairo to discuss the project details. They reviewed many points on the Ramses Hilton project such as the exterior material of the building, fixed decoration, and the materials to be used in preparing the “mock up” guest room. The attendees agreed that the exterior material of the building would be a product called Mineralite to be used in conjunction with Aswan granite. Charles Warner suggested that the use of marble in the bathrooms would be desired.<sup>20</sup> During this visit to Cairo, all loose decoration items for the entire project were approved by all concerned parties and were ready for bidding by September 1978.<sup>21</sup>

The construction of the Hotel had begun at the end of 1977; the foundation slab began in mid-December 1977<sup>22</sup> and was completed in 1981 (Fig. 1 – Fig. 2).<sup>23</sup> Modern Western technology was used in the Hotel construction. Prior to this, prominent buildings in Egypt were often constructed using wooden scaffolding and mixed concrete was carried out by hand in baskets. Machines were used for excavation. The project included three tower

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<sup>19</sup> Letter from Charles W. Warner, Jr., Warner Burns Toan Lunde, to Hassan Naghy, Managing Director of the Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism, on June 20, 1978, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Hassan Naghy, Managing Director of the Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism, to Charles W. Warner, Jr., Warner Burns Toan Lunde, on April 24, 1978, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>21</sup> Telex from Charles W. Warner, Jr., Warner Burns Toan Lunde, to Dino Papas, on June 21, 1978, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>22</sup> Albert Zwicker, “Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs,” *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1092.

<sup>23</sup> Ramses Hilton: A Hilton International Hotel 1978-1981, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

cranes, two concrete mixing plants, and a modern 'flying forms' system designed in the United States for rapid stripping and installation of forms.<sup>24</sup>



**Fig. 1:** Concrete work on the 26<sup>th</sup> floor. In the background are the Nile and Cairo Tower.<sup>25</sup>

There were 700 workers in all including 38 highly qualified foreign personnel (American, British, Swiss, and Scandinavian) to oversee the labourers, who were primarily Egyptians.<sup>26</sup>

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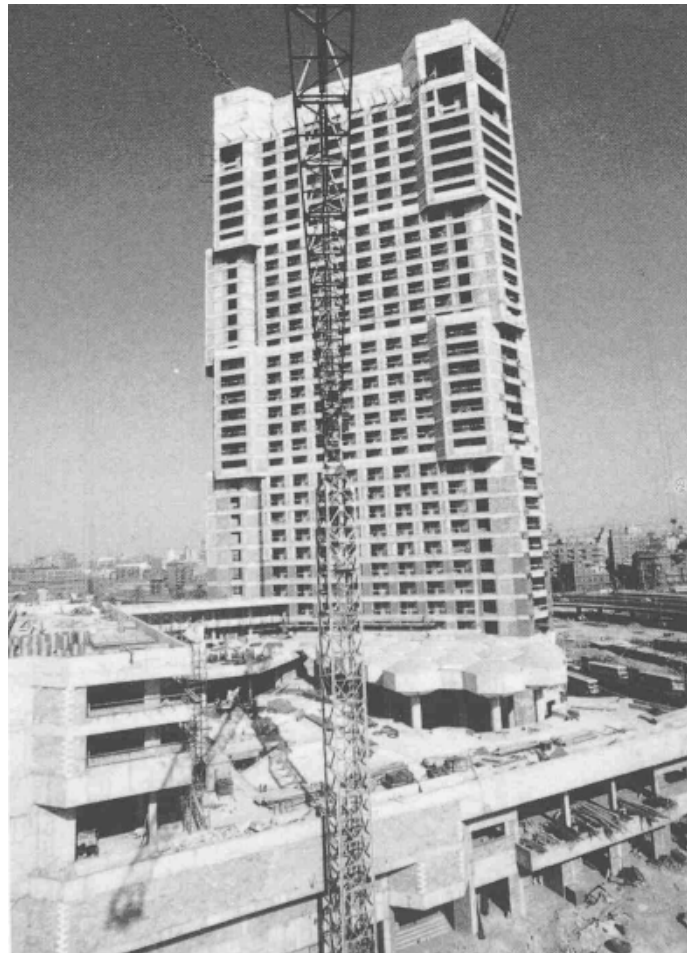
<sup>24</sup> Quake-Proofing the Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), 1975 Apr, 1975 13 Oct, 1976 Oct, 1979,1980/1981, 2005.004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>25</sup> Albert Zwicker, "Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs," *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1093.

