

# Antique Dealing and Creative Reuse in Cairo and Damascus 1850-1890

*Intercultural Engagements with Architecture  
and Craft in the Age of Travel and Reform*

Mercedes Volait



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By

Mercedes Volait



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## Acknowledgments

This book builds on the lectures I gave as LUCIS Fall Fellow at the University of Leiden in 2017, thanks to an invitation kindly and generously arranged by Léon Buskens. Entitled “Taking things seriously: Patterns of art consumption across the modern Mediterranean,” the talks were meant to be published in the following year and thus this text has been long overdue. The pandemic of Spring 2020 offered the opportunity to postpone its finalisation no longer.

I have kept fond memories of the days spent in Leiden, and the rich exchanges I have had with colleagues and students from varied origins and disciplines, during the lectures, but also, and more importantly, afterwards, during the convivial culinary moments that followed each talk, a (Dutch?) tradition that I am keen to replicate whenever possible. The issues discussed in the book benefited from extended stays at the Victoria and Albert Museum’s Research Department in London, to which I was associated as visiting fellow from 2015 to 2019, and from privileged access to the vast resources of the museum in the matter of acquisition and provenance of Middle Eastern artefacts. The book furthermore incorporates material from previous research, collected in particular during a visiting fellowship at the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, in 2010.

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- 165 Francis Frith, *Self-Portrait in Turkish Summer Costume*, 1857. Albumen silver print. 12.0 × 16.2 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 66.640.2.4–222
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- 178 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Untitled* [A European at the slave market]. Watercolour on paper. 12.2 × 7 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de



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## Connecting Historiographies, Challenging Assumptions

It was by sheer accident that I came across the topic at the origin and core of the present book. As an architectural historian interested in the working of modernity in pre-Nasserist Egypt, in the early 1990s I was fortuitously given access to an unprecedented resource on the making of Khedivial Cairo: the private papers of French architect Ambroise Baudry (1838–1906), who had been active in the city from 1871 to 1886. For the first time ever, the architectural fashioning of modern Cairo could be viewed and experienced through primary sources, instead of secondary, and mostly indirect, ones. Baudry's carefully kept archive, then in his descendants' hands, consisted of an extensive collection of correspondence (about 800 letters to family, friends, mentors and clients); an accounts' ledger detailing commissions, costs, collaborators and contractors on an almost year-by-year basis; and sets of photographs and architectural drawings, a number of which were acquired in 2000 by the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.<sup>1</sup> The archive also contained documentation on his art collections: Baudry was an early enthusiast and proud owner of valuable Islamic objects from Egypt and Syria, among other high "curiosities," the then current shorthand term for non-Western artworks. A selection of his Iznik tiles and Mamluk woodwork is now housed in the Musée du Louvre in Paris; while the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York holds carved and inlaid woodwork from his collection too. Most remaining pieces were dispersed in 1999 and 2000.<sup>2</sup>

The papers revealed a fine artist who gave birth to one of the most original and alluring form of Mamluk-inspired architecture conceived during

Egypt's modern era.<sup>3</sup> Many other architects, such as the Slovenian Anton Lasciac (1856–1946), did also explore the possibilities of Mamluk tangible heritage for modern design and came up with appealing formulas at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> But Baudry's work not only came at an early stage, it indeed uncovered an aspect of modern design practice on Egyptian soil that came as complete novelty: the large-scale reuse of historic architectural salvage in new suburban domestic architecture. The notion of salvage in modern Europe is typically embedded in post-revolutionary France, when eccentric *amateurs* [art lovers] endeavoured to transport to safety any fragment rescued from confiscated church property at risk of destruction or dilapidation;<sup>5</sup> it infused museum display with the idea of the period room, and inspired historicist architecture for decades afterwards, particularly in France.<sup>6</sup> In other words, salvage designates elements retrieved from damaged buildings or structures in the course of demolition, in order to ensure their survival. Repurposing them in modern residences in France and elsewhere

3 Marie-Laure Crosnier Leconte and Mercedes Volait, *L'Égypte d'un architecte, Ambroise Baudry (1838–1906)* (Paris: Somogy, 1998).

4 Mercedes Volait, "Un architecte face à l'Orient: Antoine Lasciac (1856–1946)," in *La Fuite en Égypte: supplément aux voyages européens*, ed. Jean-Claude Vatin (Cairo: Cedej, 1989), 265–73.

5 Geneviève Bresc-Bautier and Béatrice de Chancel-Bardelot, *Un Musée révolutionnaire: le musée des Monuments français d'Alexandre Lenoir* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016) and for a broader view, just released, Tom Stammers, *The Purchase of the Past, Collecting Culture in Post-Revolutionary Paris c. 1790–1890* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

6 On nineteenth-century historicism, also termed Revivalism, in architecture, Martin Bressani, "Revivalism," in *The Companions to the History of Architecture*, III: *Nineteenth-Century Architecture*, eds. Martin Bressani and Christina Contandriopoulos (New York: Wiley, 2017), 3–18.

1 The drawings are numbered ARO 2000 378–389, supplemented by ARO 2010 013–016.

2 *Arts d'Orient*, Paris-Drouot Montaigne, 7 June 1999, lots no. 76 to 147; *Arts d'Orient*, Drouot-Richelieu, Paris, 11 December 2000, lots no. 98 to 120; no. 172 to 195.

became a worldwide line of decorative work during the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth one.<sup>7</sup>

The patrons for which Baudry designed houses which incorporated salvage were themselves Islamic art collectors. The purpose was to reconstruct immersive environments for their artworks. The spoils repurposed consisted of entire ceilings, marble floors and dados, fountains, tiles and mashrabiyyas – in short anything that could be detached from historic buildings for future recycling. To be sure, *spolia* in itself is hardly *terra incognita* for historians;<sup>8</sup> it is basic material to any archaeologist and medievalist around the world. But its modern instantiation in nineteenth-century Cairo had never been addressed, let alone mentioned in the literature. Studying Baudry's architectural achievements in Cairo thus opened unsuspected horizons. It pointed to an economy of collecting and repurposing that had never been heard of until then.

On further inspection, the recycling of salvage proved to be far from exceptional but rather an integral part of a broader ecosystem in Egypt. Good evidence of its prevalence is offered by the recurrence of briefs and reports on rubble (*kharāb*, also *inqāṣ* in Arabic) in the pages of the official journal of the Egyptian government since the 1830s.<sup>9</sup> The availability and prominence of ruined buildings in late Ottoman Cairo raise in turn questions about the commodification of the city's tangible heritage

and portable assets associated with its architecture. It subsequently appeared that the circulation of salvage and artefacts trespassed across the frontiers of Egypt, for provenances could be traced to adjoining Syria and, farther afield, to the Hijaz and Persia. How did such things turn into collectibles? How did their circulation function? What was the relationship with the system of endowments, since endowed buildings and their furnishings formed the largest part of historic architecture and craft in Cairo and Damascus and had theoretically been made in perpetuity? What agencies were involved? What were the economic dynamics behind the movement of salvage and objects? What subjectivities (cultural, aesthetic and otherwise) sustained it? How was it dealt with, socially and politically, at a time of increased worldwide awareness about heritage preservation?

## 1 Things, People and Places

The five chapters of this book attempt to provide answers to these questions. They do so by exploring the commodification process from varied viewpoints, within a time frame covering its early phase during the nineteenth century. Evidence shows that the birth of the trade in Islamic antiques, to use contemporary parlance,<sup>10</sup> can be dated to the 1850s, while legal control over it became quite effective from the 1890s onwards. Those four decades represent a transitional period in the commercial and consumption cycle of tangible heritage in the region, and constitute the focus of this book. The period in question is characterised politically by late Ottoman imperial governance besieged by increasing European interference, but before direct European rule intervened (the British army occupied the Ottoman province of Egypt in 1882). Within the Ottoman Empire, it

7 Bruno Pons, *Grands décors français 1650–1800, reconstitués en Angleterre, aux États-Unis, en Amérique du Sud et en France* (Dijon: Faton, 1995); Wayne Craven, *Stanford White: Decorator in Opulence and Dealer in Antiquities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

8 Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, eds., *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012) and further bibliography in Chapter 4.

9 A systematic mining of the official journal *Al-Waqā'ir al-misriyya*, irregularly issued since 1828, for news related to architectural and urban affairs in Cairo is currently underway within the project “La fabrique du Caire moderne,” based at the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology in Cairo, under the supervision of Adam Mestyan (Duke University) and the present author.

10 On the category of “antiques,” its meaning and history, see Mark Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique and Curiosity Dealer in Britain 1815–1850. The Commodification of Historical Objects* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 102–06.

corresponded to an age of reform inaugurated by the Tanzimat Edict of 1839 in order to adjust to the new world order. These times were conflicted ones, and yet they cannot be subsumed in the colonial paradigm. They had an Ottoman, Syrian and Egyptian life of their own, and one that should be captured in its own terms.<sup>11</sup> On the global stage, industry was in full swing. Manufactured objects reigned; gigantic international fairs promoted and celebrated their worldwide outreach. Trains and steamships did the rest: European goods travelled faster and further away, dominating consumption everywhere.

A first angle under which the evidence collected for this book is looked at is the social life of the Middle Eastern pieces on the move, which in turn encompasses many aspects. To name but a few, the availability and supply of artefacts, their varied provenances, the multiple means of their motion, their incorporation into private and public spheres, the functions they performed, and last but not least, the reactions their appropriation elicited (from indifference and complacency to reluctance and dissension), all shaped the biography of artefacts in circulation for reuse and display. The material things considered here are of diverse nature, ranging from small curios to large fixtures, and all varieties of collectibles in between: from helmets, architectural tiles and tabouret-tables up to a mosque pulpit, painted ceilings and full rooms. These commodities were joined by non-architectural objects, namely apparel. Because of their corporeal dimension, garments offer a way to further approach the realm of the subjectivities associated with cross-collecting and cross-decorating.<sup>12</sup>

The second prism is that of people. The book considers trade and consumption through the

lens of individual stakeholders and end-users, be they officials, overseers, collectors, connoisseurs, brokers, providers, manufacturers, designers, purchasers, painters, photographers, sitters, and the like. Following Howard S. Becker's *Art Worlds*,<sup>13</sup> the approach assumes that the transformation of things into collectibles was not the doing of isolated individuals, but the undertaking of a web of interrelated people who intersected one way or another with the physical settings and material objects – historic architecture and related artefacts – discussed here. Whether protagonists were engaged with selling, purchasing, dismantling, repurposing the tangible culture referred to, or facilitated, negotiated, opposed and punished its appropriation, their actions and attitudes did impact the commodification process and have something to say about it in return.

Capturing both Western and non-Western voices in the microhistories that make the weft of the book has been a relentless concern. The literature on collecting has shown that the desire to acquire and display the rare and the remarkable had reached around the world since at least the sixteenth century and that it often involved cross-cultural contact. It was the case in the Early Modern Atlantic world,<sup>14</sup> and it holds true for the coeval Islamicate one.<sup>15</sup> There are comparatively fewer studies for the nineteenth-century Mediterranean realm. And within these, subaltern voices are frequently left offstage, for that age, the acme of Western imperial Orientalism, has been primarily sought through the eyes of

11 As proposed in Adam Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism: The Ideology and Culture of Power in Late Ottoman Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).

12 For apparel as a shortcut to core social issues, Daniel Roche, *La Culture des apparences, une histoire du vêtement (XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Seuil, 2007).

13 Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

14 Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall, eds., *Collecting across Cultures, Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

15 Sussan Babaie and Melanie Gibson, eds., *The Mercantile Effect: Art and Exchange in the Islamicate World during the 17th and 18th centuries* (London: The Gingko Library, 2017); Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010).

the conquerors. French and British collecting in the Middle East have attracted so far most existing research,<sup>16</sup> besides the Western art markets where their pieces circulated.<sup>17</sup> Some peripheries such as Central Europe and Russia have been recently brought into the picture.<sup>18</sup> But local agency is still remarkably absent from the narrative, with the exception of a handful of successful dealers who had moved to Europe and America in the late nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Truly enough, the asymmetry of sources is overwhelming, as has been frequently acknowledged; documents on the activities of Europeans and Americans largely outpace records addressing local figures and dynamics. Redressing the balance may seem farfetched, but alternative historiographies do exist.<sup>20</sup> The present book holds central the points

of view, interests and actions of insiders, in addition to that of outside agency. Besides adhering to the concerns of “decentered history,”<sup>21</sup> it aims to further explore the path of entangled and connected history by examining the interplay of both agencies.<sup>22</sup> It is willing, in other words, to devote attention to intercultural “contact zones.”<sup>23</sup>

Place constitutes a third entry into the subject matter of the book. It is understood here in its architectural sense. The consideration of place commands close attention to the physical settings where consumers’ actions could be observed and interpreted, whether the agency consisted of fashioning domestic décors or conceiving the lifestyle to be enjoyed within their precincts. All places studied are interiors, and most belong to homes, with the exception of a few art galleries and showrooms. New collecting cultures always developed in the private sphere before conquering the public realm. To word it otherwise, most museum collections grew out of private ones, starting with the aristocratic *Wunderkammer*, the cabinet of curiosities of the early modern period. What happened in the private interiors considered here is thus of broader social significance, as most of their valuables went public at one point or another. Geographically speaking, the book covers local, transnational and global ground. Cairo, and to a lesser extent Damascus, are the cities at

16 Stephen Vernoit, ed., *Discovering Islamic Art. Scholars, Collecting and Collections, 1850–1950* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000); Christine Peltre, *Les Arts de l’Islam: itinéraire d’une redécouverte* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006); Rémi Labrusse, *Purs décors, Arts de l’Islam, Regards du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Arts Décoratifs, 2007) and *Islamophilies: l’Europe moderne et les arts de l’Islam* (Paris: Somogy, 2011); Moya Carey, *Persian Art. Collecting the Arts of Iran for the V&A* (London: V&A Publishing, 2017).

17 Bénédicte Savoy et al., eds., *Acquiring Cultures: Histories of World Art on Western Markets* (Boston, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

18 Francine Giese et al., eds., *À l’orientale: Collecting, Displaying and Appropriating Islamic Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

19 The typical example is the famous New York-based Armenian dealer Dikran Kelekian; for a thorough study of an Ottoman collector-dealer in *fin de siècle* Paris, Deniz Türker, “Hakky-Bey and his Journal *Le Miroir de l’art musulman*, or, *Mir’ât-I Şanāyî-İ İslāmiye* (1898),” *Muqarnas* 31 (2014): 277–306.

20 A case in point is André Raymond, *Égyptiens et Français au Caire, 1798–1801* (Cairo: Publications de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1998). An attempt to look at empire “from the inside out,” is Maya Jasonoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture and Conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York: Vintage books, 2005). Further entangled histories are proposed in François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin, eds., *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

21 Natalie Zemon Davis, “Decentering history: local stories and cultural crossings in a global world,” *History and theory* 50, no. 2 (May 2011): 188–202.

22 The conceptual model is offered by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Mughals and Franks: Explorations in Connected History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); see also Romain Bertrand, *L’Histoire à parts égales, récits d’une rencontre Orient-Occident (XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup>)* (Paris: Seuil, 2011). An inspiration in prose has been Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: a Hidden Inheritance* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2010), which follows a family collection of Japanese netsukes from Paris, Vienna, Tunbridge Wells, Tokyo, Odessa and London over a century.

23 The term was initially forged for literary studies, see Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007, 1st edition in 1992).

the onset of the collecting and commercial culture studied and constitute a central focus. But the outcome of cross-collecting their architecture and crafts reached quite distant locations, such as Manhattan and upstate New York, and these trans-oceanic places are considered too. Yet, the key sites in these pages are not unexpectedly located in Paris and London, besides Cairo and Damascus, for the four capital cities possessed at the time the richest resources to afford supply and meet demand of such collectibles. Passing mentions are made to locations in Rome, Venice, Florence, Istanbul, Beirut, Jerusalem, Athens, Tunis, and Algiers.

## 2 Structure of the Book

The book takes as its point of departure a group of Middle Eastern artefacts offered for public viewing in Paris from 1865 to 1869. Chapter 1 traces the three distinct Parisian events (a loan exhibition, participation in a Universal Exposition, and a public sale) where these objects attributed to Islamic Egypt and Syria were exhibited, priced and dispersed in no time. Their collective biography, and varied afterlife over a condensed span of time, is already indicative of the diversity of channels and agencies that made their presence in Paris possible, and the range of mechanisms that engineered their dispersal. At the forefront in the commodification process emerge the figure of a high official and art lover from Egypt and the global strategy of a young British museum. Chapter 2 shifts the focus to Cairo and Damascus as sites of expanding trades in Islamic antiques after the 1850s in the latter, and the 1870s in the former. It demonstrates that the commerce of curios and the trade in Revival crafts were from the very beginning intertwined, and that European firms quickly jumped into the lucrative business. It highlights the centrality of architectural salvage, and of its repurposing, in the commercialisation movement. Chapter 3 charts a series of Egyptian attitudes and reactions to the cannibalisation of historic architecture that came with the commodification of

its fragments. Viewpoints are seized in particular through episodes revolving around three celebrated Cairene interiors, belonging to the historic palaces of al-Sadat, al-Musafirkhana and al-Mufti. Each case testifies again that positions were not unequivocal. The dismantling of domestic décor was viewed very differently in each situation and the opinions directly expressed or indirectly received do cross national divides. Chapter 4 is devoted to the end destination of the material culture collected in Cairo and Damascus: the fashioning of elaborate atmospheric rooms, in Cairo itself, and elsewhere across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Sophisticated interiors constitute the sites where salvage was ultimately repurposed; the spoils of historic architecture were complemented with matching Revival furnishings and curios. The ensuing domestic décors were explicitly referenced as following the restoration model promoted by the Musée de Cluny in Paris.<sup>24</sup> The chapter attempts to position the historicist interiors not only with the grain of the French post-revolutionary doctrine of restoration, but indeed in connection with the Egyptian culture of reuse, a centuries-long tradition that has remained a living one to this day. The case studies suggest that a cross-fertilisation of both cultures developed.

The final chapter approaches cross-collecting and cross-decorating through the lens of cross-cultural dressing, commonly shortened as cross-dressing in the literature. Dressing native, so to speak, has a long history in European culture. Its manifestations, and the visual culture they set in motion, represent a further opportunity, and possibly the most telling one, to seize the subjectivities and emotions associated with the cross-cultural project. Ethnic guise and disguise are explored both within the deeply rooted culture of fancy dressing in Europe and the Ottoman codification of attire. It delves further into French and British

<sup>24</sup> The classical reference on its original and innovative museography is Stephen Bann, "Historical Text and Historical Object: the Poetics of the Musée de Cluny," *History and Theory* 17, no. 3 (1978): 251–66.

engagements with several types of garment worn in late Ottoman Egypt. The purpose is again to pay attention to connections and entanglements, in their day to day effectiveness and source of enjoyment, as well as, at times, cause of predicament, a notion that has been held central in intercultural relations.<sup>25</sup> The epilogue concludes by charting to the present the diverging traces left by the cross-cultural interactions examined throughout the book on either side of the Mediterranean. They can be best captured, in summation, by a combination of endurance and estrangement.

### 3 A Variety of Sources

These findings have been made possible by the fastidious excavation and cross-examination of a large array of primary and secondary sources, accessibility to which has been facilitated by the ever-growing digitised material available online. In this sense, this book is firmly anchored in its present. As most connected history, it would probably not have been feasible a few decades ago. Its method is based on the premise that nineteenth-century papers, prints and photographs still have something to contribute to contemporary knowledge, if expertly and sensibly mined, read and interpreted.

The material studied can be broken down into four main categories. First come the multiple traces left by the movement of artworks in auction and museum records. The mobility of pieces can be followed through sale catalogues, many of which are annotated with prices and buyers' names. An additional, and exceptional, source on auctions held in Paris is provided by the minutes of the sales, which were established for fiscal reasons and list all names involved and values hammered. The records provide good coverage across

the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> The archives of the V&A Museum in London, and the records of the Musée des Arts décoratifs and Musée du Louvre in Paris, are rich in acquisition and exhibition papers, both from the early 1860s onwards; they have been systematically used for the present study. Visual material constitutes the second resource based on which I have written. Sets of paintings, architectural drawings, photographs and engravings have contributed a wealth of evidence and insights on the cross-cultural phenomena I have set to analyse. Particularly useful has been a subgenre of pictorial Orientalism, not yet recognised *per se* but that deserves to be. It could be detached in fact from the Orientalist genre altogether and stand alone. It does not depict Western fantasises of non-Western people, but pictures cross-cultural interplay taking place, literally or figuratively, in the East. Photographs of Americans in Middle Eastern attire posing with their interpreter typically fall into that category, as do souvenirs sketched on the spot by travelling artists.<sup>27</sup> Other examples are given throughout the book.

Moreover, I have used material sources, such as artworks kept in museums, not to speak of architecture in Cairo. Lengthy visits to a particular late Ottoman house, the home of the prestigious Sufi family of al-Sadat, and to the remnants of a French Islamic Revival house (today relocated on the grounds of the French embassy in Egypt), have produced unparalleled information, particularly when observations made on site could be juxtaposed with historic iconography, plans and textual descriptions. Finally, writings of several sorts have been sought out to reconstruct the trade and consumption of historic architecture and

25 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

26 Isabelle Rouge-Ducos, *Le Crieur et le Marteau, Histoire des commissaires-priseurs de Paris (1801 à 1945)* (Paris: Belin, 2013).

27 Mercedes Volait, "Scène de genre, choses vues ou attrait du travestissement? Les Européens dans la peinture orientaliste," in *L'Orientalisme après la Querelle: dans les pas de François Pouillon*, eds. Guy Barthélemy, Dominique Casajus, Sylvette Larzul and Mercedes Volait (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2016), 37–49.

related crafts from Cairo and Damascus after 1850. Private correspondence, memoirs, travel accounts, administrative reports, press clippings, gazetteers, collection descriptions, letterheads and invoices, have all contributed precious data, and specifically when they are crosschecked among themselves and with other media. I have also strived to include Arabic writings, when available, such as historical chronicles, archival material, and news reports. Arabic inscriptions read from the architecture or deciphered on photography have produced useful hints as well.

Piecing together a puzzle (with no predefined outcome) may be the most appropriate metaphor to describe one of the investigation procedures I use in my research. I am borrowing the analogy from Egyptologist Paule Posener-Kriéger (1925–1996) explaining how she proceeded to reconstruct text from minuscule fragments of papyri. I similarly endeavour to assemble and reconnect the largest possible sets of visual, material and textual evidence on a place (e.g. the grand reception hall of the house of al-Sadat discussed in Chapter 3) or a practice (such as antique dealing or photography making), in order to reconstruct its material and social history. Navigating with profit across visual records that are frequently very loosely – if not erroneously – captioned, requires prior direct knowledge of the sites and things pictured. Data mining in this circumstance does not suffice. Topographical expertise is crucial to be able to attribute to specific places photographs bearing generic labels such as *Cour de maison arabe* [Court of an Arab house]. One needs to know the place in order to recognise it in pictures; vague and misleading captions, as is generally the rule, are of little help to get to what is depicted. Discourse analysis can certainly reveal stereotypes across photographs' titles, a well-established marketing technique, but little else.

Once a substantial amount of evidence can be related to a given locale (or thing or use for that matter), the cross-examination of the information collected serves to trace continuity and change, such as physical alterations. Modifications

illuminate in turn attitudes towards historic architecture. Identifying aspects of a place's social life can be equally meaningful. The abundant visual material depicting the architecture of the house of al-Sadat and portraying sitters at its premises, from 1868 onwards, can thus serve several purposes. It can help detect physical change from one image to another. But it can also outline a social interplay with new technology, here represented by photography, as I discuss in Chapter 3. In this sense, a reconstructed series of photographs can offer access to past practices that other sources do not reach.

#### 4 Data Re-Identification

Apart from reconstructing visual series on the basis of architectural and topographical analogies, I have strived to match photographs with their published versions and with any auxiliary data available.<sup>28</sup> The method has led me to rescue a number of images and artworks from anonymity. A telling example is an 1869 photograph depicting a "Coppersmith" according to its label. (Fig. 41) The triangulation with its printed version and the text related to it, as well as topographical knowledge, permits the identification of the location of his shop at the entrance of Cairo's main bazaar and the person photographed as Muhammad al-Shirazi [Mohamed El-Cherazy in the French source],<sup>29</sup> a name of obvious Persian origin, which

28 An example of results reached through data re-identification and intermedia cross-examination, is the reconstruction of the catalogue of architectural views of Cairo taken from 1875 to 1895 by photographer Beniamino Facchinelli (1839–1895). The study brought unprecedented findings on the monumental history of the Egyptian capital city; Maryse Bideault *et al.*, *Le Caire sur le vif, Beniamino Facchinelli photographe (1875–1895)* (Paris: INHA, 2017). The catalogue is available online at [<http://facchinelli.huma-num.fr/>].

29 Arthur Rhoné, *L'Égypte à petites journées. Le Caire d'autrefois*. Nouvelle édition (Paris: Société générale d'éditions, 1910), 272.



can be connected in turn to the tradition of Persian merchants in the city's central market place.

I have systematically proceeded with data re-identification of the visual documents used for this book. In doing so, I diverge from the internal analysis of images performed by conventional art history and semiotics. It is not so much the intrinsic meaning of an image, or its artistry, that is my concern – admitting that one can reach it beyond any reasonable doubt. What I attempt to read in images, and more often than not in series of images, is the social realities and relations that they convey and attest to. I contend that small clues on social matters can be extracted from even the most staged and artificial visual depictions, in particular when connected to other images or other sources.<sup>30</sup> The insights mined might not be the most visible ones. They might be tangential to the primary subject of the images, and they might lead to external issues. But they are always evocative.

A concrete example may best exemplify the investigation procedure. A colour plate from an illustrated compendium of costume and interior design over time and place, authored by French artist Albert Racinet (1825–93), can serve as a departure point. The image is numbered HA and labelled Turkey: it supposedly illustrates the progress made there in palatial design during the second half of the nineteenth century. (Fig. 1) It is meant, according to its author, to picture a shift towards a more inclusive synthesis of Islamic architecture, bringing together the Alhambra, the monuments of Cairo and the “good Persian school” in the design, as an alternative to the Turkish Rococo embraced during the preceding decades. The original conception of the room is rightly attributed to French architect Jacques Drevet (1832–1900), but the context given for its construction is misleading. It allegedly represents a *salāmlık* in a Turkish regal palace, i.e. a hall devoted to the reception of

male visitors. Racinet explains that Drevet's initial design has been slightly adapted, for the purpose of the chromolithograph, on suggestions made by an architect who had visited Egypt, Paul Bénard (1834–86). The reason was to provide the room with a “more archaic physiognomy” and a character adapted to its female use – an interesting twist for a type of room conventionally made for men. A pointed shape was given to the rear arches, turned wood screens were added to their openings (in place of coloured glass), and carved stucco filled the top of the bay windows. Thick carpets covered the floor in place of the central fountain that figured in the original design. The colour scheme followed indications provided by architect Paul Bénard; it is indeed very typically Second Empire in the red and green tones chosen.<sup>31</sup>

Anyone familiar with the iconography of architecture in modern Egypt, and moreover of Egyptian involvement in World's fairs, immediately recognises the initial structure from which the room comes: it is the vice-regal pavilion commissioned by the Egyptian ruler for the Universal Exposition of 1867 in Paris.<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 2) Rather than being a pure specimen of modern Turkish architecture, the standalone building is a perfect hybrid. It exemplifies the almost insuperable challenge that the conception of a characteristic Egyptian building represented for a French architect ignorant of Islamic architecture ... The result is a *unicum*, as nothing had ever been built in its semblance, nor was to be. The distribution of the pavilion is classically symmetrical in its perfect cruciform plan reminiscent of Byzantine architecture, while its interior decoration is neo-Moorish. The decorative

<sup>30</sup> On the different ways of using images in historical writing, Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> *Le Costume historique: cinq cents planches, trois cents en couleurs, or et argent, deux cents en camaïeu, types principaux du vêtement et de la parure, rapprochés de ceux de l'intérieur de l'habitation dans tous les temps et chez tous les peuples, avec de nombreux détails sur le mobilier, les armes, les objets usuels, les moyens de transport, etc.* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1876–88), 111: n.p. [329–30].

<sup>32</sup> Abundant visual documentation exists on the Egyptian participation to the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris; full references are given in Chapter 1.

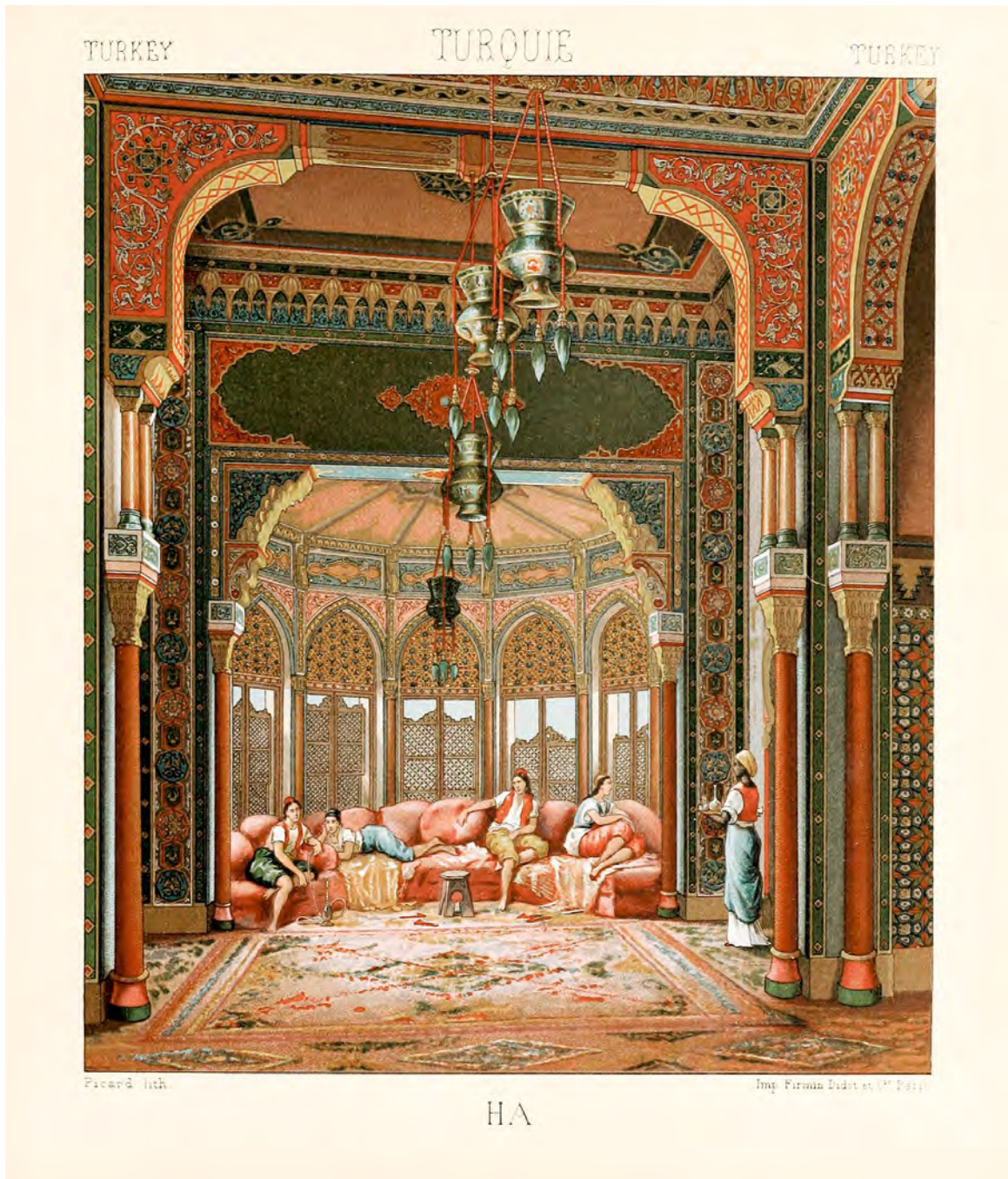


FIGURE 1 Picard, lithographer, after a watercolour by Stéphane Baron, *Turquie: Architecture intérieure des palais, dix-neuvième siècle* [Nineteenth-century Turkish palatial interior]  
 ALBERT RACINET, *LE COSTUME HISTORIQUE...*, 1876–88, III: N.P. [PL. 327]

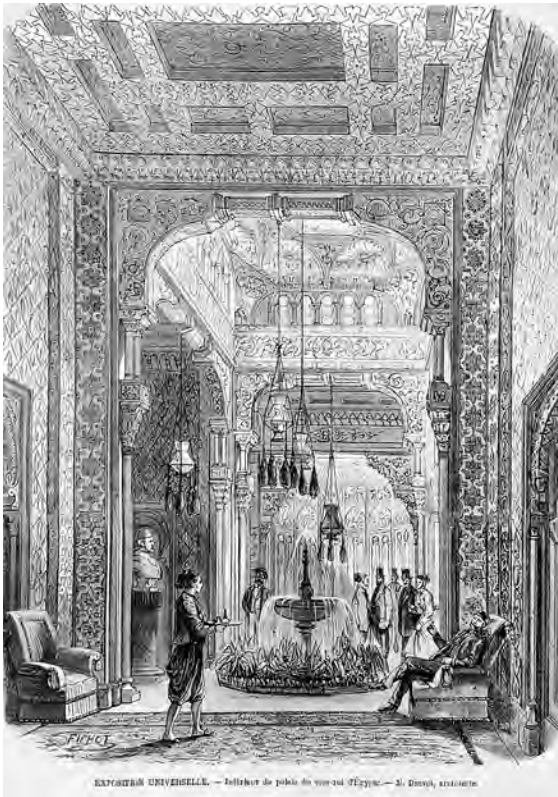


FIGURE 2 *Exposition universelle: Intérieur du palais du vice-roi d'Égypte* [Jacques Drevet, Interior of the Khedivial pavilion at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867]

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choice displeased the Egyptian authorities, who made plain that it was inappropriate as “the ornamentation of old houses in Cairo is of a true Arab style, which is more beautiful and more appreciated than the Moorish style,”<sup>33</sup> and yet, it was built with a neo-Moorish interior design.

Data re-identification and cross-examination bring about a number of findings in this instance. It suggests that accuracy was not a prime concern when representing exotic architecture in Europe;

33 Quoted in Mercedes Volait, “Égypte représentée ou Égypte en représentation? La participation égyptienne aux expositions universelles de Paris (1867) et de Vienne (1873),” in *Voyager d'Égypte vers l'Europe et inversement: parcours croisés (1830–1950)*, ed. Randa Sabry (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 425–41.

manipulations were tolerated, and some were even openly acknowledged, which is remarkable indeed. It shows that appearance (style) prevailed over physicality (production); in other words, a French-designed building in approximate Islamic style could pass as archetypal of late nineteenth-century Turkish architecture. Visually speaking, the pavilion primarily denotes the grip of the Alhambresque vogue, which was then at its height, and consequently a Western representation and alteration of Islamic architecture.<sup>34</sup> The Racinet plate is not about Turkey as it claims, nor about France despite its Gallic touch; it is chiefly about intercultural architecture. When paired with analogous iconography and additional fragments of evidence, under scrutiny the colour plate can uncover facts and perspectives that go well beyond the alleged Turkish interior it projects at first glance. Submitting visual data to systematic comparison and methodical criticism and paying attention to the metadiscourse and paratexts that accompany images in the form of captions, cross-references, and comments, are useful tools for historical enquiry. A number of other examples are developed across the book, whether the reality explored concerns the practice of fashioning interiors or cross-cultural dressing.

I similarly look at objects in a way that does not correspond to the traditional archaeological or art historical method. I do not consider material culture in order to reconstruct the remote societies that produced it, as archaeologists do, or to identify artistic authorship, schools and references, as is the usual business in art history. I use objects, together with their identification and provenance history, to comprehend the very process of their de-contextualization in the nineteenth century, and the shifts in their social perceptions and functions. I take their modern afterlife as an index of local availability and global desirability, as well as evidence of new social subjectivities and attitudes.

34 For a recent survey, Francine Giese and Ariane Varla Braga, eds., *The Power of Symbols: The Alhambra in a Global Perspective* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018).

I practice object-based research as a means to access historical processes such as cross-cultural interactions, commodification dynamics, consumption practices and material politics,<sup>35</sup> here viewed through the prism of a very specific physical matter: historic architecture and related artefacts in and from the Eastern Mediterranean.

## 5 Revising the Narrative

This research falls at the intersection of several disciplinary perspectives: architectural history, nineteenth-century visual and material culture, Middle Eastern studies, and museum and heritage studies and its results invite revision of some common assumptions made within each framework. A first trope to revisit relates to visual Orientalism. Most of the iconography used throughout the book is generally attributed to that artistic genre. Yet it does not match the standard definition of pictorial Orientalism as an art based on ignorance, using the artifice of realism to impose an imaginary immutable Orient, carefully expurgated of any trace of modernity and the Western presence.<sup>36</sup> Not only do Europeans appear in the photographs and canvases discussed here; they frequently represent, in their interplay with local culture and people, their very topic. Interestingly enough, when expurgation has taken place, figuratively, through faulty labelling in particular, it came at a much later stage, as can be established in most cases, and such distortions reflect the spirit of decolonisation, rather than the pre-colonial or colonial gaze. Part of the imagery produced by Europeans in the Middle East and about

the Middle East consequently calls for rereading and reinterpretation.

Dominant dogmas regarding historic architecture in the Middle East may also be questioned in light of the book's findings. Cairene specimens are generally dated to the time of their initial construction. Consequently, they are known as representative of Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottoman architecture, and so on. On close examination however, historic buildings appear to have been largely reconfigured throughout their existence and no less so during the nineteenth century, in view of their adaptation to modern life, and again during the twentieth century, when undergoing restoration. Today, their remnants represent mixed-period structures that primarily testify to their mutability over time. There is a pressing need to work out a new understanding of the identity and historicity of these buildings, one that does not erase whole stages of their expansion and transformation. That does not expurgate the impact of the industrial age. At present, the modern history of listed monuments in Cairo is entirely missing from the canonical narrative. That their conservation as tangible heritage was guaranteed by the organic system of religious endowments [*waqf*] is another belief calling for reassessment. It does not hold true in a number of historic situations, as historians have demonstrated. The fundamental topic here is rather the cannibalisation of Egyptian buildings throughout history, and the continuous recycling of their architectural salvage, together with the constant reworking of structures.

Finally, the translocation of cultural heritage needs also to be considered in a new light. It is today mostly equated with loot, as museum curators know too well.<sup>37</sup> "Of course, all this was stolen from us," is a phrase familiar to anyone interested in the public experience of museum collections. I heard it myself in 2015 at the V&A in London, during a Friday Late, the monthly event during

35 The vast opportunities opened by thinking materially in historical writing are discussed in Frank Trentmann, "Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices, and Politics," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 2009): 283–307.

36 Linda Nochlin, "The imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-century Art and Society*, ed. L. Nochlin (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 33–59.

37 Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998).

which live performance, film, installation, debate, DJs and late-night exhibition openings attempt to bring in new audiences, with obvious success, for Friday Lates are lively evenings that do draw multicultural crowds at the museum's galleries. One ultimately realises that the perception of museum collections as stolen heritage is in fact quite widely shared. I had plenty of opportunities to observe that the prime impulse of younger colleagues, when entering a museum, is to consider that all they see is the product of misappropriation, and in particular of colonial pillaging. This view is possibly a matter of generation and education, but that does not mean it should be neglected.

The stories recounted in this book demonstrate that there were dynamics other than colonial plunder channelling Middle Eastern objects to European museums. They suggest that pillage was a modality among many others in the circulation of objects within the Middle East and across the modern Mediterranean during the period under study. There was an even more powerful force at work behind the mobility of historic objects changing hands across short or long distances: trade. Commerce is an insidious mechanism that takes good advantage of any major social and political disruption, as has been well demonstrated for post-Revolutionary continental Europe,<sup>38</sup> and other dramatic phases of its twentieth-century history.<sup>39</sup> And yet, commerce is a transaction between consenting parties, not necessarily a despoliation forced on people by coercion. As the book demonstrates, the commercialisation of things from the past in the Eastern Mediterranean did not start with colonisation (and decolonisation did not end

it either, one must add). The economic model of demand and supply entrenched in trade constitutes a far more complex reality than plunder, and one most difficult to control and counter.

Transparency of provenances and transactions is here of paramount prominence. The channels and economic mechanisms that drove objects, and indeed entire rooms and parts of monuments, to museums and collections in the West (and nowadays to the Arabian peninsula) should be public information. As long as it is kept confidential for fear of restitution claims, suspicion on how objects were and are acquired will loom large. I do believe that these issues belong to the public sphere and ought to be discussed openly, to the benefit of the common good and all parties concerned. If some repatriation is meant to happen in the process, so be it. All indications however are that reclamations will be very limited, with the exceptions of few strongly contentious pieces.

And then there is the consciousness and appeal of history. The “melancholy of history,”<sup>40</sup> and its absence therein, create different attitudes to the past and the urge of ensuring its transmission. It is safe to assume that senses of time diverged across the modern Mediterranean during the period considered. At least, the tempo of historic longing did, as nostalgia for bygone days is quite a recent phenomenon in the region, while the “cult of the extinct,” to borrow the expression of architectural historian Geoffrey Scott,<sup>41</sup> obsessed nineteenth-century Europe and distinctively shaped its architecture, besides characterising a largely shared ethos across society. That the past possessed less appeal on the other side of the Mediterranean at

38 A recent publication on the British case is Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique and Curiosity Dealer*. See also the classic Bénédicte Savoy, *Patrimoine annexé. Les biens culturels saisis par la France en Allemagne autour de 1800* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2003).

39 Lynn H. Nicholas, *Le Pillage de l'Europe: les œuvres d'art volées par les nazis* (Paris: Seuil, 1995); Martin Jungius, *Un Vol organisé: l'État français et la spoliation des biens juifs (1940–1944)* (Paris: Taillandier, 2012).

40 The phrase has been coined by historian Peter Fritzsche to describe the mood generated in the West by the American and French Revolutions and the subsequent longing for an irretrievable past, Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

41 Quoted in Martin Bressani, “Revivalism,” 10, from Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965 – 1st edition 1914).

the time was not without material repercussions. It not only impacted the built environment, but indeed oriented the fluxes of historic artefacts and salvage.

I have endeavoured to comprehend with eyes wide open some domestic facets of these phenomena in the late Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean, a period that collided with the early experiencing of modernity. Further light should continue to be shed on the modern fate of past art and

architecture in the region. It entails confrontation with issues that will appear difficult and distressing to anyone craving the preservation of cultural property in this part of the world. But I do believe that it will ultimately be to the advantage of the afterlife of its tangible remnants, and allow for shared enjoyment of their contemplation.

Paris, November 2020



## Early Shows and Sales of Islamic Antiques in Paris

Early displays of Islamic arts and crafts in nineteenth-century Europe are commonly associated with a set of shows that were held between 1885 and 1910 in London (*Exhibition of Arab and Persian Art*, 1885), Paris (*Les Arts musulmans*, 1893 and 1903), Stockholm (*F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus dem Orient* within the General Art and Industry exhibition, 1897), Algiers (*Exposition d'art musulman*, 1905) and Munich (*Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst*, 1910).<sup>1</sup> These did not represent however the first or sole opportunities for direct exposure to artworks from the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa that were offered to European audiences during the age of empire, industry and spectacle. Every single Universal Exposition since 1851 presented objects from the region,<sup>2</sup> whether they were the product of current craftsmanship or “curiosities” from the past – the common term then used for non-Western artworks.<sup>3</sup> From the very beginning, shows devoted to applied arts, routinely described as industrial, ornamental or decorative in the sources, also hosted Islamic artefacts among their exhibits; alternative viewing was thus provided to those who had not travelled East. More

importantly, the presence of such collectibles in Europe did not depend on European agency alone; Middle Eastern actors also took part in the European exposure of such objects. From the outset, the Western appraisal of Islamic antiques was embedded into transnational dynamics working in both directions.

Three interconnected public events, closely linked to the rise of these collectibles on the art market, helped to further the extent of European encounters with historic artworks from the Middle East and the interactions that sustained them. All took place in Paris during the late Second Empire. The earliest is the loan show organised by the Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie in 1865. For the first time French collectors and *amateurs* were publicly showing their specimens in applied arts, either Western artefacts, or pieces from elsewhere, the Islamic world included. This circumstance provides a unique opportunity to explore the range and type of Islamic collectibles then held in French private hands. An Egyptian display at the *Exposition universelle* of 1867 subsequently brought to international attention a substantial amount of Islamic salvage. Two auction sales connected to both exhibitions followed in 1868 and 1869.

Some information can be retrieved on each event and their contents by mining an array of heterogeneous data. Visual records exist for a fraction of the artworks exhibited in 1865. Those depicted by photography, together with the ones only known through written descriptions, pop up in loan records, press clippings, exhibition catalogues or auction minutes. Some artworks photographed at the 1865 show can be traced down to museums today, where further data on their origin, style and provenance are retrievable. Piece by piece, insights can be gained on

1 Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art*, 18; Komaroff, “Exhibiting the Middle East,” 1–8; Labrusse, *Purs décors*, 64–74; Chris Dercon *et al.*, *The Future of Tradition*.

2 Chromolithographs by Joseph Nash depict the Tunisian, Egyptian, Turkish, and Persian exhibits at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, see *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851, from the originals, painted for H. R. H. Prince Albert, by Messrs. Nash, Haghe and Roberts* (London: Dickinson brothers, 1854). The Tunisian case is explored in Isabelle Weiland, “La Tunisie aux expositions universelles de 1851 à 1900” (PhD diss., École des Hautes études en sciences sociales, 2013).

3 Michael Hall's introduction to “Bric-à-brac: A Rothschild's memoir of collecting,” *Apollo*, no. 545 (July–August 2007): 50–77 (53).

the objects concerned, the players involved, and the economics at stake. In other words, a collective biography of Middle Eastern artworks in Parisian hands during the 1860s can be attempted. The group portrait allows insights and speculations on the rationales and processes behind the movement of the objects, from the point of view of European demand, but also of Middle Eastern availability. The increased presence of artefacts from the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia in Second Empire Paris ultimately raises broader issues about the commodification and translocation of material culture from a region caught up in a declining Ottoman Empire called to modernise in the face of expanding European imperialism.

### 1 *Orientalia at the Musée rétrospectif* in 1865

The Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie, a body better known under the name it adopted in 1882 of Union centrale des arts décoratifs (UCAD), was created in 1861 by a group of artists, collectors and manufacturers with the view of promoting a French renaissance in the applied arts, along the model offered by the London South Kensington Museum (today the Victoria and Albert Museum), consisting of galleries with a design school and art library. The aim was to sustain the idea of “functional, yet pleasant design” – “*le beau dans l'utile*” – as the *motto* went.<sup>4</sup> The ultimate goal was to counteract the hegemony of British manufactured furniture and other wares.

An early initiative was a survey exhibition of decorative arts, presenting contemporary design and crafts alongside historic artworks. The latter were meant to deliver lessons and patterns to draughtsmen and artisans, besides providing useful knowledge for art history. A call was launched in April 1865 inviting the main owners of fine

artworks from all major periods (chiefly Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance and Enlightenment) and, less expectedly, from all countries, to participate in the show. The plea argued that so far only objects in museums and public collections had provided patterns to industry, while many more lay in home galleries, hidden from the general public and separated from the crafts sphere.<sup>5</sup>

About 200 *amateurs* responded positively to the novel initiative – there had been no loan shows in France prior to this. Some 6,700 objects joined the historic section of the exhibition entitled *Musée rétrospectif*, which lasted from 10 August until 3 December 1865. Fortunately, catalogue headings exist for each item on display and valuations are available for those properly recorded in the loans register of UCAD (not all were). More importantly, images for many of the exhibits do survive. Views of objects presented at the show were taken by the French photographer Franck (François Alexandre Gobinet de Villecholle; 1816–1906), prints of which, mounted on card, could be purchased separately or in bound portfolios. A complete set containing 845 plates is preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>6</sup> Pairs or trios of objects, as well as larger groups, appear frequently in the photographs, meaning that a good proportion, probably one third, of the *Musée rétrospectif* can be visualised through Franck's photographs. The documentation is not consistent, however, since not all photographed objects can be traced in the exhibition catalogue or in the loans register. Nevertheless, it still has evidence to offer on collecting trends at the time.

4 *Le Beau dans l'utile. Histoire sommaire de l'Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie: suivie des rapports du jury de l'Exposition de 1865* (Paris: Union centrale, 1866).

5 Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie, *Exposition de 1865. Palais de l'industrie. Musée rétrospectif...* (Paris: Librairie centrale Julien Lemer, libraire-éditeur, 1867), vi.

6 François Alexandre Gobinet de Villecholle dit Franck, *L'Art ancien: photographies des collections célèbres, Première partie: exposition de l'union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie, Musée rétrospectif* (Paris: n.p., [1868?]), in the Prints, Drawings and Paintings department of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Partial sets are at the Bibliothèque de l'INHA and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.



### 1.1 *The Armour Effect*

Among the thousands of objects on show, 494 belong, according to the exhibition catalogue, to what would today be termed art from the Middle East, even if they were not necessarily recognised as such at the time. For instance, glasswork from Mamluk Egypt or Syria could be deemed Venetian. Arms and armour provided the highest number (342, about 70 percent) of Middle Eastern exhibits and of these, the largest share (140) corresponded to the weapons presented by the fourth Marquess of Hertford, Richard Seymour-Conway (1800–70) (Fig. 3). An eccentric British bachelor, the Marquess had made his home in Paris; born into one of the richest families in Europe, he had inherited large collections that he in turn expanded. His Oriental armoury was his personal acquisition, and a recent one made at a late age. Most of his Eastern arms were purchased at famous sales in Paris, such as the Pourtalès or Morny auctions of 1865.<sup>7</sup> At a Vernet sale in March 1858, Seymour-Conway had procured half the stock of Eastern arms on offer, representing 27 pieces out of 46.<sup>8</sup> Many of the Eastern arms purchased by the Marquess on the Parisian market can be viewed today at the Wallace Collection in London, together with European arms purchased at a later stage. Upon the Marquess' death, in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune upheavals, his son Richard Wallace (1818–90) had made bulk acquisitions, before having the entire Hertford holdings and his own collection transferred to Britain in 1872. By then, the Oriental armoury had expanded to 600 items. Specimens were assembled for decorative effect and testify to the taste for heavily ornate pieces enriched with gold and gems. Most were of Indian provenance,

with some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian and Turkish examples.<sup>9</sup>

Oriental armouries were not rare among European rulers and aristocracy. The tradition of collecting Islamic arms can be traced back to the Middle Ages, when weaponry arrived as war trophies from battlefields in the Holy Land or diplomatic gifts from Middle Eastern rulers.<sup>10</sup> The colonial expansion into India and North Africa brought its own supply of guns, daggers, helmets, vambraces, shields and shirts of mail. Individual expeditions provided further occasions for procurement. From 1868–69 onwards, adventurous excursions in Central Asia helped the Swiss Islamic art collector Henri Moser (1844–1923) to assemble an extraordinary assortment of pieces that he completed through fifteen years of regular visits to the Hôtel des ventes in Paris, the main auction house in the city, located on Drouot Street. His 1,300 arms and armour were bequeathed to the Bern Historical Museum in 1914. Prior to the donation, Moser had his holdings picturesquely displayed in his mansion in Charlottenfels (Switzerland). Arms were classically arranged in symmetrical trophies hanging on the walls; complete suits of armour were presented on wooden equestrian figures and mannequins properly dressed up (see Chapter 5),<sup>11</sup> a typical set up of which many other instances are known. The most extravagant one is probably the staging devised by the British expatriate Frederick Stibbert (1838–1906), who had two

7 Guy Francis Laking, *Wallace Collection, Oriental Arms and Armour* (London: Printed for the Trustees by W. Clowes, 1964), xi.

8 Léa Saint-Raymond, "Le pari des enchères: le lancement de nouveaux marchés artistiques à Paris entre les années 1830 et 1939" (PhD diss., University of Paris-Nanterre, 2018), 151.

9 *The Wallace Collection: Guide to the Armouries* (London: Trustees of The Wallace Collection, 1982), 39; Suzanne Higgott, 'The Most Fortunate Man of His Day': Sir Richard Wallace: Connoisseur, Collector & Philanthropist (London: Wallace Collection and Pallas Athene Books, 2018).

10 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Practicing Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

11 Henri Moser, *Collection Henri Moser-Charlottenfels: armes et armures orientales* (Leipzig: K.W. Hiersemann, 1912), pl. 1; Francine Giese, Mercedes Volait, Ariane Varela Braga, eds., *À l'orientale*, 101–05.

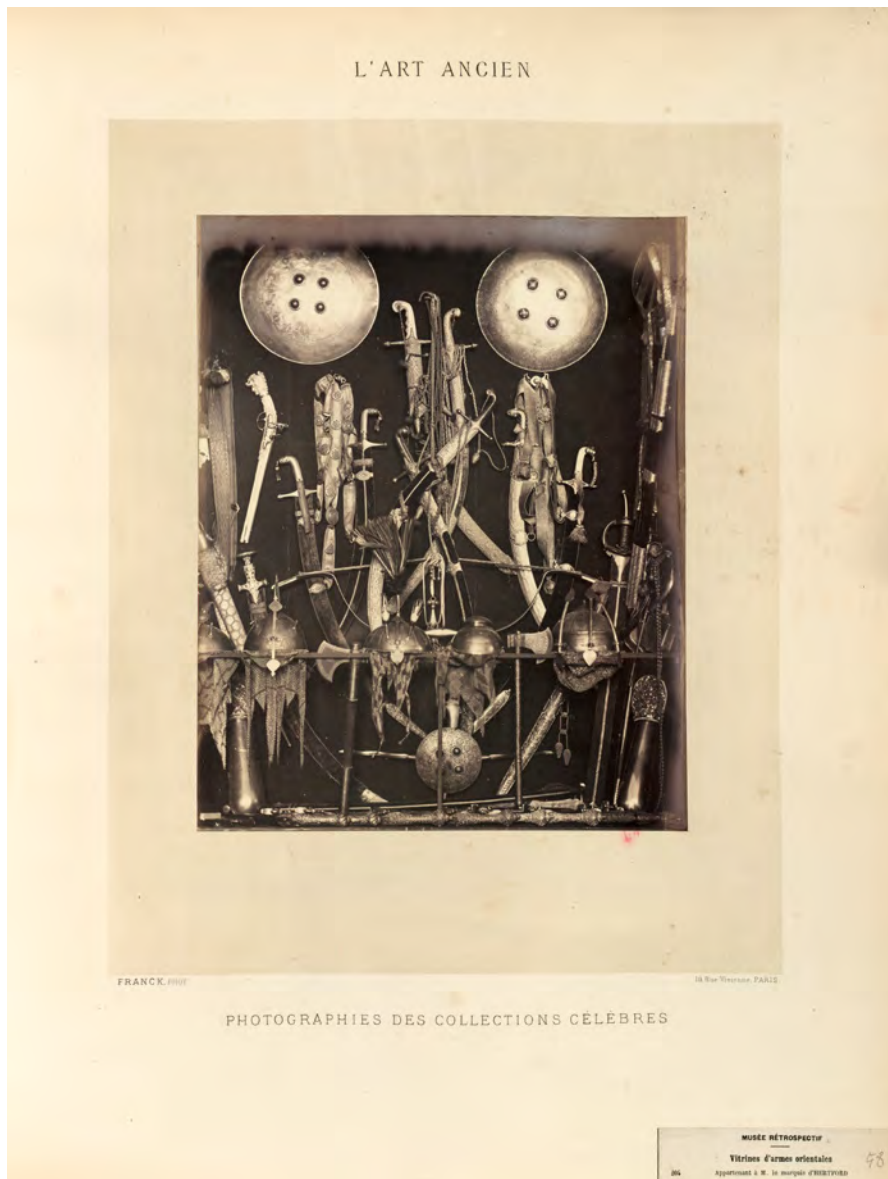


FIGURE 3 Franck, *Vitrine d'armes orientales, collection du marquis d'Hertford*. Oriental arms lent by the fourth Marquess of Hertford to the 1865 show. Albumen print. 22.7 × 18.5 cm. Franck, *L'Art ancien: photographies des collections célèbres*, 1868: Pl. 204 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL EST 752 (1), F. 58

armouries installed in his property in Florence. An elongated hall, with Gothic Revival wall painting, hosted a long cavalcade of knights and infantry wearing European armour, while a second room, walled with white stucco work cast from the Alhambra, presented figures clothed with Eastern military accoutrements. Altogether, Stibbert's

collections, both Western and Eastern, amounted to over 16,000 pieces, mostly purchased after 1860.<sup>12</sup> With their gilding, precious components,

<sup>12</sup> On Stibbert, Simona di Marco, *Frederick Stibbert (1838–1906), Vita di un collezionista* (Turin/New York: Umberto Allemandi, 2009); Francesco Civita, ed.,

sophisticated mechanisms and “exotic” provenance, arms and armour had become highly fashionable in mid-nineteenth-century European society. The Gothic Revival and the Romantic Movement had awakened an unprecedented curiosity for objects evocative of medieval chivalry. They eventually represented a good part of the collections of the French Emperor Napoleon III himself. They became a way for the new plutocracy represented by the affluent bourgeoisie to advance their status. Lenders of Islamic arms at the 1865 loan exhibition included members of the Rothschild family, the Marquess of Saint-Seine, the historian Achille Jubinal, the Prefect Albert Germeau, as well as dealers (Baur, Berthon and Henry) riding the wave. American collectors followed three decades later and became the major heirs and conveyors of that fashion.<sup>13</sup>

Middle Eastern armour and weaponry were also sought after by artists. The painter Mariano Fortuny y Marsal (1838–74) was a dedicated collector of arms and armour, mostly Oriental. Martial artworks spoke to him: they had the potential to convey history and as such, fired his imagination. In his words, “ancient blades recounted the past better than a book;”<sup>14</sup> fights and battles were seen as encapsulating the essence of history. Fortuny partook in the on-going craze for Persian helmets [*kulāh khūd*], highly elaborated head pieces, still in use in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iran (possibly more for parade than battle); he is known to have owned about a dozen different

specimens.<sup>15</sup> Nor was he the first one to do so. The famous Orientalist artist Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904) is said to have set the trend for artists to collect Middle Eastern curios,<sup>16</sup> among which were arms. A wall of his studio was covered with martial *paraphernalia* (Fig. 4); and some feature as props in his Orientalist canvases. His brother-in-law, the art dealer Albert Goupil (1840–84), followed the fashion and had many displayed in the Oriental room he specially arranged in the 1880s for his Islamic collections.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.2 *Precious and Radiant*

Next in number after weapons at the 1865 show, were ceramics (seventy-six), and in particular the so-called “Persian earthenware” (or *faïences persanes* in French sources).<sup>18</sup> Most were in fact Iznik pottery (i.e. Turkish-made), as it was later discovered,<sup>19</sup> or productions from Damascus; they were generally acquired in Damascus itself, Cairo, Istanbul, or Izmir. A bottle mounted with a silver terminal, loaned by Arabist Charles Schefer (1820–98) to the 1865 *Musée rétrospectif*, and now in the Louvre,<sup>20</sup> exemplifies how colourful such vessels

*Islam. Armi e armature dalla collezione di Frederick Stibbert* (Florence: Centro Di, 2014).

- 13 Stuart W. Pyhrr, “American collectors and the formation of the Metropolitan Museum’s Collection of Islamic arms and armor,” in *Islamic Arms and Armor in the MET*, ed. David G. Alexander (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 3–17.
- 14 Édouard de Beaumont, “Armes,” in *Atelier de Fortuny: oeuvre posthume, objets d’art et de curiosité, armes, faïences hispano-moresques, étoffes et broderies, bronzes orientaux, coffrets d’ivoire, etc. ... dont la vente aura lieu les 26 avril et jours suivants* [Lugt 35598] (Paris: imprimerie J. Claye, 1875), 71.

- 15 Carlos G. Navarro, “La historia domesticada. Fortuny y el coleccionismo de antigüedades,” in *Fortuny (1838–1874)* ed. Javier Barón (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2017), 373–425.
- 16 Alfred Frigoult de Liesville, *Coup d’œil général sur l’exposition historique de l’art ancien (palais du Trocadéro)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1879), 44.
- 17 Mercedes Volait, “Les intérieurs orientalistes du comte de Saint-Maurice et d’Albert Goupil: des ‘Cluny arabe’ au Caire et à Paris à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *The Period Rooms. Allestimenti storici tra arte, collezionismo e museologia*, eds. Sandra Costa, Dominique Poulot, Mercedes Volait (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2017), 103–14.
- 18 Julian Raby, “Iznik: the European perspective,” in Nurhan Atasoy & Julian Raby, *Iznik: the Pottery of Ottoman Turkey* (London: Alexandria Press, 1989), 71–4.
- 19 Arthur Lane, “The Ottoman pottery of Iznik,” *Ars Orientalis*, no. 2 (1957): 247–81.
- 20 Bottle mounted with silver terminal, Iznik, 1535–1545, AD 9142 (long term loan to the Musée du Louvre). The piece was acquired for F 2250 at the Charles Schefer sale in 1898 (lot no. 37) by the dealer Stora, and resold by him the following year to UCAD. Paris, Institut de



FIGURE 4 Edmond Bénard, *Gérôme* [Gérôme in his studio], c. 1884. Albumen print. 20 × 25 cm. *Ateliers d'artistes* (1884–94), f. 25  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, 4 PHOT 055

could be: the ware is decorated with turquoise medallions set against a deep cobalt blue ground (Fig. 5).

In sharp contrast with later displays, the show presented very few tiles. There were almost no rugs either as if such goods had not entered yet

the world of modern European collecting. Henri Moser believed that the exodus of ancient carpets to the West had been set in motion by the Great Persian famine of 1870–72,<sup>21</sup> but the odyssey of the magnificent Ardabil carpet, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, tells a different story. The carpet made its way to London after an earthquake in 1873 had damaged the shrine in which it lay.<sup>22</sup> Broader dynamics were also at play. The motion of lavish Persian rugs to Europe and America resulted both from the greater integration of the Iranian

France, Ms 5440, Annotated copy, with captioned photographs of some items, of *Catalogue des objets d'art et de curiosité, faïences de Perse, de Damas et de Rhodes..., bronzes et porcelaines de la Chine et du Japon ..., bronzes d'art et d'ameublement..., tableaux et dessins anciens et modernes, composant la collection de M. Ch. Schefer*, Paris, 8–11 June 1898 [Lugt 56421]; Labrusse, *Purs décors*, 335.

21 Moser, *Collection*, 111.

22 Carey, *Persian Art*, Ch. 4 *passim*.





FIGURE 5 Franck, *Aiguière et bouteille en faïence persane*, collection M. Schefer. Iznik pottery lent by Charles Schefer to the 1865 loan show; the bottle mounted with silver terminal is on the right hand, and is currently on view at the Musée du Louvre. Albumen print. 18.5 × 24 cm. Franck, *L'Art ancien: photographies des collections célèbres*, 1868: Pl. 139

PARIS, BNF, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE, LA-100(1-3)-FOL, V. 2

economy into the world capitalist system (implying a “desperate search for a valuable item of export” in the very words of economist Ahmad Seyf,<sup>23</sup> possibly an exaggerated statement) and an increased demand for luxury consumption from the East in ever-affluent Europe and the United States. In fact, what was truly changing was the direction of export circuits. During the first half of the nineteenth century, rich Persian carpets had mainly been destined for India, Turkey and Russia; as the

century progressed and the purchasing power of the Western middle classes grew, they increasingly travelled west.<sup>24</sup> The double conjunction of adjustments to the Iranian economy and shifts in global consumption encouraged the development of a carpet industry that was entirely Western looking (and predominantly British-driven, starting with the Ziegler firm established in Tabriz in 1867); almost no one inside Iran could afford such expensive goods.

23 Ahmad Seyf, “The carpet trade and the economy of Iran, 1870–1906,” *Iran* 30 (1992): 99–105.

24 Annette Ittig, “Carpets xi. Qajar Period,” *Encyclopædia Iranica* IV, no. 8 (1990): 877–83.

The remaining categories of objects displayed in 1865 at the *Musée rétrospectif* in bronze, glass, woodwork, miniatures, textiles, and jewellery did not exceed a dozen items each. However, the glass section encompassed some of the most precious and valuable objects on show. One of the Rothschilds from the French branch of the family, the Baron Alphonse (1827–1905), presented two mosque lamps in enamelled glass attributed to the fourteenth century and an “elegant” long-necked flask, enamelled in green, red, and blue, and gilded.<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 6) The latter was deemed Byzantine, Turkish, or indeed Persian, work at the time; it is now recognized as Egyptian or Syrian, mid-fourteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Its Chinese style ornaments reflect the taste for “chinoiserie” in Mamluk culture. The provenance history of the flask, provided by the Met, is instructive, albeit partly erroneous. Its first known owner was a merchant established in Cologne, Peter Leven (1796–1850); at the 1853 public sale of his vast collection of applied arts, the object was acquired by one Prince Soltykoff. This is not Petr Soltykoff (1804–99), as commonly assumed, but his younger brother Alexei Soltykoff (1806–59), a Russian diplomat who had travelled extensively throughout the Middle East and Asia, visiting Persia in 1838, India in 1841 and Egypt almost every winter, before settling in Paris. Many pieces in his collection were gifts received from local dignitaries.<sup>27</sup> After his untimely death, his brother Petr inherited the precious collection and auctioned part of it in 1861 under his own name, hence the confusion.<sup>28</sup> The very rare flask was



FIGURE 6 Bosredon, *Untitled* [Enamelled long-necked flask or decanter], c. 1865. The piece is since 1936 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (36.33). Hand coloured print. 22.2 × 15.5 cm PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, MANUSCRITS OCCIDENTAUX, FONDS ÉMILE PRISSE D’AVENNES, ART ARABE: VASES, NAF 20443 (2), F. 8

acquired by one of the experts in charge of the sale, Mr. Roussel, for 5,000 francs. It then became the possession of Gustave de Rothschild (1829–1911), the brother of Alphonse, shortly afterwards,<sup>29</sup> and ultimately entered the Met in 1936 via the influential dealer Hagop Kevorkian (1872–1962).

25 Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l’industrie, *Exposition de 1865*, 508 (item no. 6047).

26 The bottle is now at the Met, 36.33.

27 Prince Alexis Soltykoff, *Voyage en Perse* (Paris: Victor Lecou, 1854); Alfred Darcel, “La collection Soltykoff,” in *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 1861, 169–78, 212–26; Richard R. Walding et al., “The Russian Prince and the Maharajah of Travancore,” *Journal of Kerala Studies* XXXVI (2009): 10–87.

28 *Catalogue des objets d’art et de haute curiosité composant la célèbre collection du prince Soltykoff. Objets byzantins et autres, émaux de Limoges, faïences italiennes, faïences françaises de Bernard Palissy, faïences dites de Henri II,*

*bois et ivoires sculptés, orfèvrerie, verrerie de Venise et de Bohême, vitraux anciens, meubles anciens en bois sculpté, objets chinois, russes et indiens, manuscrits, etc.*, 8 April–1st May 1861 [Lugt (sorted) 26136a] (annotated with prices and purchasers’s names).

29 “Bouteille de fabrication orientale,” in Jules Labarte, *Histoire des arts industriels au Moyen Age et à l’époque de la Renaissance* (Paris: A. Morel, 1864–66): VI: *Album*, Tome 11, f. 62 and pl. 132.



FIGURE 7 Franck, *Lampe et coupe arabe*, collection Schefer. Lamp and bowl from the Schefer collection exhibited in Paris in 1865. Mounted albumen print. 15.3 × 24 cm. Franck, *L'Art ancien: photographies des collections célèbres*, 1868: Pl. 250  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL EST 752 (2), F. 7

The artefact thus belonged to the type of precious Islamic objects that had been in Europe for some time,<sup>30</sup> before beginning to move again from one country to another.

The values of the three Rothschild works of glass given in the ledger of loans to the *Musée rétrospectif* in 1865 were 6,000 francs for each lamp, and 5,000 francs for the flask. There is no straightforward way to calculate what these values are worth today, but considering that the pound sterling equated 25 francs at the time, 5,000 francs represented £200, not a small amount when related to

the value reached by other Islamic pieces at the time on the European market, as we shall see. The price of 5,000 francs stated for the flask evidences that, while declarative, insurance values did reflect market prices, as the item had been acquired for that very amount a few years earlier. The figures provided are significant in relation to one another: an enamelled mosque lamp was priced six times as much as a Hispano-Moorish vase (1,000 francs) and could approach the value of a set of 31 arms (7,990 francs).<sup>31</sup>

Other glass items were lent by Charles Schefer (Fig. 7). One was a late Ayyubid or early Mamluk bowl with an eagle emblem (Fig. 8), the other a

30 For an assessment of the early presence of Islamic objects in Europe, Gwenaëlle Fellingier, "Commerce de l'art et échanges d'objets au Moyen Âge en Méditerranée: le point sur la question," in *Espaces et réseaux en Méditerranée*, eds. Damien Coulon, Christophe Picard and Dominique Valérian, *La configuration des réseaux* (Paris: Bouchène, 2007), 1: 237–52.

31 Paris, Archives du musée des Arts décoratifs, A1/69–70, Exposition rétrospective de 1865. Enregistrement des objets confiés au Musée rétrospectif. For some reason, the artefact was declared by Alphonse, not Gustave.





FIGURE 8 Enamelled footed bowl with eagle emblem, probably Syria, mid-thirteenth century. Glass, stained, enamelled and gilded. 18.3 × 19.7 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (SINCE 1891), 91.1.1538

mosque lamp dated c. 1325 (no value was declared for either of them). Both are today star objects at the Met.<sup>32</sup> Schefer sold the two glass works during his lifetime<sup>33</sup> to an American silversmith, Edward C. Moore, who in turn bequeathed them to the Met in 1891.<sup>34</sup> At Schefer's death in 1898, his collection of curios still numbered 200 first-rate objects, including early Mamluk metalwork. Gilded or silvered metalwork was particularly sought after by early Islamic art collectors. From

32 The footed bowl is 91.1.1538; the mosque lamp is 91.1.1534.

33 *Catalogue Schefer*, 1898 (annotated copy).

34 Little is known on Moore's vast Islamic art collection, apart that it was assembled for pattern inspiration: see Elizabeth L. Kerr Fish, "Edward C. Moore and Tiffany Islamic-Style Silver, c. 1867–1889," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 6, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 1999): 42–63.

Gustave de Rothschild, Franck photographed, besides glass artefacts, two wondrous brass candlesticks inlaid with silver and gold, one of which had reputedly been part of the estate of the Mamluk Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (d. 1341) in Cairo, as suggested by the caption of a plate in Prisse d'Avennes's *L'Art arabe* depicting the same object.<sup>35</sup> (Fig. 9) Prisse's attribution is possibly based on the registers of confronted birds decorating the candlestick's base, the duck being the emblem of Sultan Qalawun.

Nielloed silverware was also much praised. Both one of the Rothschilds and the French aristocrat Gaston de Saint-Maurice (1831–1905) presented ewers made of zinc alloy with silver inlay, attributed then to "Persian, sixteenth century," and identified today as Bidri wares produced in eighteenth- or nineteenth-century India.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.3 Demand and Availability

The biography of individual collectors provides clues to map, in time and space, the process of procurement. The bulk of Charles Schefer's works of art from the Middle East was most probably secured during his time as interpreter of Eastern languages in the French diplomatic service from 1843 to 1857. Trained since a young age to be a dragoman [from the Arabic *turjumān*, translator], he was successively posted in Beirut (1843), Jerusalem (1844–45), Izmir (1845–47), Alexandria (1847–49) and Istanbul (1850–57), before being offered the Chair of Persian language at the School of Oriental languages in Paris.<sup>37</sup> His priceless bowl with an eagle emblem was published in 1859 as an artefact

35 Franck, *L'Art ancien*, pl. 501; Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Caire depuis le VII<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup>* (Paris: Morel, 1869–77), 282–83 and pl. CLXIX for a polychrome image of the candlestick. The two pieces are not recorded in the catalogue of the 1865 *Musée rétrospectif*.

36 A typical object in this group is a flask in the British Museum, 1878, 1230.760.

37 Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, "Notice sur la vie et les travaux de L. Charles Schefer," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres* 43, no. 6 (1899): 627–68 (634).





FIGURE 9 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Mobilier du Sultane Mohammed Ben Qalaoûn*. Metalwork from the estate of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun. The candlestick on the left, at the time in the collection of Gustave de Rothschild, can be related to metalwork from Mosul. Chromolithograph ÉMILE PRISSE D'AVENNES, *L'ART ARABE*, 1869–77, III: PL. CLXIX

bought in Damascus at a barber's shop,<sup>38</sup> possibly during his visit to the city in 1844.<sup>39</sup> The deal discloses familiarity with the region and ease with its dialects and people; while the date of its published print highlights an early acquisition. Another of Schefer's collectibles – the Ottoman gem-set Chinese porcelain ewer illustrated in Fig. 5 – is reported to have been obtained in Damascus in 1860.<sup>40</sup>

Travellers' accounts give further hints. Henri Moser recalled that sword-blades could be obtained in Central Asia in exchange for vodka.<sup>41</sup> The narrative of the years spent out East by the Dutch aristocrat Baron Lycklama (1837–1900) in 1865–68 features comments on purchases made on the spot. The dozen or so weapons he brought back came partly from Persia (Tehran, Isfahan, Tiflis and Sulaymaniyah) and partly from Aleppo and Damascus.<sup>42</sup> He acknowledged buying modern swords and daggers in the Syrian capital in 1868,

38 Adalbert de Beaumont, Eugène Collinot, *Recueil de dessins pour l'art et l'industrie* (Paris: Delattre, 1859), pl. 196.

39 Gaston Schefer, *La Jeunesse d'un orientaliste, Charles Schefer, 1840–1856* (Paris: H. Leclerc, 1913), 21.

40 *Les Collections célèbres d'œuvres d'art dessinées et gravées d'après les originaux par Edouard Lièvre* (Paris: Goupil, 1866), pl. 57.

41 Moser, *Collection Moser*, iv.

42 Cannes, Archives municipales, 2R44, Catalogue du Musée Lycklama, 27 June 1887; Ernest Massenot, *Musée de M. le chevalier T. M. Lycklama à Nijeholt: notice descriptive provisoire: musée oriental* (Bruxelles: Leemans & Vanberendonck, 1871).

because “although the renowned scimitars were no longer produced in Damascus, one could still find blades of good quality” that “could decently stand comparison with [his] Persian collection.”<sup>43</sup> His Persian and Syrian armour, among a collection of 700 artefacts bought during his extended tour, and installed in France in 1877, is held today by the Musée de la Castre in Cannes (France).<sup>44</sup>

Marks on objects can point to manifest provenance. Arms originating from the Ottoman arsenal generally held a seal, called a *tamga* in Turkish, incised into the iron surfaces. (Fig. 10) Otherwise known as an “arsenal mark,” it presents a sign close to the letter Y flanked by two vertical lines, the whole being enclosed in a circle. Two of the helmets owned by Jean-Léon Gérôme, now in The Walters Art Museum (Baltimore, US), bear this arsenal mark.<sup>45</sup> Similarly do the hundred pieces of Islamic armour possessed by the Met alone.<sup>46</sup> Good opportunities to procure Oriental arms (as well as European ones) from spoils of war were offered by cyclic disposals of surplus stock from the Ottoman arsenal lodged since 1453 in the former church of St. Irene (within the Imperial Palace precinct). The collections won from the Persians, Mamluks or Christian knights had been reorganised in 1726 as a *dār al-asliha* or *maison d’armes*. Some of the arsenal’s holdings were looted by the Janissaries around 1800. Objects associated with



FIGURE 10 *Tamga* on the central part of a Turkish Helmet, late fifteenth-century  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 04.3.212, FORMERLY IN THE COLLECTION OF CHARLES MAURICE CAMILLE DE TALLEYRAND-PÉRIGORD, DUC DE DINO, PARIS

these militias were removed from St. Irene after the abolition of the corps in 1826.<sup>47</sup> A well-informed scholar dates a major clearance of old stock to 1852, and considers that this event was instrumental in the formation of private collections of Islamic arms and engraved metalwork in Europe.<sup>48</sup> A previous large dispersion of ancient spoils of Christian and Persian arms and armour stored in St. Irene is known to have taken place around 1839. Nevertheless, significant series of objects, among which were the most ornamented pieces, remained in place. A weaponry museum was rearranged there in the late 1870s; and, later, what was left of the collection was ultimately transferred to Istanbul’s Military museum.<sup>49</sup> (Fig. 11 & 12)

43 My translation from *Voyage en Russie, au Caucase et en Perse, dans la Mésopotamie, le Kurdistan, la Syrie, la Palestine et la Turquie exécuté pendant les années 1866, 1867 et 1868 par T.M. Chevalier Lycklama a Nijeholt* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1872–75), Tome 4, 548: “Damas ne fabrique plus ces cimenterres jadis si renommés; cependant ses lames sont encore estimées des connaisseurs, et je ne me suis pas refusé l’achat d’une demi-douzaine de sabres et de poignards qui font encore bonne figure auprès de ma collection d’armes persanes.”

44 Joseph Billiet, “La collection Lycklama au Musée de Cannes,” *Gazette des beaux-arts* LXXIII (July 1931): 321–40.

45 Baltimore (US), The Walters Art Museum, Late medieval turban Helmet, fifteenth century, 51.70 and 51.74. See also Marianna Shreve Simpson, “A Gallant Era: Henry Walters, Islamic Art, and the Kelekian Connection,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 91–112.

46 Pyhrr, “American collectors.”

47 Stuart W. Pyhrr, “European Armor from the Imperial Ottoman Arsenal,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 24 (1989): 85–116.

48 Liesville, *Coup d’œil*, 44.

49 Pyhrr, 1989.



FIGURE 11 Abdullah Frères, *Untitled* [Entrance of Saint Irene, the Ottoman arsenal in Istanbul], before 1891. Mounted albumen print. 45.1 × 33 cm. *Vues de Sainte-Irène, Constantinople*, 1891: Pl. 3  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 2016.649





FIGURE 12 Abdullah Frères, *Untitled* [Helmets on shelves at Saint Irene], before 1891. Mounted albumen print. 45.1 × 33 cm. *Vues de Sainte-Irène, Constantinople*, 1891: Pl. 34  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 2016.649

The Islamic objects presented at the *Musée rétrospectif* by a more modest collector, Gustave de Beaucorps (1824–1906), help to narrow the temporal and geographic frames of specific acquisitions. Little is known about Beaucorps, apart from that he earned his living as a Treasury official in the French administration and was an early practitioner of photography. Of aristocratic stock but diminished wealth (the family's revenues had disintegrated during the French Revolution), he is remembered as a passionate and highly-cultured *amateur*.<sup>50</sup> The collecting history of his Islamic artworks is comparatively less obscure. It is a condensed one, as the collection was formed and dispersed within less than ten years. An early supporter of UCAD,<sup>51</sup> Beaucorps lent twenty-four pieces to the 1865 *Musée rétrospectif*. Many were subsequently published in the illustrated journal *L'Art pour tous*,<sup>52</sup> and most auctioned in April 1868. In the introduction to the sale catalogue, Beaucorps highlights the direct Middle Eastern provenance of his pieces, stating that they were not acquired at European dealers or auction houses, but during several journeys across the Middle East.<sup>53</sup> There is no reason to question the statement, as Beaucorps is known to have been touring the Mediterranean from 1858 to 1861, with stops in Algeria (1859), Morocco, Jerusalem, Damascus, Istanbul (1860) and Cairo (1861).<sup>54</sup>

An annotated copy of the Beaucorps' sale catalogue specifies the hammer price for each item.<sup>55</sup> The object that made the highest price (3,000 francs) was a large footed basin labelled Persian (item no. 1). The caption referred to its illustration in a survey on world ceramics,<sup>56</sup> and the piece can thus be recognised as one photographed at the 1865 show,<sup>57</sup> when it had been priced at a mere third of its sale price (1,000 francs). (Fig. 13) Its design featured composite lotuses and saz leaves, prunus flowers, bands of tulips and lobed medallions on light ground. The colour scheme was detailed in the sale catalogue as composed of cobalt, green, turquoise, and manganese on a white ground. An almost identical specimen in design, and seemingly colour, identified as mid-sixteenth-century Iznik, is at the British Museum; its radiant white background contributes to the distinctiveness of this vessel, which was originally inspired by Chinese wares.<sup>58</sup> When auctioned, Beaucorps' basin was deemed the finest known example of such productions. That its value could triple in less than three years also testifies to a new appreciation for such type of object. Next in line price-wise was a gilded helmet (item no. 52; hammer prices 1,000 francs; valued at 600 francs in the loans register of 1865), with a lion and inscriptions engraved in lobed medallions (Fig. 14). An ivory (or bone?) inlaid casket in ebony, dated to the sixteenth century, possibly of Indian provenance (item no. 111), reached 800 francs.

