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The restorations of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe in Egypt: "Conservation" or "reinvention" of monuments? = Les restaurations du Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe en Égypte: « conservations » ou « réinvention » des monuments?

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the PhD dissertation

This PhD dissertation scrutinizes and analyzes the restoration works of Egypt's first modern official organization with the overarching mandate of ensuring the conservation of Islamic art and architecture, entitled the *Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe* (hereafter *Comité*), and in Arabic and English, *Laġnat Hifz al-Ātār al-'Arabiyya al-Qadīma*, The Commission for the Preservation of Monuments of Arab Art.

Most of the Islamic monuments that the *Comité* became responsible for their conservation were initially founded as religious endowments [*waqf*; pl. *awqāf*] with the endowment deed [*waqfiyya*] stipulating that maintenance and repair must be regularly carried out in order to ensure the perpetuity of their benefit. Nevertheless, by the late nineteenth century, it was noted that many of these structures were not regularly maintained and often neglected; in some cases, they were restored and/or renovated in ways that changed their historic fabric. Moreover, some were at risk of being lost due to modernization. During the same time there was a growing European interest in the Orient in general and in Egypt's historic past in particular. This is clearly manifested through the representations and writings regarding the country's monuments and traditions by numerous authors, architects, artists and photographers. Concerns raised by Egyptian and European art connoisseurs regarding the condition of Islamic monuments in Egypt led eventually to the issuance of a khedival decree/superior order [*amr 'ālī*] (December 1881) establishing the *Comité* under the Ministry of *Awqāf*, the body responsible for and owner of these structures. In 1936 the *Comité* was moved to the Ministry of Public Instruction (Education) [*wizārat al-ma'ārif al-'umūmiyya*]. The *Comité* remained active till the 1950s and throughout its lifetime its members were Egyptians and Europeans, composed of ex-officio civil employees, professional experts and prominent scholars; some members were honorary ones and others in correspondence.

Building on earlier art historical, social-historical, conservational and post-colonial studies related to the *Comité* and some of its members, as well as to Cairo's Islamic monuments, this dissertation's primarily objective is to examine the *Comité's* restoration works, methodologies and policies through the research of archival material (documents, drawings and photographs) and on-site observations, questioning whether these interventions could be considered as 'conservation' or 'reinvention' of monuments. The rationale is that only identifying the *Comité's* interventions on monuments and simply referring to them as "modern" interventions -as often done- is neither sufficient to understand these structures nor to answer this question. Through the art historical lens, this PhD analyzes the *Comité's* modern layer on three architectural elements (minarets, domes and *minbars* [pulpits]) of mosques predominantly from the Mamluk period. It examines how, why and based on what evidence certain interventions were opted for? Investigating these questions clarifies on the one hand how those who took the restoration decisions at the time interpreted these monuments and on the other raises questions on the notion of 'authenticity', which in turn impacts our present comprehension and understanding of these historic structures and elements.

Furthermore, the dissertation addresses recent scholarly notions suggesting that the decisions of the *Comité's* foreign members and Egyptian elite were influenced by ideology and politics, prioritizing the interests of foreign tourists over those of the local Egyptian

communities, focusing mainly on the historic and artistic values of these buildings while ignoring their social and spiritual ones. Even though these have become accepted and established narratives on the *Comité*, some scholarly works, including this dissertation, disagree with some of these general notions. This PhD research argues that a deeper and more detailed factual investigation of the *Comité's* actions and actors in a contextualized manner reveals new nuanced narratives and interpretations.¹

1.2 Author's interest in the *Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe*

Coming from a family of engineers accounts for my interest in architecture and construction engineering that led to my choice of field. While pursuing a Bachelor of Science from the American University in Cairo in Construction Engineering (1994 – 1999) I studied ancient Egyptian art and architecture, history and photography. I realized that the restoration, conservation and management of cultural heritage would allow me to integrate these interests while fulfilling a wish to contribute something of value to Egypt, where I live. Seeking additional education through taking courses organized by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Italy made me acquainted with the methodologies, theories and history of heritage conservation worldwide.²

Preparing a master's thesis in Islamic Art and Architecture (AUC, 2004) I wrote about how Islamic monuments were maintained in medieval times through the *waqf* system,³ which was in fact considered by conservation specialists (such as for example Jukka Jokilehto who wrote *A History of Architectural Conservation* within the European context)⁴ as a traditional maintenance system. It was within this system and under the Ministry of *Awqāf* that the *Comité* was founded.

I started to work in the field of cultural heritage conservation, where as part of any project, identifying the earlier restoration interventions is a fundamental undertaking. I got hands-on experience with the *Centro Italo-Egiziano per il Restauro e l'Archeologia* then restoring an Ottoman building (the *Samā' ḥāna*), constructed over a historic Mamluk *madrassa* [school], a palimpsest of historic architectural reconstructions as well as modern restorations by the *Comité*.⁵ Furthermore, managing conservation projects of Islamic monuments in Historic Cairo with a number of organizations including the American

¹ The author of this PhD dissertation has presented her research on the *Comité* at various seminars and conferences. Among those are:

- Framing Medieval Mediterranean Art and Archaeology: Museums and Archaeology in National Discourses; A Getty Connecting Art History Seminar at the American Academy in Rome (April 2015); her presentation was entitled: "The *Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe* in context".

- Deuxième Congrès : Groupement d'Intérêt Scientifique du CNRS ; Moyen Orient et Mondes Musulmans (July 2017); her presentation was entitled: "The work of the *Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe* and its members: A milestone in (re-) constructing Egyptian heritage."

- The Annual History Seminar of the American University in Cairo with the theme "Working in Egypt in the 19th Century" (March 2018); her presentation was entitled: "Restoring Cairo's art and architecture during the 19th and 20th centuries: Actions and actors behind the scenes".

Other seminars and conferences will be listed in the different chapters in relation to the specific themes discussed.

² <https://www.iccrom.org> (last accessed June 2020)

³ Bakhoum Di., 2004.

⁴ Jokilehto, 2005, pp. 12-13 (first published in 1999).

⁵ Fanfoni, 1988 and 2006.

Research Center in Egypt (2001-2004)⁶ and the Aga Khan Cultural Services-Egypt (2004-2012), the service company of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture,⁷ brought me into direct contact with the *Comité's* interventions and their outcomes, offering the chance to observe their methodologies and decision-making rationales and explore parts of their archives.