<sup>26</sup> Quake-Proofing the Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), 1975 Apr, 1975 13 Oct, 1976 Oct, 1979,1980/1981, 2005.004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

The static concept enabled the architect to design a 120 meters high tower. Up to a depth of approximately 10-15 m from OK terrain, the subsoil of the site consists of loose, partly cohesive alluvial sand deposits from the Nile and was moderately to highly sensitive to settlement. Below this are densely packed Nile sands down to great depths, which have very good load-bearing capacity and are not very sensitive to settlement. The groundwater level corresponds to the Nile water level and was about 3 m below OK terrain.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding orientation to the sun, the triangular tower was quite useful. Since the roof terrace houses the outdoor dining and entertainment areas, its triangular shape allowed a significant amount of sunlight to pass through. In addition, at least two thirds of the guestrooms have views of the Nile thanks to the triangle tower and the angled windows. The remaining one-third of the view is directed towards the Egyptian Museum and the inner public space.<sup>28</sup>



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<sup>27</sup> Albert Zwicker, "Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs," *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1090.

<sup>28</sup> Schematic Design for Cairo Hilton, on June 10.1974, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.



**Fig. 2:** The shell building construction of the Ramses Hilton, completed in August 1979.<sup>29</sup>

A lobby was designed leading to a large garden court with a fountain and columns looking like those of the ancient Egyptian temples at Luxor and Karnak (Fig. 3). The lobby bar and lounge of the courtyard was described as “Cairo's most popular meeting place.”<sup>30</sup>



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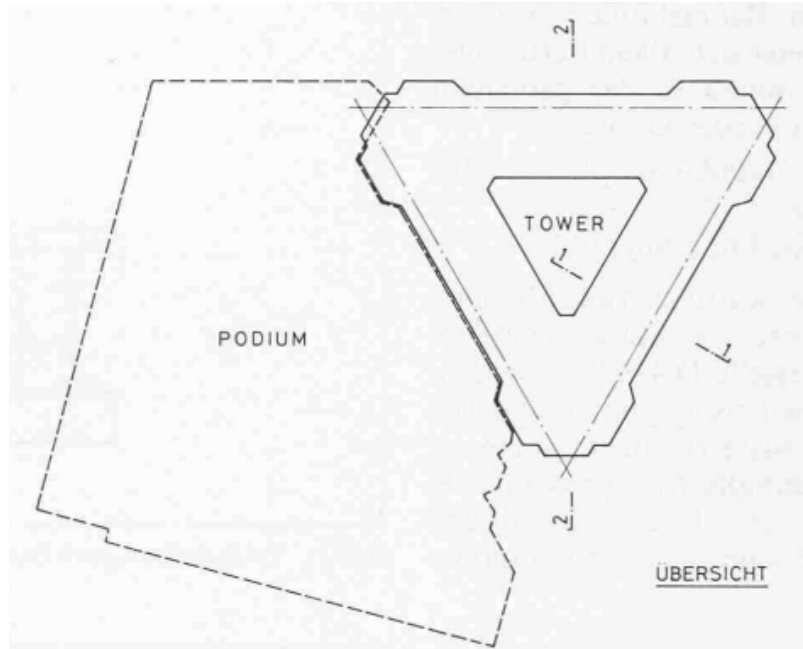
<sup>29</sup> Albert Zwicker, “Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs,” *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1090.

