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Takiyyat ibn Tulun, Preservation, and ‘Utility’ in the Case of a Deserted Mosque

Abstract

Between 1846–80, the Ibn Tulun Mosque (876–79) was recast as a poorhouse, its long-deserted spaces transformed to meet new programmatic requirements. However, the modernizing state that enacted that transformation was also responsible for its undoing, ending traditional practices of reuse that had previously characterized Cairene architecture and instituting a modern philosophy of preservation. Following the poorhouse’s closure, the Comité de la Conservation des Monuments de L’Art Arabe (Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments of Arab Art), in conjunction with the Ministry of Awqaf (Ministry of Endowments), initiated a decades-long restoration of the mosque’s historical form and use. This article takes the plans of the mosque/poorhouse published by K. A. C. Creswell and Yusuf Ahmad, which capture opposite ends of the restoration period, as a lens through which to analyse and outline the Comité de la Conservation des Monuments de L’Art Arabe and the Ministry of Awqaf’s divergent doctrines of preservation and ideas on the (re)use of deserted mosques.

Keywords

mosque architecture
architectural drawing
architectural
preservation
Awqaf
Comité
Cairo

Between 1846–80, Cairo’s Ibn Tulun Mosque (876–79) was recast as a poorhouse and transformed both programmatically and spatially.¹ In 1880, the poorhouse’s closure was ordered by Franz Pasha, soon to become head of the Comité de la Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe (hereafter Comité; established in 1881). For the Comité, Ibn Tulun provided a rare exemplar of early Cairene Islamic architecture, standing out against the old city’s numerous Mamluk-era buildings. The mosque’s uncommon periodization

heightened the importance of the restoration of its original form and use.² The painstaking, decades-long process of assessment and repair was catalogued within the Comité's organizational bulletins, which captured the organization's attention to Ibn Tulun's historical architectural features and its immediate urban context.

The Comité's restoration sought to return the mosque to a perfected image informed by contemporary European preservation discourse, and by a series of increasingly abstract plans produced by western scholars. As historian Paula Sanders argues, by focusing on 'authentic' or 'original' form, the Comité relegated the mosques that they preserved to a distant past, detaching them from an active role in the city and reframing them for the 'touristic gaze' of the European visitor.³ Their bulletins narrate the Comité's attempt to reinstate the mosque's 'authentic' form, as well as their attempt to erase evidence of Ibn Tulun's historical spatial flexibility. This project was at odds with traditional Cairene preservation practices, such as those advocated by the Ministry of Awqaf (hereafter Awqaf; established in 1878), which prioritized community need over a static architectural form. By focusing on the fixed monument, the Comité foreclosed an array of possible futures, arresting the mosque's active life.

This article takes the restoration of the Ibn Tulun Mosque as a lens through which to examine the contested question of (re)use, which has largely been absent from scholarly investigations of the Comité's preservation work.⁴ While the preservation philosophies of the Comité and the Awqaf diverged, the two institutions were closely intertwined administratively. The analysis below examines the physical transformations that facilitated Ibn Tulun's operation as a poorhouse, using these changes to examine the frictions between the architectural value systems of the Comité and the Awqaf.

In their introduction to *Writing Architectural History: Evidence and Narrative in the Twenty-First Century*, architectural historians Daniel Abramson, Zeynep Çelik Alexander, and Michael Osman question disciplinary assumptions regarding architectural historical 'evidence' and the narratives it produces. They argue that by 're-drawing the boundary of the archive' – in other words, looking outside its official confines – historians will be able to illuminate alternative or erased architectural histories.⁵ This article takes up that provocation, drawing from a range of sources, from the organizational bulletins of the Comité to the structural and historical survey drawings of the Ibn Tulun Mosque. Two drawings in particular – K. A. C. Creswell's canonical plan (1932–40) and an obscure plan (1917) published by Yusuf Ahmad – are read against each other to suggest a complex understanding of the mosque's change of use, and to reinsert use into the discussion of the preservation of historical mosques.

The Ahmad plan, a technical survey, illustrates the erasures enacted by the traditional archive by indirectly revealing the monument's functional uses. This survey highlights how the examination of alternative sources and oblique approaches to canonical ones can reveal histories otherwise obscured by methods of data collection. Unpacking the Comité's detailed chronicles of their restoration of underused or deserted mosques, and reading backward or between the lines, foregrounds the Awqaf's deep understanding of community need and the spatial performance of the mosques under their purview, as well as their desire to make ruined mosques useful again. In parallel, these documents also narrate the Comité's efforts to undo or interrupt transformations initiated by the Awqaf, even when those spatial or programmatic reconfigurations did not conform to the Comité's philosophy of preservation or its understanding of historical periodization.

Preservation and Value in Nineteenth-Century Cairo

The Awqaf and the Comité worked in parallel to care for the physical state of Cairo's historical mosques. Their efforts were coordinated at times, while in other instances they appeared to operate at cross-purposes. The Comité, credited today for safeguarding many of Cairo's architectural monuments, evaluated mosques through a strict series of historical criteria aimed at preserving the city's 'Arab-Islamic' architecture within a clear system of typological classifications.⁶ In contrast, Awqaf officials understood mosques as 'buildings-in-time', seeing no fixed dichotomy between their past and present lives.⁷ The Awqaf prioritized a building's utility (*manfa'a*) to the community over a structure's supposedly original form or typological purity.⁸ Buildings were allowed to change, grow, fade, or adapt based on the needs of their users. This attitude resulted in frequent charges of '*waqf* [charitable endowment] abuse' and accusations that the Awqaf exploited or neglected the structures in their care.⁹ The western preservation discourses of the time focused on questions of stylistic unity. It was not until decades later, with art historian Alois Riegl's radical shift toward the appreciation of present-day systems of value, that the valuation of a monument's current use entered European conversations on historical architecture.¹⁰

By the mid-nineteenth century, Egypt's *waqf* system had been weakened, leaving many of its properties in disrepair. Muhammad Ali (ruler from 1805–48) undertook a series of reforms designed to address abuse and to modernize and centralize government operations. These reforms diverted *waqf* revenues toward schools or other projects of state benefit.¹¹ In 1866, Khedive Ismail decreed that if they fell into ruin, *waqf* sites surrounding historical mosques could be expropriated. Such policies reduced the *waqf* system's control over its properties and its ability to maintain their condition.¹²

In 1881, in response to lobbying by Europeans such as archaeologist Arthur Rhoné, Egyptian Khedive Tawfiq (1852–92) established the Comité. The Comité was responsible for cataloguing Cairo's historical monuments, assessing their condition, and restoring those that had fallen into a state of disrepair. It was organized as a subsidiary of the Awqaf, from which it received partial financing.¹³ Conceptually, the Comité was modelled on the French Commission of Historic Monuments (established 1837), with a philosophy of preservation that echoed nineteenth-century European models.¹⁴ By the time of the Comité's establishment, these discourses had begun to shift beyond the binaries of architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's (1814–79) interventionist approach to restoration and art historian John Ruskin's (1819–1900) romantic doctrine of conservation. While Viollet-le-Duc's approach remained influential, a discourse of moderate preservation emerged under the direction of figures such as the Italian engineer, architect, and art historian Camillo Boito (1835–1914), who practised historical building restoration in Milan. The advocates for this moderate path developed nuanced, selective restoration criteria that were only to be mobilized after the failure of previous repairs.¹⁵

By the 1890s, the Comité was under the leadership of architect and historian Max Herz. Herz was familiar with emerging European scholarship and, facing budget constraints and the opacity of Awqaf traditions, found utility in this new strategy of selective intervention.¹⁶ British archaeologist Stanley Lane-Poole commented on the restraint of the Comité's restoration work, noting that 'nothing more must be done than absolutely necessary for the stability of the building, and its security from weather and other

injuries'.¹⁷ This concept of restraint was also deployed to halt proposed physical or programmatic changes to existing mosques, including the repair and return to use of deserted mosques. Unlike Ruskin, the Comité did not see deserted mosques as romantic relics of the past. Instead, following Viollet-le-Duc's theory of classification, the Comité attempted to restore the 'historical value' and 'historical use' of deserted mosques, reinstating their stylistic unity.¹⁸

The Comité believed that over time Cairo's monuments had been disfigured or obscured by the encroachment of newer structures. A strategy of urban *dégagement* (clearance) maximized the visibility of monuments, providing what the Comité viewed as an appropriate commemoration of their status. This practice first emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Paris, where a rhetoric of urban degradation drove the widespread demolition of the city's old quarters. During Georges-Eugène Haussmann's restructuring of Paris (1853–70), Notre-Dame cathedral and other monuments were isolated from their surrounding context through the clearing away of 'parasitic' structures.¹⁹ In Cairo, the Comité's *dégagement* proceeded cautiously and incrementally, within a framework established by 'Ali Mubarak and the Ministry of Public Works, and in the face of legal constraints imposed by the Awqaf.²⁰ *Dégagement* isolated historical mosques from their social, urban, and historical contexts, facilitating an abstracted understanding of these buildings and framing them as timeless, placeless monuments.