50 Charles de Beaucorps, *Famille de Beaucorps: notes historiques et biographiques* (Saint-Brieuc: n.p., 1928), 117–18.

51 *Le Beau dans l'utile*, 30.

52 *L'Art pour tous* was a new encyclopaedia of industrial and applied arts meant to educate the general public; Beaucorps objects feature in issues no. 179, 185, 190, 193 (1867), no. 212 (1868), no. 237 (1869) and no. 304, 321, 324 (1873).

53 *Catalogue des objets orientaux, faïences de Perse et Hispano-Mauresques; armes orientales... composant la collection de M. G. de B*, 16–17 April 1868 [Lugt 30431]. While Beaucorps is named only by his initials in the title of the catalogue, he can be easily identified as the catalogue refers to objects published in *L'Art pour tous* under his full name.

54 Marianne Thauré, Michel Rérolle, Yves Lebrun, eds., *Gustave de Beaucorps, 1825–1906. Calotypes "l'appel de*

*l'Orient", 1858–1861* (Poitiers: Art Conseil Elysées, Neuilly et les Musées de Saintes et de Poitiers, 1992).

55 London, Research Centre of the National Gallery, *French Armour Sales*, vol. 32 (1868–1869). The minutes of the sale, sadly, have not survived.

56 Albert Jacquemart, *Les Merveilles de la céramique, ou L'art de façonner et décorer les vases en terre cuite, faïence, grès et porcelaine depuis les temps antiques jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Hachette, 1868), Part I: 243–44.

57 Franck, *L'Art ancien*, pl. 211.

58 Footed basin with a diameter of 42 cm, previously in the Godman collection, British Museum, G. 66 (on display).



FIGURE 13 Franck, *Vasque en faïence de Perse*, collection de Beaucorps, 1868. A very similar mid-sixteenth-century Iznik basin is currently on view at the British Museum in London, G. 66. Mounted albumen print. 24 × 21 cm. Franck, *L'Art ancien: photographies des collections célèbres*, 1868: Pl. 211 BNF, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE, LA-100(1-3)-FOL, VOL. 2

All other items did not exceed 500 francs per piece. A silver inlaid candlestick “of minute execution and excellent condition” (item no. 94) reached 400 francs (against a declared value of 250 francs in 1865). A large rectangular “Persian” tile of unusual size (item no. 39) made 400 francs, while it had been valued at 60 francs in 1865. The sixteenth-century Iznik tile can be seen today in the collections of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyons; its dimensions (43 × 32.3 cm) are indeed uncommon.<sup>59</sup> According to the catalogue of the 1865 *Musée rétrospectif*, it had been part of a shop in Cairo. Its composition was published in *L'Art pour tous* as a pattern to be used for wall

paper.<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 15) Also auctioned, for 40 francs, at the same sale, was a “wooden coffered ceiling from a fifteenth-century mosque” (no. 116, *Plafond de mosquée du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, en bois, à compartiments*), equally of Cairene provenance. At a second sale in 1869, Beaucorps also disposed of two ewers and rugs brought from Izmir.<sup>61</sup>

A few of his pieces do not appear in either sale. This is the case for four small wooden panels and a metal object; each featured in the 1865 exhibition catalogue, as photographed by Franck at the *Musée rétrospectif* and published in *L'Art pour tous* in 1867. The panels were carved pieces coming from a minbar (pulpit) offered in 1296 by Sultan Lajin to the Mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo.<sup>62</sup> (Fig. 16) As we shall see, more of these intricate polygons reached Paris two years later. Beaucorps had also kept for himself a recognisable Safavid engraved brass ewer, mistaken at the time for an “Indian teapot.” (Fig. 17) Its curved spout was inspired by Chinese shapes; it defined a genre of objects that had spread over Persia and beyond in the early seventeenth century, with the earliest known piece recorded in this group dated 1602.<sup>63</sup> All together these pieces represented remarkable artworks, of what is often referred to as “museum-quality” by curators and collectors alike.

60 “Carreau de faïence émaillée, art persan moderne, XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *L'Art pour tous*, no. 190, 15 November 1867, 758, item no. 1731.

61 *Objets arabes, Koptes, Koufiques et persans, appartenant en partie à M. le Dr M\*\*\* [Meymar] et à MM des Essarts, Henry et de Beaucorps*, 8 and 9 January 1869 [Lugt 30875].

62 “Panneaux de bois sculpté, fragment d’une mosquée,” *L'Art pour tous*, no. 193, 1 December 1867, 772, items no. 1766–69.

63 “Théière en cuivre jaune gravé, anse supérieure servant d’orifice à couvercle, et bec en S, bordures, médaillons et inscriptions,” no. 5893 of the 1865 Exhibition catalogue; Franck, *Théière orientale en cuivre gravé, collection M. de Beaucorps, L'Art ancien*, pl. 200; “Théière en cuivre doré, Art oriental, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *L'Art pour tous*, 30 May 1867, no. 179, 715, item no. 1626; v&a, 458–1876.

59 Lyons, Musée des Beaux-Arts, D. 470.



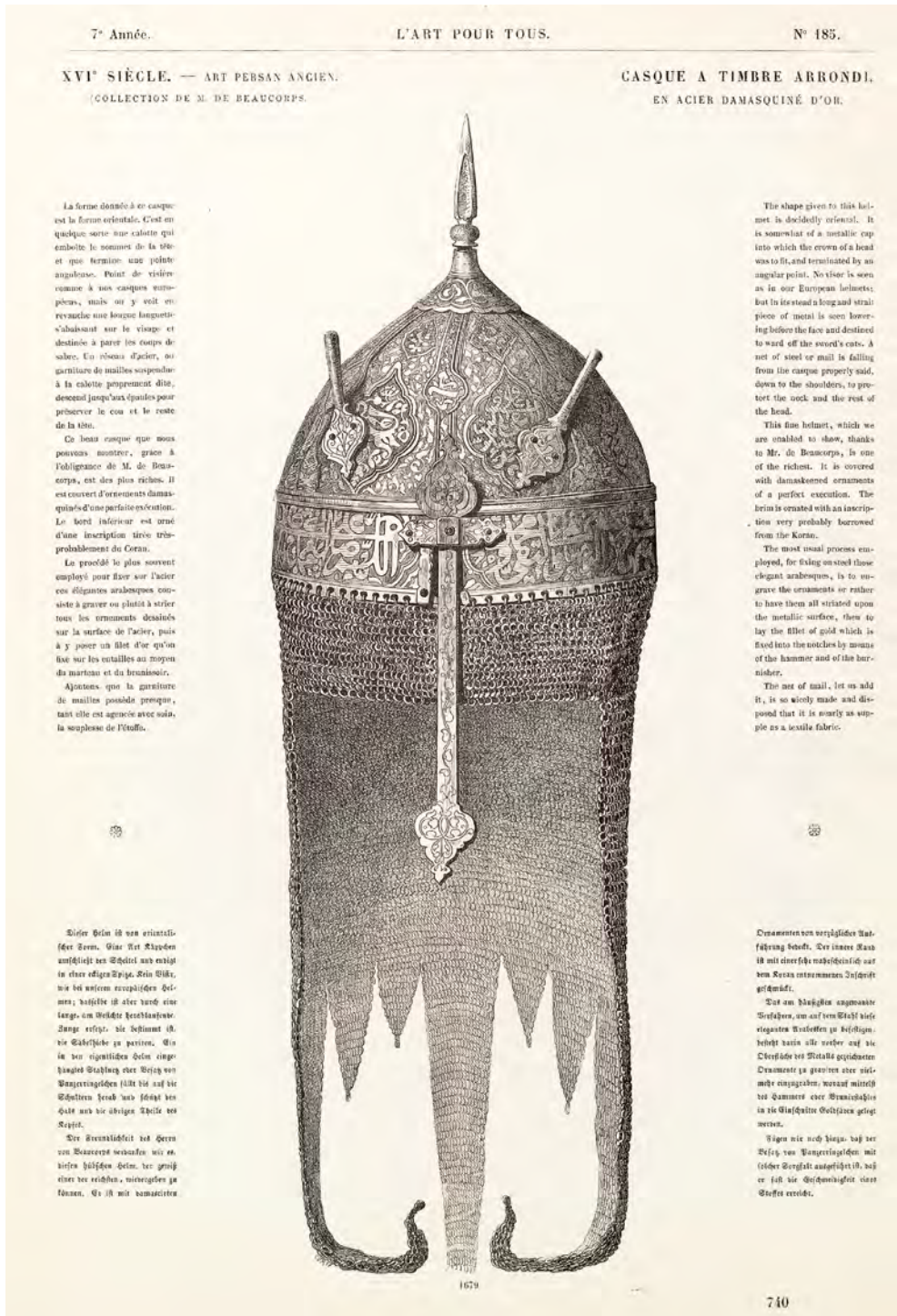


FIGURE 14 Casque à timbre arrondi en acier damasquiné d'or, 1867. [Persian gilded helmet]. While deemed at the time sixteenth-century Persian metalwork, the piece is in all likelihood more recent (current location unknown)  
 L'ART POUR TOUS, 31 AUGUST 1867, NO. 185, P. 740, ITEM NO. 1679



FIGURE 15 *Carreau de faïence émaillé, art persan moderne, collection de Beaucorps.* The illustration expands on the pattern of Beaucorps' Iznik tile, now in Lyons, Musée des Beaux-Arts, D 470 (43 × 32.3 cm). In 1865, the piece was labelled as coming from a shop in Cairo. Chromolithograph

L'ART POUR TOUS, NO. 190, 15 NOVEMBER 1867, P. 758, ITEM NO. 1731



XV<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE. — ART ARABE.  
FRAGMENTS D'UNE MOSQUÉE.

PANNEAUX DE BOIS SCULPTÉ,  
A M. DE BEAUCORPS.

Nous devons à M. F. de Beaucoerps, voyageur et collectionneur distingué, le pouvoir montrer les spécimens de décoration arabe rapportés par lui de Calcutta dans un récent voyage. Ils proviennent de la mosquée d'Elia-Yousouf, édifice remarquable, et faisaient partie de la chaire à prêcher. Nous ignorons quel était leur usage primitif dans la construction de cet édifice, mais tels que nous les présentons, c'est-à-dire isolés, nous les croyons susceptibles d'utilité. Ces ornements, particuliers à l'art arabe, et que l'on voit assez souvent employés dans la décoration générale de l'Alhambra, possèdent ici un caractère peu commun.

Les quatre motifs ou panneaux, sem-



1765

blables comme forme générale, sont variés d'ornementation tout en conservant à peu près la même physionomie. Le panneau inférieur cependant diffère des autres. Il offre une disposition toute dont le compartiment central, et des découpes produites par les branches de l'étoile, ont reçu une décoration sculptée analogue aux panneaux précédents, tandis que les branches elles-mêmes sont formées d'applications de bois plus foncé, agencées triangulairement et formant par leur assemblage des dessins prismatiques.

Nous le répétons, l'application servit au motif de ces divers arrangements, dont les entrées sont la base, nous semble possible dans plus d'un cas.



Die viertheile sind von arabischer Arbeit aus Kairo. Von F. de Beaucoerps, der diesen bei seiner Reise nach Kairo gefunden hat. Sie sind von dem Künstler des Kairo gefertigt. Die Formen sind von dem Künstler des Kairo gefertigt. Die Formen sind von dem Künstler des Kairo gefertigt. Die Formen sind von dem Künstler des Kairo gefertigt.



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1767



1768

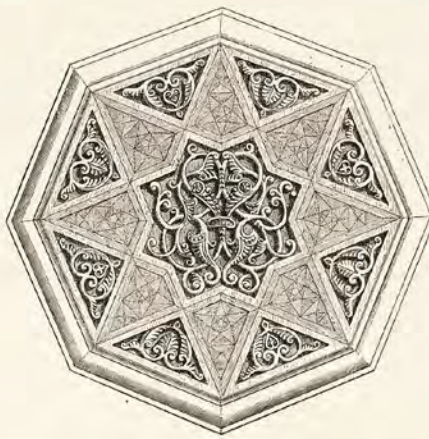
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To M. F. de Beaucoerps, the distinguished traveller and collector, we are indebted for the reproduction of these specimens of Arabic decoration, which he brought from Cairo in his recent travel. They come from the Elia-Yousouf mosque, a remarkable building, and were a portion of the pulpit. We do not know in what they were arranged in that small fabric; but such as we give them here, that is to say isolated, we believe they may be useful. These interlacings, peculiar to the Arabic art and which are rather frequently found in the Alhambra, present here an uncommon character.

The four motifs, or panels, alike as far as the general form goes, are unlike



1769



by their ornamentation, yet they nearly have the same aspect. The lower panel however differs from the others. It presents a starry disposition, the central compartment of which, as well as the angles produced through the branches of the star, have received a sculptural decoration analogous to the former panels; whilst the branches themselves are formed of applications in darker wood, triangularly disposed and reproducing prismatic designs by their assemblage.

To say it again, we think the imitation more or less free of these various arrangements, whose base is the twine, is possible in more than a case.

FIGURE 16 *Panneaux de bois sculpté, fragment d'une mosquée, à M. de Beaucoerps.* Panels from the Lajin pulpit in the Mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo. Engraving  
L'ART POUR TOUS, 1ST DECEMBER 1867, NO. 193, P. 772



FIGURE 17 Franck, *Théière orientale en cuivre gravé*, collection M. de Beaucorps. Safavid ewer from Gustave de Beaucorps' collection, 32 cm height (current location unknown). Mounted albumen print. 23.9 × 18 cm. Franck, *L'Art ancien: photographies des collections célèbres*, 1868: Pl. 200  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL EST 752 (2), F. 45



The provenance given for at least three pieces from the Beaucorps collection is Cairo. His “Persian” helmets may have come from Istanbul, although through a channel other than arsenal clearance. Stylistically datable from late seventeenth to early nineteenth century, their period does not match an epoch of obvious Ottoman victory over Persia. No distinguishable *tamga* can be identified on the photographs; and similar specimens do not appear in photographs of the arsenal. However, Istanbul was still a place where arms could be procured. In his account of a visit to the city in 1852, the writer Théophile Gautier devotes several pages to the antiques shop favoured by foreigners in the Ottoman capital. Its owner was an Armenian who spoke French and had adopted the name of Ludovic. Numerous historic weapons and pieces of armour could be found on his shelves, including helmets, shirts of mail and shields.<sup>64</sup> However, fakes and forgeries were soon to flood the market: in 1875, an expert saw many pieces being openly crafted in workshops located by the grand bazaar.<sup>65</sup> Whatever the provenance of Beaucorps’ helmets, his collection is a useful index of European demand and Middle Eastern availability, in Cairo and Istanbul, of a given range of Islamic artworks, from 1858 to 1861.

## 2 Egyptian Architectural Salvage at the *Exposition universelle* of 1867

A large group of Middle Eastern objects arrived in Paris two years after the UCAD show, but they came thanks to a completely different circuit. The occasion this time was the Universal Exposition of 1867 and, within it, the displays organised under the umbrella of Khedivial Egypt. For the first time, countries were represented by full-scale and free-standing architecture, instead of indoor

installations as in earlier World’s fairs. Previous exhibitions had represented architecture only by way of models or drawings; national exhibits were displayed in show-cases or along multidimensional arrangements in allocated stalls.<sup>66</sup> Khedive Ismail (r. 1863–79) had arranged for a lavish showing, in line with his strategy of asserting Egypt’s autonomy from the Sublime Porte. Substantial commercial space was obtained in the galleries of the Palais du Champ-de-Mars alongside the Turkish stands and almost as large in area; the stands were given Ancient Egyptian décor to distinguish themselves from the adjoining booths.<sup>67</sup> Egypt also had a 6,000-square metre concession allotted to it in the gardens. Four pavilions were erected on the triangular plot. (Fig. 18) The largest was a caravanserai (*okel* or *okelle* in French sources, after the Arabic *wakala*), a commercial building arranged around a courtyard, and in this instance modelled on existing buildings in Upper Egypt. (Fig. 19) The structure was meant to embody Modern Egypt and featured craftsmen performing their art. At the opposite end of the section stood a *salāmlik* or reception pavilion, erected as a rest house for the ruler; its function was to symbolise Medieval Egypt. (Fig. 20) In between was a building in the shape of an Egyptian temple for the display of Ancient Egyptian antiquities. At its rear, stables housed a pair of camels and two donkeys brought from Cairo.

### 2.1 *Official Exhibits*

A running theme throughout the Egyptian pavilions and galleries was the coexistence of historic craft and modern design, at times literally embedded into one another. Egypt had chosen to illustrate the overall theme of the exhibition, which was the history of labour, through a presentation of past and present handicrafts. Selected

64 Théophile Gautier, *Constantinople* (Paris: Michel Levy, 1853), 123–24.

65 Paul Eudel, *Le Truquage: altérations, fraudes et contre-façons dévoilées* (Paris: Molière, 1908), 348.

66 Alfred Normand, *L’Architecture des nations étrangères: étude sur les principales constructions du parc à l’Exposition universelle de Paris (1867)* (Paris: A. Morel, 1870), 1.

67 H. Marini, “Les installations égyptiennes,” in *L’Exposition universelle de 1867 illustrée*, 53–60 (54).



FIGURE 18 Henri Laurent, *Exposition vice-royale égyptienne* [A panorama of the Egyptian section at the Universal Exposition of 1867]. Mounted albumen print. 15 × 22 cm. Photographic reproduction of a watercolour by Jacques Drevet, dated 5 August 1867. *Monuments de l'Exposition vice-royale égyptienne*, 1868: f. 1  
BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, RÉSERVE DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE CENTRALE DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX, GR FOL 6

specimens of Islamic glasswork, metalwork, woodwork and calligraphy were displayed across the Egyptian exhibits. An enormous bronze lamp was hung at the centre of the covered courtyard of the *okel*. The provenance given at the time was one of the Qaytbay mosques (late fifteenth century).<sup>68</sup> Thanks to its inscriptions, the chandelier was subsequently identified as a piece made in 730 H (1330 AD) for the emir Qusun; it was suspended in the Mosque of Sultan Hasan before being transferred to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.<sup>69</sup> (Fig. 21)

Most of the *mashrabiyyas* (screened windows made of lattice work) came from the palace of one Husayn Bey in Cairo;<sup>70</sup> one was taken from the late eighteenth-century Cairene palace of Gamaliyya where Khedive Ismail was born (the palace was later known as al-Musafirkhana, literally “the travellers’ inn,” because the ruler had foreign hosts housed there on several occasions). Six glass lamps belonging to the Mamluk Mosques of Sultan Hasan and Barquq were suspended to the dome of the *salāmlīk*. In the central hall, opposite the entrance door, a precious fourteenth-century Qur’an was on display in a modern console featuring a panel made of old marquetry of wood and

68 Normand, *L'Architecture*, pl. II.

69 Gaston Wiet, *Catalogue général du musée arabe du Caire, objets en cuivre* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1932), 40–1 (inv. 509), pl. VII.

70 Charles Edmond, *L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1867* (Paris: Dentu, 1867), 220.



FIGURE 19 Henri Laurent, *Okelle, façade latérale*. [Lateral elevation of the caravanserai]. Mounted albumen print. 15 × 22 cm. *Monuments de l'Exposition vice-royale égyptienne*, 1868: f. 10 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, RÉSERVE DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE CENTRALE DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX, GR FOL 6



FIGURE 20 Jacques Drevet, *Sélamlick, Elévation latérale*. [Lateral elevation of the Khedivial reception pavilion designed by architect Jacques Drevet]. Engraving *LA REVUE GÉNÉRALE DE L'ARCHITECTURE ET DES TRAVAUX PUBLICS* XXVIII, 1870: PL. 47–48



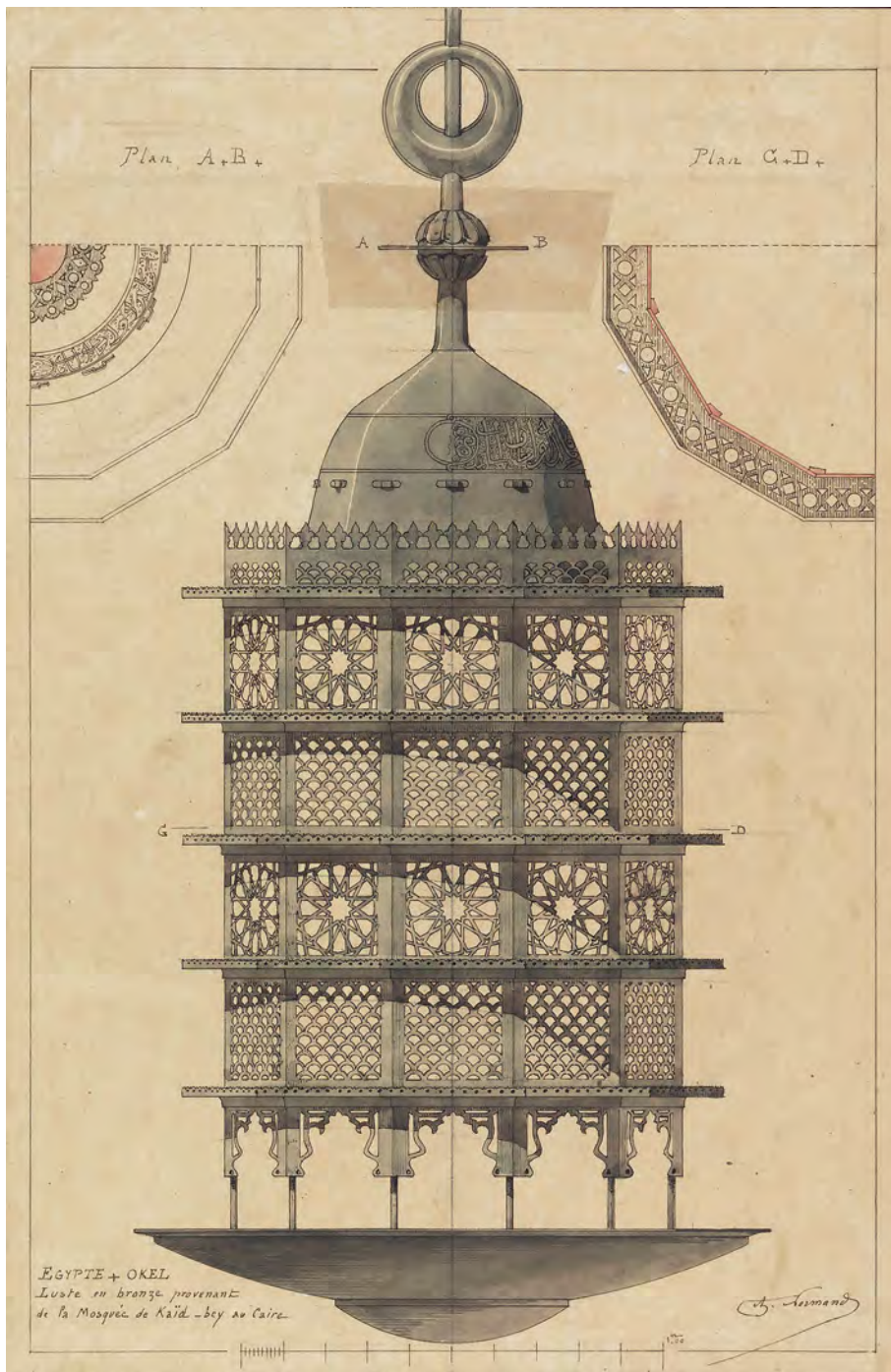


FIGURE 21 Alfred Normand, *Lustre en bronze provenant de la mosquée de Kaid-bey au Caire*, 1866. A Mamluk bronze hanging lamp exhibited at the Egyptian section of the Universal Exposition of 1867 in Paris as a piece from a Qaytbay mosque. It came in fact from the Mosque of Sultan Hasan. Pen and black ink, grey wash and watercolour on tracing paper mounted to heavy wove paper. 47.8 × 30.8 cm  
NEW YORK, COOPER HEWITT MUSEUM, DRAWINGS, PRINTS AND GRAPHIC DESIGN DEPARTMENT, 1992-147-3

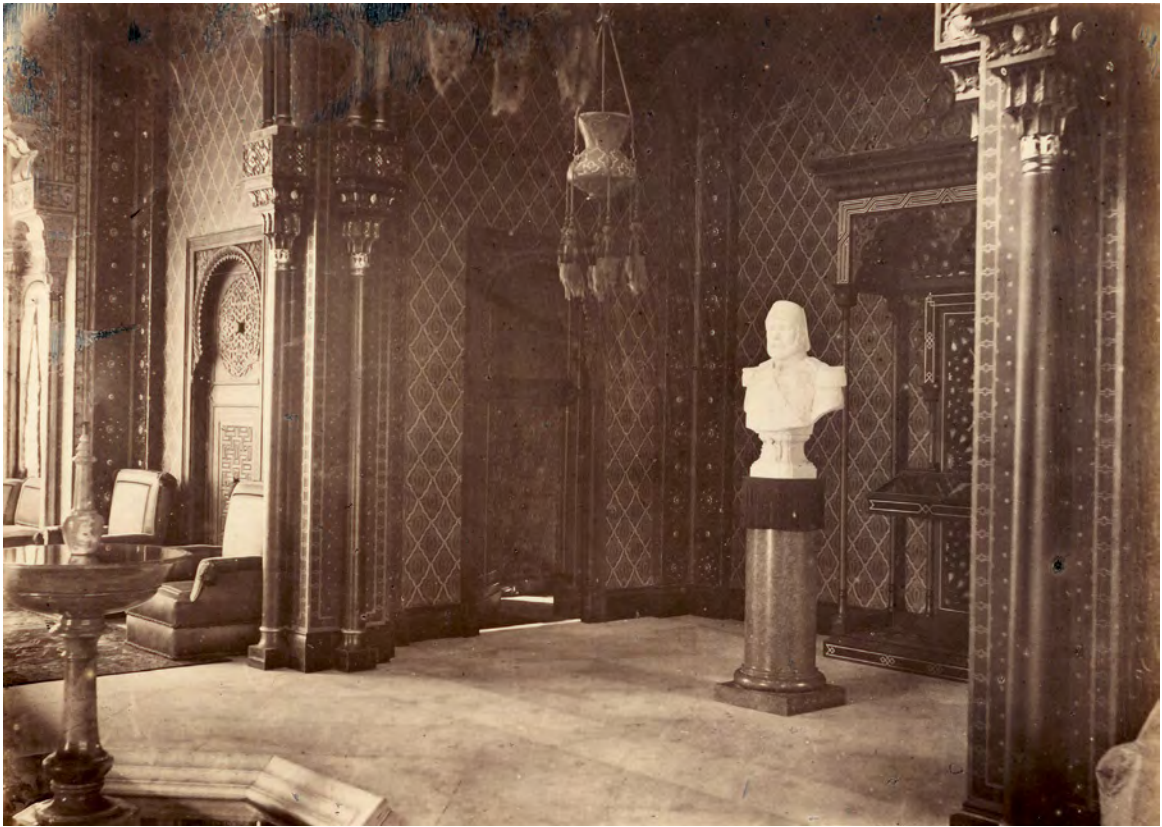


FIGURE 22 Henri Laurent, *Salāmlik, Intérieur*. Interior view of the *salāmlik* showing the Qur'an cabinet behind the bust of Khedive Ismail. Mounted albumen print. 15 × 22 cm. *Monuments de l'Exposition vice-royale égyptienne*, 1868: f. 4 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, RÉSERVE DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE CENTRALE DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX, GR FOL 6

ivory (Fig. 22, 23).<sup>71</sup> Similarly several doors of the *salāmlik* had historic woodwork repurposed as panels (Fig. 24).

Other doors were described as “restorations,”<sup>72</sup> a term used then for creative historicist craftsmanship. Revival design could involve literal imitation; the entrance doors to the exhibition hall adjoining the *salāmlik* had wooden replicas of the bronze plating decorating the entrance of the eighteenth-century public fountain and school of ‘Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in Cairo.<sup>73</sup> (Fig. 25 and

26) Other pieces in Mamluk style were more freely designed. This is the case with a large cupboard dated 1866 and signed by the Italian cabinet-maker Giuseppe Parvis (1832–1909). Made for one of the private rooms of the *salāmlik*, the gigantic piece of furniture, modelled after a scaled-down Mamluk portal, bore a rhyming eulogy to the Khedive, praising his guidance for the revival of the past splendour of Egyptian arts and crafts. The text was authored by his preferred panegyrist, Sheikh Mustafa Salama al-Najjari.<sup>74</sup> The cupboard

71 Edmond, *L'Égypte*, 196.

72 Edmond, *L'Égypte*, 196.

73 The bronze plating was itself a restoration made around 1800 after the original door had been

accidentally destroyed; Normand, *L'Architecture*, pl. 18; Prisse d'Avennes, *L'Art arabe*, pl. cv and 111: 273.

74 *Illustrierter Katalog der Pariser Industrie-Ausstellung von 1867*, foreword by Wilhelm Hamm (Leipzig:



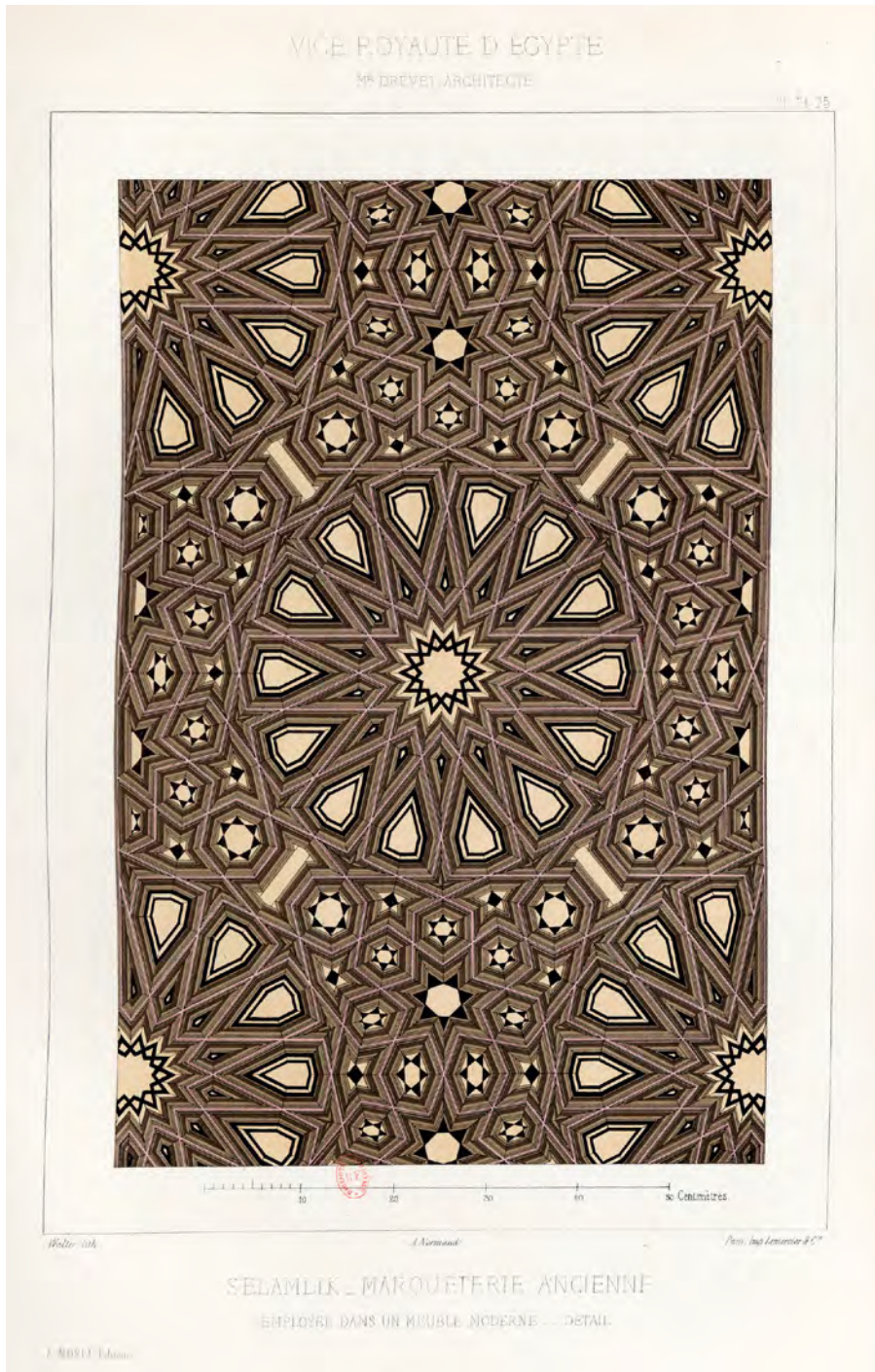


FIGURE 23 Alfred Normand, *Marqueterie ancienne employée dans un meuble moderne*. Old marquetry used in a piece of modern furnishing. Chromolithograph ALFRED NORMAND, *L'ARCHITECTURE DES NATIONS ÉTRANGÈRES*, 1867: PL. 24–25





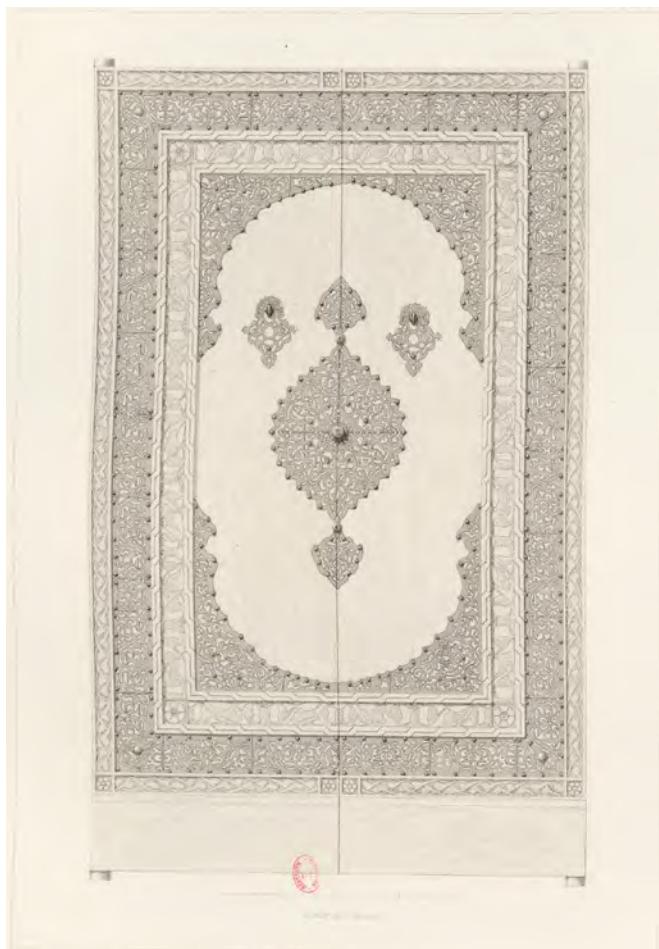


FIGURE 25  
 Alfred Normand, *Selamlık, porte de la fontaine d'Abd el Rahman au Caire*. Entrance door to the *salâmlık* with a replica of the bronze plating from the entrance to the fountain of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in Cairo. Engraving  
 ALFRED NORMAND, *L'ARCHITECTURE DES NATIONS ÉTRANGÈRES*, 1867: PL. 18



FIGURE 26  
 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Porte du sibyl d'Abd-El-Rahman Kyahya (XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Door to the Fountain of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in Cairo. Chromolitograph  
 ÉMILE PRISSE D'AVENNES, *L'ART ARABE ... 1869-77*, III: PL. CV

now stands in a corridor of Cairo's Marriott Hotel, formerly the Khedivial Palace of Gazira. (Fig. 27)

The exhibition hall adjacent to the *salāmlīk* had a large scale relief map of Egypt covering forty-five square metres. Other maps hang on the walls. One side of the hall was lined with glazed cupboards presenting 400 books in Turkish or Arabic from the Bulaq Press, including translations from French authors. Many of these belonged to Gustave Le Gray (1820–84), the famous photographer who had been living in Egypt since 1862; some of the Arabic manuscripts on show were also his. Beside these were photographic albums by the Frenchman Désiré Ernié (1830–?), depicting ancient monuments, as well as people and objects.<sup>75</sup>

## 2.2 A Private Initiative: The Meymar Display

The Egyptian galleries located in the Palais du Champ-de-Mars accommodated the remaining items presented by Egypt. They featured a collection of national costumes, arranged on mannequins executed by the French sculptor Charles Cordier (1827–1905). More importantly, they included a “collection of Arab antiquities,”<sup>76</sup> most probably installed in the Egyptian part of the circular section reserved for the museum of the history of labour that cut across all national stalls. This collection was curated by an individual generally identified in European sources as Doctor Meymar<sup>77</sup> or Meymarie.<sup>78</sup> He was not a doctor and should

not be confused with Dr. Alexandre de Meymar, a physician practicing in Paris in the 1880s. The title of Doctor did not necessarily denote a member of the medical profession; it was given to people with renowned expertise in any domain of knowledge. At the time, one Dr. Alexandre Foresi, for instance, bore the title as a specialist in detecting forgeries.<sup>79</sup> The name Meymar transcribes in fact an approximate oral pronunciation of the word *mī'mār*, meaning architect or rather building-surveyor in Arabic; the title was usually transliterated as Meymar in nineteenth-century European sources.<sup>80</sup> This clue, supplemented by biographical data,<sup>81</sup> led “Doctor Meymar” to be identified as Husayn Fahmi *al-mī'mār* (c. 1827–91), alternatively known in the literature as “Cutchuk Hussein Pacha” (*Küchük* meaning little, i.e. young here, in Turkish),<sup>82</sup> Husseïn Pacha Maïmar<sup>83</sup> or Hussein Pacha Meimar.<sup>84</sup> The man belonged to a family of “Albanese” origin (possibly from Macedonia) close to the ruling family. Husayn, following his father ‘Abd al-Karim, had benefited from the program of educational missions that sent young literate men to European capitals for knowledge transfer in science and technology. After studying engineering in France in 1844–49, Husayn had held successive

Brockhaus, 1868), 202; Edmond, *L'Égypte*, 255, 335–36. On Ismail's panegyrist, see Adam Mestyan, *Primordial History, Print Capitalism, and Egyptology in Nineteenth-Century Cairo, Muṣṭafā Salāma al-Nağğārī's The Garden of Ismail's Praise* (Cairo: Publications de l'IFAO, 2021).

75 Edmond, *L'Égypte*, 231, 332, 370. His name is frequently misspelled as Ermé.

76 Hôte, “L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1867,” *La Science pittoresque*, 13 March 1867, 155–57.

77 Edmond, *L'Égypte*, 199.

78 Adalbert de Beaumont, “Les Arts décoratifs en Orient et en France. Une visite à l'Orient à l'Exposition Universelle,” *Revue des deux mondes* LXXII (1st November 1867): 138–60 (143).

79 Dr. Alexandre Foresi, *Tour de Babel ou Objets d'art faux pris pour vrais et vice-versa* (Paris: Pedone-Lauriel, 1868).

80 Ambroise Calfa, *Guide de la conversation français-turc* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1859, 2d edition), 84.

81 Entries on Husayn Fahmi exist in ‘Umar Tusun, *Al-ba‘that al-‘ilmīyya fi ‘ahd Muhammad ‘Alī wa ‘Abbas wa Sa‘id* [*The Educational Missions during the Reign of Muhammad Ali, Abbas and Said*] (Cairo: n.p., 1934), 292–95; James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Cass, 1968), 257; ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi‘ī, *‘Asr Muhammad ‘Alī* [*The Era of Mehmed Ali*], fourth ed. (Cairo, 1982), 419, 484.

82 Yacoub Artin, “Description de six lampes de mosquée en verre émaillé,” *Bulletin de l'Institut égyptien* (1886): 120–54 (126).

83 Gabriel Charmes, “L'Art arabe au Caire,” *Journal des débats*, 2 August 1881.

84 *Almanach de Gotha* (1888), 1044.





FIGURE 27 Cupboard made by Giuseppe Parvis for the Khedivial *salāmlik* at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, signed and dated 1866 (currently located in the Marriott Hotel in Cairo)  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2020

positions in the Egyptian administration. In 1864, he was listed as chief architect for urban embellishment work in Cairo, and was to rise to the head of that administration in the following years.<sup>85</sup> He ended his career as *wakil* [undersecretary] of the Administration of *Awqāf* [religious endowments] from 1881. He was known to fellow architects in Egypt for his love of books and penchant for drawing, as well as kindness to his staff. His little appetite for public life was also widely known,<sup>86</sup> a trait that conforms with the discrete nature of many a collector.

Although no catalogue exists of the pieces that Meymar exhibited in 1867, passing mentions do appear in descriptions of the Universal Exposition. But it is the subsequent acquisition of a good share of his collection by the South Kensington Museum that allows a reconstruction of its composition.<sup>87</sup> As early as the end of May 1867, within a few weeks after the opening of the Universal Exhibition on 1st April 1867, Husayn Fahmi had approached the nascent London museum of art and industry with a view to selling or loaning his collection.<sup>88</sup> Owen Jones, the illustrious author of the *Grammar of Ornament*, was dispatched to Paris in June 1867, in order to inspect it, together with the numismatist Reginald Stuart Poole and the art referee John Charles Robinson. The sixteen-folio memorandum

drafted by Stuart Poole does not seem to have survived, but extracts published thereafter do still exist.<sup>89</sup> The numismatist recommended the purchase on the basis of provenance, chronology and quality, as most pieces were identifiably Egyptian (“Arab art is acknowledged to be best represented by its Egyptian branch, the purest in style”), and were “works of the first importance,” with many bearing dates.<sup>90</sup> The substantial amount asked for the whole collection (£6,000) provoked much discussion when the proposed purchase of the “Meymar collection of Arabian ornament” was examined in June 1867 by a committee specially appointed by the House of Commons.<sup>91</sup> The price was considered extravagant and unreasonable, but the purchase still deemed desirable as it represented a unique opportunity. As Henry Cole, the director of the South Kensington Museum, brought to the fore: “It is rarely that you can buy the old art of Cairo.”<sup>92</sup> It was agreed to select the most important pieces for a sum not exceeding £2,000. On 30 August 1867, Jones reported that he had been able to secure the most significant part of the collection for £2,100.<sup>93</sup> The selection proceeded to store on 14 October 1867, two weeks before the end of the Parisian exhibition on 3 November 1867. For some reason yet to be ascertained (perhaps loan before acquisition), the

85 Amin Sami, *Taqwim al-nil* [The Nile Almanach] (Cairo: Maṭba‘ Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, 1915–36) III: Part 2, 584. He was replaced as head of Cairo’s urban embellishment bureau in 1873 by French civil engineer Pierre Grand, according to a document listing personnel and monthly salaries in the Department of Parks and gardens and other administrations, ca. 1875; Cairo, Dār al-Waṭā’iq al-Qawmiyya, *Muhāfaza Misr, Mahāfiḍ* 1872, 2002–3607.

86 Istvan Ormos, *Max Herz Pasha (1856–1919), His Life and Career* (Cairo: Publications de l’IFAO, 2009), II: 435.

87 Moya Carey and I are working at the reconstruction of the Meymar collection as part of a research on Early Islamic art collecting at the V&A.

88 Kew, The National Archives, Minute books of the board meetings of the Department of Practical Art and its successor, the Science and Art Department (1852–1876), ED28/22, Fol 157–159, # 13975, 31 May 1867.

89 “Report by Mr R. Stuart Poole on the Meymar collection,” *Fifteenth Report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education* (London: George Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1868), 231–34.

90 “Report by Mr R. Stuart Poole,” 231–32.

91 The discussion and recommendations made by the referees are recorded in *Report from the Select committee on Paris exhibition; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix* (House of Commons, [1868]).

92 *Report from the Select Committee*, 35.

93 Kew, The National Archives, “Minute books of the board meetings of the Department of Practical Art and its Successor, the Science and Art Department (1852–1876),” ED28/22, f. 211 – letter # 20905, Report from Owen Jones, 20 August 1867.

accessioned objects (about 200 pieces) were only registered in the museum in 1869.<sup>94</sup>

The acquisition included one of the three enamelled glass mosque lamps exhibited in Paris<sup>95</sup> and three tiles. It also comprised Qur'an folios and copies of religious texts made during the reign of Qaytbay with elaborate title pages, as well as large bindings. The Orientalist Émile Prisse d'Avennes drew parts of the leaves on show, and thought that they had belonged to the *waqf* of Sultan al-Gawri and had been copied at the time of the building of his mausoleum, in the early sixteenth century. (Fig. 28) Prisse also recalled that when repairs were made on the dome of the sanctuary in 1858, one of its most beautiful Qur'ans was carried away and sold to a Greek individual who brought it to Paris.<sup>96</sup> Qur'an's folios were known to circulate in Paris: a friend of Prisse d'Avennes, the artist Charles Cournault possessed dozens of folios from a Qur'an in the name of Sultan Barquq that he had acquired in Paris on Quai Voltaire in 1850.<sup>97</sup> Is it where Meymar may have acquired his leaves too? It is known that the Egyptian art lover did purchase collectibles on the Parisian market, for example at the sale in 1868 of objects brought back from Persia by the art dealer Ferdinand Méchin,<sup>98</sup>

as evidenced by the minutes of the sale recording metalwork acquisitions by Meymar.<sup>99</sup>

Two Meymar metal objects, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, do have Persian – and hunting – connections. One is a circular mirror, with a mounted falconer circled by Arabic script, and “magical” inscriptions on the reverse. This type of object, of which many examples survive, is generally attributed to Iran, probably Khorasan, and dated twelfth/thirteenth century.<sup>100</sup> A similar one from the Schefer collection, now at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, has been dated to the twelfth century.<sup>101</sup> The other Persian artwork is a drum used by falconers to recall their birds. One wonders if Husayn Fahmi was intending to document falconry or Iranian metalwork? In wood, the Egyptian collector owned, as Beaucorps, panels from the Mamluk minbar offered by Sultan Lajin to the Mosque of Ibn Tulun on the occasion of a major renovation of the site in 1296. Meymar had eight loose partially damaged panels,<sup>102</sup> (Fig. 29) and several dozens more that were arranged in London into a square wooden frame by British artist James Wild (1814–92).<sup>103</sup> According to one source, the Egyptian official had helped to salvage threatened woodwork in that mosque:

Le docteur Meymarie [sic] a eu l'heureuse idée de ramasser les boiseries, portes, volets, morceaux de plafonds et grilles sculptées, provenant de la mosquée El-Teyloun [Ibn Tulun]. [...] En réparant certaines parties du

94 Inventory numbers: 1049–1869 to 1087–1869; “Dr Meymar’s collection,” in Science and Art Department, *List of Objects Obtained during the Paris Exhibition of 1867 by Gift, Loan or Purchase, and now Exhibited in the South Kensington Museum* (London: H.M. Stationery office, 1868), 52–4; *List of the Objects in the Art Division, South Kensington Museum, Acquired during the Year 1869, Arranged According to the Dates of Acquisition* (London: H.M. Stationery office, 1870), 78–81.

95 The lamp bears the name of Sayf al-Din Aqbugha, and is dated c. 1340 (V&A, 1056–1869).

96 Prisse d'Avennes, *L'Art arabe*, 286, pl. CLXXXIII.

97 Emmanuel Hebre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault* (Mazeville: Serge Domini éditeur, 2004), 193.

98 Méchin had been dispatched to Iran in 1867 by the Sèvres Imperial Manufactory of Porcelaine to purchase specimens of Persian wares for its museum; Carey, *Persian Art*, 70–6.

99 Archives de Paris, Minutes de ventes des commissaires-priseurs, Étude de maître Pillet, Ventes 1868, D. 48 E 3 59 (file 1647).

100 London, V&A, 1859–1869; Ladan Akbaria *et al.*, *The Islamic World: A History in Objects* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2018), 100–01.

101 *Catalogue Schefer*, lot no. 159, currently labelled as “miroir persan” (Paris, Bnf, Médailles et antiques, 55-536).

102 London, V&A, 1085–1869.

103 London, V&A, 1051–1869; Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1886), 115–16.





FIGURE 28 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Ornementation d'un Qoran du tombeau du Sultán el-Ghoury*. Part of a Qur'an leaf from the Mausoleum of Sultan al-Gawri. Chromolithograph  
 PRISSE D'AVENNES, *L'ART ARABE ... 1869–77*, III: PL. CLXXXIII

*mirab* [sic for *mihrab*] ou sanctuaire, on avait abattu et jeté parmi les gravats une foule de détails ravissants, où des nielles de nacre, d'ivoire et d'ambre se mêlent au cèdre et à l'ébène. M. Meymarie a recueilli et sauvé ces débris.<sup>104</sup>

The testimony validates what the director of the South Kensington Museum was told about the collection: occasions to procure such historical art were extremely rare. Cole had been informed that “The gentleman who has made this collection is one who watched the demolition of mosques and other things, and has managed to get these things.”<sup>105</sup>

When, during a visit to Cairo in 1844, Wild had sketched the minbar of the mosque, it was intact.<sup>106</sup> In 1846, the sanctuary was converted into a refuge for the needy elderly. The pointed arches were

<sup>104</sup> “Dr Meymarie [sic] had the happy idea of collecting the panels, doors, shutters, ceiling fragments and carved screens coming from the mosque of Ibn Tulun. [...] When repairs were made to certain parts of the prayer hall, a number of gorgeous pieces in varied species of wood were damaged and thrown away. M. Meymarie collected and saved these debris”, my translation from de Beaumont, “Les Arts décoratifs en Orient et en France,” 143.

<sup>105</sup> *Report from the Select Committee*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Élise Anglade, Musée du Louvre, *Catalogue des boiseries de la section islamique* (Paris: Rmn, 1988), 89.



FIGURE 29 Eight panels from the Lajin minbar in the Meymar collection mounted on a board. Guardbook photograph  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, PRINTS AND DRAWINGS DEPARTMENT, NEGATIVE NUMBER 63866; PHOTOGRAPH DEPICTS OBJECT 1085-1869





FIGURE 30 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Interno del Tulun* [An internal view of Ibn Tulun Mosque]. Mounted albumen print. 21 × 27 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo, fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli*, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 50  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

walled up (Fig. 30) and the mosque ceased to function as a place for prayer. By 1856, one hundred families were living in it.<sup>107</sup> A photograph published in 1887 shows a minbar that had sadly lost, probably long since, all its carved panels (Fig. 31).

Lajin panels remained a must-have collectible. Most major world museums have a number in their collections. The Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna managed to buy a set of 35 panels forming a complete rosette at the Paris Exposition in 1867,<sup>108</sup> and pieces from that very pulpit continued to flow to Europe and the US. Four were donated to the

107 Tarek Swelim, *Ibn Tulun, His Lost City and Great Mosque* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2015), 206–07.

108 Chris Dercon et al., *The Future of Tradition*, 94.



FIGURE 31 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Interno del Tulun* [A view on the minbar of the Ibn Tulun Mosque]. Mounted albumen print. 22 × 26 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo, fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli*, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 47  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

Musée du Louvre in 1905. The Met acquired fourteen pieces in 1907. A survey carried out in 2008 identified 179 specimens in Western collections.<sup>109</sup> Panels still surface in auction houses: one was offered at a Sotheby's sale in 2011.<sup>110</sup> From pulpits, Meymar also had carved polygons and inscribed woodwork coming from another mosque, the Mosque of al-Maridani, which had suffered greatly during an earthquake in 1856. (Fig. 32)

109 Désirée N. Heiden, "Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Minbar," in *Von Gibraltar bis zum Ganges: Studien zur Islamischen Kunstgeschichte in memoriam Christian Ewert*, eds. Marion Frengel, Martina Müller-Wiener (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2010), 75–95.

110 *Arts of the Islamic World*, 5 October 2011, Sotheby's London, lot 243, estimated £18,000–25,000 (unsold).



FIGURE 32 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Cortile e Minareto del Mirdan (Cairo)* [Courtyard of the al-Maridani Mosque after damage caused by the 1856 earthquake]. Mounted albumen print. 15 × 19 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII* [sic: xxx for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 114 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

However, Meymar's star object exhibited in Paris in 1867 was neither the Lajin polygons, nor the epigraphy from al-Maridani, but a full minbar (Fig. 33), albeit one that had been heavily repaired, as can be observed today when looking closely at its canopy, base and sides. When the purchase was discussed before the Select Committee, Meymar was quoted as having stated that he had bought the pulpit from "a royal mosque," "at the time of [its] pulling down," for £700, not a negligible amount for a damaged piece when compared to the gilded candlestick in Gustave de Rothschild's collection then valued at £200. The corresponding mosque was identified by the Egyptologist



FIGURE 33 Anonymous, *Pulpit*, 1913. [The Qaytbay pulpit purchased from Meymar by the South Kensington Museum at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1867]. Albumen print on card. The photograph depicts object 1050–1869 LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, 1580–1913

Gardner Wilkinson as that of al-Mu'ayyad.<sup>111</sup> As a matter of fact, it is known that its prayer hall had been fully restored in 1255 AH (1839 AD) but that the mosque had experienced seismic activity in 1847. It was described in 1870 as a complete ruin,<sup>112</sup> resulting from the enlargement of the adjoining street of Taht al-Rab'.<sup>113</sup> Other provenances for the

<sup>111</sup> *Report from the Select Committee*, 18.

<sup>112</sup> Auguste Ferdinand Mehren, "Tableau général des monuments religieux du Caire," *Mélanges asiatiques tirés du bulletin de l'académie impériale des sciences de St-Pétersbourg* VI (1871): 296–569 (308).

<sup>113</sup> "Meymar collection of Arab Art: extracts from the Report of Reginald Stuart Poole," *Fifteenth Report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education* (London: H.M. Stationery office, 1868), 231–35 (232).

minbar were considered as well at a later stage. As we shall see in Chapter 3, all proved wrong and the cross-checking of sources on the pulpit's acquisition suggests that it should be more safely attributed to the Mosque of al-Sultan Shah.

In any case, Meymar's exhibits in 1867 do mark a change of scale and geography in the translocation process of Islamic artworks. In 1861, Beaucorps had managed to secure four panels from the Lajin minbar on site; six years later, there were dozens of them offered on sale in Paris, together with a full minbar.

### 3 The Sale and Display of an Egyptian Collection in 1869

Meymar's collection must have been substantial, for on 8–9 January 1869, he had ninety further lots auctioned off in Paris.<sup>114</sup> These may be considered “left-overs,” as among the pieces he had exhibited at the 1867 *Exposition universelle*, were objects that had not been acquired by the South Kensington Museum. This was the case for armour, because the British referees considered the items “neither rare nor ancient.” Brass and copper bowls and vases, “said to be of the manufacture of the Hedjaz, but which are precisely similar to objects of the same class so common in India” were similarly rejected, because the museum already had many specimens of such vessels.<sup>115</sup> The minutes of the sale show that, as a matter of fact, most of Meymar's lots realised very modest prices (less than 100 francs per item).<sup>116</sup> The majority falls in the category of

brass and glass vessels, but there were also tiles, some jewellery, four plaques of carved ivory dating from the fifteenth century, and further folios from manuscripts. A good deal of them was acquired by dealers, possibly as stock or on order from patrons. Seventeen items (mostly salvaged carved woodwork) were moreover bought back by Husayn Fahmi, because of unsatisfactory bids. It was not a fruitful sale. Architectural salvage was yet to become a must-have.

Some of the objects withdrawn from the sale were lent to the next exhibition organised by UCAD in the fall of that same year (10 August–10 November 1869). This time, the entire section of historic design was devoted to “Oriental art,” covering both Islamic and Asian art. The loans to this *Musée oriental* amounted to more than 2,800 artworks (compared to about 500 in 1865). Husayn Fahmi loaned fifteen significant pieces, among them ceramics. Two tiles with blue background, floral ornament and a horseman with a falcon are recognisable Qajar pieces.<sup>117</sup>

He also presented carved wooden roundels and an elaborate door, both supposedly dated from the sixteenth century.<sup>118</sup> It is very tempting to connect these two pieces with engravings published in *L'Art pour tous* in December 1869 and February 1870. (Fig. 34) Although the pieces do not bear the name of Meymar, they are said to have been part of the *Musée oriental* and are described as “sixteenth-century Arab art.”<sup>119</sup> No other pieces in the catalogue of the show fit such a description. Close examination of the published engravings reveals their almost certain provenance: the Egyptian *salāmlīk* built at the 1867 *Exposition*

114 *Objets arabes, koptes, koufiques et persans, bronzes, armes, tapis, appartenant en partie à M. le Dr. Meymar, et aussi à MM. Henry, des Essarts et Beaucorps*, Drouot, 8–9 January 1869 [Lugt 30875].

115 Kew, The National Archives, Minute Books of the Board Meetings of the Department of Practical Art and its Successor, the Science and Art Department (1852–1876), ED28/22, Report From Owen Jones, August 30, 1867, f. 211.

116 Paris, Archives de Paris, Minutes de ventes des commissaires-priseurs, Étude de maître Pillet, Ventes 1869, D. 48 E 3 60.

117 Albert Jacquemart, “Exposition de l'Union centrale des Beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie, Musée Oriental,” *Gazette des beaux-arts* 2 (2d period) (1st October 1869): 332–51.

118 Exposition des Beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie, *Guide du visiteur au Musée oriental* (Paris: Union centrale, 1869), 33, 36, 37, 38.

119 “Panneaux en bois sculpté, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, art arabe,” *L'Art pour tous*, no. 241, 30 December 1869, 961; “Fragment d'une porte en bois, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *L'Art pour tous*, no. 244, 15 February 1869, 973.



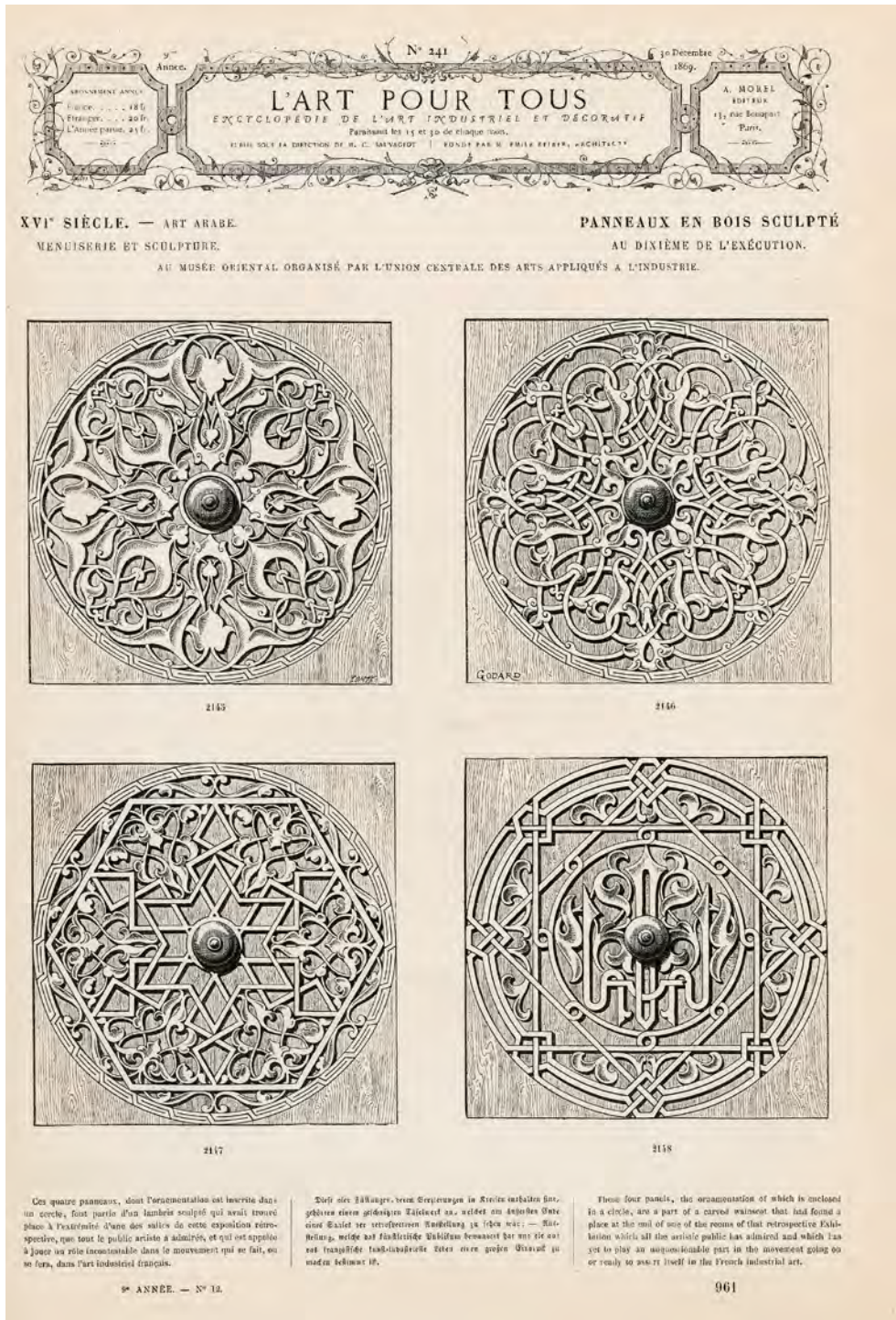


FIGURE 34 *Panneaux en bois sculpté, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, art arabe* [Carved roundels, said to be sixteenth-century, displayed at the *Musée oriental* in 1869]. Engraving *L'ART POUR TOUS*, NO. 241, 30 DECEMBER 1869, 961

*universelle*. The carved roundels engraved in *L'Art pour tous* are of identical design to the ones repurposed in modern frames that topped the doors opening onto the central hall of the pavilion. (See Fig 24 above) The second engraving in *L'Art pour tous* depicts the upper part of the leaf of the door separating the central hall from the pavilion's vestibule. Their attribution to the sixteenth century is questionable. In all likelihood, the roundels (probably taken from mashrabiya) are later (late Ottoman?), while the manufacturing of the leaf can be recognised as purely nineteenth century. Were Meymar's composite pieces mistaken, on purpose, by himself or the journal, for historic ones? Is the erroneous label a deliberate act to mislead readers? More likely, the faulty attribution is evidence rather than "stylistic dating" dominated the understanding of art during that period, or at least its dissemination to a wider public. It is very plausible that in the context of *L'Art pour tous*, and indeed more broadly, a piece was captioned sixteenth century because it resembled, reproduced or emulated sixteenth-century craftsmanship. In other words, the emphasis was on design rather than on historicity. Distinguishing nineteenth-century Revival work from historic originals may be more the concern of the present-day art historian, and differences in perception have to be kept in mind when using this type of source. The boundaries between copy, interpretation and original were then thin. The focus was on style and pattern. The way Beaucorps' Iznik tile was illustrated in *L'Art pour tous* is another good example. (Fig. 15)

The doors published in 1869 were, without much doubt, salvaged from the Egyptian kiosk, directly or indirectly by Husayn Fahmi. It was customary to dismantle the pavilions at the end of the expositions and resell their parts; as a matter of fact, numerous structures from World's fairs were relocated across Europe in whole or part, and many other fragments reinserted into existing buildings.<sup>120</sup> The phenomenon points to an on-

going culture of recycling woodwork and building materials that was as active in France as it was in Egypt. The technique could apply just as easily to remnants from historic mosques or to material from more recent constructions. In this sense, the Islamic collections assembled during the nineteenth century were foremost the product of the recycling culture of their time.

#### 4 Shifting Trajectories and Contexts

In sum, a number of findings emerge from this exploration of Islamic artefacts on public view in late Second Empire Paris. A first observation is that type, provenance, and procurement could shift rapidly. In 1865, elaborate arms and armour, precious glasswork and ceramics, and sumptuous metalwork inlaid with silver and gold dominated the exhibits. The selection reflected the standards of conspicuous consumption of luxury goods that characterised French high society at the time.<sup>121</sup> As we have seen, most exhibitors at the 1865 loan show belonged to the higher end of French society, whether heirs of old money or recipients of recent wealth. Two years later, in 1867, a new type of collectible made its entry: salvaged woodwork. It fitted perfectly the theme of the Universal Exposition (the history of labour) and attracted the attention of the South Kensington Museum because of its potential value for modern design. In contrast it fared poorly at public auction.

Early arrivals of Islamic artefacts were mainly due to Western travellers, and came principally from Damascus, Cairo, Istanbul, Iran, and occasionally Central Asia or the Hijaz. They were mostly obtained at bazaars, although other types of dealing (e.g. an exchange of goods or purchase

<sup>120</sup> Gustave Delchevalerie, "L'Égypte agricole, industrielle et artistique," in *Études sur l'exposition universelle*

*Paris 1878, Annales et archives de l'industrie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Librairie scientifique, industrielle et agricole E. Lacroix, 1878), 452, 547; Sylvain Ageorges, *Sur les traces des expositions universelles, Paris, 1855-1937* (Paris: Parigramme, 2006).

<sup>121</sup> *Spectaculaire Second Empire*, eds. Guy Cogeval et al. (Paris: Skira, 2016).



to individuals) are recorded. Some objects were already in Europe decades earlier and had been moving from a collection to another, or one country to another. Other sets, like the ones displayed in 1867, were mediated to Paris through Middle Eastern agency, as the case of the engineer-collector-dealer Husayn Fahmi *al-mi'mār* recounts.

Overlaps across the collections, on the other hand, are best explained by availability. Desire for specific pieces did spur demand; but supply equally fueled purchases in an even more crucial way. One significant episode is the weaponry that reached Europe following recurrent clearance of the old Ottoman arsenal in Istanbul from the 1830s onwards. It would have been much more difficult to procure otherwise. Another determinant situation was the derelict conditions of many a historic monument in Cairo. It provided the market with a new genre of material, exemplified by the salvage brought to Paris in 1867. Four mosques are connected to the artworks recalled so far: the sanctuaries of Ibn Tulun, al-Mu'ayyad, al-Gawri and al-Maridani. These buildings had either undergone heavy reconstruction in the first half of the nineteenth century, or been in a state of ruin for

decades; in many instances they had lost their religious function. In fact, only exceptional circumstances permitted the purchase of major pieces from such structures. The portable assets of dilapidated mosques were subjected to financial transactions, as demonstrated by the case of the Mamluk minbar displayed for sale in Paris in 1867. Qur'an leaves were reported to have left the mausoleum of al-Gawri as early as 1858. Other sacred folios were disposed of, at an even earlier stage, from another large building, the Madrasa of al-Sultan Barquq, as suggested by Cournault's acquisitions in Paris in 1850 or a bequest by Antoine Clot-Bey in 1851.<sup>122</sup> The so-called treasure of the Madrasa of Qalawun provided collectors with many luxurious specimens of metalwork. The afterlife of Islamic art in Europe cannot be disconnected from the domestic history of medieval material culture in the Middle East during the long nineteenth century, although little is known so far of its vicissitudes.

<sup>122</sup> Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Ms 19991, Luxury copy of a part of the Koran, dated 789 AH (1387 AD), bequeathed by Antoine Clot-Bey in 1851.

## Expanding Trades in Late Ottoman Cairo and Damascus

The rising appeal of Islamic collectibles in Europe and America set a pattern among those who visited, or sojourned in, the Middle East: that of procuring antiques locally and transporting them back home. The sought-after artefacts were mostly secured through formal trade. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, all indicators are that Cairo and Damascus became active market-places for Islamic artworks, although the information is fragmentary and unevenly distributed. Evidence on antique dealing does exist for *fin-de-siècle* Egypt, but it mostly covers “Egyptian” objects, by which are meant the Ancient pieces obtained primarily at excavations, but also at the villages closest to the ruins.<sup>1</sup> No comparable documentation is available for Islamic artefacts produced under Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk, or Ottoman rule. Yet, some evidence for Cairo, as well as for Damascus, can be retrieved from a heterogeneous array of sources: Western travelogues, Arabic encyclopaedias, scholars’ papers, museum archives, private correspondence, and photography. The following is an attempt to piece together this scattered information. At the very least, the material allows for the outlining of significant timelines, primary locales, typical providers and characteristic objects; it also offers some leads on the provenance of the objects.

### 1 Distinctive Profiles and Iconic Artefacts

As far as can be established, the development of a trade in historic goods followed quite distinct routes in Cairo and in Damascus. In Egypt, the market was mainly geared towards archaeological

findings brought up by digs; Islamic artworks represented a marginal trade in comparison. Stock of objects from the Islamic period seems indeed more limited in Cairo than in Damascus. As a matter of fact, established dealers specialising in Islamic artworks emerged at a later stage in the Egyptian city. In contrast, the Syrian capital housed traders in Islamic curios since at least the 1850s, and it remained for many decades the most renowned place for the abundance and quality of available antiques, whether arms, ceramics, metalwork, or indeed architectural salvage. Most Syrian travelogues include a chapter on the riches of the bazaars, the lavish objects on display, and the opulence of Damascene merchants.<sup>2</sup> Products, old and new, ranged from locally-made “silks, and embroidered scarfs,” to “carpets and curiously inlaid ornaments and caskets from Persia; shawls from Hind and Cashmere; weapons of every form and character, richly ornamented with gold and gems.”<sup>3</sup> The distinction between authentic antiques and Revival items appears rarely in the sources; both seem to have catered to the same clientele. A segment of the commodities came through the pilgrimage caravans from Baghdad and further East; annually these conveyed thousands of people to Damascus, who were eager to join the official convoy placed under the protection of the Ottoman sultan. They brought with them possessions to trade en route to, or back from, Mecca. Eastern goods of myriad provenances circulated

1 Frederik Hagen and Kim Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade in Egypt 1880–1930, The H.O. Lange Papers* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2016).

2 For an example of the narrative, Jean-Jacques Bourassé, *La Terre-Sainte, voyage dans l'Arabie Pétrée, la Judée, la Samarie, la Galilée et la Syrie* (Tours: A. Mame et fils, 1860), 427.

3 Josias Leslie Porter, *Five Years in Damascus: Including an Account of the History, Topography, and Antiquities of that City; with Travels and Researches in Palmyra, Lebanon, and the Hauran* (London: J. Murray, 1855), 1: 31.

on the routes to the Holy City.<sup>4</sup> The advent of steamship meant that after the 1840s there was a reduced number of caravans, but transit trade continued to be important to Damascus' economy, even after imported European goods dominated the commercial flows.<sup>5</sup> The city remained a hub for exchanging used objects. In the hierarchy of Middle Eastern bazaars proposed by a tourist guide in 1907, Damascus still undoubtedly came first, while the Cairene souks were considered "inferior even to those of Constantinople."<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1 *Antique Dealing and Dealers in Cairo*

An early mention of the trade in second-hand commodities in late Ottoman Cairo appears in the fifth edition of the classic *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*,<sup>7</sup> written in 1833–35 by Edward William Lane after an extended stay in the city. The text was expanded widely in 1860 by his nephew Edward Stanley Poole based on the author's original notes. Among the additions, one note brings to light the practice of auctioning second-hand wares or fabric in the streets of Cairo:

In many of the sooks (bazaars) in Cairo auctions are held on stated days, once or twice a week. They are conducted by "dellâls," (or brokers), hired either by private persons who have anything that they wish to sell in this manner, or by shopkeepers; and the purchasers are of both these classes. The "dellâls" carry the goods up and down, announcing the sums bidden with cries of "*Harag*" or "*harag*" etc.

The word *dallâl* comes from the Arabic verb *Dalla*, meaning "to show." According to the Lanes, the *dallâl* (pl. *dallâlin*) was a crier who loudly advertised second-hand goods for sale in Cairo streets, an equivalent to the practice of *vendre à l'encan* in France. Until the 1800s, the *dallâlin* were exclusively Turkish; the function was opened to Egyptians only after Mehmed Ali Pasha seized power in 1804.<sup>8</sup>

John Frederick Lewis, the British artist who lived in Cairo from 1841 to 1851, composed a colourful depiction of a scene that perfectly matches Lane's written description.<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 35) According to the architectural setting of the watercolour, the action takes place in the vicinity of the Khan al-Khalili, a large caravanserai that gave its name to the central commercial area of historic Cairo. The Dutch artist Willem de Famars Testas (1834–96), who sojourned in Egypt in 1858–60, and visited again in 1868, also remarked on the presence of Cairene criers ("*crieurs publics*"), populating the passageways of the Khan al-Khalili every Monday and Thursday. This is how one could secure "interesting objects or curiosities," according to Émile Prisse d'Avennes.<sup>10</sup>

4 John Wilson, *The Lands of the Bible, Visited and Described in an Extensive Journey Undertaken with Special Reference to the Promotion of Biblical Research and the Advancement of the Cause of Philanthropy* (Edinburgh: William Whyte & Co, 1847), 1: 147–48; Marcus Milwright, "Trade and the Syrian Hajj between the 12th and the early 20th centuries", in *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, eds. Venetia Porter and Liana Saif (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 2013), 28–35.

5 James Reilly, "Damascus Merchants and Trade in the Transition to Capitalism," *Canadian Journal of history* xxvii (April 1992): 1–27.

6 Eustace Alfred Reynolds-Ball, *Cairo of To-day: a Practical Guide to Cairo and the Nile* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), 71.

7 Edward William Lane, *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians Written in Egypt during the Years 1833–5, partly from notes made during a former visit to that country in the years 1825, -26, -27 and -28*, edited by his nephew, Edward Stanley Poole (London: J. Murray, 1860), 317. The observation does not appear in previous editions.

8 André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Damas: Presses de l'Ifpo, 1973) 11: chapter xi [<https://books.openedition.org/lfpo/4610>], accessed 13 March 2021.

9 James Parry, *Orientalist Lives, Western Artists in the Middle East, 1830–1920* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2018), 151.

10 "Le journal de voyage de Willem Famars de Testas, 1868," Maarten J. Raven, trans., in *Album de voyage au pays du Levant*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: RMN, 1993), 100–01.



FIGURE 35 John Frederick Lewis, *A Cairo Bazaar; The Dellal*, 1875. Watercolour. 67.5 × 51 cm  
CAIRO, THE SHAFIK GABR COLLECTION

The addition of the paragraph on the *dallālīn* in the 1860 edition of Lane's *Manners and customs* may well correspond to the rising Western interest in acquiring "Oriental curiosities," as they came to be known in the literature and sources. It also testifies to the permanence of Ottoman practices in Khedivial Egypt, and the continuity well into the

nineteenth century of a particular way of trading second-hand commodities.

Listings of professional and commercial addresses in Cairo do not register any names and locations of traders in antiques before 1890, whether one searches under *antiquaires* (antique dealers) or *négociants de curiosités* (dealers in

curiosities).<sup>11</sup> Early guides released in 1868 record merchants operating as importers or exporters of all types of goods, the only specified trade being, significantly, that of *nouveautés* (the latest fashion), from Paris and London.<sup>12</sup> Antiques were still not common currency, nor of particular interest to anyone. The first tourist guidebook mentioning antique dealers in Cairo is Baedeker's sixth German edition, dated 1906.<sup>13</sup> However, it should not be inferred from this that no antique dealing occurred prior to this date. In a watercolour of historic Cairo's main thoroughfare by Louis-Vincent Fouquet (1803–1863), a shop of significant size selling blue-and-white china, some of which may be old, can be spotted.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 36) The most prominent dealer in Oriental wares, both old and modern, is said to have started operating in 1880. Born in Smyrna, Joseph Cohen had been working in Syria, before settling in Egypt. The “Turkish and Persian bazaar” that he opened in 1891 in the Khan al-Khalili gained the reputation of being the most expensive, but also the most reliable, in the business, because its owner “rigidly [excluded] anything in the shape of spurious imitations.”<sup>15</sup> Another prominent dealer, mostly in Egyptian antiquities but occasionally in Islamic artefacts,

Panayotis Kyticas (?–1924), is recorded as active from 1879 (according to his letter-head) or 1890 elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> Discrepancies in the sources may be due to the fact that some business took place in the privacy of homes rather than in the openness of the bazaar. The dealer of biggest repute in twentieth-century Cairo, Maurice Nahman (1868–1948) – renowned to the point of having inspired a central character in the film *The Night of Counting the Years* [*al-Mummiya*] by director Shadi Abdessalam (1969), belongs to the former category. Of Macedonian descent,<sup>17</sup> Nahman started selling antiquities in 1890 as an activity on the side while formally a bank cashier, therefore operating originally from his house; he did not open a showroom until the late 1910s on 27 Madabegh Street (today Sherif St) where he also lived.<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 37) His trade was perfectly legal; his “Licence for Sale from the Egyptian Museum” was No. 38. As a matter of fact, many dealers in old books and *bric-à-brac* still operate from their homes in Cairo today.

There is also evidence that sellers went to the buyers rather than vice versa – again a practice still current in Cairo, possibly because the trade could not and cannot sustain, apart from a few exceptions, the rent, taxes and hiring demanded by a permanent store, or indeed because services at home were much appreciated, as they continue to be to this day. The daughter of a French collector

11 Four listings have been used here: Stéfano G. Poffandi, *Indicateur égyptien administratif et commercial en usage près les ministères, les tribunaux, les administrations de l'État, des banques, etc.*, (Alexandria: Impr. générale L. Carrière, 1890 and 1896 editions); *Annuaire égyptien administratif et commercial* (Cairo: G. Teissonnière, 1891); Mario Di S. Mieli, *Guide égyptien du Caire, annuaire administratif et commercial* (Cairo: Imp. Moussa Roditi, 1899).

12 François Leverney, *Annuaire officiel administrative, commerciale et industrielle, avec les plans du Caire, Alexandrie et Port-Saïd* (Alexandria: Imprimerie nouvelle, 1868); J. Millie, *Alexandrie d'Égypte et Le Caire, Guides-Bijou* (Milan: Civelli, 1868), 136, 141–42.

13 Hagen and Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade*, 286.

14 Auctioned by Damien Leclère and Delphine Martin-Orts on 26 March 2018 at Drouot Richelieu, Paris (lot 163).

15 Arnold Wright, ed., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Egypt* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1909), 376.

16 Ann Gunter, *A Collector's Journey: Charles Lang Freer & Egypt* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art; Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; London: Scala, 2002), 90–1; Hagen and Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade*, 229–30.

