Drawing the Isolated Mosque

Ziad Jamaleddine
Assistant professor, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
mzj2104@columbia.edu

Abstract

From the early-nineteenth century onwards, Orientalist visual constructs heavily shaped European depictions and analyses of mosque architecture. Over time, these representations shifted from the Orientalist exoticized scenographic model to the "scientific" language of the orthographic drawing. This article analyzes that process, tracing the evolution of a series of published plan drawings for five historical mosques. Unpacking their authors' drafting techniques and examining the relationship between the isolation of the drawing and the understanding of the mosque as a timeless monument highlights the gaps of knowledge reproduced within the canonical texts of Islamic architecture and their disciplinary impact.

1 Introduction

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Western scholars produced a series of survey texts that shaped disciplinary understandings of "Islamic" architecture. These surveys and their varied representations of the built environment reflected the cultural and intellectual context of their production. As the survey book became the arbiter of historical knowledge, the plan – the constructed visual representation of that knowledge – played a critical role in defining the presence of the "historical" mosque in the "modern" city. Transitioning from specificity to abstraction, the plan increasingly reinforced an understanding of the mosque as an isolated monument rather than an actively used space. As many of the archeologists, architects, art historians, and preservationists who authored these surveys led or consulted planning and preservation agencies across the Middle East and North Africa, this conceptual shift resulted in concrete impacts on the physical structures of mosques, rescripting their forms and their relationship to their surroundings.[1]

In this text, I argue that a close reading of the graphic language of the mosque plans produced for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century surveys of Islamic architecture exposes a progressive reduction to the "essential," as the building survey drawing was gradually transformed into a diagram – a simplified, autonomous compositional

representation.[2] My argument follows architect and historian Robin Evans, who, in his study of the drawing in the Western architectural tradition, warned of the impact of the "pieties of essentialism," insisting that a drawing "operate either through insistence on a true and irreducible expressiveness … or in the demand that only pure geometric forms and ratios be employed" (Evans, 1997).[3] The scholars who produced the mosque plans printed in the canonical texts of Islamic architecture embraced the strategies against which Evans cautioned, abstracting their subjects. In their efforts to define the mosque as an autonomous object and sort it into clear typological categories, these scholars foregrounded formal language, obscuring the mosque's history of responsive adaptation and its imbrication within social, urban, and environmental networks.[4] The plan's diagrammatization reframed the mosque as a fixed "historical" monument whose purpose existed only in the past – associated with a specific period, patron, or program – and denied its continued value to the modern or modernizing city.

In this article, I focus on five extensively studied and widely taught historical mosques, mapping how their plans evolved through their appearances in the canonical survey texts of Islamic architecture. I argue that these case studies evince a demonstrable resonance between the abstraction of each mosque's plan, understanding of its relationship to the environment, and the treatment of its physical structure. The selected mosques represent a spectrum of physical and social environmental embeddedness. I have excluded mosques that were initially conceptualized as detached from their urban surroundings, such as Samara's Great Mosque of al-Mutawakkil (c.246/860). While the Ibn Tulun Mosque (262–5/876–9) is often compared to al-Mutawakkil, by the late-nineteenth century, its *ziyada* had become physically enmeshed within its neighborhood context. Istanbul's Süleymaniye mosque (964/1557) sat at a clear distance from the surrounding residential fabric but was central to a larger imperial complex embedded in the life of the surrounding city (Ugurlu, 2020). A new religious structure was attached to the outer wall of Cairo's al-Hakim Mosque (380–403/990–1013), causing the building to spill outside of its original footprint (Sanders, 2008). The varied qualities of historical embeddedness exhibited by the selected case studies posed different graphical challenges to their authors. As they strove to draft their subjects of study, they had to make intentional decisions regarding what contextual information to include or exclude. While my analysis focuses on a close reading of plan drawings, I also demonstrate how those plans' representational abstraction was reflected in the accompanying textual analysis.

From the early nineteenth century onwards, Western scholars' analysis and representation of mosque architecture were heavily shaped by orientalist visual constructs (Bozdoğan, 1988). Early orientalist paintings romanticized the Islamic city; however, they simultaneously depicted the mosque as actively embedded within urban and environmental networks. Over time, this exoticized, scenographic image was shed in favor of scientific abstraction. Archeologists, architects, and historians produced orthographic and axonometric drawings that methodically surveyed the forms of the mosques they studied. Illustrating them as technical objects, these drawings abstracted their subjects, severing them from their context and dissecting them into component parts. This abstraction was part of a trajectory of Western architectural thought originating during the Enlightenment. Prizing empirical observation, scholars sought to uncover the universal laws that they believed underlaid the surrounding world. Eighteenth-century architects such as Julien-David Leroy and Jean-Nicholas Louis Durand applied these scientific frameworks to architectural production, seeking to expose general principles of various building types. For these scholars, each epoch of building represented a link in an evolutionary chain of development that progressed towards ever-greater perfection.[5]
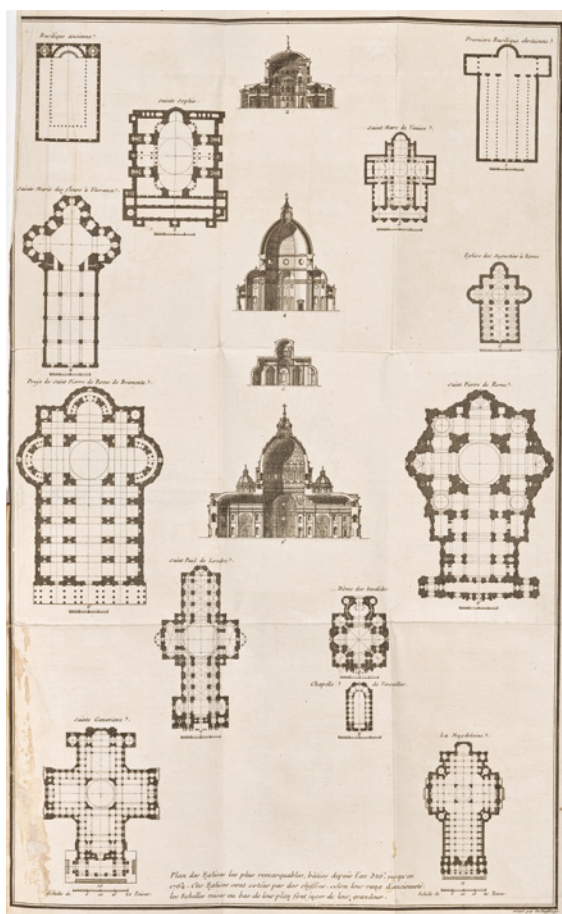
Constructing these comparative frameworks necessitated the suppression of detail and focused attention away from social, temporal, or environmental factors and towards purely formal concerns. Diagrammatization through drawing allowed these scholars to "reveal" the latent commonalities concealed within historic buildings, facilitating their systematic comparison (Fig. 1).[6]

