

**The Villa and the Modern Egyptian Intelligentsia:
A Critique of Conventionalism**

by

Khaled Asfour

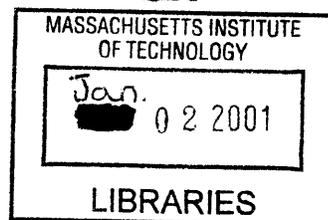
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In Architecture, Art and Environmental Studies
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Abstract

The dissertation deals with how societies respond to foreign influence, which in today's Arab cultures has had the effect of stifling innovation in architectural practice and intellectual life. At the end of the nineteenth century, in contrast, a relaxed and self-confident attitude towards Western influence allowed for a more critical approach to both local and foreign conventions giving birth to a new architecture.

The dissertation investigates this problematic present by comparing it to the ideologies and dwellings of the educated Egyptian elite of a century ago. It examines the synthetic process that occurred between different ideals in architecture and those in society, in practice and in theory. By highlighting the congruence and discrepancy involved in the process, I argue that it is possible for a culture to derive inspiration from another while still maintaining its own identity as manifested in social values.

Thesis Supervisor: Stanford Anderson

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TEXT REFERENCES

My transliteration of Arabic words is based on the system used by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, but I avoided using diacritics with the exception of the apostrophe (') for the *hamza* and an inverted comma (') for the *ayn*. I also replaced (j) by (g) and (e) by (i) in places when the term is restricted to the Egyptian dialect.

Text references combine the author-date system with footnotes. The benefits of this combined style are the reduction of the "ibids" and "op. cites" that usually inflate the volume of footnotes. The author-date system is used to refer to the source of information. Footnotes are used to comment on a particular point or present a supplement argument.

I N T R O D U C T I O N A N D M E T H O D

A century ago, Egypt was well informed about European culture. The years of contact between the native and European culture had eliminated any expectations that the foreign presence was temporary. Conventions of the local culture had carved a permanent place for the European in society. The contact between the two cultures resulted in a rigorous process of interaction. Deconstruction, diffusion, adaptation are only a few notions involved in this process. This prompted an intensive cultural criticism. The European was seen as both contaminator and rescuer; the native was seen as both regressive and authentic. It was a time of reevaluation and innovation.

The response to Western intervention varied from total fascination to rigorous rejection to conditional or reluctant acceptance in the upper classes and especially among the Western-educated intelligentsia.

These elites ... possess a more or less definite grasp of Western ideas. In their reactions to Westernism they are sharply differentiated. Some while retaining the fundamentals of their ancestral philosophy of life, attempt a genuine assimilation of Western ideals and envisage a higher synthesis of the spirits of East and West. Others break with their traditional pasts, steep themselves in Westernism, and become more or less genuinely Westernized. Still others conceal behind their Western veneer disillusionment and detestation. Of course it is in externals that Westernization is most pronounced. The ... "intellectual," [holds] Western university degrees and [speaks] fluently several European languages ... Such men wear European clothes, eat European food, and live in houses partly or wholly furnished in European style. Behind this

facade exists every possible variation of inner life ...
(Stoddard, 1921; pp.93-94).

I am interested in this Western-educated intelligentsia, particularly the group that attempted to synthesize Western and Eastern ideas and that simultaneously took into account the validity of both. Members of this class who saw the two as complementing each other, were the majority. They tried to find a middle ground and invested their efforts in diminishing the differences between local and foreign ideas rather than accentuating them.

By contrast, in the Arab world today, a prevailing trend among intellectuals and architects is to see both Western and Eastern ideas as uncompromising opposites. One group perceives history as deterministic over contemporary criteria of living. "Islamic character" is the banner of this approach and has social, political and religious connotations. Not to fly this banner of "Islamic character" is itself taken as a statement. Architects and intellectuals of this group may then be labeled as outdated modernists or simply as Westernized practitioners. This hegemony of the past over the present would coerce them to reduce their innovative capacities and rather direct them to the recycling of the past as the doctrinal solution for the present.

Another approach today, less popular, is the tendency to welcome foreign ideas with slight adaptation to local environment. These ideas are neither in harmony with behavioral patterns, nor do they satisfy aspirations for a better future. Innovations, often tied with the notion of modernity, do not include the local heritage while introducing the foreign.

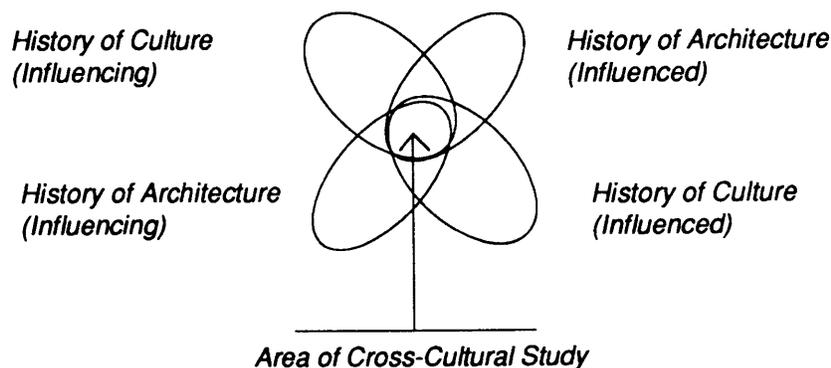
These two polarized approaches I shall consider as the "problematic present." The dissertation responds to this present by showing that the same notions of modernity and tradition were debated a century ago, in Egypt, but more subtly with a better outcome. With a combination of architectural theory and social ideas, state and private interest, I intend to demonstrate how the Egyptian interaction with the foreign ideas at the turn of the century was far more mature than the comparable processes going on today in Egypt and the Arab world. I intend to show what is lacking in today's interaction, that allowed the earlier process to succeed. Thus the dissertation is a critical essay that looks into the past while keeping in mind problems of today's architectural practice. It does not intend to document historical events *per se* but rather to debate past issues in relation to the problematic present.

To establish this dialogue between past events and present concerns I have taken the private dwelling as a unifying theme. This is because it is the one architectural type that captures the latest trends in architectural thought and expresses social aspirations towards both modernity and tradition. For the problematic present I have derived architectural examples from the Egyptian, Jordanian and Gulf practice, because of the availability of resource material, and where one can see reciprocal influence. This should not mean that the issues presented are limited to those cultures.

For the past, I have focused on Hilmiya neighborhood that is located at the middle of the eastern side of Cairo. Up to the 19th century the location of this neighborhood was part of al-Fil pond; then by the 1840s it became a palace with a large garden for a royal prince, Abbas Hilmi. Between 1890 and 1909 the

land was redesigned into a network of streets and plots of residential land. The neighborhood during this period housed the Egyptian cultured elites who were highly educated and knew about social reforms through the literature of cultural critics. To what extent should Western culture with its artifacts be admitted to the local environment? This question was intensely debated and also implicitly answered in the domestic accommodation of Egyptian intellectuals, some of whom were among Hilmiya residents. The same question is debated today but with lesser success in answering it.

In this dissertation, I work on the premise that cultural response to foreign ideas entails that there are two sets of histories: the *influencing* culture and its architecture proposes one; the *influenced* culture and its architecture another. The intersection of these two sets is the focus of the cultural crisis or potentiality.



When foreign architecture and cultural values are introduced into a local setting, a screening process takes place; some values and forms are discarded, others prevail; even some of the surviving forms acquire different meanings in the new setting. A similar process of screening and adaptation takes place with local

forms and cultural values. Between the two processes, an eventual equilibrium is achieved, combining new aspirations with local traditions in a variety of ways.

In light of this, architecture's relation to culture becomes fundamental to our understanding of cross-cultural interaction. This relation can be classified in three lines of thought.

According to one school of thought, architecture is a fully autonomous discipline, revealed only through its theory and practice. Buildings and theories exist as a self-generating process. No interaction with culture is realized for it is assumed to be ineffective, non-engaging and indifferent to how the discipline is shaped.

According to another school of thought, it is impossible to imagine architecture as a discipline separate from the cultural sphere in which it resides. Culture has to be seen as a whole, with architecture as one of its components. There is a direct cause-and-effect mechanism which leads the discipline to lose its autonomy. Agents like revolution, economics, war, politics, religion, industrialization, philosophy and literature can explain its evolutionary process and the *raison d'être* of its theory and practice.

The third school lies somewhere between these two extremes and seeks a relationship between architecture and culture that is not so rigid. The two components of this relationship reciprocate with one another through time. Whatever situation one may find in a society at one time is the result of a long sequence of interaction between the two components.

According to this view the relationship is more difficult to resolve, yet scholars have attempted to cast it in a theoretical framework. Some see the environment offer certain ways of acting and interacting from which the society can choose and adopt according to their needs (Rapoport 1977, p.2).

Stanford Anderson extends such an interpretation to conceive of the built environment as a potential that includes "influential" and "latent" portions. The "influential" potential is that portion which is adopted by the culture; it is the realized potential. Yet the environment may offer to its culture a potential which is not assimilated or even realized. This is called a "latent" potential. It can be recognized but not exploited, or unrecognized but theoretically possible (Anderson, 1975; p.24). When the royal family in Egypt decided to fill part of a pond to build a palace and garden, the pond became partly influential for the family (in the section which is developed into a palace) and partly latent (in the undeveloped area). The type of latent potential here is recognized but unexploited. This theoretical proposition is suitable for scholarship that deals with the development of an environment over time. In other instances, the latent potential is used in a manner not previously known: for example, when an architectural type is used differently in another culture. The second proposition is directly relevant to studies in which the built environment develops in a new way by the change of place.

The idea of the potential environment can be further elaborated by realizing that the culture also has its own potentials, both "influential" and "latent." The Egyptian elite had to change their lifestyle on moving from a traditional eighteenth century courtyard house to a nineteenth century European villa.

Thus relationship between architecture and culture is determined not only by the potentials of the built environment, but those of the culture as the other participant. A new convention is established when there is an equilibrium between the potentials of one component and the other, or in other words, when harmony prevails between the culture and its built form.

Returning to my original hypothetical proposition that there is a range between two modes of deterministic thinking with culture on one end and architecture on the other, we can perceive the notion of equilibrium lying at any point in between. We can also conceive that there is more than one point of equilibrium for a society in any given time and that these points of equilibrium continue to change positions with the passage of time.

The last argument is important to realize in the context of a society under foreign influence. Before its impact is felt, each culture and architecture have their own established conventions. When the interaction occurs, tranquility disappears, criticism arises and the screening process begins. The latent potential of the *influenced* set --built form and culture-- is utilized to respond to the newcomers. In built form, it is manifested in the accommodation of the existing fabric to new ideologies in town planning and the reintroduction and adaptation of traditional architectural types to foreign design. At the level of culture, local manners and customs are revised and are measured in relation to imported ones.

In each of the two components there is an instinct for self-preservation that most readily reestablishes an equilibrium with the foreign force. This may initiate slight or radical change. The degree of success varies depending on the

condition and the amount of latent potential in use. There is always a better chance of preserving a component, culture or architecture, when its latent potential is in abundance and ready to be used in response to the foreign idiom. After a period, perhaps extended, of experimentation and interaction between the two sets, a third set is obtained and new points of equilibrium appear.¹



House facade in Hilmiya neighborhood in Cairo showing one version of the equilibrium status.

Consider a specific example: In early nineteenth-century Cairo, traditional craftsmanship, such as the latticed woodwork in wall openings, was challenged by the Italian shutter. By the turn of the century, they coexisted, not only in dwellings of one neighborhood, but even in one facade. Both treatments were

¹ As Georges Duby said, "Ideologies must adapt if they are to survive or win ... When they are in a dominant position, they partially absorb the images or models which threatened them, taming them and turning them to their own advantage." (1985; p.154-5).

accepted by the building code of Ministry of Public Works, indicating a revised state of equilibrium in response to foreign ideas. No doubt, a new scenario is produced, call it "localized Western" or "westernized local" depending on the emphasis. In the end, it is a new convention based on criticism, selection and change of earlier conventions in a conscious way, i.e., critical conventionalism (Anderson, 1986; p.8).

The dissertation focuses on this process of critical conventionalism that was apparent at the turn of the century in villas and ideologies of Hilmiya society and which almost disappeared today. In the earlier period, every incoming novelty and every pre-existing convention was measured, balanced, then assessed and labeled as harmful or beneficial, acceptable or not acceptable despite apparent benefits. I argue that because of this critical conventionalism a mature outcome was possible. Yet, logical as it may sound, this process is hardly mentioned in scholarships dealing with such topics. To understand the repercussions of ignoring this process, I shall analyze some classical pitfalls in cross-cultural scholarship.

James Clifford in "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm" remarks:

What's different about peoples seen to be moving out of 'tradition' into the 'modern world' remains tied to inherited structures that resist or yield to the new but cannot produce it. (Clifford, J 1987)

Clifford shows the general tendency of scholars to overlook the complexity involved in cultural response to foreign idiom. They always assume that the notion of "modernization" is always in conflict with that of "traditionalism": if

modernism is to prevail in a culture, tradition has to vanish. This assumption of scholars stems from the more general inclination to see the process of interaction between the two cultures --the influencing and the influenced-- as a clash of binary opposites: foreign-native, oppressor-oppressed, order-disorder, secular- religious. For example, Hisham Sharabi in *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914* (1970) writes:

The effort to modernize Arab society required two separate but complementary tasks: to make innovation legitimate and to demolish old intellectual and social forms. The process threatened an intellectual revolt of the first order.... A spirit of rebellion seemed to be born out of increasing lucidity. (p. 9)

Because of this "opposition," to use Sharabi's term, between tradition and modernization, Arab intellectuals are classified into two opposing groups: conservatives and modernists. The first is made up of religious Muslim conservatives and reformists² opposed to the West and described as "backward-looking." The modernists, the anti-thesis of the first, are made up of Muslim secularists and Christians. The idea that there might have been Christian conservatives is not even considered (pp. 6-8)! With this classification Sharabi misses all the genuine achievements of the "third approach" which is until today emulated and discussed not only in Egypt but in the Arab World at large.³

² Despite his initial attempt to separate conservatives from reformists, he eventually groups them together as opposed to the modernists for they are also dogmatic and, according to him, never really systematically adopted modern science (p.11).

³ The most important Arabic source for contemporary debates on this middle approach is *al-Turath wa Tahaddiyat al-'Asr: al-Asala wa al-Mu'asara (Tradition and Today's Challenges: Authenticity and Contemporaneity)*. Edited by al-Sayyid Yasin (1985). This huge volume was published as the proceedings of an Arab states symposium held in Cairo in 1984.

This dissertation shows the superficiality of this particular classification, not only from a social but from an architectural perspective. Villas of the period under discussion are still extant and constitute hard evidence for the effectiveness of this middle road. These villas were not a rare phenomenon; they constituted a prevailing type in whole neighborhoods. Here the Hilmiya neighborhood is used as an example, but there were many others.

Another problem related to this polarized type of scholarship is the assumption that since the culture under study has been colonized then the process of responding to foreign idiom always involves tension and hostility. If the colonized culture did not in fact view the *whole* West as "evil," would not the outcome differ?

Cairo at the turn of the century included many foreign cultures, such as French, Italian, Austrian, German and Greek, in addition to the occupying English. Against the English there was hostility but it did not extend to other European cultures. The motto of Mustafa Kamil, the Egyptian activist against English occupation was: "Hospitable to our guests, autonomous in our countries." (al-Rafi'i, [1939], 1984; p.67). Nevertheless, scholars writing on the urban history of Egypt continue to see the city as divided between the "colonial" and the "native," with all sorts of tension between them. Ironically, in the case of Egypt, the colonizing culture had the least influence upon the built form compared to other European cultures.

Janet Abu-Lughod in *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* clearly expresses this polaristic attitude. The book surveys the urban development of Cairo from

its birth till the 1950s. Reaching the 19th century, when the cross-cultural impact started to take place, she writes:

The city's physical duality was but a manifestation of the cultural cleavage. To the east lay the native city, still essentially pre-industrial in technology [and] social structure ... to the west lay the "colonial" city with its steam-powered techniques and its European identification ... To the east lay the labyrinth street pattern ... to the west were the broad straight streets ... [The] two cities, despite their physical continuity were miles apart socially and centuries apart technologically (1971. P.98).

When the research alludes to an "either-or" situation, any sign of compromise is disregarded; any subtle scenario of interaction is dismissed for the sake of contrast.

Another pitfall in cross-cultural research is not to compare the phenomenon in the context of its motherland as well as in the host culture. The scholar misses the screening process that evolves at the time the idiom is introduced to a foreign setting. The scholar also overlooks new meanings acquired by the phenomenon in the new setting. Even when this type of research is conducted with great care and scrupulousness, it is easy to argue against the thesis. The point of attack stems from the researcher's neglect of the history of the *influencing* culture relative to the phenomenon under study.

The same type of pitfall is present in studies dealing with *influencing* cultures. This could be traced in survey books on the history of architecture such as

Benevolo's *History of Modern Architecture*. When comparing Muslim cities with those of the Greeks and Romans he says:

There were radical differences between the cities of Islam and their predecessors. 1- The simplicity of their new cultural code, contained in the pages of the Koran, resulted in a reduction in social activity. Because of this, the Arab cities lacked the complexity of their Roman and Hellenistic counterparts; they had no forums, basilicas, theaters, amphitheaters, stadiums or gymnasiums, only private dwellings (ordinary houses or palaces) and two categories of public buildings. A. Baths...B. Mosques..... 2-The widespread regimentation of the Hellenistic and Roman cities was abandoned, and there was not even a municipal administration to enforce the rules (p. 261 1980).

The quotation shows that the writer did not give enough scholarly attention to the culture under influence as compared to that given to the *influencing* culture. This inequality in attention leads to hasty conclusions and cuts off channels of critical conventionalism.

The principal and secondary set of histories should both be studied with equal amplitude and interest before any attempt is made to trace the influence of one over the other. The final product of the scholarship may not present the two cultures equally, but it will better reflect a complex and profound level of interaction that could not have been realized otherwise.

The methodology for researching cultural response to foreign ideas becomes clear. Since the thesis primarily focuses on a process of synthesizing two

different components into a third one, then it is important to refer constantly to the situation before and after the synthesis, both in the case of the European and the native artifact. The methodology also entails the cross-examining ideals in architecture with those of society. These ideals will be further contrasted with actual practice to highlight the congruencies and discrepancies involved in the synthesis.

In light of this, the themes of the dissertation will be presented in the following manner:

In chapter one I will analyse the symptoms of the problematic present. What are the current debates among Arab architects? What kind of villa architecture is produced under the hegemony of the traditional past? What does authenticity mean in the context of Western influence?

In chapter two, I will analyze Hilmiya villa from the users' point of view. I will show that the attempt to localize Western ideas was not only a state's vision but a society's as well. The villa of Hilmiya expressed aspirations of a newly rising Egyptian elite that combined a European image with traditional values. How the villa fulfilled both ends is the main theme of this chapter.

In chapter three, I will show how the question of authenticity was debated among architects and state planners who practiced one century ago. The idea of localizing Western ideas was also a concern. It was debated among theoreticians of the state's polytechnic school and officials of Ministry of Public Works. The planning of Hilmiya neighborhood and its villa architecture were an

outcome of this approach. Thus the villa is presented from the point of view of its makers.

Chapter four combines the two periods (today and turn of the century) through social ideologies that tackle notions of progress. These ideologies helped foster the architecture of the villa in both periods. While the nineteenth century reformers reciprocated with their societies effectively, today's intellectuals are isolated. The chapter investigates the problematic present in view of the success of the earlier period.

In the conclusion I address the question of authenticity and aspiration to the foreign.

T H E C U R R E N T D E B A T E

In the Arab world today "Islamic character" is a heavily loaded term. It has social, political and religious connotations. If the architect does not propose a *qa'a* in the plan or a *mashrabiyya* on the facade, it becomes a statement. He may be labeled as an archaic modernist or simply a Westernised practitioner. Because of this, most architects, particularly those practicing in the Gulf, are coerced into adopting "Islamic character" in their designs. This chapter analyses the repercussions of this situation on the profession today.

Attitudes towards using history in current settings is best characterized by Nietzsche In *The Use and Abuse of History* (1873). He mainly distinguished between two extremes: "historical" and "unhistorical." The first attitude is best represented by an antiquarian who perceives history as an entity that needs to be preserved. Every product of the past deserves to be glorified and is seen as a source of identity and pride. When reverence to the past becomes excessive it becomes an ossified doctrine for the present to follow. The antiquarian does not dare to trust himself and always asks history for advice about "how I ought to feel now." He sees himself in the past artifact, lives in it, establishes a veil that screens off all cries for contemporaneity and novelty ([1873] 1957; p.18).

The second attitude towards history criticizes it and negatively evaluates it in order continuously to welcome the new. Here the tendency is to annihilate the past and delete it from memory. Carried to excess, critical history can turn cynical and shake the culture, whose roots are chopped off in favor of the foreign without any real promise for a better future (p.21).

Nietzsche calls for a middle line that considers the unhistorical and the historical as necessary to the well being of the cultural system (p.8).

The knowledge of the past is desired only for the service of the future and the present, not to weaken the present or undermine a living future (p. 22). You can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present...you will only understand it as builders of the future ..if you set a great aim before your eyes (pp. 40-41).

Excessive use or the rejecting of history may lead to "wretched imitation" of past artifacts or foreign idioms and create an antagonism between form and substance of the culture (p.28).

Nietzsche directed this argument to the German culture of his day¹ that excessively revered the Enlightenment and its German champions such as Goethe and Kant (Meinecke, 1946 ; p.9). The pitfalls which Nietzsche indicated were not avoided by his culture and ultimately led to National Socialism; they are also evident in the modern history of the Arab world.