<sup>30</sup> Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

**Fig. 3:** The Garden Court Lounge with its marble columns recalling those at the Temples of Karnak and Luxor. Photographed by the author.

### 3- The Architectural Description

The dimensions of the new Hotel were enormous. It was divided into a triangular “tower” about 120 m high and a low-rise building, called a podium, with a floor plan area of about 3,400 square meters (Fig. 4 – Fig. 5).<sup>31</sup>



**Fig. 4:** The Hotel was divided into a tower and a low-rise building (podium).<sup>32</sup>

The site of the Hotel contributed greatly to its final design. The triangular inner corner of the site caused the high-rise portion of the Hotel to be triangle shaped. The triangle shape not only suited the site, but it also related to the existing building line along the Nile due to its placement on the inner corner.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Albert Zwicker, “Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs,” *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1090.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Zwicker, “Das neue Ramses-Hilton-Hotel in Kairo: Bericht des Ingenieurs,” *Schweizer Ingenieur und Architekt* 98, (1980): 1091.

<sup>33</sup> Cairo Hilton – General Information, 1, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

The guestrooms' angling allowed the building to offer striking views of the Nile from most of them, along with views of other landmarks, such as the pyramids at Giza situated far to the west across the Nile, and the Mokattam Hills situated east of the city.<sup>34</sup>



**Fig. 5:** The triangular tower and the podium of Ramses Hilton. Photographed by the author.

Another change of pace was provided by the proposed Cairo Hilton's architecture. The intention had been to develop a structure with visual strength and solidity.<sup>35</sup> Hilton International emphasized that the interior design and decor of its hotels use indigenous art

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<sup>34</sup> Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects Planners, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>35</sup> A Hilton International Hotel, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

and other materials, reflecting the culture of the countries in which they are located.<sup>36</sup> The building's exterior, the architects believed strongly, should have a strong sense of resemblance to Egypt's ancient monuments, with the "wall" serving as the main design element "the overriding device". The masonry exterior of the structure echoes the visual mass of the walls of ancient buildings. As most of the ancient monuments of Egypt, where columns were rarely expressed at any great extent on the exterior, Ramses Hilton Hotel's design, in general, followed this direction. The Hotel's interior design included plenty of relatively thin columns in the garden court and incredibly heavy columns that support the 35-story guestroom tower.<sup>37</sup> In addition to being a conventional building material, masonry construction helps to reduce the solar cooling loads.<sup>38</sup>

The podium part consists of four stories of common areas including restaurants, bars, ballrooms, the lobby, and a four-story interior garden court which is the centre of the podium. The relatively high, 20-meter podium was built as a result of the high-water table, which limited underground area to one level.<sup>39</sup>

The high court's roof was made up of thin concrete domes that were held up by rows of thin, pink marble-clad "lotus-like" columns that resemble the public spaces in ancient Egyptian buildings that were formerly filled with columns.<sup>40</sup>

The roof was used for dining facilities, entertainment areas, and a nightclub. The four guest room components that form the triangular guestroom tower are situated equally above this podium.<sup>41</sup>

The service entrance, mechanical rooms, laundry, housekeeping, and certain employee facilities were all housed in one below-grade (above the Nile water level) basement. The various support facilities were contiguous to the areas they service, including kitchens,

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<sup>36</sup> Background on Hilton International, 4, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>37</sup> Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>38</sup> Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects Planners, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>39</sup> Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>40</sup> Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects Planners, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>41</sup> A Hilton International Hotel, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

pantries, food storage, administration areas, employee dining areas, and recreational spaces appropriate for a hotel of such magnitude.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4- The Interior Design of the Hotel**

In 1977, the Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism appointed Warner to draw the designs for the interiors of Ramses Hilton Hotel. These designs were developed in collaboration with Hilton International to ensure that the offered designs were compliant with Hilton operational procedures.<sup>43</sup>

