studies on

ARCHITECTURE, HISTORY & CULTURE

papers by the

2003-2004 AKPIA@MIT

visiting fellows

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Contents

Introduction

With this booklet, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (AKPIA@ MIT) is launching a new publishing project. The project aims to highlight the work of the program's visiting fellows and make it available to our wider community in print as well as on the web. The papers reflect the research done during our fellows' stays at MIT and anticipate their larger and fuller publications later on. AKPIA@MIT hopes to make this publication a yearly occasion and plans to eventually include synopses of theses done by our graduating PhD and SMArchS students in future issues.

The present work is straightforwardly titled "Studies in Architecture, History, and Culture: Papers by the 2003-2004 Visiting Fellows at AKPIA@MIT." It comprises four papers by our four postdoctoral visiting fellows for the year 2003-2004. First is a paper provocatively entitled, "The President and the Calligrapher: Arabic Calligraphy and Its Political Use" by Vlad Atanasiu, who had just finished his doctorate at the École Practique des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Historiques et Philologiques in Paris on Mamluk Calligraphy. Vlad deftly concocts a narrative that moves between the artistic, social, and political spheres and connects the apogee of Arabic calligraphy in the 13th century with its contemporary peregrinations in the West. Second is a study by Hussein Keshani with the title "Strangers, Lovers, and Kin: Gender Roles and Their Interplay with the Architecture of Awadh." Hussein did his graduate work at the University of Victoria, Canada focusing on the Bara Imambara of Lucknow, India. In his work, he raises through architectural and historical analysis questions on gender roles in the study of Islamic architecture in this fascinating 18th and 19th century instance from

India and in general. The third paper, "History and the Production of the 'Culture of Shiraz'" is by Setrag Manoukian who teaches cultural anthropology at the Università di Milano-Bicocca, Italy. In his paper, Setrag reads in the architectural landscape of the Iranian city of Shiraz signs of an intentional production of an image of the city of learning diffused over the entire urban scale. Last is Cristina Pallini's paper "Italian Architects and Modern Egypt," which offers a foretaste of the book she is currently preparing on the subject. Cristina, who teaches design studios at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy, argues a middle ground between Orientalist critique and modernist puritanism in understanding the contributions of Italian architects to the modernization of Egypt in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Naturally, the papers and the research that produced them cover different places and time frames and reference manifold theories and methods. The variety subtly illustrates the pedagogical philosophy of AKPIA@MIT, which advocates a broad-minded approach to research in light of diverse theoretical, historical, critical, and developmental criteria. It also represents the wide range of interests pursued by the program in its capacity both as an academic unit within MIT's department of architecture and as an international center for the study of architecture, urbanism, visual arts, and conservation in the Islamic world. Thus, we hope that this booklet will constitute a step in promoting the objectives of AKPIA@MIT, and we look forward to your feedback in preparing future issues of this new series.

Nasser Rabbat
Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture

The President and the Calligrapher: Arabic Calligraphy and Its Political Use

Vlad Atanasiu

In September 2000 news agencies reported that Saddam Hussein took delivery of a manuscript Qur'an written with his own blood. Reports continued to come until the very end of his regime about the use of blood as a writing medium: to sign an oath of allegiance to the president, to mark referendum ballots, or to paint the president's portraits.

Horror and violence have long been integral parts of many arts, yet Arabic calligraphy is generally perceived as having preserved its grace and innocence, and belonging to a blissful realm away from the realities of this world. That this is not the case is made clear by a closer look at its history, where the relationship between art and power, between artists and the men in power, was a defining characteristic. It still holds true today, as exemplified by Saddam using calligraphy as a propaganda tool—which of course didn't change the course of Arabic calligraphy, unlike his silencing of a couple of talented Iraqi calligraphers and the exile of others, some of whom ended up in the West founding new calligraphy schools.

Compared to the prestige of Arabic calligraphy there is conspicuously little material available on contemporary cultural politics regarding this art form. Documentary limitations, however, should not detract from the need to study a relationship that isn't obvious and which relies for its effectiveness on the unawareness of the amateurs of calligraphy.

The benefits of a link between state politics and calligraphy are mutual: part of cultural politics, calligraphy brings its sponsors prestige which attracts in turn various types and levels of support from individuals, communities, and institutions, while calligraphers also gain prestige and—more important—jobs. The importance of this link for both the political and cultural history of Islam and the history of Arabic calligraphy is apparent from the fact that calligraphy was and continues to be the principal art form of Islam, similar to cathedrals and icons in Christianity. (There is no "Islamic dance" or "Islamic music," but there is "Islamic calligraphy"; likewise calligraphy was never banned on religious grounds, as dance and music were.) Furthermore, the semiofficial status that it enjoys goes back to the very early days of Islam. The nascent empire produced the necessary wealth and desire for art, resulting in the first known masterpieces of Arabic calligraphy, among them caliph 'Uthman's first complete written Qur'an and the mosaic inscription in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Both are highly political statements—the former the cornerstone of the Muslim faith, the latter a symbol of Islam as world religion—to which calligraphy provides a supplement of credibility, importance, and attraction.

The empire also needed scribes for its growing administration, instructors to teach people to read and write, stonemasons to engrave tombstones, all part of a numerous workforce involved with the shaping of letters who needed to retain their jobs after the Muslims took over from the defeated dynasties. The mutual dependence was further complicated by the introduction of a new script—Arabic—that supplanted Greek, Avestan, Syriac, Latin, Sanskrit, etc., which fulfilled at a graphical level the gradual conversion of vast populations from Gibraltar to the Indus. Which of the two sides—governors or calligraphers—initiated the profitable relationship between Islamic power and Arabic calligraphy, and what was the story of the individuals who transformed Arabic script into Arabic calligraphy, are however matters not well enough understood in today's scholarship.

The succeeding centuries are dotted with anecdotal evidence on the politics–calligraphy link, the period spanning before and after the 15th century and centered on Persia being particularly significant for the history of Arabic calligraphy because the aesthetic models and social status of calligraphers that appeared during that time lasted until the present.

Among the most striking inventions was the lawha and the qalib. The lawha is a calligraphy meant to be hung on a wall, like paintings are in modern houses. It is different from a handwritten book, an official document, or an inscription in stone, due to its semi-public nature and easy portability. Whereas books and documents are usually kept closed, the

writing of the lawha is always visible to its owner and his guests, while still retaining a degree of intimacy. The prolonged visual contact with the calligrapher's work invites a careful appreciation of the aesthetic values of the script. The preponderance of graphical form over semantic content put creators of lawhas in a class apart from scribes, copyists, or masons, for whom the communication function of writing was the primary concern. Being a small-scale commerce—one sheet of paper and one or a few lines of text per lawha—rather than a transaction of bulky manuscripts, the calligrapher could, with some proficiency, sell more items and adapt the content to a more diverse market than his fellow scribes and copyists could. His financial success was improved by the other marketing technique, the qalib: a sheet of paper with small holes on the outline of characters, serving as stencil for the duplication of calligraphies. While the lawha facilitated the distribution of a calligrapher's work, the qalib dissociated the physical location of the artist from the place where his work was to be produced. Moreover, his personal style could be applied to any surface, not only paper—stone, wood, ceramics, or metal—all realms of inscriptions produced by specialized craftsmen, expressing their own stylistic particularities. The qalib was a major factor allowing calligraphers to control and monopolize the production of Arabic writing styles. The invention of new styles like nasta'liq and calligraphic objects with new functionalities such as the sample albums muraqqa' converged to secure the financial autonomy of calligraphers. The relation to political power was no longer to the sole benefit of governors.

The long period during which these technical and social changes took place witnessed an unprecedented attraction for calligraphy among Muslim sultans, princes, and emirs. It became fashionable for a ruler to practice calligraphy. Stories like the one about the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II holding the inkstand for the legendary calligrapher Shaykh Hamdullah abounded in many countries. Many Timurid princes were accomplished calligraphers and some of their works have been preserved until our days to prove that their fame was not merely self-interested praise. Mamluk sultans were with a few exceptions near-analphabets; honorable manuscripts written by lower ranking Mamluks demonstrate that the fashion spread also into their dominions. In one particular case, Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad was so keen to prove himself as a patron of arts, that an exquisite Qur'an written for his enemy, the Il-Khanid Öljaytü, had the sultan's own name substituted in the original dedication. The episode reflects the general attitude of the Mamluks—former slaves of mainly Turkish and Caucasic descent—of supporting calligraphy as a shield against accusations of lacking sophistication. Despite not having the appropriate training to appreciate good

writing, they were astute enough to grasp its symbolic power. When the Moroccan sultan Abu al-Hasan wanted to bequest to Jerusalem a Qur'an written in his own hand after having sent one to Mecca and then another to Medina, the Mamluks considered this act of great piety as a diplomatic affront, a humiliating reference to their own lack of graphic abilities. One of the most spectacular instances of the ascendancy of calligraphy over politics took place in the Safavid and Ottoman empires, through the ideology of letter mystics that were at the basis of Safavid power and instilled the elite Janissaries Ottoman troops. Calligraphy became an active element of the state and military machinery.

Arabic calligraphy was tied to politics not only in the countries where Arabic script was the state script, but it played a role in foreign politics too. Although not intended for this use, as a result of trade and crusades, between the 11th and 14th centuries real or imitated Arabic writing became a fashionable decoration in European medieval arts, thus substantiating the prestige of Islam as a civilization of luxurious cultural sophistication. A similar Islamic art craze took hold of Europe in the late 19th century, when everything Mamluk was copied with great care for details—even the rounded Mamluk serifs on top of vertical strokes were not confounded with the spiked outlines of the Ottoman and Persian styles. Calligraphy was not only an export good, but affected also the politics of imports. Chinese silk products and porcelain had obvious qualities, but in order to guarantee and increase their commercial success, the Chinese government was pragmatic enough while trading with the Mamluks to put aside its customary disdain for the "Barbarians"—everything not Chinese—and allow that instead of Chinese characters export objects be inscribed with Arabic letters, to accommodate the sensibility of the customers.

During its fourteen centuries of existence Arabic calligraphy has developed firm social roots: protected by religion, used in politics, boasting aesthetic sophistication, sustained by a mystical credo, and subject of poetry and popular lore, more than an art form, calligraphy was a culture. This particular setting had a far reaching influence on calligraphy in the 20th century: many, struggling with the accelerating turmoil of life, ignored it and looked upon it as a boring old custom; others, for the same reasons, found in it a refuge from the world and a guardian of cultural values; while a few took calligraphy straight into globalization, where it lost, as in exile, all meaning and was reduced to bare movements laden with emotion. In each case—as exemplified by Turkey, Iran, and the West—political powers found calligraphy to be a worthy instrument to wield in the pursuit of their ambitions.

It is well enough known why in 1928 Kemal Atatürk decided to change the official script in Turkey from Arabic to Latin—to add a supplementary degree of symbolic and technological compatibility with the modernity represented by the Latin-writing West toward which he led his country. This rare example of political power being detrimental to calligraphy would prove itself eighty years later to be one hurdle less in Turkey's bid to join the European Union. It is also known that historically most script changes are politically motivated and often related to violent events (here the fall of the Ottoman empire, elsewhere the conquests of Muslim armies, Roman cohorts, or Soviet divisions), aiming at and implying modifications of national and individual identities. (The competition for the reform of the Arabic script in Egypt came, after thirty years of deliberations, to an abrupt halt in 1968 after the heyday of Arabic nationalism.) What is less well known is what became of Arabic calligraphy in Turkey after the abandonment of Arabic writing.

The immediate result was that calligraphers found themselves out of jobs, many of them having worked for the administration, ministries, or the school for calligraphy in Istanbul, which was closed in 1928. Being clerks and writing for many hours daily had kept them trained, protected the script from fossilization through constant innovation opportunities, and replenished the pool of rising masters (some of the finest calligraphers of them all had lived during the last century of Ottoman rule). In the new conditions—and without making the transition to Latin calligraphy or typographic font design, as many calligraphers did in Europe—the number of calligraphers declined, together with the interest of the public in calligraphy, an art that was not surprisingly seen as moribund.

