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Approaches to the conservation of Islamic cities:

The case of Cairo

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Hossam Mahdy

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Foreword

With the recent founding of the ICCROM-ATHAR Regional Conservation Centre under the patronage of His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, it is most appropriate that ICCROM's ATHAR Programme and its Regional Centre publish this work that examines in depth the conservation history of a pearl of Islamic built heritage, the historic city of Cairo, to serve as a guideline for cultural heritage professionals. It is also most appropriate that the author is Hossam Mahdy, a noted Egyptian researcher in heritage conservation, who was an ICCROM Fellow in 2007.

The relationship between the Islamic world and heritage would appear on the surface to be a difficult one. Stories on the destruction of Islamic or pre-Islamic historic sites, tombs and even manuscripts come from various countries such as Iraq, Mali and Syria, and at times seem to dominate the world press. The destruction may be a direct result of war or disasters, or it may occur in isolated episodes that flare up for reasons that are incomprehensible to the West. As the issue of war damage to historic cities and archaeological sites in this region is deserving of a separate volume, this publication does not focus on the tragic events dominating the recent headlines. Rather, it examines the complexities of reconciling faith, function and the realities of urban life in a setting rich with history and culture.

The author presents an alternative view of the relationship between Islam and heritage, and asserts that it is a tenet of every Muslim's faith and outlook to hold a deep respect for heritage and for the traces of civilizations that have preceded Islam. This view is held not only by Mahdy, but also by other noted Islamic scholars, institutions and clerics. The February 2013 *Déclaration internationale du Caire: Conserver le patrimoine, un devoir islamique* emerged from the Conference entitled *Islamic Views on Cultural Heritage,* attended by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Research Center For Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) and the Egyptian Ministry of State for Antiquities. This Declaration serves as a further reminder that the extremist views on heritage are not an inherent part of Islam and are not accepted within traditionally rooted Islamic beliefs. The Conference professes that heritage conservation is an Islamic duty, and stresses the inviolability of Egypt's entire heritage. According to the Conference, calls to destroy heritage are rooted in fanaticism and political extremism, and betray *"an ignorance of the sublime religion of Islam".*

If this is so, then the whole story is not being told in the world press, and it is important to look further. Mahdy's timely volume is part of this conversation. For him, respect for heritage is fully integrated in the Islamic world view – but Islamic views of heritage and their values may be seen at times as being at odds with those Western views of heritage codified in practices such as the procedures that define World Heritage.

Mahdy's nuanced conservation history of Cairo traces the Western and Islamic views that over time have worked at counter purposes. This has given rise to alternate frameworks under which decisions for conserving the historic city of Cairo have been made and contested – an Islamic and a Western-based outlook, an informal and a formal philosophy, a practical and a bureaucratic view. The history of Cairo's heritage is not an easy one, with its backdrop of conquest, foreign domination, colonization and at times, sadly, misrule. Mahdy asks: What is to be conserved, and for whom? The material traces of the Islamic city or the vibrant life of its community, the societal uses to which the structures and buildings were historically put? Is it possible to do both? How and under what circumstances, and how does tourism fit in?

To illustrate his ideas, Mahdy applies a range of conservation theories to advance solutions for a hypothetical conservation of a medieval Islamic gate structure in a modern city setting. The exercise is designed to help conservation specialists think through the possibilities for the sites for which they are responsible, in full awareness of the cultural and other assumptions that underlie those decisions. The solutions per se are not necessarily wrong or right – as is often the case in practice. The key is in finding the best balance to satisfy a range of ethical criteria and stakeholder needs.

I am pleased to congratulate Mahdy's important review on the role of heritage in the Islamic universal view, and for his tracing of debates and practices that can be helpful for professionals responsible for the appropriate conservation and use of other Islamic cities and built heritage sites. ICCROM was created to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas and viewpoints for improving conservation practice around the world. Sixty years later, this original purpose holds true, and we offer up this book as a timely starting point for what I hope will lead to a continued and fruitful conversation. I am certain that it will further discussions on the best way to approach conservation decisions in historic Islamic cities, while respecting the spiritual and physical needs of their inhabitants and multiple communities.

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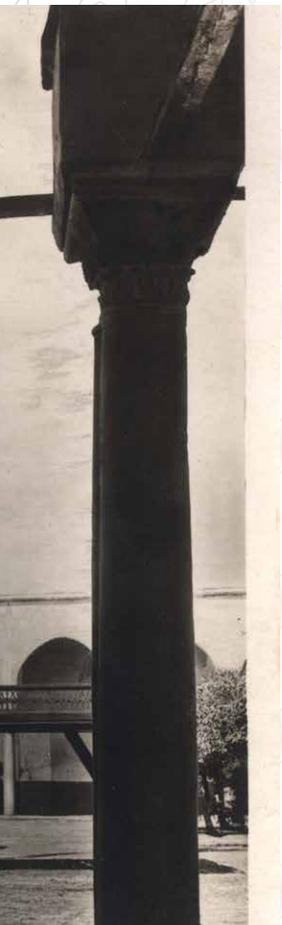
Preface

Since the Middle Ages, Cairo has been known as the city of a thousand minarets. The call to prayer was chanted from a thousand minarets, which could be heard from anywhere in the city. During the month of Ramadan and other important celebrations, all minarets were lit. Some minarets had up to 60 lamps. After sunset, the city was transformed into a magical place. Until the first half of the 20th century, what we know today as Greater Cairo was known as *Misr*, the Arabic name for Egypt. It was described as *Umm al-Dunya* (Mother of the World) by Arab travellers and historians. Today, there are many more than a thousand minarets in Cairo, and Egyptians continue to refer to Cairo as *Misr*, *Umm al-Dunya*.

> Cairo is an unequalled treasure house of Islamic architecture. Built over a span of a thousand years, Cairo's historic center contains the most concentrated, the most numerous, the most varied collection of monuments in the Islamic world. But Cairo is not only a sum of its monuments; its historic center remains also a dynamic urban organism. Medieval Cairo was the city where the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights* were collected, and it was in the narrow streets of Bayn al-Qasrayn and the Darb al-Ahmar that many of the characters of those tales were supposed to have lived. Over the centuries, Cairo has continued to be a literary setting. Cairo, unlike Baghdad and Damascus, was spared the devastation of the Mongol invasions (Williams, 2008: 6).

For many Egyptians, the historic quarters of Cairo are significant for their unique social and cultural life. The best mint tea, Turkish coffee and hibiscus drinks are served in traditional cafes in al-Gamaliya, al-Darb al-Ahmar, al-Sayyeda Zaynab and other historic quarters. The best Egyptian traditional food is served in the *balady* restaurants there. Shoppers for wedding arrangements from rural areas all over Egypt go to al-Ghuriya, as they have done for centuries. Candles for *subou'* celebrations, lanterns for Ramadan festivities, *kheyam* (tents) of traditional tent fabric used for temporary structures for *mulid* (traditional celebrations of the birthday of a pious figure) and other observances are all made and sold in the historic quarters of Cairo. But the most significant of all is the very warmth and distinctive traits of the traditional communities of the *awlad al-balad* ("sons of the country") who live in these areas and give them a unique ambience and quality of life.

However, appreciation of the tangible built heritage is a different story. When President Obama visited the Sultan Hassan Mosque before his symbolic speech at the University of Cairo to the Muslim world on 4 June 2009, several Egyptian Muslim friends outside the heritage-related circles asked: "Why this particular mosque? What is so special about it? Where is it anyway?" They wanted to visit the mosque to see why it was chosen over the mosques of al-Azhar, al-Husayn or 'Amr as a symbolic homage by the West to Islam.

In 2002, I asked a man who lived in al-'Utuf quarter inside the northern walls of Cairo, "Would you move to another area if you were offered a flat there?" He answered, "I am like a fish in water; if I am taken out of it, I will die". I asked, "But what is so special about this place?" "This is my home", he said. "I don't carry any identification or money. Here, everyone knows me, my parents and my grandparents. As a child I used to play in this street. When I felt tired or hungry I entered any of these houses and was fed and put to sleep as if it was my own house." When I asked him to tell me what he knows about the nearby *Wakala* Qaytbay, he knew nothing except that it was an archaeological site. When I visited the area two years later, the house where this man lived was not there. The row of early 20th century houses had been demolished by the Ministry of Culture so that the northern walls of Cairo could be restored and a buffer zone for the walls created.

For heritage conservation professionals like myself, *Wakala* Qaytbay is an Islamic historic building. Why, then, is a committed Muslim whose family has lived in the city for many generations not concerned with its conservation? Are Muslims not interested in their built heritage? According to Jokilehto, the identification and conservation of heritage has evolved with modernity (Jokilehto, 2004). Is there a conflict between being Muslim and being modern? Is the built heritage and its conservation an elitist concern? What about the majority of Egyptians? For whom is historic Cairo conserved? This book aims at establishing an in-depth understanding of approaches to conservation in Cairo today. While the viewpoints of the elite can be understood from formal historic accounts and conservation interventions, those of the majority are much more difficult to trace.

This text is based on three assumptions. The first is that Islamic views on conservation derive from the Islamic belief system (*'aqida*) and its code of conduct and practices (*shari'a*). Accordingly, Muslims' attitudes towards the conservation of their built heritage are essentially different from those of the West, not only as a direct impact of their religious beliefs and practices, but also as a result of their adoption of Islamic views of conservation-related issues such as art, history, cultural tourism, natural diversity, cultural diversity, the built environment, architecture, sustainable development and the *waqf* system.

Second, the modernization process in Egypt, and possibly in other Muslim countries, imposes a secular model of modernity. Cultural heritage has been used to this end. Indeed, in the beginning, this model was part of the colonization process of Egypt, and later, the same secular model was followed by the national movement and the rulers of the country because they were looking to Europe as a model in their efforts to free the country and to form a modern nation-state. Thus, demoting Islam and the adoption of a secular way of life were deemed necessary for modernization by the Egyptian elite, even after independence.

The third assumption is that a secular public life may have been achieved in form, but the majority of Egyptians remained and continue to be Muslims at heart. They form their attitudes towards the built heritage and its conservation within the framework of Islam as a reference system. The imposition of modernization as a process of secularization by political tyranny, state control and censorship over the media and arts resulted in a duality of formal and informal sectors. Mass poverty and deprivation of civil rights further added to the already conflicting values and attitudes in the city. It is within this political and socio-cultural context that one may understand attitudes and approaches to conservation in the complex situation of Cairo today.

The first three chapters are an investigation of the above three assumptions. The first chapter addresses the pre-modern period, the second, the colonial period, and the third, the period of independence. In each chapter, a section on political and socio-cultural context outlines the general framework, followed by a review of attitudes towards the conservation of the built heritage in context. However, the structure and methodology of Chapter 1 differ from the following two chapters. As the political and socio-cultural context in pre-modern Egypt is greatly impacted by Islam, a review of Islamic viewpoints on conservation-related issues is included in a separate section. Chapter 4 is an analysis and superimposition of political and socio-cultural developments, and the different relevant approaches to conservation that contribute to shape Cairo today.

Obama may have been mistaken thinking that, by visiting the jewel in the crown of Islamic architecture, he would be showing a full understanding of the values cherished by Muslims. This thinking represents a typical difference in the worldview and value system between Westerners and Muslims. Nevertheless, he was right when he addressed the faculty and students from both al-Azhar University and Cairo University. He showed a sharp understanding of the dual value systems that coexist in Egypt today. ▶

He was also correct in addressing the two groups from Cairo University main hall, since the University represents the formally dominant culture in Egypt today. Cairo University may be in its infancy in comparison to al-Azhar University, but it must be noted that the Egyptian Prime Minister at the time and most of his Cabinet were graduates of Cairo University and other similar secular modern universities.

> I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo, and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. Together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress.
> *Obama's speech to the Muslim world, 4 June 2009*

This book is an adaptation of a Ph.D. dissertation that was submitted to the Mackintosh School of Architecture of the University of Glasgow, U.K. in 1992. Today, more than 20 years after completing the initial research, much has changed. On the international level, as the scope of cultural heritage has expanded, many charters have been adopted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The approach of conservation specialists has also been redefined several times. It is accepted today that historic gardens, towns, villages, landscapes, ethnographic collections and vernacular heritage merit conservation, among many other developments.

A number of very important publications further enhanced and developed the views of the international conservation movement, some of which are relevant to this book: *Historical and philosophical issues in the conservation of cultural heritage*, edited by Stanley-Price, Talley Jr. and Vaccaro (1996); *A History of Architectural Conservation* by Jokilehto; publications by the Getty Conservation Institute on value-based conservation, such as *Values and heritage conservation* by Avrami, Mason and de la Torre (2000); the *ICCROM Conservation Studies* series, including titles such as *Traditional conservation practices in Africa* by Joffroy (2005), and *Conservation of living religious heritage* by Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick (2005).

Furthermore, the very important work of Mehdi Hodjat, *Cultural heritage in Iran: Policies for an Islamic country* (1995), asserts that the issues investigated in the present discussion are relevant to Muslims' heritage in other places of the world. It has now been firmly established that conservation and development concerns must be addressed together in an integrated conservation approach. Major players in the field of development on the international level, such the World Bank, have included culture, identity and the built heritage as essential aspects of their approach to development. An important publication that explains this approach is the World Bank's *Historic cities and sacred sites, cultural roots for urban futures* by Serageldin, Shluger and Martin-Brown (2001).

There have also been major developments in Cairo. The 1992 earthquake in Egypt caused great concern for the safety of the built heritage of historic Cairo among the international and national bodies. The technical and financial aid that Egypt received since then has been unprecedented. Two main developments occurred as a result. First, the Ministry of Culture inaugurated a large-scale restoration programme, the Historic Cairo Restoration Project, which, to date, has restored more than 100 buildings. It also started interventions on the urban level, such as the upgrading of al-Darb al-Asfar alleyway and the upgrading and lowering the level of the infrastructure of the northern part of al-Mu'ezz Street. Second, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture created a mega project that included the creation of Al-Azhar Park, the uncovering and restoration of the eastern walls of Cairo, the restoration and adaptive reuse of a number of listed buildings, and the socio-economic development of al-Darb al-Ahmar District in historic Cairo. The scale of the Aga Khan project and its inclusion of both conservation and development elements are unprecedented in Cairo. However, at present, the main issues raised by this book continue to be valid if not more pressing. Also, the direction of this research offers a useful example for analysing attitudes towards the conservation of the built heritage in other Muslim historic cities.

Two developments show the relevance of this text today. On the international level, since 11 September 2001, there has been the upsurge in terrorism by Muslim militant groups as well as the 'culture of fear'. Until recently, international mass tourism to Egypt had increased on an unprecedented scale. There is a great danger that historic Cairo will become an open-air museum taken out of its traditional context in order to satisfy the demands of the tourism industry and also to separate the tangible (i.e. architecture and urban fabric) from the intangible (i.e. Islamic, Arabic and socio-economic values) of the built heritage. This separation is intended to reassure tourists that this Disneyland-like Cairo has nothing to do with what is now a much-feared Islam. But this separation will undermine much of the significance and values of the built heritage. It will also widen the gap between formal and informal values and approaches. A better alternative would be to reach a deeper understanding of the various aspects of Muslims' built heritage. There is also a need to reaffirm Cairenes' pride in their heritage, within its traditional context, tangible and intangible, which is one of the aims of this book.

On the national and regional levels, another development unfolded. In January 2011, while I was finalizing my latest revision of this text, another major change shook Cairo and strongly impacted Egypt, the Arab region and possibly the entire world. An uprising initiated by a Facebook group sparked a revolution that joined the 'Arab Spring' of democratically inspired uprisings throughout the Middle East. I felt that these young revolutionaries exposed to the world the marginalization of most Egyptians and the conditions under which they lived. This is also reflected in this book through a careful review of the political and socio-cultural context in Cairo over time. Thus, my arguments on the approaches to and values in conservation of the built heritage are now more relevant than ever before. My hope is that this book will ultimately contribute to the conservation of the built heritage in Cairo, taking into account more socially inclusive approaches.

Preparing this text for publication has not an easy task. Twenty-five years ago, the initial research for my thesis started with the question: why do Cairenes not care for their architectural heritage? Four years of research and investigation did not yield an answer, but rather a different question: why do Cairenes care for their heritage the way they do? Many more years of experience in fieldwork, debates, teaching and training then led to the restructuring and rewriting of the thesis into this book.

As an Egyptian conservation architect, the research contributed to my clearer understanding of the situation of built heritage conservation in Cairo. There are so many values underlying what I used to perceive as neglect or ignorance of the scientific method of conservation. I understand today why the imam of a 15th century mosque installed zigzag, green neon lamps on the body of an exquisitely decorated stone minaret. I can also see now that this is a sign of care and not neglect. I see this as a manifestation of the significant intangible heritage of the role of the minaret as a landmark and a 'lighthouse' that gives audible and visual guidance, and contributes to the identity of its place in the Muslim city. However, I see the floodlight projected towards the recently restored minarets as a problem. Although it illuminates the minaret very effectively, it demotes it from being the tower that *gives light* to an object that *receives light* just as any other ornamental object or structure in the city. Neither the neon green lamps nor the floodlight projector was the best solution to highlight the minaret. There is a need to find an intervention that is compatible, not only from the technical and aesthetic points of view, but one that will also conserve the integrity of the heritage. In the case of the Muslim Arab city, European examples should not be followed unquestionably and the intangible aspects of the heritage should not be ignored.

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Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Caroline Williams who devoted so much of her precious time to go through the whole text and for her scholarly critique and friendly advice, ranging from correcting small typos and commenting on transliteration to theoretical and philosophical debates. I am also grateful to Kris Johnson for reading the manuscript and giving me very useful comments and ideas.

I am greatly indebted to the men and women who live in the historic quarters of Cairo who taught me so much about the very long urban tradition of our city. They taught me how to prioritize my work.

I am grateful to Joanne, my wife, for her continuous support, encouragement and love. Joanne read the entire manuscript and made valuable comments and corrections. I am also grateful to my children Mahmoud, Tasnim, Sondos and Iman. And just as for every achievement I've managed to accomplish in my life, I am indebted to my sister Nagwa and our parents for their love and support.

Notes on translations and transliterations

Arabic words are written in *italics* and explained in the glossary. They are transliterated into a simplest form so as not to alienate readers unaccustomed to Arabic and Egyptian names of people and places. Arabic names have been transliterated as close to the Arabic spelling as possible except where they appear incorrectly in a quotation, e.g. "Mohamed" for Muhammad.

No indication is made for long vowels. For example, the two vowels in *hammam* are not differentiated, although the first is short and the second is long.

An 's' is added for plural (e.g. *hammam,* pl. *hammams*) except in cases where the Arabic plural is used in formal names or is in popular use (e.g. *waqf,* pl. *awqaf* and *'alim,* pl. *'ulama'*). The same applies for other rules of Arabic grammar; for example, a word is transliterated in one of its simple forms regardless of its place in the sentence.

No differentiation is made between *lam shamsiya* and *lam qamariya*. Both are transliterated as 'L' (e.g. *qawa'd al-nahw wa al-sarf*). No differentiation is made for Arabic subtle pronunciation differences that do not exist in English (*seen* and *sad* are both transliterated as 's', and *dal* and *dad* are both transliterated as 'd'). Both Arabic letters *'ayn* and *hamza* are indicated by an apostrophe e.g. *naf'* is an example for *'ayn* and *naba'* is an example for *hamza*.

Despite all efforts to observe consistency, there are many situations where irregularities were unavoidable due to popular use of certain words in English (e.g. 'bazaar' should have been written *bazar* according to the above system; however, it is an existing entry in English dictionaries with the long vowel indicated by a double 'a'.

Glossary

'Alim	Scholar of one of the branches of Islamic studies
Adhan	Call to prayer
Ahl al-Bayt	The family of the Prophet and their descendants
'Amara	Constructed, lived in, full of life and revived
Ansha'a	Constructed
Atlal	Remains of a place that was lived in
Awlad al-balad	Plural of *ibn al-balad*
Awqaf	Plural of waqf
Bab	Gate or portal
Balady	National, native, belonging to the country *(balad)*
Bayt al-Umma	The house of Sa'd Zaghlul (The house of the nation)
Caliph	The religious and political leader of the Muslims; literally, it means 'successor' and was a title given to the successors of the Prophet. The whole caliphate system was abolished in 1922 by Kamal Ataturk
Diwan	Council
'Eid	Feast
'Elm	Knowledge or science
'Ellm al-'adl wa al-tajrih	The knowledge of men/women and their credibility with regard to narrating *hadith*
Fallah	Farmer – used in pre-modern Egypt to indicate an Egyptian, as opposed to Mamluk, Turkish or others of different ethnic and racial origins
Faqih	A scholar of *fiqh*
Fard	Islamic obligatory duty, such as the five daily prayers
Fatiha	The opening chapter of the Qur'an
Fatawi	Plural of *fatwa*
Fatwa	A ruling by an Islamic jurist, or an opinion regarding a particular issue or situation from the *fiqh* point of view
Fiqh	The applicable understanding of Islamic knowledge and insight into *shari'a*
Fina'	Yard or courtyard
Fuqaha'	Plural of *faqih*
Hadith	Sayings of the Prophet
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Makka

Halal	Permissible according to *shari'a*
Hammam	Bath
Hanafi	One of the four *sunni* schools of *fiqh*
Hanbali	One of the four *sunni* schools of *fiqh*
Hara/Harat	Alleyway – sometimes indicating a social group or a neighbourhood
Haram	A protected zone (with a short vowel)
Haram	Prohibited according to *shari'a* (with a long vowel)
Hasan	Good or beautiful
Hifaz	Conservation
Hijab	Head covering of Muslim women
Hijra	Migration
Hijri	Referring to the Islamic calendar that started with the year of the Prophet's migration to Medina
Hima	Buffer zone
Ibn al-balad	An Egyptian urbanite, usually Cairene – literally, the son of the country
'Ibra	Learning lessons from an event, a situation, a place or history
Ihsan	Doing more than what is required – literally, it refers to goodness as well as beauty
Ijma'	Agreement
Ijtihad	Innovative thinking
Iman	Faith
Jihad	Religious war – it can be psychological, e.g. *jihad al nafs,* which means to resist one's own temptations
Kafir	Non-believer
Khanqah	Residential institution for the living and worship of sufis
Kheyam	Tents
Khutba	Speech
Kitab	Book
Kitaba	Writing
Kutubi	Librarian
Kuttab	A school for children to learn the Qur'an, mathematics, reading and writing
KTB	The linguistic root for writing, book, library, desk, school and related words

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Lihya	Beard
Madhhab	A school of thought – there are four *sunni madhhabs*
Madrasa	School
Makruh	Not favoured
Maktab	See *kuttab*
Maktabah	Library
Maliki	One of the four *sunni* schools of thought
Maqsura	Elevated or enclosed space in a mosque
Mashrabiya	Wooden lattice screen
Mawarith	Inheritance
Mayda'a	A place for ablution
Mihrab	Niche where the imam leads the prayer, indicating the direction of *Ka'ba,* or *qibla*
Mubah	Permissible
Mukataba	Correspondence
Mulid	Traditional celebration of the birthday of a pious figure
Mu'min	Faithful
Muqaddas	Sacred
Mustahabb	Preferred
Musta'riba	Arabicized people
Naba'	News, history
Naf'	Use, function or utility
Nafi'	Useful
Qadi	Judge
Qisas	Stories
Qawa'id al-Nahw wa al-Sarf	Rules of Arabic grammar
Qawa'id Tilawat wa Tajweed al-Qur'an	Rules of reciting the Qur'an
Qibla	Direction towards the *Ka'ba*
Qiyas	Analogy (literally measuring)
Qubbah	Dome, as in a mausoleum
Qudat/ Qudah	Plural of *Qadi*
Ribat	A stronghold, for devotees or defence of a Muslim frontier or Muslims' lands
Riwaq	Arcade around the courtyard of a mosque
Sabil	Public water fountain

Sadaqa Jariya	Continued charity – after death of the donor
Salah	Ritual prayer
Sanam	Idol
Siyam	Fasting
Sira	Life story – e.g. life story of the Prophet
Shafi'i	One of the four *sunni* schools of *fiqh*
Shahada	Testimony that God is One and that Muhammad is his Prophet
Shaikh	Religious leader or an elderly wise man
Sharab	Drink
Shari'a	Prescribed Islamic conduct
Shi'a	Partisans of the Prophet's family who became *madhhab*s
Shi'i	Members of the *shi'a* movement
Shilla	A group of friends
Subou'	A traditional celebration of a newborn when he/she becomes a week *(usbu')* old
Sufi	Muslim mystic – originally referring to the rough wool garments devotees wore all year round
Sunna	Tradition of action and sayings ascribed to the Prophet
Sunni	Muslims following one of the four *sunni madhhabs* – as opposed to *shi'i*
Tafsir	Explanation – usually referring to the Qur'an
Tan	'Organization' – modernizing the urban fabric
Tashkil	Placement of vowels in Arabic words
Takiya	Turkish word for *khanqah*
'Ulama'	Plural of *'alim*
Umma	The Muslim community – all Muslims
'Umran	Urbanization, culture, or civilization
'Urf	Traditions, conventions, norms, traditional rules
Wakala	Commercial building around a courtyard with lodging facilities in the upper levels
Waqf	Pious endowment not to be bought or sold, for a named purpose
Waqf Ahli	A family endowment often for descendants of the patron
Waqf Khayri	A *waqf* for a charitable or religious purposes
Waqfiyya	*Waqf* deed – the legal document establishing the *waqf* and its arrangements
Warsha	Workshop
Wazir	Head of government – the equivalent of present-day prime minister

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Wudu'	Ablution
Za'im al Umma	Leader of the nation (the first to be given this title by the Egyptian people was Sa'd Zaghlul)
Zakat	Alms
Zawiya	An oratory, as for a *sufi shaykh* and his disciples
Ziyada	An outer courtyard for a mosque – literally 'addition'

Acronyms and abbreviations

AKTC	Aga Khan Trust for Culture
BSG	Building/settlement graph
Comité	*Le Comité pour la Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*
EAO	Egyptian Antiquities Organization
HCRP	Historic Cairo Restoration Project
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
MoC	Ministry of Culture
SCA	Supreme Council of Antiquities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction

The primary aim of this book is to promote an understanding of the context in which approaches towards architectural conservation in Cairo arose. Political and socio-cultural contexts were investigated according to their place in history. By contextualizing the approaches within the historic perspective, a complex reality in Cairo is revealed. A historical development of conflicting values and the severe impact of poverty led to the fragmentation of the nation and a widening gulf between formal and informal ways of life, which is manifested in a wide range of studied approaches to conservation to date.

Two events have deeply impacted modern Egyptian history: the French invasion, which planted the seeds of modernization in the country and the *coup d'état* by Nasser, which led Egyptians to begin building a modern, independent nation-state. In the light of these two watershed events, the introduction and progress of modernity are traced within the socio-cultural scene in Egypt through three historical phases: the first phase was mainly dominated by Islam; the second phase was characterized by both colonization and modernization; and the third phase was characterized by both independence and dictatorship. This third phase may have ended with the Egyptian revolution in Tahrir Square in 2011. In each of the first three chapters of this book, the political and socio-cultural context offered an explanation of many aspects of the approaches towards architectural conservation in each specific period.

Chapter 1 explores the political and socio-cultural context of pre-modern Egypt (641-1798), which was greatly dominated by Islam as a reference system. The popular culture of *ibn al-balad* in Cairo reflected a sense of belonging to the wider Muslim nations while maintaining respect and tolerance for the followers of other faiths. Such was the importance of Islamic values that rulers throughout different historic periods relied on Islam to legitimize their rule; this was manifested in all aspects of public life, including the patronage of Islamic monumental architecture and religious institutions.

The impact of Islam on approaches towards the conservation of the built heritage should be understood within the holistic Islamic concept of the world and its meaning and role in human life. It is therefore essential to review Islamic views on conservation-related concepts such as history, tangible heritage, cultural tourism, natural and cultural diversity, art, architecture, the built environment, sustainable development and the *waqf* (pious endowment not to be bought or sold, for a named purpose) system.

Three main principles are central to the Islamic concept of history. First, human life does not end with death but enters a new phase. Second, material progress does not guarantee happiness or the well-being of society, while moral values do. Third, a clear distinction should be made between writing and interpreting history.

Tangible heritage is considered by Islam as an important tool for interpreting history. An early form of what we know now as cultural tourism was put forward by the Qur'an and adopted by Muslims. Muslims are encouraged to visit the remains of previous civilizations in order to understand history better and to reflect on the meaning of life. Such tours should abide by a strict etiquette of respect.

Muslims are instructed to observe and respect natural and cultural diversity as an essential part of their religious observance. From an Islamic point of view, acceptance of local, regional, natural, and cultural diversities is an expression of God's creation. This is shown through the diversity of Islamic artistic, architectural and urban heritage in different regions.

Islamic art should be beautiful, truthful and moral. However, Islamic art is not sacred. The most crucial aspect of Islamic views on art is that no form or material is sacred. Even an expression of a sacred concept of value does not render that expression sacred.

Architecture and the built environment should strike the right balance between values, e.g. social bonds versus individuality; shelter from natural elements versus integration with nature; the human dimension versus urban factors; aesthetics versus modesty; religion versus secularism. The rules that govern building and urban development are based on principles from the Qur'an and *sunna* (tradition of action and sayings ascribed to the Prophet). Muslims' buildings and built environments are characterized by underlying Islamic intangible rules rather than forms and styles.

Awareness of the limitations of the short human life span, combined with Muslims' wish to continue their good deeds after departing this life, produced a highly effective vehicle for sustainable development: the *waqf* system. As a result of thousands of *waqf* arrangements and development efforts by individuals and institutions, Islamic urban heritage survived for centuries, thus creating different layers of built heritage.

These views together create the context and the strongly pronounced approaches towards architectural conservation in pre-modern Cairo. But the questions remain: how and why were historic buildings conserved? The difficulty in answering these questions lies in the absence of a researched history of architectural conservation in Cairo.

Factors and issues that impacted on approaches to architectural conservation are identified by the comparative analyses of the conservation history of four congregation mosques, which were fairly similar in function, religious and political importance in 1009 – the mosques of 'Amr, Ibn-Tulun, al-Azhar and al-Hakim. A comparative study of constructions, reconstructions, additions, repairs, demolitions, misuse and other positives and negatives in the conservation history of the four buildings led to a number of concluding remarks:

- The urban setting of a building was the most important factor in its conservation.

- The building that was built intentionally with a strong architectural form and high aesthetic values, and was built to last, continued to keep its architectural form fairly intact.

- Endowing a building with *waqf* money and administrative arrangements secured its conservation.

- Strong symbolic values of a building initiated positive approaches towards its conservation.

Chapter 2 examines the political and socio-cultural context of colonized Egypt (1798-1952). The first encounter of the Egyptians with modern Europe was violent and deceptive. Napoleon Bonaparte presented himself and his army to the Egyptians as fellow Muslims. His use of modern technology and the organization of his army secured him a swift victory. Subsequently, his use of modern technology, such as the Arab press, secured his control over Egypt. Although the French stayed in Egypt no longer than three years, their campaign had a huge impact on the country by introducing modernity. Since then, and possibly until today, the Egyptians have had a love-hate relationship with modernity. On the one hand, they aspired to modernize their country, and on the other hand, they saw it as a threat to their identity and religion.

Throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, Egyptian rulers strived to modernize Egypt following the European model. This was manifested in all aspects of life including arts, architecture, urban planning and social manners. Consequently, the

newly formed nation-state produced its own modern intellectuals and national movement. As in modern European cities, architectural styles appeared in Cairo to express cultural preferences, ideological choices and political aspirations. Revival of European historic styles, the Neo-Islamic style, the Neo-Pharaonic style and different hybrid styles coexisted in the modern streets of Cairo. This was not limited to the built environment; Cairenes also express their identity and taste in different styles of arts, furniture and clothes. Such a conscious use of style and appearance to express an ideological or cultural stand was a manifestation of the European model of a modern nation.

Orientalism is a product and result of the European colonization of Egypt and the rest of the 'Orient'. It influenced the way the Egyptians and other 'Oriental subjects' were seen and understood in the West. By adopting the European model for modernization, the Egyptian elite viewed their own country, people and heritage through the lens of Orientalism.

A two-tiered society resulted from the modernization endeavours by the elite according to the European model. While the European-educated elite were steadily secularizing the country, the majority of Egyptians remained deeply committed to an Islamic way of life and value system. Even the Egyptian national movement that led the population in resisting the British occupation advocated a secular model of a modern Egyptian nation. By the late 1920s, the establishment and swiftly growing popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood was an expression of the need to fill the widening gap between the elite and the majority of the population by calling for modernization while maintaining Islam as a reference system.

Approaches towards the conservation of the built heritage in the 19th and first half of the 20th century were greatly impacted by both the colonization and modernization of Egypt. Napoleon introduced the concept of straight, wide streets – not to modernize the city, but to be able to control the population through his organized army. He also introduced the careful study and survey of the urban fabric and the built heritage to be able to control and at times manipulate them. Indeed, the first acts of urban modernization went hand in hand with colonization and tyranny.

The efforts by Muhammad 'Ali's dynasty to establish a modern nation-state and to carry out large-scale urban modernization projects in Cairo were a continuation of Napoleon's approach, and in some cases, the projects were designed by the same engineers. The management and control of the country were centralized through the creation of a bureaucratic machine. The greatest impact on the built heritage at the time came from the two newly created departments of *Awqaf* and Public Works. The first changed the centuries-long tradition of different *waqf* administrative arrangements, while the second bulldozed through the dense medieval urban fabric to create straight, wide boulevards.

The creation of *Le Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* (the *Comité*) in 1881 was the result of mounting pressure on the Egyptian authorities by European amateurs of Arab/Islamic art. The *Comité* was the first modern body mandated with the conservation of the built heritage in Cairo. It was the fruit of campaigns by European intellectuals in Europe and Egypt who criticized the loss of urban heritage and architectural fabric in the face of grand urban projects by the Ministry of Public Works and the reconstruction of historic mosques by the Ministry of Awqaf. The great majority of the *Comité*'s members were Europeans, and their approaches towards the conservation of the built heritage mirrored those in Europe at the time. When the *Comité* addressed the particular nature of Islamic architectural and urban heritage, it was within the viewpoint and framework of Orientalism.

The working language of the *Comité* was French, and its approaches differed little from prevailing approaches in France at the time. Restoration was preferred over preservation, and Islamic buildings were dealt with as dead heritage, with no attention paid to their function, social or cultural values. The establishment of the *Comité* and the interventions that

it carried out were part and parcel of the modern city according to the European model, with its growing modern urban fabric, while selected portions of the built heritage were frozen for their aesthetic and archaeological values.

With the exception of the *Comité* members and a small number of European-educated Egyptians, the approaches of the majority were not essentially different from those of pre-modern times. Most Egyptians did not see any real break from the pre-modern flow of history in Egypt and Cairo; their approaches towards the conservation of the built heritage of Cairo continued to be motivated by the urban, social, economic, functional, religious and aesthetic values of historic buildings as living heritage. Islamic views of the world, man's mission in life and conservation-related concepts continued to motivate the informal approaches of the layman as opposed to the formal approaches of the *Comité*.

Chapter 3 explores the political and socio-cultural context of independent Egypt (1952–2011). A new phase of modernizing Egypt was initiated by the 1952 *coup d'état*. Although the coup was engineered by Egyptian Muslims, secularism was imposed in an unprecedented manner. On the one hand, throughout the 1950s, Nasser undertook important steps towards creating a modern nation-state. Independence from British colonization, reinstatement of national pride, redistribution of wealth, social equality and welfare institutions were among the achievements of the newly modernized republic. On the other hand, there was a dictatorship, a police state, the abolition of democracy and violations of political and human rights. Consequently, Nasser became both a beloved national leader and a resented dictator.

The secular, socialist ideology of Pan Arabism was the only permissible political stand in the country throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The secular minority gained absolute power and access to all governmental resources, while the religious majority was forced into silence, adopting an informal way of life and activities. Thus, the formal-informal divide in the nation became deeper. Egypt became fragmented and divided across many lines: poor and rich, Muslims and Christians, religious and secular, Westernized and *ibn al-balad* (an Egyptian urbanite, usually a Cairene – literally the son of the country).

With independence, the foreign members of the *Comité* left the country and were replaced by Egyptians. The administrative structure and name of the organization changed, though without any essential change in approaches. Little money or political will was directed to the conservation of Islamic heritage in Cairo during the 1950s and 1960s, mainly for political and ideological reasons. The historic areas of Cairo deteriorated rapidly due to neglect, rural migration to the city, and changes in rent laws that discouraged landlords from maintaining their properties.

From the mid-1970s, the Islamic heritage of Cairo was rediscovered, both for political reasons and for the economic potential of tourism growth as a major income-generator for Egypt. By the late 1970s, the historic quarters of Cairo resembled a slum with its dilapidated overcrowded houses. Homeless families found themselves on the streets or seeking shelter in historic buildings after the collapse of their homes due to lack of maintenance, coupled with an inappropriate use of old buildings. Many families who used to live in the historic areas of Cairo were relocated by the Government to newly built areas that had very little or no services, and were far from the historic city.

In the 1980s, the Government became more interested in historic Cairo. This was not always welcomed since many of the hasty, heavy-handed restorations carried out ignored the needs of local communities. There was no coordination between development and conservation efforts. Urban conservation and revitalization policies saw tourism as the magic solution to the problems of historic areas in Cairo. Socio-economic and socio-cultural issues were not addressed. There was an assumption that tourism would lead to an economic revitalization that would solve all other problems.