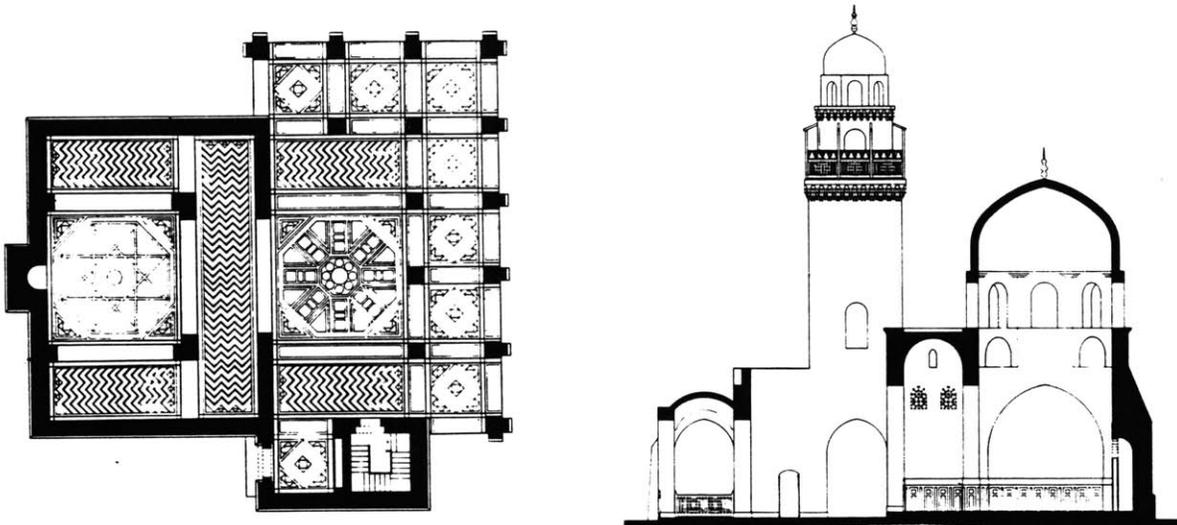
¹ *The Use and Abuse of History* (1873) is one of the early writings of Nietzsche which expresses faith in the genius of an impending German culture that is to be created out of the present state of affairs (Jasper,1936; p.43) This writing comes as an answer to the overwhelming feeling of national pride that followed Bismarck's victory over France. More importantly, the work is a reaction to the influence of the Hegelian sense of historic determinism which does not leave much space for the will to power (Kraft, 1949, p. viii; Jasper, 1936; p.245). Friedrich Meinecke characterizes the period in which Nietzsche wrote *Use and Abuse of History* as the "silver age" that followed Goethe (Meinecke,1946; p.10). In this period intellectuals of the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, headed by Heinrich von Treitschke, called for this healthy balance which Nietzsche had advocated between the historical and unhistorical. By the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, socialist and nationalist movements merging in Prussian militarism ended this "silver age" and rushed for the excessive use of history which Nietzsche had warned against (p.11). A consequence of such excess is the development of theories of "form and content" by Troeltsch (Ringer, 1969; pp. 130-210). Even this was anticipated by Nietzsche.

After the imperialists evacuated the Middle East in the fifties and sixties, leaving behind artificial boundaries of sovereignty, a fever of nationalism arose. Lines that were drawn between newly founded states, such as the boundaries of Saudi Arabia with Yemen, did not always coincide with original cultural boundaries. Because of this a fierce competition manifested in modernization grew up among the Arab countries. Architecture was nothing but a mirror that gave this competition a physical presence. Beginning in 1950, modernization became identified with an uncompromising notion of Modern Architecture. The architecture of the West was transplanted with little adaptation into the Arab world (Curtis, 1986; p.24), representing a particularly excessive manifestation of "critical history." Then, beginning in the 1980s, the situation shifted from one extreme to the other (Serageldin, 1986; p.76). Modernization came to mean traditional architecture *par excellence* (Abel, 1986; p. 37) and led to an excessive state of "antiquarianism".

What started in the eighties has today become the prevailing trend in architecture. Architects use history as a design criterion to solve the question of identity. In Nietzsche's terms they are no more than antiquarians using history often to excess. This trend in the Arab world can be classified into three approaches.

The first approach is at the level of imagery -- that is to say, architects who design contemporary buildings allude to past architecture in a photographic sense. They decompose traditional architecture into elements, either at the level of facades or plan types, then copy them in their new design. The copying can be literal or may involve some modification. The end result may be simpler than the original in detail but it must visually recall the historical source from which it

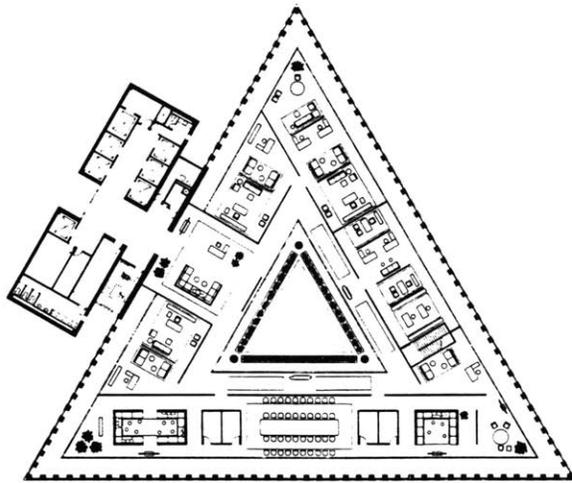
is derived. This process can be called "visual abstraction." Abdel Wahid al-Wakil, a recent recipient of the Aga Khan Award for his Corniche Mosque in Jeddah, masters this approach. On presenting his project in the seminar that followed the Award ceremony, he felt the need to project the inspiring historical monument as part of his design procedure, thus accentuating the importance of the past as an indispensable visual source for his new design. What distinguishes one architect who uses this approach from another is the degree to which past icons are handled artistically in designing new forms.²



Abdel Wahid al-Wakil's mosque in Jeddah, winner of the Aga Khan Award in 1989

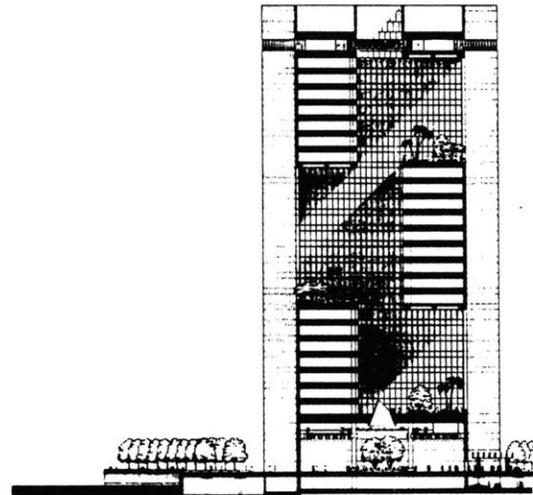
Not all architects have Abdel Wahid al-Wakil's talent. When they do not, the design does not escape arbitrariness in form-making, and can lead to a split between the nature of the building program and its formal language, an aspect which Nietzsche analysed as a separation of form from content when falling into excessive antiquarianism (Nietzsche, [1873] 1957; p.25-26).

² Abdel Wahid al-Wakil's design was criticized in the Award symposium by Jamil Akbar as an attempt to "copy and improve on the [historic] model."



First floor where we can find the library
the congress room and the cafeteria.

الدور الاول - حيث المكتبة
- الكافتيريا وقاعة المؤتمرات



Cross Section — side elevation in glass.

SOM National Commercial Bank in Jeddah (al-Benaa , May 1985)

The second approach to the use of history as a design criterion is at the level of principles. The architect analyses past architecture in a manner that can yield rules and formulas with which he can create his new design. Thus abstraction here is "conceptual". Principles in the case of Islamic architecture include: circulation of air through wind-catchers and clerestory windows, bent entrances and separation of the sexes and circulation for privacy, proportions of window openings, and projections. These principles are then used in the design so as to appear to have naturally evolved from the requirements of the building. The end product is devoid of direct visual semblance to past architecture and may reveal modern technology in full thrust. A good example of this approach is SOM's National Commercial Bank of Jeddah. In this project a single principle from past architecture was adopted, namely inward orientation through courtyards, and applied to skyscraper design. This was done by creating huge

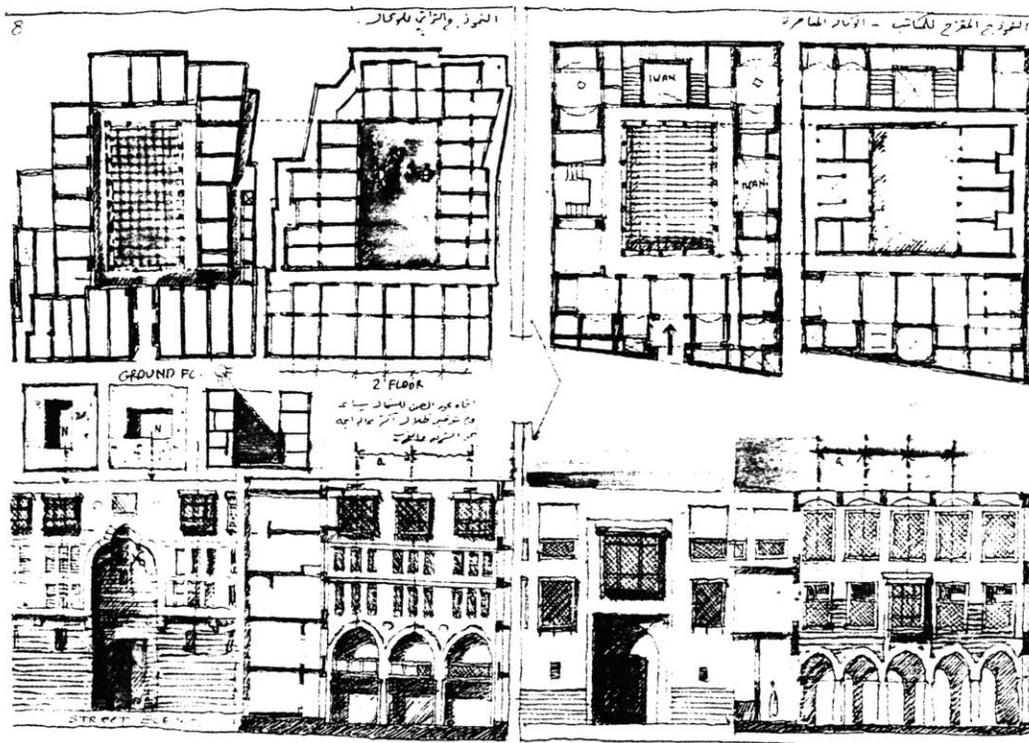
triangular voids in the tower so that the glass facades of the offices are always in shade, thus reducing energy consumption for air conditioning.

The third approach to the use of history as a design criterion lies somewhere between the first two approaches. On viewing a design based on such an approach, the examiner may find it hard to believe that there is an obvious reference to history, either visually or conceptually. Rasem Badran, a Jordanian architect, exemplifies this third approach. Through mini-sketches he treats extrapolated principles and visual icons equally. The sole criterion with which he validates components from either approach is rational thought.³ That is to say, every component, whether visual or conceptual, must prove to be of relevance to the design at hand, either through its historic *raison d'être* or through a newly acquired function that suits the project. An example of his work is the Headquarters of the Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities in Jeddah.⁴ In this project some of its building types had direct historical reference, such as mosques and residential architecture. Thus, several sketches were drawn for each type highlighting its characteristics and stressing its relevance to the current project.

For architectural types that had no past equivalent, Badran looked at what was closest, for example, he used the caravansari or *wakala* to derive his office spaces.

³ John Hancock calls the design approach that takes from history what only proves to be valid for current design as "scientific" in his theory of precedent (Hancock, 1986). It is in this sense that I am using the word "rational".

⁴ The organization arranged for a competition for best design. For more details see pp. 21-27.

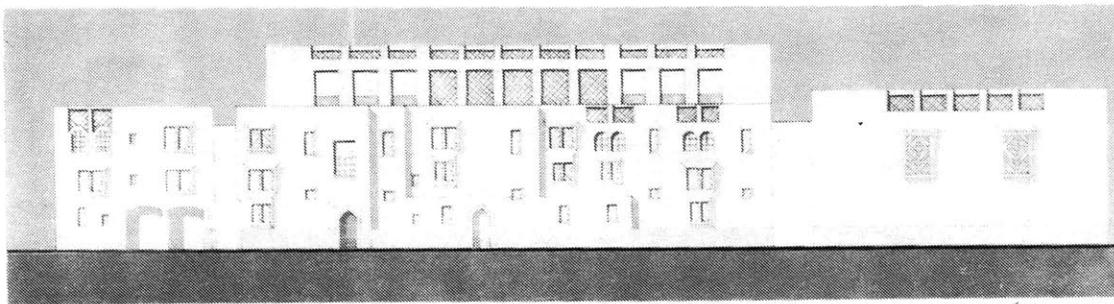


Study sketches elucidating the original type and its modern transformation

In these sketches he does not literally transfer historical types; rather, the project is the outcome of a synthesis. In his facades, he merges several traditions to suit the international character of the program. In plan, he conceives the project as a miniature Islamic city with both individual elements and group relationships. For example, through his study sketches he notes the integral relation between the mosque and the rest of the urban fabric. Thus in the design, instead of having a free standing mosque, he allows its shifted orientation to run into the formal grid of the project. This clash in orientation, between the mosque and the rest of the project commemorates the historic vitality of the mosque as the dominant institution in the city fabric (Badran, 1990; p.38).



Plan of the project showing the clash in orientation between the mosque and other constituents (1) Mosque; (2) Courtyard; (3) Housing units (duplex); (4) Offices; (5) Multi-purpose hall; (6) Library



Facades showing the advanced degree of visual abstraction (al-Benaa, Sept., 1990)

Architects using the third approach are rare and those who use it may not maintain a consistent standard because of the difficulty involved in the process of abstraction. Arab architects like Rasem Badran usually tilt their projects towards the first approach, while Westerners practicing in the Arab world, like

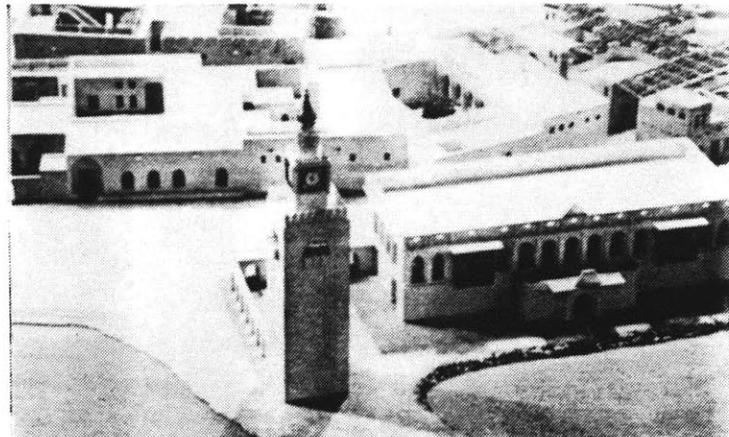
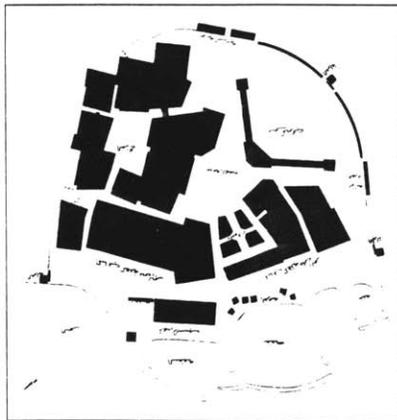
Henning Larsen (a recent recipient of Aga Khan Award for his Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Riyadh) incline towards the second.

Despite the fact that architects using all these approaches utilize past architecture in different ways, they all regard history in a similar fashion. It is seen as a static entity that does not encourage innovation. History is codified into a series of "inspiring icons" to be readily recycled in current design. In the first approach, this perception is the strongest since history is primarily captured in its physical form, often copied from nineteenth-century paintings that depict traditional urban scenes. A familiar source is the nineteenth-century Orientalist painter David Roberts (1796-1864), famous today for his colorful perspectives. In the second case, where the principles are extrapolated, the question then becomes how they should be employed in a new form using modern technology. Architects may consult works like that of Basim Hakim,⁵ to learn about these principles. The problem arises when the architect perceives them as the *sole* ideas for design without really questioning their relevance to current conditions. The result may have the same effect as that of a nineteenth-century etching, that is the treatment of the past dictates the present production.

In the context of excessive use of history, to perceive the past as an "inspiring icon" becomes problematic; more so, when it is actually re-created in toto. In 1989 a project proposal in Riyadh tried to capture the atmosphere of the Gulf's past by building a group of "villages" each representing a state. Not only was the built form completely modeled from the past, but there was also a display of

⁵ Basim Hakim in *Arab-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles* (1986) analysed traditional cities on the basis of principles derived from Islamic law.

traditional clothes and food. The idea is reminiscent of nineteenth-century world expositions in which the Orient is depicted through its traditional neighborhoods.⁶ What the two have in common is a display of authority. In the first case this authority, according to Edward Said and his followers, is attributed to the colonizing West; however, in the second it is to indigenous ancestors!



The traditional village of Kuwait: plan and view of the model [Source: al-Benaa no. 47]

Nietzsche in *The Genealogy of Morals* (1886) explains this display of authority by the ancestors. He defined the relation between the two generations, old and new, in terms of a contract between a debtor and a creditor. Existing generations, being the debtors, are always haunted by a feeling of indebtedness with respect to their ancestors, the creditor.

There prevails in them [i.e. existing generations] the conviction that it is only thanks to sacrifices and efforts of their ancestors that the race persists at all --

⁶ The cultural aim of the project is to make it possible for the coming generations to get a glimpse of the times before the oil boom in the Gulf. The editorial staff praises such projects on the premise that the past is the basis for developing the present and the future (*al-Benaa* April - May 1989; p.43).

and that this has to be paid back to them by sacrifices and services... festivals, tributes of veneration, above all obedience (pp. 106-7).

Such a feeling of indebtedness increases in the existing generations with the increase of their power, wealth and prosperity.

-- are the ancestors ever given enough? This suspicion remains and grows : from time to time it exhorts a great wholesale ransom, something monstrous in the way of repayment of the creditor.. (p.107)

This "wholesale ransom"; can be well exemplified in the recapture of traditional atmosphere, built form *and* people, by erecting those villages in Saudi Arabia.

The analogy between Nietzsche's theorization and current architectural concerns in the Arab Gulf cultures is not hypothetical. These cultures began their process of modernization by eradicating their traditional built form. By this act they hoped to open a new chapter of their history based on the latest technology. Not only did the prosperity of the early eighties remind them of their indebtedness to their ancestors, the latter being the initiators of their great wealth, but their destruction of what their ancestors had left intact intensified the feeling of guilt that their notion of modernization was the antithesis of their ancestors. Consequently, the debt was magnified. Can their sinful act be expiated by erecting whole villages that recall their past? This feeling of guilt forced them to caricature Modern Architecture as evil and malicious to a heritage that is by now no more than a fragmented memory.⁷ It is labeled as "cardboard architecture" and "glass and steel tower" that is inappropriate to the local

⁷ An example of such a reading is "Modern Architecture in Kuwait" by Tareq Abdel Fattah in *al-Banaa*, April / May 1989; pp.38-42.

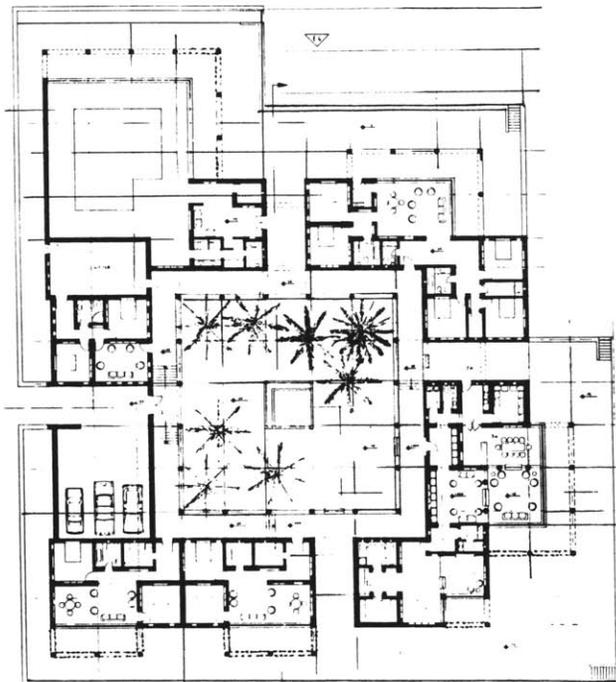
environment.⁸ Through the writing of Arab architects and critics, these ideas are perpetuated. Ibrahim Abul Khail, the editor of *al-Benaa (Construction)*, a Saudi architectural magazine circulating widely in the Gulf, "confesses" his guilty conscience which only finds peace when he decides to reject Western architecture totally:

At first, when Western culture was introduced to the region, architectural approaches were focused on copying Western technology. However, this idea soon proved to be inadequate. This is because Western technology is based on cultural prerequisites that are different from our own. Then came the attitude of copying Western technology with respect to local conditions. With this premise, I started my practical experience which proved to be an agonizing ordeal when attempting to compromise between the local and foreign idioms. I always felt uneasy about my design, with a guilty conscious that I was deceiving my society. The resultant architecture was schizophrenic, having a local appearance from the outside, but fully westernized from inside. On re-searching traditional Saudi architecture, I concluded the following: we cannot depend even on the idea of merging Western technology with local standards ..The alternative is indigenous technology (Ibrahim Abul Khail, Sept - Oct 1988 ; p. 44).