It became apparent to me that both my experience as an engineer specialized in heritage conservation along with my art historical studies of Egypt's Islamic monuments aided my understanding of the *Comité's* interventions and the buildings themselves. This encouraged me to further explore the *Comité's* work on Cairo's Islamic monuments from an art historical perspective but with the knowledge of a conservation specialist.

Looking at the literature linked to the *Comité* and/or to Egypt's Islamic art and architecture, I noticed that:

- 1) several conservation specialists have produced studies focused on the *Comité* as a conservation institution, and
- 2) other scholars have dedicated works to some of its members.

And while all these studies have significantly added to our knowledge, more questions on specific actions and actors of the *Comité* remain to be explored.

- 3) the *Comité's* work does not feature strongly in art historical studies on Egypt's Islamic art and architecture; sometimes it is listed – sometimes not – but rarely analyzed.

A dedicated study on how the *Comité's* interventions impact our art historical understanding of the monuments is so far lacking;

- 4) some scholarly works that looked at the *Comité* through the post-colonial lens, arguing that its activities ignored the social and religious values of these moments, are not based on enough evidence and hence need to be readdressed.

Moreover, working on Cairo's monuments and coming in direct contact with the wealth of archival material related to the *Comité's* interventions on them, made me realize the mines awaiting to be explored.

My work as a heritage conservation specialist, who have restored several mosques and who have interacted with the different interest groups for whom these buildings have similar or diverse -and sometimes conflicting- values, made me aware that despite the passing of decades since the *Comité* was functioning, today we are often dealing with quite similar technical, administrative and social issues and difficulties as those faced by the *Comité*; I was hence aware that this could lend me to be more sympathetic to the *Comité*. Therefore, I consciously took the decision to balance between my shared experience with the *Comité* and its members, and my role as a researcher analyzing its work.

The aim of this dissertation is thus not to judge the *Comité's* restoration decisions but to understand and analyse the rationale behind them in a contextualized manner.

⁶ <https://www.arce.org> (last accessed June 2020)

⁷ <https://www.akdn.org/our-agencies/aga-khan-trust-culture> (last accessed June 2020)

1.3 The theories of conservation and restoration of monuments in Europe during the nineteenth century

While this PhD research focuses primarily on contributing to the scholarly discourses on the *Comité's* work and on Islamic art and architecture within the Egyptian context, it aims to be of relevance to a wider audience interested in investigating how do we view and interpret historic buildings today in light of their historic and modern restorations, and to place the *Comité's* contributions within the international history of architectural conservation.

Why do we conserve monuments, historic buildings and works of the past? Why do we consider these as heritage? And whose heritage is it? And when we opt to restore them, how do we do that? What do we keep, what do we remove, what do we reconstruct? How are such decisions taken and based on what criteria?

These questions and the best methodologies for restoring historic buildings have long been the subject of numerous debates. Here, only a very few international (mainly European) individuals who have shaped this field during modern times will be mentioned.⁸ Attention must be drawn that although destruction of historic buildings was a direct result of revolutions (such as the French revolution of 1789) and wars (World War I and World War II), these events became turning points for the protection of cultural heritage through the creation of institutions and the issuance of recommendations, charters, conventions and regulations.

A prominent figure for France is Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), the French architect and inspector of monuments, who in 1846 directed the French *Commission des monuments historiques* (established in 1837). Viollet-le-Duc is known for following the principle of 'stylistic restoration' through a variety of interventions including reconstruction. Among his famous quotes on *restauration* [restoration] as published in his *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVI siècle* is:⁹

Restaurations. Le mot et la chose sont modernes.

Restaurer un édifice ce n'est pas l'entretenir, le réparer ou le refaire, c'est le rétablir dans un état complet qui peut n'avoir jamais existé à un moment donné.

And its English translation:¹⁰

The term Restoration and the thing itself are both modern.

To restore a building is not to preserve it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time.

Other nineteenth-century ideas in opposition to this view on restoration became to be known as the 'anti-restoration movement'. The British John Ruskin (1819-1900) is

⁸ A lot has been written about the development of the field of architectural conservation in Europe since historic times and focusing on the modern conservation movement and its main protagonists. Here, only a few major publications on this topic are listed. Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, 1986 and 2005; Elder, *Our Architectural Heritage: From Consciousness to Conservation*, 1986; Glendinning, "The Conservation Movement: A Cult of the Modern Age", 2003 and *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation*, 2013.

⁹ Viollet-le-Duc, 1854-1868, vol. 8. For more on Viollet-le-Duc's work, see Timbert, 2013, among others. For more on 'stylistic restoration' see Jokilehto, 2005, pp. 137-174.

¹⁰ Viollet-le-Duc & Wethered, 1875, p. 9.

considered as the “principal protagonist in this movement.”¹¹ In his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, specifically when discussing “The Lamp of Memory” he writes:¹²

Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word *restoration* understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied by false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. That which I have above insisted upon as the life of the whole, that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and it is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts.

In Italy, the ‘*restauro filologico*’ [philological restoration] was developing. Jokilehto explains this system as follows:¹³

In Milan, there developed a historical approach analogous with the linguistic studies, which has, in fact, been called ‘philological’. This approach can be seen to derive from the Latin definition of monument as inscription or as a document. A monument, in this sense, was built to carry a message, and it was itself seen as a document. Its text represented a resource for the verification of history; it needed to be analyzed and interpreted, but must not be falsified.

Camillo Boito (1836-1914), who supported this approach, classified monuments in three groups based on their age, being antique, medieval and modern; he attached to each group a value, being archaeological, picturesque and architectural respectively and suggested that restoration respects the value attached to it.¹⁴

Without going into more details and analysis of these theories and approaches to conservation, I would like to draw attention that the architecture and the decorative details of many historic structures all over the world have been maintained, restored, expanded and changed over the centuries and are composed of several layers. As will be discussed later in the text, for Egypt’s Islamic architecture this was done through the *waqf* system as well as by successive dynasties to those who initially founded the structure.

1.4 Each restoration intervention is a decision based on sets of values

It can be argued that what kept many historic buildings alive or preserved till the present day -even if their function ceased to exist- is that certain groups assigned special values to them and hence cared to conserve them in any form or the other. I will shed light here on the Austrian art historian Aloïs Riegl (1857-1905), whose ideas -in my opinion- remain very significant till today, either when we attempt to understand past restoration interventions or when we discuss new ones. Riegl in his 1903 work *Der moderne Denkmalkultus, sein Wesen, seine Entstehung* [The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and its Origin] has argued that buildings have memorial values related to “age value, historical value and

¹¹ Jokilehto, 2005, pp. 174 and for the quote, p. 175.

