

Academic Papers Articles Scientifiques

International Conference on “Living with World Heritage in Africa”

26-29 September 2012
Johannesburg, South Africa

Conférence internationale sur le thème “Vivre avec le patrimoine mondial en Afrique”

26-29 septembre 2012
Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud

Africa **celebrating the 40th** **Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention**

International Conference on
“Living with World Heritage in Africa”
26-29 September 2012, Johannesburg, South Africa

***“If you do something for me without me, you are against me.
You cannot say it is for me without me”***

L’Afrique **célèbre le 40ème anniversaire** **de la Convention du patrimoine mondial**

Conférence internationale sur le thème
“Vivre avec le patrimoine mondial en Afrique”
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***« Si vous faites quelque chose pour moi mais que vous le faites
sans moi, alors vous le faites contre moi. Vous ne pouvez pas
dire que vous le faites pour moi, sans moi »***

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African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)
1258 Lever Road, Headway Hill, Midrand, 1685, South Africa
Tel. +27 11 313 3946
Website: www.awhf.net

Department of Arts and Culture - South Africa
Kingsley Centre 481 Stanza Bopape Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, South Africa
Tel. +27 12 441 3000
Website: www.dac.gov.za

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Editors

Cosme Kpadonou
Danho Neuba
Hermione Boko-Koudakossi
Ishanlosen Odiaua
Moses Wafula Mapesa
Patrick Abungu
Sibongile Van Damme
Youssouph Diedhiou

Coordination

Thembi Malao – Department of Arts and Culture
Souayibou Varissou and Pamela Mac Quilkan – African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)

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Fonds pour le patrimoine mondial africain (FPMA)
1258 Lever Road, Headway Hill, Midrand, 1685, Afrique du Sud
Tel. +27 11 313 3946
Site Web: www.awhf.net

Ministère des Arts et de la Culture- République d'Afrique du Sud, Kingsley Centre 481 Stanza Bopape Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, South Africa
Tel. +27 12 441 3000
Site Web: www.dac.gov.za

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Editeurs

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Coordination

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Souayibou Varissou et Pamela Mac Quilkan - Fonds pour le patrimoine mondial africain (FPMA)

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Nous remercions également les éditeurs et le comité d'organisation de la conférence. Nous exprimons notre sincère appréciation pour les contributions et l'engagement des experts dévoués pour la mise en œuvre de la Convention du patrimoine mondial sur le continent africain.

Foreword

The year 2012 witnessed the World Heritage fraternity celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 1972 World Heritage Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The Government of South Africa is very pleased to have participated in celebrating one of the major milestones associated with the World Heritage. On behalf of the African Continent, the South African Government hosted a conference titled, "LIVING WITH WORLD HERITAGE IN AFRICA" in September 2012, the conference provided a unique opportunity to communities and decision makers to engage and reflect on the achievements of the Convention to date as well as to take stock of the challenges with which it is confronted.

South Africa like all the other African State Parties is faced with the contradictory need to conserve its heritage and the need to develop its infrastructure and economic development. One of the profound messages that emanated from the conference was the importance of finding a balance for these two dichotomies.

The compilation of the proceedings confirms our commitment towards the implementation of the Convention and to ensure the visibility of the Convention and the activities undertaken to preserve World Heritage while contributing to sustainable development through partnerships with the private sectors.

This compilation is an outcome of the proceedings that encapsulates the aspirations of the African decision makers, African local communities and the private sector operating on the continent. It is therefore befitting that it is made accessible to all the important stakeholders and it becomes a living document which will empower all.

On behalf of the African member states that participated in this Conference, I hereby hand over this compilation as a symbol of appreciation to the communities who continue to safe guard these properties on behalf of all human kind.

Minister Paul Mashatile

Minister of Arts and Culture of South Africa

Avant-propos

En 2012, la confrérie du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO a fêté le 40^{ème} anniversaire de la Convention concernant la protection du patrimoine culturel et naturel du monde.

Le gouvernement de l'Afrique du Sud est ravi d'avoir participé à la célébration de l'une des grandes étapes de l'existence du patrimoine mondial. Au nom de tout le continent africain, le gouvernement de l'Afrique du Sud a accueilli une conférence intitulée « VIVRE AVEC LE PATRIMOINE MONDIAL EN AFRIQUE », en septembre 2012, et cette conférence a offert une opportunité unique aux communautés et aux décideurs de s'engager dans des échanges et des réflexions sur les réalisations qui ont découlé de la Convention jusqu'à présent, ainsi que de faire un bilan des défis auxquels cette dernière est confrontée.

L'Afrique du Sud, comme tous les autres Etats parties, est confrontée à des besoins en contradiction, tels que celui de préserver son patrimoine et celui de développer ses infrastructures et son économie. L'un des messages fondamentaux qui sont ressortis de cette conférence est qu'il importe de trouver un équilibre entre ces aspects dichotomiques.

Le compte-rendu de la conférence fait bien apparaître que nous nous sommes engagés à mettre en œuvre la Convention et à assurer la visibilité de la Convention et des activités entreprises pour préserver le patrimoine mondial, tout en contribuant au développement durable grâce à des partenariats avec les secteurs privés.

Ce compte-rendu, produit de la conférence, est l'expression des aspirations des décideurs africains, des communautés locales africaines et du secteur privé qui opère sur ce continent. C'est pourquoi il est bon que ce document soit rendu accessible à toutes les parties prenantes, jouant un rôle important et qu'il devienne ainsi vivant et puisse profiter à tous.