Administratively and financially linked, the Comité and the Awqaf jointly coordinated monument repairs, project scopes, labour assignments, and quality control. The Awqaf delegated the aesthetic evaluation of monuments to the Comité. The bulletins show, however, that Awqaf officials, imams, and muftis had to explain the religious laws governing religious properties and communicate the needs of beneficiary communities to the Comité. Questions of *waqf* properties and deeds, and of the *waqf*'s beneficiary communities, became a particularly active site of contestation between the two institutions. The process of education either encouraged certain restorations or intimated that others would be impossible. This allowed the Awqaf to slow down, re-shape, or even halt the Comité's preservation efforts. The Comité navigated within the Awqaf's agenda by focusing its resources on the selective preservation of buildings and details deemed valuable. Through the years of their collaboration, the Comité and the Awqaf learned to instrumentalize institutional knowledge or power to frustrate the objectives of the other group.²¹

When the resolution of concerns reported by the Awqaf conflicted with the preservation of architectural features that the Comité considered historically valuable, they might be left unaddressed. The Comité bulletins record numerous requests by the Awqaf for the assessment and repair of structural failures, including cracked façades or domes, damaged minaret bases, fractured *sabil* (drinking fountain) basins, and water leaks.²² In one such instance, the Awqaf alerted the Comité that, due to the building's low rails, a disabled person had fallen from the stairs of the El-Mahmoudieh Mosque. Identifying the low marble rails as original to the mosque, the Comité resolved that their preservation superseded safety concerns and refused to act.²³

While the Comité merely had the ability to refuse to pursue projects, the Awqaf could mobilize intricate Islamic legal arguments based on the laws governing mosque properties to frustrate the Comité's restoration efforts. When the Comité requested the acquisition and demolition of a house that encroached on the façade of the Aksonkor Mosque, legal arguments were

leveraged to block the sale. Islamic law dictates that adjacent properties can only be purchased under the *waqf* deed if a mosque needs to expand.²⁴ The imam determined that the mosque's size was sufficient for community need, nullifying such purchases. The Awqaf also used the age of properties or the character of architectural features to disrupt the Comité's plans.²⁵ In one heated conversation on the windows of the Kadi Yehia Mosque, the Awqaf distinguished between windows that overlooked the mosque and windows that unlawfully opened through the mosque's wall. The Awqaf emphasized the legitimacy of the former, as they brought light and air into neighbouring spaces and should not be closed as a result.²⁶ The Comité countered the Awqaf's legal strategy by harnessing financial arguments to justify the urban clearance of *waqf* properties. When the Comité wished to remove a shop from the façade of the Ghanem el-Bahlaoun Mosque, it argued that its small size meant that it 'generate[d] very little' income for the *waqf*.²⁷

Although their actions were inconsistent and only modestly effective, the Awqaf possessed a granular understanding of the monuments within their purview. Historian Alaa El-Habashi argues that, in nineteenth-century Cairo, the *waqf* system's understanding of property was 'rigid' in ideology and 'flexible' in application.²⁸ According to El-Habashi, a functioning mosque *waqf*, unlike other public *waqf* properties, could never be changed in use (*ta'dil*) or physically modified (*taghyir*). Simultaneously, a debate existed surrounding ruined or unused mosques (*takharrah*). Some jurists held that ruined mosques could be partially sold, modified, or changed so that they might continue to fulfil their charitable obligations.²⁹ The Comité bulletins suggest that the Awqaf subscribed to this flexible interpretation of the law and thus a relativist preservation principle. Their knowledge of community habitus allowed them to imagine or tolerate physical interventions in deserted Cairene mosques so that they might again serve their communities.

The Awqaf made regular requests to transform deserted mosques for new uses, primarily in service of Cairo's exploding student community. The Comité resisted these conversions, characterizing the students as behaving in a disrespectful manner toward 'valuable' features of the mosques they occupied.³⁰ When the Awqaf requested that curtains be added around the *sahn riwaqs* (mosque courtyard arcades) of the al-Mardini (1340) and al-Mu'ayyad (1415) mosques to protect the students who studied there from the elements, the Comité rejected their petition. The Comité critiqued the effectiveness and aesthetic impact of curtains, stating the only sufficient solution, a fixed enclosure, would be unacceptable.³¹ The organization blocked new renovations and worked tirelessly to restore mosques that had been reimagined through the addition of housing or educational facilities to their original uses.³²

During Ibn Tulun's transformation into a poorhouse, its physical structure was carefully reimagined to fulfil complex state and religious charitable mandates, providing evidence of the *waqf* system's utility-based understanding of preservation. While it predated the establishment of the Comité and the Awqaf by decades, this concept of preservation – and its contrast with that of the Comité – caused friction during the two groups' later restoration efforts.

History of the Ibn Tulun Poorhouse

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Cairo's population boomed. Mirroring western planning templates, a massive state-led urban modernization project executed by the Tanzim (Planning Council) sliced wide boulevards

through the historic fabric of the old city and extended development outward. In the mode of the colonial dual city, a new modern, well-organized city emerged in parallel to its ageing historical counterpart.³³ Many of the buildings of Cairo's still active medieval section sat in apparent disrepair.³⁴ While physically divided, the two Cairos were linked by new urban hygiene policies introduced by the Tanzim and the French medical advisor Clot Bey, head of the Health Council.³⁵

In 1846, Clot Bey, under the direction of Khedive Muhammad Ali, ordered the conversion of the long-deserted Ibn Tulun Mosque into a poorhouse.³⁶ The new institution absorbed residents from the Maristan Qalawun, an overcrowded thirteenth-century hospital-turned-shelter.³⁷ Ibn Tulun had reportedly sat deserted for several centuries, the most recent in a series of interruptions to the building's formal use as a mosque. It was occupied by travellers in the twelfth century; a woollen girdle workshop in the late eighteenth century; and a military hospital, a salt storage facility, and a blacksmith's workshop in the early nineteenth century.³⁸

Sited at the southern tip of the historic Mamluk (1250–1517) district of Cairo, Ibn Tulun became part of a city-wide network of state-sponsored medical centres and benevolent institutions. Driven by Islamic charitable obligations and facilitated by the increased centralization of poverty relief services, this network included hospitals, shelters, and fully functioning mosques such as Al-Azhar (970–1894).³⁹ The Ibn Tulun poorhouse fulfilled the government's religious obligation to the poor and played a critical role during the city's multiple epidemic outbreaks.⁴⁰ In the 1840s, with the criminalization of begging, many of Cairo's beggars were relocated to Ibn Tulun's residential cells, implicating the mosque in the increased policing of public space.⁴¹

Ibn Tulun's massive scale allowed it to absorb up to five or six hundred residents at a time. The poorhouse's population was diverse, comprised of families and individuals who came from the adjacent neighbourhoods, Cairo at large, and surrounding rural areas. These residents reflected a range of demographic backgrounds and possessed a variety of medical needs. They included the elderly, beggars, orphans, pregnant women, and single women with young children. The mosque also continued to provide accommodation to Hajj pilgrims, participating in a practice dating back to the thirteenth century.⁴² Admittance and release from the facility required specific clearance. Residents might stay for as little as ten days, or for years at a time. A cook provided meals, but some cells also contained individual cooking areas. Residents acquired food from the surrounding neighbourhoods, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between the facility and its urban context.⁴³

Unlike the European houses of confinement or workhouses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ibn Tulun poorhouse did not aim to reform its patients, to give them vocational training, or to put them to work.⁴⁴ Its primary function, based in Islamic charitable tradition, was simply to provide shelter to those deemed deserving. Historian Amy Singer describes Islamic 'charitable giving' as a universal obligation widely observed across Islamic societies. Stemming from a 'religious ideal' and fostering social relations, it 'prompts people to act in a pious and just manner'.⁴⁵ Charitable acts such as *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving) and *sadaqah* (voluntary almsgiving) were to be 'performed discretely' and were thus 'not as visible to foreign eyes and ears'.⁴⁶ The conversion of one of Cairo's largest mosques by Clot Bey, Cairo's 'father of medical studies', would have sent a visible message about Muhammad Ali's charity and his modernization agenda to both his own citizens and to

Cairo's influential Europeans. That latter group, however, interpreted the transformation negatively, implicating Clot Bey in the 'vandalism' of a unique monument.⁴⁷