¹² Ruskin, 1889⁶, p. 194; First published in 1849.

¹³ Jokilehto, 2005, p. 200.

¹⁴ Jokilehto, 2005, pp. 202-203.

intended memorial value”; and present-day values in terms of “use value, newness value and relative art value.”¹⁵

Building on Riegl and on twentieth-century conservation charters such as the 1964 Venice Charter (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites) and the Australian Burra Charter (2013 and earlier versions), which discuss how diverse values are impacted by socio-political, religious and cultural matters and how they change over time, I would argue that any restoration intervention is a decision taken at a specific moment in time based on certain sets of values within a specific political, cultural and social context.¹⁶

When Notre-Dame Cathedral, a World Heritage site, was devastated by fire (April 15, 2019), France’s president, Emmanuel Macron, stated the following:¹⁷

During our history [France] built towns, ports, churches; many have burnt or have been destroyed by war or revolution but each time we have rebuilt them. The fire at Notre-Dame reminds us that our history never stops – never [...]
We will rebuild the Cathedral of Notre-Dame [to be] even more beautiful than before.

Thanks to the contributions of citizens and other entities worldwide, the project to restore Notre-Dame will not suffer the financial constraints usually associated with restoration projects on this scale. But questions surrounding the theoretical and methodological approach to the reconstruction are challenging and, given the building’s conservation history, are stirring discussion and debate. The destroyed spire was a mid-nineteenth century creation by Viollet-le-Duc, whose design did not follow exactly the original thirteenth-century spire, itself destroyed and dismantled in the late-eighteenth century. Indeed, the shape of the original spire is known only through medieval representations. Given that the spire designed by Viollet-le-Duc is the one attached to the memory of how Notre-Dame looks, questions arise such as whether the reconstruction should follow the original design, or that of Viollet-le-Duc, or become something quite different, reflecting the current era. Likewise, the choice of materials, between traditional and those reflecting modern technology, will be integral to the design.¹⁸

¹⁵ Jokilehto, 2005, p. 216. See also Riegl, 1903 and in translation 1982.

¹⁶ The Venice Charter 1964. The full text of the charter can be found online:

https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf (last accessed June 2020)

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of cultural Significance, The Burra Charter 2013.

The full text of the charter can be found online:

<https://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf>

For earlier versions see: <https://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/burra-charter-archival-documents/> (last accessed June 2020)

¹⁷ For President Macron’s speech, see <https://youtu.be/s5HGZJZevic>

For its English translation see: <https://www.euronews.com/2019/04/16/watch-live-emmanuel-macron-gives-speech-on-notre-dame-cathedral-blaze> (last accessed May 2019).

¹⁸ The design competition and the proposals, some of which being very innovative and not in line with several conservation theories, stirred several debates. <https://www.insider.com/bee-hive-spire-and-gold-flames-among-redesign-proposals-for-notre-dame-2019-5#a-white-spire-1> and

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/proposals-redesign-notre-dame-de-paris-start-debate> (accessed June 2019).

The final decision taken was to reconstruct the spire and the roof as per their condition before the fire;

<https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/10/notre-dame-cathedral-spire-to-be-rebuilt-exactly-as-it-was-macron-decides> (accessed July 2019).

Could a decision have been taken not to reconstruct the spire? This is not unlikely, as examples of such cases do exist. In 1955 a fire hit the Basilica of Saint Servaas (also known as the Basilica St. Servatius) in Maastricht and destroyed its neo-Gothic spire, which was added in the end of the nineteenth century by an acquaintance of Viollet-le-Duc, namely the Dutch architect Petrus Josephus Hubertus Cuypers (1827-1921) as part of the restoration of the basilica, replacing the baroque tower built between 1768 and 1770; the church's original tower dates to 1566.¹⁹ The spire was never reconstructed. If hypothetically speaking this fire took place in 2019, not in 1955, could the decision be different? Possibly yes and possibly no. If opted for reconstruction, which design or architectural style would be opted for? The decision would most likely depend on who participates in the debates, what are the available resources, what the reconstruction would mean to the city, and who takes the final decision and based on which values and what criteria.

The point is that any conservation intervention (of today and/or of the past) offers a number of possibilities and no matter how many interest groups are involved in the decision-making process, each proposal will have its supporters and opponents. The decision taken would, however, be governed by contemporary values and the significance attached to the building and its setting. These would be explained and possibly justified by arguments linked to contemporary as well as earlier conservation theories, debates and established charters governing the field.

It is within this framework that the work of the *Comité* is presented in this dissertation: as decisions taken at a specific moment in time, based on a set of criteria and arguments. The research also pays attention to the *Comité's* work environment within the Egyptian context as well as its links to the international context.

1.5 In a nutshell: The *Comité* in context and in action

This section briefly introduces some of the themes discussed in chapter three "The *Comité* in context and in action", which is composed of three parts. The first part introduces 1) Cairo, the city where the *Comité* was created; 2) the *waqf* system and its relation to maintenance and repair; it was under the Ministry of *Awqāf* that the *Comité* was founded and operated (until 1936), and whose *awqāf* [endowed] buildings/monuments it restored; 3) the nineteenth century at the end of which the *Comité* was established. The second part provides an overview of the cultural setting and the fascination with Cairo as manifested in a variety of written and iconographic sources produced over more than ten centuries. The third part discusses the international and local circumstances that led to *Comité's* establishment and provides details on its foundation decree/superior order [*amr 'ālī*], its initial regulations, its evolution and significant milestones and changes (shifts in directions) in its organizational structure over its seven decades of operation till the early 1950s. It also discusses the publications and other material produced or collected by the *Comité*, its members or those it collaborated with; and finally, its main activities and its general *modus operandi* are described.