Au nom des Etats membres africains qui ont participé à cette conférence, je remets donc ce compte-rendu aux communautés qui continuent à sauvegarder ces biens pour l'humanité entière, pour témoigner, symboliquement, de notre reconnaissance.

M. Paul Mashatile

Ministre des Arts et de la Culture de l'Afrique du Sud

Introduction

The World Heritage Committee and States Parties have long recognized the relationship and challenges between World Heritage and Sustainable Development worldwide. As a developing continent, Africa is often faced with challenges in achieving Sustainable Development while sustaining its social and cultural fabric. The World Heritage community often refers to concepts such as “conservation”, “outstanding universal value”, “sustainable management”, “ecological balance”, etc. whereas Government institutions, development agencies, and communities are more comfortable by driving terms such as “job creation”, “economic growth”, “infrastructure development”, “poverty alleviation” etc. At face value, there appears to be different priorities between the World Heritage Committee and the States Parties. Sustainable development should meet the present socio-economic needs, without compromising the future of heritage sites. Sustainable development equally considers environment, economics and social aspects.

On the recommendation of States Parties (2010/11), the 35th Session of the World Heritage Committee adopted the decision to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention under the theme: “World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the Role of Local Communities” (35 COM 12D). The theme was defined to cover:

- The role of local communities in the nomination process, in the day-to-day management of properties, and in the conservation of sites;
- The role of communities as actors and beneficiaries from the social and economic points of view;
- Indigenous management practices at World Heritage properties;
- Mapping of traditional knowledge in conservation techniques and practices;
- Strengthening the local communities’ role in sustainable cultural tourism and ecotourism at and around World Heritage;
- Public-private sector partnerships to foster local development and economic revenues of local communities.

In line with the World Heritage Committee decisions, the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the African World Heritage Fund developed a seven (7) months programme on “World Heritage and Sustainable Development”. The programme consisted of the following activities:

Introduction

Le Comité du patrimoine mondial et les Etats parties ont longtemps reconnu les liens et les défis qui existent entre le patrimoine mondial et le développement durable de par le monde. En tant que continent en développement, l'Afrique est souvent confrontée à des défis pour arriver au développement durable tout en maintenant sa structure sociale et culturelle. La communauté du patrimoine mondial fait souvent référence à des concepts tels que “conservation”, “valeur universelle exceptionnelle”, “gestion durable”, “équilibre biologique/écologique”, “cohésion sociale”, “identité”, “développement durable” etc. tandis que les institutions gouvernementales, les agences de développement et les communautés sont plus à l'aise avec des expressions telles que “création d'emplois”, “croissance économique”, “développement de l'infrastructure”, “développement social”, “réduction de la pauvreté” etc. Au premier abord, il semblerait qu'il y ait des différences entre le Comité du patrimoine mondial et les Etats parties au niveau des priorités. Le développement durable devrait répondre aux besoins socio-économiques immédiats, sans compromettre l'avenir des sites du patrimoine mondial. Le développement durable tient compte aussi bien des aspects environnementaux qu'économiques et sociaux.

Sur recommandation des Etats parties (2010/11), la 35ème session du Comité du patrimoine mondial a adopté la décision de célébrer le 40ème anniversaire de la Convention du patrimoine mondial sous le thème : “Patrimoine mondial et développement durable : le rôle des communautés locales” (35 COM 12D). Le thème a été défini de manière à couvrir les sujets suivants:

- Le rôle des communautés locales dans le processus d'inscription, dans la gestion au quotidien des biens ainsi que dans la conservation des sites ;
- Le rôle des communautés en tant qu'acteurs et bénéficiaires du point de vue social et économique ;
- Pratiques de gestion indigènes au sein des biens du patrimoine ;
- Recensement des connaissances traditionnelles en matière de techniques et de pratiques de conservation;
- Renforcement du rôle des communautés locales pour un tourisme culturel et un écotourisme durables dans et autour du patrimoine mondial ;
- Partenariats entre les secteurs public et privé en vue d'encourager le développement local et les revenus économiques des communautés locales.

Conformément aux décisions du Comité du patrimoine mondial, le Gouvernement de la République d'Afrique du Sud et le Fonds pour le patrimoine mondial africain ont développé un programme s'étalant sur sept (7) mois sur le thème “Patrimoine mondial et développement durable”. Le programme comprenait les activités suivantes :

1. **A Situational Analysis Report** (March and April 2012) to provide an updated assessment of the relations between World Heritage and Extractive Industries in the Africa region.
2. **An Expert Workshop** on “**Managing the impacts of development activities and resource extraction in and around World Heritage in the Africa region**”: to discuss issues on the ground and develop recommendations. The workshop was held from 23rd to 25th May 2012 at Maropeng (South Africa).
3. **A Conference on “Living with World Heritage in Africa” (South Africa)** bringing together high level decision makers and representatives from the government institutions, heritage institutions, local communities and development sectors to discuss the theme of World Heritage and Sustainable Development in Africa. The main contribution of the conference was for Africa to contribute to the on-going global discussion on “**World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the role of local communities**” through:
 1. articulating the role of World Heritage properties in the Sustainable Development agenda,
 2. evaluating the critical role World Heritage plays in improving community livelihoods in Africa,
 3. developing a framework to address conservation and development needs on the African continent,
 4. exploring guidance for policy development agenda at national and regional level.