17 Interview with his grand-daughter, Alessandra Manessaro, 6 March 1996. The first Nahman in Egypt, Matatia Bey Nahman (d. 1870), was a cotton merchant who had looms installed in Mahalla al-Kubra, the largest city in the Nile Delta.

18 “Les Antiquaires égyptiens,” *L'Art Vivant* v (15 January 1929): 99; Hagen and Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade*, 253–55; Mercedes Volait, “27, rue Madabegh: une mémoire presque enfouie de la vie artistique du Caire d'antan,” in *Étudier en liberté les mondes méditerranéens: mélanges offerts à Robert Ilbert*, eds. Leila Dakhli and Vincent Lemire (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016), 179–88.





FIGURE 36 Louis Vincent Fouquet, *Ruelle animée au Caire*, before 1863. [A prominent China dealer on a main thoroughfare in Historic Cairo]. Watercolour on paper. 28 × 19 cm  
 DESSINS ANCIENS ET MODERNES,  
 MAISON DE VENTES LECLÈRE, PARIS,  
 26 MARCH 2018, LOT 163. CURRENT  
 LOCATION UNKNOWN

who resided in the city from 1876 onwards remembered the scene in her diary:

Presque chaque jour, des marchands s'installent dans le vestibule, en démons tentateurs et y étalent leurs richesses. [...] J'avais le loisir d'assister à cette exposition qui n'allait pas sans palabres, repris de jour en jour, où la patience des uns rivalisait avec la persévérance des autres, se terminant par des transactions à nulles autres pareilles. Que c'était donc amusant!<sup>19</sup>

19 Versailles, private collection, Gabrielle Bompard-de Bliognière, *Au fil des jours* (souvenirs inédits rédigés



FIGURE 37 Kahil, *Hôtel du Cercle artistique*, c. 1895. [The building on 27 Sherif Street in Cairo that housed Maurice Nahman's showroom after 1914]. Albumen print. 16.6 × 11.8 cm  
 GENEVA, MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE,  
 A 2006-0029-340

A photograph displaying the very objects bought by this family before their return to France in 1882 (Fig. 38) may illustrate a specific taste, but the image is moreover a good indicator of what was available then to the average collector of Islamic arts. The set is somehow typical: it includes salvaged doors, Indo-Portuguese ivory-inlaid caskets, Damascus chests and stools, kilims, tray-stands, and various pieces of metalwork.

Some previously recorded acquisitions point to transactions directly made on site, right in the object's original setting, in most cases fraudulently. One of the precious enamelled mosque lamps in the collection of Albert Goupil is said to have been obtained by bribing a mosque keeper during

entre 1935 et 1942), 17: Almost every day, merchants settle in the vestibule, as tempting devils, and deploy their riches [...] I could attend this exhibition that did not go without much talking, repeated day after day, during which the patience of one party rivalled with the persistence of the other, and resulted in unprecedented transactions. How amusing this was! [My translation].



FIGURE 38 Anonymous, *Untitled* [Objects from the Blignièrès collection bought between 1876 and 1882 in Cairo]. Albumen print  
CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN

a visit to Cairo in 1868.<sup>20</sup> A few years before, a Mr. Maynard had six stucco stained-glass windows, known as *qamariyya* or *shamsiyya*, detached from a mosque named al-Ashrafiyya (either al-Ashraf Barsbay *intramuros* or its funerary complex in the cemeteries, but possibly indeed the eponymous mosque in Khanqa?) for the purpose of exhibiting them in Paris at the *Exposition universelle* of 1867. They arrived in pieces and were never displayed, but their remnants were used by Émile Prisse d'Avennes to illustrate a craft that fascinated many because of the vivacious colours used – the very reason why we hear about their later afterlife.<sup>21</sup>

Commercial listings for the last decade of the nineteenth century provide the names of twenty-five established antique dealers in Cairo (see Table 1). As the lists were based on willing declaration, they cannot be considered exhaustive, but they still evidence general traits. Remarkably

enough, less than one third of the twenty-five names identified overlap with the ones associated with the trade in Egyptian antiquities. Dealing Egyptian art and trading Islamic curios were seemingly not always the same business. Four main specialities can be singled out across the listings: antiques of all periods, Oriental curiosities, Far Eastern curiosities, and rugs. An invoice and a photographic portrait of one merchant, Asadolla Irani, who self-identified as *antiquaire* [antique dealer] in the listings, suggest that the categories were porous. His letter-head advertised in English and French a business in carpets, arms, gems, coins, embroideries, and ceramics, coming from any place east of Egypt all the way to Japan. However, his trade was described as “curiosities” in the photograph of his shop, and much metalwork can be seen there. (Fig. 39) The name of Asadolla Irani and the Qajar-style imagery on his invoice clearly indicate that he was at least from Iranian descent. (Fig. 40) The carpet dealer Mohamed Hassan Irani may have been of Persian descent as well. There was a long tradition of a Persian presence in Cairo, in particular among merchants and

20 Michel Zamacois, *Pinceaux et stylos* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1948), 102.

21 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *L'Art arabe*, 278 and III: pl. CXLV.



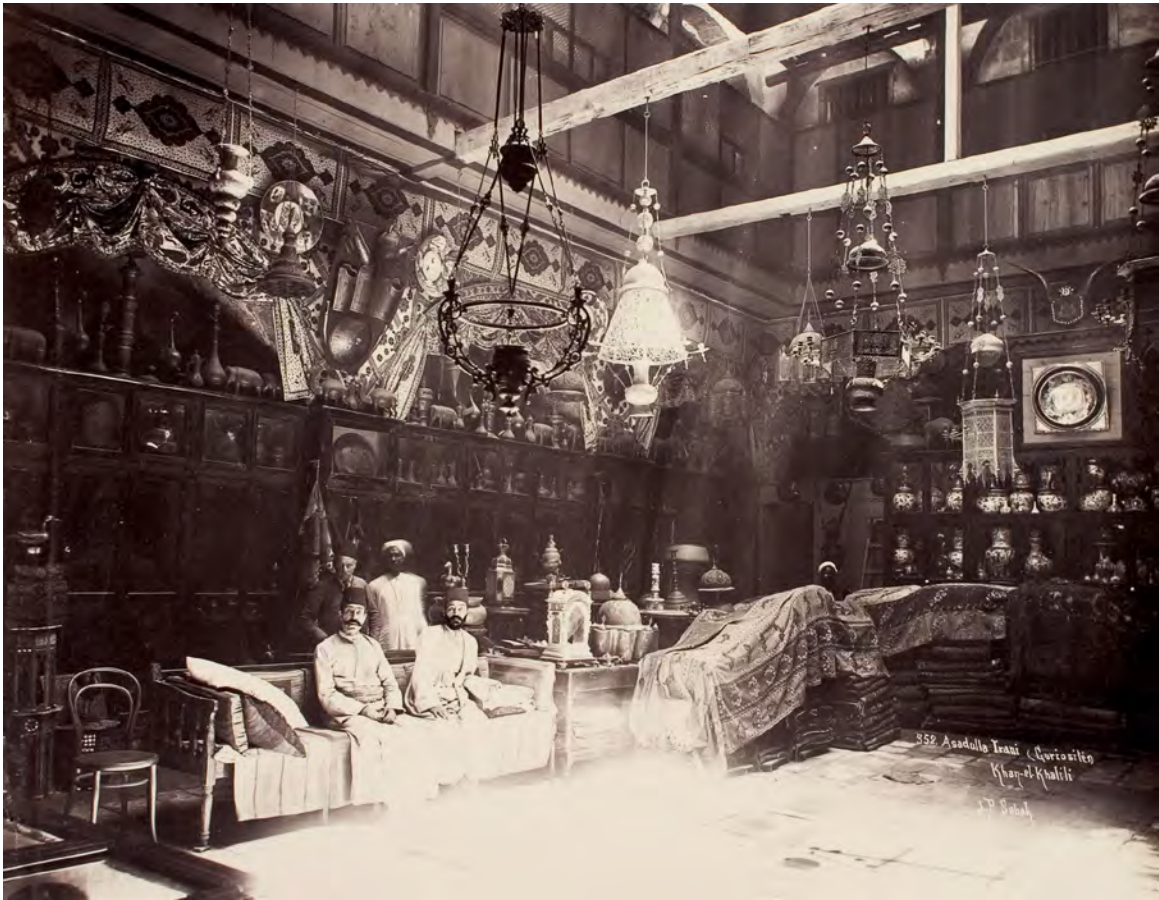


FIGURE 39 Jean Pascal Sebah, *Asadolla Irani, Khan al-Khalili (Curiosités)*, undated [c. 1890s]. Albumen print. 20 × 25 cm  
NANTES, BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE, FONDS NORMAND, ÉGYPTÉ 2 B, 352

craftsmen at the Khan al-Khalili.<sup>22</sup> The workshop of a relatively late representative of this group, a “Mohamed El-Cherazy”<sup>23</sup> [Muhammad al-Shirazi] still stood in 1869 at the entrance of one of its caravanserais. (Fig. 41)

A number of merchants dealt generally in old and new Eastern artefacts. This was the case

of Joseph Cohen, Elias Hatoun, Paul Philip, E.M. Malluk and Gaspere Giuliana. The business of E.M. Malluk & Co was in “Old and modern Oriental silks, Furniture: Mouchrabea [sic] Work and Mother of Pearl, Inlaid Tables, Stools, Chairs, Stands, Brackets, etc. Antiquities in Statues, Coins, Jewellery and Arms.”<sup>24</sup> Some were also manufacturers: besides selling Islamic and Egyptian antiques, Elias Hatoun is known to have produced Mamluk Revival works, such as large bronze

22 From even before the Ottoman conquest, see André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Damas: Presses de l’Ifpo, 1973) 11, chapter XI *passim* [<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/4612>], accessed 13 March 2021.

23 Arthur Rhoné, *L’Égypte à petites journées. Le Caire d’autrefois*. Nouvelle édition (Paris: Société générale d’éditions, 1910), 272.

24 Advertisement in Mario Di S. Mieli, *Guide égyptien du Caire, annuaire administratif et commercial* (Le Caire: Imp. Moussa Roditi, 1899), n.p.

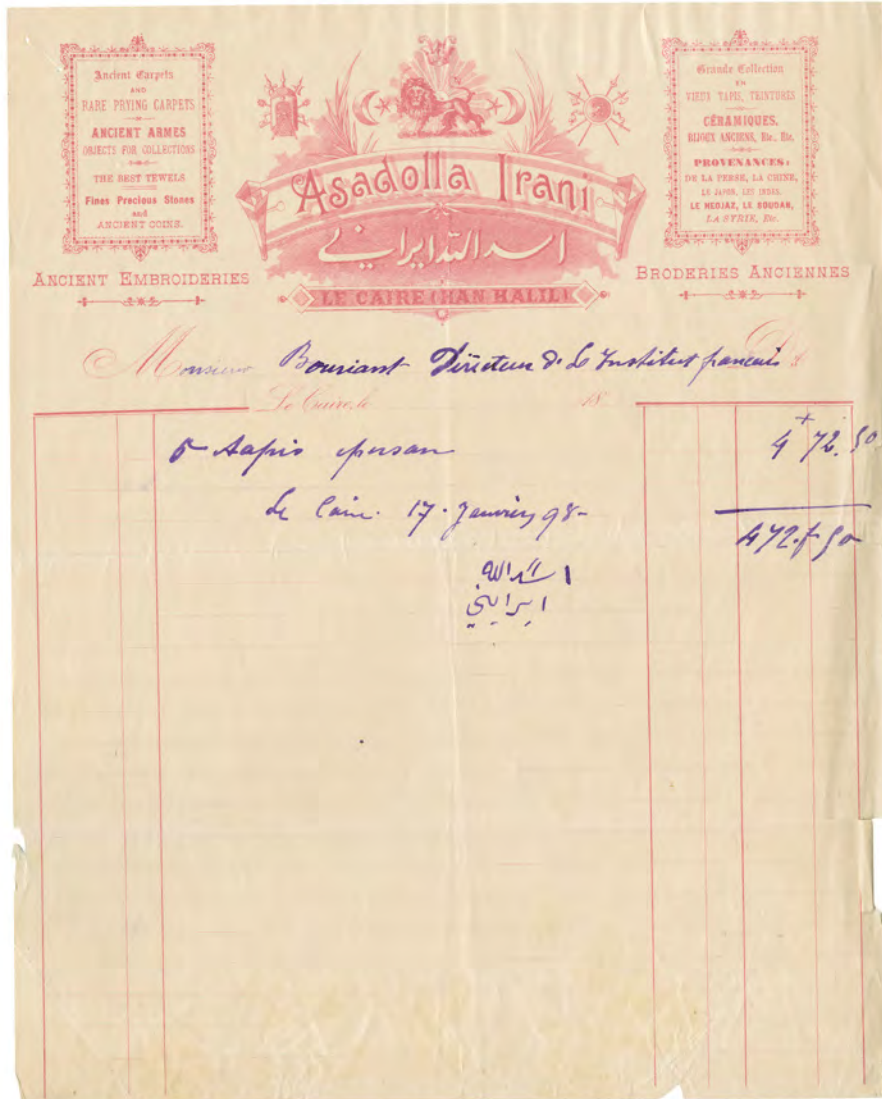


FIGURE 40 Invoice from Asadolla Irani's business in Cairo, 17 January 1898  
 CAIRO, INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE, ARCHIVES  
 ADMINISTRATIVES, MS\_2015\_01170

doors.<sup>25</sup> Some of the traders did have backgrounds in handicraft. Active from 1887 to 1909, Paul Philip

25 One is currently in Kuwait, Géza Fehérvári, *Sultan Barqūq's Door* (Kuwait: Tareq Rajab Museum, 2012) and István Ormos, "The Doors of Sultan Barqūq and their inscriptions," *The Arabist* 38 (2018): 33–92. A Mamluk style bronze door dated 1906 and bearing the signature of Hatoun's workshop was auctioned at Christie's London on 8 April 2008.

advertised his business as "*Antiquités-objets d'art. Collections d'étoffes anciennes. Fabrique de meubles de style arabe*" [Antiquities-artworks. Collections of old fabrics. Cabinet-making in Arab style]; he is known to have been "originally a French carpenter's apprentice, who had turned to trading in antiquities."<sup>26</sup> The cabinet-maker Gaspard

26 Hagen and Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade*, 257.





FIGURE 41 Émile Béchard, N° 25. *Ciseleur* [Coppersmith], 1869. The artisan was identified as “Mohammed El-Cherazy, Persan,” by Arthur Rhoné in *L’Égypte à petites journées* 1910: 272. Mounted albumen print. 21 × 26.8 cm  
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, ALBUM MM.522, PL. 13

Giuliana also conducted both activities at one time. As the sign on his shop-front recorded by photographer Pascal Sebah (1823–86) in the early 1880s clearly states, his trade was both in cabinet-making and antique dealing [*Ebenista e negoziante antichita*]. (Fig. 42) What the shop had on offer comprised a random assortment of old and new handicrafts, mixed with folk art (such as *appliqué* textiles, known as *khayyāmiya*, and puppet figures); two individual tiles can be spotted on the side of a composite cupboard. Presumably tiles had gone rare and could no more be offered in series or panels. In 1883, Giuliana sold a number of Islamic collectibles to the South Kensington

Museum.<sup>27</sup> The invoice did present him as an “*ébéniste, négociant de mucharabie & d’antiquités*” [cabinet-maker and dealer in lattice windows and antiques].

The transaction with Giuliana was part of an acquisition campaign carried out in January–March 1883 by the Arabist and archaeologist Stanley Lane-Poole (1854–1931) for the museum. The purchases offer a valuable snapshot of existing providers, desired commodities and available goods in Cairo at the time. From Giuliana, Lane-Poole

<sup>27</sup> London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, Stanley Lane-Poole Nominal file, MA/1/L257.



TABLE 1 Antique dealers listed in Cairo's commercial listings, 1890–99 and their declared specialities

Dealer	Type of objects	Year(s) of listing
Assadola Irani	Antiques	1890, 1891, 1896
Herdan	Antiques	1890
Kyticas (Panayotis)	Antiques	1890, 1891, 1896
Pantazi (Elie)	Antiques	1890, 1891, 1896, 1899
Spiliotis	Antiques	1890, 1896
Tano (Nicolas)	Antiques	1890, 1891, 1896
Assadolla Aga	Oriental curiosities	1890, 1891, 1896
Joseph Cohen	Oriental curiosities	1890, 1891, 1896, 1899
Bercovich (J.)	Oriental curiosities	1890, 1891, 1896
Kateb Frères	Oriental curiosities	1890, 1891
Nahabedian (T. & P.)	Oriental wares	1890, 1891, 1896, 1899
Nessim D. Sohami	Oriental curiosities	1891, 1899
Bencitrit (Isaac)	Japanese & Chinese curiosities	1890, 1891, 1896
Carmona (M.)	Chinese curiosities	1896, 1899
Chellaram (H.)	Indian curiosities	1890, 1896
Pohoomull	Indian curiosities	1891, 1896, 1899
Wassiamul Assomull	Indian curiosities	1891, 1896, 1899
Giuliana (Gaspare)	Antiques and furniture making	1890, 1891, 1896, 1899
Hatoun (Elias)	Antiques and furniture making	1890, 1891, 1896
Philip (L. Paul)	Antiques and furniture making	1890, 1891, 1896, 1899
Malluk (E.M.)	Antiques and furniture making	1890, 1891, 1896, 1899
Assadolla Irani	Rugs	1899
Colali (K.)	Rugs	1896
Mohamed Hasan Irani	Rugs	1891, 1896
Mustapha Isaac	Rugs	1891

SOURCES: STÉFANO G. POFFANDI, *INDICATEUR ÉGYPTIEN ADMINISTRATIF ET COMMERCIAL EN USAGE PRÈS LES MINISTÈRES, LES TRIBUNAUX, LES ADMINISTRATIONS DE L'ÉTAT, DES BANQUES, ETC.*, (ALEXANDRIA: IMPR. GÉNÉRALE L. CARRIERE, 1890 AND 1896 EDITIONS); *ANNUAIRE ÉGYPTIEN ADMINISTRATIF ET COMMERCIAL* (CAIRO: G. TEISSONNIÈRE, 1891); MARIO DI S. MIELI, *GUIDE ÉGYPTIEN DU CAIRE, ANNUAIRE ADMINISTRATIF ET COMMERCIAL* (CAIRO: IMP. MOUSSA RODITI, 1899).

bought a “Small Arab room, with meshrebiyehs” (for sixty pounds sterling), further wooden architectural salvage, twelve coloured glass windows and sixty-five tiles. A Gandour Bey (?) sold him objects in ivory; Sebah (most probably the photographer Pascal Sebah) a bronze vase, while various anonymous individuals provided further tiles (170 out of one single house, which equates a surface

of about ten square metres).<sup>28</sup> More tiles were procured from Tano,<sup>29</sup> a Dimitri (?), (Panayotis)

28 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, Stanley Lane-Poole Nominal file, MA/1/L257, Purchases made in Cairo for the South Kensington Museum, 1883. Tiles had an average dimension of 25 cm × 25 cm.

29 Marius Panayotis Tano, the founder in 1870 of one of the oldest and most successful antiquities business in Cairo; Hagen and Ryholt, *The Antiquities Trade*, 266.



FIGURE 42 Pascal Sebah, *Magasin d'antiquités*, undated [c. 1881]. [The shop of antique dealer and cabinet-maker Gaspare Giuliana in Cairo]. Albumen print. 19.69 × 26.04 cm  
MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART, 82.57.71. GIFT OF CHARLES HERMAN

Kyticas, and two British intermediaries. The first was Reverend Greville Chester (1830–92), an Oxford alumnus and ordained clergyman, who used to trade antiques as a side activity, and the second the numismatist Edward Thomas Rogers Bey (1831–84), who was an early advocate of the preservation of Islamic monuments in Egypt.<sup>30</sup> At the time, selling artefacts and supporting

heritage preservation were not seen as contradictory; acquiring such objects was actually considered as a way to keep them from destruction. Of course, this did not always hold true, as we have just seen with the case of broken *qamariyyāt*. In any case, the range of people involved in the trade in Islamic antiques was obviously diverse. They could be dedicated dealers, but also cabinet-makers, a photographer, art lovers and occasional sellers. In this sense, it was still not an institutionalised trade. Remarkably, the deals primarily concerned salvage from old houses. To some collectors, architectural specimens were indeed far more collectable than decorative objects.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole, "Arab art monuments," *The Academy* vi (1874), 354, 361; Warren R. Dawson and Eric P. Uphill, *Who Was Who in Egyptology* (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1995, 3rd edition), 361; Mercedes Volait, *Fous du Caire*, 183, 187.

## 1.2 “Vastly More Important Than Bric-à-Brac”

The dual nature of Giuliana’s business – dealing in antiques and producing Arab style furniture, also termed Arabesque – can best be explained by the culmination of a specific, and somewhat ephemeral, fashion that took Egypt by storm, just as it had gripped France previously: the reuse of historic fragments in new handicrafts. A by-product of the passion for antiques that had seized Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, the second life offered to antiques through their repurposing in modern fittings was to acquire the dimensions of an industry in France from the 1880s. The technique came to be known as *clunisienne* in an explicit reference to the Musée de Cluny in Paris, a medieval mansion that had been refurbished and refurnished anew by the collector and archaeologist Alexandre Du Sommerard (1779–1842). He is credited as the inventor of a practice consisting of combining old fragments and new Revival parts to produce historicist pieces, that is to say modern fittings with an authentic old flavour. The procedure was particularly effective for furniture. It allowed for the creation of a new sofa out of an old armchair (by cutting it in two parts and inserting a new piece in the middle), or a cabinet out of loose panels. The (re)creation was not meant to be hidden; it was not, technically speaking, a forgery. This type of work strived to satisfy a demand for old items that was so vigorous that there were no longer sufficient originals to fulfil it.<sup>31</sup>

The technique *clunisienne* reached Egypt quite early on. As seen in Chapter 1, a number of items of composite nature mixing old and new material were presented by Egypt at the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris. Among them was the display console designed for the Khedive, which included a large historic panel of wooden marquetry. (Fig 22 and 23, Chapter 1) The doors of the Khedivial pavilion were partially made of historic panels, such as

Ottoman roundels. The console and doors thus represent the earliest known examples of mixed-period Islamic artefacts from Egypt in the nineteenth century, and it is telling that the Egyptian ruler had destined them for Paris, either as artistic model to follow or as evidence of on-going craftsmanship. A “restored ancient window” was presented by the cabinet-maker Giuseppe Parvis in the class of luxury furniture, along with windows with coloured glass and historic panels made of carved ivory.<sup>32</sup> Among the items sent to Paris in 1867 by Husayn Fahmi, also mentioned in Chapter 1, was a “modern French table” with a top made of thirty-one carved panels from the pulpit of the Mosque of Altinbugha al-Maridani (fourteenth century). This piece of furniture was among the ones purchased by the South Kensington Museum in 1867–69.<sup>33</sup> It is no longer possible to view it, as the table was deaccessioned in 1939 under the motive that it was largely “made up of modern ingredients,” besides being “an unwieldy and cumbrous object,” and hence “not suitable for exhibition.”<sup>34</sup> It was consequently sold on 6 June 1939 at Stevens auction rooms as no. 83 with the description of “a large circular top Moorish table, inlaid ivory on octagonal stand.”<sup>35</sup> Contrary to what is commonly assumed, entering a museum has not been a guarantee of eternal life for the artefact, and gone with this table were the precious Mamluk carved polygons. Tastes, space constraints and display strategies within museums not strictly tied to inalienable collections, as is generally the case in Great Britain apart from major institutions such as the British Museum, do shift overtime. Accidental losses also happen in inalienable collections. The work of keeping safe decontextualised art is demanding.

At a later international fair, the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, another composite

31 Manuel Charpy, “Le théâtre des objets, Espaces privés, culture matérielle et identité bourgeoise. Paris, 1830–1914” (PhD diss., Tours University, 2010), 536–38.

32 Edmond, *L’Égypte à l’Exposition universelle*, 335.

33 London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1049–1869.

34 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, MA/50/2/35: Departmental Boards of Survey, Furniture and woodwork (1935–1939), Policy File.

35 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, MA/50/2/35: Stevens’s auction rooms, Catalogue of sale no. 15 547, 5.

piece displayed among the Egyptian exhibits caused something of a sensation. The object was presented by Egypt's "National Museum" (i.e. the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities) in class no. 452 devoted to inlaid work in wood and metal.<sup>36</sup> It consisted of a minbar door reconstructed out of detached ivory carved polygons, re-mounted onto a modern board following a sixteen-branch star pattern. An inscription at the bottom of the door bore the name of Sultan al-Zahir Barquq (r. 1382–89 and 1390–99). Strikingly odd to the modern beholder, the work was considered a genuine fourteenth-century piece and valued at the astonishing and extravagant price of \$14,000.<sup>37</sup> It was bought and donated to the Boston's newly-established Museum of Fine Arts by an amateur Egyptologist who was interested in providing American art students with examples of good design and delicate workmanship.<sup>38</sup> Other (plainer) composite doors were proposed by Parvis in the class of "Heavy Furniture,"<sup>39</sup> (Fig. 43) similar examples of which (doors and cabinets) can be viewed today in the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation that opened in Cairo in 2016; others are displayed in the Islamic gallery of the modest Archaeological Museum of Cairo University. They adorn many an interior; some have appeared in recent auctions. (Fig. 44 and 45) Although never studied *per se*, this Revival production, intermixed with historic

material, was not inconsiderable. It deserves proper research.

As we shall see (Chapter 4), the principle of integrating historic components into modern design was extended from furniture to architecture by French expatriates residing in Cairo in the 1870s. Among them was architect Ambroise Baudry whose specialty became architectural reuse. He designed several houses, including his own, along the formula of recycling Islamic salvage for surface decoration. A mention in his correspondence evidences that as early as 1872, a stock of old mashrabiya and cupboards was being purchased for the house he was designing in Cairo for Baron Alphonse Delort de Gléon (1843–99), another recent French resident in Egypt and an early collector of Islamic art.<sup>40</sup>

While strongly impacted by the Cluny model and vogue, the reuse of Islamic salvage was by no means an exclusively French phenomenon. In his recollections of purchases made in the Middle East, the American collector and designer Lockwood de Forest (1850–1932), who was to make a living out of reviving Indian woodcarving for interior decoration and furniture in the United States, wrote:

When I was in Cairo and Damascus in 1876 and again in 1882, I had bought such things to preserve them where ever I could. I considered the architectural specimens of buildings and interiors vastly more important for our Museums than the bric-à-brac usually collected and called objects of fine arts. Such things as house fronts balconies doors paneling [sic] of walls and cuttings are very bulky and require space to store them. For years I have been collecting such things as I thought the Metropolitan Museum should have. I had filled my own houses full and in some cases loaned to different museums. I had tied up

36 United States Centennial Commission, *International Exhibition of 1876 Official Catalogue* (Philadelphia: Centennial Catalogue Company, 1876), 236.

37 *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876, What We Saw, How We Saw it*, Part II, *A Tour through the Main Building* (Philadelphia: S.T. Souder & Co, 1876), 36.

38 Boston, Museum of Fine arts, 77.1; Laura Weinstein et al., *Ink, silk & gold: Islamic art from the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2015), 49.

39 United States Centennial Commission, *International Exhibition of 1876*, 236–37. On Parvis's Mamluk style furniture, Mercedes Volait, "Goût de la réplique et art de la reprise: le mobilier 'de style arabe' au Caire après 1860," in *D'une rive à l'autre: patrimoines croisés*, eds. Sylvia Naef, Pauline Nerfin and Nadia Radwan (Genève: Slatkine, 2018), 223–34.

40 Private collection, Letter of Eugène Picard to Ambroise Baudry, Cairo, 20 January 1871 [sic for 1872].



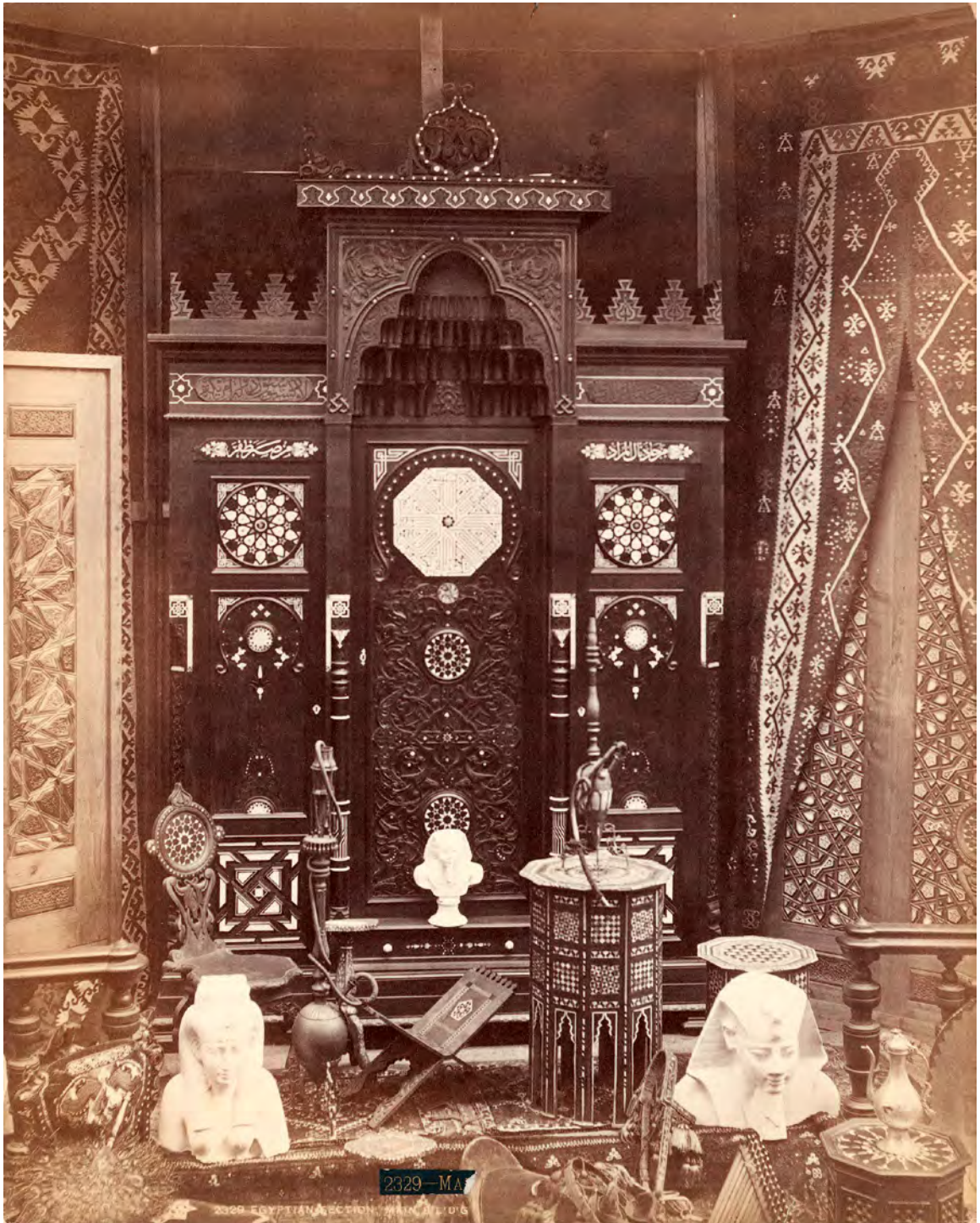


FIGURE 43 Centennial Photographic Company, *Egyptian section in main building*. [Exhibits by Giuseppe Parvis at the Egyptian section of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia]. Silver albumen print. 26 × 21 cm  
 FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, PARKWAY CENTRAL LIBRARY, PRINT AND PICTURE COLLECTION, C022329





FIGURE 44 Cupboard with historic panels, possibly made by the Jacovelli brothers, third half of the nineteenth century, standing in a Cairene building  
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, 2017

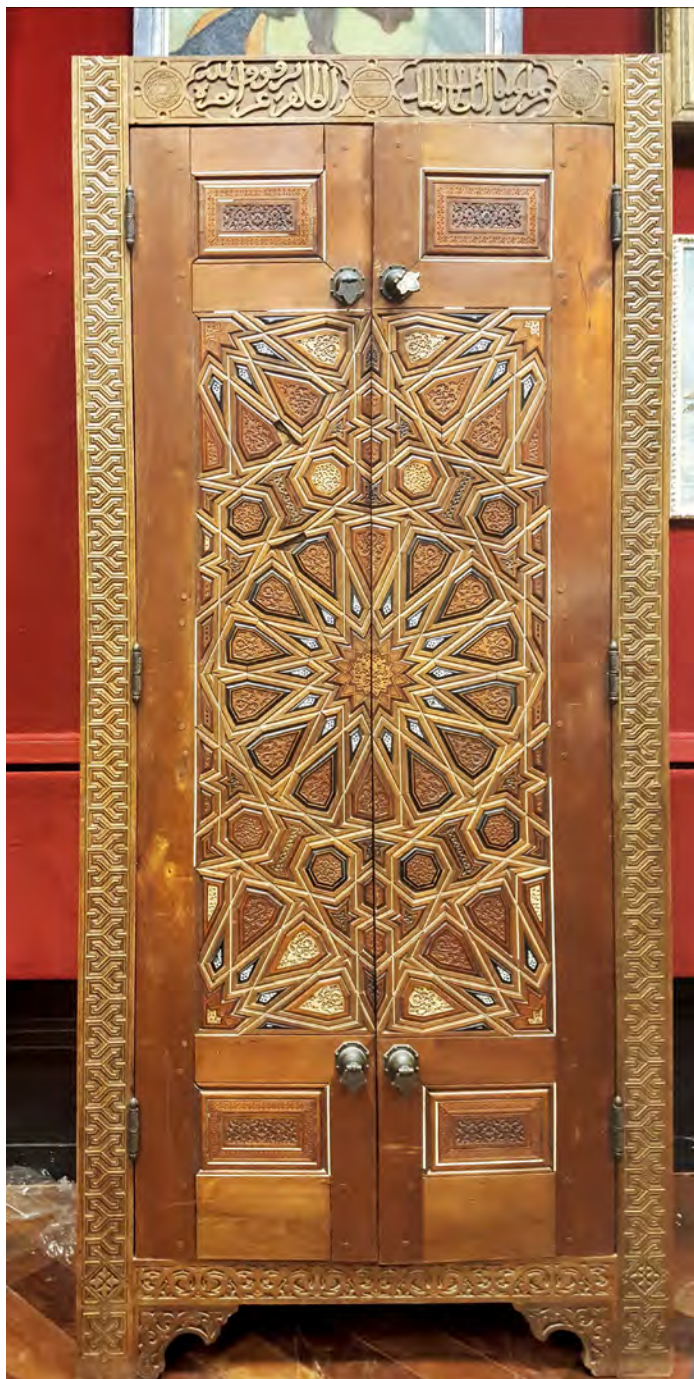


FIGURE 45 Mamluk style cupboard from the collection of Ernest de Blignières, made in Cairo c. 1880. Auctioned by Ader Nordmann on 23 May 2017 (lot 296) in Paris, hammer price €38,000. Current location unknown  
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, 2017

quite a large amount of my money in such things.<sup>41</sup>

He too repurposed what he bought and brought back home in the interiors he designed, including his own apartment and showroom in New York, on 9 East 17th Street, where several walls were fully tiled with Damascene specimens.<sup>42</sup> (Fig. 46 and 47).

In short, before Islamic antiques became, in the 1890s, an established trade with recommended dealers and identifiable shops in the bazaars, diverse types of transactions, made by people with renowned flair, had already taken place. It could consist of merchandise being offered at home to exclusive collectors or opportunities to purchase salvage from willing providers. For *connoisseurs*, the institutionalisation of the market actually signalled the end of fruitful procurements. On 4 December 1881, the scholar Arthur Rhoné (1836–1910) reported to Byzantinist Gustave Schlumberger (1844–1929) that the “[Cairo’s] bazaars were empty: not a single tile left, not one old piece of brass available.”<sup>43</sup> According to Baudry, who had become an expert buyer, the market was furthermore highly volatile, with daily fluctuations and unpredictable supply:

Le bazar est essentiellement journalier, un jour tout abonde dans le sens qu’on désire, tout s’écoule et des années se passent avant que la veine se rouvre. Actuellement le bazar en est réduit aux rebuts de Constantinople, aux faux poignards ou haches d’armes de Tiflis, aux faux cuivres de Damas, aux chandeliers découpés à jour et autres horreurs dont je me détourne avec mépris.<sup>44</sup>

Visual depictions of typical bad imitations being offered to European tourists at Cairo bazaars nicely complement Baudry’s observation. (Fig. 48) The scene painted by Nicola Forcella (1868–1911) captures with humour a group of tourists, looking very out of place, and encouraged on by their dragoman, on the verge of buying over-priced merchandise. Depicting artefacts for sale became a favourite topic of the Orientalist genre of painting. The Austrian artist Ludwig Deutsch (1855–1935) particularly delighted in the theme during the 1890s.<sup>45</sup>

In 1875, the best rugs were already to be had in Paris, as Lockwood de Forest discovered when he visited *Au Bon Marché*, the newly-built department store that had opened on Rue de Sèvres in 1872. He had never seen “so many in one place,” and most were “perfect beauties.”<sup>46</sup> The store had been sell-

41 Washington, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Lockwood de Forest papers, 1858–1980, Box 1, folder 63, Handwritten draft of Indian Domestic Architecture, circa 1919, Part 4, view 75 (foliated 286).

42 Roberta A. Mayer, *Lockwood de Forest: Furnishing the Gilded Age with a Passion for India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press), 2008; Damascene tiles from the Lockwood de Forest collection can be viewed at the website of dealer Anthony Slayter-Ralph [<https://anthony-slayter-ralph.com/islamic-tiles/index2.html>], accessed on 13 March 2021.

43 Paris, Institut de France, Correspondance Schlumberger, Ms 4250, Letter no. 14: “Les bazars sont vides: plus une seule faïence, un seul cuivre ancien. En ce genre aussi on verra de grandes choses; dans dix ans, on ne verra plus rien!”

44 Cairo, Scientific archives of Institut français d’archéologie orientale, Fonds Rhoné, no. 34, Letter of Ambroise Baudry to Arthur Rhoné, 19 January 1885: “The bazaar operates on a daily basis. One day, there could be an abundance of what one is looking for, and then years could pass before the flow begins once more. Nowadays, the bazaar is mostly limited to leftovers from Constantinople, sham daggers from Tiflis, fake brass from Damascus, cut-out brass candlesticks and other horrors that I discard with contempt.” [My translation].

45 Many are now in the collection of Egyptian businessman Shafik Gabr and illustrated in Parry, *Orientalist Lives*.

46 Washington, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Lockwood de Forest papers, 1858–1980, Box 2, Folder 28, Travel Journal for Europe and the Middle East, 1875–76, Entry for 20 November 1875.





FIGURE 46 Damascene tiles from the Lockwood de Forest collection, brought to the US in 1876 or 1882. Albumen print. No dimensions provided  
 WASHINGTON, DC, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, LOCKWOOD DE FOREST PAPERS, 1858–1980,  
 BOX 3, FOLDER 35, F. 6



FIGURE 47 A tiled corner with Damascene specimens at Lockwood de Forest's house, 9 East 17th Street, New York, designed in 1887. Albumen print. No dimensions provided  
 WASHINGTON, DC, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, LOCKWOOD DE FOREST PAPERS, 1858–1980,  
 BOX 3, FOLDER 32, F. 1





FIGURE 48 Nicola Forcella, *Dans le souk aux cuivres*, undated (c. 1890). [Tourists at the Coppersmiths' bazaar in Cairo]. Oil on canvas. 48 × 72.5 cm  
 AUCTIONED AT SOTHEBY'S PARIS ORIENTALIST SALE, 24 OCTOBER 2007, LOT 26. CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN

ing Oriental rugs almost since its opening.<sup>47</sup> It had agents sent on annual tours to Turkey (Smyrna in particular), Egypt, Armenia and Iran to buy and ship stock to Paris. (Fig. 49) The store boasted special galleries for “Tapis d’Orient” and organised major sales every fall.<sup>48</sup> A rival store, *Les Magasins du Louvre*, had a fine selection as well. Well-established carpet dealers in Cairo were soon to market their best pieces directly to these giant retailers, as Baudry observed in 1885 about a

merchant named Abdallah in the Khan al-Khalili.<sup>49</sup> Known as the most successful carpet dealer in the bazaar at the time, this man is most probably the one featuring in the series “Le Caire pittoresque: photographies d’après nature” published by photographers Carlo Naya and Otto Schoefft after 1874.<sup>50</sup> (Fig. 50) This is a further example which

47 Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869–1920* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 50; 168–74.

48 *Au Bon Marché, Grande exposition et mise en vente des tapis de l’Inde, de la Perse, de la Turquie, du Maroc et de la Syrie* (catalogue) (Paris: Boucicaud et fils, 1876).

49 Cairo, Archives scientifiques de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, Fonds Rhoné, no. 34, Letter of Ambroise Baudry to Arthur Rhoné, 19 January 1885: “Ce vieux coquin d’Abdallah lui-même ne fait plus rien qu’avec les grands magasins de Paris;” Arthur Rhoné, *L’Égypte à petites journées, Le Caire d’autrefois* (Paris: Henri Jouve, 1910), 268.

50 The print kept at the Met is a close variant of the view no. 44 included by Carlo Naya and Otto Schoefft in their series “Le Caire pittoresque;” see Felix Thürlemann, *Das Haremsfenster: zur fotografischen Eroberung Ägyptens im 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016), 63;



FIGURE 49 *Au Bon Marché, Tapis français et orientaux*, c. 1878. Chromolithograph  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE,  
D 11246

demonstrates that, by the mid-1870s, the golden age of Cairo's bazaars for antique hunting had well and truly passed.

### 1.3 *From Abū Antīqa ...*

The commercial life of historic artefacts in Damascus follows a different pattern, or at the very least prompted a distinct narrative. Mentions of authentic antique dealing in the city appear much earlier than in Cairo. The earliest occurrence identified so far is in a traveller's account written by French banker and historian, Baron Fernand de Schickler (1835–1909). A whole chapter

(Chapter x) records a visit to the bazaars made on 9 November 1858.<sup>51</sup> The tour ends by introducing readers to a famous character nicknamed “*Père des antiquités*” [Father of Antiques] by European travellers. The sobriquet is a literal translation of the expression *abū antiqa*, meaning in colloquial Arabic literally “father of antiques,” but figuratively used to qualify someone who knows about antiques and possesses such goods. It should be emphasised that this is the use of an Arabicised version of the Latin *antica*, instead of the classical Arabic *athar*, to designate historic vestiges and artefacts. Schickler reports most vividly on the

Paris, Bnf, Estampes et photographie, oeuvre de Naya and Schoefft, EO-250 (1).

51 Fernand Schickler, *En Orient; souvenirs de voyage, 1858–1861* (Paris: Michel Levy, 1863), 107–18.





FIGURE 50 Carlo Naya and Otto Schoefft, *Marchand de tapis* [The merchant Abdallah at the carpet bazaar in Cairo], after 1874. Albumen print. 28.2 × 22 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 2000.179 A, B

ways the dealer operated.<sup>52</sup> He would come daily at lunch time to the guesthouse where all foreigners in town then lodged, an inn installed in an old house that was managed by a Greek former dragoon named Dimitri Kara.<sup>53</sup> Seated at the end of the table, Abu Antiqua would display choice pieces: jewellery, a dagger, an intaglio stone, an engraved tray. Eventually, privileged customers would be taken to his house, adjoining the hotel. In a room opening onto the courtyard, objects sat on simple wooden shelves. Deals were made in a separate room (the typical *t̄wān* of Damascene houses,

overlooking the courtyard?), to where objects were only brought one by one. Endless bargaining, with expressive pantomime, would take place for a few selected pieces. Only at the end of the visit, when the purchase was concluded, could Schickler wander more freely across the multiple rooms of the house which were packed with things, “from splendid old Chinese wares to Persian rugs.”<sup>54</sup>

Under the alternate spellings of Abú Antiká,<sup>55</sup> Abu Antica,<sup>56</sup> Abou-Antica,<sup>57</sup> Abou Antiqua,<sup>58</sup> or Abou Antik,<sup>59</sup> the man features in numerous accounts recording visits dated 1858 to 1871; all concur on his strong personality and astute commercial ways. According to Schickler, his first name was Abd-el-Kader, as the famous Algerian emir exiled in Damascus since 1855 was named.<sup>60</sup> This was in fact about the sole Arabic name that was familiar to French people at the time; unsurprisingly, the dealer appears in another account under the name of Abdallah.<sup>61</sup> Schickler recalled

54 Schickler, *En Orient*, 114.

55 Isabel Burton, *The Inner life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land: from my Private Journal* (London: Henry S. King & Co, 1875), 1: 86.

56 Karl F. Werner, *Hof im Hause des Scheich Bender, vulgo Abu Antica in Damaskus* [*The court of the house of Shaykh Bender, a.k.a Abu Antica, in Damascus*], water-colour exhibited in 1866 in Leipzig.

57 Marcos Antonio De Macedo, *Pèlerinage aux Lieux Saints, suivi d'une excursion dans la Basse Egypte, en Syrie et à Constantinople* (Paris: Librairie internationale, 1867), 364; Vicomte de Savigny de Moncorps, *Journal d'un voyage en Orient 1869–1870. Égypte-Syrie-Constantinople* (Paris: Hachette, 1873), 172; John Dibblee Crace, *Letters from Egypt and Syria*, 1: fol. 281 (London, Victoria and Albert archive, AAD/2001/6/328).

58 Jean-Louis Andral *et al.*, eds., *Album de voyage: Des artistes en expédition au pays du Levant* (Paris: Rmn/Afaa, 1993), 181.

59 *Damas et le Liban: extraits du journal d'un voyage en Syrie au printemps de 1860* (par le comte de Paris), (Londres: W. Jeffs, 1861), 8, 11–12, 50.

60 Schickler, *En Orient*, 112.

61 *Damas et le Liban*, 8. No match to either a relevant “Abd al-Qādir” or “Abdallah” can be identified in the Damascene prosopography worked out in Linda Schatkowski Schlicher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985).

52 Schickler, *En Orient*, 112–5.

53 Initially based in Beirut, where he had already managed a hotel, Kara had moved to Damascus in 1856; see James Lewis Farley, *Two Years in Syria* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1858), 282.

an aged “Turkish merchant” wearing a white turban and impeccable robe; he might have been born around 1800 or even before. Beside his business in antiques, he was allegedly tasked with the control of the souks.

Isabel Burton, the wife of diplomat and Orientalist Richard Burton (1821–90), who lived in Damascus in 1870–71, devoted an even longer chapter to dealings with Abu Antiqua. It is twelve years later, and the merchant, also referred to as “Shaykh Bandar,” is now a “venerable white-bearded” man, “with an eye full of cunning, the manners of a gentleman,” but occasionally bad-tempered and rather tough in business.<sup>62</sup> Artists were fascinated with the sight of his *bric-à-brac*. The Dutch artist Wilhem de Famars Testas mentioned spending two mornings sketching the courtyard of the house of “Abou Antiqua,” on 4 and 6 May 1868;<sup>63</sup> two years earlier, the German water-colourist Karl Werner had exhibited in Leipzig his own view of the house *Hof im Hause des Scheich Bender, vulgo Abu Antica in Damaskus*.<sup>64</sup> One visitor admitted that purchases at Abu Antiqua were mostly a pretext to have a look at objects piled up in barely lit rooms, a mesmerising sight.<sup>65</sup> In any case, the venerable dealer was a popular figure.

In two references at least, the title of “Shaykh/Sheikh Bandar” is associated with his name, while Schickler speaks of Abu Antiqua as a “*marchand turc préposé à la surveillance du grand bazar*” [a Turkish merchant in charge of the surveillance of the grand bazaar]. Both mentions, however, are erroneous and misleading. “Shaykh/Sheikh Bandar” is in fact an old misspelling for *shah bandar*, in full *shah bandar al-tujjar*, a term of Persian origin used for the head of the merchants’ guilds, or “*prévôt des marchands*” in French sources.<sup>66</sup> These guilds were independent from the *muhtasib*,

the supervisor of the bazaars. The function of *shah bandar* was generally performed by merchants of considerable wealth and influence, traditionally engaged in the trade with the Hijaz in spices, coffee, and luxury goods.<sup>67</sup>

That a *shah bandar* – if he had actually been one? –, or any merchant for that matter, would shift to antiques is a clear sign of commercial reconfiguration. As a matter of fact, Damascus had been brought into the orbit of European commerce as early as the 1820s. The nine-year Egyptian rule over Syria starting in 1831 accelerated the trend. In 1840, about 120 large merchant houses, primarily Muslim, but also Christian and Jewish, specialised in European trade. The markets were dominated by British goods, which were retailed by a hundred shopkeepers.<sup>68</sup> By the 1850s the penetration of European goods had provoked a severe crisis of the local economy, culminating in sectarian violence in 1860. Goods from abroad proved cheaper and more appealing. Damascene manufacturers soon lost their luxury markets to European imports; a number of crafts declined and ultimately disappeared. The steamship and the Suez Canal had also both badly affected pilgrimage traffic. Alternate trade routes and manufacturing lines were subsequently figured out. Expanding into commerce with Damascus’ hinterland represented one strategy; devising new lines of production was another.<sup>69</sup> Antique dealing might have been a way, however trivial, to adjust to the new situation. It had the double advantage of gifting a second life to commodities that had fallen out of fashion locally, while accommodating the European unquenchable thirst for Middle

62 Burton, *The Inner life of Syria*, 1, 86.

63 Andral et al., *Album de voyage*, 181.

64 Attempts to locate the work have proven unsuccessful so far.

65 *Damas et le Liban*, 12.

66 “Schëych Bender” in Jean de Thévenot, *Suite du “Voyage de Levant”* (Paris C. Angot, 1674), 67.

67 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, 11, 580.

68 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, “A fractured society: Ottoman Damascus in the mid-19th century,” in *Histoire, archéologies, et littératures du monde musulman: Mélanges en l’honneur d’André Raymond*, eds. Ghislaine Alleaume, Sylvie Denoix, and Michel Tuchscherer (Cairo: Publications de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2009), 193–204 (196–97).

69 Donald Quataert, “Ottoman handicrafts and industry in the age of European industrial hegemony, 1800–1914,” *Review* 11, no. 2 (1988): 169–78.



Eastern curios. Another related response was the production of “Oriental goods” for European and North American markets, which nevertheless also became goods for local consumption.<sup>70</sup>

#### 1.4 ... To the Damascene Antikjī

That antique selling became a thriving business in Damascus is confirmed by the recorded existence of a specific craft established under the name of *antikjī* in the Arabic “Encyclopaedia on Damascene crafts” [*Qamus al-sinaʿat al-shamiyya*], drafted from 1891 to 1905 by three learned Syrian gentlemen.<sup>71</sup> (There is no such equivalent profession known for Cairo). The noun is constructed from a derivation of the (Latin) word *antica* coupled with the Arabicised version of the Turkish occupational suffix *-jī* – indicating a trade or profession. Again, it is a good illustration of the expanding hybrid lexicon juggling with *lingua franca*, Turkish and Arabic at the time. The text explains that the *antikjī* is someone that sells antiques [*antika*], “by which is meant *āthār qadīm*” [literally, ancient traces]. The authors of the *Qāmūs* attribute the flourishing of the new trade to the eagerness of the *al-Franj* [literally Franks, i.e. Europeans] to buy very old wares, “especially the ones going back to distant times and generations, and with historic associations.”<sup>72</sup> They list among the desired valuables old textiles, rugs, tiles, brass vessels, wool and arms. Moreover, they connect the

development of the antique market to the growing numbers of tourists that were attracted to Baalbek and Palmyra, among other archaeological sites. They chart the chain of intermediaries by taking the example of an old copper bowl from Mecca, bought for a rupee or half riyal, resold to a Beirut *antikjī* for thirteen gold francs (instead of the twenty francs initially asked for), who in turn sold it to a “Frankish tourist” for more than ten times that price (150 gold francs). They add that “many people grew wealthy, especially during the pilgrimage season in Jerusalem when many visitors come from Europe.” Furthermore, they observe that the shops dealing in antiques also sold “imitations of old things” [*taqlīd al-qadīm*], as well as “products of current handicrafts [*al-ashghāl al-jadīda*] with beautiful design and forms, and all are eagerly sought after by Franks.” Some merchants “have made it a trade, and have appointed an agent abroad to whom they send merchandise.”<sup>73</sup>

This was precisely the case of the Habra brothers, who appear in the purchase records of the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1894 to 1927.<sup>74</sup> According to their letterhead on an invoice dated 1894, the firm was established in 1836. The Habra brothers belonged to a Greek-Catholic family from Damascus;<sup>75</sup> they carried out their business “in Eastern art treasures” from London, at least from the 1880s, working through the humorous telegraphic address of “Kuskus, London.” They presented themselves as both “manufacturers and direct importers of Oriental Works of Art” and could provide goods as different as “Turkish and Syrian embroideries, fancy furniture inlaid with mother of pearl, Benares ware, Moucharabia, Persian Brass trays, antique rugs,” etc. They developed branches in Cairo and Damascus (where

70 James A. Reilly, “From Workshops to Sweatshops: Damascus Textiles and the World-Economy in the Last Ottoman Century,” *Review* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 199–213.

71 The work was published much later: Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Qāsimī, Kalīl al-ʿAzm, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Qāsimī, Zāfir Qāsimī, *Qamus al-sinaʿat al-shamiyya* [*Dictionary of Damascene crafts*] (Paris: Mouton, 1960).

72 Muḥammad al-Qāsimī *et al.*, *Qamus*, 40–1. The entry is partially translated in Charles Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent, 1800–1914: A Documentary Economic History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 388; also Marcus Milwright, “An Arabic description of the activities of antique dealers in late ottoman Damascus,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 143, no. 1 (2011): 8–18.

73 Muhammad al-Qasimi *et al.*, *Qamus*, 40–1.

74 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, Habra Brothers Nominal file, MA/1/H16.

75 One was named Cesar and went through a contentious divorce in Britain in 1914; “A Turk’s Marriage at Damascus,” *The Times*, Wednesday 25 February 1914, Issue 40456, p. 3.

their factories were located).<sup>76</sup> Their dealings with the South Kensington Museum, however, mostly concerned salvage. They offered 135 Old Damascus tiles to the museum in 1894 for £100 (bargained down to seventy-seven pounds sterling), and the following year an “antique Damascus fountain (damaged and repaired)” for seventy-two pounds sterling.<sup>77</sup> Five years later, they managed to sell the museum eighteen panels of marble and semi-precious stone mosaics (“all more or less damaged”), that had been removed “to considerable expense” from an old house in Damascus, for the negotiated price of seventy-five pounds sterling.<sup>78</sup> One suspects that Revival furniture may have been a far more successful branch of their trade. It proved the case for a similar firm, albeit better known: the one operated by the connected families of Tarazi (also spelled Tarrazi) and Terzis.

## 2 The *kursī* as Global Commodity

Originating from Edessa (present-day Turkey), the Tarazis allegedly had settled in Damascus in the early 1800s. As their surname suggests (*Tarazī*), the family’s skills were initially in tailoring, although their name is spelled in a slightly different way than the Arabic word identifying a tailor [*tarzī*].<sup>79</sup> Part of the family relocated to Beirut after the 1860 massacres, while another fled to Athens where it took the name of Terzis, a Hellenised version of Tarazi. Their investment in “Oriental goods” in Beirut came shortly afterwards. In 1862, Dimitri Tarazi opened a shop named *Au Musée oriental*,

while his brother André Terzis established *Au Magasin oriental* when back from Athens in 1868. Both shops marketed similar commodities, i.e. an assortment of manufactured silks, embroideries, Oriental rugs, mashrabiya and “artistic furniture of Oriental style,” besides old Persian carpets, old embroideries, and antiques.<sup>80</sup> In contrast from the Habras, the goods were not manufactured by the brothers themselves, but by another pair of brothers, Georges and Selim Nassan in Damascus.<sup>81</sup> The factory of the latter was probably created at about the same time (early 1870s?), as the dates of Georges Nassan (1851–1916) suggest.<sup>82</sup> It became renowned, under the name of *Grande fabrique de meubles et objets orientaux* [Large workshop for Oriental furniture and artefacts], for its works in tapestry, brass and furniture, exporting as far as Algiers in the 1880s,<sup>83</sup> as well as Paris, London, Cairo (Fig. 51), Tunis and Istanbul.<sup>84</sup> The Tarazis also expanded geographically at rapid pace. Dimitri Tarazi opened a store in Jerusalem in 1895, and four years later another one in Damascus, while his brother André developed in Jerusalem from 1904 onwards. Both opened branches in Cairo in 1909.

One successful example of Revival furniture that achieved global fame through the Tarazis and the like, was the occasional table known as *kursī* in Arabic. Edward William Lane describes the item in his *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* as a decagonal stand meant to receive upon it a round tray [*sanīyya*], the two pieces combined forming

76 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, Nominal files, MA/1/H16, Letter to Mr Skinner, dated 12 January 1905.

77 London, Victoria and Albert Archive Nominal files, MA/1/H16, Report on objects received from Habra brothers, 29 October 1894.

78 London, Victoria and Albert Archive Nominal files, MA/1/H16, Report on 17 Pieces of mosaic (all more or less damaged), bought from Habra Brothers, 7 April 1899. 773 to 783–1899.

79 Camille Tarazi, *Vitrine de l’Orient. Maison Tarazi, fondée à Beyrouth en 1862* (Beirut: Editions de la Revue Phénicienne, 2015).

80 Tarazi, *Vitrine de l’Orient*, 8.

81 Tarazi, *Vitrine de l’Orient*, 26.

82 Death announcement in *L’Écho d’Alger*, 1st November 1916, 3, stating that Georges Nassan was Catholic. According to Stefan Weber, the Nassans were Armenians; Weber, *Damascus*, 11: 94.

83 Advertisement for the trade of “Dimitri et Simon Nassan, Objets d’Orient (Armes, nacre, soierie, broderies, Tapis et cuivreries),” *Alger-Saison*, 5 February 1884, n.p.

84 Wolf-Dieter Lemke, *Représentations de l’Orient: imagerie populaire fin de siècle* (Beirut: Dar en Nahar, 2004), 161.



FIGURE 51 Walter Tyndale, *The store of Nassan*.  
Chromolithograph  
WALTER TYNDALE, *AN ARTIST IN EGYPT* 1912:  
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the *sufra* or table where Cairenes ate.<sup>85</sup> At the time of Lane's survey (1820–30s), the ordinary Egyptian *kursī* was fifteen inches high (38 cm), had ten legs and was inlaid with mother-of-pearl, tortoise-shell or bone, along a chess board marquetry pattern.

There is scant information on the history of this type of object, let alone its regional distribution. The earliest known *kursī* is attributed to the fourteenth century by the style of its carving; it was found in the Mosque of Umm al-Sultan Shaʿban,

85 Edward William Lane, *Account of the Manners and Customs*, 1860, 146–47.

built in 1368, in Cairo.<sup>86</sup> However, it bears little resemblance to Lane's table. It is much higher and endowed with small openings fitted with turned wood. An early view of objects piled up in Cairo's Arab Museum (presently the Museum of Islamic Art) depicts several such furnishings besides the one salvaged from Umm al-Sultan Shaʿban Mosque (visible at the left of the image). (Fig. 52) Their function is still unknown. They were long said to be furniture to house Qurʾans but their size makes them unfit for that purpose.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, tray stands did exist in the region well before the nineteenth century but they were made of metal, bore names of emirs and dignitaries, and were consequently exclusive objects, not a common part of domestic life.<sup>88</sup> To add to the confusion, Islamic art historians also used the term *kursī* to refer to the large item of furniture in many Mamluk mosques in Cairo which combined a place to read the Qurʾan over a cupboard for storing the holy book, a structure also known as a *dikka*.<sup>89</sup> In contemporary Egyptian dialect, *kursī* means primarily a seat, and particularly a chair.

Wooden side tables, mostly decagonal and with geometrical patterns, can be spotted in the iconography of Cairene interiors produced all throughout the nineteenth century. Works by Émile Prisse d'Avennes (after a drawing by Ippolito Caffi dated

86 In the collection of the Museum of Islamic art in Cairo, but not on view; Lane-Poole, *Art of the Saracens*, 143–44, fig. 66; Colonel F.S. Leslie, "The Turned Lattice Work of Egypt," *Journal of the Society of Architects* 4, no. 41 (March 1911): 167–77.

87 On their use as holders of objects or manuscripts, Sophie Makariou and Carine Juvin, "The Louvre kursi: Function and meaning of Mamluk stands," in Doris Behrens-Abouseif, ed., *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria: Evolution and Impact* (Goettingen: V&R Unipress, 2012), 37–53. According to Doris Abouseif (personal communication, March 2019), they might have served as incense burners.

88 Ladan Akbarnia et al., *The Islamic World: A History in Objects*, 148.

89 Gaston Migeon, "The cover of a kursi," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 2, no. 6 (August 1903): 344, 347.





FIGURE 52 Garabed Lekejian & Co., *Musée arabe, 4ème salle, Koursis, vitrail et niche*, c. 1890 [Stands and other artworks in rooms built within the Mosque of al-Hakim, the first premises of Cairo's Arab Museum]. No dimensions provided

NANTES, BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE JACQUES DEMY, FONDS NORMAND, ÉGYPTÉ 2A, 508



1844<sup>90</sup> – Fig. 53), David Roberts (engraving printed in 1855 under the title *The Ghawazee of Cairo*), or Frederick Goodall (watercolour dated 1875),<sup>91</sup> are good examples. An early nineteenth-century *kursī* was donated to the Musée du Louvre in 1856; it had been in the private collection of French collector Charles Sauvageot (1781–1860), one of the men who inspired Balzac to create the character of Cousin Pons, exemplifying the type of art lover bereft of financial means who sacrifices everything to his *mania*.<sup>92</sup> (Fig. 54) The side table greatly resembles Lane’s stand and was most probably a contemporaneous object, if not one which was older by several decades. There is no equivalent visual evidence for the Syrian context. The word *kursī* appears in a few seventeenth-century probate inventories of Damascene denizens, but without a clear-cut definition of its function; the *sufra* then consisted of a piece of leather that was used on the floor and most interiors seem to have been devoid of any furniture, apart from chests to store apparel.<sup>93</sup> It can be inferred that, whatever its genealogy, Lane’s *kursī* characterises an innovation, reflecting a change in manners and etiquette on matters of eating and drinking. Architectural historian Stefan Weber has similarly demonstrated that furniture or décor today deemed traditional

in Damascene homes were in fact the legacy of late Ottoman modernity.<sup>94</sup>

The modern *kursī* acquired various names and shapes while transitioning into a global commodity. It appears indistinctly as a “Turkish stool,” “Syrian coffee table,” “Damascus stool,” “Arabian table,” “tabouret table” (from the French *tabouret* meaning a seat without back), or indeed “Damascus taborette,” in a number of English printed sources. The Syrian version is characterised by floral patterns and sprays. A photograph of a tabouret seller in Damascus c. 1870 only displays models with this typical floral design.<sup>95</sup> The specimen that came with the mid-eighteenth-century Damascus room acquired in 1875 by British architect Caspar Purdon Clarke also bears a design of floral nature and was considered at the time “ordinary nineteenth-century Syrian manufacture.”<sup>96</sup> So do most of the examples staged in a room at the German consulate in Damascus around 1890, probably in the context of a sale promoting local handicraft – an activity still current in diplomatic circles across the Middle East. (Fig. 55) It is very likely that geometric models – in addition to the version with lattice work – were a Cairene specialty, while the ones with vegetal pattern were produced in Damascus, but it is difficult to ascertain provenances in the absence of robust evidence. The available imagery reveals that, whether of the Cairo geometric type or the Damascus floral one, new models adopted many shapes, whether decagonal, octagonal or hexagonal.

90 Mercedes Volait, “Émile Prisse d’Avennes au travail: un art de la collecte et de la compilation,” in *Émile Prisse d’Avennes: un artiste-antiquaire en Égypte au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Mercedes Volait (Cairo: Publications of Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2013), 75–102 (fig. 14, 16).

91 London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 517–1882, *Copt Mother and Child*, signed and dated 1875.

92 Élise Anglade, Musée du Louvre, *Catalogue des boîtes de la section islamique* (Paris: Rmn, 1988), 160; the *kursī* is OA934; André Lorant, *Les Parents pauvres d’Honoré de Balzac, La Cousine Bette, le Cousin Pons* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 262–67.

93 Jean-Paul Pascual, “Meubles et objets domestiques quotidiens des intérieurs damascains du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 55–56, (1990): 197–207.

94 Stefan Weber, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918)*, Proceedings of the Danish Institute in Damascus v (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 1: 304–07; 396–401.

95 Badr El-Hage, *Des Photographes à Damas (1840–1918)* (Paris: Marval, 2000), 145.

96 The room was subsequently sold to the South Kensington Museum in London; Moya Carey, “Appropriating Damascus Rooms: Vincent Robinson, Caspar Purdon Clarke and Commercial Strategy in Victorian London,” in Francine Giese *et al.*, eds., *À l’orientale*, 65–81. The side table is about 16 inches high, or 40 cm (Victoria and Albert Museum, 411q-1880).



FIGURE 53 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Cairene Lady Waited upon by a Galla slave*. Chromolithograph after a watercolour by Ippolito Caffi, dated 1844  
 ORIENTAL ALBUM: CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, AND MODES OF LIFE, IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE, 1848: PL. 10



FIGURE 54 Arthur Henri Roberts, *Vue intérieure d'une des pièces de l'appartement de monsieur Sauvageot*. [A room at the flat of collector Charles Sauvageot]. The *kursī* stands on the left side of the image and is topped by a ewer. Oil on canvas. 48.5 × 59 cm  
PARIS, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, MI861 (CHARLES SAUVAGEOT' BEQUEST, 1856)

Western purchases provide further hints on the social life of the modern *kursī*. The Prussian Prince Herman von Pückler-Muskau had an octagonal stand and matching casket fully inlaid with mother-of-pearl made expressly for him in Egypt during his Near Eastern tour, with the presumable purpose of making his journey more comfortable and enjoyable, in 1834–40.<sup>97</sup> Artists delighted in the portable device. The American Frederic Edwin

Church (1826–1900) brought back at least one “Arabian table” from his stay in the Syrian capital in 1868, and bought a few more in New York in the following decades.<sup>98</sup> Frank Dillon (1823–1909), the British water-colourist, had several in the Eastern style studio he had arranged in London following repeated Egyptian sojourns in the 1850s,

97 Illustrated in *Parkomanie: die Gartenlandschaften des Fürsten Pückler in Muskau, Babelsberg und Branitz*, exhibition curated by Agnieszka Lulinska (Bonn, Munich: Prestel, 2016), 278, fig. 232–234.

98 Hudson (US), Olana New York State Historic Site, inv. OL.1981.690 and OL.1979. 26; Karen Zukowski, *Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site: A History of the Interiors, Thoughts on Their Significance, and Recommendations for Their Restoration* (Hudson, NY: Olana New York State Historic Site, 2001).





FIGURE 55 Félix Bonfils, *Salon du consulat d'Allemagne*, c. 1890. [Staged *karāsi* (pl. of *kursi*) in a room at the German consulate in Damascus]. Albumen print. 23 × 28.2 cm  
CHARENTON-LE-PONT, MÉDIATHÈQUE DE L'ARCHITECTURE ET DU PATRIMOINE, APMFO11799

1860s and 1870s.<sup>99</sup> In 1884, fellow Parisian painters Benjamin-Constant, Emmanuel de Dieudonné, Émile Foubert and Gustave Courtois all had tabouret tables in their studios, mostly of the geometric type.<sup>100</sup> French artist Henri Matisse purchased in 1918 a “*guéridon arabe*” that he used as prop in some compositions.<sup>101</sup> (Fig. 56)

By the late 1870s, the distinctly and easily recognizable Middle Eastern side table could be obtained anywhere. Inaugurated in London in 1875, the department store Liberty and Co had several models in various heights advertised in its first catalogue titled *Eastern Art Manufactures and Decorative Objects* [1881]. All were supplied

99 Illustrated in Georg Ebers, *Egypt: Descriptive, Historical, and Picturesque* (London, Paris & New York: Cassell, Petter Galpin & Co, 1885), 11: 85–6.

100 Pierre Wat, ed., *Portraits d'ateliers. Un album de photographies fin de siècle* (Grenoble: Ellug/INHA/MSH Alpes, 2013), 25, 37, 83, 143.

101 Nice, Musée Matisse, 63.2.131 (former collection of Henri Matisse); *Matisse in the Studio*, eds. Ellen

McBreen and Helen Burnham (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2017), 118. While given as “likely of Tunisian origin,” the decagonal stool (15.5 inches high or about 40 cm) that Matisse acquired definitely in April 1918 from a Parisian dealer closely resembles the Egyptian archetype and can be dated to the early 1800s.





FIGURE 56 Matisse's *guéridon arabe* at the Royal Academy in London in 2017  
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, 2017

by Middle Eastern manufacturers.<sup>102</sup> (Fig. 57) "Noticing the growing appreciation of Cairene goods," another British firm, Rottmann, Strome and Co., while specialised largely in Japonaiserie, opened a department of "Moorish furniture" from Cairo in the 1880s, serviced by a "first class maker of furniture" in the Egyptian capital.<sup>103</sup> In both cases, Parvis' Cairene workshop, founded in 1859, was certainly a major provider; his

<sup>102</sup> Daryl Bennett, *Liberty's Furniture 1875–1915, The Birth of Modern Interior Design* (Suffolk: The Antique collectors' club, 2012), 31, 62.

<sup>103</sup> "Oriental art in St. Mary axe," *The Cabinet maker and Art furnisher*, 1st February 1886, 213–14.

showroom (Fig. 58) displayed models very close to the ones marketed by Liberty and Co or Rottmann & Strome. By 1878, Parvis is known to have been employing no less than fifty workers (one third of them Europeans and the other two thirds local staff).<sup>104</sup> (Fig. 59) The figure had doubled in 1900,<sup>105</sup> and the Italian cabinet-maker was now competing with many other manufacturers, such as the Furino brothers and Giuseppe and Nicola Jacovelli, besides Gaspare Giuliana, Paul Philip and others, already mentioned above. Parvis' production was moreover distributed by the Tarazis in Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem.<sup>106</sup> Whatever the history of the modern *kursī*, the specifics of its crossbreeding between Cairo and Damascus, and the details of its regional outreach, it had become a global fixture by 1900. Its portability contributed much to its wide distribution, as did its evocative quality.

Tourists to the Holy Land no longer needed to dive into the complexities of bargaining at the souks to get their "tabouret table;" they had a selection of available models on offer at the very premises of their hotel in Damascus, as a photograph taken by Bonfils in 1893 evidences.<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, the inlaid Damascene table had become a must-have in the US; shoppers were encouraged by the magazine *Vogue* in 1899 to get "inlaid Damascus taborettes" as "they were \$10" and "much smarter than the usual taborette."<sup>108</sup> Biscuit tins were designed after its shape around 1900, and this

<sup>104</sup> Europeans probably include here Italian, French, Maltese and Greek carpenters, while the two other thirds were defined as "Arabs" in the source – but as well known, these categories could be rather porous; Gustave Delchevalerie, "L'Égypte agricole, industrielle et artistique," 365–452 (434).

<sup>105</sup> Paola Ricco, "Art and luxury in the details: Italian interior decorators in modern Egypt, 1859–1967," in *Building beyond the Mediterranean: studying the archives of European businesses (1860–1970)*, eds. Claudine Piaton et al. (Arles: Honoré Clair, 2012), 157–67.

<sup>106</sup> Tarazi, *Vitrine de l'Orient*, 27.

<sup>107</sup> Bonfils, *Intérieur de l'hôtel Victoria à Damas*, 1893, Albumen print on card, Fuad Debbas collection, EAP 644/1/62.

<sup>108</sup> "Seen in the shops," *Vogue* (New York) 14, no. 5, 2 February 1899, 76.

**Carved and Inlaid Furniture (from Cairo, Damascus and India).**

LIBERTY & CO. LTD.]

"LIBERTY" YULE-TIDE GIFTS.



**No. 1. Carved and Inlaid Mirror.**  
Handsomely carved and inlaid, and with bevelled plate glass. Size 5 feet high by 3 feet 2 inches wide.  
Price £6 6s.



**No. 2. Koran Stand.**  
For holding Books, Periodicals, Music, &c. Inlaid with Mother-o'-pearl.  
Prices 11/6, 15/6, 21/-, 25/-, 31/6, and 37/6



**No. 3. Carved and Inlaid Table.**  
With quaint Oriental and geometrical designs. For Coffee Tables or Palm Stands.

	Price	£	s.	d.
1 ft. 7 ins. high	1	1	0	0
1 " 9 " "	1	7	6	
1 " 11 " "	1	15	0	
2 " 1 " "	2	17	6	



**No. 4. Carved and Inlaid Table.**  
Inlaid with Mother-o'-pearl.

1 ft. 1 in. high	Price	£	s.	d.
1 " 3 " "	1	1	0	0
1 " 8 " "	1	10	0	
1 " 9½ " "	1	17	6	



**No. 5. Inlaid Table.**  
To stand by chair for holding Tea Cup, Lamp, &c.

1 ft. 10 in. high	Price
each.	5/9
Extra quality.	9/6



**No. 6. Carved and Inlaid Table.**  
Elaborately carved and inlaid with Mother-o'-pearl and Ivory. For Coffee or Tea Tables or suitable for Palm Stands.

	Price	£	s.	d.
2 ft. 1 in. high	2	17	6	
2 " 3 " "	3	10	0	
2 " 8 " "	4	4	0	

[Regent Street, London, W.

55

FIGURE 57 Carved and inlaid furniture (from Cairo, Damascus and India) on sale at Liberty's & Co in London in 1895-96  
YULE-TIDE GIFTS: CATALOGUE CONTAINING 274 ILLUSTRATIONS OF EXCLUSIVE AND INEXPENSIVE NOVELTIES, SUITABLE FOR DAINTY PRESENTS, 1895-96: 55





FIGURE 58 Anonymous, *Untitled* [Parvis's showroom in Cairo, c. 1900]. Albumen print. No dimensions provided  
ROBERTO PARVIS' PRIVATE COLLECTION

integration into the packaging industry is a significant index of the popularisation achieved by the Middle Eastern stand.<sup>109</sup> (Fig. 60) British and American occasional tables also adopted its form. Known examples include a hexagonal table made from stained mahogany, with open arched side panels and bent scrolls, dated c. 1895,<sup>110</sup> and a stream-lined stand from Gustav Stickley's Craftsman Workshop in New York manufactured around 1900.<sup>111</sup> (Fig. 61)

109 Michael Franklin, *British Biscuit Tins* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984).

110 London, Museum of the Home, Hexagonal occasional table, 36/1995. The Tonet-like table inspired by the shape of a *kursi* was sadly not reproducible at time of going to press.

111 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Damascus" Plant Stand, M.2000.186.5a–b.

### 3 Market Adjustments

The network of people and situations involved in the trade and consumption of salvage and collectibles in the late Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean delineates a rich panorama that still awaits systematic research. Some sequential order can be attempted from the evidence encountered so far. If there had always been some trade in second-hand goods in Middle Eastern cities, a market for Islamic antiques appears to have been functioning from mid-nineteenth century in Damascus; it developed some two decades later in Cairo. In both cases, antique dealing involved local merchants who had been trading other goods, or had other activities; a number of intermediaries, including hotel managers, also intervened. In this and other respects, antique dealing in the region



FIGURE 59 Giorgios and Constantinis Zangaki, *Menuisiers arabes*, c. 1890. [Arab carpenters]. The view was most probably taken at Parvis' workshop, as the large mirror standing in the background very much resembles a model he exhibited in 1878. Albumen print. 14 × 18 cm  
CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN

did not differ much from the situation in Spain, for instance, where the trade in historic decorative artefacts emerged at about the same time and involved similar profiles.<sup>112</sup> It is important to bear in mind these parallels, when trying to figure out what was happening in the Middle East.

The business attracted foreigners in Egypt, mainly from neighbouring countries such as Greece or Iran, or from more faraway India. The

goods at stake could shift at rapid pace. Metalwork made up a good part of available items in the early days of the antique markets; architectural salvage became predominant from the 1870s, while tiles were not available in vast quantities until a later stage. By the 1880s, the trade in either Cairo or Damascus encompassed the local production of Islamic-style fittings and furnishings.

As a matter of fact, the commerce of curios and the trade in Revival furniture from Cairo and Damascus intersected in many cases. The businesses of the Habras in London and Damascus, Tarazis in Beirut, Gaspere Giuliani in Cairo, as well as stock at the typical Damascene *antikji* are eloquent examples of overlap. Middle Eastern dealers

<sup>112</sup> Élodie Baillet, "Réseaux de collectionneurs et enjeux de patrimonialisation en Europe au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: le baron Davillier, le comte de Valencia de Don Juan et Lady Schreiber" (PhD diss., Paris 1 University, 2020), 209–40.





FIGURE 60 A “Syrian” biscuit tin manufactured by Huntley, Boorne & Stevens for Huntley & Palmers, 1903. The tin was also produced in a “Cairo” version, and a “Kashmir” one. Offset litho printed tinplate, embossed. 16.6 × 18.9 cm  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, M.297–1983. ON SHOW IN THE BRITISH GALLERIES



FIGURE 61 Gustav Stickley’s Craftsman Workshop, “Damascus” Plant Stand, c. 1900. Oak and earthenware tile. 53.98 × 50.8 × 50.8 cm  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM, M.2000.186.5A–B. NOT CURRENTLY ON PUBLIC VIEW

were not the only traders operating both commercial lines in the 1880s and 1890s. As mentioned already, an essential part of Liberty and Co’s activity in London during its early years was in selling “oriental antiques” besides marketing Eastern imports. Only at a later stage would Liberty turn to British-made “Anglo-oriental furniture” and interiors (see Chapter 4), dropping both commercial lines along the way, once the firm started championing the Art Nouveau crafts for which it is mainly renowned today.

The fate of other regional handicrafts such as embroidery can enrich our understanding of the economics involved. In the second half of the nineteenth century, lace had stimulated a brand-new area of handicraft production in Istanbul. Running out of stock of the old lace sought by

European buyers, Istanbul antique dealers fell back to “imitations of the old patterns, and from imitating old patterns, it was one short step to making new patterns,” with yarn imported in large quantities from England, Germany and Austria. “This developed into a rather substantial business involving the antique dealers and women embroiderers, working in their own homes.”<sup>113</sup> The entire production of finished lace was then exported for sale in Paris and London. A reorganised production with new raw material had thus replaced a waning traditional handicraft. An equivalent scenario may have applied to wooden furniture with marquetry, with the additional bonus that it could cater to a domestic demand as well – the *kursi* and

113 Donald Quataert, “Ottoman Handicrafts,” 174–75.

related fixtures were also in use locally. As Revival furniture was initially marketed by antique dealers, its industry may have equally resulted from an exhaustion of the authentic product, although, as already seen, the popular tabouret may have had a short history not going back much earlier than the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The intertwining of the trade in antiques with that in Revival crafts was an attempt to respond to the threats posed by European manufacturing and commerce to late Ottoman regional economies. It was a way to expand stock. The double response – trading antiques and reviving traditional crafts – represents an adjustment to the challenges posed by European exports. The two lines of business were entangled to the point of merging into unique objects: modern furnishings incorporating historic fragments, of which the earlier examples from the region were presented in Paris in 1867 within the framework of the Egyptian participation to the Universal Exposition, by the ruler, as well as the art collector Husayn Fahmi.