That Modern Architecture was not responding to local heritage meant to most Arab critics and practitioners a lack of obvious "visual abstraction" in the design

⁸ Udo Kulturmann in *Mimar* maintained this line of thought throughout all his articles that survey contemporary practice in Arab countries, for example, "Contemporary Arab Architecture: The Architecture of the Gulf States" in *Mimar*, Dec. 1984; pp. 50-57.

process. Ibrahim Abul Khail after his lengthy "confession" showed his design of a house reflecting how the "creditor" pays his debts. The house is composed of a series of lodgings arranged around a courtyard. Although he has rejected Western technology, he follows a strict structural module in organizing the plan, thus reflecting his Modernist architectural education. He also uses a Western



Plan of the house [From: al-Benaa Sept -Oct 1988]

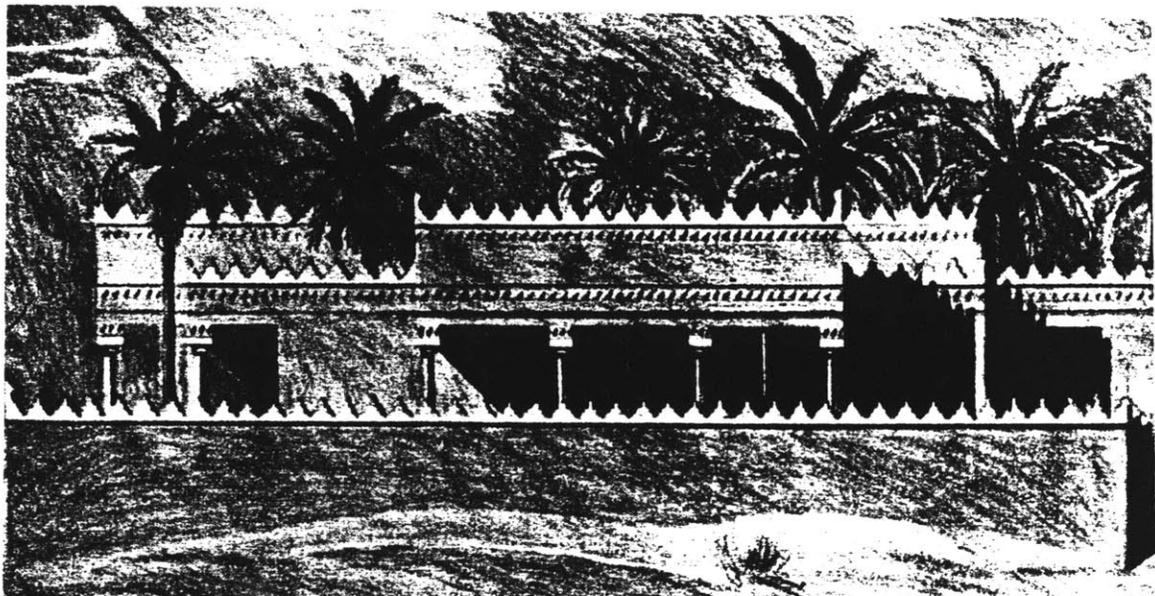
technology in building, reinforced concrete slabs and columns. This did not seem to him inconsistent with his earlier "confession" because what to him distinguishes a Western from a traditional idea is primarily visual in character. Thus, other than the courtyard, the only aspect of his design that could be relevant to his heritage, is the use of mud brick for external

walls and the strong visual vocabulary on the facades reminiscent of his ancestral architecture (Abul Khail; p. 44).

An earlier project shows Abul Khail's attitude, which he later rejected, of amalgamating local with foreign vocabulary (Abul Khail, Dec.-March 1987; pp. 18-19). The facade consisted of mud-brick walls in some parts of the office building and glass panels in another. To shift from a middle to an extreme line meant to Abul Khail eliminating the glass panels and retaining the mud walls.

Only then was the building contextual, devoid of schizophrenia, part of the long Saudi heritage.

Visual abstraction as a design criterion at times becomes so compelling, that an Arab architect is obliged to seek the local tradition, not just of the country in which the project is located (for example the image of a tent, like that in the Medina Haj Terminal, would suffice for a project in Saudi Arabia) but of a particular region within it. In the case of Abul Khail, it was Najdi traditional architecture that inspired him in his two projects situated in Riyadh.



Facade of the house at al-Kharj, Riyadh, designed by Ibrahim abul Khail

Today, "antiquarian" architecture in all of its excess is manifested in various ways: project managers use certain catchwords to promote their products, whether buildings or furniture. Briefs require phrases like merging old with new buildings, establishing historical continuity, conserving traditional character. It

is through words like these that the product is marketed.⁹ In furniture design, arabesque patterns and panels of latticed woodwork are found everywhere.¹⁰ Even state officials display traditional architecture¹¹ and contemporary designs that are heritage-conscious in grand exhibitions.¹²

Antiquarian history in excess only gained such momentum in the past six years. *Al-Benaa*, for example, before 1985 had a more balanced attitude. In the first six years of its publication, the magazine limited its antiquarianism to studies of past architectural types highlighting their role and transformation throughout history.¹³ During this period, *al-Benaa* included Modern architecture that did not have direct visual resemblance to past architecture.

This did not categorically mean that this architecture was totally alienated from the local culture, as was later claimed. A housing project funded by the public sector in Jeddah shows this clearly. For, despite its appalling mass, the plan was carefully designed to protect the strict privacy of a Saudi family.

⁹ The central district of Abha was advertised in similar terms by the Ministry of Municipality Affairs (*al-Benaa*, March 1989; p.31).

¹⁰ "Islamic furniture" is advertised constantly in the Egyptian and Saudi magazines, e.g. *Alam al-Benaa* Nov. 1982; p.38 - 39, and *al-Benaa*, Nov. Dec. 1988; p.30.

¹¹ In 1988 there was a mud-building exhibition in Riyadh where state officials from Riyadh Redevelopment Authority inaugurated the ceremonial openings (*al-Benaa*, March-April 1988; p. 12 English text).

¹² In 1982, there was an exhibition in Jeddah for Contemporary Design for Islamic Architecture, inaugurated by the mayor of Jeddah (*Alam al-Benaa*, April 1982; p. 29).

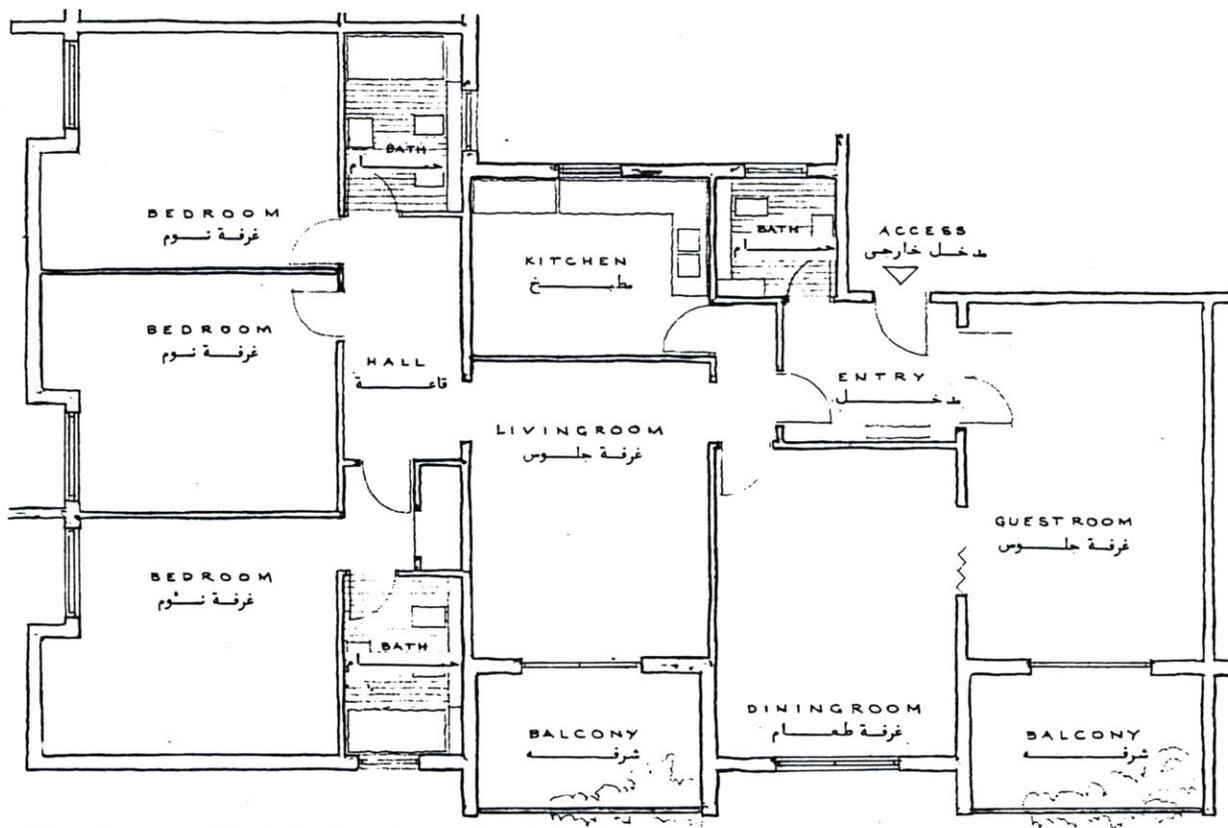
¹³ In the first and second issue there was a detailed study on mosque architecture.



Housing project in Jeddah sponsored by Ministry of Housing (al-Benaa no.4, 1979)

When a visitor rings the bell, he is admitted through a lobby to a reception room located on one side of the flat. This room opens onto the dining room, connects with the kitchen and has its own bathroom. The wife can go to the kitchen and supervise the servants preparing food for the visitor without running the risk of being seen. In this way the visitor is totally separated from the family life, an aspect that was emphasized in the project briefing in *al-Benaa* (Aug-Sept. 1979; p. 77).

Compared with the years after 1985, the first six years of *al-Benaa* were tolerant of new forms so long as they accommodated the typical life of the culture. The magazine could have taken the opportunity to develop an approach to architectural criticism that penetrated the outer skin of the building, but that did not happen. In the last two decades, the Modern Movement was totally rejected, at least in theory.



Plan of a typical flat in the housing project in Jeddah

Western architectural critics like William Curtis, Chris Abel and Kenneth Frampton reacted to this rejection by asserting that Modern Architecture had the capacity to cope with local conditions. "Authentic regionalism,"¹⁴ "regional modernism,"¹⁵ and "critical regionalism"¹⁶ are terms coined by them to

¹⁴ An article that summarizes Curtis' thoughts is "Contemporary Transformations of Modern Architecture." In *Architecture Record*, June 1989, pp.108-117.

¹⁵ The best article dealing with this approach is Chris Abel, "Regional Transformations." In *Architectural Review*, Nov.1986; pp.37-43.

¹⁶ Although Frampton never wrote about the Arab world specifically, his writings are still of great relevance. See, for example "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance." In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Edited by Hal Foster. Bay Press, 1983.

advocate an architecture that avoided vulgar imitation of the past. They would prefer visual abstraction over visual copying and conceptual abstraction over visual abstraction.

This priority is reversed in the case of many Arab critics, for example, Ibrahim Abul Khail editor of *al-Benaa* and Yehya Hasan Waziri¹⁷ a critic who writes for the press as well as for *Alam al-Benaa*. They were joined by non-Arabs such as Udo Kulturmann in *Mimar* and Jim Antoniou¹⁸ in *Middle East Construction*.

Arab critics prefer obvious links with the past, not only in their writings but also in their formulation and assessment of competitions in the Arab world. A recent competition reflects this attitude. The competition was to design a headquarters for the Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities in Jeddah, whose stated mission was the preservation of the city's identity in the Muslim world. Six out of fifteen design criteria in the brief centered on this mission. The first criterion specified that every project should reflect the Islamic heritage in its overall design and working details. The fourth urged the architect to make use of Islamic design principles in dealing with window openings and climate control. The eighth required the subservience of modern technology to the Islamic character of the project. The ninth dealt with the choice of materials relevant to the locality. The tenth urged the architects to consider landscape design that

¹⁷ See for example his article, " *al-Mabani al-Maktabiya wa 'uqdat al-Khawaga* (Office Building and the Western complex) " in *al-Akhabar*, 4 April 1988 and " *Mehnat al-'Emara al-Masriya al-Mu'asira wa Darurat al-Bahth 'an Hawiya laha* (Crisis in Contemporary Egyptian Architecture and the Need to Search for its Identity)." In *Alam al-Benaa*, Nov.- Dec. 1986; pp. 40-44.

¹⁸ See for example "A Future for the Past" in *Middle East Construction*. Vol 10, Oct. 1985; p.31-35.

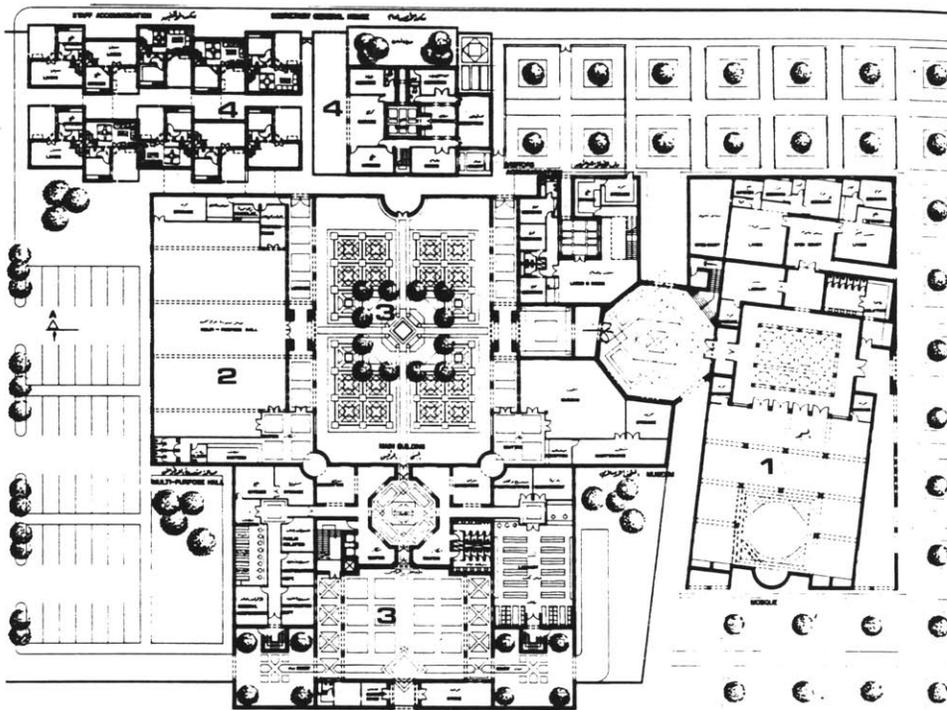
reflected an Islamic character. The fifteenth focused on the visual and conceptual harmony between the headquarters and a mosque that was to be built on adjacent land (Abdel Fattah, Sept. 1990; p.16).

In those six criteria meanings of contextuality and heritage preservation are repeated. The past is referred to in almost every step in design, starting with the design concept and ending with the facade treatment. This redundancy of meaning reinforces the notion that the past is to be *the* basic framework in which architects should operate. Modern technology, a sign of contemporaneity, is even coerced into subservience. Even if the difference between the past and present is five centuries, the architect is expected to give the past the upper hand. If this is what the project briefing entails, the winning projects should best represent them.

The project included a multi purpose hall, administration offices, a residential compound to house the employees and guests, and a mosque. In most of the entries these elements made apparent use of the past. Since the headquarters was for an organization of Islamic cities, the competitors used the image of the "Islamic city" as the basis for their design (p.17). They even correlated the constituents of the project to those of an "Islamic city"; the question then became how to arrange them to acquire the revered image. This was left for every competitor to solve in his design; those who ignored this problem did not win.

In the first winning entry of Tuqan, reference to the past is most visible. In plan, the constituents of the project are arranged around a central courtyard. Smaller courtyards are then used to organize the spaces of each constituent. The multi-

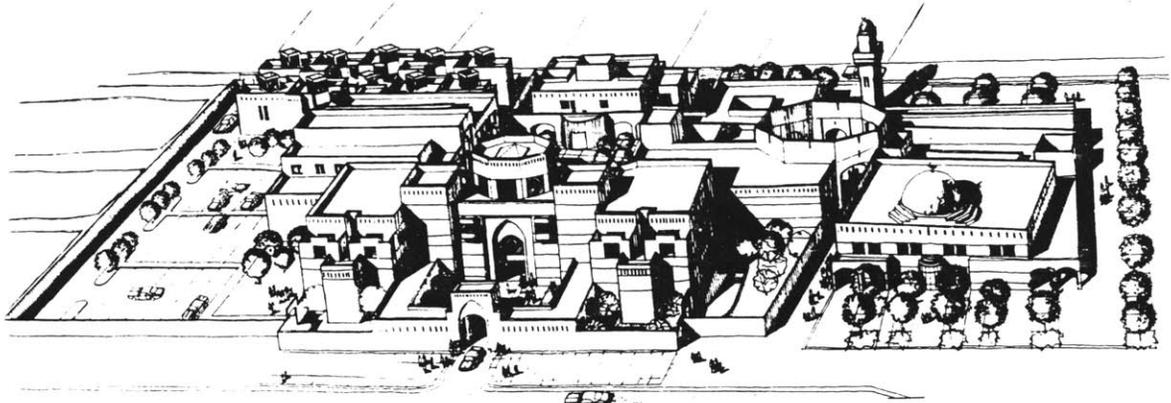
purpose hall takes the form of a traditional North African mosque in which the central space is accentuated through stepped ceilings. Octagons and squares, the most common icons in Muslim architecture (e.g., the Dome of the Rock), are used for main spaces. The wall openings are covered with projecting screens of latticed woodwork reminiscent of traditional *mashrabiya*s. Doorways are arched and residences are topped by wind catchers traditionally used in the Gulf. The artificial varying of heights recalls the image of a medieval city, with narrow openings reminiscent of crenellations and arrow slits in its fortifications.



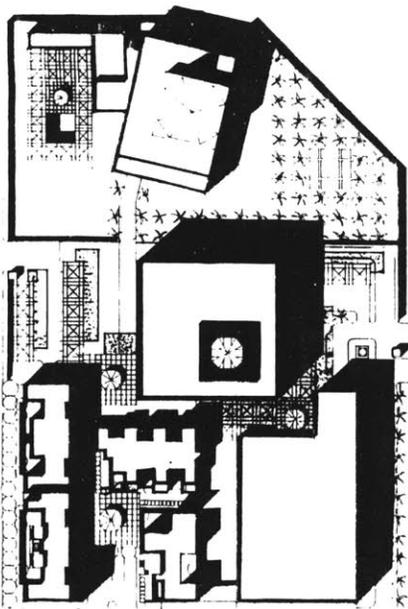
Plan of the first winning entry: 1-Mosque; 2-Multi-purpose hall; 3-courtyard; 4-residence



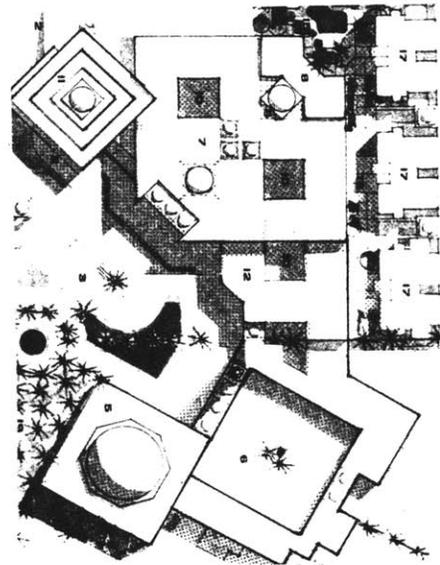
Elevation of the project



Perspective of the first winning entry (Ja'far Tuqan - Amman) showing an image of a fortified city



Mass plan of the second winning project

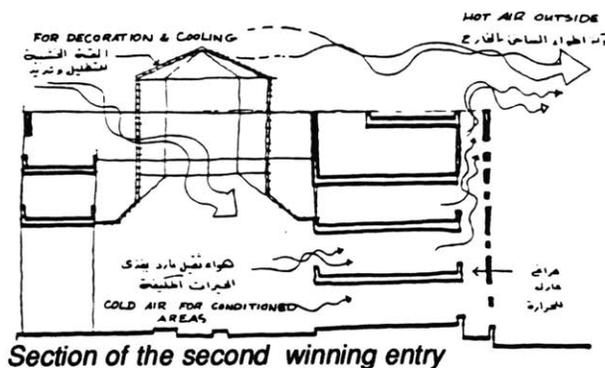


Mass plan of the third winning project

In the other two winning entries, courtyards and *mashrabiyyas* were also used, but not as literally as in the first entry; consequently the "Islamic city" image is not as pronounced. Their versions of what an "Islamic city" is differed slightly. It is no longer a continuous fabric surrounded by a fortified wall and pierced with courtyards, but rather a group of buildings arranged around open spaces, with

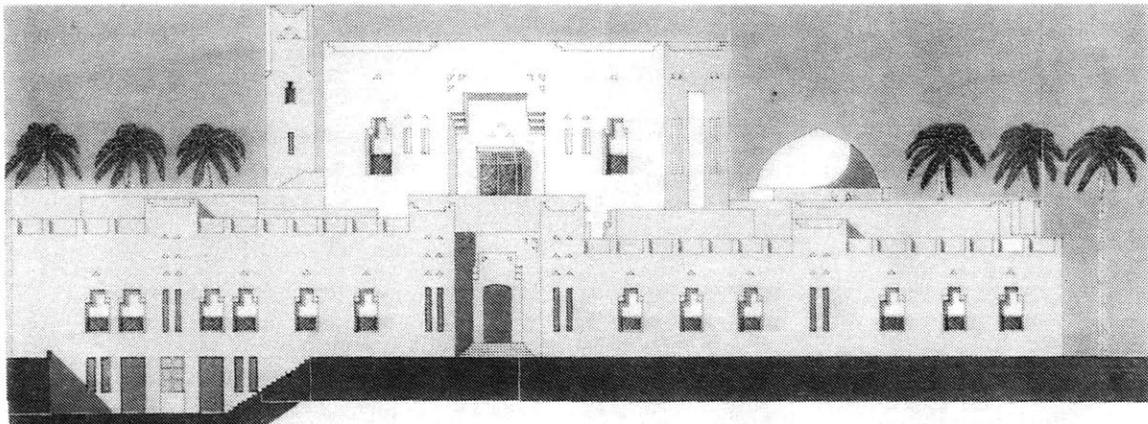
pathways shaded by canopies. Each building may have its own courtyard, but those inner spaces are of secondary importance compared to those in the first entry.

