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"Preservation" for "Alteration": The Mosques of Cairo and the "Comite´ de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe"

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Abstract: Much had been studied on mosques architecture: its history, its evolution, its styles, its elements etc.. Scholars usually identify different parameters that influence the architecture of the Mosque. The basis of these influences is often confined in the narrow evaluation of an artistic exchange between different local cultures and environments. This research paper investigates the topic from a different viewpoint in which "preservation", a science established in Europe during the nineteenth century, is the key player. "Preservation", with its present meaning, was introduced to the Islamic World during the age of colonialism. Most of the historic mosques were the premier target of this "foreign" preservation philosophy and consequently subjects of imported conservation techniques. The historic mosques of Egypt were among the first in the Islamic World to get exposed to this foreign concept through a locally established organization called *Le Comite´ de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, or lajnat hifz al-athar al-'arabiyya* (commonly referred to as the *"Comite"*). The *Comite´* activities in Egypt started in 1882 and was restrained and halted in 1954 because its "westernized" message opposed the local nationalism movement of the time.

The growing worldwide attention towards the preservation of cultural heritage and the development of conservation techniques has opened the door to assess and evaluate previous experiences. In this paper the *Comite´s* implementations on the mosques of Egypt will be evaluated. Although the preservation of Egypt's cultural heritage was the Comite´ claimed aim, its western ideology had overshadowed and sometimes distorted the very basics of this heritage. With the Comite´ interventions, the historic mosques were "monumentalized", but also disengaged from the people for whom they were primarily built. The Mosques' religious function was consequently altered.

Introduction

"If faut aussi considérer que Hussein pacha qui se flattait d'émuler les grands artistes du moyen-âge, se trouvait bien dans un état d'infériorite´ par l'époque de décadence dans laquelle il vivait; et nous le trouvons bien hardi de vouloir égaler les grands maîtres inconnus sans les avoir étudiés auparavant."

(Max Herz, La Mosquée El-Rifaï au Caire, 1911?)

The quoted phrase was written around 1911 in "La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire", a monograph appeared at the occasion of the consecration of al-Rifaï mosque in Cairo. [1,p22] In order to understand the consequences, during which these words were written, the author should be first introduced. Max Herz was an Austro-Hungarian architect who went to Egypt in 1882 and worked under his countryman Julius Franz[1] in the service for the preservation of Arab monuments. He directed the Museum of Arab art, and headed the second commission

[1] An attention will be devoted to Franz Julius in a later section in this study.

of the Comité until June 1914, when like all Germans, Austrians, etc., left Egypt at the time, he settled in Switzerland where he died in 1919. [2, p140]

Hussein Fahmy was an Egyptian architect and a prince of the Egyptian royal family. In 1840, he was sent to study in France as part of Mohammed 'Ali's fifth and largest educational mission. Among the members of this mission was Khedive Ismail (r 1863-1879) for whom Hussein Fahmy, after his return from France, worked as the supervisor of religious endowments (awqaf).[2] In the late 1860's, Fahmy laid down the primary design for al-Rifaï mosque and started building it. According to Herz, only one drawing survived from the Fahmy's project (Fig. 1). [1, p36]

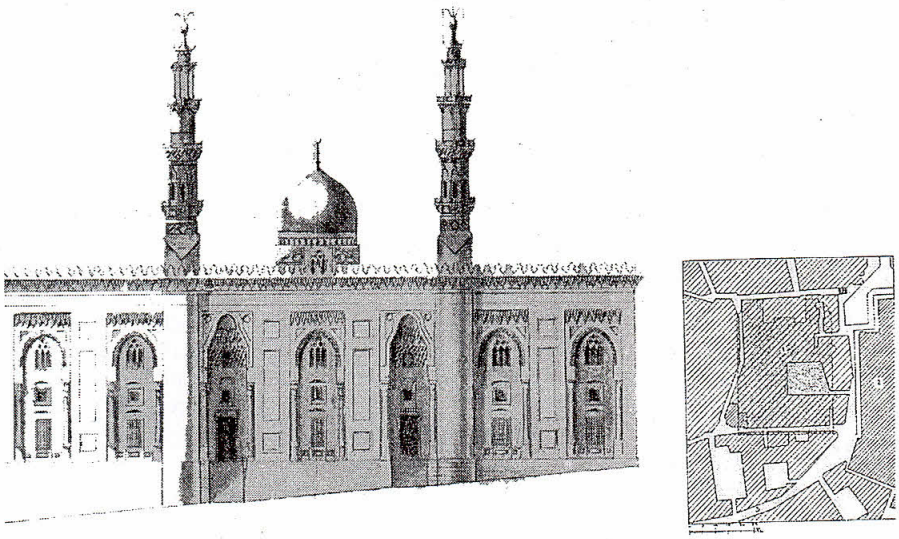


Fig. 1: Hussein Fahmy's design (Herz, Pl.V); and Partial plan of the city.

The work was interrupted and halted in 1885 because of financial shortage and due to the death of Princess Khushyar, the mother of Khedive Ismail and the initiator of al-Rifaï mosque project. The unfinished mosque was left untouched until 1905 when Khedive Abbas Hilmi (r. 1892-1914) entrusted Max Herz for its completion[3] (Fig. 2). A comparison between the 1906 photograph, before resuming the work, and the one taken after the inauguration of the mosque, reveals that Herz's contribution in the design of the exterior facades and the interior arrangement of the spaces was very limited (Fig. 3). Herz was mainly involved in the structural enhancement and in most of the interior decoration. Herz realized and praised the mamluk inspiration in Fahmy's design. He knew that this architectural style was never adopted in Egypt after the Mamluks.[4] He, however, criticized the symmetry in the design because it was alien to the

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[2] For Hussein Pasha Fahmy (known by Hussein Pasha Kojak Fahmi al-mi'mar), See Abd Al-Rahman al Raf'I, *Asr Muhammad Ali*, 3rd edition. Cairo: al-nahda al-masriyya (1951), 568.

[3] For a complete account on the mosque of al-Rifaï, see Herz, and Mohammad al-Asad, "The Mosque of al-Rofai in Cairo", in *Muqarnas*, vol. 10 (1993), 108-124.

[4] Herz brought up the examples of "la mosqueé Sayednal-Hussein commenceé en 1865, la mosqueé Mohamad Ali acheveé en 1848 et copieé sur le modèle des mosqueés turques, et la reconstruction partielle sous le Khédive Ismail Pacha de la mosqueé el Mouayyed..."