The commodification of tangible heritage, to use current idiom, thus constitutes a phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the concept of looting

or plunder, despite what is commonly assumed. It partakes in far broader dynamics, fuelled by asymmetrical financial means. While a few Syrian agents, such as the Habras and the Tarazis, managed to go global, the retail processing tended to centralise in British and French hands, demonstrating that European traders were quick in driving the demand to their benefit. By the 1880s, some segments of the flow of goods were directly controlled from European capitals, as the case of rugs or woodwork suggests, with their export being encouraged by major Department stores in France and Britain. By 1900, the very best artworks, whether in glass, wood or metal, were not to be acquired in Damascus or Cairo anymore, but at renowned Armenian art dealers in Paris, such as the likes of Dikran Khan Kelekian (1868–1951), Hagop Kevorkian (1872–1962), and Antoine Brimo (of Aleppian descent), as the exceptional Islamic pieces purchased in Paris by amateur Charles Gillot in 1898–1902 demonstrated.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Ancienne collection Charles Gillot (183–1903)*, sale catalogue, Christie's Paris, 4–5 March 2008, 18–30.

## Conflicted Commodification in Cairo

Until the constriction of the local market, curios had enjoyed a second life on bazaar stalls, as just seen in the preceding chapter. But the very existence of historic artefacts offered for sale opens a new set of questions regarding supply and procurement. Some factors are well known. As elsewhere, warfare and unrest in the Middle East were prime moments favouring the commodification of antiques. In 1801, the French occupation of Egypt is known to have left large mosques in Cairo in complete ruin, and consequently vulnerable to neglect, which inevitably led to dismemberment. Sectarian violence in Damascus resulted in hundreds of Christian houses being burnt to ground in 1860. Later, the economic hardship that seized the Syrian capital in the 1870s compelled many to dispose of household possessions, down to the very last one.<sup>1</sup> The first Damascus room of the South Kensington Museum arrived during these unfortunate circumstances, despite the “superstitious repugnance to sell family relics,” as its buyer recalled.<sup>2</sup> In parallel, patterns of taste and consumption in relation to one’s domestic sphere shifted drastically: new types of furniture and wall decoration deliberately replaced previous ones, as has been well demonstrated for late Ottoman Damascus and Beirut.<sup>3</sup> All in all, it was a period of

turmoil for architecture and material culture, but also one of innovation.

Natural phenomena also had their own role to play. Earthquakes regularly hit Cairo during the nineteenth century: in 1847 (7 August), 1856 (12 October) and in 1863 to list but a few instances.<sup>4</sup> A total of 111 buildings were partially or completely damaged in the 1847 quake; the Mosque of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh alone lost eight of the large arches overlooking its courtyard.<sup>5</sup> Minarets regularly collapsed, or were indeed preventively dismantled, as it happened to the al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh Mosque. As its two minarets threatened to collapse after the 1863 earthquake, their last shafts were pulled down for safety reasons; they were reconstructed only many decades later.<sup>6</sup> Buildings encumbered with rubble were eventually abandoned and progressively emptied of their fittings.

One is struck by the sight of desolation and ruin emanating from many a photograph of Cairo’s mosques and mausoleums in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>7</sup> This is not Orientalist stereotyping of Middle Eastern urban landscapes, as cultural theory would have it.<sup>8</sup> It is factual information that contradicts a largely shared belief, among historians of Islamic

1 Toru Miura, *Dynamism in the Urban Society of Damascus, The Salihyya Quarter from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 277.

2 Quoted in Carey, “Appropriating Damascus Rooms,” 79.

3 Stefan Weber, “Images of imagined worlds: Self-image and worldview in late Ottoman wall paintings of Damascus,” in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, eds. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp and Stefan Weber (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg/Orient-Institut der DMG, 2002), 145–71; Toufoul Abou-Hodeib, “Taste and class in late Ottoman Beirut,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 3 (2011): 475–92.

4 Dina Ishak Bakhoun, “Mamluk minarets in Modern Egypt: Tracing restoration decisions and interventions,” *Annales islamologiques* 50 (2016): 147–98.

5 “*Al-hawādith al-dākhliyya*,” [Domestic news], *al-Waqā’i’ al-misriyya* no. 78, 16 August 1847, 1.

6 Jacob [sic] Artin-Bey, “Bab Zoueyleh et la mosquée d’El-Moéyed: notice historique et anecdotique,” *Bulletin de l’Institut égyptien*, no. 4 (1884): 127–52.

7 The pictures taken by French photographer Édouard Jarrot in 1858–60 (online on Gallica: <https://gallica.bnf.fr>), or those published in 1861 by the German Jakob August Lorent (1813–84) are good illustrations; see Mercedes Volait, ed., *Le Caire dessiné et photographié au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Picard, 2013).

8 Derek Gregory, “Emperors of the gaze: Photographic practices and productions of space in Egypt, 1839–1914,” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical*

architecture, that organic architectural maintenance was available in Islamic lands through the institution of *waqf* [endowed property serving to maintain religious and charitable foundations or to provide revenues to private beneficiaries].<sup>9</sup> It is true that the system guaranteed, in principle, the perpetual upkeep of pious foundations, i.e. of major monuments in urban centres, through the revenues of unalienable *waqf* property. However, in practice, it proved dysfunctional and unsustainable in the long run, when one considers actual situations rather than theoretical principles. As revenues shrunk or disappeared with time, so did the means available to repair and provide upkeep for structures. This resulted in countless ruins. In reaction, measures were devised to protect what was left from dilapidated *awqāf*.

## 1 Urban and Domestic Reform

However, artefacts and architectural salvage did not only reach the market because of natural disaster, pandemic diseases, famine or neglect. They could also be consciously disposed of, for the sake of fashioning new environments or the need to procure cash. Both public and private agencies were involved in this process.

### 1.1 Sanitising the City

A well-known episode of radical reconfiguration of the urban fabric of Cairo is its so-called “Hausmannisation” at the initiative of Khedive Ismail. While the concept ill-characterises Cairo’s urban planning policy at the time,<sup>10</sup> the work car-

ried out did add its share of rubble. A demolition programme was launched in June 1869 in order to open up new thoroughfares across the historic quarters of the city. One new road alone, the Citadel Street, allegedly cut through 398 building plots. Most were occupied by private houses, but among the affected buildings were also public baths, stables, kilns, and four mosques, including that of al-Qawsun.<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 62) The upkeep and sale of the stone rubble [*anqād*, pl. of *nuqā*] and timber ensuing from the construction of that street employed at least sixteen officials in 1872.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, pulling down architecture for the sake of modernisation had a longer history. When it comes to the nineteenth century, the Egyptian chronicler ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Gabarti recalled that in 1815 the new ruler ordered the demolition of all houses threatening ruin in Cairo, and imposed their replacement by new structures. If owners could not afford the reconstruction, the rebuilding was funded by the Treasury and the property consequently reverted to the state. What had allegedly motivated the decision was the collapse of a house causing the death of three individuals, but al-Gabarti suspected that the measure was foremost designed to procure building materials for the sovereign.<sup>13</sup> He goes on to report other

*Imagination*, eds. Joan Schwartz and James Ryan (London/New York: Ib-Tauris, 2003), 195–225.

9 For the principles of *waqf* upkeep, see Dina Bakhom, “The Waqf system: Maintenance, Repair and Upkeep,” in *Held in Trust, Waqf in the Islamic world*, ed. Pascale Ghazaleh (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 179–96; Alaa El-Habashi, “From *athar* to monuments: the intervention of the Comité in Cairo” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001).

10 For a discussion of the Cairo-Paris comparative perspective, Mercedes Volait, “Making Cairo modern

(1870–1950): Multiple models for a ‘European-style’ urbanism,” in *Urbanism – Imported or Exported? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans*, eds. Joseph Nasr and Mercedes Volait (Chichester: Wiley-Academy/UK, 2003), 17–50; Khaled Fahmy, “Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative,” in *Making Cairo Medieval*, eds. Nezar AlSayyad, Irene Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 173–200.

11 ‘Ali Mubarak, *Al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya al-jadida li-Misr al-Qahira wa-muduniha wa-biladiha al-qadima wa-l-shahira* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Kubrā al-Amīriyya [Bulaq], 1306 AH/1888–89 AD), III: 253–54.

12 Cairo, Dar al-Waṭa‘iq al-Qawmiyya, *Muhāfaza Misr, Mahāfiḍ 1872*, 2002–3607, List of appointees in the Administration of parks and gardens and other services, 1872–75.

13 *Merveilles biographiques et historiques ou chroniques du cheikh Abd-El-Rahman El Djabarti*, trans. Chefik Mansour *et al.* (Cairo: National Printing Press, 1889–96), IX: 188–90.





FIGURE 62 Anonymous, *Démolitions nécessitées par le percement du boulevard Mehemet Aly au Caire*, c. 1875 [Demolition required by the opening of the Mehmed Ali thoroughfare]. The print was originally in the collection of architect Ambroise Baudry and captioned on the reverse in his handwriting. Albumen print. 27 × 22 cm  
AUCTIONED ON 11 DECEMBER 2000 AT FRANÇOIS DE RICQLÈS IN PARIS, LOT 107. CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN

examples of demolition, concerning houses in Bulaq and Old Cairo for instance, geared towards securing stones and bricks for the palaces being constructed by dignitaries in Giza, Imbaba and Rawda. Architectural destruction, therefore, was already in full swing in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The first new street cut through the historic fabric of Cairo also goes back to the reign of Mehmed Ali; dated 1846, it took the unequivocal name of *al-sikka al-jadida* [literally the New Street], before adopting the name al-Muski. Interestingly enough, its route picked up exactly that of an unrealised

project conceived in 1799 by French engineers attached to the Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. Urban planning has its own rationale, independent of political regimes, and envisioned schemes have a marked endurance, as I have demonstrated elsewhere for Cairo.<sup>14</sup> Renewing the materiality of the city was moreover a project widely shared within society: it went beyond the urban landscape, reaching out to the domestic sphere.

<sup>14</sup> Volait, "Making Cairo modern (1870–1950)."

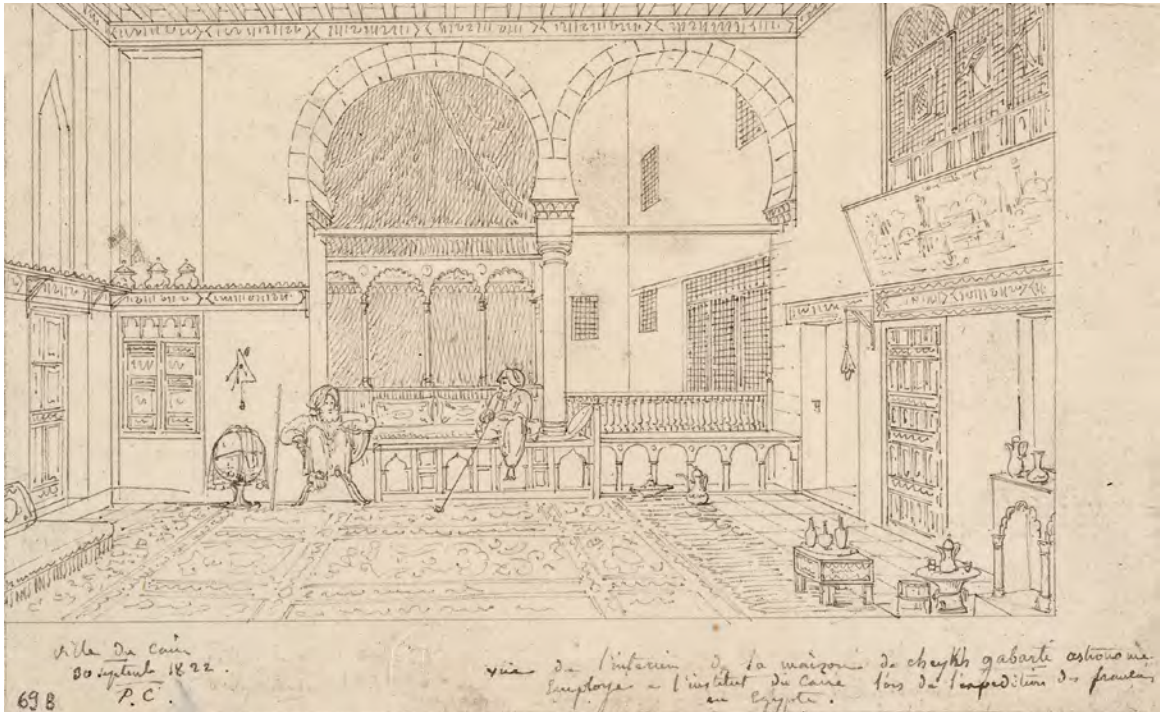


FIGURE 63 Pascal Coste, *Vue de l'intérieur de la maison du cheykh Gabarti, astronome*. [Interior of the house of Sheikh al-Gabarti. The panorama of Istanbul is displayed at the right end of the drawing at mid-height]. Pencil on paper. MARSEILLES, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'ALCAZAR, FONDS PASCAL COSTE, MS 1310, F. 69B

### 1.2 *Refurbishing Interiors*

In his article on wall painting in late Ottoman Damascus, Stefan Weber charts the changes occurring in interiors, particularly in mural iconography.<sup>15</sup> He shows that instead – and in place – of the classical panoramic view of Istanbul overlooking the Bosphorus, (Fig. 63) walls started displaying European cityscapes, such as urban *vedute* of Paris, London, Naples, Rome, Venice or Trieste.

Scenes inspired by the latest news and innovations also made their appearance on Damascene walls. Archaeologist Melchior de Vogüé was amused to observe in 1872 that:

Un autre fait peindre des médaillons par un badigeonneur de passage, et, nous prenant à témoin de ses sentiments français, il nous

<sup>15</sup> Weber, “Images of imagined worlds.”

montre sur le mur, entre un railway et un steamboat ... la maison de M. Thiers! Le bon Damasquin était à Paris pour son négoce à l'époque de la Commune; justement indigné de la destruction de l'hôtel du président, il l'a fait reproduire dans sa galerie.<sup>16</sup>

While sojourning in Damascus in 1875, French architect and draughtsman Jules Bourgoïn (1838–1908) reported that he was offered three “Arab

<sup>16</sup> Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos; voyage aux pays du passé* (Paris: E. Plon, 1876), 80 (his visit to Damascus took place in 1872): “One of our hosts had medallions painted by a visiting would-be artist, and to prove his good will towards France, he pointed to us, between a railway and a steamboat, the house of Mr Thiers [French president] illustrated on his wall! The brave Damascene was in Paris for his business during the Commune; duly revolted by the destruction of the President's residence, he had it reproduced in his gallery.” [My translation].

ceilings, old and in a perfect condition” for 400 francs – a nominal cost – on condition that he provided as replacement “a painted canvas, or better said, a canvas painted in the Frankish [European] manner.”<sup>17</sup> The ceilings were meant to be transported to Cairo on the request of a French patron, as we shall see in the following chapter. In other words, house owners in Damascus were willing to get rid of their coffered ceilings or *‘ajamī* [lit. Persian] ones,<sup>18</sup> as long as cash and a Western-style alternative came in exchange. It can be inferred that swapping old (Damascene) for new (European) may not have been uncommon practice, although no mention in the sources has been so far recorded. One explanation was economic. As previously recalled, the 1870s were times of hardship in Syria, and from the 1850s, European goods had been dominating the Syrian markets in most domains thanks to their appeal to local consumers in price and function. But shifting aesthetics cannot be disregarded either; renovating one’s interior also corresponded to changing tastes in matter of decoration.

A telling example offering material substance to the mechanisms of domestic transformation in Cairo is offered by the refurbishment of the grand reception hall in the family house of the al-Sadat al-Wafa’iyya. A prominent Sufi family claiming descent from a royal dynasty in the Maghreb, the Idrisids, with roots in the Tunisian city of Sfax, the al-Sadat had been in Cairo since the fourteenth

century. Over time they had amassed significant wealth and by the mid-eighteenth century had risen to become one of the most prestigious families in the city, thanks to their *sharīfī* lineage, the religious and administrative functions they were entrusted with and the official protection they enjoyed. Their affluence was gained by trusteeships of lucrative endowed properties [*awqāf*, pl. of *waqf*] and tax-farms (*iltizām*).<sup>19</sup> Besides a large funerary complex in Cairo’s southern cemetery and a Sufi lodge in the heart of the city, the family possessed a home on Rawda Island. It had another one built in the southern outskirts of the city, on a site overlooking the pond of Birkat al-Fil. The new residential complex must have experienced several phases of construction as a number of dates are associated with it. It was dated 1070 AH (1659 AD) when it was registered as an historic monument around 1920;<sup>20</sup> the year is consistent with the surviving blue, white, and turquoise Iznik tiles adorning one of the main rooms since few Izniks were available in Cairo after the 1660s.<sup>21</sup> An inscribed cartouche on one of the walls bears the date of 1089 AH (1678/79 AD),<sup>22</sup> suggesting that some renovation took place twenty years after construction. An extension to the house was built in 1755. New living quarters were added to the complex in 1228 AH (1812 AD) by the then head of al-Sadat al-Wafa’iyya, Shams al-Din Muhammad Abu al-Anwar al-Sadat at the end of his life; he died the following year. These additions, and the

17 Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (France), Archives nationales, F172941, item no. 21 bis, Report from Jules Bourgoïn dated February 1875, to the director of the Sciences and Lettres’ division in the Ministry of Public Instruction in Paris: “On me propose trois plafonds arabes, anciens et dans un bon état de conservation, à condition de faire les frais de trois plafonds en toile peinte ou plus exactement peinturlurée à la franque.”

18 *‘Ajamī* décor is a characteristic technique of Ottoman Syria, where the woodwork is covered with elaborate floral designs that are densely patterned and richly textured. Relief was obtained by applying a thick gesso to the wood; Anke Scharrahs, *Damascene ‘Ajami Rooms: Forgotten Jewels of Interior Design* (London: Archetype Publications, 2013).

19 Richard Mc Gregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafa Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn Arabi*, 2004; Id., “Is this the end of medieval sufism? Strategies of transversal affiliation in Ottoman Egypt,” in Rachida Chich *et al.*, *Sufism in the Ottoman Era (16th–18th c.)* (Cairo: Publications de l’IFAO, 2010), 83–100.

20 Ali Bahgat and Harry Farnall, “Maison waqf as-Sâdât al-Ouafaïa,” in *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe. Procès-verbaux de l’exercice 1915–1919*, no. 32 (1922): 724–26.

21 Hans Theunissen, “The Ottoman tiles of the Fakahani Mosque in Cairo,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 53 (2017): 287–330.

22 André Raymond *et al.*, *Palais et maisons du Caire* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 1983), 11: 265.

other transformations carried out at the time, are described in detail by al-Gabarti in his long obituary of the Sufi sheikh.<sup>23</sup> When the house was surveyed in 1932, it consisted of an ensemble of structures extending over a vast stretch of land; the estate then encompassed several living units, three ceremonial halls, a prayer hall opening onto the first courtyard, as well as a library at the back of the gardens.<sup>24</sup>

Cross-checking the map of the premises with al-Gabarti's account helps to identify the transformations undertaken in the 1810s. They consisted of the addition of new structures and the complete reconstruction of previous ones. A prime new structure was a square room overlooking Birkat al-Fil on two sides, with a marble column erected at its centre; the room was known as *qā'a al-ghazāl* [the room of the gazelle]. The rebuilding, on the other hand, concerned three parts of the premises. Firstly, some changes were made to the most beautiful and celebrated room of the house, named *umm al-afrāḥ* [lit. the mother of ceremonies, hosting the Sufi meetings of the order]. Dated to the building of the house in the 1660s, the room was described by al-Gabarti as the most beautiful in the house, because its walls were covered "with Chinese ceramics" [*al-qīshānī al-ṣīnī*], meaning blue-and-white Iznik tiles, and "polychromatic marble" [*al-rukhām al-mulawwan*], that is the typical *opus sectile* mosaic in stone of distinct colours covering the bottom of the walls. The room was



FIGURE 64 Frank Dillon, *In the Harem of Sheik Sadat*, c. 1878. The watercolour almost certainly depicts the *qā'a al-anwārīyya* erected in 1812. Watercolour. 29 × 44 cm  
ISTANBUL, THE ÖMER MEHMET KOÇ COLLECTION

enlarged over the adjacent courtyard in a manner that is not entirely clear. Opposite *umm al-afrāḥ*, Shams al-Din Muhammad Abu al-Anwar had demolished an old *maq'ad* [elevated loggia used as seating place], graced with a "column and [two] arches," and replaced it with an open oratory, completed with a pulpit for delivering the Friday's sermon.<sup>25</sup> Finally, a large hall bordering the gardens, with a central fountain, was built in place of a previous one. It was named *qā'a al-anwārīyya* in honour of its patron and is very plausibly the one depicted in a watercolour by Frank Dillon, aptly entitled by the artist *Dans le harem du cheikh Sadat*.<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 64) A photograph of the courtyard by Bonfils shows, on the left, the entrance to the private quarters of the house, with its door covered with *appliqué* fabric, and a Black servant (possibly a eunuch) sitting on the adjoining elevated bench; on the right stood the elongated prayer hall behind a turned-wood screen, furnished with a

23 'Abd al-Rahman al-Gabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar fi al-tarajim wa-al-akhbar* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1879–80), IV: 190–91; *Merveilles biographiques et historiques ou chroniques du cheikh Abd-El-Rahman El Djabarti*, trans. Chefik Mansour et al., (Cairo: Imprimerie nationale, 1896), IX: 50–1 (French translation); *'Abd al-Rahmān al-Gabartī's History of Egypt*, trans. Thomas Philipp et al. (English translation) (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1994), IV: 265–66.

24 Map surveyed on 9 June 1932 by the Service des antiquités islamiques d'Égypte, a sketch of which is reproduced in Bernard Maury, "Maison al-Sadat," in *Palais et maisons du Caire du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. B. Maury (Cairo: Publications de l'IFAO, 1983), 67–86 (69 for the map).

25 'Abd al-Rahman al-Gabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar fi al-tarajim wa-al-akhbar*, IV, 190.

26 The watercolour was auctioned as lot 188 of *Dessins anciens et objets d'art et d'ameublement*, sale on 27 March 2009 at Thierry de Maigret's auction house in Paris. It had been exhibited under no. 32 in The British Fine arts section (Group 1, Class 2) of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.





FIGURE 65 Félix Bonfils, *Cour de maison arabe, Le Caire* [Prayer hall and harem entrance in the courtyard of the house of al-Sadat, in Cairo], 1880s. Albumen print. 22.9 × 28.3 cm  
CHARENTON-LE-PONT, MÉDIATHÈQUE DE L'ARCHITECTURE ET DU PATRIMOINE, APMFO011855

minbar. (Fig. 65) Not much of the house is extant today, with the exception of *umm al-afrāḥ*, and a few smaller rooms, including an upper *qā'a*, not mentioned by al-Gabarti, that notably rests on a rather short marble column (possibly reused from the old *maq'ad*?). (Fig. 66)

Renovations were allegedly carried out again in 1279 AH (1862 AD).<sup>27</sup> If the date is correct, they would have been the initiative of Ahmad Abu al-Nasr (d. 1280 AH/1863 AD), the twenty-first *khalīfa* of the Sufi order, shortly before his death. They may have been made at the instigation of his son, Ahmad 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Sadat

(1263 AH/1846 AD–1324 AH/1907), nicknamed Abu al-Futuhat, who succeeded him in 1864.<sup>28</sup> The nature of the refurbishment can be grasped, if not fully comprehended, through a few sources. British decorator John Dibblee Crace (1838–1919), accompanied by photographer Frank Mason Good (1839–1928), visited the renovated hall on 7 December 1868 and reported on it.<sup>29</sup> The British artists were invited to eat with the owner of the house on this occasion and both were asked to make his portrait, in painting and photography,

27 Edmond Pauty *et al.*, "La protection des maisons et des palais anciens," in *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, Procès-verbaux de l'exercice 1930–1932* 36 (1936), 140–48. In 1932, it was still a private *waqf*, managed by Colonel Abdel Rahim Fahmy pacha.

28 A biography is given by Muhammad Tawfiq al-Bakri, *Kitab Bayt al-Sadat al-Wafa'iyya* (Cairo: n.p., 1910), 8–11; see also Sara Rose Nimis, "Between Hands: Sanctity, Authority and Education in the Making of Modern Egypt" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2013).

29 London, V&A Archive, AAD/2001/6/328; John Dibblee Crace, *Letters from Egypt and Syria, 1868–69*, 7 December 1868, f. 89.



FIGURE 66 An upper *qā'a* at the house of al-Sadat, resting on a column possibly from a previous construction demolished in the early 1810s  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2016





FIGURE 67 Frank Dillon, *Reception room (mandara) in the house of the Sheikh al-Sadat, December 15, 1873*. Watercolour on paper. 42.9 × 28.9 cm  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, 855–1900

which they did. Frank Dillon produced a watercolour of the room dated 1873. (Fig. 67) German diplomat Max von Oppenheim (1860–1946) took photographs of *umm al-afrāḥ* between 1896 and 1910,<sup>30</sup> when the house was still inhabited (Fig. 68) – which was no longer the case in 1915 because of water damage.<sup>31</sup> Traces of the 1860s renovation are still visible today; as is now the

<sup>30</sup> I am grateful to Daniel Budke for providing approximate dates of the photographs. Max von Oppenheim's diaries, kept in Cologne, may help narrowing them.

<sup>31</sup> Bahgat and Famall, "Maison waqf as-Sādāt al-Ouafaïa," 725; according to another source, the house was already unoccupied in 1914 (Jehan d'Ivray, *Bonaparte et l'Égypte* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1914), 252).

rule, the restoration undertaken in 2016 under the supervision of architect Tariq al-Murri kept the different layers of the hall visible, from the original construction to the changes introduced in the 1860s and the recent intervention carried out in the 2010s. (Fig. 69)

The nineteenth-century revamp realistically depicted by Dillon's watercolour seems to have been motivated by decorative concerns. The most striking feature is the uniform surface decoration given to the walls. As on-site inspection confirms, this was obtained by closing all the recesses with wooden partitions (now removed, but made apparent by fragments left visible). Representations of similar partitions in other houses can be glimpsed at in engravings of the 1860s (see Fig. 108 in Chapter 4) and can still be observed in some historic houses in Cairo, such as Bayt al-Sihaymi (built 1648 AD). It was not an unusual initiative, but common practice. The marble mosaic dados, mentioned by al-Gabarti and that covered the bottom of the walls, were most probably removed before installing the partitions. Imprints of the marble slabs on the mortar used to fix them to the walls have been left visible nowadays. The same occurred with the tiles above the marble mosaic; there are a few remnants, but it is mainly their imprint that can be seen today. There is no evidence that the removal of marble followed financial reasons (profit could be made from its sale) or aesthetic ones (obtaining a homogeneous wall), but the latter is more likely. Wall paper imitating the designs of Iznik tiles was then laid on the wooden partitions, as suggested by photography, while the upper part of the walls received (or had previously received) a coat of painted plaster, still visible today. Since the two parts of the walls display distinct patterns, the facsimiles may have been put in place at different dates. (Shams al-Din would have needed more tiles, already impossible to procure, for his transformation of the room in the 1810s). Surmounting the painted tiles was a wooden frieze decorated with a peculiar colour scheme alternating vivid red, green, and blue, that corresponds to the decoration of *qā'a al-anwāriyya*

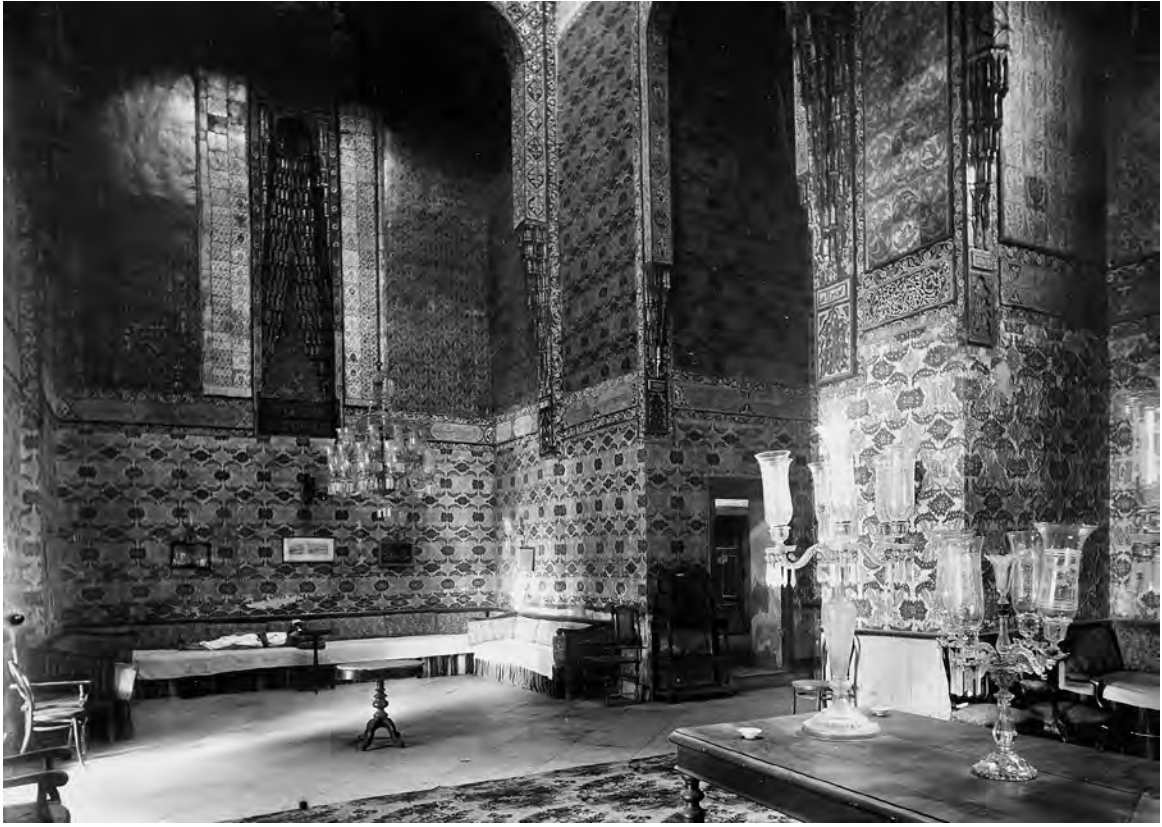


FIGURE 68 Max von Oppenheim, *Haus des Schech es Sebat* [Grand hall named *umm al-afrāh* at the house of Sheikh al-Sadat], 1896–1910  
 COLOGNE, MAX FREIHERR VON OPPENHEIM FOUNDATION, FOTOSAMMLUNG MAX VON OPPENHEIM, 8001519,06

and may then be dated to the 1810s. It is consistent with al-Gabarti's account of a major transformation of the property taking place in those years. The new dados were left plain in the latest refurbishment, as Crace remarked<sup>32</sup> and Dillon's watercolour (Fig. 67), as well as von Oppenheim's photograph, (Fig. 68) confirm. Crace was impressed by the magnificence of the room, and in particular by the luxurious Iznik tiles in white, blue and turquoise, but resented the renovation: "much has been renovated and badly. [...] The walls are, to a great extent, lined with old Persian tiles; blue,

green and white and the rest is painted to imitate them."<sup>33</sup> The homogeneous coating also concealed a monumental vertical fountain [*salsabil*]; its connected basin was also taken away, possibly to avoid humidity in the room. In its place, the floor was carpeted with a patterned rug featuring large motifs that recalled a European (possibly British) import.

A complete new physiognomy was thus given to the hall, meant to achieve grandeur and distinction. On special occasions, the chief of the al-Sadat al-Wafa'iyya would be seated on the sofa lining the main *dīwān*; this is where ceremonies specific to their Sufi order would take place. The lineage was famous for its poets and the sessions

32 John Diblee Crace, "On the ornamental features of Arabic architecture in Egypt and Syria," *The Builder*, 12 February 1870, republished in *Sessional Papers of the RIBA* (1870): 71–90.

33 Crace, *Letters from Egypt and Syria*, f. 90.





FIGURE 69 The grand reception hall named *umm al-afrah* in 2017. The fountain and the basin are modern interpretations of what stood before the carpeting and panelling of the hall in the 1860s  
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, 2017

where musical instruments were played, “in spite of the displeasure of the orthodox Muslims.”<sup>34</sup> It is also in this room that the two British artists were invited to share a meal with the owner on 7 December 1868, seated on chairs set around a local table, made of “a large circular metal tray placed upon a small movable table” (probably a

*kursī*).<sup>35</sup> There were spoons to serve the meal, but the meat offered was eaten by seizing the bone with one’s fingers. Afterwards, the two Britons were invited to rest on a divan and were offered “English cigars,” although Crace would have preferred to smoke the chibouk as their host did. In short, life at the house of al-Sadat encompassed a mixture of Egyptian and non-Egyptian commodities and goods. When von Oppenheim photographed the place a few decades later, it was populated with seats, armchairs and tables; lighting was provided by Murano-like glass lamps and windows were dressed with curtains, as in any European interior of equivalent status.

The refurbishment of the main hall of the family house of the al-Sadat al-Wafa’iyya represents a deliberate decorative arrangement driven by distinctive ideas on aesthetics and comfort. The room was intentionally made anew, and its surface decoration made uniform. Getting rid of out-dated marble panelling and other trappings, such as the dados and the fountain with its basin in marble mosaic, does not seem in this instance a matter of necessity, as happened with the 1875 Damascene case reported earlier. It was a matter of status, self-projection and well-being. There may have also been the desire to avoid clashing colour schemes, as the Iznik-covered part was distinctively in cold blue tones, while the lower part of the room was initially in the warm reddish and yellow tones.

It makes sense that the work was carried out after the young Ahmad ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Sadat had become head of the order, after his father’s death in 1863 and once having performed the customary rituals preparing him for his tenure (including the *hajj*). During this time, he regained resources and positions that the old elite household had lost during the reign of Mehmed Ali. In 1864, despite his young age, he was appointed to official functions in the legal and advisory bodies newly created by Khedive Ismail and received once more the endowed properties that had been confiscated

34 Michael Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517–1798* (London: Routledge, 1992), 189.

35 Crace, *Letters from Egypt and Syria*, f. 91.

from the family. The new hall may have been a way to mark his ascension as the head of the family. It was a material gesture engaging with innovation in the context of a house with an established history. It can be seen as reflecting the young sheikh's dual education. Ahmad 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Sadat had been traditionally trained in religious matters at al-Azhar but he had also acquired a new kind of education at the government schools. He had attended the School of Languages, the government school founded and overseen by the famous figure of the *Nahda* [Arabic renaissance], Sheikh Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801–73). There, he learned Turkish, calligraphy and arithmetic, skills that became beneficial in his new responsibilities. In other words, Abu al-Futuh had possessed the resources needed to navigate diverse social and cultural spheres, and could do the same in the realm of interior design.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the continuous rebuilding going on at Manzil al-Sadat since the 1810s (if not before) suggests that architecture is never frozen in time, as books on Islamic built heritage may want readers to believe. Buildings are caught in a permanent cycle of change; above all they are palimpsestic creations.

### 1.3 *Engaging Innovation: The Evidence of Photography*

One is prompted to associate the name of the young sheikh with a portrait by Frank Mason Good titled "Sheik Sadad" [sic] and dated c. 1868. (Fig. 70) It could well be the one taken, at his request, on the visit of Crace and Good to his house on 7 December 1868, although the sitter seems somehow older than Sheikh al-Sadat actually was (twenty-two years old). The inner fur of the robe worn by the young man suits the winter weather; it is a mark of opulence, and possibly of courtly rank: "it was an ancient Turkish tradition to grant fur-lined robes of honour to newly

appointed officials" at the Porte.<sup>37</sup> The portrait epitomises the composite material world that was his. The man leans, in elegant attire (possible made of yellow silk, the colour of the order), on an upholstered fauteuil covered with a glossy flowered fabric typical of Second Empire furniture, with a chibouk by his side and an *appliqué* hanging behind him. While the latter displays a technique said to be characteristic of Egyptian folk art,<sup>38</sup> some of its patterns denote external interference. The design of the bi-colour palmettes recall the aesthetics of Fraktur art, a form of book illumination practiced by Dutch *émigrés* to the United States in the early nineteenth century, as can be inferred from examples kept at the Free Library of Pennsylvania.<sup>39</sup> Could it be that such art reached Egypt through missionary activity, in the country itself or in the Holy Land? The sheikh's world was one with multiple external connections, although little is known about them.

The sheikh holds a relaxed, yet assertive, pose that suggests ease in front of the camera, while avoiding its gazing. The portrait exudes self-confidence. It makes an eloquent accompaniment to the rejuvenated hall, illustrating the embracing of global contemporary aesthetics and technology by a member of the traditional Egyptian elite within his centuries-old family residence.

Sheikh al-Sadat features in many other individual or group portraits taken by European or local photographers. The French Émile Béchard portrayed him a decade later for a series exhibited at

<sup>36</sup> Nimis, *Between hands*, 122–4.

<sup>37</sup> Hülya Tezcan, "Furs and skins owned by the Sultans," in Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds. *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity* (Istanbul: Eren Press, 2004), 63–79.

<sup>38</sup> Seif El Rashidi and Sam Bowker, *The Tentmakers of Cairo, Egypt's Medieval and Modern Appliqué Craft* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2018), 158–59.

<sup>39</sup> On Fraktur art and samples very similar to the *appliqué* hanging at the house of al-Sadat, see Lisa Minardi, *Drawn with Spirit: Pennsylvania German Fraktur: from the Joan and Victor Johnson Collection* (Philadelphia and New Haven: Philadelphia Museum of Art/Yale University Press, 2015), 89.



FIGURE 70 Frank Mason Good, *Sheik Sadad* [Portrait of the Sheikh al-Sadat, possibly taken on 7 December 1868]. Albumen print. 21 × 15.5 cm. HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE, COLLECTION OF ARCHIVIST PATRICK MONTGOMERY. OBJECT NO. 2016.281

the *Exposition universelle* of 1878 in Paris. The views were intended to illustrate “popular types and costumes” in Cairo, but were shot against distinctive architectural background rather than in a studio.<sup>40</sup>

40 “Ce sont des photographies nouvelles de M. Béchard sur les costumes et types populaires du Caire, où quelques détails intéressants d'architecture arabe viennent toujours former un fond de tableau,” Arthur Rhoné, “L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1878,” *L'Illustration*, 30 July 1878, no. 1853, 131; 68 prints in this series, on the format 27.2 × 20 cm, are kept at the Rare books and Special collections of the American University in Cairo's library, as part of the Philip Maritz collection. An album titled *Collection de types égyptiens*, with elaborate binding monogrammed “I.H.” for Prince Ibrahim Hilmi, presents 60 prints of the same

One is titled *N° 19 Cheikh Sadad/Descendant de Mahomet*; two others with similar setting are *N° 35 Cheik Sadad* and *N° 42 Cheik Sadad*. It is winter again; the sheikh's robe is linen with fur. The circumstance seems more official: in *N° 19* the sitter wears a large turban and is surrounded by books, with Persian rugs hanging behind him; he holds a *sabha*, the string of beads used for prayer and meditation. (Fig. 71) He is now over thirty years old and has put on some weight, but his face shows the characteristic cheekbones visible in the previous portrait. Other likenesses are more casual. In *N° 42* the sheikh is portrayed without his shoes while projecting an almost absent-minded face in front of Béchard's camera. A later, seemingly happier, portrait by Garabed Lekegian is plausibly a direct commission.<sup>41</sup> (Fig. 72) This time, the sheikh wears a number of decorations over his ceremonial garb and seems to be slightly amused at the action taking place. The rugs or appliqué hanging are replaced by a painted screen but the view is still shot at his house, as evidenced by the armchair (identical to the one featuring in Good's photograph, except now upholstered in plain dark velvet-like fabric) and the design of the carpet (present as well in many other photographs taken at the house).

The last *khalifa* of the al-Sadat obviously enjoyed photography, and indeed willingly opened his house to photographers. A good part of Béchard's 1878 stills were shot in its main courtyard, as evidenced from their background. *N° 1. Écrivain public*, *N° 2. Cheikh lisant le Koran*, *N° 5. Groupe des Ulémas lisant le Koran*, *N° 7. Derviche Tourneur*,

series, without number and caption in the negative; it was auctioned in Paris on 13 November 2020 by Ader. Another copy of the same work is kept at Musée d'Orsay (PHO 1986 139).

41 Garabed Lekegian is said to have opened his studio in Cairo in 1887 and was mostly active during the 1890s–1910s; Ken Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839–1925* (London: Quaritch, 2007), 54.





FIGURE 71 Émile Béchard, *N° 19 Cheikh Sadat/Descendant de Mahomet*, c. 1878. [Ahmad 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Sadat posing at his house, surrounded by books]. Albumen print on card. 27 × 21 cm  
AUCTIONED ON 2 DECEMBER 2015 IN PARIS BY GROS-DELETTREZ, *LIVRES, MANUSCRITS & PHOTOGRAPHIES ORIENTALISTES*, LOT 195. CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN



FIGURE 72 Garabed Lekegian, *Son Excellence le Cheikh El Sadate*, 1890s [Ahmad 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Sadat in ceremonial garb]. Albumen print. 27.5 × 20.9 cm  
LOS ANGELES, THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, KEN AND JENNY JACOBSON ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION, 1788–1960, 2008.R.3-3235

*N° 22. Derviche* and *N° 33. Derviches tourneurs (groupe)* are taken at the entrance or in front of the prayer hall; *N° 4. Groupe des ulémas (Docteur en religion)*, *N° 11. Cheikh se rendant à la mosquée de nuit* and *N° 24. Iman arabe* stand by the doorstep to the private quarters of the house, while *N° 37. Repas arabe* can be located in the eastern corner of the courtyard. *N° 17. Sakkas (Porteurs d'eau)* takes place in a little recess next to the entrance to the private quarters. *N° 46. Sakka (Porteur d'eau)* is staged by the recognisable large tree standing in front of *umm al-afrāh*, (Fig. 73 and 74), as are *N° 39* and *N° 40. Marchandes d'oranges*.<sup>42</sup> All are genre scenes meant for commercial distribution.

Some of the participants can be recognised across a number of photographs. The two bearded men in *N° 4* (Fig. 75) pose again in *N° 37*; one of them features in *N° 1*. Other figures, such as the man embodying the water carrier, appear in views signed Pascal Sebah. (Fig. 76), either because photographic sessions brought together several practitioners at the house, or Sebah purchased the plate from Béchard. In any case, photographers were joined by painters. Walter Charles Horsley (1855–1934) used the setting of the courtyard for *Unwilling Evidence* (1882), as demonstrated by the stonework

42 Cairo, American University in Cairo, Rare books and Special collections of the Library, Philip Maritz

collection, Béchard's "Oriental studies" (as the series have been renamed).





FIGURE 73 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Cortile di Sceik-el-Sadat (Cairo)*. [The courtyard of the house of al-Sadat]. Mounted albumen print. 19 × 25 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli*, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 52

PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

and the pattern of the colourful *khayyāmīyya* over a door on the far left side of the canvas.<sup>43</sup> In his

*Striking a Bargain* (1896),<sup>44</sup> one can discern part of the prayer hall in the background. Were the models brought by the artists? Were they recruited from among the personnel serving the household? What was going on there? Was it for leisure?

43 The canvas, 67 × 53 cm, is illustrated in El Rashidi and Bowker, *The Tentmakers*, pl. 25 and discussed p. 150 with no identified location.

44 *Striking a Bargain*, 92 × 71.5 cm, was sold in Paris at Hôtel Drouot, 18 March 1996, by Maître Tajan, lot 109.



FIGURE 74 Émile Bécard, *N° 46 Sakka (Porteur d'eau)*, c. 1878. [A model posing as water carrier in the courtyard of the house of al-Sadat]. Albumen print. 26.2 × 20.2 cm

LOS ANGELES, THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, KEN AND JENNY JACOBSON ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION, 1788–1960, 2008.R.3-587

Business? Exchanges of favour, as it happened with the sheikh's early photographic portrait? Patronage of the new medium? The British water-colourist Walter Tyndale (1855–1943), who had the chance to install his easel in the house in the 1890s, recalled a “unique and delightful place” and held fond memories of the aged “oriental prince”

who inhabited it. He remembered his deep laughter when being told jokes. They communicated through an intermediary, but the encounter was nonetheless pleasurable.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Walter Tyndale, *L'Égypte hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Hachette, 1910), 60.





FIGURE 75 Émile Béchar, *N° 4. Groupe des ulémas (Docteur [sic] en religion)*. [Ahmad 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Sadat poses with other sitters in the courtyard of his house, c. 1878. The calligraphic epigram on the appliqué fabric behind them reads "Oh opener of doors, open for us a blessed door"]. Albumen print. 26.9 × 21 cm  
 LOS ANGELES, THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, KEN AND JENNY JACOBSON  
 ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION, 1788–1960, 2008.R.3-588



FIGURE 76 Pascal Sebah, N° 368 Sakka (*Porteur d'eau*). Before 1886. The model posing as water carrier in the courtyard of the house of al-Sadat was also photographed by Béchard in identic attire. Albumen print on card. No dimensions provided  
 LOS ANGELES, THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PIERRE DE GIGORD  
 COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, SERIES  
 III. 96.R.14 (F3.079)

## 2 Inducement and Resistance to Commodification

More insidious dynamics further shaped the commodification process of historic material culture in the Middle East. The gradual disposal of assets and structures belonging to pious foundations represents one such force. The phenomenon is still

poorly understood, for lack of research, but also because *waqf* is in essence a system of estate perpetuation that generally revolves around theoretical considerations, rather than working practice.

### 2.1 *Embezzling waqf Property and Assets*

When observed at close glance, physical endurance of *waqf* can be shown as coexisting with



many other situations. The study of the condition of madrasas [religious colleges] in Damascus and Cairo at the turn of the twentieth century shows a panorama of ruin and dilapidation. Out of a total of 152 such institutions identified in Ottoman Damascus, only half had survived as standing buildings and only twenty-four were still active as places for religious instruction; some of them had been converted into houses and made private property. In Cairo, only one-third of the madrasas listed during the nineteenth century still existed in the next one; out of the surviving thirty-seven, twenty-two partially retained their original state of construction while fifteen were reduced to mere vestiges.<sup>46</sup> This was the result of a usurpation process, alternatively named “embezzlement,” “cannibalisation” or “misappropriation” in the literature.<sup>47</sup> It could be caused by famines, economic recessions or exceptional taxation, or indeed, as already mentioned, by natural catastrophes such as fires or earthquakes. A number of circumstances had the capacity to turn *mawqūf* [lit. immobilised] structures into despoiled sites from which material assets, from utensils to manuscripts down to stones, would be gradually taken away until the place was abandoned, and ultimately erased. A low Nile flood was one such cause. Endowed institutions used the revenues from the agricultural land (or urban land for that matter) made *waqf* for them, to maintain their buildings and pay the wages of their employees. When incomes contracted, the personnel of the relevant foundations were downsized, and repairs kept at a minimum. The outcome was invariably the dilapidation and ultimate abandonment of the corresponding structure.<sup>48</sup> (Fig. 77)

46 Miura, *Dynamism in the Urban Society of Damascus*, 37, 283.

47 Miura, *Dynamism in the Urban Society of Damascus*, 37; Theunissen, “Ottoman tiles,” 296; Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 133.

48 Gaston Wiet, “La ‘grande pitié’ des mosquées du Caire. Les Wakfs,” in Louis Hauteceour and Gaston Wiet, *Les Mosquées du Caire* (Paris: Leroux, 1932), 1: 151–62. The title of the chapter echoes the plea made by writer and

It is telling that regulations on endowments promulgated in the early nineteenth century all had provisions regarding ruined and abandoned *waqf* properties. In 1837, a regulation stated that if insufficient funding was found for the reconstruction of a dilapidated *waqf*, its remains were to be sold and “the vacant land rented to those who display an interest.” Another article of the same regulation stipulated that budget surplus was to be prioritised for investment in destroyed *waqf* properties, with the prime objective of building mosques. Moreover, in 1864, the ruler decided to confiscate the *awqāf* whose private administrators had committed an offence against shari‘a.<sup>49</sup>

The dismemberment of *waqf* property was therefore not necessarily illegal. Licit measures, such as *istibdāl* [exchange], had long been incorporated into *waqf* practice and allowed for all sorts of transformations of *waqf* property.<sup>50</sup> It is also admitted that the *istibdāl* regulation was abused in many ways and that such encroachments were unsuccessfully fought against when denounced in court.<sup>51</sup> In a provocative text criticising *waqf*, sadly without proper referencing but based on the meticulous study of a series of endowment deeds, historian Gaston Wiet (1887–1971) highlighted types of misappropriation supported by a Hanafi judge in the years 1405–09, that became customary.<sup>52</sup>

The fate of manuscripts belonging to endowed libraries in medieval times, such as the Ashrafiyya in Damascus,<sup>53</sup> offers numerous illustrations of

politician Maurice Barrès in favour of the incorporation of all French churches into the public domain in order to preserve them (Maurice Barrès, *La Grande pitié des églises de France* (Paris: Émile Paul frères, 1914)).

49 Miroslav Melčák, “The development of *Dīwān al-awqāf* in Egypt in the 19th century: Regulations of 1837 and 1851,” *Archiv orientální* 78, no. 1 (January 2010): 1–33.

50 Richard van Leeuwen, *Waqfs and Urban Structures: The Case of Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 160.

51 Miura, *Dynamism in the Urban Society of Damascus*, 283–84.

52 Gaston Wiet, “La ‘grande pitié’ des mosquées du Caire. Les Wakfs.”

53 Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library, The Ashrafiyya Library*



FIGURE 77 Gustav Steitz, after Karl Werner, *Tombs of the Kalifs of Cairo*, 1871 [The dilapidated condition of the late Mamluk Mausoleum of Ya'qub Shah al-Mihmandar in the outskirts of Cairo in 1871]. Chromolithograph, c. 1878 LONDON, WELLCOME COLLECTION, ATTRIBUTION 4.0 INTERNATIONAL (CC BY 4.0)

*waqf* embezzlement. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, books were highly mobile and migrated easily from one collection to another. "Many endowed books that were 'mobilized' in breach of the endowment's stipulations ultimately made their way to the shelves of another endowed library."<sup>54</sup> Konrad Hirschler warns against misreading the process. The restructuring of dissolved libraries in new collections during invasions, crises, catastrophes and revolts was a recurrent phenomenon that allows for insights into social processes of transformation and changing cultural practices. The misappropriation of holdings may primarily mean that a specific madrasa was about to stop teaching after 150 years of existence. Manuscripts

were sold because the library's income had drastically declined and was no longer able to fund the librarian's salary. In addition, the library could have lost its significance due to the foundation of other libraries. Equally, the restructuring of holdings could indicate the relative economic decay of a region. An Iraqi scholar travelling in the eleventh century to Egypt was able to buy large quantities of low-priced manuscripts during a famine. However, to transfer an endowed manuscript into a private collection was theoretically illegal and could be scandalous, as endowment deeds always stipulated that the manuscripts were inalienable. Modern scholarship has occasionally taken up this normative rule and has depicted such changes of status as one of the main factors for the purported decline of libraries in the Mamluk period. But in fact, the phenomenon is, above all, evidence of displacements from one institution to another,

*Catalogue* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 45–53.

54 Hirschler, *Written Word*, 131–34.

rather than a sign of decline. The rise of a local endowed library (in madrasas for instance) hastened the dissolution of existing libraries.

This had probably been the destiny of the Madrasa of al-Sultan Barquq in Cairo. It could explain how folios from a Mamluk Qur'an bearing his name were bequeathed to a library in Europe as early as 1851 (see Chapter 1). Another part of that very Qur'an had been in the hands of the Algerian emir 'Abd al-Qadir (1808–83) during his exile in Damascus in 1855. The leader offered the precious folios to his secretary Léon Roches probably a few years later; they were ultimately acquired by the Musée du Louvre in 2015.<sup>55</sup> The disposal of a copy of the holy book from the madrasa should be understood first and foremost as an indicator of its cessation as a teaching institution. The story epitomises the motion of *mawqūf* portable assets between Cairo and Damascus, from a religious foundation to private hands, in the 1850s. The prime difference is that the new hands ended up being European.

The “book drain to Europe” had been in full swing in Cairo since the early 1800s. In 1809, one single book hunter, the German “hobby Orientalist” Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811), was able to ship home no less than 1,574 manuscripts, despite resistance encountered from mosques' custodians and with no assistance from the eleven booksellers established in the Khan al-Khalili who had claimed “that the French had taken all the manuscripts.”<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, the weakened state of institutions in charge of books left them unable to fight the disruption.

55 Paris, Musée du Louvre, MAO2281.

56 Ahmed El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 10–20. Seetzen's acquisitions, with available information on their provenance, are kept at the Gotha Research Library, University of Erfurt, in Germany, Tilman Seidensticker, “How Arabic manuscripts moved to German libraries,” *Manuscript Cultures* no. 10 (2017): 73–82.

## 2.2 *Fighting Commercial Transactions of Religious Artefacts*

There are known instances when misappropriations of endowed objects was noticed, and drastically punished. The famous encyclopaedia of Egypt's historic topography drafted during the 1880s by the engineer and high official 'Ali Pasha Mubarak (1823–93), under the title of *Al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya al-jadida*, includes at least one such story about the sale of a major endowed asset that sparked off open conflict and castigation.

The episode takes place in Cairo. In his entry on the Mosque of al-Sultan Shah in Bab al-Khalq (close to 'Abdin Palace), 'Ali Mubarak narrates in some details a story involving its pulpit. The mosque was in very poor condition and had been standing half destroyed and dilapidated for some while. Its custodian [*nāzir*] was one Muhammad Effendi al-Giridli/al-Kiridli [al-Geretly in contemporary Western sources, meaning someone from Crete]. The mosque possessed a finely executed minbar made from the precious wood known as *khashab al-'aud* [cedar or epicea]. According to Mubarak, Muhammad al-Geretly sold it to a European traveller [*siyyāh min al-Afrang*] for 25,000 piasters [*qirsh*] *dīwānī* and the buyer took it home. When the news reached Khedive Ismail, the ruler condemned both the custodian, and the carpenter who had helped to dismantle the minbar, to be banned to the White Nile, where the custodian died. Deportation to the White Nile started after 1865 and applied to men sentenced with more than ten years of forced labour. Here it indicates that a case of *waqf* embezzlement by the person who oversaw it was considered a very serious offense. Since appropriation of *waqf* assets was common, one is left wondering what motivated such exceptional condemnation.<sup>57</sup> The Khedive ordered the renewal [*tajdīd*] of the mosque, and the work was completed in 1289 AH (1872–73 AD)

57 Rudolph Peters, “Egypt and the age of the triumphant prison: Legal punishment in nineteenth century Egypt,” *Annales islamologiques* 36 (2002): 253–85.





FIGURE 78 The prayer hall of the Mosque of al-Sultan Shah after its reconstruction in the 1860s  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2019

according to the *Khitat*.<sup>58</sup> There is no inscription on the building to corroborate the date given, but the mosque itself is visibly a nineteenth-century reconstruction incorporating only very few fragments from the previous structure.<sup>59</sup> Strikingly enough, its stone columns are sculpted along patterns directly echoing those found on the structure of Mamluk wooden pulpits; the feature is quite unique, with few equivalents in the city.<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 78)

58 'Ali Mubarak, *Al-Khitat al-tawfiqīyya al-jadida* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1888–89), V: 30. Mubarak reports that the mosque celebrates an annual *mawlid* at the end of the month of Sha'ban (111:54).

59 The mosque is misdated and mislocated in the Archnet database [<https://archnet.org/sites/2357>].

60 Engaged columns at the Mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi (built 1480) exhibit equally sculpted surfaces, as pointed out by one of the anonymous reviewer of the manuscript, but their patterns diverge from those on minbars.

Was the idea to eternalise in stone what had disappeared in wood?

It is tempting to relate the sale of al-Sultan Shah's pulpit to the Qaytbay minbar proposed by Husayn Fahmi *al-mi'mār* to the South Kensington Museum at the *Exposition universelle* of 1867 in Paris. The dates do match, considering that the sale of the minbar at al-Sultan Shah took place at some point between 1865 (the *terminus post quem* of deportation to the White Nile) and 1872 (the end of the mosque's renovation). The coincidence was detected after an Egyptian collector, Markus Simaika Pasha (1864–1944), had observed, when visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1932, that the pulpit attributed to the Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh bore an inscription in the name of Qaytbay. A report on the issue by the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe pointed out that both a Qaytbay Mosque in Rawda Island, and the al-Sultan Shah Mosque



(itself having been repaired by Qaytbay), lacked their original minbar. It meant that the pulpit in London could have come from either of these monuments, and very likely from the latter.<sup>61</sup> A careful material analysis of the wood of the pulpit now in London, of remnants of Qaytbay's patronage in the current al-Sultan Shah Mosque (inscriptions and ornaments on stone in particular) and of the decorative scheme of its reconstruction, should in due time clarify the matter.

On the other hand, the values paid for each – possibly the same – minbar differ significantly. The amount charged to the “European tourist” for the pulpit in al-Sultan Shah Mosque is almost three times less than the one reported by Husayn Fahmi *al-mi'mār* (£700, equating 68,250 piasters *dīwānī*, against the 25,000 reported by Mubarak) for the pulpit now in the V&A. Did the European traveller act as an intermediary for the Egyptian official? Did the price put forward by Husayn Fahmi take into account the heavy repair that he had to incur before being able to resell the pulpit? As a matter of fact, its canopy looks entirely new, and other parts also had to be completed in modern wood. Its current condition suggests that the original piece of work was truly worn out. What was sold at the time was not exactly a pulpit, but most probably fragments of one. It remains to be ascertained if the reinforcement, or indeed re-erection, of the pulpit was done in Paris or in Cairo. In any event, the sums talked about are considerable and it presupposes substantial cash availability. At the time, the annual wage of a master-carpenter averaged 3,000 piasters *dīwānī*: eight years of income would need to be sacrificed in order to procure the pulpit of al-Sultan Shah.<sup>62</sup> In comparison, Husayn Fahmi

*al-mi'mār*'s purchase represented for him almost two years' earnings.<sup>63</sup>

However extraordinary the sale of this pulpit had been, this disposal of mosque furnishings was not unique. A similar story is recorded for carved stonework with epigraphy from the madrasa of al-Zahir Baybars in Cairo (adjacent to the Mausoleum and College of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub in the historic centre of the city). The buyer this time was one Sheikh al-Babli, the chief of the guild of jewellers. The opening in 1874 of a new street had required the dismantling of the monumental portal of the madrasa. Its main bronze door was ultimately transferred to Cairo's Islamic Art Museum, but a pillar and further inscribed stones had remained on site. Part of the land was acquired by the sheikh from the *waqf* administration around 1882. The transaction was later denounced as having no legal basis, “whatever the administrative procedures through which it had gone.” The sheikh was asked to give back the land and the architectural salvage he had appropriated. He eventually did, at least in part, and was reimbursed for what he should not have been able to acquire, but still had managed to make his by legal means.<sup>64</sup> These were clearly contentious issues, but not fully illegal ones.

To counter material misappropriation, measures were taken as early as February 1870 to protect endowed assets. A Frenchman with some

*l'Égypte. Année 1873–1290 de l'Hégire* (Cairo: Mourès, 1873), Annex 1, 1, 220.

61 Marcus H. Simaika, Muhammad Shafik, Robert Hyde Greg, John Home, Pierre Lacau, Mustafa Fahmy, Sayed Metoualli, Edmond Pauty, “7. Minbar de Kāyṭbāy déposé dans un musée de Londres,” *Procès-verbaux du Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 37, exercice 1933–35 (1940): 44.

62 The daily earning of a master-carpenter was 8.3 piasters; E. de Régny, *Ministère de l'Intérieur. Statistique de*

63 The exchange rate of the pound sterling (£) was ninety-seven piastres and twenty paras in 1873 (Régny, *Statistique*, 1). The annual income of the *ma'mūr* Urnato [chief officer of Cairo's embellishment], a position Husayn Fahmi held until 1873, was 45,600 piasters *dīwānī* in 1872, which equated £470 (Cairo, Dār al-Waṭā'iḳ al-Qawmiyya, *Muhāfaza Misr, Mahāfid* 1872, 2002–3607, List of appointees in the Administration of parks and gardens and other services with their monthly salaries, 1872–75).

64 Julius Franz, Ambroise Baudry, Ezzat Ismaïl, Pierre Grand, “Mosquée et tombeau du Sultan Saleh Nedjm-ed-Din Ayoub, au quartier de Nahassin, au Caire,” *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 3 (exercice 1885) (1886): 13–6.

experience in restorations in the Holy Land, Auguste Salzmänn (1824–72),<sup>65</sup> was appointed as “curator of Cairo’s monuments” and director of an “Arab Museum” to be created, in order to complement the Egyptian Museum with a structure dedicated to Islamic artwork. Salzmänn proposed, as the Khedive had suggested, selecting a disused mosque, albeit a restorable one, for the purpose in order to acquire a “remarkable site perfectly adapted to its new function” at low expense.<sup>66</sup> Objects could then be shown in their almost original context. On 24 February 1871, the Minister of Interior instructed Customs that the Khedive had decided that the “antiquities produced by the Arabs” could neither be traded nor exported.<sup>67</sup> In a report dated April 1871, Salzmänn insisted that fragments of interest from a historic or artistic point of view, taken from on-going demolitions or belonging to dilapidated or abandoned mosques, were daily sold and exported abroad despite the Khedive’s instructions, and that a place to temporarily store such objects was urgently needed.<sup>68</sup> He reiterated his proposal to allocate one deconsecrated mosque to the purpose and suggested choosing the very large Mosque of al-Sultan Zahir

Baybars, which stood, abandoned, outside Cairo’s walls.<sup>69</sup>

The project materialised ten years later, but another disused mosque was opted for, that of al-Hakim. All furniture and valuables held in mosques were systematically transferred to its galleries. (Fig. 79 and 80) This explains why images of furnishings and fittings in place, such as candlesticks, rugs, and stands in the mosques of Cairo are so rare (Fig. 81): most photographs were taken after the removal of their portable historic artefacts, and therefore give a distorted view of what mosques looked like prior to these conservation policies.

On 20 April 1880, directives were reiterated to prohibit the departure of objects or fragments coming from mosques or mausoleums – only elements from private houses could be taken out of the country.<sup>70</sup>

In line with this, in all reported cases so far, the concern for preservation targeted exclusively religious architecture and objects. But the institutionalisation of conservation did not radically change the situation. In 1881 it was significantly within the Administration of Endowments [*awqāf*] that the Comité de conservation des monuments de l’art arabe was created and tasked with preserving historic mosques, and more importantly controlling their restoration. Surveillance over religious buildings increased.<sup>71</sup> Legal control over the exportation of Islamic artefacts was reinforced in 1887. But

65 On Salzmänn in Egypt, see Mercedes Volait, *Fous du Caire*, 51–2; for his contribution to photography, Lise Brossard-Gabastou, *Auguste Salzmänn (1824–1872) Pionnier de la photographie et de l’archéologie au Proche-Orient* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2013).

66 Cairo, Dār al-Waṭā’iq al-Qawmiyya, *‘Aṣr Ismā’īl*, Antiquities, file 7/2, Note relative à la préservation des monuments arabes et à l’organisation du musée, 2 avril 1871.

67 Antoine Khater, *Le Régime juridique des fouilles et des antiquités en Égypte* (Cairo: Publications de l’IFAO, 1960), 69. The order was dated 3 Zū al-Ḥijja 1287 AH; a translation was issued to all Foreign consuls on 7 March 1871, Filib Jallad, *Qamus al-idara wa al-qada’* [*Dictionnaire d’administration et de jurisprudence*] (Alexandria: Yani Lagoudakis, 1890) 1: 83–4.

68 Cairo, Dār al-Waṭā’iq al-Qawmiyya, *‘Aṣr Ismā’īl*, Antiquities, file 7/2, Note relative à la préservation des monuments arabes et à l’organisation du musée, 2 avril 1871.

69 Cairo, Dār al-Waṭā’iq al-Qawmiyya, *‘Aṣr Ismā’īl*, Antiquities, file 7/2, Note relative à la préservation des monuments arabes et à l’organisation du musée, 2 avril 1871. Salzmänn considered that the location of the mosque on the road to ‘Abbasiyya would make it very visible and an ideal destination for walks.

70 “Décret du Conseil des ministres en date du 20 avril 1880,” Filib Jallad, *Qamus al-idara wa al-qada’*, 84; Khater, *Le régime juridique*, 280.

71 Abundant literature, not always grounded on solid evidence, exists on the creation and working of the institution; for a substantial critical literature review, see István Ormos, “The Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe: Towards a balanced appraisal,” *The Arabist* (Budapest) 40 (2019): 47–140.



FIGURE 79 Anonymous, *Untitled* [Early objects from mosques moved to storage in the Mosque of al-Hakim, c. 1880]. Albumen print on card. 27 × 21 cm  
MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, DOCUMENTATION DU DÉPARTEMENT DES ARTS DE L'ISLAM, PAI-59

there was still a long way to go for the protection of secular architecture and material culture.

### 2.3 *Chasing “Arab Rooms” in Cairo*

The attempt to purchase a Cairene “Arab room” for the Victoria and Albert Museum at this exact time offers further clues on the range of agencies and attitudes involved in the commodification of tangible heritage from the region. The idea came about in 1886, when British artist and collector Henry Wallis (1830–1916) returned from a visit to Cairo. Passionate about early ceramics and a leading figure in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in London, Wallis had started spending time in Egypt in 1885 and would sojourn

there during most winters until 1901.<sup>72</sup> Since 1880, he had also been acting as external art referee to the London museum, advising on opportune acquisitions. Having observed that houses were fast disappearing in Cairo, and their interior decorations on the verge of being destroyed or dispersed, he had ventured that the Victoria and Albert Museum could make good use of rooms “fitted up in Oriental fashion” [...] “to display the

<sup>72</sup> Ronald Lessens, “Henry Wallis (1830–1916), a neglected Pre-Raphaelite,” *The British Art Journal* xv, no. 1 (September 2014): 47–59.



FIGURE 80 Félix Bonfils, *Minaret de la mosquée El-Hakem*, 1890s. [Architectural salvage stored in the courtyard of the Mosque of al-Hakim]. The gallery built for smaller objects can be seen on the left hand; it was added in the 1890s. Albumen print on paper. 21.2 × 28 cm  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RESEARCH CENTER, 257A

splendid collection of Oriental art possessed by the Museum."<sup>73</sup>

Wallis initially had in mind rooms at al-Musafirkhana, an uninhabited eighteenth-century

house that was part of the endowments of the ruling family, and was then placed under the control of the *Waqf* administration. The house had provided exhibition material in the form of a mashrabiya at the Paris *Exposition universelle* in 1867 (Chapter 1). Since then, it had occasionally served to lodge artists – for instance, a group of German and Austrian painters during three

73 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, MA/2/P6, Purchase of an Arab room, Letter of Henry Wallis to T. Armstrong, 12 July 1886.





FIGURE 81 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Interno della Moskea Suliman Pacha (Citadella) (Cairo)*. [The prayer hall in the Mosque of Sulayman Pasha before its furnishings were transferred to the Mosque of al-Hakim]. Mounted albumen print. 27 × 22 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli*, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 30 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

months in 1875<sup>74</sup> but otherwise it was seldom occupied. Ten years later, the house was “past all reparation, whole sets of apartments having fallen into ruin.”<sup>75</sup> During the ‘Urabi Revolt of 1882, the house had sheltered refugees and many of the fittings that could be stripped from walls

and floors disappeared in those circumstances.<sup>76</sup> (Fig. 82 & 83)

Since the mid-1870s, there had been an interest in British artistic circles for “Arab rooms,” especially for those coming from Damascus because of their floral ornament. The painter Frederic Leighton had a Damascene-inspired “Arab Hall” erected at his London studio in 1877–79. It was highly artificial, yet an inspiring place. Museums were not necessarily inclined to acquire real rooms, for lack of space and a bias towards artworks lined up in

74 *Orientalische Reise: Malerei und Exotik im späten 19. Jahrhundert*, eds. Erika Mayr-Oehring, Elke Doppler, Andre Gingrich (Vienna: Wien Museum, 2003), 48 sq.

75 Henry Wallis, “Ancient Cairo houses,” *Art Journal* (London) (May 1888): 144–49.

76 Wallis, “Ancient Cairo houses,” 148.



FIGURE 82 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Salone della casa Ibrahim Pacha (Cairo)*. [The grand hall in the house of al-Musafirkhana after 1882]. Mounted albumen print. 22 × 27 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII* [sic: xxx for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 100  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65



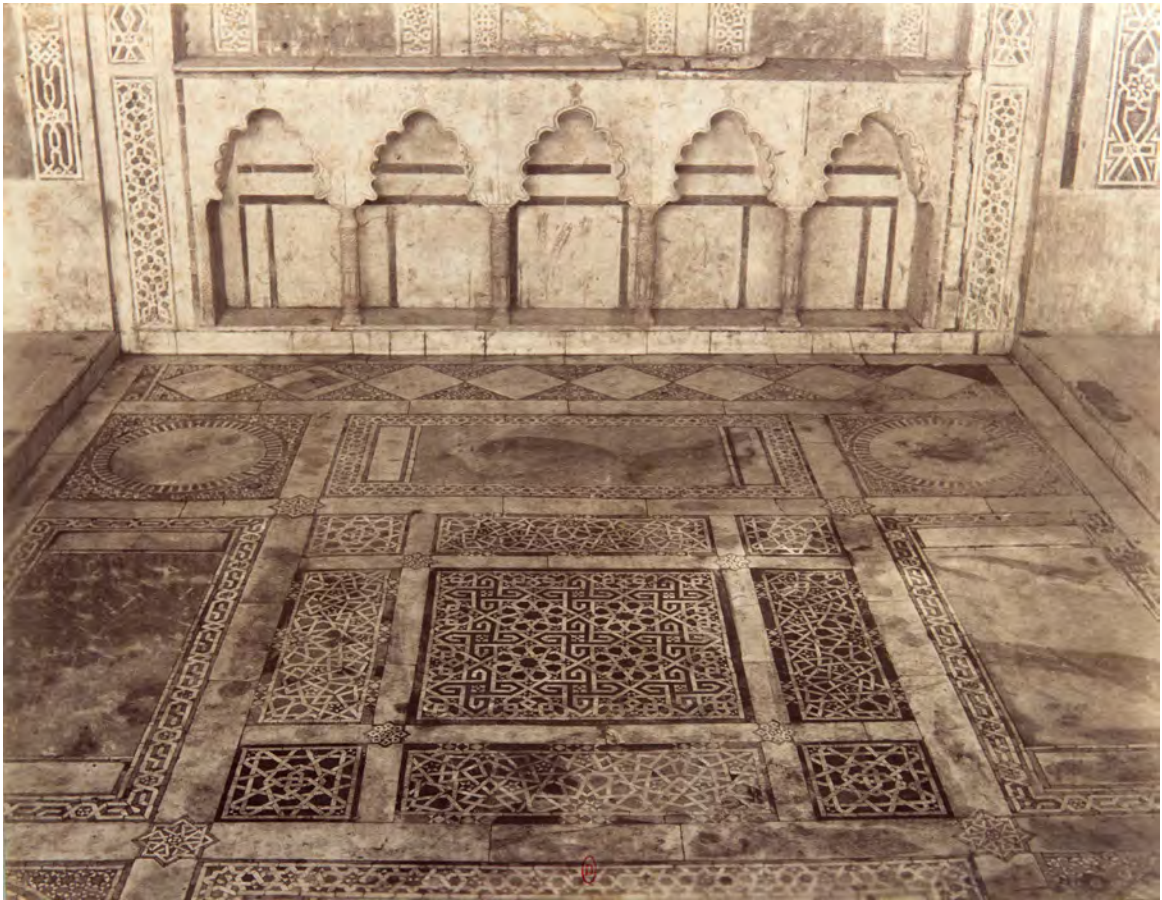


FIGURE 83 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Pavimento in mosaico (Ibra. P.)* [Marble mosaic floor before its looting at the house of al-Musafirkhana], Mounted albumen print. 28 × 21 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli*, Cairo (Egitto) MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, i.e. 1887], f. 109

PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

show cases.<sup>77</sup> However, to some, times seemed propitious to get Cairo specimens. In 1883, Stanley Lane-Poole had cynically reported that:

The present is a particularly favourable time for such purchasing [of Arab artworks]. The late war has caused many changes which bring private property into the market; old houses are being broken up, and persons are now ready to sell heirlooms which they have hitherto carefully preserved. At the same time the present predominance of England

in Egypt gives an English purchaser unusual facilities.<sup>78</sup>

However, Lane-Poole turned out to be misguided on all counts. The Museum's authorities thought it unlikely that they could store such imposing items inside their already overcrowded building. Moreover and somewhat ironically, British power in Cairo proved less effective than expected. The British consul-general in Egypt, Sir Evelyn Baring (later 1st Earl of Cromer), agreed to mediate with the Khedivial family, but to no avail. Truly enough,

77 Moya Carey, "Appropriating Damascus Rooms."

78 London, V&A archive, Nominal file MA/1/L257, S. Lane-Poole to the Director, 4 January 1883.

however, a preliminary agreement was reached in 1887 with the Khedive and the *Waqf* administration for the acquisition of the main room of al-Musafirkhana for £300, a price covering the “cost of restoring the room to habitable condition” – that is of replacing the lost elements with new ones. What mattered for an endowment was to serve the purpose for which it had been created; in this case, the stake was to get a habitable residence, whatever the age and shape of its walls and ceilings. Conservation was not the central concern. The agreement was conditional on the written consent of the brother of the Khedive, Prince Husayn. In 1888, Baring reported that the latter had accepted to “let the roofs be taken away if the Khedive would see him through any family difficulties.” But the current ruler, Tevfik (r. 1879–92), declined responsibility on the matter. The only way out was to have all the members of the three families involved agreeing to the purchase, a “hopeless task,” considering the number of parties concerned. Baring humorously concluded his reporting to the v&a that the five-million pound loan he was simultaneously negotiating for the Egyptian finances proved an easier matter than the £300 roof!<sup>79</sup>

Discussions resumed three years later. In view was now an entirely different interior, a room well known to many artists and travellers. It belonged to the estate used by the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Muhammad al-‘Abbasi al-Mahdi (1827–97). The residence had been built at the very beginning of the eighteenth century according to a date identified on one column (1704–05). It had been granted to the Sheikh al-‘Abbasi upon his appointment as Grand Mufti in 1848. Architects and painters had access to the reception hall since then, starting with the Bernese Theodor Zeerleder (1820–1868) who produced the oldest known watercolour of the room that very year. Many other artists followed

suit.<sup>80</sup> (Fig. 84 and 85) All depicted an empty place, devoid of any furnishing. In 1882, the room was deemed one of the most elegant and complete specimen of an “Arab reception hall”, albeit a decaying one. The section and plan drafted by Czech architect Frantisek Schmoranz (1845–92) in 1874, although not an accurate survey but a “restoration” in the style of a seventeenth-century room, shows a place reduced to its ground-floor reception room, the main room with lateral recesses known as a *qā’a* or *mandara*, and its attached *maq’ad* [loggia overlooking the courtyard].<sup>81</sup> The date 1280 AH/1863 AD inscribed on the top of one of the coloured glass windows alludes to some work done that year. In all likelihood, the Mufti did not use the rooms – according to local rumour, he had at his disposal a much finer reception hall, which might have meant one arranged *alla franca*.<sup>82</sup> In the vicinity of the old hall, was indeed a newer mansion, decorated in the Ottoman Rococo genre so popular in the early nineteenth century.<sup>83</sup>

Talks regarding the disused room appear to have taken place in early 1891. The Museum was now ready to spend £500 on the transaction. The Mufti was approached by the dragoman of General Grenfell, a then Major-General of the Egyptian Army, and one of his officers. The two men endeavoured to “cajole” the Sheikh al-‘Abbasi but found him “obdurate.” They reported that he would

79 London, v&a archive, Purchase of an Arab room, MA/2/P6, Note of T. Armstrong, 19 August 1886; Caspar Purdon Clarke to Baring, 13 May 1887; Baring to director of the Museum, 11 February 1888.

80 Georg Ebers, *Egypt Descriptive, Historical, and Picturesque* (New York: Cassell and Co, 1885) 11: 77; Francine Giese et al., *Mythos Orient. Ein Berner Architekt in Kairo*, exhibition catalogue (Oberhofen Castle) (Oberhofen: Stiftung Oberhofen, 2015); Mercedes Volait, “Figuration et fortune artistique des intérieurs du Caire au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *The Myth of the Orient: Architecture and Ornament in the Age of Orientalism*, eds. Francine Giese and Ariane Varela Braga (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 17–33.

81 Volait, ed., *Le Caire dessiné et photographié*.

82 Arthur Rhoné, *Coup d’œil sur l’état du Caire ancien et moderne* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1882), 35–6.

83 While the “Mufti room” is gone since the 1920s, remnants of its nineteenth-century additions were still visible in 2018. For their description in the 1980s, see Mercedes Volait, “Grandes demeures du Caire au siècle passé,” *Cahiers de la recherche architecturale* 20/21, (1987): 84–93.





FIGURE 84 Anonymous, *Untitled* [An artist at work in the reception room of the Mufti's house]. Albumen print on paper. 13 × 18 cm  
 BOSTON, THE ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM, ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER'S TRAVEL ALBUMS, EGYPT, 1874 (N.F.)

“prefer to see the room wrecked and the ornamentation demolished to selling it.” Wallis could not figure out if the response was determined by “religious fanaticism” or “pure cussedness ...”<sup>84</sup> This

was quite an unperceptive comment, and one telling as to the little attention given to local voices. In the context of British-occupied Egypt, adamant opposition to anything British from someone who could afford it should hardly come as a surprise. Wallis extended his bitterness to the British authorities. To him, Britain's consul-general had never been supportive of the efforts to bring home

84 London, V&A Archive, MA/1/W330, Henry Wallis nominal file, part 1, Letter of Henry Wallis to Sir Philipp Cunliffe-Owen, 5 February 1891.