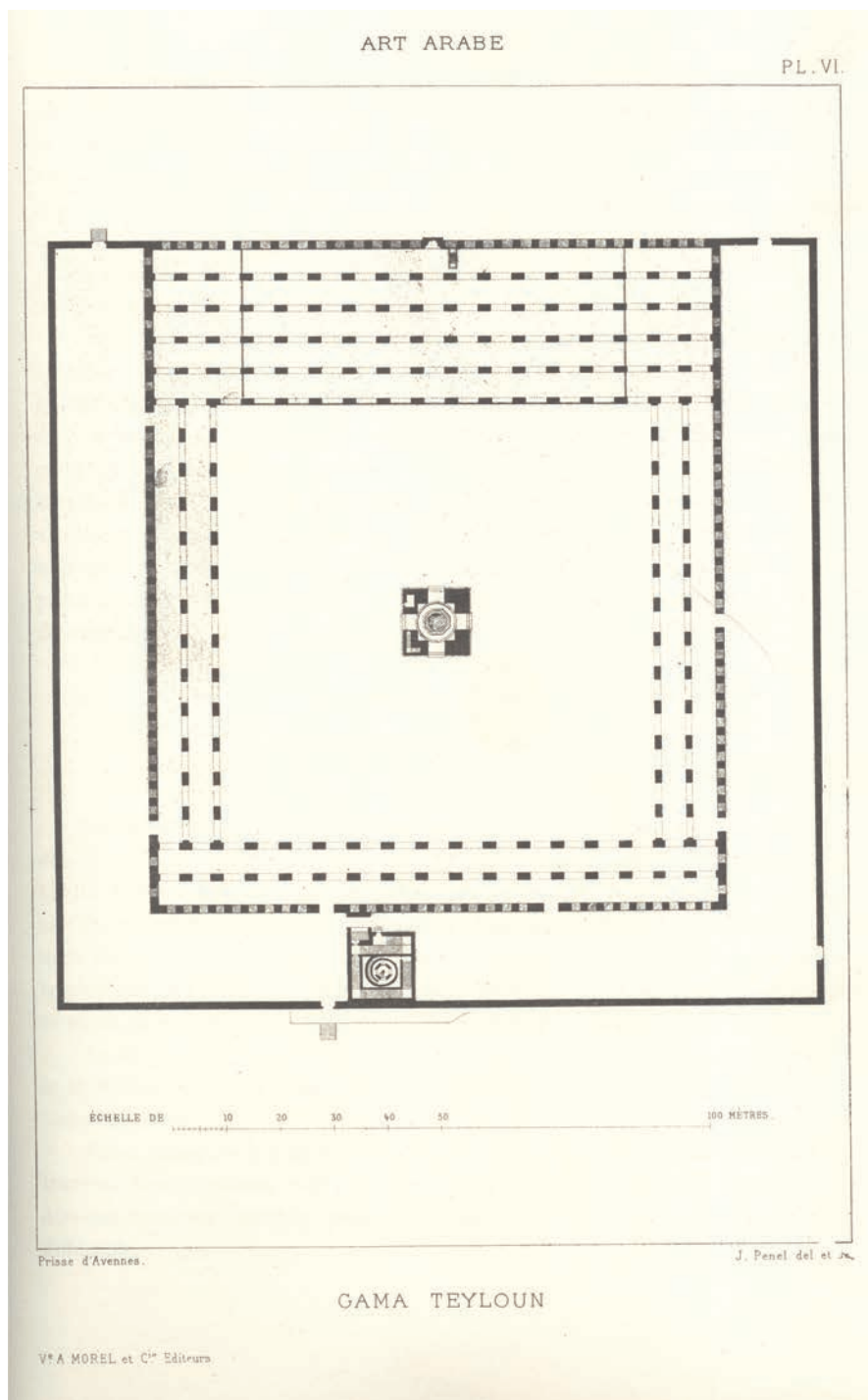
According to the Mamluk *waqf*, which was later taken over by the Ottomans (1517–1801) and was responsible for the maintenance of religiously endowed buildings into the eighteenth century, a building's utility outweighed its aesthetic qualities. At times, this attitude came at the expense of historical structures, which were stripped of valuable construction materials, including wooden beams, iron rods, and marble that would then be reused elsewhere or sold to generate financial support for the *waqf*'s mission.⁴⁸ Continuing this practice, the Awqaf argued that buildings should serve the present and future needs of their communities.⁴⁹ This belief led to strife in the Awqaf's engagements with the Comité over various preservation projects.

The conversion of Ibn Tulun typified the religious *waqf* authorities' understanding of preservation, but to the western architects, archaeologists, and travellers who visited the mosque during its tenure as a poorhouse, it represented a violation of the mosque's stylistic integrity and thus its value. When French architect and archaeologist Émile Prisse d'Avennes visited the mosque between 1858–60 in preparation for his book on Cairene monuments, he was surprised to find its spaces partitioned into small rooms. He complained that the mosque's subdivided state, which he described as 'an act of vandalism, hidden under a masque of philanthropy', prevented him from properly drafting its plan.⁵⁰ He eventually produced a drawing that erased all evidence of the poorhouse and reconstructed the mosque's prior open form [Figure 1].

In *L'art arabe*, Prisse d'Avennes accompanied his 'corrected' plan with an exquisite engraving of the *qibla* wall from 1843 by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey. The engraving depicted a dilapidated but still fully functioning mosque inhabited by worshippers rather than the resident 'paupers and cripples' described in the Baedeker travel handbook of 1895.⁵¹ Stanley Lane-Pool praised the 'original beauty' of the sanctuary, which remained untouched by the poorhouse programme, but lamented the presence of the 'beggars [...] who infest[ed] and disfigure[d] the noble building'.⁵² In 1891, Eustace Corbett described the conversion as 'one of the most shocking acts of vandalism recorded in the modern history of Egypt', calling the poorhouse's inhabitants 'the most ignorant and filthy of the whole population'.⁵³ Decades later, Creswell published an almost verbatim echo of these words, calling the mosque's conversion 'a most shameful act of vandalism'.⁵⁴ Because of these attitudes, the transformation of Ibn Tulun's spaces went largely unrecorded, restricting scholarly understandings of that specific moment in its architectural history.

These European observers were blind to most of the pragmatic socio-religious factors related to Ibn Tulun's conversion. They saw only a fragile, 'injured' monument that needed to be saved from local Egyptians, missing the architectural plasticity that had sustained the mosque across the centuries.⁵⁵ In 1882, Arthur Rhoné accused the 'Muslims' responsible for the protection of Cairo's monuments of selling their artefacts to 'infidels', asserting that those 'infidels were the only ones who cared for protecting Islamic monuments'.⁵⁶ This belief shaped the vision of the Comité. Lacking comprehension of the active social role played by Ibn Tulun's reimagined spaces, they worked tirelessly to return its architecture to an original state.

Both Europeans and Egyptian experts criticized Ibn Tulun's conversion. 'Ali Mubarak of the Ministry of Public Works echoed his European contemporaries, although his negative appraisal was qualified by his praise for the



Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *L'art arabe d'après les monuments au Kaire depuis le VII^e siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e* (Paris: J. Savoy & Cie éditeurs, 1869–77), plate VI.

Figure 1: Floorplan of 'Gama Teyloun' (Ibn Tulun Mosque), c.1869.

building's resilience. In *Al-Khitat*, Mubarak stated that 'despite [the conversion] its original characteristics endure'.⁵⁷ In 1917, Yûsuf Ahmad, a technical inspector for the Comité, published a small, Arabic-language book titled *Jami' Ahmad ibn Tulun*.⁵⁸ Aimed at students, the book provided an introductory history of the mosque, narrating its alternating cycles of abandonment, ruin, and reconstruction. Ahmad shared his European colleagues' critical assessment of the poorhouse and expressed concern for Ibn Tulun's structural integrity. He closed his book by praising God for facilitating the building's most recent restoration.⁵⁹ Both Mubarak and Ahmad questioned the conversion, but rather than describing it as purely destructive, they emphasized the mosque's inherent flexibility.

The Re-Inscription of the Original Plan

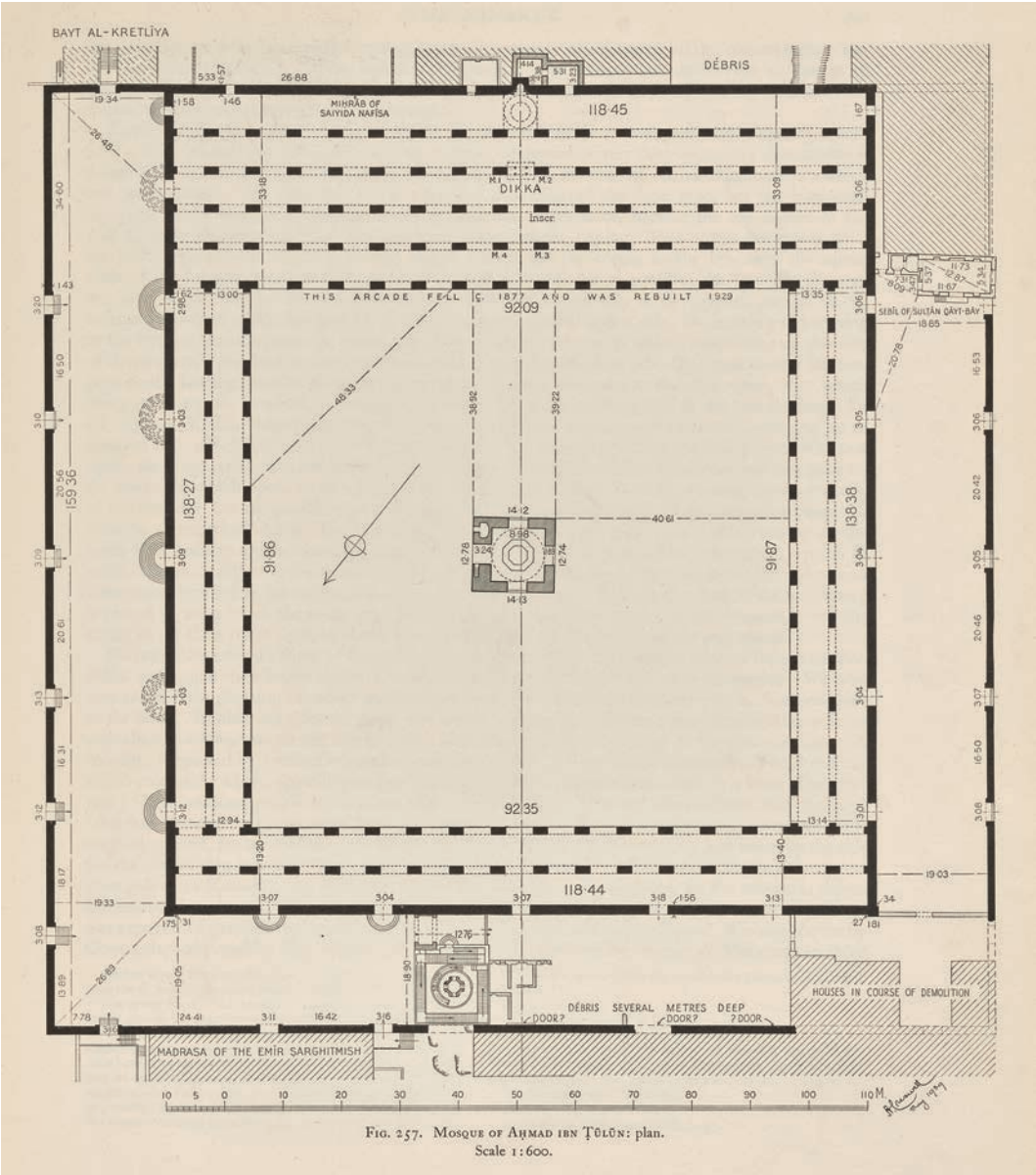
In 1880, Franz Pasha, head of the Awqaf Technical Bureau and soon-to-be first chief architect of the Comité, ordered the poorhouse's closure, citing the risk of roof collapse. The Comité blamed the mosque's general state of disrepair on the previous three decades of interior renovations, asserting that the physical work of the conversion had negatively impacted Ibn Tulun's structural integrity.⁶⁰ The closure triggered a backlash by the local community, who blocked foreigners' entry into the mosque's grounds.⁶¹ Community members later brought visitors in through adjoining houses, charging them a lower fee than the official entry cost imposed by the Comité.⁶² The community saw itself as the legitimate beneficiary of the mosque grounds and understood foreigners' interest in the building as being limited to its historical features.