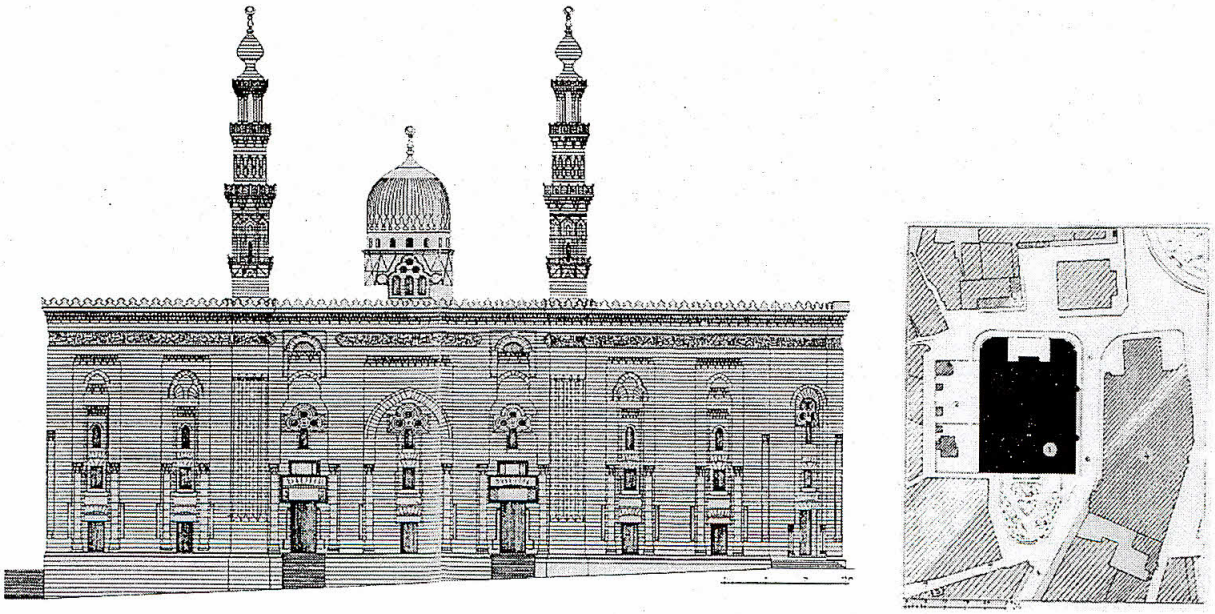


Fig. 2: Herz's design for al-Rifa'I and Herz's plan for the site.

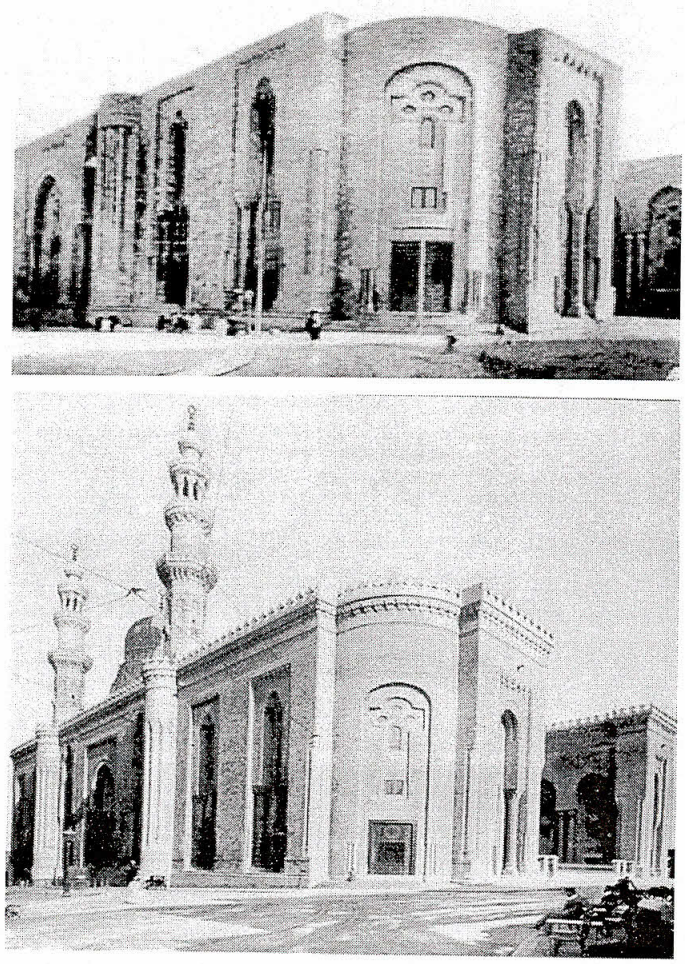


Fig. 3: Al-Rifai mosque before and after 1906.

arrangements of the mamluk precedents. Symmetry in Fahmy's design, Herz pointed, led to the engagement of several useless series of rooms and hallways and to an inexplicable exaggeration of the number of entrance vestibules. Herz objected the adoption of a sabil and a kuttab in the mosque as replacements for the ones existed in the site and demolished to make place to the massive mosque. According the Herz, the sabil and the kuttab should have had different destinations rather than al-Rifaï mosque. [1, p17] Herz, moreover, disapproved the placement of the two minarets at the western side of the mosque, facing the mosque of al-Sultan Hassan, because they were giving on a "very narrow street". He felt that they should have been placed at the southern side of the mosque where a plaza could have been cleared out.

Prior to his commission for the completion of al-Rifaï mosque, Herz was involved in the conservation of several mamluk buildings. Such training made him to conceive the historicity of Hussein Fahmy's design. It is not until recently that scholars proved that the architecture of al-Rifaï mosque was the first of a series of mosques and other public and cultural structures which adopted the so-called neo-mamluk style.[5] This notion, however, is of a little importance to this study. The anecdote of al-Rifaï mosque, Hussein Fahmy and Max Herz was introduced here to highilight the ideological differences between the two architects' understanding of the function of a mosque in its urban context.

In laying down the plan of the mosque, Hussein Fahmy respected to a great extent the grid of the existing urban fabric. For Fahmy, it was not of any bothering to place the minarets at the northern façade opposite to the mosque of al-Sultan Hassan, and giving to, what Herz described, a "narrow street". This little street was simply the main approach to the mosque and thus the commonplace for the minarets. Fahmy realized the imposition of the Mosque's mass over several urban spaces. He, therefore, compensated these spaces by creating a little urban piazza in front of the qibla facade. Fahmy also respected the existing water fountain and other elements by enclosing special interior spaces for their transfer in the new Mosque. Fahmy sought integration with the surrounding urban fabric of the mosque.