A revival came only in the last quarter of the 20th century, with the relaxing of laws governing political activities in Turkey and a number of other independently converging factors: scholars writing monographs on famous calligraphers and collecting their work in facsimile catalogues; curators setting up exhibitions on various themes around writing (a regular feature in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul); writers using calligraphy and related arts as part of their plots (a growing trend in later years); their publishers, booksellers, and antique dealers (shops around tourist hotspots being outlets for the work of young calligraphers); collectors in Turkey or the Gulf States (an important market for contemporary calligraphers), and Westerners visiting Turkey (books on calligraphy, when voluminous and lavishly printed, are not inexpensive). The calligraphic workforce increased with the rise of religion in Turkish politics: calligraphy offers young people a way to combine faith and art, together with a respectable status and a rich heritage. An important role

on the Turkish calligraphy scene is played by the Center for Islamic History, Art, and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, a foundation financed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which since 1988 has organized a famous calligraphic competition. Besides promoting Islamic values and cultural exchanges (there are participants from over thirty countries), the event collaterally also serves other agendas. For the state it is a showcase of Turkish cultural achievements (the link with the past glories being apparent from where IRCICA is housed: Yildiz Sarayi, the former residence of the last Ottoman sultans), while for calligraphy it is a battleground for regional calligraphic styles and an international arena were models are set and defended. (Ottomans and Persians in the past set worldwide standards for the rules of acceptable calligraphy, so it is usually difficult for outsiders to beat them, especially in a home-game.)

A substantial cause of the calligraphy–politics link comes from the fact that calligraphy is not a totally abstract art, but needs words as its graphical building blocks. What to write is a dilemma tormenting calligraphers, and politicians are quick to jump in with a suggestion. However, master calligraphers do acknowledge that it is not possible to be a good calligrapher and not believe in what one writes. In Iran calligraphers were given this chance in the late 1970s, when graffiti started to appear in the streets calling for an end to the Shah's regime, in the first substantial and documented example of revolutionary involvement of Arabic calligraphy. At that moment modern graffiti was only a decade old and was also rooted in social revolt. Says one of its founders in New York: "A violent revolution should be the result of what people are forced to go through. But graffiti is what came out of it. Instead of taking arms we just took paint."[1] It is possible that given the presence of American cultural references among the Iranian youth—youth which played a major role in the Iranian Revolution, some having studied in the United States—Iranian revolutionary graffiti was inspired by its American counterpart. It is equally not clear for how long revolutionary graffiti continued to be genuine. For one thing it didn't revolutionize the shape of script; instead of the fractures, twists, and blown-ups typical of graffiti the world over, Iranian graffiti were written in the same obediently traditional nasta'liq style. Following the breakout of the war with Iraq and the hostility of Western nations, public calligraphy painted on walls experienced an unprecedented boom, very much reminiscent of Maoist China. Graphic arts are an old Iranian tradition, as exemplified by both pre- and Islamic-era wall painting for palaces, miniatures in manuscripts, or glazed tiles for inscriptions on mosques. In

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1 Craig Castleman, Getting Up: Subway Graffiti in New York (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982): 107.

contemporary Iran, the huge "revolutionary murals" seen in any city usually mix calligraphy with painting to celebrate martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war and Imam Khomeini, or to invoke the destruction of America and Israel. Some, dating back to 1979, have acquired the status of historical landmarks, while the new ones must employ a sizeable workforce. Painting banners for officially approved rallies is another lucrative niche for calligraphers, albeit debased as lettering and a toxic activity. Some murals are sponsored through the Defense Ministry and veterans' associations to commemorate fallen comrades and provide jobs, many finding in arts and literature solace from the scars of war. It is obvious that state politics did not take long to pick up graffiti and public calligraphy for their own interest, to maintain the fighting spirit of the population throughout the war and beyond, under the cover of graphics reminiscent of the days of the Revolution. The inscriptions of the Achemenid kings on the rocks of the Zagros mountains are prodigious examples of public lettering, but the contemporary Iranian military can pride itself on having produced something truly unique: a collection of landscape graffiti. On the barren slopes of the hills between Teheran and Qom, where maneuvers are held and rockets test fired, lie several dozen ten-foot-long inscriptions made from white painted rocks, some saying "Death to America" and "Death to Israel," some others outlining weapons such a cannon, accompanied by the identification number of the army unit and the date of the exercise (*Fig. 1*). The inscriptions follow the well-known military tradition of marking with messages the weapons and ammunition hurled at enemies. Clearly discernible on satellite images, the insults end eventually on the desk of some U.S. general, the intended recipient of this mix of low- and high-tech communication, but probably the soldier who sweated pushing those boulders up the hill didn't care too much about the propaganda—unless he wasn't rolling them down . . .

Calligraphy is a silent activity, best accomplished while alone and appreciated in intimacy—the opposite of speech, which needs an interlocutor, flies easily from mouth to mouth, and can be loud enough to move the masses. In Iran the feeble grindings of the pen are a golden exile for the liberty of spoken words. No other country using Arabic script witnesses such a large number of practitioners and lovers of calligraphy, actively encouraged and sometimes financially supported by the state. Calligraphers' associations and collectors of valuable historical masterworks are found even in small provincial towns. Specialized shops are bustling trading places for handmade papers, custom-made inks, reeds gathered in the torrid Mesopotamian plains or as far as Egypt and the island of Java, dragon-headed pen-holders from Singapore, and knives forged in the mountains

Fig.1 Military inscriptions on the hills along the Tehran-Qom road.

of the Caspian region. In contrast to Arabic countries where students of calligraphy are overwhelmingly male, or female in the West, in Iran the proportions are evenly balanced and the classes are well booked—even for a three-stories-high block such as the calligraphers' association branch in central Teheran. The response of the government is equally enthusiastic. Where else in the world is the building of the parliament and its tribune devoted to honoring the life-long work of a codicologue?[2] The Library of the Parliament has also published since 2000 the first journal in an Islamic country for the study of manuscripts and calligraphy and regularly organizes calligraphic exhibitions. When held in such a place as the halls of the Organization of the Islamic Conference the subject is "Islamic calligraphy," when in the Museum of Modern Art it is "Persian calligraphy"—although the exhibiting artists are the same. The naming of Arabic calligraphy is a matter of partisan sensibilities and militant cooptation. Calling it "Islamic"—the usual term in English, but not in French—excludes Christian, Zoroastrian, Jewish, Animist, and many other religious communities living in countries with Muslim majorities and using Arabic script sometimes as their sole writing, and also ignores the calligraphed poetry, administrative records, scientific treatises, and various other writings that have nothing to do with Islam. On the other hand no Persian patriot would call Persian calligraphy "Arabic," on the grounds that it should be named after its origins. Scholars would perhaps prefer "calligraphy based on Arabic characters," which is hopelessly too long to be practical, or argue that maybe "Islamic" doesn't refer to the religion, but much more inclusively to the calligraphy evolved within the Islamic civilization. Naming Arabic calligraphy—sometimes with overlaps and fluctuations for the same individual—reveals political, religious, national, and social identities.

During the Middle Ages Persia exported its calligraphy—and many times the calligraphers themselves—in great quantities to India and sufficiently to the Ottomans to fill a small quarter in a cemetery of Istanbul. Today's Iran continues the tradition of using calligraphy as an instrument in foreign relations. Oil, caviar, and carpets are successful Iranian export items, but calligraphy has the particularity of being reproducible by anybody who learns it. Also, who would want to visit the oil well from which the fuel in one's car comes from? But calligraphers are ready to travel to meet the masters whose script became theirs as they copied it so many times for training. At least, this is what happened to me. And once in Iran I met other calligraphers and got entangled in a mesh of cultural references whose exploration left little time to practice calligraphic styles not Persian.

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2 Festivities in honor of the respected Iranian manuscripts scholar 'Abd al-Hussain Haeri, November 2001, Teheran.

Among the efficient "attraction" places are the cultural centers of the embassies, which Iran has around the world; given that money is spent in Iran by cultural converts, the government's investment pays back at least in financial terms. In Syria, where I first started to practice Persian nastaʻliq, the calligraphers were divided into the local calligraphers, with an Arabic calligraphic accent, those with Turkish allegiances, and the Persianites. The divisions were reflected not only in the number of character elongations kashidas-s of their handwriting, but equally in the destinations for holy days, the languages they spoke, and the interior design of their apartments. It might even affect culinary habits (to which I can attest, having not so long ago started to learn Japanese).

Comparing Turkey and Iran would suggest that the state of calligraphic development is inversely proportional to the degree of democracy in each country. While indeed this is often the case, Western countries provide an example where Arabic calligraphy is thriving without political influence, being a civil art so to speak. The evolution of Arabic calligraphy in the West is interesting for the diversity of developments, resulting from the particularities of a transplanted art that is sensitive to its linguistic and cultural environment.

There are no clear signs of Western governments being aware of the public relations value of calligraphy for relations with the Muslim world. Although they did finance initiatives that had a sizeable impact on the popularity of Arabic calligraphy in the West—such as the World of Islam Festival in 1976 in the United Kingdom,[3] the Institute of the Arabic World opened in 1988 in Paris, and the Fikrun wa Fann cultural magazine published by the Goethe Institut of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government of Germany—governments chose the cultural-political strategy, leaving the actual content to the decision of curators, editors, and various collaborators. In the United States, government involvement is even less pronounced than in Europe, given the importance of private funding for education and arts. Occasionally, calligraphy exhibitions and classes are organized by foreign embassies in the West. Even if the political views of the local calligraphers do not converge with those of the sponsoring governments, the relation between local and visiting calligraphers is usually frictionless, the presence of a new artist stimulating individuals to enroll for calligraphic training, for the benefit of everybody involved.

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3 John Sabini, "The World of Islam: Its Festival," Aramco World Magazine 27:3 (1976), also available via www.saudiaramcoworld.com.

Scholars, librarians, curators, publishers, and antiquarians are another group of actors who have contributed intellectually to the status of Arabic calligraphy in the West, which again might or might not support the interests of all political forces concerned.

A third group belongs to the artistic scene: the calligraphers themselves, calligraphic associations, art galleries, and modern art collectors. Their role was to transform Arabic calligraphy from an art form alien to Westerners into something in which everybody could take part and produce, without the knowledge of Arabic script as a precondition. This was principally the work of a couple of emigrated calligraphers determined not to abandon calligraphy and to educate the public to appreciate it. Originally from Iraq, Hassan Masoudy is responsible for initiating much of the present dynamism of Arabic calligraphy in Europe. His book Living Arabic Calligraphy published in France in 1981 in a bilingual French-Arabic version succeeded as being all in one a history of Arabic calligraphy, a beautifully designed printed collection of calligraphic samples, and a teaching manual of everything from cutting the reed and making ink according to medieval receipt to writing in several styles.[4] He had many epigones and soon France became the center of intense calligraphic activity. In the United States it was Mohamed Zakariya, American by birth and Muslim-calligrapher by choice, who accomplished much for the popularity of Arabic calligraphy in that country. Although the Iranian diaspora is estimated to be around 1.5 million strong in North America, it didn't contribute to calligraphy to the expected extent, for socio-economic reasons that would be interesting to explore.

Given the actors identified above, how are the artistic choices of calligraphers as seen in the respective styles expressed socially and politically? A good part of Arabic calligraphy in the West is done in traditional styles, which is the easiest solution for calligraphers, since they only have to reproduce what they were taught. It is also exciting for the public, with the calligraphic training coming wrapped in cultural episodes picked from throughout the centuries and geography of Islam and telescoped into the present to make a richly decorated historical fresco, an excellent remedy to relieve Westerners from their Westerness and offer those with Arabic-writing ancestors pieces of identities to be imagined. The drawback is the reliance of this type of calligraphy on the "somewhere else," transforming a history into a calligraphic amusement park (complete with Horror Timur Lenk slicing through calligraphers, wise hurufi mystics lost in kabbalistic contemplation, and beautiful-eyed sons and daughters of calligraphy

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4 Hassan Massoudy, Calligraphie Arabe Vivante (Paris: Flammarion, 1981).

masters ready to be married), as well as the feeling of doing a second-hand calligraphy, away from the countries where Arabic calligraphy evolved, where the true masters still are today, and where one has ultimately to do his calligraphic hajj. (Which is literally what the organizers of the IRCICA competition are doing: from Washington to Kuala Lumpur, everybody has to travel to Istanbul, the Mecca of calligraphy, to get their diplomas.) A result of this is that calligraphy is easily used as part of a conservative approach to Islam. Arabic-writing communities in the West live in different conditions from their countries of origin; if there is a will to assert their particular identities, without constantly depending on the umbilical cord with the "somewhere else," then artists can have an important social shaping role. Every major style of Arabic calligraphy that we know today is a successful aesthetic expression of a particular cultural community. Watch for the day when there will be a European or North American variant of the Arabic script.