¹⁹ Thanks are due to Dr. Gertrud J. M. van Loon for drawing my attention to this example when responding to my question about debatable restoration cases in The Netherlands that resonate to the issue regarding the spire of Notre-Dame. For more, see <https://www.kerkgebouwen-in-limburg.nl/kerken/maastricht/servatius-basiliek>

1.5.1 The *Comité's* history and activities²⁰

The *Comité's* establishment in December 1881 was strongly linked to the overall fascination with Cairo's historic monuments and urban fabric, which till today stand as a testimony to the numerous Muslim dynasties that ruled Egypt starting the mid-seventh century. Since historic times and throughout the centuries, historians and travelers were captivated by the city's rich architecture and traditions and have documented their impressions in chronicles and travelogues. These accounts, written in intervals over several centuries, demonstrate a continuous interest in the city's history, with each providing us with a record of the city at a specific moment in time -hence its status quo- and allowing us to trace some changes over time. Despite this uninterrupted attention to Egypt's past, it is the political, social and cultural events of the long nineteenth century that attest to the significant growing interest in the country's material culture especially by Europeans, but also by Egyptians. The French expedition to Egypt under Napoléon Bonaparte between 1798 and 1801 and the consequent publication of the *Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française* (appearing in nineteen volumes from 1809 to 1829) has often been regarded as a turning point in the growing interest in Egypt's past, although -as noted and as will be further discussed- this interest can be traced since historic times.

Mehmed Ali, the Ottoman viceroy to Egypt between 1805 and 1842 and the one who founded the dynasty that remained in power in Egypt till the mid-twentieth century, encouraged foreign participation in the country's development and throughout his and his descendants' reigns several Europeans held official government positions and others were invited for specific tasks. Numerous nineteenth-century painters, architects and photographers (after 1839) made their way to Egypt and their works disseminated their interest to a wider audience outside the country. Likewise the Egyptian pavilions at Universal Exhibitions / World Fairs, showing replicas of Egypt's monuments as well as Cairo's streets and life, aroused the West's interest in the country's past.²¹ The invention of the steamship placed travel within the reach of many more people, with Egypt and the Holy Land (Palestine) being the most sought-after destinations.

Along with the heightened interest in Egypt, concerns about the condition of its Islamic monuments during the later 1800s were raised as discussed in the writings of several nineteenth-century scholars, art connoisseurs and journalists. By that time, the fields of archaeology and Egyptology were born; ancient Egyptian (Pharaonic) monuments were protected through a law issued in 1835; they later became under the auspices of a newly established official body, namely the *Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte / Service des Antiquités égyptiennes* [Egyptian Antiquities Service], established under the Ministry of Public Works.

Islamic monuments were as noted above endowed religious structures [*waqf*; pl. *awqāf*] under the responsibility and ownership of the *Awqāf*. And while this meant that those buildings should be regularly maintained and restored through the *waqf* system, the writings of those concerned reveal on the one hand the lack of maintenance and neglect of some of these historic structures and on the other renovations that could lead to the loss

²⁰ For this section the references are not included here as they are provided in detail in chapter three, section 3.3.

²¹ The classical account on the representation of the 'Orient' at Universal Exhibitions/World Fairs remains Çelik, 1992. See also, Mitchell, 1988.

of the monuments' historic fabric. Many of those concerned were Europeans who were on the one hand in touch with the modern conservation movement in Europe and on the other have seen how modernization can be a risk to historic cities as was the case with Paris. Napoléon III (1808-1873) had tasked George-Eugène Haussmann (1809-1891) with improving the city's infrastructure, and urban planning activities began during the mid-nineteenth century leading, however, to the destruction of many historic parts of Paris. Many noted that Cairo was facing a similar risk because of the khedive's modernization project and the opening of new streets through the dense urban fabric where several historic buildings still existed (such as the street of Mehmed Ali), and the destruction of parts of historic districts to build new modern constructions (such as in Azbakiyya). It was also noted that the interest in the Orient accompanied by the collection of valuable decorative pieces caused great damage to the original artistic elements. In line with the international consciousness regarding the importance of protecting historic buildings and cities, several ideas were raised, suggestions made and actions taken by Egyptian and European art connoisseurs, lobbying with different interest groups to find a solution for the protection of Cairo's Islamic architecture, proposing the establishment of a committee modeled on the French *Commission des monuments historiques*. Finally, in December 1881 the Khedive issued a decree/superior order, undersigned by the President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of *Awqāf*, to establish the *Comité*, a specialized organization that would work under the umbrella of the Ministry of *Awqāf* to ensure the overall conservation of these Islamic monuments.

The *Comité's* mandate was to inventory, register, document and ensure the conservation of what was defined as Arab art and architecture, today commonly referred to as Islamic art and architecture. Funding the restoration projects was primarily from the *Awqāf* as well as other secular State sources. Fifteen years after its creation, Coptic monuments were included in its purview with funding from the Coptic Patriarchate and also other private or governmental sources. While the *Comité* focused mainly on religious Islamic structures, shortly after its foundation it began to work on a few secular buildings as well as Roman ones. And although most of the monuments within the *Comité's* scope were in Cairo, it also addressed Islamic and Coptic buildings nationwide.

The *Comité* was composed of two commissions. The first was responsible for preparing an inventory of the monuments to conserve, reaching eventually a list of over 600 monuments to register and protect; although this commission was somehow dissolved (around 1898) after it issued an initial list of monuments, more buildings kept on being registered and in some cases de-registered. The second was a technical one charged with reporting on the conditions of the monuments, suggesting restoration works, approving projects and supervising them.

The *Comité* was accordingly considered as a technical advisory body for the Ministry of *Awqāf*. The *Comité* members included Egyptian and European specialists and scholars, alongside ex-officio officials and civil servants from a number of ministries, who worked *pro bono*. A technical office linked to the *Comité* was responsible for preparing the necessary drawings, designs, project proposals and specifications, to be reviewed by the members for their comments, suggestions and approvals. Those carrying out specific technical works were formally employed or commissioned to do specific tasks.

In 1936, the *Comité* was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction (Education) [*wizārat al-ma'ārif al-'umūmiyya*]. While the Minister (or administrator) of *Awqāf* acted as the president of the *Comité* prior to 1936, the Minister of Public Instruction subsequently assumed the presidency. In 1939 another administrative reorganization took place, establishing the *Conseil Supérieur pour le Service de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* and the Technical Section became the *Comité permanent*. The chief architects and other specialists were responsible for technical works; here their names, nationality and date in this position are given: the first three chief architects were the German Julius Franz (1882-1888; fig. 3.13a), the Austro-Hungarian Max Herz (1890-1914; fig. 3.13b) and the Italian Achille Patricolo (1914/1915-1923; fig. 3.13). Reflecting the growing nationalism in Egyptian politics during the 1920s, subsequent chief architects were Egyptian: Aḥmad al-Sayyid (1923-1932), Maḥmūd Aḥmad (1934-1942) and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ḥilmī (1943-1953). Nevertheless, throughout the *Comité's* history, its members, engineers, architects, photographers and contractors (who worked for or collaborated with the *Comité*) comprised both Egyptians and Europeans; the various actors were Muslim, Christian or Jewish.