Caught up in the structural enhancements and the interior decoration, Herz seemed to misunderstand the values of Fahmy's design. His ignorance to the intimate relationship between the mosque and the surrounding community, led him to clear out what he described as "parasite structures", and imposed instead gardens and open spaces at the eastern, western and southern sides of the mosque. A comparison between the two site plans of al-Rifaï mosque before and after 1906 proves that Herz was concerned to provide a monumental setting for the mosque (Figs. 1 and 2). Through his earlier involvement with the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, Herz studied and conserved the mosque of Sultan Hassan located right opposite to the new al-Rifaï mosque.[6] There, he followed a similar approach by clearing out all the "parasite structures" around the mamluk mosque. Today, the mosques of al-sultan Hassan and al-Rifaï are two "monuments" surrounded by fences in a circle of a heavy street traffics. Besides, the religious function of the two mosques is deprived and almost ceased.

It is through the premise of Fahmy's and Herz's ideological differences that the following questions raise: What had changed from the time of the première design of al-Rifaï mosque,

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[5] For the analysis of the architecture of al-Rifaï mosque, see Muhammad al-Asad, The Mosque of al-Rifaï in Cairo", and Nasser Rabbat, "The Formation of the Neo-Mamluk Style in Modern Egypt". *The Collection of Essays presented to Stanford Anderson on his second birthday (1997), 363-386*

[6] For the Max Herz's studies on the Mosque of Sultan Hassan see Herz, *La mosqueé du sultan Hassan au Caire*, Cairo: Le Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, 1899.

1869, until 1911 that made Max Herz to confirm that Hussein Fahmy al-mi'mar was found in an inferior state to design the mosque? How, in a time span of four decades, did Max Herz, a foreigner architect practicing in

Egypt, found himself better informed to design al-Rifaï mosque?; How did "conservation", through Herz and other Comité members, contributed to alter the Mosques' functionalism?

Mosques and Colonialism

Since the time of the "Description de l'Egypte", which was published in Paris between 1809 and 1828,[7] the architecture of the mosque was a subject of many studies and analysis. In depicting "modern Egypt", the French scientists of the Description devoted two volumes of plates. Unlike all other building typologies, mosques in those volumes were given a special attention. From the 82 plates which are included in the first volume of Description's "Modern Egypt", 35 depict mosques or elements of mosques, whereas only 10 plates illustrate houses and 1 plate depicts a water fountain and a public bath.[8] The excessive depiction of mosques indicates that the premier means for picturing "modern Egypt" was through exhibiting the country's religious structures.

The Description's map of Cairo confirms the concerns of the expedition's scientists with the city's mosques.[3, p592-593] Beside the highlights of the names of the lakes (e.g.. "Place birket el Fyl") and the names of some main districts in the city (e.g. "Citadelle"), the cartographers of the French expedition included not only the names of main mosques but also their ground floor plans (e.g. "Gama Touloun", "Gama el Hakym" and "Gama el Daher") (Fig. 4). Some sixtv years later, Khedive Ismail appointed the Frenchman Pierre Grand to draw a map of Cairo.[9] Grand's map, completed in 1874, presented Cairo not simply as it was, but as it might be for it included avenues through the fabric of the old city which were never in fact executed.[10] The important religious monuments of the city were differentiated both by color (red for mosques, and blue for churches and synagogues) and notation (numbers for the mosques, and letters for churches and synagogues). Other public buildings were named directly on the map (Fig. 5). This typological differentiation only recognized mosques and churches: no other building types such as houses, hammams, wikalas or sabîl-kuttab are distinguished in Grand's map. A qualitative assessment of which were the most significant mosques in the city, in terms of history or aesthetic appearance, had also obviously been made prior to the production of the map. Grand overstated the importance of the highlighted religious buildings by including a typed list of 282 mosques in the map. A

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[7] Published in nine folio volumes of text and 14 grand volumes of illusrations. For the history of the publication of the *Description de l'égypte*, see the introduction by Charles Coulston Gillispic, in C. C. Gillispic and Michael Dewachter, eds., Monuments of Égypt: the Napoleonic Edition: The Complete Crchaeolocgical Plates from la Description de l'Égyte, Princeton (1987), 1-29

[8] The first volume of the "Modern Egypt" in the Description de l'Égypt, covers sites and cities of upper Egypt. See the compilation Description plates in *Description de l'Egypte*, Benedik Taschen: KÖln (1996), 560-657.

[9] Pierre Grand was a French civil engincer who arrived in Egypt in 1868 and was first employed by the *Societé Anonyme des Eaux du Caire*. In 1871 he directed the Department of the Streets of Cairo before promotion took him, in 1885, to the post of General Director of Cities and Buildings in the Ministry of Public Affairs. See *Résumé des Travaux de la Société des Ingénieurs Civils de France* (1918), 38.

[10] Example is the boulevard running from the still to be completed Mosque of al-Rifa'i to the Mosque of *Aqsunqur* on *al-darbal-ahmar*.

reduced version of Grand's map was included in Baedeker Egypt, the most recognized guidebook of the time, confirming to tourists that these highlighted structures were worth of discovery.[4] With the map of the Description and the one of Grand the mosques of Cairo were assigned to be "landmarks" within the city's urban context.

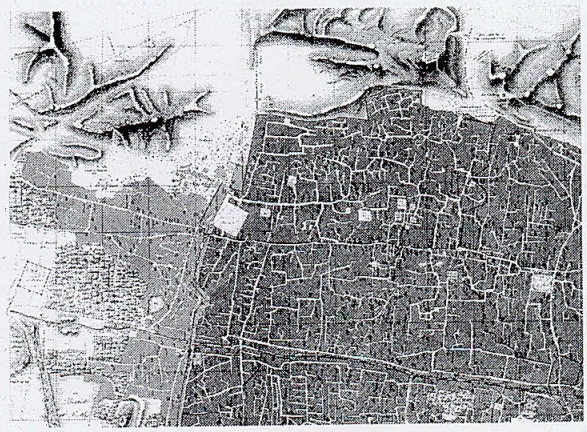


Fig. 4: Map of Cairo, La description de L'Egypte.

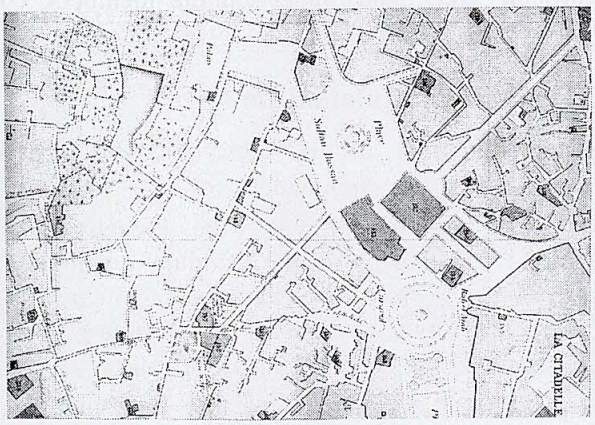


Fig. 5: Detail in the "Plan Generale de la Ville du Caire", 1874, (Special Collections and Rare Books Library, American University in Cairo).