In the second entry, the architect used the typical cross-ventilation system of a traditional reception hall (*qa'a*). Ideally, the cool breeze enters from a top opening, passes gently through the hall, and then as it warms it rises to leave the space through another air outlet at the top. However, it was never clear how

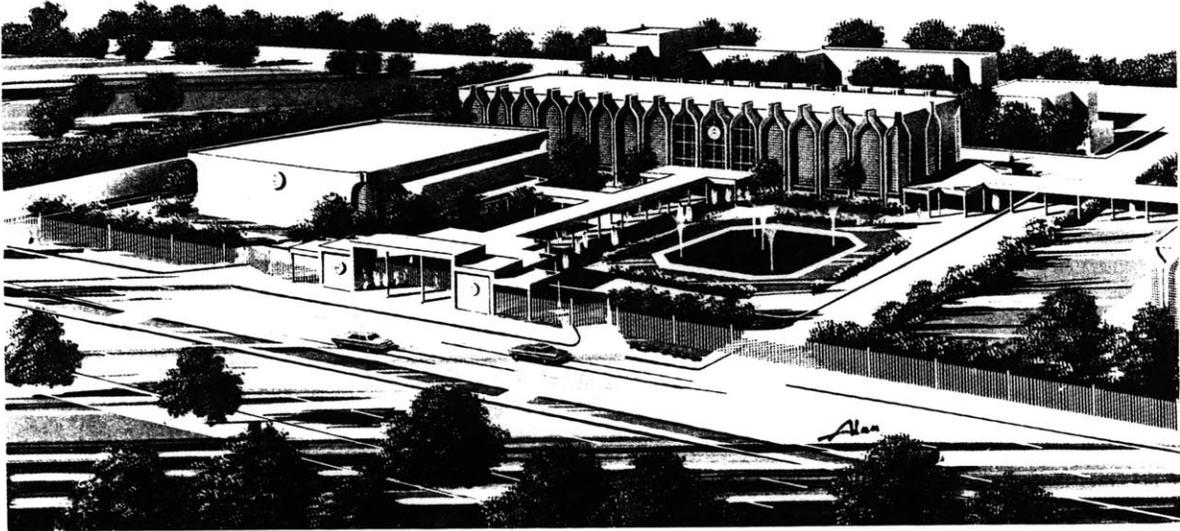


the architect intended to use this cross-ventilation mechanism in a fully air conditioned space. Nevertheless, this "environmental" aspect still pleased the jurors. In addition to the three winning entries, there were eight published by *al-Benaa*

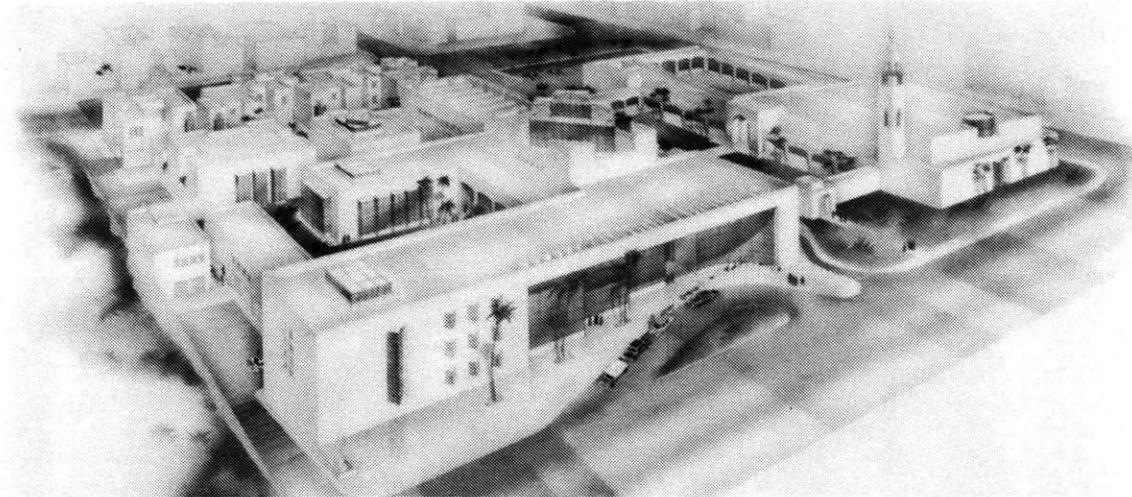
four of which did not use the courtyard in organizing the spaces and the other four were less obvious in their visual abstraction. Neither group won any prizes, for the jurors did not sense any direct "Islamic character."



A non-winning entry showing a less obvious abstraction from past architecture (Bitar - Amman)



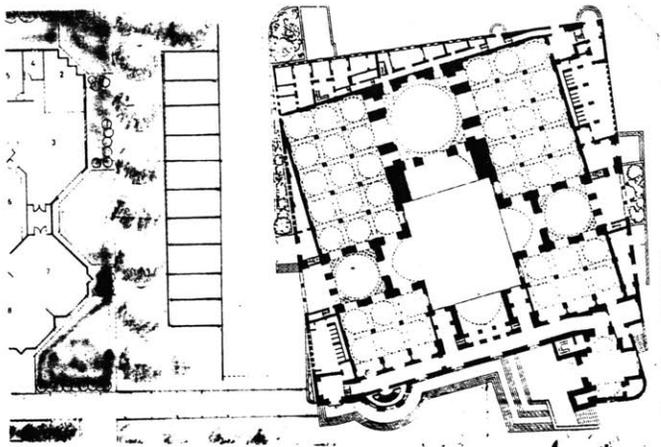
Note the absence of a courtyard - conscious design in the perspective of a non-winning project (Salah Zaton -Cairo). It did not win for it may have reminded the jurors of Modernism.



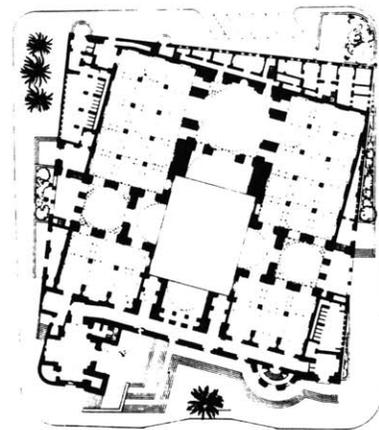
A non-winning entry showing the least resemblance with the past (Arab Consultants-Jordan)

Past architecture was not the only theme that emerged from this competition. Architects were "inspired" by the works of prominent professional peers. Thanks to the three active architectural magazines in the region, *Mimar*, *al-*

Benaa and *Alam al-Benaa* as well as the influential Aga Khan Awards for Architecture, certain architects and projects have become models to emulate of no less importance than monuments from the past, whether for abstraction or even copying. After six years of practicing architecture with an "Islamic character", Arab architects have given up innovation. In one of the entries, the King Saud mosque designed by Abdel Wahid al-Wakil is "xeroxed," then mirror reversed to suit the new site.



Non-winning entry by Dar al-Kuwait for Engineering Consultant

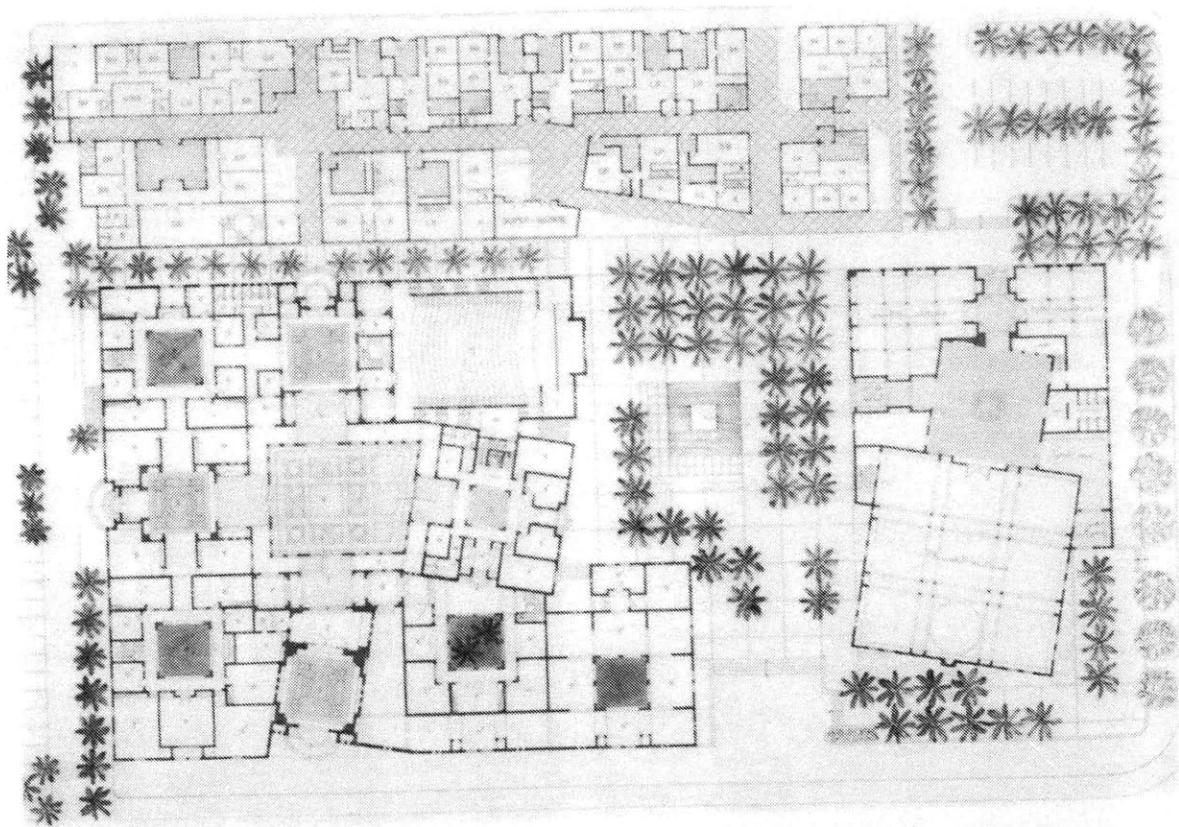


Mosque of al-Wakil

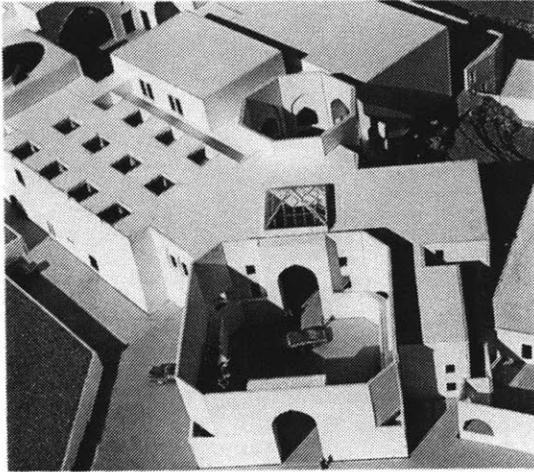
In another non-winning entry the triangular plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh by Henning Larsen was the inspiration. Bitar of Amman, in his entry, was highly inspired by Rasem Badran's rendering techniques and visual abstraction. The integration of two grids, one of which is oriented towards Mecca, a hallmark in Rasem's plans, is adopted by Bitar.¹⁹ His plan is reminiscent of Rasem's project in another competition, the United Arab Emirates Embassy in Amman (1989).

¹⁹ Bitar worked with Badran in the competition for the "Amman Municipality" in 1988. (Source: Sabri Jarrar)

This copying was not limited to non-winning projects. Ja'far Tuqan who made the first winning entry transferred the same arresting image of windcatchers designed by Kamal al-Kafrawi in Qatar University (Taylor, April 1985; pp. 20-27) to his residential units. The octagonal entrance courtyard that links the mosque with the rest of the headquarters is literally copied from Badran's Albeit project in Amman (1984).



A non-winning entry influenced by Rasem Badran (Bitar office - Jordan).



The octagon in the Albeit project (Rasem Badran)

The competition also highlighted the lack of local character in the Modern Architecture practiced by Egyptian architects. As a result they rarely win Arab international competitions or even receive an honorary mention. This is ironic, for the earliest architects calling for heritage-conscious design were Hasan Fathy and Abdel Baqi Ibrahim, both Egyptians. The first was a practitioner-theoretician, the second an academician-critic. Both shared the same cause, but each with his own conception of what it was.

As early as 1963, Abdel Baqi Ibrahim called for architecture that interacts with local environments and traditions.²⁰

It cannot be denied that what we are witnessing is the coming of a universal aesthetic arising from the rhythm of mechanised life..such standardization of architecture always clashes with the cultural tradition. Architects and town planners in Egypt will have to

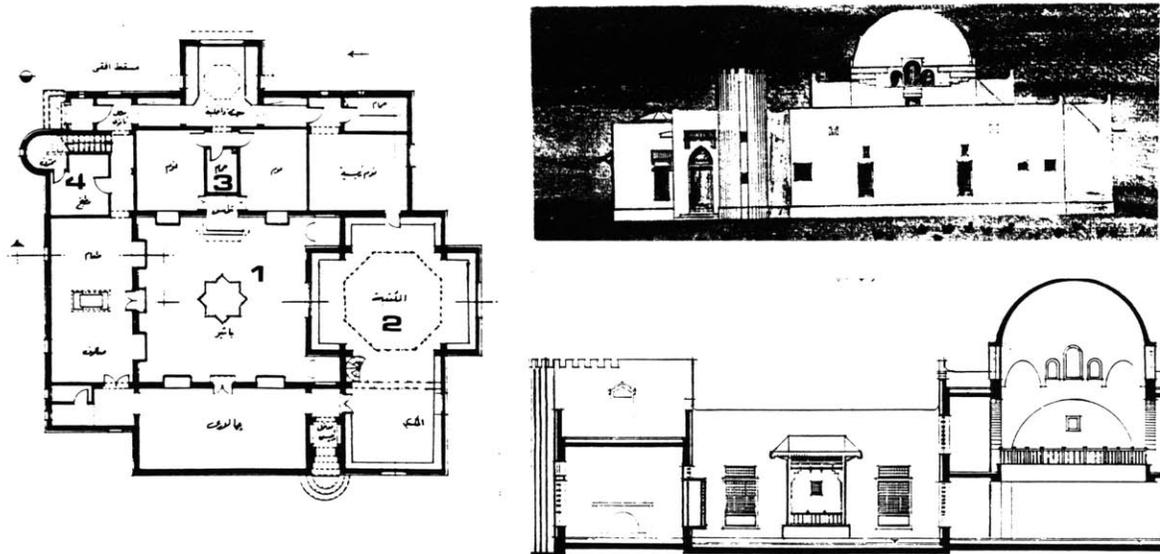
²⁰ He published in *al-Ahram*, 15 Aug. 1963, his first article criticizing architectural dependency on the West. (Reprint: Nov. 1982; pp.32-33)

come to terms with ... buildings which [initiate] the search for ways that express --in a sincere and modern idiom-- the native character of the place... . (Ibrahim 1968 ; p.2)

Since the sixties, Abdel Baqi Ibrahim has not solved this riddle of how to make a genuine modern idiom while reflecting local character, perhaps because of his perception of the past and present as two different natures, one technological, the other sentimental: "The problem will always be how to keep the balance between the materialism of technology and the emotions of the historical heritage" (p.8). The perception of the past as a bundle of sentiments led Abdel Baqi to appreciate visual abstraction as a way to evoke it. This method is plausible so long as the degree of abstraction continues to allow for instant recollection of the past. Otherwise, the balance between the "materialism of technology" and the "emotions of the historical heritage" tips. Throughout his career, Abdel Baqi sought a rational argument to justify this emotional need for the past. He argued that past architecture was sensitive to seasonal variations; it preserved the privacy of the family; it was a cradle for cultural ethics, manners and customs; it reflects Islamic law; it was the Arab identity card; it was authentic (Ibrahim, Aug. 1980; p.3). The aim of those justifications was to sustain visual abstraction, not to encourage the study of the past in a manner that would yield fresh designs.

Abdel Baqi showed his approach very clearly in one of his most recent designs, a library and residence for Ne'mat Fu'ad, a prominent Egyptian literary critic. The design is replete with "sentiments" of the past. The most important of them is a courtyard with a fountain in the middle. The library, the main reason for

erecting the complex, has a cruciform plan topped with a dome to recall a fifteenth-century school-mosque. In its elevation, all the wall openings are screened with panels of latticed woodwork. On one side of the courtyard, there is an elaborately detailed canopy which covers a small terrace and accentuates a tiny opening for a bathroom. Exterior openings are kept to a minimum, reflecting the idea that traditional houses are inwardly oriented towards the courtyard for privacy (Ibrahim, April 1987; p. 31). Though in this case the house is in the midst of a large estate inhabited by the patron, her family, trees, grass, dogs and a few peripheral farmhouses. Apart from the dome, which marks the library and not, as it traditionally would have, a mausoleum, the facade is dominated by a tower which recalls the gateways to medieval Cairo or to the citadel. This tower functions as a storage area for the kitchen.



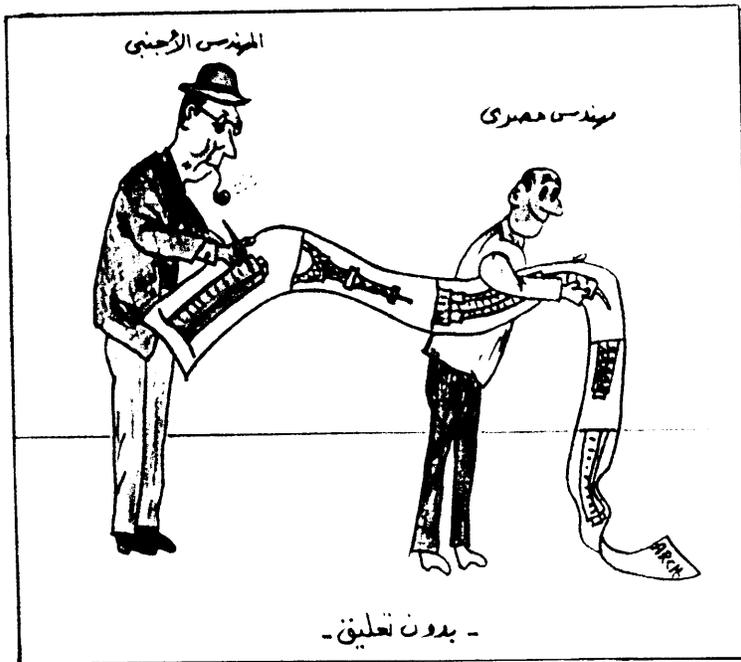
Plan, elevation & section of Ne'mat library & residence: (1) court, (2) library, (3) bath, (4) kitchen

In this design, sentiment has clearly surpassed rational thought. Elements of the past are plugged into the design without fulfilling the justifications Abdel Baki had set for them. The building, already shaded by trees, is nonetheless given redundant screens on its wall openings. Through the intentionally few and small exterior windows, the family is deprived of any enjoyment of the beautiful green scenery of their estate for the sake of an unnecessary privacy. No wonder the proposal was rejected.

What is really rejected in Abdel Baqi's design is the balance between rational and emotional criteria in design thought which he had advocated thirty years earlier. It is the same attitude that lies behind the selection of winners in the competition for the Islamic capitals' headquarters; Abdel Baqi was the chairman of the master jury (*al-Benaa*, Sep. 1990; p.16).

Abdel Baki started *Alam al-Benaa (The World of Construction)* in 1980. In the eleven years his magazine has been published, Abdel Baki has continually called for architecture that reflect his cause, but he never shows any method of implementation. His writings never surpass problem definition and description of symptoms.

He realizes that in the Arab world and particularly in Egypt heritage-conscious design is still in its preliminary stage of development (May 82; p.5); what is worrying is the stagnation of this development (Oct 86; p.5). Despite his concern, he is unable to suggest a way of moving on and his magazine never escapes the vicious circle of monotony. Consequently, his message to Egyptian culture at large ceases to be effective.



A caricature by Amr Hasan Waziri, depicting the unquestioning acceptance of Western architecture in Egyptian practice. On the left, is a Western architect, puffing seriously on his pipe while sketching a highrise on a long piece of paper. Standing in front of him is an Egyptian architect who happily takes what the foreign architect passes on to him and adds some rendering of his own (From: *Alam al-Banaa* 111, 1990; p. 35).

This ineffectiveness is reinforced by the inconsistency between what he says and the projects he chooses from local practice for publication in his magazine. The failure to convey his message is also seen in the separation between most of the historical studies published in the magazine and contemporary practice ²¹ -- an aspect that was consciously addressed by Hasan Fathy.

Like Abdel Baqi Ibrahim, Hasan Fathy condemned the Egyptian version of the Modern Movement which did not converse with the local environment. However, Hasan Fathy did not start with the premise that the use of the past is essentially emotional, nor did he perceive heritage-conscious architecture as a

²¹ Examples of such historical research are: "*al-Qubba fi al-'Emara al-Islamiya bayn Asalat al-Tasmim wa al-Tatwir al-Wa'i* (The dome in Islamic Architecture between Authentic Design and Conscious Development)" by Yehya Hasan Waziri in the issue of Aug. 1986, pp.21-25; "*Al-Nisab al-Riadiya fi al-'Emara al-Islamiya* (Mathematical proportions in Islamic Architecture)" by Abdel Rahman Sultan in issue no. 96, 1988, pp. 23-28.

balance between technology which connotes rationality and visual abstraction which stirs sentiments.

In order to assess the value of the Arab heritage in architecture, and to pass judgment on all the changes that it has undergone, we need to analyse scientifically the various concepts of design, and to clarify the meaning of so many terms... [In addition,] We have to estimate what is basic and constant and thus worthy of keeping , and what is ephemeral and transient and can be discarded (1970 ; pp. 12 & 15).

Based on this premise, Hasan Fathy started to analyse past architecture, particularly residential buildings. One of the elements he chose was the wooden lattice screen, *mashrabiyya*. He did not consider it solely as a social device preserving the privacy of the family, but also as a mechanism that diffuses light.

The mashrabiya softens the glare without dazzling the eye when one looks out through it. This effect is produced by the rounded shape of the balusters or small bars of which it is made. The round form of these bars graduates the light and shade they take, subduing the contrast between the edges and bright light in the interstices when seen against light (1969; p.141)

Had Hasan Fathy perceived the *mashrabiyya* solely as a social device, he would have discarded it in modern design, for the level of family privacy may no longer require such strict measures. The *mashrabiyya* continues to be valid in

bright sunny summers because of the outstanding quality of light it offers to the space behind it.