The establishment of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) in 1994 ended the administrative and financial independence of the management and conservation of built heritage. The Minister of Culture, who remained in office for more than 20 years, assumed responsibility for heritage conservation. He was regularly criticized in Egypt and abroad for failing to show understanding or appreciation for the significance and values of heritage. The impression was that the built heritage of Cairo was being restored and presented as a convenient showcase for tourism, with financial gain as the main aim of conservation. Scientific, symbolic and socio-economic values were often greatly undermined, as reflected in the Historic Cairo Restoration Project (HCRP). Restoration projects were hastily prepared by non-specialized consultants, while the work was executed by contracting companies with no track record in architectural heritage conservation.

The project by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) combined a number of conservation and development efforts for the al-Darb al-Ahmer area. In addition to restoring historic buildings, it created a large park, improved the infrastructure of the area, and provided technical assistance to the local inhabitants to upgrade their old houses. It also addressed capacity building and other development needs such as education, health care and micro-loans to assist the disadvantaged to escape from the poverty trap. The project was made possible only through the influence and financial capacity of a prestigious foreign organization. The sustainability of this approach and its value as a pilot project are yet to be tested.

A number of efforts were made to address the conservation and development of historic areas in Cairo; however, none were successful due to the lack of coordination between different institutions with overlapping mandates. The latest of these efforts was the establishment in 2008 of the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH). The scope of its mandate was limited to the façades of buildings and street furniture, but is not concerned with the needs of local communities.

The divide between the local inhabitants and the decision-makers is reflected in the contrast between the attention given to restoring the fabric of the built heritage and the poor quality of new housing schemes for the inhabitants who were relocated from historic Cairo.

Chapter 4 aims to understand current approaches in context. Conflicting values underlie today's different approaches in Cairo. One major conflict is between the values of modernity and those of tradition. Another conflict is between the values of Islam and those of secularism. Accordingly, it is possible to map four main players on the political and socio-cultural scene in Egypt: popular cultural trends, nation-state institutions, Western-style modernization movements and Islamic revival movements.

Present approaches cannot be understood without assessing the impact of poverty and the way it disturbs values and changes priorities. Maslow's *psychological hierarchy of needs* influences people's priorities and approaches.

The formal-informal duality is a marked reality in Cairo today, as illustrated by a comparative analysis of formal and informal approaches towards *sabils,* minarets and street shading structures. Formal approaches address architectural, aesthetic and archaeological values with great care but almost totally ignore socio-cultural and socio-economic values. In contrast, informal approaches carefully address socio-economic and socio-cultural values, while almost totally ignoring architectural, aesthetic and archaeological values. The building/settlement graph (BSG) was used to illustrate these differences pertaining to the three selected types of historic buildings: *sabils,* minarets and street shading structures.

The range of possible approaches to the conservation of the built heritage in Cairo today reflect different, conflicting values and the divisions of formal and informal activities, which

will be illustrated by a series of hypothetical case studies for the conservation of Bab Zuwayla. Some approaches address the heritage fabric or the immediate surroundings of the heritage, or both; others are textbook cases of conservation theory; and still others can be explained by anthropic pressure from tourism or real estate development.

The analysis of the different approaches leads to the following conclusions:

- The average low-income, poor living conditions and poor education of the local communities do not permit them to appreciate the archaeological and aesthetic values of the heritage. Too much attention to the built heritage while ignoring the needs of the community may result in encroachments, vandalism, theft or indifference towards the built heritage.

- All interventions that create jobs and revitalize the local economy are warmly welcomed by the local community, irrespective of the opinions of historians and heritage professionals.

- Approaches that may be legal and professionally acceptable may be meaningless, misguided or even intimidating to the local community. For example, 'minimum intervention approach', such as maintaining a minaret in a ruinous state, may offend many devout Muslims.

- Approaches that may comply with international principles for the conservation of the built heritage may violate Islamic criteria and may therefore be resented by the local community.

- Local intangible values may be associated with a heritage site, resulting in tremendous pressure to restore it and embellish it with decorative and functional elements, and to allow unconditional free access.

- Good conservation practices that may be considered by the Ministry of Awqaf and by many Muslim individuals and groups may be rejected and fiercely resisted by the Ministry of Culture and SCA because they undermine the archaeological and historic values of the heritage.

- Some of the approaches that are consistently adopted by the SCA and the Ministry of Culture are a continuation of the approaches that may have been appropriate when initiated by the *Comité* more than a century ago. However, they do not take into consideration subsequent changes at the national and international levels in how built heritage is defined and conserved. These changes require a new philosophical and technical approach.

- Both formal and informal approaches may be in agreement but for different reasons and motivations. Formal approaches may lead to an intervention that mainly addresses the aesthetic and archaeological values of the heritage, while the local community identifies with the socio-economic or religious benefits that may not have been aimed for.

- The function of the built heritage is a problematic issue. As an extension of approaches inherited from the *Comité*, the SCA resists assigning a function to the heritage building, even if it were to be its original one. International conservation principles encourage assigning the heritage a function that is meaningful to the community. From an Islamic point of view, the heritage building should be adapted to perform its initially intended function, and new functions may be introduced providing that they do not conflict with the original functions and meanings defined in the *waqf* deed.

The local community understandably promotes a functioning heritage because it is the Islamic point of view and a pragmatic approach to recognizing a resource to be valued; even the MoC supports a functioning heritage. Nevertheless, the SCA is mandated by law to protect the heritage and thus usually able to veto any proposal for rehabilitating the heritage for adaptive reuse.

- Formal approaches should acknowledge that the Muslim heritage is a living heritage and should not be undermined and therefore its intangible aspects are just as important, if not more so, than its fabric and other tangible aspects. If the living heritage is left to the local community or the local authorities, as in the case of the non-listed heritage, then very little attention will be paid to archaeological and aesthetic values.

- Socio-economic needs may lead to an outright refusal to protect the heritage if it is not protected by law, which is the case for all non-listed heritage buildings. The lack of interest in the social, economic and cultural needs of the local community by the conservation specialists and decision-makers encourages this approach.

- There is a general consensus that the need exists to encourage, revitalize and revive traditional crafts. However, there are different approaches towards the quality of crafts, the conservation of the traditional system and process of craftsmanship, and the incorporation of traditional crafts in new buildings. Foreign mass tourism motivates some approaches that are beneficial for the conservation of the heritage, but it also motivates other approaches that invite the falsification of traditional crafts.

- Interventions or regulations at the urban level that do not respect the individuals' rights to intervene in their own properties violate Islamic views on the built environment. Corruption and indifference to the pressing socio-economic needs of the local community add to the reasons for the failure of area conservation in Cairo. For example, restricting construction activities and vehicular movement to protect the heritage may damage the interests of the local community and therefore meet with resentment and negative approaches. The situation is usually worsened when rules are not applied fairly to everyone due to corruption.

- The identity crisis that Egyptian society suffers from as a result of the modernization process over two centuries motivates experiments to search for a national or Islamic identity by architects, planners and intellectuals. However, this remains an elitist concern. It is only relevant to the local community insofar as it addresses their socio-economic and socio-cultural needs.

- There is escalating pressure from the international mass tourism industry to adapt heritage resources in Cairo for tourism. This is usually welcomed by all parties, even if the local community do not receive the actual benefits. However, mass tourism may initiate negative approaches in the local community for religious or socio-cultural reasons.

1 | The impact of Islam on pre-modern Egypt (641–1798)

1.1 Rationale

What motivated the preservation of a historic building in pre-modern Cairo? Why were some buildings preserved while others neglected or demolished?

> … history can never be separated from politics unless it is reduced to a recitation of dates. Any explanation of human behaviour naturally requires a degree of subjective judgement or opinion (Faulks, 1990: 33).

It is almost impossible to interpret history objectively without being influenced by one's own viewpoints and values, and those typical of one's time and place. The task becomes more difficult when the aim of interpreting history is to understand perspectives. It is not always possible to differentiate between contemporary perspectives and those of the historian. For example, we learn about Fatimid history from al-Maqrizi, who lived in the time of the Mamluks. al-Maqrizi chose historical events, and described and portrayed them according to his personal viewpoints and values, which also reflected those of his time and place, i.e. Mamluk Cairo.

Since there is no actual work devoted to the history of architectural conservation in Cairo, approaches towards understanding conservation can be traced by studying the history of conservation of a specific building. If we want to understand attitudes towards conservation, we need to analyse the writings on religious foundations (i.e. mosques). The congregation mosque might be an ideal case study because it is usually the best-documented building in a Muslim city.

> Although mediaeval historians are usually silent on the subject of architecture and its development, they always mention religious foundations of special historic or religious importance (Behrens-Abouseif, 1989: 47).

The weakness of this type of analysis is that certain conditions or circumstances specific to a certain mosque may not necessarily apply to other mosques, hence the conservation history of more than one mosque should be studied.

After the completion of al-Hakim Mosque at the beginning of the Fatimid Period, 909-1171 AD, four mosques became as important as the congregation mosques of Cairo and its environs (Figure 1.1). Mufaddal ibn Abul Fada'il wrote:

> … I have seen in the life of al-Hakim that on Friday, the 9th Ramadan 399 (7 May 1009) the Friday prayer was instituted in the new mosque of al-Hakim and the Caliph used to give his address in it one Friday, in the mosque of al-Azhar on another Friday, in the mosque of ibn Tulun on another Friday, in the mosque of Misr (i.e. the mosque of 'Amr) on another Friday (Mufaddal Ibn Abul Fada'il, quoted by Creswell, 1: 37).

Since the four mosques enjoyed equal status on 7 May 1009 AD, they should have had the same potential chances to survive decline, and external factors such as a political upheaval or natural disasters should have affected them equally. The difference in importance given each mosque, after al-Hakim's heyday, was due to the different values attributed to each building. However, this equal importance did not continue for very long, and each of the

four mosques over time underwent a different process of flourishing and decline. The equal importance of the four mosques at the time suggests that attitudes towards their conservation should have been similar. Therefore, comparing the subsequent advances and setbacks in the conservation state of each of the four buildings should indicate the values that were attributed to the mosques that would determine a positive or negative attitude towards their conservation.

▶ **Figure 1.1**
Location of the four mosques
1 'Amr Mosque
2 Ibn Tulun Mosque
3 al-Azhar Mosque
4 al-Hakim Mosque
A Al-Fustat
B Al-Askar
C Al-Qata'i'
D Al-Qahira (the Fatimid walled city in Cairo)
E Al-Mu'iz Street
F Citadel
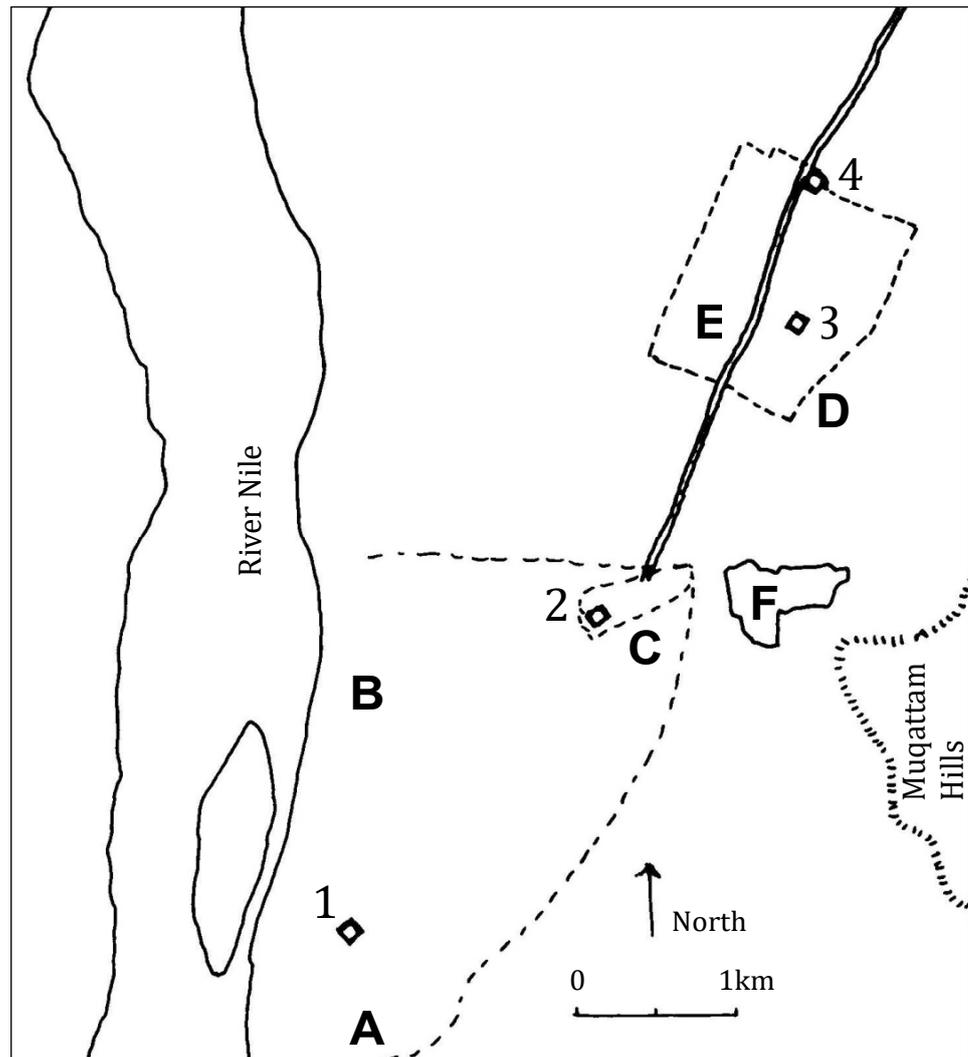
Before embarking on a comparative study of the four mosques, two questions must first be addressed. What was the socio-cultural context of pre-19th century Egypt? The answer will help to understand attitudes towards the conservation of the built heritage within a context. The great impact of Islam on the socio-cultural context leads to the second question: What are the Islamic viewpoints on conservation-related concepts? The answer to this question provides another layer of contextualizing pre-modern approaches. In pre-modern Egypt and before being exposed to Western values and concepts, history, art and other concepts that seemed neutral were perceived differently than in the West. With modernization and Westernization these concepts were influenced by modern, i.e. Western, paradigms. The author uses the present tense when reviewing Islamic viewpoints because they are as valid and relevant to most Muslims today as they were throughout the past fourteen centuries of Islamic history. The main sources for this discourse are the Qur'an, *Sunna* and other main sources of Islam.

Sections 1.2. and 1.3 address these two questions, and the final section (1.4) traces approaches towards architectural conservation by comparing the state of conservation of the four great mosques of Cairo from 1009 to 1798 AD.

1.2 Political and socio-cultural context

The Arab conquest in 641 brought the world of Islam to Egypt. Soon after, the country played a central role in the culture, politics and economy of the Islamic civilization. By the 14th century, Cairo was the unrivalled cultural capital of the Muslim world:

> The reign of al-Nasir Muhammad was the age of Cairo at its most resplendent, when the city blossomed into maturity as the world capital of Arab art and letters. While the Mongol horde ransacked its way through the Middle East, devastating Baghdad and plundering Damascus (1299-1300), Cairo offered a secure haven for scholars, craftsmen, and rich merchants who were nimble enough to escape across the Sinai Peninsula, taking with them the knowledge, artistic skills, and wealth that helped make Cairo the most cosmopolitan centre of civilized culture anywhere in the Dar al-Islam (Dunn, 1989: 49).

Egypt has always attracted ambitious Muslim leaders for many reasons, but especially for its strategic location and its agricultural wealth. Ahmad Ibn Tulun, the appointed Abbasid Governor of Egypt, declared Egypt's independence in 870. The *shi'i* Fatimids, in their attempt to challenge the *sunni* Abbasids over the leadership of Muslims, moved from their homeland in North Africa to Egypt and established their capital in Cairo (al-Qahira) in 969. In 1171, Salah al-Din (known in the West as Saladin) founded his dynasty in Egypt, built the citadel in Cairo, and embarked on wars against the Crusaders in the Levant. Under the Mamluks from 1259 to 1517, Egypt became a regional power in political and economic terms. The Mamluks defeated both the Crusaders and the Mongols, controlled trade between Asia and Europe, and established their economic and political hegemony in the region, if not the world. From 1517 to 1798, Egypt became a province of the Ottoman Empire, and Cairo declined slowly from a world-class capital into a provincial city.

None of the leaders who ruled Egypt from the mid-7th century to the end of the 18th century were Egyptians. Many of them did not speak Arabic, and some were not born Muslims. However, the predominant creators of values throughout this period were Islamic and Arabic. This is remarkable considering that the majority of Egyptians at the time of the Arab conquest were Christians who spoke Coptic and Greek.

> The adoption of the Arabic language by the local population and their conversion to Islam would determine Egypt's future […] the Copts' submission to the conquering Arabs no doubt contributed to the long-term preservation of their community. Yet many Christians converted to Islam at the time of the conquest because of their hostility towards Greeks, according to the bishop of Nikiu. The risk that Christian population would gradually shift more towards Islam was therefore very real. Islam's simplicity and its links with the Judeo-Christian tradition militated in its favour. […]
>
> Arabization was naturally linked to Islamization… (Raymond, 2001: 21).

The literature of Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt mentions a sub-culture of the local natives as distinct from the foreign ruling elite. The local native (*ibn al-balad*) was an urbanite who lived in Cairo or other Egyptian cities, and whose behavior was different from those of the Mamluks, Turks and other ruling class members. He was also different from the peasant (*fallah*) who lived in the countryside, and the bedouin who lived in the desert (Ashmawi, 2008). The ethics and behaviour of *ibn al-balad* included acceptance, coexistence and respect for the followers of other religions. A surviving tangible example is the wooden lattice work of the window

in the Ottoman house of 'Ali Katkhuda al-Rub'umiya, which includes both Coptic crosses and poetry in the form of al-Burda calligraphy in praise of Prophet Muhammad. Muslim and Christian families lived in the house at different times of its history; none of its inhabitants dismantled the features that did not belong to their faith (Figure 1.2).

▶ **Figure 1.2**
The wooden lattice work of a window in the house of 'Ali Katkhuda

The common reference system of all the sub-cultures was based on Islamic criteria. Foreign rulers used Islam to justify and legitimize their rule, either by claiming to be descendants of the Prophet, as did the Fatimids, or by proving that they were brave defendants of Islam in the face of its enemies, as did the Ayyubids, Mamluks and Ottomans. In their attempt to win the support of the Egyptians, the country's foreign rulers played on Islamic sentiment.

The Fatimids, investing in the Egyptians' love for the Prophet and his family, brought the remains of many of the Prophet's family members (*Ahl al-Bayt*) to be buried in ceremonial shrines in Cairo, such as al-Husayn, al-Sayyida Zaynab, Aly Zayn al-'Abidin, al-Sayyida Fatima al-Nabawiya, al-Sayyida Nafissa, al-Sayyida Ruqayya and al-Sayyida 'Aisha. A common ground was therefore created between the *shi'i* Fatimids and the *sunni* Egyptians.

The Ayyubids attempted to win the approval of the Egyptian population by building *madrasas* of the *sunni* doctrine. They portrayed themselves thus as the protectors of *sunni* Islam, which Egyptians followed, instead of *shi'i* Islam, which their Fatimid predecessors propagated.

Mamluk sultans and amirs also wished to win the approval of the people and to legitimize their rule through the extensive establishment of Islamic institutions such as mosques, *madrasas, khanqahs* and *sabil-kuttabs* (Humphreys, 1972).

One of the first decrees of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I, after defeating the Mamluks and annexing Egypt to the Ottoman Empire, instructed his viceroys to preserve the *waqf* arrangements that guaranteed the management and maintenance of the religious institutions (Afifi, 1991). This was an immediate message to the Egyptian population by the Sultan that he respected Islam and the ownership of God.

According to a fairly new trend of historical studies in Egypt, seeds of modernization can be traced back from the 17th century with regard to scientific research, the intellectual life, land ownership, economic activities and the rise of an urban middle-class, among other developments (Shalaq, 2006). These trends towards modernization were not an outright rejection of traditional values – on the contrary, they occurred from within the existing cultural and social frameworks. Islam remained the main reference system. Unlike the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe, modernization attempts in pre-colonial Egypt introduced gradual improvements to the existing socio-cultural framework.

Since there was no break with the past, cultural heritage was not seen as separate from the ongoing cultural scene. It did not, therefore, invite exceptional attention. Buildings that were constructed centuries earlier were not seen as being so out of date as to need demolishing, nor as more precious than newer ones because of their age. They were treated according to the values that they held for the community. Since there was no search for a new cultural framework outside religion, there were no attempts to revive or revisit pre-Islamic heritage for inspiration, as was the case in the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe.

The surviving intangible heritage, including tales, songs and sayings as well as visual arts traditions, show that Egyptians fully accepted foreign rulers provided that they were Muslims, regardless of their ethnic origin. Furthermore, they made legendary heroes out of good rulers, such as Baybars al-Bunduqdari, who was immortalized in *Sirat al-Zahir Baybars*. Many of the characters in the folk tales were non-Egyptian Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula or North Africa such *al-Sira al-Hilaliya,* or from Baghdad, Damascus and other Muslim places as in the *Arabian nights* (Qasem, 2001). It is therefore safe to assume that Egyptians perceived themselves as part of the greater Muslim community (*umma*) and not as a separate regional entity. Throughout the whole pre-modern period, Islam was accepted as a cultural, legal, political and economic framework, even though it was not always strictly practised. Up to the end of the 18th century, values were mainly generated by Islam. Pre-Islamic values and traditions that did not conflict with *'aqida* or *shari'a* were accepted or 'Islamized'.

However, Islam was always observed in everyday life. There were times when a ruler deviated from Islamic instructions, such as al-Hakim, who claimed at one point that he was God. At other times, terrible injustices were committed by sultans, amirs or other individuals or groups. But since everyone had full access to the Qur'an and no one had the right to alter it, Islam as a reference system was always measured by the same yardstick of *'aqida* and *shari'a*. Even when Islamic criteria were grossly violated, it was crystal clear to all what *halal* and *haram* were.

> As a monotheistic religion, Islam infused new approaches into the minds of its followers. The characteristic mentality of the Muslims found expression in all their activities including arts and crafts. Thus, the chief normative force in the fine arts of Muslims is Islam itself (Beg, 1981: 1).

1.3 Islamic viewpoints on conservation-related concepts

1.3.1 History

History is central to Islamic teachings. It is used as a major educational tool to explain and elaborate on abstract ideas. The *Qur'an* defines a distinct concept of history and a methodology for its interpretation based on a number of principles, two of which directly impact on approaches towards cultural heritage. The first is the position and role of man on earth. Man's life is like a journey starting from a certain point and ending at a specific destination. It is a transitory stage and an introduction to the eternal life in the Hereafter. Death is the end of a phase and the beginning of a new one. In the new phase of his life, man will not be able to do or change things. He will enjoy the fruit of his deeds during the first phase of his life. Accordingly, it is wise to live according to God's instructions and to make one's life a safe passage to the future life of eternity (Abdulati, 1983).

The second principle is the difference between material progress and moral standards. Individual or collective achievements are measured against the Islamic criteria for the interpretation of history. The moral values adopted by a certain nation at a given historic period are the cause for its rise or downfall. Material progress does not affect overall individual or collective achievements except insofar as it affects moral values. Thus, materialistic and technological advances do not guarantee the well-being of a society; moral values do.

> ...there has been no change in man's response to love, kindness, mercy, charity, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, justice, honesty, truthfulness. Man's reaction to injustice, ruthlessness, lies and bribery remains the same. Similarly, a man has not become more aware and more truthful or a more just person because he can travel by a jet plane today. The complexity is of situations and not of values (Ashraf, 1980: 8).

Ensuring the separation of facts from opinions is the third Islamic principle. A clear distinction should always be strictly made between 'writing' and 'interpreting' history. This is best practised in the writing and interpretation of the Prophet's sayings (*hadith*). The task of a *hadith* writer is twofold. First, all narrators must be identified as reliable and credible men or women who are knowledgeable about *hadith*. They should also be firsthand witnesses of the transmitted saying. A specialization was established and developed by Muslim theologians for assessing the credibility of men or women for narrating *hadith,* which is known as 'the knowledge of men' (*'ilm al-rijal*) or 'the science of evaluation and criticism' (*'ilm al-'adl wa al-tajrih*).

Second, the content and the language of a *hadith* must be checked against other sources so that it does not contradict the Qur'an or *Sunna*. Thus, sayings of the Prophet are classified according to their credibility as historic evidence. A *hadith* writer is limited to the content of the Prophet's words and the above two criteria. Any mixing of personal opinion or professional interpretation with the actual saying would discredit a writer from being a qualified *hadith* writer. This strict methodology is perhaps the nearest to objective history writing that has ever been known to man.

1.3.2 Tangible heritage and cultural tourism

Research on tangible heritage is one of the tools for the Islamic interpretation of history. The Qur'an challenges archaeologists to show evidence of a relationship between material prosperity and the fate of civilizations. According to the Islamic interpretation of history, moral values are what matters. A civilization that greatly flourished materially and then perished, leaving great archaeological remains, provides proof that material prosperity is not important in the overall achievement of civilizations; otherwise, material sophistication should have prevented the disintegration of such civilizations.

What is known today as 'cultural tourism' is not essentially different from the Islamic instruction for believers to travel and reflect on the remains of past civilizations. There are over 20 verses in the Qur'an in which Muslims are instructed to travel around the world and to visit the heritage sites of previous nations and cultures. The following are a few examples:

> Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before them? They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they have left) in the land: But Allah did call them to account for their sins, and none had they to defend them against Allah (Qur'an, Ch.40: V.21).

> Say: Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth (Qur'an, Ch. 6: V.11).

> How many populations have We destroyed, which where given to wrong-doing? They tumbled down on their roofs. And how many wells are lying idle and neglected, and castles lofty and well-built? Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts which are in their breasts (Qur'an, Ch.22: V.45-6).

> Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? They were superior to them in strength: they tilled the soil and populated it in greater numbers than these have done: there came to them their messengers with clear (signs), (which they rejected, to their own destruction): it was not Allah who wronged them, but they wronged their own souls (Qur'an, Ch. 30: V.9).

Cultural tourism that is encouraged by Islam requires a particular etiquette. Great respect should be paid when visiting the remains of previous civilizations. Visitors to sites of cultural and archaeological heritage sites are instructed by Islam to observe and reflect on the big

questions of life. Islamic etiquette for visiting such sites is similar to Islamic etiquette for visiting graveyards and cemeteries. The aim is to remember to place one's life within the bigger picture of birth, life, death, resurrection and the hereafter, and to learn lessons ('ibra). This is completely different from the present phenomenon of cultural mass tourism, which is mainly for financial gain for the organizers and hosts, on one hand, and entertainment and leisure, for the tourists, on the other hand.

The pilgrimage to Makka (hajj), one of the five pillars of Islam, is the form of cultural tourism that each Muslim strives to perform at least once in a lifetime as an act of worship. Before the advent of the airplane, on their way to Makka, Muslim pilgrims reflected on the different lands, peoples, cultures and sites that they saw as a part of their religious duty. Many famous Muslim travellers, such as Ibn Jubair and Ibn Battuta, acquired their appetite for travelling and recording their reflections on cultural differences and archaeological remains on the route to Makka in their first voyages to perform the *Hajj.*

1.3.3 **Natural and cultural diversity**

Natural diversity is mentioned in the Qur'an many times in different contexts, the most significant being when cited as a proof of God's existence and of the meaning and purpose of man's existence:

> Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the disparity of the night and day, in the ships that course in the sea with that which benefits people, in the water that God sends down from the sky, reviving with it the earth after it was barren, in His spreading in it all kinds of living things, in the changing of the winds and the subjected clouds between the sky and the earth, indeed are Signs for people who have understanding (Qur'an, S.2: V. 164).

In the Qur'an, both natural and cultural diversity help Muslims shift attention from petty everyday concerns to reflect on the main issues of life.

> And from His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and your colours, surely in that are Signs for those who possess knowledge (Qur'an, S. 30: V. 22).

> And of His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and all the living things He scattered through both, and He has power to gather them whenever He pleases (Qur'an, S. 42: V. 29).

Appreciation and devotion to the conservation of Muslims' natural and cultural diversity is also expressed in the *Indonesian Charter for Heritage Conservation*:

> We, the advocates and practitioners for the conservation of Indonesian heritage, praise God Almighty that Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago, is endowed with the diversity and abundance of extraordinary nature and cultures that provide divinely inspired creativity, imagination and vitality. Awareness, concern, and efforts for conservation have begun and need to be strengthened and continued (Indonesia Charter for Heritage Conservation, 2003:1).

Muslims should respect and enjoy racial, social and cultural diversity as part of respecting and appreciating God's creation. In addition, they are encouraged to know 'the other' on an equal basis:

> O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the most honourable of you in the sight of God is the most pious of you… (Qur'an, S. 49: V. 13).

The built heritage of Muslims is a good example of their understanding and respect for both nature and cultural diversity. Although Islam is believed to be a universal religion and way of life by its followers, there is no equivalent in Islamic heritage to concepts such as 'the golden section', 'perfect proportions' or 'international style'. Islamic architectural heritage throughout the world shares many characteristics since it reflects the same *'aqida, shari'a* and Islamic concepts. However, regional differences can be observed, since the architecture of every region respects the nature and the cultural heritage of that region. For example, a Muslim's house is characterized by certain features that reflect values such as privacy, personal hygiene, family values and community cohesion. And yet, a house in Istanbul is immediately distinguishable from a house in Sana'a, Timbuktu or Kuala Lumpur. The characteristics of nature are respected in an Islamic house through its climatic treatment and choice of building materials and techniques. Also, the cultural identity of a place is reflected in the house through its design programme, decorative motifs, architectural elements, and urban features and characteristics.

1.3.4 Art

"God is beautiful and He loves beauty". A *hadith* (Qaradawi, 1985: 95).

The highest degree of Islamic faith is called *ihsan* according to *hadith* (al Nawawi, 1981). The word *ihsan* comes from the root H-S-N, which means good, beautiful and merciful. This indicates the essence of the Islamic concept of beauty that it cannot be separated from morality. Therefore, what is false, ugly, unfair, immoral or destructive cannot be considered art.

The adjective 'Islamic' does not make art sacred. Although Islamic art represents ideas, concepts and values that may be sacred according to the Islamic belief system (*'aqida*), the design, fabric or shape of the art work is not sacred. One of the first actions by Prophet Mohammad was to put an end to idol worshipping. This is in essence the separation of spiritual principles and values from material objects or mortals. Neal Ascherson was surprised to learn this from a Moroccan professor at a conference on Islamic architecture (Ascherson, 1989: 15):

> [The professor stated that] [t]he whole point was that Islamic architecture was not sacred: the mosque was just a place for praying and teaching. Islam came to desacralize the material world and to make the immaterial sacred instead. Islam means that I can pray in a synagogue, cathedral or an aircraft, and for me a mosque is no different to [sic] any other building… 'politics and reactionary movements' were behind the attempt to give the mosque 'a significance it shouldn't have'… If he [the Moroccan professor] was right – which certainly isn't for me to judge – then Muslim architects and artists and everybody concerned with art can fly upwards into the infinite like Gaudy balloons, free to work in any manner or style, freer – even – than those working in Romano-Christian tradition.

1.3.5 Architecture and the built environment

According to the Qur'an and *Sunna,* Muslims should not overemphasize architecture per se, but rather, should put it in the human, social and natural context. It is a dynamic endeavour to strike a balance between numerous qualities and values:

- On the one hand, architecture should help strengthen the ties between individual Muslims (within a family as well as between different members of society regardless of their social or economic standing); on the other hand, it should emphasize the privacy of each individual. Even the members of a family must comply with privacy rules.
- On the one hand, architecture is simply a shelter for protection from the natural elements; on the other hand, it should help to strengthen ties between Muslims and nature. Therefore, courtyard buildings have always been popular for Muslims

since they allow activities to take place in the open air while providing a measure of protection from the elements without disturbing the privacy principle.

- On the one hand, the human scale is an essential factor that defines the ceiling height of an Islamic building; on the other hand, this does not limit the height of external walls and roofs, which is defined instead according to other factors such as the width of the street and visual privacy from neighbours.
- On the one hand, durability of building materials is a functional necessity; on the other hand, permanence (or symbolic eternity) should not be the aim of architecture.
- On the one hand, beauty and dignity should be inherent qualities in any Islamic artistic expression; on the other hand, architecture should not be the cause of pride through exaggerated embellishment.
- On the one hand, the mosque is the first and most important building in any Muslim settlement; on the other hand, it is also a secular building. It is hardly possible to draw the line between religious and secular architecture in terms of style and use since the mosque is also used as a school and community centre, and for other functions.

What makes a settlement 'Islamic' is not its physical components or morphology, but the lifestyle of the society that builds and uses it. According to Hakim,[1] the following principles and behavioural guidelines represent the core of urban decisions in a Muslim settlement. These principles are defined by the Maliki school of thought, which is prevalent in North African cities, and might differ slightly from the *fiqh* of other schools of thought (Hakim, 1986):

- One should exercise one's full rights to his or her property, provided that his/her action does not generate harm to others. Similarly, others should exercise their full rights in what is rightfully theirs, providing that their decision or action does not harm others.
- There should be interdependence of the different members of society, and also the interdependence of all members and elements of the natural environment.
- One is entitled to privacy and dignity, which is expressed in terms of personal clothing and the private domain, and invasion of privacy, even visually, is prohibited.
- Rights of earlier usage or original ownership are respected. This principle is implemented in resolving disputes related to walls of different parties and the location of windows.
- The right to build higher than one's air space, even if it excludes air and sun from others, is, according to the Maliki school, the only exception to the principle of harm to others.
- One should exercise respect for the property of others.
- The right of pre-emption should be respected, i.e. the right of a neighbour or partner to purchase an adjacent property or structure when offered for sale by another neighbour or partner.
- Seven cubits is the minimum width of a public thoroughfare.
- Any public thoroughfare should not be obstructed by temporary or permanent obstructions.
- Access to water should not be barred to others.
- The right to use the exterior yard (*fina'*) belongs to the owner of the house or building that abuts it.
- Activities that generate unpleasant odours and/or noise should not be adjacent to or near mosques.
- Cleanliness should be encouraged, including the interior and exterior yard (*fina'*).
- Assumption of responsibility and a sense of public awareness should be encouraged, such as removing obstacles in public rights-of-way.

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1 Hakim differentiates between 'principles and behavioural guidelines' and 'values and societal guidelines of accepted behaviour'. Such a differentiation is only necessary when examining legal cases and *fatawi*.

- Beauty should lack arrogance.
- Trust, respect and peace among neighbours should be encouraged.
- Defects should be announced and not hidden when selling a property.

1.3.6 Sustainable development and the waqf system

Awareness of the short span of human life is a central concern of Muslim development endeavours. In pre-modern Muslim societies, a rich man who decided to build a school, a mosque or a hospital was aware that his own life was too short to guarantee the sustainability of his charitable deed; endowment (*waqf*) was the guarantee for sustainability. Endowments (*awqaf*) were therefore widespread in all Muslim societies. A person or a group of people who decided to establish an institution to serve the community did so by donating money not only to construct and equip the buildings, but also to set up a revenue-generating investment that guaranteed funds for the administration, maintenance and thus the sustainability of the institution. Most public and charitable institutions in Muslim cities were part of *waqf* arrangements.

Waqf in Muslim societies was also popular due to the Islamic concept of history, according to which once a Muslim dies, he or she is no longer able to do good deeds.

> …when death comes to one of them he says: "My Lord return me, so that I shall do righteousness in that I neglected". No indeed! It is only a word he says, and there behind them is a barrier, until the Day they shall be raised up (Qur'an, Ch. 23: V.99-100).

However, there are three exceptions in which a man's credit for good deeds may increase after his death:

> Once a man is dead his deeds are cut, with three exceptions: a continuous charity *(sadaqa jariaya),* useful knowledge or a pious child who prays for him. A *hadith* by the Prophet according to Al Shawkani (Amin, 1980: 15-16).

A charitable deed sustained by *waqf* is considered by most schools of *fiqh* as 'continuous charity' (*sadaqa jariaya*), which is mentioned in the above *hadith*. A *waqf* that is set up to support a charitable establishment was called *waqf khayri*.

A *waqf* arrangement is treated as a will from a legal point of view. No one may change the will of a deceased person. Similarly, no one may change the conditions and the details of a *waqf* arrangement after the death of its initiator:

> Ordained for you, when one of you nears death, and he leaves behind possessions, that he makes as will to parents and next of kin in a fair way, this is an obligation on the God fearing, so whoever changes the will after hearing it, then the sin is on those who change it. Indeed God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (Qur'an, Ch. 2: V180-181).

Accordingly, even in times of hardships, such as wars and droughts, no one was authorized to access money, equipment or estates that were part of a *waqf* arrangement. The judge was responsible for overseeing that *waqf* was administered appropriately and protected.

Sustainability of non-charitable buildings was also guaranteed by *waqf*. Private endowment (*waqf ahli*) was a way of guaranteeing the sustainability of development in the Muslim built environment. Wealthy Muslims who wished to guarantee the sustainability of the method of managing their wealth bound it into a *waqf ahli* arrangement. Accordingly, their offspring could receive the revenue of the assigned assets but could not liquidate these assets. Wealthy individuals opted for this choice for one or both of the following two reasons: first, to protect their assets from irresponsible management by their children after them, as this would have resulted in loss of the family wealth and influence in society; and second, to

protect their assets from transgression by tyrant rulers. Since assets that are part of a *waqf* arrangement are considered from a *fiqh* point of view to be owned by God and not by individuals, a tyrant would hesitate before appropriating God's properties.

As a result of *waqf khayri* and *waqf ahli,* sustainability was guaranteed in Muslims' built environments for both public and private buildings and open spaces. In most Muslim settlements, *waqf* was a formidable mechanism for sustainable development.

1.4 A comparative study of the state of conservation of four mosques in Cairo

1.4.1 'Amr Mosque

'Amr Mosque, the first mosque to be built in Egypt and Africa (Figure 1.3), was founded in 641 by 'Amr Ibn al 'As. It was the seat of government, a centre for the preaching and teaching of Islam, and an urban centre for the newly established settlement of al-Fustat.