In 1953, the Administration of Antiquities [*L' Administration des Antiquités / maṣlaḥat al-āṭār*] was established under the Ministry of Public Instruction. The *Comité's* transfer to this new administration and the changes that took place during that time are considered the 'end' or the transformation of the *Comité* as initially established.

Throughout the years, the *Comité* members were meeting regularly to discuss the planned or ongoing restoration works. The *Comité's* minutes of meetings along with the technical reports were published in a specialized Bulletin (reaching 40 volumes; initially in French then also translated into Arabic; volume 41 was issued only in Arabic). As an official organization, the *Comité's* minutes were also regularly published in Arabic in the official newspaper. Moreover, several members of the *Comité* published on a variety of topics linked to Islamic art and architecture.

1.5.2 The *Comité* in relation to the European context of monuments conservation and restoration

Among the important aspects to highlight in this introduction is that the *Comité's* work started more than hundred years ago at the time when nineteenth-century debates on the conservation of monuments were being shaped in Europe. Most of its work took place, however, prior to the issuance of internationally agreed upon charters such as the 1931 Athens Charter (appearing 50 years after the *Comité's* establishment) or the 1964 Venice Charter (appearing after the *Comité's* time); both were developed based on nineteenth and twentieth-century events as well as debates on the significance of monuments and historic buildings and how to conserve them.

The *Comité* since its early times and throughout its lifetime was in touch with the international conservation debates and the issued charters. For example, in a *Comité* meeting dated November 7, 1899, a *Comité* member (Yacoub Artin Pacha) communicated an excerpt of *La vie littéraire* by the French author Anatole France (1844-1924), which the members asked to have translated into Arabic.²² In this text France criticized the works of Viollet-le-Duc stating that they went "so far as to sacrifice valuable/venerable and charming

²² BC 16, 1899, "Procès-verbal N° 93", pp. 81-82.

works of art, and to transfer, as at Notre-Dame, the living cathedral into an abstract cathedral" [*Il allait jusqu'à sacrifier des œuvres vénérables et charmantes et à transformer, comme à Notre-Dame de Paris, la cathédrale vivante en cathédrale abstraite*].²³ The excerpt ends with a quote by the French art historian and archaeologist Adolphe Napoléon Didron (1806-1867) in which he states that:²⁴

En fait de monuments anciens, il vaut mieux consolider que réparer, mieux réparer que restaurer, mieux restaurer qu'embellir ; en aucun cas il ne faut ajouter ni retrancher.

Although neither restorations in Europe nor the ones by the *Comité*, as will be demonstrated through this PhD research, followed in full such a philosophy, the discussion of such concepts in the *Comité's* meeting at quite an early stage of its work is a clear sign of the members' knowledge of European debates on the emerging restoration theories and concepts. It also shows their awareness that architects and decision makers must be cautious and respectful to the monuments they are restoring.

The *Comité* and its members were hence fully aware of the European conservation theories and practice, and were up to date with the international debates on the topic, with even one member attending the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in Athens (1931).

We must also bear in mind that during the *Comité's* lifetime several political as well as economic events happened locally and internationally such as, the British occupation of Egypt (1882), World War I (1914-1919), the 1919 Egyptian revolution against the British, the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II (1939-1945) and the Egyptian Officers revolution of 1952. These events had an impact on the administrative and technical works and decisions of the *Comité* albeit with different intensities.

Worldwide, the twentieth-century wars have had a major impact on how cultural heritage is appreciated today. The past and possible future loss of material legacies inspired agreement on the notion of a shared 'World Heritage' with an "outstanding universal value", a debatable issue in itself. But the point was well-made that the protection of cultural properties is a shared responsibility between the nations of the world.²⁵

As this dissertation will highlight, the *Comité*, long before these notions, was composed of Egyptian and European members who, despite of their diverse national, social, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as their different and often individual professional ideas regarding how to best restore a specific monument, shared the task of conserving Egypt's and Cairo's Islamic and Coptic monuments.

²³ BC 16, 1899, "Procès-verbal N° 93", pp. 81-82; BC 16, 1899, "Annexe au Procès-verbal N° 93. Extrait de l'ouvrage de M. Anatole France, *La vie littéraire*, communiqué au Comité par S. E. Yacoub Artin Pacha", pp. 83-86.

For more on France, see Jokilehto, 2005, p. 187.

²⁴ Original quote as drafted by Didron is in the first *Bulletin archéologique*, 1840-41, p. 47, and as quoted in BC 16, 1899, p. 86. For more on Didron, see Jokilehto, 2005, p. 138.

²⁵ For more on the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World cultural and Natural Heritage (known as the World Heritage Convention), see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/> and <https://whc.unesco.org> for other related matters (last accessed June 2020).

1.6 Framing this PhD dissertation

This section summarizes the main themes of chapter two “The *Comité’s* work under scrutiny”, which is composed of two parts.²⁶ The first presents the different scholarly disciplines that have used the *Comité’s* work and publications either to obtain information relevant to a specific research topic, or to produce works dedicated to and focused on the *Comité* and/or its members. Building on the one hand on this plethora of studies and identifying on the other gaps in the research as well as arguments on the *Comité* that need to be readdressed, the second part of chapter two frames the contributions of this PhD dissertation to the various scholarly disciplines and outlines its research angle, questions, methodology and rationale.

1.6.1 Overview of scholarly works linked to the *Comité*²⁷

Interest in the *Comité’s* work initially and contemporaneously with its work came from art connoisseurs who appreciated Cairo as well as Islamic monuments. Consequently, art and architectural historians became the predominant scholars using *Comité* related material especially when studying individual Islamic or Coptic monuments.²⁸ It can be noted, however, that sometimes the *Comité’s* layer has been thought to be an original one. Such misinterpretations can be misleading not only when studying an individual building but also when producing studies that deal with architectural and artistic typologies of buildings, architectural elements or objects dating to a specific historic period. Fortunately, in most of the cases, studies on Islamic art and architecture in Egypt have acknowledged the *Comité’s* work by identifying and listing the interventions carried out on a specific building, and were sometimes referred to as “modern” interventions.²⁹ Nevertheless the *Comité’s* interventions were rarely analyzed from the art historical perspective. While the *Comité’s* layer on historic buildings is indeed a modern one, this PhD argues that it forms an integral part of the structure’s stratigraphy that merits further analysis as it impacts our understanding of historic structures as will be elaborated on below.