In the same year, 1977, Sam Failla, the Director of Interior Design Department at Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects, travelled to Cairo to survey the availability of Egyptian products that could be used for the Ramses Hilton's furnishings and interior design. When designing the hotel's interior designs, the designer took into consideration the nature of the architecture of the building and at the same time reinforce it. Because of the various purposes they perform, the spaces adopt a variety of moods, from modern to Arabic.<sup>44</sup>

Ayala Sales Ltd<sup>♦</sup> of England was the company that executed the interior contract and furnishings of the Hotel; the Company was responsible for fitting out of all public areas throughout Ramses Hotel.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Cairo Hilton – General Information, 3, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Charles H. Warner, to Hassan Zaki, Chairman of Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism, on October 27, 1977, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), 1977, 2005-004, Oversize Box 04, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Charles H. Warner, to Hassan Zaki, Chairman of Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism, on October 27, 1977, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), 1977, 2005-004, Oversize Box 04, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>♦</sup> **Ayala** had gained international fame in the field of providing construction, fitting out, supply undertakings and on-site monitoring and supervision services required in relation to the fit-out and furnishing of traditional English cafes, taverns and international hotels. These could be added to specialized restaurants, nightclubs, palaces, offices, and luxurious galleries. This company provided its services in several countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt.

Note from Philip S. S. Brown, Sales Manager of Ayala Sales Ltd, August 1981, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>45</sup> Ramses Hilton, Cairo: Technical Notes Covering Work Carried out by Ayala Sales Ltd of England, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

Cairo Ramses Hilton: Mulahazat fanya tashmal ala'mal alaty qamat beha sharekat Ayala lelmabe'at almahduda, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo,



The interior design project in Ramses Hilton began in June 1980 and took approximately one year with approximate value of \$2.24 million.<sup>46</sup> Ayala worked in the reception which was completed on June 1, 1981. The company was responsible for the furnishings in the Courtyard Bar which was mostly finished in brass and marble (Fig. 6).<sup>47</sup>



**Fig. 6:** The Courtyard Bar mostly finished in brass and marble by Ayala. Photographed by the author.

Ayala had built a 3.500 mm high brass screen in the Ballroom Foyer area. The general effect of the screen was to provide the same restrictions as the Arabic balcony screens, which were initially designed to shield the women from the outside world and to provide shade, but still allowing one to view into the courtyard when resting. Ayala furnished other areas in the Hotel such as the Patisserie, Cocktail Bar, Specialty Restaurant with its carved timber screens with Islamic designs (Fig. 7), the Rotisserie which has five copper cans made by Ayala with the help of local craftsmen, were situated over the counter (Fig.

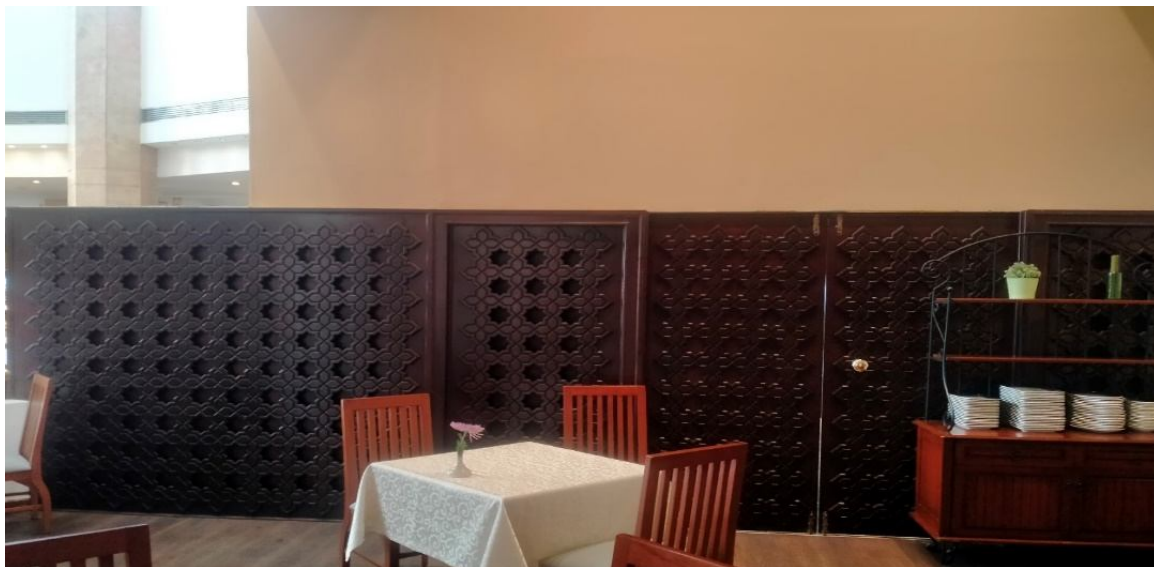
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<sup>46</sup> Ayala projects completed or currently under way in the Middle East and Mediterranean, August 1981, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>47</sup> Ayala Newsletter, August 1981, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