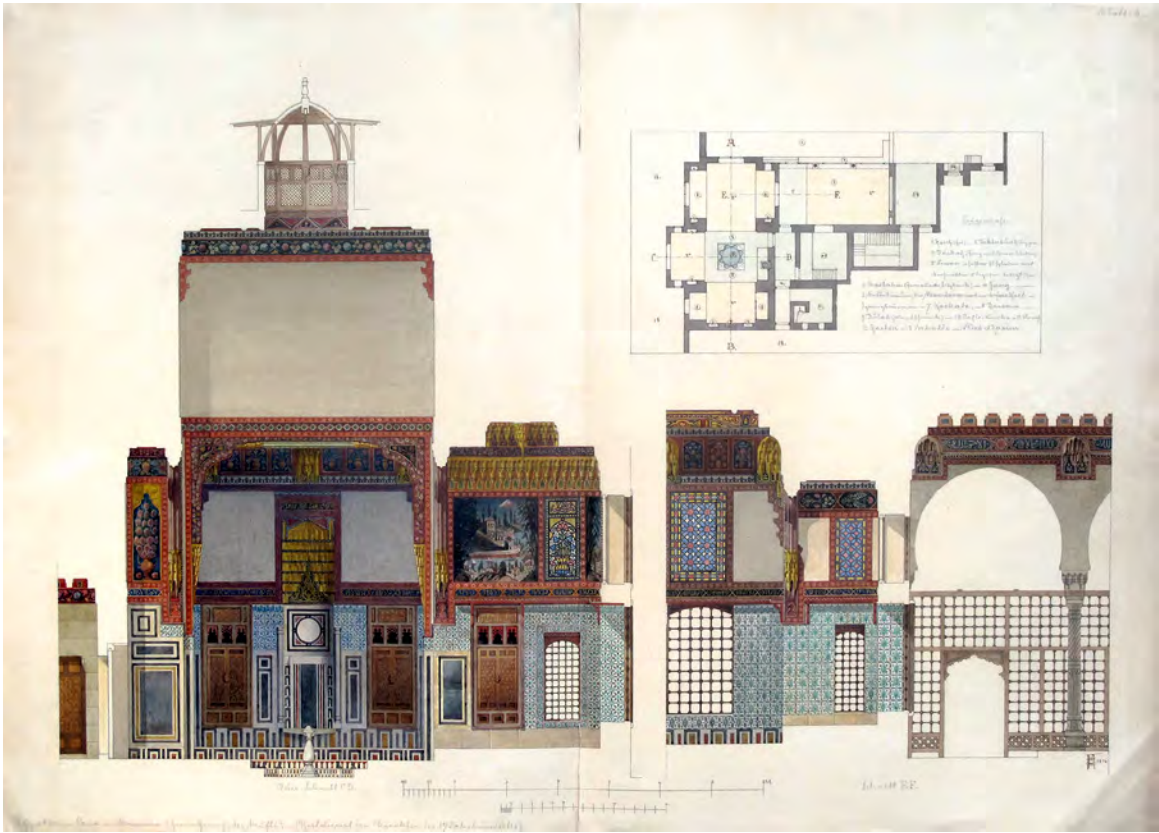


FIGURE 85 Frantisek Schmoranz, *Mandara des Mufti* [Mandara of the house of al-Mufti], 1874. Watercolour on paper. 56 × 40 cm  
 CHRUDIM, SOKA STÁTNÍ OKRESNÍ ARCHIV [DISTRICT ARCHIVES]

an “Arab room.” The British broker was told by Baring that there only remains to see “whether the Khedive will bring the Mufti to reason,” but the promised audience was never arranged. Wallis lamented the lack of support of the British authorities in Egypt when it came to matters of artistic interest, imagining that the French or German representatives would have acted very differently and succeeded in getting the room!<sup>85</sup> British-occupied Egypt was decidedly very different from what one would imagine today.

In the end, the “Moufti room” never headed to London. Power relations, even in colonial circumstances, proved to generate more unfortunate

interactions than anticipated. A whole range of obstructions was possible, and the British authorities in Egypt were not last at slowing action. Attitudes towards the disposal of historical assets could greatly differ from one individual to another, and this held true way beyond the European-Egyptian divide. Responses, whether Egyptian or British, were themselves diverse, ranging from reluctant assent to adamant refusal. As for the room itself, it did not survive the passing of time. Its condition was surveyed as pitiful in 1908. A restoration was contemplated but abandoned, because the owners “were not willing to contribute to the expenses.”<sup>86</sup> Photographs taken in 1913

85 London, V&A Archive, MA/1/W330, Henry Wallis nominal file, part 1, Letter of Henry Wallis to General Donnelly, 18 February 1891.

86 Albert Boinet *et al.*, “Procès-verbal n° 149,” *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe* 24, exercice 1907 (1908): 1–5, 24.

showed walls despoiled of all their tiles.<sup>87</sup> The room ultimately disappeared when a new major thoroughfare, the al-Azhar Street, was opened in 1922–25 through the property, leaving the modern quarters built in the 1850s as the sole remains.<sup>88</sup> Preservationists may argue that the removal of the room would have guaranteed its survival. As we have seen, decontextualisation did not always guarantee conservation and moreover, the reasoning pays little attention to how such act would have been perceived locally.

#### 2.4 *Unrelenting Misappropriation*

Misappropriation continued in parallel, whenever given a chance. A later episode relates to the Mosque of al-Ashraf Barsbay in Khanqa, a locality in the northern outskirts of Cairo, in the province of Qaliubiyya. In 1894 a petition was sent by inhabitants of the adjoining district of Shubra to the *Waqf* Administration to signal the existence of the mosque, which had fallen out of use, probably many decades earlier. The Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe was summoned to inspect the building. It reported that the minaret of the mosque had only retained one original storey; at the entrance was a door with fragments of bronze plating featuring animal iconography and inscriptions relating to another building. The door had been commissioned in 600 AH /1203 AD by one Shams al-Din Sunqur al-Tawil; it was an example of reuse from another structure.<sup>89</sup> (Fig. 86) More *spolia* stood inside the mosque: one column had a capital with a cross, most of the other capitals were Corinthian, and many served as bases rather than capitals. The minbar kept only one

of its doors. A *sabil* [fountain] was added during the reign of Abbas I (1854–59) according to oral tradition. Inhabitants knew of revenues included in the *waqf* of the Mosque of Al-Ashrafiyya in Cairo. The *Waqf* Administration was requested to provide information on these resources.<sup>90</sup> The final conclusion was that the mosque had been abandoned long ago, but could be repaired. Yet, no course of action was immediately taken. Meanwhile rumours developed that the mosque hid a treasure that included gold. The building was looted during one night in 1897 in hopes of finding it.<sup>91</sup> Following this, its security was reinforced, and some repairs were made afterwards. The precious bronze door was taken away to be restored. When the work was completed in 1900, it was considered safer to keep the artwork in the Museum of Islamic Art, where it still stands today.<sup>92</sup> Along the same rationale, the mosque's minbar did not return to the sanctuary after its restoration in 1914; after some hesitancy, it went to another al-Ashraf Barsbay foundation, closer to town, and hence better watched over.<sup>93</sup> For safety reasons, the mosque was furthermore locked up. It became a home for bats. A 1921 photograph reveals a structure in derelict condition, with a minaret stripped of its upper shafts.<sup>94</sup> It would take another hundred years to have the mosque reverted to its initial splendour. The restoration work was ultimately completed in December 2017.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the afterlife of historical monuments in Cairo follows quite unpredictable

87 "Maison du Moufti. Caire. Vue intérieure de la Ka'a." *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 29, exercice 1912 (1913): 10, pl. VI–X.

88 Themselves in dilapidated condition today; on the new *salāmlīk* of the Moufti residence, Mercedes Volait, "Grandes demeures au Caire."

89 Ismaïl, Pierre Grand *et al.*, "8° Rapport sur la mosquée du sultan Barsbaï au village de Khanka," *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 11, exercice 1894 (1895): 151–55.

90 Pierre Grand *et al.*, "Mosquée du sultan Barsbaï au village el-Khanka," *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 12, exercice 1895 (1896): 22–4.

91 Louis Hautecoeur and Gaston Wiet, *Les Mosquées du Caire* (Paris: Leroux, 1932), 1: 137.

92 Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 2389.

93 F.R.H Darke *et al.*, "Minbar de la mosquée d'al-Achraf Barsbâï, à al-Khanqah," in *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 33, exercice 1920–1924 (1928): 141–42.

94 London, v&a, Photograph by K.A.C. Creswell, 932–1921.

95 I am indebted to Karima Nasr, from 'Ayn Shams University, for the information on its full restoration (including the reconstruction of the minaret).





FIGURE 86 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Porta Moschea de Khanka*. [The entrance door of the Mosque of al-Ashraf Barsbay in Khanqa before its restoration in 1900, and subsequent transfer to the Museum of Islamic Art]. Albumen print. 17.4 × 12.2 cm  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE, BOITE FOL B-EO-1717



ways and in the process, buildings experienced all sorts of reconfigurations.

### 3 Contrasting Attitudes

A large range of dynamics was involved in the commodification process of Cairo's artefacts and salvage. Urban obsolescence, social aspirations to change and economic necessities were among the factors that hastened it: local factors determined the type of goods successively available. The driving forces were a combination of enduring realities and novel dynamics. On the one side, was a centuries-old history of shrinking *waqf* resources and waning assets, as well as a tradition of architectural reuse; on the other, the unprecedented pressure of European goods and the constraint to adjust to their influx. The amalgamation of both forces stirred the shift from traditional commercial flows and activities to the trade of historical valuables and Revival handicrafts, as personified by the trajectory of a Damascene alleged *shāh bandar al-tujjār* [head of the merchants' guilds] turning into a successful dealer in Islamic antiques by the mid-nineteenth century, as seen in Chapter 2. As a collateral effect, new artefacts from the region became global commodities, as the fate of the modern *kursī* demonstrated.

Recorded events suggest that the transformation of endowed assets into commodities was not a linear process. It was eventually contested and fraught, as exemplified by the Khedivial reaction to the dismantling of the pulpit of the al-Sultan Shah Mosque in Cairo. The true novelty in the 1870s was the authorities' opposition towards the disposal of endowed artefacts in Egypt. But the idea of conservation was not necessarily supported by everyone across society. The "father of Coptic archaeology," Marcus Simaika recalled in his memoirs:

In the Coptic Church, unfortunately, there is a rule that objects used in place of worship should be burnt rather than fall in profane hands as soon as they became unserviceable.

This has made the collection of religious relics of historic value very difficult. The lumber rooms in the monasteries and churches are crammed with old woodwork, icons and fragments of manuscripts, etc. store for use as fuel for baking the bread used for Holy Communion.<sup>96</sup>

Attitudes towards what could be disposed of, or not, were not unequivocal. The Egyptian Grand Mufti adamantly opposed the dismantling of the decoration of a disused room adjoining his residence, while another considerable religious figure, the Sheikh al-Sadat al-Wafa'iyya, got rid of similar decoration adorning his own reception hall in order to replace it with new fixtures. The former case was a room that had lost its *raison d'être*; the latter was a living place. At the demand end of the transaction, the forces at play were no less divergent. An exclusive group of Western *connoisseurs* supported from the 1870s onwards the idea of collecting architectural salvage for museographical purposes, but official authorities, from museum curators in Britain to British representatives in Egypt, were reluctant to provide assistance and did not fully support salvaging initiatives.

Stepping outside the Egyptian situation for a moment provides further perspective. Reflecting in the 1910s on the Indian antiques market, Lockwood de Forest similarly depicts a context changing at rapid pace and tightly dependent on local responses. He outlined the drastic change since he had visited in 1881 and 1891, when he used to operate through his Indian associate and a network of brokers who would gather objects from which he made his selection. There were now established dealers with shops in all the large cities controlling the market: "they have learned the kind of objects for which there is a demand and

96 Excerpts from the *Memoirs of Marcus Simaika Pasha* (unpublished manuscript), f. 14–15, my gratitude to Ola Seif for providing a copy; Samir Simaika, Nevine Henein, *Marcus Simaika, Father of Coptic Archaeology* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2017).

prices have advanced." Yet everything was not readily available, or had not been until then. As far as he could tell, for instance, "no object belonging to a temple had ever been sold except when it was injured, which destroys its sacredness." In his experience, it was the revival after 1892 of all the native religions and the subsequent remodelling or enlarging of many a temple or a mosque that changed the situation. The architectural transformations now offered unprecedented opportunities to the "scientific collector," as he described himself. He cites the case of a temple being rebuilt of marble as in fact the unique occasion to secure its old wood carving, much of which however perished in the process. Salvaging, even when possible, was a delicate enterprise.<sup>97</sup>

97 Washington, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Lockwood de Forest papers, 1858–1980, Box 1, folder 66, "Indian Domestic Architecture"

In the case of Egypt, measures were simultaneously taken by the ruling authority to fight misappropriation. By 1870, an emblematic banning order had been pronounced against a guilty *waqf* custodian and a conservation programme had been allotted to a specialist in restoration. An *ad hoc* committee, the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe, was installed in December 1881 within the administration of *awqāf*. Its efficiency was to be questioned,<sup>98</sup> but it suggests that conservation concerns and historical consciousness were gaining momentum in Egypt.

Typescript, circa 1919, Part 3, views 79 to 84 (foliated 218 to 233).

98 In a letter dated 1913, Wiet expressed serious doubts about the capacities of the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe: "Ils sont tellement paresseux à ce Comité;" Bibliothèque de Genève, Correspondance Max van Berchem, Box 29, f. 97, Letter of Gaston Wiet to Max van Berchem, 21 April 1913.

## Fashioning Immersive Displays in Egypt and Beyond

Among the collectors who lent works of Islamic Art to the 1865 and 1869 retrospective shows of the Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie in Paris, two groups can tentatively be differentiated in terms of display. On the one hand, were art lovers who typically kept their pieces in glass cases and cabinets, such as the Marquess of Hertford, or alternatively were to install “treasure chambers” (in German, *Schatzkammer*), as the Rothschilds famously did. Alphonse de Rothschild, who exhibited “Arab” enamelled glass in 1865, had his precious specimens, together with rock crystal, carved ivories and medieval enamels, locked in a mezzanine room at his *hôtel particulier* [private mansion] on 2 Saint-Florentin Street in Paris. The smoking room created in 1889 by Ferdinand de Rothschild at Waddesdon Manor for his valuable Renaissance Museum, visually epitomises how objects, such as the famous Palmer Cup (a thirteenth-century enamelled glass beaker from Egypt or Syria mounted on a French silver-gilt foot) and a Mamluk mosque lamp, were presented: they were lined up and protected under glass.<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 87) On the other hand were artists, architects and would-be designers who engaged in arranging immersive displays for their curios and pieces of salvage. Some of the atmospheric rooms they created were rather casually conceived. In the studio of Mariano Fortuny y Marsal in Rome, the *bric-à-brac* coexisted side by side with valuable collectibles and some of them performed mundane

functions. Fourteenth-century Alhambra jars serving as vases are an eloquent illustration. (Fig. 88) But arrangements could follow more sophisticated conventions. The Oriental and Renaissance galleries installed in Paris after 1881 by Jean-Léon Gérôme’s brother-in-law, Albert Goupil, come to mind. Furnished respectively as a drawing-room and a bedroom, for visitors, the rooms evoked “practically living museums,” through the quality, historicity, function and arrangement of the assembled objects. The installation involved creativity. Instead of carpeting the floor, Goupil’s most sumptuous rugs were hung on the walls, as if canvases; because of their bright colours and iconography, they were said to compare favourably with European paintings.<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 89 and 90)

The decorative idea was taken a step further by collectors who delighted in architectural salvage, by inclination or opportunity. They were individuals who had the occasion to spend long periods of time in the Middle East, and notably in Egypt. The “style rooms”<sup>3</sup> they created with historic fragments in Cairo accomplished more than providing atmosphere and individuality; they became the collectible itself. Diverse techniques were used to revive historic décors. Collectors turned to reuse and patina, as well as replica and revival; in most instances these were employed in combination. Whatever their flaws or artificiality,

1 The content of the room is now at the British Museum as the Waddesdon Bequest; Pipa Shirley and Dora Thornton, eds., *A Rothschild Renaissance: New Look at the Waddesdon Bequest in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 2017); Ulrich Leben, “A High Victorian legacy at Waddesdon Manor: Baron Ferdinand’s smoking room and its contents since the creation of Waddesdon,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 27, no. 3 (November 2015): 335–45.

2 Mercedes Volait, “Les intérieurs orientalistes du comte de Saint-Maurice et d’Albert Goupil: des ‘Cluny arabe’ au Caire et à Paris à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *The Period Rooms. Allestimenti storici tra arte, collezionismo e museologia*, eds. Sandra Costa, Dominique Poulot, Mercedes Volait (Bologne: Bononia University Press, 2017), 103–14.

3 For the different types of historic rooms (style rooms, period rooms, epoch rooms), see Benno Schubiger, “Period Rooms’ als museographische Gattung: ‘Historische Zimmer’ in Schweizer Museen,” *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 66, no. 2–3 (2009): 81–112 (82).



FIGURE 87 Ferdinand de Rothschild's 'Renaissance Museum' at Waddesdon Manor  
 PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS LACEY/NATIONAL TRUST, WADDESDON MANOR, 2017



FIGURE 88 *Interior del estudio de Fortuny*, Roma [Interior of Mariano Fortuny y Marsal's studio in Rome, Italy].  
 Engraving  
 LA ILUSTRACIÓN ESPAÑOLA Y AMERICANA 19, SUPPLEMENT TO FASC. X, 15 MARCH 1875, 180–81





FIGURE 89 Edmond Bénard, *Untitled* [Albert Goupil's Oriental gallery at 9 Chaptal St., Paris, c. 1884–88]. The young man reclining on the sofa is his nephew Jean Gérôme. Albumen print. 20 × 27.5 cm  
EDMOND BÉNARD, *INTÉRIEURS PRIVÉS D'ARTISTES. ATELIERS D'ARTISTES*, 1880–1910, F. 35. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, 4 PHOT 021

and irrespective of how we view them today, the attempts at recreating historic interiors discussed here, fit the model of *Gesamtkunstwerks*, i.e. total works of art in their own right.

The concept, and its Cairene manifestations, experienced various lives and afterlives. The phenomenon raises in turn a set of queries from the point of view of materiality and cross-cultural interactions – the perspective that runs throughout this book. How did the modern art of accommodating architectural salvage, developed in Cairo by Western artists and patrons for the sake of Revivalism, work at a material level? Did it connect to the centuries-long Egyptian culture of reuse, or not? What impact, if any, did

arrangements incorporating salvage have on subsequent Revival interiors, once the mass-market reproduction of themed rooms became accessible to the middle-class in the late nineteenth-century? The responses are not unequivocal.

### 1 Atmospheric Interiors for Western Connoisseurs

Many purchases of antiques in Cairo or Damascus during the 1860s–70s were connected to modern recreations of Middle Eastern architecture, whether at home or in the Middle East itself. Olana House, the family mansion designed in



FIGURE 90 Edmond Bénéard, *Untitled* [Medallion carpet displayed at Albert Goupil's Oriental gallery on 9 Chaptal St., Paris], c. 1884–88. Albumen print. 26.9 × 20 cm

EDMOND BÉNARD, *INTÉRIEURS PRIVÉS D'ARTISTES. ATELIERS D'ARTISTES*, 1880–1910, F. 37.  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, 4 PHOT 021



upstate New York from 1871 onwards by Frederic Edwin Church, is an early example. It was conceived “after a pattern of a Damascus house,” upon his return from a long journey to Europe and the Near East that took him and his family to Syria and Palestine from January to May 1868.<sup>4</sup> Elements of recognisable Syrian origin contributed to the design and interior decoration of the house. Some of the valuables in Goupil’s rooms may have shared an identical Syrian provenance; they were indeed most probably bought at the same time, possibly at Abu Antiqua. Albert Goupil’s first encounter with Islamic artworks took place during his travels through the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in January–June 1868 with a group of artists; the caravan was led by his brother-in-law Jean-Léon Gérôme.<sup>5</sup> The party crossed paths with the Churches twice, at Jerusalem on 3 April 1868 and in Damascus on 2 May 1868. Since one of the artists of the French group, Famars Testas did produce several sketches during two afternoons at “Abou Antiqua’s,”<sup>6</sup> it is safe to assume that the famous antique dealer and his treasures were familiar to all of them. Another possible customer of Abu Antiqua, in person or in *absentia*, was Gaston de Saint-Maurice, the patron of a remarkable “modern Arabic Palace” built in Cairo in 1872–79. As we shall see, some architectural fragments connect his endeavour to Damascus.

### 1.1 *A Damascene Home Up the Hudson: Olana House and the Mediation of Christianity*

Church is reputed to have brought back thousands of “trophies of travel”<sup>7</sup> from his Grand

Tour overseas. The valuables ranged from “stones coming from the ancient sites of Petra and the Parthenon to coloured-stone architectural fragments from a house in Damascus, rugs, Ottoman embroidery, Arab spears and armors, and mere tourist curios.”<sup>8</sup> Among them, was a sixteenth-century thirty-two-tile panel installed in the vestibule of the front porch at Olana. (Fig. 91) Featuring a vase flanked by two cypresses, the panel is typical of the Iznik-style ceramics produced in Ottoman Damascus. Both the tones of the glazes – turquoise, olive green, blue and manganese over a white ground – and the design – floral sprays rising from a vase decorated with prunus flowers – are characteristic of that type of production.<sup>9</sup> Placed in central positions on walls or in niches, tile panels decorated the main rooms in Syrian architecture, domestic and religious alike.<sup>10</sup>

A close look at the panel shows that it had been both mended and filled with spare tiles to replace missing parts and it may even have been formed out of several incomplete sets. Full specimens were probably very rare. In 1871, British diplomat Richard Burton reported to the artist and Syrian-tile collector Frederic Leighton that “he was willing to have a house pulled down for [him], but the difficulty is to find a house with tiles.”<sup>11</sup> The cannibalisation of tiles had already been going on for some time in Damascus.

As a whole, Olana reflects the Churches’ exposure to Damascene houses. The brilliance of their

4 Marianne North, *Recollections of a Happy Life* (London, 1894), 1:67; Mercedes Volait, “Olana, A Persian-style home for the enjoyment of fine architecture”, in *Frederic Edwin Church: A Painter’s Pilgrimage*, ed. Kenneth Myers (Detroit: Detroit Institute of arts, 2017), 192–207.

5 Jean-Louis Andral *et al.*, eds., *Album de voyage: Des artistes en expédition au pays du Levant* (Paris: AFAA/RMN, 1993).

6 Andral, *Album de voyage*, 181–84.

7 *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, 3 December 1869, 2.

8 Hudson (US), Olana New York State Historic Site, Estate of Sally Church Papers, Frederic Church to William Osborn, 4 February 1869, transcript of a lost original, quoted in Zukowski, *Historic Furnishings*, 58.

9 Anne-Claire Schumacher, ed., *Terres d’Islam. Les collections de céramique moyen-orientale du Musée Ariana à Genève* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2014), exhibition catalogue, 306–12.

10 Brigid Keenan, *Damascus: Hidden Treasures of the Old City* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 54 sq.

11 London, Leighton House, Sir Richard Francis Burton in Damascus to Frederic Leighton, 22 March 1871, LH/1/5/24.

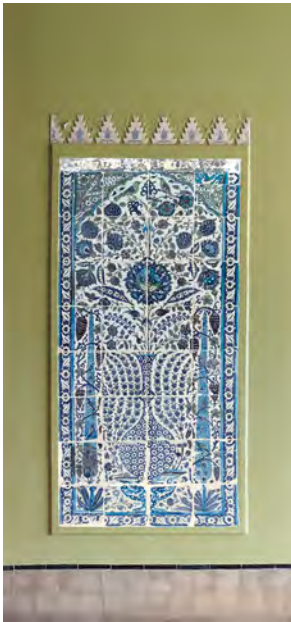


FIGURE 91 Damascene tile-panel in the front porch at Olana House, Hudson, Greenport, near Hudson, NY, USA

PHOTOGRAPH BY GERALD CARR, 2016

polychromatic interior decoration was legendary.<sup>12</sup> All visitors to the “oldest city in the world,” as the Syrian capital was then coined,<sup>13</sup> concurred that “the chief glory of Damascus is in the splendor of its private houses.”<sup>14</sup> Reception chambers were either decorated with panels of marble revetment or colourful paste-work designs inlaid into stone,

or with elaborate painted woodwork. Recurrent themes were motifs from nature, such as flower-filled vases and overflowing fruit bowls, all symbols of botanical opulence. This characteristic perfectly suited Frederic Church, a landscape artist who attached great value to nature and gardening. Olana was conceived with a central hall recalling the Damascene courtyard – the room was intended to be domed, but ultimately was not. (Fig. 92)

That Olana was recurrently deemed “Persian in style” at the time is only seemingly contradictory.<sup>15</sup> At that point, “Persian-ness” in matters of art denoted a style, not a land or a country. Iznik tiles, produced in Turkey, were long deemed “Persian” because of their floral pattern – the Iznik provenance was a late recognition. Floral Damascene tiles were also labeled “Persian” along the same rationale.<sup>16</sup> The comment made in 1870 by John Dibblee Crace (already quoted in Chapter 3) that the interior polychrome decoration in Damascus was “of essentially Persian character” meant, in a similar way, that it was primarily floral.<sup>17</sup> Just as “Arab,” by contrast, had come to symbolise geometry,<sup>18</sup> “Persian” was now equated with floral “Arabesque,” that is, vegetal ornament.<sup>19</sup> A “Persian room” (called as such in Damascus, i.e. *‘ajami*) did not designate a room from or in Persia, but one

15 For a discussion, Volait, “Olana.”

16 For the confusion between Persian, Rhodian, Damascus, and Iznik tiles, see Arthur Lane, “The Ottoman Pottery of Isnik,” *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957): 247–81, and for a contemporary review of shifting attributions, Julian Raby, “Iznik, The European Perspective,” in Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby, *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey* (London: Alexandria Press, 1989), 71–4. Crace, “On the Ornamental Features.”

17 As argued by French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in his introduction to Jules Bourgoïn’s *Les Arts arabes, Architecture, menuiserie, etc. avec une table descriptive et explicative et le trait general de l’art arabe* (Paris: A. Morel, 1868–73), 6–9.

18 On changing understandings of ornament across time and geography and on cross-cultural fertilization, Gülru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne, eds., *Histories of Ornament: From Global to Local* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

12 John Dibblee Crace, “On the Ornamental Features of Arabic Architecture in Egypt and Syria,” *Sessional Papers of the RIBA* (1870): 71–90.

13 Josias Leslie Porter, *The Giant Cities of Bashan and Syria’s Holy Places* (New York: T. Nelson, 1867), 336. The same statement appears twice in Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrims’ Progress ... With Two Hundred and Thirty-Four Illustrations* (Hartford: American publishing company, 1869), 457, 651: “Damascus, the ‘Pearl of the East,’ the pride of Syria, the fabled Garden of Eden, the home of princes and genii of the Arabian Nights, the oldest metropolis on earth....”

14 Josias Leslie Porter, *Five Years in Damascus: Including an Account of the History, Topography, and Antiquities of that City; with Travels and Researches in Palmyra, Lebanon, and the Hauran* (London, 1855), 33.





FIGURE 92 Cervin Robinson, *Olana court hall looking toward the main entrance*, 1969. From 10.16 × 12.7 cm negative WASHINGTON, DC, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, NY-5501-12

ornamented in gesso relief with fruit and flower paintings.<sup>20</sup>

What Church brought back from Syria and Palestine, more unexpectedly, were reminiscences of Eastern Christianity. The mantel over the fireplace in the sitting room bears an Arabic inscription taken from a biblical verse: “While I was musing, the fire burned” [عند لهجي اشتعلت النار] *‘inda lahajī, ishta’alat al-nār*] (Ps. 39:3). (Fig. 93) It is both a literal allusion to the flames beneath it

and an indirect reference to the fragility and vanity of human life, recalled in the subsequent lines of the Psalm. The fragment resonates with Eastern Christianity as well as Western missionary work in the Levant. The circle of acquaintances of the Churches during their stay in the Holy Land was mainly composed of British, Irish, and American missionaries,<sup>21</sup> including Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck

20 Anke Scharrahs, *Damascene ‘Ajami Rooms: Forgotten Jewels of Interior Design* (London: Archetype Publications, 2013).

21 John Davis, “Frederic Church’s late career,” in Davis, *The Landscape of History: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 168–207.



FIGURE 93 Cervin Robinson, *Sitting room at Olana house*, 1969. The fire-place bears an Arabic inscription. From 10.16 × 12.7 cm negative  
 WASHINGTON, DC, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, NY-5501-16

(1818–95), the main force behind a new translation of the Bible into Arabic funded by the American Bible Society – “truly a noble work,” in the very words of Church’s wife.<sup>22</sup> The couple would have heard of the July 1860 massacres in Damascus, in which about 2,000 Christian inhabitants of the city were killed and their houses burnt, as well as the school of the Presbyterian mission. Quoting from the Bible in Arabic was a way to connect to

early Christianity. For the stenciling on a double-door in the same room, Church chose a motif deriving from an Armenian church in Jerusalem, based on a plate by Jules Bourgoïn, *Porte de l’église de Saint-Jacques des Arméniens à Jérusalem*.<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 94) The large Greek crosses adorning the façades of the bell tower, as well as the doors of the east parlour, provide another direct visual link to Near Eastern Christianity. (Fig. 95) In contrast with the usual association of the Islamic Revival

22 New York Historical Society, Isabel Church diary, 1868; quoted in Karen Zukowsky, *Historic Furnishings Report For Olana state Historic Site, A History of the Interiors, Thoughts on their Significance, and Recommendations for Their Restoration* (Hudson, NY: Olana State Historic Site, 2001), 382.

23 Jules Bourgoïn, *Les Arts arabes*, pl. 27.



FIGURE 94 Jules Bourgoïn, *Porte de l'église de Saint-Jacques des Arméniens à Jérusalem*. The drawing was emulated through a stenciled design for one of the doors at Olana House  
*LES ARTS ARABES, 1867–73: PL. 27*

style with Islamophilia,<sup>24</sup> Olana House highlights a connection to the region mediated by Christianity.

### 1.2 *Accommodating Christian Salvage in Cairo*

Local Christianity also surfaces in the ambitious “Modern Arab” house erected by Count Gaston de Saint-Maurice in Cairo’s new quarters, while he was serving as Khedive Ismail’s grand equerry

24 Rémi Labrusse, *Islamophilie: l'Europe moderne et les arts de l'Islam* (Paris: Somogy, 2011).

from 1868 to 1878. (Fig. 96 and 97) The man is known to have been a keen collector of Islamic artefacts. A large part of his collection was displayed in Paris at *L'Égypte des Khalifes*, the show he curated on the occasion of the Universal exposition of 1878; around 400 objects among the exhibits were ultimately purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>25</sup> His Cairo’s residence, facing the city’s newly-built hippodrome, was meant to be a recreation of local historic architecture. In his very words dated 1882, the mansion was built:

Sur un plan ancien, avec des matériaux provenant des plus belles habitations des XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles. Plafonds sculptés peints et dorés, mosaïques de marbre et de nacre, portes de bronze et d’ivoire, faïences de Perse et du Caire, moucharabiehs, inscriptions, moulages, etc., etc.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, Saint-Maurice’s approach consisted of fitting and repurposing period materials into a new construction, with the intention of emulating historic architecture. It was an exercise in reuse, in the accommodation of salvage. The house was depicted then as “an exemplary Arab restoration,” for this is how “restoration” was understood at the time.<sup>27</sup>

25 Moya Carey and Mercedes Volait, “Framing ‘Islamic Art’ for Aesthetic Interiors: Revisiting the 1878 Paris Exhibition,” *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 9, no. 1 (2020): 31–59 [doi: 10.1386/ijia\_00003\_1]; a study of the collection by Moya Carey and myself is under preparation.

26 London, Victoria and Albert Archive, Gaston de Saint-Maurice Nominal file, MA/1/S180, Gaston de Saint-Maurice to Philip Cunliffe-Owen, 24 October 1882: “built according to an ancient plan, with materials coming from the most beautiful houses of the 14th-, 15th- and 16th-century, [with] sculpted ceilings, painted and gilded, mosaics of marble and mother-of-pearl, doors in bronze and ivory, Persian and Cairene tiles, mashrabiya, inscriptions, plaster casts, etc. etc.” [My translation].

27 Gabriel Charmes, “L’art arabe au Caire,” *Journal des débats*, 2, 3 and 4 August 1881, 54.



FIGURE 95 Cervin Robinson, *General view of Olana House from south west*, 1969. From 10.16 × 12.7 cm negative  
WASHINGTON, DC, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, HABS NY-5501-1

The endeavour took seven years to be completed. Like many high officials at the Khedivial court, the French aristocrat had been granted a land in suburban Cairo for his residence in 1872; the foundation inscription, penned in Arabic around the ceiling of the house's central hall, stated that it was finished in 1296 AH/1879 AD.<sup>28</sup> (See below Fig. 121) A few years later, the house was offered for sale and the premises were bought by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for diplomatic use.

<sup>28</sup> For a history of its construction, Mercedes Volait, *Maisons de France au Caire: le remploi de grands décors mamelouks et ottomans dans une architecture moderne* (Cairo: Publications de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2012). The initial house stood on Sherif Street.

Although the house was ultimately dismantled in 1937, its interiors were partially salvaged a second time, on the recommendation of Gaston Wiet, who then headed Cairo's "Musée Arabe" (presently Museum of Islamic Art). While considering some rooms of dubious taste, Wiet reckoned that the building was one of the most popular in Cairo, and that part of what it contained was of true archaeological value.<sup>29</sup> A number of the second-hand interiors were hence reinstalled, with some adjustment, in the new premises acquired for the French diplomatic mission in Giza. Therefore,

<sup>29</sup> Nantes, Archives rapatriées des postes, Le Caire, Ambassade, 353PO/2/404, Assessment by Gaston Wiet dated 25 February 1935.





FIGURE 96 Edward Livingston Wilson, *Front of Modern Arabic Palace, Cairo* [Main entrance to the house of Gaston de Saint-Maurice in Cairo], 1882. Albumen print. 20 × 25 cm  
WASHINGTON, DC, NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES, GRAMSTORFF COLLECTION, 2512-A



FIGURE 97 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Casa del Conte Saint-Maurice costruita tutta in pezzi e modelli antichi sull'architettura araba (Cairo)*. Façade of the Saint-Maurice house from the garden. Mounted albumen print. 26 × 20 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto)*, MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, soit 1887], f. 67  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

Saint-Maurice's achievement can still be partially observed first hand.

The pieces of salvage included a couple of prestigious bronze doors. The entrance door (Fig. 98) was recognised by epigraphist Max van Berchem (1863–1921) as coming from the madrasa founded by Baybars I in the heart of Historic Cairo. A second, smaller bronze door at the house can be ascribed to the same building. The madrasa was demolished in 1874 to make room for a new street. The salvaged door bore the name of the sultan, besides a date written in numerals, that van Berchem

suspected was a later addition, possibly at the hands of the dealer who procured the door.<sup>30</sup>

The most iconic part of the house was the cruciform hall located on the first floor. Its plan was inspired by the typical *qā'a* of Mamluk and Ottoman houses in Cairo, the reception room with

<sup>30</sup> Max van Berchem, "Matériaux pour un corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Égypte première partie," *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française XIX* (1894): 120.



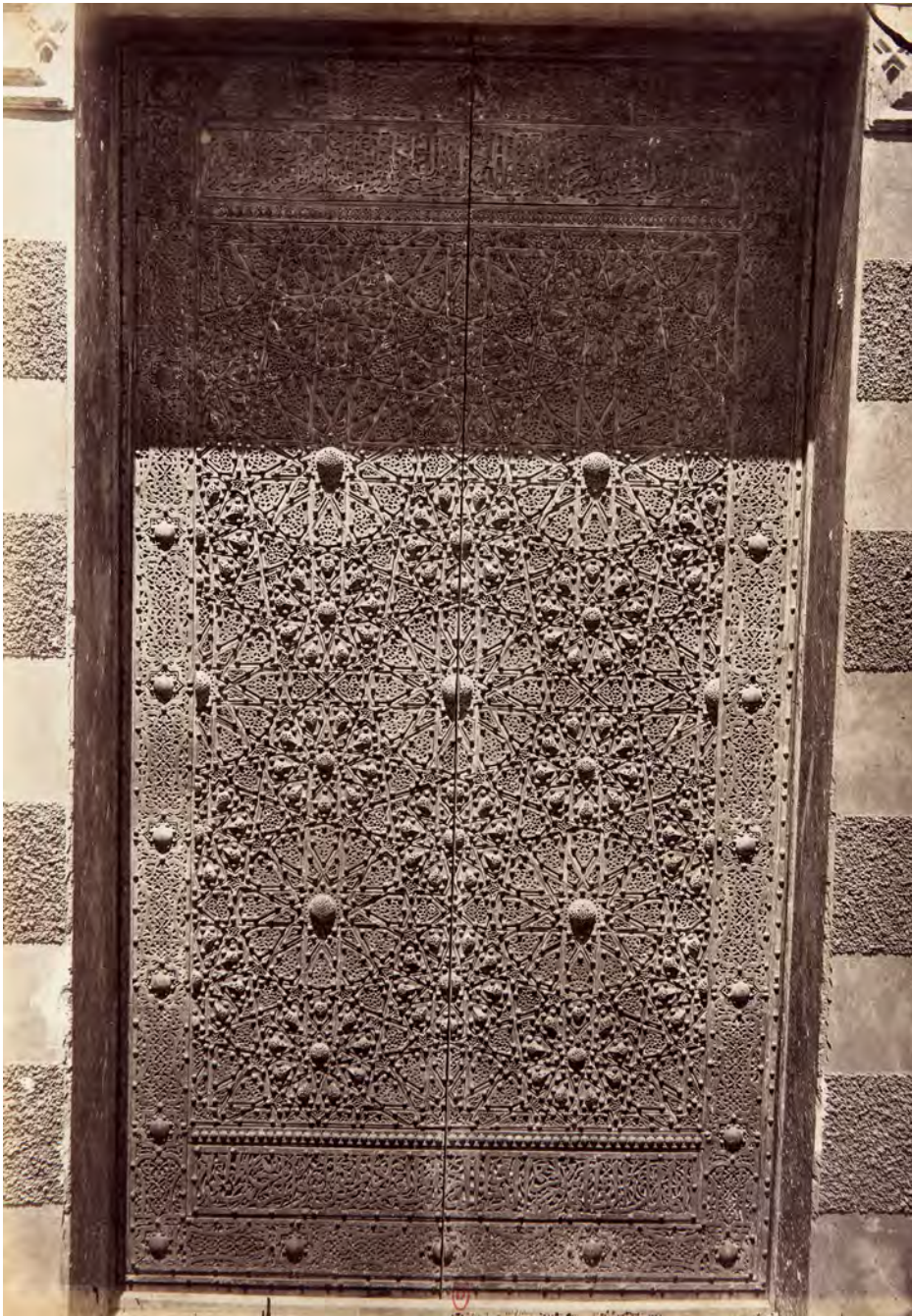


FIGURE 98 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Porta in Bronzo (Cte St Mce)*. Historic bronze door at the entrance of Saint-Maurice house in Cairo; the date 661 H (1262–63 AD) in numerals was added during its restoration. Mounted albumen print. 19 × 26 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto)*, MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: xxx for CCC, soit 1887], f. 93 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65





FIGURE 99  
 Pascal Coste, *Vue intérieure de la salle d'été de la maison au quartier Hauch Kadan*. Interior view of a *qā'a* in Cairo, Chromolithograph published as pl. XXI in unidentified publication. 48.4 × 31.7 cm  
 CHARENTON-LE-PONT, MÉDIATHÈQUE DE L'ARCHITECTURE ET DU PATRIMOINE, APMFO114666

high ceilings, lit by a central lantern. These rooms captivated European travellers; they were seen as characteristic of Cairo. Detailed views of such spaces were produced during the French occupation of Egypt in 1798–1801. Later, architect Pascal Coste included an illustration in his own survey of

Cairene architecture.<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 99) In Saint-Maurice's version, the recesses were given extra depth and

<sup>31</sup> Pascal Coste, *Architecture arabe, ou Monuments du Kaire, mesurés et dessinés, de 1818 à 1826* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1837–39), pl. XLVI.



a large lattice window was installed in one of them to convey additional light. (Fig. 100 and 101) Significantly, the room incorporated the typical shelf placed at mid-height to display wares of various kinds; instead of them being showcased in a display cabinet, as was usual at the British and Austrian Rothschilds for instance, Saint-Maurice's collectibles were presented as objects of daily use. Each recess received an elaborate painted ceiling, distinct from one another in style and relief. The central ceiling exhibited a rich pattern based on an eight-pointed star, formed from overlaid squares and filled with intricate arabesques; they were grouped in modules of four, interlocking with crosses presenting arms of equal length and pointed ends. (Fig. 102) The floor and dados were made of polychromatic stone mosaic dateable to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Some doors presented inlaid historic panels characteristic of the Mamluk period that were repurposed within modern frames. (Fig. 103)

Several features of the hall relate to Eastern Christianity. The most evident one is nestled up in an Arabic inscription circling one of the ceilings, about seven-metre height, which explains why it was only recently read.<sup>32</sup> The inscription offers a variation of Psalm 150 (1–6), the final prayer in the *Book of Psalms*, known as the Musicians' Psalm, as it names nine types of musical instruments called to praise God. The verses are familiar to any Christian Egyptian because they are chanted during the Eucharist portion of the Coptic liturgy.<sup>33</sup> The scripture also echoes the function of the reconstructed reception hall, for it was used initially as a place for musical entertainment. Similarly to the biblical verse that literally alludes to the chimney it adorns at Olana House, a psalm naming musical instruments decorated the cornice of a reception hall where music was occasionally performed, suggesting that inscribed texts were selected on purpose and have to be understood literally.

The presence of biblical verses, used in the Coptic Orthodox liturgy, in Saint-Maurice's main hall suggests that at least one ceiling was salvaged from a Coptic building. Furthermore, a door in the same room bears a pattern of repeated crosses. (Fig. 104) Drawings by a French artist related to the Saint-Maurice house are annotated with the handwritten mention "Kasr Roumi" [*qašrrūmī*],<sup>34</sup> which points again to a possibly Christian site. "Roumi" [*rūmī*] is an adjective with ample semantic scope, as historian Cemal Kafadar has highlighted.<sup>35</sup> The classical meaning is "Byzantine," and in principle designates all inhabitants of the central provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Anatolia and Rumelia.<sup>36</sup> In the nineteenth century, the word was mainly used to identify Greeks, that is Orthodox Greeks, and by extension Europeans. Writing in the 1880s, engineer 'Ali Mubarak qualifies the new characteristics of modern construction in Egypt as *rūmī*, by which he seems to allude to imports from Europe and European master-builders, or alternatively Greek ones.<sup>37</sup> However, in the context of French drawings captioned Kasr Roumi, the term has to be understood not from the point of view of an Arabic speaker, but from that of a French one. In other words, we are confronted again with the hybridised Arabic in use among European travellers who transferred what they picked up from colloquial language into their own tongue, where words could adopt slightly different meanings. In 1875, a major French dictionary defines *roumi* as the name given by the Arabs to Christians, and by extension to Europeans.<sup>38</sup> In short, "Kasr Roumi" can be translated either as "Greek Palace," "Christian/Orthodox Palace," or indeed "European

32 Mercedes Volait, *Maisons de France*, 200–02.

33 The psalm is known as the Communion Psalm, Abraam D. Sleman, *St. Basil Liturgy, Reference book*, 127.

34 Paris, Collections des Beaux-arts de Paris, Fonds Jules Bourgoïn, EBA 7900-0624 and 0625.

35 Camel Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum," *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* xxiv (2007): 7–25.

36 Halil Inacik, "Rūmī," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds. C.E. Bosworth *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), viii: 612.

37 'Ali Mubarak, *Khitat*, I: 214–16.

38 Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, supplément (Paris: Hachette, 1886), 302.



FIGURE 100 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Salone (Casa Cte St Maurice)*. View of the grand parlour at the house of Saint-Maurice in Cairo photographed from the musicians' loggia. Mounted albumen print. 22 × 28 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto)*, MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: xxx for CCC, soit 1887], f. 70  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65





FIGURE 101 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Interno Cte St Mce*. The recess with mashrabiya lighting in the grand parlour of the Saint-Maurice house in Cairo. Mounted albumen print. 22 × 27 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto), MDXXXLXXXVII* [sic: XXX for CCC, soit 1887], f. 72  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 65

Palace.” One place in Cairo could fit this description: the Palace of the Coptic Patriarchate where the British artist John Frederick Lewis lived for many years during the 1840s. That palace (enlarged in 1781, but disused by the Patriarch since the 1810s) was located in a street then known as Harat al-Rum [literally the street of the Christian(s)/Orthodox/European(s)] in the heart of Historic Cairo; it

adjoined one of its oldest Coptic churches. The house is no longer extant, and the street is now named Harat al-Zuwayla, but the ancient Church of the Virgin Mary still stands.<sup>39</sup> If the hypothesis

39 Magdi Guirguis, “Nuṣūṣ jadīda ḥawla al-qalāyya al-baṭriyarkiyya bi-Ḥārat al-Rūm,” [New evidence on the Patriarchate Palace at Harat al-Rum], *Annales*



FIGURE 102 The central ceiling of the grand parlour of the Saint-Maurice house in its current state of reinstatement and colour scheme

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2019

can be substantiated by written record, it means that parts of a Coptic Palace inhabited by a British artist started a new life in a French Arab-style house in the 1870s. Whatever the case, “Kasr Roumi” represents a further connection between the house of Saint-Maurice and Christianity.

The eight-pointed star module, interspersed with crosses, which provides the framework for the composition of the central ceiling in Saint-Maurice’s reception hall, has Christian and Coptic connotations as well. (Fig. 105) Of course, the motif crossed cultures since Late Antiquity. In Norman Sicily, it famously decorated the coffered ceiling of the Capella Palatina (1140s); it can also be spotted on soffits at the Cathedral of

Monreale (1170s). The motif then gave its shape to Persian lustre tiles from the Ilkhanid period (1250s to 1350s). It features in many a drapery present in Italian painting. The patterned curtain behind the throne in the celebrated Rucellai Madonna by Duccio di Buoninsegna (1285) is one such example. The source for its motif of interlocking crosses with eight-pointed stars is believed to be a coeval Venetian silk.<sup>40</sup> A seventeenth-century Qur’an from the Maghreb, reproduced by Prisse d’Avennes, bears the same motif.<sup>41</sup> Going back in time, a number of Coptic textiles from the third to the sixth century already prominently exhibited

*islamologiques* 48/2, (2015): 191–215; Julien Auber de Lapiere, “Le Musée copte du Caire, une utopie architecturale,” *Annales islamologiques* 50 (2016): 235–66.

40 James H. Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and his school* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 1: 25.

41 Émile Prisse d’Avennes, *L’Art arabe*, pl. 191.



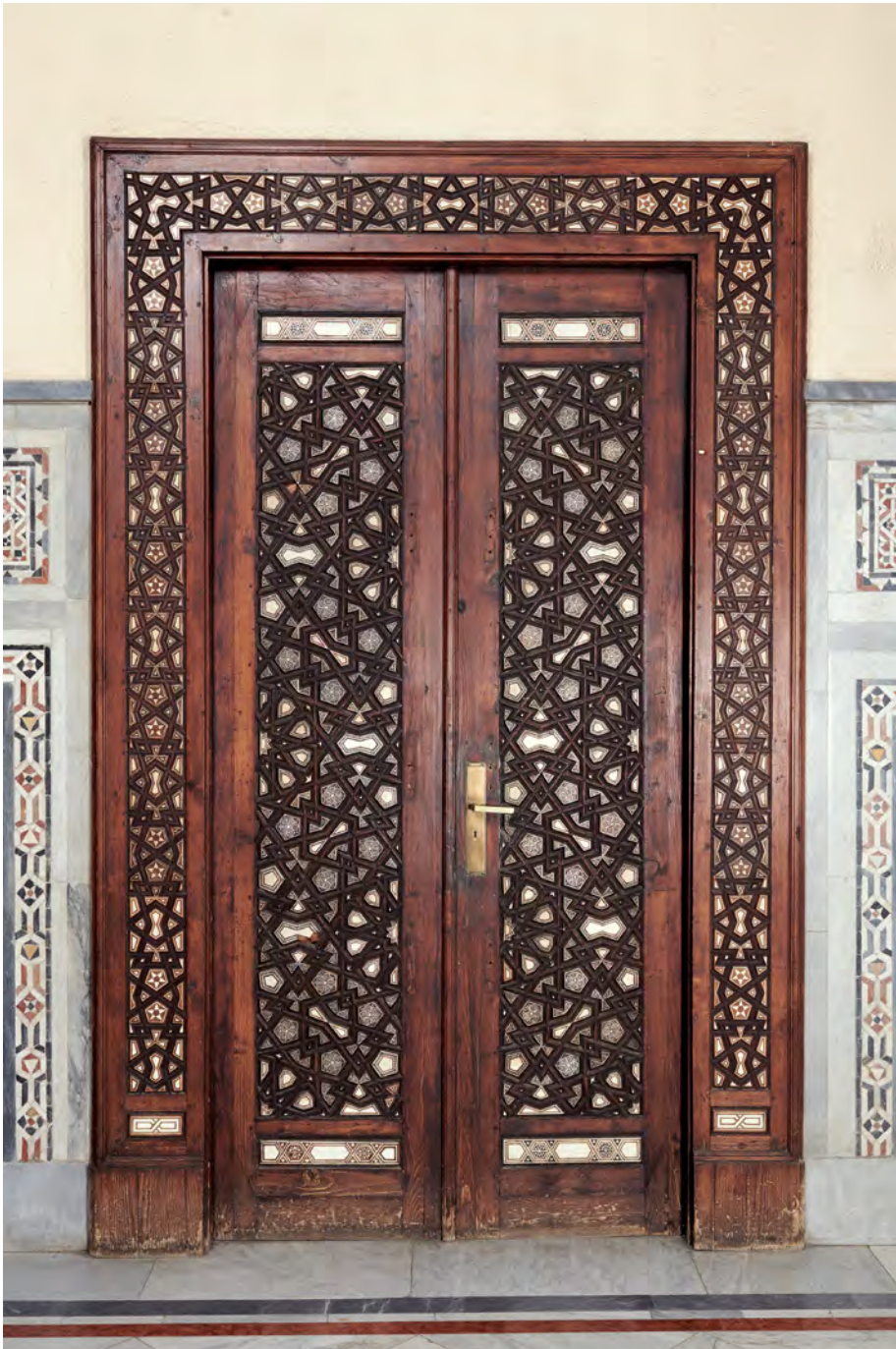


FIGURE 103 Fifteenth-century Mamluk door leaves from Saint-Maurice house in their current location

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2019

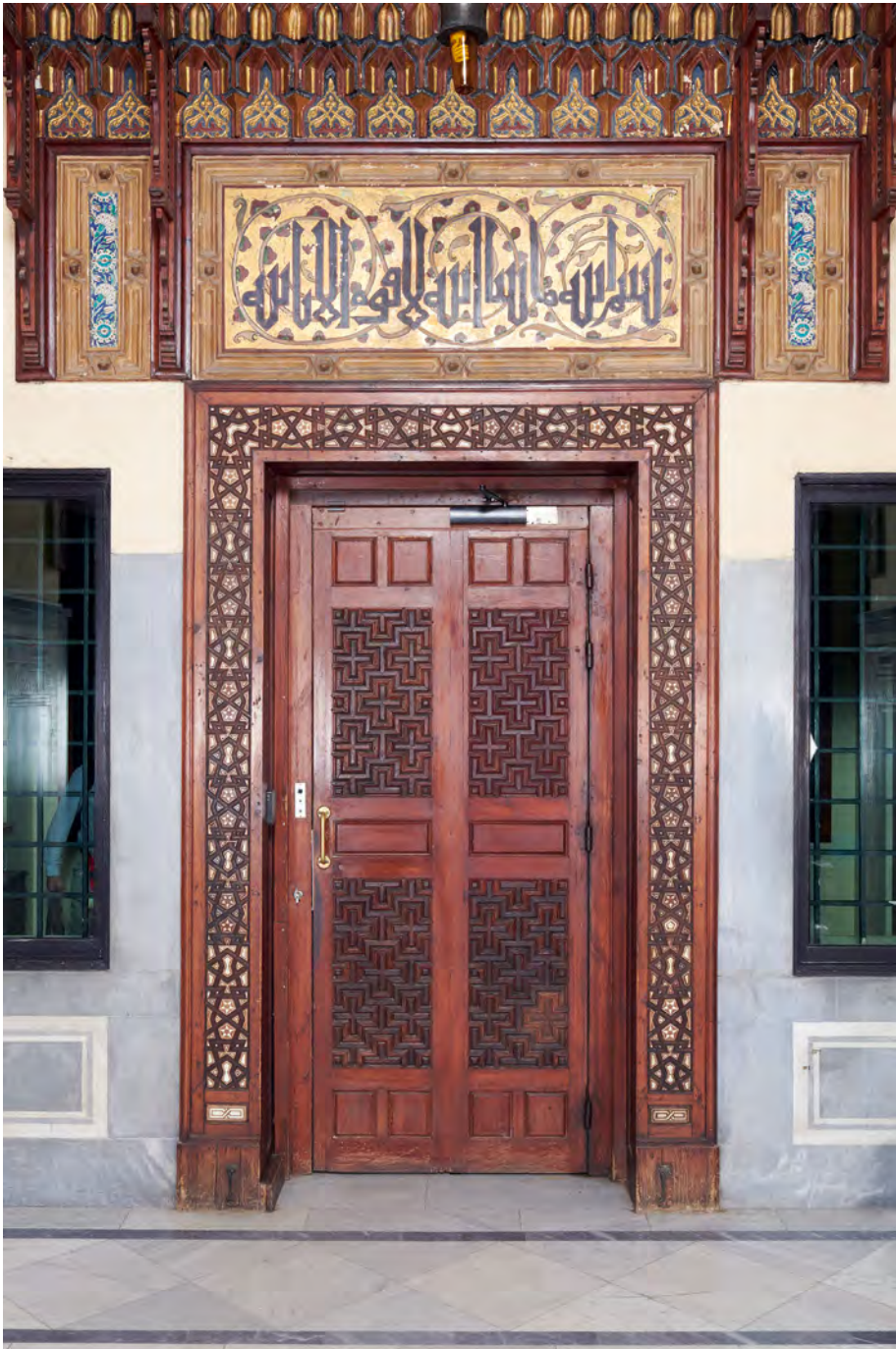


FIGURE 104 Door leaves with crosses from Saint-Maurice house in their current location  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2019





FIGURE 105 Detail of the central ceiling from the Saint-Maurice house in its current location  
PHOTOGRAPH BY DOMINIQUE ROUX, 2001

the eight-pointed star pattern.<sup>42</sup> An example even closer to Saint-Maurice's decorative scheme, with the stars sharing a similarly intricate infilling, is to be found on the title page of an Arabic Gospel Book dated to the fourteenth century. (Fig. 106) The pattern faces a Byzantine style figurative illumination and the pair is viewed as illustrating how Coptic Egypt accommodated geometric arabesques, supposedly Islamic, by using them in conjunction with crosses.<sup>43</sup> It has been even argued that the joint iconography symbolised the peaceful coexistence of Christian and Islamic civilisations in the

region.<sup>44</sup> While the statement is anachronistic and questionable, the fact is that the eight-pointed star pattern with interlocking crosses enjoyed success in buildings designed by European architects for the Khedivial family during the 1860s. The pattern appeared on ironwork at a fountain built in 1869 by architect Ciro Pantanelli for the Khedive's mother [*sabīl al-Walda*], and it can also be spotted on the interior of the Khedive's pavilion at the Paris World's fair of 1867. (Fig. 2) Were all these connotations accessible to Saint-Maurice? What sustained the circulation of such a recognisable pattern from one building to another? No written sources allow a response to be offered. But it does consolidate the idea of the strong hold of Christian-connoted patterns, and Christianity more broadly, on

42 Several examples at the met.

43 Lucy-Ann Hunt, "An icon and a Gospel book: The Assimilation of Byzantine Art by Arab Christians in Mamluk Egypt and Syria," in *Studies in Coptic Culture; Transmission and Interaction*, ed. Mariam F. Ayad (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016), 93–116. The manuscript is MS Ahmet 111 3519, currently kept at Topkapı Sarayı in Istanbul.

44 Jules Leroy, "Un évangélaire arabe de la bibliothèque de Topqapi Sarayi à décor byzantin et islamique," *Syria* 44, no. 1–2 (1967): 119–30 (128).

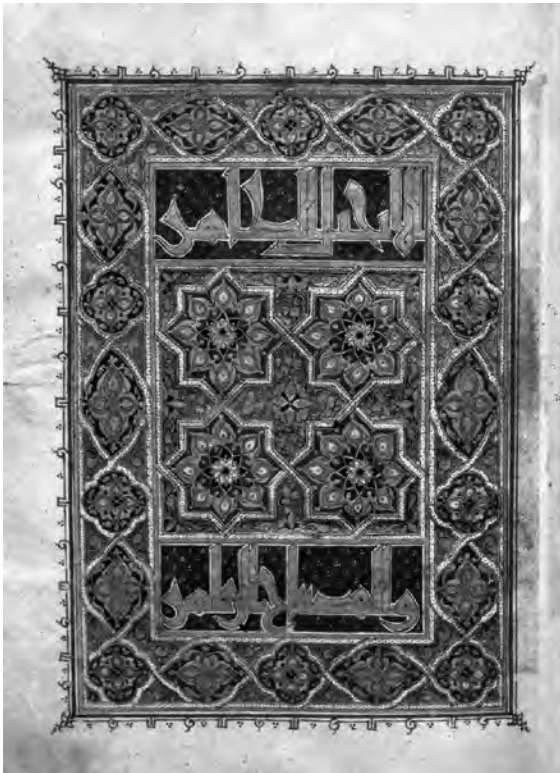


FIGURE 106 Title page of an Arabic Gospel in the collection of the Tokpaki Palace  
ISTANBUL TOPKAPI SARAYI MÜZESİ  
LIBRARY, MS AHMET III 3519, IV

European and American enthusiasm for Cairene and Damascene art and architecture.

What can be further argued is that Christian houses had in general been more accessible to Westerners than Muslim ones. Most images of reception rooms produced by European artists during their visits to Egypt depict inhabited Christian homes. Abandoned or disused Muslim ones represented the other prime resource available to artists. An early illustration of the former type is provided in a wonderful watercolour by the Swiss artist Charles Gleyre (1806–74), dated January 1835. (Fig. 107) The Madonna with Child at the far end of the room leaves little doubt as to the Christian identity of the house's inhabitants. As just mentioned above, John Frederick Lewis spent many years in Cairo renting the Palace of the Coptic Patriarchate. During the 1830s Émile Prisse

d'Avennes, and later in the 1870s the photographer Gustave Le Gray, both also rented their historic houses from Christian owners.<sup>45</sup> Another often sketched room during the nineteenth century was the old *mandara* of the Mufti's house – the very one that the religious official refused to sell to the South Kensington Museum in 1890–91 despite not using it, as seen in Chapter 3. It had long been opened to artists, judging from the number of drawings, paintings, photographs and engravings depicting the place since 1848. (Fig. 108) Al-Musafirkhana, belonging to the Khedivial family, was also an empty house that was occasionally let to travellers, as its very name indicated. In retrospect, the openness to artists of Manzil al-Sadat, discussed in Chapter 3, appears in fact rather extraordinary.

A black and white photograph of the main ceiling of Saint-Maurice's reception room, taken in the 1890s, shows that at the time, each eight-pointed star bore at its centre a cross with branches of equal length painted in a light colour or with gild. (Fig. 109) All indications are, hence, that the decorative scheme was perceptibly Christian at first sight, even though the crosses are no longer distinguishable. They were probably painted over, after the room was dismantled and migrated in 1937, in a way that rendered them indiscernible. In addition, the name of Allah was added two times on the wall of one of the recesses. (Fig. 110) The French authorities, or their architect, probably judged it more appropriate to add the name of the Muslim God at a time when their politics of influence were shifting towards more interaction with Islam, following the Protectorate in Morocco in particular. It is no accident that the new Legation in Giza was constructed in 1937 to resemble modern Moroccan architecture; the colonial style was now seen by the French ambassador as the quintessential Arab

45 Mercedes Volait, "Figuration et fortune artistique des intérieurs du Caire au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *The Myth of the Orient: Architecture and Ornament in the Age of Orientalism*, eds. Francine Giese and Ariane Varela Braga (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 17–33.





FIGURE 107 Charles Gleyre, *Intérieur de maison chrétienne en Égypte, Janvier 1835*. Watercolour and pencil on paper. 33.1 × 25.1 cm  
BOSTON, MA, THE LOWELL INSTITUTE, ON LOAN TO MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, 137.49

modern style in architecture, in contrast with the type of Islamic Revival that had developed in Egypt and that he judged over ornate and of terrible taste. In his very words:

[La nouvelle chancellerie] est conçue dans ce style marocain sobre et dépouillé où se retrouvent toutes les traditions de l'art arabe, de Damas à Grenade, et dont l'adaptation aux besoins administratifs n'est pas la moindre gloire du Maréchal Lyautey.<sup>46</sup>

46 “[Our new agency] is conceived in the sober and bare Moroccan style where all traditions of Arab art, from Damascus to Granada, melt and which adaptation to public buildings is the not inconsiderable achievement

The master bedroom of Saint-Maurice house's displayed more reused woodwork, together with what records described as an “Arab bed” in rosewood, inlaid with glass and ivory, from the Hijaz.<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 111) Rugs, tabouret-tables and a large trunk completed the furniture. The latter belonged to a group of objects known as “Arab chests.”<sup>48</sup> These portable items were mainly manufactured in India, and incorporated stylistic influences traceable to the Dutch and the Portuguese. Arab chests were highly prized by diplomats, colonial administrators and other expatriates posted in the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Another specimen is significantly mentioned in the inventory of Saint-Maurice's belongings as a coffer “retour des Indes” [Returning from India].<sup>49</sup> It is not known if Saint-Maurice procured the chest in Cairo or elsewhere.

In addition to salvage, plaster casts of historic ornaments contributed to surface ornamentation. The walls of the large terrace adjoining the reception hall were covered with a series of replicas of Mamluk stonework that can be traced to specific details in the mosques of al-Sultan Hasan (mid-fourteenth century) and Qaytbay at Qal'at al-Kabsh (late fifteenth century). A large panel was obtained by the duplication of a pattern based on a stuccoed niche in the Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (fifteenth century). (Fig. 112) Saint-Maurice's house represents an early instance

of Marshall Lyautey.” [My translation]. Nantes, Archives rapatriées des postes, Le Caire Ambassade, 353PO/2/406, Letter of ambassador Pierre de Witasse to the Ministry of Foreign affairs, 19 July 1937 where he also mentions “la complication ‘pâtissière’ de l'architecture officielle d'Égypte.” In the same file a French article dated 12 November 1937 mentions again the contrast of modern Arab architecture in Morocco with “l'architecture locale si pesamment ornée” [the local architecture so heavily ornate] of Egypt.

47 Nantes, Archives rapatriées des postes, Le Caire Ambassade, 353PO/2/407, Inventaire de la maison G. de Saint-Maurice au Caire, June 1884.

48 Sheila Unwin, *The Arab Chest* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2006), 105.

49 Volait, *Maisons de France*, 89.



FIGURE 108 Stéphane Baron, *Untitled*. The painted partition closing one of the recesses on the far left end exemplifies a common refurbishing device, already encountered at Manzil al-Sadat. Chromolithograph based on a photograph

AUGUSTE RACINET, *LE COSTUME HISTORIQUE...*, 1876–88, III: PL. 166

where the mechanical reproduction of historic ornament featured so boldly. The movement had been launched at the *Exposition universelle* of 1867 in Paris by an International convention advocating plaster copies as a mass medium for the dissemination of historic architecture; from there it developed fast until it was discovered that casting damaged the originals.<sup>50</sup>

One decorative fixture of the terrace was a tile panel very similar to the one brought back from Syria by Frederic Church. (Fig. 113) While made of twenty-four tiles instead of thirty-two, the panel possessed a colour scheme and motifs identical to the one located at Olana House. This is one of several indications relating, unpredictably, Saint-Maurice's house to Damascus.

Another is a contract signed on 16 April 1875 with a carpenter from Damascus, named Salah Ibn 'Ali

<sup>50</sup> "Convention for promoting universally reproductions of works of art for the benefit of museums of all countries," Mari Lending, *Plaster Monuments: Architecture*

and the Power of Reproduction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

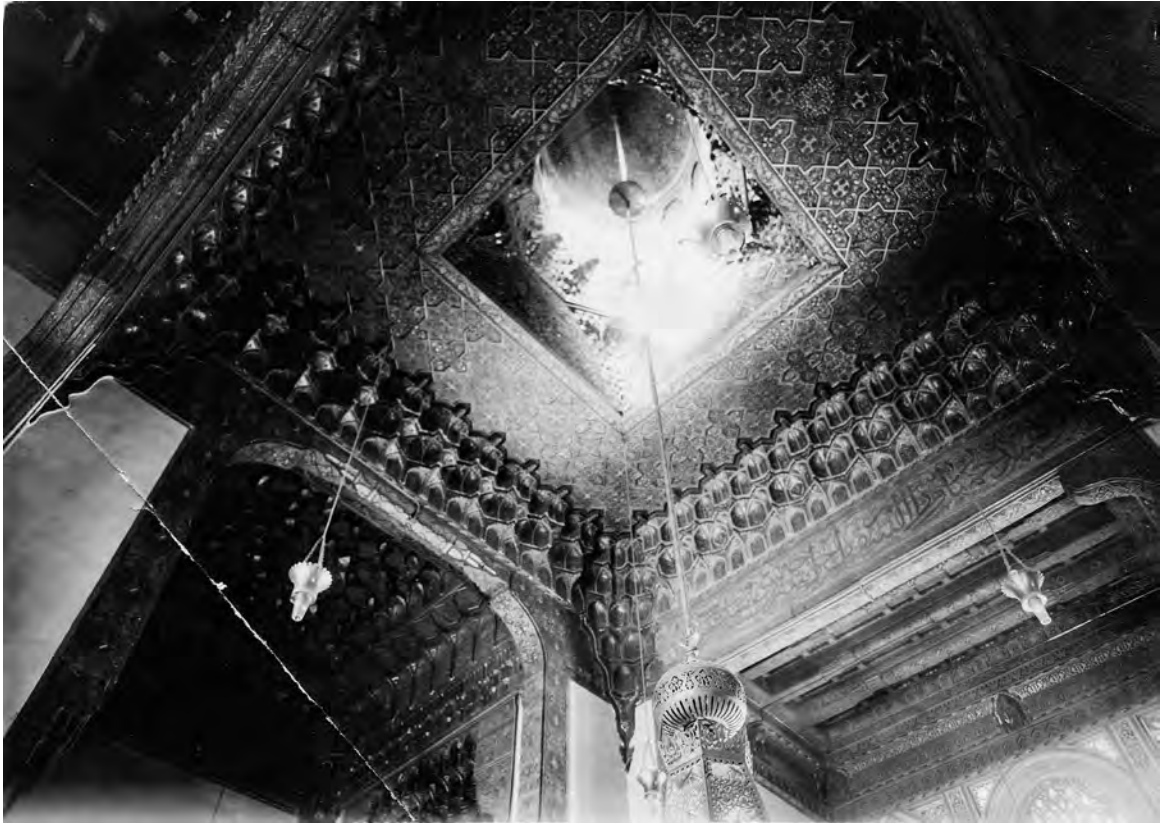


FIGURE 109 Anonymous, The central ceiling of the grand parlour at the Saint-Maurice house in Cairo. Undated. Albumen print. No dimensions provided  
CAIRO, MARKAZ AL-DIRĀSĀT AL-AṬARIYYA [THE CENTER FOR HERITAGE STUDIES]

Abu Lahaf, *al-najjār al-shāmī min tumn al-Qanawāt* [the Syrian carpenter from al-Qanawāt, a suburb southwest of Damascus]. The contract stipulated that the artisan was to work for Saint-Maurice in Cairo for a full year, on an exclusive basis. The hiring document was endorsed by French architect Jules Bourgoïn, acting in Damascus as a representative of Saint-Maurice. The text does not detail the work assigned to the carpenter; it only stated that he had to accomplish any task commissioned by Saint-Maurice.<sup>51</sup> This might have included the production of tabouret tables; a photograph depicts a substantial set of them in Saint-Maurice's front yard. (Fig. 116) Salah might have worked

on the composite doors, made of historic panels inserted into modern frames and exhibited by Saint-Maurice in Paris in 1878, or on the cupboard made for the same show.<sup>52</sup> He might have also been entrusted with making adjustments to items of salvage from Damascus. At the exact time of his hiring, Bourgoïn was negotiating, as already mentioned, the potential purchase of three old ceilings that were in "good condition" and could be obtained at a reasonable price if their replacement with "painted canvases in the Frankish manner" was provided for.<sup>53</sup> It is not clear if these pieces of salvage were ultimately incorporated at

51 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'INHA, Archives 067 (Jules Bourgoïn Papers).

52 London, v&a museum, 889–1884.

53 "Plafond en toile peinte ou peinturlurée à la franque;" Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (France), Archives nationales,





FIGURE 110 The first part of the Saint-Maurice house's foundational inscription. The name of God in Arabic can be identified within the left and right cartouches in the background  
PHOTOGRAPH BY BLAS GIMENO RIBELLES, 2012

Saint-Maurice's, but the drawing of one of them (fig. 114) is captioned in several sources either as a ceiling coming from Damascus or as an element at Saint-Maurice's or indeed as a ceiling in Cairo.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the house included among its metal objects an eight-lobed doorknocker that is typical of a type of production attributed to late Ottoman Damascus.<sup>55</sup> (Fig. 115)

<sup>54</sup> F17 2941 (36), item no. 26, Jules Bourgoïn's mission to Damascus 1874–75.

54 Maryse Bideault and Bassam Dayoub, "Une saison damascène, 1874–1875," in *De l'Orient à la mathématique de l'ornement. Jules Bourgoïn (1838–1908)*, eds. Maryse Bideault et al. (Paris: Publications de l'INHA, 2015) [<https://books.openedition.org/inha/7021>].

55 An almost identical specimen was auctioned at Sotheby's London on 2 May 1977; Stefan Heidemann, "Late Ottoman Doorknockers from Syria," in *Facts and Artefacts, Art in the Islamic World*, eds. Annette

In sum, Olana House in upstate New York and Count Saint-Maurice's residence in Cairo, while thousands of miles apart, shared identical features: references to Damascene visual and material culture, Syrian salvage, inscriptions as a decorative scheme and with connections to Eastern Christianity in the guise of Biblical verses reproduced in Arabic. Their aesthetic interiors were the product of a very specific and ephemeral moment: the encounter at the end of the 1860s with the commodification of late Ottoman architecture and design, particularly Christian, by Westerners interested in the Near Eastern roots of their religious persuasion. They illustrate forms of intermediacy: the transfer from the medium of manuscript and printed illustrations onto that

Hagedorn and Avinoam Shalem (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 153–84.





FIGURE III Beniamino Facchinelli, *Stanza da letto (Cte St Mce)*. Saint-Maurice's bedroom with a bed believed to be from the Hijaz. Mounted albumen print. 22 × 28 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto), MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, 1887], f. 83*  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 065



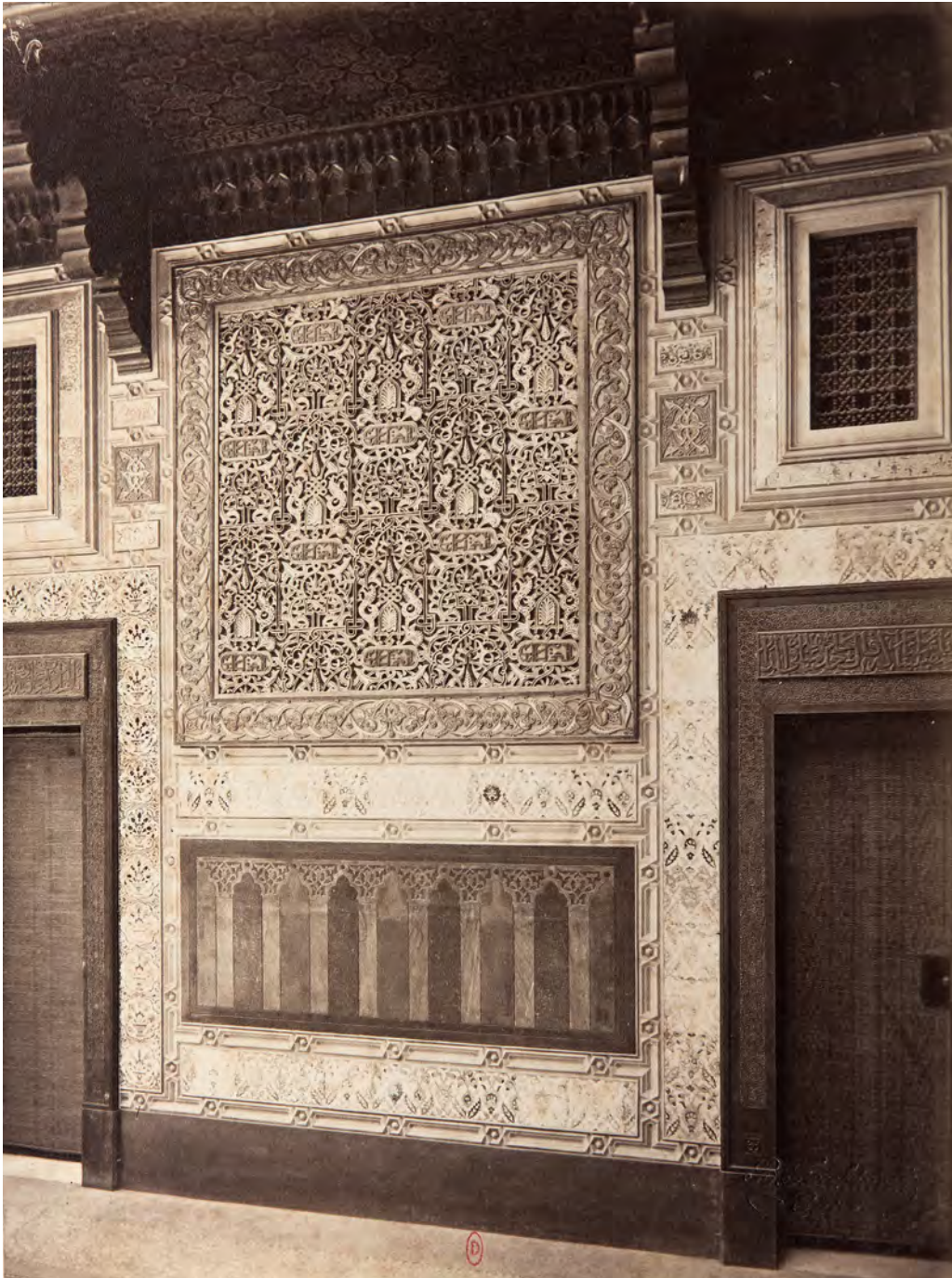


FIGURE 112 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Dettagli e Ornati della Terrazza (Cte St Mce)*. The panel was made after a pattern inspired by stucco work in the Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh. Mounted albumen print. 20 × 26 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto), MDXXXLXXXVII* [sic: XXX for CCC, 1887], f. 78

PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 065





FIGURE 113 Tile-panel of Damascene provenance from the house of Saint-Maurice in Cairo in its current location  
PHOTOGRAPH BY PASCAL MORA, 2019

of painted decoration. The formal contrasts of Church's American "Eden" and Saint-Maurice's French "Alhambra," to refer to coeval expressions used to depict them, cannot be explained only by their distinct authorship. They are affected too by their distance from the ruins and the measure of architectural reuse: from a few fragments at Olana to full ceilings, dados and floors at Saint-Maurice's. That the French aristocrat turned to Damascus for craftsmanship and craftwork, together possibly with salvage, is indeed worthy of note. It means that reuse and recreation were not the mere result of pragmatism or availability, due to the sheer amount of rubble then existing in Cairo. They were the outcome of intention. It was a conscious and deliberate scheme that spared no energy to achieve its goal. The fact that Saint-Maurice's accomplishment was copied elsewhere, such as in "Arab rooms" created by a German aristocrat in Stuttgart in 1895–98,<sup>56</sup> reinforces the point: collectors could expend considerable effort to realise their historicist visions, whatever it cost in time, effort or money. The German reach of Saint-Maurice's interiors suggests in turn that the aesthetic mood could cross national boundaries, while firmly rooted in a specific French formula of historicism, as we shall see now.

### 1.3 An "Arab Cluny"

A third case study provides further leads in helping to situate Islamic Revival interiors within broader cultural dynamics. While of unparalleled scale, Saint-Maurice's mansion was not an isolated enterprise in Cairo. It relates to a group of houses all created during the same decade by French expatriates attached to the Khedivial court, all of whom were Islamic art collectors. The first built belonged to Alphonse Delort de Gléon, the man behind the creation of the Islamic section at the Musée du Louvre thanks to the donation of his

<sup>56</sup> Francine Giese, "International fashion and personal taste: Neo-Islamic style rooms and orientalizing scenographies in private museums", in Giese *et al.*, *À l'orientale*, 92–108.



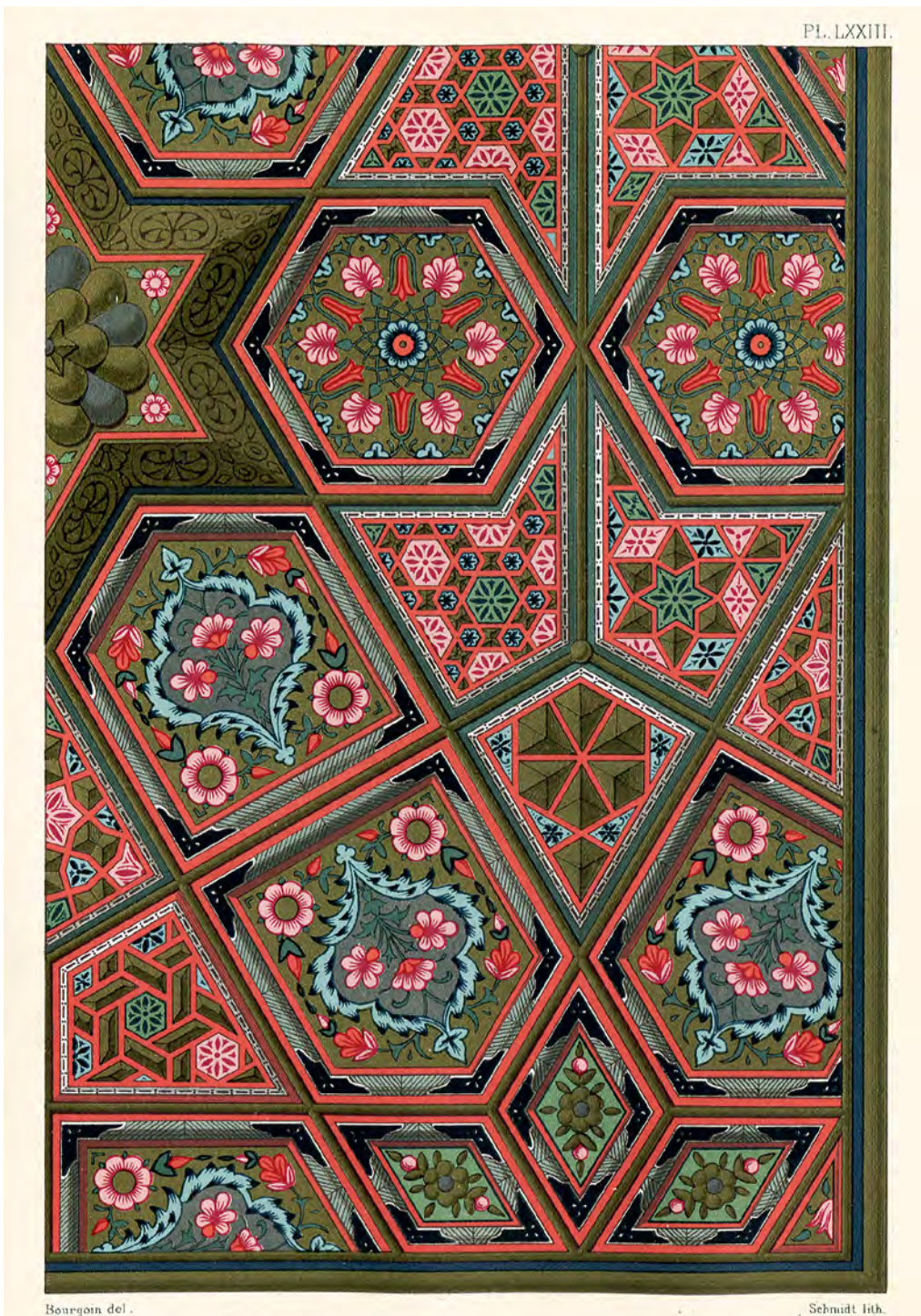


FIGURE 114 Jules Bourgoin, *Plafond d'une maison de Damas du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. The eighteenth-century ceiling from Damascus was offered to Jules Bourgoin as salvage in 1875. Chromolithograph ERNEST BOSCH, *DICTIONNAIRE RAISONNÉ DE L'ARCHITECTURE ET DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS QUI S'Y RATTACHENT* 1879, III: PL. LXXIII





FIGURE 115 Doorknocker from Saint-Maurice's house, attributed to late Ottoman Syria, in its current location  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATJAZ KACICNIK, 2019

collection, together with a substantial sum to arrange a facility in which to house it. Another house was designed by architect Ambroise Baudry for himself. While of very modest background, Ambroise had grown up in the shadow of an elder brother who had attained fame in Second Empire Paris, the painter Paul Baudry (1828–86); his brother's earnings allowed him to nurture his passion for art collecting that he had developed at a young age.<sup>57</sup> His antiquarianism was a wider one; he had started collecting ancient coins and medals, which did not require much means, for the pleasure encountered in historic erudition. As he expressed

in 1855, when he was barely seventeen years old, after asking his brother for books on Antiquity:

parce que j'ai soif d'instruction et que l'étude de l'Antiquité est très instructive et très amusante. Avec une pièce, je reconstruis un règne, je vois l'empereur. J'apprends quelles sont ses habitudes, ce qu'il a fait, etc. Avec le secours de l'imagination, je reconstruis un passé depuis longtemps évanoui et les moments que je passe en cette occupation me procurent un plaisir infini.<sup>58</sup>

Living in Cairo from 1871 to 1886, after having supervised the construction of the Paris Opera under the guidance of his mentor Charles Garnier, Baudry managed to assemble an exceptional collection of 279 Iznik tiles, besides pieces of Fatimid, Mamluk and Ottoman metalwork and woodwork, including a dated Coptic arch made out of reused Ancient Egyptian carved wood, reputedly found at a church in Asyut (Upper Egypt).<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 117 and 118) The tiles<sup>60</sup> and part of the woodwork entered the Louvre in 1898, while further woodwork joined the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1907 (Fig. 119); the remaining pieces were dispersed over the years, and ultimately auctioned off in Paris in 1999 and 2000.<sup>61</sup>

58 Private collection, France, Letter of Ambroise Baudry to his brother Paul, 14 April 1855: "because I have a thirst for education and because the study of Antiquity is very instructive and entertaining. With a coin, I reconstruct a reign, I see the emperor. I learn what his habits were, what he did, etc. With the recourse of imagination, I reconstruct a past long since vanished and the moments I spend in this occupation bring me infinite pleasure." [My translation].