His observations were not limited to the interplay of form with light in *mashrabiyya(s)*, but also included the calculation of air volume, floor area and thermal comfort in a traditional duplex living unit as opposed to a modern flat. He also studied air drafts that are generated by the combination of a wind catcher and a lantern piercing the roof of a traditional reception hall. He computed the structural limits of mud-brick domes and vaults found in rural architecture and studied their aesthetic effects, good thermal insulation, great span coverage and low building cost. Through these studies, Hasan Fathy eventually came to the conclusion that "analysis by principles of physics and aerodynamics have shown that many of the concepts embodied in the design of Arab houses of the past remain as valid today as they were yesterday" (1970; p.15). Consequently, the term "contemporaneity" to Hasan Fathy meant not only compatibility with current state of knowledge but a harmonious and humane relationship between man and his environment. In this, he felt that past architecture is clearly superior to the Egyptian version of Modern Architecture (1970; p.14).

Contemporaneity as a characteristic of past architecture was not so difficult to prove. Hasan Fathy showed how Modern architects of his time used some of his traditional concepts in their current designs. Oscar Niemeyer, for example, used the same concept of *mashrabiyya* in a country-house design in Brazil, except that Niemeyer's version was not as efficient. According to Fathy, because his balusters were flattened in section rather than rounded, glare was

not subdued. Le Corbusier used the duplex system of a traditional Egyptian lodging in which the living space is of double height and the sleeping area is a mezzanine. The influence of the Orient on the West was not a point made by Fathy; he only sought to prove that traditional ideas were useful in current architecture (p.15). In so doing, Hasan Fathy gave a universal and humanistic message: if the same environmental conditions are repeated throughout time and location, similar solutions can be adopted, at least in concept. Consequently, he used the same traditional solutions derived from Egypt in projects located in the Arab peninsula and Mexico.

Hasan Fathy no doubt favored an antiquarian use of history but not to excess. This is evident in the way he researched past architecture. He did not deal with the architectural type as an end product but placed it in a sketchy sequence of development, noting its formal transformation through time. Sometimes his historic survey of a type is not as accurate as a professional historian would have it. Nevertheless, it should be noted that his aim is not give a historical account for its own sake, but to emphasize the presence of a typological development that ought to be continued from the point it had been abandoned for Western solutions.

...it is the responsibility of the modern Arab architect to find a remedy. He must renew Arab architecture from the moment it was abandoned; and he must try to bridge the existing gap in its development by analysing the element of change, by applying modern techniques modified by the valid ones of the past which were established by our ancestors, and then

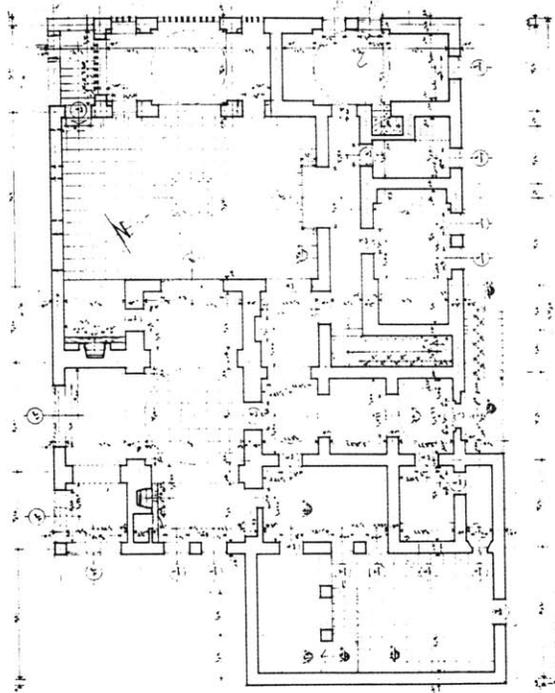
by working to find new solutions for these new elements (1970; p.15)

Consequently he did not mind using reinforced concrete to develop a screen wall with its openings filled with glass. In fact he saw the potential of introducing the outside view to the inside space with such a treatment, but only in temperate zones and not in hot arid climates. To insist on using this treatment in desert areas under the banner of modernity, he found unacceptable (p.6).

Researching past architecture, Hasan Fathy certainly showed his admiration for it, but that admiration did not drive him to .c.accept traditional architecture as fully autonomous over present conditions;. What then did he discard from the past? He discarded the spontaneity in the layout which resulted from an accretionary process in construction that used to be the mark of history, happening circumstantially over unforeseeably long periods of time. His residential plans are primarily orthogonal in arrangement, without apology. In so doing, he did not fall into the ambiguity of making the layout appear as if shaped by history when it was only the rational outcome of a single design act. This unpretentious attitude in design distinguishes him from his successors and disciples who arbitrarily impose on the plan false irregularity in the hope of capturing some essence of the past.²²

²² For example, in Queen Alia Airport Housing in Jordan, designed by Rasem Badran, the streets are arbitrarily bent and vary in width to give the traditional image of an Islamic city fabric (Abu Himdan, Sept. 1987; p.62).

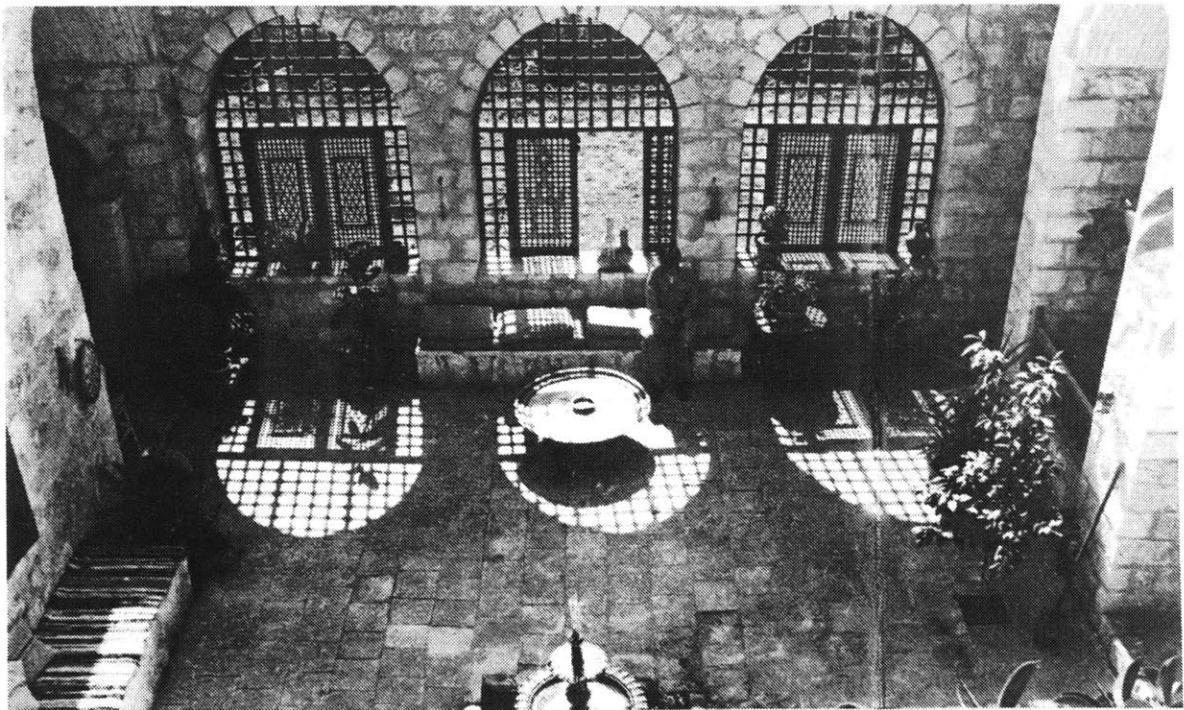
In Mit Rehan villa, for example, Hasan Fathy drew the plan on an orthogonal grid of 50 x 50 cms thus acknowledging the single design process. At the ground level, three sides of the courtyard encompass various reception halls and living spaces. The fourth side, however, overlooks a large garden estate through three large screened openings.



Plan of Mit Rehan villa showing the orthogonal arrangement of spaces (From: Rastorfer, 1985)

The courtyard does not copy a historical model. Hasan Fathy studied the courtyard in past architecture, as a place where cool air collected on summer nights that could provide coolness to the rest of the house during the day (1969; p. 136). In this function the courtyard can still maintain its validity in current design. He also studied the courtyard as an open space, totally surrounded by covered spaces and this led him to deduce the idea of introversion of the Arab house. Since this villa also sits in the midst of a large estate, Fathy rejected its privacy function and connected it visually to the beautiful landscape outside through three arched openings. There was no literal copying of the historic

model for the sake of authenticity. Compared with the villa of Abdel Baqi Ibrahim, this is a more rational solution.



The courtyard in Mit Rehan Villa (Source: Rastorfer, 1985)

Despite Fathy's more mature approach, he shared with Abdel Baqi the failure to promulgate heritage-conscious design in Egypt but for a different reason. He did not belong to the world of academics. When he did teach for a time, it was in a Fine Arts school (Ibrahim, Aug. 1980; p.38), less prestigious than a university department. Hardly any Egyptian listened to him, and as a result, he did not develop his designs. He spent his life proving his point that man should bridge the gap between a neglected yet valid tradition and current technology. His whole career was devoted to closing this gap for which he had a perpetual lack of support from the Egyptian architectural community:

Even during the 'seventies [and eighties], the time when modernism was being called into question in the West, there was no rising wave calling into question these same ideas and theories in the [Egypt]. Although ... Fathy in 1967 ... was awarded the Egyptian Order of Merit ... that, did not lead to ... widespread academic acceptance in Egyptian universities, which for the most part remained indifferent (though not hostile) to both Fathy and his message (Serageldin, 1985; p.19).

Still today Egyptian academic indifference to the heritage-conscious design advocated by Abdel Baqi Ibrahim and Hasan Fathy prevails. This indifference is also due to the stagnation of architectural education in Egypt.

One facet of this educational stagnation is the isolation of history courses from design studios (Barrada, 1986; p.184). Such isolation, as Chris Abel says, has its roots in the Bauhaus type of education.

The ideal state of mental preparedness for students beginning architecture is assumed in line with the 'clean sheet' theory of creativity, to be that early state of childhood innocence that historical awareness ...had yet to 'corrupt'. This ...system...has its influence amongst teachers in the developing world, who usually picked up their methods [of design teaching] whilst completing their own education in the West. (1986 ; pp.39-40)

To this today, professors controlling architecture departments are primarily those with Western education acquired in the fifties and sixties. They may allow

history courses to be taught, but only as a separate entity that is non-interactive with design studios. They do not promote any widespread and creative interpretation of past architecture, since they cannot see its relevance to present conditions. Because of this, it is natural for them to perceive Hasan Fathy as an archaic mud-brick preacher coming from the yellowed and dusty pages of history and calling for time to go backwards.

Educational stagnation is also due to the encapsulation of the discipline in a concentrated technical framework which started with the introduction of the Polytechnic School in the nineteenth century. Since that time, the discipline has been seen more as a science that involves more of civil engineering calculations than as a conceptual creativity. Institutionally, architecture continues to be seen as merely a part of the more powerful and respectable Faculty of Engineering. In the Engineers' Syndicate, the majority of seats go to the civil engineering section; thus laws and conditions of practice are naturally biased in their favor. The term "architect" when translated into Arabic, originally coined by nineteenth-century Egyptian educators, means "engineer-architect" thus reflecting the subordination of the profession to technicians (Barrada, 1986; p. 182).

Introduced within this technical atmosphere, the Modern Movement was soon reduced to functionalism. The student thinks of the design problem in terms of sliding some geometric forms onto each other in order to reach efficient circulation patterns. The facade is a mere outcome of a structurally disciplined plan. With such a version of Modernism, the student is well trained in working-drawings and structural details, but knows very little about theoretical discourse.

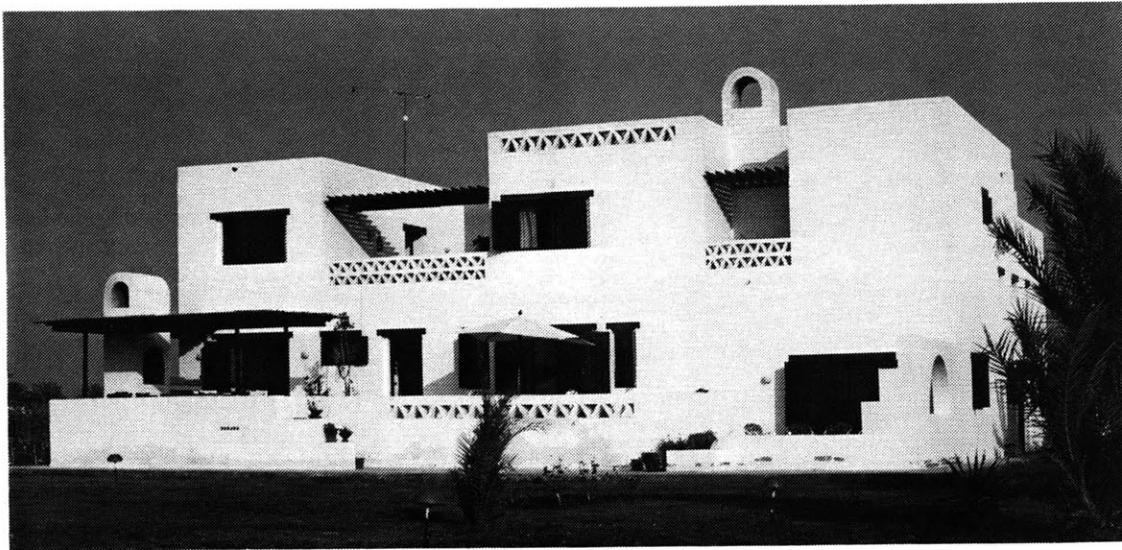
In recent years, Egyptian architects have noticed their isolation from Arab practice, especially in the Gulf region where most business is located. They are thus forced to consider historic references in their proposals. In villa architecture, the name of Hasan Fathy has become a trade mark. Many Egyptian architects try to evoke his designs; but almost invariably, they seem to follow a tradition of reducing Fathy's architecture to few images to be readily recycled in their current design.

Nevertheless, I believe that Fathy has established a doctrine that permits development, unlike Abdel Baqi Ibrahim who is caught in an infinite regression.

Muhammad al-Husayni, an Egyptian architect has managed to break out of the prevailing reductivist 'tradition'. In a recent project, a resort villa, he revives a lost dialogue with Hasan Fathy's theories and promises further progress in heritage-conscious design.

The villa, located on the Bitter Lakes of the Suez Canal, is intended to be a second home in which the client's family can enjoy an atmosphere of repose and entertainment throughout the year. Ideologically, this means that it exists not to fulfill autonomous functions but to provide a counterbalance to urban predicaments, such as congestion, noise and tension (Ackerman, 1990; p.9). With such an ideology, the architect is challenged to design a villa that makes the best possible use of site potentials. After all, it is through the appreciation of those potentials that the villa becomes meaningful as a retreat.

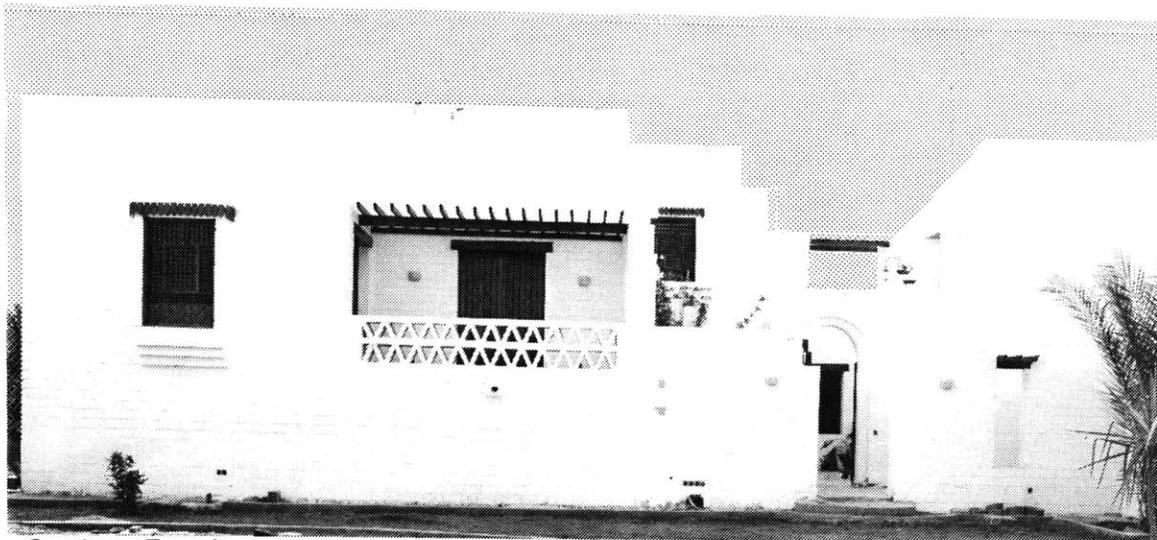
From this ideological premise, al-Husayni designed a villa that resonates sensitively with site particularities. Because of its location at the southern side of the Bitter Lakes, the villa constantly enjoys north and north-west cool breezes. Al-Husayni responded to this setting by providing generous openings to the northern side of the villa. Family and guests, sitting in the living room and on the terrace at the ground level or in the bedrooms on the upper level, can enjoy both the relaxing panorama of the lake and the cool breeze. They can also enjoy barbecues, cook-outs and open buffets either in the combined kitchen-dining room or under the shade of a timber pergola located in the enlarged portion of the northern terrace.



Northern facade

On the southern facades where heat and glare are most discomforting, al-Husayni applied many of the traditional solutions to reduce their effect. For

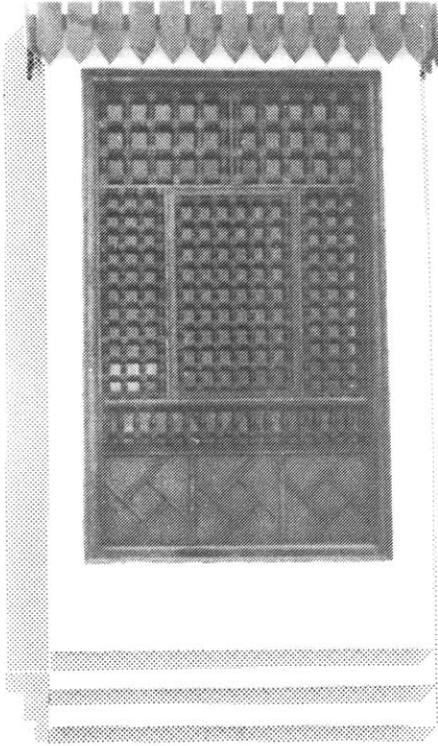
example, he restricted the area of wall openings in order to minimize the heat radiating to the inside. Heat insulation is further enhanced by painting the external walls white and using brick bearing walls 38 cm thick. To reduce the effect of humidity that can be associated with heat, al-Husayni planned a courtyard in the southern parts of the villa. With the northern terrace, the southern courtyard provides cross ventilation for the living room which is located in between.



Southern Facade

Al-Husayni adopted another traditional solution, this time to solve the problem of glare. He added to the window openings panels of latticed woodwork which were not a literal copy of the past. Like Hasan Fathy, al-Husayni perceived historical types in a chain of progress and attempted to derive new models within today's economy. On the one hand, he retained the lattice screens to perform the basic function which Hasan Fathy had earlier analyzed, namely to soften the contrast between outside and inside brightness. On the other hand,

he replaced the elaborately detailed wooden encasement that once housed such screens with another made of bricks.



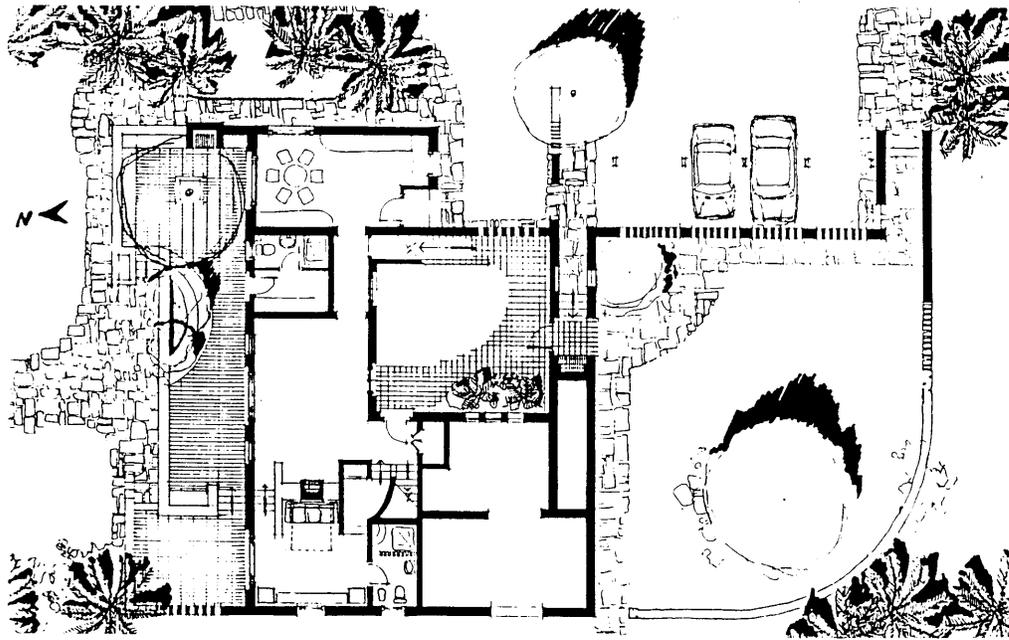
The new form of the mashrabiyya

In this manner he fulfilled the basic aim without unnecessarily escalating construction costs. He subsequently supported the encasement with brick corbels rather than wooden brackets. He produced a naturally evolving form that was unpretentious and unapologetic.

In this villa, al-Husayni showed a critical approach to current extremes. He neither succumbed to the temptation of using traditional images to dominate contemporary criteria of living, under the banner "Islamic character,"

nor did he ignore the outcome of centuries of experience for the sake of "progress." This critical approach has allowed his architecture to blend successfully with the surrounding landscape. Thus the openness of the northern facade together with the screening of the southern ones provides a natural diversity which resonates with diurnal and seasonal changes in the environment. It is this diversity which permits al-Husayni's design to satisfy the basic ideology of a resort villa.

The villa's harmony with the surrounding environment is matched by its sensitivity to behavioral patterns. The ground-floor reception area is an open plan with a series of levels. Despite this openness, privacy can still be maintained because a stair leads from the courtyard directly to the master and guest bedrooms, providing an alternative circulation that bypasses the reception halls.