The conference, hosted from the 26th -29th September 2012, marked the official event on the African continent on the occasion of celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. More than 300 delegates attended and these included 14 Ministers and representatives from Africa in charge of World Heritage properties, 8 Director Generals/Permanent Secretaries, 25 Heads of heritage institutions, 25 local communities living in and around World Heritage properties in Africa, 19 Private sector companies (covering the mining, telecommunication, tourism and banking industries), more than 60 heritage experts and many other people who were interested in the discussions.

The Conference programme consisted of colloquiums for Ministers, local communities, development sectors and experts. The Conference adopted a set of recommendations and also issued a declaration on the conflict situation in Mali pertaining to concerns on the protection of heritage places and trafficking of cultural properties.

1. **Un rapport d'analyse situationnelle** (mars et avril 2012): pour fournir une évaluation mise à jour des relations entre le patrimoine mondial et les industries extractives dans la région africaine.
2. **Un atelier d'experts** sur le thème **Gérer les impacts des activités de développement et de l'extraction des ressources dans et autour du patrimoine mondial de la région Afrique** : pour débattre des questions sur le terrain, des pratiques existantes et pour élaborer des recommandations en se basant sur les meilleures pratiques. L'atelier s'est tenu du 23 au 25 mai 2012 à Maropeng (Afrique du Sud).
3. **Une Conférence sur le thème “Vivre avec le patrimoine mondial en Afrique” (Afrique du Sud)**: rassemblant des décideurs et des représentants de haut niveau d'institutions gouvernementales, d'institutions du patrimoine, de communautés locales et de secteurs de développement en vue de débattre sur le thème du patrimoine mondial et du développement durable en Afrique. La conférence visait principalement à voir l'Afrique prendre part aux discussions en cours à l'échelon mondial sur le thème “**Patrimoine mondial et développement durable: le rôle des communautés locales**” à travers :
 1. l'articulation du rôle des biens du patrimoine mondial dans l'agenda du développement durable,
 2. l'évaluation du rôle critique que joue le patrimoine mondial dans l'amélioration des moyens de subsistance des communautés en Afrique,
 3. le développement d'un cadre pour répondre aux besoins en matière de conservation et de développement sur le continent africain,
 4. explorer des orientations pour l'agenda d'élaboration de politiques aux niveaux national et régional.

La conférence s'est tenue du 26 au 29 septembre 2012, c'était l'événement phare organisé sur le continent africain à l'occasion de la célébration du 40ème anniversaire de la Convention du patrimoine mondial. Plus de 300 délégués ont pris part et parmi ces derniers, figuraient 14 Ministres et représentants de Ministres d'Afrique, en chargés des biens du patrimoine mondial, 8 Directeurs généraux/ Secrétaires permanents, 25 Chefs d'instituts du patrimoine, 25 communautés locales vivant sur et aux alentours des sites de patrimoine culturel, 19 compagnies du secteur privé (rassemblant les industries des secteurs miniers, des télécommunications, du tourisme et des banques), plus de 60 experts en patrimoine et un grand nombre de personnes intéressées de prendre part aux débats.

Le programme de la conférence s'est déroulé sous forme de colloques pour les ministres, les communautés locales, les secteurs de développement et les experts. La Conférence a adopté une série de recommandations et a également publié une déclaration sur la situation de conflit au Mali relative aux questions de protection des aires patrimoniales et le trafic des biens culturels.

The experts' seminar was designed as a platform for academic presentations on cross cutting issues relating to (i) World Heritage, sustainable development and poverty alleviation, (ii) World Heritage and Local Communities, and (iii) World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism.

This publication covers a selection of the papers presented during the experts' seminar of the conference.

Le séminaire d'experts a été conçu sous forme de plateforme pour des présentations académiques sur des questions transversales liées au (i) patrimoine mondial, développement durable et la réduction de la pauvreté, (ii) patrimoine mondial et communautés locales, (iii) patrimoine mondial et le tourisme durable.

Cette publication couvre une sélection des communications présentées au cours du séminaire d'experts de la conférence.

Living with World Heritage in Cairo Vivre avec le Patrimoine mondial au Caire

Agnieszka and Jaroslaw Dobrowolska

Abstract

Cairo, an agglomeration of different urban units gradually added as extensions to the city established in 641AD next to an older Roman fortress as the new capital of Egypt after the Arab conquest, is now among the largest cities in the world and faces tremendous development challenges. Five separate units were collectively listed as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. The site covers most of the historic core of the city, but not all of its historically important areas or aspects. It is under various serious pressures as part of the rapidly developing metropolis. There is not enough comprehensive planning for its preservation and management, but diverse conservation efforts have had an impact on the historic city over time. Two recent conservation projects are presented as case studies, chosen because they illustrate well the multicultural, rich and pluralist character of Cairo's heritage, as well as some of the ways in which the city's historic monuments interact with its local communities.

Key words: Cairo, Egypt, Heritage Management, Historic Preservation, Islamic Architecture, Urban Development

Introduction

As of summer 2012, Egypt was home to six cultural, and one natural, World Heritage sites. This paper focuses on the cultural site of Historic Cairo, a city that holds an exceptional position within the patrimony of humankind while it also faces tremendous and multifarious challenges. The authors have lived in the city and were involved in historic preservation projects there for more than twenty years. The paper presents the reflections and opinions of conservation professionals, not those of governmental or non-governmental agencies that are involved in preservation and management of the historic city.