The Comité's intervention

Ismail not only wanted to build major mosques in Cairo (e.g. al-Rifa'i, al-Hussein Mosques),[11] but also recognized the degradation of the other existing mosques and wanted to act upon saving them. In 1876, Ismail formed an engineering administration within the ministry of al-awqaf to maintain the historic mosques. Foreign elite living in Cairo who highly appreciated the local arts regarded the work of the administration, and all other local maintenance efforts, as destructive. They realized that the administration's objective was to upkeep the mosques in cult. The historic fabric which was more appreciated in their viewpoint, however, was not "conserved".[12] The foreigners' urge to save the Arab monuments of Egypt was amplified during the reign of Ismail's followers,[13] and reached its utmost when Khedive Tawfiq (r. 1879-1892) was persuaded to decree, in 1881, the founding of a committee within the Ministry of Awqaf responsible for the protection of Arab

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[11] al-hussein mosque was renovated and enlarged by Ali Mubarak during, the reign of khedive Ismail. The construction started in June 1865 by Emir Rateb Pasha al-Kabir, the director of al-awqaf of the time. The mosque was completed in October 1873, and its minaret was delayed for 5 Years. See Abdel-Rahman Zaki, *al-Qahira,* vol. 2, Cairo: higazi, 1935, 171.

[12] On the conflict of objectives, see Alaa El-habashi and Ihab Elzyadi, "Consuming Built Patrimony, Social Perspectives and Preservation Strategies in Modern Cairo: A Chronological Cross-Disciplinary Analysis", in *IASTE working paper series,* 1998.

[13] For an example of these requisitions are Arthur Rhoné's series of articles "Coup d'oeuil sur l'état du Caire," published in *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in November 1881 and Junuary and February 1882, were among the most influencing articles.

monuments of Egypt.[14] The committee was named le Comité pour la Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe or lajnat hifz al-athar al-'arabiyya. Within the Comité were appointed two sub-committees, one of which, the "First Commission", was entrusted with the task of drawing up a complete inventory of the Arab monuments of Egypt. The brief of the other committee, the "Second Commission" (later the "Technical Commission"), was to visit the various mosques, water-fountains, etc., which appeared to be most urgently in need of attention, to report upon their condition and to recommend steps for their preservation. If a monument was so wholly ruined that conservation would be both "useless and impossible", the Comité removed any objects of interest found among the ruins to the Museum of Arab Art[15].

Briefly after the Comité was founded, the local authorities asked its "First Commission" to compile an inventory of buildings which would fall under its auspices. In response, Rogers Bey, an Englishman who was appointed as a members of the Comité's first commission,[16] penned the first list of monuments (athar) in July 1883. This inventory which was never published, referred to as the daftar athar al-qahira, contained 664 numbered entries.[17] The inventory identifies the owner(s) and the proprietor(s) of each of the listed buildings. Such knowledge of the ownership of buildings was essential to the Comité's work because different approaches to conservation were required dependent on who owned the building. Only mosques, zawiya, sabil/kuttabs and mausoleums were included in the list. No secular buildings were considered. It is evident that only historic buildings that were related to religious rituals or practices were included in Roger's list;[18] a similar approach to the ones followed in the maps of Description de l'Égypte and of and of Grand's.

While the First Commission's inventory of monuments defined the scope of work for the Comité's activities in its early years,[19] the "Technical Commission" had to formulate preservation philosophies and to develop conservation techniques to operate the interventions. The Comité's Technical Commission was headed by Julius Franz, an Austro-

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[14] The Khedival Decree is published *in al-waqa' al-masriyya*, December 1881, and in the first Bulletin of the *Comité* published in (1882), 8-10. The Bulletins are henceforth referred to here as B.C., the Procés Verbaux as P.V., and the Rapports as R. Bulletin years are cited in preference to years of publication as the latter are often confusing. For the formation and the legal shifts within the Comité see Donald Reid, "Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism", *International Journal of Middle Fast Studies* 24, 1992, p. 57 -76.

[15] The Museum of Arab Art was formed in the standing arcades of the ruined mosque of *al-Hakim* in 1881. The present Museum of Islamic Art (earlier called the Museum of Arab Art or *daral-tharal-'arabiya)* in *bab al-khalq* was founded by the *Comité* and was opened to the public in 1903.

[16] Edward Thomas Rogers served from 1868-1874 as the British Consul in Cairo. He subsequently returned to Egypt to work for the Ministry of Public Instruction and was appointed as the first secretary to the *Comité* in 1882 due to his interest in antiquities: a post he occupied till his death in 1884. For a brief account of Rogers' life see Warren R. Dawson and Eric P. Uphill, 252.

[17] The copy of the list compiled by Rogers consulted by the authors is one sent by the president of the *Comité* to the president of the Council of Ministers located in folder 163 *'abdin, al-awqaef, lajnat hifz al-athar alqadimaal-'arabiyya* , Egyptian National Archives, *(dar al-watha'iq al-qawmiyya),* Cairo.

[18] For the various lists of monuments produced by the *Comité*, see Alaa E-Habashi and Nicholas Warner, "Recording the monuments of Cairo: an introduction and an overview," *Annales Islamogique* 32, 1998, p. 81-99.

[19] The *Comité* 's list of monuments, which followed Rogers' inventory, was compiled in 1890. See B.C. 7, 1890, p. 147-152. For an analysis of 1890's list, see El-habashi and Warner, p. 84.

Hungarian architect/engineer who was working for the awqaf Ministry.[20] Franz, consequently, was handed the responsibility to set up the institution's philosophical and technical approaches.