▲ **Figure 1.3**
Amr Mosque.
Photo by Creswell, © Rare Books and Special Collections Library, the American University in Cairo

The mosque was built in the form of a courtyard surrounded by a shaded area of columns made of palmtree trunks, on the *qibla* side, and by a mudbrick wall on the three other sides. It was a freestanding building surrounded by streets from four directions, with six doors but lacking a *mihrab* or minaret.

In the 10th century, Muqaddasi mentioned the mosque and described glass mosaics that decorated the walls of the mosque as well as four minarets (Behrens-Abouseif, 1989). In 1047, shortly after al-Hakim's era, Nasir-i-Khusrau mentioned the mosque in his *Safar nameh:*

> … the *qibla* wall was entirely panelled with white marble on which was engraved, in beautiful characters, the entire text of Qur'an. Every night more than one hundred lamps were lit. The *Qadil Qudah* [chief judge] held his court in the mosque (*Safar nameh,* quoted by Creswell, 1960: 1, 173).

It is obvious from these descriptions that the mosque did not maintain its original modest character. Furthermore, its area was enlarged by several additions to 109.82 m x 86.70 m. The mosque now had a courtyard, a *mihrab,* a *mayda'a,* and four minarets. Its ceiling was elevated to a higher level than its initial three-metre height (Creswell, 1960).

At the time of al-Hakim, the mosque was in a very good state of conservation and served the community. Al-Hakim carried out massive construction and decoration works in the mosque (Creswell, 1960). From al-Hakim's time until al 'Adid's (the last Fatimid caliph), the mosque underwent a series of additions, decorations and renovations. The first misfortune to affect the mosque was in 1141, when one of its corners was struck by lightning. The worst crisis in the mosque's history was when Shawar, the *wazir* of al-'Adid, set fire to al-Fustat to prevent the Crusades from capturing it (Maqrizi, 1853). Not only was the mosque physically damaged, but due to the destruction of al-Fustat, it went from being a religious urban centre to a ruin in the middle of nowhere.

With the exception of Salah al-Din's restorations, the mosque was neglected throughout the whole Ayyubid period:

> Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi, who visited Egypt between 1241 and 1259 AD, gives us a vivid picture of the state of the mosque: 'then I entered and saw a great mosque, of ancient structure, without decoration, or any pomp in the mats which ran round part of the walls and were spread on the floor. And observed that the people, men and women alike, made a passage of it... passing through from door to door to make short cuts… and the roofs and the corners and walls were covered with cobwebs; and children played about the court; and the walls were written upon with charcoal and red paint in various ugly scrawls written by the common people' (Maqrizi, 1853: 1,341).

The conservation history of the mosque during the Bahri Mamluk period was a desperate effort to save a great monument from destruction. The three conservation operations in this period were concerned with saving or rebuilding it. First, Baybars al-Bunduqdari carried out great restoration works in 1267, after the mosque's condition had become ruinous. Second, 'Izz al-Din al-Afram, under Sultan Qalawun, carried out some repairs. Third, the restoration of Amir Salar sought to repair the damage caused by the great earthquake of 1303 (Maqrizi, 1853).

According to Maqrizi, after the death of Sultan Barquq in 1399, the mosque was once more in ruinous condition, its arches were out of the perpendicular, and it was on the point of collapsing. Burhan al-Din, Chief of the merchants, took up the matter and resolved to restore the mosque (Maqrizi, 1853).

Burhan's restoration as well as the two restoration works by Sultan Qayetbay in 1471 and 1474 all told the same story: the mosque fell into ruin until it was restored, and then fell back into ruin a few years later (Creswell, 1960).

An account of Murad Bey's restoration of the mosque in 1798 by the contemporary historian al-Jabarti discusses the state of the mosque at the time of the French occupation of Egypt:

> … the mosque had fallen into disuse and stood amongst mounds and dust-heaps, the nearest houses being some distance away. Moreover, the inhabitants of the latter did not use it, but went instead to small mosques in the immediate neighbourhood… the building was in a ruinous state, the roof and columns having fallen, and the right-hand half (i.e. the south west *riwaq*) being out of the perpendicular, had fallen likewise (Jabarti, 1904: III, 170).

The mosque's layout at the beginning of the 19th century was approximately as it was at the time of al-Hakim. Only two minarets existed, and the whole building had badly deteriorated.

The only account of the mosque not being in a ruinous state is that of Maillet in *Description de l'Égypte* (Jomard 1809-1822). Creswell citing Maillet states that he spoke of the mosque of 'Amr as being well kept and mentions columns of various kinds of marble and granite. (Creswell, 1960: I,176).

One striking event influenced the mosque's history more than any other – the setting on fire of al-Fustat in 1168 by the Wazir Shawar. It is interesting to note that it was the damage to the surrounding urban fabric rather than to the building itself that brought the remarkable role of the mosque to an end. None of the conservation works after the great fire succeeded in revitalizing the function of the mosque. In spite of its repeatedly falling into ruin, it attracted the efforts of many notable persons to conserve it. This was probably due to its great symbolic value and to the precious memories it conveyed. None of the conservation works that the mosque underwent seemed to have consciously built a relationship with the original design or fabric. Out of nine conservation interventions, only al-Afram's work was accompanied by an endowing *waqf*. This might explain why it was always difficult to maintain the building, since *waqf* money was the financial source for a building's upkeep as well as for legally binding administrative arrangements to manage it.

1.4.2 Ibn Tulun Mosque

Ibn Tulun Mosque (Figure 1.4) was built as the Friday mosque of al-Qata'i', which was the third Arab settlement in the Cairo area after al-Fustat and al-'Askar. The mosque was built by the 'Abbasid Governor of Egypt al-'Abbas Ahmad Ibn Tulun in 876–879. Stories were told about the money used for constructing the mosque, and the reasons for its architectural design:

> …Ibn Tulun said to people who had criticized, amongst other things, the absence of columns: '… As far as the columns are concerned, I have executed the work with lawful money, namely with the treasure which I have found, and I will not mingle it with anything else: columns can only be got from chapels and churches and I wish to purify the mosque from that'… (Qalqashandi, quoted by Creswell, 1960: I, 333).

▼ **Figure 1.4**
Ibn Tulun Mosque
Photo by Creswell, © Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo

The mosque consisted of four *riwaqs* (arcades) surrounding a 92m^2 courtyard with a fountain in its centre. The *qibla riwaq* was five aisles deep, whereas the other three *riwaqs* were two aisles deep. The minaret, which was heavily influenced by the spiral minaret of Samarra' Mosque, was located outside the mosque on the northwest side.

No major changes occurred to the mosque from its construction until the time of al-Hakim. It did not undergo major changes throughout the whole Fatimid period. It did not spark the enthusiasm of any caliph to embellish it with rich decorations, or add a minaret or a *riwaq*. The location of al-Qata'i, the immediate context of the mosque, affected the conservation state of the mosque. Under the Fatimids, al-Qata'i' became less attractive to live in, and gradually fell into ruins. The mosque slowly lost its *raison d'être* as a religious and urban centre. This situation was accelerated by the great drought of 1066.

> …in the days of al-Mustansir, and when al-Qatat'i' and al-'Askar fell into ruin and nobody lived there, all that surrounded the mosque was in ruin… time passed and the mosque deteriorated and the greater part of it became ruined. Later the Maghrebiyin [men from Morocco] stopped there with their camels and their baggage when they passed through Egypt on their pilgrimage (Maqrizi, 1853, II, 268).

There was no mention of the mosque in the Ayyubid period either by Maqrizi or by Creswell. We know that the building was in decline from stories dating back to the Fatimid period, and that towards the end of the Fatimid rule, the mosque lost its function. The accounts of the mosque in the Bahri Mamluk period speak of a neglected and deserted building. The mosque probably stayed in a ruinous state throughout the whole Ayyubid period.

> …Ibn Duqmaq says that in 696 AH/1296 AD, when Husam al-Din Lajin al-Mansuri killed Sultan al-Ashraf, he fled and hid in the mosque for a year. Maqrizi says that the mosque 'was then entirely abandoned. At night only a single lamp was lit and no one ascended the minaret to make the call to prayers. A man only stood at the door to make *adhan*.' Ibn Duqmq continues: 'He vowed that if God favoured him and gave him power and wealth he would restore this mosque and endow it with a large *waqf*. When God gave him the throne he kept his vow and restored it, and he entrusted the work to the Amir 'Alam al-Din Sanjar… and he restored it extremely well, and installed there the teaching of law, *Hadith,* the Qur'an and medicine and other things… and its condition has remained until now (i.e. before 1399 AD) in the best possible state'. Maqrizi says that 'he removed the debris, had it paved and whitewashed, and organized courses for *Fiqh* for the four rites and a course for the interpretation of the Qur'an, another for *Hadith,* another for medicine… appointed an *Imam, Mu'adhdhins* and supervisors'. He gives the cost of the restoration and the endowments as 20,000 dinars (say £10,000) (Ibn Duqmaq, quoted by Creswell, 1960: I, 337).

Lajin's restoration is an extraordinary event in the history of Ibn Tulun Mosque. It indicates two important points: the mosque was deserted and in such a ruinous state that it was possible for a 'sultan's killer' to hide in it for a year without being noticed; and this restoration gave great momentum to the mosque and its survival for a long time afterwards.

It is likely that it was Lajin's restoration in the Bahri Mamluk period that kept the mosque active until Qaytbay's restoration in 1468–82. Creswell assumes that it was in regular use at the end of 15th century, but it was probably gradually deteriorating.

According to 'Ali Pasha Mubarak, the mosque was turned into a workshop for the manufacture of woollen girdles and similar items in the time of Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, 1773–5 (Mubarak, 1889). The drawings of the mosque some 30 years later in the *Description de l'Égypte* suggest that no major architectural changes had occurred to the building.

There is no single indication that the mosque was of any significance during the entire Ottoman period. It is doubtful that it was used as a mosque at all, since the only accounts of the building mention it as a workshop, or in a ruinous state (Mubarak, 1889).

From the beginning of the Fatimid period, the immediate surroundings of Ibn Tulun Mosque began to deteriorate. Travellers and historians often referred to the deserted ruinous settlement al-Qata'i'. The mosque was therefore losing its role and function. The four conservation interventions by different Fatimid Caliphs did not manage to save the building from continuous, steady deterioration. Unlike the 'Amr Mosque, Ibn Tulun Mosque does not stand for great religious symbols or memories. On the contrary, the source of the money with which Ibn Tulun constructed the mosque had always been the object of suspicion for Cairenes, which might have added to the cause of the mosque's deterioration.

> Ibn Duqmaq says that when the mosque was finished, people refused to go there to pray, alleging that it had been built with money of which they did not know the source, so Ibn Tulun one Friday ascended the *minbar* and assured them that he had built the mosque by means of a treasure which he had found on the mountain. The people, thus reassured, came in crowds on Fridays… The truth probably is that Ibn Tulun was in possession of sufficient funds, because in 259 H (873) he refused to send the tribute to the Khalif at Baghdad, and that he invented the story of the treasure to disguise the fact (Creswell, 1960: I, 336).

Lajin's restoration, shortly after 1296 AD, not only saved the building, but also restored its function and role in the city of Cairo. The generous *waqf* that Lajin allocated to the mosque allowed it to keep functioning until the middle of the 15th century AD. Subsequently, the mosque underwent a process of deterioration similar to the one before Lajin's restoration. According to Creswell and other historians, all conservation interventions carried out in the mosque have respected its original design.

1.4.3 al-Azhar Mosque

The mosque of al-Azhar (Figure 1.5) was built by Jawhar al-Siqilli as the central congregation mosque of the newly founded princely city of al-Qahira. The first Friday prayer took place on 22 June 972 (Maqrizi, 1853).

◀ **Figure 1.5**
Minarets of al-Azhar Mosque in the foreground.
Photo by Creswell, © Rare Books and Special Collections Library, the American University in Cairo

According to Creswell's reconstruction, the mosque consisted of three *riwaqs* around a courtyard. The *riwaq al-qibla* was five aisles deep, cut through the centre by a transept. There was no *riwaq* on the northwestern side, but it had two *riwaqs* on the other two sides. It had a small minaret above the main entrance, built of brick.

Since its construction and up to al-Hakim's era, the mosque gathered momentum as an important centre for teaching *shi'a* doctrine. Architecturally, the building was enriched with more decorations, fixtures and furniture, and its roof was raised by a cubit (Creswell, 1960).

When al-Hakim gave the Friday *khutba* in the four mosques, each one in turn, he actually reduced the status of al-Azhar Mosque from being the main congregation mosque of Cairo to merely one among four equally important mosques. Nevertheless, the mosque continued to flourish under all the Fatimid caliphs after al-Hakim. Every subsequent caliph presented the mosque with some elaborate decoration and added a new part to the building or allocated a generous sum of money towards it through a *waqf*.

According to al-Maqrizi, after Salah al-Din's ascendance to power, the mosque was abandoned during the whole Ayyubid period:

> … and the *khutba* was discontinued from al-Azhar mosque when sultan Salah al-Din came to power. As he assigned Sadr al-Din 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Derbas as Qadi al-Qudah, who implemented the Shafi'i (the school of thought to which he belonged) rule, which does not allow more than one Friday prayer to be held in the same built area. So he stopped the *khutba* in al-Azhar and approved the *khutba* in the mosque of al-Hakim because it is bigger in area. Since then al-Azhar was not used for more than one hundred years… (Maqrizi, 1853: II, 275-6).

In 1266-7, the works of Sultan Baybars al-Bunduqdari brought al-Azhar back to life as a major congregation mosque in Cairo. Not very long after, the mosque was destroyed by the great earthquake of 1303. Amir Salar's restoration in the same year brought the building back to its previous form and function. Four different conservation interventions thereafter secured al-Azhar's ever-rising position as a major congregation mosque in Cairo throughout the Bahri Mamluk period (Maqrizi, 1853).

At least ten different conservation interventions were executed during the Circassian Mamluk period. They contributed to embellishing and enlarging the mosque and securing its financial efficiency by allocating endowments for its maintenance and management as well as its religious, charitable and teaching functions.

The important position of the mosque continued to rise throughout the Ottoman period. It became the greatest university of Egypt, if not of the whole Muslim world, with students and scholars from all over the world. It also became the 'house of the people', and indeed the most important congregation mosque of Cairo. The remarkable works of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda show the great interest in the mosque at the time:

> … He built *(ansha'a)* and enlarged the *maqsura* of the mosque of al-Azhar to the extent of one half in length and breadth including fifty marble columns carrying as many arched *(maqsura),* lofty and spacious bays *(ba'ikas)* of cut stone. He roofed the upper part with fine wood, He also built in it a new *mihrab* and a pulpit *(minbar)*. And he made *(ansha'a)* for it [sic] a great door in the direction of Haret Kitama and built in the upper part of it a school *(maktab)* with arches *(qanatir ma'quda)* resting on marble columns, for the teaching of the Qur'an to Muhammadan orphans, having with it a spacious court, a large cistern and a place for drinking *(siqaya)* for a dome having under it a cenotaph *(tarkiba)* of marble of wonderful workmanship.

And there was likewise a *riwaq* for students from Upper Egypt, devoted to the quest of knowledge, approached from that court by a stair leading up to the *riwaq* and fitted with conveniences and facilities, a kitchen, small rooms and libraries. He built a minaret at the side of this door. He also built another door, in the direction of the kitchen of the mosque, with a minaret above it.

He built up *(bana)* the Taybarsiya madrasah and reconstructed it *(anasa'aha)* entirely anew, putting it, with the Aqbughawiya madrasah opposite it, within the great doorway which he built outside both in the direction of the vaulted passage leading to *(qabw muwassel ila)* the *Mashhad* of Husayn and the Khan al-Sharakisa. This great doorway consists of two great doors, each having two leaves, with a minaret to the right of one passing outside the Tybarsiay. There was a *mida'a* for ablutions for which he made a water wheel *(saqiya)* in order to bring water to it, and within the *mida'a'* was a stair leading up to the minaret and the riwaq of the people of Baghdad and India. This doorway and the Taybarsiya madrasah inside it, the Aqbughawiya *madrasa* and the *riwaqs*, turned out to be one of the finest in size and dignity and nobility.

…On *11 Jumada I,* 1213 (21 Oct. 1798), the French, in order to suppress a serious riot, bombarded Cairo by means of batteries in the citadel and on the mounds which extend along the east side of the city; al-Jabarti says that their fire was directed on al-Azhar and its neighbourhood (Creswell, 1960: I, 41).

This event shows that, by the time of the Napoleonic Expedition, al-Azhar was not only an important university, but also a civic centre and national symbol. Towards the end of the 18th century, the building grew in area and was composed of different architectural elements that represented most styles of Cairo's architecture since the Fatimids.

The conservation history of this mosque is a remarkable success story. Obviously, al-Hakim's decision to pray in the four mosques meant that al-Azhar would no longer be the main congregation mosque of al-Qahira. However, this situation did not continue for very long. Two factors may have contributed to bringing al-Azhar back to its former position in the heart of the public life of Cairo. The first is its symbolic weight as an important university, and the second, its setting and urban value for the city. Throughout the Ayyubid period, the mosque was associated with the *shi'a* doctrine, and was therefore neglected and left to deteriorate. At the same time, its urban value grew very quickly with the opening up of al-Qahira for the general public and the concentration of urban, political and economic elements in the formerly walled princely al-Qahira. As soon as Baybars restored the mosque in 1266/7 AD, it acquired a new symbolic value associated this time with *sunni* teaching. Since then, it became not only the university of *sunni* teaching in Cairo, but also one of the most important Islamic universities in the world. By the time of the Napoleonic Expedition, it was a great institution, and much larger in area than its original plan due to 20 conservation interventions since Salah al-Din's ban of Friday prayers in the building. Ibrahim Bey's restoration between 1778 and 1798 AD, financed with illegal money, shows that the suspicion that gave the Ibn Tulun Mosque a bad name could do no harm to the great name of al-Azhar Mosque:

Ibahim Bey, without paying for it, took a house alongside the mosque, near the Gawhariya *madrasa,* added a piece of land to it, and constructed the *riwaq* al-Sharqawiya […] using stone and a great column from the mosque of Baybars on the road to 'Abbasiya (Creswell, 1960: I, 40).

The additions and alterations did not follow any easily traceable geometric or stylistic relationship with the original plan of the mosque.

1.4.4 al-Hakim Mosque

The mosque of al-Hakim (Figure 1.6) was founded by al-'Aziz Billah in 990, and located just outside Bab al-Futuh, north of al-Qahira. When Badr al-Jamali rebuilt the city walls, the mosque was included inside the walls (Maqrizi, 1853).
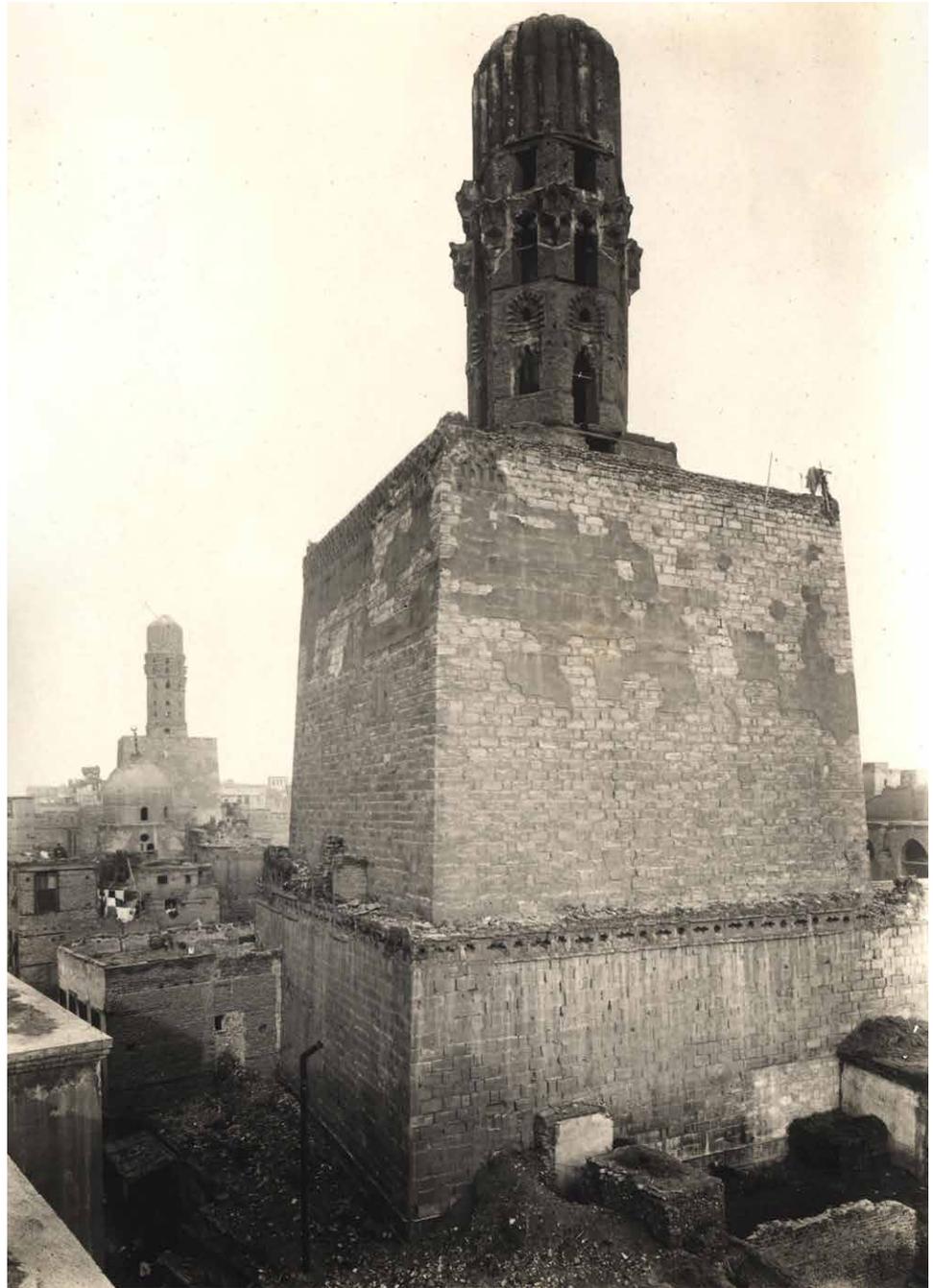
The plan of the building was a rectangle measuring 113.01 m x 120.78 m. It consisted of four *riwaqs,* the biggest being the *qibla riwaq* (5 aisles deep), with a transept running from the courtyard to the *mihrab*. The northwest *riwaq* was two aisles deep, whereas the other two were three aisles deep. Three domes were built on the *qibla* side of the *qibla riwaq*. A monumental entrance was located on the main façade, and 12 other lesser entrances were distributed over the three other façades (Creswell, 1960).

No major architectural changes were made to the building throughout the whole Fatimid period. Salah al-Din's choice of al-Hakim Mosque as the only congregation mosque of Cairo gave the mosque more importance than it had previously acquired, even in the time of its founder. Except for a fountain and a *ziyada,* no changes were made to the mosque since its completion by al-Hakim.

After the great earthquake of 1303, al-Hakim mosque was restored by Amir Baybars al-Jashenkir, but no major changes were made to it after that. It seemed to be losing ground as an important congregation mosque of Cairo.

> … the mosque was restored and the whole of it paved during the time of al-Nasir Hasan, son of Muhammed Ibn Qalawun, during his second reign in 760 (1359)… The mosque at present is in a dilapidated condition, for a long time there has not been one of its roofs from which pieces have not been falling. The *mida'a* of this mosque was small and situated near the present one, between it and the door of the mosque. Its site is now a store with a floor above it…The present *mida'a* was made later and the *fisqiya* [fountain] in it established by Ibn Kausun [in] about 780 (1378/9). The latter whitewashed the two minarets of the mosque. Then a merchant reconstructed the *ma'dhana* [minaret] above the door next to the *minbar,* it was finished *Gumada* II, 827 (May 1424). An opening was made in the roof of the mosque, so that the *mu'adhdhin* [callers to prayers] could descend from the roof to the *dikka* [elevated platform in the sanctuary], when they made the *takbir* [say: Allah Akbar] behind the imam (Sakhawi, quoted by Creswell, 1960: I, 66-7).

Creswell states that, according to al-Sakhawi, the last year in which the mosque was known to have been in use was 1452. It seems that the mosque remained in a ruinous state from the mid-15th century until the Ottoman period. The first mention of the mosque after this period appears in 'Ali Mubarak's accounts, which describe it as a ruin that the French used as a fortress, and its minarets as watch towers (Mubarak, 1889). A drawing of the mosque's courtyard published in the *Description de l'Égypte* shows the mosque in a ruinous state (Jomard, 1809-1822). With the exception of a minaret added to the *qibla riwaq* in 1424, no major architectural changes were made to the building since the time of al-Hakim.

The elevation of status that al-Hakim gave to his mosque was prolonged by Salah al-Din's decision to establish the only Friday prayer in Cairo in al-Hakim Mosque. Like the other three mosques, al-Hakim Mosque was restored after the earthquake of 1303; however, it never fully recovered its functionality and importance after that. Two reasons might have caused the sudden decline in the mosque's function and role: the terrible tyranny and mental illness of al-Hakim and likely, because it was located very close to al-Azhar Mosque. Due to the fairly short distance between the two great mosques, there was only room for one mosque of such a large scale to survive, which naturally would have been al-Azhar. The conservation interventions that were made to al-Hakim Mosque did not change much of its original design. Even al-Hakim's decision to change the shape of the minarets made by his father, al-'Aziz Billah, was carried out in a unique way; he hid the original minarets by building two surrounding cubes that projected out of the façade. This highlights how much care was given to the shape of a new addition in relation to the original design:

> The possibility cannot be excluded that he disliked the minarets built by his father and therefore decided to hide them behind the cubes…. The fact that the original minarets were only hidden, not pulled down, may have been the architect's device to preserve these two masterpieces of stonework, which are unparalleled in Cairo's minaret architecture (Behrens-Abouseif, 1989: 64).

The many changes to the conservation states of all four mosques suggest that the fabric of a mosque was not sacred in its own right. A mosque, like any other building in the city, was conserved according to its values and significance.

The urban setting of a building was the most important factor in its conservation. For example, because of the urban setting of al-Azhar Mosque, there was always a positive inclination towards its conservation. Similarly, after their urban settings of al-Fustat and al-Qata'i' were ruined, the 'Amr and Ibn Tulun Mosques were badly neglected. While al-Hakim

Mosque enjoyed a better urban setting than both 'Amr and Ibn Tulun Mosques, its setting remained less privileged than that of al-Azhar Mosque.

A building constructed with a very strong architectural form and built to last continued to keep its original architectural form during its history. There is a certain power in the architectural forms of the mosques of both Ibn Tulun and al-Hakim, as opposed to those of 'Amr and al-Azhar. Remarkable architectural features and their overall integrity guaranteed the survival of both Ibn Tulun and al-Hakim Mosques. Such features included the forms of the minarets, the relationship between solids and voids, the architectural and decorative elements, and the integrity of each of the two buildings.

Lajin's *waqf* for the Ibn Tulun Mosque revived the functions of the building for a long time. The revived functions attracted more financial contributions, which maintained these functions in a virtuous circle. The financial-functional circle continued for over a century. The same is true for other interventions in the four mosques. Waqf secured financial resources, administrative structures and management of housekeeping, repairs and restorations. Efficiently managed and functioning buildings attracted more *waqf* allocations, which guaranteed their conservation.

The symbolic value of a building was conducive to creating a positive attitude towards its conservation. Similarly, a building that flourished due to its urban, architectural and/or functional qualities created great associative symbols and meanings, and thus also created positive attitudes towards its conservation. From the first day of its construction, 'Amr Mosque represented a unique symbol and the commemoration of significant historic events and persons. This likely compensated for the weakness of its architectural characteristics and urban setting in creating positive attitudes towards its conservation. However, al-Azhar Mosque was associated with negative symbols since it was the first *shi'i* institution in a *sunni* country. But due to its urban setting in the heart of the city, it housed great events, which became symbols of great significance in the history of Cairo. Many of these events could have occurred in any large assembly place in the heart of Cairo, but with time it became a tradition to use al-Azhar. By the time of the Napoleonic Expedition, al-Azhar was already an established national symbol and thus the centre of resistance movements for Muslim and Christian Egyptians. In the case of al-Hakim and Ibn Tulun, symbols and memories always worked against their conservation since the founders of both mosques failed to leave positive impressions in the collective memory of Cairo.

In sum, the conservation of a historic building was motivated by its urban setting, architectural and aesthetic qualities, financial and functional efficiency, and symbolic values. Conservation was carried out by non-governmental efforts through the *waqf* system.

Finally, a historic building was not seen as different from other components of the built environment. The conservation of the built heritage was sustained by the appraisal and appreciation of its high values and great significance. It was not protected by legislation nor was it part of an elitist cultural interest. Although conservation interventions were carried out by sultans, *amirs* and wealthy individuals, they used the same reference system as the rest of the population.

2 | Colonialism and modernization (1798-1952)

2.1 Political and socio-cultural context

2.1.1 Colonization and deception

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt with an army of 36,000 men transported on 400 ships. More than 500 civilians accompanied the army. Around 150 of them formed what Edward Said called a 'full-scale academy' of French savants who constituted the *Commission des Sciences et Arts*. Their painstaking efforts during their stay in Egypt resulted in the publication of the monumental *Description de l'Égypte*, which appeared first in 1809 and continued until the final volume appeared in 1829, consisting of 20 volumes of text, drawings and maps on the environment, heritage, culture, society and economy of Egypt (Moreh, 1993).

Like all previous foreign rulers of Egypt, once his soldiers captured the country, Napoleon used Islam to legitimize his rule and to secure the cooperation, if not the support, of the Egyptians. He relied on the advice of a team of Orientalists who accompanied him in his campaign. Furthermore, he brought with him to Egypt the first Arabic press that the country had ever known. Napoleon issued a proclamation directed to the Egyptian people written in Arabic and starting with the Islamic traditional opening:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He has no son, nor has He an associate in His Dominion.
>
> On behalf of the French Republic, which is based upon the foundation of liberty and equality, General Bonaparte, Commander-in-Chief of the French armies makes known to all the Egyptian people that …
> …
> O ye Egyptians, they may say to you that I have not made an expedition hither for any other object than that of abolishing your religion; but this is a pure falsehood and you must not give credit to it, but tell the slanderers that I have not come to you except for the purpose of restoring your rights from the hands of the oppressors and that I more than the Mamluks, serve God – may He be praised and exalted – and revere His Prophet Muhammad and the glorious Qur'an.
> …
> O ye Qadis, Shaykhs and Imams; O ye Shurbajiyya and men of circumstance, tell your nation that the French are also faithful Muslims, and in confirmation of this they invaded Rome and destroyed there the Papal See, which was always exhorting the Christians to make war with Islam. And then they went to the island of Malta, from where they expelled the Knights, who claimed that God the Exalted required them to fight the Muslims. Furthermore, the French at all times have declared themselves to be the most sincere friends of the Ottoman Sultan and the enemy of his enemies, may God ever perpetuate his empire!... (Moreh, 1993: 24-26).

Napoleon used Islam as a reference system in his proclamation and announced that he was obeying Allah, following the Qur'an and serving the Ottoman sultan and caliph. He then established an administrative system to act as an intermediary between the generals of the French army and the Egyptian population. It consisted of a council (*diwan*) of Egyptian notables and Islamic scholars in Cairo, and a *diwan* in each of the 22 governorates of Egypt at the time. The head of the central *diwan* who presided over the whole system was Shaykh al-Sharqawi, a prominent scholar (*'alem*) from al-Azhar.

However, it did not take long for the members of the *diwans* and the rest of the population to realize that all this was a façade. Egyptian daily encounters with the French alerted them that these foreigners were totally ignorant of Arabic and Islam, and that they had no respect whatsoever for the Qur'an, the Prophet or the Ottoman sultan. It was not long before the Ottoman sultan announced an Islamic war (*jihad*) against the French and instructed the Egyptians to resist the occupation.

Although the French occupation did not last more than three years, its consequences lasted for more than a century. It was the first Egyptian encounter with the modern West. The humiliating defeat by the French and their alluring technology, science and administrative systems convinced the Egyptians that a qualitative change was required in order for their country to secure a place in the modern world. Both the Egyptian rulers and the intelligentsia agreed that modernization was necessary, but they were divided on its essence and on how to modernize the country. One extreme opinion was to follow the European example in every walk of life including cultural issues, morality and value systems. The other extreme was to revive Islamic ideals as practised by the Prophet and his companions, and to build on the Muslims' achievements in their golden age when they excelled in the sciences, the arts, economics and all aspects of life. Between these two extremes, there were compromises that sought to adopt European administrative systems, technology, applied sciences and arts while maintaining the Islamic criteria as the moral framework and searching for a genuine Egyptian national identity. However, this was an exclusively elitist debate. The majority of Egyptians were neither interested nor even aware of the question of modernization: ordinary Egyptians carried on with their lives as usual. Their way of life and their values continued to be based on traditions that either originated in Islam or were sanctioned by it.

2.1.2 Modernization according to the European model

In 1805, Muhammad 'Ali emerged from the aftermath of the French occupation as the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt. Later on, he established his own dynasty that remained formally the agent of the Ottoman Empire but was practically independent. Muhammad 'Ali decided to modernize the administration, technology, military and education of the country according to the European example. He established modern institutions, infrastructures, a centralized bureaucracy, and most importantly, a modern education system with the help of European advisers, many of whom had been members of Napoleon's army a few years earlier.

> About that time [1844], the viceroy decided to send a large student mission to Paris, one which included his sons, Husayn and Abd al-Halim, and two of his grandsons, Ahmed and Ismail, the future Khedive… Those who went on this mission were destined for fame as future leaders: of the eighty members of the group whose biographies are recorded by Omar Tusson, fifty-four became Beys and Pachas. Friendships and personal contacts were made that lasted a lifetime… (Hunter, 1985: 126-7).

However, Muhammad 'Ali remained faithful to Islam as a reference system for the modern state that he was striving to construct. He assigned Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, a scholar from al-Azhar, to travel with the students' mission to Paris as a religious instructor in order to ensure that his chosen future leaders of the country observed the instructions of Islam. 'Ali did not lose sight of the fact that the legitimacy of his rule was based on Islam by authorization from the sultan and caliph in Istanbul. Thus, he looked to Istanbul for inspiration in art and architecture. All the buildings he built in Cairo, including his mosque at the citadel and the two *sabils* (public drinking water fountains) commemorating his sons, were built according to the imperial style of Istanbul (Figure 2.1).

It was in the era of Khedive Isma'il (1863–79) that Egyptian modernization efforts, following the European example, extended beyond sciences, technology and administrative systems to include cultural and social issues such as urbanism, architecture, art, dress code and modes of socialization. The opening of the Suez Canal was the most elaborate expression of Isma'il's passion to 'Europeanize' Egypt:

> He [Khedive Isma'il] was planning the biggest party the world had ever seen. For the opening of the Suez Canal he was determined that his capital should be a showcase, a seat fit for royal European guests. It required open squares adorned with heroic statues, and gas-lit avenues lined with palaces and villas. It needed parks with grottoes and Chinese pavilions and pleasure lakes rippled by pedal boats. It simply had to have a comedy theatre and an opera house, a museum and library, and learned institutes like the Khedivial Geographic Society.
> …
> The canal's inauguration in 1869 was a triumph for Ismail. Europe's nobs and nabobs migrated to Cairo en masse for the occasion. The Crown Prince of Prussia, Prince Louise of Hesse, Henry of the Netherlands and a trail of other luminaries trundled through the new streets in a flotilla of sumptuous landaus. The Khedive, being a great ladies' man, was conspicuously attentive to Empress Eugenie of France. The residential and guest palaces, the cast-iron bridge over the Nile flanked by bronze lions, the Opera House and landscaped parks were in place (Rodenbeck, 1998: 167-8).

The Khedive's character and aspirations were influenced by his French education and his life as a young man in Paris. His friends from the Paris years, such as 'Ali Mubarak and Bughus Nubar, were the intellectuals, technocrats and bureaucrats who made it possible for him to pursue his ambitions. Isma'il's efforts resulted in burdening Egypt with debts to European banks. The financial difficulties that Isma'il faced later led to his dethronement and were used by the British in 1882 to justify their invasion and occupation of the country. Nevertheless, Isma'il's plans were not all superficial. He provided Egypt with an extensive network of irrigation canals and 5,000 modern schools. He also abolished slavery among other genuine reforms.

The process of modernizing Egypt according to the European model, initiated by Muhammad 'Ali and escalated by his grandson Isma'il, gathered momentum and produced successive generations of Egyptians who were educated in modern schools instead of traditional Islamic *madrasas* and al-Azhar. They adopted Western cultural and social values, and created a sub-culture of their own. Together with the growing European community in the country, they gave Cairo and Alexandria a cosmopolitan character. No wonder, then, that the many years of British occupation (1882-1954) did not produce major changes as far as cultural and social trends were concerned. Europeanization had already been underway since the 1840s. Thus, Parisian-style wide boulevards and European-style buildings constructed in Cairo between the mid-19th century and the mid-20th century were not colonial per se (Fig. 2.2):

> The number of Europeans actually resident in Egypt grew steadily throughout the nineteenth century. In technical fields, Egypt had to depend on such men ever since the reign of Mohammed 'Ali, but during Ismail's time even more technicians were recruited from the West, and the country was thrown wide open to Western influence in non-technical areas as well. In 1878, there were 68 653 Europeans living in Egypt. By 1882 this number had increased to 90 886, and it soared to 112 526 in 1897. Since these foreigners were concentrated in the large cities and for the most part held high positions, their influence was out of all proportion to their number. By the turn of the century knowledge of one or more European language had become essential to every 'educated' Egyptian (Crabbs, 1984: 206).