Figure 1: Al-Darb a-Ahmar district within Historic Cairo World Heritage Site, now part of an enormous metropolis.

Agnieszka Dobrowolska

The Greek historian Herodotus observed in the 5th century BC that “Egypt is the gift of the Nile” (Hdt. II 5.5). Cairo also owes its existence to its strategic location on the river, at the point where the Nile branches into the Delta before entering the Mediterranean. To guard it, in the early 2nd and late 3rd centuries the ancient Romans built a fortress called Babylon of Egypt, of which substantial parts still remain (Sheehan, 2010). The strategic importance of the site was recognised by the Arabs who conquered the land in 640 A.D. They moved Egypt's capital from

Alexandria to the new settlement which they established just north of the old fortress, and which quickly developed into a thriving commercial and cultural centre (Kubiak, 1987). In the following centuries, the city expanded north along the Nile, as rulers of Egypt ordered the construction of new urban districts, each centred around a congregational mosque. A number of these huge courtyard mosques still stand, sometimes as the only buildings surviving from their original neighbourhoods. One of the new settlements, founded in 969AD, was called al-Qahira and gave the name to the modern city that encompasses many different urban components far beyond the original al-Qahira (Thompson, 2008). Between the city and the cliffs of the desert plateau to the east grew enormous cemeteries that expanded north, reflecting the city's urban growth. Because the tombs of the rulers and nobles were centres of huge multi-function religious complexes, the cemeteries were not only the 'city of the dead', but also home and place of work for numerous people (Al-Kadi and Bonnamy 2007).

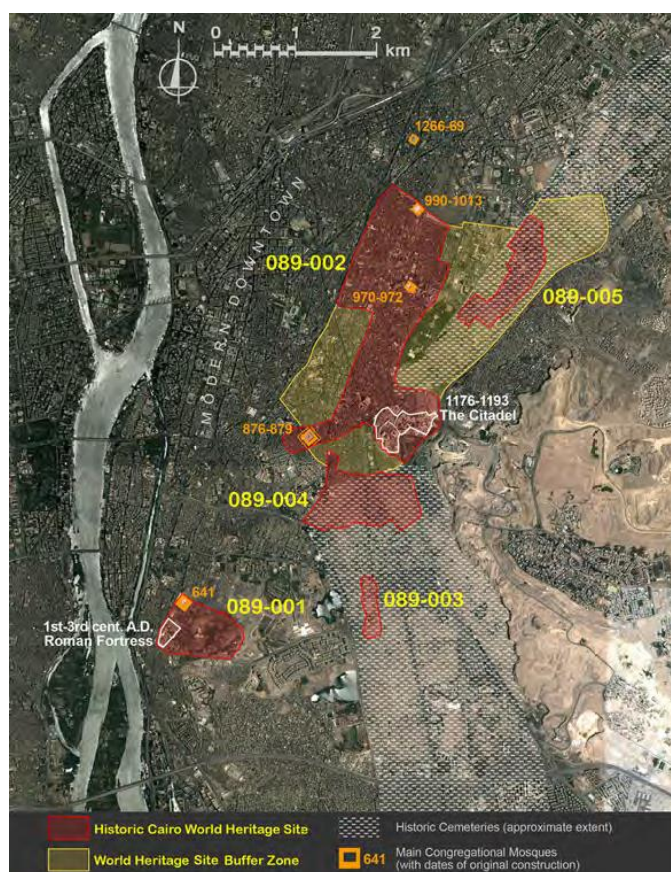


Figure 2: Historic Cairo World Heritage Site; location within the city. Jarosław Dobrowolski, based on a Google Earth image

The overall configuration of Historic Cairo is reflected in the borders of the area designated as the World Heritage site. It comprises five separate units that include: (1) the mediaeval core of the historic city with the Citadel; (2) three most historically significant areas of the cemeteries (the "City of the Dead"); and (3) the area around the Roman fortress, known as "Old Cairo" and including important historic Christian churches and an ancient synagogue, as well as the oldest congregational mosque in Cairo, and the archaeological site of Fustat, the location of the earliest Arab settlement.

Historic Cairo was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979. However, the borders of the site were only defined in 2007. The site was originally named “Islamic Cairo”, and renamed “Historic Cairo” in 2007 at the request of the Egyptian authorities. This name much better reflects the multicultural and multi-religious character of the city’s heritage. The World Heritage property covers 524 hectares, slightly more than Historic Venice (for comparison, the World Heritage property *Historic Areas of Istanbul* covers 678 ha; the *Historic Centre of Vienna*: 371 ha; the Central Park in New York City covers 341 ha.). This is a different World Heritage site than the nearby *Memphis and Its Necropolis* that includes the famous pyramids in Giza.

Although the site is vast, some significant elements of the historic urban complex of Cairo are outside its boundaries. Also, some of the oldest monuments in Cairo are outside the boundaries of the World Heritage site. Today in 2012, the description of Cairo in the World Heritage list still reflects the ideas and attitudes towards historic preservation typical of the time of its inscription 33 years ago. It focuses on individual buildings, names only early monuments up to the 14th century but not later, does not mention any intangible aspects of Cairo’s significance, and does not put emphasis on the city as a living organism within which people who populate it are an inseparable part.