The majority of studies directly linked to the *Comité* were produced predominantly by specialists in cultural heritage conservation as well as other scholars interested in this field and in the history of the architectural conservation of Islamic monuments; these focused on the history of the *Comité*, its contributions to inventorying Egypt’s Islamic monuments and its conservation techniques and methodologies.³⁰ Other studies, focused on individual members of the *Comité*, especially those with technical background and knowledge, offering insight not only on the role they played in the *Comité* and the publications they produced, but also on the *Comité’s* work and contributions to the fields of art history and conservation.³¹ As highlighted by Mercedes Volait, these individuals

²⁶ For this section the references are not included here as they are provided in detail in chapter two.

²⁷ For more details see section 2.1.

²⁸ There are many art historians who identify the *Comité’s* work -or use the research, drawings or photographs produced through the *Comité*- when discussing individual Islamic monuments. These will not be listed here but reference to those that are relevant to this research will be given in relation to the individual case studies.

²⁹ See for example, Behrens-Abouseif, 2010, p. 209, 217, 223.

³⁰ Studies on the *Comité* or where the *Comité* features significantly, written or edited predominately by architects and/or conservation specialists (including a few from other disciplines), include: Meinecke (ed.), 1980; Volait, 1994; Mahdy, 1992; Bacharach (ed.), 1995; Hampikian 1997 and 2007; Al-Ḥabašī & Warner, 1998 (note: Al-Ḥabašī is El-Habashi, the author of El-Habashi, 2001); Abd el-Maksood, 1999; El-Habashi, 2001; Speiser 2001; Warner, 2005; Al-Ibrashy, 2005b; Mayer & Speiser (eds.), 2007; ‘Ali Ash., 2011; Fahmy Ad., 2016 and 2017; Ormos, 2019.

³¹ Volait, 1988, 2002 and 2009a; Ormos, 2001, 2002 and 2009a; Godoli, 2017.

were sometimes professionals and sometimes amateurs but what they had in common was that they were “Crazy about Cairo” as per the title of her book *Fous du Caire*.³²

In 1992, Donald Malcolm Reid wrote “Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism: The Struggle to Define and Control the Heritage of Arab Art in Egypt”, an article that would influence the way the *Comité* was studied and perceived.³³ In his article and later books, Reid politically contextualized the Egyptian-European discourse of managing Egyptian heritage, especially Arab monuments, demonstrating how, after years of European domination of the *Comité*, national claims to heritage prevailed, especially after the 1920s when nationalism was growing in Egypt.³⁴ The publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1987) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonising Egypt* (1988) and Reid’s later works have played a role in shaping studies related to the *Comité*, inspiring a genre of scholarly works that view the *Comité* and its work through a post-colonial lens, suggesting that the *Comité*’s decisions were impacted by the gaze of Orientalism and others claiming that the *Comité* was a tool of the British colonial power; among the principle notions of these works is that the actions of the *Comité*’s foreign members and Egyptian elite, influenced by ideology and politics, created a “medieval” Cairo (or “medievalized” Cairo) for the sake of foreign tourists focusing on the artistic and historic values of the city and its monuments, while ignoring the interests of the local Egyptian communities, and the social and spiritual values they attach to these buildings, hence distancing them from the *waqf* buildings that had figured in their daily lives.³⁵ And while some of these ideas have become widely accepted, other scholars disagree with them noting that they are quite exaggerated, not based on solid evidence and that different dynamics (including professional disagreements rather than political / nationalist ones) played a role in how the *Comité* and its members functioned.³⁶

1.6.2 Overview of the PhD’s angle, sources, research questions, methodology and rationale

Based on the above discussion it can be noted that studies linked to the *Comité* can be grouped into art historical, social-historical, conservational and post-colonial ones. Building on the plethora of studies produced either on Islamic art and architecture or in relation to the *Comité*, this PhD dissertation uses a wide range of primary sources to scrutinize in detail the *Comité*’s work and to provide new complementary information on both the *Comité* and the monuments themselves.³⁷ In addition to the *Comité*’s published Bulletins, this dissertation relies primarily on a wealth of archival material produced either by the *Comité* itself or during its time (such as written documents, drawings, photographs), housed in various archives in Egypt and in Europe; the research also explores several other collections digitized in recent years and made available through a variety of online sources. All these sources form in my opinion a corpus of material that is indispensable not only when researching the *Comité*’s activities but also any of Egypt’s Islamic and Coptic monuments.

³² Volait, 2009a.

³³ Reid, 1992.

³⁴ Reid, 1992, p. 57-76. See also Reid, 2002 and 2015.

³⁵ See Mahdy, 1992, which appears the same year as Reid (and is hence not inspired by it), but where ‘orientalism’ plays a major role in the construction of his argument. See also El-Habashi, 2001.

Two major works linked to the notion of “medievalization” are AlSayyad et al., *Making Cairo Medieval*, 2005 (in this work see specifically Bierman, 2005, pp. 9-27; Hampikian, 2005, pp. 201-234 and Al-Ibrashy, 2005b, pp. 235-256); and Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 2008. See section 2.1.3 for the use of the term “medieval” in the Islamic and Arab context.

³⁶ Speiser, 2001; Ormos, 2009a and 2019.

³⁷ For more details see section 2.2.3.

Scrutinizing these sources is accompanied by on-site investigations of the different monuments. The research will show how information obtained through these diverse archival sources along with *in situ* observations could be analyzed, cross-linked and interpreted in ways that allow archives to speak to each other, and the buildings to speak to the archives and vice versa, providing more profound answers to a diverse range of research questions.

This PhD dissertation, set within the disciplines of art history and Islamic studies, aims to add to the scholarly discourses on how Egypt's first modern conservation body for Islamic monuments dealt with this architecture and how this in turn impacts our understanding of these historic buildings today. The rationale is that analyzing the *Comité's* modern layer and attempting to understand the justifications noted by the members for each specific restoration intervention prompts questions sometimes missing from art historical studies as to how the original may have looked like. Such investigations draw attention to the fact that many of these monuments are in fact architectural palimpsests composed of historic as well as modern layers. In some cases, they might arguably be described as reinvented as opposed to restored buildings.