This interest was not imagined. The Comité explicitly focused on the production of 'specimens of ornamentation from the earliest Muslim art',⁶³ and on 'uncover[ing] the birth of Arab ornaments in Egypt'.⁶⁴ They sought to reconstitute clarified versions of mosque typologies out of the layered complexity of existing structures. The Comité largely relied on the technical analysis of photographs to determine authenticity, claiming that Arab scholars' accounts of historical buildings did 'not always deserve absolute confidence'.⁶⁵ Once identified as authentic, elements were sorted into categories for restoration, preservation, display, or reuse. This process required the construction of a new network of expertise: local technical knowledge and labour resources were mobilized; collaborations with experts from European cultural institutions, such as the École des Beaux-Arts or the Louvre Museum, were established; and local modern cultural institutions, such as the Arab Museum (1884) were founded.⁶⁶ The Comité transformed the École des Arts et Metiers (School of Arts and Crafts) in Bulaq into a school in the Beaux-Arts model. Its trained craftspeople were responsible for the 'most delicate work in the mosques' repair'.⁶⁷ This was done in the manner of Boito's 'orthopaedic' model of restoration, in which new elements were carefully differentiated from those that were original, missing, or heavily damaged.⁶⁸ Elements were not replaced in kind, as ones that lacked inscriptions or other decoration were used in their place.⁶⁹

An influential plan of Ibn Tulun, drafted by historian K. A. C. Creswell in 1932–40 and supported and instrumentalized by the Comité, made visible the group's attitude toward the interior renovation of the mosque.⁷⁰ Creswell described the plan as an attempt to excavate the 'noble simplicity of [Ibn Tulun's] plan' out from under the debris of the poorhouse.⁷¹ Annotations inscribed across the drawing carefully represented 'metres deep' piles of

‘debris’—the remains of structures that had once intruded into the mosque’s grounds [Figure 2].⁷²

Creswell’s dimensioning was meticulous, highlighting deviations between the original structure and later additions. In keeping with Boito’s ‘distinguishability’ principle, Creswell’s annotations, dimensions, and wall hatches keyed to various historical periods aimed to distinguish recent construction from

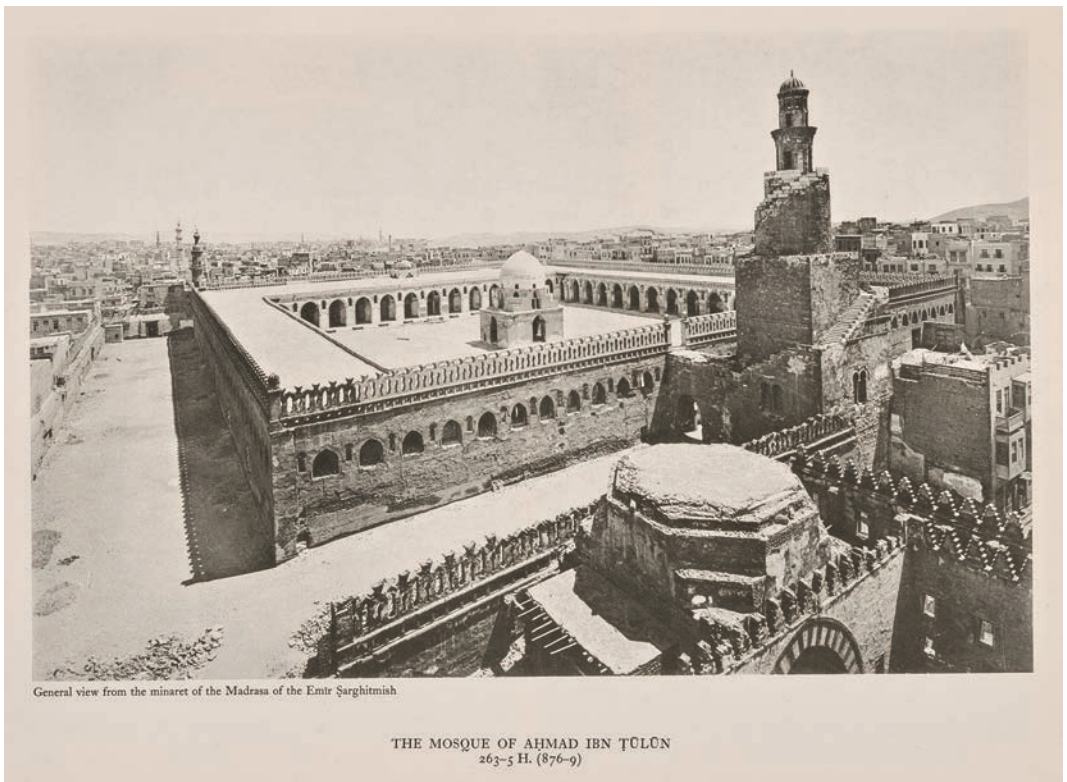


that deemed original, thus uncovering, verifying, and confirming the supposedly authentic form of the mosque.

This strategy obscured the gradual evolution of Ibn Tulun's form over the centuries. The mosque came to include: a domed ablution structure in the *sahn* in the thirteenth century; a *zawiya* (Sufi lodge or small prayer room) in the fifteenth century; a corner minaret added during the Ottoman period; and a bazaar attached to its northern wall by the nineteenth century.⁷³ During the Mamluk period, the mosque gained a *sabil*, a library, and a bakery, in addition to an existing clinic space.⁷⁴ Creswell's drawing reflected the Comité's erasure of several of these additions, including the Ottoman-era minarets.⁷⁵ It rigidly interpreted the mosque as a structure exclusively consecrated for prayer, applying a modern understanding of the opposition of sacred and secular spaces.

Creswell's plan and the accompanying photograph emphasized this division, portraying the mosque as an assertive object physically disengaged from the unruly city [Figure 3].

Creswell represented the *ziyada* (outer enclosure space of the mosque) as a buffer, graphically emphasizing the separation between the city and the mosque. The plan thus reinforced the Comité's strategy of urban *dégagement*, framing the mosque as a fixed monument. Creswell's text disengaged the mosque from its urban surroundings, and from Egypt. Emplacing the Ibn Tulun's plan within a regional 'Abbasid' typological lineage, Creswell



K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932-40), plate 96.

Figure 3: General view from the minaret of the madrasa of Emir Sarghitmish, c.1932-40.

wrote that ‘in many respects, the Mosque of Ibn Tulun is a foreign, Iraqi building planted down on the soil of Egypt’.⁷⁶ Drawing from his own work on the Grand Mosque of Samarra as well as from the scholarship of Ernst Herzfeld, Creswell supported the Comité’s definition of ‘Arab-Islamic art’, connecting the mosque to a regional archaeological and historiographic framework.⁷⁷

In the early twentieth century, preservation discourse in Europe and colonial North African cities began to expand from the scale of the building to that of the historical city.⁷⁸ In the emergent Turkish Republic (1923–), the modernization of Istanbul’s dense urban fabric made the protection of the city’s historical monuments a hotly debated topic.⁷⁹ In Cairo, a decade after they finally cleared Ibn Tulun’s exterior walls, the Comité’s European members began to bemoan the loss of Cairene mosques’ ‘urban character and charm’, comparing their isolation with that of Parisian churches.⁸⁰ The Egyptian head of the organization contested this reading, noting that, unlike the Parisian churches, Ibn Tulun predated the neighbourhood that grew to surround it. As the debate over the authentic form shifted toward the historical figure of the city, the isolated mosque, stripped of its urban social connections, became a contested monument, positioned outside of history.

Throughout the restoration of Ibn Tulun, the Comité and the Awqaf clashed over questions of use value related to contemporary versus historical associations. In 1910, the Awqaf proposed adding housing for the students of Al-Azhar to the renovated but still-empty mosque. Al-Azhar’s enrolment had swelled to nearly ten thousand students, overstressing the reformist educational institution’s ‘deteriorating infrastructure’.⁸¹ The Awqaf’s proposal included both additional interior renovations to the mosque and the construction of new programmatic spaces, including a library, kitchen, and refectory, as well as a shading structure in the *sahn*. The Comité swiftly rejected the proposed additions, approving only the restoration scope.⁸² They thus reinforced their narrow reading of the mosque’s ‘correct’ historical use, and prevented the development of new forms of occupation. The restoration of Ibn Tulun remained as a preservation measure intended purely for the sake of the monument rather than for the benefit of contemporary users.