Even within such limited definition, the architectural historic resources of Cairo are extraordinarily rich. More than five hundred buildings are officially listed in the national monuments register (*Index*, 1951; Warner, 2005). Forty-six of the buildings date from the period between years 641 AD and 1250 AD, when Egypt was sometimes a province in the Arab empire ruled by a Caliph, and sometimes ruled by local dynasties. The most important one were the Fatimids (969-1171 AD), who ruled from Cairo over a vast empire. Twenty-seven monuments of this period survive in Cairo, including al-Azhar congregational mosque. The Fatimids surrounded their royal city with massive defence walls, and three formidable city gates are still preserved as important landmarks (Raymond, 2002). Salah al-Din Ayyub (Saladin) who vanquished the Fatimids in the late 12th century AD, began the construction of the Citadel on the rocky spur where the Nile Valley is narrowest in the area. The Citadel, expanded a number of times (Lyster, 1993), still figures prominently in the Cairo’s landscape.



Figure 3: The Citadel of Cairo. Jarosław Dobrowolski

Between 1250 and 1517, ruled by the military oligarchy of the Mamluks, Cairo flourished as a pre-eminent political, intellectual, commercial and cultural centre of the Islamic world. During this period, a distinct architectural style was locally developed, with architectural decoration organically carved in the structural stone masonry of the walls. To a large extent it still defines the character of the historic city. Many of its buildings are masterpieces of architecture, and the elaborate silhouettes of numerous domes, minarets, and crenellations of Mamluk-period buildings still define the skyline of Historic Cairo. (Behrens-Abouseif, 1980, 2007; Hillenbrandt, 1994, Blair and Bloom, 1995).

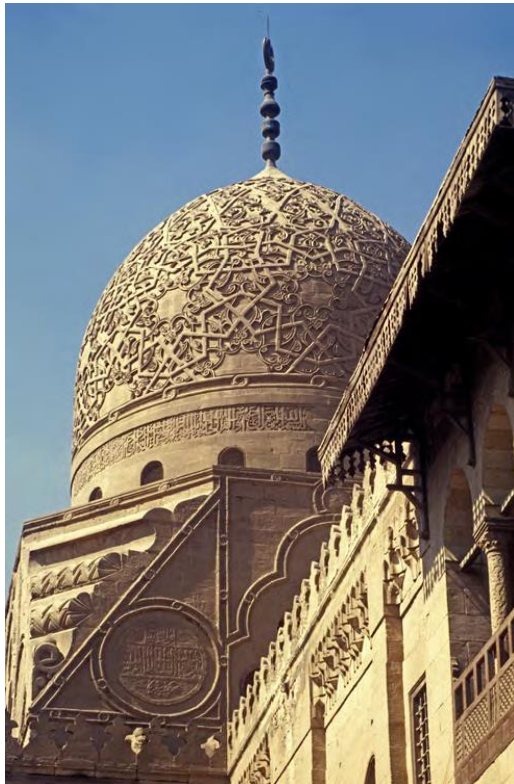


Figure 4: The mosque of Sultan Qaitbey (1472-74), an outstanding example of Mamluk architecture. Jarosław Dobrowolski

This architectural style survived long after the Turkish conquest in 1517, when Cairo became a provincial capital within the Ottoman Empire. Gradually, influences from metropolitan Istanbul merged with the local tradition in the unique architectural style of 18th century Ottoman Cairo (Behrens-Abouseif, 1992) – the 1744 building in the centre of fig.5 is an illustrative example.

Most religious buildings belonged to religious trusts (*waqf*, pl. *awqaf*) which paid for the upkeep of the mosques and associated charities from income generated by properties that often included shops placed in the ground floors of mosques whose prayer halls were elevated above them. Among charities so supported were numerous *sabil-kuttab*s, almost unique to Cairo, where drinking water was dispensed as charity from a room set over an underground cistern, with a charitable elementary school above. More than seventy still remain from over 300 recorded in Cairo in 1798 and are an important defining feature of Historic Cairo, although none serves its original purpose. There were also numerous commercial buildings known as *wikala*, or urban caravanserais. Family houses, often sumptuously decorated and adorned with elaborate fountains and basins, were always built

around the central courtyard; the upper floors were reserved for the women of the house; the flat roofs were used for household work (Hanna, 1991; Revault et al., 1975; 1977; 1979).

In common with many major cities in the Islamic world, Cairo had only a few major thoroughfares (and even these were often only as wide as to let two loaded camels pass). The basic urban unit was an alley that branched into a number of cul-de-sacs and housed a self-contained community with all commodities and services its inhabitants needed in their everyday lives (Raymond, 1980). After sunset, Cairo disintegrated into hundreds of villages as the gates at the entrance to the alleys were closed for security. Remarkably, many aspects of this urban and social organisation have not only been preserved in the historic city, but carried over into new modern districts.