A sequel of globalization, the metis scripts are material proofs for the advocates of happy cultural blending: these are Arabic characters made to look like Latin letters. The reverse was also tried and there exists an equal amount of Latin script calligraphy in the shape of Arabic writing. While metis scripts existed throughout the history of writing in many cultures, their frequency has increased greatly today due to the need of the advertising industry (the Coca-Cola logo in dozens of world scripts is an excellent example). The next step for the artist, a step that would help make the cultural symbiosis go deeper than the paint level of corporate labels, is to use metis typefonts to set the main text, not only the titling of books, newspapers, and all sorts of printed matter. It would be a real case to test the open-mindedness of would-be cosmopolitan readers (or at least the limits between legibility and anger).

Hassan Massoudy's best-selling book on traditional Arabic calligraphy has ensured him an international popularity, but his artistic work is devoted to mixing abstract painting with calligraphy, the personal style being copied in the recent years by a couple of fellow Parisian calligraphers who build upon it their careers. Painting-calligraphy has evolved during the last half-century in most fine arts schools of Arabic-writing countries and those with Muslim communities where the fusion between foreign new with the indigenous and traditional has become a hallmark of the graphical landscape. Politicians have found out, however, that compared to traditional calligraphy, its modern avatar is harder to manipulate. Paint-calligraphy introduces a cut with the past, which, while apparently similar socially (the formal training by a teacher, in a school, and sanctioned by a diploma or the master's approval), is immediately sensed at visual level by not shap-

ing characters according to the rules of traditional calligraphy and relying heavily on color. It is particularly the aesthetic factor that explains the slow penetration of modern calligraphy in mosques (while it became a common feature of churches). Architects continue to play an avant-garde role, helped by the decision-making position they hold, in making modern calligraphy religiously acceptable. At the functional level the traditional/ modern schism has meant that less and less value is put on communicating through words, replaced by abstract graphic stimuli: calligraphy becomes blobs of ink splashed by the Arabic equivalents of Pollock and Hartung. For calligraphers living in the West and those seeking a global audience, shedding the language barrier is a natural turn taken by their art, but it leaves politicians and political pressure groups with little if any means to use calligraphy's writing component.

One also cannot overlook the westernized character of modern calligraphy: by its origins, the training of artists (the educational structure of fine arts schools, the textbooks in their libraries, the fellowships abroad), and the public it attracts. The perception of traditional calligraphy as religiously appropriate and modern calligraphy as less correct was reflected in the wish of the organizers of the calligraphy exhibitions in Teheran to host the former in the building of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the latter in the Museum of Modern Arts (which resembles the Guggenheim Museum in Manhattan). In the United Arab Emirates, which heavily invests in all material aspects of modernity, on the other hand, the state selected the Tunisian artist Nja Mahdaoui, known for mesh-like, broken-line modern calligraphies, to design the outward decoration for the fuselages of its national airliners.

One more element makes modern calligraphy difficult to use by politcians, especially conservatives: it is utterly individualistic. While in past times there were only a limited number of script models in usage at any time all over the Islamic world, now there are as many as there are artists. In a historical role reversal, calligraphy has become to an unprecedented extent a political instrument in the hands of calligraphers.

While Atatürk was dancing the foxtrot[5] and the Turks were about to forget

5   With the daughter of the governor of Izmir, during the first republican ball in 1925 (Elif Mahir, "Etiquette rules in the early republican period," Journal of Historical Studies on Turkey 3 (2005): 20; Nesrin Oran Mavitan, "Women in Turkey before and after Ataturk," The Izmir Turkish-American Association website (20 March 2001), http://www.izmir-taa.org.tr/english/women.htm). Among the most famous photographs of Atatürk is one depicting him dancing—it is said the tango—with his daughter at her wedding party (Selected Atatürk photographs from The National Library's archive, National Library of Turkey (Ankara) website, http://www.mkutup.gov.tr/75a.html). The image was an international hit, making it to the cover of The Illustrated London Times of the epoch, and

Arabic calligraphy, Iranians let calligraphy flourish in the 20th century and let the black of chadors censor from public view the female body. The idea that calligraphy acts as an intermediary between politics and sexuality appears to be one of the latest novelties regarding Arabic script. Here is how a progressive journalist described in his column of 1 November 1928 the "divorce" of laic Turkey from what the Qur'an itself names a God that doesn't bear:[6] "They say that woman is the most lyrical poem in nature. But the artist's brush and the sculptor's chisel have surpassed even this work of God. Well then, ye bournoused characters, a thousand years ago you came, and told the Turkish genius, 'Cast away that brush, and fling aside that chisel; take this inkwell and forget woman and nature, to beautify only us.' A thousand whole years; you should not have done this to us."[7] These thousand years of abstinence were however not evenly enforced. Reading for example Flower Garden of Arts, a biography of calligraphers and painters from mainly 14th and 15th century Persia, the importance of homosexual love as a driving force for calligraphy becomes evident.[8] It is also known—but not yet studied by scholars in order to asses the interplay between sexual behavior, calligraphic art, and political action—that homoeroticism was a component of the hurufi and bektashi movements that came to power in those times. Notwithstanding these occurrences, writing, calligraphy, and calligraphers never became a topic of Islamic erotic literature and painting, despite the importance of calligraphy in Islamic cultures. Not even Mamluk writers, prodigiously lascivious, felt ruttish on more than a couple of pages about the scribe's writing implements—even while script was one of their favorite subjects of administrative treatises.[9] India too didn't invent a subcontinental version of Hieronymus Bosch's paradise and hell for calligraphers, despite the ancestral ability of its Mughal miniaturists to depict in highly imaginative ways all sorts of sexual activities. In other cultures, however, the shapes of the alphabet are often the pretext to draw them as naked humans—recorded in the West since the Renaissance[10]—and calligraphers have been made part of the plot in erotic fiction, as in Imperial Chinese literature, recent Hong Kong pornographic

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is used today as projected wallpaper during commemorations of the event (Tolga Adanali, Atatürk's dance, photography, Nostalgy Ball of the Republic, Izmir, 2002, http: //www. tolgaadanali.com/tregl19.htm).

6   Qur'an 112:3.

7   Ismail Habib (Sevük), "Farwell, Ye Good and Faithful Characters," Harfi Harfine, (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Kültür Sanat Yaincilik, 1998), 19.

8   Qadi Ahmad, Calligraphers and Painters (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1959).

9   Suyuti 'Abd al-Rahman, Nuits de noces ou comment humer le doux breuvage de la magie licite (Paris: Albin Michel, 1972), 78-81.

10   Fritz Franz Vogel and Joseph Kiermeier-Debre, Menschenalphabete: Nackte Models, Wilde Typen, Modische Charaktere (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2001).

filmography,[11] and Peter Greenaway's movie The Pillow Book.[12]

A few examples, however, attest to the potentiality for sensuality of the Arabic calligraphy: a Kama Sutra–inspired book presents 28 selected positions of Sheherazade in the shape of Arabic characters;[13] bodies serve artists as living writing surfaces during performances, for videos and photography;[14] during a fashion show lingerie patterned with Arabic calligraphy lace is presented on the catwalk. Are these curiosities? Cheap marketing techniques? Recalling the preeminent place played by calligraphy in Theo van Gogh's movie Submission, and his ensuing killing,[15] would indicate the politically subversive nature of an alliance between eroticism and calligraphy.

Sex is a perennial saboteur, ready to blow up norms and transgress social boundaries, proclaiming new laws, when in the somber seclusion of its dealings the possessed souls are bound to meet. Not so calligraphy, the conformist bureaucrat always afraid to be out of pace with the same clique of a handful of old writing styles, which dictate their repetitious content to a mothballed scribe, toiling under a billboard that says "Silence!" It should come as no surprise, to those who hold such a cynical viewpoint, that rulers found an interest in calligraphy as a way to get a firm hold on sexual matters. Furthermore, if a calligrapher should by profession be as silent a fellow as a reader needs to be, he certainly cannot be blind, blind to the role he was given to play in society, and the chances are that if his spirit is rebellious, he might ally himself to sulphurous sex in an attempt to subvert the politics he dislikes.

11 Yu Li, The Carnal Prayer Mat (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996); Michael Mak (film director), Sex and Zen (Hong Kong, 1993), vol. 1.
12 Peter Greenaway (film director), The Pillow Book (Sony Pictures, 1996), Peter Greenaway, The Pillow Book (Paris: Dis Voir, 1996). In the film we see also a glimpse of the 15th century Timurid "Baysunghur Qur'an."
13 Hassan Musa, L'alphabet de Schéhérazade (Dommessargues: Grandir, 2000).
14 'Izzal-Dinal Madani (ed.), Nja Mahdaoui (Tunis: Ceres, 1983), Gabriele Mackert (ed.), Shirin Neshat (Vienna: Kunsthalle Wien; London: Serpentine Gallery, 2000).
15 Theo van Gogh (film director), Submission (Amsterdam, 2004), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Submission_%28movie%29).

Strangers, Lovers, and Kin: Gender Roles and Their Interplay with the Architecture of Awadh

Hussein Keshani

In our histories of the art and architecture of the Islamic world, there is barely a trace of the feminist critique of historiography, which has been steadily transforming our historical imagination of the Anglo-European past over the last three decades. The critique can be divided into two broad streams: first, there is a critique of women's absence from the historical gaze, and second, the practice of historiography itself is questioned. The latter critique is highly nuanced. It not only challenges historians to bring the pasts of women into the historical gaze, but in its most incisive form, asks that the very way history is imagined be reconsidered.[1] Simply making women the subject of historical study does not escape a model of history that is inherently androcentric, in which the roles of women and their relations with men are inevitably rendered as peripheral, obscuring their presence in the unfolding of history. The questions that historians are used to asking tend to produce male-centered histories; therefore, a re-examination of the types of questions that are asked and their underlying assumptions is necessary. Gender relations and roles are not to be understood as separate topics of historical inquiry but as areas central to historical inquiry itself, given the universality of gender relations in human

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1 Natalie Z. Davis, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case," Feminist Studies (1976) 3: 90. See also Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
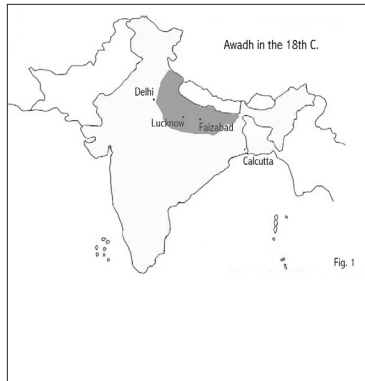
Fig.1 Map of Awadh.

societies. This formulation of the feminist critique does not see itself as part of a quest to impose a twenty-first-century ideal of gender equality onto the past, but as part of an increasingly successful effort to advance the discipline of historiography in the Anglo-European tradition.

The few attempts in the field of Islamic art and architecture to address the feminist critique so far are arguably rooted in a gynocentric approach.[2] Such an approach has been described as a women's history approach, or more critically as a recovery project, and does not fully engage the feminist historiographical critique. This paper attempts to address the feminist critique of historiography in relation to the study of Islamic architecture, using the case of architecture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Awadh[3], India, one of the most vibrant centers of architectural activity in the Islamic world at the time[4]. (*Fig. 1*) The period offers a good supply of historical evidence that exposes women's history more directly. Instead of simply asking which women were active in the process of architectural development and in what ways, we can ask what types of relationships between the sexes had an important bearing on architectural development and vice-versa. In doing so, the roles of women in the formation of the built environment are closely integrated into the historical gaze. The initial results show that gender relations and regimes are indeed deeply related to the unfolding of architectural development in Awadh.