▲ **Figure 2.2**
European architectural styles
in downtown Cairo

In 1879, Khedive Isma'il was dethroned and succeeded by his son Tawfiq. In the early years of his rule, the new Khedive faced the first revolt by Egyptians, led by Ahmed 'Orabi against the rule of the country by non-Egyptians. A new slogan began gathering momentum over the years, and gave birth to the Egyptian National Movement: 'Egypt for Egyptians' (*Masr lil-Masriyyeen*). It is ironic that the very process of modernization and forming a modern nation state by a non-Egyptian ruling elite gave birth to Egyptian

nationalism and consequently challenged the legitimacy of this same ruling elite. The dynasty of Mohammad 'Ali ruled Egypt by mandate from the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul, who was also the caliph of all Muslims. But since Islam was no longer the framework of the state as a consequence of the modernization/Westernization process, it no longer made sense that the country was ruled by non-Egyptians. The situation was aggravated over the years by the attitude of the ruling elite, who claimed the superiority of their Turkish race and culture. They looked down upon Egyptians with great snobbery. They used adjectives like Egyptian, *fellah* or *balady* (in reference to the culture and mannerisms of *ibn al-balad*) to indicate low origin, ignorance and lack of civility.

2.1.3 Questions of identity, culture and style

Post-Napoleon Cairo witnessed a new phenomenon in its long history of architecture and visual arts. Style became a conscious choice as a political, cultural or social statement by an individual or a group of people. Sometimes, however, it was simply a question of personal taste and preference. Both the rulers and the intelligentsia practised the new game of consciously choosing one's own style. For example, Tawfiq al-Hakim, a prominent intellectual and writer, chose to cover his head with the French beret. This indicated his rejection of the fez, a symbol of loyalty to the Ottomans. Different choices were made by other prominent intellectuals, such as Mustafa Lutfy al-Manfaluty who wore a turban in reference to his religious education at al-Azhar and his choice of Islam to express his identity and political tendencies (Figure 2.3).

▲ **Figure 2.3**
Statue of Tal'at Harb, one of the pioneers of the Egyptian Nationalist Movement, wearing the European suit and the fez

Similar observations could be made on other aspects of cultural and social life in Cairo and the main cities and towns of Egypt, such as the style of furniture, dress code, cuisine and eating manners, as well as education and ethics of living and working. For example, urbanite Egyptians made and used furniture in a European style, Islamic style or a hybrid such as the 'Farouq Quinze', which is an Egyptianized version of the gilded French Louis Quinze furniture.

It was not unusual to see architecture built in a European style by Egyptians and for Egyptians, such as the house of Sa'd Zaghlul: it was called *Beit al-Umma* ('House of the Nation') in reference to the status of its owner as the leader of the Egyptian Nationalist Movement from 1919 to 1927 (Figure 2.4).

▲ **Figure 2.4**
Beit al-Umma (House of the Nation), the European-style house of Sa'ad Zaghlul, the leader of the Egyptian national movement

Conversely, there were the Neo-Islamic buildings of Heliopolis that were commissioned by European investors and designed by European architects for Europeans who lived in Egypt. However, it is important to note that the Neo-Islamic style was a revival of façade decorations, while the organization of spaces and the relationship between interiors and exteriors were designed according to typical European style with respect to the thickness of the plaster of the façade. Also, Islamic landmarks such as minarets were used on top of residential buildings with no relation to *adhan* or mosque function (Figure 2.5).

Between the two extreme choices of European and Islamic styles, there emerged a range of hybrid styles that combined different mixes of European and Islamic decorative styles (Figure 2.6).

▶ **Figure 2.5**
A Neo-Islamic residential building with a minaret-like structure, in Heliopolis

▶ **Figure 2.6**
The entrance to a residential building with a door of hybrid European and Islamic-style decorations

In addition, a Neo-Pharaonic style emerged and was enthusiastically adopted as an expression of the aspirations of the Nationalist Movement for an independent nation-state that referred to the glory of the ancient Egyptians. The most imposing building erected in this style was the mausoleum built for Sa'd Zaghlul, the 'leader of the nation' *(Za'im al-Umma),* after his death in 1927 (Figure 2.7).

2.1.4 A note on Orientalism

It is ironic that Egyptians who adopted the European cultural and intellectual framework saw their heritage and fellow Egyptians through the eyes of Orientalism. This may explain the ever-widening gap between the elite and the rest of the Egyptians, even after the departure of the European colonizers.

The works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have contributed greatly to paving the way for effective criticism of Orientalism outside the Muslim sphere. The relationship between knowledge and power could no longer be ignored:

> 'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth (Foucault, 1980).

The negative impact of Orientalism has been studied and criticised extensively by many Muslim scholars for over a century. However, it was taken seriously by Western scholarship only after the criticism of four scholars, three of whom were Arabs and all of whom belonged to Western academic institutions: Anouar Abdel-Malek, an Egyptian Coptic sociologist who lived and worked in Paris; A.L. Tibawi, a Syrian specialist in Arab history who lived and worked in London and then Harvard; Edward Said, a Palestinian Protestant Christian who lived and worked in New York; and Bryan Turner, a sociologist and a specialist in Marxism (Macfie, 2000):

> The assault on Orientalism, when it finally came, was launched on four fronts: on Orientalism as an instrument of imperialism, designed to secure the colonisation and enslavement of parts of the so-called Third World…; on Orientalism as a mode of understanding and interpreting Islam and Arab nationalism…; on Orientalism as a 'cumulative and corporate identity' and a 'saturating hegemonic system…; and on Orientalism as a justification for a syndrome of beliefs, approaches and theories, affecting the geography, economics and sociology of the orient… (Macfie, 2000: 3).

The nature of Orientalism, why it existed and to what extent it influenced the understanding of the Orient, is best explained by Said:

> Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan mainly). Unlike the Americans the French and the British – less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians and Swiss – have a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the place of Europe's greatest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles (Said, 1987: 3).

A huge library of Islamic-Arabic anti-Orientalism had been discredited by Western academia. And yet, ignorant remarks, racist interpretations and even pornographic illusions were perfectly acceptable to Western scholarship, provided that they came from 'Orientalists' rather than 'Orientals'. In a lecture "Modern trends in Islam", H.A. Gibb remarked:

> It is true that there have been great philosophers among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arabs, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for the separateness and the individuality of the concrete events. This is, I believe, one of the main factors lying behind that 'lack of sense of law', which Professor Macdonald regarded as the characteristic difference in the Oriental.
>
> [This also explains – which is so difficult for the Western student to grasp – the aversion of the Muslims to] the thought processes of rationalism… The rejection of rationalist modes of thought and of utilitarian ethic which is inseparable from them has its roots, therefore, not in the so-called 'obscurantism' of the Muslim theologians, but in the atomism and discreteness of the Arab imagination (H.A. Gibb, cited in Steegmuller, 1973).

Such arrogance and lack of sensitivity are not unusual to observe when consulting Orientalists' interpretations of Arab and Muslim issues. Thus, it is not difficult to understand how Orientalists dared to feel free to interpret, alter and ridicule the values of Islamic-Arabic ideology and culture. A 'hypothesis' by an Orientalist is often taken by another as a sound 'theory', and by a third as a 'fact'; it then appears and reappears in almost all writings on the same subject as 'stating the obvious'. This explains why most Islamic-Arabic texts written since the early years of the 20th century assure the reader that their ideas and information are based on Islamic and not Orientalists' sources.

2.1.5 A two-tier society and the rise of political Islam

One hundred and fifty years have elapsed since the French invasion of Egypt and the military *coup d'état* that ended the dynasty of Muhammad 'Ali in 1952. During this period, dramatic changes occurred. A two-tier society was created of two socio-cultural groups: the members of the elite who adopted the European way of life formed one group, and the rest of the Egyptians formed the other group. Although the first group was small in number, it included the rulers and the majority of educated Egyptians. The second group included all the laymen and a minority of the educated. For the first time since the Arab conquest in the 7th century, Islam was no longer the indisputable reference system for all. The city reflected the socio-cultural situation, as André Raymond describes it:

> This 'fragmented' city was the image of a divided society, the image of a colonized country. In all the urban symbols the preponderance of foreigners was apparent, entrenched within their business and residential quarters. For the Egyptians, the dilemma was clear: to become resigned to the slow asphyxia of the old quarters or to accept assimilation into a way of life which had been brought to them from outside (Raymond, 1993: 325).

The rulers, from Mohammad 'Ali to Farouq, adopted a similar approach to that of Napoleon's. Although the rulers were eager to transform Egypt into a modern independent nation state, they never lost sight of the fact that the legitimacy of their rule was based on Islam. Even after the caliphate was abolished in Istanbul in 1922, King Fou'ad and his son King Farouq after him made sure that they were seen by their Egyptian subjects as the patrons of Islamic activities. Despite their otherwise Western lifestyle, they built mosques, celebrated *'eid,* prayed in public and took part in other religious activities. After all, what would legitimize a non-Egyptian, non-Arabic-speaking family governing Egypt if not for Islam? The leaders of the early stage of the Egyptian national movement, such as Mustafa Kamel and Mohammad Farid, shared the same approach with the Turkish ruling class. They advocated a modern Egyptian nation within the Ottoman Empire and with Islam as a reference system. The steadily growing national movement in the first half of the 20th century addressed two main issues: social justice for all Egyptians, and the independence of Egypt from the British occupation.

However, as independence moved higher on the agenda, an essentially different approach was adopted by the national movement. In order to prevent a division between Muslims and Copts, Sa'd Zaghlul and the other leaders of the Wafd Party advocated a modern secular nation. They used the slogan '*al-din liLLah wa al-watan lil gami*" (Religion is for God and the homeland is for all). Their supporters raised flags with a crescent and a cross on a green background as a symbol of a united nation with two religions. They referred to ancient Egyptian history for inspiration since they did not find a closer reference to a unified Egypt ruled by fellow Egyptians. Thus, they used ancient Egyptian motifs, decorative elements and styles in art and architecture to symbolize their vision. Nevertheless, out of the political arena, Islam continued to be the reference system for values and ethics. For example, the lawyer Makram 'Ebied Pasha, one of the most prominent Coptic members of the Wafd party and a close comrade of Sa'd Zaghlul, would quote the Qur'an in his speeches in front of the court. Once a lawyer of the opposition tried to embarrass him after he had quoted from the Qur'an, by asking him: "Do you really believe in what you have said, Makram Pasha?" He answered immediately: "This is what you believe in" (Abdelwahab, 2007). His reaction shows a similar approach to that found in pre-modern Egypt, when Islam was accepted as a reference system even by those who did not strictly follow it. Another example is the establishment of the Coptic Museum in 1910 by Murqus Semaika Pasha, the pioneer of Coptic heritage studies. Semaika, a Copt himself, chose to build the façade of the museum as a copy of the façade of al Aqmar Mosque, the oldest surviving stone façade of a mosque in Cairo. On the façade of the museum, Coptic crosses and Christian figures were carved where Islamic inscriptions were carved on the mosque façade. The interior of the museum

also included a mix of Coptic and Islamic decorative styles on painted ceilings, wooden lattice work partitions and projecting windows.

Some highly respected intellectuals, such as Taha Hussain and Lutfy al-Sayyed, took the idea of a modern secular Egypt one step further. They claimed that Islam was the reason for the backwardness of the country. In following the European example, they called for a total separation of religion, or the function of the mosque, from everyday life, just as the church was separated from everyday life in modern Europe. They failed to see that Islam did not form a theological institution of clergymen as was the case of the Church in Europe, their model and source of inspiration. They called for a battle with an imagined enemy. The mosque was not an institution with a hierarchical power structure or material wealth, as an ill-informed observer may have assumed; rather, the mosque was the place where a Muslim prayed, even if there was no building or personnel. The only wealth related to a mosque was through the endowment system (*waqf*), which was managed by non-religious administrators and did not play any political role. A narrow-minded sheikh or a fanatical Muslim preacher had as much power and influence as the audience was willing to give him; i.e. a Muslim preacher was only influential if he was popular, just like any other public figure. Resistance to secular ideas came mainly from committed Muslim individuals who did not have prestige or power. Lutfy al-Sayyed was an influential writer, an academic and the first Rector of the University of Fu'ad I (later Cairo University), the first modern university in Egypt. Taha Hussain was a university professor, a Minister of Education, and a prominent writer and public figure. While their ideas spread quickly among the intelligentsia, these intellectuals gave the Egyptians an unprecedented shock. In the midst of these developments arose the Muslim Brotherhood, who advocated a modern state governed according to *shari'a*. The Brotherhood referred in their aims and means to Islam, which was the reference system for the majority of Egyptians. Meanwhile, the Wafd party, once the most popular party, started to decline rapidly and suffered from divisions after the death of its founder and charismatic leader, Sa'd Zaghlul.

2.2 Attitudes towards the conservation of the built heritage in Cairo

2.2.1 Urban destruction under French occupation

The aim of the painstaking surveys and studies of the French expedition with respect to the built heritage of Cairo was not to conserve it, but rather, to govern and control the city and the whole country. Furthermore, whenever destruction seemed necessary to secure better control, the French did not hesitate to demolish whole neighbourhoods, such as the al-Hussayniya suburb outside the northern wall of Cairo. The French also burned Bulaq, al-Azbakeyyah and Birkat al-Ratly (Abu-Lughod, 1971). They even bombarded al-Azhar Mosque when it became the hub of the resistance movement. The French introduced to Cairo another form of destruction to the historic urban fabric when they opened up and widened streets:

> For purely military reasons the French began to regularize a number of important communicating streets in the city, since European armies could not cope with the confusions and potential ambushes of Cairo's maze-like system. In this process, al Fajjalah Street was cleared of obstructions, to allow the French readier access to the strategically important gates along the northern wall of Cairo (Bab al Nasr and Bab al Futuh). The ancient pathway which connected Azbakiya to the medieval city at the Muski Bridge over the Khalij (mentioned by Maqrizi) was similarly widened and straightened to permit the maneuvering of troops. The old road between Azbakiyah and Bulaq was elevated and stabilized, again for purely tactical purposes. These streets have since become major thoroughfares of the city, indispensable to the present circulation system of contemporary Cairo (Abu-Lughod, 1971: 84).

The French occupation forces also demolished the gates of residential alleyways in Cairo to allow their soldiers quick access to every space and building in the city (Jabarti, 1904). Bonaparte's actions expressed his view on the built heritage of Cairo. He sought to understand the city, its history and culture in order to be able to govern it and control its population. His efforts to modernize the city were aimed at securing his political and military supremacy.

2.2.2 Centralized management of the built environment

After the French evacuation, the approaches of Muhammad 'Ali and his dynasty were not essentially different from those of Bonaparte and his generals. However, unlike Bonaparte, Muhammad 'Ali had enough time and resources to realize his projects of modernizing the country. He created a bureaucratic machine to enforce a central control of the modern nation-state that he was striving to construct:

> One of Muhammed 'Ali's most important reforms was to establish a centralized bureaucracy which gradually replaced the old concessionaire administration. Unlike his monopoly system and the new industries, which were dismantled in the last years of his reign, the centralized structure he created not only survived his death but also grew so rapidly in subsequent years that "bureaucracy" became almost synonymous with the modern state in Egypt (Vatikiotis, 1969: 66).

Two of the newly created governmental entities had a great impact on the state of conservation and management of the built heritage in Cairo: the Ministry of Awqaf and the Ministry of Public Works. In 1835, Muhammad 'Ali issued a decree to create the General Department of *Awqaf* (*diwan 'umumy al-awqaf*), which gathered the administrative and financial aspects of all endowments in Egypt. The significance of this change cannot be overemphasized. It implied a number of major problems from the religious and legal points of view. For each *waqf* arrangement, there was a legal document (*waqfiyya*) that stated who should administer the *waqf* and how. As a result of a central administration at the national level, however, the different *awqaf* were not administered by the named administrators. More importantly, revenue from the *waqf* investments were not spent according to the wishes of the founders of the different *waqf* arrangements. From a *shari'a* point of view, this was a major violation of the rules of inheritance (*fiqh al-mawarith*), since a Muslim's *waqf* arrangement, such as the will of a Muslim, may not be changed after his death.

Resistance from religious leaders might have been the reason for cancelling the decree three years later. However, in 1851, Mohammad 'Ali's grandson, 'Abbas I Pasha, issued a new decree re-establishing the *Diwan* (*diwan 'umumy al-awqaf*). Since then, *waqf* has been administered centrally in Egypt by the *Diwan*, which later became the Ministry of *Awqaf*.

The impact of centralization of the management of *awqaf* on the built heritage of Cairo was tremendous. All historic buildings were initially managed by *waqf* arrangements, either as beneficiary institutions, such as mosques, *madrasas, sabils* and *kuttabs,* or as revenue-generating institutions, such as *wakalas,* khans, shops, *hammams* and residential buildings. For the first time in the history of Cairo, the brilliant management system of *waqf* that enabled the preservation of all Islamic built heritage was cancelled. Also, non-governmental contributions to the welfare of the country were dramatically reduced. Before its centralization and appropriation by the Government, the system of *waqf* was a formidable mechanism for non-governmental development efforts. Even at times of economic and political hardships in pre-modern Cairo, rich individuals and families contributed to the development of the city and the welfare of the society through their *awqaf.*

The establishment and activities of the General Department of Public Works (*diwan al-ashghal al-'umumiyya*) also greatly impacted on the state of conservation and management of the built heritage of Cairo. It introduced grand urban renewal projects for the historic city such

as the opening up and widening of the streets of Muski, Bulaq, Fumm al-Khalij and Shubra in 1846 and 1847. The innovation was not only reflected in the scale of these projects, but also and more importantly, in their nature. These projects aimed to transform Cairo into a modern city with straight, wide 'hygienic' streets. For example, the plans for al-Muski Street, later named al Sikka al-Gidida (New Street), were similar to those of the French Expedition's original plans, which were to open a straight street cutting through the city from East to West in order to open up the historic city for the European merchants (Ali, 1998).

The role of the General Department of Public Works reached a new level at the time of Khedive Isma`il within the framework of his passionate modernization vision. In 1867, he appointed 'Ali Mubarak, his friend from the Paris years, as the Head of the Department, with the mission of modernizing Cairo according to the Parisian model. Mubarak was appointed to head the Department of Education, the Department of Awqaf and the Department of Public Works. Accordingly, not only did he draw up plans for urban renewal, but also, as the Minister of Education, he led the system of education that trained the required human resources. Furthermore, as the Minster of *Awqaf*, he secured the necessary funds to realize his plans from the enormous revenues that were available from *awqaf*. Major plans for new arrangements (*tanzim gidid*) were prepared for the urban fabric of Cairo. Among the projects were the construction of the new downtown area called al-Ismailiyya after the Khedive, the creation of Boulevard Muhammad 'Ali and other new streets, as well as the widening of streets. These projects were implemented through the Tanzim Department within the General Department of Public Works:

> In its early years, the Tanzim followed the French model faithfully. It maintained a regular geometry in street alignments with little or no acknowledgment of existing conditions. This approach reached its peak in France under Napoleon III (1850-57), who envisioned a new Paris of straight avenues stretching from one node to the next. The rue Rivoli is a manifestation of this approach in Paris; Muhammad 'Ali Boulevard was its counterpart in Cairo. It sliced with uncompromising straightness through the densest section of the urban fabric for a distance of two kilometres (Asfour, 1993: 126).

2.2.3 European pressure and the formation of the *Comité*

The Khedive was fiercely criticized in the European media because of the scale of the destruction that his modernization caused to the historic buildings of Cairo. One of his critics was Stanley Lane Poole, who wrote in *The Academy* of the difficulty of convincing the Khedive to change approaches:

> … such a measure would involve very delicate negotiations with the Khedive, who is the principal sinner in the matter of art-demolition, and the negotiations, we may confidently prophesy, would end in smoke. If anyone is to move in this matter it is the Khedive himself: and the Europeanising tendencies of his Highness do not favour the supposition he would be willing to take any steps in the conservative direction. He would perhaps ask whether Parisian boulevards and Italian villas planted in the historical soil of Egypt were not more artistic than tumble-down mosques and ruined houses? And would it be possible even with the temper of an angel, to answer such a question? (Lane Poole, 1874: 36).

Stanley Lane Poole was not the only critic of the Khedive's modernization efforts. Calls for the preservation of the Arab monuments in Cairo gathered momentum among European art collectors and amateurs in Europe and Egypt. In 1869, growing pressure resulted in the Khedive's approval of a proposal by European architects who worked in the Department of Awqaf to establish a museum of Arab art in the ruins of the Mosque of Sultan al-Zahir Baybars. However, the idea was not implemented despite the Khedival decree (Reid, 1992: 61). In 1874, the issue was raised in the International Congress of Orientalists. A motion was

forwarded to the Congress to urge the Khedive to establish a committee for the preservation and restoration of monuments of Oriental art and architecture, and "for duly recording those monuments which are decaying and which cannot be restored" (Sanders, 2008: 24).

Isma'il was dethroned in 1879 before managing to take any concrete action. In 1881, his son, Khedive Tawfiq, issued the decree that established *Le Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* (hereafter the *Comité*) within the Ministry of the *Awqaf*. The effective members of the *Comité* were either Europeans or European-educated Egyptians. *The Saturday Review* commented in 1892:

> It would, indeed, be difficult to pick out a stronger or more representative body of men than those who formed the Commission at the date of the publication of the Report [the Comité's annual report of 1891]. Besides Ali Pasha Riza, the Director General of Waqfs, and Sir C. Scott-Moncrieff, Minister of Works, they included Yakub Pasha Artin, Under-secretary of Public Instruction, a highly-cultivated man; Mustafa Pasha Fehmy, President of the Council; Tigrane Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Franz Pasha, the ex-architect of the Waqfs Department, and a first-rate authority on Saracenic architecture; Dr Vollers, the Khedive's librarian; M. Grebaut, Director of the Giza Museum, and other influential persons; whilst the support of lovers of Arab art in Paris, Berlin, and London is invited by the addition of honorary members. A Commission so constituted is able to hold its own against most of the opposition which it is bound to encounter in the anaesthetic bureaucracy of Egypt.[2]

The *Comité* formed two commissions: the First Commission was responsible for defining the scope of the *Comité*'s work and the compilation of an inventory of monuments; and the Second Commission, which later became the Technical Section, was responsible for defining the conservation approach and its methods. It was also responsible for identifying objects and architectural elements that were to be transferred to the newly created Museum of Arab Art at the Mosque of al-Zahir Baybars, and later at the purpose-built *'Dar al-Athar al-'Arabiyya'* (the House of Arab antiquities).

Nevertheless, criticism of the Khedive continued to appear in the European press. In some cases, criticism was directed to Khedive Isma'il even after his disappearance from public life in Egypt:

> Twenty years ago, Cairo – the Cairo of the Kalifs – was intact, save for the ravages of time. Its fairy minarets, its treasured mosques and street-fountains, its noble gates, though crumbling slowly away in a land where nothing is ever done to arrest the progress of decay, were more lovely in the pathos of their gradual dissolution than they could have been even in their prime. Then came Ismail Pasha, and with him an era of "improvement" – in other words, of travesty and demolition. To Haussmannise Cairo was his darling ambition. The plans for this gigantic act of Vandalism were actually drawn and sanctioned; and but for his Highness's fortunate financial collapse, he would undoubtedly have driven miles of yawning Boulevards and dozens of formal French thoroughfares through the shady and romantic labyrinths of his capital (Edwards, 1882: 301-2).

Much of the criticism was directed to "the Khedive" without clarifying whom was addressed – Tawfiq, the Khedive at the time, or Isma'il, the initiator of the ambitious modernization plans. This was perhaps because Tawfiq did not announce any major change of plans when he succeeded his father. An example of such criticism was the announcement made by The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1883, four years after the dethroning of Khedive Isma'il and two years after the establishment of the *Comité*:

2 "Ancient buildings at Cairo" in *The Saturday Review*, September 3, 1892, pp. 277-8.

> … the society have already addressed a letter to the Khedive on the subject, and have received a polite but indefinite answer – probably meaning little or nothing (Bentley, 1883: 28).

The Khedive was also criticized for not having maintenance and guards to protect the mediaeval buildings against theft. More criticism was directed towards the unsympathetic coloured striping of historic façades as part of the beautification plans for Cairo to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal:

> While lavishing these sums on this wretched structure he [the Khedive] did not think it worth his while to spend a few thousands upon the magnificent work of former ages, the ornament of his city, but on the contrary levelled a portion of it. In almost every mosque the hand of the destroyer is visible: the ivory incrustations are chiselled out of the doors and pulpit, the rich designs in coloured marbles and mother-of-pearl are knocked off for visitors and curiosity-dealers, and large squares of mosaic work have been removed from the floor to decorate the palace of some pasha or amateur. The guardians of these buildings have not the slightest regard for them, and I am convinced that if I set my heart on any particular inlaid work in the greater part of the less used mosques, I could have it conveyed to my hotel at nightfall for a small consideration. But this is not all; as if to add insult to injury, in a vast number of cases the colouring of time on the stone and wood work has offended the eye of the authorities, and the most ruthless and vile wash of cobalt, vermilion, and yellow ochre has been applied with unsparing profusion, and covers the delicate traceries and all the variety of arabesques and carvings which until recently rejoiced the eye (Gregory, 1882: 69).

Complaints were made in the European media about the loss of authenticity of many historic buildings in Cairo because of the methods with which management, repair, restoration and reconstruction were applied to historic buildings by the General Department of *Awqaf*. This was a consequence of the centralization of the management of the *awqaf*. Another reason was the planning and implementation of conservation plans by engineers and architects who were trained according to European curricula and were thus ignorant of the traditional architectural techniques and materials:

> In many cases, a beautiful old mosque has been pulled down, with all its gorgeous decorations of mosaic, stained glass, carving and beautiful furniture, to be rebuilt by some ignorant European or Turkish architect in the most miserable mongrel style that can be imagined, substituting for the priceless old building such things as the expensive and yet mean-looking mosques of El-Hassanein, Setti-Zeynab, and the like (Middleton, 1883: 28).

European interest in the state of conservation of the built heritage of Cairo was a manifestation of Egyptian cultural dependence on Europe, a result of more than half a century of efforts to modernize the country according to European models. It was also a manifestation of the European political and economic domination over Egypt, even before British colonization in 1881. Egyptian affairs were debated and decided in Europe or by Europeans in Egypt who acted as experts and advisers to various governmental departments.

It is interesting to note that, before the beginning of the 20th century, Orientalists like Albert Gayet used terms such as 'Arab art', 'Arab civilization', 'Arab culture', 'Arab monuments' hence the name of the *Comité*. After World War I, the defeat and then the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Pan-Arabist aspirations changed political priorities, including vocabulary (Basha, 1988): 'Arab' was replaced by 'Islamic' without explanation. The Museum of Arab Art in Cairo became the Museum of Islamic Art, and all works as well as all institutions that specialized in culture, art and architecture followed the new trend. Professor Hassan

al-Basha explained this change as a shift in the political approach of the colonial powers at the time. Before World War I, Orientalists encouraged the 'Arab' character as opposed to the 'Islamic' one, simply to discredit any cultural achievement of their Ottoman/Turkish enemies and to weaken the ties between the Arabs and the Turks within an Islamic framework.

European interest in the conservation of the built heritage of Cairo should be understood within the cultural context of the time. Interest in the 'Orient' in general and Egypt in particular gathered momentum after Napoleon's expedition. A body of literature that focused on the aesthetic, historic and archaeological values of the built heritage of Cairo grew steadily after the publication of *Description de l'Égypte*. The Khedive's modernization schemes alarmed enthusiasts of the 'Orient'. The growing criticism of the destruction of the authentic fabric of historic buildings should be understood within the context of the growing popularity of Romanticism and the birth of conservation movements in 19th century Europe. These approaches were manifestations of the fundamental changes that occurred in the way a historic building was appreciated and therefore conserved in Europe (Jokilehto, 2004).

2.2.4 Attitudes of the *Comité* towards conservation

Naturally, the attitude towards conservation that was adopted by the Comité was not much different from attitudes in Europe at the time, both towards conservation of historic buildings and towards Islamic, Arab and Egyptian cultural and architectural heritage. The Egyptian members of the *Comité* did not promote different attitudes since they were educated in modern schools and were living and functioning within the hegemony of European colonialism. The *Comité*'s practice followed the French school of conservation to a certain extent. Its conservation of Islamic monuments in Cairo often resembled Viollet-Le-Duc's conservation of Gothic monuments in France:

> The working language and three of the first five Europeans on the Comité were French. France fought tooth and nail to maintain her cultural influence throughout the British occupation, and French Comité members outnumbered Britons until the 1930s (Reid, 1992: 63).

Priority was given by the *Comité* to stylistic and artistic values over historic and archaeological values. Heavy-handed restoration that aimed at unifying a monument's style was commonly practised. For example, many Mamluk minarets that had Ottoman-style repairs, additions or reconstructions were rebuilt according to an idealized Mamluk style. Monuments were treated like museum pieces that should be protected from the encroachment of surrounding buildings, even if these encroachments were already historic. Clearing around monuments and sometimes prohibiting their development were practised for many listed buildings such as the historic Mosques of Malika Safiyya and Saleh Tala'e, and the Mosques of Sinan Pasha and Qadi Zein al-Din in Bulaq. In some cases, the *Comité* constructed a building in the Arabic style, adjacent to a historic building, in order to offer a 'better historic environment', as in the case of the *madrasa* of al-Ghuri and the Sarghatmash Mosque. They also built Arabic-style buildings to house the function of a monument so as to retain its historic fabric, as in the case of Qalawun Hospital. The *Comité* also often brought to a halt a monument's function as they did in all *sabils* and most *kuttabs,* houses and *wakalas*. Evacuating inhabitants or users from historic buildings was also common practice. Much of the *Comité*'s budget went to compensating relocated people. No attention was given to functional, economic, urban, sociological, political, symbolic or religious values.

The *Comité*'s reports that documented their interventions show examples of the different levels of interventions carried out. The following examples were published in *Procès-verbaux des séances du comité et rapports de la section technique* on the works carried out from 1946 to 1953 (*Comité*, 1961):

- The interventions in the dome of al-Shafi'i mausoleum are an example of straightforward technical repairs (Figures 2.8 and 2.9).
- The intervention in the Wakala al-Ghuri included removing any alterations and vernacular additions (Figures 2.10 and 2.11). There was no concern for the function of the building or for the locals who used it before the restorations.
- Sabil Umm Husayn was transferred to a new location to allow for a wide Port Sa'id Street to replace al-Khaleej al-Masri (Figures 2.12 and 2.13). The function of the *sabil* was not resumed.
- The minaret of Tamim al-Rasafi Mosque was reconstructed following research on the Mamluk style. As a result, the reconstructed minaret was even more Mamluk in style than the original (Figures 2.14 and 2.15).
- The few original remains of the ceiling decorations at al-Nasir Mohammed's Mosque at the citadel were used to reconstruct the decorations for the rest of the ceiling (Figures 2.16 and 2.17).

▶ **Figures 2.8 and 2.9**
The dome of the Mausoleum of Imam al-Shafi'i before [left] and after [right] restoration (*Comité, Procès-verbaux*, 1961)
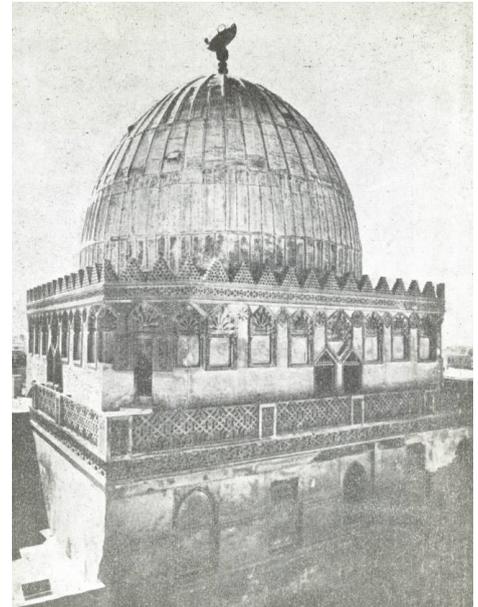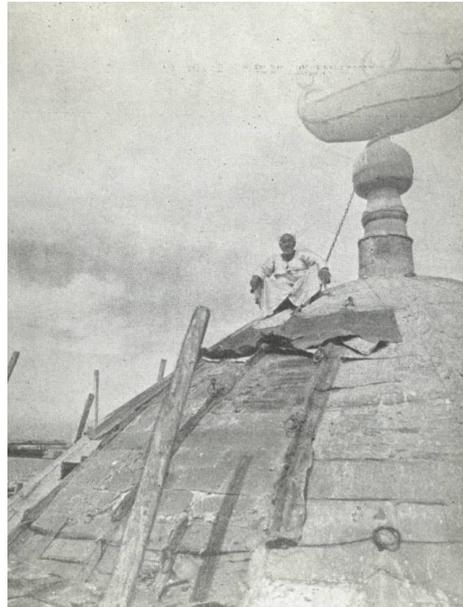
▶ **Figures 2.10 and 2.11**
Wakala al-Ghuri before [left] and after restoration [right] (*Comité, Procès-verbaux*, 1961)
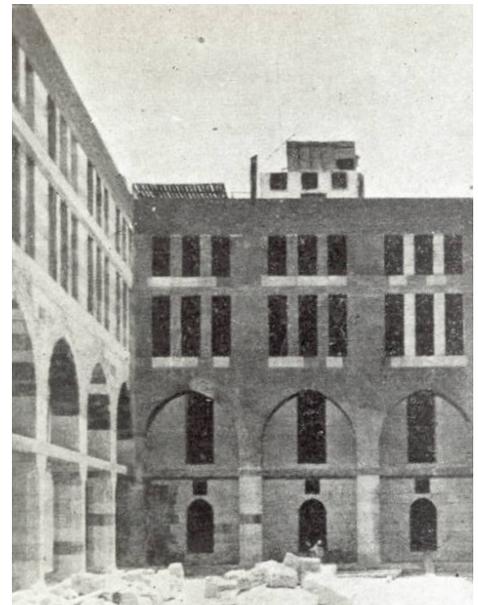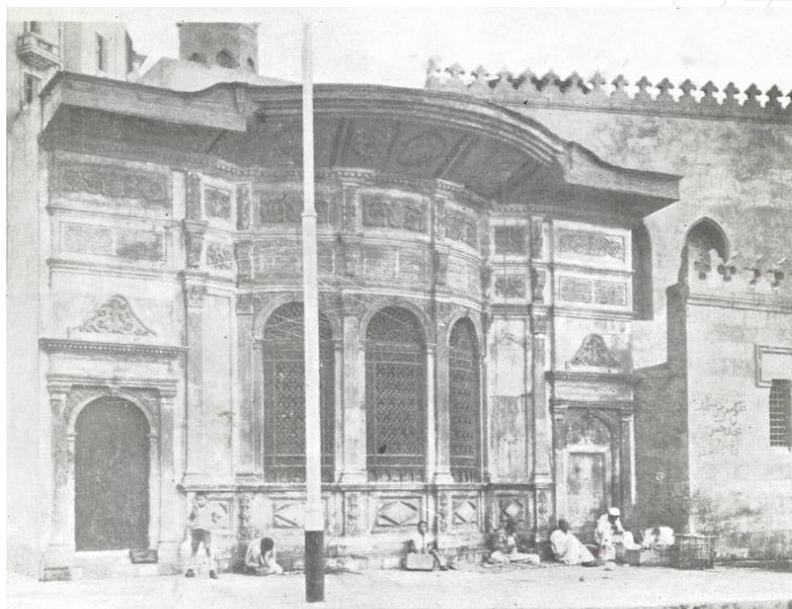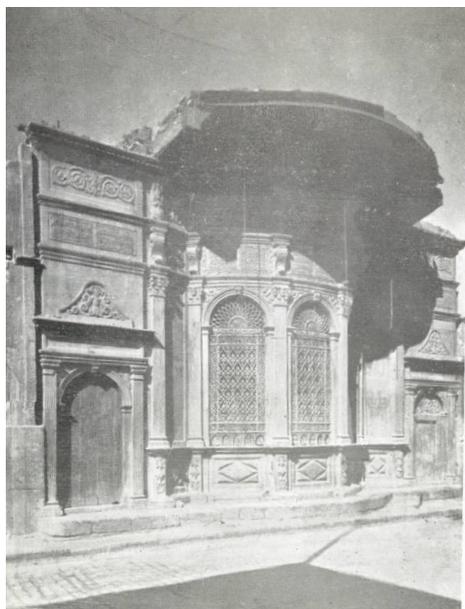
▲ **Figures 2.12 and 2.13**
Sabil Umm Husayn before [left]
and after [right] its transfer
(*Comité, Procès-verbaux*, 1961)
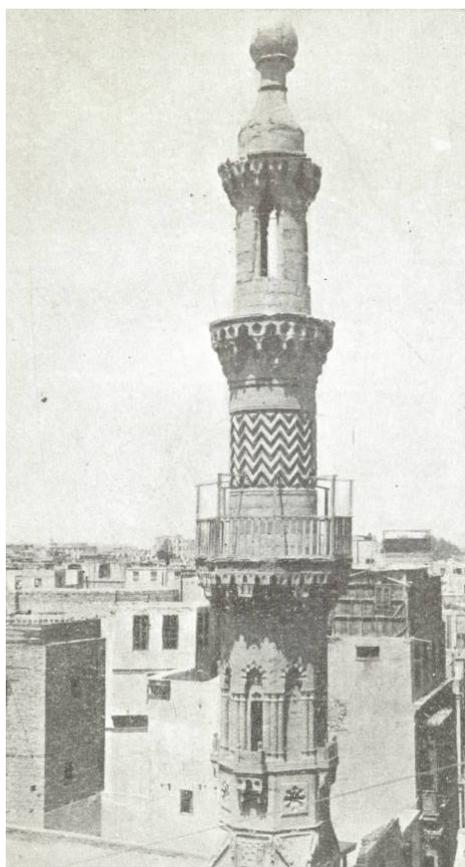
◀ **Figures 2.14 and 2.15**
The minaret of Tamim al-Rasafi
Mosque before [left] and after
restoration [right] (*Comité,
Procès-verbaux*, 1961)

The ceiling decorations of the al-Nasir Muhammad Mosque at the citadel before [left] and after restoration [right] (*Comité, Procès-verbaux*, 1961)
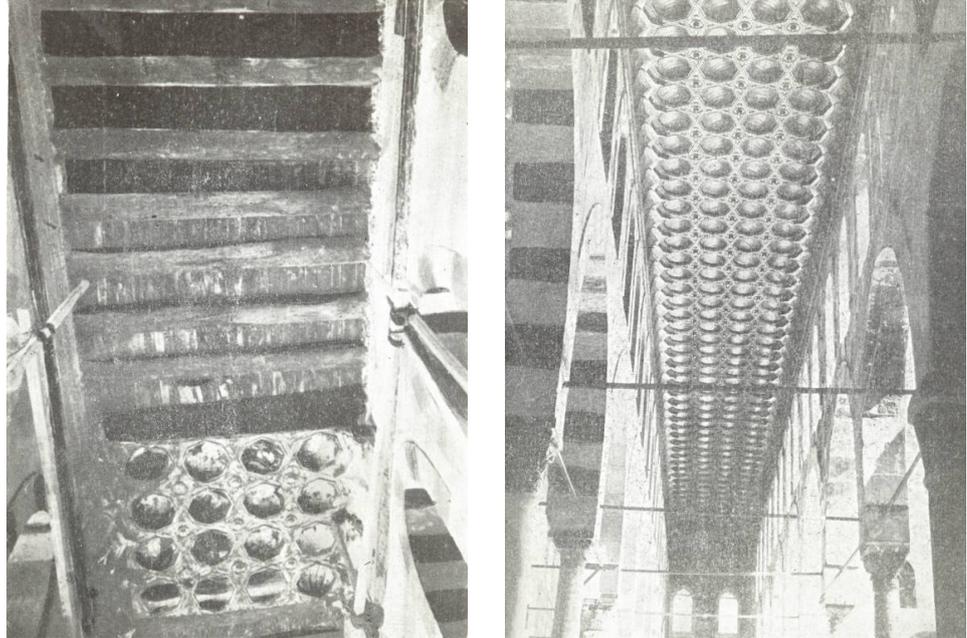
Most European critics celebrated and congratulated the *Comité* for its work. On 6 March 1896, *The Architect & Contract Reporter* reported the following:

> It is more than twelve years since *The Times* drew attention (July 30, 1883), writes a correspondent of the journal, to the excellent manner in which the then newly-founded "Commission for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art" had set about its important duties. The annual reports published by the Comite and the testimony of numerous artists and travellers have informed the public from time to time that the work has not stood still, that the Commission has not relaxed its efforts to preserve the mosques and private buildings of Mediaeval Cairo, and that on the whole its energy has been tempered with discretion. A recent detailed inspection of its more important labours has strongly confirmed this favourable impression. There can be no doubt that the Commission fully realises its responsibility as guardian of the monuments, and has succeeded in doing a great deal of very valuable work in spite of much difficulty and opposition work which has never yet been adequately recognised or supported, but for which artists and archaeologists, to say nothing of mere lovers of the beautiful, should be grateful for many generations to come. But for the watchful care of the Commission many of the most interesting monuments of Cairo would by now have fallen, either by natural decay, aided by neglect, or by the rude hand of the modern street-improver, who within memory has cut a mosque in two or demolished a Mediaeval palace for no better reason than the correct alignment of a hideous new boulevard.[3]

The only unfavourable criticism that the *Comité* received was from within: it was an echo of the restoration and anti-restoration argument that was taking place in Europe at the time between different schools of conservation. In his *Muslim Architecture of Egypt,* in the section on the restorations of al-Azhar Mosque, Creswell criticized the *Comité* for the disappearance of drawings and photographs, and also the bad copies made by of the stucco decoration before demolition. Creswell thought that, at least in this very particular case, the *Comité* should have been held responsible for its unacceptable practices. The criticism peaked

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3   "The preservation of mediaeval Cairo" in *The Architect & Contract Reporter,* 6 March 1896, 152.

with Creswell's declaration of a loss of "an archaeological document", for which he found the *Comité* fully responsible. He ended his long and critical investigations with his only direct commentary on any restoration work in the ten-century-long history of al-Azhar:

> It is nothing short of a scandal that these arcades should have been demolished without any record being made of the early stucco ornament which decorated them, and that such a tragedy should have been possible nine years after the construction of the *Comité de Conservation* and over forty-five years after the invention of photography (Creswell, 1960: 1, 49).