59 Currently at the Louvre, E 32578, on show in the Baouit Rooms.

60 Catalogued as OA 4047/1 to 258, these tiles are searchable on the online portal of the Musée du Louvre's collections, released in 2021.

61 Crosnier Leconte and Volait, *L'Égypte d'un architecte*, 134–47; *Arts d'Orient*, Drouot Montaigne, Paris, 7 June 1999, lots 76 to 147 and *Arts d'Orient*, Drouot-Richelieu, Paris, 11 December 2000, lots 98 to 120; 172 to 195.

57 Crosnier Leconte and Volait, *L'Égypte d'un architecte*.

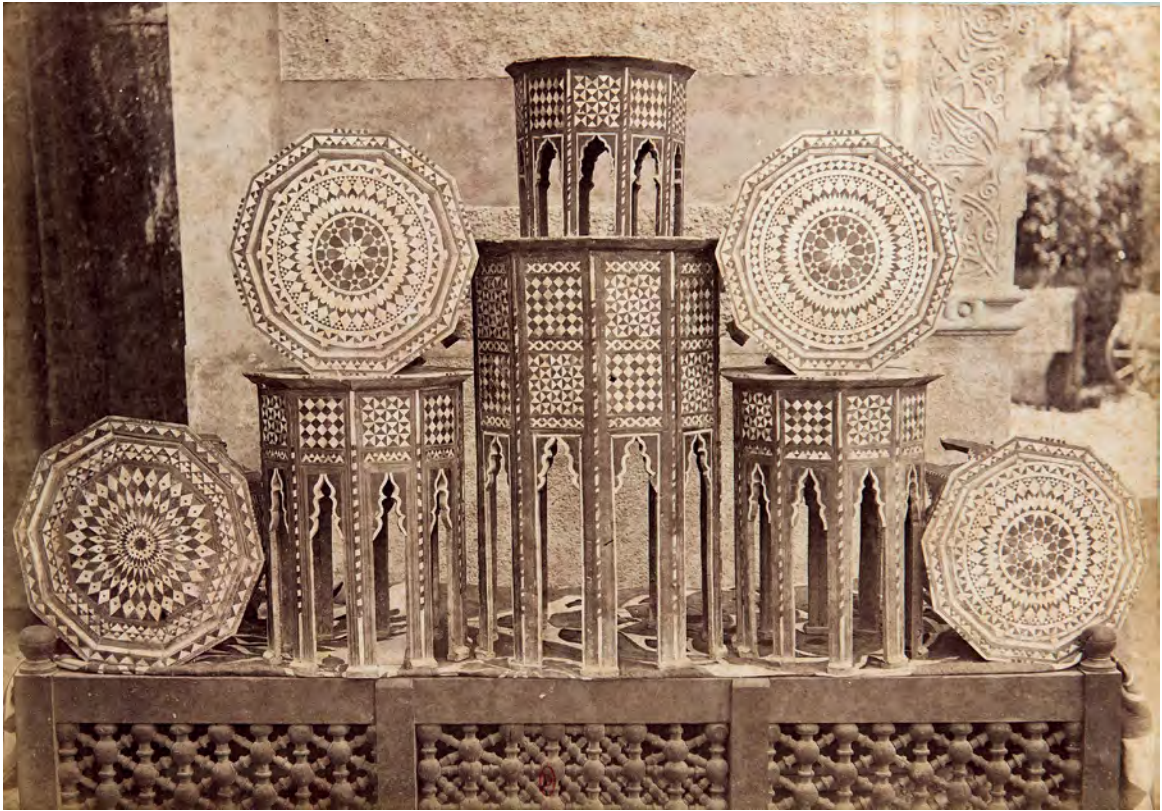


FIGURE 116 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Ornati e tabourets (Cairo)*. Tabouret tables displayed in the front yard of Saint-Maurice's house. Mounted albumen print. 25 × 18 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto), MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, 1887], f. 166*  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 065

The Delort de Gleon villa, meanwhile, is still extant though in very poor condition,<sup>62</sup> and represents Baudry's first attempt to come to terms with the Islamic Revival style while remaining as faithful as possible to historic sources. There was some plaster-casting involved, but above all new historicist design. Baudry created wooden panels for the doors and marble mosaics for the dados, based most probably on specific originals.<sup>63</sup> (Fig. 120) The architect was then involved in the designing of Saint-Maurice's house, although only the name of

his two assistants, Charles Guimbar and Marcel Gouron-Boisvert, were recorded in its foundational inscription (Fig. 121); he probably contributed preliminary ideas. He subsequently worked on his own residence in Cairo, a highly original achievement, carried out in 1875–76. The facades were plainer than the ones at Delort de Gléon's or Saint-Maurice's, while the interiors displayed a subtle assemblage of material, pattern and colour, unfortunately lost to the present beholder as the composition is mainly known today through black and white photography. The sitting-room was designed to accommodate a large salvaged ceiling, possibly from the seventeenth or eighteenth century; many doors had old inlaid and carved panels repurposed in modern frames. (Fig. 122 and

62 Located at 30 'Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat Street.

63 Some of his drawings for the Villa Delort de Gléon entered the Musée d'Orsay in 2000, as mentioned in the introduction.





FIGURE 117 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Armi antiche (Cairo)*. Arms from Ambroise Baudry Collection together with a dated Coptic arch made of Ancient Egyptian reused carved wood. Arch is Louvre E 32578. Mounted albumen print. 24 × 16 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto)*, MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, 1887], f. 149 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 065



FIGURE 118 An Iznik tile from the large collection of specimens from Cairo, Rashid and Damascus assembled by Ambroise Baudry between 1871 and 1886. Fritware, underglaze painting. 25.1 × 25.1 cm PARIS, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, DÉPARTEMENT DES ARTS DE L'ISLAM, ANCIENNE COLLECTION AMBROISE BAUDRY, OA 4047/66



FIGURE 119 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Ornato e tabourets (Cairo)*. Carved panels from the collection of Ambroise Baudry, some of which are currently in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Mounted albumen print. 21 × 24 cm. *Raccolta artistica di fotografie sull'architettura araba, ornati ecc. dal XII° al XIII° secolo fotografia italiana del Cav. B. Facchinelli, Cairo (Egitto)*, MDXXXLXXXVII [sic: XXX for CCC, 1887], f. 165 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, FOL PHOT 065

123) Some walls were covered with a combination of coloured plaster casts and bi-chromatic woodwork. Doors were framed with a row of Iznik tiles, elegantly fixed with discrete clips, and harmoniously mixing cobalt, turquoise and green tones, with some yellow and spots of brownish red.

Baudry designed most of the furniture, which in many cases incorporated historic fragments. Like Saint-Maurice, Baudry had a carpenter working with him at his house. In this case, it was a craftsman of Maltese origin, a Peppe Gliveu, who later established his own business in “Arabesque style furniture” [*entrepreneur de travaux de menuiserie en style arabesque* in French, or *sina' baladī* in

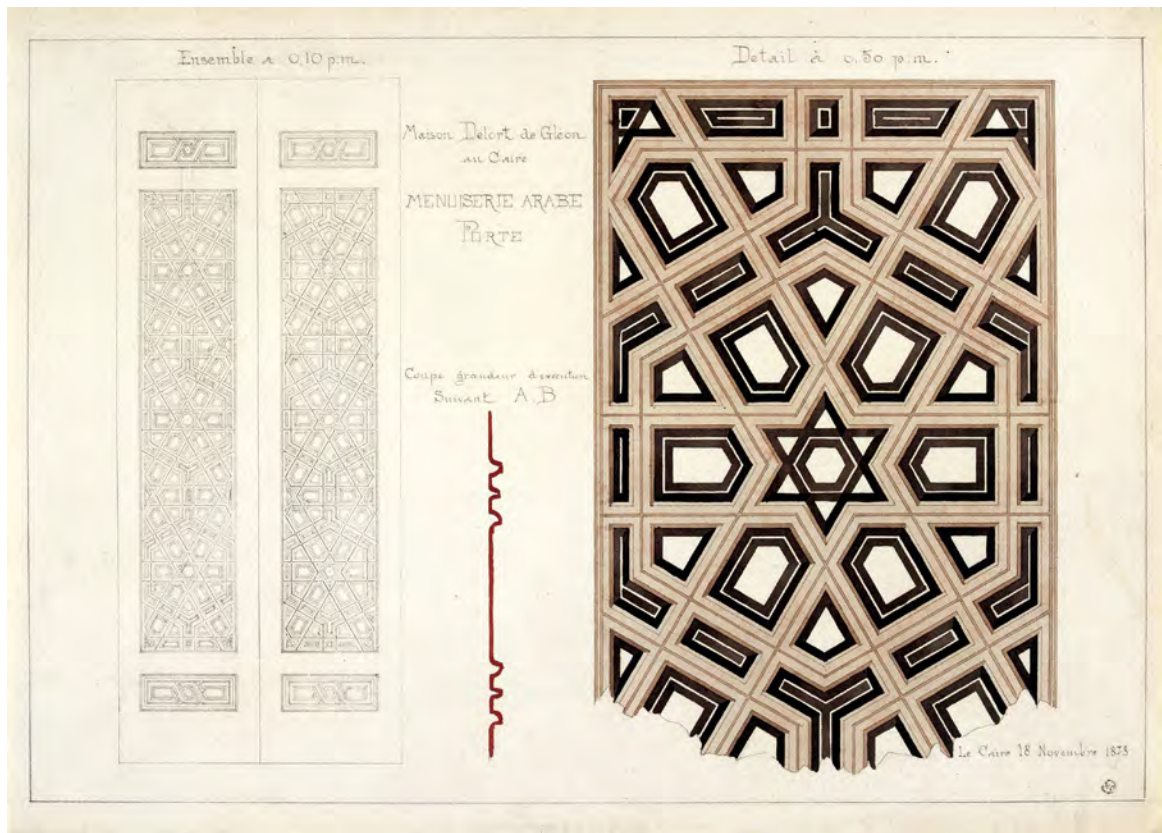


FIGURE 120 Ambroise Baudry, *Maison Delort de Gléon au Caire, menuiserie arabe, porte, 18 novembre 1873*. [‘Arab’ woodwork for the house of Delort de Gléon in Cairo]. Watercolour, red ink and pencil on paper. 32 × 44 cm PARIS, MUSÉE D’ORSAY, ARO2000-381 (PHOTOGRAPH BY HERVÉ LEWANDOWSKI)

Arabic, literally native craftsmanship].<sup>64</sup> Of particular notice, is an overmantel characterised by an upper pair of two arcaded openings topped by a crenellation, historic carved wood and inlaid ivory, and Arabic inscribed plaques. The two symmetrical inscriptions, possibly modern copies, name the fourteenth-century Sultan Barquq, while the central one is Qu’ran 22:77, the penultimate verse of *sūrat al-Ḥajj*:

الْحَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا  
وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا

O men, bow you down and prostrate yourselves, and serve your Lord, and do good; haply so you shall prosper.

The piece stood on top of a chimney in an adjacent recess of the house’s main sitting-room. (Fig. 124)

A comment made by his brother Paul, after discovering the house during a visit to Cairo in 1876, offers crucial evidence to critically locate the artistic genre and rationale of Baudry’s design:

La maison d’Ambroise est un bijou. Nous serions riches si l’immeuble était situé dans

64 The “master of cultured restoration”, as Baudry nicknamed him, appears in several letters, e.g. Letter of Ambroise Baudry to Ernest de Blighnières, 22 May 1883 (Private collection, correspondance Baudry); Cairo, Institut français d’archéologie orientale, Archives administratives, Invoice of Peppe Gliveu, dated 22 February 1898.





FIGURE 121 Second part of the foundation inscription bearing the name of the artist who designed the ceiling of Saint-Maurice's house  
PHOTOGRAPH BY BLAS GIMENO RIBELLES, 2012

les environs du boulevard St Germain, ou simplement aux Batignolles, les portes et les plafonds, les marbres et les faiences viennent des palais du 16ème siècle, c'est un Cluny arabe.<sup>65</sup>

The phrase “an Arab Cluny” leaves no doubt as to the matrix from which Baudry’s architectural recreation proceeded: it explicitly echoed the restoration and refurbishing, from 1839 onwards,

of the Abbey of Cluny (later Musée de Cluny), one of the very few medieval mansions that were left in Paris, already mentioned in Chapter 2. It inscribes Baudry’s Cairene dwelling into manifestations of the French “fever of analogy,” a movement that aimed to make the (medieval) past live again. The craze reached its apogee in the “living museums” displayed at Universal expositions with animations by costumed performers, and live recreations of past entertainments and activities.<sup>66</sup> An initially exclusive pursuit soon transformed into a most popular one.

65 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'École des Beaux-arts, Correspondance entre Charles et Louise Garnier et Paul Baudry, 2d part, 1873–1885, Mss 742, pièce 97, Letter of Paul Baudry to Louise Garnier, 22 December 1876: “Ambroise’s house is a gem. We would be rich if the building stood in the surroundings of boulevard Saint-Germain, or simply at the Batignolles; the doors and ceilings, the marbles and tiles, come from 16th century palaces, it is an Arab Cluny.” [My translation]

66 Elisabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, “From the living room to the museum and back again: The collection and display of medieval art in the *fin de siècle*,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 16, no. 2 (November 2004): 285–309.





FIGURE 122 Ambroise Baudry, *Untitled* [Grand parlour of his house in Cairo], undated [after 1876].  
Watercolour and pencil on paper. 39 × 33 cm  
CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN





FIGURE 123 Anonymous, *Untitled* [A corner of Baudry's studio at his house in Cairo], undated [after 1876] AUCTIONED AT PARIS-DROUOT MONTAIGNE, *ARTS D'ORIENT*, PARIS, 7 JUNE 1999, LOT 145. CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN





FIGURE 124 Anonymous. *Cairo. Egyptian home (interior)*. [A recess at Ambroise Baudry's house in Cairo]. The overmantel with Mamluk carved panels features in the far centre of the photograph. Albumen print. 40.5 × 28 cm  
 CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ANDREW DICKSON WHITE ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHS, 15/5/3090.01492





FIGURE 125 Anonymous, *Untitled* [Edmond de Rothschild's smoking room in Paris], designed by Ambroise Baudry in 1889–93. The room is no longer extant.

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Historical recreation became Baudry's specialty. He arranged similar interiors for his friend Ernest de Blignières in Cairo (in 1880) and in Brittany (1882). From 1889–92 he worked on a sophisticated Mamluk style smoking room for Islamic art collector Edmond de Rothschild (1854–1934) in Paris. (Fig 125 and 126) In this instance, the architect furthermore provided his client with “ancient Arab ivory panels” at a cost of 25,000 francs, possibly inserted in the panel behind the central sofa.<sup>67</sup> In 1892, Baudry extended the technique of accommodating salvage into new constructions in France. For instance, he reinstalled seventeenth-century

gilded and sculpted French panelling in a modern mansion he designed in the vicinity of Le Mans.<sup>68</sup> Historic salvage brought pedigree to interiors, together with exclusivity. It was not an effortless pursuit, nor one reserved for exotic settings and recreations. It was a specific architectural genre, which developed into a successful industry from the 1900s onwards, particularly in the United States, in the hands of French decorators such as Georges Hoentschel (1855–1915), but

67 Private collection, Baudry's accounts' ledger, 53.

68 Crosnier Leconte and Volait, *L'Égypte d'un architecte*, 113–14.

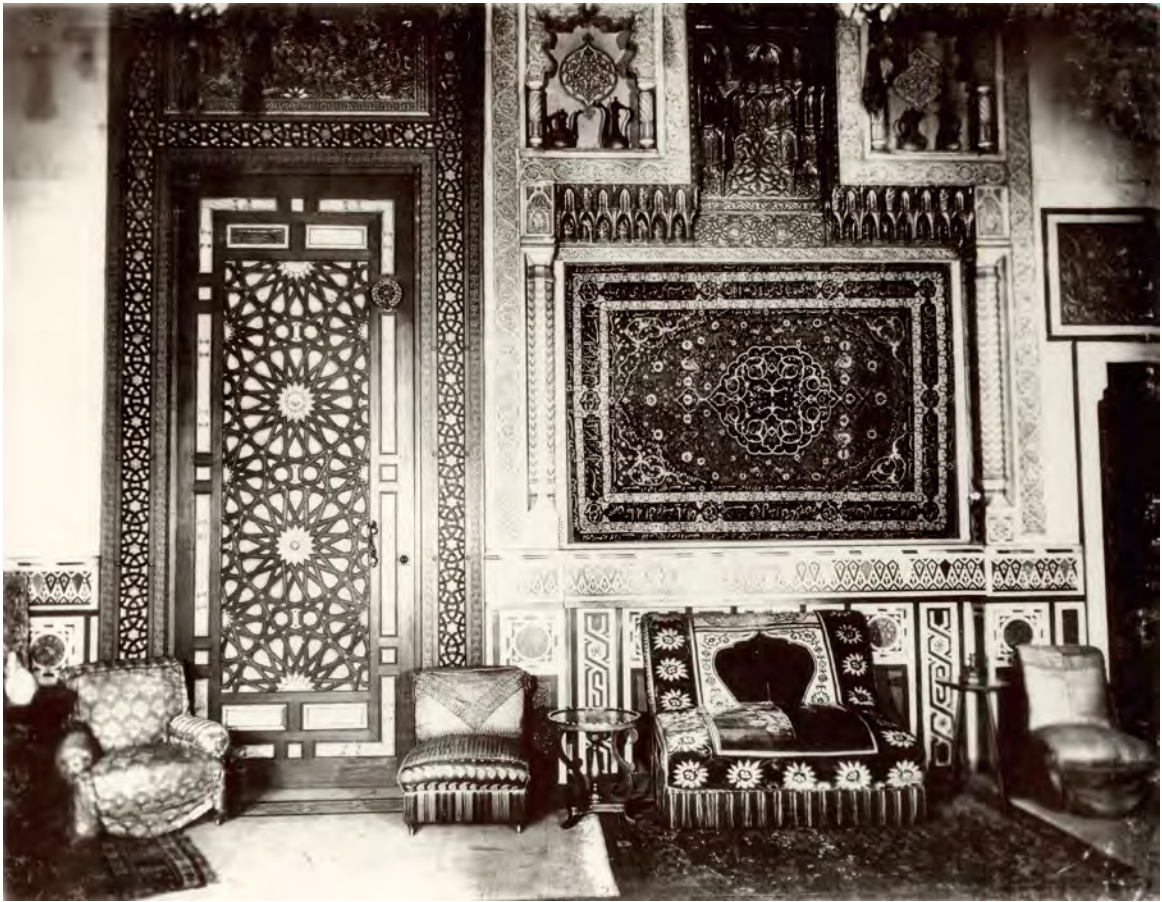


FIGURE 126 Anonymous, *Untitled* [Edmond de Rothschild's smoking room in Paris], designed by Ambroise Baudry in 1889–93. Of note is the display of rugs on the wall.  
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also American designers, starting with architect Stanford White (1853–1906).<sup>69</sup>

## 2 The Living Culture of Reuse in Egypt

The reuse of salvage in architecture, or its insertion into modern furniture, is at odds with current preservation principles promulgated at

an international level by multilateral organisations such as UNESCO. Preservation specialists and activists tend to forget that the tradition of reuse and the recycling of historic fragments are centuries-old practices that cut across most cultures and times. The repurposing of historic material enjoyed remarkable momentum in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.<sup>70</sup> In more recent times, it has inspired art worldwide throughout the past century; lately the celebrated Chinese artist Ai Weiwei (b. 1957) has experimented with it in the

69 Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide *et al.*, eds., *Salvaging the Past: Georges Hoentschel and French Decorative Arts from the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2013); Wayne Craven, *Stanford White: Decorator in Opulence and Dealer in Antiquities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

70 Pierre Toubert & Pierre Moret, eds., *Remploi, citation, plagiat: Conduites et pratiques médiévales* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009).

utmost provocative manner.<sup>71</sup> Second-hand reuse, labelled “upcycling” in the fashion industry, is nowadays being promoted for ecological concerns.

Nor was the concept of salvage alien to Egypt. Indeed, its Egyptian history is extended and substantial. Reuse has been widely practiced since Antiquity; and it continued to be after the rise of Islam. Its driving forces were adornment, *apoptropaia*, or simple construction, e.g. foundation filling.<sup>72</sup> It is still a living tradition, although its contemporary manifestations have never been properly studied. In any event, aesthetic interiors made out of salvage in Cairo from the 1870s onward cannot be comprehended only within the Cluny craze; they need to be considered along the grain of this Egyptian cultural background as well.

### 2.1 *Life Cycles of Salvage*

The local afterlife of Baudry’s work in Cairo is a first indication that they fit into a domestic pattern of reuse. The various fates of what he designed in architecture and furniture offer a significant measure. The overmantel he created for his Cairene residence is currently displayed in the galleries devoted to the Mamluk dynasties in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. (Fig. 127) When it was catalogued for the reopening of the Museum in 2010, the furniture was deemed a “cupboard” but its form caused some perplexity, as “nothing similar [had] ever been found.”<sup>73</sup> The given provenance in the guidebook of the Museum is the collection of Prince Yusuf Kamal (1882–1967). As a matter of fact, the portable piece adorned one of the rooms at his palace in Matariyya, as a late 1930s

photograph reveals.<sup>74</sup> (Fig. 128) The Mamluk style room where it was placed represented a later addition to a building that had been erected in 1908–21 on designs by Slovenian architect Anton Lasciac.<sup>75</sup> As Baudry’s house was demolished in 1935 or 1936, after its purchase by the famous antique dealer Kevork Ispenian, who had stores in Cairo and Istanbul,<sup>76</sup> it can be safely assumed that Yusuf Kamal bought the salvaged piece of furniture from Ispenian for his new room. In the process, its crenellations were lost. The transfer to the Museum of Islamic Art took place after the Prince’s death. He had bequeathed his collections to the Museum during his life time, while reserving the right to continue using them;<sup>77</sup> they reverted to the Museum on his death in 1967. Consequently, his Mamluk style room was emptied, and the unique cupboard went to the Museum. The full history of Baudry’s piece was by then lost, which explains its misplacement. Hopefully, the artwork will at some point benefit from, and indeed contribute to, the current reconsideration of the boundaries of Islamic art and architecture. There is a recognised need among Islamic art scholars for enlarging the temporal extension of the canon in order to accommodate nineteenth-century art and architecture.<sup>78</sup> Mamluk Revival specimens,<sup>79</sup> and within that genre the sub-category represented by modern pieces incorporating historic salvage,

71 Ai Weiwei *et al.*, *Ai Weiwei: Dropping the Urn: Ceramic Works, 5000 BCE–2010 CE* (Glenside, Pa.: Arcadia University Art Gallery, 2010), exhibition catalog.

72 For an overview and a case study, Iman R. Abdulfattah, “Theft, plunder, and loot: An examination of the rich diversity of material reuse in the Complex of Qalāwūn in Cairo,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 20 (2017): 93–132.

73 Cairo: Museum of Islamic Art: 23767; Bernard O’Kane, ed., *The Illustrated Guide to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo*, with contributions by Mohamed Abbas and Imam R. Abdulfattah (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 134.

74 Roma, Library of Accademia di San Luca, Album *Architetto Antonio Lasciac. Cairo-Egitto* [n.d., given in 1939], 86 plates, 1688bis, pl. 33.

75 Volait, *Fous du Caire*, 216.

76 Nantes (France), Archives rapatriées des postes, Le Caire, Ambassade, 353PO/2/406, G.D. [Gabriel Dardaoud?], “Trois vieilles maisons du Caire,” *La Bourse égyptienne*, 15 April 1937 (clipping).

77 Gaston Wiet, “Le musée national de l’art arabe,” *L’Art vivant* v (15 January 1929): 53–7.

78 Barry Flood & Gülru Necipoğlu, “Frameworks of Islamic Art and Architectural History: Concepts, Approaches, and Historiographies,” in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, eds. Flood & Necipoğlu (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 1: 2–56.

79 Marcus Millwright, “Reviving the Past and Confronting the Present: Crafts in Syria and Egypt, c. 1875–1925,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 13 (2020): 7–21.





FIGURE 127 A. Del Vecchio, *Untitled* [Room at Yusuf Kamal's palace in Matariyya, designed by Anton Lasciac], c. 1935–36. Mounted albumen print. No dimensions provided. *Album Architetto Antonio Lasciac. Cairo-Egitto*  
ROME, LIBRARY OF ACCADEMIA DI SAN LUCA, 1688BIS, F. 34



FIGURE 128  
Overmantel designed by Ambroise Baudry in 1875–76 with fourteenth-century carved polygons, currently on view in the Mamluk galleries of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (23767)  
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, 2017

are perfect candidates. These might be considered composite, but what art is not in some way? In any case, Mamluk art repurposed in modern artefacts created a very significant line of production, particularly in Egypt. It led to fine pieces. Beyond their historical and artistic values, the intercultural nature of such mixed-period artworks is worth museological attention.

To this day, these pieces have seldom attracted such consideration. Other nineteenth-century examples of modern woodwork incorporating Mamluk panels and inscriptions are experiencing a fate similar to the afterlife of Baudry's overmantel: their modern history is being erased. This is the case of a couple of doors that were auctioned in London in 2016.<sup>80</sup> They had been made for another French expatriate in Cairo from 1879 to 1900, the lawyer Octave Borelli (1849–1911), a close acquaintance of Delort de Gléon, who will be encountered again in the following chapter. The mixed-period doors were installed in his house in Cairo's new quarters. Upon his return home, Borelli mounted the doors in an Orientalising parlour at the large residence he had built in the heights of the summer resort of Saint-Tropez in southern France. The doors were bought by the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur at the London sale, and loaned as Mamluk doors for the new British Museum's Islamic galleries funded by the Malaysian Albukhary foundation. Their current labels make no references to their repurposing and reframing, which is again puzzling to the viewer for the nineteenth-century Gothic style framing of the two leaves is quite prominent.<sup>81</sup>

Larger pieces from Baudry's house survived too. His Cairene residence provided the Ottoman ceiling that Prince Yusuf Kamal had installed in his own Arab Room at Matariyya. A second ceiling went, together with one of the facades and a large wooden balcony, to the villa that the antique

dealer Kevork Ispenian was building in 1936 at 29 Pyramids Road.<sup>82</sup> Together with the other historic pieces in the house, all duly registered in the inventories of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, the architectural salvage from Baudry's house was ultimately looted in 2011, and consequently embarked on a new journey.<sup>83</sup> Baudry's salvage and work thus continued to live since the 1930s within a world of dealers and patrons; their motion recently resumed. The prime change was, and is, that they now circulate into a local, or possibly regional, eco-system. Ultimately, one piece reached museum status in Cairo, albeit due to a misunderstanding.

Part of Saint-Maurice's salvage survived as well, but in a radically different context. As mentioned already, much of it was specifically reinstalled in a building designed to incorporate it in the new French diplomatic premises at Giza. Villa Delort de Gléon is the only one still standing in its initial location on 30 'Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat Street, though made almost invisible today by the many encroachments that happened over the years upon its original surrounding garden. After Delort de Gléon's return to France, the property passed to Muhammad al-Shawarbi, the heir of a large land-owning family in the province of Qalyubiyya;<sup>84</sup> it was made a *waqf* in 1908.<sup>85</sup> An Islamic style house, designed for a European bachelor, thus came into the hands of an affluent Egyptian household. It is not clear if and when the house was used by the family. As a member of the Legislative Council, Muhammad al-Shawarbi may have occupied it as his *pied-à-terre* in Cairo. He might also have invested in the property for renting purposes. In

80 *Arts of the Islamic World*, Sotheby's London, 20 April 2016, lots 84 and 86.

81 IAMM 2016.12.1, in 2020 on show in room 43a at the British Museum in London (lot 84 of Sotheby's sale L16220, 20 April 2016).

82 Mercedes Volait, *Fous du Caire*, 217–20.

83 Omar El Adl, "Systematic ruin of Egypt's antiquities in Haram," *Daily News Egypt*, 3 January 2013; [https://cairoserver.com/post/42575456931/destruction-alert-villa-ispenian], accessed 25 May 2020.

84 The Al-Shawarbi family originated from the Hijaz and had emigrated to Egypt in the thirteenth century; Raouf Abbas and Assem El-Dessouky, *The Large Landowning Class and the Peasantry in Egypt (1837–1952)* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2012), 70.

85 Personal communication from Maître Saad Fakhry Abdel Nour, 1998.



FIGURE 129 Georges Blanchard, *L'Agence d'Italie au Caire*, 1908. [Villa Delort de Gléon in Cairo while rented by the Italian Embassy, 1908]. Glass plate. 13 × 18 cm  
CHÂLON-SUR-SAONE, MUSÉE NICÉPHORE NIÉPCE, 96.33.310/308

the early 1900s, the building housed the Italian Consulate. (Fig. 129) In the 1920s, it served as premises for the journal *al-Siyāsa* [The Politics], the main media outlet of the Constitutional Liberals, one of the parties that defended a moderate nationalist line. The house seems to have been abandoned in the 1960s. It was refurbished in 1995 and since then serves as a warehouse for trading companies. Interestingly enough, the marble mosaics designed in 1871 by Baudry for surface decoration of the main reception room were then offered as salvage to be bought.<sup>86</sup> Baudry-designed Mamluk style dados are now adorning a completely different building somewhere in Cairo or in the region. Their life cycle in one place lasted some 120 years; another phase started unfolding some twenty years ago.

## 2.2 A Centuries-Old Tradition

Another way of identifying possible interplays between Baudry's work (and other like it) and local realities is to position them within currents of reuse culture in Egypt. In turn, this implies a better understanding of the history of this culture, for none has been written so far in

86 They were offered for purchase to the author by the administrator of the house.

a comprehensive way, encompassing the *longue durée*. But many instances of Islamic reuse are known. For example, during the first three Islamic centuries, grave stones often move from one tomb to another; it was sufficient to engrave the name of the deceased on the reverse of the slab. This is continuous practice to this day in abandoned cemeteries, such as the Catholic and Jewish cemeteries at Port-Said, or in out-of-use funerary chapels, as is the case at the Terra Santa graveyard in Cairo, where Catholics were buried.<sup>87</sup> Funerary headstones were also frequently incorporated into monuments or the city walls: "cemeteries served as quarries for construction in town."<sup>88</sup> A threshold stone bearing hieroglyphs welcomes visitors at the *khanqā* [convent] of Baybars al-Gashankir (1309), as it does in many other Mamluk and Ottoman mosques in the city. The practice was less ideological than talismanic: Ancient Egyptian inscribed stones protected against the evil eye and satanic influences.<sup>89</sup> Roman and Byzantine buildings in Egypt, and indeed in Palestine, provided a number of mosques in Cairo with stones, engraved or not. A survey conducted on 137 pre-Ottoman monuments in Cairo concluded that in half of them the polychromatic marble mosaics of their dados and floors were Late Antique *spolia*.<sup>90</sup> The capitals of the Fatimid Mosque of al-Azhar, consecrated in 972, are all pre-Islamic: some crosses were even left visible to symbolise the victory over Christianity. All display a Corinthian order; the *spolia* was not

87 Long-neglected graves and their trappings are redistributed to new applicants, personal observation, March 2017.

88 Yusuf Raghīb, "Les pierres du souvenir: stèles du Caire de la conquête arabe à la chute des Fatimides," *Annales islamologiques* 35 (2001): 321–83.

89 Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, eds., *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 86.

90 James A. Harrell *et al.*, "Reuse of Roman ornamental stones in Medieval Cairo, Egypt," in *ASMOSIA VI, Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone, Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Association for the Study of Marble and Other Stones in Antiquity*, Venice, 15–18 June 2000, ed. L. Lazzarini (Padova: Aldo Ausilio – Bottega d'Erasmus 2002), 89–96.



only ideological, but indeed aesthetic.<sup>91</sup> Muslim victories over the Crusaders favoured the despoilation of Christian architecture in the Holy Land from the late thirteenth century onwards. One famous example is the portal from the cathedral of the Holy Cross in Acre that was taken after the capitulation of the town in 1291 and installed ten years later in the Madrasa of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad in Cairo. Another is the carved corner stones displaying in miniature the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Residence of the Royal Court in Jerusalem, which were placed at the entrance of the Mosque of Sultan Hasan.<sup>92</sup>

*Spolia* did not only work across confessions: based on the medieval chronicler al-Maqrizi, Wiet links the disappearance of the Fatimid Palaces of Cairo to the Mamluk reuse of their stones. Fatimid figurative woodwork was also appropriated for Mamluk buildings, famously at the Bimaristan of Qalawun in 1284, and five centuries later, at the Mosque of al-Fakahani, which was fully rebuilt in 1736 using Fatimid remnants. The doors at al-Fakahani not only imitate Fatimid wood-carving; they incorporated authentic Fatimid panels, despite (or because of?) its association to Shiism.<sup>93</sup> Mamluk Sultans moved artefacts from one monument to another: the elaborate monumental bronze door of the Madrasa of Sultan Hasan was famously transferred to the Madrasa of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh in the early 1400s.<sup>94</sup> Several waves of the Black Death, in particular between 1403 and 1405, increased the ruins in the city, and

with them, further opportunities for reuse.<sup>95</sup> But in fact the practice had never stopped: the *khanqā* of Baybars al-Gashankir was famously built in 1309 with materials purchased from three old houses.<sup>96</sup>

Less familiar are instances from the late Ottoman period. An ancestor of the young Sheikh al-Sadat encountered in Chapter 3, Sheikh Shams al-Din, demolished an old *maq'ad* graced with arches and a marble column at his family's residence, to replace it with an open oratory. A column, with Corinthian capital, features in the courtyard of the house and might be the one reused. He also had a new pavilion built in the 1810s, and placed a marble column at its centre.<sup>97</sup> What it was intended for is a mystery. One might speculate that the display of a precious ancient object projected wealth and the taste for art. The stone may have been blessed with apotropaic powers. However, displays of ancient pieces were probably common. They recurrently appear in the topographical imagery of modern Egypt. In 1818, a sketch by Pascal Coste depicts a rotunda in the gardens of Omar Bey Baffi, an Italian chemist, whose estate was located in the vicinity of Giza.<sup>98</sup> (Fig. 130) In the middle of the circle, stands a column with a Corinthian capital, like a miniature of Pompey's Pillar in Alexandria. Other capitals mark the outer circle and were possibly used as seats. Was it a way to relate to Antiquity? To the Greco-Roman past of Egypt? To a land of layered cultures? Or did they represented a reference to the follies so typical of eighteenth-century British and French landscaping, as suggested by the vegetal pavilion in the background? It was possibly a mix of all of these. What is sure is that ancient stones represented a common sight in city and countryside alike.

91 Marianne Barrucand, "Les chapiteaux de remploi de la mosquée al-Azhar et l'émergence d'un type de chapiteau médiéval en Égypte," *Annales Islamologiques* 36 (2002): 37–76.

92 Lucy-Ann Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam, Art at the Cross Roads of the Medieval Mediterranean* (London: The Pindar Press, 1998), 1: 337.

93 Jonathan M Bloom, "The 'Fatimid' doors of the Fakahani Mosque in Cairo," *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* xxv (2008): 231–42.

94 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mameluks: a History of the Architecture and its Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 231.

95 Julien Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan, 1350–1450: ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire* (Cairo: Publications de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2010), 1: 119–21.

96 Loiseau, *Reconstruire*, 1: 131.

97 'Abd al-Rahman al-Gabarti, *'Aga'ib al-atar*, IV: 190.

98 Baffi was Pascal Coste's first patron. He was made Umar bey by Mehmed Ali, and headed a battalion of French soldiers who had remained in Egypt after the French had left and had passed to the service of Mehmed Ali. Pascal Coste, *Mémoires d'un artiste: notes et souvenirs de voyage (1817–1877)* (Marseilles: Cayer, 1878), 1: 9–19.



FIGURE 130 Pascal Coste. *Vue du pavillon et du jardin d'Omar bey (Baffi) à Terrane, 5 janvier 1818. Anticomania at Omar Bey's estate near Giza. Pencil on paper*  
MARSEILLES, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'ALCAZAR, MS 1311, F. 24

Ancient Egyptian *spolia* also had a modern history. Having visited a palace being built in Cairo in 1828, Jean-François Champollion reported that the owner, a minister of Mehmed Ali, had low-reliefs from Saqqara, depicting offerings givers incorporated in a hallway. In other words, the high official displayed the figurative art of the civilisation of the Ancient Egyptians at his house. This would be commonly considered absolute sacrilege today because of preservation concerns. Nor is it in line with the Islamic aniconism we might expect from such a figure. For the young Egyptologist, such appropriation, coming from a man known for opposing Mehmed Ali's reforms, was quite remarkable and encouraging.<sup>99</sup> It manifested a

taste for the Antique and an acceptance of figurative imagery that Champollion equated with progress. The comment offers useful information on local mind-sets and attitudes. Furthermore, it coincides perfectly with current re-evaluations of the artistic deployment of *spolia* as a reconfiguration of the past meant to convey contemporary messages.<sup>100</sup> In sum, the topic is worth academic attention rather than judgemental comments on heritage appropriation.

The diverse afterlives of *spolia* over time in Egypt raise numerous questions and point to experiences and situations that exceed the

99 "C'est un pas fort remarquable, fait par un ministre du Pacha, le plus renommé pour son opposition à la réforme," in *Lettres et journaux de Champollion*, ed. Hélène Hartleben (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909),

Bibliothèque égyptologique xxxi, 2<sup>e</sup> partie, 87–8 and 116.

100 Paul Magdalino, "Epilogue: A meditation on the culture of *spolia*," in *Spolia Reincarnated: Afterlives of Objects, Materials and Spaces in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Era*, eds. Ivana Jevtic and Suzan Yalman (Istanbul: Anamed, 2018), 341–50.



FIGURE 131 A Mamluk style room at Manyal Palace, Cairo, photographed in 2015

current notion of plundered cultural heritage. How Baudry's handling of *spolia* fit into the narrative, however, is still difficult to establish. Obviously, his experiments with architectural antiques in Egypt did not develop in a vacuum; there were plenty of surrounding pre-existing examples. More were to come.

### 2.3 *The Modern Repurposing of Salvage*

Twentieth-century Egypt had its own share of salvage being repurposed. All instances are connected to art collecting. Huda Sha'rawi (1879–1947), best known as an early advocate of women's rights in Egypt, but who was indeed a keen collector, had her villa on Qasr al-Nil Street, built in 1928–29, populated with salvage. The spoils included a mosque portal, fountains, hanging lamps, Iznik tiles, ceilings from Damascus, and painted doors in 'ajamī style, possibly from Syria too.<sup>101</sup> A 2019

exhibition in Cairo showed, from her collection, a tiled side table, with Damascene ceramics inserted into a modern frame.<sup>102</sup> The Arab rooms installed at the house of Dr. 'Ali Bey Ibrahim, a carpet collector, had walls covered with historic woodwork framing tile panels made of Iznik, Egyptian and Damascene ceramics; on display were a sixteenth-century candlestick, a thirteenth-century magic bowl, a vase blazoned to the emblems of Sultan al-Qalawun and Bukhara rugs.<sup>103</sup> Prince Mehmed Tevfik (1875–1955) worked during three decades, from 1902 to 1929, with the help of antique dealer Kevork Ispenian, on the enlargement and refurbishment of Manyal Palace, a set of buildings and pavilions standing amidst a vast garden estate on

<sup>101</sup> Magda Baraka, *The Egyptian Upper Class between Revolutions, 1919–1952* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 186; *Images* (20 February 1932): 6–7.

<sup>102</sup> Ehab El-Labban, ed., *Treasures of our Art Museums 3: Features from an Era* (Cairo: n.p., 2019), 201–03 (exhibition 27 January–27 April 2019, Aisha Fahmy Centre of Arts, Cairo).

<sup>103</sup> Nelly Vaucher-Zananiri, "Les grandes collections égyptiennes," *L'Art vivant* 5 (15 January 1929):92–5; Shirley Johnston, *Egyptian Palaces and Villas, 1808–1960* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2006), 143–45.



Rawda Island in Cairo. Several historic rooms were installed: a Damascus room dated 1190 AH/1776 AD, a Persian room, a Maghribi room and a Second Empire one, salvaged from the Khedivial Palace at Giza. In his endeavour, the prince was not only salvaging the remnants of Middle Eastern art, but indeed the traces of his personal dynastic history. Open to visitors since the 1960s as an example of a modern aristocratic residence in Cairo, Manyal Palace is above all a museum of period rooms and a perfect illustration of the dissemination of salvaging and reuse amongst Egyptian grandees at the time.<sup>104</sup> (Fig. 131)

Another distinguished example is the suite of style and epoch rooms arranged within the ensemble known as Bayt al-Kiridliyya [the house of the Cretan lady]. The site comprises a house erected in 1631 and an adjacent one dated 1540 that were registered as historic in the late 1920s and consequently placed under the authority of the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe. In May 1935, one of the members of this Comité, Major Gayer-Anderson (1881–1945), a devoted collector of Islamic art, was granted permission to rent the place and install his collections, on the condition that he would help fund the restoration work. The British Army doctor contributed by arranging a set of historic rooms, displaying objects and furnishings that he bequeathed to the Egyptian Nation in 1938. Among the newly installed rooms were a Persian style room decorated with Qajar paintings, an early nineteenth-century sitting room acquired from the harem building of Yaghan<sup>105</sup> Palace in Suq al-Silah at the time of its demolition in 1937,<sup>106</sup> and an *'ajamī* room dated 1691 that the Major had purchased from Damascus for 250 Egyptian pounds (roughly equivalent to £250 then) with a view to having the panelled room re-erected

at al-Kiridliyya.<sup>107</sup> A Queen Ann Room arranged as a dining-room was also installed.<sup>108</sup> Within a historic structure, the invented Bayt al-Kiridliyya denotes much the same fantasy that shaped Manyal Palace. The ensemble became a museum on the death of the Major and bears his name today.<sup>109</sup> Not all objects displayed, however, date from Gayer-Anderson's time: many were added afterwards, and refurbishment continues today on a grand scale. In a way, Gayer-Anderson's project is being completed by the current curators of the Museum.

The most striking recontextualisation that took place in Cairo's modern architecture involves a stone inscribed in Himyaritic, the Semitic language spoken in ancient Yemen in the first century BC. It was inserted by scholar Ahmad Zaki (1867–1934) into the wall of the funerary mosque that he designed in 1933 for his and his wife's mausoleum on the banks of the Nile at Giza. A plaque placed above the ancient stone tells its story: the epigraphic piece came from the Ghumdan Palace, the residence of the kings of Saba, and it had been offered by the Imam Yahia, the ruler of Yemen, to the Egyptian scholar during his visit to Sanaa in 1926. The precious pre-Islamic fragment testifies to the cause that Zaki, nicknamed *shaykh al-'urūba* [Sheikh of Arabism], championed throughout his life: the unity of Arabs beyond borders and confessions. It is also a prime material manifestation of historical consciousness and antiquarianism

104 Mahmud Mohammad Tawfiq, *Dalil mathaf Qasr al-Manyal* [A Guide to the Manyal Palace] (Cairo: Public Printing Press, 1979), 2, 29 sq.

105 The surname of this prominent Turkish family related to the ruling family is indifferently spelled Yekhen, Yeken, Yakan, Yaghan in the sources.

106 *A Guide to the Gayer-Anderson Pasha Museum* (Cairo: n.p., 1946), 19.

107 Mahmud Ahmad *et al.*, "10. Acquisition d'une chambre ancienne," *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* 38 (1936–1940, printed 1944): 219–20. The canopied-bed labelled "Indo-Persian" that supposedly came with it, bears striking resemblance with the "Arab" or Hejazi bed used by Saint-Maurice. The uncertainty of the labels is a good illustration of how little is known about nineteenth-century furnishing in Cairo and how large its continental provenance was.

108 Nicholas Warner, *Guide to the Gayer-Anderson Museum Cairo* (Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2003), *passim*.

109 Louise Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: The Life and Afterlife of the Irish Pasha* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016), ch. 17 *passim*.

in Egypt.<sup>110</sup> Today [2019] administrated by the Ministry of Endowments, Ahmad Zaki's mosque is thus inscribed within an ancient and prestigious lineage that cuts across denominational identities.<sup>111</sup>

The display of relics from the past, and their architectural recontextualisation, served multiple purposes in Egypt. In ancient and pre-modern times, *spolia* and salvage acted as emblems of victory, were ascribed protective qualities or were meant to provide adornment. In contemporary times, they held artistic functions, expressed religious affinities, provided status and pedigree, recalled dynastic lineage or inscribed the present into the *longue durée* of Arab history. Meanings shifted from one time to another, as well as from one agent to another. At the heart of the phenomenon in the past two centuries, and cutting across national boundaries, was the act of collecting the past: a shared culture of collecting and re-enacting. Whether practiced by Egyptians or non-Egyptians, reuse has been kept alive, and with it the specialised skills required to perform its practice. It is not known if Baudry benefited from such a workforce. Traditions, however, are not exempt from inventions and interpolations. When the owner of a well-established Egyptian firm specialising in demolition and salvage (that of 'Abd al-Wuddud, active from the 1930s), was asked the name of his trade in Arabic, the response spontaneously brought up, unexpectedly, the French noun *démolisseur* [demolisher].<sup>112</sup> For some reason, the existing Arabic substantive naming those

who practiced the trade of *hadm* [demolition], the *hādīmīn*, was not considered a suitable term,<sup>113</sup> as if the French practice of designing with antiques, after all, left its own mark on the Egyptian tradition of reuse.

### 3 The Social Outreach of Revivalism

The pattern of historical recreation formed at Cluny by the collector Alexandre Du Sommerard, and continued by his son Edmond, fired many an imagination in Europe all throughout the nineteenth century among art lovers, but also among writers, antiquarians and collectors, and ultimately, the general public. Historicist recreations with salvage had long been the preserve of the exclusive elite, mainly aristocrats and artists, but copies developed in their wake. The mechanical reproduction of artworks rendered the historicist pursuit more widely accessible to the average consumer. The attraction of the middle-classes to the displays at the Musée de Cluny is well-encapsulated by an engraving illustrating a typical Sunday afternoon at Cluny in 1881, with hordes of viewers closely observing and commenting on the objects on display, the copies of which, in plaster casts, could be acquired on the very premises at the end of the visit.<sup>114</sup> (Fig 132) The scene takes place in the so-called bedroom of François I<sup>115</sup> and the setting is not less significant: Cluny not only offered a window onto the medieval past, it

110 Ahmad Zaki's antiquarianism is discussed by Ahmed El Shamsy in his talk "Philology, Forgery, and Superstition: The Fierce Debate over the Shrine of Sayyida Zaynab in Early Twentieth-Century Egypt," given at the Bard college's symposium *Antiquarianism in the Islamic World*, 9–10 May 2019, podcast available at [https://www.bgc.bard.edu/events/927/09-may-2019-symposium-antiquarianism].

111 Mercedes Volait, "Ahmad Zaki: Une vie à la croisée de plusieurs mondes," in Ahmad Zaki, *L'Univers à Paris, un lettré égyptien à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900* (Paris: Norma, 2015), 21–7.

112 Personal interview, 2011.

113 A French dictionary gives *khārib*, pl. *khurrub* for "démolisseur," formed on the root *kh-r-b*, *Dictionnaire français-arabe par le père J.-B. Belot* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1939), 1:319.

114 Manuel Charpy, "Passés intérieurs: reconstitutions et mises en scène du passé dans les appartements et les magasins de Paris et New York au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *The Period Rooms: Allestimenti storici tra arte, collezionismo e museologia*, eds. Sandra Costa et al. (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016), 133–42.

115 The bed is most likely a nineteenth-century piece, Muriel Barbier, "Le lit dit 'de François I<sup>er</sup>' de la collection Du Sommerard: des questions en attente de réponses," *In Situ* 2019 [DOI: 10.4000/insitu.24164].

facilitated intimate access to the trappings of royalty. (Fig. 133)

Emulations of Cluny were not the sole purpose of the mechanical reproduction of art. As Victor Lottin de Laval (1810–1903), the antiquarian who invented *Lottinoplastie*, a reproduction technique to which he gave his name, argued in 1857:

À une époque comme la nôtre où tant de gens ont leur chez soi, où l'on aime les belles choses qui ne coûtent pas cher, où chacun rêve un hôtel Cluny en miniature, c'est, il me semble, une grand bonne fortune que de pouvoir instantanément, sans peine, sans apprentissage d'art, se faire une salle de l'Alhambra, un Balâ-Khanè persan, un oratoire gothique, une chambre à coucher de la Renaissance, un divan constantinopolitain, un boudoir du temps fleuri de la Régence.<sup>116</sup>

Lottin de Laval goes on to point out further benefits of mechanical reproduction of art: it allowed everyone to easily afford what only “rulers, public monuments, some grandees and very few artists” could attain thanks to “abundant money, effort and genius.” It brought to all the delight of the “unforeseen and the unknown.”<sup>117</sup> In short, reproductions of interiors, whether historic or exotic, catered to the same needs: one’s own home, affordable aesthetics, and technical ease. Reproducing a room from the Alhambra, a Persian upper

chamber, a Renaissance bedroom, a Gothic chapel, a Turkish den or a miniature Cluny, as enumerated in the quotation, were not pursuits of a very different order: all corresponded to the same craving for bringing lost pasts into the present, at home and with limited effort. Mechanical replica made the past or the wider world accessible to all, and not only to the privileged. They prompted social equity.

Art historians have used the concepts of (material) *spolia in se* and (virtual) *spolia in re* to distinguish reuse from imitation, while drawing attention to their entanglements: in many instances physical adoption worked hand-in-hand with citation and reproduction.<sup>118</sup> The same phenomenon applies here: material *spolia* cannot be separated from the style of *spolia*.

### 3.1 “Anglo-Arab” and Other “Saracenic Rooms” in Europe

A similar dissemination pattern to the one highlighted for “mini-Clunys” can be observed with Arab style or Islamic Revival: from the exclusive sphere of a few well-acquainted collectors, they reached larger audiences thanks to the industry of mass-market reproduction. Instrumental in the process were firms such as Liberty and Co in England. The department store had started its Oriental offerings, as seen in Chapter 2, by marketing Eastern antiques provided by agents in the Middle East, but it soon moved towards commissioning locally-made Oriental style furniture to workshops in the Middle East, and finally embarked upon producing at home its own line of “Anglo-Arab” furnishings and interiors. The British craze for imported old furniture had begun to wane (and the products itself might have been exhausted), while an interest was growing in new “art furniture.” On the other hand, British furniture-making praised itself for producing goods superior

116 Victor Lottin de Laval, *Manuel complet de Lottinoplastique: l'art du moulage de la sculpture en bas-relief et en creux mis à la portée de tout le monde, sans notions élémentaires, sans apprentissage d'art précédé d'une histoire de cette découverte* (Paris: Dusacq, 1857), 92–3. “At a time like our own when so many people possess a home of their own, when one loves beautiful things that are inexpensive, when everyone dreams of a Cluny mansion in miniature, it seems, to me, good fortune that one is able to procure, instantaneously, without trouble or artistic training, a room from the Alhambra, a Persian upper chamber, a Gothic chapel, a Renaissance bedroom, a Turkish den, or a Regency boudoir.” [My translation]

117 Lottin de Laval, *Manuel complet de Lottinoplastique*, 93.

118 Richard Brilliant, “I piedistalli del giardino di Boboli: spolia in se, spolia in re,” *Prospettiva* 31 (Oct. 1982): 2–17.



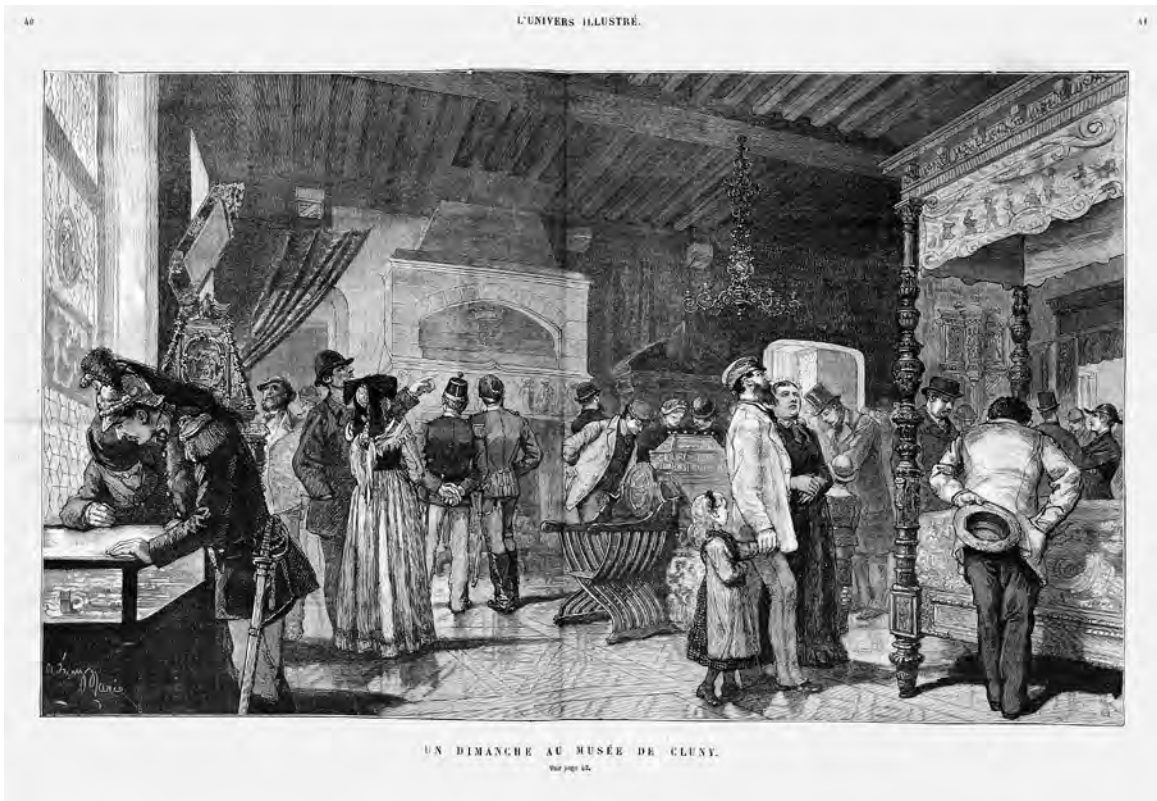


FIGURE 132 After Adrien Marie, *Un Dimanche au Musée de Cluny*. [A Sunday afternoon at the Musée de Cluny in Paris in 1881]. Engraving  
*L'UNIVERS ILLUSTRÉ*, 15 JANUARY 1881: 40–1

to anything made elsewhere,<sup>119</sup> and the country was indeed recognised for its manufacturing power. No wonder, then, that Liberty's would think that commodities made at home could have stronger national prospects. In 1883, the firm hired Leonard Francis Wyburd (1865–1958), a very young interior designer, for the purpose. The artist was to run Liberty's special branch for "Eastern decorations" and ultimately their Furnishings and Decoration studio for the following two decades.<sup>120</sup> The 1889 catalogue of Liberty products advertised the concept in the following terms:

The adaptation of Eastern forms to English homes has been specially studied by Liberty and Co, and many beautiful rooms in town

and country have been decorated and furnished by them. The prominent advantage of such a treatment is picturesqueness of effect, adaptability to any shape of room, richness of colour, and the fact that it can be carried out, if desired, in an inexpensive manner.<sup>121</sup>

Among the examples offered was Anglo-Arab Hall no. 1 "with woodwork all treated in a simple and characteristic decorative manner and the fireplace faced with rich Persian tiles." Anglo-Arab no. 2 relied on walls, curtains and divan covers of "soft and durable Eastern fabrics," while Anglo-Arab no. 3 combined both traits. Original coloured designs could be obtained on demand. "Musharabêyeh" lattice was liberally proposed for

119 "Market for English goods," *Furniture and decoration* 2, issue no. 24 (1st December 1891): 169.

120 Bennett, *Liberty's Furniture 1875–1915*, 89–94.

121 *The Liberty Hand-Book of Sketches: With prices & other information for Artistic & Economic Decoration of Furniture* (London: Liberty & Co., 1889), 35.



FIGURE 133 Anonymous, *La chambre dite "de François Ier" de l'ancien musée de Cluny*. [Alleged room of Francis I at the old Musée de Cluny], before 1900  
PARIS, LA PARISIENNE DE PHOTOGRAPHIE, 12606–8

archways, windows, openings and many other purposes. The firm announced in 1884 that:

Liberty and Co have constantly a stock of Old and Modern Musharabiyeh Lattice which they adapt for such purposes as Window blinds, Door-heads, Screens for Halls and Landings and Panels for Doors, and which can be stained or painted as required.<sup>122</sup>

Lattice was thus salvaged on a grand scale by the British Department store. Customers could indeed order "Liberty's Anglo-Arab fitments," such as "Liberty's saddle bag lounging chairs," and all kinds of cabinets and seats. The Kharan chair was

advertised as making "very tasteful use of the fascinating artistic product of Muhammadan Egypt" represented by lattice work.<sup>123</sup> (Fig. 134) When looking at the models marketed, one realises that in fact some of the Arab-style seats, or indeed Egyptian-style for that matter, to be seen today in Cairo's affluent interiors may be products manufactured by Liberty's.

In this way, individuality was becoming affordable. In the age of personality, at a time when interiors had become a crucial marker, it mattered to be allowed to achieve distinction at limited cost.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> *Liberty's Art Furniture* (London: Liberty & Co., [1884]), 31.

<sup>123</sup> John Moyr-Smith, *Ornamental Interiors, Ancient and Modern* (London: C. Lockwood, 1887), 141.

<sup>124</sup> Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 128–30.

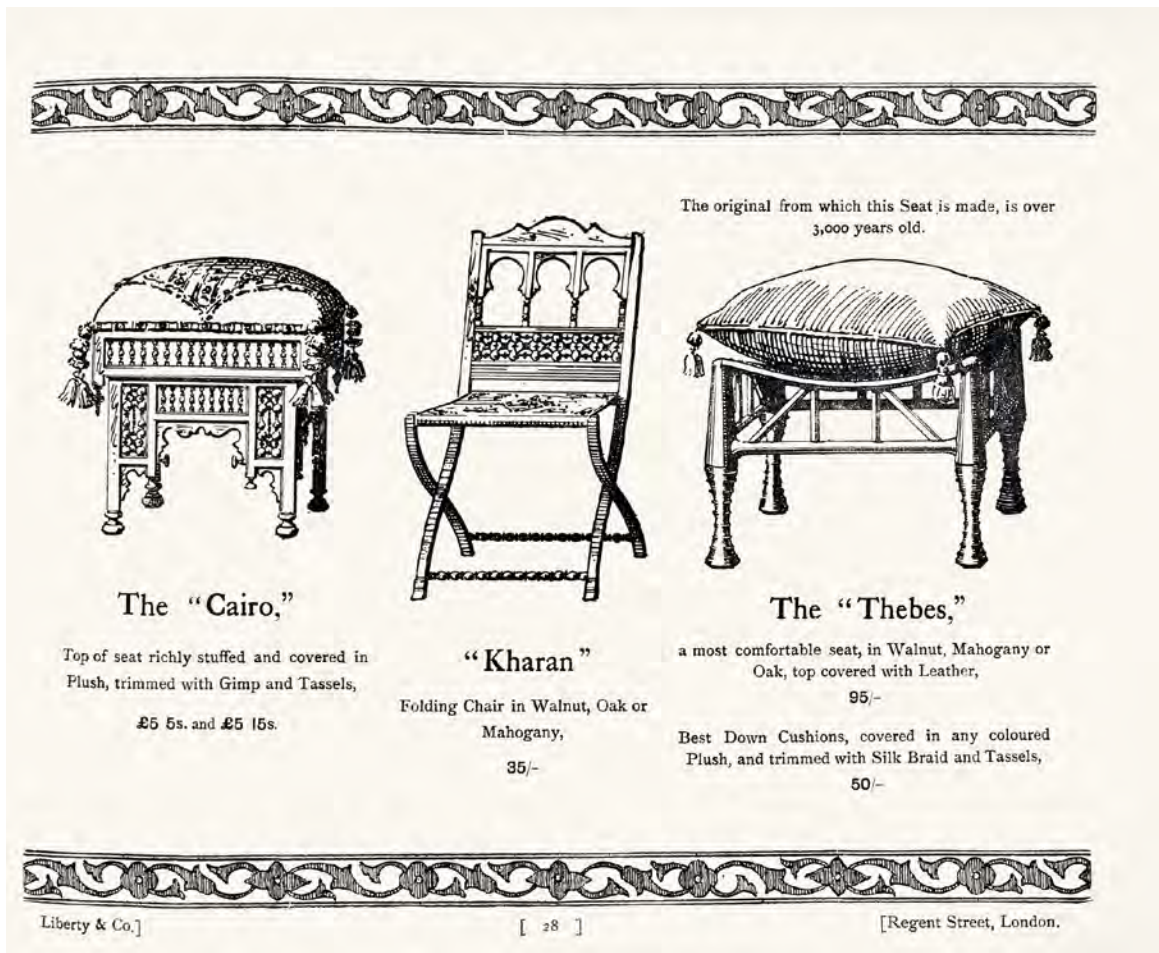


FIGURE 134 Three Liberty & Co's iconic seats inspired by Egypt: the "Cairo," "Kharan," and "Thebes." The latter was manufactured according to a design by Leonard Wyburd patented in 1884. *LIBERTY'S ART FURNITURE* [1884]: 28

(Fig. 135) The other British firm, H. & J. Cooper, on the market of "Arabian and Moorish" interiors since 1875, catered to a much higher segment of the demand. Their Oriental rooms were extravagant, as exemplified by the ones installed in 1893 for Mr and Mrs Wallace Carpenter at 28 Ashley Place in London. (Fig. 136) Similarly to Liberty's, the Coopers worked with lattice screens "brought from the fronts of old houses in Cairo,"<sup>125</sup> but they used it in a very liberal way, such as carrying a mashrabiya indoors in this instance! The sight produced in a drawing-room was rather peculiar;

no less striking was the adjoining boudoir placed under a tent.<sup>126</sup> In contrast:

Messrs. Liberty & Co ... have fitted up apartments quite in the same style as the foregoing [H. and J. Cooper], and, from a commercial point of view, their display is more practical, because their 'adaptation of Arabian Art' – as they define it – is really consistent with inexpensive furnishing. They have applied

<sup>125</sup> Moyr-Smith, *Ornamental Interiors*, 142.

<sup>126</sup> 28 Ashley Place is fully illustrated in The Bedford Lemere Collection of photographs (Swindon, Historic England archive).





FIGURE 135 *Saracenic Smoking Room* marketed by Liberty & Co in the 1880s. Engraving  
 TYPE OF DECORATION & FURNITURE BY LIBERTY & CO. LTD C. 1890:15

the style, more or less successfully, to cheap forms of ordinary furniture.<sup>127</sup>

The “Arabian” vogue did not last long in Britain. It diminished from 1900 onwards with the rise of Modernism. The brief involvement of Liberty’s in the style eventually fell into complete oblivion. The brand is forever associated with the volutes of

Art Nouveau, and posterior flower-patterned fabrics, and Wyburd himself is mostly remembered today as the designer of the Thebes stool, a must-have patented in 1884 that continued to be sold until 1919. Egyptomania had been more enduring than Islamophilia in Europe, and continues to be, although, recently, “Oriental” elements are becoming fashionable again.<sup>128</sup>

127 From *The Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher*, 1 April 1884, quoted in Barbara Morris, *Liberty Design, 1874–1914* (London: Pyramid Books).

128 My gratitude to Fuschia Hart for pointing out that Liberty’s has recently opened a large Oriental section for high-end interiors.



FIGURE 136 Henry Bedford Lemere, *The sitting room at 28 Ashley Place, London, decorated in a Moorish style*, 22 August 1893. The interior was designed by the firm H. and J. Cooper for George Wallace Carpenter. Photographic negative. 30 × 25.4 cm

SWINDON, HISTORIC ENGLAND ARCHIVE, THE BEDFORD LEMERE COLLECTION, BL12330/005A

### 3.2 *Islamic Revival Rooms in Cairo*

Rooms in “Arabic style”<sup>129</sup> became a standard in Egyptian upper and middle-class homes in the 1920s and 1930s (their previous history is less well-known). They continued to be installed into the 1950s and 1960s, and they can still be found in many an Egyptian household. Their appearance and contents did not differ greatly from their British, or French counterparts. The room

designed c. 1930 by Egyptian architect ‘Ali Labib Gabr (1898–1966) for the house of Mujib Fathi Bey on Pyramids Road in Cairo is a rare dated example for which photographs are available. It incorporates the ingredients encountered elsewhere: a carved ceiling circled with rows of stalactites, hanging kilims, chairs with lattice infill, a cut out metal hanging lamp, “Mecca cushions” (that is, made from saddle bags), and the typical Parvis, or Parvis-style, cupboard (visible in the far left corner of the photograph). (Fig. 137) The only difference from its European counterparts lies in the type of salvage then available and the minutia of the

129 Caption of pl. 32, Kingdom of Egypt, Ministry of Public works, State buildings department, *Photographs of various buildings in Egypt*, s.d. [1931–32].





FIGURE 137 Anonymous. *Villa of Fathi Bey (Drawing room in Arabic style)*, Cairo, 1930s. The room is captioned in Arabic as “Arab salon.” It was designed by architect ‘Ali Labib Gabr. Mounted albumen print. 20 × 25 cm. Kingdom of Egypt, Ministry of Public works, State buildings department, *Photographs of various buildings in Egypt*, s.d. [1931–32], pl. 32

CAIRO, INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D’ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE’S LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, 44318

handicraft. The tiles inserted in the cabinet over the sofa may have been copies, rather than reused items. Authentic tiles had been lacking since the 1890s. In 1898, when Max de Zogheb, and his architect Max Herz Bey, conceived a monumental Cairene house in “the spirit and the good taste of the best Saracenic work,” tiles had to be manufactured anew. Some were produced in Venice from patterns sent by de Zogheb while others were ordered from Austria and the reputed Cantagalli brothers from Florence provided their share.<sup>130</sup>

130 Walter Tyndale, *An Artist in Egypt* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 174–75; Istvan Ormos, *Max Herz Pasha (1856–1919)*, 391–402.

An Islamic style interior frequently belongs to a sequence of rooms representing various times and places. At Mujib Fathi Bey’s villa, the “Arab salon” [*sālūn ‘arabī*] coexisted with a hall in the Louis XIII style and a neo-classical morning room.<sup>131</sup> Arab rooms were commonly paired with Far Eastern ones. Villa Harari, built in the 1920s in the picturesque neighbourhood of Garden-City in Cairo, possessed an even more diverse range of style rooms. (Fig. 138) Its auction brochure lists a grand Hall in the Arabesque style opening into a den

131 Kingdom of Egypt, Ministry of Public works, State buildings department, *Photographs of Various Buildings in Egypt*, s.d., [1931–32], pl. 29–31.





FIGURE 138 Anonymous, *Villa Harari*, Garden-City (Cairo), undated. The house was built in 1921, architect unknown. Albumen print. 13 × 18 cm  
PARIS, CENTRE D'ARCHIVES DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHITECTURE, FONDS BÉTONS ARMÉS  
HENNEBIQUE, 076 IFA, 1-B-160

used as a smoking room, a large study furnished in Empire style, a Chinese room decorated by a Cairo-based Ukrainian artist named Stoloff and a Renaissance-style sitting-room featuring a copy of a chimney from the Palace of Fontainebleau.<sup>132</sup> Renaissance style was the quintessence of chic for the international upper class; the Rothschilds used the style liberally for their Parisian mansions. The overall composition of the external appearance of Villa Harari, when contrasted with facades at the Saint-Maurice house for instance, suggests

in turn how different Islamic Revival aesthetics could be from one architect to another, from one patron to another, or from one temporal frame to another.

Reputedly built in 1907 and recently reopened as an art centre after a full restoration, the palace of Aisha Fahmi in Zamalek features an Etruscan style room with bare breasted dancing figures performing music and comedy, a carved oak panelled billiard-room in the like of one at a British country house, a hall with overdoors filled with eighteenth-century French decorative genre painting, and a Japanese room.

The *mélange des styles* found in the houses of well-to-do Egyptians was analysed in the 1940s by

<sup>132</sup> Auction brochure published on [<http://www.egy.com/gardencity/>] on 3 September 1998, accessed on 20 June 2020.

the distinguished scientist Mustafa Musharrafa (1898–1950) as a sign of conflicted identity:

Few signs reflect the conflict in our lives between the old and the new, Arabic and Pharaonic, Western and Eastern, more than this disturbing tendency; to furnish one room in the Arabesque style, another in Louis XVI's, a third in the Pharaonic's and yet a few steel chairs and glass tables scattered over the halls and balconies of the house. It is a conflict which comprehends our life to-day.<sup>133</sup>

Historian Magda Baraka aptly observes that what Musharrafa saw as an incongruity could be read by other contemporaries, or the previous generation, “as an expression of the reconciliation in their lifestyle and outlook of their indigenoussness and their cosmopolitanism.”<sup>134</sup> Written four decades apart, both points of views primarily express mind-sets and opinions clearly anchored in their own time, one marked, on the one hand, by the rising tide of independence, and the other, by disenchantment with its outcome. But Magda Baraka brings up issues that haven't lost their currency in Egypt. The way one fashioned his or her interior went hand-in-hand with an ease at multilingualism in speech and writing (Arabic, French and English, and indeed Italian or Greek were commonly spoken and intertwined) and direct access to varied cultures. Hybrid tastes in interior decoration resonated with an unorthodox appreciation of music that could encompass both Beethoven and the Egyptian diva Umm Kulthum. It was a form of cultural fusion long before the late twentieth-century music industry coined and popularised the idea of World fusion and Crossover.

If Islamic Revival interiors in Egypt resembled their Western equivalents in their materiality, at

least in part, paths diverged as to the social significance of the decorative style. The implications in terms of cultural belonging were deeper for Egyptian society than for its European counterpart. Inhabiting Oriental interiors was commonly detached from local culture and language in the case of Europeans. In contrast, Egyptian “Arab parlours” were dwelled by individuals identifying to Arab culture, and having access to many other ones ... When it comes to multilingualism alone, a clear divide separates those familiar with multiple languages (in the Middle East) and those who were not (in Europe). That the fashion for Anglo-Arab interiors was short-lived in Britain – as it was across Europe – is also an indication of divergent fates on either side of the Mediterranean.

#### 4 Islamic Art as Intrinsically Architectural

Islamic antiques collected by travelers or residents in the Middle East during the 1870s were frequently interrelated with the fashioning of historicist interiors at home, or indeed abroad. They brought a seal of authenticity to pursuits that had long been pure fantasy and artifice as demonstrated by most examples of eighteenth-century Turquerie.<sup>135</sup> A late impersonation of Turquerie in interior design offers an eloquent contrast with all Islamic Revival interiors encountered so far. It was called a “Turkish room” and was implemented in 1833 at the Académie de France in Rome by the artist Horace Vernet (1798–1863) during his directorship. Apart from being devoid of objects, the room features tiles, ceiling paintings in the Etruscan style, a colour scheme in reds, yellows and blues, and geometric patterns that point concretely to no precedent, even remotely. The work was done by the master builder Francesco Oslenghi, under the supervision of architect Domenico Cacchiatelli. The tiles of this *Camera alla turca*, as it was called

133 M.M. Mosharrafa, *Cultural Survey of Modern Egypt* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1947), 44.

134 Magda Baraka, *The Egyptian Upper Class between Revolutions, 1919–1952* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 186.

135 Nebahat Avcioglu, *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1737–1876* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishers, 2011).

in the primary sources, came from Naples.<sup>136</sup> The Arabic script over the door provides the main link with the region, as it reproduces the first lines of the Throne verse from the second surah of the Qur'an (2:255)<sup>137</sup> celebrating the uniqueness of God (اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ); it is one of its best-known verses, often recited as a protection against evil spirits and frequently inscribed on buildings. (Fig. 139) One wonders again if Vernet knew the meaning of the written words and had selected them on purpose. To be sure, the room predated his ventures East (though not a brief trip to Algeria in spring 1833), and might have turned out differently if arranged afterwards. But it demonstrates the developments in Islamic Revival rooms which took place since the early nineteenth century.

Since the 1860s, affluent aesthetes or artists had typically indulged in Islamic style rooms arranged as “quasi living museums.” Objects served as furniture (or props); fragments of architectural salvage from demolished structures, whether tiles, marble slabs or carved woodwork, were used for floors, doors, surface decoration or ceilings. The *spolia* were in some instances complemented by replicas of historic ornament cast in plaster, as well as by Revival design. This decorative genre was nurtured by a specific high end collecting culture mourning irretrievable pasts, which was typical of post-revolutionary France, and more broadly, Europe, and was to give birth in parallel to Gothic Revival. With the refurbishing of the Gothic mansion (later Museum) of Cluny in the 1830s, an inspiring model had been set. A “*Cluny arabe*” was the phrase used

to qualify one such Revival achievement in Cairo in 1876.

The “allure of the old” and the “Oriental obsession” did not speak only to French society.<sup>138</sup> Frederic Leighton embarked on a similar scheme of an “Arab Hall” in London in 1877. The fashion for antiques developed in parallel within British society as a reaction “against the grotesqueries of Victorian manufacture” and a “fast-living age:” old furniture helped acquire an “aura of pedigree.”<sup>139</sup> With time, (Islamic) style rooms became popular worldwide among the middle-class, in Europe as in Egypt. A German instance, Urach Palace in Stuttgart, has been mentioned earlier. Swiss examples have been recently unearthed.<sup>140</sup> During his residence in Cairo as a German diplomat from 1896 to 1910, collector Max Freiherr von Oppenheim indulged in Islamic-style interiors, as most Islamic art collectors did.<sup>141</sup> The taste lasted longer in Egypt for it carried more vital meanings in a country experiencing political and cultural assaults from a dominant Europe, than it did elsewhere.

Islamic style aesthetic interiors thus represented a very consistent decorative genre during the age of the mechanical reproduction of art. It attested to a form of consumption and an understanding of Islamic visual and material culture that were intrinsically architectural in nature. This would change with other types of objects entering the world of collectors and scholars of Islamic

136 Isabelle Chave et al., eds., *Correspondance des directeurs de l'Académie de France à Rome. Horace Vernet (1828–1834)* (Paris/Rome: Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français/Académie de France à Rome, 2010), 459–60.

137 I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for the identification of the verse. It is usually translated as “God, there is no God but He; the living, the self-subsisting, no slumber can seize him nor sleep.”

138 John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

139 Cohen, *Household Gods*, 146–47.

140 *Der Orient in der Schweiz. Neo-islamische Architektur und Interieurs des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* [The Orient in Switzerland: 19th and 20th Century Neo-Islamic Architecture and Interior Design], eds. Francine Giese, Leïla el-Wakil, and Ariane Varela Braga (Berlin/Munich/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

141 Gabriele Teichmann, “Max von Oppenheim: Sammler, Gastgeber, Grenzgänger,” in *Abenteurer Orient: Max von Oppenheim und seine Entdeckung des Tell Halaf*, eds. Ulrike Dubiel et al. (Tübingen/Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 2014), 28–35.





FIGURE 139 The Turkish room at the French Academy in Rome, designed by artist Horace Vernet in 1833, photographed in 2020

Art alike, such as illuminated manuscripts from Persia.<sup>142</sup>

A clear-cut response as to the impact of the Egyptian culture of reuse on the development of interiors with Islamic salvage cannot be given. More comparative research is needed to contrast the rooms discussed here with other types of

historic reconstructions in an array of contexts and conjunctures. One thing can be asserted with some certainty: in Egypt Cluny-type recreations found a perfect terrain on which to blossom. Modern revivals of Mamluk and Ottoman domestic architecture carried out in Egypt can thus be safely located at the intersection of two cultures of the Antique: the lasting tradition of Egyptian reuse and the French post-revolutionary understanding of “restoration” as a modern reconstruction of past architecture with authentic fragments, copies and imitations. They eventually came into fusion.

<sup>142</sup> Stephen Vernoit, “Islamic art and architecture: An overview of scholarship and collecting, c. 1850–c. 1950,” in *Discovering Islamic Art*, ed. Vernoit, 1–61 (31–6).