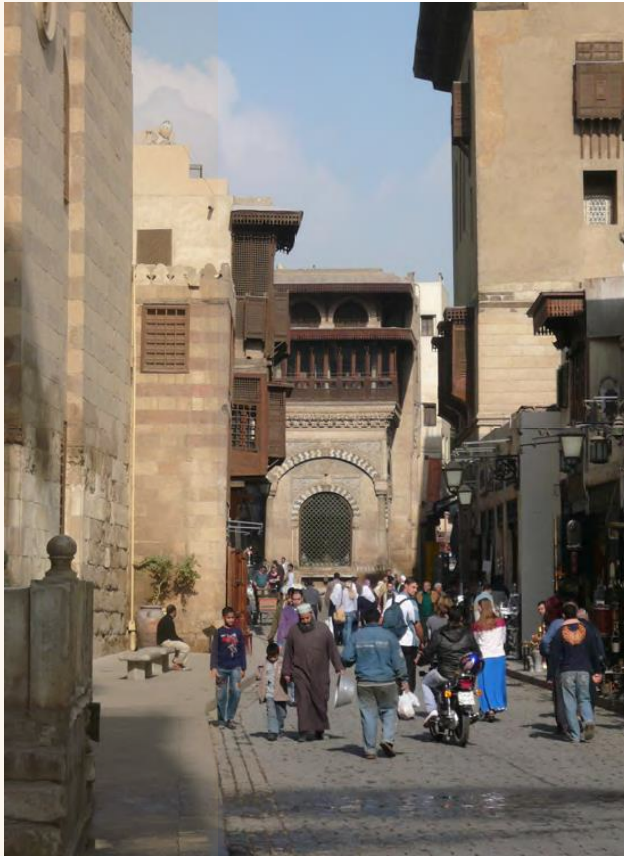


Figure 5: the main thoroughfare of mediaeval Cairo in 2009. Jarosław Dobrowolski

Khedive Isma'il, who ruled in 1863-79, was largely successful in his ambition of turning Cairo into "Paris on the Nile." However, unlike in Paris, where the new city in effect replaced the earlier one, Cairo could develop on new land available as the Nile receded west. Downtown Cairo emerged with its European-style houses, huge governmental buildings, and straight boulevards, while the historic city to the east of it was left behind, largely untouched (Raymond, 2001.) The distinction between

these different urban units is still clearly visible. By the early 20th century, seasonal lakes within the city and the canal that fed them at the time of the annual Nile flood were filled in, and so this once important aspect of Cairo has now been completely lost. The early 20th century, with no more land was available in the city centre, saw the development of outlying districts, like the satellite city of Heliopolis, an ambitious experiment that followed the most advanced architectural and urban-planning concepts of the time (Dobrowolska & Dobrowolski, 2006).



Figure 6: Heliopolis buildings, ca.1910. Jarosław Dobrowolski

Beginning in 1960s and ever since, Cairo population grew rapidly, resulting in unprecedented expansion of the built-up area. Much of this development consisted of informal settlements, resulting in huge unplanned residential areas. Also, vast tracts of the desert have been turned into housing ranging from high-end gated communities to densely packed apartment blocks. The historic cemeteries filled with residential houses. As a result, Historic Cairo is now part of one of the largest and most populous cities in the world, facing tremendous development and environmental pressures (Raymond, 2001; Rodenbeck, 2000).

Cairo as a whole has very high population density, with as much as 50,000 to 100,000 people per square kilometre in the historic areas (population density in New York City in 2010 was just under 10,500, and in Manhattan, less than 27,000 /km²). On the other hand, as inadequate maintenance results in deterioration and collapse of many buildings in the historic districts, many lots within the historic core of Cairo stand empty. Many historic areas deteriorated and are inhabited by poor populations. Statistics show that the Darb al-Ahmar area within the mediaeval core of Cairo has much higher illiteracy rates among both men and women, higher percentage of families living in a single room, and dwellings without access to running water than Cairo in general (Sims, 2003).

In spite of huge challenges, Historic Cairo maintains its unique values both as a very rich resource of historic architecture, and as an example of traditional forms of human settlement. This is largely due to conservation efforts. While seldom following a comprehensive planned approach, these interventions cumulatively have had a huge impact.

Heritage conservation in modern sense started in Cairo with the formation, in December 1881, of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*, an Egyptian governmental agency employing both Egyptian and foreign experts. The *Comité* produced the register of Islamic monuments, and carried out extensive restoration work in numerous buildings, effectively saving the architectural heritage of Cairo as we know it (Herz, 1914; El-Habashi and Warner 1998). From the 1970s, different organisations carried out a number of conservation projects in collaboration with the Egyptian antiquities authorities. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture successfully turned huge rubbish dumps at the edge of the historic city into a public park. It also conserved a number of historic buildings as part of a social development and urban improvement (Bianca and Jodidio, 2004). In the 1970s, the Shi'ite Bohra community controversially renovated some Fatimid-period buildings with little respect for authenticity (Aslan, 2005; Williams, 1985; 2002). The Cairo Division of the German Archaeological Institute restored a number of historic monuments in Gamaliya area in the heart of Historic Cairo (Speiser, 1980; 1995). Between 1994 and 2007, the American Research Center in Egypt carried out ten conservation projects in the historic city with funding from the USAID (Danforth, 2010). Danish, French, Italian, Polish, and Spanish teams, among others, also carried out conservation work in Historic Cairo (von Jensen, 1996; Grimal 1993; Fanfoni, 2006; Dobrowolski, 1998; Antón 1993).

While the contribution of the international community is important, the preservation of Cairo's values as a World Heritage site is ultimately in the hands of Egyptians. For years, preservation of Historic Cairo was severely under-funded and consequently received insufficient attention (Minabbawy, 1995). In 1998, the situation changed with the creation of the Historic Cairo Restoration Project within the Ministry of Culture (later within the Ministry of Antiquities) with an

initial budget of 250 million Egyptian Pounds. The project has so far restored more than 70 historic buildings, including some of the most important monuments in the city. It also brought a more comprehensive and planned approach to the management and preservation of Historic Cairo (*Historic Cairo*, 2002). This enabled turning a section of the main spine of the mediaeval city into a pedestrian zone as part of the effort to turn the centre of Historic Cairo into an open-air museum. After the events of the Arab Spring in 2011, vehicular traffic returned to the street. However, the improvements to infrastructure have a lasting effect.