Located in northern India and west of the Bengal, Awadh was an affluent, semi-independent province in the decentralizing Mughal imperium and a focus of Anglo-European colonial intrigue. Unlike the Mughal court, which generally patronized Hanafi Sunni Islam, Awadh's elite patronized Twelver Shi'i Islam, and the annual ritual mourning of the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn, a seminal event in Twelver Shi'i history, became a hallmark of public life, exceeding what was permissible in Mughal centers. In the mid-eighteenth century, Awadh was led by the Persian soldier-aristocrat Nawwab-Wazir Shuja al-Dawla (1753–75)

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2   D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Heghnar Watenpaugh, "Sources and Methods for Studying Women and Islamic Cultures in the Disciplinary Field of Art and Architecture," The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures, Suad Joseph, ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), vol. 1: 315–320. For a set of useful historical studies of Muslim women in history, see Gavin Hambly, ed. Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

3   Awadh is also spelled as Oudh or Oude.
4   For the most comprehensive survey of Awadh architecture to date, see Banmali Tandan, The Architecture of Lucknow and Its Dependencies, 1722-1856 (New Delhi, 2001).

with the aid of his strong-willed, wealthy wife Amat al-Zahra, who was affectionately known as Bahu Begam and had close ties to the imperial Mughal court.[5] The two were responsible for continuing to ease Awadh away from direct Mughal rule and help it evade the full brunt of British colonial expansion.[6] They based themselves in Faizabad, which began to emulate the architectural splendor of the Mughal capital Shahjahanabad (Delhi). Faizabad was destined to rival Shahjahanabad until a succession crisis erupted with the untimely death of Shuja al-Dawla in 1775, allegedly from a dagger wound inflicted by an Afghan princess he raped.

The succession crisis of 1775 was a turning point not only in Awadh politics but in its architectural history as well, for soon after the capital of Awadh was transferred from Faizabad to Lucknow, Faizabad wilted away into obscurity while Lucknow played host to the subcontinent's last flowering of monumental architecture in the Mughal tradition. At the heart of this crisis was the collapse in relations between Bahu Begam and Mir Amani (later Asaf al-Dawla), her eldest son with Shuja al-Dawla and rightful heir to Awadh's seat of power. This breakdown of the mother-son political compact lay behind the most significant event in Awadh's architectural history, the transfer of the capital to Lucknow.

In South Asian Islamic court culture, as elsewhere, reproduction and politics were closely entwined since dynastic and political continuity depended on the production of a male heir.[7] Because polygamous marriage practices partnered older men with multiple younger women, wives frequently competed within a female household hierarchy to become the principal wife by being the first to bear a male heir. A wife's financial security was not entirely linked to her husband's wealth, for Islamic law gave her rights to hold revenue-generating property and inherited wealth separate from her husband, a crucial point since wives routinely outlived their husbands. Following the death of the patriarch, the principal wife generally became the bearer of her husband's will and an agent of political succession. The royal mother of the eldest son was expected to assert her son's rights for succession at the time of the royal father's death but cede to his authority once the transition took effect. She in turn expected that having an eldest son who became a ruler would elevate and secure her social status, ensure her personal security and safety, grant her greater degrees of autonomy and power particularly over household bureaucracies, endorse her rights to

5 Amat al-Zahra literally means handmaiden of Fatima al-Zahra, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad.

6 Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, Shuja-ud-daulah, 2 vols. (Calcutta: S.N. Sarkar, 1939–45).

7 For a detailed treatment of the politics of reproductivity in the Ottoman courts, see: Leslie P. Peirce, Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Fig.2 Enclosure 3 of the Great Imambara complex with Friday mosque and Great Imambara.

oversee marriages of sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters to create political alliances, and give her a continued voice in political affairs with her son and the right to demand that her son use the resources of the "kingdom" to meet her needs and wants. In brief, she expected that the influence and status she had accrued with her husband would be sustained and enlarged through her son. Soon after Shuja al-Dawla died and before his funeral ceremonies were concluded, Asaf al-Dawla (r. 1775–97) impatiently seized authority. He sat on the throne, assumed military leadership, and appointed officials, much to the disgust of Faizabad's noblemen and his own grandmother. His mother, Bahu Begam, pointedly challenged Asaf al-Dawla's appointments, which included an individual who had offended her in the past. Faizabad's noblemen turned to Bahu Begam to regulate her son's behavior and perhaps disapprove of his succession but she did not. Seeking to expand their influence, British representatives at the court lobbied for the succession of Saadat Ali, a son of Shuja al-Dawla by another wife and someone who was indebted to the British. Bahu Begam initially played her prescribed role by endorsing her own son over Saadat Ali and writing letters to the British requesting that they support Asaf al-Dawla's accession. But Bahu Begam did not fully trust that her son would ensure her future welfare. She retained control over the Awadh treasury and Asaf al-Dawla's inheritance. In addition, she was blessed with her own vast personal wealth and extensive income-generating land holdings. As the cash-poor Asaf al-Dawla demanded more and more money from her, she laid plans to abandon Faizabad for the Shi'i pilgrimage center Karbala in Iraq and to take what she could with her, including her husband's body. After she saw the futility in escaping to Iraq, she entrenched herself in Faizabad and continued to resist her son's increasingly aggressive claims to power and wealth.

It was these circumstances that prompted Asaf al-Dawla to abandon Faizabad and rebuild the Awadh court in Lucknow, without a role for his mother. Had mother and son played their prescribed roles, Faizabad would have likely remained Awadh's capital. Over the next two decades, Lucknow and not Faizabad became the focus of extraordinary monumental architectural patronage by Asaf al-Dawla. The anchor of this redevelopment of Lucknow was the enormous Great Imambara complex, which consisted of three vast urban enclosures, several monumental gateways, a large Friday mosque and a monumental Twelver Shi'i ritual center known as the Great Imambara (*Fig. 2*). The Imambara boasted one of the largest masonry vaults ever built on the Indian subcontinent. The shift of the Awadh court from Faizabad to Lucknow after 1775 was not due to strategic military concerns, economic incentives, water issues, overdevelopment

or excessive crowding in Faizabad, or personal whims. The overarching reason for the change in capitals and corresponding building activity was the collapse of the political compact between mother and son.

While the breakdown in relations between mother and son was a turning point in Awadh's architectural history, it had little to do with the actual structuring of architectural space. However, gender roles and relations were important to the way that urban and architectural space were conceptualized, largely because the cultural practice of segregating unmarried men and women who had reached the age of sexual maturity was widely practiced, especially among the elite. One of the key functions of architecture in Awadh was to facilitate the regulation of access and visibility based on social rank and gender interaction privileges.

Considerable attention has been given to the social practice of segregating men and women in various Islamic societies, but the relationship between this practice and architecture is often limited to a study of women's quarters within households, typically the zananna (women's) spaces within palace complexes. The elasticity of the actual practice of segregation is sometimes lost. Like many other Islamic societies, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Lucknow saw segregation implemented at various spatial scales, with a variety of corresponding tools used to regulate visibility and gender interaction privileges when circumstances required. Within the household, these tools included a basic curtain or tapestry to section off space, interlaced wooden screens to cover windows, the division of the household into women's quarters (zananna) and men's quarters (mardanna), and high walls for the zananna. For mobility between segregated spaces, there was the infamous cloak for women (the burqa), the covered palanquins carried by male or female servants, and the covered elephant carriers (howdahs), all of which were applied primarily to the female body rather than the male body. Affluence determined the level of comfort and ease of mobility, as well as the capacity to implement segregation. Desexualized male eunuch guards and female soldiers, servants, and slaves, whose visibility could be compromised because of their inferior status, were essential to regulating gender interactions and securing spaces exclusively for female use. Male relatives also had similar responsibilities, privileges, and mobility. Architecture in Awadh was merely one element in a suite of tools used to structure gender relations and visibility. As a result of the emphasis placed on gender segregation by Islamic Awadh's social elite, architectural spaces in general were required to be adaptable enough to lend themselves to creating segregated spaces.
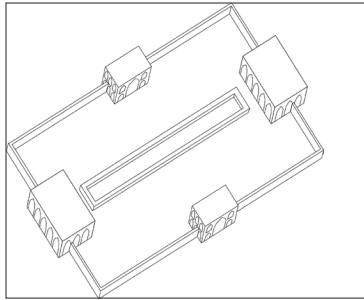
Fig.3 Hypothetical reconstruction of Farhad Baksh zananna.

A good example that demonstrates the elasticity in gender and spatial relations is the visit of George Annesley (1770–1844), the Viscount Valentia, to the quarters of Asaf al-Dawla's widow in 1803. The Viscount was an English nobleman with strong ties to the English East India Company, who toured and wrote about the Indian subcontinent. In the company of the widow's nephew, the Viscount was permitted into her decaying courtyard garden enclosure, located within Lucknow's Dawlat Khana, a new palace complex that Asaf al-Dawla built to replace the old Panj Mahal complex. Viscount Valentia wrote, "Our suwarrys [horsemen] were not admitted into the garden; it was a high compliment that I was permitted to approach so near, for Colonel Scott informs me that a miserable room on the outside is the usual place of audience."[8] The Viscount also described the encounter itself: "We were at a very small distance from her, but the thick purdahs gave us no hopes of a peep. The usual messages were carried across by the eunuchs. . . ."[9] The "purdahs" mentioned by the Viscount were the curtains that were generally used to cover arched openings for privacy and warmth; they could have peepholes for gazing outwards as well.

The Viscount also met with the mother of the reigning Nawwab-Wazir Saadat Ali Khan (r. 1798–1814), who was enthroned by the British after Asaf al-Dawla's death in 1797. The encounter took place in a large garden enclosure within Saadat Ali's new palace complex apart from the Dawlat Khana, the Farhad Baksh.[10] At two opposite ends of the enclosure stood a garden house and a women's residence that he called a "zenana." A long rectangular basin of water with fountains stretched between the two structures. (*Fig. 3*) Valentia wrote: "His Highness [Saadat Ali], with his usual court, was waiting to receive us at a garden-house situated opposite to the zenana itself. . . . We were seated in a verandah, and the eunuchs passed to and fro, bringing polite messages from the old lady, with thanks for the compliment of the visit. The zenana was a handsome building, but had a most melancholy appearance from the wooden lattice-work on the outside of the windows." As the Viscount left, he approached the zananna: "We then walked close to the zenana, (probably that its inmates might have an opportunity of more closely examining the Lord Saheb)."[11] In both cases,

8 George Annesley [Viscount Valentia], Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, The Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt in the years 1803, 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1806 in three volumes (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1809), vol. 1, p. 145.

9 Annesley, Voyages and Travels, pp. 144-145.

10 For a discussion of the Farhad Baksh, see Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 182-187. It is not known whether the garden enclosure still exists.

11 Annesley, Voyages and Travels, p. 143

a male stranger was permitted into close spatial proximity with a secluded, elderly woman. This was acceptable because both women held considerable status and were past their reproductive years. Viscount Valentia was also of comparable social rank and had ties with the powerful English East India Company. In addition, male relatives of the women concerned also accompanied him on his visits. Social etiquette permitted closer spatial proximity as long as visual segregation was rigorously preserved and the potential for sexual relations to take place was low. It should be noted in these instances that the women were entitled to see the stranger while he was not permitted to see them, showing that visual segregation was a one-way affair. The architectural scheme of the women's courtyard enclosures was not particularly unique, but they were easily adaptable for the purposes of providing visual segregation once the degree of spatial segregation had been relaxed.

Fig.4 View of the zananna of the Panj Mahal taken from the Friday mosque's minaret. Source: Panorama of Great Imambara complex, British Army, c. 1857, Picture Library, courtesy of the National Army Museum, London, 25249.

In addition to the implications that segregation practices had for architecture, the cultural practice of polygamy was also significant for the design of household architecture for the elite. The resulting female hierarchy imprinted itself on household architectural planning. Status hierarchies based on women's kinship and their sexual relationships to the central male of the household permeated women's quarters in social and architectural dimensions. At the peak of the female hierarchy was the mother and grandmother of the male. Next was the class of official wives, married in accordance with Islamic legal custom using the nikah ceremony in which a formal Islamic marriage contract between the bride and groom was approved. Beneath the official wives, there were the concubines, who had entered the household outside of nikah marriage. Within this female hierarchy, giving birth to a potential male heir was the surest means of ascent. In elaborate households, separate architectural spaces were designated for each class of women. The case of Lucknow's Panj Mahal palace complex illustrates how this was particularly true for the concubines.

Thanks to the British male scholar Frances Gladwin, we have an informative textual description from 1785 of Asaf al-Dawla's first administrative palace complex in Lucknow known as the Panj Mahal, including the women's quarters.[12] The Panj Mahal was destroyed after the Great Rebellion of 1857 but it was documented with photographs by the British army (*Fig.4*). Gladwin apparently did not enter the zananna enclosure, but he was able to discern that the women's quarters were planned as a rectangular enclosure with high walls, three inward-protruding buildings and one gate at the midpoint of each side. In other words, it followed a very generic
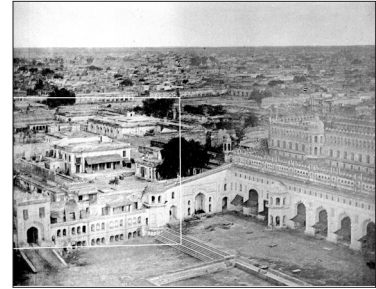
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12 Frances Gladwin, "Account of Lucknow," *Asiatic Annual Register* (London: 1800), pp. 97-101.

architectural idiom common to Mughal and late-Mughal era architecture. Gladwin explained that each of the buildings of the enclosure bore a different name—Sheesh Mahal (the glass house), Khurd Mahal (the lesser house), and Rang Mahal (the color/pleasure house).