The practices of the *Comité*, as well as the interest and follow-up of its activities by intellectuals and art lovers, were a remarkable turning-point in attitudes towards the conservation of historic buildings in Cairo. The *Comité* was part and parcel of the modernization efforts according to the European model. It was part of the newly established mechanism to produce a modern city with monuments that emphasized, rather than challenged, its modernity. By the last decade of the 19th century, Egypt was equipped with an apparatus for managing a modern city within a newly established bureaucratic machine:

- a centralized governmental department for urban planning and management: the Tanzim Department within The Ministry of Public Works;
- a ministry for the management of religious structures and affairs that was totally separate from other issues of urban management: the Ministry of *Awqaf*;
- a centralized commission for the conservation of historic buildings in the city: the *Comité*, which was administratively within the Ministry of *Awqaf*, but entirely independent of any religious association.

Each of the three bodies was fully specialized and focused on its own mission. Nevertheless, they coordinated on common issues such as moving monuments to allow for the widening of streets. An example was the dismantling and repositioning of the *zawiya* of Farj Ibn Barquq in front of Bab Zuwayla to allow for the widening of Taht al-Rab' Street. This specific effort was the result of the coordination of three separate bodies with their different missions, criteria and interests.

For the first time since the foundation of Cairo, the holistic Islamic approach to life was not adopted in managing the city. By the 1890s, Islam was no longer the reference system, not even for the management of religious institutions such as mosques, *madrasas* and *kuttabs*.

A historic mosque came to be seen as a work of art and as historical and archaeological evidence, and not as a place for prayers. The break between the 'modern present' and the 'pre-modern past', which had been strongly established in Europe since the Renaissance in the 14th century, was mirrored in the approaches towards the built heritage of Cairo by the *Comité* and its European supporters and critics. A historic *sabil* was not understood and appreciated as a functional drinking-water fountain, nor indeed as an act of charity, but rather as a piece of antiquity that should be protected from the hustle and bustle of the daily life of Cairo.

2.2.5 Traditional approaches towards the built heritage

Throughout the 19th century, the buildings of Cairo were continuously adapted while respecting their associations and intangible values, which included:

- the ethics and characteristics of *ibn al-balad*, which encompassed the Egyptian character and the long urban traditions of Cairo. Such characteristics included generosity, good humour, and religious sentiments with acceptance and respect for other faiths;

- religious ceremonies, celebrations, rituals and events related to numerous shrines of pious men and women, many of whom were members of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*);
- Islamic teachings and debates on how Muslims should cope with modernization and how they should resist Western colonialism. These were initiated by al-Azhar University, the most influential in the Muslim world, which attracted students and scholars from all over the world and maintained an intellectually vibrant atmosphere in and around al-Azhar Mosque;
- trade for merchandise related to the Egyptian traditional way of life, which remained in the historic quarters of Cairo after the modern expansions of the city. As the new modern quarters were designed according to modern European models and standards, they had no place for trade in traditional goods. Also, the organization of markets in historic areas were designed to cater to traditional customs such as celebrating the first week of newborns (*subou'*) or the needs of a bride-to-be. Egyptians flocked to the old quarters of Cairo to shop for such events from all over the country;
- care, food, water, refuge and assistance for the needy by charitable Islamic institutions, as a result of financial arrangements through *waqf*. A stranger who arrived in the city without previous arrangements or escaping a disaster such as a flood or epidemic could expect to be welcomed with open arms and be taken care of in the Old City.

For the *Comité*, all of the above were obstacles to remove, if possible, rather than significant values to be conserved. Whenever the *Comité* was given the power or the funds to evict the users of a historic building, it did so without the intention of allowing them to return after restoration was completed. The difference in approaches between the Europeans and Europeanized Egyptians, on the one hand, and the traditionally educated Egyptians and the rest of population, on the other hand, was reflected in the way the built heritage was valued and managed. Although the *Comité* had the mandate to manage the built heritage of Cairo, the mainstream culture of local communities was not influenced by its approaches. This was one issue among many in which the modern phenomenon of the two-tier society was manifested.

Most Egyptians continued to see themselves as part of a continuous flow of history and to see their cultural heritage as an inseparable part of their contemporary culture. This was reflected in their continuing to follow the dress code, the way they socialized, and their use of public space, among many other indications of a cultural continuum. For the inhabitants of the historic city of Cairo, their built heritage was the environment they lived in. Their traditions, values and way of life formed – and were formed by – the urban fabric of the city. A mediaeval mosque, *madrasa* or *sabil* in the eyes of the locals was not essentially different from a newly constructed one, except for the values that always mattered in pre-modern Egypt: its religious, symbolic, functional, architectural and urban values. Thus, an informal intervention in a historic building (i.e. an intervention carried out by the local community and not by the *Comité*) was carried out, in the manner of the time, regardless of the building's original stylistic, historic or archaeological values. As in pre-modern Cairo, the conservation of a mosque by the local community entailed practical repairs or enhancing its function, or allocating funds or real estate to consolidate its *waqf*.

Since the *Comité* was the mandated government body, heritage-related practices by others were considered to be unscientific and informal activities that had no access to formal resources, such as finance, professional expertise and legal protection. Thus, the formal/informal divide of cultural, social and economic activities in colonized Egypt persisted in the field of cultural heritage and its conservation.

3 | Independence and dictatorship (1952–2011)

3.1 Political and socio-cultural context

3.1.1 From *coup d'état* to revolution

A century and a half after Napoleon's proclamation, the Egyptians were awakened at dawn on 23 July 1952 by another proclamation and another army. It was the Egyptian army this time announcing a *coup d'état* by its group of young officers who called themselves '*al-Dubbat al-Ahrar*' (the Free Officers):

> Egypt went through a difficult period in her recent history: bribery, corruption and government instability. All these factors heavily influenced the army. Corruption caused our defeat in the war of Palestine [referring to the 1948 war]. After the war, corruption and treason conspired against the army. Its leadership was either ignorant or corrupt, so that Egypt had no army to protect her. Therefore, we undertook to purify ourselves. We have given our leadership of the army to men whose integrity and patriotism we trust. Certainly Egypt will welcome this news with pleasure. […]
> *wa Allah wally al-tawfiq* [and God guides to success]
> (The First Proclamation of the Free Officers, delivered by Anwar Al Sadat).

The proclamation of 1952 was broadcast on the Egyptian radio and, unlike the French proclamation of 1798, was not introduced with the Islamic traditional opening phrase. It announced the *coup d'état* and explained the motivation behind it, referring to patriotism and Egypt. Its mission was to combat the "ignorant, corrupt traitors". The Free Officers adopted the line of the Egyptian Nationalist Movement. They used secular language and referred to Egyptian nationhood and patriotism. But they were all Muslims, and the closing of their proclamation indirectly indicated that they did not reject religion, but also did not base their reference system on it.

To the amazement of everyone, including the Free Officers themselves, the *coup,* which started as a desperate reform movement within the army, was so successful that the entire country was controlled without the need for force or bloodshed, Egyptians were eager for change that would restore their sense of dignity, freedom and justice, and as such, the event came to be referred to as the 'Revolution' (*al-Thawra*). The two main objectives of the Egyptian Nationalist Movement, independence and social reforms, were quickly realized. With breathtaking speed, the new leaders sent King Farouk into exile, announced the 'Republic of Egypt', and managed to negotiate with the British the evacuation of their troops from the country. The privileges that Europeans enjoyed in Egypt were abolished, as were those that the Turkish elite used to enjoy, together with their titles. It was no longer embarrassing to be a peasant (*fallah*) or a native Egyptian urbanite (*ibn al-balad*) without any foreign lineage, as had been the case before the Revolution.

The agricultural reforms that followed addressed the huge inequalities and injustices regarding land ownership and the status of the peasants (*fellaheen*), who were the great majority of Egyptians at the time. With the nationalization of big firms, factories and farmlands, the great majority of the population became employees of the state, working in one of its governmental agencies or public sector institutions. The new Government made education compulsory and free of charge for all Egyptian children, and offered free university education, irrespective of social status. The state offered employment to all university graduates and encouraged education for girls, work for women and the promotion of women's rights.

The Free Officers secured control over the country and Nasser emerged as the sole leader. Consequently, the leaders of the *coup* needed an ideology to establish themselves as revolutionaries. The mission of the National Movement was adopted. Historical periods between the last ruler of ancient Egypt and 1952 considered as foreign occupations were denounced, particularly the Ottoman period due to its association with the dynasty of Mohamed 'Ali and the exiled King Farouk, who had sympathizers among Egyptians.

Like Napoleon Bonaparte, Nasser was a young professional army officer with great ambitions to rule Egypt and achieve historical glory. He knew how to use the mass media and the arts, as Napoleon had, to glorify his achievements. As a Muslim, Nasser did not need to prove that he respected Islam; as a native Egyptian, a descendant of a lower-middle-class family from Upper Egypt, he did not need to invent a connection with the Egyptian people in order to legitimize his rule.

3.1.2 Imposing secular modernization

As a function of his control over the Government and its policies, Nasser defined the identity of the nation. Within a few years after the 1952 *coup*, Egyptians looked quite modern and independent: no fezzes, no turbans and no hats. The modern Egyptian man wore a European suit and did not cover his head. Women took off their veils and wore European dresses; they left the home for schools, universities and workplaces.

New buildings also followed the styles of the Modern Movement of architecture, i.e. the international style. No neo-Islamic or European revival styles were adopted in either public or private sectors. In the early years of the Republic, the keen interest in ancient Egyptian heritage led to the erection of the colossal statue of Ramses II in the main railway station square. The square as well as the street leading to it were named 'Ramses'. However, constructing new buildings in the Pharaonic style was perceived by some as placing too much emphasis on Egypt's ancient heritage and could weaken the newly discovered Arab dimension of the country. As an advocate of Pan-Arabism, Nasser stressed the modernity of his project for Egypt and the Arab region. Although Islam was the essence of Egypt's Arab identity and that of most other Arab countries, Nasser advocated a secular version of Arabism. While Egyptians were already familiar with the vision of a secular Egyptian identity, it was new to them to see themselves as secular Arabs. Since the Arab conquest of Egypt, being an Arab had been integral to being a Muslim, or at least to accepting Islam as the prevailing value system.

Before the *coup* of 1952, the nation had been divided between religious and secular ideologies. With the adoption of Nasser's secular model, the secular faction controlled the Government, the media and education. The governmental agencies and the media communicated an image of the nation as secular, while portraying religious elders as being too old to change and modernize. No other image was projected, and the religious population created a parallel informal way of life.

3.1.3 Globalization and privatization

In the first half of the 20th century, there was a gradual deconstruction or reversal of efforts by the Nationalist Movement – continued by the leaders of the independent republic – to build a modern nation-state with all its institutions, sovereignty over its own affairs. By the end of the 20th century, the Egyptian economy had become heavily dependent on the Western economy through aid, grants and loans from foreign governments and multinational organizations. An aggressive privatization programme resulted in a sector that had previously belonged to the public sector:

> In 1991, the Government of Egypt signed the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This accord marked Egypt's entrance into an active phase of reforms that

transformed economic apparatuses, modes of government, and state functions. The decade of the 1990s was marked by the gradual implementation of a program of economic liberization [sic] and privatization. A new social contract gradually took shape between the public and private sectors as public expenditures were drastically adjusted. Imposing conformity with international commercial agreements led toward the gradual eradication of customs barriers. Conditions for the development of industrial activities and distribution were radically transformed as the emergence of a new landscape triggered the decline of old forms of concentration and circulation (Vignal and Denis, 2006: 101).

As in the period of colonization, a new Egyptian social class emerged that was dependent on foreign and multinational institutions. They communicated in English, and ascribed to Western cultural and intellectual traditions. Although a minority, they had an overwhelming influence in the formal media, the arts and public life, an influence out of proportion to their size due to their financial, social and political status. Concurrently, the great majority of Egyptians remained essentially unchanged in their thinking and way of life. They communicated in Arabic and embraced a traditional value system, though their identity was expressed through informal domains and contexts. Many of the Egyptian poor saw the country as an uneasy coexistence of two parallel societies: those of the rich and the poor.

The development of gated communities outside Cairo was a physical manifestation of this new cultural phenomenon and the changed concept of nationhood:

> Gated communities represent the socio-political result of economic neo-liberalization. Here private democracy materializes. While estimating that public institutions cannot assure the well-being and the defence of the collective, a restrained community of like-minded people itself takes charge of the management of the protection of its own way of life. The community of residents of the gated community of Mena Garden City, for example, manages shared spaces, lighting, and the roadways from common funds that it places in the Cairo stock exchange.

> This kind of private democracy flourishes in Egypt while on the national social scale, political exclusion and repression has intensified. The election of mayors (*'umdas*) was suppressed in 1994 under the guise of the struggle against Islamism, replaced by a system of administrative appointment from above (Denis, 2006: 60).

By the 1990s, Western-style shopping malls, coffee shops, fast-food chains, seaside resorts and gated communities had become increasingly important features of the cityscape in Egypt. At the same time, recently built informal mosques, *madrasas, kuttabs, sabils* and other Islamic urban institutions were the landmarks of the populace and their neighborhoods of Cairo and other Egyptian cities, towns and villages. Coptic communities had also developed informally around churches and monasteries.

3.2 Attitudes towards the conservation of the built heritage in Cairo

This section addresses the conservation of built heritage during Independence and dictatorship (1952–2011), whereas the previous section discussed the context during this same period.

3.2.1 Different names, similar attitudes

The independence of Egypt in the 1950s led to the elimination of foreign participation in government departments. Europeans left the country, and the names of government departments were changed. The name of the *Comité* was changed to the Permanent

Commission for the Preservation of Islamic and Coptic Monuments, and later to the Department of Islamic and Coptic Monuments within the Institute of Antiquities (*Maslahat al-Athar*), which later became the Egyptian Antiquities Organization (EAO). The EAO was attached to the Ministry of Education and later, to the Ministry of Culture; it was no longer part of the Ministry of *Awqaf*. As a result of this transfer, the management of Islamic monuments conserved by EAO becme the responsibility of the Ministry of *Awqaf*. There was no longer basic coordination between the two ministries as was the case during the colonial period. Practically, this was awkward because mosques were owned, used and managed by the Ministry of *Awqaf*, whereas their conservation was organized by the EAO. On a conceptual level, this meant the separation of tangible and intangible heritage, and a formal secularization of Islamic built heritage.

The national Egyptian administration of the EAO did not consciously adopt pre-modern approaches or approaches that were informally expressed during the colonial period. Egyptians replaced foreign members of the *Comité*, but there was no change in objectives or approaches. European critics and public opinion that gave moral support to conservation efforts in Egypt ceased to be heard. The conservation of the built heritage of Cairo was left to Egyptian civil servants who were not fully aware of European approaches towards conservation. Because of their European-style education, they were also ignorant of Islamic views on conservation. The EAO boasted patriotic (i.e. anti-European) and revolutionary or progressive (i.e. adopting anti-Islamic) approaches. But what did this actually mean? What were the alternative approaches towards conservation? And what was the new rationale for conservation according to the new cultural and political changes in the country? No answers were suggested by anyone within or outside the establishment. On the ground, conservation practices by the EAO continued for a few years in the manner that had been established by the *Comité*, with no major difference at the technical or philosophical levels. The annual reports on conservation that the *Comité* had issued were continued by the EAO for almost ten years, but later all formal publications on conservation work in Cairo came to a halt.

3.2.2 Continuous neglect and accelerated deterioration

In the 1950s and 1960s, few conservation efforts were made in the built heritage in Cairo. Political propaganda before independence portrayed King Farouk and his dynastic predecessors as the guardians and protectors of Arabic/Islamic heritage, a heritage that Nasser and his successive governments deemed the legacy of a backward and imperialist regime. Very little money was allocated for the conservation of the Islamic heritage in Egypt in general and to the built heritage of Cairo in particular. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Nasser collaborated with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the international community to salvage the heritage of Nubia before completing the construction of the Aswan High Dam, which started in 1960 and was inaugurated in 1970, and eventually inundated the whole region. However, little was done to protect the Islamic heritage of Cairo.

The great majority of residential buildings were not protected despite forming the urban fabric of the historic city. The historic quarters of Cairo were neglected and dilapidated as a result of the poor management of listed buildings and the lack of maintenance of residential buildings. Indeed, for example, the Ministry of *Awqaf*, the owner of a great portion of the housing stock in the city as revenue-generating properties, did not adopt good management and maintenance policies for its properties. Another factor was the Law of Rents, which froze rents for residential units, a socialist initiative launched by Nasser in support of tenants. Consequently, private owners neglected their properties because it was no longer feasible to maintain them. Rising damp was another problem that contributed to the deterioration of the historic buildings in Cairo. This problem resulted from the steady rise in the groundwater as a side-effect of the construction of the High Dam in Aswan. The deterioration of the old networks of sewage and water-supply compounded the problem

of surface water. Historic buildings were founded on lower levels than newer ones as a consequence of the continuous rise of street levels. As a result, historic buildings were the ones most impacted by surface water and groundwater. The fragile nature of their fabric did not help. The steady increase in the number of vehicles also added to the threats that the built heritage faced.

As the historic quarters became run down and neglected, many urban poor and rural migrants moved in, slowly turning the historic urban fabric into a slum-like area. They lived in dangerously dilapidated, deserted houses and bribed guards to allow them to live inside closed historic buildings. In some cases, families made homeless by the collapse of their houses were allocated spaces within listed buildings as temporary shelters. Even tombs in the historic cemeteries of Cairo were occupied by homeless families. The increase in the population of Cairo and Egypt as a whole created a huge demand for housing. This demand added to the pressure on historic areas because of their geographically central location within Greater Cairo:

> By 1957 Cairo contained within her boundaries at least as many persons as had inhabited all of Egypt when the French Expedition made its population estimate little more than a century and a half earlier. Within that relatively brief span of history, the Egyptian population had increased eightfold – from 3 to 24 million – while Cairo's population had become fully twelve times greater than it had been in 1800 (Abu-Lughod, 1971: 118).

3.2.3 Interest in heritage but not people

After Nasser's death, the 1970s witnessed President Sadat's rediscovery of the Islamic dimension of Egypt, although he used it mainly to combat Nasser's legacy of secular pan-Arabism and socialism. Some archaeologists, intellectuals and politicians suggested transforming the historic part of Cairo into an open-air museum. By 1979, Cairo was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List; however, the socio-economic state of the inhabitants was becoming unbearable. In 1980, Mohammed Baghdadi, a journalist in *Sabah al-kheir* weekly, wrote about his experience in the historic quarters of Cairo:

> … in every street I came across a few historic buildings; al-Aqmar mosque, al-Nahhasin school, Barquq mosque, Qalawun mosque and many others. Some mosques are closed, and I was refused entry to some other historic buildings. Around the closed mosques and the dangerously deteriorating schools, many Egyptian families were living in the streets without any privacy or environmental shelter.[4]

Baghdadi described the terrible condition that these families lived in. He interviewed the following people:

- *Mr Saleh*: Mr Saleh is a married worker with seven children who used to live in house at no. 1 in Haret Abu Ful, off al-Husayneyah Street. On 15 February 1978, he and his family were forced to move out of their house by court order. They were allowed to stay in Barquq Mosque for a while, and were later thrown out on the street. Since then, their children no longer have been able to go to school.
- *Mrs Ibrahim*: Mrs Ibrahim's husband works in a kebab shop in al-Husayn quarter. The family consists of 14 members. Two years ago, their house collapsed in Haret al-Darrasah. They were moved to Qalawun Mosque and later to the Barquq Mosque. Twenty-two days later, they were kicked out of the mosque, and since then, they have been living in the street.

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4 Baghdadi was one of many journalists who were concerned with the homelessness problem in the Old City, and whose alarming articles appeared periodically in the weekly and daily press in Egypt.

- *Mrs Shafi'i*: Mrs Shai'i's husband is handicapped and does not work. They have three children. In November 1979, the building at 16 Haret al-Gamaliyah collapsed. Her family was one of 20 families that became homeless. In the beginning, they were allowed to stay in Barquq Mosque and later were forced out onto the street.
- *Mr Salem*: Mr Salem is married and supports four brothers and sisters. In January 1978, the building at 4 Sikkat al-Khurunfush, where they all used to live, collapsed. They were allowed to live in Qad 'Abd al-Basit Mosque, at 5 Sikkat al-Khurunfush. They were then moved to the *madrasa* of al-Sha'rani for six months. Later, they were moved to *madrasa* al-Nahhassin, which was a very dangerous building to live in, as it was about to collapse. Finally, they were evicted to the street.
- *Mrs Ibrahim*: Mrs Ibrahim is a tea-seller, a widow with five children. In October 1978, she and her children were ordered to leave their flat at building no. 10, Haret al-Hallah by a court order. They were evicted to the *wakala* of Oda Bashi; later for two months they lived in Sultan Barquq Mosque, and then finally on the street.
- *Mr Mursi*: Mr Mursi is a street vendor, married with five children. In June 1978, a court ordered the family's eviction from their flat at no. 18 Haret al-Hallah. They were moved to the *wakala* of Oda Bashi where 96 other families lived. They were then evicted to the Barquq Mosque, and then finally to the street. His wife gave birth to their youngest child on the street. She then fell terribly ill and was admitted to the hospital.

In the same year, the journalist Siham Dhihni wrote about the method by which the Government offered shelter to the dispossessed in the streets of medieval Cairo:

> There is a special calendar for al Jammaliyya inhabitants. For them, life starts or ends at the day of inventory or the day of receiving. The first is the day in which 26 formal committees invaded the quarter for a couple of hours, without any previous notice, and made an inventory of the families living in mosques, madrasas, and streets with the promise of giving them new homes. The second day is the day of receiving, when those who were present at the day of the inventory received contracts for their new homes in al-Doueka new settlement. Also the day of receiving is the day when those who were absent during the inventory realised that they lost their legal right for a shelter, simply because they were not available during the two hours of inventory on the first day. All their efforts to change this misfortune were unsuccessful (Dhihni, 1982: 14-17).

The poorest and most vulnerable of the population of the historic quarters of Cairo were either forced or encouraged to leave the city for newly built shelters and social housing schemes that were not related to their economic, social or cultural values and interests. This was part of the 'open-air museum' concept. The restoration of individual monuments was the other important part of the concept.

In 1982, Ahmed Kadry, the energetic Chairman of the EAO, appropriated the revenue from entry tickets to sites, monuments and museums, and used it to fund rapidly executed restoration projects. In an EAO publication, he stated that the weight of achievements made in the last three years is much greater than what was achieved in the previous 150 years, both in quantity or quality. This statement is confirmed by scientific societies and institutes specializing in archaeology and restoration as well as UNESCO (Kadry, 1985).

Despite Kadry's words, the interventions by the EAO did not show much scientific or professional competence. Most if not all works of the EAO showed either fatal technical mistakes or a contradictory and/or confused philosophy of conservation. For example, the EAO dismantled the listed minaret of Amir Husayn Mosque with the aim of reconstructing it, but without prior thorough documentation or study. The dismantled stones of the minaret, left on site, were later flooded by sewage water where they remained for years until the stones were basically corroded beyond recognition by the acids of the sewage water; thus,

a listed building was lost forever. Kadry's wholesale and hasty restorations were carried out throughout the 1980s. These restorations were directed to individual monuments, but the historic urban fabric and socio-economic living conditions continued to deteriorate:

> To the many conflicting, and often apparently schizoid, approaches that the West has presented to the developing world – for example, urging the use of advanced technologies and then advocating 'intermediate' technologies – we add another: adopt 'modern' building and housing, learn in your schools Western architecture and planning, and conserve your traditional buildings.
>
> It may be that in some cases the Open Air Museum may be the only answer to the dilemma, especially where traditional building forms are rapidly disappearing (Oliver, 1982: 12).

The adoption of 'schizoid' approaches, as Paul Oliver puts it, resulted in an unnecessary confrontation between conservation and development. While social and economic development policies treated conservation as an isolated cultural icon relegated to the background, conservation strategies approached Cairo as a potential open-air museum and ignored the social and economic aspects of the city. This may explain the popularity of 'modern' architectural solutions to development problems in Cairo, and the isolation of historic buildings through restoring them as museum pieces. In the proceedings of an Aga Khan Award for Architecture seminar on Cairo, Abu-Lughod warned:

> Expensive patching and cordons sanitaires around clusters of monuments are not enough to preserve the living heritage of the old city with its fabric of homes and work places… The protection of Cairo's heritage should not result in depriving people of their homes and livelihoods. We must ensure that the *means* used to achieve the preservation of the old city should not be at the expense of the people who live there. Otherwise, we will be creating a 'city of the dead' in the very heart of historic Cairo (Abu-Lughod, 1984).

3.2.4 Urban revitalization for tourism

Pioneers and advocates of 'urban conservation' in Cairo, such as Saleh Lamie-Mostafa, Abdel Baki Ibrahim and Hazem Mohammed Ibrahim, produced pilot schemes for the urban conservation of historic quarters of the city which addressed social, economic and cultural issues. However, these schemes were inadequate and belated, and also assumed that tourism would be the magic solution for all socio-economic problems. Had they been realized, the schemes would have turned historic Cairo into a big open-air museum. For example, in his proposal for the rehabilitation and restoration of al-Batiliyya district in Cairo, Saleh Lamie-Mostafa describes the current situation:

> It is obvious that a large number of the inhabitants did not continue their education, probably due to the high earnings for labour in the last 15 years, as well as the profits gained from drugs and narcotics distribution, for which Al-Batiliyya district is widely known. This was probably the reason for the low number of Azhar students living in the area (Lamie-Mostafa, 1987: 134).

Since the above-mentioned drug and narcotics distribution in al-Batiliya quarter involved strong socio-economic and territorial networks, most armed campaigns by the Government to control the area proved unsuccessful. Lamie-Mostafa presented the following design criteria for his proposed rehabilitation project (Lamie-Mostafa, 1987):

- Public awareness of cultural heritage must be promoted.
- The infrastructure system must be rehabilitated and the quality of the external environment improved.

- Historic monuments must be restored as part of an integral programme of rehabilitation together with housing improvement.
- Standards of commercial activity and craftsmanship must be improved to be compatible with the area's character.
- The trend of residents leaving the area must be reversed.
- Historic buildings must be adapted for appropriate new uses.
- Tourism potential must be exploited.
- Tight controls must be implemented for new buildings, and there must be consistent surface treatment with respect to materials, texture and colour.
- Shops combined with residential buildings should be regarded as a basic feature of the area's social and economic history.

Then, Lamie suggested different new functions for historic buildings without much concern about the needs of the local population. The rationale was to attract tourism:

> The other two houses were suggested as a museum of medieval daily life, similar to the Kretliyya House in Cairo, in order to attract and exploit the tourism potential, and to raise the social and economic standard of the area, in the hope of getting rid of the narcotic trade (Lamie-Mostafa, 1987: 146).

The above design criteria did not address the particular nature of al-Batiliyya's social and economic life; rather, it assumed that tourism would flourish despite the hostile and insecure surroundings. Furthermore, it assumed that once the historic buildings as well as the new structures in the quarter were used for functions related to tourism and the university, the local inhabitants would change their lifestyle to play their expected role in the rehabilitation project scenario, despite being mostly illiterate and not trained to work in the tourism industry.

Adbelbaki Ibrahim and Hazem Mohammed Ibrahim diagnosed the problem as one of development and upgrading, rather than restoration and rehabilitation. In their project for the al-Gamaliyah quarter, they set out detailed guidelines for upgrading the historic area. However, when these guidelines were applied to a specific pilot area, they produced a restoration-rehabilitation project identical to Mostafa's proposal; the new function was tourism, and no mention was made of what was to happen to the inhabitants:

> Wekalet Qait-Bey is to be restored and eventually transformed to an Islamic touristic hotel. The existing buildings on its southern side are to be removed and replaced by an annex including the services of the hotel…

> The demolished part of the northern wall is to be reconstructed… an Islamic Arabic garden would take their place supplied by an oriental Arabic restaurant and cafes. The existing *Sabil* and *Kuttab* of Auda Pacha [Oda Basha] is to be cleared from its residents and restored. The adjacent vacant land could be used to build an annex including an Islamic library, a fine art gallery and a cultural seminar room (Ibrahim, 1986: 40).

Ibrahim's proposals create a nightmarish image of Cairo as a lifeless open-air museum. Although the project was aimed at promoting social and economic upgrading as the ideal form of urban development in historic areas in Cairo, the socio-economic issues of al-Gamaliyah neighbourhood were ignored. Neither of the urban conservation proposals by Lamie-Mustafa and Ibrahim was implemented.

3.2.5 Natural and man-made disasters

The moderate earthquake of 12 October 1992 damaged at least 125 listed historic buildings and caused much more damage to non-listed buildings in the historic city of Cairo.

It raised concerns in Egypt and abroad for the state of built heritage conservation in Cairo. The Egyptian Government received offers of funds and technical assistance from many international, regional and national organizations, and was ready to allocate money from the public purse towards conservation of historic Cairo (Bacharach, 1995).

Two years later, the Presidential Decree No. 82 of 1994 established the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), which replaced the EAO. According to the new institutional structure, the Minister of Culture became the Chairman of the SCA, while the former EAO Chairman became second-in-charge as the Secretary-General of the SCA. This was Farouk Hosny's victory in battle since his appointment as Minister of Culture in 1987 to end the administrative and budgetary independence of the EAO. In his newly formed position, Hosny was mandated to manage the income from entry tickets to sites, monuments and museums. These funds, managed since 1982 by the EAO, had been mainly spent on heritage conservation and management. The new mandate allowed the Chairman of the SCA, as the Minister of Culture (MoC), to spend the revenue from entry tickets to heritage sites on any cultural activity. The great increase in tourist numbers and the rise in prices of entry tickets secured substantial and steadily increasing financial resources for the MoC. Furthermore, the Ministry organized cultural events, art exhibitions and other activities in heritage buildings and sites for tourists, which brought in extra revenue.

A further Presidential Decree no. 1352 guaranteed the Minister of Culture's control over the funds allocated to the conservation of historic Cairo. Subsequently, Decree no. 1352 of May 1998 inaugurated the Historic Cairo Restoration Project (HCRP), launched by President Mubarak with an allocated budget of one billion Egyptian pounds (Williams, 2006). The project was managed by staff appointed by the Minister of Culture and was based in his own office, thus bypassing the SCA. The HCRP was headed by Ayman Abdul Mon'em, a young archaeologist who was also the Minister's Secretary and the head of the Cultural Development Fund, the section within the Ministry that finances all cultural initiatives. Rumours of gross corruption for almost a decade at the HCRP were confirmed in 2007 when Abdul Mon'em was convicted on corruption charges.

In October 1998, a fire destroyed the al-Musafirkhana Palace in the historic al-Gamaliyah district of Cairo. The Palace was highly significant because of its architectural, aesthetic and historic values. The birthplace of Khedive Isma'il, it was an Ottoman palace known for its very beautiful courtyard, lattice-wood windows (*mashrabiya*), wind-catchers and private *hammam*. In the late 1980s, the palace had been shored up and considered for structural restoration works. It had been closed to the public for almost ten years, during which no restoration work was ever started. It gradually became a garbage dump for the surrounding residential buildings. When the building caught fire, there were no fire-extinguishers on site; the fire engines that eventually arrived were too big to enter the narrow alleyways to reach the palace. After the fire had destroyed al-Musafirkhana, anger was expressed publicly in cultural circles and in the media, since it was obvious that the nation had lost this precious heritage due to misconduct by the SCA and the Minister of Culture. Dr. Gaballah, the SCA Secretary General at the time, was fully apologetic and accepted responsibility. "If it was decided to hang me in a public square for the loss of al-Musafirkhana, I would accept". The Minister of Culture, however, denied his Ministry's responsibility for the loss and said that he would "allocate 30 million Egyptian pounds to reconstruct a new al-Musafirkhana that would be as good as the lost one!"[5]

In the same year, a proposal was presented by an Italian business group and endorsed by Hosny for building a hotel and tourists' leisure compound in the citadel of Cairo, near its southern gate of Bab al-'Azab. The endorsement was met with angry resistance in the media and Parliament. A group of Egyptian intellectuals filed a court case against the Minister of Culture, which resulted in the proposal being dismissed. Another proposal endorsed

5   *Al Ahram,* 2 November 1998, p. 3.

by the Minister that faced fierce resistance was to move all authentic fixtures and doors from their original places in Cairene buildings to a purpose-built museum. In the case of an original door being removed from a historic mosque to be replaced by a copy, a number of intellectuals questioned what were the guarantees that the original door would be moved to the proposed museum and not be placed on the international antiquities market. The proposal was not mentioned in public again despite rumours that the MoC was adapting one of the buildings inside the citadel to house the Museum for the Doors of Islamic Historic Buildings in Cairo. Nevertheless, the proposal was once again advanced ten years later, in 2008 and 2009, after a series of thefts of fixtures from historic mosques.[6]

The Minister of Culture had been accused by his opponents of privatizing the nation's heritage and of being motivated by income-generation rather than history or cultural significance. Since 1998, many newspaper articles, books, and radio and television programmes have accused the MoC of destroying the built heritage of Cairo and distorting the identity of the nation, as the following examples illustrate. Gamal al-Ghitany, the editor-in-chief of *Akhar al-Adab,* a highly respected weekly cultural and literary journal, and the author of *al-Zeny Barakat*, a landmark in the history of modern Arab literature, wrote a book entitled *"Isti'adat al-Musafirkhana, muhawala lilbena' min al-dhakira"* (Retrieving *al-Musafirkhana*, *a trial of reconstruction from memory*, 2007). The book gives a detailed description of al-Musafirkhana Palace, appraising its significance and passionately lamenting its loss. It was received by readers as the modern equivalent of the old Arab poetry of reflection on *atlal* (ruins). In addition to this powerful accusation of gross misconduct directed at the MoC and SCA, Farouq Guwaida, a prominent Egyptian writer and poet, in his *"Athar Misr, Kayf hanet?"* (The heritage of Egypt – How could it be humiliated? 1999), accused them of privatizing the heritage of Egypt. Finally, Ali al-Qammash, a journalist, in his book, *Mukhattat dayaa' al-huweyya wa tadmir al-athar al-islamiyya* (The *conspiracy of the loss of identity and the destruction of Islamic heritage*, 1999) reviewed a wide range of evidence that the MoC and SCA had been selling off the Islamic heritage of Egypt.