Ground plan of the villa

With this solution, al-Husayni's villa has come closer in maturity to Hasan Fathy's theoretical approach. The maintenance of privacy in an open plan and the seemingly contradictory treatments of the southern and the northern facade recall Hasan Fathy's Mit Rehan villa. Both villas show a relaxed encompassing attitude towards what appear today to many Arab architects to be uncompromising adversaries, namely, aspiration to the new versus sustenance of tradition. Like Hasan Fathy he has tried to bridge the gap between the past and the present or, to use Nietzsche's terms, the "historical" and the "unhistorical."

T H E V I L L A A S A S P I R A T I O N

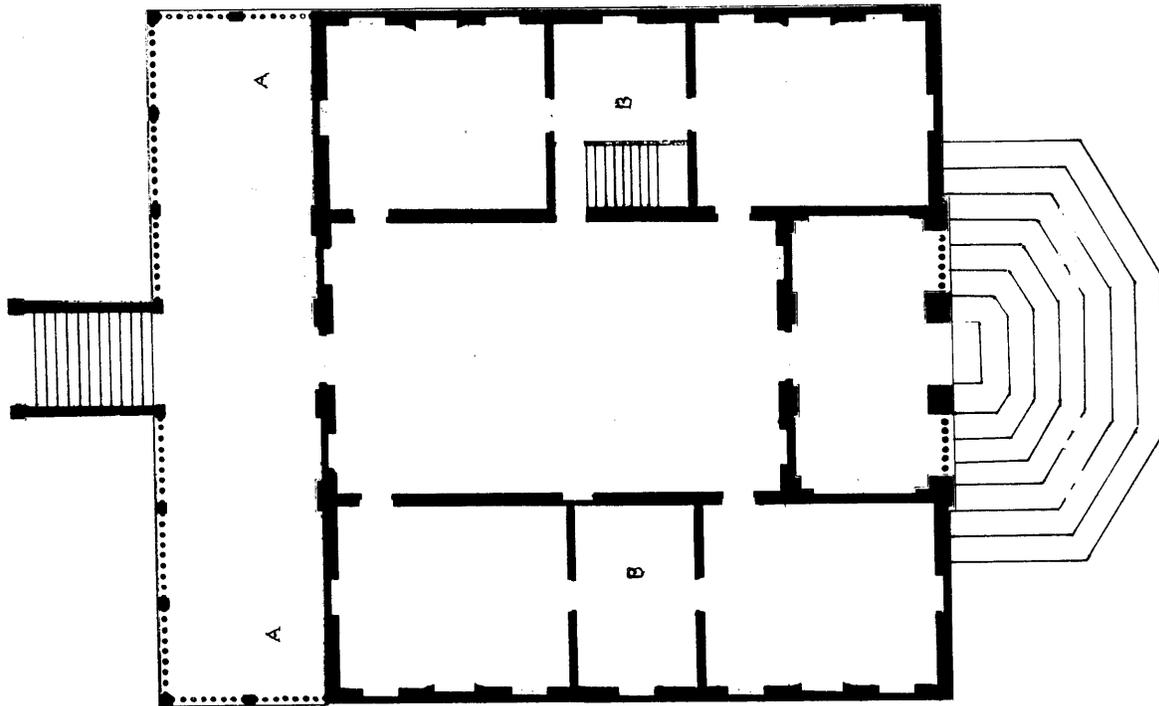
The concept of a detached dwelling, composed of two to three stories, situated in a garden and overlooked a sunny regular quiet street, only came to Cairo in the second half of the nineteenth century. This detached dwelling, or villa, was tripartite in plan. The middle part contained the central hall, flanked by two sets of rooms and was accentuated by the projection of a terrace, porch or a bay window.

The origins of the villa as described could no doubt be traced to the sixteenth-century theoretician Andrea Palladio who practiced in the Venetian lands. By the nineteenth century, Palladian villas were considered a prototype for upper-class dwellings all over Europe, and what was set as the norm for villa design by Palladio continued to exist throughout these centuries. Palladio described his plan as follows:

The rooms ought to be distributed on each side of the entry and the hall, and it is to be observed that those on the right correspond with those on the left, so that the fabric may be the same in one place as in the other, and that the walls may equally bear the burden of the roof ([1570] 1965; p. 31).

Palladio justified the arrangement of rooms not only on the grounds of construction and economy, but also aesthetics. He believed that beauty results from a form in which the parts correspond to the whole, leading eventually to a plan that has an entire and complete body (p. 1). In his mind, mirror symmetry perfectly served this ideal in both plan and facade, where the windows on the right had to correspond to those on the left, and those on the upper story to

those on the lower. An accentuated central part served as an axis for these symmetric sides (p.38).

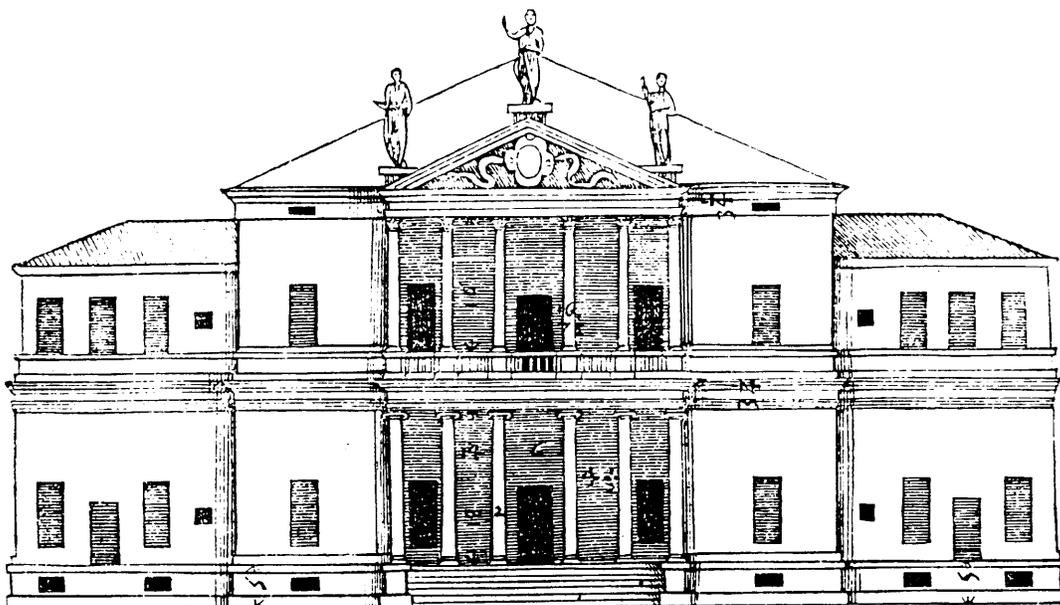


Plan of Villa Caldogno built by Palladio (From: Ghezzi, 1968; p.230)

Palladio gave his arrangement a third layer of rationale, which was more meaningful to his clients and those of succeeding generations:

I have made in all the villa buildings and also in some of the city ones a pediment on columns for the front facade in which there are the principal portals. The reason is that these porches announce the entrance of houses and lend much to their grandeur and magnificence. They make the forward part more eminent than the other parts and are most convenient for the insignia of arms ... which one usually places at the center of the facade. (p. 53.)

This third layer of rationale had a social meaning, for the presence of a colonnaded loggia with a pediment on top in the central part, a borrowed element from religious iconography, became a hallmark of honorary status for residential architecture (Constant, 1985; p. 4). To push the idea further, Palladio tied the *barchesse* (service areas for the maintenance of the estate) to the main block of the villa, through two flanking wings (p. 34). In this way he further enhanced the centrality and hence the grandeur of the structure, for the *barchesse* wings would make the central block of the villa appear as the frontispiece of the whole ensemble, just as the entrance loggia did for the central block. Palladio then regarded this whole setting in his treatise, to be only for "great men"; since greatness is only perceived through the eyes of others, this arrangement was there to impress those "who shall wait to salute or ask him [the master of the house] some favour." (p. 40)



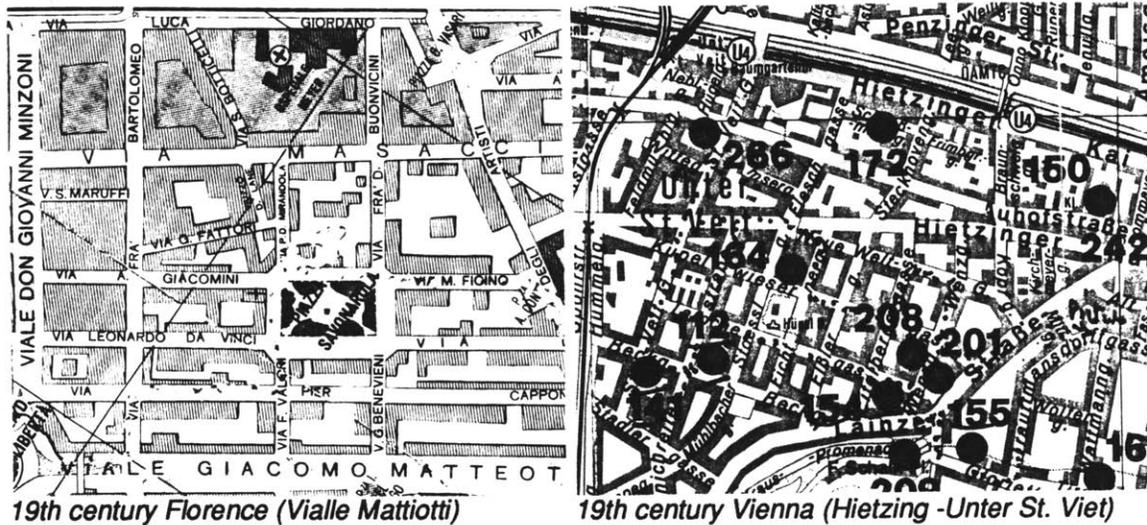
Villa Giorgio Cornara by Palladio showing the honorary facade (From: The Four Books)

This elevated status of the villa had never been idealized with such intensity before Palladio (Ackerman, 1967; p.13). Since his time, the Palladian design has always been associated with expressions of wealth, power and prestige.

The country villa was usually set in the midst of large green fields (farming estates and gardens) where the family enjoyed the privileged sense of isolation and repose from the dense fabric of the city (Ackerman, 1990; p. 10). It was a second house for the family that fulfilled their psychological need for a *dolce vita* (Muraro, 1986; p.20).

The sixteenth century villa continued over the centuries to act as a place for amusement, hospitality and escape from the urban life but its farming aspect gradually diminished (Muraro, p.90).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Palladian villa as a prototype was no longer limited to the countryside. It was erected in suburban neighborhoods outside the crowded urban fabric of the city. The villa in its new format is a compacted version of what used to be found in large estates. Causes for such a development are intertwined: they include industrialization, rapid growth of central historic cities at the expense of the countryside, and faster means of transportation (Ackerman, p.17). This development gave rise to a new social elite of industrial entrepreneurs, urban bureaucrats and commercial bourgeoisie. These groups, bent on acquiring fortunes, sought to create their own miniaturized version of aristocracy.



19th century Florence (Viale Mattiotti)

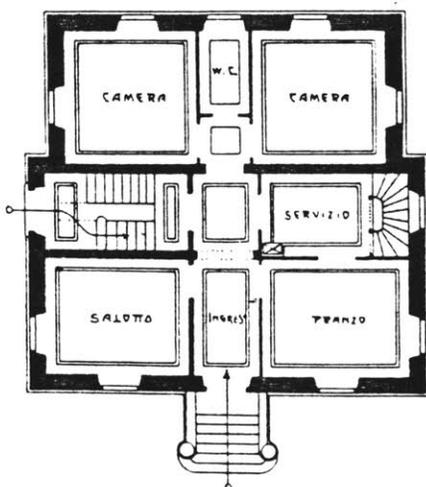
19th century Vienna (Hietzing -Unter St. Viet)

In the field of construction, the type became widely acknowledged among the newly rising elite through vast numbers of albums and catalogues. In the first decade of the twentieth century these publications formed a genre and helped in establishing a common taste between real estate developers and their clients. In Italy, for example, an active publishing house was that of *Società Italiana di Edizioni Artistiche*. C. Crudo & Co.¹ In Austria it was Anton Schroll & Co.² In these albums villas were classified according to place such as *Le costruzioni moderne in Italia* (circa 1910) and *Neubauten in Wien, Prag und Budapest* (1904) or according to style such as *Wiener Neubauten im Style der*

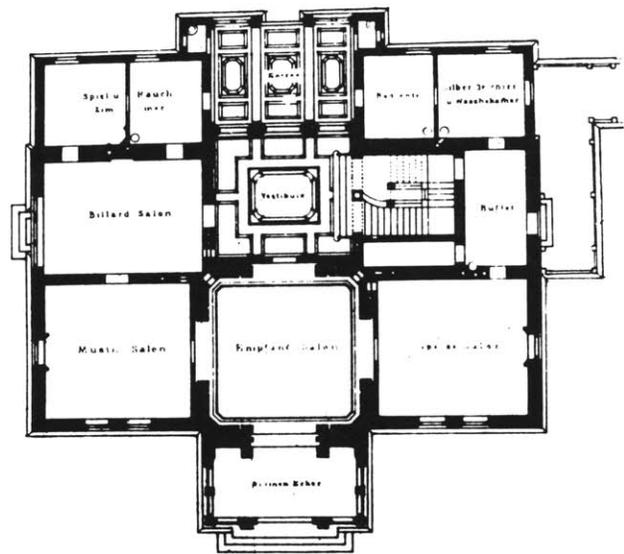
¹ Other albums by the same publisher are *Soffiti e fregi moderni*, - *Le ville moderne in Italia - Ville del Lago di Como e della Lombardia*, - *Ville di Torino*, - *Ville di Roma*, - *Ville del Lido a Venezia*, *Ville e villette moderne*, *Le Moderne in Italia - Milano*, - *Genova*, - *Torino*, *Motivi ornamentali moderni*. They are also in charge of publishing architectural periodicals like *L'Architettura Italiana*. These publications do not contain year of publication, but in the National Library of Rome there is an accession stamp of the Library dated 1911 on some of them.

² Other albums by the same publisher are: *Neue Landhäuser und Villen in Oesterreich (Vienna 1910)*, *Wiener Neubauten im Style der Secession und anderen modernen Stylarten. Façaden. Details. Hausthore. Vestibule (Vienna 1906)*. *Wiener Neubauten im Style der Secession. Façaden. Details. Hausthore. Vestibule*. The last title is a yearly catalogue that started to appear in 1902 up till the 1910s.

Secession (1907). However, in all of them words like "modern" and "new" were in the title thus reflecting the taste of the new clientele that focused upon the notion of "reminiscence" not "copying". The notion suggests that the past which had once belonged to the "real" aristocracy is now idealized and revered (Olsen, 1986; p. 126). It cannot be reached nor entirely reconstructed, but perhaps it can be hinted at.³



Plan in *Le ville moderne in Italia (Venezia)*



Plan from *Kunsthistorisches Institut Vienna Univ.*

The villa plan in all these publications retained in essence much of what Palladio advocated. In the era of the "garden city", which meant to combine rural ideals of past aristocracy in an urban format, quotations from the past helped achieve that aim. Rooms might no longer be arranged in rigid symmetry along the central hall, but the tri-partite division on the facade is clearly maintained at least on one side of the dwelling. The central hall may not be large and close to

³ Such aspirations and attitudes towards "real" aristocracy are depicted in literary works of the time in various European cultures. For example in Italy: D'Annunzio *The Child of Pleasure*; in Austria: Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, and Loos, "Potemkin's Town"; in France: Zola, *Pot-Bouille*.

a square in shape, as in eighteenth-century country houses, but is smaller in size and more corridor-like in effect.



Villa in Währing district (Gersthof) in Vienna



Villa in Nomentana district in Rome, built in 1900

The loggia, once the temple frontispiece designed to overwhelm visitors with its finishing material, size and decoration, had become a humble pediment either in the form of a molded pilaster on the facade or projecting enough to be surmounted on two engaged or detached columns and attached to a brief flight of stairs.

The vast gardens that were once an indispensable element in rendering the grandeur of the villa, shrank in this suburban setting to a small cultivated green area in the back or front yard, just enough to differentiate the villa from other dwellings found in more densely populated streets of the urban center (Ackerman, 1990; p.18).

This process of simplifying history under the banners "new" and "modern" meant that the new clientele may not have had honorary emblems to post on the front loggia, as Palladio liked; but a small porch would suffice as a recollecting icon. They may not have a refined classical education that enabled

them to understand the Palladian metaphor of correlating the symmetric arrangement of his villa with the human body, but a chalcedony jar in the drawing room would create the link.

In the process of simplification, the few stands for the many and the abstract for the original. Consequently memory is vital for establishing a dialogue between the ideal and its reduced image. To help foster this dialogue, publishing houses were equally encouraged to publish separate or combined albums of historic monuments, that is, the source of inspiration, together with images of modern architecture. In the same year, for example, C. Crudo & Co of Turin would publish catalogues with titles like *Particolari di architettura classica* that included *Architettura greca, romano, bizantino - lombarda, gotica, cinquecento, seicento* and *settecento*.⁴ In magazines as well, such as the *Emporium*, that covered light miscellaneous topics and were oriented towards mass culture, past architecture took up considerable space.⁵

In these magazines details on past cultures were abridged and distilled, leaving only a "meaning-form" vocabulary for the newly rising elites. To them, Baroque villas reflected meanings of prestige, power, amusement, wealth, refined education and elegant life-style. Those meanings of authentic aristocracy were inherently tied in the minds of those classes to large garden estates, spacious

⁴ Other albums that focus on past architecture by the same publishing house are : *Il Barocco a Roma nell'architettura e nella scultura decorativa*, *L'Architettura antica in Dalmazia*, *Ornamenti classici ad uso delle scuole di disegno*, *La decorazione dei pilastri della Loggia Vaticana di Raffaello Sanzio*.

⁵ The attitude of compiling past architecture with modern is also found in specialized periodicals oriented towards architects as In Vienna, *Wiener Bauhütte*.

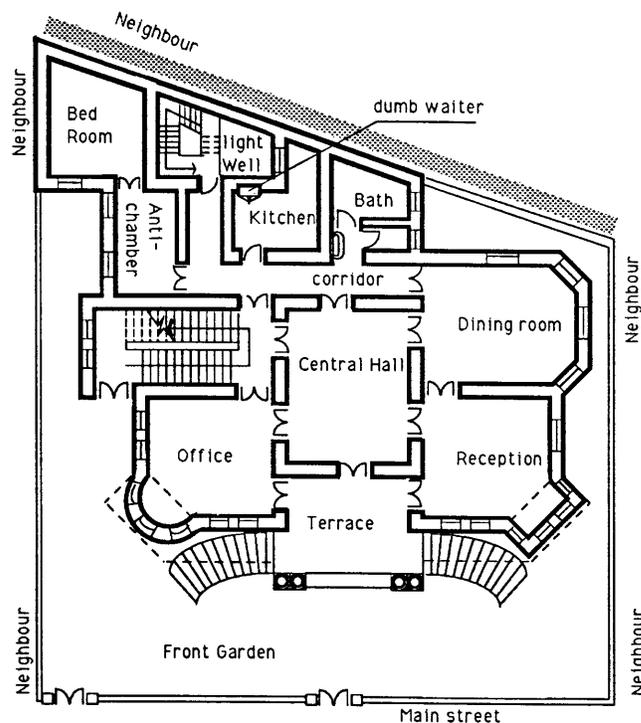
central halls, majestic loggias, symmetric arrangement of rooms, elaborate statues and decoration. The bond between the meaning and form, became so strong in the 19th century, that the line of demarcation almost disappeared. Historicism was at its climax, causing the villa to continuously lose meanings of contemporaneity for the sake of reverence to past aristocracy.

Keen to establish a link with the past, the newly rising elite in Europe sought to acquire this vocabulary of combined meaning and form to their villas. For example, little gardens would be found in front of their villas to recall the image of the large estate of the eighteenth century associated with landed nobility and refinement. Both the authentic form and the revered meaning were instantly evoked by this abstracted, cheaper and simplified version of the historic model.

When the villa migrated to Cairo, its already distilled meaning went through another round of filtration. Generic form is with generic meaning: the pediment is inherently European and not Classical, garlands are royal and not Renaissance-rooted nobility. Forms evoking past cultures were screened. Some were never adopted in Cairo: the pedimented loggia, for example, a temple-like image, was replaced by a horizontal slab. What filtered into Egyptian society is the essential and the very striking. One plan type in villa design, the central hall flanked by two sets of rooms, predominated for almost a century in Cairo and was taught at the Cairo Polytechnic.

As in Europe, the degree of uniformity in the plan can vary according to the site particularities. However, it was necessary to maintain symmetry in the elevations that overlooked the main streets and in the entrance-porch facades, for

this was essential to the formal appearance of the house and subsequently the patron. It was a very important form that no longer referred to Palladio but merely to Europe or modernism; the two terms were synonymous.



Villa in Hilmiya neighborhood in Cairo, built in 1910s and owned by Ahmad Bek Ismail. The ground plan shows the central-hall arrangement. The villa has frontage on the street. Elements overlooking the street, i.e., the entrance porch flanked by two flights of marble stairs together with the reception room and the office, constitute the "formal" appearance of the villa. What lies behind this facade is not as formal. To accentuate this distinction, there is an entrance situated right on the axis of the "formal" setting for visitors, and there is another side entrance for the family. (Surveyed by author)

Like Europe's new elite society, the Egyptian patron⁶ who was usually a landowner, sought these villas to make up his image. The Egyptian upper classes flourished after a law was passed in 1858 which regulated the possession of any amount of agricultural land, a privilege that used to be limited to the ruling Turks and very few Egyptians. Since then, owning land has been the dream of every Egyptian and the main source of wealth and status. In 1866, the

⁶ Ahmad Shafiq Pasha, a socio-political chronicler, recalls that when the poet Subhi Bey was made head of a municipality, he rushed to borrow a carriage so as to have an image compatible with his new status (Shafiq, 1934, vol 1; p. 47).