8), Café, Ballroom, Nightclub, Pool Terrace Bar, and the Observation Desk on the top floor.<sup>48</sup>



**Fig. 7:** Carved timber screens with Islamic designs in the Specialty Restaurant. Photographed by the author.



**Fig. 8:** Five copper cans made by Ayala over the counter of the Rotisserie. Photographed by the author.

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<sup>48</sup> Ayala Newsletter, August 1981, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

## **5- The Guestrooms and the Public Spaces**

At the time of its opening, in January 1982, the Hotel included 900 rooms: 353 twin bedrooms, 447 queen size studios, 24 cabanas, and 76 parlors. The Hotel offered 5 One Bedroom Deluxe, 2 Duplex State Suites, 60 Corner Parlor, 5 King Parlor, and 4 Twin Suite. The Hotel provided around 1800 beds.<sup>49</sup>

The main public areas of the Hotel were located at the four-storey podium and the roof terrace.<sup>50</sup> There are two lobbies at the street level: the main business lobby and the courtyard lobby, which are four stories high. This courtyard lobby's roof was glazed.<sup>51</sup>

Warner designed the Hotel's major dining spaces (specialty restaurant, bar, and the cafes) to be on the upper floor of the podium for two main reasons; the first reason was that since a very little parking would be available in the site except in the proposed parking structure, it was preferred to locate the dining spaces at the same level of the bridge connecting the Hotel and that parking structure. It was important for the public areas of the hotel, which might be used by residents of Cairo, to be close to the point of major parking facilities. The second reason represented in providing the best possible view of the Nile.<sup>52</sup>

There were four restaurants, three bars, a nightclub and poolside snack bar at the Ramses Hilton. The Ramses Hilton's Food and Beverage Manager at the opening time, Rene Balin, stated that he had a passion to make the Hotel the most stylish gathering place in Cairo. Balin said: "We have something for everyone here. The Citadel Grill<sup>♦</sup> is the most

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<sup>49</sup> Ramses Hilton International Cairo, Egypt (To open in January 1981), Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>50</sup> A Hilton International Hotel, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>51</sup> Cairo Hilton – General Information, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>52</sup> Schematic Design for Cairo Hilton, on June 10.1974, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>♦</sup> **The Citadel Grill:** it was the Ramses Hilton's main restaurant, specialized in international cuisine with a few dishes that were inspired by the local environment and some nouvelle cuisine offerings. The open rotisserie, which featured five red copper hoods and was modelled after ancient Egyptian clay ovens, was the main attraction of the Citadel Grill. In front of the rotisserie, a counter features specialty from the Citadel Grill. There were two display bread ovens where guests might get freshly cooked bread. The menu offered a variety of specialties, including American steaks, charcoal-grilled steaks, Alexandrian prawns, fish from the Mediterranean and Red Sea and a roast beef trolley.