3.2.6 Massive interventions

After its inauguration in 1998, the HCRP embarked on a mission to restore 149 listed buildings, divided into four phases over eight years. The justification for this "massive intervention", according to *Historic Cairo,* the volume produced by the MoC in Arabic and English, was the following:

> The large number of aching monuments and the complexity of the problem facing these buildings have made the present massive intervention necessary. The slow pace of previous work was just adding new problems to the existing ones. The advantage of such a massive intervention is the ability to think big, which is necessary while facing problems of the infrastructure (SCA, 2002: 13).

The massive scale of interventions and the speed with which they were to be implemented raised great concern, both in Egypt and at an international level. The greatest cause of alarm was the method by which the HCRP managed the process. Restoration projects were hastily prepared by consultants, and the actual work was implemented by contracting companies. The great majority of consultants and contracting companies used in these very rapid operations had neither specialized staff nor prior experience in heritage conservation interventions. The HCRP had no qualified staff and no capacity to supervise the process, nor did it allow access to restoration sites to concerned members of the public, professionals or scholars.

Steadily growing concern and criticism gathered momentum, and in mid-2001, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre sent a mission to inspect the situation. A group of international scholars, professionals and public figures signed an open letter addressed to Mrs Mubarak, the First Lady of Egypt, expressing their concern and urging her to intervene.

6 *Al Masry Al Youm,* 21 June 2008, p. 4.

The MoC responded by organizing the International Symposium on the Restoration and Conservation of Islamic Cairo on 15–20 February 2002. They invited almost all the signatories of the letter addressed to Mrs Mubarak and representatives from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The result was a partial relaxation of international criticism of the HCRP, the release of the pressure on the Egyptian Government, and a compromise was reached regarding the speed and scope of the HCRP in order to satisfy its critics.

The Minister of Culture has been confident in imposing his vision for 'Historic Cairo as a great Open Air Museum' that would become a major tourism attraction and a great source of income. In one of the Parliamentary debates, he stated: "These monuments are there to bring in money for the poor people who live in the area." Ironically, the massive intervention by HCRP paid little attention to the interests of the local communities:

> Historic Cairo was put on the World Heritage List as a living, vital organism, in which the people and the monuments of an area intertwined in an authentic relationship. The World Heritage Report noted that the new design proposals for the Historic Cairo Restoration Project (HCRP) did not take into account the real characteristics of the historic city as an integrated community, nor did their plans include the participation of the people who live in these areas. The approach of Egyptian officials is often: 'The people? What do they have to do with the monuments?' Additionally, they feel that those who live and work in the area, such as street vendors and street urchins, endanger the monuments and abuse the antiquities (Williams, 2002: 472).

The approaches of the MoC and the SCA may have differed from those of the former EAO in their scale and vigour, but not in their essence. Their formal approaches towards the built heritage remain confined to aesthetic and archaeological values, as had been the case with the *Comité* and the EAO. The local inhabitants of the historic quarters of Cairo remain at best uninvolved and at worst gravely harmed by the formal restorations of the heritage. For example, the restoration project for al-Mu'ayad Mosque by the HCRP included the reconstruction of three *riwaqs*. Only the *qibla riwaq* existed before the intervention. The location of the reconstructed *riwaqs* was defined according to excavations that uncovered their original foundations. The detailed design of the *riwaqs* was, however, a speculation based on a drawing by Pascal Coste in 1818-1825 for his book *Architecture Arabe du Caire* (1836). Although the justification given by the HCRP for the huge reconstruction was to increase the prayer space from 735 to 2 750 m^2 (*Historic Cairo*, 2002), today the three new *iwans* lie idle. No more worshippers were attracted to the mosque because the restoration project did not include toilets and ablution facilities to serve a large number of worshippers. The restoration project also included the elimination of encroachments on the mosque façades without consulting the concerned stakeholders.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) has made an important contribution to the city of Cairo. A project that started as a 30-acre park as a gift to the city became the most remarkable urban conservation and development project in its modern history. The uncovering of the eastern Ayyubid city walls raised the question of conservation not only for the walls, but also for the houses that were, from a legal point of view, encroaching on the walls. Following the consideration of the integrated conservation of these houses, an assessment was carried out of the socio-economic development needs of the community of al-Darb al-Ahmar, with a view to sustaining any conservation and upgrading works on the houses and the public spaces. Due to their visibility from the finished al-Azhar Park, some of the listed buildings were the object of a new restoration project (AKTC, 2004). Furthermore, the al-Sultan Hassan *madrasa* and al-Rifa'i Mosque, on the southern edge of the park, offered a dramatic view of minarets and domes. Later, they were illuminated for aesthetic reasons at night.

The massive interventions by AKTC, unlike those of the HCRP, were welcomed and praised by the international conservation community. The AKTC initiatives were strongly founded on internationally accepted principles and carried out by internationally renowned experts with refreshing transparency and accessibility. Although these interventions were much less acknowledged or celebrated in Egypt, al-Azhar Park has been very well received and instantly became a popular park. Nevertheless, the approach to the conservation and development work in al-Darb al-Ahmar District seems to have sprung from the wrong direction. The Al-Darb al-Ahmar District is not defined in terms of administrative, cultural or socio-economic borders, but rather, according to its proximity to and visibility from the park. If one draws concentric circles around the park with the Hilltop Restaurant as their centre, one can see the hierarchy of both conservation and development interventions. The smaller the circle, the more attention the area gets in terms of both conservation and development. It would be almost impossible to repeat the AKTC projects elsewhere in Cairo without the financial and political will of His Highness, the Aga Khan. The problems that the AKTC projects face, due to old legislative systems and bureaucratic blockages arising from the large number of different authorities with conflicting mandates and agendas, are solved by the enormous pressure that the AKTC is capable of exerting over local and national agencies as a wealthy and prestigious foreign entity. Thus, AKTC's project is not a pilot project that may influence other future initiatives. Further, the question may be asked: what will happen to the park, al-Darb al-Ahmar District, and its restored monuments when the AKTC eventually terminates its involvement and moves on to other projects in the world to do its good work?

It is interesting to note that at one point, the HCRP had its own arm for urban conservation, the Center for Historic Cairo Development Studies (HCSDC). It was short-lived and produced no more than maps and plans for urban design proposals, urban design arrangements and street furniture for selected historic areas. Its premises were inherited by the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), which was established by Law No. 119 of 2008. The scope of NOUH covers the whole of Egypt and has not yet had any influence on the urban life of the historic quarters of Cairo. There was a shift of focus and scope between these two bodies: the scope of HCSDC was development and the focus was Historic Cairo, whereas the scope of the NOUH was visual harmony and the focus was the whole of Egypt. However, on the ground, in the historic quarters of Cairo, the situation is still grim for the local communities. Residents do not wish to be relocated to other areas. The people hear horrific stories about the living conditions that face those who accepted to move (Hassan, 1985).

3.2.7 Cairo's inhabitants

The individuals who were made homeless by the dilapidation and collapse of old houses in the historic quarters of Cairo during the 1980s were transferred to the newly built al-Doueka housing scheme. The whole settlement was built in 60 days by the army. It was isolated, without any form of public transport and with few other services. Every family, irrespective of its size, received a one-room flat with shared toilets (without water or a connection to public sewerage systems). The public toilets within the settlement were far from the houses, and there were no lights in the streets, which prevented children and women from using them at night. This group was therefore forced to use either the street or the waterless shared toilets. The only public services made available were the police station, the cooperative shop and the health unit, which had only one American ambulance that was too big to enter the garage. The sociologist Nawal Hassan interviewed the people who had moved to the new houses, and wrote a report summarizing the complaints and needs of the inhabitants as follows; one third of respondents were artisans (Hassan, 1985b):

- We need buses to take us to our work places and to take our children to their schools.
- We need schools for our children and social services for the family.
- Please fix our leaking roofs.
- We have a water fountain. Nevertheless, please connect water to our houses.

- Public toilets are not enough. The houses still have no sewerage facilities.
- The health unit has a modern ambulance, but it needs water, sewerage facilities and basic medicine.
- We need permits to set up stalls or shops to provide employment for our youth and to have basic merchandise available.
- We need workshops.
- We need stables to protect our horses and donkeys from the cold and to prevent illness.
- The cooperative shop offers tinned food only.

On the morning of 7 September 2008, news broke out that a 100-tonne rock had fallen from the Muqattam hills, destroying 35 houses in Doueqa, killing 23 persons and injuring 39.[7] During the following days, on satellite TV, the world watched the recovery of some of the corpses from under the debris. The news coverage also showed surviving relatives waiting in total shock for the corpses of their loved ones. Only a few professionals and local authority bureaucrats remembered that this was the same area where the inhabitants of historic Cairo had been relocated in the 1980s. Yet the relatives, friends and previous neighbours who had remained in the historic quarters had not forgotten; they had personally witnessed the low quality of life and the risks involved in moving to the new environment that was chosen for them by the Government in the 1980s.

A few months later, while the problems of Doueqa continued, the Minister of Culture invited many journalists and intellectuals for a walk in al-Mu'izz Street to enjoy its new stone pavement, floodlights and pedestrian zone guarded by uniformed security personnel. With the exception of tourists and workers in bazaars and souvenir shops, there were no local people in sight. Most of the mosques that had been restored and locked up were open so that the guests could enjoy their beautiful empty interiors. There were no cars or peddlers, nor children to be seen or heard playing as in the old days. The place resembled a stage waiting for actors to arrive. All the scenes, noises, smells, textures and feelings that Naguib Mahfouz described so vividly in his *Cairo trilogy* were gone. An elegant hardback coffee-table book entitled *Al Mu`izz Li Din Illah Street* (The Great Street) was produced for the occasion by the SCA. Dr Zahi Hawass, the SCA Secretary General, wrote in the foreword:

> We used to receive criticism with regards to the conservation works, but nowadays, everybody is in agreement on the necessity of following a scientific methodology in any form of preservation intervention. Furthermore, constructive criticism is particularly welcomed because the ultimate beneficiary is the monument itself. Our vision, this time, is one that is comprehensive, holistic and all-inclusive, namely to transform the whole street into a monumental tourist site open to tourists night and day. To this end, the streets were paved and the area was converted into a pedestrian zone and the negative effect of vehicles on the beauty and attraction of the street was eliminated. We have finally begun to reap the fruits of these great and unique achievements by inaugurating a number of conservation projects.
>
> I take this opportunity to thank the leader of this magnificent symphony, Mr. Farouk Hosni, who is an artist himself, and who has successfully supervised the conservation process and has always asserted that the proper scientific methods of conservation must be adopted, otherwise we will be in isolation from the outside world.[8]

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7 *Al Ahram,* 7 September 2008 and *Akhbar al Yum*, 13 September 2008, as well as other daily news sources over a period of almost a month.

8 SCA, Historic Cairo, *Al-Mu'izz Li Din Illah Street, The Great Street,* p.6.

Caroline Williams, a scholar on Cairo and author of *Islamic Monuments of Cairo: the Practical Guide,* was a concerned voice and the Corresponding Secretary of the international group of scholars who signed the above-mentioned open letter to Mrs Mubarak. In one of her many articles that accurately documented the developments in historic Cairo over the last two decades, Williams ended with an ironic Arab proverb:

> For Historic Cairo the issue remains the scale, speed, and insensitivity of the renovation work, the lack of transparency in the government plans, and the disregard for the role of the local inhabitants in this city. Still unresolved is an agreement on a real vision of the historic zone. Once restored, how will these buildings be adapted for reuse? Who primarily is to benefit from this 'massive intervention' and museumization; world citizens who value historic and cultural variety? Cairenes who live in the historic area? Contracting companies, who are doing the work? Or tourists, whether foreign or Arab, who visit Cairo? The preservation problems that face Cairo are immense, and far surpass those being confronted by any other Arab city. Still, selling the nation's authentic heritage for the short-term rewards of capital gain does not seem a good bargain. Perhaps here the cautionary wisdom of an Arab proverb is appropriate: 'He tried to beautify her with *kuhl* [dark eyeliner], but blinded her instead' (Williams, 2006: 287).

4 | Understanding current approaches in context

4.1 Contextualizing current approaches

4.1.1 Conflicting values and attitudes

For more than two centuries, Egypt has witnessed conflicts of values and approaches. Two conflicting processes were jointly introduced to the country: colonization (direct as well as indirect) and modernization. In response, another conflicting duality emerged: secular nationalism and Islamic revivalism.

Three main issues – identity, modernization, and Islam – are debated extensively with regard to the achievements of independence and development in Egypt. They are obvious manifestations of the conflicting values and approaches that make up the Egyptian political and socio-cultural scene of today:

a. The identity of modern Egypt remains a difficult issue. What are the sources of its values, views and aspirations? Are they Islamic, Arab, Coptic, Ancient Egyptian, Mediterranean, African, or a mix of some or all of these? There are countless indicators of Egyptians' dissatisfaction with the present expressions of national identity. Thinkers, poets, writers and artists daily address the issue of national identity, either directly or indirectly, in their creative works. Egyptian architects often hide their modern buildings behind façades depicting historic, geographic, religious or cultural identities. Egypt today is not simply modern, nor is it simply Islamic, Arab, Coptic or traditional. There is a great interest among Egyptian intellectuals in finding the right balance between authenticity and modernity.

b. The modernization of Egypt has not been very successful. Although the process started over two centuries ago, it remains shallow and ineffective. Many major concepts that should have constituted the essence of modernity were absent from the country's political, social and cultural scene. For example, the value of work, human rights, the concept of citizenship and freedom of thought, creativity and expression are all partially or totally absent from Egyptian public life. Modernity in Egypt seems to reflect a choice of style and appearance, rather than the adoption of a philosophy, a method and a way of life. After two centuries of modernization efforts, Egyptians wore European clothes, had modern furniture in their homes, used modern means of transportation, and lived in modern buildings. However, they remained essentially traditional with regard to most of their values and approaches. At face value, Egyptians were modern citizens who lived in a modern democratic welfare state. However, behind the modern façade, their lives were dominated by an unfair class system, an imposed political dictatorship, a monopoly of resources and extended family politics. Whether the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 has marked an essential breakthrough remains unclear at the time of writing.

c. The cultural and social duality of the nation is a by-product of two centuries of modernization efforts. The role of Islam is the main cause of this division. While most Egyptians embrace Islam as a religion, reference system and way of life, a powerful and influential minority sees it as dead cultural heritage that should not influence the nation in any essential way. The distinction between the two groups is reflected in the dress code, which can always be observed in public places. However, the divide between the traditional and the modern, between the religious and the secular, is much deeper. The choice of language, rationale and reference systems by the two groups is quite different. Other factors such as class, wealth, power, and access to resources and media also deepen the divide.

4. **Understanding current approaches in context**

The relationships among value systems in Cairo, as in other Muslim cities, may be theoretically represented along two main axes: epistemological and methodological. On one extreme of the epistemological axis, we can observe the Islamic sacred texts of the Qur'an and the *sunna*, while on the other extreme, there is reason and science according to modern Western philosophy. On the extreme of the methodological axis, we can observe traditional methods of knowledge, whereas on the other extreme, there is modern and progressive innovation (Figure 4.1).

▶ **Figure 4.1**
Theoretical representation of value systems in Cairo
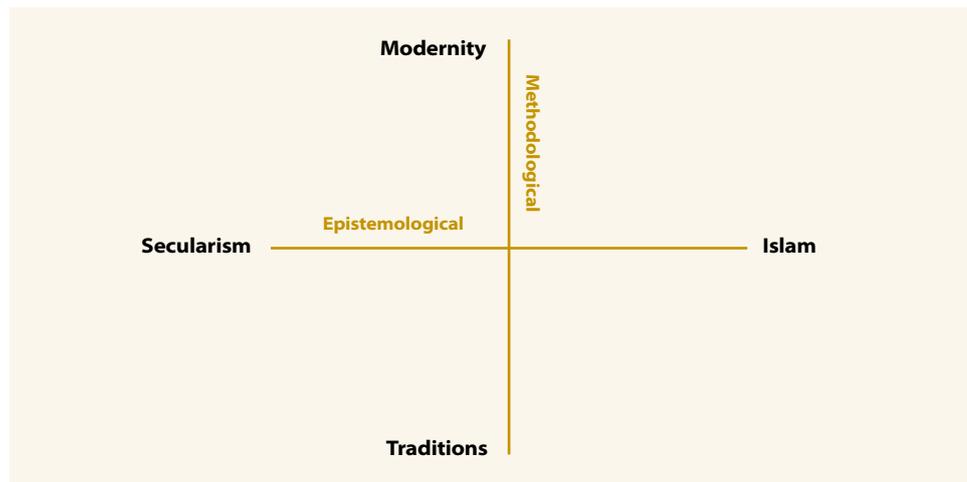
The dynamics of change in the value systems can be traced within four major cultural elements (Figure 4.2):

- popular cultural trends that are produced, consumed and adopted by the majority of Muslim Egyptians whose value systems stem from traditions and/or Islam;
- nation-state institutions, which were established by Western colonial powers or by Egyptians, based on Western models. These values are, oddly, embedded in both traditions and secularism, since the prevailing value system of their employees is Islam, while the basis for the intellectual, functional, legal and administrative systems is secularism;
- Western-style modernization movements whose values stem from secularism and modernity;
- Islamic revival movements whose values stem from both Islam and modernity.

▶ **Figure 4.2**
The four major cultural trends in relation to main value systems
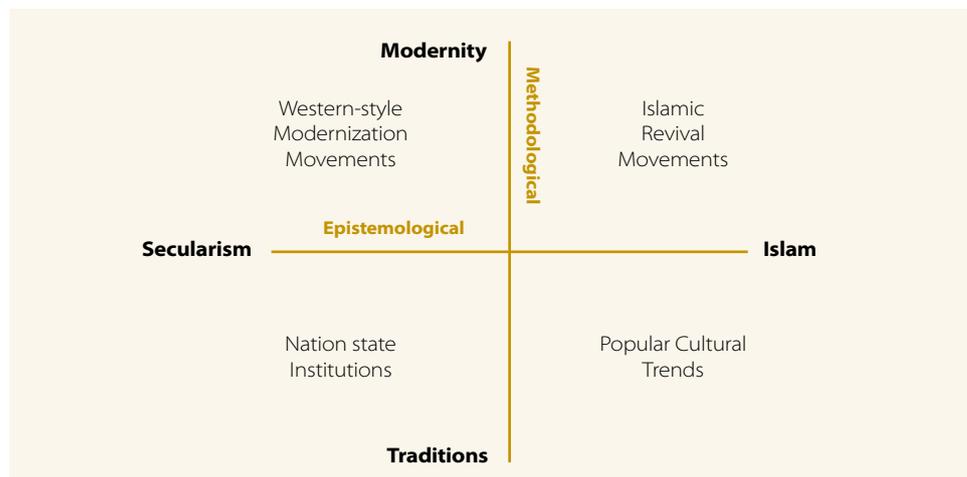
When pluralism is not tolerated, a two-tier society of formal and informal cultures is created. Tensions that lead to intolerance between the following value systems create parallel cultures:

a. Modern versus traditional value systems: Popular secular cultural trends and state institutions may co-exist, but they do not tolerate either Islamic revival movements or Western-style modernization movements. Also, Islamic revival movements and Western-style modernization movements do not tolerate popular secular cultural trends and state institutions.
b. Islamic versus secular value systems: Popular cultural trends and Islamic revival movements may co-exist, but neither accept nation-state institutions nor Western-style modernization movements, which in turn do not accept the former.

Contextualization of attitudes towards conservation should include poverty as another factor. Poverty should be not addressed as a factor that sets values and attitudes, but rather as a factor that disturbs and distorts them. It affects priorities of these values and causes changes in approaches towards their cultural heritage. Although Egypt is not and never was a poor country in terms of resources, most Egyptians are either below or just above the poverty line. A man or woman who is hungry, ill or insecure should not be expected to care for his or her cultural heritage. Furthermore, a person who is culturally and politically marginalized, who is unable to express himself or herself, is less likely to show an interest in heritage, much less feel responsibility towards it. Abraham Maslow stated that humans have a psychological 'hierarchy of needs', an ascending scale of motivators (Figure 4.3). Once a need has been reasonably well satisfied, it ceases be a motivator, and the drive then comes from higher up on the ladder (Raymond, 1997: 22). According to Islamic *shari'a,* a government may not prescribe punishment for crimes that are motivated by hunger or other basic human needs. Omar Ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, was reported to have said, "If poverty were a man, I would have killed him", in reference to the way that poverty disturbs man's priorities of values and approaches.
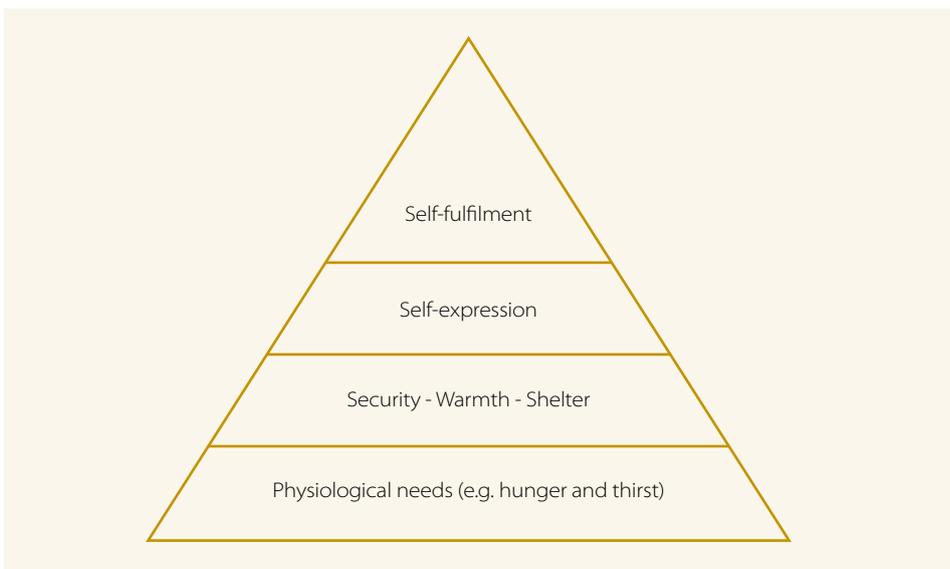
◀ **Figure 4.3**
Hierarchy of needs (based on Abraham Maslow)

4.1.2 **Formal-informal duality**
The phenomenon of informal urbanization has become the single most pervasive element in the production of cities in developing countries. The sheer magnitude of this modality of urbanization has rendered it the norm rather than the exception in the growth of Third World cities (Anymba, 2011: 57).

Informal activities address essential socio-economic and socio-cultural needs that have been ignored or suppressed by the formal sector; fulfilling these needs is a struggle for survival. Therefore, informal solutions are common-sense reactions, despite being technically illegal in most cases. The emergence of the informal sector indicates different aspects and areas of the formal sector's failure. For example, housing amenities and infrastructure offered by the formal sector are not only scarce, but also qualitatively very poor and inadequate. As a source of employment and income, the formal sector has also failed to meet the basic needs of Cairenes. Informal households strive to adjust spaces to their own needs, and do so more successfully than formal households, perhaps because they adapt more easily to their environment; the owners and tenants seem to establish a workable relationship. Owing to the increase of land and housing costs, the average tenant in informal housing spends about 30 percent of the family income on rent. Recent studies show that 84 percent of the units built in Greater Cairo are estimated to be informal, which indicates that, had it not been for the contribution of informal housing, the housing problem would have been much more acute than it is now (Rageh, 1985):

> The most interesting unanswered question about informal settlements is why many of them are such nice places to live. If they lack services and look extremely disordered on the surface, they are nevertheless characterised by an underlying order which produces a high level of safety and security for their residents. Despite almost no serious conflict... all local disputes are settled by informal institutions, quickly and effectively. This is particularly curious, as most such settlements are made up of people from all over the country and most of them are young communities. It would be both extremely interesting and potentially extremely useful to analyse how in so many cases they have been able to generate a viable, supportive social fabric out of such disparate elements and under such severe environmental conditions (Oldham *et al.*, 1987: xv).

The informal sector has emerged and is growing despite its limited access to credit, training, technology, markets, foreign exchange, publicity mechanisms and other means and facilities. This indicates the existence of an invisible framework of influential socio-economic and cultural forces and networks by which the informal sector has developed and without which a community would lose an important part of its identity.

The informal sector is not integrated within the overall development strategies and plans on local or national levels, despite its great influence and involvement in daily life. This absence impedes the actual development of the city.

The example of squatter vendors shows the importance and vitality of informal activities despite the resistance they face from governmental and other formal agencies:

> While squatter vendors continue to fulfil urban needs, it is often thought they interfere with the goals of those responsible for the order and safety of the urban environment. Many officials, and indeed other city residents, perceive hawkers, as nuisances who clog up streets, sidewalks and other public places, pose health hazards – not by any means frivolous concerns in a city so congested as Cairo. They are, furthermore, often seen as an embarrassment to those concerned with presenting a modern image of the city. In the absence of adequate legislation and because of the ambivalent role street vendors play in the society, it is not surprising that conflict between the vendors and law enforcers sometimes arise… No Cairene would deny the important role the squatter markets play in the life of the city. The markets exist in virtually every district, and given Cairo's demographic picture and its well-defined traditional characteristics, they unquestionably will persist as a phenomenon in the city's market structure (Tadros *et al.*, 1990).

The formal-informal duality persists with respect to built heritage conservation. A study by Shehayeb and Sedky, 'Heritage protection… against what? A model to explain adverse change in historic districts' (2002), defined a clear conflict between users of the historic districts on one hand, and professionals on the other hand. They suggested two analytical models. The first identifies 'users as vandals' because they maximize social, economic, psychological and cultural values at the expense of historic and aesthetic values. The second model identifies 'professionals as vandals' because they attempt to maximize historic and aesthetic values while banning social, economic, psychological and cultural values (Shehayeb and Sedky, 2002).

It is not a straightforward exercise to identify and understand informal approaches towards the conservation of the built heritage. Informal approaches towards historic *sabils* are a good example of how misleading appearances may be.[9] On the surface, it seems that the function and meaning of this type of building has ceased to exist. A more careful look at the streets of Cairo, however, will show that new *sabils* are being built every day. The formal conservation operations have eliminated the function and meaning of historic *sabils* from the urban life of Cairo. With the introduction of running water, historic *sabils* became obsolete and were therefore stripped of their function. Historic *sabils* were conserved as archaeological objects and tourist attractions. For local inhabitants they became meaningless and had no relevant cultural, social or functional values. This may explain why local inhabitants neglected historic *sabils* even if they were formally restored, and yet continued to create and effectively maintain new informal *sabils*. These observations indicate that informal conservation is directed toward the function and meaning of a historic building, whereas formal conservation is directed to the form and fabric.

A comparison of formal and informal attitudes[10] to conservation highlights the contrast between them in values and approaches. When comparing different attitudes, three different types of architectural elements should be considered: street shading, *sabils* and minarets. For historic buildings, it may be useful to visualize the two sets of values: architectural, aesthetic and archaeological values, and social, cultural and economic values. The building/settlement graph (BSG) illustrates the role of a building within its urban context (Figure 4.4).

(Y)
Architectural, Aesthetic & Archaeological values

(X)
Socio-cultural & socio-economic values
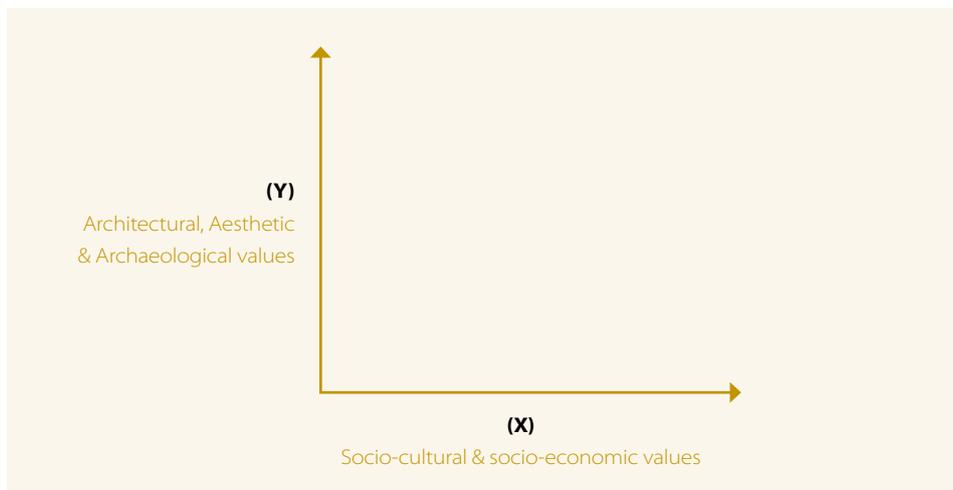
◀ **Figure 4.4**
The building/settlement graph (BSG)

9 An informal as opposed to a formal approach to conservation of historic buildings highlights the heterogeneous character of informal activities, which is a complex of sub-cultures.

10 However, reality is much more complex than merely dividing approaches to socio-economic and cultural activities into two categories – formal and informal: most activities actually fall somewhere between the two extremes.

Historic minarets, *sabils* and street-shading structures in Cairo are located at different positions on the BSG (Figure 4.5). On the (y) axis, one extreme is historic minarets whose architectural, artistic and archaeological values are very high; the other extreme is street-shading elements whose architectural and archaeological values are very low; *sabils* are between the high and the low values. On the (x) axis, one extreme is *sabils*, which stand for crucial socio-cultural and socio-economic values; minarets, which can be replaced by modern means of communication and lighting, are found on the other extreme; and street-shading structures are found somewhere in between.

▶ **Figure 4.5**
The place of minarets (a), street shading (b) and *sabils* (c) on the building/ settlement graph (BSG)

(Y)
Architectural, Aesthetic
& Archaeological values

(X)
Socio-cultural & socio-economic values
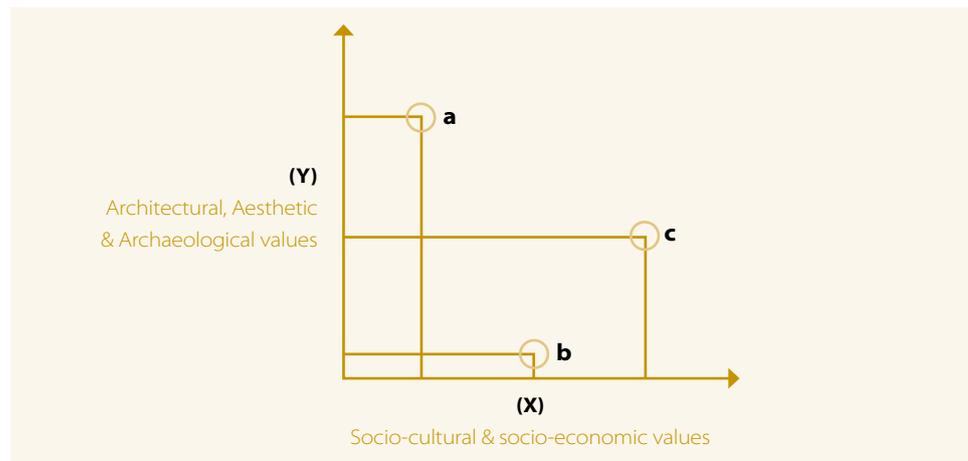
Formally, each of the three types of buildings is approached differently according to architectural, aesthetic and archaeological considerations:

a. Street shading always added a touch of colour and reflected care for passers-by on the streets of old Cairo. As temporary structures, the shading was fixed and removed according to convenience. None of the formal conservation operations in Cairo kept or restored the wires, threads and fabrics of street-shading structures. However, permanent shading structures were formally restored (Figure 4.6). This feature did not appear in the new formally designed streets and buildings in the modern, formal part of town.
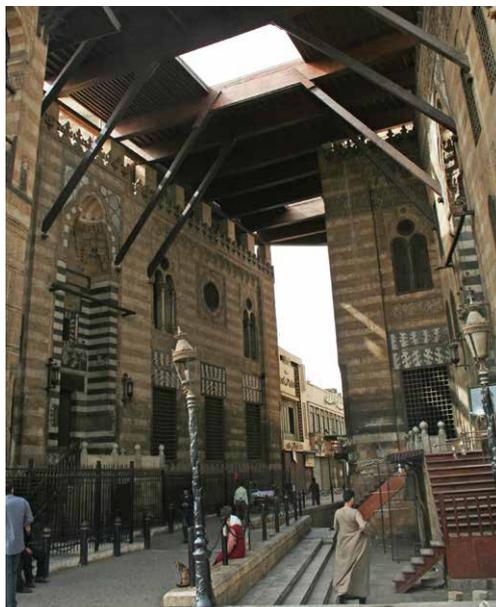
▶ **Figure 4.6**
Formally restored permanent shading structure of al-Ghuri

b. *Sabils* also reflected care given to the passers-by on the streets of Cairo. They were located at focal points in the streets to provide passers-by with pleasant resting points in their travels throughout Cairo. When formally restored, their function came to a halt (Figure 4.7). In the new formally designed streets of modern Cairo, nothing has been planned that can equal the old *sabils*.
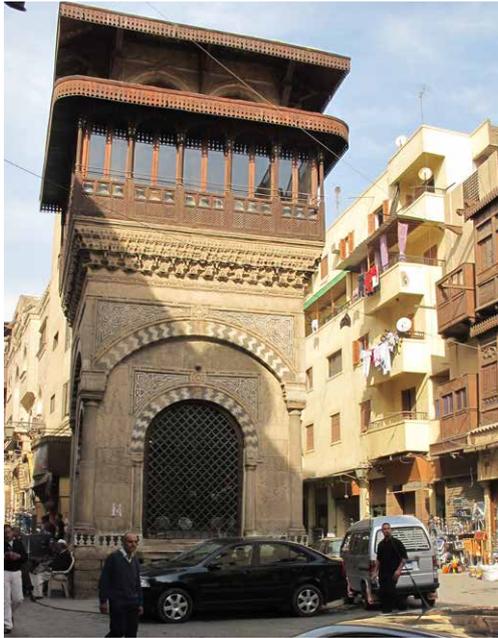
◀ **Figure 4.7**
The formally restored *Sabil-Kuttab* of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda

c. Minarets have come to be symbols of Islam. They had multiple functions – providing lighting, broadcasting the call to prayer, and sometimes announcing important messages to the population. When formally conserved, minarets are restored only as monuments (Figure 4.8). In new formally designed mosques, minarets are also built as monuments.

◀ **Figure 4.8**
The formally restored minaret of al-Ashraf Barsbay *madrasa*. The loudspeakers were not included in the restoration project but were installed informally by the local community

The formal approach to conservation allocates to a historic building the difficult position of a large (y) axis value and very small (x) axis value on the BSG (Figure 4.9).

▶ **Figure 4.9**
The place of minarets (a), street shading (b) and *sabils* (c) on the building/settlement graph (BSG) after formal conservation.