By 1918, when Ibn Tulun finally reopened its doors to worshippers, the mosque’s closure had lasted longer than its life as a poorhouse. Attendance by members of the surrounding community was weak, suggesting that the lengthy restoration of its valued historical features failed to attract daily users or fulfil their needs.⁸³

Poorhouse Plan

Creswell’s plan emphasized the Ibn Tulun Mosque’s monumental character and its separation from the urban surroundings. In contrast, a technical survey produced by the Comité and published by Yusuf Ahmad indirectly made a prioritization of use visible [Figure 4]. The survey was drafted to evaluate how best to protect the mosque’s original piers during the demolition of the walls that had been inserted into its *riwaqs*.⁸⁴ Rather than projecting the image of a ‘most perfectly harmonious’ mosque-monument, it faithfully catalogued the mosque’s condition immediately following the poorhouse’s closure.⁸⁵ In its representation of blocked and newly opened doors, and the maze-like segmentation of the *riwaq*, the plan illustrated a radical reconfiguration that absorbed a new programme at the mosque.

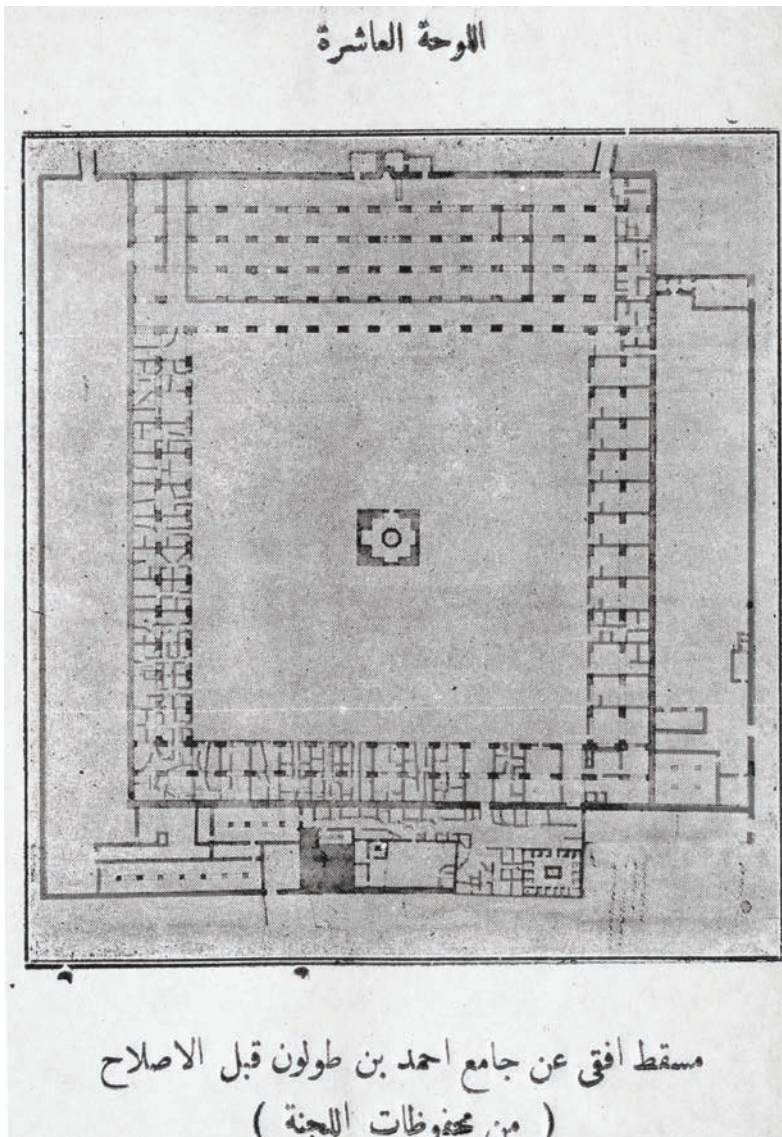
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The organization of the plan suggests that the poorhouse's administration and growing population read the mosque as a 'field condition', open to reconfiguration and growth.⁸⁶ As the poorhouse expanded through the open spaces of the mosque, new enclosures were created using a flexible construction system of recycled brick and wood debris. These adaptations re-integrated Ibn Tulun into its congested urban context, using the spaces of the *ziyada* to mediate between the mosque and the city. In its seeming complexity, the drawing reveals the plasticity of the mosque's floor plan. At first glance, the layout of

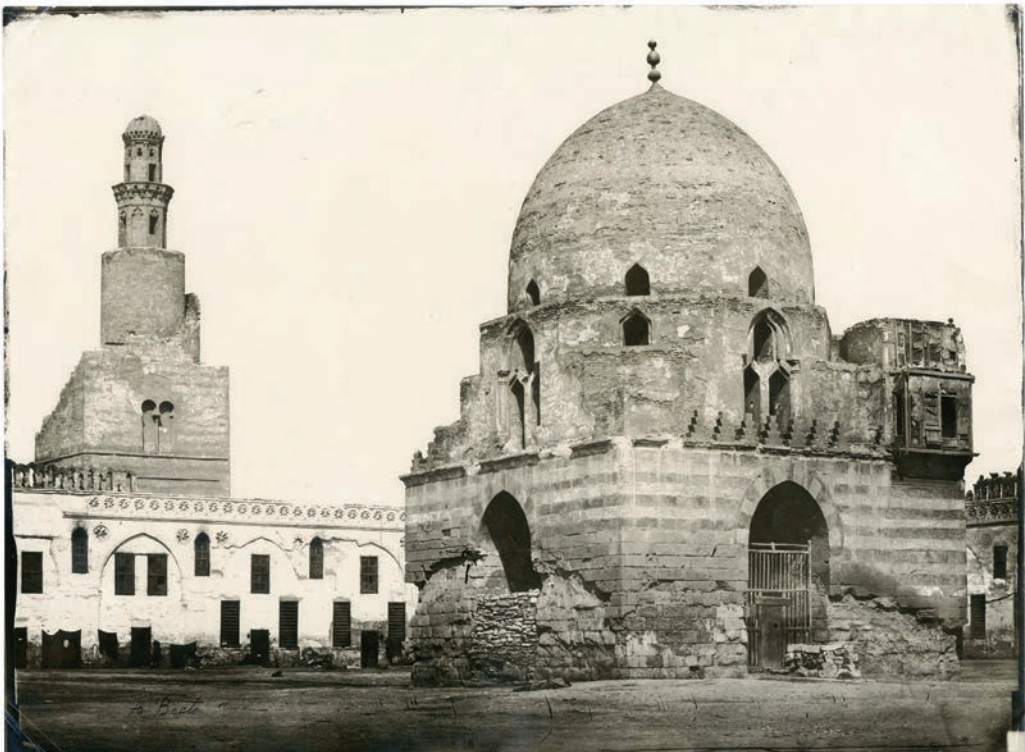


Yusuf Ahmad, *Jami' Ahmad ibn Tulun* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Taraqi, 1917), plate 10.

Figure 4: Plan of the Ibn Tulun Mosque before restoration by the Comité (c.1846–80), partially retraced by Ziad Jamaledine.

the walls and the varied scales and geometries of the rooms inserted into the two-aisle *riwaqs* surrounding the mosque's *sahn* appear irregular. At times, the subdivision of the *riwaqs* follows the pier bays, while at others it negates the bay modules and orients away from the *sahn*. The lack of annotations and absence of historical evidence leaves the rooms' specific functions unclear, but a careful reading of Ahmad's drawing reveals their strategic layout. Considered planning allowed the adaptation of the mosque's interior for a new, complex use that responded to the needs of both its internal community and the surrounding neighbourhood.

The limited photographs of the poorhouse indirectly expose the informality and flexibility of the construction system that transformed the mosque. These images capture the stucco-finished walls of the two-aisle *riwaqs*, and the low partitions of bulging courses of poorly bound brick that gradually came to infill the southeast *riwaq* and cluster around the *sahn*'s domed structure [Figures 5, 6, and 7]. The visual similarity of these bricks to those of the piers indicates that they might have been salvaged from dilapidated areas of the mosque [Figure 8]. Visual evidence in other photographs suggests that wooden trunk beams from a collapsed *riwaq* may have been repurposed as structural material for cell roofs [Figure 9].⁸⁷ Taken together, these images narrate the adaptability of the mosque's plan, which allowed the poorhouse to grow in capacity over time.



Antonio Beato/Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

Figure 5: Photograph of the courtyard of the Ibn Tulun Mosque, c.1870s.