Eat, Drink, and be Merry at the Ramses Hilton, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.



sophisticated restaurant in town, yet we can also offer just a light snack and a cup of coffee in our lobby level Patisserie♦♦".<sup>53</sup>

The area of the Hotel's restaurant facilities was decorated with magnificent examples of Islamic fairy-tale architecture found in Cairo's Citadel Fortress, which was constructed in 1176 by Salah El Din.<sup>54</sup> The combination of arabesque ornamentation, alcoves, flashes of polished brass, arches, cupolas, stained glass, and local crafts had produced an incredibly elegant and cosy oriental atmosphere in this area. Throughout, carved Mashrabiya<sup>55</sup> traditionally, turned lattice screens meant to protect the women of the harem from prying eyes which serve as a powerful decorative element.<sup>56</sup> The lounge was decorated with photo murals of ancient Egyptian art.<sup>57</sup>

The Hotel also included an Egyptian Corner Restaurant which was considered the only restaurant in Cairo that served Egyptian food in luxurious but traditional surroundings. It was located next to the Citadel Grill.<sup>58</sup>

A major recreation space with outdoor dining area and a swimming pool had been allocated on the roof terrace with views of the Nile. The swimming pool was built on the

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♦♦ **The Patisserie:** A tiny restaurant which was located next to the Garden Court Lounge. Sandwiches in the Scandinavian style, light snacks, ice creams, and an assortment of cakes and pastries were available. Eat, Drink, and be Merry at the Ramses Hilton, 1-2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>53</sup> Eat, Drink, and be Merry at the Ramses Hilton, 1, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>54</sup> Nasser O. Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mameluk Architecture* (New York: Brill, 1995), IX.

<sup>55</sup> Mashrabiya : It is one of the main characteristics of Arab-Islamic architecture, which is still in use in many cities across the world. It is an opening enclosed with wooden lattice that provides houses with ventilation, natural light, privacy, and aesthetic appeal.

Abdullah Abdulhameed Bagasi and John Kaiser Calautit, "Experimental field study of the integration of passive and evaporative cooling techniques with Mashrabiya in hot climates," *Energy and Buildings* 225, (2020): 1.

<sup>56</sup> The Ramses Hilton Cairo – Egypt's Largest Hotel opens, 5, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>57</sup> Ramses Hilton, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>58</sup> Eat, Drink, and be Merry at the Ramses Hilton, 2-3 , Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

roof terrace because the Hotel's small site did not provide space for a pool on the ground.<sup>59</sup>

The Hotel had superb convention facilities. Ahmed El Nahas<sup>♦</sup>, the General Manager of the Hotel at the opening time, stated that he was expecting heavy bookings for the convention facilities of the Hotel.<sup>60</sup> The capacity of the Hotel's ballroom was 421 seats for a banquet or 600 seats at a reception.<sup>61</sup> There were five other smaller meeting rooms which could handle groups for up to 150.<sup>62</sup>

## **6- The Opening of the Hotel**

The Hotel was opened on January 28, 1982.<sup>63</sup> The Hotel's advertising materials during its opening referred to the luxury the Hotel offered to its visitors; "Here, every comfort,

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<sup>59</sup> Schematic Design for Cairo Hilton, on June 10.1974, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>♦</sup> **Ahmed El Nahas:** The General Manager of the Hotel at the opening. He was an Egyptian, 42 years old and was born in Cairo. El Nahas was a graduate of the well-known Lausanne Hotel School in Switzerland, which is the world's first hotel school, founded in 1893. He joined Hilton International in 1963 after working in some leading hotels in Switzerland for three years. He was firstly employed by Hilton International at the Nile Hilton in the Food and Beverage Department and became Banquet Manager in 1966. He worked at the Cavalieri Hilton in Rome and at the Kuwait Hilton in 1968 and in Abu Dhabi in 1969. He was the Manager of Al Ain Hilton in the Arab Emirates at the time of its opening in 1972. He had opened seven hotels for this company. The Ramses Hilton was his eighth, "It's like coming home", said Nahas.