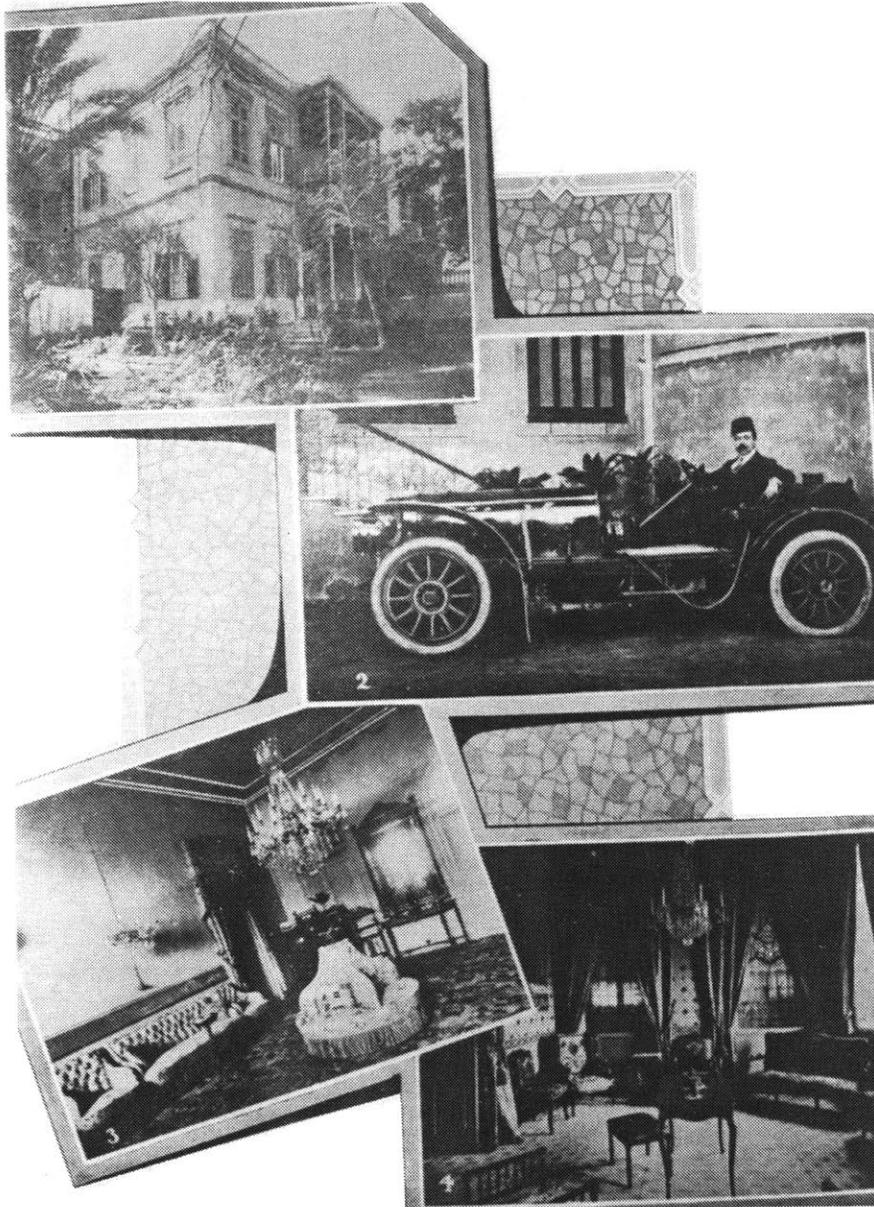
status and power of this class was officially enhanced when it politically represented various provinces in a state advisory council ('Awad, 1980; pp.326-336).

Well educated and high ranking officials in the government formed another privileged class. They were very influential, for they either allied themselves with rural notables and invested in agriculture or with the old Turkish elite (Serageldin, 1972; p. 90 / 220). They were the products of modern education. Some of them were officially sent to Europe for their education and were appointed to governmental positions upon their return (Heyworth-Dunne 1968, p. 170). The first group of Egyptians to be educated abroad returned in the 1830s. By the end of the century, they were still relatively newcomers to the world of aristocracy, and tried to enhance their position with status symbols, one of which was the villa.⁷

A detailed monograph on Egypt, *Twentieth Century Impression of Egypt* (1909), written for European readers, covers every aspect of Egypt, its political history, economy, education, professions, monuments, urban development, journals, traditional crafts, public services and biographical notes on almost every distinguished notable in the society. The monograph also shows in images the work of some professional groups, like architects and builders and their offices and stores. When it comes to the Egyptian notable, his wealth was displayed through images of sitting rooms, drawing rooms, studies and libraries, lavishly decorated and well furnished. Exterior shots of the house with the garden and

⁷ Husein Mu'nis in *Bashawat wa Suber Bashawat (Pashas and Super Pashas)*; 1984; Chap. 3, identifies three main status symbols : 1-agricultural estate, 2-villa , 3- carriage (or later a car).

front porch are also included. Another indispensable status-symbol is the automobile in which the patron in full uniform sits with a serious look on his face.



(1) House; (2) Him sitting in the car; (3) Drawing room; (4) Sitting room

This group of pictures accompanies the biographical notice for M. Khurshid Bey. The text says: [He] occupies a prominent position among agriculturists in Egypt and his extensive estates...are among the most carefully cultivated and best irrigated in the country ... [He] was born in Cairo in 1878, and was educated at the French Jesuit College until his father's death in 1895. In 1900 he journeyed through Europe ..., and was much interested in ... motor vehicles...On his return he brought with him the first motor car ever seen in Egypt. ... He has collected a splendid library of books to gratify a taste for literature." (Wright, p.399)

The monograph in this way chooses what can best represent each group to the rest of the society. Just as it shows the architects through their work and

merchants through their shops, Egyptian notables are represented by their houses and gardens.

Anchoring one's place in the Cairene social map through architecture was a traditional practice that went as far back as the Mamluk era (1326-1515). However, it was not through residential architecture that the Mamluk aristocracy carved its presence in the public cognition, it was through religious edifices.

In his *Prolegomenon* Ibn Khaldun shed light on this phenomenon. He writes:

A "house" means that a man counts noble and famous among men of his forbearing. The fact that he is their progeny and descendant gives him great standing among his fellows for his fellows respect the great standing and nobility that his ancestors acquired ... (Part I Chapter 2 Section 12, p. 273).

However in the case of people who have no group feeling to make themselves feared, and who have no rank (to bestow) for which one might hope, there can be no doubt as to why they are respected ... namely glory, perfection in personal qualities ... (Part I, Chapter 2, Section 19, p.294)

A dynasty that could not boast of a noble "house" (i.e. lineage) had to rely solely on personal qualities to gain the loyalty and support of the masses. The Mamluk dynasty that centered its rule in Cairo was contemporary to Ibn Khaldun and fitted this category. Each member of this dynasty reflected these personal qualities through the erection of religious foundations which served as centers of charity and not only as places for worship. In these foundations a passer-by

was provided with water, an orphan was educated, and the poor were fed. Patrons in this way asserted their existence in the public consciousness (Lapidus, 1984; p. 178).

Expressing personal piety and power through architecture was always present. However it was amplified during the Mamluk dynasty due to their lack of a respected "house." This intensity was revived during the nineteenth century by the newly rising elite. Like the Mamluk mosque, the villa was a place for distributing food and clothing to the poor on religious occasions, as well as practicing Qur'an recitation.⁸ To the public it displayed notions of piety and charity, not only modernity and prestige.

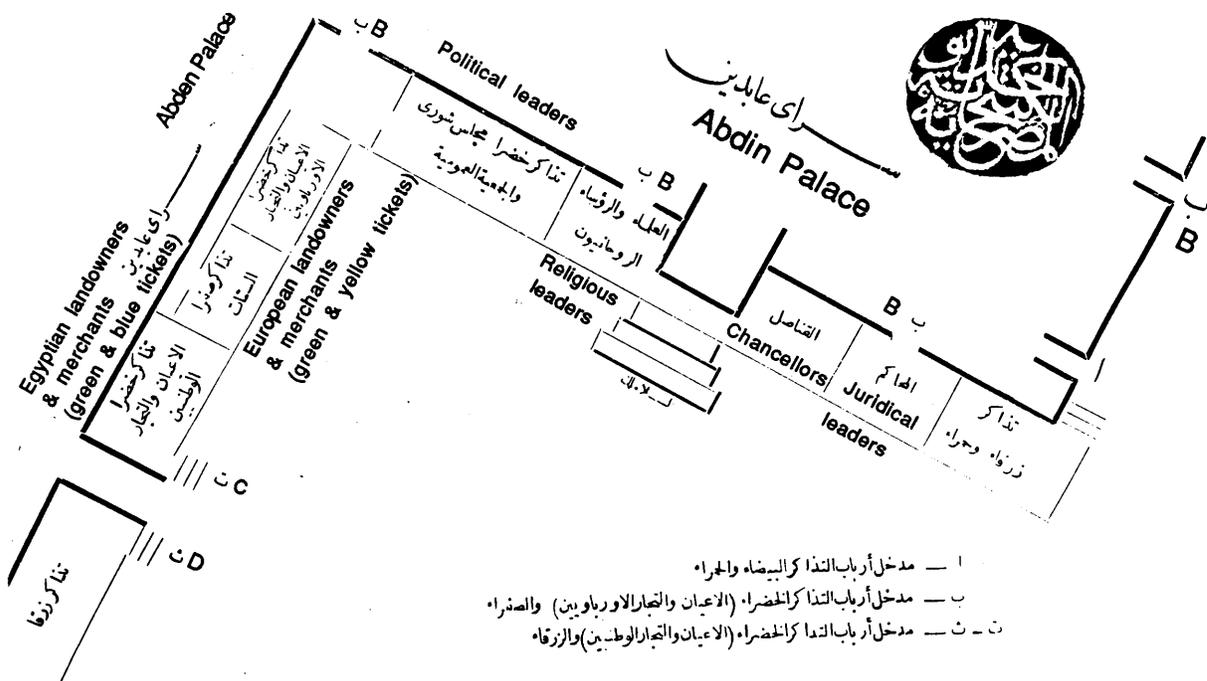
The villa was also known to the public through the rank of the patron. In nineteenth-century Egypt class distinction was expressed by official titles *effendi*, *bey* and *pasha*. Other titles are social and specify professions, like *al-tuggar* (merchant) and *al-a'yan* (notable-landowner). They may combine with the former set to give an accurate position of the patron in the society.

To understand the position of the Egyptian notable-landowner in the social hierarchy we need to see where he sat in royal ceremonies that involved the invitation of large number of distinguished people.

Organizers of official events in royal palaces had to observe strict protocol in seating guests. To insure the correct order during the ceremony the event was

⁸ In various interviews with members of second-generation families who lived in the Hilmiya neighborhood, these activities were mentioned as part of the villa's interaction with the public.

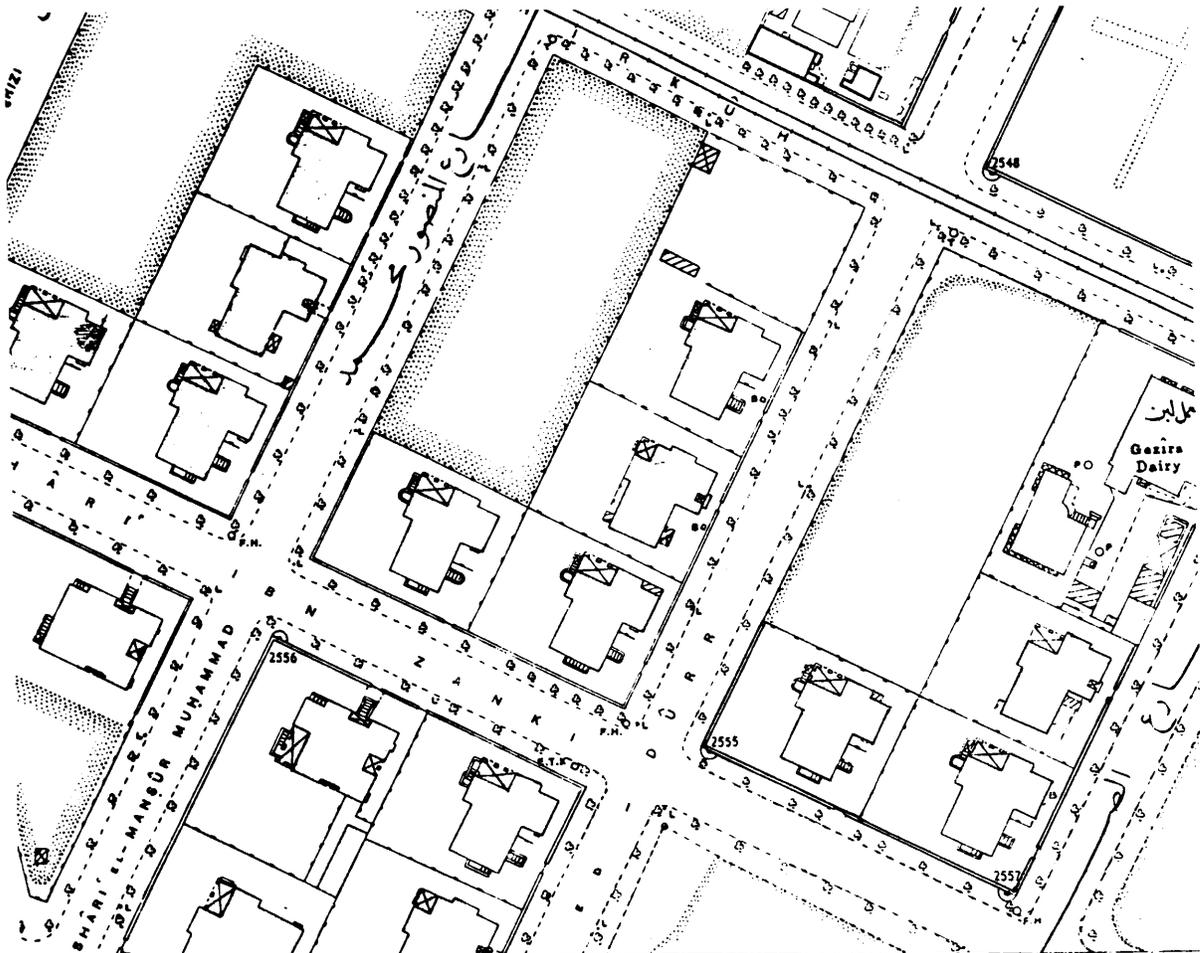
announced in the official newspaper *al-Waqai' al-Masriya* with the assignment of each entrance to a certain category. In some cases a schematic plan of the royal palace was provided with the entrances being marked and classified according to titles.⁹ Each category knew where to sit in relation to the highest authority and hence where they stood in the social hierarchy. In these ceremonies Egyptian notables of *a'yan* rank were seated at the farthest point, after European dignitaries, religious, political and juridical leaders, European merchants and landowners. This position not only announced their newly acquired status but that they were the distinguished class closest to the masses.



Ranking persons in royal ceremonies according to titles was also applied to residential neighborhoods. Marcel Clerget, a 1934 urban historian, classified

⁹ Examples of such announcements are in issues of 1892 between April and June.

new neighborhoods in Cairo into three types: neighborhoods that had an exclusive European character and contained the major banks and hotels.



1913 plan of Zamalek neighborhood where the English colony lived (from: Cairo Survey dep.)

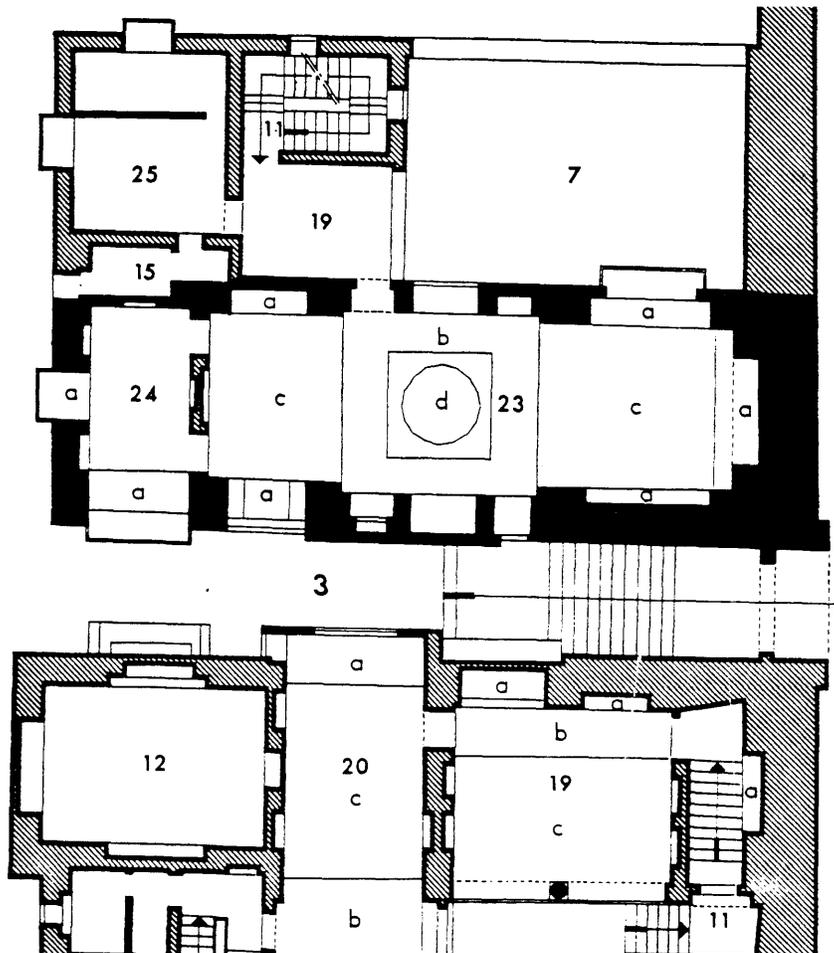
Next to them were those semi-indigenous semi-European in character. Next came those with a predominant local character that housed the *petite bourgeoisie*. Egyptian landowners of distinguished caliber, who were seated in the farthest end of the palace, lived in the second type of neighborhoods. It was a group that retained local values and looked up to a European image. Hilmiya neighborhood was one of their seats (Clerget, 1934; p.266).

Residents of Hilmiya lived in houses that combined European with traditional values. In a map of 1911 most of the houses have a separate structure raised from the ground by one flight of stairs which was the *salamlek*, or a reception hall where male non-relatives were received.



Detail of map of 1911 showing the salamlek in Hilmiya houses. (From: Cairo survey department)

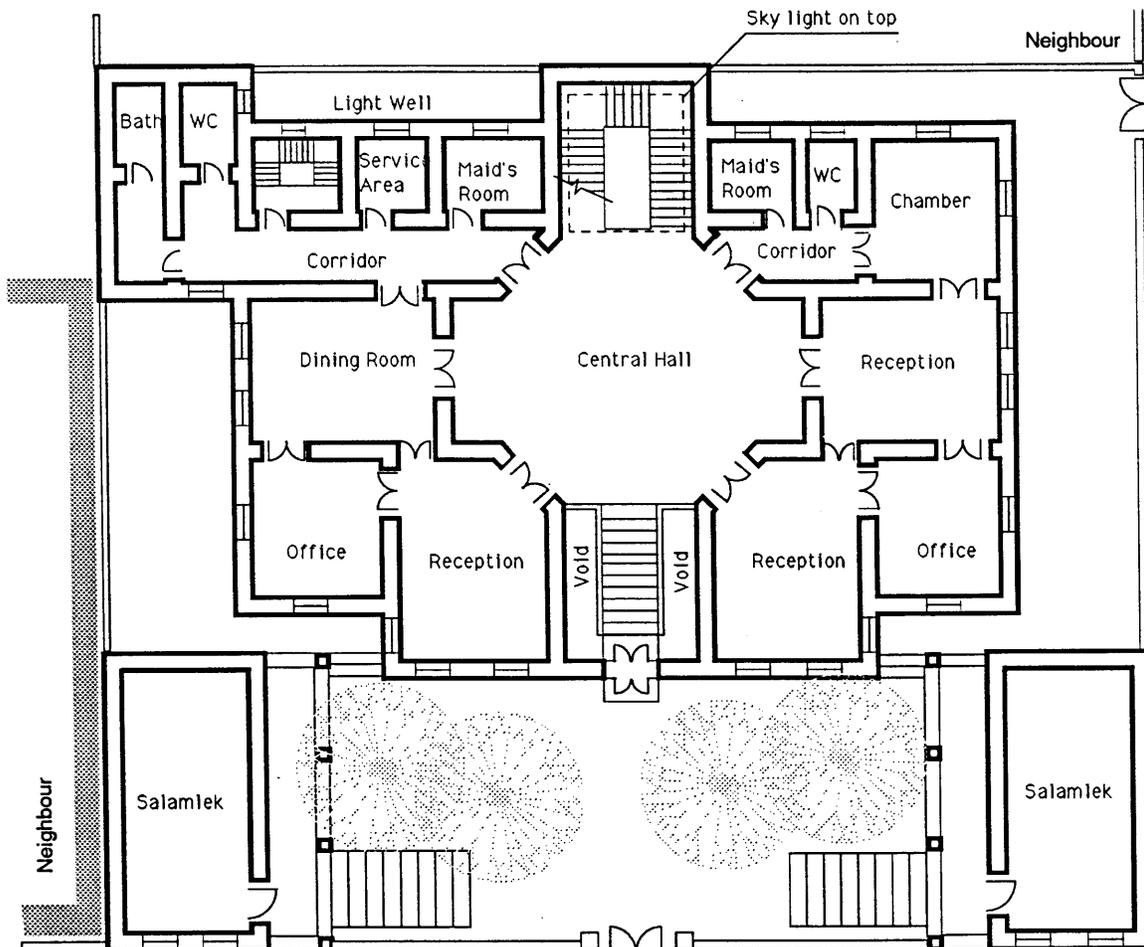
Until the eighteenth-century the *salamlek* in Cairene mansions was part of the house. It was also the show-piece of the house and reflected the wealth of the family who lived there in its lavishly decorated interior. It had a regular shape and followed a prescribed layout: a sunken area, where the entrance and a finely executed marble fountain were located, flanked by two raised sitting areas. This whole setting disappeared with the introduction of the central-hall plan, leaving only the idea.