(Y)
Architectural, Aesthetic
& Archaeological values

a

c

b

(X)
Socio-cultural & socio-economic values
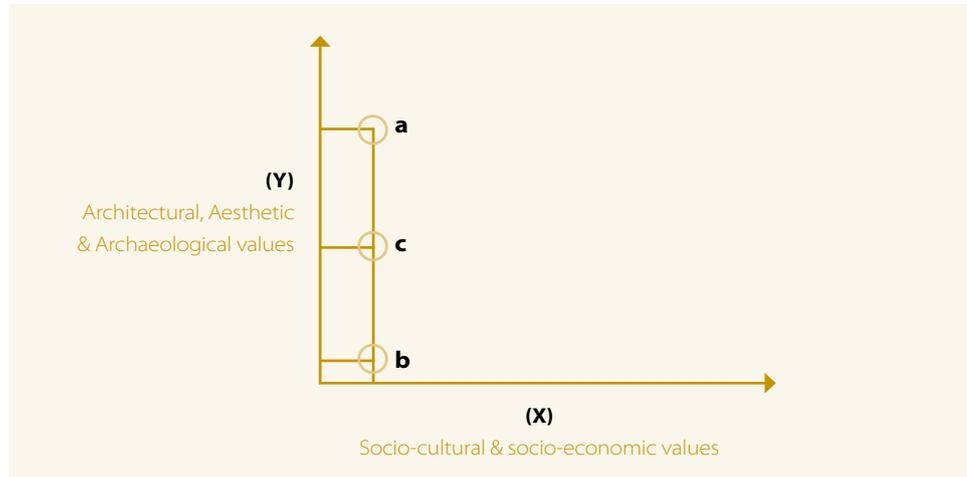
The same three types of buildings should highlight the informal approach to conservation:

a. Informal temporary structures for street shading have always been important features of street life in Cairo, old and new (Figure 4.10).
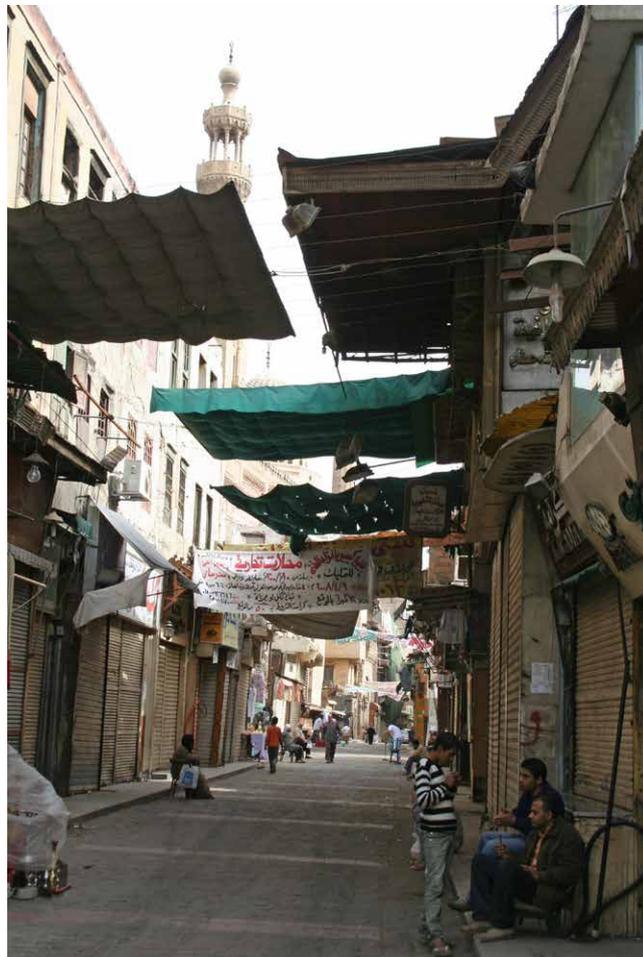
▶ **Figure 4.10**
Informal street shading

b. After historic *sabils* were formally excluded from today's street life in Cairo, much less elegant arrangements have appeared informally and have taken over the function and meaning that historic *sabils* fulfilled in the past (Figures 4.11 and 4.12).
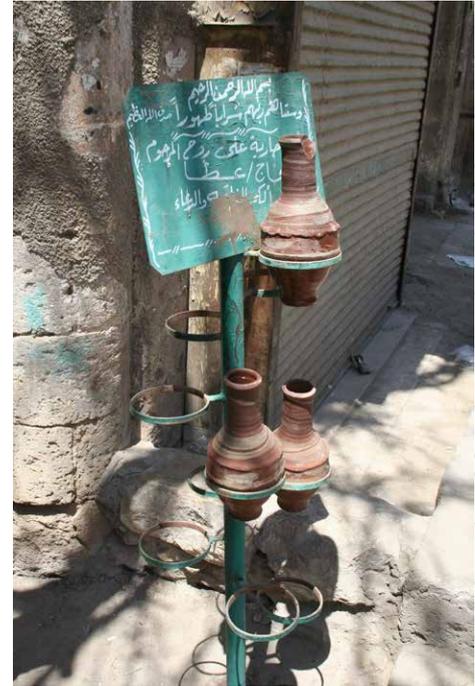
c. Historic minarets did continue their functions, but informally, local inhabitants provided them with loudspeakers and lamps (Figure 4.13). In modern informal mosques, minarets are cheap little structures, such as a stick with two loudspeakers on top, or even as a loudspeaker attached to one of the neighbouring buildings.

▲ **Figure 4.11, 4.12**
An informal *sabil*
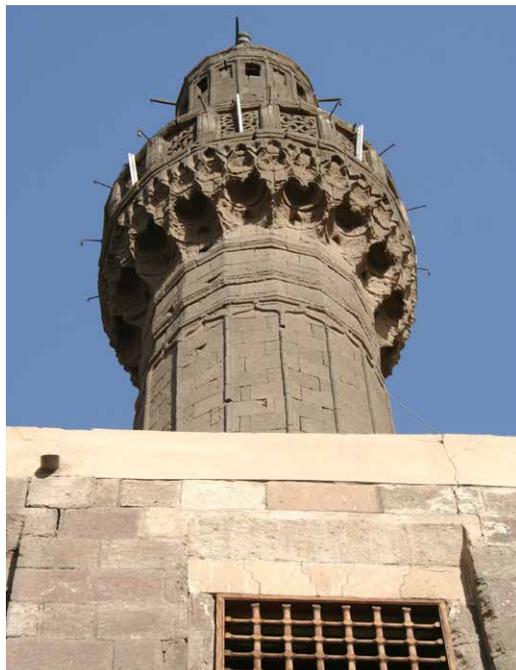
◀ **Figure 4.13**
Neon lamps installed informally on the Ottoman minaret of the al-Fakahani Mosque

d. After informal conservation operations, these buildings retain their socio-cultural and socio-economic values, represented on the (x) axis, while losing most of their architectural, aesthetic and archaeological values, represented on the (y) axis, on the BSG (Figure 4.14).

▶ **Figure 4.14**
The place of minarets (a), street shading (b) and *sabils* (c) on the building/settlement graph (BSG) after informal conservation
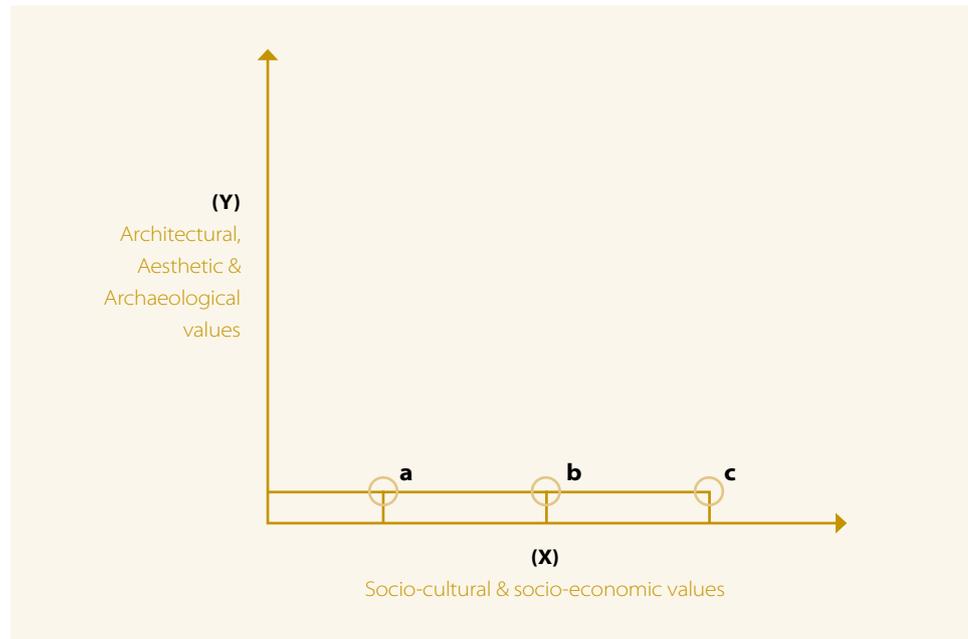
4.2 A catalogue of observed approaches to conservation of the built heritage

Different, sometimes contradictory approaches to the conservation of the built heritage can be clearly observed in Cairo. An approach considered appropriate by some may be denounced as unethical by others. What may be called an act of vandalism by conservation professionals may be a sincere manifestation of deeply rooted values by the local community. Irrespective of how unjustifiable an act may seem, it is worth observing and reflecting on its possible motives. A simple right/wrong judgment is too shallow and will not lead to a profound understanding of the reasons and motivations behind different approaches.

A hypothetical conservation case study will help to understand and appreciate the implicit and explicit values that motivate different approaches. This does not imply that all approaches are professionally sound, nor offer a catalogue of ready-made approaches for architects and planners to choose from. Rather, the idea is to be aware of the existence and the extent of different approaches, and to consider them in conservation plans and efforts.

The hypothetical conservation case study is based on an assumption that Bab Zuwayla and the al-Mu'ayad Mosque need conservation. The question is: what should be done? The following method has been proposed for understanding how different approaches are manifested in different interventions to the same heritage situation.

Bab Zuwayla is the most famous gate of Cairo, both for its aesthetic and archaeological values, and for its place in the city's history and culture. The gate, with the addition of the two minarets of al-Mu'ayad Mosque, became a religious, national and urban symbol (Figure 4.15). Hypothetically, the state of the site would be as follows (Figure 4.16):

- The actual gate, built in the Fatimid period, is intact.
- One of the two Mamluk minarets is partially destroyed.
- The other Mamluk minaret has an Ottoman-style crown on it.
- The Mamluk Mosque of al-Mu'ayad, which was integrated within the city walls, is found in a ruinous state.
- A multi-story modern residential building from the 1960s is built close to the gate.
- There is great pressure to build more residential buildings as well as public buildings and services such as a mosque, a school, a post office and other buildings to meet the needs created by the dramatic growth of population in Cairo.
- There is pressure to adapt the site to prepare it for foreign mass tourism.

◄ **Figure 4.15**
Bab Zuwayla in 2008
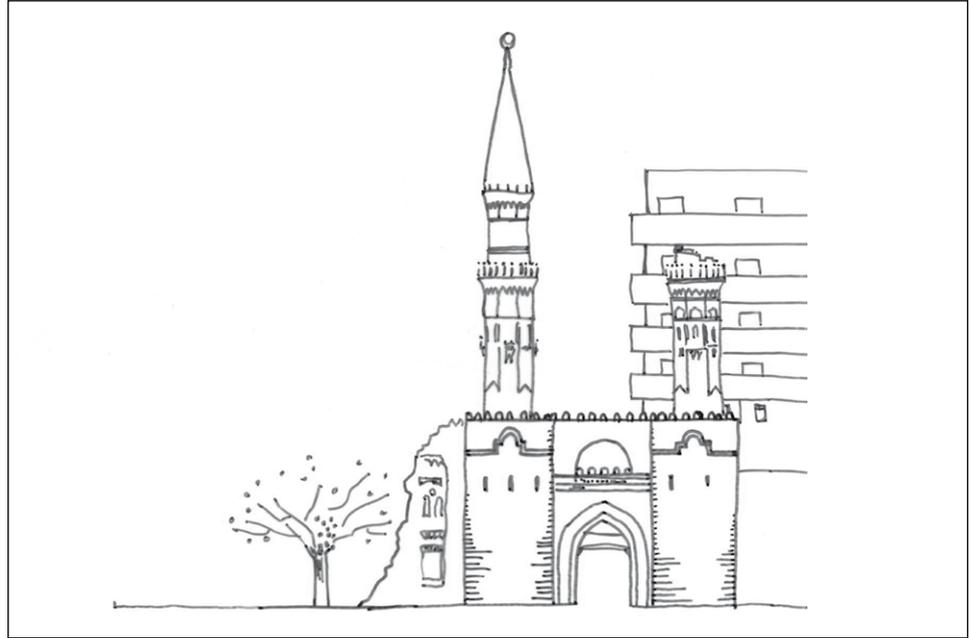
The following catalogue of observed possible approaches is designed to illustrate how different attitudes would lead to different conservation interventions for the hypothetical conservation case study on two main levels: the heritage building and the immediate urban surroundings. The selected approaches are intended to represent actual approaches towards the conservation of the built heritage in Cairo that have been observed over many years and in numerous buildings, sites and historic areas.

4.2.1 Conservation as anti-restoration
The fabric of the heritage (i.e. both the Bab Zuwayla and al-Mu'ayad Mosque) is preserved in its present state; only minimum interventions are applied to prevent or to slow down deterioration. No restoration, alteration or addition is accepted (Figure 4.17).

The archaeological value of the heritage and the aesthetic value of the impact of time are considered the main values to be conserved. The writings of John Ruskin inspire this approach.

In Cairo, this anti-restoration approach is applied where there is no strong pressure to restore the mosque or rebuild it in order to perform prayers and other related functions. It is also applied where there is a lack of sufficient interest in heritage by the tourism industry, as in the case of the mosque and *khanqah* of Nizam al-Din in the desert cemetery area (Figure 4.18).
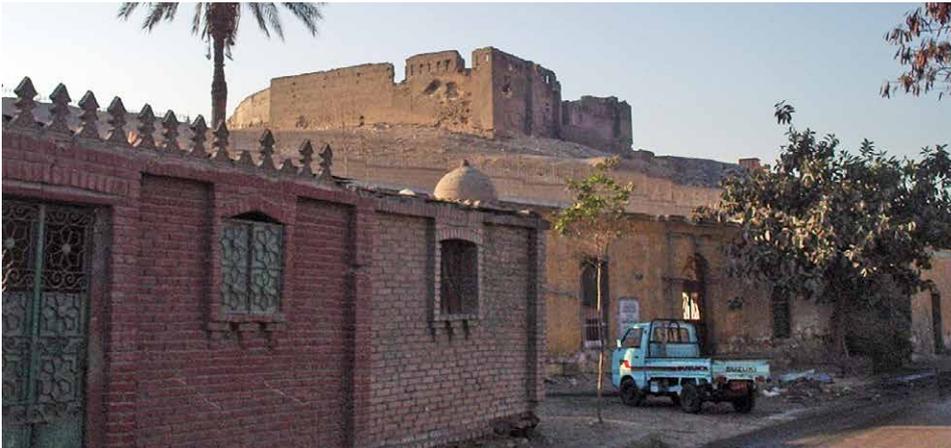
◀ **Figure 4.18**
The mosque and *khanqah* of Nizam al-Din in al-Hattaba

The decision not to restore is often adopted formally when there is a lack of funds or political interest in the heritage; this is not necessarily based on principle. Informally, this approach often invites vandalism or encroachment since it is felt by the local community that the heritage is a wasteland in the heart of the urban fabric.

4.2.2 Conservation as an old-fashioned archaeological exercise
Here, heritage is cut off from the socio-economic and cultural life of the local community; it is treated as an archaeological island or as a museum object (Figure 4.19). Access to the site is either not permitted or allowed through paid admission during working hours, with little or no consideration of the non-archaeological significance of the heritage.
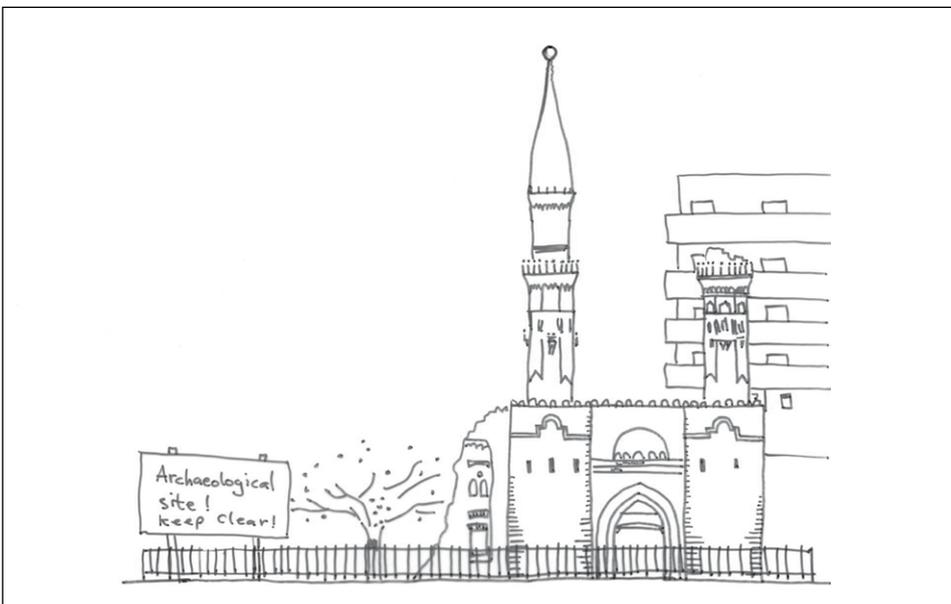

◀ **Figure 4.19**
Conservation as an old-fashioned archaeological exercise

The fabric of the heritage is conserved as a document of archaeological and historic importance. Excavations, investigations and testing are major on-site activities. Although developments in the field of archaeology have led to a more accessible, transparent and democratic approach towards archaeology, old-fashioned management of archaeological sites continues to be the norm in Cairo. Here, this approach is adopted when the archaeological value is believed to be very high, or when much of the heritage has disappeared and there is no documentary evidence to guide its restoration or reconstruction; *Qubbat* Yunes al-Dawadar is a good example of this approach (Figure 4.20).

▶ **Figure 4.20**
Qubbat Yunis al-Dawadar in al-Hattaba
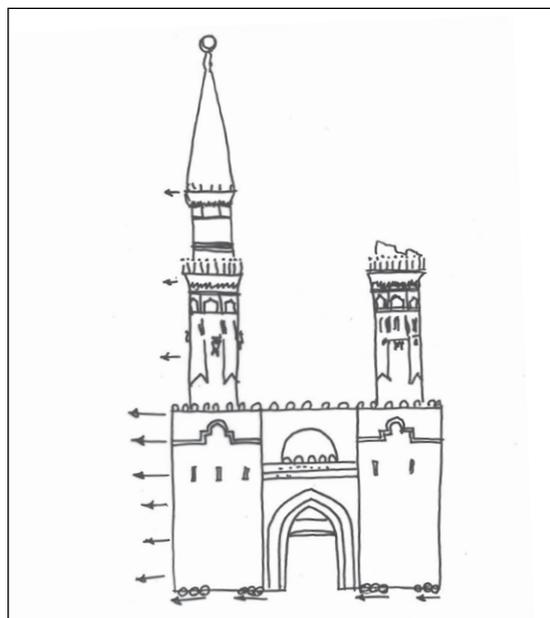
▶ **Figure 4.21**
Conservation on wheels

The local community usually becomes indifferent to the heritage as a result of this approach. It was found in some cases that people who had lived next to the site all of their lives did not know its name, history or significance. They did not feel that it belonged or related to them in their everyday life.

4.2.3 Conservation on wheels

The heritage is moved to a new site, not far from the original one, to allow for better vehicular movement. The historic building may also be moved to a fairly distant site to save it from the pressures of its original setting (Figure 4.21).

Although the archaeological and aesthetic values of the heritage are appreciated, context and associations are given much less importance. The socio-economic and socio-cultural needs of the modern city are not considered as an extension of the historic city.

This approach has been evident in Cairo since the beginning of the late 19th-century modernization projects of the Department of Public Works and the *Comité*. An example is the moving of the *zawiya* and *sabil* of Farag Ibn Barquq a few metres back in order to widen al-Darb al-Ahmar Street in front of Bab Zuwayla. Until today, this approach was adopted where there was strong pressure for urban renewal or widening streets to improve vehicular movement. At times, a heritage historic building is elevated to a higher level to cope with the rise in the street level and to escape the surface water

◀ **Figure 4.22**
Zawiya of Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in al-Mu'izz Street

and rising dampness, for example, at the sites of the *zawiyat* Abdel Rahman Katkhuda in al-Mu'izz Street (Figure 4.22) and the *madrasa* of Qanibay al-Rammah in al-Naseryyah Street. Moving the heritage usually involves dismantling and reconstructing it on the new site.

The local community is usually interested in the historic building if its function is reinstated or if it attracts tourists to its new location, since tourism may help trigger a possible revitalization of the local economy.

4.2.4 Eclectic restoration or reconstruction

The Fatimid parts of the heritage are restored to their original state, while the non-Fatimid parts are reconstructed in Fatimid style even if the result is a form that never existed before (Figure 4.23).
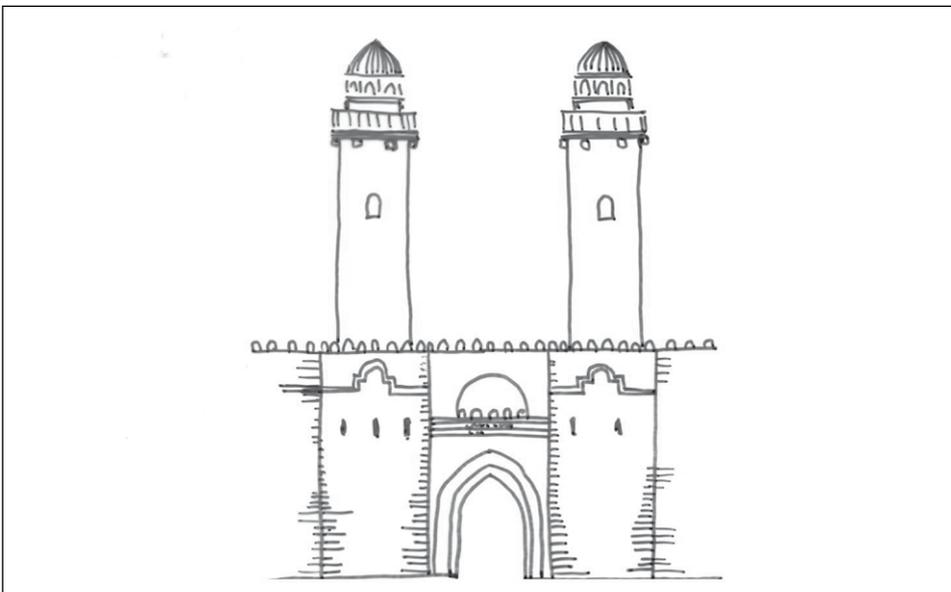
◀ **Figure 4.23**
Eclectic restoration

A consciously selected style typical of a particular historic period is restored at the expense of the remains of other periods. This approach is often motivated by ideological, national or religious reasons; at times, it is motivated by aesthetic preference for a particular style.

In Cairo, this approach was strongly adopted by the *Comité*. The most widespread example is the eclectic restoration of minarets. Mamluk minarets, which were repaired in the Ottoman period, are reconstructed according to a Mamluk idealized form. The same approach is adopted in Cairo today in many conservation interventions. Nevertheless, as there is more exposure to the literature of the international conservation movement, this form of historic purity is becoming less popular among SCA conservationists. The Ministry of *Awqaf*, however, adopts this eclectic approach with regard to mosques that are highly popular due to their associations with the Prophet's descendants, such as al-Sayyida Zaynab and al-Sayyida 'A'isha (Figure 4.24), which were reconstructed in a Neo-Mamluk style for purely aesthetic preferences. It should be noted that the choice of the Neo-Mamluk style was made in the first half of the 20th century, probably under the great influence of the *Comité*. It was seen as the truly Egyptian style, as opposed to the Ottoman style that was considered Turkish. Until today, the Neo-Mamluk style is selected for mosque reconstructions without much reflection. A recent example is the reconstruction of the Fatma al-Nabaweya Mosque in al-Darb al-Ahmar area.

▶ **Figure 4.24**
Al-Sayyida 'Ai'sha Mosque

For the local community, this approach elicits interest and appreciation mainly for economic, socio-cultural and religious reasons. The community welcomes the restorations and reconstructions because they revitalize the local economy. Also, if a reconstruction reinstates and even improves the building's religious functions, then religious sentiments guarantee local positive approaches.

4.2.5 Restoration
The Mamluk style is considered superior to later styles. Accordingly, the Ottoman repairs and additions are dismantled. The entire mosque and the minarets are restored to their original Mamluk state according to the available documentation and comparative stylistic studies (Figure 4.25).
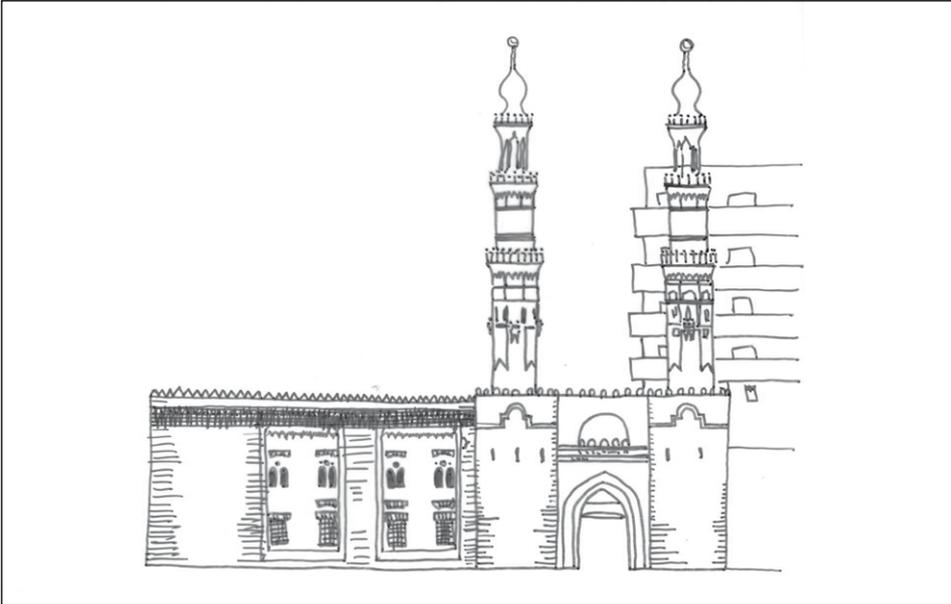
Restoration

In this case, the aesthetic value is more important than the authenticity of the heritage fabric. The allegedly correct style is given greater emphasis at the expense of authenticity and indeed of all other values such as socio-economic, socio-cultural and religious aspects. The main tool of this approach consists of analytical comparative studies of an architectural style; the main objective is unity of style.

In Cairo, this type of restoration was widely adopted by the *Comité*, whose restoration of al-Mu'ayad Mosque is a good example. Today, the same approach is adopted by the SCA in many of its interventions, including al-Mu'ayad Mosque. Again, this is not for theoretical or philosophical reasons, but rather is a continuation of practices that have always been followed and which the *Comité* started (Figure 4.26).


◀ **Figure 4.26**
The restored *riwaqs* of al-Mu'ayyad Mosque

4. Understanding current approaches in context

Although unintended, the restoration of the mosque and its minarets boosts the functional, religious and socio-economic values of the building. Therefore, it is usually appreciated by – and elicits positive attitudes from – the local community. Regardless of the style of the building and the extent of authenticity of the heritage fabric, such restoration is positive in terms of the socio-economic and socio-cultural needs of the local community.

4.2.6 Conservation of the building's function

The function of both the gate and the mosque are enhanced regardless of archaeological or aesthetic values (Figure 4.27).
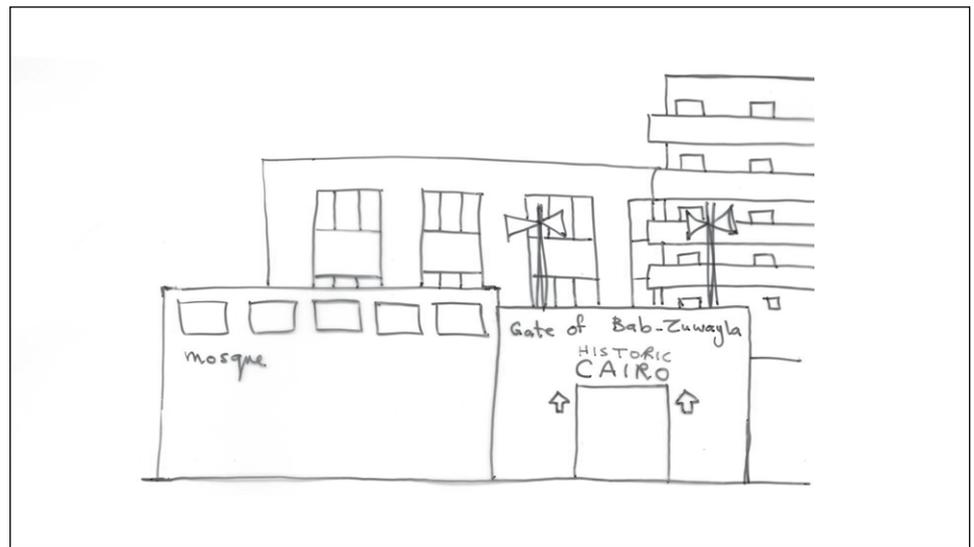
▶ **Figure 4.27**
Conservation of the building's function

The functional value of the historic building is given priority at the expense of other values, usually in response to strong socio-economic pressures.


▶ **Figure 4.28**
An informal *sabil* and drinking pot for street cats and dogs. This arrangement preserves the Cairene tradition of combining sabils with drinking troughs for animals

This approach seems 'modern' because it values function in a practical, simple sense, and yet, it is very much an extension of pre-modern approaches when interventions in historic buildings were executed according to the style of the time, regardless of their original styles.

In Cairo, this approach is understandably adopted by the informal sector since it is mainly concerned with the basic survival needs of people who have no access to education or an understanding of historical and aesthetic values. The widespread informal *sabils* in the city are a good example of this approach (Figure 4.28). The Ministry of *Awqaf,* the owner and manager of mosques, is devoted to conserving functions, an aspect important for historic mosques. In some cases, in order to guarantee high functionality, a mosque is totally demolished and rebuilt to fulfil modern functional criteria.

4.2.7 Rehabilitation for adaptive reuse

The heritage fabric is rehabilitated and adapted in support of the surviving original functions (i.e. the mosque and *madrasa*) and newly introduced functions (e.g. post office, shops, restaurant and café), which are designed to serve the community and tourists (Figure 4.29).
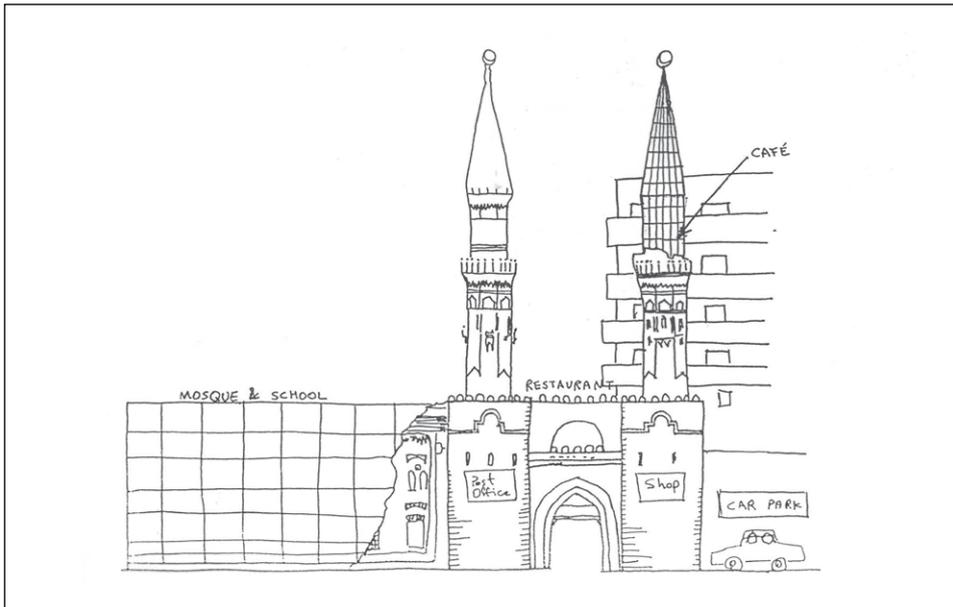

◀ **Figure 4.29**
Rehabilitation for adaptive reuse

This approach is based on the conviction that the use of the heritage is a guarantee for its sustained conservation. The building is rehabilitated so as to host the surviving original functions, if applicable, and/or to introduce suitable new functions that do not cause harm to the heritage fabric. The Venice Charter is the basis for the philosophy underlying this approach, providing the criteria for the alterations that may be made in the historic fabric to host new functions.

In Cairo, this reuse approach is restricted by the SCA. In most cases, the SCA shows little sensitivity toward both the original function of the building and the actual needs of the local community. An example of this lack of sensitivity is the reuse of the *sabil-kuttab* of Sultan Qaytbay on al-Saliba Street (Figure 4.30) by adapting it as a library and a cinema club. Other examples are the adaptive reuse of a number of historic houses and *wakalas* as cultural centres by the MoC (Figure 4.31).

▲ **Figure 4.30**
The rehabilitation of the *sabil-kuttab* of Qaytbay in al-Saliba Street as a special library and a cinema club

▼ **Figure 4.31**
The rehabilitation of *wakala* al-Ghuri as a cultural centre for the performing arts, mainly for foreign tourists.
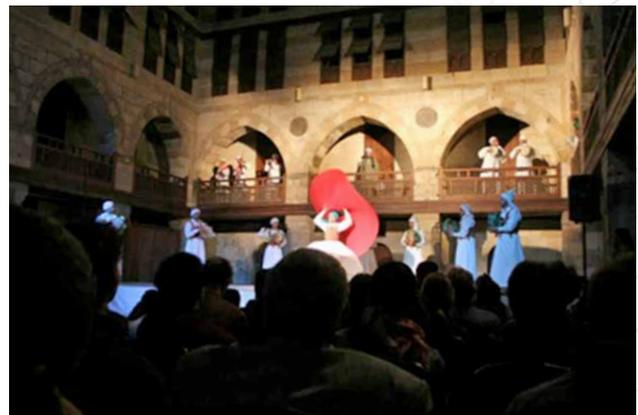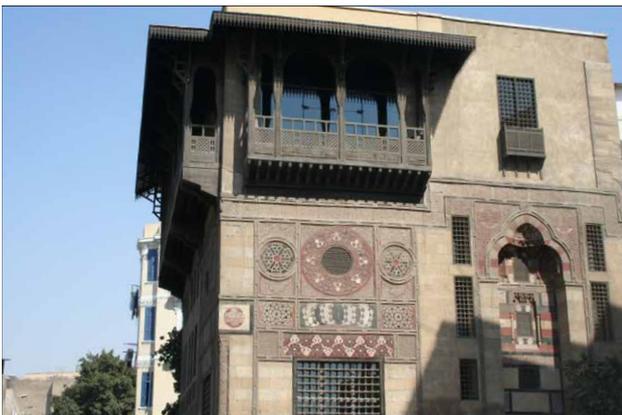
In essence, rehabilitation for adaptive reuse strives to strike a balance between the archaeological and aesthetic values of the built heritage on one hand, and the socio-economic and socio-cultural values of the people on the other. However, as all rehabilitation projects executed to date are aimed at tourists or middle-class Egyptians, they rarely elicit positive attitudes from the local community. Also, some rehabilitation projects are not sensitive enough to the archaeological values of the heritage. Thus, many SCA archaeologists and decision-makers are categorically against adaptive reuse.

4.2.8 Conservation according to the 'living nature' of the heritage

Here, the gate is isolated from urban life and treated as a fenced-off archaeological site, whereas the mosque is reconstructed to function according to local convenience and taste (Figure 4.32).
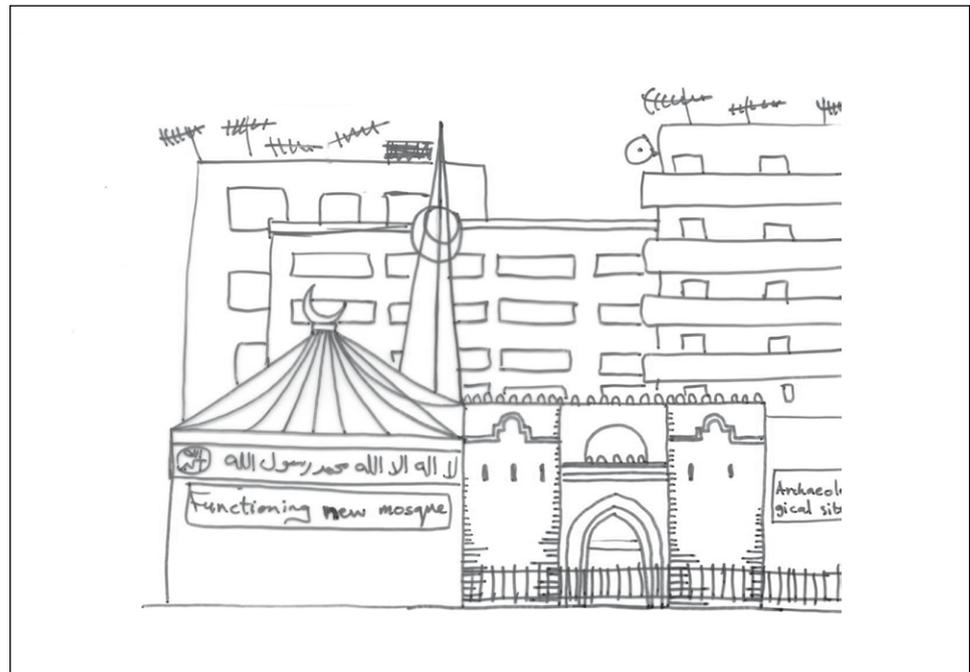
▶ **Figure 4.32**
Conservation according to the
'living nature' of the heritage

There is a clear distinction between 'living' and 'dead' heritage. A historic building is considered dead heritage if it no longer functions in the everyday life of the city; it is conserved as archaeological evidence and as a historical document. However, with respect to a living heritage building that plays an active role in the life of the city, the archaeological and historical values are not considered a priority.

This approach is adopted for living heritage buildings of outstanding religious value. This is likely due to the impossibility of suppressing a highly popular religious function without causing great social unrest. Usually, non-religious functions or religious functions that are not highly popular are suppressed in favour of archaeological, historical and aesthetic values.

If the laws for the protection of archaeological heritage were not as strict as they are, informal conservation would have applied this approach extensively to listed buildings. Encroachments and illegal alterations to shops under Mamluk and Ottoman mosques in Cairo may be seen as reflections of this attitude to heritage by the local community (Figure 4.33).