Accordingly, this PhD's main research question is whether the *Comité's* modern restoration interventions could be considered as 'conservation' or 'reinvention' of monuments. It is important to clarify here what is explicitly meant with these two terms in the context of this PhD dissertation and in relation to its main research question, which is looking at the impact of the *Comité's* restorations on our understanding of these buildings from the art historical perspective. Accordingly, interventions based on solid evidence and argumentation, allowing us to properly understand the original design and typology of the building, are considered as 'conservation', while those that falsify our comprehension (by being for example anachronistic) are considered as 'reinventions'.³⁸

The following questions are raised: What kind of pre-*Comité* restorations or renovations took place on Cairo's monuments and how did the *Comité* treat them? How did it deal with these architectural palimpsests? Based on what evidence did the *Comité* take its decisions and produce design proposals regarding the restoration and/or reconstruction of elements; i.e. did they use earlier photographs or representations as a reference? Did they use analogy with buildings from the same period and architectural typology? Did they use *in situ* remains as guidance? Or did they reinvent monuments? To what extent did the *Comité* and its members respect the historic fabric and nature of the buildings they were restoring? In what way did the *Comité* ensure that their actions are documented, easily identifiable and understandable by future generations?

³⁸ The use, meanings and interpretations of the terms "conservation" and "invention"/"reinvention" vary in different scholarly disciplines including the fields of cultural heritage, World Heritage and other social studies.

For more, see Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds.), 1983 (and later editions); Choay, 2001; Batisse & Bolla, 2003; Harrison, 2013, among others.

While a discussion of the development and changes of these terminologies over time, in different cultural settings and languages is beyond the scope of this dissertation, they are themes the author of this dissertation is interested in and is considering for future publication, especially in light of the *Comité's* work within the Egyptian and international contexts. For the translation of conservation terms into Arabic see the glossary compiled by Mahdy, [2008?]; for Arabic terms used in *waqf* documents see El-Habashi, 2001, pp. 238-224; see also Bakhoum Di., 2004, p. 29, ft. 62 and pp. 57-58.

Moreover, how does the study and analysis of the *Comité's* layer affect our comprehension of the 'authenticity' of these historic monuments, bearing in mind that 'authenticity' is a notion that developed and changed over time. The *Comité's* use of the term 'authentic' was more in line with 'original' (while the latter was more frequently used), 'true' or 'lawful' especially in relation to the building material or the documentary evidence respectively. Today, however, and after the long debates taking place regarding the notion of 'authenticity' after the issuance of the Venice Charter (1964) and especially with the issuance of the the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), we need to clarify whether we are looking at the 'authenticity' in terms of "form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and [/or] other internal and external factors" as listed in the "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention."³⁹

While as noted above, the dissertation is set within the disciplines of art history and Islamic Studies, and hence not directly within the field of cultural heritage conservation, its focus is on a conservation body working for more than seven decades in Egypt. Making use of my own professional background, I aim to contribute to this field and to the study of the history of architectural conservation in both Egypt and the world. The research will on the one hand draw attention to the role the *Comité* played in its capacity as Egypt's first official body responsible for the conservation of Islamic monuments and on the other will highlight the *Comité's* links to international debates, events and meetings regarding the conservation of monuments as well as the relationship between the *Comité* members and other local and international communities of scholars, professionals and contractors (or contracting firms) from Egypt and abroad. The questions raised are: What were the *Comité's* restoration methodologies and approaches and to what extent did they change over time? In what way did the personal and professional backgrounds of the individual *Comité* members (Egyptians and Europeans) play a role in how conservation decisions were discussed and taken? Where do the *Comité's* restoration interventions and the studies on them stand within the international history of architectural conservation? Accordingly, in order to place the *Comité's* restoration interventions within the wider context of the field, I will whenever relevant link some of the *Comité's* technical interventions to works of similar nature taking place in Europe at the same time.

To readdress the post-colonial notions regarding the *Comité*, this research looks into the following questions: What was the nature of the relationship between the *Comité* and the *Awqāf*, the body under which it was established, the one who was owning most of the

³⁹ Although already during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the term 'authentic' was often used in relation to the conservation of historic buildings and monuments, it was only explicitly expressed in relation to this field in the 1964 Venice Charter (see the preamble and article 9). And while in the 1972 World Heritage Convention it was not discussed or defined, the "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention", which change over time, did specify that sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List had to pass the "test of authenticity" (later versions: "meet the conditions of authenticity"). Initially 'authenticity' was linked to tangible aspects, namely "design; material; workmanship; setting". A turning point took place in 1994 in Nara (Japan), where the Nara Document on Authenticity was issued; it was argued that cultural diversity needs to be taken into consideration and that different forms of 'authenticity' exist (also noting that the term 'authentic' does not exist in all languages). Today, the "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention", (paragraph 82), lists the different attributes linked to authenticity as noted here in the text. The full text of the Operational Guidelines can be found online: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>

For more discussion on this topic especially in relation to World Heritage, see Jokilehto, 2006; Stovel, 2008; Stanley-Price & King (eds.), 2009; Labadi, 2010; Van Uytsel & Jurčys, 2013; Boccardi, 2019, among others.

buildings the *Comité* worked on and who financially contributed to the restoration interventions? The PhD will also draw attention to the move of the *Comité* from the Ministry of *Awqāf* to the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1936 questioning: What was the impact of this move on the relationship between both bodies and on the way the *awqāf* structures were restored and managed in the future? How did the *Comité* communicate with the various local and international institutions and contractors and in which language/languages? To what extent do the actions of the *Comité* reveal its relationship with the Egyptian community and the users of the *awqāf* buildings? Did they ignore the local community? Did they restore for the sake of foreign tourists? How did the *Comité* members understand the nature of the buildings they were restoring – especially the religious ones? Which values did they attach to them? Did the worshippers feel separated from the buildings / monuments they used?

To research these questions, the restoration of three architectural elements of mosques (minarets, domes and *minbars* [pulpits])⁴⁰ predominantly from the Mamluk period are discussed. So, why Mamluk, why mosques, why architectural elements rather than a whole mosque, and why specifically minarets, domes and *minbars*?