Early nineteenth-century Islamic architectural surveys maintained a measure of orientalist painting's scenographic impulse; these large format and Beaux-Arts-influenced works featured illustrated plates presenting plans surrounded by fragmentary sections and elevations, details of ornament, and perspectival vignettes. Through this pastiche, these plates communicated a mosque's planimetric organization while also offering glimpses of its spatial qualities and modes of observation (Fig. 2). Their content focused primarily on limited geographical areas, notably the encyclopedic *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–22), or Émile Prisse d'Avennes' *L'Art Arabe D'Après Les Monuments Du Kaire Depuis le VIIᵉ Siècle Jusqu'à La Fin du XVIIIᵉ* (1869) focused on Egypt, while others, such as the *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (*Usul*), a survey of the "classical" Ottoman mosque produced for the 1873 Vienna International Exhibition described the architectural production of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1907, Henri Jules Saladin and Gaston Migeon's *Manuel D'art Musulman* initiated a shift from the regional study to the comprehensive survey. Surprisingly small in format, its chapters focused on individual regions of the Islamic world. Inline plans and photographs depicted mosques that the authors considered geographically representative. Following the *Manuel's* publication, the comprehensive survey became the common structural model for texts on Islamic architecture, continuing to dominate such scholarly production through the mid-twentieth century. With chapters dedicated
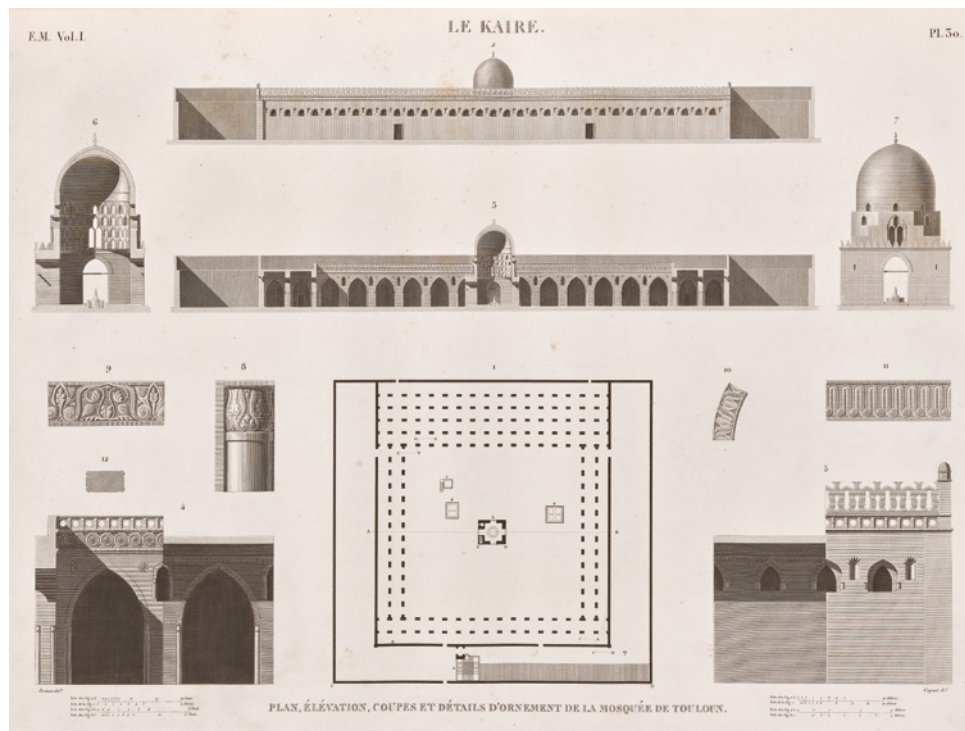
to individual geographical regions, dynasties or typologies, these surveys juxtaposed diverse buildings and objects to argue for coherence in the artistic and architectural production of the Islamic world.[7]
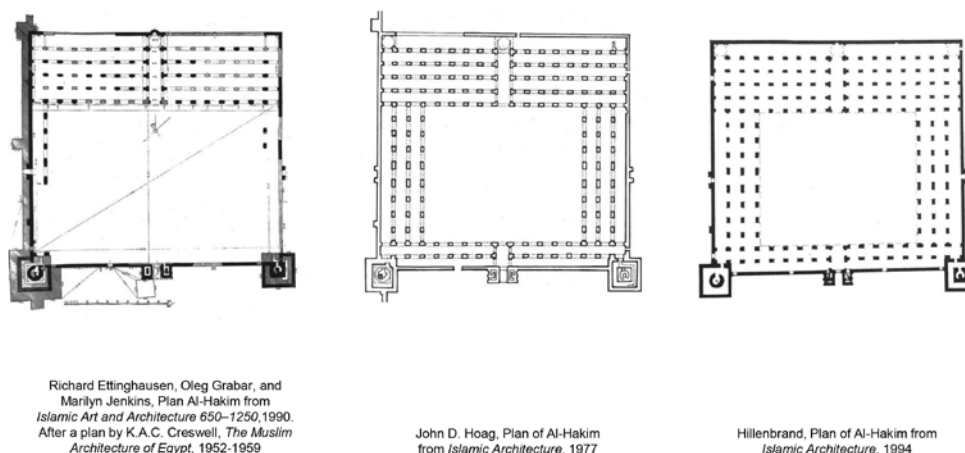
If these surveys' structures remained relatively consistent, their graphic strategies shifted to meet a range of representational desires – illustrating mosques and constructing arguments regarding their formal qualities, "origins," and contextual relationships. Drawings by architectural historian K. A. C. Creswell and others utilized historically coded wall poché, centerlines, and other annotative symbols to communicate their search for the formal essence or "true" origin of the mosques they studied (Fig. 5).[8] As scholars simplified or "corrected" mosque plans to clarify periodization or reinforce typological arguments, this redaction of detail led to increasing planimetric abstraction.[9]

Essentializing the mosque into a diagram facilitated the classification of the diversity of buildings constructed across the Islamic world into a singular and linear narrative. Additionally, it reframed the mosque as a fixed formal object or monument, erasing the realities of its history. By understanding the mosque as a "historical" structure, these scholars relegated its function to the past, obscuring its adaptations to or role in the contemporary city.

2 Al-Hakim Mosque

In his canonical text, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (1952), Creswell illustrated Cairo's al-Hakim Mosque (380–403/990–1013) in an as-found condition. Widely dispersed, his plan utilized graphical devices to present the plan as an archeological site. Vast blank areas emphasized the missing piers of the *sahn*'s colonnade, and annotative survey dimensions and chronologically coded wall poché excavated the mosque's historical layers for viewers (Fig. 3). Twenty years later, art historian John D. Hoag published a radically transformed plan of al-Hakim, graphically restoring the mosque to an

Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and
Marilyn Jenkins, Plan Al-Hakim from
Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250, 1990.
After a plan by K.A.C. Creswell, *The Muslim
Architecture of Egypt*, 1952-1959

John D. Hoag, Plan of Al-Hakim
from *Islamic Architecture*, 1977

Hillenbrand, Plan of Al-Hakim from
Islamic Architecture, 1994

"original" state for *Islamic Architecture* (1977) (Fig. 3). Hoag redrew the missing piers and regularized the wall poché, expunging the passage of time. His correction of al-Hakim's plan was mirrored by the eventual "purification" of its actual built structure. Drawn and redrawn by various scholars, evidence of the mosque's history was progressively erased. A Mamluk-era tomb, expunged from the drawing, was eventually physically removed from the mosque itself.

Initiated in 380/990 by Fatimid Caliph al-Aziz, al-Hakim was completed twenty-three years later by his son, Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah. In the late 1970s, the Egyptian government granted the Dawoodi Bohra community permission to renovate al-Hakim and several other Fatimid-era Cairene monuments. The Bohras, an Isma'ili Shi'a group centered primarily in India and Pakistan, locate their spiritual origins in the Fatimid era. Through architectural restorations and the construction of new neo-Fatimid mosques, the Bohras have instrumentalized architecture to create a cohesive identity for their geographically dispersed community (Sanders, 2008). The group's restoration of al-Hakim was controversial, not least for removing the tomb – a redaction justified by the structure's complication of the mosque's Fatimid periodization. However, the tomb's presence typified Cairo's urban development; additions and adaptations over time were characteristic features of the city's architecture (Reid, 1992).

In his plan for *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (1952), Creswell represented the tomb as an ambiguous presence, a lightly drawn square tangentially attached to the left corner of the mosque's entrance (Fig. 3). Previously, an obscure survey drawing of the ruined al-Hakim Mosque captured its physical dilapidation and transformation, including the Museum of Arab Art structures in the sahn, and the tomb's detailed plan. This drawing illustrates the tomb as an extension of the mosque gate into the surrounding urban fabric (Fig. 4). Isolated from the city and drawn as merely an outline in Creswell's plan, the tomb's lack of detail offered a sharp contrast to the rest of the drawing, graphically framing it as intrusive and separate from the mosque. Hoag's plan, the next significant iteration, consolidated the annotative hatches and erased the tomb completely. This latter action was reinforced by an accompanying photograph labeled "monumental entrance," which strategically cropped out the tomb (Hoag, 1977) (Fig. 5). Subsequent plans by George Michel (1978) and Robert Hillenbrand (1994) also removed the tomb and the adjacent medieval city wall, representing the building as a self-contained and decontextualized form (Fig. 3).