The Khurd Mahal specifically referred to the structure designated for the concubines. The term "Khurd," meaning lesser, referred to the fact that concubines were considered as lesser wives in relation to wives who had entered the household through nikah marriage. Senior wives were apparently entitled to their own enclosures apart from the other women of the household. In Shuja al-Dawla's palace complex at Faizabad, his wife Bahu Begam occupied her own enclosure adjacent to a building also called Khurd Mahal, indicating that the palace complexes of Faizabad and Lucknow were similarly planned. In the households of later Nawwabs of Awadh, women who joined through temporary marriages but gave birth were given separate apartments and larger allowances.[13] Through their reproductivity, women transformed their spatial circumstances. The practice of polygamy, with its categories of official and unofficial wives, was reflected in the spatial layout and architectural nomenclature of the household complex.

Not only were portions of the palace complex named according to marriage and sex roles, women were titled according to the structures they dwelled in. In the household of the last Nawwab-Wazir of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah (r. 1847–56), the building a woman belonged to became a part of her name and title particularly if she gave birth to a child. Social and spatial status was thus imprinted onto the identity of women.

If architecture could reinforce gender relationships, it could violate them too. For example, when Asaf al-Dawla initiated the addition of the monumental Great Imambara complex to his pre-existing Panj Mahal palace complex in Lucknow around 1786, he compromised the visual segregation of the women's quarters of the palace complex. The Great Imambara complex addition, the second pivotal moment in Awadh's architectural history, included a Friday mosque for the Twelver Shi'i male community with towering minarets (*Fig. 2*) that provided a distant but clear view into

13   Abdul Halim Sharar, Lucknow, the Last Phase of an Oriental Culture, ed. and trans

E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976), p. 71

the zananna enclosure, bringing androcentric and gynocentric space into conflict (*Fig.4*). Not surprisingly, Asaf al-Dawla completed another palace complex called the Dawlat Khana far from the minarets and relocated his household there before the Great Imambara complex was finished in 1791. The reasons for the relocation, an important episode in the urban development of Lucknow, still require a detailed explanation, but the lack of visual privacy for women at the old palace complex would have to be considered as a key factor.

The preceding examples illustrate how gender relations were important for architectural development in Awadh, more than a first glance would suggest. The two pivotal moments in Awadh's architectural history—the relocation of the capital and the Great Imambara complex development—have issues of gender relations at their core. In the first instance, the reconfiguration of the relations between mother and son led to the relocation of Awadh's capital, significantly redirecting architectural development. In the second instance, an architectural intervention into the urban landscape of Lucknow destabilized the existing architectural regulation of visibility, contributing to the relocation of Asaf al-Dawla's palace complex. In addition to these two pivotal moments, the social practices of gender segregation and polygamy shaped the functional requirements of architecture in Awadh and underlay the very conceptualization of architectural space, as evidenced in the idiom of palace architecture.

Since the interplay between architecture and gender relations in Awadh builds upon similar relationships in Mughal South Asia and other Islamic societies, there is good reason to revise our current approach to the study of Islamic architectural history to be more sensitive to the ways that gendered social practices interact with the unfolding of the architectural landscape. As the case of Awadh shows, the stories of how men and women were conditioned and chose to relate to each other is an integral part of the stories of these architectural manipulations of the built landscape.

History and the Production of the "Culture of Shiraz"

Setrag Manoukian

Introduction

My research project at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT focused on the production of knowledge in contemporary Shiraz and in particular on some of the most visible products of this evolving concatenation: the buildings and public initiatives that mark the landscape of Shiraz today.[1] These diverse products are constructed, presented, and interpreted mainly through the modality of history, which constitutes the main frame of reference to imagine the city and its place within the Iranian nation.

Public history

The Islamic Republic, since its inception, has devoted many efforts to the control of public space. These efforts have been oriented toward mapping revolutionary discourse onto streets and squares through images, texts, and objects as well as toward conforming existing images, objects, and texts to what were perceived as the tenets of the new state.[2]

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1 I spent January and February 2004 at AKPIA at MIT and found a lively intellectual community that helped me to sharpen my views. I wish to thank Nasser Rabbat, Heghnar Watenpaugh, and Susan Slyomovics for their insights.

2 For descriptions of revolutionary images, texts, and objects and their relevance in the construction of the revolutionary state see Michael M. J. Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) and more specifically Peter Chelkoswski and Hamid Dabashi, Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran (London:

A dispersed set of operations projected a forceful regime of signs, structuring a prescriptive field that regulates what can be made public. The result of this projection, however, has not been a uniform space of conformity, nor a clear set of polarized oppositions between what can be made public and what cannot. The prescriptive field of public statements is highly contingent on a set of intersecting trajectories, from international politics to local moods. This field has undergone tremendous transformations in connection with changes in state structure and particular events. It has managed to retain, however, a certain degree of force even now that revolutionary zeal has become quite tame. The force of the field lies in the inscription of the mark of power on words, images, and objects, regardless of its homogeneity. It does not matter whether the ensemble of public statements has a strong coherence or adheres to a clear rule—what counts instead are performances of alignment. Making something public coincides with aligning it with what is perceived to be the field of public statements. The externality, indeed the superficiality, of this alignment is constitutive of its force.

History is particularly relevant in the prescriptive field of public statements. In Iran, history has been important in the construction of the national imagination. History plays a crucial role, even though—or because—it is a fractured field of diverging interpretations and causalities, where tensions toward truth intertwine with visions of undercurrents and conspiracies.

Making history public entails producing or modifying images, texts, and objects so that they can be exposed and available to everyone. This process implies fitting the past within the contingent configuration of the prescribed field. This conformity, however, does not mean that the resulting public history is a smooth, uniform, and coherent platform for the interpretation of the past.

Shiraz as an object of knowledge

In Iran there is a centuries-long tradition of discourses on the specificity of each city, mostly (though by no means solely) articulated in the writing of local histories and biographical dictionaries. These literary genres construct a relation between a certain group of people and a specific place: they territorialize knowledge, structuring specific geo-poetic identities, not unrelated to political restructurings.

Booth-Clibborn Editions, 2000).

Within this tradition, the city of Shiraz is mostly characterized by poetry and religious knowledge.[3] The poets Sa'di and Hafiz have been the most revered figures from Shiraz, but numerous books recount the achievements of many other important poets, mystics, and scholars, to the extent that the city is often termed dar al 'ilm, the land of knowledge.

In the twentieth century this territorialized tradition was restructured in conjunction with the transformation of Shiraz into one of the provincial cities of the Pahlavi nation-state. Pahlavi cultural politics, in connection with certain Orientalist works[4] and the role of Shiraz as a "colonial city,"[5] reinterpreted in national terms this Shirazi "heritage" and paired it with the Achaemenid empire whose most relevant ruins are located in the region. The Achaemenid empire had begun to be an object of interest in Iran in the second half of the nineteenth century, with books like Asar al-Ajam by Fursat Shirazi,[6] an historical geography of the region of Fars. By the 1930s the Pahlavis made the empire the central repertoire of historical and political identification and invested it with a discourse on the "origins" of the Iranian nation.

Classical poetry and the Achaemenid empire became during the Pahlavi period the two poles around which the Pahlavis' "culture of Shiraz" was articulated and inscribed in different ways on space, books, and events (restoration of poets' tombs, replicas of Achaemenid columns, tourist guides, scholarly publications, and conferences). Shiraz became the repository of "classical Persian culture," in contrast with the modern bustling capital Tehran, and in the monarchy's vision, a city deputed to pursue its tradition of knowledge. In the 1970s, this policy was made evident with the ceremony of coronation at the ruins of Persepolis, the establishment of the Pahlavi University, and the Festival of the Arts.

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3 Religious knowledge in Shiraz had two main trajectories, one mystical and one philosophical (hikmat).

4 Arthur John Arberry, Shiraz: Persian City of Saints and Poets (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960).

5 I owe the use of the term in reference to Shiraz to Narges Erami. This interpretation of Shiraz is not only connected to the work of Orientalists but has a colonial trajectory that I cannot discuss here at length. British presence in Shiraz, during World War I and II in particular, amounted in a certain period to a de facto occupation.

6 Muhammad Nâsir Fursat Shîrâzî, Asâr-i 'Ajam, edited by M. Rastigâr, 2 vols. (Tehran: Amîr Kabîr, 1998; original 1377).

The revolution of 1979 marked a sharp break. History had to be rewritten from a different point of view. The inscription of the revolution on the city was carried out through the destruction of Pahlavi insignia, the construction of new monuments, the change of street names, and a series of more temporary decorations, billboards, and banners.

All these interventions in public space signaled the institution of a new order, a new image of the "people," and a new interpretation of the past. They instituted a clear divide between "before the revolution" and "after the revolution," reproducing a more general organizational framework structured around the reversal of the previous social order. Public history in the Islamic Republic has been articulated through this reversal.

Cultural activities: Restorations

Today in Shiraz there are different state and municipal institutions that produce public history. These institutions, while often collaborating with each other, have competing agendas and economic interests. While all their projects have what Adorno might have called an administrative character and strive for the production of a unified field of knowledge and perception about Shiraz, the outcome of their activities is far from being the homogeneous sweep that their projects envisage.

The Cultural Heritage Foundation (Saziman-i Miras-i Farhangi), the state institution that supervises monuments, has been involved since the early 1990s in a large restoration project of the Shiraz city center. This was the area that Karim Khan Zand, the eighteenth-century "pious" ruler whose reign is considered today an example of just rule, turned into the political and commercial center of the city. There he had a fort erected, the Arg, where he resided, as well as a bazaar, a public bath, several administrative buildings, and a mosque, all now named after him. In the Qajar epoch the area retained its function and was often used for public ceremonies and executions. In the 1930s, during Reza Shah's time, several buildings for state administration (the municipality, the tribunal, the police, the post office, and the National Bank) were built. At the same time, avenues were drawn and the area was transformed. The new buildings were superimposed on the previous structure, which was disregarded. The Arg (which became a prison), for example, was obscured by the police building and became almost invisible from the street. A large avenue was built cutting through the Bazar-i vakil, which was divided in two as a result. These interventions gave a homogenized image to the area, which became the site for state and city administration.

In the 1970s, some of Karim Khan's buildings, such as the Kulah-i farangi pavilion, the mosque, and the bath, began to be used as tourist sites. There were projects to restore some of the caravanserais within the bazaar; at least one of them, the Caravanserai Mushir, was restored and filled with souvenir shops. Some of the performances of the Festival of the Arts were also held there.

The revolution put a halt to these projects but did not substantially alter the use and function of the area until the late 1980s. Since that time, an ambitious project has aimed at making the area more attractive by reconstructing it as it was at the time of Karim Khan Zand. The idea of the project is to turn this area of the city into a sort of history theme park. (*Fig. 1*) Restoration work began in the early 1990s when several Pahlavi buildings around the fort were demolished and the Arg restored. In 1997 a tunnel was dug beneath the avenue that divides the nearby Bazar-i Vakil. (*Fig. 2*) The present project, by moving traffic underground, aims at transforming the missing portion of the bazaar into a walkway. Work continued in 2002–03 with other demolitions. (*Fig. 3*) Only the building of the National Bank will apparently be spared.

These interventions into the area of the bazaar are indirectly related to the unprecedented urban explosion of the city. Since the early twentieth century the city has been expanding beyond its walls, which are now completely destroyed. Administrative buildings and residences began to be constructed along a series of avenues, some of which incorporated older roads leading to villages and beyond.[7] After the revolution, with the growth in population and the migration of refugees from West Iran during the war with Iraq (1980–1988), the city continued to expand in several directions, slowly coming to fill the plain where it is located, reaching the hills and mountains to the north and south and the salt lake to the east. Major expansion now continues westward. Since 2000, condominiums of ten stories or more have been built.