"Our Awards and Rankings," EHL Hospitality Business School, Last modified January 6, 2024,

<https://www.ehl.edu/>

"Cairo's Ramses Hilton," *Horizons Annual Review: Hilton International's Pan -Arab Magazine for the Middle East* (1980/81): 8.

The Ramses Hilton Cairo – Egypt's Largest Hotel opens, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>60</sup> The Ramses Hilton Cairo – Egypt's Largest Hotel opens, 2, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>61</sup> Ramses Hilton: Suggested Group Planner for visitors to Cairo – Grand Lady of the Nile, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>62</sup> Eat, Drink, and be Merry at the Ramses Hilton, 5, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>63</sup> The Ramses Hilton Hotel Opening Invitation to Mr. & Mrs. Charles Warner Jr, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

every pleasure, awaits your clients, from the cool blue of the swimming pool to the warm hospitality of the rooftop piano bar”.<sup>64</sup>

Curt R. Strand, President of Hilton International Co. was keen to attend the Hotel’s opening himself and expressed his delight at being present at this occasion. Strand emphasized his appreciation for the architecture of the building and the Warner Burns Toan Lunde Architects careful execution of the work. He said: “The hotel itself is a beauty architecturally,....., and I believe that from the point of view of an operator, an owner, a guest and an observer it is the right hotel for the city and for the site.”<sup>65</sup>

It is worth noting that The Hotel’s main designer, Charles H. Warner, Jr., relationship with the Hotel and its management did not cease after the completion of its construction and its opening. More than three years after unveiling, Warner visited the Hotel in March 1985 and met with the General Manager, Ahmed El Nahas, to discuss how to improve landscaping, exterior traffic, elevators, and suggestions regarding the main bar.<sup>66</sup>

Warner suggested planting large trees to improve the building’s façade, particularly near the main entrance and around and in the terrace area outside the Patisserie. As the Hotel's entry was difficult to find and navigate, and the pedestrian and vehicular traffic conditions were terrible. Warner and Nahas discussed the prospect of reopening the small street or alley, on the north boundary so that vehicles coming from the corniche might turn right here and go to the rear street, which would lead to the main entrance. However, this alleyway was narrow, this additional traffic access point would be helpful if permission could be obtained to enhance it and appropriate signage was used.<sup>67</sup>

After more than three years of using the elevator, it was noticed that most guests had great difficulty in seeing the numbers on the floor call buttons. Warner proposed to get a quote from the manufacturer of the elevator to cover the cost of "self-illuminated" call

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<sup>64</sup> Ramses Hilton: Opening July 1, 1981, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from Curt R. Strand, President of Hilton International Co., to Charles H. Warner, Jr., on February 2, 1982, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Charles H. Warner, Jr., to Helmut Hoermann, Executive Vice-President – Operations - Hilton International, on March 21, 1985, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Charles H. Warner, Jr., to Ahmed El Nahas, General Manager of Ramses Hilton, on March 20, 1985, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

buttons which would not be very expensive since the buttons were standard and new "self-illuminating buttons" could be inserted easily.<sup>68</sup>

Regarding the screens which were hiding the main bar, Warner suggested that these screens should be removed to let the interior space of the bar be seen and accessible from the adjacent public lobby near the main elevator bank. These screens could be used horizontally forming a delightful lobby extension of the bar. This modification would not give only more attraction to this area, but also, they would produce more income in the bar.<sup>69</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Weighing up the facts, this article finds that the Ramses Hilton Hotel's massing and planning took into consideration its prestigious site. The Hotel's tower was built as far back from the bank of the Nile as possible to prevent it from encroaching on the river. The site's features—the inner corner of the land being triangular—influenced the Hotel's ultimate design, which was a triangle tower rising next to a podium base. The previous point led to the fact that at least two thirds of the guestrooms had views of the Nile thanks to the angled windows and triangle tower. The Egyptian Museum and the interior public area made up the remaining one-third of the view.