## Guise and Disguise Before and During the Tanzimat

In 1911, French war illustrator Georges Bertin Scott de Plagnolle (1873–1943) was entrusted by Henri Moser with producing colour images for a portfolio presenting his Middle Eastern arms and armour displayed at Charlottenfels, the “castle,” or rather mansion, which he had bought in Neuhausen (Switzerland) and where he had installed a *fumoir arabe* [Islamic style smoking room]. Scott brings colour and detail to the type of display favoured by many collectors throughout the nineteenth century. (Fig. 140) Sets of vibrant draperies and rugs hang in order to orientalise the armoury. The room is replete with artefacts. The plate creates an image of plentifulness. Daggers are aligned in glass cases or arranged in mural trophies, while sets of armour are worn by *papier mâché* mannequins. Other illustrations in the book show mannequins mounted on horses. All were crafted by the Parisian firm Georges Hallé Fils & Successeur.<sup>1</sup> In the background, one can discern the owner himself by one of his cuirasses. His likeness is modelled after a photograph of Moser in travelling garb, a fur-lined kaftan [from the Persian *khaftān*] worn over capacious embroidered pants with a cashmere shawl tied around the waist. (Fig. 141)

Curios, atmospheric rooms and matching attire constitute an association found across many collections. The trilogy of space, artefact and garb substantiates the artifice of verisimilitude. It represents a rhetorical device meant to bring decontextualised inanimate articles into living existence. Moser recalls “sitting alone one evening at dusk in [his] armoury,” imagining “a nocturnal ambush,” when, “suddenly the arms seemed to become imbued with life.”<sup>2</sup> The idea of inert

objects coming to life in one’s reminiscence of past events is a trope that has already been encountered in the words of artist Fortuny (Chapter 1) and that of architect Baudry (Chapter 4). The artefacts’ physical arrangements were meant to facilitate that process. In his reflections on museology, Lockwood de Forest insisted that the “nearer you can get the surroundings which belong with the objects, the more effective they are.” An enthusiastic supporter of the Musée de Cluny in Paris, de Forest recalled sitting there on an old bench and feeling the “atmosphere of the Middle Ages.”<sup>3</sup> Dress was an integral part of the method deployed by private and public collectors alike in order to reclaim the past into the present. It had the power to vivify emotions.

Islamic collectibles thus intersect not only with the materiality of their physical setting, as seen in the previous chapter, but indeed with dress protocols matching the immersive displays that were made for them. As we shall see in the course of this chapter, “sartorial Orientalism”<sup>4</sup> did take place within such atmospheric rooms. The setting was, more often than not, costume balls and live performances in Middle Eastern disguise. The writer Pierre Loti (1850–1923) gained a reputation for the lavish Arab and Turkish parties he gave in the style rooms that he installed from 1877 to 1906 in his family house in Rochefort (south western France). Loti himself delighted in posing in the clothes brought back from his travels to the Middle East: a set of photographs depicts him in 1892 dressed

1 Francine Giese, “International Fashion and Personal Taste,” 104.

2 Henri Moser, *Collection Henri Moser-Charlottenfels, Armes et armures orientales* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1912), v.

3 Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Lockwood de Forest papers, Box 2, Folder 10, Museum Management, June 1919, f. 3.

4 The phrase is borrowed from Marie-Cecile Thoral, “Sartorial Orientalism: Cross-cultural dressing in colonial Algeria and metropolitan France in the nineteenth century,” *European History Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2015): 57–82.





FIGURE 140 Georges Bertin Scott, *Oriental armoury at Charlottenfels*, 1911. Chromolithograph  
HENRI MOSER, *COLLECTION HENRI MOSER-CHARLOTTENFELS, ARMES ET ARMURES  
ORIENTALES 1912: PL. 1*





FIGURE 141 Tronel & Koch (Schaffhouse), Portrait of Henri Moser in *carte de visite* format, before 1884. Albumen print on card. 6 × 9 cm  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, SOCIÉTÉ DE GÉOGRAPHIE, SG  
 PORTRAIT-1385

as an “Arab Warrior”, reclining in his Arab den, and as an “Emir” in the fictional mosque where he mourned Aziyadé, the alleged Turkish love of his life.<sup>5</sup>

It was indeed the spirit of the age in Europe to consider architecture and apparel in conjunction. Auguste Racinet (1825–93), the distinguished author of the six-volume *Le Costume historique* (1888), an illustrated global survey of attire across time and place, explicitly linked clothing and dwelling in the very subtitle of his *magnum opus*: *Types principaux du vêtement et de la parure rapprochés de ceux de l'intérieur de l'habitation dans tous les temps et chez tous les peuples, avec de nombreux détails sur le mobilier, les armes, les objets usuels, les moyens de transport*.<sup>6</sup> All chapters included notes and images of characteristic domestic architecture in the places represented. To antiquarians, attire was a prime cultural marker. It represented solid empirical evidence from which to reconstruct past societies, as architects and archaeologists did for the Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> François Pouillon has shown that fabric and garb can be an apt golden thread to explore the labyrinth of intercultural experiences

and engagements.<sup>8</sup> Following his lead, this chapter thus intends to connect Islamic style interiors with cross-cultural dressing, labelled by some ethnomasquerade,<sup>9</sup> in order to assess the analytical added-value brought by looking into their combinations and interactions.

There is no lack of visual documentation and textual evidence to conduct the enquiry, whatever the recognised shortcomings and ambiguities of the material. As well established, images do not always, or not solely, represent what they pretend to depict.<sup>10</sup> However, close examination, in combination with cross-checked information and expanded contextualisation, allows us to extract relevant clues and access pertinent meanings.

In the past few decades, a large body of literature has engaged with cross-cultural dressing during, and since, the Enlightenment, as part of a broader interest in historic and global dress. The following is an attempt to distinguish, on the one hand, timelines and tropes based on overviews and discussions of sartorial experimentation by Europeans on both sides of the Mediterranean in pre-Tanzimat times. It aims on the other to examine what can be reconstructed specifically about “dressing native,”<sup>11</sup> to borrow John Rodenbeck’s phrase, in nineteenth-century Egypt from travel narratives and imagery. It finally charts some of the uses of Middle Eastern attire encompassed by European visual arts during the same period.

5 Bruno Verrier et al., *La Maison de Pierre Loti à Rochefort* (Paris: Editions du patrimoine, 1999), 11; and for an inspired personal essay about a visit made in 1937, Marcel Schneider, “Pierre Loti à Rochefort,” *Revue des deux mondes* (June 1989): 161–71.

6 Auguste Racinet, *Le Costume historique: cinq cents planches, trois cents en couleurs, or et argent, deux cents en camaïeu, types principaux du vêtement et de la parure, rapprochés de ceux de l'intérieur de l'habitation dans tous les temps et chez tous les peuples, avec de nombreux détails sur le mobilier, les armes, les objets usuels, les moyens de transport, etc.* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1876–88).

7 Françoise Tetart-Vittu, “Auguste Racinet,” in *Dictionnaire critique des historiens de l'art actifs en France de la Révolution à la Première Guerre mondiale*, eds. Philippe Sénéchal and Claire Barbillon, [<https://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/racinet-auguste.html?search-keywords=Racinet>]; Odile Blanc, “The historiography of costume: A brief survey,” in *Ottoman Costumes, from Textile to Identity*, eds. Suraiya Faruqi and Christoph K. Neumann (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 49–62.

8 François Pouillon, “Le fil d’Ariane,” in François Pouillon, *Exotisme et intelligibilité: Itinéraires d’Orient* (Pessac: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2017), 133–49, initially published as “Collections, travestissements, dévoilements: notes anthropologiques sur l’exostime textile et vestimentaire,” in *Touche d’exostime*, ed. Sylvie Legrand (Paris: Musée de la mode et du textile, 1998), 207–17.

9 Kader Konuk, “Ethnomasquerade in Ottoman-European encounters: Reenacting Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,” *Criticism* 46, no. 3 (2004): 393–414.

10 On the possibilities and pitfalls of visual evidence, Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

11 John Rodenbeck, “Dressing native,” in *Unfolding the Orient, Travellers in Egypt and the Near East*, eds. Paul and Janet Starkey (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2001), 65–100.

## 1 Codification and the Intricacies of Cross-Cultural Dressing in Pre-Tanzimat Times

The European embrace of Middle Eastern attire during the nineteenth century was certainly not a new phenomenon, nor an exclusive one. It is closely tied to, and marked by, eighteenth-century culture, when it had been competing with other fashions, such as clothing *all'antica*. A most famous Enlightenment visual testament of the latter type of fancy dressing is Gavin Hamilton's canvas *James Dawkins and Robert Wood Discovering the Ruins of Palmyra* (1758, National Gallery of Scotland) where the two British antiquarians approach the ancient site dressed in togas. The Roman cloth was meant to match the archaeological remains visited. The contrast with the costumes of their Turkish escorts (allegedly no fewer than 300 guards!) is all the more striking.<sup>12</sup>

The reasons that induced Europeans to dress in Ottoman garb for travel, portraiture, public performance, or daily life, are manifold. Some instances had implicit political messages. Romanticism and displays of distinction were known motivations, as was the culture of spectacle. Convenience mattered too. The etiquette of dress in the Eastern Mediterranean had a say indeed. European cross-overs did not intervene in a vacuum; they took place in the context of strict dress codification across Islamic lands. Cross-cultural dressing was not always voluntary but imposed.

### 1.1 *A Realm of Codified Attire*

The most obvious dress-codes in the Eastern Mediterranean were the ones imposed on non-Muslims since at least the eighth century. Typical limits on attire encompassed the ban on wearing white turbans or donning yellow slippers; green was also a colour reserved for Muslims, as were, as a general rule, bright tones. Non-Muslims were to wear black slippers and dark, black or navy, robes. These prescriptions were enforced to greater or lesser extents. Edicts commanding

obedience to dress restrictions and complaining of their being ignored are said to have been strikingly frequent during Ottoman times, suggesting that infringements were common. At the borders of the Sultanate, practices of clothing and arming the body have been shown to be fluid and permeable, to the point of creating a “muddling of costume and identity” that blur conventional categorisations.<sup>13</sup> Rules allowed for exceptions too, such as when local Christians and Europeans transited through dangerous areas; in such circumstances, they were permitted to dress as Muslims to avoid potential assault. Cross-dressing was not always an option; in this case, it was a required precaution. The effectiveness of the artifice is another story, as shall be seen below. Still, clothing protocols long represented a common culture across the Empire. Sartorial impositions were not fully abolished until the Imperial Rescript of 18 February 1856 proclaimed equal rights and honour of all Ottoman citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Garb and headgear restrictions for non-Muslims developed within broader norms of etiquette and identification that applied to all classes of society and activity in the Ottoman world. As a result, Ottoman or Turkish attire generated a whole realm of images: from the sixteenth century onwards, countless costume books or costume illustrations were produced. The former were primarily popularised in Europe in print form, while the latter were authored by the so-called bazaar artists in Istanbul and were primarily meant for export as detached leaflets or bound albums. Recycling the technique of the Islamic miniature, they aimed to document the distinct attire commanded by rank, office and religion, not to speak of gender and ethnicity, in Ottoman society.<sup>15</sup> They were

12 Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 140–43.

13 Robyn Dora Radway, “Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593” (Phd Diss., Princeton University, 2017), chapter 5 *passim*.

14 Matthew Elliott, “Dress codes in the Ottoman Empire: the case of the Franks,” in *Ottoman Costumes*, eds. Faroqhi and Neumann, 103–23.

15 For the most recent assessment regarding later compendiums, Elisabeth Fraser, “The Color of the Orient: On Ottoman Costume Albums, European Print Culture, and Cross-Cultural Exchange,” in *Visual*



crafted supposedly from life, but more often than not from codified types, and were intended both for European and Ottoman audiences. A plea has been convincingly made to consider these collections individually, as specific patronage is strongly evident in their compilation, while their reception singles out distinct publics.<sup>16</sup> Yet at a broader level, costume books and albums do share the commonality of presenting series of single human figures standing against a plain background, with brief labels identifying their status or function. (Fig. 142) The genre persisted well beyond the eighteenth century as a Turkish compendium of Ottoman costumes produced for the Vienna Universal exhibition in 1873,<sup>17</sup> and Auguste Racinet's endeavour, exemplify. (Fig. 143) Both were based on thorough observation. The latter used the black and white photographs engraved in the former, and added the colours from actual costumes seen at the 1874 annual exhibition of UCAD in Paris.<sup>18</sup> As a type of image, the costumed characters were in a way the ancestors of the genre of "Types and scenes" mass-produced by colonial photography and postcards in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. Their respective audiences were very different however. Costume albums and books were exclusive goods, only affordable to the fortunate few. Postcards were products for mass consumption.

### 1.2 *Defying Prohibitions or Mediating Private Affairs?*

Many Ottoman costume recollections were actually made for, or acquired by, European envoys to the Porte. Their iconography was an efficient guide to the hierarchies of Ottoman society, helping diplomats to properly identify the dignitaries with



FIGURE 142 Anonymous, *Bourgeois grec*, end of eighteenth century [A Greek bourgeois]. *Dessins originaux de costumes turcs: un recueil de dessins aquarellés*, f. 64 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE, 4-OD-23

whom they were to interact during their sojourns,<sup>19</sup> as well as the diverse groups forming the society they were to encounter. The visual volumes made appealing souvenirs in return. Once ambassadors were back from their postings, the codices served to memorialise the time spent abroad, and contributed to self-promotion when the images were shared at social gatherings. Portraiture in (sumptuous) Ottoman attire was another frequent practice for the diplomats (and traders) who had gone East.<sup>20</sup> Interpretations suggest that through such

*Typologies from the Early Modern to the Contemporary, Local Contexts and Global Practices*, eds. Tara Zanardi and Lynda Klich (New York: Routledge, 2018), 45–58.

16 Gwendolyn Collaço, "Dressing a city's demeanour: Ottoman costume albums and the portrayal of urban identity in the early seventeenth century," *Textile History* 48, no. 2 (2017): 248–67.

17 Osman Hamdy and Marie de Launay, *Les Costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873* (Istanbul: n.p., 1873).

18 Racinet, *Le Costume historique*, n.p. [376].

19 Soraya Faroqi, "Introduction, or why and how one might want to study Ottoman clothes," in *Ottoman Costumes*, 15–48 (20).

20 Joachim Gierlichs, "Europeans in 'Turkish' Dress," in *Fashioning the Self in Transcultural Settings: the Uses and Significance of Dress in Self-Narratives*, eds. Claudia Ulbrich, Richard Wittmann (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2015), 151–86.



FIGURE 143 Auguste Racinet, attr., *Turquie, Asiatiques turcomans, chrétiens et israélites, vilayet de Houdavendighiar (Brousse), d'Aïdinet de Koniah*. Muslim, Jewish and Christian costumes in the wilaya of Bursa. On the upper row, left to right: an inhabitant of El-Maly, a Jewish woman from Bursa, an artisan from Aïdin, a groom from Bursa, a Jewish scholar from Smyrna; on the lower row: a couple from Bursa in marriage costume, a Muslim woman from Bursa, a Christian merchant from Aïdin  
*LE COSTUME HISTORIQUE...*, 1876–88, III: PL. 178

gestures, often in life-size format, sitters intended to make outwardly visible the elevated status acquired abroad; being depicted in Oriental garb was a way to project a well-travelled persona and the authority of experience. Under this rationale, Orientalist portraits are to be understood as “public performances,” whose assertive power was directed at Western viewers, rather than Ottoman ones, contrary to what has been long assumed.<sup>21</sup> In the context of the clothing restrictions imposed on non-Muslims, one cannot but question the measure of defiance involved in the act of cross-dressing. Was dressing native, i.e. dressing Muslim, a way to visually challenge prohibitions and the authority of the Porte? At times, however, motivations may just have obeyed more intimate concerns, as the following case suggests.

An enigmatic instance of *alla turca* portraiture, slightly unsettling in its strangeness, is a likeness of the Chevalier de Vergennes (1719–1787) painted in Istanbul by French artist Antoine de Favray in 1766. (Fig. 144) The French aristocrat had been the ambassador of Louis xv to the Porte since 1755. He is depicted sitting against richly patterned cushions, one foot tucked under a bent leg, a posture akin to local habit, found in many Ottoman portraits.<sup>22</sup> The Rocaille style panelling in the background follows French contemporary interior design. The gilded moulding features a discernible fleur de lys, the typical French *regalia*, but the combination of deep green and gold can indeed be considered a nod to classical Ottoman embroidered velvets. The ambassador is dressed in a red kaftan trimmed with ermine over a robe made of radiant yellow silk brocade with floral buds woven into it, and a pale blue one; he wears the typical scarlet *şalvar* [baggy trousers] and yellow slippers. Brown fur envelopes him, possibly belonging to the rose-coloured marten-lined mantle of

honour provided for his audience with the Sultan upon his arrival.<sup>23</sup> Vergennes’s headgear consists of a white turban wrapped around a red toque, the quilted cap known as *kavuk*. A dagger set with gems is slipped into the sash tied around his waist. He holds a chibouk in one hand and a rosary in the other. Two pocket watches with stylised Indian numerals rest by his hand on the cushion. The article was much in fashion across the Ottoman Empire since the 1740s; most were manufactured by British watchmakers involved in a considerable export trade to Turkey, such as the firm Markwick Markham.<sup>24</sup> Did he use two in daily life? Did he collect the items?

Every detail – the bright colours, the layered fabrics, the jewelled dagger, and the elaborate cap – replicates the outfit worn by high dignitaries at the Ottoman court, if not that of the Sultan himself. The similitude is corroborated both by depictions in costume albums and contemporary portraiture. Several plates of the widely circulated *Recueil Ferriol* (1714), a series of engravings commissioned by a previous French ambassador to the Porte, Charles de Ferriol, feature similar accoutrements.<sup>25</sup> More significantly, a life-size portrait, dated 1742, of Said Pasha, who became grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire shortly after Vergennes’s arrival in Istanbul, displays very similar attire.<sup>26</sup> Later compendiums confirm the

21 Tara Mayer, “Cultural cross-dressing: Posing and performance in Orientalist portraits,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22, no. 2 (April 2012): 281–98.

22 Later examples include a portrait of Selim III, by Konstantin Kapodagli (Topkapi Palace in Istanbul) and of Yusuf Agha effendi by Carl Fredrik von Breda, 1794–96 (Pera Museum, Istanbul).

23 Louis Bonneville de Marsangy, *Le Chevalier de Vergennes. Son ambassade à Constantinople* (Paris: E. Plon, 1894), 1: 163.

24 G.H. Baillie, *Britten’s Old Clocks and Watches and their Makers, A Historical and Descriptive Account of the Different Styles of Clocks and Watches of the Past in England and Abroad* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956, 7th edition), 95–6.

25 *Recueil de cent estampes représentant les diverses nations du Levant, tirées d’après nature en 1707 et 1708 par les ordres de M. de Ferriol, ambassadeur du Roy à la Porte, et gravées en 1712 et 1713 par les soins de Le Hay* (Paris: Le Hay et Duchange, 1714), pl. 2, 14, 39; on its wide circulation, Jeff Moronvalle, “Le *Recueil Ferriol* (1714) et la mode des turqueries,” *Dix-huitième siècle* 44, no. 1 (2012): 425–46.

26 Jacques Aved, *Said pacha, ambassadeur de la porte ottomane*, 1742 (238 × 161 cm, Versailles, musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, mv 3716).





FIGURE 144  
 Antoine de Favray, *M. de Vergennes, ambassadeur de France en costume turc*, 1766.  
 French ambassador Count de Vergennes in  
 Turkish attire. Oil on canvas. 140 × 112 cm  
 ISTANBUL, PERA MUSEUM, SUNA AND İNAN  
 KIRAÇ FOUNDATION



FIGURE 145  
 Manzoni, *Interprète des langues orientales à Constantinople*, end  
 of eighteenth century. [An interpreter in Istanbul]. *Costumes  
 orientaux inédits, dessinés d'après nature en 1796, 1797, 1798, 1802 et  
 1808, gravés à l'eau-forte avec des explications 1813*: Pl. 10  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, ESTAMPES ET  
 PHOTOGRAPHIE, 4-OD-24



FIGURE 146  
 Antoine de Favray, *Madame de Vergennes, en costume oriental*, s.d. [Portrait of the Countess of Vergennes in Oriental attire]. Oil on canvas, 129 × 93 cm  
 ISTANBUL, SUNA AND İNAN KIRAÇ FOUNDATION, PERA MUSEUM

documentary *minutiae* of Favray’s painting, as similar fabrics, such as the yellow embroidered robe, or the red and white headgear, can be encountered among the illustrations. (Fig. 145) An identical type of wardrobe, but of different colour, together with corresponding props (chibouk and rosary), were used by the Swiss artist Jean-François Liotard, also based in Istanbul, in his double portrait *Monsieur Levett et Mademoiselle Glavani en costume turc* (c. 1740). The painting shares a connection with Favray’s piece through the diplomatic sphere, for Miss Glavani was the daughter of the then French consul. Apart of being a signifier of status, rich Turkish clothing within European diplomacy in Istanbul was not exceptional.<sup>27</sup>

27 Mark Fehlmann, “Orientalism,” in *Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702–1789)* (London: Royal Academy of Arts and National Galleries of Scotland, 2015), 65–87.

When looking closer (or rather zooming in on a digital reproduction of the canvas), Vergennes’s incorporation of the Turkish habit, in the double sense of costume and custom, does not appear limitless. The most obvious deviation is the clean-shaven chin – an actual Ottoman high official will have been moustached and bearded. The sitter holds a rigid, almost hieratic, pose that conveys a sense of performing formal representation. His gaze is not frontal. Should the attitude be understood as the artist’s attempt to capture some embarrassment at the accoutrement? Or was it just a mean to convey the sense of decorum?

A pendant was painted by the same artist, seemingly two years later; it portrays Vergennes’s long-time, but newly espoused (1767), beloved companion, Anne Viviers (1730–98). (Fig. 146) The setting bears commonalities: a low cushioned sofa is placed against a green background. The fabric

of the cushions and the identical rosary provide a direct visual link to her husband's portrait. The sitter is richly dressed in a densely patterned gown, probably made from Lyons silk brocade. The fabric is typical of the French Rococo style; compositions with multi-coloured floral springs, here flowing along a chequered grid, were of the latest fashion in France in the 1760s.<sup>28</sup> The tight bodice with very open neck, the double, scalloped sleeve ruffles, the large golden belt with two circular plaques, and the ample volume of the lower part of the dress, all correspond to the guises donned by Liotard's Levantine sitters.<sup>29</sup> (Levantine, in this instance, designating Catholics who had settled in the Empire, spoke local languages besides theirs, and had adopted some local mores.)<sup>30</sup> It is congruent with the attire appearing in other Levantine portraits by Favray.<sup>31</sup> What is unusual here is the invisible *şalvar*, customarily worn under female gowns, and the green buckle shoes that clearly point to a French type. Thus, the picture is not technically speaking a portrait in Turkish attire, as is generally assumed,<sup>32</sup> but one in composite apparel that mixes Ottoman and French fashion. Perhaps not insignificantly, a *connoisseur* labelled it as *Madame de Vergennes, en costume oriental*, while her husband's portrait was captioned *M. de Vergennes, ambassadeur de France, en*

*costume turc*.<sup>33</sup> Madame de Vergennes's clothing is embellished by lavish jewellery on her hair, ears and wrists. In striking contrast with her husband, she lays with apparent comfort on the couch, staring with confidence at the viewer. Her hands are depicted delicately; her opened right palm performs the welcoming gesture ascribed to nobility in contemporary royal portraiture.<sup>34</sup> Her likeness radiates the embodiment of honourable and warm femininity.

Her situation sheds very different light on the medium-size canvas (1.29 m by 0.93 m) whose dimensions suggest that it was made for remembrance rather than to make an impression. Anne Viviers was actually a local member of Istanbul society. She was born in Pera, the city's cosmopolitan neighbourhood, to a modest French émigré and a Greek mother, and had been widowed at twenty-four years old by a member of a prominent French family of Istanbul.<sup>35</sup> As a Levantine, she was accustomed to wearing local garb. Her usual way of sitting was cross-legged on low sofas.<sup>36</sup> In other words, her portrait in Levantine outfit does not qualify as cross-cultural dressing; it corresponded to routine clothing, if in this instance in a more flamboyant mode. Because of their unequal social ranks, Vergennes had long kept their bond secret. Their marriage had taken place without

28 Natalie Rothstein, *Silk Designs of the Eighteenth Century: in the Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London: with a complete catalogue* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

29 Jean-Étienne Liotard, 78–84, 189.

30 Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Les Levantins: cadres de vie et identités d'un groupe ethno-confessionnel de l'empire ottoman au "long" 19<sup>e</sup> siècle*, translated from German by Jean-François de Andria (Istanbul: Isis, 2007).

31 Semra Germaner, Zeyneb Inankur, *Constantinople and the Orientalists* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), 162–3.

32 *Intersecting Worlds, Ambassadors and Painters: ambassador portraits and art patronage of ambassadors from the 17th to the 19th century with works selected from Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Orientalist Paintings Collection*, ed. Baris R Kibris (Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2014), 53–7.

33 Auguste Boppe, *Les Peintres du Bosphore au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1911), 97.

34 The sultanic figures in the *Recueil Ferriol* are good examples, as well as the portraits of Queen Marie Leszczyńska; Jennifer G. Germann, *Picturing Marie Leszczyńska (1703–1768): Representing Queenship in Eighteenth-century France* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015).

35 Orville T. Murphy, *Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes: French Diplomacy in the Age of Revolution, 1719–1787* (Albany: State university of New York press, 1982), 165–71.

36 "Elle était ordinairement assise sur un sofa à la manière des tailleurs, dont elle se redressait avec adresse," Jean-François Labourdette, *Vergennes, Ministre principal de Louis XVI* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 1990), 50.



the King's consent and was to remain private.<sup>37</sup> Vergennes' attempts to introduce her in diplomatic society had turned sour in more than one occasion. A guest recalls an incident at a reception the ambassador himself had organised in Istanbul:

On fut fort étonné dans une fête que donna M. de Vergennes, de voir cette femme, magnifiquement vêtue, en faire publiquement les honneurs. Tous les ministres étrangers, qui y avoient été invités, s'en trouvèrent offensés et voulurent s'en aller. M. de Vergennes les retint, en leur disant que c'étoit Mme la Comtesse de Vergennes, ambassadrice de France, qu'il avoit l'honneur de leur présenter.<sup>38</sup>

Their double portrait in (Ottoman) ceremonial garb may be reminiscent of, and in conversation with, that disparaging episode. Favray does picture Anne Viviers as "attired superbly," and with an amicable gesture, an appropriate attitude for an ambassador's wife at a public appearance, possibly her first one after her marriage to Vergennes. In this perspective, the pendant portraits would be a visual reassertion of their bond. Vergennes's averted gaze can be (re)interpreted accordingly. He may just be watching her, in loving admiration or reassurance. As there are no available text to confirm the speculation, what artist and sitters really intended with this double iconographic statement may remain a mystery. But considering portraiture with the knowledge of biography and other events demonstrates that the European

wearing of Ottoman attire can be more complex and meaningful than one expects.

### 1.3 *The Culture of Fancy Dressing in Europe*

Many other examples of Ottoman clothing in European portraiture lack the realism encountered in the Vergennes' pendant portraits because they relate to masquerade culture. An accepted form of social transgression originating from the Italian tradition of *carnevale*, masked and costumed events enjoyed tremendous popularity in eighteenth-century Britain and France, and beyond. Masquerade played a subversive role in the Enlightenment imagination through its association with the crossing of class, gender and cultural boundaries, sexual licentiousness, and the "overthrow of decorum."<sup>39</sup> It experienced prolific reception, aristocratic and popular alike, in the following century.

From the outset, masquerading *à la turque* in reality (performance) and representation (portraiture) was a prime subgenre for expressions of personal and national identities. The phenomenon was ultimately about oneself and was not solely frivolous. Ottoman disguise in London was performed at dedicated clubs such as the Divan Club, functioning in 1744–46; it involved gentlemen who had sojourned in the Ottoman Empire and took on seriously the pursuit of acquiring knowledge of its history and culture.<sup>40</sup> The famous Orientalist Richard Pococke, portrayed in Ottoman attire by Liotard in 1740, was a founding member. Portraits in Turkish guise were also commissioned from the same artist by members of the Society of Dilettanti. This convivial dining society formed in 1732 by elite young men who had travelled the

37 Murphy, *Charles Gravier*, 165–71; it ultimately brought disfavour to the diplomat. Vergennes was hastened to leave Istanbul one year after marrying Anne Viviers and was denied a post for several years afterwards.

38 Pierre Victor de Besenval, *Mémoires de M. le baron de Besenval* (Paris: F. Buisson, 1805), 11: 221. "People were astonished to see, at a party given by M. de Vergennes, this woman, superbly attired, appear in public. All foreign ambassadors among the guests felt offended and wished to leave. Mr de Vergennes held them back, telling them that it was the Countess de Vergennes, the French ambassadress, whom he was honoured to introduce to them." [My translation]

39 Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), viii.

40 Vanessa Alayrac Fielding, "Sultans, nababs et mandarins: les enjeux du travestissement oriental en Angleterre," special issue "L'attrait de l'Orient," *XVII–XVIII: Revue de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* 67 (2010): 45–66.



FIGURE 147 Joseph-Marie Vien, *Sultane blanche*. The costume is donned by a male artist from the French Academy in Rome on the occasion of the 1748 carnival. *La Caravane du Sultan à la Mecque: mascarade turque faite à Rome par Messieurs les pensionnaires de l'Académie de France et leurs amis au carnaval de l'année 1748*: Pl. 25 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE, 4-PD-79

Grand Tour was to take on an influential role in British cultural affairs through the promotion of archaeology and the sponsorship of artistic institutions. Elite sociability, of which fancy dressing was an integral part, complemented their collecting and patronage. “Masquerades and sexual liaisons revealed the man of leisure,” as their historian explains.<sup>41</sup> But cross-cultural fancy dressing was not restricted to nobility; it became a highly popular activity in London.

Turkish masquerades abounded in eighteenth-century France too. Ottoman disguises paradoxically served to publicly assert the power of the nation, or that of individuals.<sup>42</sup> A stunning pub-

lic success was the parade organised in 1748 by students of the French Academy in Rome on the occasion of the carnival. The procession comprised thirty-two persons on litters or horseback wearing elaborate Turkish attire that minutely reproduced the typical male and female figures found in costume books, such as the *Recueil Ferriol*, the feminine types being performed by male students in drag. The spectacle was so applauded that it was commemorated by a volume of watercolour engravings under the title *La Caravane du Sultan à la Mecque*,<sup>43</sup> some of which were in turn copied by later works. (Fig. 147) The whole point of

41 Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti*, 119.

42 Julia Landweber, “Celebrating identity: Charting the history of Turkish masquerade in Early Modern France,” *Romance studies* 23, no. 3 (2005): 175–89.

43 Joseph-Marie Vien, *La Caravane du Sultan à la Mecque: mascarade turque faite à Rome par Messieurs les pensionnaires de l'Académie de France et leurs amis au carnaval de l'année 1748* (Paris: Basan et Poignant), 1748.

the staging was to celebrate French wit – and the abilities of the young artists of the fashionable genre. Another, quite distinct, famous instance is Madame de Pompadour depicted as *La Sultane* by Carl van Loo around 1750 for a panel in her Turkish boudoir, a “self commentary in masquerade form” meant to consolidate her position at court, after having lost the King’s favours.<sup>44</sup>

Turkish disguise continued to prosper in nineteenth-century France. A recorded instance is the public “grand oriental ball” organised in Paris on the occasion of the 1841 carnival.<sup>45</sup> The new century, however, sanctioned a change in style. Sartorial *turquerie* was now competing with accoutrements from other parts of the Islamic world. Much commented upon in the press were the costume balls given at the Pavillon de Marsan in Paris by a son of the King, the young Duke of Orléans, in the 1840s. At the reception held on 5 February 1842, a number of artists wore diverse Eastern uniforms, from the attire of a “Mughal King,” down to that of a “Tunisian leader,” a “Muslim officer from the Russian Imperial guard” (a Tatar?) and a “Bedouin chief.” Painters Adrien Dauzats and Amaury-Duval were dressed as Arnauts [from the Albanian *Arnaut* and Greek *Arnaoutis*, designating a member of the Albanian *militia*], while Horace Vernet had adopted the “burnous, arms, camel reins and complexion of an Arab sheikh,”<sup>46</sup> a reminiscence of either of his sojourns in Algeria since 1833,<sup>47</sup> or most likely his encounter with a Bedouin camel guide during his Near Eastern tour in 1839–40, as I suggest below. It was “universal history through costume,”<sup>48</sup> as a newspaper put it. At another time, the Duc himself had appeared in the uniform of a Spahi officer [from the Ottoman Turkish *sipāhi* for cavalymen, based on the Persian *sepāhī* for

horseman], an autochthonous cavalry corps organised in 1834 within the French occupation army in Algeria.<sup>49</sup> Worthy of note is the military character of the disguises, and the shift to Balkan and North African garment when it came to “Oriental” attire. The turn sanctioned both the rise of Independent Greece (as symbolised by the Arnaut) and of colonial Algeria (the Spahi) in France’s collective imagination. At the carnival of March 1851 in Rome, architect Alfred Normand and a couple of other fellows of the Académie de France appeared in “Arab costume,” which they explained as representing that of a “Moor from Algiers.”<sup>50</sup>

*Bal travesti chez le baron Lycklama* (1874) by Dutch artist Peter Tetar van Elven further confirms the continuous diversification of “Arab disguise.” (Fig. 148) The small canvas depicts a carnival reception organised at Villa Escarras in Cannes, the retreat of Dutch collector Baron Lycklama (mentioned in Chapter 1). Half a dozen turbaned heads are noticeable. The local press provides more detailed information.<sup>51</sup> The reunion had taken place on 16 February 1874 and had gathered about 200 attendees, most wearing costumes from the Renaissance or the reign of Louis xv. In Arab guise was one M. Tève as “Arab Algerian” (possibly the figure at the left end of the painting). Lycklama’s private secretary, Ernest Massenot, donned an “accurate replica” of the garment of a

44 Perrin Stein, “Madame de Pompadour and the Harem Imagery at Bellevue,” *La Gazette des beaux-arts* 123 (1994): 29–44.

45 “Le grand bal oriental,” *La Caricature*, 7 March 1841.

46 *Le Moniteur universel*, 9 February 1842, no. 40, 259–60.

47 On Vernet’s extensive travelling in Algeria and his Algerian paintings, see Nicolas Schaub, *Représenter l’Algérie. Images et conquête au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2015).

48 *Le Moniteur universel*, 9 February 1842, no. 40, 259.

49 Eugène Lami, *Le Duc d’Orléans en costume oriental*, s.d., in Paul-André Lemoisne, *L’Oeuvre d’Eugène Lami, Essai d’un catalogue raisonné* (Paris, 1914), 253, no. 1105; sale *Une collection pour l’histoire*, Sotheby’s Paris, 29–30 September 2015, lot 27.

50 Letter of Alfred Normand to his parents, 14 March 1851, quoted in Laure Ducos, “Alfred Normand (1822–1909) ou les leçons de Rome” (PhD diss., Tours University, 2013), 205. “Je m’étais fait un costume arabe, celui d’un maure d’Alger. J’avais de grandes guêtres rouges jusqu’aux genoux, des souliers jaunes, le pantalon turc; un gilet de soie jaune à raies, une chemise à manches. Un turban en soie rouge et jaune et sur les épaules un burnous noir ... Il paraît que j’étais pas mal et que je ressemblais assez agréablement à un Arabe; 4 April 1851: le costume n’est pas revenu fort cher, 25 f environ.” Watercolour at Musée des Arts décoratifs, gift by Jacques Foucart, 1979.

51 “Bal costumé de la villa Escarras,” *Les Échos de Cannes*, Sunday 21 February 1874, no. 71, 1–2.





FIGURE 148 Peter Tetar van Elven, *Bal travesti chez le baron Lycklama*, 1874. Costume ball at Lycklama's villa in Cannes. From left to right: M. Tève as Algerian Arab, M. Massenot as Lebanese emir, M. Hennessy as a caliph and Baron Lycklama in mixed garb. Oil on canvas. 48 × 81 cm  
CANNES, MUSÉE DE LA CASTRE, INV. 2005.0.346

Lebanese chief (the person sitting on the floor in front of Tève?).<sup>52</sup> One M. Hennessy [Hennessy?] dressed as a “khalife” (in a long black robe beneath a red cape?) while a Miss Mulholland was in “Arab apparel” (a female cobalt blue dress over large pants is visible on the right side of the painting, behind the man in black and red). According to the report, the host wore the rich garb of a dignitary from Baghdad, selected among the many garments acquired during his Middle Eastern travels. A “grand Arab costume” from Baghdad does figure in the inventory of Lycklama’s collections; it was made of a kaftan with short sleeves, a waistcoat (*šudāriyya*), and large trousers with waistband (*dikka*), all embellished with golden embroideries

made by Baghdadi “Arab and Jewish” [sic] women.<sup>53</sup> Lycklama had himself portrayed wearing similar apparel a few years later.<sup>54</sup> It is not however the dress he dons in Tetar van Elven’s canvas. For the sake of easiness, one can venture that the artist had drawn it from a previous portrait,<sup>55</sup> made after a photograph, which represented Lycklama in “Albanian dress,” with Cairene architecture in the background (possibly a montage). (Fig. 149) Tetar van Elven had used the upper part of the picture to model Lycklama’s posture and accoutrement,

52 József Borsos, *Emir of Lebanon*, 1843 (Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery, 2003.3) represents an Austrian aristocrat (count Edmond Zichy) in similar disguise.

53 No. 618 in Ernest Massenot, *Musée de M. le chevalier T. M. Lycklama à Nijeholt: notice descriptive provisoire* (2d ed.) (Brussels: P.-J. Leemans et Vanderendonck, 1871), 50.

54 Eugène Dretch (?), *Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt*, 1878 (Cannes, Musée de la Castre, inv. 2006.0.91). The painting is attributed to an artist that does not appear in any database; his name is probably miswritten.

55 Émile Vernet-Lecomte, *Le Baron Lycklama en costume albanais*, 1869 (Cannes, Musée de la Castre, 2005.0.350).



FIGURE 149 Robert Jefferson Bingham, *Portret van Jhr. Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt*, 1869. Portrait of Baron Lycklama in Albanian costume. Dimensions not provided. LEEUWARDEN, FRIES MUSEUM, COLLECTION KONINKLIJK FRIES GENOOTSCHAPINV. PPI319A-01

leaving out the wide *fustanella*, the typical white pleated kilt worn by men in the Balkans, and replacing it with baggy trousers. Paintings are artifices after all.

#### 1.4 *Ambivalent Trophies of Travel*

Bringing back full outfits from the Middle East was a common activity of early touring. Massenot had acquired his Lebanese disguise worn at Lycklama's party from a recent trip to the region.<sup>56</sup> Lycklama himself acquired many items of clothing during his regular trips to Central Asia and the Near East in the 1860s and 1870s. His attention to costume

is a salient trait of his travelogue. He saw garments as specimens of a country's industry,<sup>57</sup> and spared no effort in describing the wealth of costumes encountered on the road. While he doesn't disclose in which garb he travelled (his Albanian guise?), he narrates one special occasion in which he robed himself in his "grand Arab costume" from Baghdad. It was at the request of his host in Kermanshah (Iranian Kurdistan). The eldest son of the Qajar governor of the province, Prince Ali Quli Mirza Sarim ud-Daula (d. 1872), was a keen amateur photographer, who possessed the latest British and French equipment, and processed his plates himself. He wanted a picture of Lycklama in dignified attire for his albums. Two poses were sufficient to attain a result that pleased him. The Dutch traveller was offered a copy as a souvenir, among other photographs of the family and prestigious guests of the Qajar Prince.<sup>58</sup> In this instance, cross-cultural dressing was a courtesy, inscribed in decorum, amiability and ... technology.

Sartorial souvenirs seemed to be meant primarily for portraiture, rather than wear. The fate of Lord Byron's Albanian clothes is significant in this respect. The British poet is known to have indulged in Ottoman disguise from a young age. While on a Mediterranean Grand Tour, he had acquired in 1809 some magnificent "Albanian costumes" for fifty pounds each. In 1813, he had his portrait taken while wearing one of them. The canvas was a success and was reproduced many times in oil and engraving.<sup>59</sup> But he never wore the garb again: it reminded [him] "of one or two things I don't wish to remember," as he wrote to a friend shortly after sitting for the artist.<sup>60</sup> This is clear confirmation,

57 Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt, *Voyage en Russie, au Caucase et en Perse, dans la Mésopotamie, le Kurdistan, la Syrie, la Palestine et la Turquie exécuté pendant les années 1866, 1867 et 1868* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1872–75), III: 479.

58 Lycklama, *Voyage en Russie*, III: 479.

59 Jennifer M. Scarce, "Lord Byron (1788–1824) in Albanian Dress: A Sartorial Response to the Ottoman Empire," *Ars Orientalis* 47 (2017): 158–77.

60 Leslie Alexis Marchand, *Wedlock's the Devil: Byron's Letters and Journals* (London: John Murray, 1975), 4: 113, quoted in Scarce, "Lord Byron," 161.

56 "Bal costumé de la villa Escarras," *Les Échos de Cannes*, 21 February 1874, no. 71, 1–2.

if there was ever one, of the emotional power of clothes.

The Albanian dress became a prime visual symbol of Philhellenism in the 1820s.<sup>61</sup> It came to embody other meanings over the century. The guise, and by extension the people who donned it, referred to distinct groups. The noun initially alluded to populations from the Balkan Peninsula dispersed across the region, some having settled in present northern Greece and Macedonia; it went on to designate the special troops that Albanians formed within the Ottoman army. Their courage was legendary. Thousands of them were called to Egypt to fight the French occupation in 1798–1801, and many continued serving Mehmed Ali, the new governor, himself of Macedonian origin, afterwards.<sup>62</sup> Albanians were reputed to be “quick and fiery, impetuous in anger, addicted to insubordination, and distinguished for contempt of authority.”<sup>63</sup> With the continuous military reorganisations prompted by the Porte and the need to reassert Ottoman power in Egypt, the disciplining of turbulent corps such as the Albanians, the Mamluks and the Janissaries became paramount.<sup>64</sup> Such rearrangement eventually led to their disappearance (as per the massacre of Egyptian Mamluks in 1811) or their gradual return to civil life (the Ottoman Janissaries after 1827). In Cairo and Istanbul, Arnauts and Janissaries became mercenaries in the employ of embassies and private families alike as guards, footmen, or couriers. (Fig. 150 and 151) To complicate matters further, the *fustanella* and accompanying embroidered jackets were adopted following Independence by the nascent Greek army. It became the official court dress in 1835, and ultimately the Greek national

costume.<sup>65</sup> The meaning of Albanian attire had thus shifted over a few decades, inducing confusion for outsiders.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, travellers continued to be portrayed in “Albanese guise,” once in the region. A later example, a few years later than Lycklama’s portrait in Albanese suit, features Lockwood de Forest. (Fig. 152) His photograph in *carte-de-visite* format is unlabelled, but can be paired with a parallel disguised portrait bearing identical location, as evidenced by the floor’s tiles.<sup>67</sup> The latter was authored by photographers P. Sotiropoulos and I. Mantzakos in Athens. (Fig. 153) De Forest’s portrait can be dated to late spring 1876 when he was touring the region.<sup>68</sup> The other portrait possibly depicts his travel companion then, his cousin George Deforest Lord. Both men are robed in “Albanian guise,” now identified as “Greek”, but both sets of attire are specific, which suggests personal possession, rather than props provided at the studio. The non-pristine condition of the clothing supports the former hypothesis. Both men carry a different rifle and a number of other arms, equally specific. Were these the outfits in which they had been travelling across the

61 Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, “Of Suliots, Arnauts, Albanians and Eugène Delacroix,” *The Burlington Magazine* 125, no. 965 (Aug 1983): 486–91.

62 [Émile] P[risse] and P[ierre] N[icolas] H[amont], *L’Égypte sous la domination de Méhémet-Ali, L’Univers pittoresque* 45 (Paris: Firmin-Didot Frères, 1848) III: 2–3.

63 *Oriental Album*, 1–2, pl. 2.

64 Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1997), 79–86.

65 Scarce, “Lord Byron.”

66 For the ambiguities of the visual representation of Albanian attire in post-revolutionary France, see Elisabeth A. Fraser, *Mediterranean Encounters, Artists Between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, 1774–1839* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), chapter 5 *passim*.

67 Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Lockwood de Forest papers, Box 3, folder 25, f. 1 and Box 3, folder 30, f. 2–3.

68 Three stays by de Forest in Athens are recorded, one in 1869 when he was still a young man (nineteen years old), a three-week sojourn in late spring 1876, on his way back from a large tour of Egypt, Syria and Palestine, and a longer residence during the winter of 1878; the facial features of the portrayed de Forest correspond with a person in his late twenties rather than a barely twenty years old young man, while the short sleeves of his costume suggest spring rather than winter time, which would better match the 1876 stay, than the one taking place eighteen months later; Roberta Ann Mayer, “Understanding the Mistri: The Arts and Crafts of Lockwood de Forest (1850–1932)” (Ph.D diss., University of Delaware, 2000), chapter 3 *passim*.





FIGURE 150 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Arnaout and Osmanli [soldiers] in Alexandria*. Both figures are possibly Europeans in Middle Eastern guise. Chromolithograph *ORIENTAL ALBUM, CHARACTERS, COSTUMES AND MODES OF LIFE IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE, ILLUSTRATED FROM DESIGNS TAKEN ON THE SPOT BY E. PRISSE, 1848: PL. 1*

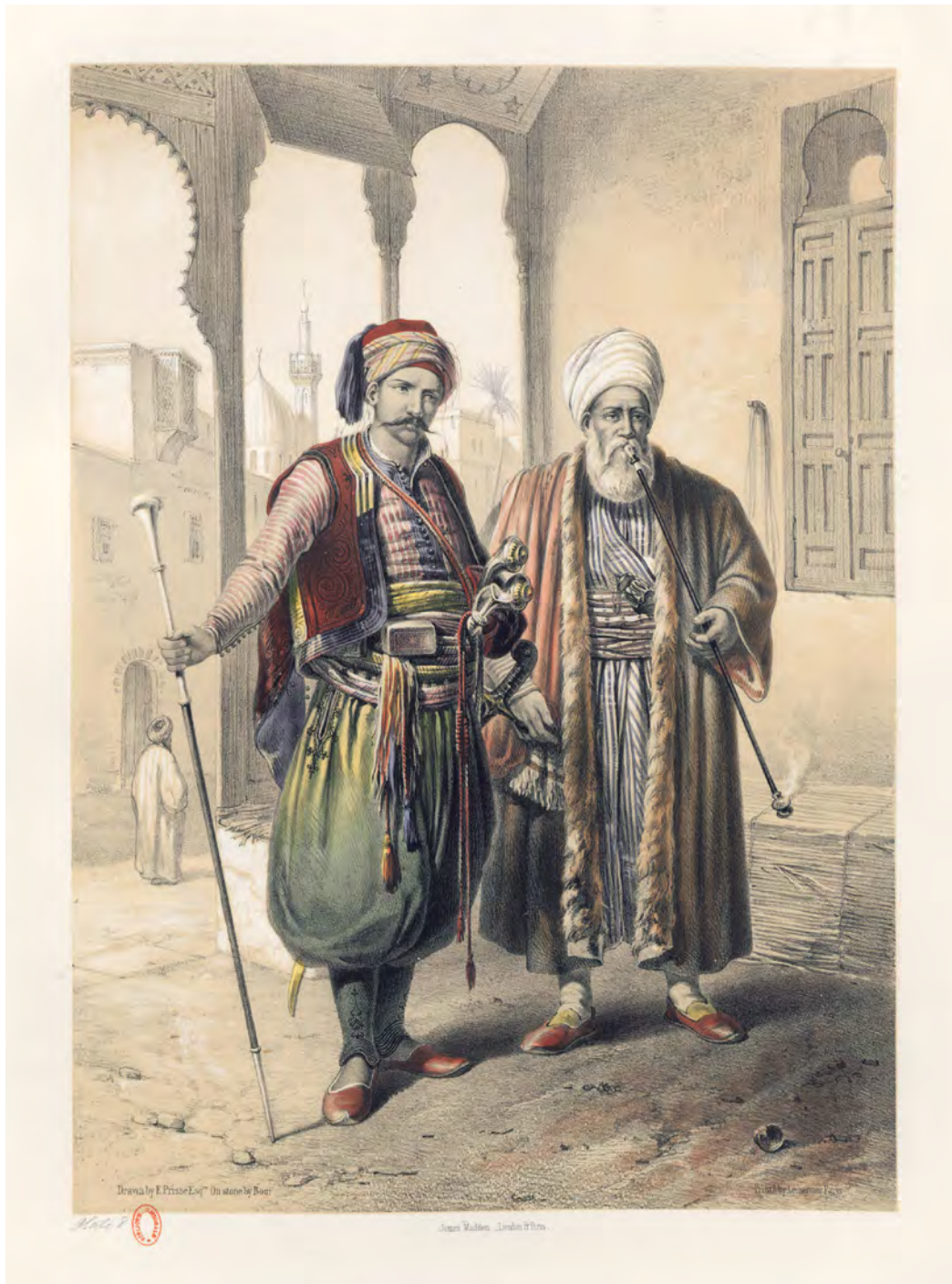


FIGURE 151 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Janissary and merchant*. Chromolithograph  
*ORIENTAL ALBUM, CHARACTERS, COSTUMES AND MODES OF LIFE IN THE VALLEY OF THE  
 NILE, ILLUSTRATED FROM DESIGNS TAKEN ON THE SPOT BY E. PRISSE, 1848: PL. 8*





FIGURE 152 P. Sotiropoulos and I. Mantzakos (attr.), *Lockwood de Forest in Greek attire* [May or June 1876]. Albumen print. 13 × 8 cm WASHINGTON DC, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, LOCKWOOD DE FOREST PAPERS, BOX 3, FOLDER 25, F. 1



FIGURE 153 P. Sotiropoulos and I. Mantzakos, *Unidentified sitter* [possibly de Forest's travel companion George DeForest Lord]. Albumen print. 13 × 8 cm WASHINGTON DC, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, LOCKWOOD DE FOREST PAPERS, BOX 3, FOLDER 30, F. 2

region out of convenience, as Henri Moser did in his fur-lined kaftan? Did they solely serve for a photographic session in order to authenticate their travel experience? Were they intended as a tribute to Greek folk culture? Donning exotic costumes was in many instances an act of homage to otherness.<sup>69</sup> Were the two comrades just having fun? Expressing manly bravery? It is hard to ascertain definitively, in the absence of direct testimony. Set in conjunction with Lycklama's

portrait, the photographs point to a shared *gusto* for Albanian/Greek guise by collectors wandering in the region in the 1860s and 1870s, in search of a vanishing past through art. In other words, they highlight a fashion. In a Far Eastern context, such cross-dressing has been characterised as a kind of "alternative consumerism," symbolic of the performance of modernity.<sup>70</sup> In any case, most analysts of cultural cross-dressing referred to so far concur

69 Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 60–1.

70 Christine M.E. Guth, "Charles Longfellow and Okakura Kakuzō: Cultural cross-dressing in the colonial context," *Positions* 8, no. 3 (2000): 605–36.



that these performances were not stages in a process of cultural conversion, but circumstantial fantasies, that we can't help seeing today as a bit ridiculous ...

## 2 Dressing Native in Nineteenth-Century Egypt and Back Home

Looking at cultural cross-dressing in the specific case of Egypt brings further insights into the why and how of the phenomenon. It highlights various perceptions. It outlines stories of necessity, and in contrast, self-fashioning. It engaged varied forms of impersonation in gesture and attitude. A systematic survey across the available evidence induced John Rodenbeck to conclude that bravura and seduction had their say too.<sup>71</sup> But disguise was not only a matter of individuality; local circumstances shaped it as well. They determined whether it was recommendable or not to wear a local costume and they defined the type of outfit desirable. Different modes of engagement with Egyptian culture ensued. In other words, dressing native was inscribed into intercultural relations, and in return was shaped by the outcome of that interplay. As we shall see, the phenomenon meant quite different things in Egypt at the dawn of the nineteenth century, and over its course.

### 2.1 *From Necessity to Initiative*

Sources concur that the shift from necessity to initiative can be dated to the 1830s. A commonly quoted brief from an official French newspaper stated in 1832:

Les routes sont parfaitement sûres en Égypte; on peut même les parcourir en vêtements européens et sans le moindre danger d'ici jusqu'au Sennaar.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Rodenbeck, "Dressing native."

<sup>72</sup> "Nouvelles extérieures," *Le Moniteur Universel*, 29 July 1832, 1522. "Roads are perfectly safe in Egypt; you can even travel on them in European cloths and without the slightest danger until Sennaar."

Prior to that date, European travellers shared the belief that wearing local clothes was a requisite to safety, and as they wrote, commanded respect. No one expressed it more clearly than British collector Henry Westcar (1798–1868) while in Cairo in 1824:

Under the auspices of [Osman effendi]<sup>73</sup> I became to appearance a Turk; my head shaved, a *Mameluk* turban and a proud look. I walked along the streets and the first day I found the difference of the change. When dressed in Frank clothes, every ragged Arab that passed would run against you, and the soldiers elbow you and make you get out of their way. When, when [sic] I was a Turk, with my pipe bearer before me, all get out of the way, and the Arabs who were sitting down, got up as I passed and saluted me. Then I was a great man and it is not the first time that I have found persons judging of a person more by the cut of his coat than his mind.<sup>74</sup>

Travelling with his father from Istanbul to Cairo in 1825 for archaeological purposes, French scholar Léon de Laborde (1807–1869) confirmed that they had been convinced to the "necessity of this masquerade" for their own security. He acknowledged collateral benefits. He considered the "Turkish costume" as healthier, for it was more ample and comfortable than European garments; turban and sash prevented catching the usual diseases contracted by Europeans in the region as they kept head and stomach warm.<sup>75</sup>

A visual testimony of their accoutrements is provided in their travel account. (Fig. 154) Two different types of Turkish costumes are illustrated.

<sup>73</sup> A Scottish renegade living in Cairo since 1807, see Jason Thompson, "Osman Effendi: A Scottish convert to Islam in early nineteenth-century Egypt," *Journal of World History* v, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 99–123.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Heike C. Schmidt, *Westcar on the Nile, A Journey through Egypt in the 1820s* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2011), 149.

<sup>75</sup> Léon de Laborde, *Voyage de l'Asie mineure par Mrs Alexandre de Laborde, Becker, Hall et Léon de Laborde, rédigé et publié par Léon de Laborde* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1838), 27–8.



FIGURE 154 Antoine de Monfort, *Portraits du comte Alexandre de Laborde et de son fils Léon dans leur costume de voyage*, 1825. Chromolithograph  
LÉON DE LABORDE, *VOYAGE DE L'ASIE MINEURE*, 1825: UNUM. PLATE

The father wore a “*costume à la longue*,” in his son’s words, a phrase encountered in other travelogues. The outfit was composed of long robes worn over the typical red *şalvar* [shalwar] and under a fur-trimmed overcoat. The garb was a formal one, necessitated by the welcoming ceremonies that Alexandre de Laborde had to attend throughout the trip. The son wore an outfit that he pretended was more fitted to horse riding and his digging activities, with long baggy trousers and short waistcoat over an inner *entari* [Turkish for gown], a costume closely resembling that of the military cast, as worn by Mamluks and Janissaries. The two men were heavily armed, although acknowledging that gifts facilitated travel more effectively than any “true arsenal.”

French artist Horace Vernet also chose the *costume à la longue*, when travelling in Egypt in 1839–40. (Fig. 155) In the account of the tour, his student

and travelling companion Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet further voiced the benefits of disguise for artists. In his words, dressing native should not pass for “puerile disguise,” an indirect admission that a measure of childishness loomed somehow in the background. Adopting local clothing was a matter of adaptation to the weather, an issue of hygiene, and lastly a means to supposedly ensure invisibility in order to sketch freely in streets and mosques:

En effet, les habits du pays sont beaucoup plus commodes que les nôtres à cause de leur ampleur. De plus, le dessin étant inconnu ou plutôt défendu chez les musulmans, nous pourrons nous livrer à la récolte indispensable des croquis, en tout lieu, sans être remarqués sous le vêtement musulman, et il nous sera aisé de pénétrer dans les mosquées en ôtant nos babouches; grâce à ces



FIGURE 155 Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet, *Costume de Mr Horace Vernet pendant son voyage*, 1839. Chromolithograph  
FRÉDÉRIC GOUPIL-FESQUET, *VOYAGE D'HORACE VERNET EN ORIENT*, 1840: AFTER 117

précautions nous serons confondus avec les fidèles. L'habit est collant, boutonné et agrafé étroitement aux manches et aux jambes contre les incursions des insectes qu'on craint de nommer. Le soin de se raser la tête est une mesure de propreté qu'il serait ridicule de ne pas admettre. Les vêtements du pays ont été faits pour les exigences du climat.<sup>76</sup>

76 Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient* (Paris: Challamel, 1843), 79. "Local clothes are actually much handier than ours because they are more ample. Besides, as drawing is unknown or rather forbidden by Muslims, we can sketch wherever needed without being noticed under our Muslim costume, and it will be easy to enter mosques by taking our slippers off; thanks to these precautions, we will be confused

Their "metamorphosis into Arabs" took place as soon as they set foot in Cairo.<sup>77</sup> Goupil-Fesquet does not tell if the artifice was effective – in other instances, as to be seen below, it provided trouble rather than anonymity. That same year, the British artist David Roberts was informed by his Consul that in order to visit mosques in Cairo and make drawings, he had to assume the Turkish dress,<sup>78</sup> which he did; he managed to secure the drawings he wanted under the disguise. French architect Pascal Coste had done the same twenty years earlier in order to carry out his own survey of Islamic architecture in Cairo.<sup>79</sup> A tradition of disguise that facilitated entering mosques did exist.

The local costume that Europeans mainly donned in the following decades remained an adaptation of the Turkish military dress; it was also the common attire of the many Turkish merchants – or rather Osmanli, as they preferred to be named – operating in the country, according to unpublished notes drafted by Arabist Edward William Lane in 1834.<sup>80</sup> The common outfit underwent some changes with the "new order" promoted by Mehmed Ali (*Nizām-ı Cedid* in Ottoman Turkish). The main innovations of the Nizami uniform, or *vêtement à la nizam* in French sources, were that the baggy trousers were now tight from knee downwards and that a close-fitting vest had replaced the silk *entari*; the waistcoat eventually adopted the very name of the long shirt.<sup>81</sup> In the

with believers. The garb is tight; it is buttoned narrowly to the sleeves and pants against insect incursion. The act of head shaving is a measure of cleanliness that it will be ridiculous to dismiss. The clothes of the country have been made for the requirements of its weather." [My translation].

77 Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d'Horace Vernet*, 45.

78 Entry in his travel journal dated January 2, 1839, quoted in Scarce, "Lord Byron," 170.

79 Dominique Jacobi, ed., *Pascal Coste, toutes les Égypte* (Marseille: Parenthèses, 1998).

80 Jason Thompson, "OF THE 'OSMA'NLEES, OR TURKS': An unpublished chapter from Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 19–39.

81 "L'uniforme des officiers du Nizam est en drap ponceau bleu de ciel; il consiste en une veste ou justaucorps appelé entéri, et un pantalon très large de la ceinture





FIGURE 156 Thomas Hicks, [Posthumous] *Portrait of Henry Abbott*, 1863 (after a coloured pastel drawn by Andrew Morris in 1853). Oil on canvas. 101 × 127.6 cm  
 NEW YORK, BROOKLYN MUSEUM, GIFT OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 48.191

late 1830s, the tarbush or fez superseded the turban for the army and civil service alike, while the rest of society continued wearing the latter. The Turkish costume could otherwise be combined with a turbaned shawl over the fez. Weaponry and turban became exclusive of one another; people either wore one or the other. The traditional yellow inner slippers [*mizz*, a word of Turkish origin] were now covered by thick red pointed shoes, named *marküb*.<sup>82</sup> Another turn was the adoption of dark colours: black, dark green or blue, whether

for Nizami garb or not, in addition to the bright tones of previous Muslim attire. (Fig. 150)

The Nizami dress is the costume that the innumerable Europeans in the service of the Egyptian administration donned as an attribute of their function. Architect Pascal Coste, French doctor Antoine Clot-Bey,<sup>83</sup> British physician Henry Abbott (Fig. 156),<sup>84</sup> engineer Linant de

au jarret et collant comme une guêtre jusqu'à la cheville." P[rissé] and H[amont], *L'Égypte sous la domination de Méhémet-Ali*, 133.

82 Rachel Arié, "Le costume en Égypte dans la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue des études islamiques* XXXVI (1968): 201–13.

83 Clot-Bey recalls in his memoirs that his recruitment contract explicitly stated that he had to don the Nizami garb when requested to do so; one of his uniforms is kept in the Musée d'archéologie méditerranéenne in Marseilles (5514.2–5); *Le Goût de l'Orient, Collections et collectionneurs de Provence*, eds. Aurélie Bosc and Mireille Jacotin (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2013), 223.

84 Abbott's posthumous portrait was made after a coloured pastel authored by Andrew Morris in



FIGURE 157 Édouard Jarrot, *Portrait de Willem de Famars Testas, fait au Caire par Jarrot, notre photographe, en 1859*. Photograph hand-coloured with watercolour, 8.4 × 7 cm LEIDEN, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES, ARCHIVES 19.6.3/1A

Bellefonds, Colonel Sève, and antiquarian Émile Prisse d'Avennes, to name but a few, have all been portrayed in this “Turkish costume,” either in its everyday formula, or in its ceremonial variant. Lane himself, like many other European travellers or expatriates, dressed in Nizami garb, with a wound shawl over his fez.<sup>85</sup> It was an experience worth recording visually.

Europeans continued donning the Nizami guise long after it had ceased being a requisite for safe travel. Willem de Famars Testas, who assisted Prisse d'Avennes in his late archaeological works,

was portrayed wearing it in 1859.<sup>86</sup> (Fig. 157) Later photographs show slight changes in the arrangement of the outfit, as illustrated by a group portrait shot in Alexandria in 1867. The *carte-de-visite* picture stages the famous American writer Mark Twain (standing on the right), with a fellow traveller and their dragoman (interpreter). (Fig. 158) Their adventures in Near Eastern lands inspired his *Innocents Abroad*, a humorous tale of the excursion written in press report prose. The suit of the seated figure has been preserved, offering insights on the colourfulness involved. It was made of broadcloth in a heavy camel colour, and complemented by a shawl of contrasting deep blue. The trousers were longer than the original Nizami ones, and boots had replaced the slippers. The style followed the new costume of Egyptian government's employees.<sup>87</sup>

This type of attire could be considered local, as it was worn by the ruling elite and government employees in Egypt, but it clearly distinguished travellers from the rest of the population, whose common garb was the *costume à la longue*, composed of a long vest of striped silk and cotton, also named a *kaftan*, over a linen shirt and drawers, completed in winter by a long cloth coat called a *jubba*.<sup>88</sup> Blending in with the population was not exactly the point.

Yet travel could foster unforgettable interactions. Vernet held vivid memories of the Bedouin sheikh who guided him and his party from Cairo to the Holy Land in late autumn 1839. The man

1853, Andrew Oliver, *American Travelers on the Nile: Early U.S. Visitors to Egypt, 1774–1839* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2015), 312.

85 Richard J. Lane, *Portrait of Edward Lane*, c. 1836 (Oxford University), reproduced in Jason Thompson, *Edward William Lane (1801–1876), The Life of the Pioneering Egyptologist and Orientalist* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2010), unum. plate after 534.

86 Marteen Raven, “Extraits du journal égyptien de Willem de Famars Testas (1858–1860),” in *Émile Prisse d'Avennes, un artiste-antiquaire en Égypte au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. M. Volait (Cairo: Publications de l'IFAO, 2013), 189–213 (fig. 3).

87 For an example, Elke Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz, “Julius Franz-Pasha's *Die Baukunst des Islam* (Islamic architecture) of 1887 as part of the Manual of Architecture,” in *Le Caire dessiné et photographié au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Mercedes Volait (Paris: Picard/Inha, 2013), fig. 1 [<https://books.openedition.org/inha/4853?lang=fr>], Accessed 13 March 2021.

88 Edward William Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1944/1908 edition), 30–1.



FIGURE 158 Schier and Schoefft, [Charles Langdon and Samuel Clemens, a.k.a Mark Twain, in neo-Nizami garb, in probable company of their dragoman], Alexandria, Egypt, Fall of 1867. Albumen print on board. *Carte-de-visite* format

NEW YORK, ITHACA, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF FIBER SCIENCE AND APPAREL DESIGN, 2003.29.002

appears several times in his narrative of the ride, and in a letter to Antoine de Montfort. He is remembered as old Selim and was supposedly from a tribe in Mount Sinai. Sheikh Selim and two young companions had been recommended to Vernet by Linant de Bellefonds. They procured the nine camels plus donkey that were to transport Vernet, his student Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet, his nephew Charles Burton, a French servant, an

Egyptian cook, the dragoman Georges Khalil, and all their impedimenta, through the Eastern desert up to a certain point on the road to Jerusalem. Selim happened to be an astute guide, who knew how to navigate the caravan safely through “a sea of sand with his acumen as sole compass,” even though he had not walked the route since the siege of St John of Acre in 1799.<sup>89</sup> Selim possessed piercing sight and an acute ear, and he was also the proud owner of a rifle that he constantly inspected and manipulated.

Vernet was fascinated by the “expressive physiognomy” of Sheikh Selim. He was captivated by the colour of the skin, the white beard, fleshy lips, radiant eyes, bushy eyebrows and marked wrinkles.<sup>90</sup> Between the two men tactility unfolded:

Il [Selim] nous fait toutes sortes de caresses; Vernet semble avoir la plus belle place dans son affection; il le cajole, le flatte de la main et prend de lui un soin tout particulier manifesté par mille attentions de tous genres. Il dit que Vernet a une vraie figure d'Arabe.<sup>91</sup>

Whether Vernet could pass for a true Arab is highly questionable; it was a courtesy from Selim to say so. But anyone having experienced desert travel in the region will not doubt the intensity of the affectionate gestures. The memorable connection between the two men survives in the unique canvas that Vernet derived from his entire

89 Letter to Antoine de Monfort, 11 September [sic for December] 1839: “Nous étions au milieu des tombeaux des califes, en face du désert, et n’ayant dans cette mer de sable d’autre boussole que l’intelligence de notre vieux scheik qui, depuis l’expédition des Français à St-Jean d’Acre, n’avait pas vu le pays que nous allions parcourir.” Horace Vernet, “Des rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux et celui des Arabes modernes,” *L’Illustration*, 12 February 1848, 370–72.

90 Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage*, 131–32, 134.

91 Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage*, 137. “He [Selim] caresses us in every possible way; Vernet seems to have the best place in his affection; he is being cajoled, flattered by the hand, and taken care of with particular attention. He said that Vernet has a real Arab face.” [My translation]





FIGURE 159 Horace Vernet, *Voyage dans le désert* [The Artist and his Companions Travelling in the Desert], 1843. Oil on canvas. 46.7 × 57.7 cm  
LONDON, WALLACE COLLECTION, P584

journey in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. (Fig. 159) The small anecdotal piece was exhibited at the 1844 Salon in Paris under the title *Voyage dans le désert*. It was painted during Vernet's later stay in St Petersburg and finished on 26 November 1842; the "small unpretentious canvas, representing our caravan in the desert" was initially made by Vernet to evaluate the worth of his art in Russia.<sup>92</sup> The piece represents the convoy after having parted with Linant de Bellefonds and American consul

George Gliddon, who had joined the beginning of the ride but had then gone towards Suez. A high-ranking official in charge of Public Works in the administration of Mehmed Ali, Linant rode an elegant white camel that Vernet transposed as his own in the painting. Vernet also clothed himself in Nizami garb – that is in Linant's uniform – rather than in the *costume à la longue* that he is known to have worn throughout the trip. Sheikh Selim leads the group, and is portrayed with his beloved gun; he points at a direction with interrogative sight while looking at Vernet. The artist depicted him with characteristic sandals that seem to have been adjusted from a previous work rather than from observation. They feature in a painting made from

<sup>92</sup> Horace Vernet's letters to his wife dated 29 October and 26 November 1842, in Amédée Durande, *Joseph, Carle et Horace Vernet: correspondance et biographies* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1864), 202, 215.

nature in the surroundings of Annaba in Algeria, *Rebecca à la fontaine* (1833). Vernet's visual memory was legendary,<sup>93</sup> but he could still make use of props, and art commanded distortions from the real scene to maximise effect.

When contrasted with his other works in the religious or genre manner, most partaking in the usual Orientalist kitsch, *Voyage dans le désert* has a convincing semblance of truthfulness that calls for attention. Was its naturalism topical or technological? As a matter of fact, photography, which meant daguerreotyping in this instance, had been a major part of Goupil-Fesquet and Vernet's activity during their tour. Looking into their images and related texts, art historian Michèle Hannoosh has suggested that the technology helped bring to the fore "elements of the haphazard, the momentary, the everyday or the historical that persist in even the most calculated photographic image" and, in doing so, conveyed a more nuanced and complex view of people and places encountered, than the usual lot of Orientalist formulas.<sup>94</sup> The strong eye-to-eye connection between Vernet and Sheikh Selim that structures the composition of *Voyage dans le désert*, to the point of imposing itself as the central message of the canvas, is a brilliant rendering of a moment of interpersonal engagement, away from the common prejudices of the imaginary Orient, despite the asymmetry of their respective positions in the scene, Vernet up a camel, and Sheikh Selim standing below. Selim seems to be showing the way in response to a question by Vernet, who in turn assents to the direction pointed at. It does not come as a surprise that the artist would have chosen to disguise himself as an "Arab sheikh," with camel reins, at the costumed ball of Duke of Orléans in Paris, just a few months

before finishing the oil painting. Did he purchase the guise during this travel?

## 2.2 *Engagements with Local Culture*

Representations of Europeans in popular apparel, i.e. *à la longue*, rather than in *nizami* garb, involved, more often than not, people, and in particular artists, that had developed a long and sustained acquaintance with the country. An example in photography represents Frank Dillon, bearded and turbaned, reclining, a chibouk by his side, on the sofa of the tiled and raised alcove emulating the recess of an Egyptian *qā'a* at his London studio.<sup>95</sup> A frequent traveller to Egypt, the British artist had already posed in similar attire for one of the most famous images of the Orientalist suite created by fellow photographer Roger Fenton in 1858, *Pasha and Bayadère*, in which he had impersonated an Arab musician with clothes brought from a recent trip to Cairo, while a dancing woman entertained a seated figure (Fenton himself), in a setting hastily arranged *à l'orientale*.<sup>96</sup> Cultural cross-dressing was here associated with a highly-artificially staged tableau. The anonymous solo picture of Dillon at his place is of a distinct nature. It captures the British artist in deep *rêverie*. To be sure, the dozy smoker is known as a stereotypical image of a Near Eastern man at leisure.<sup>97</sup> But what Dillon's posture embodies is rather the idea of "keif" (from the Arabic *kaïf*, literally mood, translated by Lane as "placid enjoyment").<sup>98</sup> *Kaïf* was among Egypt's best kept secrets, and one many (male) Europeans discovered with the utmost

93 "Tout s'y grave pour l'éternité, avec la fidélité du miroir," according to Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage*, 22.

94 Michele Hannoosh, "Horace Vernet's Orient: Photography and the Eastern Mediterranean in 1839," *The Burlington Magazine* CLVIII (April 2016): 264–71 (Part I: a daguerrean excursion), CLX (June 2016): 430–39 (Part II: the daguerreotypes and their texts), (439 for the quote).

95 Ken Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques*, fig. 7–2, 62; Dillon's studio is known from an illustration in Georg Ebers, *Egypt, Descriptive, Historical and Picturesque* (London: Cassel, Petter Galpin and Co, 1885), II: 85–6.

96 Gordon Baldwin, *Roger Fenton, Pasha and Bayadère* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum Studies on art, 1996); Gordon Baldwin *et al.*, *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852–1860* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 84. For "*à l'orientale*" settings across Europe, Giese *et al.*, eds., *À l'orientale, Collecting, Displaying, passim*.

97 Baldwin, *Roger Fenton, Pasha and Bayadère*, 65.

98 Lane, *Manners*, 338.

delight. As Prisse d'Avennes detailed in his unpublished “Manners and customs of Egyptians in the nineteenth century:”

Le Keif indique cette heureuse disposition à jouir de ce qu'il y a de bon sous toutes les situations, où l'on se trouve sans trop s'inquiéter de ce qu'elles ont de mauvais. Le Keif sait jouir du confort lorsqu'il en a et s'en passer lorsqu'il ne l'a pas. Keif s'approche beaucoup du mot contentement – contentement pas richesse – mot bon à introduire dans notre langue.<sup>99</sup>

Attire, posture, and setting perfectly coincide in Dillon's reclining portrait. It can be contrasted with a *carte-de-visite* portrait featuring the architect Ambroise Baudry.<sup>100</sup> (Fig. 160) The portrait is signed on the reverse by Facchinelli, which implies it was taken in Cairo in 1875 or 1876 at the earliest, four or five years after Baudry had settled in the city. At the time, the architect was working for the Khedive and wore a fez in everyday life. Yet, he chose to be photographed in a more vernacular outfit: the striped kaftan, the *jubba*, and the turban of the peasants or inhabitants of Cairo's popular neighbourhoods. He had grown a beard and is seated cross-legged on a sofa covered with kilims and saddle bags; he actually possessed his own saddle for camel riding.<sup>101</sup> On the floor rests a smoking device differing from the usual types



FIGURE 160 Beniamino Facchinelli, *Ambroise Baudry en tenue arabe*, c. 1876. [Ambroise Baudry in Arab garb]. Albumen print on board. *Carte-de-visite* format  
CONSERVATION DES MUSÉES DE VENDÉE

found in Orientalist painting; it is neither a *shisha* with glass reservoir, nor a *chibouk*, but the traditional *gūza* used to smoke hashish. According to Lane, this kind of pipe, with short cane tube, was “used by men of the lowest classes, for smoking both the *tumbāk* and the intoxicating ‘hasheesh,’ or hemp.”<sup>102</sup> There is no evidence that Baudry indulged in cannabis; every indication suggests rather the contrary. What is certain is that disguise, pose and props are meant here to stage a representation of Egyptian popular culture. The visual statement is congruent with the style of the house Baudry was building in Cairo at the time. As a journalist wrote:

99 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits occidentaux, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises 20423, Émile Prisse d'Avennes, “Mœurs et coutumes des Égyptiens au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” f. 358. “Keif represents this happy predisposition leaning to enjoy the good in every situation, wherever one is and without worrying too much of their negative side. The Keif knows how to enjoy comfort when there is and do without when there isn't. Keif approaches greatly the word satisfaction – not wealth, it is a word worth introducing in our language.” [My translation]

100 Marie-Élisabeth Loiseau, Jean-Pierre Remaud and Christophe Vital, *Les Vendéens, grands voyageurs* (Paris: Somogy Editions d'art, 1998), 84–5.

101 Loiseau *et al.*, *Les Vendéens*, 85.

102 Lane, *Manners*, 140.



Un architecte érudit et inventeur, dont j'ai déjà parlé, M. Ambroise Baudry, a bâti au Caire une maison plus originale encore que toutes les maisons arabes. Les indigènes l'appellent une maison de fellah; il serait plus juste de dire que c'est une maison réellement égyptienne. Les murs en sont absolument droits et nus, sans encorbellement, sans moulures, sans corniche; seulement, pour éviter une monotonie désagréable, des briques rouges fixées dans la maçonnerie y dessinent les plus gracieuses broderies, tandis qu'un certain nombre de faïences plaquées dans la muraille contribuent encore à la gaieté de l'ensemble. C'est absolument le procédé que suivent les fellahs dans la construction de leurs cabanes, espèces de cubes de limon qu'ils décorent de quelques ornements en briques, et sur la porte ou les ouvertures desquelles ils placent un fond d'assiette ou quelque vieux plat qui simule la faïence.<sup>103</sup>

Baudry's "Fellah house" differed in effect from the over-worked Islamic style residences that were being erected by European expatriates and Egyptian high officials alike in Cairo. At least the facades of his house did. They were plainer than those of surrounding Islamic Revival buildings. The main decorative detail was a geometric strip in red bricks at the top of walls and fenestration,

inspired by the simple ornamentation of rural dwellings, when the other houses displayed rich arrangements of sculpted ornament, turned wood balconies, and bicoloured plastering, as shown in Chapter 4. Charmes was right in highlighting the originality of the design. Citations of vernacular architecture were unprecedented in Islamic Revival houses. In deep contrast with the facades, however, Baudry's interiors were as profuse as in those very houses. In other words, his architectural transgression of mainstream Orientalist aesthetics was relative. His portrait in popular apparel can be read similarly. It staged a specific impersonation, up to a certain point, and not to that of doziness in any case. Set in the context of Baudry's lifestyle in Cairo, the portrait confirms that clothing participated with dwelling in the projection of selves, although in a more restrained way than in Dillon's reclining likeness. Both photographs bring to the fore nuances in the range of local codes incorporated by Europeans in Egypt (from high to popular culture), and the extent to which they were (or not) embodied – as far as we can tell from the available iconography.

### 2.3 *Corporal Experiences*

It is safe to assume that the incorporation of local habits was highly selective. Some pastimes encountered stunning success. *Tumbāk* is a good example of an Eastern product that went global at fast pace. Chibouk-smoking had practitioners in Europe from quite early on. A self-portrait of German architect Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer (1800–60) stages him smoking the long pipe in his room in Rome in 1828, before having set foot in the Eastern Mediterranean, or having even decided to visit.<sup>104</sup> (Fig. 161) A later portrait while in Egypt represents him chibouk in hand, together this

103 Gabriel Charmes, "L'art arabe au Caire, III," *Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*, 4 August 1881, 1. "A learned and creative architect, Mr. Ambroise Baudry, built in Cairo a house more original than all other Arab ones. The natives called it a fellah house; it will be more adequate to say that it is a truly Egyptian house. Walls are straight and bare, without protrusion, molding, or cornice; only, to avoid distasteful monotony, red bricks are fixed in the masonry and make gracious embroideries, while a few plates immured in the walls further contribute to the freshness of the whole. This is absolutely the device that peasants follow when building their dwellings, sorts of cubes in silt that they decorate with a few brick ornaments, and on the door and openings of which they place a dish's base or some old plate that simulated tiles." [My translation]

104 *Zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik: Zeichnungen, Aquarelle und Ölstudien aus der Gründungszeit des Hessischen Landesmuseums Darmstadt* (Heidelberg Berlin: Kehrer, 2015), 288–89; Maryse Bideault, "Mein Fritz geht nach Aegypten!" Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer sur les traces de l'arc brisé au Caire, in *Le Caire dessiné et photographié au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 17–40.



FIGURE 161 Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer, *Self-portrait in Rome*, 1828. Watercolour. 19.7 × 29.2 cm  
DARMSTADT, HESSISCHEN LANDESMUSEUMS, HZ 2665

time with full local attire.<sup>105</sup> (Fig. 162) The device figures in many travellers' portraits. The Turkish pipe holds centre stage in Horace Vernet's famous self-portrait painted in Rome in 1835. The artist had just built his Turkish Chamber in Rome, but had not yet set foot on Ottoman land. Paintings are certainly fictions, but they inform that the Turkish pipe, whether in reality or imagination, had fully entered the realm of European culture. Ten years later, "Parisian Turks," i.e. Frenchmen with some interest in, or acculturation to, the Ottoman Empire, could access a Cercle oriental [Oriental Club] where, crouching on Turkish rugs, they

could read the Ottoman official gazette [*Moniteur ottoman*] while smoking the exotic pipe.<sup>106</sup>

Direct experience of the East brought more than chibouk addiction: it introduced to new corporal attitudes. A suggestive example is given by a social gathering held in Paris in August 1843. The host was the visionary architect Hector Horeau (1801–1872), who was serving as first treasurer of the newly-formed Société orientale de France. The cenacle had been created in 1841 by concerned observers of the current state of affairs in the region who committed to leverage its potential for the "general progress of civilisation" and, to be sure, the "specific interests of France."<sup>107</sup> Conditions of join-

105 Bideault, "Mein Fritz geht nach Aegypten!", fig. 2 from Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer (1800–1860) *Ein Frankfurter Baumeister in Ägypten*, eds. Jürgen Eichenauer and Clemens Greve (Frankfurt am Main: Waldemar Kramer, 2001), 244.