Franz wrote extensively on Cairo and on "Arab Architecture".[21] An article he wrote in Beadeker's handbook, however, was particularly insightful about his architectural philosophical approach. In this article entitled "Mohammedan Style", Franz praised "symmetry in plan and proportioning of masses," and expressed his dissatisfaction with Arab art and architecture since it lacks these qualities.[5,p174-188] For Franz, a separation of the self from the picture is essential to grasp 'the whole. In a later edition of Beadeker's handbook for travelers Franz was more aggressive in criticizing, the Arab architecture for its lack of order, symmetry and regularity:

When we come to analyze the impressions produced by a study of Arabic buildings in Egypt, we find that our admiration of the harmonious and tasteful ornamentation, unsurpassed by any school of architecture, is counterbalanced by a certain feeling of aesthetic dissatisfaction, prompted by the numerous incongruities arising from unsystematic and unskilful treatment of architectonic

details. [6, p.clvii]

Harmony, for Franz, is attained through "order". Since no distinct Arabian order was ever developed, no harmony would be guaranteed. [6, p.clviii] For Franz, disorientation encountered from experiencing Cairo's streets, strange clothes, unusual colors and unfamiliar sounds and smells were expressed as an absence of a pictorial order. Franz's dissatisfaction with Arab architecture conflicted with the protection he should devoted to conserve its historic remains through his leadership of the Technical Section of the Comité. Franz's means to preserve Arab monuments were to impose a frame of "order and symmetry" over them and to "regulate" the picture by eliminating all unfamiliar environment; for that he expropriated "parasite" structures and restored an order which might had never existed before him. With Franz's thoughts, the Comité's had unveiled what was hidden behind the rubble in order to exhibit the monuments.[22] Max Herz and Achille Patricolo, Franz successors in heading the Comité's Technical Section,[23] followed the same path. Most of the frustration expressed by Franz, Herz and Patricolo in the minutes of the Comité's meetings were results of the difficulties they encountered in exhibiting, or rather "unveiling", the mosques of Cairo. Amid this understanding, the Comité had followed the local political regime of the British whose Consul-General, Earl Cromer (1888-1907), had pointed that "the unseen is often more important than the seen". [7, p126-128] While the earlier cartographic exercises assigned a role of landmarks to the historic Mosques, the Comité's hands-on conservation interventions offered them a new meaning of "monuments".

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[20] Julius Franz left Egypt in 1887, but hold to a honorary position with the *Comité*. He founded the museum of Arab Art in Cairo. He published several works on the Islamic architecture of Egypt and Andalusia; he died in or soon after 1912. For Julius Franz, see Dr. P.E. Kahle in Warren R. Dawson and Eric P. Uphill, 109.

[21] See for example:*Kairo*, Leipzig: Dud von Ramm & Seemann, 1903; and "Cairo's Neubauten," *Zeitschrift fur praktische Baukunst*, January, 1871, 327-28.

[22] For the effect of World Exhibitions on the perception of Egyptian cultural heritage, see Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31.2, April, 1989, p. 217-38.

[23] For the shift of leadership towards the Egyptian members of the *Comité*, see Alaa El-Habashi, "The preservation of Egyptian Cultural Heritage through Egyptian Eyes: The case of the *Comité* de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe", *Imported or Exported Urbanism?*, in press.

One of these numerous mosques subjected to the Comité's intervention was al-Salih Talai' mosque which is the last built Fatimid mosque in Cairo (1160 AD). Included in the First Commission's inventory of 1883,[24] the Comité's Technical section reported that "the original facades of the mosque are hidden with 'modern' construction". [8, p40-42] In 1919, the decision was taken to clear the 'monument' out from these parasite structures. The historic photograph taken around the year 1919 shows the mosque during the clearing process [9] (Fig. 6). In 1924, the reconstruction of the mosque started, and a 3 meters deep trench was dug around the mosque[25] (Fig. 7). The monument was subject to several other 'restoration' project after 1925 which contributed a great deal in alienating the mosque from its local environment. Due to the earlier demolishing process of the 'parasite' structures, severe damage were manifested on the minaret which was built during the seventeenth century substituting the original which fell during a 1302 earthquake. Contemplating its structural stability of the existing Ottoman minaret, The Comité questioned its genuineness to the fabric of the Fatimid mosque. In 1925, a decision was taken to demolish the minaret because it was 'out of style'. [10, p273]

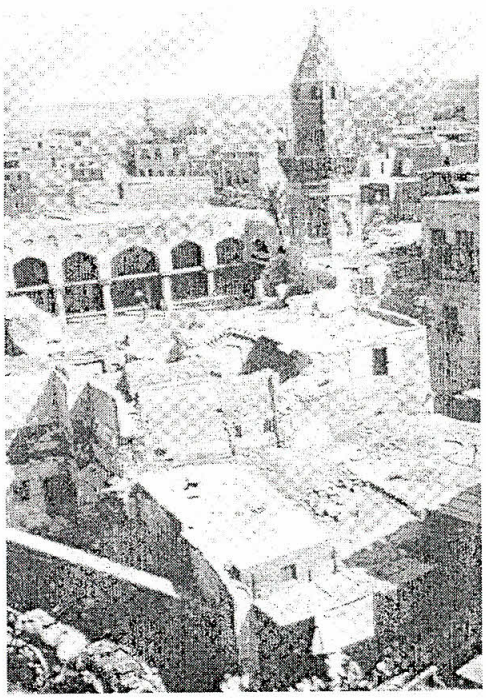


Fig. 6: Al-Salih Tala'I Mosque, before 1927 (B.C. 32, 1915-19).

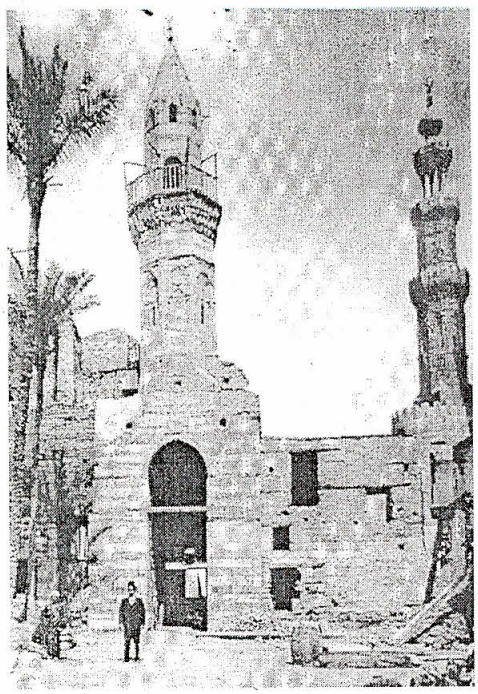


Fig. 7: Al-Salih Tala'i mosque:the minaret before its demolition (Photographic archive, Supreme Council of Antiquities, Cairo).

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[24] *Al-Salih Tala'i* mosque is entry number 207 in the 1883's Rogers' list. For the first *Comité's* interest driven to al-Salih Tala'i mosque, see B.C. 1 (1882).

[25] Extensive studies raised controversies on the authenticity of the western Iwan. Edmond Pauty, a French architect and one of the *Comité* leader, insisted that the building had no western Iwan as Prisse d'Avennes drew it in 1860's. However, an Egyptian *Comité's* architect, Sayed Mitwally, was able to convince the members of the *Comité* that the mosque had originally a western Iwan in order to complete the four Iwans standard image of a mosque. See Edmond Pauty, "La mosque d'as Salih Talay," *Bulletin da la Societe Royale de Geographie d'Egypte,* Vol. XVII, (September 1931). For the *Comité* interventions, see B.C. 33 (1920-1924), 288.