The following two case studies of small-scale conservation projects in Historic Cairo in which the authors have a first-hand experience, have been chosen because they illustrate well the multicultural, rich and pluralist character of Cairo's heritage, as well as some of the ways in which the city's historic monuments interact with its local communities.



Figure7: Sabil-kuttab of Sultan Mustafa III and Dutch tiles decorating its interior.
Matjaž Kačičnik

The *Sabil-Kuttab* of Sultan Mustafa III was built in 1759. When the recent conservation work started, the upper floor was unused, and in the ground floor rooms operated an Islamic charity helping the families of cancer victims. Originally, drinking water stored in a huge underground cistern was distributed as charity from the ground-floor room (*sabil*), while the upper floor housed an elementary school for the neighbourhood children.

It was founded by the Ottoman Sultan, who wanted the sumptuously decorated building to carry a message of his imperial authority. He located it next to the mosque of Sayida Zeinab, a venerated shrine which still receives numerous visitors from both far and near, many of them women.



Figure 8: pilgrims in front of the mosque of Sayida Zeinab. Agnieszka Dobrowolska

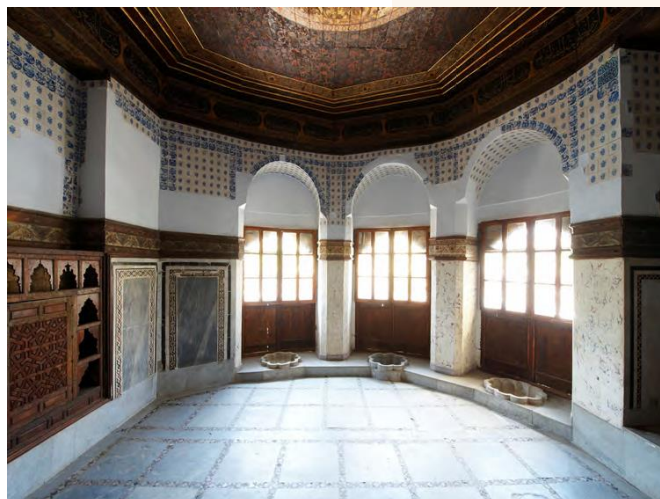


Fig.9: interior of the Sabil of Mustafa III. Matjaž Kačičnik

The *sabil* room is a remarkably preserved example of an Ottoman-period interior, gracefully combining the local mediaeval tradition with the style then fashionable in Istanbul. Surprisingly, its walls are adorned with about 2500 blue-and-white painted Dutch wall-tiles, many of them decorated with landscapes and scenes from the Dutch countryside. The conservation project carried out by the Cairo-based ARCHiNOS Architecture was affiliated to the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, and financed by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Egyptian and foreign conservators, as well as craftsmen practicing their traditional trades worked hand in hand treating every square inch of the decoration in different materials, and making discoveries which revealed that the Ottoman-period “time capsule” was even more completely preserved than had been thought (Dobrowolska & Dobrowolski 2011). After conservation, the ground floor houses a small self-guided bilingual exhibition explaining the building, its history, and its significance. The Islamic charity continues its operations on the upper floor.

Between 1998 and 2002, the American Research Center in Egypt, with USAID funding, carried out conservation, in another part of Historic Cairo, of a *sabil* erected in 1820 by the ruler Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha (Dobrowolska and Fahmy, 2004; Dobrowolska, 2009). Its façade incorporated the entrance to a small neighbourhood mosque at the back of the building. The mosque of Sam Ibn Nuh (Shem, the son of Noah) was one of the oldest in continuous use in Cairo, probably for more than a thousand years, but did not preserve any historically significant architecture. In the neighbouring *sabil* differential settlement of foundations caused by raised groundwater level threatened the building with imminent collapse. The conservation project saved the building, which now houses a permanent exhibition about Muhammad ‘Ali, “the father of modern Egypt” (Dobrowolska, 2010).



Figure 10: Sabil of Muhammad 'Ali; the entrance to the mosque is on the right

However, the roof of the mosque collapsed in June 1999. This came as a shock to the local community, comprising mostly small-scale traders and craftspeople, many sustaining on very low income, for which the neighbourhood mosque is more than a place of prayer: it is a focal point of community life. In the overcrowded, noisy environment of Historic Cairo, where many people lack basic services, it provides the qualities of a home: tranquillity, peace, physical and spiritual cleanliness and purity. Emergency shoring installed by the conservation team to prevent further collapse made it possible to keep the mosque open for prayers, but a full reconstruction was beyond the financial means of the community. Following the plea of the local residents, the conservation team searched for possible sources of funding for a community support project. Means provided by the Local Cultural Fund of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and by the Ford Foundation allowed for complete re-building of the mosque. The project was participatory: the architectural and structural design, materials, and specialised craftsmanship were provided by the professional project team, while the local community's input was through in-kind contributions, voluntary work, and liaising with local authorities. The new design by Agnieszka Dobrowolska used elements of traditional historic architecture of Cairo –familiar to the local people and perceived as appropriate for a mosque—translated into simple forms of modern architecture.