In conjunction with this expansion, middle and upper classes have moved out of the perimeter of the walled city and continue to relocate further west. The "old neighborhoods" (baft-i qadim), as the area once within the city walls is now called, are inhabited today mostly by Afghans and by people who recently migrated from rural villages; these neighborhoods are referred as payin-i shahr, the low city, a term that denotes both a social and a spatial location.
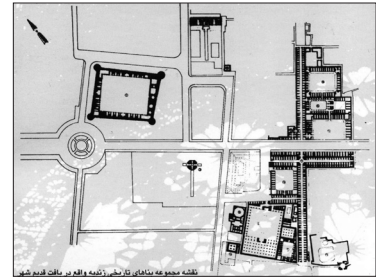

Fig.1 Plan for the restoration of the "Karim Khan complex" from Masur Fatavhiqiyam, Majmu'a-yi Zandiyya (Shiraz, Saziman-i Miras-i Farhangi, n.d.), p.5.

Fig.2 Entrance to the tunnel that passes beneath the Bazar-I Vakil.

Fig.3 Ruins of the central post office built in the 1930s; in the background, a wall of one of the administrative buildings of the Karim Khan epoch.

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7   John Clarke, The Iranian City of Shiraz (Durham: University of Durham, 1960).

Fig.4 A demolished house in one of the old neighborhoods.

The restoration project aims to "clean up" the area around the bazaar and construct it as a tourist site, attracting national and international tourists as well as drawing the middle and upper classes back for visits. The project is itself a very selective interpretation of the city's past. While aiming at the valorization of several historical buildings that had been neglected or destroyed during the Pahlavi era, the project intends at the same time to wipe out all that was built in that period. The project also envisages a substantial reconfiguration of the commercial activities in the area.

In many ways this project, while opposite to the Pahlavi urban plan and apparently aimed at restoring the area to its condition prior to the Pahlavis' interventions, in fact involves a similar trajectory: While the Pahlavis intervened on city space to institute the state's presence through large avenues and administrative buildings, the new project produces a public historical space at the center of Shiraz as the interpretative pole of the city, thus reinforcing its specific location within the national imagination.

These plans of the Cultural Heritage Foundation clash with different interpretations of the city's space and the presence of the past within it. While the Heritage Foundation is restoring buildings, the municipality of Shiraz is demolishing large portions of the old neighborhoods. (*Fig. 4*) The municipality argues that there is need for new avenues to ease congested traffic and that the neighborhoods lack a proper sewage system. The demolition of the old neighborhoods is carried out in the name of functionality but also aims at evicting the population living there. A large avenue that resulted from demolitions of homes was built between the shrines of Shah Chiraq and Astana, two important sites of pilgrimage, in an effort to ease traffic in the area, but consequently created a sort of no man's land in a central location. In 2004 the municipality launched a bid for investors to present projects to redesign the area.

The municipality is causing a de facto destruction of what remains of the older structure of the city. A number of "historic homes" will be kept, sometimes to be placed in the middle of roundabouts, thus achieving complete decontextualization. Questions of attribution of "historic" or "artistic" value on the one hand, and criteria of functionality on the other, define this dynamic of conservation and demolition.

Both the Cultural Heritage Foundation and the municipality, though in apparent discord, pursue visions of harmonious urban spaces, with clearly allocated functions. Built into these visions is the streamlining of a composite and layered urban landscape. History in this vision is a quality of certain buildings that should be preserved, thematized as "heritage," and marketed for tourist consumption.

Other forces in the city have different and opposing visions that are less concerned about the thematization of the past. The use of historical buildings for communal prayers and other religious events contrasts with their transformation into monuments—for many years the Vakil Mosque built by Karim Khan Zand was used for the Friday prayer and thus closed to visitors, the pressures of the Heritage Foundation notwithstanding. Now Friday prayer is held at the ninth century Masjid-i Nou, and cement pillars have been built in its courtyard to support a tin roof.

The election of Khatami in 1997 did not substantially alter this configuration of the administration of the culture of Shiraz. There were, however, significant changes, especially in the Office of the Ministry of Culture, which has since then promoted many more cultural events, most of them new in scope and theme: film festivals, art shows and competitions, photo exhibits, and music concerts. There has been a widening in scope and scale in the general implementation of activities.

In 2001, a Committee for the Development of Culture was created, which gathers representatives from the main institutions involved. The aim of the committee is to coordinate the different initiatives by speeding up the realization of projects that have already begun (such as the Karim Khan complex), while implementing new ones. The committee plans to build the following: a park of the "City of Civilizations," a park of "Culture," an historical museum of the literature of Iran, a cultural house of the tribes of Fars, a museum of theosophy and philosophy, a museum of contemporary arts, thematic museums linked with cultural heritage, a museum of the Achemenids (at Persepolis), a museum of the Zand dynasty, a museum of the Qajar dynasty, and an anthropology museum.

These initiatives further push the idea of a "culture of Shiraz" for general consumption, quite close to the articulation of what can be called "cultural entertainment."[8] It is unclear how these spaces would be organized. Their conceptualization pays homage both to certain contingent political views—"dialogue of civilizations" is a key Khatami term, here envisaged as a citadel with different pavilions—and to certain specificities of Shiraz that are turned into tokens of a fragmented and delocalized public history: tribes, philosophy, the Achaemenids, and dynasties of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[9]

8   Parks have been for years the single most developed area of state and municipal investment for the leisure time of the people. In Shiraz in particular, this meets with the long established practice of family picnics.

9   In this regard, the insertion of the Qajar dynasty should be noted: their revival, on the political, historiographical, and nostalgic level, has been going on for ten years or so. Noteworthy also is the absence of any mention of the Safavid dynasty, equally important in

Fig.5 Advertisement for a "traditional" kebab restaurant, with an Achaemenid soldier

Conclusion

These coordinated and conflicting administrative initiatives are structuring public history in Shiraz. They operate through what I have described as a dynamic of reversal that dates from the revolution and now takes place in transformed ways. It is a dynamic that works through a process of erasure and reconstruction, in search perhaps of a more homogeneous vision of public history for the nation. The trope of culture provides the ground for such projects, streamlining fragments into a unified frame, naturalizing political interests and transforming the traces of the past into objects for consumption. Culture makes possible the combination of seemingly divergent interpretations of the past and renders the Achaemenids public again. (*Fig. 5*)

This process, however, does not produce the uniformity it strives to achieve: The Shiraz city center appears more as the battleground of power than the concrete vision of a redeemed past. It suggests a contradictory but also livelier articulation of the past in the present, where conflicting visions are juxtaposed one next to the other, where an aesthetic of cut-ups and editing prevails over broad strokes. This does not imply that power is not at work, nor that these represent alternative trajectories. Rather, as I have tried to show, this fragmented landscape is one of the effects of the modality of power now prevalent in Iran.

Shiraz, which propagated Twelver Shiism in the country.

Italian Architects and Modern Egypt

Cristina Pallini

"Exiles who, fleeing from the Pope or the Bourbons, had embarked at night in fishing boats from Barletta, or Taranto, or from the coast of Sicily, and after weeks at sea disembarked in Egypt. . . . I imagined them, the legendary fugitives of the last century, wrapped in their cloaks, with wide-brimmed hats and long beards: they were mostly professional men or intellectuals who, after a while, sent for their wives from Italy or else married local girls. Later on their children and grandchildren . . . founded charitable institutions in Alexandria, the people's university, the civil cemetery. . . ." To the writer Fausta Cialente,[1] these were the first Italians who crossed the Mediterranean in the first half of the nineteenth century to reach what had survived of trading outposts founded in the Middle Ages.

Egypt, the meeting point between Africa and Asia, yet so accessible from Europe, was at that time the scene of fierce European rivalry. Within only a few years Mohamed Ali[2] had assumed control of the corridors to India, pressing forward with industrial development based on cotton. Having lost no time in inducing him to abandon the conquered territories and revoke his monopoly regime, the Great Powers became competitors on a

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1 Fausta Cialente (Cagliari 1898 – London 1994), *Ballata levantina* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1961), 127–128.
2 Mohamed Ali (Kavala, Macedonia 1769 – Cairo 1849) is considered to be the founder of modern Egypt. His mark on the country's history is due to his extensive political and military action, as well as his administrative, economic, and cultural reforms. His vast program of public works included the digging of the Mahmudiyyah canal from the Rosetta branch of the Nile to Alexandria, of fundamental importance in bringing the city into the orbit of the western world.

number of major projects for the transit of the road to the Indies across Egyptian territory.

Between the early nineteenth century and the 1940s, Italian emigration to Egypt was a matter of individual initiative and ambition. For many Italians Egypt was a second homeland, where their language was widely understood and spoken, where their fellow-countrymen held prominent posts enjoying the trust and esteem of the pashas, and where they could operate under particularly favorable conditions due to the Italian "imprint" left on many institutions by their successful and highly appreciated forerunners. For them Egypt was a land of promise partly on account of the many large-scale projects shaping the future structure of the country and its main cities against an international background where a vital stage in the development of a market economy was in progress.

Italian emigration to Egypt included a sizeable number of architects, engineers, and builders: pioneers who set to work for Mohamed Ali; political exiles who had been involved in the Risorgimento risings; emigrants seeking their fortune in and after the "golden days of the Khedives"; and up-and-coming professionals. Their influence began to make itself felt with the reconstruction of Alexandria (1819–1848), reaching a peak at the start of the twentieth century and lasting until the Nasserite period. They held a dominant role in the building industry and were to be found wherever construction was going on: in Alexandria and Cairo as well as in minor cities like Damanhour or Mansoura, or in the newly founded Helwan, Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez.

I have here chosen some examples to show how the approach frequently adopted by Italian architects in Egypt was one of courageous experimentation often producing results of great interest, a point that historians tend to neglect.[3]

In discussing the remodeling of Egyptian port areas (Alexandria and Bulaq) and the building of theaters and schools in Alexandria and Cairo, I want to emphasize that both are factors that facilitate the creation of social cohesion: the port was the basic reason for founding a settlement, explaining the presence of many ethno-religious groups; theaters and schools were important features of the resulting social framework that was to foster composite, yet individual, cultural identities.

3 During the rise of modern architecture in the 1930s those who continued to practice eclectic architecture in Egypt tended to be ignored or forgotten by their Italian contemporaries.

1. Italian contribution in the building of ports and their environments

Italian poets who were born in Egypt or lived there for a considerable time may help us to visualize the life of Egyptian ports from ancient times to their flourishing development in the course of the nineteenth century.

Alexandria

The buried port (1916): "The poet reaches it / then rises to the light / sowing his song." To Giuseppe Ungaretti[4] the discovery of a pre-Ptolemaic port, proving that Alexandria had been a port even before 332 BC, suggests a metaphor expressing the very essence of poetry. On returning to Alexandria in 1930, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti vividly expresses the dynamism of the port area spreading rearward along the Mahmudiyyah canal: "crowded in the pool above the lock, the boats are restless, anxious to be off with their load of raw cotton: groaning, grumbling, creaking in their aversion for that European trap!"[5] The poet Giuseppe Regaldi emphasizes the presence of an extraterritorial settlement, "the place where the Franks are most often to be found . . . a quadrangle commonly known as the Place des Consuls."[6] (*Fig. 1*)

This long rectangular square was created in the 1840s under the joint supervision of Ibrahim Pasha[7] and the Italian engineer Francesco Mancini, both playing a leading part in the Commission of Ornament.[8] Old photographs and maps enable us to see the square in detail as Giuseppe Regaldi saw it in 1850. At the southeast corner stands the Okelle of St. Mark and the Neo-Byzantine/Neo-Moorish Anglican church by the London architect James William Wildt. Along its eastern side are the Neoclassical Okelle d'Abro and Okelle de France, the traditional-style Okelle Moharrem Bey, and the
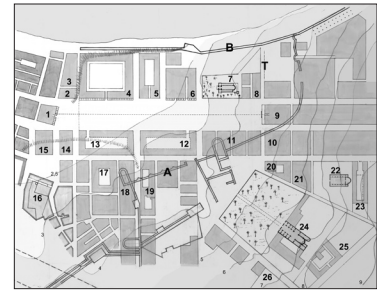

Fig.1 Alexandria: Place des Consuls around 1850 (author's reconstruction). Legend:
1. Okelle du Cafè de l'Europe; 2. Okelle Zizinia, Antonio Lucovich; 3. Mixed Tribunals; 4. Okelle Moharrem Bey/Neuve (including the Italian Theater), 1820 c.; 5. Okelle de France; 6. Okelle Abro; 7. Anglican church, James William Wildt, 1845–1854; 8. Okelle St. Mark; 9. Tossizza Palace, Francesco Mancini; 10. Okelle des Enchères Publiques; 11. Okelle Prince Ibrahim Pasha; 12. Okelle Domaines de l'Etat; 13. Hotel d'Europe (including an hammam); 14. Okelle d'Anastasy (including a collection of antiquities); 15. Okelle Gibarra; 16. Cheikh Ibrahim Mosque; 17. New Bazaar; 18. Convent of the Lazarists, 1844-1848; 19. Convent of the Sisters of Charity, 1844–1848; 20. Hotel Abbat; 21. Okelle Caruana; 22. Greek-Orthodox Church, 1847–1856; 23. Tossizza Schools, 1854; 24. Roman Catholic Church, Serafino da Baceno, 1847–1856 (and School of the Frères of the Écoles Chretiennes); 25. European Hospital, founded in 1816 and rebuilt in 1857. A. Old sea-walls, demolished in 1842; B. New sea-walls built around 1840 and demolished before 1865. T. Location proposed for the Italian Theater in 1858.