In 1936, a proposal was presented to the Comité to rebuild the minaret in a Fatimid architectural style (Fig.8). The project was never executed due to the opposition of the majority of the members. A recent photograph of the area depicts the 'exhibited' version al-Salih Talai' mosque, or rather the Comité's interpretation of the 'monument' (Fig. 9). A similar approach to the one followed by the Comité "conserving" AI-Salih Talai' mosque was pursued to tackle most of the historic mosques of Cairo. The Comité's perception of mosques was coming into focus only from a distance, detaching the local urban life from its religious foundations.

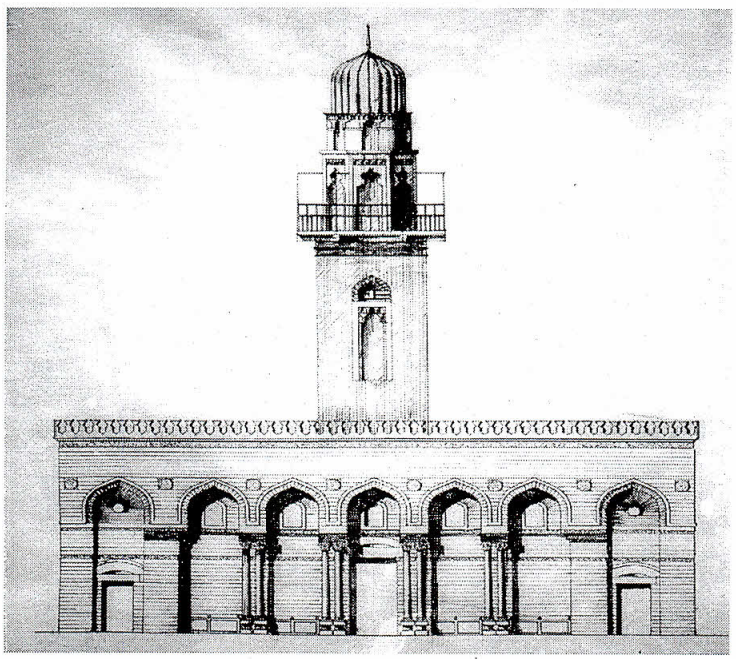


Fig. 8: Proposal of a minaret for al-Sailh Tala'i mosque, 1931 (Photographic archive, Supreme Council of Antiquities, Cairo).

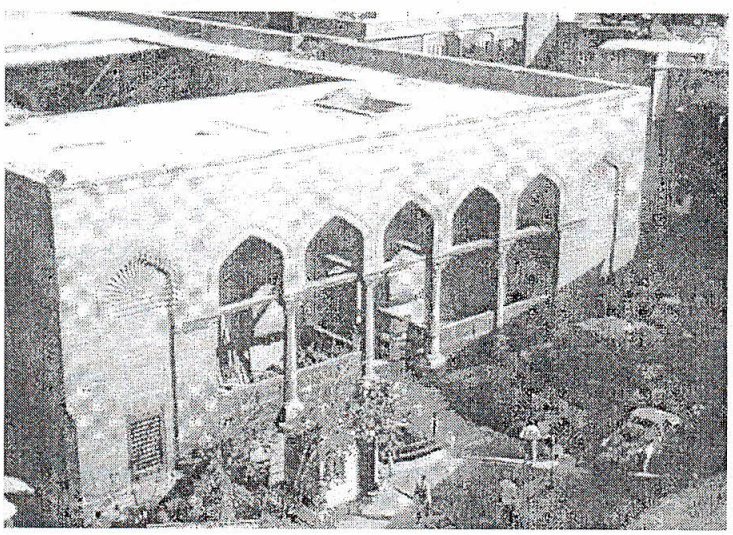


Fig. 9: al-Saleh Tala'I Mosque, 1997.

Local Reception

Mohammed Amin Fikri, an Egyptian who visited the French World Exhibition of 1867, reported , that the Egyptian visitors were "disgusted by all this and stayed away, and that their final embarrassment had been to enter the door of the mosque and discover that, like the rest of the street, it had been erected as what the Europeans called a facade. Its external form was all that there was of the mosque. As for the interior, it had been set up as a coffee house, where Egyptian girls performed dances with young males, and dervishes whirled." [11,p217] Fikri and most of the Egyptian visitors of the Exhibition refused the misuse of a religious emblem (the replica of the mosque). Being in a foreign land, Fikri and other Egyptian visitors, did not have much to intervene except to criticize in the local press. What about those Egyptians who perceived the Comité's misinterpretation of their religious basic right on the spot, within the historic districts of Cairo? Were they, in their home land, also impotent and innocent spectators of the Comité's interventions?

Three different levels of investigation are offered to tackle this question: The reaction of the Egyptian members of the Comité; the position of the other local authorities; and the reception of the local people. The president of the Comité, as the establishment decree stated, was consistently an Egyptian who headed either the awqaf or the Ministry of Public Instruction.[26] Mohammed Hamdi who was the general director of the waqf administration (idara 'umum al-awqaf) and consequently the president of the Comité from 1889 to 1891, opposed Julius Franz's decision to expropriate two shops located at the ground floor level of the mosque of al-Hakim and Bab al-Futuh (one of the northern gates of Cairo). He expressed his opposition during the Comité's meeting of 18th of December 1889, but did not have enough supporters since most of the meeting's attendants were Europeans who were by Franz's side.[27] The majority of the voices, thus, were for the expropriation.

Being the president of the Comité, Hamdi signed the meeting's minutes. Still not convinced with the decision, Hamdi referred to the Egyptian mufti who banned the expropriation since it contradicted with the principle of religious endowment (waqf). Hamdi was then criticized for his biased position. The matter was elevated to the Council of Ministers who disregarded the ifta' and ordered the expropriation.[28] Hamdi's position shows that there were Egyptian opposition boosting from within the body of the Comité. The benefit of the local people and the assertion of a national identity were the main motivations for these oppositions. Being surrounded by a colonial environment, these oppositions were constantly suppressed. Mohammed Hamdi, and many other Comité Egyptian members, was appointed to fulfill an official participation but not for a serious consideration or respect of their beliefs and traditions.[29] Other local authorities and ministries also expressed their concerns over the formation of the Comité and over their activities. A year after its

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[26] In 1936, control over the *Comité* was transferred to the Ministry of Public Instruction *(wizarat al-ma'arif al-'umimiyya).* The minister of Public Instruction was then elected as the Comité president. Prior to 1936, the *Comité* was functionning, under the aupices of *al-awqaf,* and consequently the head of the awqaf was the president.

[27] 6 of the 10 attendants of the mentioned meeting were Europeans See B.C. 6, P.V. 39 (1889), 50-51.