106 "Le Cercle oriental," *Le Charivari*, 17 March 1846, 1.

107 *Société orientale fondée à Paris en 1841, constituée et autorisée en 1842 conformément à la loi, 1843; Société orientale de France fondée à Paris en 1841 reconnue et*



FIGURE 162 Wilhelm Ahlborn, *Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer, aka Yussuf effendi, 1830*. Watercolour and graphite pencil. 21.8 × 20.2 cm  
 EIN FRANKFURTER BAUMEISTER IN ÄGYPTEN, FRANKFURT AM MAIN 2001: 244

ing the society were either to have been travelling in the East, have been studying it thoroughly, or have been producing artistic, scientific, literary, or economic works on Eastern issues. Many reputed scholars, artists, writers, diplomats and journalists were affiliated. The society acted as a lobby. At the initiative of Horeau, in 1846 it embarked on a public campaign for the establishment of a mosque, school and burial grounds for Muslims in Paris.<sup>108</sup> Architectural drawings were prepared, but the projected buildings, the earliest of their kind, were never implemented. The initiative contributed, however, to public exposure to the issue of Islamic worship in France. A later attempt by Baudry and fellow architect Henri Saladin in 1895

*autorisée par décision des ministres de l'intérieur et de l'instruction publique* (Paris: Rouvier, 1853).

108 Pierrefite-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, F<sup>19</sup> 10934, folder 1, Projet d'établissement d'un collège, d'une mosquée et d'un cimetière musulman à Paris, 22 May 1846.

also failed.<sup>109</sup> It was only after World War I, once so many Muslims had died while fighting for France, that was a mosque erected in Paris.<sup>110</sup>

In attendance that evening in Summer 1843 at Horeau's place was another member of the Société orientale, the artist Charles Cournault (1815–1904), who kept a detailed note of the event,<sup>111</sup> alongside an annotated print of the engraving that the illustrated press issued, after a sketch by Karl Girardet.<sup>112</sup> (Fig. 163) Guests were artists and travellers who had sojourned in the East, in its broadest terms. Horeau himself had spent two years in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1837–39, and had just published a large portfolio from his excursion. He welcomed his guests under an elegant tent, only furnished with sofas. The dress code of the evening was Eastern clothing. Identified by Cournault at the far left of the print, was the scholar and collector Charles Schefer, in Nizami costume, chanting in “dolente voice an Arab song,” to the sound of a small mandolin, one leg bent under the other.<sup>113</sup> Smoking the narghile by his feet, and sitting cross-legged, was Girardet himself in Bedouin garb. At the other end of the image, Cournault donned the clothes of an Algerian Bedouin and also sat cross-legged, while the man serving drinks was Horeau dressed in Nizami garb. At the centre of the picture, a disciple of Ingres, Henri de Chacaton, wearing the Albanese *fustanella*, stood by a chibouk smoker dressed *à la longue*, possibly Horace Vernet himself, who was an honorary member of the Société orientale. The comment made in the press is no less captivating than the present sight of the disguised guests:

109 Pierrefite-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, F<sup>19</sup> 10934, folder 2, Projet de construction d'une mosquée à Paris (1894–1905).

110 Pierre-Olivier Chaumet, “Aux origines de l'islam en France. L'histoire controversée de la construction d'une mosquée parisienne au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1846–1905),” *Revue historique de droit français & étranger* 92, no. 3 (June–September 2014): 411–36.

111 Hece, *Les Orientis de Charles Cournault*, 92–5.

112 “Une soirée orientale à Paris,” *L'illustration: journal universel* 11, no. 27, 2 September 1843, 4–5.

113 “Une soirée orientale,” 5.





FIGURE 163 ALB HR, after a drawing by Karl Girardet. *Soirée orientale chez H.*, [A party in Oriental attire at Hector Horeau's in Paris], 1843  
*L'ILLUSTRATION, JOURNAL UNIVERSEL* II, NO. 27, 2 SEPTEMBER 1843: 5

Les artistes voyageurs et les voyageurs artistes gardent religieusement les costumes des pays qu'ils ont visités. Ce ne sont pas seulement pour eux de précieux souvenirs; ce sont aussi des preuves incontestables de leurs lointaines pérégrinations. [...] Les voyageurs aiment aussi à se parer des costumes qu'ils ont porté dans leurs courses aventureuses; ils y joignent s'ils le peuvent les gestes et le langage des pays lointains; alors la métamorphose est presque complète. [...] Tous les invités [de Horeau] portaient avec aisance des costumes orientaux d'une fidélité scrupuleuse.<sup>114</sup>

In other words, costumes played the role endorsed by photography, or rather digital images, today: a

<sup>114</sup> "Une soirée orientale," 5. "Travelling artists and artist travellers religiously keep the costumes of the countries they visited. These are not only precious souvenirs; they are also uncontested proofs of their distant wanderings. [...] Travellers also enjoy donning the costumes they wore during the adventurous excursions; when possible, they add the gesture and language of the faraway countries; the metamorphosis is thus almost complete. [...] All attendees that night wore with ease costumes of a scrupulous accuracy." [My translation]

proof of travel to be shown to others and a remembrance tool for one to enjoy. It explains why accuracy mattered so much: it authenticated the experience. Cross-cultural dressing was not only for travelling; it was prolonged when back home, and supplemented with related gestures, as well as language, when possible. The impersonation was meant to be absolute. Interestingly enough, all (male-only) guests of Horeau were said to be donning their Eastern garbs with ease. Not everyone knew how to.

From "placid contentment" [*kaif*] to sitting postures, from chibouk smoking to camel riding, experiencing Egyptian culture engaged bodies well beyond dwelling and clothing. In time, it included enjoying the full *hammam* experience at home, as in Paris after 1875.<sup>115</sup> More radical acculturations to Egyptian society had taken place in the early decades of the nineteenth century among Europeans settling in the country. "Renegades," i.e. converts, cut picturesque figures, appearing in several accounts. The Scottish-born

<sup>115</sup> Avcioglu, *Turquerie*, Chapter 4 *passim*. An earlier, private, *hammam* is the one integrated in the *Maison pompéienne* built in 1868 by Prince Jérôme Napoléon in Paris.

Osman effendi, mentioned above, was one of them. Captured by Mamluks in 1807, freed nine years later, protected subsequently by Swiss Arabist Jean-Louis Burckhardt, Osman Effendi (originally William Taylor), became the main mediator between British travellers and Egyptian society until his death in 1835.<sup>116</sup> The same year saw the passing of one “Dr.” Charles Dussap, a surviving nurse of the French expedition to Egypt, who had stayed behind and established himself as a physician. He had married an enslaved woman around 1818 and maintained others that he had freed in his household.<sup>117</sup> Dressing *à la longue*, he was known by the nickname of Abū Daqn, for a legendary never-shaved beard, pictured by at least two artists.<sup>118</sup> (Fig. 164) Dussap was tightly connected to the Saint-Simonians in Egypt (among whose were several converts). Saint-Simonians were followers of a French social and philosophical movement that preached peaceful exploitation of the globe, moral improvement of the most numerous classes, and new social roles for women; a group of them spent a few years in Egypt during the 1830s, and is credited with the idea of a

canal joining the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. Dr. Dussap belonged also to a circle of British anti-quarians who had endeavoured to live like “perfect Turks.”<sup>119</sup> One of them, James Burton, dressed in Eastern clothing, bore a beard of great length and walked with bare feet; the Egyptologist John Gardner Wilkinson reputedly ate with local table manners and equally dressed in Turkish attire. Both lived with enslaved women in houses located at the fringes of the city (Azbakiyya), where wealthy Turks resided. Wilkinson had undergone circumcision in order “to save his life if accused, by denying himself a Christian – he is in fact none but a confirmed Deist,” reported an acquaintance.<sup>120</sup> Christians were forbidden to possess enslaved individuals; some long-time residents resorted to intermediaries, such as Osman Effendi, to acquire theirs. Playing that role for John Frederick Lewis in 1842, not without drama unfolding around the enslaved woman purchased, Émile Prisse d’Avennes prided himself on being able to pass as “a true believer” in any circumstance, thanks to his command of Arabic and intimate knowledge of local mores.<sup>121</sup> In most, albeit not all, cases, this meant circumcision, a rather painful experience, graphically recorded by Saint-Simonian Ismayl Urbain after undergoing the surgery in 1835.<sup>122</sup>

Few enjoyed pushing the limits so far, and not everyone was able to easily bear, nor properly perform, the metamorphosis into (supposed) local selves. Head-shaving could already provoke

116 Thompson, “Osman Effendi.”

117 Jacques Tagher, “Le Docteur Dussap, un français ‘original’ d’Égypte,” *Cahiers d’histoire égyptienne*, Série III, no. 4 (May 1951): 342–6; George Michael La Rue, “African slave women in Egypt, from ca. 1820 to the plague epidemic of 1834–35,” in *Women and Slavery: Volume One – Africa and the Western Indian Ocean Islands*, eds. Gwyn Campbell et al. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 168–89; Roger Botte, “Des Européens au marché aux esclaves: stade suprême de l’exotisme? Égypte, première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Journal des africanistes* 86, no. 2 (2016): 6–51.

118 One portrait is by Nestor L’Hôte, *Portrait du Dr. Dussap*, dessin à mine de plomb (18,5 × 14), album 1, no. 95, Musée de Louvre, Département des antiquités égyptiennes; Joseph Bonomi left at least two portraits, one kept at the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo (Schmidt, *Westcar on the Nile*, 109: fig. 80), and a different one published by J. Dickinson in London, a print of which, bearing date, signature and a long caption in Arabic, is in the *Album of Drawings of Egyptian Subjects* at the V&A (SD.120). The original drawing is at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (see caption of Fig. 164).

119 Rodenbeck, “Dressing native,” 78.

120 Jason Thompson, *Sir Gardner Wilkinson and His Circle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 53.

121 The tale of the episode figures in Prisse d’Avennes papers, *Nouvelles acquisitions françaises 20420*, f. 67–9 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits occidentaux); it is discussed in Briony Llewellyn, “Friend and foe: Émile Prisse d’Avennes, George Lloyd, John Frederick Lewis and the interconnecting circles of the British in Egypt,” in *Émile Prisse d’Avennes*, 47–74.

122 Philippe Régner, ed., *Ismayl Urbain, Voyage d’Orient suivi de Poèmes d’Égypte et de Ménilmontant* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993), 90–110.



FIGURE 164 Al-Hajj B. [Joseph Bonomi], [*Monsieur Dussap* 1829]. This unsigned and undated drawing can be attributed with certainty to Bonomi on the basis of its dated, signed and Arabic-captioned engraved version kept at the V&A, SD. 120. Charcoal on paper. 22.9 cm × 18.5 cm  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, MANUSCRITS OCCIDENTAUX, PRISSE D'AVENNES' PAPERS, NOUVELLES ACQUISITIONS FRANÇAISES 20441 (2), F. 4



feelings of moral excruciation.<sup>123</sup> Gérard de Nerval wrote in his travel account that he enjoyed the “transfiguration,” but elsewhere spoke of the experience as a “crisis.”<sup>124</sup> Once cross-dressed, one needed to hold the right composure. The exercise was challenging. The Egyptologist Nestor L'Hôte (1804–1842) travelling with Jean-François Champollion along the Nile in 1828–30, recalls an incident on this respect, with an unfortunate outcome. It involved British travellers who were wearing their Turkish costume with such awkwardness that they had to rush back to their place in order to avoid serious admonishment. Because they performed poorly in Turkish attire, passers-by thought that their disguise was meant to be derisive.<sup>125</sup> A similar story appears in the correspondence of the British Consul during the same years. It revolved around an “Ionian subject,” i.e. under British protection, who had been sentenced to a beating when seen in oriental attire. As a result, a proclamation was issued “stating that the British Consulate could take no responsibility for or extend protection to British subjects who wore oriental dress.”<sup>126</sup> The sentence was ultimately lifted, but it outlines the reality of the issue. Ten years later, Goupil-Fesquet was to offer a quite definitive statement on the matter of traveller's disguise:

Le touriste amateur, heureux dans ses babouches à pointes, possède toujours sous le caftan local la gaucherie de l'homme qui est dans l'habit d'un autre.<sup>127</sup>

123 Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d'Horace Vernet*, 80.

124 Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient*, texte établi par Henri Lemaitre (Paris: Garnier frères, 1958), 182, 788; “Les barbiers turcs et leurs boutiques,” *Musée des familles* VII (1850–51): 206–09.

125 Nestor L'Hôte, “Voyage archéographique et pittoresque dans la Vallée du Nil,” Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits occidentaux, Papiers de J.-Fr. Champollion le jeune, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises 20377, Souvenirs de voyage, f. 124.

126 Thompson, *Sir Gardner Wilkinson*, 46.

127 Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d'Horace Vernet*, 120. “The amateur tourist, happy in his pointed slippers, always

This gaucherie is perceptible in many a likeness of Europeans in oriental attire, whether one considers the group portrait with Mark Twain (1867), or Baudry dressed *à la longue* (c. 1876). The self-portrait of photographer Francis Frith in *Turkish Summer Costume* (1857) is another telling example. (Fig. 165) There is something in the attitudes, whether a corporal rigidity, or an absent gaze, that feels not right – in other words, that denotes oddness. In contrast, some portraits project the nonchalance or panache with which their sitters wore the country's garb. The likenesses of Henry Abbott and Willem de Famars Testas come to mind, besides Horeau's guests at his Oriental evening. Whether the attitudes expressed in an artwork index the art of the painter or the ability of the portrayed is irrelevant here. What matters is the simultaneous existence of two main representations of Europeans wearing Middle Eastern attire, one exuding confidence and facility, and the other clumsiness. It can be assumed that the dual dynamics represent a fair assessment of the actual phenomenon.

### 3 Costume for History and Leisure in Painting and Photography

Frith's plate illustrating his travelling garb provided the opportunity of a broader commentary on the artistic eminence of Middle Eastern attire:

‘Costume’ is one of the most striking and interesting features of the East. [...] You will see at once that fashion has had little or no sway here. Every man robes himself according to his own free, gorgeous fancy.<sup>128</sup>

retains under the local caftan the gaucherie of a man wearing the garb of someone else.” [My translation]

128 Francis Frith, *Egypt and Palestine Photographed and Described by Francis Frith* (London: James S. Virtue, 1857), 1: n.p. [9].



FIGURE 165 Francis Frith, *Self Portrait in Turkish Summer Costume*, 1857. Albumen silver print. 12.0 × 16.2 cm New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 66.640.2.4

As we have seen, that was not exactly the case. Ottoman dress codes were quite strict, and trends did determine length, colour, or arrangement. Within the standards set, fabrics certainly bore a range of impressive tints, at the discretion of the wearer, and to the point of approaching “Pre-Raphaelite brilliancy,” in Frith’s wording. Many would have subscribed to the statement. The British photographer was also enthralled by the extravagance of the suits, each worth thirty or forty pounds according to him, truly a substantial amount.<sup>129</sup> Local garments possessed the extra appeal of being luxuries.

As comprehended so far, Middle Eastern apparel appeared in portraiture, whether the medium was oil painting or glass plate, within quite distinct perspectives since the eighteenth century. At stake were issues of travel and collecting, diplomacy and masquerade, remembrance and performance, norms and identities, besides the *gusto* for conspicuous consumption. Two further instances, in religious and genre scenes, are considered below.

### 3.1 *Picturing Biblical Scenes: The Holy Scripture “Arabised”?*

For Horace Vernet, wandering in the region two decades earlier, Middle Eastern attire had more to offer than brilliance and extravagance. It was a key to the past, to the Biblical past. Not that Francis

<sup>129</sup> Frith, *Egypt and Palestine*, I: n.p. [9].

Frith would have objected: among many others, he visited Egypt and the Holy Land in order to reclaim them for Christendom.<sup>130</sup> Vernet's thoughts on the topic were expressed in a lecture given at the Académie des Beaux-arts in Paris in 1847. The talk was fully transcribed in the press under the title *Des rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux et celui des Arabes modernes*.<sup>131</sup> It was republished twelve years later as *Opinion sur certains rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux et celui des Arabes modernes*,<sup>132</sup> and incited varied reactions. The argument and its critical reception deserve being followed in some length, as this does not seem to have been done so far. Indeed, Vernet's text is recurrently cited but it is commonly mentioned in passing, as if its title sufficed to form an idea about its content.<sup>133</sup> I propose to consider it more seriously and have used for the purpose the version published in 1848 in *L'Illustration*, together with the sketches added by Vernet to illustrate his points.

Vernet started by recalling that he was in Algeria when he first came to realise that local scenes and gestures offered substance to passages in the Bible that otherwise made little sense to him, visually speaking that is. In essence, he was having trouble figuring out the exact movements involved in a scene of Genesis where Eliezer, Abraham's servant, first meets Rebecca at a well, and is being offered water from her jug. Vernet does not tell which edition of the Bible he was consulting, nor if it was an illustrated one.<sup>134</sup> He just recalled always having

the Holy Book at hand when travelling, struck as he was by the actual resonance of the sacred text with what he saw.

The verse in Genesis (24:18) reads: "Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink."<sup>135</sup> The artist could not comprehend how Rebecca's jug could slide from her shoulder "over" her hand, until he saw in front of his eyes a young woman performing exactly the same gesture while satiating a soldier. The scene inspired his *Rebecca à la fontaine*, already mentioned. Made in the vicinity of Annaba in 1833, the revelation convinced Vernet to dig further into the matter. After his epiphany, the artist embarked upon a restless quest to "push further the comparisons that could be drawn between the Scriptures and the surviving customs of the many people that had always lived under the influence of traditions, escaping that of innovations."<sup>136</sup> Besides consulting the available literature, he sketched whatever relevant examples he could come across and acquired related artefacts.

Vernet delves further into his argument by taking the example of the canvas he was presenting at the Paris Salon that year, *Le Bon Samaritain* (1848). (Fig. 166) The scene is located on the very road leading to Jericho from Jerusalem where the parable of the Good Samaritan is set (Luke 10:25–37). A man on horseback discovers another, stripped of his clothes, lying in agony, and is about to rescue him. "Every detail is modern," Vernet notes, and "yet nothing is new, as every element concords with historic documents." The artist was not as interested in visually translating the moral message of the parable, as he admitted Poussin had masterfully done with his *Eliézer et Rébecca*

130 Douglas R. Nickel, *Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine: A Victorian Photographer Abroad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), Chapter 7 *passim*.

131 Horace Vernet, "Des rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux et celui des Arabes modernes," *L'Illustration*, 12 February 1848, 370–72.

132 Horace Vernet, *Opinion sur certains rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux et celui des Arabes modernes* (Paris: impr. de Bonaventure et Ducessois, 1856).

133 Annie Cartoux, "Horace Vernet, peintre de tableaux bibliques," *Labyrinthe*, no. 1 (1998): 45–62.

134 A plausible candidate would be *La Sainte Bible: contenant l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament / traduite en*

*françois sur la Vulgate par M. Le Maistre de Saci* (Paris: Defer de Maisonneuve, 1789-an XII [1804]), 1:79, which reads: "Buvez, mon seigneur. Et ôtant aussitôt son vaisseau de dessus son épaule, et le penchant sur son bras, elle lui donna à boire."

135 In a number of editions, for instance, in the King James Version.

136 My translation from Vernet, "Des rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux," 370.





FIGURE 166 From Horace Vernet, *Le Bon Samaritain*, 1848. Engraving  
*L'ILLUSTRATION, JOURNAL UNIVERSEL*,  
 25 MARCH 1848: 55

(1648).<sup>137</sup> His concern was to get the man and his horse right; the intention was “to speak to the eyes, rather than to the soul.”<sup>138</sup> The material information Vernet needed for the purpose was provided from three distinct sources. One was attire purchased during his trip to Egypt and Syria in 1839. Another was close observation of the tools used by the Arab people encountered during his journeys in North Africa and the Near East. The third was looking at the corresponding material culture in ancient remains, in order to guarantee its endurance over the ages. The stick that Vernet placed in the hands of the rider was one he said to have seen

being used by contemporary Arabs;<sup>139</sup> moreover it appeared in Pharaonic iconography which proved its antiquity. To ascertain the matter, Vernet presented a drawing at the end of his text, although without specific identification. The tack of the horse was copied on an existing one observed during Vernet’s brief journey to Isly (then Morocco, at the frontier with Algeria) in March 1845; its presence in Antiquity was again testified by archaeological remains. The evidence this time came from a bas-relief from Khorsabad (Nineveh) representing a horse parade that had just been exhibited at the Louvre; on one of the horses, Vernet had spotted pieces very close to the ones observed at Isly. Both drawings, the horse trappings sketched in Morocco in 1845 and the one copying an Assyrian low-relief dated eighth century BC seen at the Louvre,<sup>140</sup> were also appended to his publication.

In short, Vernet, in order to represent a Biblical scene, used sketches from his journey to the Holy Land; garments purchased there; a cane seen in Algeria that featured in Ancient Egyptian murals and horse tack observed from life in Morocco and on ancient Iraqi stonework. Alternatively put, he combined material from faraway times and places, as if history and geography did not matter. The result was not religious or historical painting, but almost genre pieces out of time.

The critical responses to Vernet’s “Arab-biblical obsession”<sup>141</sup> were lukewarm to say the least. Some agreed that it was time to explore alternatives to the classical Greco-Roman imaging of the holy text, but were not convinced by the “Bedouin” formula proposed by Vernet, nor by the contemporary expressions of his characters.<sup>142</sup> What was

137 Paris, Musée du Louvre, 7270.

138 My translation from Vernet, “Des rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux,” 371.

139 Coincidentally (or not?), the item appears in one of the plates of Prisse d’Avennes’ *Oriental Album* released that very year (pl. 20).

140 Paris, Musée du Louvre, Relief des tributaires mèdes, AO 19887.

141 Léon Lagrange, “Horace Vernet II,” *Gazette des beaux-arts* xv (November 1863): 439–65.

142 Charles Lenormant, “Critique artistique du Salon de 1835,” *Revue des deux mondes*, t. II (April–June 1835): 167–209 (208).

meant by “Arabising the Bible,”<sup>143</sup> was in fact setting it into nomadic culture. Others concurred that dressing ancient Hebrews like modern Arabs was a promising idea, even if running against the tradition of religious painting, but considered that Vernet’s interpretation fared poorly artistically speaking and disrespected the “dignity of history.”<sup>144</sup> His biblical scenes were handled in an informal way, which was disturbing to the beholder; they were considered irreverent. More aptly to the contemporary historian, the art critic Léon Lagrange objected to the Arab immutability fictionalised by Vernet:

L’histoire est là qui nous dit combien de civilisations diverses ont balayé le sol de l’Orient, jetant chacune dans l’industrie et le commerce, c’est-à-dire jusqu’au fond des déserts, des modes, des étoffes, un mobilier nouveau. Le bon sens nous oblige à reconnaître entre les pays et les peuples qu’a raliés l’unité mahométane des différences profondes. Quant à cette prétendue immobilité de l’Orient, l’expérience personnelle nous a montré, dans la Haute Nubie, la forme du bonnet rouge, du fez, variant suivant la dernière mode venue de Constantinople. [...] Ne tenir aucun compte de l’histoire, ne voir que le détail accidentel de la réalité, c’est ouvrir la porte à toutes les contradictions.<sup>145</sup>

143 Vernet had been accused of attempts to “arabise the Bible” by archaeologist Charles Lenormand; Vernet, “Des rapports qui existent entre le costume des anciens Hébreux,” 370.

144 Amédée Durande, *Joseph, Carle et Horace Vernet: correspondance et biographies* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1864), 331–33; Arsène Houssaye, “Le Salon de 1843 III,” *Revue de Paris* 16 (1843): 107–27 (116–17).

145 Lagrange, “Horace Vernet II,” 460. “History tells us how many diverse civilisations took place in the East, each throwing into industry and trade, deep into the furthest desert, new fashions, fabrics and furnishings. Common sense obliges us to recognise sharp differences among countries and peoples assembled under the unity of Islam. As to the alleged immobility of the East, personal experience has showed us, in Upper Nubia, the form of the red cap, the fez, varying along

Vernet’s imagined world was in fact a fast changing one, and the late Ottoman Empire was no exception: the shape of the fez in distant Upper Nubia was defined by the latest fashion in Istanbul. Negating history was an error.

Somehow, a definite assessment came from the famous writer and literary critic Sainte-Beuve (1804–69). Offering some posthumous support to Vernet’s anecdotal and literal realism, he saw little chance yet for his theory to be accepted. Fighting a stereotype solidly installed over three centuries in religious painting required stronger impetus. A string of masterpieces would be needed to establish a new figurative standard in religious art and he viewed the likelihood of this almost nonexistent.<sup>146</sup> As for Théophile Gautier, the most prominent critical voice of the time, pictorial traditions had to be pursued even if admittedly erroneous.<sup>147</sup>

Grasping these discussions today is demanding. Few people in Europe have the Scriptures as regular reading, let alone travel with the text in hand. The current material turn in art and cultural history invites empathy with Vernet’s interest in ethnographical artefacts, but his ahistorical vision runs counter to the present awareness of historicity and temporal change, at least for the cultural historian. His obsession with ethnographic accuracy in guise and gesture in his biblical scenes, as opposed to engagement with topic and expression, appears to be deeply rooted in times and rationales that have become alien to us, while deeply informative about the place of costume in art and historical thinking then. This is why it is so crucial to take such imagery seriously and understand it from within, rather than from above.

the latest fashion from Constantinople. [...] Ignoring history, noticing only the anecdotal details of reality, equates opening the doors to all sorts of contradictions.” [My translation]

146 Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux Lundis* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1866), v: 104–05.

147 Théophile Gautier, *Les Beaux-Arts en Europe – 1855, Seconde série* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1856), 10–21 (20).

### 3.2 *Sartorial Animations*

The same applies to the sartorial performances associated with Islamic style rooms. We are far estranged from such scenes today as well, and yet they are an integral part of Islamic historicism in architecture. These events were seldom publicised, but a few were mediated through canvas or staged on glass plate. Insights can be gained from enactments that took place in three different settings: one was Villa Delort de Gléon in Cairo, and the two others were Goupil's Oriental and Renaissance galleries and Henry-René D'Allemagne's Islamic style rooms, both in Paris.

The earliest evidence is provided in a letter by Finnish painter Gunnar Berndtson (1854–95) dated 26 March 1883.<sup>148</sup> The artist had been in Cairo since October 1882. He had proceeded there from Paris, after having been encouraged by French fellow painters to visit the Egyptian capital. In Paris, Berndtson was part of the artistic circle surrounding Jean-Léon Gérôme, a group well connected to Cairo, and in particular to art collector and patron Baron Delort de Gléon. Events unfolding in the Egyptian city made the journey timely. The country had just been occupied by the British, following rebellion within the ranks of the army. The trial of the main leader of the uprisings, Colonel Ahmad 'Urabi, was due to start in December. The event drew crowds of journalists and draughtsmen with commissions to report to the European press. Berndtson himself travelled under contract with *Le Monde illustré*. In Cairo, he soon became a regular guest at Delort de Gléon's dining table. The French entrepreneur had created his own informal version of the "Villa Medici," i.e. French Académie in Rome, in the grounds of his property where visiting artists could secure studio space and models. In residence at the time was the French Marius Michel, and the

American Julius Leblanc Stewart had been visiting in 1881.<sup>149</sup> Evenings were busy: time was spent playing music, reading, modelling wax figures, or gambling.<sup>150</sup> The passing mention of ceroplastics as social entertainment sheds further light on the artistic life at Villa Delort de Gléon. The scope of engagement with art went beyond the activity of established artists, it involved amateurship as well. The Baron himself was an amateur photographer, who had studied painting with Gérôme and had his portrait painted by the master.

Berndtson's letter describes a grand party thrown by Delort in honour of an affluent young heir, Auguste Bamberger (1864–1915), the son of bank magnate Henri Bamberger, who had many business interests in the region. An intimate dinner preceded the reception. The attendees were, besides the guest of honour, Delort de Gléon himself, his neighbour Count Gaston de Saint-Maurice, and the Finnish artist. All three donned Arab attire and kept the guise during the rest of the evening. Other guests joined after dinner to attend the performance of six *almées* [dancers] with four accompanying "Arab musicians." Berndtson was fascinated by the attire of the dancers:

The costumes of the *almées* were extraordinary, a small vest that covered the shoulders and chest, a veil covering the waist and broad trousers made of silk with gold embroidering, held up by a gold brocade belt; silver and gold bangles on their wrists and ankles and thick gold chains around their neck, brilliant medallions and other jewellery, fingers full of rings.<sup>151</sup>

Contrary to automatic assumptions, based on Flaubert's carnal encounter with Kütchük Hanem [from Turkish, literally the Little Lady] in 1850,<sup>152</sup>

148 The letter is reproduced, translated from Swedish and discussed in Elina Heikka, "Layers of fantasies: Gunnar Berndtson's *Almée*," *Finnish National Gallery Research*, no. 5 (2017): 1–28.

149 Volait, *Fous du Caire*, 99–104.

150 Heikka, "Layers of fantasies," 13–4.

151 Heikka, "Layers of fantasies," 28.

152 Auriant, *Koutchouk-Hanem, l'Almée de Flaubert* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1943).



iconic paintings (e.g. Gérôme's *Almeh*, 1863),<sup>153</sup> or later postcolonial stereotypes,<sup>154</sup> almehs usually performed in decent and substantial clothing. According to Lane:

The dress in which they generally exhibit in public is similar to what is worn by women of the middle classes in Egypt in private; that is, in the harem; consisting of a *yelek* [long vest], or an *anteree* [gown], and the *shintiyan* [trousers], etc., of handsome materials.<sup>155</sup>

The British scholar recalls that when dancing for a private party of men, some dancers may have only worn a *tob* [wide-sleeved shirt] of semi-transparent coloured gauze, largely opened, over their trousers.<sup>156</sup> It is unlikely that this would have happened at Delort's with a nineteen-year old guest of honour in attendance and less so, under the grip of rising British Victorianism in the country.<sup>157</sup> There is no evidence either that the dancing costume observed by Lane in the 1830s survived unchanged into the 1880s. What the dancers wore that evening is probably close to the costumes of the three performers that Delort conveyed to Paris a few years later within the framework of the Rue du Caire, the recreation of a Cairo street that he sponsored at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*. (Fig. 167) The spectacle in Paris involved four musicians, possibly the same ones playing at the March 1883 event. (Fig. 168)

Colour depictions, in watercolour or on glass plate, convey analogous modesty. In 1868, travelling in Egypt with Gérôme, Goupil, and their friends, Famars Testas recorded for his comrades

an *impromptu* dance that took place under their tent in the oasis of Fayyum (Fig. 169) The scene is described in some detail in the travel account of the journey.<sup>158</sup> The watercolour is unusual for it brings together a local dancer and her band, Western artists, their Egyptian servants, and Fayyumi notables. It captures a lived moment rather than a constructed stereotype, in contrast to many an Orientalist canvas.<sup>159</sup> A comparable sense of innocent trade is perceptible in the later photographic portrait of a young dancer made in Cairo by Jules Gervais-Courtellemont.<sup>160</sup> (Fig. 170)

In his letter back home, Berndtson confessed having felt little interest in the dance, "monotonous and calm," and found the music "tiresome and noisy." What had enthralled him was the atmosphere produced by the whole scenery in the setting of Delort's parlour. A month earlier, the artist had started a "small interior piece" depicting the colourful Islamic Revival design of the room. Delort was pleased and willing to acquire the canvas; he expressed desire to feature in it in Arab attire. It is not indicated if Delort meant *à la longue* or Nizami garb. Berndtson's response was to "animate the painting" with the figure of a belly dancer. He chose to have her performing the legendary bee dance (a form of striptease), in front of Delort and his close friend Octave Borelli sitting in the background.<sup>161</sup> Their gaze is caught by the bare breast of the dancer, which is lost, in contrast, to the beholder. The seen and concealed game is typical of Gérôme's art, as best exemplified by his *Snake Charmer*,<sup>162</sup> a piece created a few

153 Laurence des Cars et al., *Jean-Léon Gérôme* (Paris: ESFP, 2010), 258–59.

154 For the eroticization of belly dancers in Egyptian post-colonial fiction, Frédéric Lagrange, "L'adib et l'almée: Images de la musicienne professionnelle chez Nagib Mahfuz et Tawfiq al-Hakim," *Annales islamologiques* 43 (2009): 337–75.

155 Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 384–85.

156 *Ibidem*, 386.

157 Karin van Nieuwkerk, "A Trade like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt" (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 34–7.

158 Paul Lenoir, *Le Fayoum, Le Sinâï et Pétra: expédition dans la Moyenne Égypte et l'Arabie Pétrée, sous la direction de J.-L. Gérôme* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1872), 103.

159 Nochlin, "The imaginary Orient," 33–59.

160 "Along the banks of the colorful Nile: 23 natural color photographs by Gervais Courtellemont," *National Geographic Magazine* 50, no. 3 (September 1926): 314–38.

161 Heikka, "Layers of fantasy."

162 Williamstown, MA, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955:51; Marc Gottlieb, "Gérôme's Cinematic Imagination," in *Reconsidering Gérôme*, eds. Scott Allan and Mary Morton (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 54–64.



FIGURE 167 Alphonse Delort de Gléon, *Types de danseuses indigènes*, 1889. Three Egyptian performers photographed in Paris in 1889. Lithograph

*L'ARCHITECTURE ARABE DES KHALIFES D'ÉGYPTE À L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE DE PARIS EN 1889:  
LA RUE DU CAIRE 1889: PL. 26*





FIGURE 168 After Adrien Marie, *La Danse de l'almée Aïouché au café égyptien de la rue du Caire*, 1889  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, ESTAMPES ET PHOTOGRAPHIE,  
 H56919





FIGURE 169 Willem de Famars Testas, *Souvenir de Senouris dans le Fayyoun*, 6 February 1868. Watercolour on paper.  
32.3 × 25.8 cm  
AMSTERDAM, RIJKSMUSEUM, RP-T-1892-A-2698





FIGURE 170 Jules Gervais-Courtellemont, *Young Belly Dancer*, 1926. Autochrome Lumière WASHINGTON, DC, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, NO. 940009

years earlier and certainly known to Berndtson. Paul Baudry's *Salomé* (1875) also comes to mind, because of its very close composition: a dancer seen from the back performs under transparent gauze before a reclining Herod.<sup>163</sup> Because of his close connection to his brother Ambroise, Paul Baudry's art was not unknown in this Cairene circle. On the other hand, Salomania was on the rise; her dance and the idea of the *femme fatale* became a major literary and artistic trope in fin-de-siècle Europe. Salomé's nudity was Baudry's alteration of the Biblical episode (Matthew 14:1–10); the performance was to be baptised *The Dance of the Seven Veils* by Oscar Wilde in 1893.<sup>164</sup>

Contrary to Delort's wish, the two Frenchmen figure in European attire, while the dancer, as aptly noted by art historian Elina Heikka, holds a posture corresponding to classical ballet, in place of belly dancing. The model may not have been Egyptian either. A similar figure, posing nude by an early Mamluk ewer from Delort de Gléon's collection, was painted by Julius Leblanc Stewart during his time at Cairo's Villa Medici; her features do not look Egyptian, although she could have been a descendant of white enslaved women.<sup>165</sup> Whatever the case, Berndtson has somehow "Europeanised" his rendering of private entertainment at Delort's, by not clothing the viewers in Arab guise, and choosing a ballet gesture over belly dancing movement. It is not evening either, but seemingly midday or early afternoon. The ballet touch might have been dictated by model availability, rather than intention, but the contemporary association

of belly dancing with vulgar sensuality might have mattered too. Gérôme's *Almée* (1864) had been harshly criticised on this ground after its Salon presentation, by Gustave Moreau in particular.<sup>166</sup> An American student of Gérôme, Harry Humphrey Moore (1844–1926), had his own *Almeh* rejected because of "indecent" at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.<sup>167</sup> The two other twists introduced by Berndtson, the daytime setting of the scene and the attire of the male sitters, cannot be but deliberate. The artist's astute deviations from actual circumstance instil ambiguity in the meaning conveyed. Is the canvas portraying European men just enjoying, in fact or fantasy, Egyptian belly dancing at its extreme, or were they longing for the incorporation of belly dancing into ballet repertoire? The enigma illustrates how challenging visual readings can be.

The subjectivities and ambiguities of Berndtson's *Intérieur de salon arabe au Caire*, as the piece was named while in the possession of Delort de Gléon,<sup>168</sup> make it a highly original and effective artwork. (Fig. 171) It validates, in the reverse, a maxim of Gustave Moreau: "Where there is no mystery nor superior and divine transformation, there is no art, there is only artifice."<sup>169</sup> Seen from afar, the piece qualifies for Orientalist art; at close glance, it goes way beyond that pictorial genre. The small oil painting does not pretend to represent Middle Eastern people: Europeans feature openly and prominently in the painted scene. Intentionally

163 Christophe Vital, ed., *Paul Baudry (1828–1886), Les portraits et les nus* (Paris: Somogy, 2007), 190–91.

164 Johannes Hendrikus Burgers, "The spectral Salome: Salomania and *Fin-de-Siècle* sexology and racial theory," In *Decadence, Degeneration, and the End*, eds. Marja Härmänmaa and Christopher Nissen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 165–81.

165 *L'Esclave*, 1881, 76 × 48 cm, lot 147, auction sale by Conan, Hôtel d'Alnay, Lyons, 3 December 2017. The ewer is now at the Louvre (OA 7427). It is signed and dated (1309), and bears characteristic ducks and Zodiac signs.

166 Peter Cooke, 'It isn't a Dance': Gustave Moreau's "Salome" and "The Apparition", *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 29, No. 2 (Winter 2011): 214–32.

167 Kimberly Orcutt, "H.H. Moore's Almeh and the politics of the Centennial Exhibition," *American Art* 21, no. 1 (2007): 51–73.

168 Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Archives des musées nationaux, Mobilier et objets d'art, Dons et legs, Legs de Mme Delort de Gléon, 9 March 1914, 20144787/17 (the canvas is mentioned in an early will dated 1st July 1905).

169 Gustave Moreau, *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Peter Cooke (Paris: Éditions Fata Morgana, 2002), II: 227.



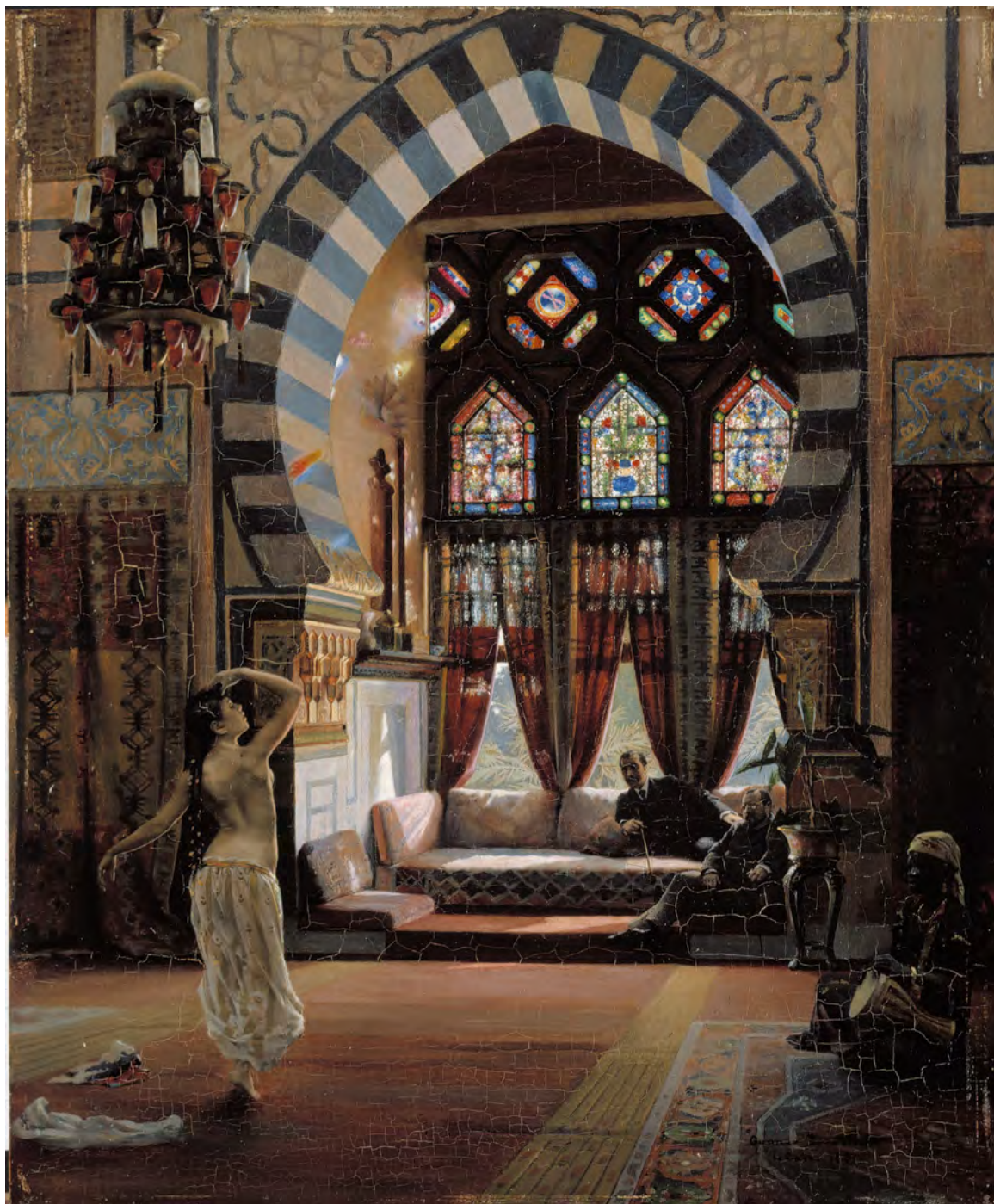


FIGURE 171 Gunnar Berndtson, *Almée, an Egyptian Dancer*, 1883 [initially known as *Intérieur de salon arabe au Caire*]. Oil on panel. 45 × 37.5 cm  
HELSINKI, FINNISH NATIONAL GALLERY/ATENEUM ART MUSEUM, ANTELL COLLECTIONS, A II 1396

or not, the piece provides a Europeanised version of belly dancing, or is it an Orientalised version of classical dance that was intended? Furthermore, could it be a transposition of the biblical Salomé and Herod into nineteenth-century French Cairo? Whatever the case, the artwork tackles the issue of cultural confrontation, and at the same time, the limits of the European appropriation of Middle Eastern culture. It is neither an Orientalist group portrait, nor a genre scene strictly speaking; it is a portrayal of interculturality in the making, socially, temporally and artistically.

Another member of Gérôme's entourage, the artist Charles Bague (1826–1883), had also produced his own *Almée* a few years earlier. (Fig. 172) The discreetly attired performer stands alone in front of elaborate woodwork; tiles can be identified in the background. The ceramic panel is fictitious, but the inlaid doors, the symmetrical pairs of griffons over them and the large basin, among other items, are not. All belong to the art dealer Albert Goupil; the collectibles were to be repurposed in a corner of his Parisian *Galerie orientale*, mentioned in Chapter 4. (Fig. 173) (Gérôme used the same corner for another of his *Almehs*.<sup>170</sup>) Bague's small size oil had been commissioned by the American collector William H. Vanderbilt through Goupil's agent in the US; curiously enough, the painting was meant for public consumption, for it was on loan to the Met from 1886 to 1903, rather than for private viewing as the licentious connotation associated with dancing might have suggested.<sup>171</sup>

In contrast to Berndtson's take on the topic, Bague's composition is pure fiction. The Islamic artefacts in the background contribute some plausibility to the scene. Yet, it is the costume that authenticates it. Bague never travelled East,



FIGURE 172 Charles Bague, *L'Almée*, 1879. Oil on panel. 41.6 × 24.5 cm  
AUCTIONED ON 1ST NOVEMBER 1995,  
CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK, LOT 46. CURRENT  
LOCATION UNKNOWN

as far as is known.<sup>172</sup> But he could get the prop from Gérôme, with whom he shared a studio, or through the well-established Parisian costumer Gaston Courtois, whose collection of historic attire

170 *La Chanteuse* [sic], c. 1880 (Huntington, NY, The Heckscher Museum of Art, August Heckscher Collection, 1959.177).

171 Christie's New York, *19th Century European Paintings, Drawings, Watercolors & Sculpture*, 1–2 November 1995, Sale 828, lot 46 (62).

172 Little is known on the artist, besides the information gathered by Gerald Ackerman in his introduction to *Charles Bague avec le concours de Jean-Léon Gérôme: Cours de dessin* (Paris: ACR Édition, 2011).





FIGURE 173 Edmond Bénéard, *Untitled* [Corner of Albert Goupil's Oriental Gallery at 9 Chaptal St., Paris] c. 1884–88. Albumen print. 26.9 × 20 cm  
 EDMOND BÉNARD, *INTÉRIEURS PRIVÉS D'ARTISTES. ATELIERS D'ARTISTES*, 1880–1910, NO. 34.  
 PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, 4 PHOT 021





FIGURE 174 Edmond Bénard, *Untitled* [Clothed mannequins in the Renaissance Gallery installed by Albert Goupil at 9 Chaptal St. in Paris], c. 1884–88. Albumen print. 20.5 × 27.3 cm  
EDMOND BÉNARD, *INTÉRIEURS PRIVÉS D'ARTISTES. ATELIERS D'ARTISTES*, 1880–1910, NO. 21. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'INHA, 4 PHOT 021

had included at least three Almeh sets.<sup>173</sup> Goupil might have secured the costume too, for his collections included many historic garments.<sup>174</sup> He was particularly fond of pieces from the Renaissance, and used to clothe wooden mannequins in them.

<sup>173</sup> *Catalogue des costumes anciens et reconstitués militaires et civils des XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup>, XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, à l'usage des artistes peintres et sculpteurs, le tout dépendant des collections de Gaston Courtois*, sale 14–17 December 1891 [Lugt 50338], no. 1203, 1253–54.

<sup>174</sup> No almée costume is however mentioned in his sale catalogue; *Catalogue des objets d'art de l'Orient et de l'Occident. Tableaux, dessins, composant la collection de feu M. Albert Goupil* (Paris: Imprimerie de l'art, 1888).

(Fig. 174) The dressed up figures made an astounding vision that impressed more than one visitor:

Dans cet ensemble s'imposait une surprise d'un effet un peu théâtral. Au-dessous du long vitrail [...], s'élevait une large et haute vitrine [...] dans laquelle semblaient vous recevoir quelques mannequins bien faits, aux visages peints sans recherche de naturisme excessif, revêtus de costumes authentiques de grands seigneurs. Du groupe se détachaient deux mignonnes infantes souriantes [...] Ces apparitions n'avaient pas le caractère vilainement impressionnant des bonhommes des

musées de cire, car on s'était gardé de rechercher l'exactitude trompe-l'œil hallucinante. Non, on pouvait s'imaginer être reçu par les ombres idéalisées des anciens profiteurs de toutes ces belles choses, heureux de voir apprécier par d'autres ce qu'ils avaient eux-mêmes admiré et aimé.<sup>175</sup>

The mode of display privileged by Goupil was seen as “theatrical.” It echoed the idea of the “living museum.”<sup>176</sup> Although inanimate, clothed mannequins were seen as bringing extra life, in the same way they did in Moser’s Eastern armoury mentioned at the opening of the chapter. At stake was the recreation not only of an historic interior, but of an historic atmosphere, away from the scary prospect of likenesses characterising waxwork. Ultimately, stimulating the imagination mattered more than perfect accuracy.

One last meaningful, albeit later, example adds a new layer to the practice of animating inanimate places. It is connected to the Islamic style rooms fashioned in Paris by scholar and collector Henry-René D’Allemagne (1863–1950). The interiors occupied the first three floors of his Parisian

*hôtel particulier* [mansion], and most had been installed in 1903–06 by artist and decorator Julien Godon (1839–1915), an expert in painted tapestry, i.e. in illusory effects. Their arrangements are illustrated in detail in a photographic album published by D’Allemagne in 1939. (Fig. 175) Two of the plates include individuals; they are among the few coloured ones. The sitters were two Persian dancers, Nahidé and Medjid Rezvani, who had given a concert in one of the rooms, and “had accepted posing to animate by their presence one of its corners.”<sup>177</sup> At the bottom of their double coloured portrait, was a verse from Persian love poetry attributed to Omar Khayyam, but ill-written.<sup>178</sup> (Fig. 176) The couple had arrived in France at the end of 1931, where their performances had caused a sensation. Accompanied by a player of *tār* [a Persian long-necked, waisted string instrument], they interpreted Iranian dances and pantomimes, from court and popular repertoire, which were completely new to French audiences. Persian dance was mostly known then only from the iconography of miniatures.<sup>179</sup> The room that the couple had gracefully agreed to “animate” had made its way to Paris from Damascus in 1920, through a chain of intermediaries.<sup>180</sup> It belonged to the *‘ajamī* [Persian] style; as seen in Chapter 4, the term applied to a decorative technique characteristic of

175 Zamacois, *Pinceaux et stylos*, 103–04. “[The rooms] imposed a surprise of some theatrical effect. Under a long stained-glass bay, stood a large and tall show case [...] where one was sort of welcomed by well-executed dummies, with faces painted without excessive naturalism, wearing authentic costumes of grandees. Two charming and smiling young princesses distinguished themselves in the group. [...] These apparitions did not possess the scary characteristic of figures in wax museums, because accurate optical illusions capable of prompting hallucinations had not been sought out. No, one could imagine being received by the idealised shadows of the previous owners of all these beautiful things, being happy to see appreciated by others what they had themselves appreciated and loved.” [My translation]

176 Elizabeth Emery, Laura Morowitz, “From the living room to the museum and back again: The collection and display of medieval art in the *fin de siècle*,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 16, no. 2 (November 2004): 285–309.

177 Henry-René D’Allemagne, *Réminiscence d’Orient. Turquie – Perse et Syrie*, Ouvrage contenant 30 planches en phototypie et six planches coloriées à l’aquarelle (Paris: D’Allemagne, 1939), pl. xii bis and xv bis.

178 My gratitude to Elaheh Habibi for checking the verse for me.

179 “Au Théâtre de la Madeleine: Nahidé et Medjid Rezvani dans leurs danses persanes,” *La Rampe, revue des théâtres et music-halls*, 1st June 1932, 23 (with their portrait). The couple fathered the reputed artist of the Nouvelle Vague Serge Rezvani.

180 Identified by a French Officer among the ruins of a house bombarded during the early days of the French mandate, negotiated with its Syrian owner, and imported to France by the Parisian cabinet-makers Perret and Vibert, the room had been installed in a previous residence, before being repurposed at D’Allemagne’s; D’Allemagne, *Réminiscence d’Orient*, 12.





FIGURE 175 Anonymous, *Vestibule d'entrée* [Entrance to Henry-René D'Allemagne's Middle Eastern rooms, at 30 Mathurins St. in Paris], c. 1932. Phototype handcoloured in watercolour. 21 × 16 cm  
HENRY-RENÉ D'ALLEMAGNE, *RÉMINISCENCE D'ORIENT. TURQUIE – PERSE ET SYRIE*, 1939: PL. I

Ottoman Syria that consisted in applying a thick gesso to the wood before painting it with floral iconography, along a manner that had originated in Persia. The costumes of the couple may have come from D'Allemagne's collection. He did possess nineteenth-century embroidered *khalat* [robe in Persian] in red and yellow silk, similar to the ones donned by the two artists.<sup>181</sup>

#### 4 A Gendered Collecting Culture

The coloured portrait of Nahidé and Medjid Rezvani in D'Allemagne's *'ajamī* room brings together again a number of threads already encountered throughout this chapter. They are intertwined in this instance under a Persian theme: the decorative technique of a salvaged and repurposed room, a live performance taking place in its setting, the donning of matching costumes, worn in this case by two Persian artists coming from Iran. The combination points to a pattern shared by many a collector: a *mania* for matching every possible element, from interior design to props to attire, to people, and to performance.

181 Henry-René D'Allemagne, *Du Khorassan au pays des Backhtiaris, trois mois de voyage en Perse* (Paris: Hachette, 1911), 11: plate facing 10.



PLANCHE XV<sup>bis</sup>.



در عشق تو از ملامت منی نیست با سبزه ان در سخن خلکی نیست

FIGURE 176 Anonymus, *Concert donné au bord de la fontaine par deux artistes persans, M. et Mme Rezvani* [Nahidé and Medjid Rezvani, posing in D'Allemagne's 'ajamī room, at 30 Mathurins St. in Paris], c. 1932. Phototype handcoloured in watercolour. 21 × 16 cm  
HENRY-RENÉ D'ALLEMAGNE, *RÉMINISCENCE D'ORIENT. TURQUIE – PERSE ET SYRIE* 1939: PL. XVBIS

Arranging Islamic style rooms and wearing Middle Eastern attire represented two faces of the same coin: the ultimate end was to engineer a “metamorphosis” of the self – the substantive appears recurrently in narratives and correspondence. The transformation encompassed one’s own space and the ways bodies inhabited it. The rest was a matter of nuances and possibilities: the transformation could be ephemeral or more lasting, more or less seriously pursued and successfully achieved; a range of agendas intervened. The broader context of codified attire in Ottoman lands was a determining factor. In most cases, cross-cultural dressing involved personal interactions of Europeans with people in the Middle East. These interplays have to be read more often than not in between the lines. They were not necessary meant to become public. That the encounters can be grasped through artworks of small- or medium-size format, and paintings long kept private, tells that their visual interpretations were not made for public impression but rather for private viewing and sharing. The privately-held nature of this iconography also explains why it has never been considered as a subgenre per se, within, or indeed beside, visual Orientalism, but it qualifies to be analysed on its own terms, as personal souvenirs of travel and, more broadly speaking, depictions of interculturality. Paintings in this manner may appear in fact more numerous than expected, once full attention, grounded on historical evidence, is paid to the figuration of art in relation to the East. At closer look, more often than not, what the artworks may reveal, are not Western fantasies of non-Western people, but concrete cross-cultural interactions in the East. Famars Testas’ souvenir of an evening in the Fayyum is an obvious example. Others are less easily detected for they involve Europeans dressed as natives. When properly scrutinised, a genre scene may ultimately emerge as the picturing of an actual episode of interculturality, as demonstrated by Vernet’s *Voyage dans le désert*. I have discussed a series of examples

here, and in previous works;<sup>182</sup> I believe more are to be uncovered.<sup>183</sup>

On the other hand, Vernet’s attention to costume, as fully fleshed out in his 1848 talk, is a perfect demonstration of why costume mattered to artists, and how dress related to historical thinking then, and from there entered the world of historicist art.

A further conclusion to be drawn from the realities and depictions analysed in this chapter relates to masculinity. The phenomenon of cross-cultural dressing and cross-cultural decorating at the time shared more than being ways to metamorphose the self and transform one’s space accordingly. They possess a gendered dimension that cannot be escaped. It represents first and foremost a male world, at least throughout the nineteenth century. Actual portraits in Eastern attire primarily involve male characters. Disguised women appear mostly in genre scenes. A similar fragmentation also links most elaborated interiors encountered so far, and the social life developing within their walls. Many were typically pursued by bachelor aesthetes, with substantial means at their disposal, whether through old or new money. An analysis of an equivalent pursuit – fashioning Japanesque interiors in Paris – has highlighted the same reality.<sup>184</sup> It has been hypothesised that bachelorhood, and moreover the outright rejection of domesticity, were the key determinants for this specific, highly

182 Mercedes Volait, “Émile Prisse d’Avennes au travail: un art de la collecte et de la compilation,” in *Émile Prisse d’Avennes (1807–1879)*, 75–102.

183 Mercedes Volait, “Scène de genre, choses vues ou attrait du travestissement? Les Européens dans la peinture orientaliste,” in *L’Orientalisme après la Querelle: dans les pas de François Pouillon*, eds. Guy Barthélemy, Dominique Casajus, Sylvette Larzul and Mercedes Volait, (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2016), 37–49.

184 Christopher Reed, “Bachelor quarters: Spaces of Japonisme in nineteenth-century Paris,” in *Oriental Interiors: Design, Identity, Space*, ed. John Potvin (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 111–26.

gendered, collecting culture.<sup>185</sup> Most collectors surveyed in these pages fit this homosocial pattern.

Finally, the lightness and pleasure involved in shaping one's interior or one's semblance should not be ignored either. It has been argued that cultural cross-dressing gathered momentum "because it was based on humor, play, transformation and

transgression."<sup>186</sup> Creating rooms meant to be "total environments"<sup>187</sup> or donning full Middle Eastern apparel appealed to those who could afford it, for it was ... enjoyable. It was a full-time occupation, and one propitious for social interaction and pleasurable entertainment. It contributed ultimately to one's own well-being.

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185 Christopher Reed, ed., *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).

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186 Thorat, "Sartorial Orientalism," 60.

187 Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own. Private Collection, Public Gift* (Pittsburgh: Periscope, 2010).



## Diverging Routes

Today, it is easy to ridicule the pursuits discussed throughout this book. They were already mocked in their own day. The French writer Pierre Loti and his fictitious mosque devoted to the mourning of an impossible intercultural love springs to mind. But the assumption made here is that they should be taken seriously because they say something about how one related to the past and inhabited the world in the age of empire, spectacle and industry. The past seemed proximate at the time, and the world wide open.

### 1 Bygone Ways of Inhabiting the Past and the World

Truly enough, most micro stories recounted in this book revolve around high culture and the upper end of society; they could be dismissed on the grounds of not representing the grass-roots of society. However, this would be missing an important part of the story, which is the popular appeal of the practices and experiences considered. Crowds dressing *à la turque* in time of carnival since the eighteenth century are a good example. Historian Ethem Eldem has shown that Orientalism was indeed a mass culture, and one that went global in no time at all.<sup>1</sup>

An influential American art critic, commenting in the 1880s on the broader pattern of aesthetic interiors and the passion for exotic historicism caustically deemed the endeavour as “insipid pedantry” and not the proper way to achieve “the independent creation of new and inventive belongings:”

The tendency of the day is not merely to classify buildings into the Grecian, the Egyptian, the Gothic and the like, but to prolong these just distinctions into our table-service and bedrooms, so that a salt-spoon may be of the Jacobean order, and may be reasonably commanded of an architect, and a night-cup may be of the chastest Louis Quinze. No growth in true taste ever came of an insipid pedantry like this.<sup>2</sup>

The visitors drawn to the Parisian Musée de Cluny in those very years, as seen in Chapter 4, would be otherwise opinionated; they readily enjoyed the experience of immersive displays, as many commentators did, even if the past arranged for commercial consumption in the rooms of the medieval abbey was no less artificial and nostalgic than the one revived in collectors’ interiors. It may have been an Old World phenomenon only, but enthusiasm for historicist multi-dimensional arrangements represented a rising tide in Europe. Through antique shops and department stores’ showrooms, the culture of aesthetic historicism, and its paraphernalia, swiftly invaded European middle-class homes, establishing itself as a prime way of dwelling for many decades.<sup>3</sup> A Louis XV hall or a Henry II dinner-room was not intrinsically different from an Oriental den or a Saracenic smoking room. As in David Lowenthal’s paraphrasing of the opening of *The Go-Between* (1953), “the past is a foreign country.”<sup>4</sup> The phrase holds extra-resonance today.

1 Ethem Eldem, *Un Orient de consommation* (Istanbul: Musée de la Banque ottomane, 2010). See also Wolf-Dieter Lemke, *Représentations de l’Orient*.

2 Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], *Mr. Vanderbilt’s House and Collection* (Boston: George Barrie, 1883–84), I: VII.

3 Charpy, *Le Théâtre des objets*, ch. 5 *passim*.

4 David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), after Leslie P. Hartley’s incipit of *The Go-Between* (1953). My

## 2 Estrangements

The anonymous art critic who reviewed Vernet's *Voyage dans le désert*, after its presentation at the Paris Salon des artistes français in March 1844,<sup>5</sup> had no trouble identifying the topic of the canvas, and the characters pictured:

Le *Voyage dans le désert* nous montre une caravane conduite par un Arabe. [...] L'Arabe qui conduit est fort beau; le principal voyageur, qui ressemble fort à Horace Vernet, est bien digne d'aller de pair avec l'Arabe. Si j'en crois ses armes, son chibouk, son regard intelligent, sa poétique insouciance, c'est bien là Horace Vernet.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever his disguise, Vernet was perfectly recognisable. It was not the case anymore a few decades later. The small piece had been acquired from the artist by the Marquess of Hertford in May 1844 for 4,000 francs. It had been registered in Hertford's ledgers under its original title.<sup>7</sup> Yet it was not long before the painting acquired another identity. The circumstance was the public opening of the Hertford collection in London, from June 1872 to April 1875. After the death of the Marquess in 1870, his son Richard Wallace had repatriated the

artworks that were then housed in Paris, and a temporary loan had been arranged in the new annex that the South Kensington Museum had opened at Bethnal Green in London's East End. The collection was meant to relocate to Hertford House once the family mansion had been refurbished anew. The 2,000 artworks, among which were 700 paintings, were provided with proper cataloguing. A preliminary guide mentioned the painting as an Eastern scene devoted to "a group of Arab chiefs of the present day;"<sup>8</sup> it was subsequently listed as *Arab travelling* [sic] under no. 591 in the complete catalogue released in 1872–74.<sup>9</sup> Vernet's rendering of a memorable desert excursion had lost in the process its original title, and together with it, its very meaning. Three decades had sufficed to estrange the artwork from its true topic.

The renaming was probably the doing of the author of the catalogue, Charles Christopher Black, a specialist of Italian Renaissance who was then serving as curator in the South Kensington Museum. Was the singular given to the noun a typo or a misperception of the canvas? Did it translate a focus on the caravan's guide – an Arab indeed – or a misrepresentation of the travellers – who were not Arab? In any case, an alteration had occurred. Another followed a few decades later, when the painting was again renamed. It became *Arabs Travelling in the Desert*, once the Wallace collection was permanently opened to the public, following the transformation of Hertford House into a museum after the death of Richard Wallace.<sup>10</sup> By 1905, the camel riders had been fully Arabised,

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gratitude to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out the literary origin of the phrase.

5 The canvas was no. 1757 in the catalogue of the Salon, *Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, et lithographie des artistes vivants exposés au Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées* (Paris: Vinchon, 1844), 219.

6 Anonyme, "Le salon, V," *L'Artiste* v (1844): 177–78 (178 for the quote). "*Voyage dans le désert* depicts a caravan guided by an Arab [...]. The Arab conductor is truly handsome; the main traveller, who deeply resembles Horace Vernet, forms a dignified pair with the Arab. If I believe his weapons, chibouk, acute gaze, and poetic insouciance, this is for sure Horace Vernet."

7 "Le Livre de Raison gives: "1844, mai 1–27, un petit tableau *Voyage dans le désert*, 4,000 f," Stephen Duffy & Jo Hedley, *The Wallace Collection's Pictures: A Complete Catalogue* (London: The Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 2004), 449.

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8 Charles Christopher Black, *A Guide to the Bethnal Green branch of the SKM* (London: Spottiswoode, 1872), 24.

9 Charles Christopher Black, *Bethnal Green Branch Museum. Catalogue of the Collection of Paintings, Porcelain, Bronzes, Decorative Furniture, and Other Works of Art, Lent For Exhibition in the Bethnal Green Branch of the South Kensington Museum, by Sir Richard Wallace, Bart., M.P. June 1872* (London: George E. Eyre And William Spottiswoode, 1872–74), 39.

10 It became no. 584 in the collection: *Catalogue of the Oil Paintings and Water Colours in the Wallace Collection, with Short Notices of the Painters. By authority of the*

either because it made the artwork more appealing or because the very existence of Europeans wandering through the desert in the Middle East could not be conceived anymore. If one looks for exoticisation going on in the visual arts related to the region, the chronology and agency are clear cut in this case. The early 1870s set a first milestone; another followed three decades later. It was long after the piece had been painted and it was a matter of reception rather than artistry. An artwork from the not so distant past had become or was made incomprehensible to its later beholders. A connection to the experience of the Middle East, of the Egyptian desert for that matter, had been lost.

Vernet's *Voyage dans le désert* was not the sole canvas that was exoticised and ethnicised, through rebranding, after entering a public collection. Many others experienced similar fate. As Helena Heikka honestly acknowledged in her thorough and perceptive analysis of Berndtson's meaningful depiction of pastimes at the house of Delort de Gléon in Cairo (discussed in Chapter 5), no art historian or curator knowing the region primarily through popular culture, i.e. *The Arabian Nights*, would imagine that the astute canvas could be anything but an "a-historical fantasy."<sup>11</sup> In this case again, the rebranding undoubtedly helped to distort the perception of the scene pictured. The small oil painting was listed as *Intérieur de salon arabe au Caire* when in the possession of its first owners, Delort de Gléon and his wife Angelina Grandcolas. At least it appeared under that name when the piece was bequeathed to Helsinki's Fine Arts Museum in a will of Mrs Delort dated 1905.<sup>12</sup> It eventually reached the Ateneum Art Museum in Finland, and was renamed *Almée, an Egyptian Dancer*, at one point in the social life of the

painting. It is not known when, but it was in any case long after the canvas had been produced.

Misreading artworks when they have gone out of context actually represents a phenomenon of much broader scope. Another telling story engages a drawing by Prosper Marilhat, dated 12 May 1832, representing a man in Nizami guise smoking a water pipe while reclining on a bed. The location written on the drawing, "Kanka," offers some clue on its topic. The name stands for Khanqa, a site north-east of Cairo, where the French Doctor Clot-Bey had established a brand new military hospital in 1826: in times of epidemic or in case of serious illness, it accepted civilian patients.<sup>13</sup> Possibly a self-portrait or a depiction of a recovering traveller, Marilhat's drawing was exhibited as *Fumeur de narghileh* in 1973, and as *Égyptien fumant un narghilé* two years later.<sup>14</sup> The ethnic demarcation of the sitter occurs here at a much later stage than for *Voyage dans le désert*; it can be dated with even more precision, to a span of two years in the mid-1970s. The timing is not accidental. It was in the wake of decolonisation, a period defined by estrangement with colonial history,<sup>15</sup> and willingness to acknowledge ethnic and national identities in visual representations from the colonial era, to the risk of stereotypical assignments, and possible misinterpretation, as happened with *Voyage dans le désert* and *Fumeur de narghileh*. I believe that many other artworks, too hastily classified as belonging to the Orientalist genre, need to be re-read in this new light. Another eloquent example is Émile Prisse d'Avennes's *Marché des esclaves* (1848), which is not in fact a typical depiction of the purchase of an enslaved woman in Cairo, but a

*Trustees of the Wallace Collection* (London: HMSO, 1905), 160.

11 Heikka, "Layers of fantasy," 1.

12 Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Archives des musées nationaux, Mobilier et objets d'art, Dons et legs, Legs de Mme Delort de Gléon, 9 March 1914, 20144787/17 (the canvas is mentioned in an early will dated 1st July 1905).

13 Bruno Argémi, "Jomard, Clot Bey et la modernisation de la médecine dans l'Égypte de Méhémet-Ali," *Bulletin de la Sabix* 54 (2014): 23–30.

14 Prosper Marilhat (1811–1847), *Peintures, dessins, gravures*, exhibition catalogue (Clermont-Ferrand: Musée Bargoin, 1973), 19, no. 38; *L'Orient en question, 1825–1875: de Missolonghi à Suez ou l'Orientalisme de Delacroix à Flaubert* (Marseille: Musée Cantini, 1975), 60 (reproduced 109).

15 Daniel Rivet, "Le fait colonial et nous. Histoire d'un éloignement," *Vingtième siècle, revue d'histoire* 33, no. 1 (1992): 127–38.





FIGURE 177 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Marché des esclaves* [The slave market]. Engraving  
JEAN-JOSEPH MARCEL AND AMÉDÉE  
RYME, *HISTOIRE DE L'ÉGYPTE, L'UNIVERS  
OU HISTOIRE ET DESCRIPTION DE TOUS  
LES PEUPLES, DE LEURS RELIGIONS,  
MOEURS, COUTUMES...* 1848, III: PL. 72

caricature of John Frederick Lewis embarking into buying one.<sup>16</sup> (Fig 177 and 178)

For the past couple of decades, the harm of cultural appropriation, primarily understood as dispossession when involving the non-West,<sup>17</sup> have made one wary of cross-cultural dressing and, for that matter, cross-cultural decorating. The sight of “ethnic” guise, when donned by outsiders, is one we have become increasingly uncomfortable with. We perceive even the most innocent fancy dressing as grotesque, at best. It would never occur to

<sup>16</sup> Llewelyn, “Friend and Foe.”

<sup>17</sup> Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).



FIGURE 178 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Untitled* [A European at the slave market]. Watercolour on paper. 12.2 × 7 cm  
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, MANUSCRITS OCCIDENTAUX, NAF 20442 (3), 27-VII-3, F. 27

French scholars and artists in residence in academic institutions to dress cross-culturally, as was the tradition at the French Villa Medici in Rome since the eighteenth century, as seen in Chapter 5, and as continued to be common practice at the French Institute for Archaeology and Islamic arts in Damascus during the 1920s, under the directorship of Islamic art historian and collector Victor Eustache (1875–1953), known as Eustache de Lorey.<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 179)

Too many disturbing phenomena have been associated with masquerade in the past two

<sup>18</sup> Renaud Avez, *L'Institut français de Damas au Palais Azem (1922–1946) à travers les archives* (Damascus: Presses de l'Ifpo, 1993), chapter 1 *passim*.



FIGURE 179 Anonymous, *Untitled* [Victor Eustache standing in Indian attire at a reception in the Azem Palace in Damascus], c. 1923. No dimensions provided  
BEIRUT, INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DU PROCHE-ORIENT, PHOTOThÈQUE, 54769

centuries. One only needs to consider the ethnological parading of non-Western human beings at national exhibitions and world's fairs, for which the all-embracing concept of "human zoos" has been coined.<sup>19</sup> Criticism has been addressed at its shortcomings and anachronistic amalgamations,<sup>20</sup> but the powerful paradigm has fundamentally changed the way we look today at ethnic-oriented sartorial displays, whether they involve people of colour or not, and before even speaking of considering crossovers. Any initiative engaging

with ethnic identity crossing through clothing (or make-up) seems out of place, to say the least. Cross-dressing has become the realm and privilege of gender fluidity, not cultural trespassing. Little space is thus left to the ambivalent, entangled, and at times conflicted, cross-cultural history recounted in this book. Lost in the transition, however, are the personal engagements and social interactions that went with wearing, or attempting to wear, the other's garb. The same applies to reconstructing the other's space. It is significant, as pointed out by François Pouillon, that cross-cultural dressing has now strictly recessed to the private sphere.<sup>21</sup> Ample clothing such as *sarwal* or *jallabiyya* is worn for comfort in the secrecy of interiors; its capacity

19 Nicolas Bancel *et al.*, *Zoos humains, de la Vénus hottentote aux reality shows* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002).

20 Claude Blanckaert, "Spectacles ethniques et culture de masse au temps des colonies," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 7, no. 2 (2002): 223–32.

21 Pouillon, "Le fil d'Ariane," 143.

to foster intercultural connections and mediations has become extinct.

### 3 Endurances

When shifting the focus to the other side of the Mediterranean, quite a different panorama emerges today. Rather than estrangement from the recent past what can be paradoxically noticed is its endurance. Many of the practices and experiences examined throughout the book are still alive in present-day Egypt. The commodification of salvage from derelict architecture is an index. A recent case is provided by an architect-designed house in Fayyum, completed in 2015. (Fig. 180 and 181) It features a portal from the late Ottoman Mosque of Fatima al-Nabawiyya in Cairo. When the sanctuary was demolished in 1999<sup>22</sup> to give way to a new Mamluk Revival mosque (inaugurated in 2003), its stonework was properly dismantled by specialised workers and resold by the Ministry of Endowments. The sale followed a legal procedure. Recycling salvage was not illicit in the past, at least in most cases, and it is not in the present either. The house was designed by Omar El-Farouk, a follower of the celebrated Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (1900–89) who searched for low-tech architectural solutions in Egypt's tangible heritage.<sup>23</sup> El-Farouk is a collector with a passion for Islamic art and architecture.<sup>24</sup> Combining salvage with Revival handicraft, his “dream house” corresponds to the pattern, explored in Chapter 4, of a specific collecting culture that strived to shape total Revival environments in order to reclaim the past. There are differences too, however. The stonework and furniture of his Fayyum house possess an

unmistakable South-East Asian touch, probably resulting from their overseas manufacture. The novelty here is not the salvage, nor the Revivalism, but the craftsmanship resorted to for its execution. Yet the link to architectural projects developed in the 1870s, after the Cluny model, cannot be missed. The genealogy is indirectly acknowledged today by members of the recycling profession in Cairo who have chosen the French word “démolisseur” to name their trade.

On 25 December 1971, the *New York Times* reported that the charred ruins of Cairo's Opera house were to be sold to a demolition contractor for the extravagant amount of \$48,100.<sup>25</sup> The architectural emblem of the Khedivial contribution to the city's modern expansion had been destroyed by fire in October that same year. Its stones, plasterwork and mirrors went on to start a new life cycle. Since then, what is being commodified, to this day, are the remnants of the tangible culture that made Cairo modern. Leading the market are the very spoils of the Islamic Revival architecture at the core of Chapter 4. An example is the salvaging in 1995 of the marble mosaics designed by Ambroise Baudry for the Villa Delort de Gléon in 1871. Another is the looting in 2011 of Villa Ispenian by the Pyramids, a house built in 1935–36 by antique dealers Kevork and his son Paul Ispenian, where they had reinstalled part of the historic ceilings and Revival woodwork from Villa Baudry (after the architect's house had itself been dismantled), together with many other salvaged fragments.<sup>26</sup> The recycling culture, or upcycling business to use the current parlance of the fashion

22 My gratitude to Péter Nagy for providing the exact date of demolition.

23 James Steele, “The new Traditionalists,” *Mimar* 40 (1991): 40–7; Abdullah Schleifer, “Islamic architecture and the discipline of design: the work of Omar El-Farouk,” *Arts of the Islamic World* 2 (1984): 43–5, 49.

24 Menha El-Batraoui, “Un rêve d'architecte: Omar El-Farouk,” *Qantara* 96 (July 2015): 57–60.

25 “Cairo Opera Ruins Sold,” *The New York Times*, Sunday 26 December 1971, 42.

26 On the construction of Ispenian House, see Volait, *Fous du Caire*; for its looting during the Arab Spring, Omar El Adl, “Systematic ruin of Egypt's antiquities in Haram,” *Daily News Egypt*, 3 January 2013; [<https://cairoobserver.com/post/42575456931/destruction-alert-villa-ispenian>], accessed 25 May 2020.





FIGURE 180 Entrance to a house designed by Omar El-Farouk in Fayyum with architectural salvage from the Mosque of Fatima al-Nabawiyya in Cairo  
PHOTOGRAPH BY HAYSHAM LABIB, 2015

industry, continues to be in full swing. And it does not stop at Islamic Revival architecture.<sup>27</sup>

The Islamic Revival crafts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century fare no less well on the art market, at international level in their case. A pair of Revival glass lamps made in 1911 for the family mansion that civil engineer and financier Boghos Nubar (1851–1930) had built in the suburb of Heliopolis in Cairo, were sold for £17,500 when they were recently auctioned in London.<sup>28</sup>

(Fig. 182) Furniture by Giuseppe Parvis regularly appears in auction rooms too; recognisable pieces from his workshop are becoming collectibles in the Gulf, for instance in Qatar.<sup>29</sup> (Fig. 183 and 184)

But the reappraisal of Islamic Revival crafts should not be considered a global one only; many signs suggest that the phenomenon thrives in Egypt too. It is particularly active in the field of museums.

27 I have discussed elsewhere the reappraisal of all kinds of “Belle époque” architecture; Mercedes Volait, “The reclaiming of ‘Belle Époque’ Architecture in Egypt (1989–2010): On the Power of Rhetorics in Heritage-Making,” *Architecture beyond Europe* 3 (2013) [<https://journals.openedition.org/abe/371>], accessed 25 May 2020.

28 “A pair of enamelled glass mosque lamps made for the house of Boghos Nubar,” *Arts of the Islamic World*,

Sotheby’s London, 25 October 2017, lot 231. The house was sequestered after 1952, but as was usual and legal, portable furniture and fixtures remained the property of the original owner, in this case the descendants of Boghos Nubar who lived in France since the 1920s and transferred back the spoils of their Cairene residence.

29 Mercedes Volait, “Revival, replica and reuse: Fashioning ‘Arabesque’ furniture in Khedival Cairo,” *The Arabist, Budapest Studies in Arabic* 41 (2020): 229–42.



FIGURE 181 Interior of a house in Fayyum, designed by Omar El-Farouk  
PHOTOGRAPH BY HAYSHAM LABIB, 2015





FIGURE 182 A pair of enamelled glass mosque lamps made for the house of Boghos Nubar, dated 1329 AH /1911 AD AUCTIONED ON 25 OCTOBER 2017, AT SOTHEBY'S LONDON, LOT 231. CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN

A marked interest for anything “Belle Époque” has driven the curators of the Gayer-Anderson Museum to display many Arabesque furnishings (probably decanted from the storage rooms of ex-royal palaces), in the rooms of the Ottoman ensemble fully rearranged by the Irish Major in the 1930s.<sup>30</sup> As there is no labelling, the non-specialised visitor is at pains to distinguish the

additions by Major Gayer-Anderson from the recent ones made to the collections. One suspects furthermore that the invented tradition imagined by Italian carpenters did not exactly correspond to the folk art and period furniture Gayer-Anderson was inclined to promote in his days. But the fact that such types of Revival furniture are being re-introduced today in an historic landmark is good testimony of the value attached to such pieces. Parvis-type furniture is being reinstated in other historic houses as well, at Bayt al-Sihaymi, for

<sup>30</sup> Personal conversation with the curator in charge, 2017, with my gratitude to Dina Bakhoum for helping arrange it.





FIGURE 183 Pascal Sebah, *Meubles arabes* [A set of Arabesque furniture photographed at the studio of the photographer, whose name is reflected in the mirror], before 1886  
 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ABU DHABI, AKKASAH: THE CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY, ALBUM  
 ADEN-ÉGYPTE, AD.MC.027, F. 89



FIGURE 184 Mirrored console attributed to Parvis, in the vestibule of a Qatari residence  
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, 2012

instance. It is a broader trend, and one that deserves to be fully researched.

Even disguise has carved out its own place within Egyptian leisure. Portable photo booths, installed since the 2010s in front of the Mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo, offer the possibility of being photographed in Mamluk attire or in the guise of a Princess from *One Thousand and One Nights* for a few Egyptian pounds. It is not exactly cross-cultural dressing as discussed in Chapter 5, because the clients are not outsiders. Or are they? The props are

completely fanciful. They are indeed quite stereotypical, something halfway between Walt Disney imagination and Orientalist kitsch. But the young customers obviously have great fun in the experience. Thanks to a loose continuity with a past that has left many fewer traces in Europe, one is thus offered today (2019), on Egyptian soil, the possibility to share in some of the emotions that went with disguise, and beyond, with a whole range of intercultural engagements.





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