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4 Giuseppe Ungaretti (Alexandria 1888 – Milan 1970).

5 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Alexandria 1876 – Bellagio, Como 1944), Il Fascino dell'Egitto (Mondadori: Milan, 1981, original 1933), 77-78.

6 Giuseppe Regaldi (Novara 1809 – Bologna 1883), L'Egitto antico e moderno (Florence: Le Monnier, 1884), 59-60.

7 Ibrahim Pasha (Kavala, Macedonia 1789 – Cairo 1848) was the son of Mohamed and commander in chief of the Egyptian army.

8 My biographical details about Francesco Mancini are still incomplete. He came from the Papal States in Italy, arriving in Egypt in 1820, an exile for having served under Eugene Beauharnais in the Napoleonic Regno d'Italia. After a period of participation in Mohamed Ali's military campaigns, he undertook civilian works, subsequently becoming chief engineer to Ibrahim Pasha, with whom he planned the Place des Consuls. In 1834 he proposed institution of the Commission of Ornament in Alexandria, later taking it over as chief engineer. This may have reflected Mancini's involvement in the Commissions of Ornament set up in Italy under Napoleon and operating in Milan (capital of the Regno d'Italia) and Venice.

Fig.2 Alexandria: Tossizza Palace, Francesco Mancini. The original façade.

Neo-Moorish Okelle Zizinia by the Venetian architect Antonio Lucovich.[9] Bordering the old Frank Quarter are the Café d'Europe and the Okelle Gibarra. The western side of the square is lined with the elegant Okelle d'Anastasy and three large blocks similar in size, the Hotel de l'Europe, and the Okelles Domaines de l'Etat and Ibrahim Pasha. At the highest point, dominating the square from its southern end, stands the temple-like edifice of the Tossizza Palace. (*Fig. 2*)

The square was the "court" of trading-consuls, merchants, and financiers with whom Mohamed Ali associated.[10] With the sole exception of the Anglican church, all other buildings are okelles, a westernized form of the Arabic word wikala indicating commercial structures traditionally used in Egypt for warehousing and trade, also serving as a hostelry for dealers.[11] All compact blocks of approximately the same height, some have a traditional layout, such as the vast Okelle Moharrem Bey, while others look more like European mansions.

Francesco Mancini, who excavated the whole area to lay the foundations for these okelles,[12] is also believed to have designed their Neoclassical façades with a base, central body, coping or pediment, and introduced Doric and Ionic ornamental pilasters or semi-columns. It may be asked why he so extensively adopted a Neoclassical style in contrast with the Turkish town and with the other styles then being introduced. This may have merely reflected his training in Italy during the Napoleonic period, but may also have been a classicist revival attempting to link this new stage

9   Antonio Lucovich (b. 1815), engineer, architect, and entrepreneur, arrived in Alexandria in 1837. Reference to Antonio Lucovich's Italian origin can be found in Ersilio Michiel, Esuli Italiani in Egitto (1815-1861) (Pisa, 1958), 130.

10   While Moharrem Bey was Mohamed Ali's son-in-law, Abram d'Abro was an Armenian financier who settled in Trieste and was related to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Boghos Bey Yussufian; Giorgio Gibarra was a rich Italian merchant, an Austro-Hungarian subject, head of the Administration of Commerce. Michali Tossizza, a Greek from Metzovo, was consul-general of Greece and president of the Commission of Ornament; Etienne Zizinia, a Greek from Chios, was a French protégé and consul-general of Belgium; and Jean d'Anastasy, a Greek merchant, was consul-general of Sweden and member of the Commission of Ornament. Tossizza, Zizinia, and d'Anastasy were three of Mohamed Ali's "Greek agents," providing him with ships, weapons, and munitions from Malta, Leghorn, Trieste, Genoa, and Marseille.

11   An okelle is a square building with a single entrance, whose open inner courtyard is lined with arched-over spaces for wholesale trading; facing onto the streets are structures for retail trade, and access to the upper floors is gained though porticoed galleries lined with rooms to house merchants and temporary settlers.

12   See Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, Modern Egypt and Thebes (London: John Murray, 1843), 166.

in the life of the port-city with its mythical Hellenistic past, or again may have been the means for establishing a lingua franca to give a European touch to the new Alexandria.

While Alexandria's flourishing development in the 1840s explains how Mancini's city planning in the Commission of Ornament had to cope with the changing needs of an expanding population in continuous movement, the final layout of the European town wedged between the Turkish and Arab towns—its main streets following the orientation of the square to reach Ras el-Tin palace, the canal port, and the ancient Canopic street— shows that the square was conceived both as the city center and as its ultimate form in embryo. Mancini, known to have extensively explored the still visible vestiges of the ancient city and to have discovered the remains of a Roman stadium,[13] may have found inspiration for his long rectangular square from the famous Heptastadium,[14] from the shape and size of a Hippodrome,[15] or from the Qaramaydan at the foot of the Citadel in Cairo.

What is certain is that the Place des Consuls became the scene of many historical events. In 1882, it became the main target for British bombardment and the site of executions of Orabi Pasha's nationalists. Reconstruction of the new blocks, similar to the European galleries of the nineteenth century, marked a decisive change; originally so vital to the port, the square had now become mainly a financial center. The Bourse—the former Tossizza Palace—provided the background for Nasser's speeches to the masses, eventually to be destroyed by fire during the Bread Riots of 1977 and completely pulled down in the early 1980s.

Bulaq

"Where the first pyramid hides the other two," writes Luigi Odescalchi, "you will find Bulaq, more or less a suburb of Cairo for which it acts as a storage point, port and customs house; it also has a remarkable museum."[16] Odescalchi describes the Bulaq of the early 1860s as a place in

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13 Wilkinson, Modern Egypt and Thebes, 171,172.
14 The Heptastadium was a seven-stadia-long dike (7 x 185 m. = 1295 m.) built by the Ptolemies to join the mainland to the island of Pharos. In the Arab period the Heptastadium silted up and became a neck of land, where the Turkish town was later to grow up.
15 Mohamed Ali's intention to evoke the cityscape of the Bosphorus—his Ras el-Tin Palace in Alexandria built à la Constantinopolitaine, his Alabaster Mosque in Cairo closely resembling the Sultan Ahmed Mosque—might also have influenced Mancini in designing

the elongated square, similar to that of the Istanbul Hippodrome.
16 Odescalchi, L'Egitto Antico Illustrato e l'Egitto Moderno (Alexandria: Tipografia Anglo-Egiziana, 1865), 264.

transition: from a major Nile port, given new life by the presence of the Alexandria–Suez overland route, to a settlement near Cairo becoming little more than a suburb of the city. Most probably he also saw what still remained at Bulaq of the main manufacturing site set up by Mohamed Ali in his plan to industrialize Egypt: the naval arsenal and docks, the textile factories (1818), the great foundry (1820), the government printing house (1822), and the School for Civil Engineers (1821), later to become the Polytechnic (1834).

While Carlo Rossetti, a trader from Trieste, had made a collection of antiquities in his country house at Bulaq as early as 1800,[17] Giuseppe Bocti, a mechanic and a veteran of the Egyptian Expedition, also from Trieste, was one of the European experts who discussed with Mohamed Ali his projects for liberating Egypt from dependency on foreign industry, also aiding him in setting up his cotton industries at Bulaq, in Cairo, and in the provinces.[18] Pietro Avoscani, from Leghorn,[19] was engaged in urban development south of Bulaq as early as 1865. When Ismail Pasha[20] began planning a modern Cairo close to the old city, Avoscani was among the investors who acquired plots of land on which he intended to build an école mutuelle and a School of Arts and Crafts; in 1873 he also intended

17 Carlo Rossetti (Trieste 1736 – Cairo 1820) arrived in Egypt around 1780, started as a trader, later becoming consul general of Austria and Russia, while maintaining a close relationship with Murad Bey, one of the Mamluk beys who controlled Egypt in the last quarter

of the eighteenth century.

18 See L. A. Balboni, Gli Italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana del Secolo XIX, vol. 1 (Alexandria, 1906), 229-30, and John Bowring, Report on Egypt and Candia (London, 1840), 31.

19 Son of a nobleman ruined by risky trading enterprises with the Indies, Pietro Avoscani (Leghorn 1816 – Alexandria 1890) emigrated to Alexandria in 1837, perhaps because of a charge of conspiracy for having joined Mazzini's Giovine Italia movement. Avoscani arrived in Egypt already trained as a goldsmith, fresco painter, and decorator and his work on the Ras el Tin palace soon won him the esteem of Mohamed Ali. In 1839 he left for Athens, Constantinople, Odessa, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Vienna on a diplomatic mission. This was also a pilgrimage in the field of art. In front of monuments like the Acropolis, Avoscani came to realize his real vocation as an architect. His experience as an architect and artist was interwoven with his many journeys, with his patriotic activity, and with his work as entrepreneur. Before Ismail's visit to the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris Avoscani was asked to prepare a project for a new quarter designed to join Cairo to Bulaq; see L. A. Balboni, Gli Italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana del Secolo XIX, vol. I: 407.

20 A grandson of Mohamed Ali, Ismail Pasha (Cairo 1830 – Istanbul 1895) became the fifth independent sovereign of Egypt, the first Khedive. He took power in 1863, abdicating in 1879 in favor of his son Tewfiq. His reign saw the establishment of European influences in Egyptian political life. He initiated an extensive program of public works. The opening of the Suez canal in 1869 gave him an opportunity to transform Cairo into a

capital comparable with those of European countries.

to build warehouses, a market, and public stables to promote industrial development close to Bulaq along the Ismailia canal.[21] Augusto Cesari of Ancona,[22] an architect-draftsman employed by the management of Ismail's properties, was asked in the early 1870s to draw up a project for the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Bulaq, which had been housed since 1863 in a building on the banks of the Nile that had served as offices for the Nile Steam Navigation Company. Though it is still unknown what Cesari's project really consisted of, we do know that the Museum did much to restore the attractions of Bulaq, becoming both a school of archaeology and a place where Egyptians could visit exhibitions and learn to appreciate the history of their country. Later on Cesari again worked in Bulaq to restore the School of Fine Arts.

2. Theaters

Introduction of the theater into Egypt was important in promoting development of social life, embodying, as it did, aspects of collective activity.

Alexandria

Pietro Avoscani guides us through events that led to building a theater on the road to the Rosetta Gate in Alexandria, and another at the Ezbekiyya park in Cairo. For Avoscani the theater was a real passion. On returning from his first diplomatic mission in 1841 he produced "Gemma di Vergy" by Donizzetti, "Ernani" by Verdi, and the "Barber of Seville" by Rossini at the Gabbari palace in Alexandria, arousing the enthusiasm of Mohamed Ali. Shortly later he successfully produced a patriotic piece at the Italian Theater (located in the Okelle Moharrem Bey), highly appreciated by his compatriots. In the 1840s he designed a theater that was also to house the Stock Exchange, a club, and a reading room, although this was never built. In July 1856 he organized a grand public festival at the Gabbari where he put on operas, tragedies, ballets, and gymnastic shows during the three days of the event.[23] A year later, together with other Italians, he asked permission to build a new Italian Theater and organize a competition for its design, eventually won by the Florence architect Mariano Falcini.[24] (*Fig. 3*) This project was never implemented, but in 1862 Etienne Zizinia, the powerful Greek consular representative for Belgium, finally entrusted Avoscani with the design for a theater to be built on the road to the Rosetta Gate. Avoscani's building closely resembled the Teatro
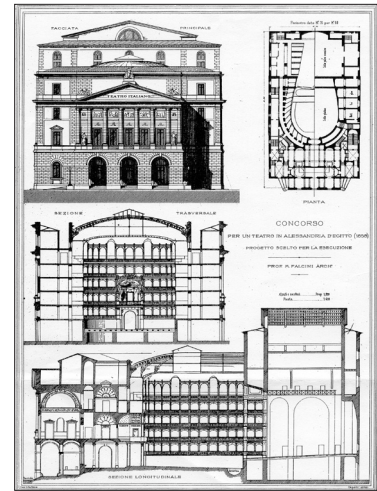

Fig.3 Alexandria: competition project for the Italian Theater, Mariano Falcini,1858. The image is taken from Ricordi di Architettura, 1882 (V), n. II, plate V.