Increasingly abstract, these plans represent a willful desire to purify the mosque's footprint, fixing its Fatimid-era boundaries and removing evidence of its transformation over time. In parallel to al-Hakim's planimetric essentialization, the texts those plans accompanied began to reflect that singular dynastic narrative.[10] In the early 1980s,
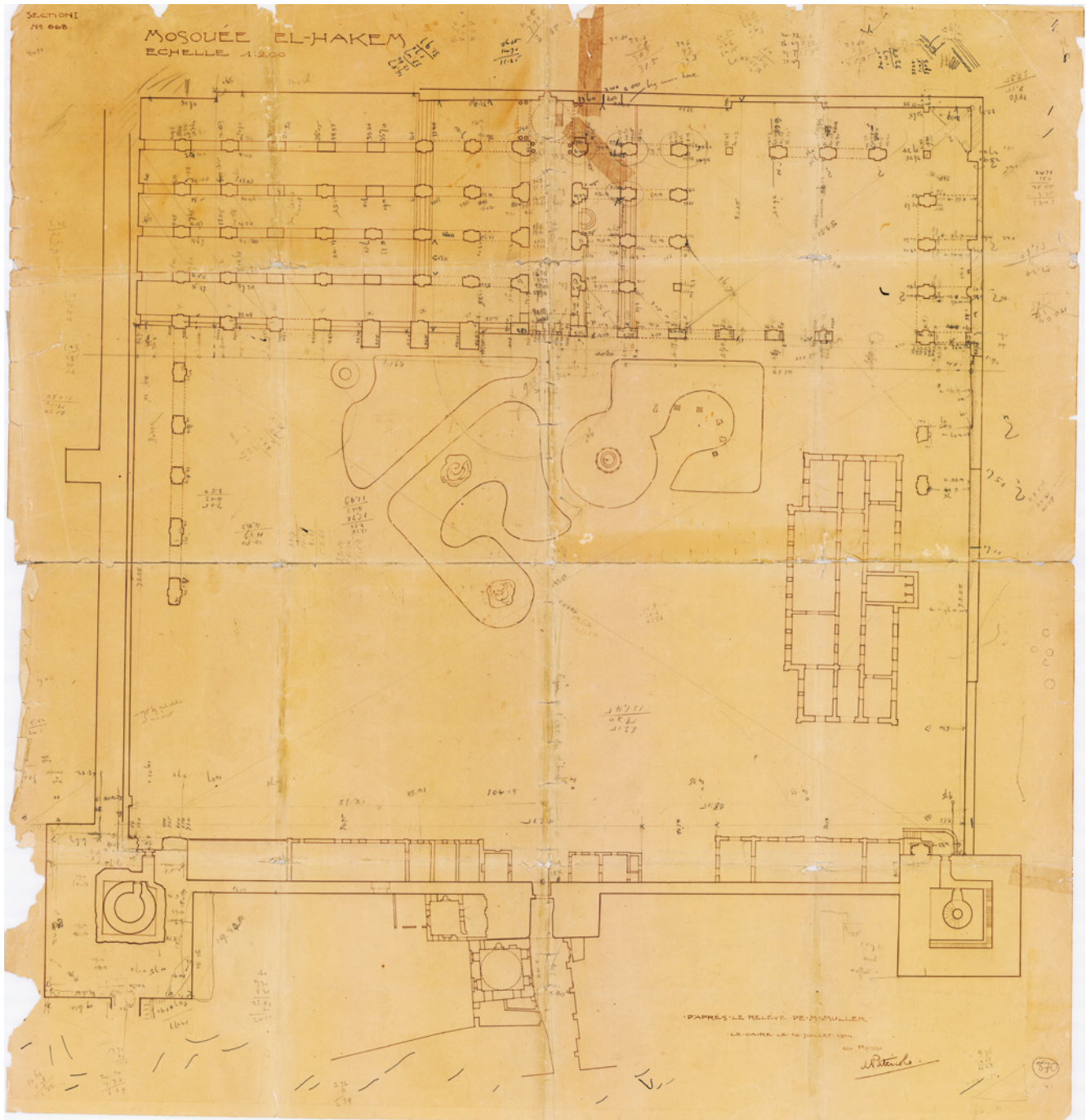
FIGURE 4
Arcille Patricolo, survey drawing
of al-hakim Mosque
SOURCE: COURTESY OF THE
RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS LIBRARY, THE
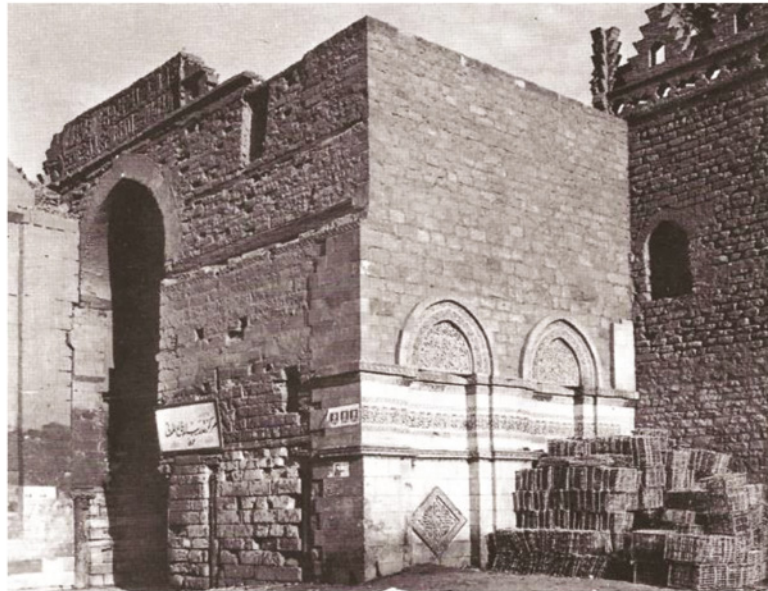AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN
CAIRO (1914)

A photograph of the Monumental
Gate of al-Hakim Mosque, from
Islamic Architecture

the Bohra's reconstruction of the mosque's exterior mimicked the purity argued for
in the drawings.[11] The Mamluk tomb, which the European-led conservation organiza-
tion the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arab (Comité) had long sought
to remove, was finally dismantled and cleared from the Fatimid mosque (Riad, 1951).[12]
With the tomb's removal, the exterior façade of the *sahn* – designated by Creswell as
original – was uncovered, thus achieving the version of the building represented by
Hoag's plan.

3   Qayrawan

The belief in a "true" origin was frequently paralleled by the belief that these mosques
possessed an intrinsic formal logic, one following a framework imposed by the viewer.
Although early drawings of the Qayrawan mosque (50–223/670–838) captured its imper-
fect mass, the texts they accompanied often framed that quality as a fault. Gradually,
the plans reflected an imposed and "corrected" formal interpretation. One of the earli-
est plans of Qayrawan was from the *Manuel D'art Musulman* (1907). While its level of
detail was uneven, Henri Jules Saladin's plan depicted the building's plinth – registering
the mosque's mass in relationship to the ground and capturing its irregular form. Clear
outlines showed the plinth wrapping three sides of the building, the perimeter of the
stylobate surrounding the depressed *sahn*, and the edges of the city fabric. The plan
presented the mosque's exterior as highly articulated: recording the deformation of the
eastern exterior wall – particularly visible at the prayer hall entrance – and of the inte-
rior courtyard wall at either side of the minaret, and representing the varied sizes, pro-
portions, and spacing of the exterior buttresses (Fig. 6). In his text, Saladin compared
Qayrawan to the "primitive" and "typical" mosque of the Maghreb, thus establishing a
typological relationship (Saladin, 1907).

   The plan in *Early Muslim Architecture* (1932) marked the next significant represen-
tational shift (Fig. 6). Much like Creswell's other plans, it included annotative pochés,
centerlines indicating formal relationships, and survey dimensions that affirmed its sci-
entific accuracy. However, simultaneously, it began to "correct" the form of its subject.
Creswell simplified the western façade, removing details, and most notably, straighten-
ing the angled courtyard and entry walls. A second version of the drawing from *A Short*
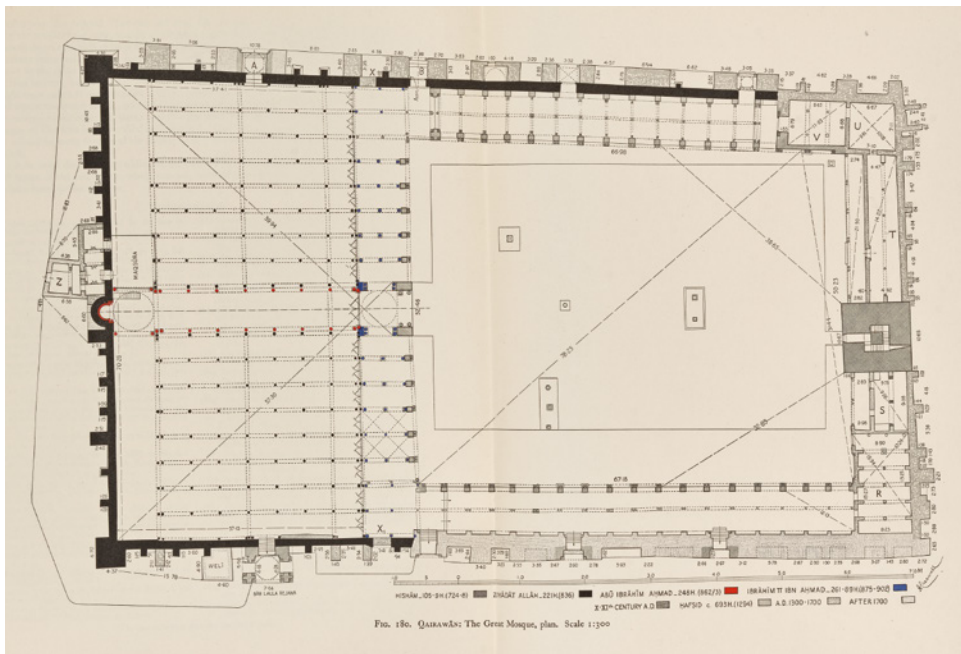
FIGURE 6
K. A. C. Creswell, A plan of the Qayrawan Mosque from *Early Muslim Architecture*, part two
SOURCE: CRESWELL (1940). AVERY CLASSICS, AVERY ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
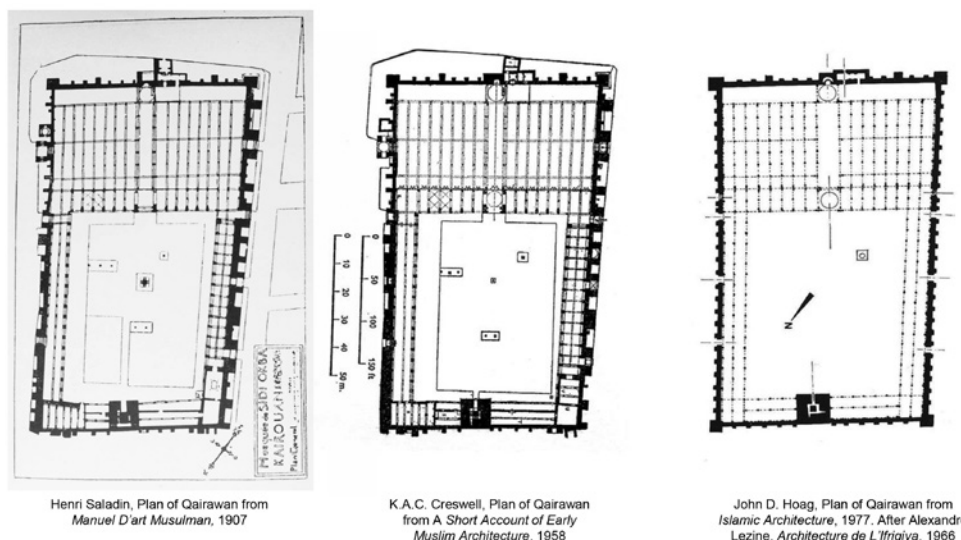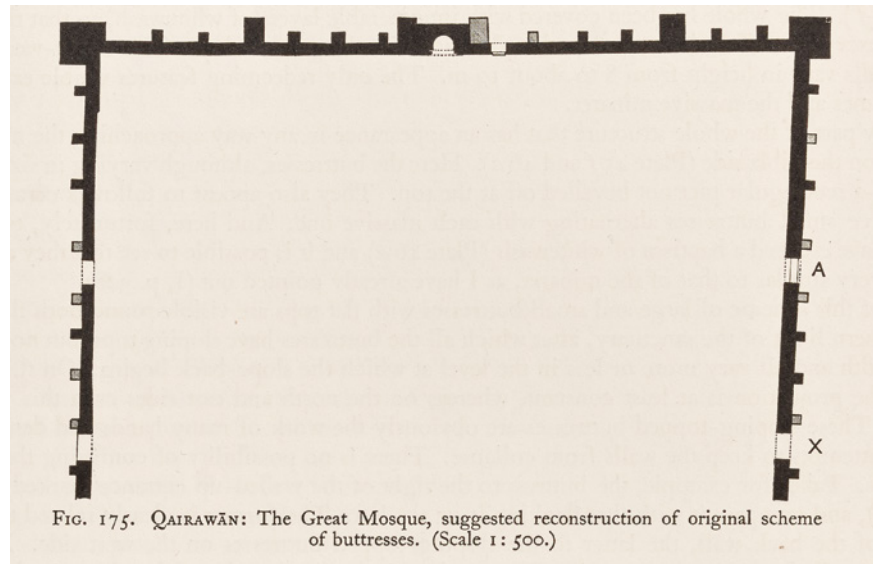