A sound and safe structural design was the first priority. In place of the previous accumulation of haphazardly added pieces of masonry and roofing, the new building is structurally integrated, with the original masonry repaired and reinforced (Dobrowolska, 2002). The project relied on traditional building crafts still practiced in Cairo (Dobrowolska, 2005), and the skills of workers contributing their handcrafted pieces were essential for the work. As the reconstruction work progressed, the mosque remained open for prayers all the time, even in the midst of construction. This was sometimes logistically difficult, but it greatly reinforced the local community's identification with the project and willingness to contribute to it.

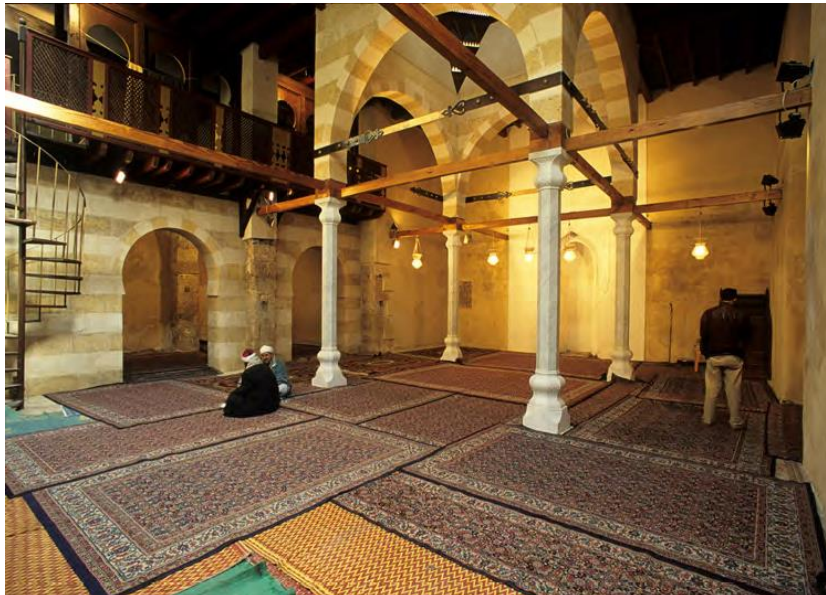


Figure11: the mosque of Sam Ibn Nuh after rebuilding, 2001. Patrick Godeau

By sheer coincidence, two German travelling journeymen arrived in Cairo and joined the project as stonecutters. The travelling journeymen (*Wandergesellen*) voluntarily embark on a three-year long journey after completing their professional training. They typically travel on foot, not staying in any town for longer than three months, and work in exchange for food and shelter, finishing their travels with the same token amount of money that they started with, but richer in experience and skills. They follow the rules of their associations, including a traditional dress: flare-legged corduroy trousers and matching waistcoats, wide-sleeved white shirts, black tailcoats, top hats, and narrow neckties. Such unusual attire, combined with non-conventional hairstyles and body-piercing, caused a minor sensation among the traditional and conservative local community in Historic Cairo. Very quickly however the local people appreciated that the

journeymen were highly skilled professionals and were serious about their work. Despite cultural differences and the language barrier, there was a continuous exchange of knowledge and experience. The *Wandergesellen* were remarkably easily accepted by the local community and formed bonds of genuine friendship (Dobrowolska, 2007).



Figure12: German stonecutters at work in the mosque of Sam Ibn Nuh and on the street in front of it in Historic Cairo. Patrick Godeau

The reconstruction was completed during the month of Ramadan of the year 1422 of the Islamic calendar (November 2001). The completion of work before the feast ending the Muslim holy month was important for the community, and was met with much satisfaction. With support of institutional and private donors, the occasion was marked with a huge festival in front of the mosque, on mediaeval Cairo's main street. It began with an *iftar* feast-breaking meal for three hundred people, followed late into the night with music and performances, in line with the long tradition of *mulids* in Egypt, festivals that mix religious ceremonies and joyous festivities full of folk art and popular culture. The building keeps serving as a neighbourhood mosque. Over the years, people of the local community decorated and adorned the interior according to their modest means and their aesthetics providing floor-carpet, marble lining to wall bases, gilding and painting column capitals. This is a strong indication that the mosque is a living component of the neighbourhood, important for the community whose people are willing to take care of it.

Cairo, an overwhelmingly huge metropolis facing multiple problems and challenges, is now a much different city than it was at the time of the inscription of Historic Cairo onto the World Heritage list in 1979. However, the city has a history of change and transformation, and as long as it has the power and ability to continually reinvent itself through its people, it will remain not only a document of its past contribution to universal human heritage, but also part of present and developing shared culture of humankind.

In South Africa in September 2012, the authors were able to present a *Post Scriptum* to the two case studies: the work on a façade of an Ottoman-period building in Historic Cairo that had been destroyed by fire had been completed days before the conference with funding from the Prince Claus Foundation's Cultural Emergency Response Fund in the Netherlands. It restored a part of the urban landscape in an extremely important location, surrounded by landmark monuments, depicted in numerous works of art, and much visited. The faithfully reconstructed turned-wood screens were produced by traditional craftsmen who still practice their craft in Cairo, little changed from the time of the original construction over 200 years ago. In spite of many serious challenges, and regardless of any comprehensive large-scale programmes, conservation and preservation for posterity of Cairo's rich heritage on a one-step-at-a-time basis continues.



Figure13: A historic turned-wood screen reconstructed by local craftsmen, 2012. Jarosław Dobrowolski

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