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21 Avoscani never managed to implement these projects. See Jean-Luc Arnaud, Le Caire—Mise en place d'une ville moderne, 1867-1907. Des intérêts khédiviaux aux sociétés privées, Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Provence, December 1993: 60-64.

22 Balboni, Gli Italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana del Secolo XIX, vol. II: 236.

23 "Les fêtes d'Alexandrie," in L'Illustration, a. 28 n. 70, 16 August 1856: 103-106.

24 Mariano Falcini (Campi Bisenzio 1804 – Florence 1885).

Fig.4 Cairo: Khedivial Opera House, Pietro Avoscani, 1869 (photo J. P. Sebah). Harvard Semitic Museum Photographic Archive

alla Scala in Milan. In contrast with the Scala's Neoclassical style he used terracotta decorations, typical of Milanese buildings of the Risorgimento period, perhaps to celebrate the accomplishment of his patriotic ideals after Italian Unity was proclaimed in 1861. Although the city contained other theaters, it was his Zizinia Theater that marked the line of the road to the Rosetta Gate as a main urban axis of the European quarter, along which consulates and villas came to be built a few years later.

Cairo

Avoscani's great opportunity arrived when Ismail decided that Cairo must appear as a European capital for the Suez Canal opening ceremonies in 1869. He had almost completed the Opera when in the fall of that year he took the poet Giuseppe Regaldi to see the Ezbekiyya park, telling him how that very spot had been a depression forming a lake during the Nile flood until Mohamed Ali reclaimed it and turned it into a garden of acclimatization.[25]

The Opera, the most important of the new public buildings financed by Ismail to transform the Ezbekiyya park into a showplace for the new Cairo, stood isolated, dominating a small square, its longer side facing onto the park. (*Fig. 4*) For its main façade Avoscani seems to have experimented with a monumental version of the Zizinia Theater in Alexandria: a tripartite composition with a central portico supported by Ionic columns, and a loggia with arched doorways framed by terracotta decorations and decorative pilasters. With its interplay of volumes, a central loggia, and horizontal cornices, the great frontage of the Opera facing onto the Ezbekyia park visually balanced those of the new hotels.

It might seem that in designing his theaters Avoscani was merely aiming to please foreigners. The views of Abou Naddara, considered the founder of the Arab theater in Egypt, may however help us to avoid hasty judgments. His ideas for plays of topical interest developed after going to the Ezbekiyya theaters, the Opera and the Commedie Française. He said, "at that time, in 1870, a good French troupe of musicians, singers and comedians, and an excellent company of Italian players were the joy of the European colonies in Cairo. . . . Seeing the farces, comedies, operettas and dramas acted here gave me the idea of creating my own Arab theater, and with God's help I have carried it out."[26]

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25 Giuseppe Regaldi, *L'Egitto antico e moderno*, 144-145.
26 Interview given in 1877 by Abou Naddara, published in Jannet Tagher, "Les débus due théatre moderne en Égypte," in Cahiers d'Histoire Étyptienne I, 2: 192-207.

3. Schools

While theaters provided focal points of social life for upper-class members of the different ethno-religious groups, schools and hospitals became community buildings par excellence, furthering cohesion of the social fabric to which large entrepreneurs were giving an economic impetus. Schools in particular—where every group could teach its own language, history, and traditions—were not only the expression of a community's presence, but also of its permanence, prosperity, and culture.   One of the key periods to illustrate school building in Egypt is the 1930s when increasing nationalistic tendencies were causing some communities to become mere groups of mutually hostile nationals.

"Cultural—and economic—penetration is of paramount importance in the programs of the Great Powers in Egypt. . . . Till now Italian cultural policy has only been aimed at Italian communities. No plan whatever has been made to promote Italian culture in Egypt, and diffuse its spirit among the Egyptian ruling classes."[27] Addressed in 1931 by Roberto Cantalupo, Minister of Italy in Cairo, to Piero Parini, General Director of Schools abroad, these words express an appeal for change. Projects such as the Royal Littorie Schools in Alexandria (1931–1933), the Italian Schools in Cairo (1934), and the Casa d'Italia in Port Said (1936)—all designed by Clemente Busiri Vici[28]—were vitally important for the fascist regime, aimed as they were at strengthening the links between Italians in Egypt and their homeland while associating fascist ideology with a new spirit of national identity.

Italian journals and newspapers circulating in Egypt at the time show how the Littorie Schools in Alexandria were both an experiment and a manifesto[29]: a community building of a new kind, where most of the social,

27   See Situazione scolastica in Alto Egitto, Cairo, 5 June 1931, Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Esteri, Affari politici, Egitto 2 (1931): 8-9. This reference is taken from Simonetta Ciranna's article "Italian Architecture in Egypt in the Thirties. The Works of Clemente Busiri Vici," in Amate Sponde . . . Presence of Italy in the Architecture of the Islamic Mediterranean. Environmental Design 9-10 (1992): 118-119.
28   Born in a family of architects, and graduating in 1912 at the School of Applied Engineering, Clemente Busiri Vici (Rome 1887 – Rome 1965) expresses the combined figures of the technician-builder and of the architect-artist. He was becoming known even before the outbreak of the First World War. Later, in the 1930s, he worked extensively for the Fasci Italiani all'Estero, an institution—begun in the early 1920s and ratified by Mussolini in 1928—that reflected the nationalist attitude innate in fascist philosophy and the new political concept applied to emigration (emigrants were supposed to form a compact political force, subject to the authorities of Rome to further the interests of the mother country).
29   In particular Il Legionario, the weekly for Italians abroad, and the special issue of Il Giornale d'Oriente published in February-March 1933 marking a visit to Egypt by King Vittorio Emanuele III.
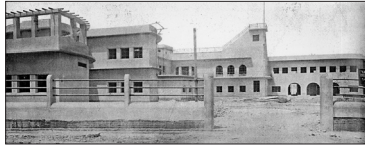
Fig.5 Cairo, Italian Schools at Shubra, Clemente Busiri Vici, 1934.
The image is taken from A. Regagioli, "Scuole italiane in Egitto," L'Ingegnere, n. 22, Dec. 1935, p. 928.

cultural, and recreational activities of the Italian community were concentrated and where new behavioral patterns—athletics and fascist youth associations—were encouraged. The school had to function as a piece of the homeland, its extremely plain style intended to mark a clean break with the revivalist architecture of the past.[30]

The ground chosen for this complex was situated in the Chatby area, where the British Boys' School, the Greek complex, the St. Mark College, and the Lycée Français already formed a "city of education." Exceptional in size, the Littorie Schools were to house the nursery, the primary and boarding schools, high schools, a library, a theater for 2000 people, and extensive sports facilities. Busiri Vici concentrated the building in the higher half of the area, leaving the lower half for sports grounds. A symmetrical layout gave coordination to the spacing of building volumes, which consisted of a series of pavilions connected by walkways to form a single structural complex.

In 1934 Clemente Busiri Vici designed a new Italian School complex in Cairo. (*Fig. 5*) Located on the great Shubra road, at that time a major route to a rapidly developing area, this building included many forms of activity: sports facilities around an open-air gymnasium, a garden for recreation, the nursery school and the Casa del Balilla facing onto a common open space, and the primary school facing onto a great courtyard overlooking the Shubra road.

While the Cairo complex embodies Busiri Vici's idea of the school as an all-inclusive citadel, the Littorie Schools seem to show that Busiri Vici was aiming at a strong evocative effect, inventing what he intended to appear as an example of modern (fascist) Italy. Here his architecture is full of symbolic features, all aimed at arousing emotional feelings among the users: arched walkways, porticoed courtyards recalling those in convents, plain and simple volumes evoking the works of Italian metaphysical painters, with the school overlooking the sports grounds as eighteenth century Italian suburban villas overlooked their parks.

Busiri Vici's focus on experimenting with buildings of a new kind—such as the "new school" and the "casa d'Italia"—all aimed at transforming the Italian individual emigrant into a member of an Italian-fascist colony abroad, seems to have led to a highly original form of figurative research, even to the point of challenging the constructional principles of architec-

30 It is an extraordinary thing that construction of the Royal Littorie Schools should have been started only 16 years after the huge neo-renaissance building of the Italian Schools had been opened; this emphasizes the urgent need felt by Italians to mark the beginning of a new stage in the life of the community.

ture, aiming as he did at creating an allegorical representation of Italy as the homeland.

Concluding remarks

Italian architects, engineers, and builders emigrated from places of widely different historical origins, each with its own marked cultural identity and political and economic role. They came from ports and capital cities of the single states existing prior to unification, from Leghorn (Avoscani), Trieste (Bocti), Venice (Lucovich), Genoa, Ancona (Cesari), Bari, Catania, Palermo, Turin, Florence (Falcini), Naples; from towns like Voghera, Ferrara, Bologna, Modena, Carrara, Siena, and Ascoli Piceno; from territories like Trento, Udine, and Gorizia. As time went on, arrivals from Rome and Milan increased, while many were second- or third-generation Italians born in Egypt. Only a few never went to Egypt but prepared their projects in Italy.

The training and cultural backgrounds of these Italians ranged between two extremes: architect-artist (Avoscani) and technician-builder (Bocti), whether possessing a regular qualification, or knowledge acquired solely through practice. Some had risen from the ranks of apprentices to more traditionally trained artists, for others the family cultural background fulfilled a fundamental role. Some of these pioneers (Mancini) came from military careers, but the later arrivals had been trained in academies of fine arts and in polytechnic schools, each dominated by some emerging personality, architectural teaching having become a separate national curriculum only in the 1920s. Few had a European-style education, while several were trained entirely in Egypt.

Rather than seeking what Edward Said called "a way of coming to terms with the Orient . . . based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience,"[31] Italian architects, engineers, and builders espoused a non-Eurocentric attitude, their diverse cultural and academic backgrounds proving to be a factor for integration. Even after unification of the country in 1861, Italy still had to face a complex process of integrating widely differing local cultures. For the Italian architects in Egypt there was no single concept of the meaning of architecture; their approach to design and urban development was greatly influenced by their individual origins, diversified training, and academic experiences, and also by their cultural levels and professional opportunities.

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31   Edward Said, Orientalism (London: Penguin Books, 1995, original 1977), 1.

On arriving in Egypt, they tended to seek some kind of balance between personal backgrounds, local traditions, and their clients' demands. At such a crucial time when a physical and social environment had to be rebuilt, they found new ways of using traditional types, experimenting with architectural styles to give an identity to some new urban settlements (Mancini). While Egyptian cities were being "Europeanized," these architects were seeking fresh interpretations for major western institutions such as the theater and the museum (Avoscani, Cesari). At a later stage they experimented extensively with new building types, such as the all-inclusive modern schools (Busiri Vici). Most of these architectural features reflected the original kind of sociocultural environment that distinguished Egyptian cities between the early nineteenth century and the 1940s.

Gaetano Moretti, a prominent Italian architect who visited Egypt around 1900, said that the other European architects there were mere adventurers, capable of little else than reproducing in Egypt popular features from their own countries, regardless of their fitness for the Egyptian context.[32] I hope that I have here managed to challenge such severe judgments. Two aspects were decisive for a successful outcome: the architect's imagination and the client's demand for an architecture that people could understand. I believe that a consideration of the experiences of Italian architects in Egypt is not only a matter of historical interest, but it may also suggest some criteria that architects can usefully adopt in approaching problems of architectural design in dealing with major changes in progress.

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32 See Gaetano Moretti, "La villa Zogheb al Cairo. Due parole sull'architettura moderna in Egitto," L'Edilizia Moderna, January 1903: 1-3.

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