FIGURE 7
A comparative diagram showing plans of the Qayrawan Mosque
SOURCE: SALADIN (1907), CRESWELL (1958), HOAG (1977), ASSEMBLED BY THE AUTHOR

Account of Early Muslim Architecture (1958) went further, redacting the small room behind the mihrab and flattening the pochés into a single hatch (Fig. 6).

Creswell's textual depiction was negative in tone, nuancing the interpretation of his regularization of the plan and highlighting his valuation of form and monumentality. In *A Short Account*, he critiqued Qayrawan's "irregular and unsatisfactory appearance," writing that its mismatched forms and erratically distributed exterior buttresses represented "the work of many hands and denote[d] various makeshift attempts to keep the walls from collapse" (Creswell, 1958). This haphazard effort, he argued, distracted from the production of a monumental effect on the exterior. Only the qibla façade, with its formally uniform buttresses, was described as monumental. The text asserted that the domes and minaret, clearly captured in Creswell's plan, were the exterior's "only redeeming features" (Creswell, 1958). In addition to its comprehensive plan, *Early Muslim Architecture* contained a fragmentary plan of the mosque's exterior sanctuary walls, reconstructing the supposed original locations and regular forms of its buttresses.

FIG. 175. QAIRAWĀN: The Great Mosque, suggested reconstruction of original scheme of buttresses. (Scale 1 : 500.)

The projected uniformity of the fragmentary drawing appears to offer a precursor to Hoag's even more simplified 1977 plan (Fig. 8).

Adapted from a plan from Alexandre Lézine's *Architecture de L'Ifriqiya, Recherches sur les Monuments* (1966) that depicted a hypothetical and fully reconstructed Qayrawan Mosque,[13] Hoag's interpretation smoothed away details, regularizing many of the exterior's idiosyncrasies: the wall behind the mihrab was solidly pochéd and the angled entry chamber removed; the exterior walls were straightened and their buttresses redistributed to present the appearance of uniform spacing and proportion; the chambers along the northern wall and domed prayer hall entry were removed; and the support piers of the arcades and hypostyle hall standardized. The lines indicating the plinth at the southern façade were erased entirely, leaving the mosque groundless (Fig. 7).

This systematic graphical essentialization of the mosque's tectonic structural elements highlighted its T-shaped plan. To further emphasize this underlying structure – real or projected – Hoag included a series of centerlines that sought to establish alignments across the mosque's form. One centerline passed through the minaret, highlighting its asymmetrical relationship to the prayer hall entrance. Hoag's text described this misalignment as "perhaps a miscalculation," postulating that the builder may have intended to eventually construct a portal on the axis with the mihrab (1977: p. 64). Several exterior photographs accompany the text – one captures the mosque's roof from above, foregrounding the relationship between the minaret and the domes.

The plans produced by the scholars who studied the Qayrawan Mosque appear to express their desperate search for the "rational order" they believed was concealed within its "irregular" geometry. Instead of accepting a conscious design decision or a de facto effect of the mosque's organic growth, the supposed misalignment of the minaret was attributed to a theoretical missing portal whose presence would have provided the axiality those scholars prized. Lost in their readings was a plan form whose logic did not conform to their projections of rational composition, clear typological precedent, or standards of artisanship. Through the process of drawing and redrawing, they produced an idealized version of the Qayrawan Mosque that bore no resemblance to the forgiving and plastic reality of its architecture.[14]

4   Ibn Tulun

In plans of the Ibn Tulun Mosque (262–5/876–9), the progressive abstraction of the *ziyada* focused disciplinary attention on the building's form, restricting an understanding of its urban relationships. First unlabeled and unexplained, as the *ziyada* gained a spatial identity and designated purpose, the drawing of its geometry began to reflect greater rationalization[15] (Fig. 9). Early plans only vaguely indicate the *ziyada*. The drawing included by Prisse d'Avennes in *L'Art Arabe* (1869), a nearly exact reproduction of the plan from *Description de L'Egypte* (1809–1829), shows Ibn Tulun detached from its environs and artificially squared geometry. The mosque's perimeter is defined by a U-shaped, walled zone, empty except for the minaret. Saladin's plan, following Julius Franz Pasha's 1907 drawing, conformed to its predecessors but represented the *ziyada* with greater specificity: its geometry was less square, a wall divided the western extent, and several masses penetrated into the perimeter. Most remarkably, the exterior boundary of the *ziyada* was represented as part of the adjacent urban fabric rather than as a freestanding wall. The text reinforced this impression, describing the annexes and minaret as "outside" of the mosque (Saladin, 1907).

By 1915, the representation of the *ziyada* acquired both greater detail and annotation. Following Karl Baedeker's adaptation of Max Herz's survey, art historian Ernst Diez's plan named the *ziyada*'s spaces *Außenhöfe*, or exterior courtyards. Diez drew them as discontinuous, obstructed by what his text labeled "debris" (1915: p. 43). Areas of gray hatch interrupt the dashed lines of the exterior wall, capturing what are now defined as urban intrusions. Corresponding to Diez, Creswell, in his 1939 plan, noted debris – "several meters deep" – in the *ziyada*. Hatched forms represented additional construction in the *ziyada*'s eastern corner; however their purpose was unannotated. Creswell's

Prisse d'Avennes, Plan of Ibn Tulun from *Les Monuments du Kaire*, 1877

Henri Saladin, Plan of Ibn Tulun from from *Manuel D'art Musulman*, 1907

Ernest Diez, Plan of Ibn Tulun "After Badeker" (After Herz), from *Die Kunst der islamischen Völker*, 1915

K.A.C Creswell, Plan of Ibn Tulun from *Early Muslim Architecture*, 1939

Grabar, "After Brandenburg" Plan of Ibn Tulun from *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 1977

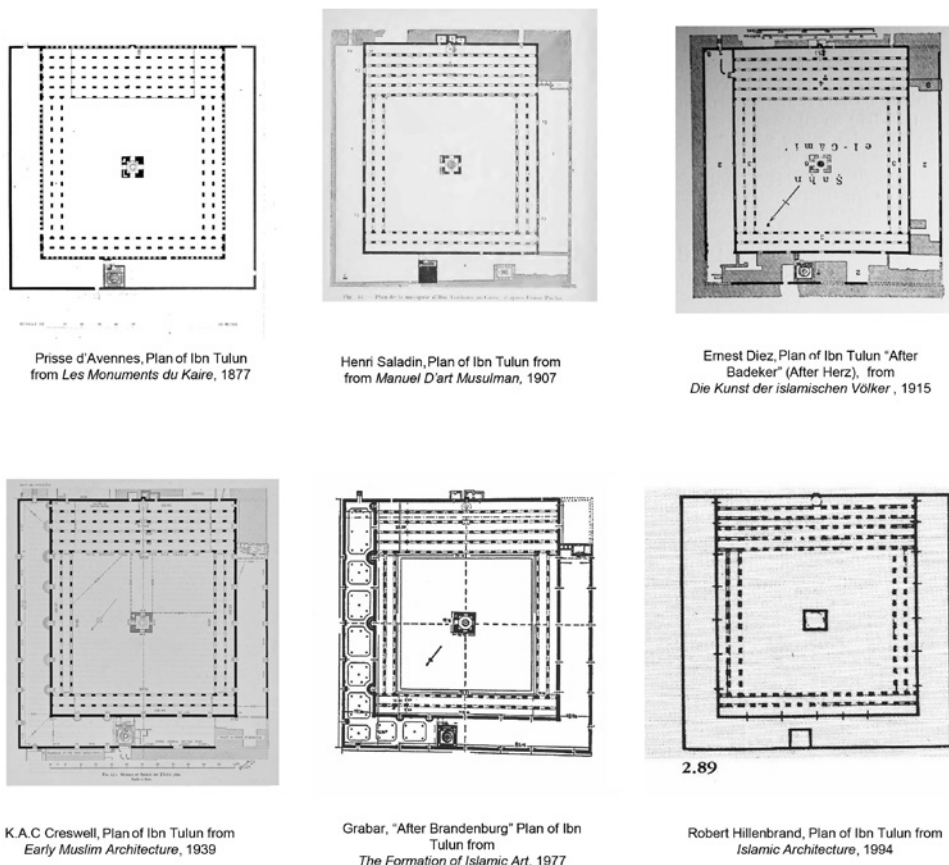Robert Hillenbrand, Plan of Ibn Tulun from *Islamic Architecture*, 1994