Illegal alterations to shops
under al-Fakahani Mosque

4.2.9 Refusal of conservation

Here, the heritage building is destroyed to allow for new development of the site according
to the socio-economic and socio-cultural needs of the local community (Figure 4.34).
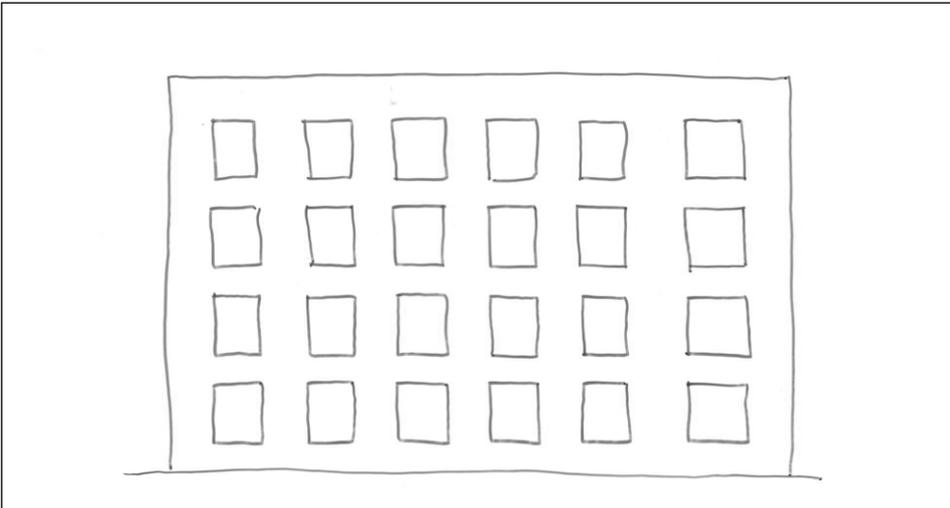
◀ **Figure 4.34**
Complete refusal of
conservation

Such a refusal of conservation can be complete or partial: a complete refusal refers to a
conscious demolition of historic buildings; and partial refusal can be manifested in the
destruction of one or more aspects or parts of the heritage building.

Formally, this approach towards listed buildings in Cairo does not exist. However, outside
the protected heritage, this is an approach adopted by many entrepreneurs, architects
and planners (Figure 4.35). Informally, this approach prevails when the local community is
suffering and its basic needs are not secured; according to the hierarchy of needs, in this
case, heritage is far from being a top priority.

4.2.10 Revival of traditional crafts

Handmade decorative architectural and decorative elements are attached to the adjacent modern building (Figure 4.36) and to any other building in the vicinity, with the aim of harmonizing the context of the heritage. Consequently, traditional crafts needed for this intervention are revitalized.
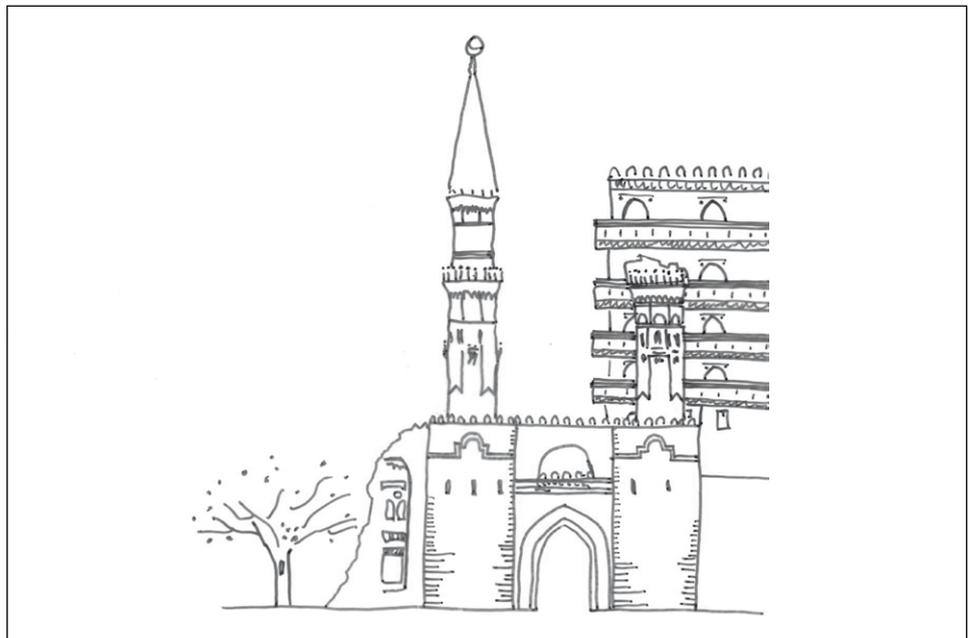
▶ **Figure 4.36**
Revival of traditional crafts

This approach is inspired by nostalgia for a pre-industrial age and nourished by the growth of mass tourism; however, the tourism industry encourages the production of cheap, mass-produced versions of the traditional crafts.

In Cairo, this approach is often adopted by the local authorities with the aim of creating a harmonious local context. In other instances, it is backed by the tourism industry with the aim of creating an attractive context for visitors to the heritage site.

In some situations, this approach is adopted informally without access to professional resources, which may lead to the creation of *kitsch* or pseudo-historic elements. Façade treatments of many privately-owned buildings along the north section of Shari' al-Mu'izz are some good examples (Figure 4.37). In some cases, the local authorities were responsible for creating such façades, whereas in others, it was the Ministry of Culture within the framework of the Historic Cairo Restoration Project (HCRP). Proximity to Khan al-Khalili bazaar also encourages the widespread use of these elements within its vicinity. Another obvious example for this faux Islamic/Arabic style is the ventilating shafts of al-Azhar tunnel for cars (Figure 4.38).

◀ **Figure 4.37**
A residential building constructed in the 1960s in al-Mu'izz Street. The façade was embellished with wooden lattice work and the building rehabilitated as a hotel


◀ **Figure 4.38**
A ventilating shaft of al-Azhar car tunnel

Historians and professionals of heritage conservation do not usually agree with this hybridizing approach. They see it as falsifying the history of the urban environment, even though it is generally accepted that raising the demand for traditional crafts is an important aspect of conservation and a good job-generator for the local community. Traditional vernacular *balady* taste in general embraces the embellishment of objects and buildings, and thus appreciates this ornamentalizing approach. According to popular religious trends, arts and crafts from the pre-modern Islamic periods are reproduced with religious sentiment.

4.2.11 Refusal of new architectural vocabulary

Here, nearby modern buildings are torn down and no modern buildings are permitted within the immediate urban fabric in order to prevent any eyesore within the urban context of the heritage site (Figure 4.39).
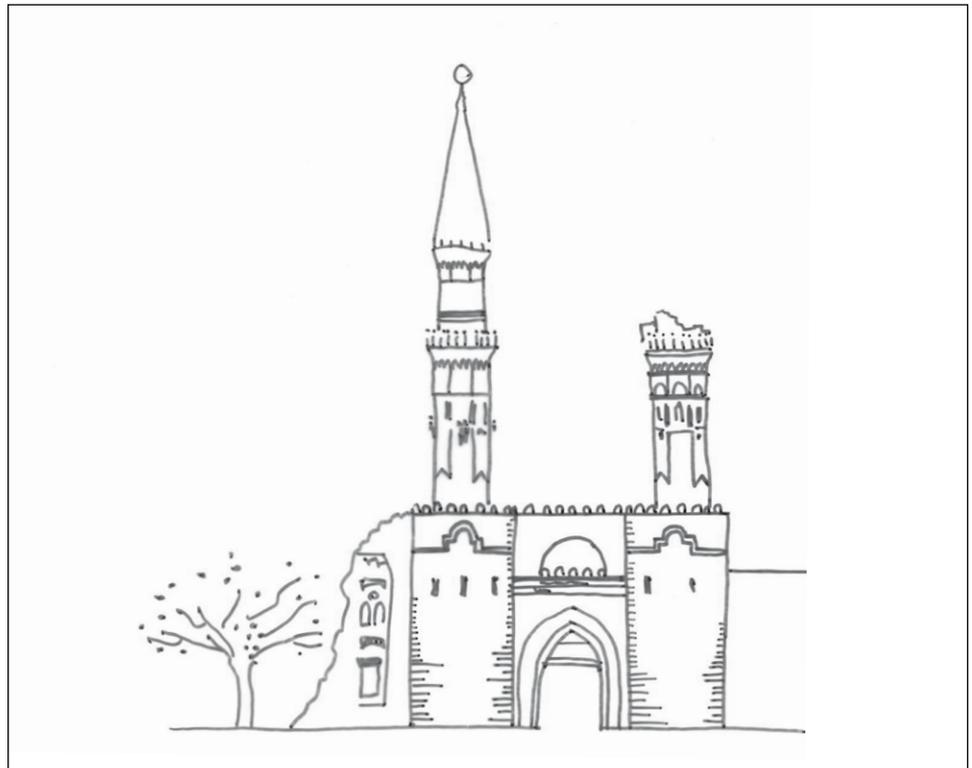
▶ **Figure 4.39**
Refusal of new architectural vocabulary

The buffer zone concept is strictly imposed regardless of socio-economic or socio-cultural issues. The ethical and legal justifications for the severity of this approach are rooted in the Egyptian Law on the Protection of Antiquities. The socio-economic and socio-cultural consequences of this approach may be too damaging. When modern buildings are demolished, their inhabitants, who were part of the social fabric of the heritage, are removed from the historic city, and as a result, many of the living traditions, which are an important aspect of the intangible heritage of the city, are lost.

This approach to altering the heritage context is adopted when the archaeological value of the heritage is high and the cost of demolishing newer buildings, together with compensations and other consequences, is affordable. Great tourism potential often makes this approach attractive. A good example is the northern walls of Cairo (Figure 4.40): a row of residential buildings in Haret al-'Utuf was demolished due to its proximity to the northern walls and Bab al-Futuh.

Bab al-Futuh and the northern walls of Cairo where a new architectural vocabulary is not allowed

As should be expected, this approach is strongly resented by the local community. In some cases the implementation is resisted. This can be very serious to the point where the heritage building is subjected to vandalism or other forms of illegal destructive actions.

4.2.12 Revival of historic styles

New buildings are constructed within the vicinity of the heritage using an architectural 'vocabulary' inspired by the heritage building. The rules or the 'grammar' that was originally used in the heritage are not fully observed. Vocabulary from different periods and places is often mixed and matched in the new building. The depth of this historical architectural vocabulary does not usually go beyond a building façade (Figure 4.41).
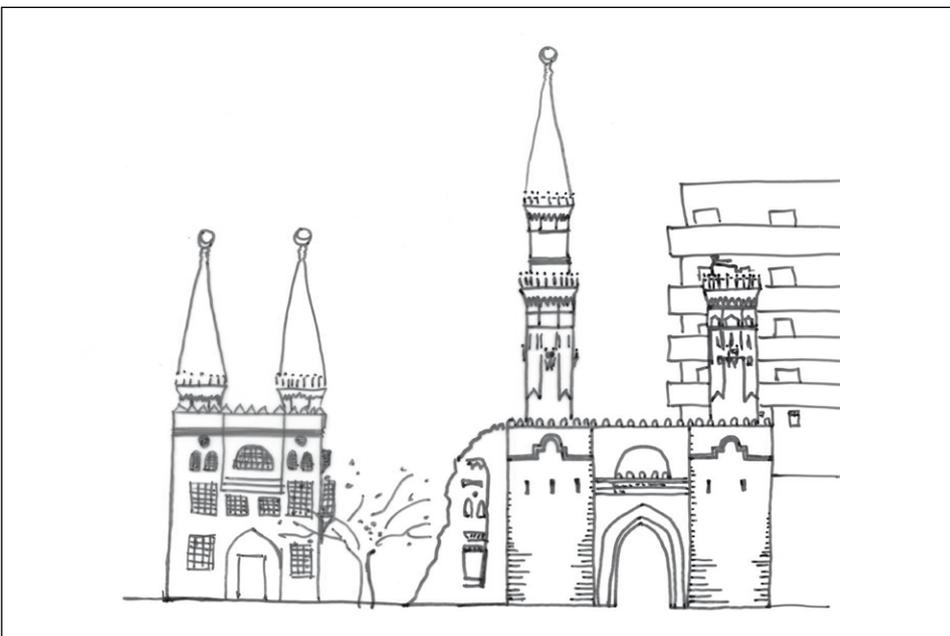
◀ **Figure 4.41**
Revival of historic styles

The use of this vocabulary can be motivated by romantic nostalgia or by commercialization of the heritage image. The aim is to revive historic styles as a form of conservation. This approach is often motivated by the search for identity by architects, planners and local authorities.

This approach was fashionable from 1870 to 1930 as 'neo-Arabic Renaissance' façades spread throughout the city; nevertheless, it was always European at heart. It flourished mainly because of the Europeans living in Cairo, as in the case of Heliopolis. It was then adopted by Egyptians to indicate their search for Islamic identity, as in the administrative building of al-Azhar (Figure 3.42). Today, this approach is adopted by Egyptians searching for identity of place and those investing in foreign mass tourism. Examples are provided by the Hilltop Café building at al-Azhar Park built by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and the training centre designed by Bahaa Bakri built on al-Mu'izz Street (Figure 4.43).

▶ **Figure 4.42**
The administrative building of al-Azhar

▶ **Figure 4.43**
A training centre built in 2008 with the use of historic architectural vocabulary

For the local community – for whom identity of place is intangible rather than tangible, and invisible rather than visual – this seems to be an unnecessarily expensive intellectual luxury.

4.2.13 Revival of historic concepts and principles

A new building is constructed in the vicinity of the heritage with no visual reference to the architectural historical vocabulary, but the design concept is based on the philosophy and traditional wisdom that produced the heritage building, such as wind-catchers and courtyards (Figure 4.44).
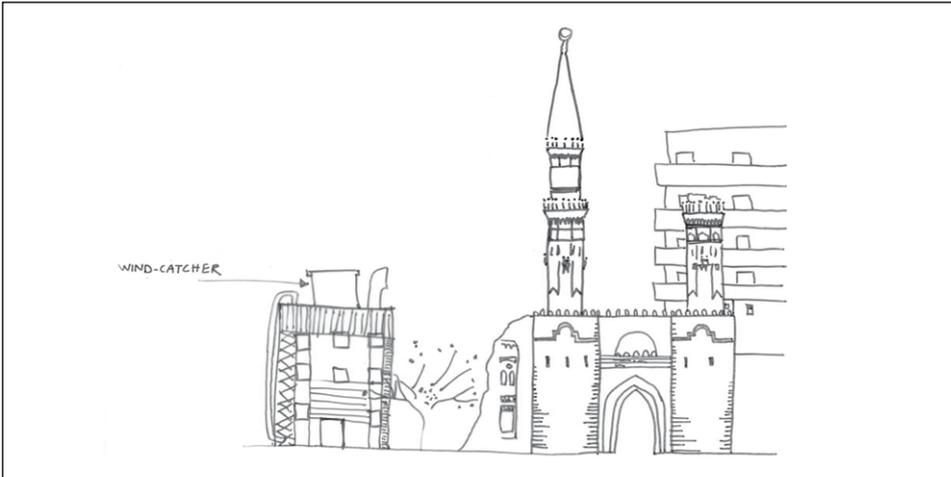
◀ **Figure 4.44**
Revival of historic concepts and principles

This approach is motivated by the search for a balance between respect for traditional wisdom and its use, and the adoption of modern advances in technology and design. This approach is adopted by architects and intellectuals searching for a distinctive Islamic architectural philosophy, which is also modern. It builds on past achievements while adapting to current needs and requirements.

In the historic quarters of Cairo, all formal stakeholders are more concerned with the harmony of the visual context than with the philosophy behind architecture. However, there are some exceptions. These include the high-tech street shading devices outside al-Husayn Mosque, which were manufactured in Germany based on designs by Egyptian architect Muhammad Kamal, who also designed the renovations and expansion for the Prophet's Mosque in Medina (Figure 4.45). The street shading devices were commissioned by the al-Husayn Mosque Committee under the auspices of the Ministry of *Awqaf*, and not of the SCA or the MoC.


◀ **Figure 4.45**
High-tech shading devices manufactured in Germany that were designed for the Ministry of *Awqaf* by Egyptian architect Muhammad Kamal

Informally, this approach is sometimes applied in the historic quarters when an important value to the local community is ignored by formal institutions, such as with new *sabils,* street shading structures and lighting of minarets. However, the limited resources available to the informal sector do not allow for adequate application of technological advances.

4.2.14 New architectural vocabulary in contrast with the old
A new building, with shockingly innovative modern or post-modern architectural vocabulary, is built close to the heritage to emphasize the contrast between the two (Figure 4.46).

▶ **Figure 4.46**

Architectural vocabulary in contrast with the old

Here, this approach is based on a strong sense of historical honesty and a clear consciousness of the role of today's architecture as tomorrow's heritage. The historical honesty of the urban context is emphasized at the expense of the visual harmony and the urban character of the historic city. While the approach recognizes archaeological and aesthetic values of the heritage, it does not give them a priority with regard to the identity of place in the shaping the future character of the city.

This approach violates the Egyptian Law for the Protection of Antiquities with regard to buffer zones and the World Heritage Convention and international charters on conservation. Since the beginning of the 20th century, however, it has been widely implemented in Cairo by architects and landlords eager to add a modern touch to the city. For example residential buildings from the 1940s were built next to the Ottoman buildings of Khan al-Zarakisha and Abu al-Dhahab Mosque (Figure 4.47). These buildings were built as a conscious adoption of European modern models in contrast with the traditional heritage. The buildings are aligned with the then newly widened al-Azhar Street. This approach is also widely implemented in Cairo by the informal sector, and is usually motivated by socio-economic needs and limited access to professional resources. Historical research on the characteristics of the built heritage is an unaffordable luxury for the informal sector (Figure 4.48).

◀ **Figure 4.47**
Residential buildings from the
1940s, next to the Ottoman
buildings of Khan al-Zarakisha
and Abu al-Dhahab Mosque

◀ **Figure 4.48**
Residential buildings from the
1960s, next to and in front of
Mahmud Muharram Mosque

4.2.15 Neutral new architectural vocabulary to emphasize the old

New buildings with a mirror glass façade are erected in the vicinity of the heritage site to offer a neutral background for the heritage site and to emphasize its characteristics and qualities (Figure 4.49). The mirror is neutral since it only reflects what is already there and does not add to the visual distractions.
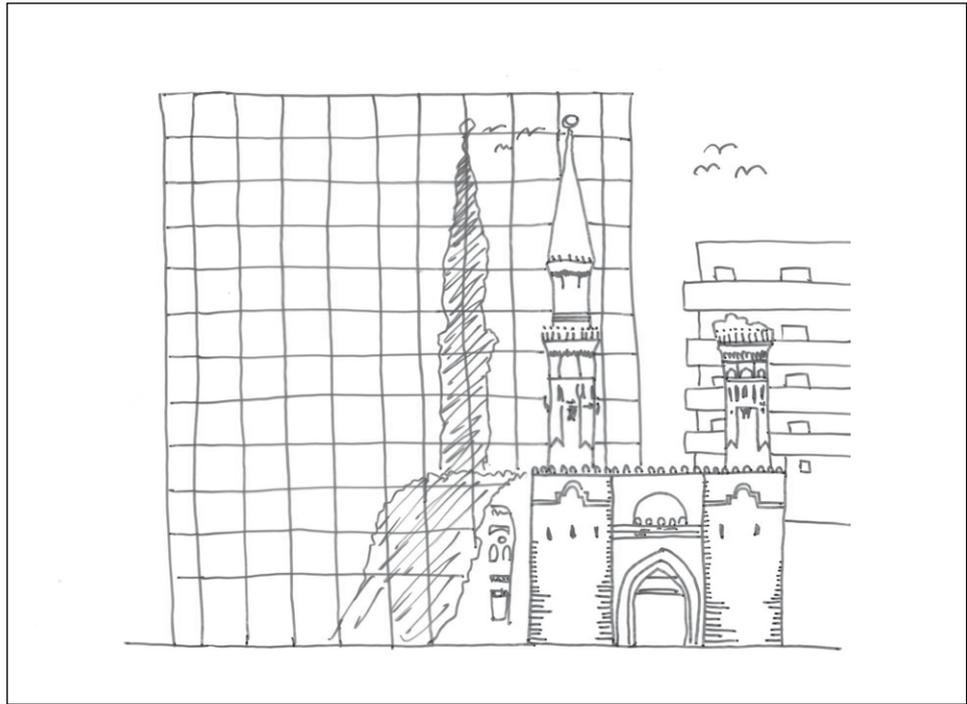
▶ **Figure 4.49**
Neutral new architectural vocabulary to emphasize the old

This approach adopts a sense of historical honesty where the architect is believed to express the culture of his time and place. However, to respect the heritage building and its archaeological, historic, symbolic and aesthetic values, the new building should not be more than a neutral background to highlight the heritage building.

This approach is not widespread in Cairo because of the buffer zone enforcement by the SCA and because neutral architecture is more of a cold-climate phenomenon. However, the informal sector adopts a less controversial version of this approach: less glass and less high-tech materials. This version is usually manifested in plain façades that may be imposing in bulk, but neutral in form.

According to the traditional wisdom in Muslim cities, the environmental behaviour of a building is crucial. Also, the design, execution, maintenance and cleaning of tall glass façades are beyond local capabilities, especially with the daily accumulation of dust from the nearby desert. Other reasons for its impracticality are the compactness of Muslim traditional urban tissue, its internally oriented architecture and the importance of privacy for Muslims.

4.2.16 Conservation zone

No modern building is permitted to be taller than the gate, so that the protective symbolic value of the gate and the spiritual symbolic value of the minarets are emphasized (Figure 4.50). Other rules may also be enforced within the framework of zone conservation, such as the use of materials and colours for façades, and the proportions of windows and other planning regulation issues.
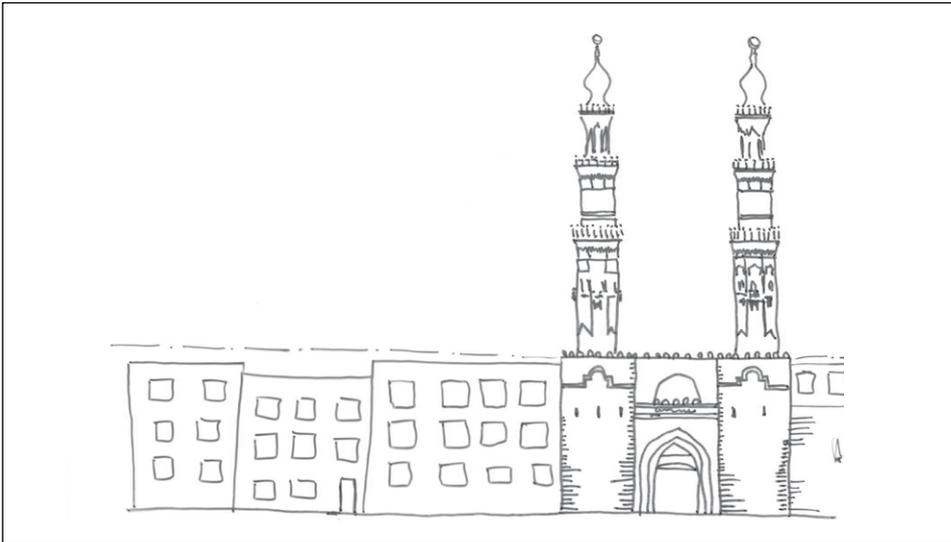
Urban conservation for a designated area is applied within its boundaries and, to a certain extent, for its defined buffer zone. Guidelines are issued for the conservation and management of old as well as new buildings. Also, streets and open public spaces are regulated.

In Cairo, this approach is applied by local authorities and other formal institutions, but with little success. The failure of formal urban conservation is mainly due to corruption, lack of cooperation between governmental departments, and insensitivity towards the socio-economic issues. The development of al-Darb al-Ahmar by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture is a good example of this approach.

Local communities do not adopt this approach since they are excluded from the decision-making process. There are no incentives for those who stand to lose by the application of zone conservation. For example, all real estate investors will lose because they will not be able to build high rise buildings and therefore the revenue from their investment will be limited. Also, vehicular traffic may be restricted by zone conservation, which may cause problems for residents and businesses that wish to have easy vehicular access to their properties. There are also many ways of circumventing the rules, which result in unfair situations for law-abiding citizens (Figure 4.51).

4.2.17 Conservation for tourism

Services for mass tourism dominate the site and its surroundings (Figure 4.52).
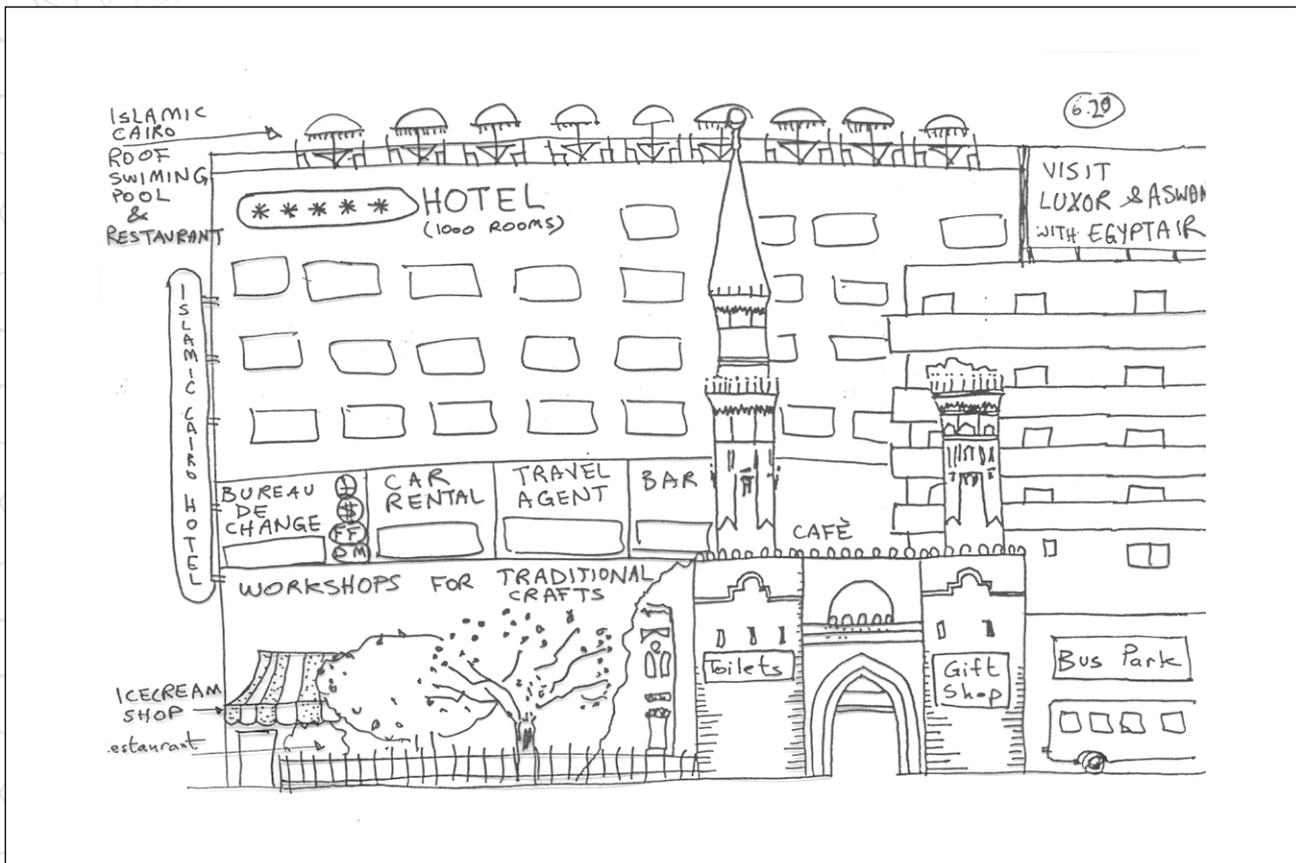
▲ **Figure 4.52**

Conservation for tourism

According to this approach, tourism is considered the best way to generate income from the archaeological, historic and aesthetic values of the heritage. It is also considered a way of eliciting positive attitudes in the local community because it generates income for many of its members and revitalizes the local economy.

The intense involvement of multi-national organizations in the tourism industry creates an unjust reality. These organizations often exercise unbearable pressure on individuals and organizations to put tourists' interests and comforts above the interests of the local community. In addition, they retain the income from tourism, and very little of it trickles down to the local economy. Adapting the heritage site to receive tourists may also contradict its authentic function, its role in the community and its symbolic values.

The international tourism industry in Cairo makes this approach highly desirable from a formal point of view. The informal sector also sees this approach in a positive light, since it helps to revitalize the local economy by creating job opportunities. A good example of this pro-tourism approach in Cairo is the development in and around Khan al-Khalili bazaar (Figure 4.53). Some individuals and groups within the local community, however, resist the growth of tourism-related developments; in certain situations, there is popular resistance for socio-cultural reasons, such as when foreign tourists do not observe the expected modest dress code in a traditional Muslim society, or when tourists disturb a religious celebration during the *mulid* period in al-Husayn area, which is adjacent to Khan al-Khalili bazaar (Figure 4.54).

▲ **Figure 4.53**
The area around Khan al-Khalili bazaar and in front of the al-Husayn Mosque adapted to serve mass tourism

◄ **Figure 4.54**
The area around Khan al-Khalili bazaar during the *mulid* days. The overlap of foreign mass tourism and *mulid* activities may upset the local community

4.2.18 **Ignoring or ignorance of conservation**

The heritage buildings are treated like any other building in the city (Figure 4.55).

▶ **Figure 4.55**
Ignoring or ignorance of
conservation
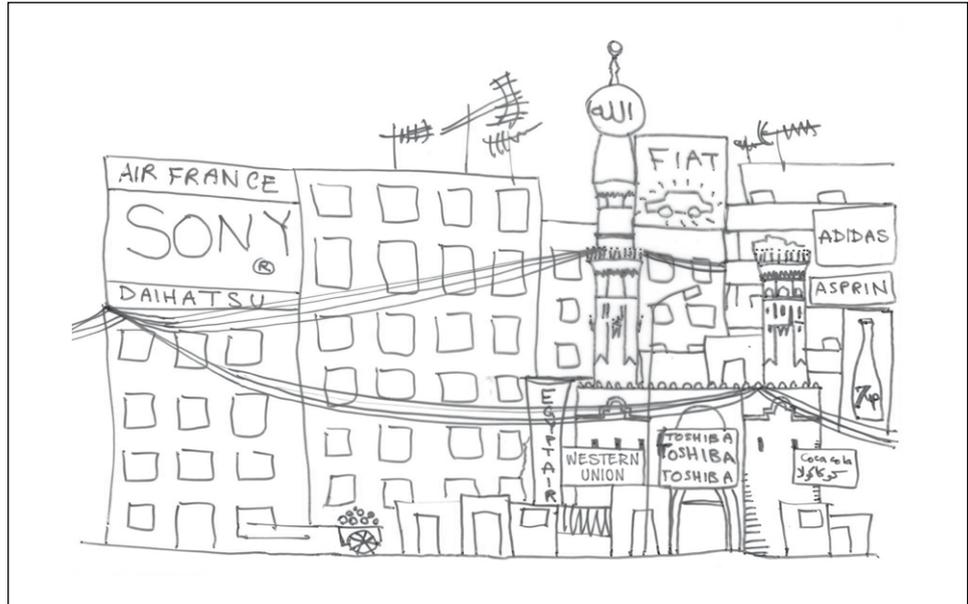
▼ **Figure 4.56**
No conservation measures
taken in Amir al-Guyush Street

◢ **Figure 4.57**
Sabil-kuttab Yusuf Agha Dar
al-Sa'ada and the adjacent
wakala in Bab al-Wazir Street,
which have been neglected for
decades. The local community
sees them as trouble and a
source of potential danger

Here, no protective measures are taken to protect the heritage, either because the values of the heritage are intentionally ignored or because they are not valued due to low levels of education and/or socio-economic hardships. This approach often leads to a slow deterioration and the eventual disappearance of the heritage, or its sudden destruction by intentional demolition or vandalism.

In Cairo, this neglect or ignorance is widespread among formal institutions with respect to the general urban heritage, to non-listed heritage buildings, and to a much lesser extent, with respect to listed buildings. It is also informally widespread. The local community is more concerned with its basic needs and the daily struggle for survival. The unnecessary separation between conservation and development plans and policies elicits negative attitudes by the local community. Examples of this approach can be seen in almost all streets of the historic quarters of Cairo (Figures 4.56 and 4.57).

5 | Conclusion

Initiatives, projects and efforts to modernize Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century introduced essential changes in the way the built heritage is conserved, its place within the cultural scene, and its meaning for different groups of Egyptians. In pre-modern Egypt, the built heritage of Cairo was conserved by non-governmental bodies within the framework of *waqf*. Conservation was part of a wider way of life generated mainly by Islam. All this changed with the introduction of new ideas and approaches from the West. In modern Egypt the built heritage and its conservation played a new role. It was used by different parties to support the identity of the newly-formed nation state. This approach led to the alienation of the built heritage from everyday life and the local communities who continued to embrace pre-modern attitudes. The consistent adoption of a secular approach to modernity, following European models by the ruling elite and the Egyptian middle classes, resulted in a division in the nation and the exclusion of the poorer, less educated and more traditionally-minded majority. Accordingly, a formal-informal divide developed in society, culture and the economy. A wide range of approaches to conservation can be observed today in Cairo as a result of these socio-cultural and socio-economic divisions among Egyptians.

The present book brought together a number of issues affecting the conservation of the built heritage in order to shed light on questions that are particular to Cairo and therefore absent from the studies of conservation in other cities. These issues are normally studied by different disciplines as diverse as folkloric studies, history, cultural and anthropological studies, economy, sociology and development studies. Further research within these disciplines is needed to better understand conservation practices and their contexts both in pre-modern and modern Cairo. The following are areas that merit more in-depth research:

- The popular culture of *ibn al-balad* and its views on the built heritage and its conservation;
- The rationale and motivations for conserving the built heritage within the framework of the Islamic value system;
- Attitudes towards the conservation of pre-Islamic as opposed to Islamic built heritage from the point of view of local communities;
- The study of the history of conservation for different historic buildings in the city within different political and socio-cultural contexts;
- The ideologies, beliefs and values of historians, travellers and archaeologists whose works are the basis of much of the established history of conservation for parts or aspects of the built heritage of Cairo;
- The place of the built heritage and its conservation in the discourse of the different political players in Cairo's history, such as colonial officials, national movement leaders, Islamist leaders and influential national post-independence figures or bodies;
- Informal socio-cultural and socio-economic trends and the way they influence the built heritage and its conservation.

The investigations of this book are relevant to other Arab cities in three ways:

1. The premise that non-Western built heritage should be investigated within its context;
2. The great impact of the modernization process which divorces non-Western cities from their traditional practices with the assumption that the Western experience produced a universal model;
3. The importance of contextualizing conservation of the built heritage and the methodology by which the investigations were carried out.

Beyond Arab and Islamic cities, the argument, approach and methodology introduced by this book are relevant to other cities located outside the West. Further research could enhance and fine-tune these conclusions, producing aspects of conservation thought that may enrich the theoretical and philosophical body that sustains the international conservation movement, as reflected in ICOMOS' charters and UNESCO's conventions and other doctrinal documents and declarations.

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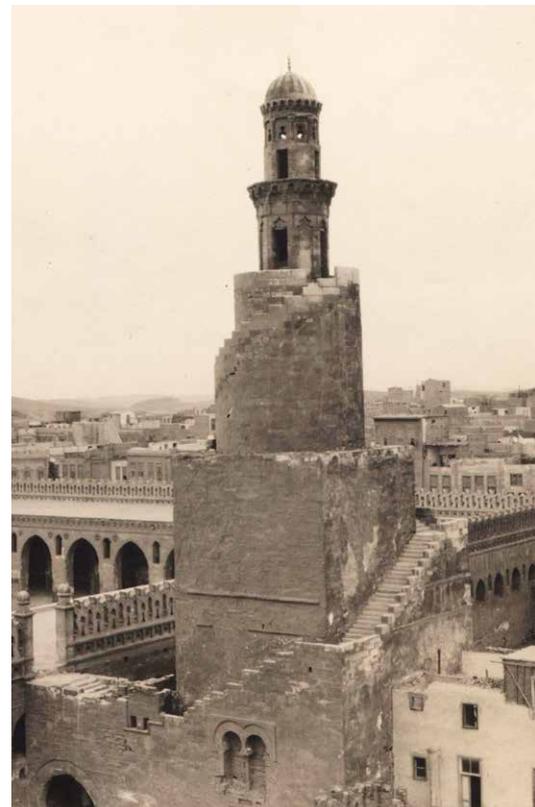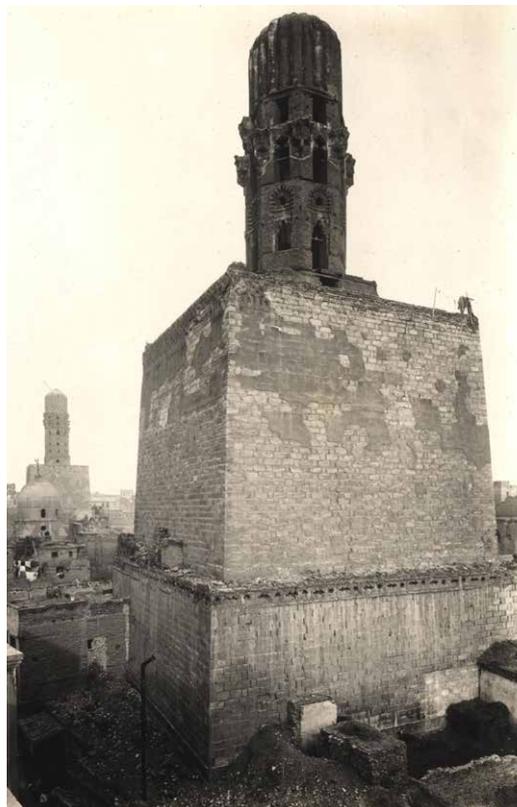
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