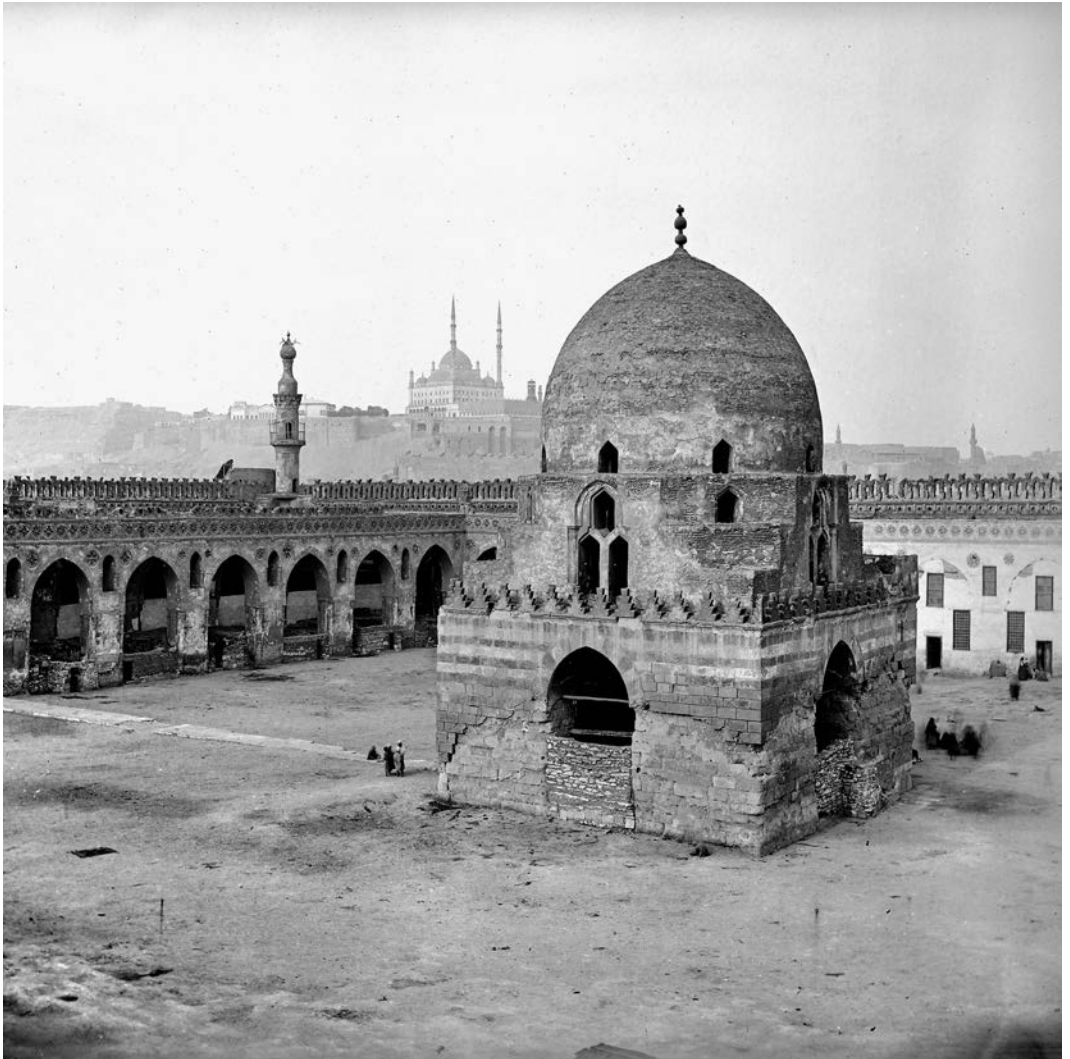
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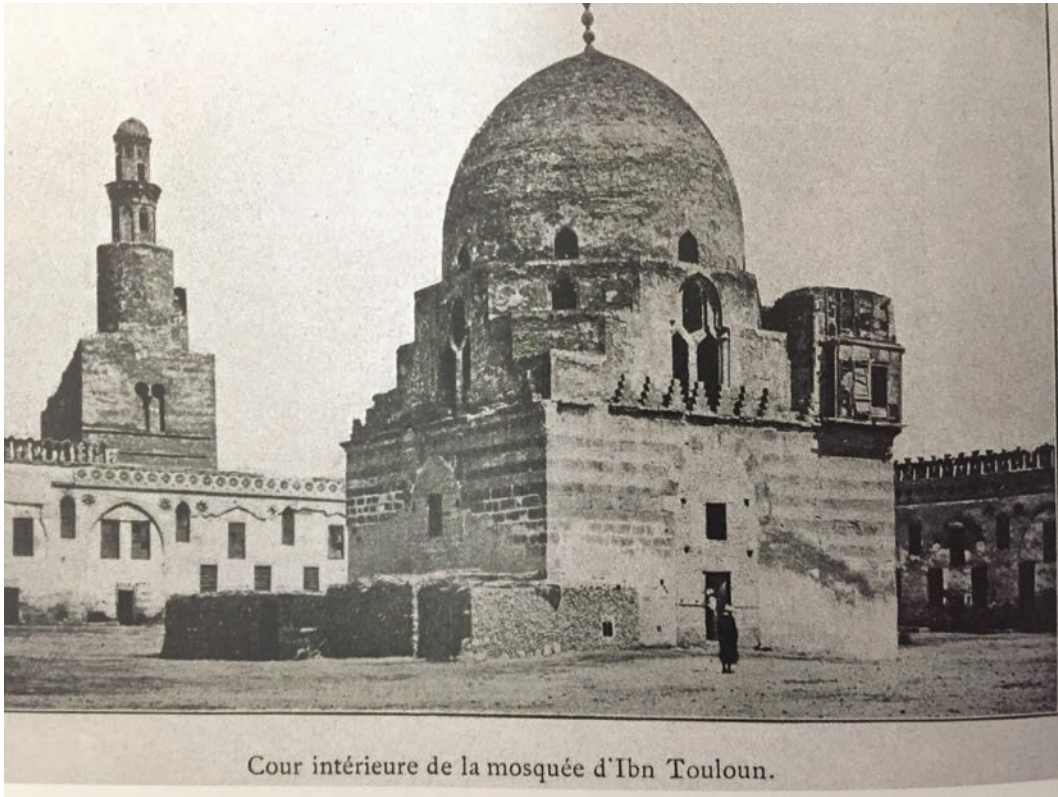
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The planimetric organization of the Ibn Tulun poorhouse differentiated it from other concurrently active facilities. In his nineteenth-century account of the Maristan Qalawun (1284–85), Pascal Coste described how the institution's varied populations were spatially segregated across its different courts.⁸⁸ Ibn Tulun's populations were mixed within the spatial armature of the *riwaqs*. Ahmad's drawing suggests that these adjacencies were managed, rather than being indicators of a lack of administrative oversight. The scale and orientation of the cells around the *sahn* provided layered degrees of privacy and openness, allowing diverse residents to coexist. In the southwest *riwaq*, divisions closely followed the module of the structural bays across the depth of both aisles. Fifteen of the *riwaq*'s sixteen bays were transformed into ample cells



Roger Viollet/Getty Images.

Figure 6: Photograph of the courtyard of the Ibn Tulun Mosque, 1865–70.



Gaston Migeon, *Le Caire: le Nil et Memphis* (Paris: Laurens, 1906), 42.

Figure 7: 'Cour intérieure de la mosquée d'Ibn Touloun' (Interior courtyard of the Ibn Tulun Mosque), photograph c.1892.

measuring 4.6 metres square. Sized to accommodate groups, they were given indirect private entries, and possibly used to house women with children. Visitors described the rooms as furnished and 'neatly divided into little partitions with old mats hung on ropes'.⁸⁹ The subdivision of the northeast and northwest *riwaqs* ignored the structural bay module. Instead, the aisles were split in all directions, creating a series of smaller, nested units that organically aggregated, possibly over time, to provide individual housing.

Ahmad's plan also demonstrates how the flexibility of Ibn Tulun's existing structure supported multiple functions within a single space, continuing the programmatic complexity of historical mosques. Rather than replacing the sacred space of the mosque with the profane spaces of the poorhouse, the new insertions recentred some of the mosque's components, such as its historical *mihhrabs* (prayer niches). The original prayer hall and the new lodging spaces sat in intimate proximity, giving them equal importance around the *sahn*. The prayer hall was formed by a long, single wall that divided the five aisles of the southeast *riwaq*. Positioned at the second aisle, the wall ran through the flat Mihrab al-Afdal and wrapped around to create a large space measuring five by eleven bays, accessed through a single entry against the *qibla* wall. Its position indicated renewed attention directed at the mosque's Tulunid (868–905) *mihhrab*, the Sayyida Nafisa *mihhrab*, and the mosque's primary *mihhrab* and

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Figure 8: 'Cour de la Mosquée Touloun' (Courtyard of the Ibn Tulun Mosque), photograph c.1870s.

pulpit. According to Ahmad, this reduced prayer hall maintained both the mosque's sacred features and its function.⁹⁰ It may have also provided a space for conducting ritual prayers for deceased residents of the poorhouse.

The strategic occupation of the *riwaqs* left several bays around the *sahn* open in order to form a series of passageways. One bay provided a connection to the northwest *ziyada*, which historically contained a *saqiyya* (water-wheel), water cisterns, latrines, and water basins.⁹¹ This space may have been repurposed as a washing and cooking area for the poorhouse.⁹² The passage also allowed access to the fifteenth-century *zawiya* located at the base of the minaret, reportedly still in use in the nineteenth century.⁹³ Ahmad's plan clearly articulates the deliberate integration of the poorhouse with its increasingly dense context. Open passageways and thresholds carefully calibrated the relationship between the poorhouse's residents, the institution's administrators, and the neighbouring community. Multiple entrances between the *qibla* wall and Ibn Tulun's prayer hall directly connected the neighbourhood to the mosque's prayer space while preserving the privacy of residents. Other entryways, including the ones from Tulun Street and Ziyada Street, utilized the *ziyada* as a threshold between the city and the poorhouse. Rooms were often positioned adjacent to these indirect access points, possibly serving as guard rooms.⁹⁴ Photographs from the 1870s and 1880s show that an internal bay



Francis Bedford/Royal Collection Trust.

Figure 9: 'Fountain in the Mosque of Tayloon [Fountain, Mosque of Ibn Tulun, Cairo] 25 Mar 1862'.

was blocked by a brick wall, perhaps reflecting increasing institutional control [Figures 10 and 11].