FIGURE 9
A comparative diagram showing plans of the Ibn Tulun Mosque
SOURCE: PRISSE D'AVENNES (1877), SALADIN (1907), DIEZ (1915), CRESWELL (1940) FROM THE AVERY CLASSICS, AVERY ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY; GRABAR (1977), HILLENBRAND (1994), ASSEMBLED BY THE AUTHOR

THE MOSQUE OF AḤMAD IBN ṬŪLŪN
263–5 H. (876–9)

FIGURE 10
K. A. C. Creswell, an exterior
photograph of the *sahn* of
Ibn Tulun, from *Early Muslim
Architecture*
SOURCE: CRESWELL (1939).
AVERY CLASSICS, AVERY
ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE
ARTS LIBRARY, COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY

text and photographs framed the *ziyada* as a buffer between the mosque and its urban environment. In his photographs of the façade, the outer elevations of the *sahn* are captured as if they were the building's exterior. The mosque emerges as an assertive object, disengaged from the unruly city beyond (Fig. 10). Discussing the Comité's razing of that adjacent fabric in the 1920s, Creswell argued that the resultant isolation of the *ziyada*'s wall "in no way represent[ed] the original condition" (1958: p. 306). For Creswell, the *ziyada* demarcated a threshold between the "secular" city and the "sacred" space of the mosque. He wrote that "on entering [the mosque] one is struck by its air of peace and serenity, completely cut off as it is from the noise of the street, by its chaste ornament and devotional atmosphere" (1958: p. 305).[16]

Describing Ibn Tulun in *Islamische Baukunst in Ägypten* (1966), Dietrich Brandenburg argued even more explicitly for a reading of the *ziyada* as an urban buffer. Utilizing affect rather than historical evidence, he wrote that the *ziyada* shielded the mosque from street noise, asserting that after stepping through it, one would be "surrounded by peace and silence and caught by the devotional atmosphere" (1966: p. 107). His plan bolstered this description, representing the *ziyada* as an uninterrupted U-shaped space. Hillenbrand's 1994 plan, thumbnail-sized and annotated only with a figure number, became a diagram of itself. Details were removed, the overall geometry was squared, the *ziyada*'s walls were solidly hatched, and the entry doors and minaret stairs were removed. The outer courts were emptied and equalized, and the *sabil* was removed. Hillenbrand's plan thus reproduced Prisse d'Avennes' early representation of the building, composed more than a century earlier.

Through this progressive clearance and geometric rationalization, the *ziyada*, historically an overspill space for Friday prayers and a container of other varied functions, became an empty vessel into which scholars projected meanings and spatial qualities, finally coming to be understood solely as a buffer between the mosque and the city. The graphic treatment and scholarly understanding of the *ziyada* developed in parallel: shifting from an ambiguous urban zone (Saladin) to an exterior courtyard distinct from the mosque (Diez) to a graphic separation between the "sacred" mosque and the "secular" city (Creswell and Brandenburg) to an unprogrammed abstract void (Hillenbrand).

5   Sultan Hasan Complex

In their readings of Cairo's Sultan Hasan Mosque (757–63/1356–62), scholars focused on the building's monumental scale – an interpretation closely tied to the clearance of its surrounding medieval fabric initiated by the 1870s *Plan général de la Ville du Caire*. This urban transformation erased the relationship between the mosque's form and the urban context that had shaped it, allowing the subsequent drawings to stage Sultan Hasan as an exemplary medieval Islamic monument. The analyses preceding Cairo's urban restructuring, such as Pascale Coste's plan in *Architecture Arabe ou monuments du Kaire* (1837–9), acknowledged the contextual drivers of Sultan Hasan's idiosyncratic form but lamented the "noticed irregularity" of their effect. Coste's drawing shows the figure of the mosque emerging from the historic *suq el selhah*; a solid hatch merged the *suq*'s fabric with the pochéd walls of the mosque, angled to face Makkah (Fig. 11). As the surrounding buildings were demolished to form the "Place Sultan Hasan," archeologist Max Herz produced a site plan enshrining that erasure within the scholarly canon, producing an understanding of the mosque as an autonomous object floating with an open plaza. Rather than linking form to context, Herz's drawing characterized the adjacent structures as an encroachment, its legend distinguishing "historic" construction from "modern" build-up (Fig. 12).

Although the "Place" was only partially realized when Herz published *La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire* (1898), the report captured the area's urban transformation. Herz wrote that the northwestern extent of the mosque sat alongside a "vast terrain" – a consequence of the razing of the *suq* accompanying the construction of Muhammed Ali Boulevard (1898: p. 1). Exterior photographs included within Herz's text highlighted the mosque's object quality, angled to capture multiple sides of the building or highlighting the free edges of the façade. Herz also produced a restoration site plan, graphically implementing the version of the "Place" from the Plan General; within it, he recommended further demolition at the mosque's northwest to remove the "modern"
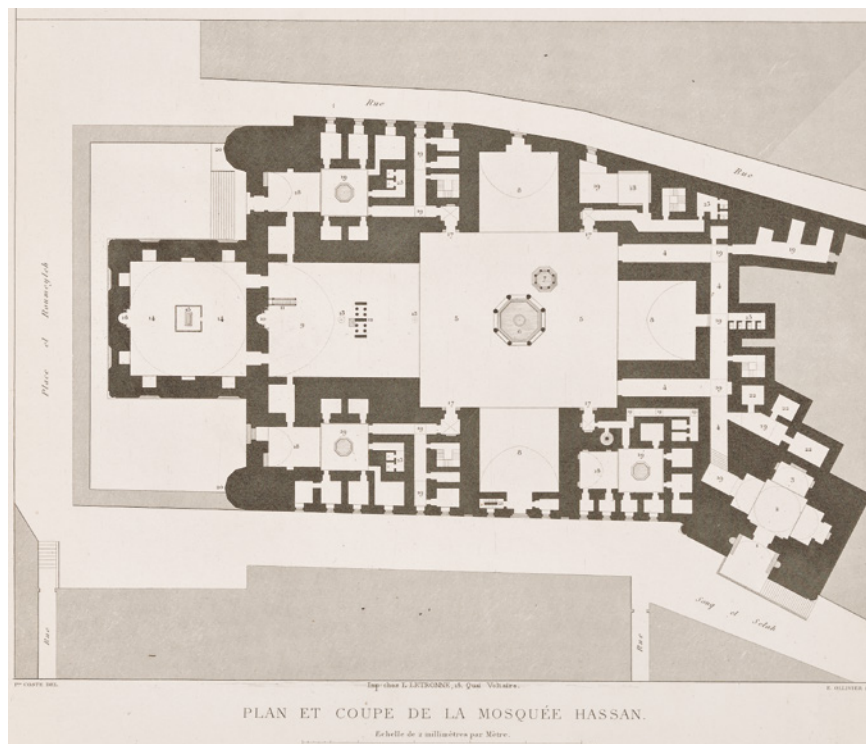

FIGURE 11
Pascal Coste, a plan of Sultan Hasan, from *Architecture Arabe ou monuments du Kaire*
SOURCE: COSTE (1837–9).
AVERY CLASSICS, AVERY ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

urban infill that "encroach[ed] on spaces which would have remained free in the interest of the monument," however, he cautioned that "total clearing" was still impossible (1898: p. 29).

Capturing a projected urban reality, Herz's plan graphically separated Sultan Hasan from the fabric that had shaped it, pacifying the "abnormality" of the mosque's irregular form and illustrating further "necessary" clearance of its surroundings. Multiple versions of Herz's 1898 plan were reprinted in later survey books, including those by Diez (1915), Marçais (1946), Hoag (1977), Michell (1978), Hillenbrand (1994), and Blair and Bloom (1994) (Fig. 13). Obscuring the historical relationship between the mosque's primary mass, angled portal, and the adjacent context, Herz's plan paved the way for twentieth-century scholarly discourse to focus on its superlative scale and monumentality. His plans of the mosque became representative of the type of late-nineteenth-century urbanism that had served as the impetus for the clearance of historic Cairo's opaque fabric. In the decades to come, this process underpinned the eventual total clearance of the site and its transformation into an isolated vehicular island.

6   Süleymaniye and the Ottoman Mosque

The scholarly classification of the Ottoman mosques of Istanbul by their dome structures influenced not only the direct understanding of those buildings but also the 1930s

master plan for Istanbul designed by French urban planner Henri Prost. Even though driven by different historiographic aims, European historians and archeologists, and Ottoman scholars created diagrams arguing for typological frameworks driven by the formal characteristics of mosque domes. This classificatory structure reflected an evolutionary drawing process where the ground was gradually dematerialized, refocusing viewer attention on discrete formal elements above. It further spurred an understanding of these mosques that centered an abstract, cross-referential reading of their domes, thus obscuring their urban embeddedness.