The reasons for working on buildings from the **Mamluk period** is because they form a great portion of Egypt's Islamic monuments and the *Comité* worked on a great number of buildings from this period; therefore there is an abundance of archival material to research allowing for a better understanding of the *Comité's* restoration methodology on Mamluk monuments. Moreover, the *Comité* members produced a great number of publications on Islamic monuments, many of them dedicated to specific Mamluk mosques. It is worth highlighting here that the *Comité* and its members in their description of these buildings, referred to them as "Mamluk" and did not for example use the term "medieval".⁴¹ In addition, there is a plethora of secondary literature produced on Mamluk monuments or on specific architectural elements from the Mamluk period that list the *Comité's* interventions but that do not necessarily include an analysis of the *Comité's* layer; building on these valuable studies, this research provides additional information and new insights on these monuments and on their modern history.

Working on **mosques rather than other secular buildings** is also linked to the fact that they formed the largest group of buildings the *Comité* restored and hence allow for a great number of case studies to be researched and compared to each other. More significantly, it was decided to work on mosques in order to better understand how the *Comité* dealt with religious monuments and what were the dynamics between the *Comité*, the *Awqāf* and the worshippers, an issue of relevance when readdressing studies set within the post-

⁴⁰ The *minbar* [pulpit] is considered among the "essential architectural elements of a mosque"; see for example: <https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/curriculum-resources/art-of-the-islamic-world/unit-one/the-mosque> More specifically and under the category of architectural elements, it is also classified as an "Islamic religious building fixture" in The Art and Architecture Thesaurus of the GCI; see: <http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300003821>

⁴¹ Between 2014 and 2016, the author of this PhD has participated in a Getty Connecting Art Histories Seminar that took place at the American Academy in Rome; it was entitled "Medieval Mediterranean Art: Museums and Archaeology in National Discourses". Among the topics discussed was what is meant by the 'medieval' and what the term implies with regard to Mediterranean art and architecture. It is worth noting that usually in Arabic sources on art and architecture, reference is made to specific periods, such as Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottoman, etc. And while scholars have discussed what "Islamic art" means, the context and evolution of the use of the term 'medieval' when referring to Islamic art needs to be further discussed. On "Islamic art" and the use of the term, see for example Grabar, 1973; Carey and Graves (eds.), 2012 and in it Shalem, 2012 and Rabbat, 2012. See also Barry Flood & Necipoğlu, 2017; Shaw, 2019.

colonial framework arguing that the *Comité* focused on the artistic and historic values of these mosques and ignored their social, spiritual and religious values.

There are two reasons for focusing on the restoration of three specific **architectural elements of the mosque, rather than a whole mosque**. The first is linked to the *Comité*'s own work methodology, where often projects and tenders were prepared for one specific element (or work type); the second reason is because working on one architectural element allows on the one hand to research a great number of case studies and on the other to go into the details of each. This provides a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the *Comité*'s interventions and methodologies, and allows to trace to what extent these changed over time (see more on that below). This is especially important because some studies came to conclusions on the *Comité* based on a few case studies.

Minarets and domes were selected because both architectural elements dominate Cairo's skyline and form an integral part of mosque architecture. Many of them suffered structurally because of earthquakes (among other reasons) and some of them were also missing at the time when the *Comité* started its activities. Both are structurally complicated constructions (the minaret due its slenderness and height and the dome due to its large diameter at times) and hence their restoration and/or reconstructions are also complex operations. For the minarets, a variety of restoration techniques were used; for most of the missing domes, reinforced concrete was the predominant technique and material used. Therefore, both provide interesting cases to explore the *Comité*'s restoration methodologies, principles and techniques and to tackle the contested question of reconstruction of historic architectural elements.

The minaret had also a functional aspect for the call to prayer and was in use by the *mu'addin* until electricity was connected to the mosques around the second third of the twentieth century. Being an architectural element that formed visually an integral part of the city, which according to post-colonial studies has been "medievalized" for the sake of foreign tourists, calls for further investigation regarding the motives that drove the *Comité* to restore them.

In addition to researching the restoration of minarets and domes, which are significant architectural and structural elements of the mosque, it was decided to include the *Comité*'s work on Mamluk wooden *minbars*. The *minbar* is an important fixture and object from the interior of the mosque because of its intricate decorative features lending it its aesthetic, artistic and historic values, as well as because of the religious function and role it has for the mosque. When the *Comité* started its work on several mosques, many of their *minbars* were in a bad state of conservation due to several reasons including among others natural decay and vandalism with many missing some of their decorative panels. Researching their restoration has the twofold purpose of investigating first how the *Comité* restored and reproduced intricate artistic panels and second how it handled and viewed this mosque fixture, which has a functional nature for the religious sermon; this is especially worthwhile because the *Comité*'s restoration of *minbars* is not discussed in any of the post-colonial studies on the *Comité*. The chapter also touches upon the question of 'authenticity' and how do we view and interpret these *minbars* today in light of the *Comité*'s interventions.

In order to trace the *Comité's* methodologies, procedures and policies over time, the case studies in each of the chapters are discussed in a **chronological order**. The work carefully surveys **the various players involved** in discussing, debating and making restoration decisions **at a specific moment in time**. As the meaning of words related to the field of heritage conservation have been changing over time and also between languages, this dissertation, when presenting the different case studies, pays attention to the specific **language and terminologies** used by the *Comité* at the time.

As will be demonstrated, paying attention to such details as well as to the particular historic context and the cultural and social circumstances allows us to examine the dynamics between the various members and institutions (European vis-à-vis Egyptian; Egyptian vis-à-vis Egyptian; European vis-à-vis European; *Comité* vis-à-vis *Awqāf*; *Comité* vis-à-vis Public Works), and is particularly relevant when placing the *Comité's* restoration and conservation interventions and methodologies within the wider international context and also when readdressing recent scholarly works viewing the *Comité* through the post-colonial lens.

To summarize, using a wealth of primary sources to trace the *Comité's* restoration interventions on specific architectural elements, which have different functions, values as well as conservation issues, allows to address the research questions from different angles. Building on the threads that connect the specific case studies discussed in the three main chapters, the concluding chapter highlights how the factual and detailed investigation and analysis of the *Comité's* specific actions and actors, in a historically, socially, politically and culturally contextualized manner reveals new significant information on Egypt's Islamic art and architecture, contributes to the history of architectural conservation worldwide, and allows for new nuanced narratives and interpretations on the *Comité*.