[28] Unpublished letter, dated February 15th, 1890, filed in folder # *163 'Abdin, al-awqaf, lajnit hifz al-athar alqadimaal-'arabiyya,* Egyptian National Archives *(daral-watha'iqal-qawmiyya),* Cairo.

[29] For other examples and full analysis, see Alaa El-Habashi, "The preservation of Egyptian Cultural Heritage through Egyptian Eyes: The case of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe", *Imported or exported Urbanism?* in press.

establishment, in 1883, the famous Ali Mubarak, the minister of Public Works at the time, opposed the formation of the Comité and questioned its assigned tasks.[30] He addressed a letter to the President of the Ministers' Council in which he enclosed a report discussing the existence of the Comité. He proposed a new local law under which the Comité can conduct its tasks without interfering with the work of other ministries.[31] In his report, Ali Mubarak quoted the establishment decree of the Ministry of Public work and underlined the lines which assigned the task of the conservation of the monuments to it. By his reminder, Mubarak hinted that the Comité had no clear foundation. Mubarak wanted to diminish the task of the Comité If not to cease its existence. Furthermore, Mubarak doubted the Comité's specialty and declared that "Les monuments de l'art arabe ne sont pas les seuls, parmi les monuments historiques, qui doivent être consevées". [12]

Mubarak saw in the Comité an obstacle towards the sought local development. He planned for Cairo several squares and boulevards which required cutting through the existing fabric and consequently the demolition of several buildings registered by the Comité. [13] Mubarak defended his position against the Comité by questioning *"A t'on besoin de tant de monuments? Quand on conserve un échantillon, cela ne suffit-il pas?"*[32] Mubarak opposed the conservation a little mamluk sabil/kuttab by drawing a remarkable analogy comparing the case with the French destroying the Bastille during their revolution. Mubarak no longer wanted to preserve the memories of giving water away in sebil(s), he would rather drive it to each dwelling through the newly installed pipelines. "Forms from earlier times which are unacceptable now, should be eradicated, and of these there were still many in Egypt". [14, p863] Mubarak, himself, was appointed as member for the Comité,[33] but did not take him longer than three meetings to resign.[34] He believed that the Comité's tasks opposed the local development, and that the institution's main goal was to create an open air museum of conserved mosques and other historic Arab remains within the city of Cairo. Mohammed Hamdi's and Mubarak's resistance were just few examples of the authorities' position to the Comité's approaches. The constant suppression of these oppositions demonstrate that the colonial environment were dominant.

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30 Ali Mubarak headed the ministery of Public Works for three rounds: when it was established on 28 of August 1878 to 16 of November 1878; 21 of September 1879 to the 10th of September 1881; 28 of August until the 10th of January 1884. See *al-nizarat waal-wizarat al-misriyya,* vol. 1, 6.41, 645 and 655.

31 For the tasks of the Ministry of Public Works and of the other different ministers, see the khedival (Kedive Ismail's) decree of the 10th of December, 1878 on the establishment and the definition of the roles of the ministers. The decree is published in *al-nizarat waal-wizarat al-misriyya,* vol. 1, 7-8.

32 Quoted from Marcel Clerget, Le Caire, vol. 1, Cairo (1934), 337. For Mubarak's opposition to the conservation of Zawiya and Sabil Farab Ibn Barquq see B.C. 1, P.V. 6 (1882-83), 10. See also B. F. Musallam, "The modern vision of Ali Mubarak", *The Islamic City,* (edited by R. B. Serjant), Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge, United Kingdom, from 19 to 23 July 1976.

33 Upon the decree of Khedive Mohamed Tewfiq of the 27th of December, 1882, Ali Mubarak was assigned as a member of the *Comité.* Grand Bey and Yacoub Artin were both elected as members in the same decree. Mubarak attended 3 meetings with the *Comité:* the 2nd (16th of December 1882), the 3rd (20 of January, 1883) and the 4th (3rd Mars, 1883). See B.C. 1, P.V. 6 (1882-83), 19.

34 Mubarak claimed that he was overloaded with his work at the ministry of Public Works, a justification hard to be believed. He was known as a very active man in handling several major tasks. For example, Mubarak handled the responsibilities of being the minister of Awkaf and the minister of Public instruction for two consequetive rounds from the 28 of Auaust 1878 until the 7th of April 1879. The first round, moreover, coincided with his heading of the Ministry of Public Works. See *al-nizarat wa al-wizarat al-misriyya,* vol. 1, 641, 645 and 655.

The fact that none of these cases were never publicly discussed or published and that they were kept in inaccessible archives for a long time, confirms that the local political environment did not allow for any counter act to take place. Despite this discreetness, the public sensed the alteration in the fabric of their city and realized the changes in their local social environments. The petitions and appeals consulted confirm the awareness of the public to the change. In 1917, for example, a Cairene who refused to mention his name sent a letter to King Fouad (r. 1917-1936) to express his/her opposition to issuing a law which was subject of discussion at the time.The projected law would have provided the Comité additional power over the registered monuments and would have widened the selection of registration of historic buildings to fall under the institution's auspices. The letter pointed to the negative results of the Comité's conservation activities:

> *Le système suivi actuellement (c'est-à-dire l'autonomie du Comité dals les réparations) a révélé que parfois les travaux entrepris par le Comité arrêtent trop longtemps les pratiques religieuses, en fermant complétement la Mosquée pendant le cours des réparations, on que l'emploi fait du lieu pendant les travaux le rend impropre à l'exercise du culte.*
>
> *Comme aussi il arrive que les travaux de restauration des monuments antiques abîment des murs non antiques de la Mosquée, par suite de la négligence des ouvriers et leur insouciance à l'égard de ce qui n'est pas antique.*
>
> *un système qui aboutit à line perte de temps, à des entraves à l'exercice des rites, et à line dispersion des efforts.*[35]

The anonymous author demonstrated that if the technical work would be under the auspices of the awqaf authorities, its continuity would be better assured. The complainer furthered in detailing a proposal for a new law that confined the power of the Comité, empowered the awqaf over conservation work. The projected law permitted the participation of the locals in the preservation of their heritage and, therefore, paid attention to rituals and local traditions.[36]

The use of the French language, and the professionalism detected in pointing to details, indicate that the anonymous author was an Egyptian intellectual elite. The structure followed in demonstrating the various works of the Comité and in highlighting their effects on the society confirms that the author was a nationalist who had the chance to live and to experience the old districts of Cairo and who was gifted with analytical eyes to perceive the social changes taking place coevally with the Comité's on-going "conservation" activities.