One of the earliest plans of the Süleymaniye Mosque (964/1557), an eighteenth-century etching by Austrian architect and historian Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, included such a paucity of detail that the dome appeared to float unsupported by any structure. Despite its overall simplicity, the plan portrayed the attached royal cemetery and the stone fence and tree line framing the grounds. An accompanying perspectival drawing activated the space, capturing a royal parade occupying the mosque's grounds (Fig. 14).[17] Charles Texier's plan (1833), produced more than a century later, was significantly more accurate than its predecessor, rendering the full extent of the fenced grounds and depicting the royal cemetery and the paths leading to the mosque's entrances (Fig. 15). Texier used this detail to argue that Süleymaniye was buffered from its direct context, describing the stone fence and line of trees as a double enclosure that separated the "sacred building from the profane buildings" (cited in Pedone, 2012: p. 291). Notable, too, was the plan's accurate representation of the grand central dome. Texier was one of the first scholars to delineate Süleymaniye's relationship to Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine architectural tradition, and thus to the "classical" Ottoman mosque (Necipoğlu, 2007). His careful depiction of the dome provided visual evidence of that lineage.

The plan of Süleymaniye included in the *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (1873) erased the dome altogether. This erasure indicated a desire to deemphasize the reference to Hagia Sophia and instead advocate for the "superiority of Ottoman architecture" (Necipoğlu, 2007: p. 144). The next significant drawing of Süleymaniye was by German architect and art historian Cornelius Gurlitt, published in his *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels* (1912) (Fig. 15). The plan captured the mosque, its dome, and the royal cemetery with great detail, although the grounds were unrepresented. As indicated by the care taken with his
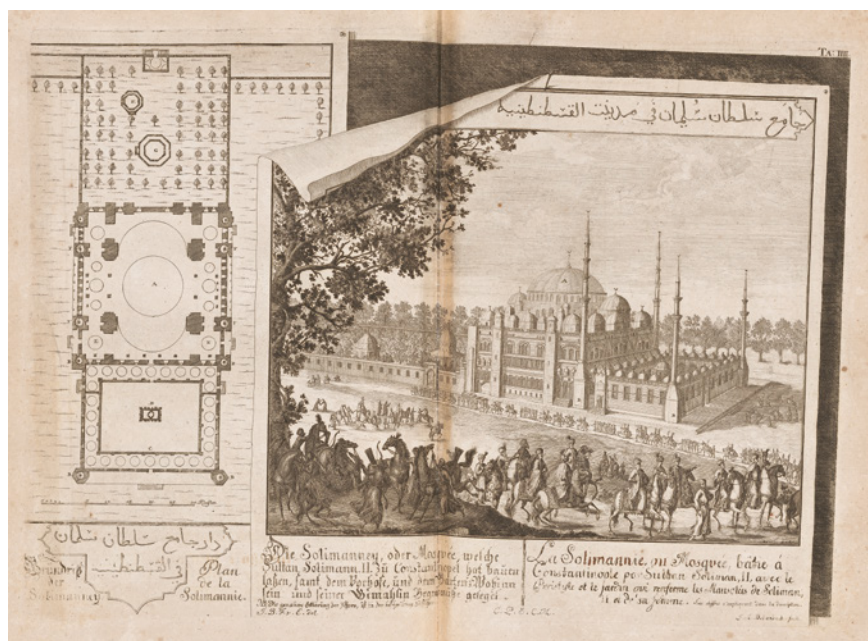

FIGURE 14
Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, a plan of Süleymaniye Mosque from *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architectur*, Book 3, plate 4 (Constantinople)
SOURCE: FISCHER VON ERLACH, 1725. AVERY CLASSICS, AVERY ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
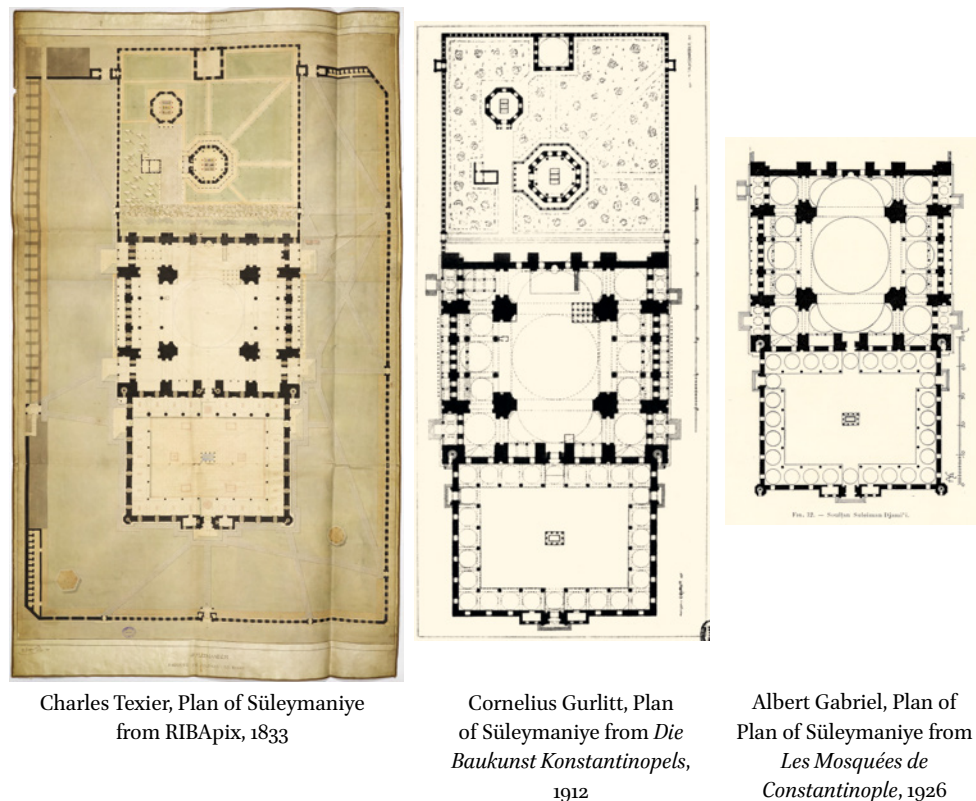
Charles Texier, Plan of Süleymaniye from RIBApix, 1833

Cornelius Gurlitt, Plan of Süleymaniye from *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, 1912

Albert Gabriel, Plan of Plan of Süleymaniye from *Les Mosquées de Constantinople*, 1926

planimetric depiction, the mosque's dome gained a new significance in Gurlitt's analysis; rather than citing Hagia Sophia as a generative influence, he compared Ottoman architecture to that of the Italian Renaissance (Necipoğlu, 2007).

Albert Gabriel's plan (1926), following Gurlitt's, cropped the cemetery and rendered Süleymaniye's domes with solid – not dashed – lines, further emphasizing their primacy (Fig. 14). In his text, the plan was followed by a set of linear diagrams dropping all planimetric detail, representing a series of mosque types classified solely through their dome support structures. Süleymaniye, along with the Bayezid and Kilic Ali Pasha Mosques, was classified as type C: "a square hall covered with a central dome that is supported along the main axis by two semi-domes" (Gabriel, 1926: p. 362). For Gabriel, the Ottoman mosque was primarily understood through the syntax of its domes, regardless of the genesis of an individual monument (Fig. 16). This reading was reinforced by the work of Celâl Esad Arseven, who produced a similar classification system and series of dome diagrams for his book *La'rt turc: depuis son origine jusquà' nos jours* (1939) (Fig. 17).

Commissioned by the emerging Turkish nation, Prost's 1938 master plan for Istanbul was heavily shaped by this reductive understanding of the peninsula's monumental mosques, derived from his familiarity with the work of Gabriel and his contemporaries. The influence of Gabriel, a friend and colleague of Prost, was clearly visible in the latter's 1943 plan for the "Place Eminonu." There, the area's mosques were simply drawn, with circles outlining their domes and centerlines connecting them to points in the new square. Further arrows and annotations established the domes of the Sultan Pasha and Yeni Mosques as brackets framing the view of Süleymaniye, itself foregrounded by a massive greenspace. The centerlines established the view corridors around which Prost's plan was organized (Fig. 18). With attention focused on the mosque domes, their ground was freed for radical transformation. The "parasitic" buildings adjacent to the Sultan Pasha and Yeni Mosques were cleared, leaving those mosques, historically
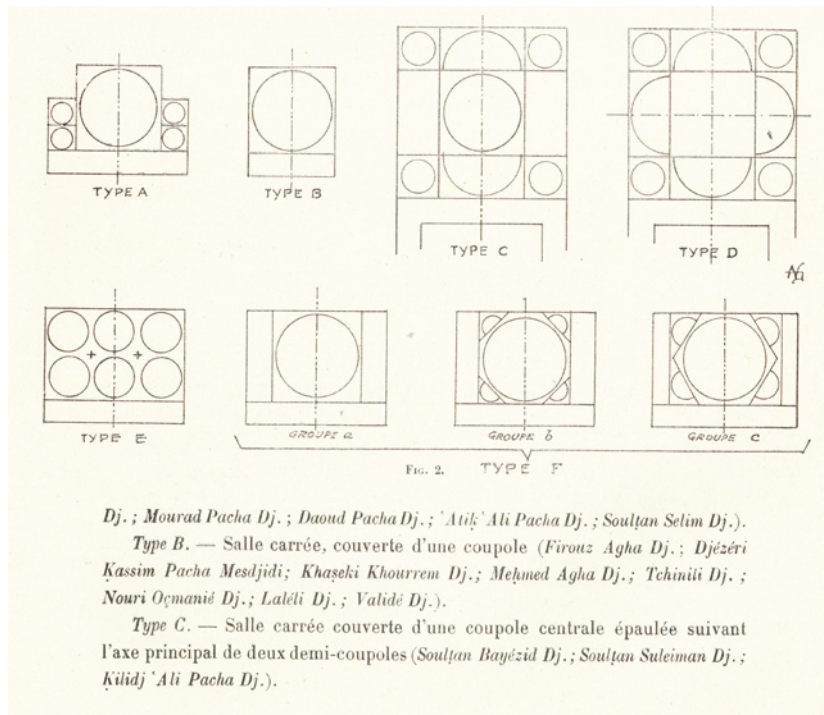
Dj.; *Mourad Pacha Dj.; Daoud Pacha Dj.; ʿAtiḳ ʿAli Pacha Dj.; Soulṭan Selim Dj.*).