Since the beginning of the Hotel's design in 1974, Hilton International stressed the use of local artwork in the interior design and décor of the proposed hotel to reflect the cultures of the nation in which it is situated. The weight of the evidence suggests that what the Hilton International pledged in this regard had been fulfilled in the interior design.

The Hotel was designed by an American company, but on a joint-venture basis with association with an Egyptian architect. It seems that the Hilton International and the Arab International Company for Hotels and Tourism were not only keen to construct a western modern building which has an expression of technological development, but also to add the Egyptian heritage character. The Egyptian heritage in the building represented in many elements; the "wall" served as the main design element in the Hotel's exterior resembling the ancient Egyptian monuments. The large garden court has a fountain and columns looking like those of the ancient Egyptian temples at Luxor and Karnak.

In addition to the ancient Egyptian elements, the study observed the revival of Islamic style; the designer inspired from heritage Islamic architecture various Islamic motifs in different parts of the Hotel such as the carved timber screens with Islamic style in the

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<sup>68</sup> Letter from Charles H. Warner, Jr., to Ahmed El Nahas, General Manager of Ramses Hilton, on March 20, 1985, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Charles H. Warner, Jr., to Ahmed El Nahas, General Manager of Ramses Hilton, on March 20, 1985, Charles H. Warner, Jr. Collection, Project Records, Hotel Projects, Ramses Hilton (Cairo, Egypt), [Undated], 1974-1985, 2005-004, Box 8, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York.

Specialty Restaurant. The lobby's decorative style was influenced by the Islamic architecture found in Salah El Din Citadel where we found that this area had an extremely exquisite and pleasant oriental ambiance thanks to the combination of arabesque ornamentation, alcoves, flashes of polished brass, arches, cupolas, and stained glass.

The evidence presented in this paper proved the Hilton International's satisfaction with the design and implementation of work at the Hotel, as well as the level of the services provided to guests when the Hotel was opened in January 1982.

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## فندق رمسيس هيلتون فى القاهرة: تاريخ البناء لرمز من رموز القاهرة المعاصرة (1974- 1982)

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يعد فندق رمسيس هيلتون رمزاً مهماً من رموز صناعة السياحة والضيافة فى مصر، حيث ينبغى ألا يتم التعامل معه باعتباره مرفقاً فاخراً للإقامة فحسب ولكن يجب اعتباره مصدراً من مصادر الجذب السياحى فى مدينة القاهرة نظراً لأهميته التاريخية وهندسته المعمارية المميزة. وعلى الرغم من الشهرة التى يحظى بها فندق رمسيس هيلتون إلا أن الفندق لم يحظ باهتمام كبير فى الدراسات التاريخية لتوثيق أهميته التاريخية والحضارية. يستكشف هذا البحث تاريخ الفندق ضمن محدد زمنى معين منذ البدء فى وضع تصميماته عام 1974 وحتى افتتاحه فى عام 1982. تركز هذه الورقة البحثية على أعمال شركة هيلتون العالمية فى مصر، وتصميم الفندق محل الدراسة ووصفه المعماري وتصميماته الداخلية التى تشتمل على عناصر فنية مستوحاة من العمارة والفن فى مصر القديمة ومصر الإسلامية مما يعد إحياءاً للتراث المصرى. تعتمد المقالة بشكل كبير على دراسة المصادر الأصلية المتمثلة فى الوثائق التاريخية ذات الصلة والمحفوظة فى أرشيف مكتبة أيفرى للهندسة المعمارية والفنون الجميلة بجامعة كولومبيا فى نيويورك بالولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

الكلمات الدالة: شركة هيلتون العالمية - فندق رمسيس هيلتون - العمارة الحديثة فى القاهرة - عمارة فندق رمسيس هيلتون - الفنادق التاريخية بالقاهرة