Conclusion

A recent turn in architectural history has led to questions regarding the privileging of fixed or singular interpretations of buildings. As the editors of *Writing Architectural History* argue, 'acknowledging layers of revision over time, such as reconstructions, renovations, destruction, or technical retrofits, makes any assumption of a building's individuated coherence difficult to accept'.⁹⁵ While the Ibn Tulun Mosque's life as a poorhouse was brief, the narrative of its conversion and subsequent restoration illuminates the divergences between the Awqaf and Comité's understandings of architectural value. The two groups' conflicts over questions of utility highlight both the Awqaf's flexible approach to preservation and the Comité's fixed interpretation of historical monuments.

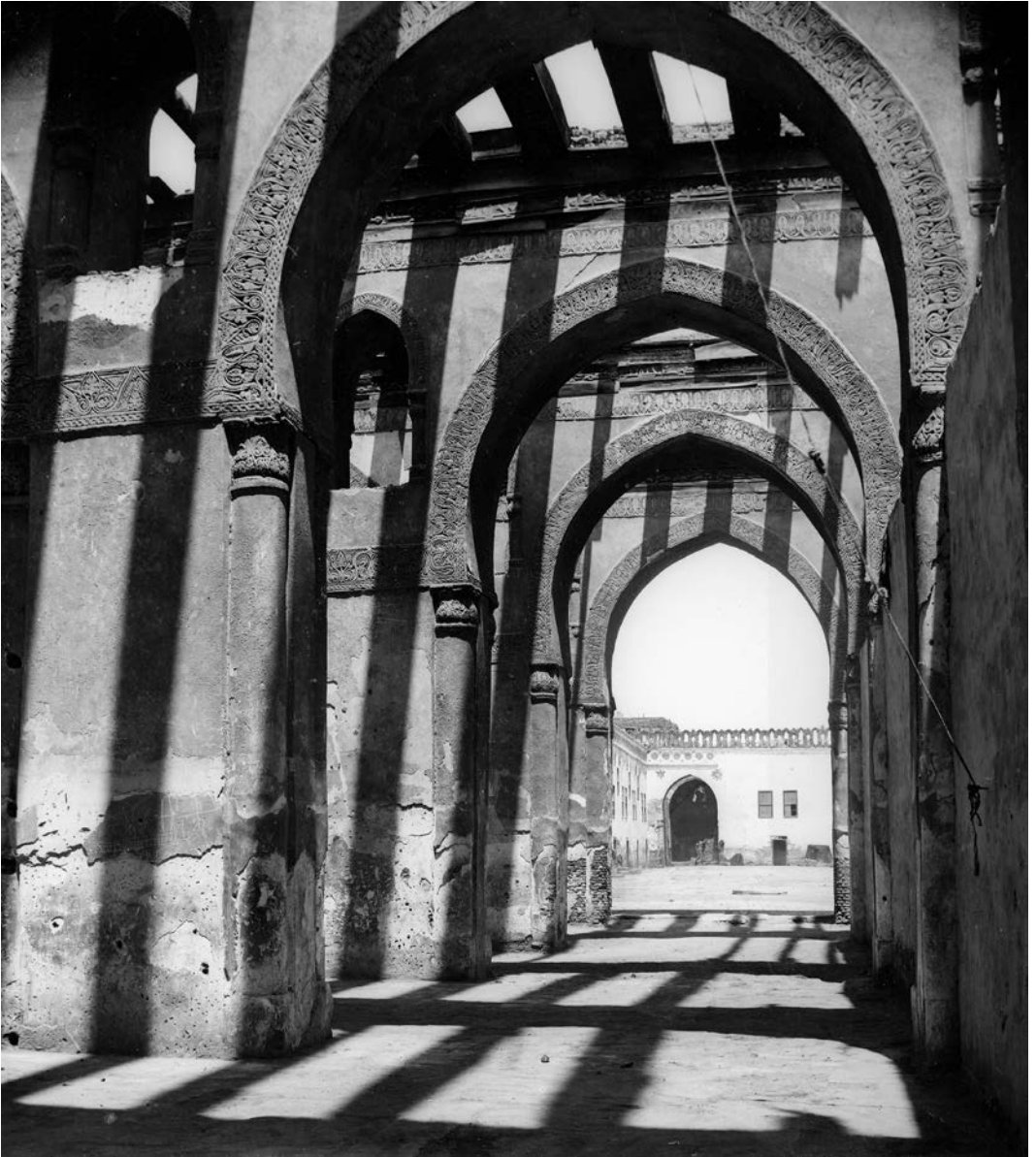
Decades before Riegl's definition of 'practical use' as an attribute of historical monuments entered western preservation discourse, this concept

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Roger Viollet/Getty Images.

Figure 10: Interior of the Ibn Tulun Mosque, photograph 1865–70.

underpinned the principles of Cairo's *waqf* system.⁹⁶ The Awqaf continued this rejection of a dichotomy between the past and present states of the mosques in its care. Unlike in Riegl's conception of 'contradictory' values, the Awqaf saw no conflict between the 'historical' or artistic value of a monument and its 'new' use.⁹⁷ The conversion of Ibn Tulun into a poorhouse offers a vital example of this permissive attitude toward the transformation of both the



Henri Béchard/Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

Figure 11: 'The arcades of the mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun, Cairo', photograph c.1880s.

mosque's programme and its physical structure. In this article, I have argued that, contrary to the charge of vandalism levelled by European observers, Ibn Tulun's transformation showed neither an indifference to the building's historical architecture nor to its function.

Across the Islamic world, mosques historically played a complex social role, supporting liturgical programmes while also housing and feeding travellers and the sick and needy. This programme of care was never architecturally formalized within the spaces of early mosques. Instead, a parallel architectural history of care institutions emerged. Ahmad's plan demonstrated how the poorhouse conversion represented a fluid approach to preservation: to integrate a charitable programme, the mosque's architecture was read as spatially, structurally, and programmatically malleable. Ibn Tulun's short life as a poorhouse was limited by the competing objectives that underlaid its transformation. The modernizing institutions of the state, still grounded in Islamic charitable practices, converted the mosque into a poorhouse while simultaneously tightening state control over the public presence of the poor. The poorhouse's closure and the relocation of its residents to less adequate state-run shelters facilitated the Comité's attempts to restore the mosque's long-lost 'historical value'.⁹⁸ This status as a historicized monument was then affirmed by Creswell's canonical plan. Ahmad's plan obliquely offered a challenge to that fixed reading, identifying the potential latent in the construction Creswell labelled as debris.

Today, as we contend with architecture's ability to respond and adapt to health and environmental crises, the typological fluidity of Ibn Tulun suggests the importance of further questioning the illusory fixity of the architecture of the mosque, whose historicized, formal image has been ratified through the drawing.⁹⁹ Viewed in isolation, the documentation analysed in this article communicates an unfavourably distorted picture of the conversion of Ibn Tulun. However, read collectively, in conjunction with an understanding of the urban socio-religious history of late nineteenth-century Cairo, this material begins to shape the image of an alternative doctrine of preservation. In this doctrine, historical religious architecture is evolutionary and responsive, serving as an active, charitable participant in urban life rather than offering a static image of the past. What lessons might this historical moment impart to the present?¹⁰⁰ Can the mosque today escape the weight of the canon and learn from its more permissive past?

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Endnotes

1. As no official records of the operating dates exist, this range is based on European visitors' accounts. See Tarek Swelim, 'The Mosque of ibn Tulun: A New Perspective' (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1994), 143–44.
2. On the Comité's membership and internal dynamics, see Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 222–29.
3. Paula Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo: Empire, Religion, and Architectural Preservation in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007), 85. On the 'touristic gaze' and questions of 'authenticity', see John Urry, *The Touristic Gaze, Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1990), 7–15.
4. Previous studies have highlighted the formation, composition, and working methodology of the Comité; or their construction of the 'Islamic' monument and the 'medieval' city in relationship to the *waqf* system in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. For the former, see István Ormos, 'Preservation and Restoration: The Methods of Max Herz Pasha, Chief Architect of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, 1890–1914', in *Historians in Cairo, Essays in Honor of George Scanlon*, ed. Jill Edwards (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 123–53, and Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*. For the latter, see Alaa El-Din Elwi El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments: The Intervention of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe' (Ph.D. diss., University of

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- Pennsylvania, 2001); Nezar AlSayyad, Irene A. Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat, eds, *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005); Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*.
5. Daniel Abramson, Zeynep Çelik Alexander, and Michael Osman, 'Introduction: Evidence, Narrative, and Writing Architectural History', in *Writing Architectural History: Evidence and Narrative in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Daniel Abramson, Zeynep Çelik Alexander, and Michael Osman (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021), 11.
 6. Istavan Ormos, 'The Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe: Towards a Balanced Appraisal', *The Arabist. Budapest Studies in Arabic* 40 (2019): 127–29.
 7. Marvin Trachtenberg articulates a pre-modern framework of 'building-in-time' in which long-duration construction (sometimes over centuries) denies buildings a formal ideal or absolute origin. Marvin Trachtenberg, *Building-in-Time: From Giotto to Alberti and Modern Oblivion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
 8. According to El-Habashi, to maintain its *manfa'a* (utility), a *waqf* building's use or *wazifa* (function) could change in response to community needs. El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 50.
 9. On the *waqf* system in Cairo, see Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 29–35; El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 55–59.
 10. Alois Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin', in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Nicholas Price, M. Kirby Talley Jr., and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996): 78–80.
 11. Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 33; El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 28.
 12. Khaled Fahmy, 'Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative', in AlSayyad et al., *Making Cairo Medieval*, 183–84.
 13. El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 92–93.
 14. Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 12–16; Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 217–22.
 15. On Boito, see: Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, trans. Lauren M. O'Connell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109–11.
 16. Ormos, 'Preservation and Restoration', 144.
 17. Stanley Lane-Poole quoted in Ormos, 'Preservation and Restoration', 126.