Type B. — Salle carrée, couverte d'une coupole (*Firouz Agha Dj.; Djézéri Ḳassim Pacha Mesdjidi; Khaṣeki Khourrem Dj.; Meḥmed Agha Dj.; Tchinili Dj.; Nouri Oçmanié Dj.; Laléli Dj.; Validé Dj.*).

Type C. — Salle carrée couverte d'une coupole centrale épaulée suivant l'axe principal de deux demi-coupoles (*Soulṭan Bayézid Dj.; Soulṭan Suleiman Dj.; Ḳilidj ʿAli Pacha Dj.*).

(Şekil : 123) 1. nci sıra : Tip D. Bayezit II c. 1506, (Şehzade , Sultan Ahmet, yeni cami ler)., Süleymaniye 1557. 2. nci sıra : Tip E. üç şerefeli c. Edirne 1436, Sokullu Mehmet paşa ca. 1571. Tip F. Firuz Ağa c. 3 cü sıra : Rüstem paşa ca. 1560, Şemsi paşa Üsküdar 1580, Selimiye Edirne 1574. 4 cü sıra Köprülü cami 1660, Lâleli c. 1763, Yıldız c. 1886.
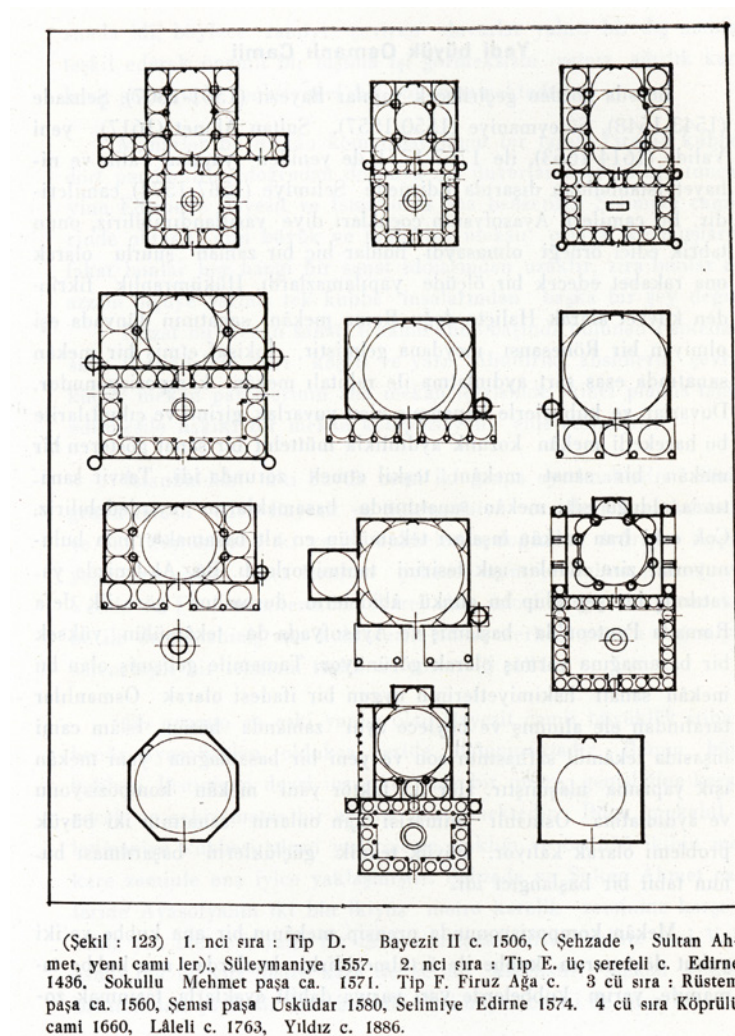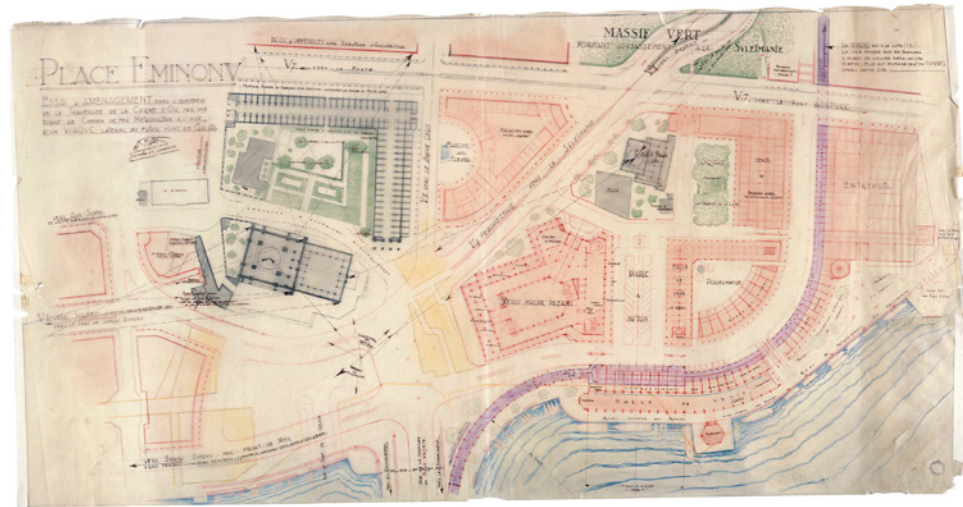
nestled within Istanbul's urban fabric, floating within pocket parks (Gül, 2012). Gabriel, who frequently wrote favorably on Prost's work in Istanbul, commended the clearance of Place Eminonu and the resultant uncovering of the Yeni Mosque's silhouette (Yildirim, 2012). While Prost's master plan was only partly realized, it paved the way for the gigantic boulevards and squares constructed around historical mosques under the tenure of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes in the following decades (Gül, 2012).

7   Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, the plan drawings of mosques produced by Western scholars became increasingly technical. As they shed the exotic and atmospheric in favor of "scientific" analysis, they also discarded their representation of mosques' historical development and connection to their physical environs. By the early-twentieth century, this planimetric precision, in conjunction with photographic objectification, was used to classify the mosque into typological, dynastic, and regional historical schema, facilitating comparative analysis.[18] The establishment of those classificatory schema required the forging of a "doctrine of essentialism" (Evans, 1997) made possible by diagrammatic readings of the mosque. The erasure of history and regularization visible in the evolution of the plans of the al-Hakim and Qayrawan Mosques resulted in those structures' medievalization. Through graphical urban clearance and decontextualization, the plans of the Ibn Tulun, Sultan Hasan, and Süleymaniye Mosques were monumentalized, and made into "masterpieces."

The scholars who produced the canonical survey texts of Islamic architecture were products of their classical European architectural educations and cultural milieus. Believing that the mosques they studied possessed intrinsic "pure" forms, they struggled, through their rigorous drafting techniques, to capture that "truth" – often viewing the realities of a building as an impediment to their analysis. Prisse D'Avennes, who visited Ibn Tulun in the 1870s, wrote that its division into small poorhouse dwelling rooms was "an act of vandalism, hidden under a masque of philanthropy," and complained that their presence prevented him from properly drawing the mosque's plan (D'Avennes, 1869: p. 95).[19] Believing this translation from sacred space to poorhouse diminished the mosque's status as a monument, he produced a hypothetical plan that expunged evidence of the poorhouse program (Fig. 9). That drawing was soon followed by the Comité's actual clearance of the poorhouse from the mosque's *riwaqs* (Corbett, 1891).

The essentialization-through-documentation undertaken by Prisse d'Avennes and other scholars privileged an idea of "authentic" form and origin over active use. Their work neatly classified the mosque into a series of "unambiguous" building types, forever fixed in specific historical periods.[20] With the rise of nation-states across the Islamic world, local actors instrumentalized this knowledge for nationalistic aims. Describing Jeddah's Juffali Mosque (1986), designed by Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil and funded by the Saudi state, architectural historian Kishwar Rizvi argues that even though the mosque was inspired by local historical precedents, its freestanding state "evokes a nineteenth-century architectural experience: that of Orientalism, in which 'Eastern' architecture would be displayed as decontextualized and detached from human inhabitation" (Rizvi, 2015: pp. 77–8).