The high level of refinement was not common in other consulted petitions and complains. Instead, most of the other cases were addressing specific problems that affected a certain ritual or habit and which led to a certain degree of frustration. In most of these cases, in fact, the Comité was not recognized as the responsible authority. In the late 1940's, for example, the traders and the residence of al-darbal-Ahmar (a district in historic Cairo), complained to King Farouk (r. 1936-1952) about the disregard of the concerned authorities- the Comité -towards their "antique mosque" of Ahmad al-Mihmindar.[37] The complainers

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[35] Unpublished and undated (probably in 1917) report, filed in folder # *164 'Abdin, al-awqaf, lajnit hifz al-athar al-qadimaal-'arabiyya,* Egyptian National Archives *(dar al-watha'iqal-qawmiyya),* Cairo.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Built in 1325, by the Amir Ahmad al-Mihmindar who was one of the great civilian dignitaries in the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad. The mosque is registered as an monument under number 115.

explained in their letter that the conservation of the mosque had resulted in locking its ablution space, which consequently became a nursery of insects, and a source of a stinking odor. The locals explain that the people were disgusted to enter the mosque for prayers.[38]

Concluding Remarks

It is clear in all three levels of investigation that for Egyptians to keep a mosque in cult was far more important than to conserve its historic fabric. Mosques at which Europeans were staring constantly and which were subject to monumentalization by foreign preservation ideologies, was just a functional part of the city's fabric. It was not of any bothering, for example, to have an external facade of a functional mosque standing as an interior wall in a residential dwelling. The mosques were not only part of the physical environment, but were also inseparable from the everyday events of the people. For locals, preservation was simply a means to upkeep the cult alive, whereas preservation for the Comité usually encounters the conservation of material life; and there the conflict of objectives was founded.

The Comité through its conservation practices had presented the mosques in a frame in which the richness of decorations, the elegance of its minaret, the sophisticated woodwork of its minbar, and the intricate designs of its mihrab were the items highlighted and appreciated. Function, rituals and traditions were of a little concern, and thus were neglected in the representation. The local resistance did not do much since it was constantly suppressed in the general colonial environment. The work of the Comité in Cairo, and elsewhere in Egypt, alienated the mosques from their societies; and the mosques' primary role in their communities was altered. Mitchell's concept of "enframing to colonize", which had its implications on the rural life, Jurisdiction and education systems,[39] had also its effects on the 'Arab monuments' in general and mosques in specific. In the process of "enframing", the Comité assigned a new meaning to the Arab remains: "monumentality". With the interpretation of the Comité, the Arab remains were unveiled from parasite structures, were evacuated from their inhabitants. The Arab remains, or rather athar, became 'monuments'.[40]

Historic mosques were not the only subjects of this alteration process, the design of new mosques in Egypt was also affected. The architects of al-awqaf who were responsible of building most of Egypt's new mosques followed Max Herz's ideologies implemented in al-Rifa' mosque and were influenced by the Comité monumental representation of the historic mosques. For example, Mario Rossi, an Italian architect who worked for al-awqaf and designed several mosques in Egypt from the 1929 until the 1955, followed the thoughts of Herz, Patricolo and other Comité members in his designs. [10, p62-69] The mosques of al-Mursi abou al-'Abbas, of al-Qa'id Ibrahim, and of 'Umar Makram are examples of his work which

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[38] A letter dated 5/7/1947, filed in folder # 170 'Abdin, al-awqaf, insha' masajid wa tarmimaha, Egyptian National Archives (dar al-watha'iqal-qawmiyya), Cairo.

[39] Mitchell explained the effects of "enframing" on. Mitchell (1988).

[40] The arabic term "athar" means what "remains of an object". "ma'thira" is what is remembered of events from century to a century, and "ta'thir" is leave an "athar", a trace, in something. The closest meaning for the arabic "athar" is then the English term "remains". "Monument" is a meaning with was added lately to the premise of the arabic term "athar".

confirm the adoption of a distorted concept of the mosque architecture. Herz, Patricolo, Rossi and other European architects, who worked for the Comité or for al-awqaf, were the twentieth century's leaders in the field of mosques' architecture. Their works inspired many local architects. The prototype of the image of a mosque has ever since remained "altered".

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"المحافظة" من أجل "التحوير": مساجد القاهرة ولجنة حفظ الآثار العربية

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ملخص البحث : تمت دراسة جوانب كثيرة في عمارة المساجد: تاريخها ، تطورها ، طرازاتها ، عناصرها ... الخ . وفي العادة ، يعمل الباحثون على تحديد متغيرات تؤثر في عمارة المساجد. وكثيرا ما تكون أصول هذه التأثيرات محددة ضمن تقييم التفاعل الفني بين البيئات والثقافات المختلفة. يتطرق هذا البحث للموضوع ذاته ولكن من زاوية أخرى، يظهر خلالها علم "المحافظة على المباني"، وهو علم كان قد تأسس في أوروبا في القرن التاسع عشر، العنصر الأبرز. دخل علم "المحافظة على المباني"، بمعناه المتعارف عليه حاليا، إلى العالم الإسلامي في عهد الاستعمار الأجنبي. كانت المساجد التاريخية الهدف الأوضح للفلسفة الأجنبية لعلم "المحافظة على المباني"، وأضحت تلك المساجد موضوعا لتطبيق تقنيات ذلك العلم. كانت

مساجد مصر التاريخية من الأهداف الأولى في العالم الإسلامي التي تعرضت لتطبيقات مفهوم "المحافظة على المباني"، وذلك من خلال لجنة كونت محليا عرفت بـ "لجنة حفظ الآثار العربية" (والتي كانت تعرف عامة بـ"اللجنة"). بدأت "اللجنة" أعمالها في عام ١٨٨٢م ولكن أعمالها تعرضت للضغط من ثم أوقفت نهائيا عام ١٩٥٤م ، حيث بدت رسالتها "غربية" ومتعارضة مع الحركة الوطنية المحلية والتي انتشرت في ذلك الوقت.

إن الاهتمام العالمي الكبير الذي يحظى به مفهوم المحافظة على التراث الثقافي من جهة، والتطويرات التقنية في أساليب المحافظة من جهة أخرى قد فتح الباب أمام تقييم التجارب السابقة في هذا المضمار. يتضمن هذا البحث تقييما لتطبيقات "اللجنة" على المساجد المصرية. رغم أن المحافظة على التراث الثقافي كان هدف "اللجنة" المعلن، فإن إيديولوجيتها الغربية قد طغت، وأحيانا شوهت، أسس هذا التراث. لقد أدت تدخلات "اللجنة" إلى إعطاء المساجد صورا صرحية ولكنها عملت بالوقت ذاته على فصل الناس عن تلك المساجد والتي كانت قد بنيت من أجل هؤلاء الناس في المقام الأول. وتبعا لذلك فإن الوظيفة الدينية للمساجد قد تحورت.