18. On Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, see Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, 102–6.
19. On Haussmann's restructuring of Paris, see David P. Jordan, 'Baron Haussmann and Modern Paris', *The American Scholar* 61.1 (1992), 99–106.
20. On Mubarak's complicated urban legacy, see Fahmy, 'Modernizing Cairo', 175–80; Nezar AlSayyad, 'Ali Mubarak's Cairo: Between the Testimony of *Alumuddin* and the imaginary of the *Khitat*', in AlSayyad et al., *Making Cairo Medieval*, 49–51.
21. On the Comité's strategy of intervention and their attempts to 'extract the monument' from the 'shrine', see May al-Ibrashy, 'The Cemeteries of Cairo and the *Comité de Conservation*', in AlSayyad et al., *Making Cairo Medieval*, 235–56.
22. Building issues were also reported by the community to the Awqaf. See Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, ed., *Bulletins, Fascicule 9, exercice 1892* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'institut Français d'archéologie orientale, 1903), 53. To access the *Bulletins* archive online, see 'Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe', Persée, last updated January 2024, <https://www.persee.fr/collection/ccmaa>. Unless stated otherwise, all quotations from the *Bulletins* have been translated from the original French by the author.
23. *Bulletins, Fascicule 24, exercice 1907, 1908*, 17.
24. *Bulletins, Fascicule 19, exercice 1902, 1902*, 24.
25. *Bulletins, Fascicule 15, exercice 1898, 1900*, 77.
26. *Bulletins, Fascicule 22, exercice 1905, 1906*, 37–38.
27. *Bulletins, Fascicule 19, exercice 1902, 1902*, 108.
28. El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 54.
29. El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 42–43.
30. *Bulletins, Fascicule 26, exercice 1909, 1910*, 149–50.
31. *Bulletins, Fascicule 29, exercice 1912, 1913*, 4.
32. *Bulletins, Fascicule 2, exercice 1884, 1885*, 1–2.
33. On Cairo's dual city phenomena, see Heba Farouk Ahmed, 'Nineteenth-Century Cairo: A Dual City?', in AlSayyad et al., *Making Cairo Medieval*, 159–67.
34. Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 38.
35. Fahmy, 'Modernizing Cairo', 189.

36. Ibn Tulun was one of several underused historical mosques repurposed for other uses. The *sahn* of the deserted al-Hakim Mosque was used as a playground for the el-Selhedar school and later became a storage space for the Arab Art Museum. See *Bulletins, Fascicule 23, exercice 1906, 1907*, 108–9; Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 237.
37. Mine Ener, 'Getting into the Shelter of Takiyat Tulun' in *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene Rogan (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 61; Mine Ener, 'At the Crossroads of Empires: Policies Towards the Poor in Early- to Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt', *Social Science History* 26.2 (2002): 408–10.
38. For a detailed chronological history of the Ibn Tulun Mosque's architecture, see Tarek Swelim, *Ibn Tulun: His Lost City and Great Mosque* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2015).
39. On the network of care facilities, see Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 20. On al-Azhar Mosque, see *ibid.*, 26; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 62.
40. Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 124.
41. Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 135.
42. K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1958), 304.
43. Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 69–73.
44. Clot Bey considered, but never implemented, a factory programme in 1875. See Ener, 'At the Crossroads of Empires', 421. On European workhouses, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977), 124.
45. Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 20.
46. *Ibid.*, 25, 26.
47. Eustace K. Corbett, 'The Life and Work of Ahmad ibn Tulun', *Journal of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (October, 1891): 554.
48. On the role of the Ottoman *waqf* in preservation, see Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 29–38; El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments'; Nelly Hanna, *Construction Work in Ottoman Cairo (1517–1798)* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archeologie Orientale, 1984), 29–48. On Ottoman attitudes toward urban maintenance in Cairo, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 164.

49. Around the same period, religious reformists prioritized investment in qualified personnel over the 'superficial' repair of monuments. Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 61–62.
50. D'Avennes, *L'Art Arabe*, 95.
51. Karl Baedeker, *Egypt: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, 1895), 267.
52. Stanley Lane-Poole, *Cairo Sketches of Its History Monuments and Social Life* (London: J. S. Virtue, 1892), 24.
53. Corbett, 'The Life and Work of Ahmad ibn Tulun', 555.
54. K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture, Second Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 338.
55. This paraphrases Stanley Lane-Poole, quoted in Ormos, 'Preservation and Restoration', 144.
56. Arthur Rhoné, *Coup d'œil s'r l'état du Caire ancien et moderne* (Paris: Imprimerie de A. Quantin, 1882), 28.
57. 'Ali Mubarak, *Al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya al-jadida* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1888–89), 48. On Mubarak's philosophy of 'conservation', see Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 83–84.
58. Yusuf Ahmad, *Jami' Ahmad ibn Tulun* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Taraqi, 1917).
59. *Ibid.*, 56–57.
60. *Bulletins, Fascicule 7, exercice 1890*, 37–43.
61. El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments', 66; Rhoné, *Coup d'oeil sur l'état du Caire ancien et moderne*, 28.
62. Swelim, 'The Mosque of ibn Tulun', 150.
63. *Bulletins, Fascicule 32, exercice 1915–1919*, 1922, 22.
64. *Bulletins, Fascicule 13, exercice 1896*, 1897, 53.
65. *Ibid.*, 53; *Fascicule 14, exercice 1897*, 1898, 27.
66. *Bulletins, Fascicule 35, exercice 1927–1929*, 1934, 108.
67. *Bulletins, Fascicule 1, exercice 1882–1883*, 1992, 27–29.
68. Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, 110.
69. *Bulletins, Fascicule 34, exercice 1925–1926*, 1933, 77–78.

70. *Bulletins, Fascicule 35, exercice 1927–1929, 1934, 141–52.*
71. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 355.
72. *Ibid.*, plate 257.
73. Creswell asserted that the domed structure 'is dated 696 H. (1296) so it does not concern us'. Creswell, *A Short Account*, 314. I would like to thank Avinoam Shalem, who called my attention to this statement made by Creswell.
74. For a detailed chronological history of the Ibn Tulun Mosque's architecture, see Swelim, *Ibn Tulun*.
75. *Bulletins, Fascicule 37, exercice 1933, 1935–1940, 111–12.*
76. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 351.
77. Alastair Northedge, 'Creswell, Herzfeld and Samarra', *Muqarnas* 8 (1991): 83–93.
78. Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, 129–31.
79. Ümit Firat Açıkgöz, 'On the Uses and Meanings of Architectural Preservation in Early Republican Istanbul (1923–1950)', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 1.1-2 (2014): 168–72.
80. Swelim, *Ibn Tulun*, 220–22. The quotation comes from *Bulletins, Fascicule 35, exercice 1927, 1929, 150.*
81. Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 198.
82. *Bulletins, Fascicule 26, exercice 1909, 1910, 22–25.*
83. Mercedes Volait, *Architectes et architectures de l'Égypte moderne. 1830–1950 genèse et essor d'une expertise locale* (Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005), 152–53.
84. The analysis in this text utilizes a version of Ahmad's plan partially retraced by Ziad Jamaledine.
85. Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250: Second Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 31.
86. Stan Allen, 'Field Conditions', in *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 93–94.
87. Ahmad speculated that in the twelfth century, the community occupying the deserted mosque salvaged and reused its wood. Ahmad, *Jami' Ahmad ibn Tulun*, 28.

88. In particular, mentally ill patients were housed separately from other residents. See Patricia A. Baker, 'Medieval Islamic Hospitals: Structural Design and Social Perceptions' in *Medicine and Space: Body, Surrounds and Borders in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Patricia A. Baker, Han Nijdam, and Karine van't Land (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 256.
89. Lucie Duff-Gordon, *Lady Duff-Gordon's Letters from Egypt, Revisited Edition* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co, 1904), 22.
90. Ahmad, *Jami' Ahmad ibn Tulun*, 56–57.
91. See Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 339, 350; Swelim, 'The Mosque of ibn Tulun', 134–38.
92. As places of death for some residents, Cairo's hospitals employed a *ghasal* (washer of corpses). Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 58.
93. Swelim, 'The Mosque of ibn Tulun', 138, 142.
94. Due to its population of beggars, entry to the poorhouse was controlled. Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 66.
95. Abramson et al., 'Introduction', 6.
96. Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, 102–6.
97. For a detailed analysis of Riegl's 'contradictory' value system, see Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, 113.
98. Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 75.
99. See for example the projects listed under e-flux Architecture, Sick Architecture, accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/sick-architecture/>; Dana Goodyear, 'The Coronavirus Spurs a Movement of People Reclaiming Vacant Homes', *New Yorker*, March 28, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/california-chronicles/the-coronavirus-spurs-a-movement-of-people-reclaiming-vacant-homes>.
100. The ongoing demolition of Cairo's nineteenth-century cemeteries has prompted universal anger. While the destruction should be emphatically condemned, experts' (ineffective) arguments for the preservation of 'unique' or 'historic' mausoleums fall squarely within the confines of the Comité's century-old preservation doctrine. See Hatem Maher, 'Bulldozers Tear into Cairo's Historic Islamic Cemeteries', *Reuters*, June 19, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/bulldozers-tear-into-cairos-historic-islamic-cemeteries-2023-06-19/>.