The monumentalized plans of these mosques have been widely proliferated through their inclusion in survey books of Islamic architecture – taught in art history departments, but also in schools of architecture.[21] While the isolated and fixed image of the mosque that they enshrine is expressive of a particular historical moment, how might its resonances have continued to impact contemporary mosque design practices? I argue that the twentieth century offers numerous examples of the effect of this reductive reading on the relationship between the mosque and its environment: from the isolation of Kuwait City's mosques within traffic circles during the urban redevelopment of the 1950s, to the isolation of Mashad's Imam Reza shrine within a green ring during the 1970s (Fig. 19), to the unmooring of religious edifices within vast shopping plazas resulting from the post-civil war reconstruction of downtown Beirut in the 1990s, to the building of new mosques within traffic islands in contemporary Sharjah (Fig. 20). The drawing and codification of the masterpieces of Islamic architecture has come at the detriment of a holistic understanding of their historical development and social function. The physical operations enacted on many of these buildings mirror earlier "corrections" enshrined within their plan drawings, affirming the plan's truthfulness and propagating that reading through future analyses. The white frame of the page and the cleared spaces of the city have become two expressions of the same form of isolation, detaching the mosque from its ground.
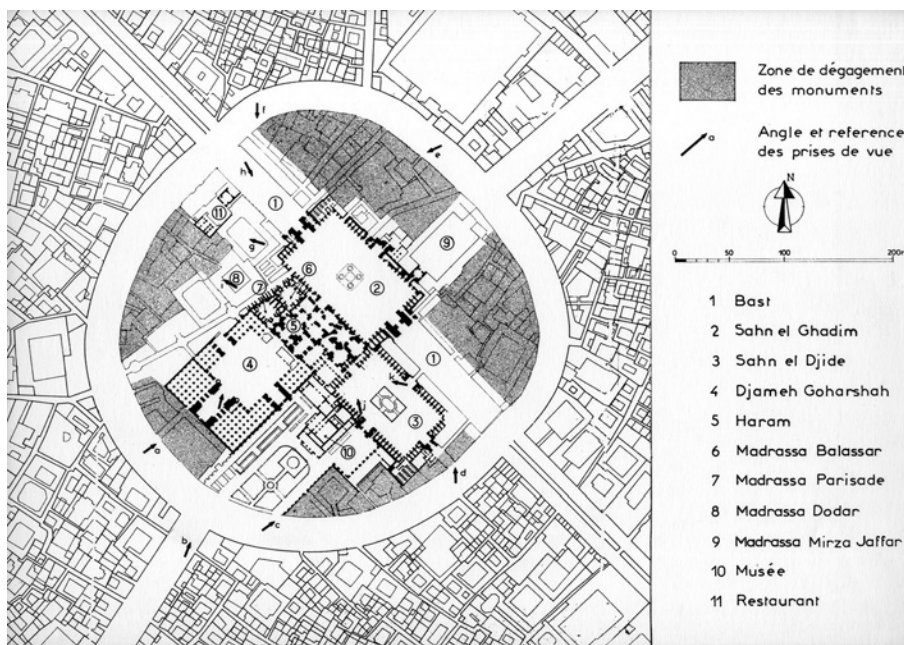

FIGURE 19
Michel Ecochard, Mashad Center Renovation Plan, 1971
SOURCE: AGA KHAN DOCUMENTATION CENTER

About the Author

Jamaleddine is an assistant professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and co-founder of L.E.FT Architects (Beirut/New York). His writings have been published in Climates: Architecture and the Planetary Imaginary (2016), The Arab City: Architecture and Representation (2016), and Places Journal (2020). Among his built projects are the awards-winning Moukhtara Mosque (2017) and the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices, Vassar College (2022).

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Notes

1 For example, the archeologist Max Herz was the chief architect of Egypt's *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* from 1890–1914.

2 Lorenz Korn analyzes the inconsistent evolution of the illustrations published in Islamic architecture surveys as they moved toward a more "exact" depiction, thus providing more "reliable" documentation of the building. Here, I probe how this desire for exactitude facilitated the identification of the supposed "original" forms of historical mosques, and consequently, their typological diagrammatization; see Korn (2021: pp. 171–90).

3 Evan's argument was informed by his study of historical drawings, including Jean-Nicholas Louis Durand's early nineteenth-century work, *Précis des leçons d'Architecture*; see Sci-Arc Media Archive (2017) *Robin Evans* (*November 18, 1985*) *Part 1 of 2*. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y7s_CRfSzg. In his survey of Roman monuments, Durand modified the plans of his subjects to produce clearly classifiable types, systematically regularizing them to conform to an applied system of geometric principles. For Durand, see Madrazo (1994: pp. 12–24).

4 Oleg Grabar makes a similar argument by discussing the inability of planimetric drawings to capture the diachronic form of the Grand Mosque of Isfahan; see Grabar (1990: p. 18). For the "epistemic importance" of the plan and its use in formally freezing the typological lineage of Selijuk-Beylik-Ottoman mosques, see Pancaroğlu (2007: p. 68).

5 In his comprehensive study of the Renaissance, Marvin Trachtenberg analyzes Alberti's regime of "building-outside-time," arguing that it and Alberti's representation of the architect as the sole author of quickly-built buildings, possessed of immutable design integrity, were formative to notions of the "perfection" and "coherence" of monumental buildings. Contra Alberti, Trachtenberg articulates a pre-modern framework of "building-in-time" in which long-duration construction (sometimes unfolding over centuries) denies buildings a formal ideal or absolute origin; see Trachtenberg (2010).

6   For Leroy, the modern scholar no longer merely accumulated data but selected and juxtaposed that information to expose underlying patterns and connections; see Kisacky (2001: p. 272).

7   As art historian Avinoam Shalem observes, this concept of the unity of Islamic art has resulted in a harmful flattening of disciplinary understandings, obscuring the importance of cultural and temporal specificities and projecting a false framework of comparison. He links this drive to identify a unified narrative to a fin-de-siecle Western interest in recognizing the "geist" of the Islamic world's artistic production; see Shalem (2012: pp. 9–12).

8   Many of Creswell's incredibly detailed planimetric drawings, such as his color-coded plan of al-Azhar in *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (1952), carefully explicated the complex chronologies of frequently altered mosques.

9   Alexandre Lézine's two drawings of Tunisia's Mahdiya Mosque, published in his 1965 book, *Mahdiya, Recherches D'Archéologie Islamique*, offer an example of this "correction." Figure 29, "Plan de la Fouille," represents the archeological plan as found, including the remnants of a peculiar central colonnade that bisects the *sahn*. Figure 30, "Plan de XI siècle," reconstructs the mosque's original plan – erasing the central colonnade. Only Figure 30 is reproduced in survey books.

10   For a discussion of the placement of al-Hakim Mosque, see Hoag (1977: p. 136), in the chapter "The Classic Islamic Architecture of Egypt: The Fatimids"; Michell (1978: p. 224), the mosque is classified under "Fatimid and Ayyubid periods"; Behrens-Abouseif (1992: p. 63), in the chapter "Architecture of the Fatimid Period"; and Ettinghausen et al., (1990: p. 192), in the chapter "Central Islamic Lands: Part I, The Fatimids in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria."

11   Aliasger Najam Madraswala quotes Hasan Fathy's descriptions to argue that the "authenticity" preserved by the project was one predicated on formal qualities and undertaken with the desire to adapt the historic structure to contemporary use; see Madraswala (2020: pp. 86–7).

12   Founded in 1881 by Khedive Mohammed Tawfiq, the organization's mandate to advise on preservation activities and on the classification of buildings as monuments quickly expanded to include the implementation of conservation projects; see El-Habashi (2001: pp. 82–8).

13   Digital archive Archnet.org credits this plan to Creswell; however, there is no documentation to substantiate this connection in Creswell's archive at the Ashmolean Museum. While Creswell bequeathed his photographic prints and negatives to the Ashmolean, his drawings were not included in that gift, leaving their copyright ambiguous and their reproduction difficult to verify.

14   Recent studies have associated Qayrawan's trapezoidal footprint with models such as the North African *ksour*, whose flexibility of form allowed it to adapt to diverse environmental, material, or terrain conditions; see Apotsos (2016: p. 49).

15   See O'Kane (1999: pp. 157–8); and pointing to the covered spaces of the Great Mosque of al-Mutwakkil, which "accommodate[d] additional faithful," Alastair Northedge argues for evidence of construction occurring within the *ziyada* (2005: p. 123).

16   Contemporary religious scholarship questions the "religious-secular" binary in conceptualizations of Islam, for example, see Ahmed (2016: pp. 176–245).

17   Gülru Necipoglu describes the Süleymaniye grounds as accessible to the "general public" (2005: p. 210).

18   For architecture photography as an art object, see Payne (2017: pp. 99–118).

19   Years later, the Egyptian architect Hasan Fathy echoed this sentiment in his description of the tomb attached to al-Hakim Mosque. Fathy, a consultant on al-Hakim restoration, characterized the original construction of the tomb as "vandalism," cited in Sanders (2008: p. 13).

20   I reference Thomas Bauer's use of "unambiguity" or "intolerance to ambiguity," which he identifies as central to modern Western understandings of truth. This reaction to the "diversity" and "ambiguity" of Islamic culture manifests as a search for and representation of a singular "true" building form; see Bauer (2011: p. 31).

21   On the present-day mobilization of the diagram for typological classification, see Peker (2021: p. 325).