Plan of a traditional house featuring a male reception hall no. 23 (From: Palais et Maisons du Caire)

The European plan was welcomed in Hilmiya along with notions of modernity and progress, yet it was not fully accepted because it seriously violated family privacy. Hilmiya society rejected the arrangement of a central hall located behind the entrance porch and flanked by rooms with no intermediary space. Consequently, the idea of the *salamlek* was retained along with the European plan. The combination allowed the visitor to be received in a room that still maintained its traditional importance without disrupting the privacy of the family.

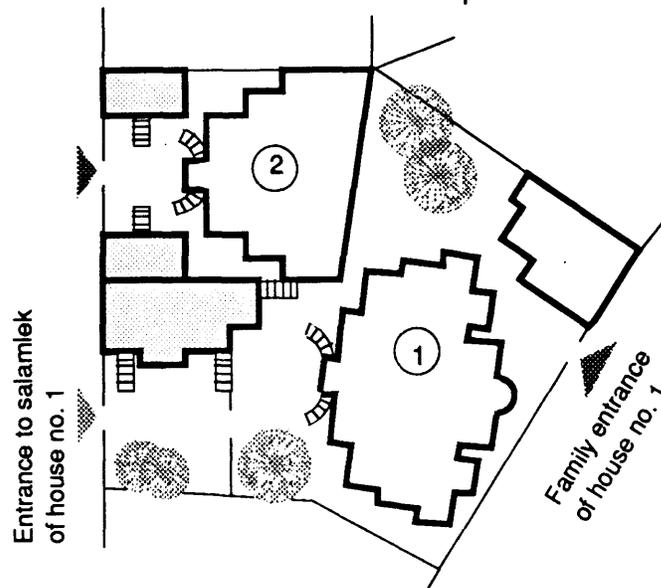
This architectural modification to the European plan shows that the tradition of excluding the visitor from familial life persisted in the new form of dwelling. The refusal to alter the central-hall plan was as strong as the insistence on having a *salamlek*. The attempt to encompass both ideals, one architectural, one social, resulted in the separation of the two domains.



Plan of Abdel Latif villa in Hilmiya showing the salamlek (1/200 reduced to 77%)

The separation of the *salamlek* from the house did not mean that it had an inferior status. It was raised from the ground by one flight of stairs to give it an honorary status. It was also located in the front yard, and the host could notice its facade treatment being similar to that of the house. Moreover, the interior is

lavishly decorated and well furnished like any other reception room inside the house. Thus the traditional component of the new dwelling was as appreciated



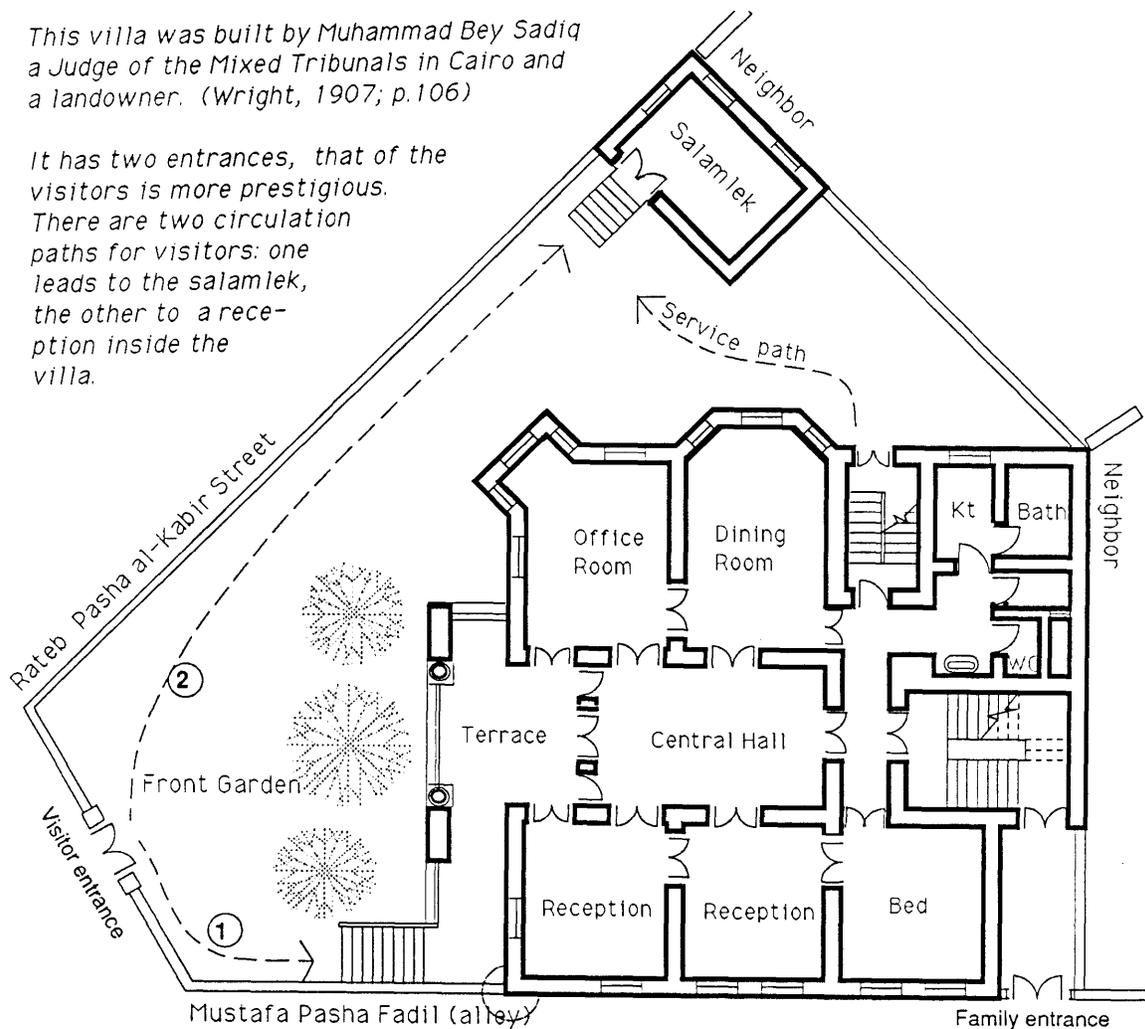
as the European. This appreciation is amplified if the land is large enough, for the house could have more than one *salamlek* (e.g., house No. 2 in the plan to the left). In some cases the *salamlek* was so large it had its own garden (e.g., house no 1).

The separation of the *salamlek* from the rest of the house can be regarded as a happy marriage between tradition and modernity. It can also be interpreted as a failure of the central-hall plan to accommodate local prerequisites within its framework. Nonetheless, this treatment of the *salamlek* had a clear message to the guest : *we value your status but due to the fact that you are not a direct relative of ours, we entertain you in this separate structure which is as prestigious as any of our reception rooms. Conventions prevent us from admitting you to this house that has no provisions for privacy.* Indeed a house like that of Abdel Latif could never accommodate all kinds of male visitors inside one of its rooms at that time, for all vertical and horizontal circulation had to pass through the central hall. Visitors were screened into two distinct categories, relatives and strangers.

Other plans of Hilmiya houses offered richer interaction with social conventions. In addition to the detached room, the visitor could be admitted from the entrance porch to flanking reception rooms without passing through the central hall.

This villa was built by Muhammad Bey Sadiq a Judge of the Mixed Tribunals in Cairo and a landowner. (Wright, 1907; p.106)

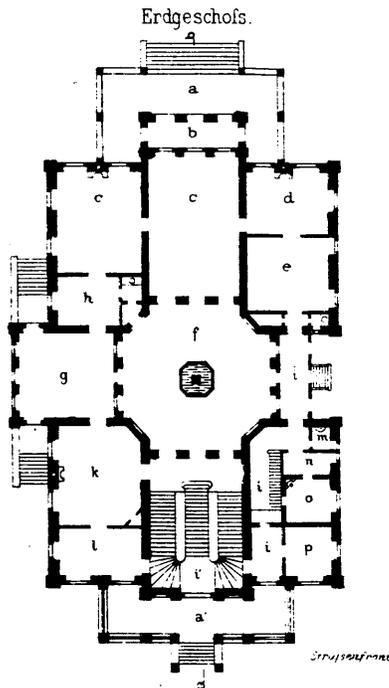
It has two entrances, that of the visitors is more prestigious. There are two circulation paths for visitors: one leads to the salamlek, the other to a reception inside the villa.



Villa of Muhammad Sadeq (scale 1/200 : reduced to 90 %)

In most European houses, visitors are admitted first to a central hall then to reception rooms. The Palladian scenario of a guest being overwhelmed by the spaciousness and decoration of the central hall while waiting to be entertained

an octagonal hall. To reflect local customs, he gave a different use to each entrance: one for the patron of the house and his male guests (a) , one for his wife and children (g) and one for servants (á).



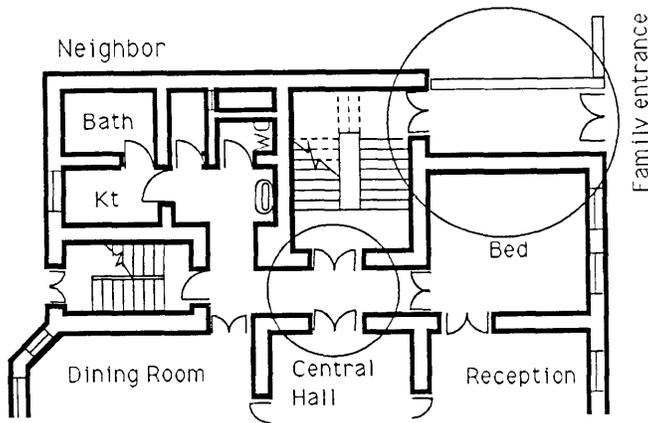
"Cairo's Neubauten" Zeitschrift für praktische Baukunst, Jan1871, p.31

This solution posed some problems. For example, for the wife to reach the stairs leading to the upper floor she has to pass either through the central hall and run the risk of being spotted by a male visitor or through the dining room (K). She also has the option of using the entrance designated by Franz for the servants (á). None of the three options was ideal but they represent an early attempt to solve traditional circulation patterns in an open plan format. Thirty years later, design solutions became more suitable to the requirements of Egyptian custom.

The owner of a house in Hilmiya, then, had the option of receiving visitors in a free-standing structure in the garden or in an reception room integrated into the house. In the latter case the unrealized latent potential of the central-hall plan is utilized for the first time to meet this persisting requirement of privacy, but the conventions of the central-hall plan remained the same to locally fulfill some revered notions of progress.

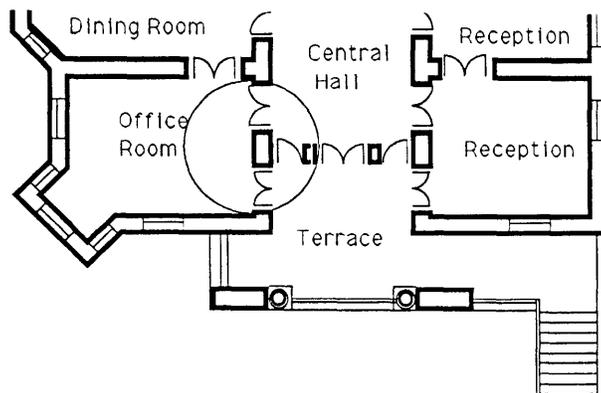
Once the plan offered more than one option for entertaining the guest, classification of visitors could be broadened. It was no longer limited to two main cate-

gories : relatives and non-relatives, as is the case with Abdel Latif's residence, but also intimate friends, professional peers and business associates.



Detail of Sadik house (1/200 : 90 %)

When any of these three categories are admitted to the house the following design solutions are invented for the purpose of privacy. The staircase that leads to the upper storey is screened from the central hall by a wall or a corridor. Thus the wife can go to the kitchen and supervise her maids without passing through the central hall.

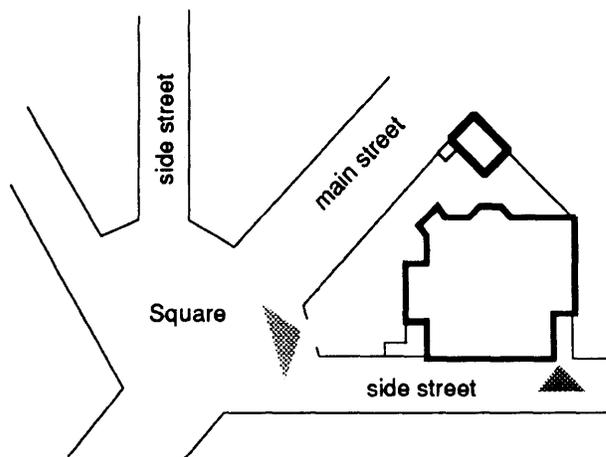


Detail of Sadik House (1/200 : 90 %)

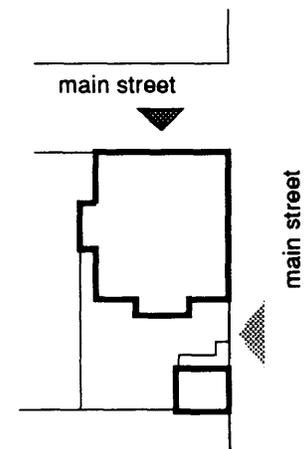
In the second solution, the central hall has side doors overlooking the terrace and abutting the reception room. When the bell rings, the maid or the owner

would open a side door of the central hall. If the visitor is a man, the maid enters the reception room, opens its door and admits the visitor. The presence of an extra side door to the central hall minimizes the time needed to go from the central hall to the reception room. This round-about circulation is essential to avoid lack of privacy in this type of plan. The number of doors alone can distinguish a Cairene central-hall plan from a European one.

The villa of Judge Muhammad Sadeq, who was also a landowner, assumes in its arrangement of rooms that visitor would not use the family entrance overlooking a narrow alley; but rather another one situated on a square.

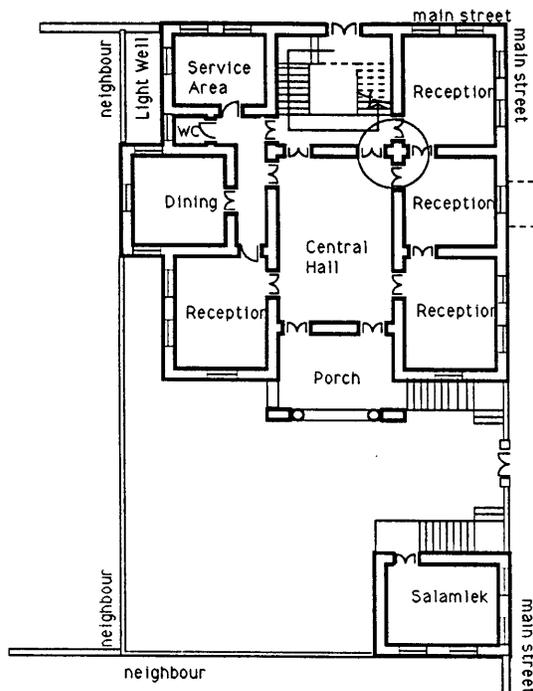


Site of villa of the Judge Muhammad Sadeq



Site of villa of Nefisa Rifa'a al-Tahtawi

Nefisa al-Tahtawi, who was the grand daughter of the first Egyptian reformer to call for Western progress tempered by local values, had a house in Hilmiya that overlooks two main streets. Thus the liability of having a visitor approaching the villa from both entrances are equal which prompted another layer of precaution. At the side of the family entrance is a reception room with two doorways: one opens onto the staircase, the other connects with the interior.

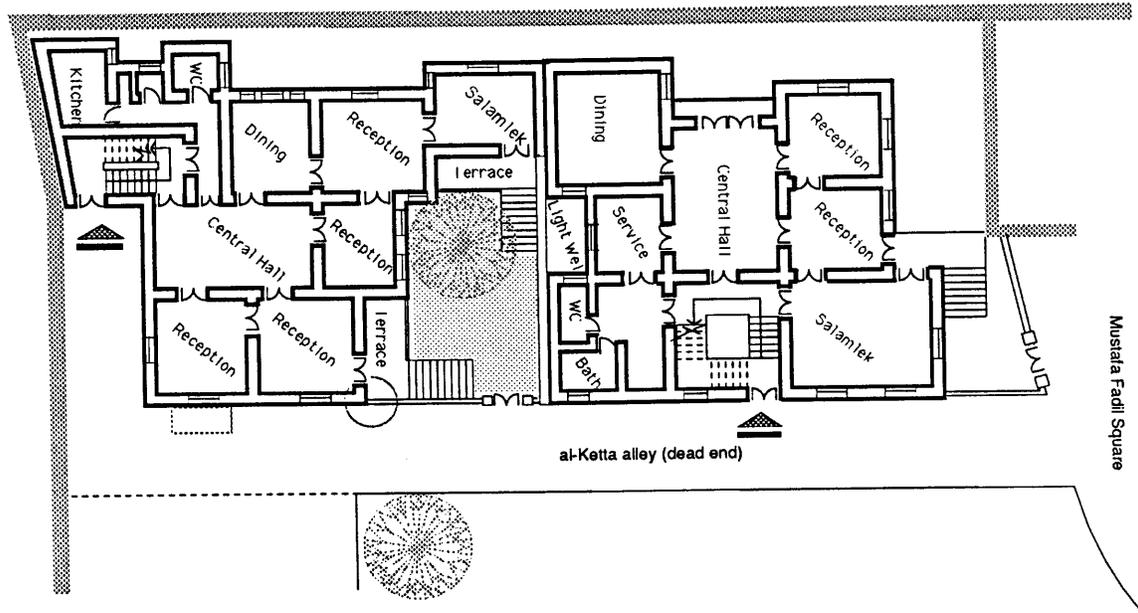


The same round-about circulation is thus transferred to the rear of the house with four doorways arranged around a Greek-cross pier. The front reception halls cannot be approached from the entrance porch. So, no male visitors are admitted through the main entrance. Instead they go to the *salamlek* on the left hand side of the garden gateway.

Villa of Nefisa Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1/200 : 60 %)

Other houses offered greater flexibility. The al-Zahwi brothers, who were merchants, had their *salamleks* integrated into their villas. Located at the entrance to an alley, the *salamlek* of the first house is approached from both a square and an alley. Another reception room directly approached from the entrance porch gives the owner another choice for entertaining his guests. Compared to the Abdel Latif house, which forced its owner to go to the *salamlek* every time a non-relative came to visit him, the al-Zahwi residences reflect a layout that is less autonomous over their owners.

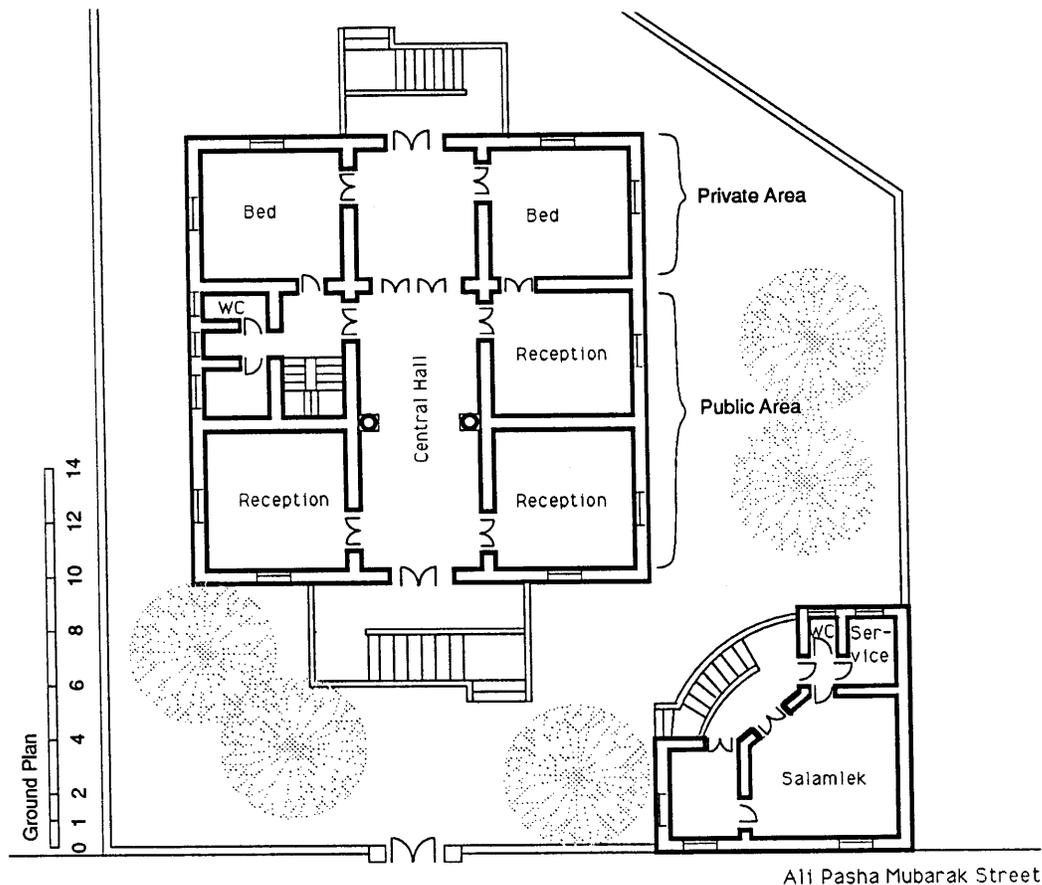
The layout of the second house is as flexible in guest reception as the first. The visitor walks down the alley to the unfolding view of a courtyard with two *salamlek* terraces each approached by one flight of stairs. The setting, indeed, does not encourage the visitor to further walk down the alley and use the family entrance located at the end of it.



Al-Zahwi residences in Hilmiya (scale 1/200 : reduced to 62 %)

Villas of Hilmiya offered solutions in guest reception that varied in flexibility. We should not, however, calibrate such flexibility on a standard qualitative scale, thus the more options provided by the plan the better. It should be perceived as a variation on the status of equilibrium between architecture and society. In other words, this variable flexibility represents different ways of reconciling culture and built form. The architect may not be the one, for example, who places restrictions on design solutions, perhaps owing to his limited professional experience. Constraints in house design may also come from the client, perhaps the result of his conservative standards. The least flexible design we presented, that of Abdel Latif may reflect the second possibility. However, it is not typical of Hilmiya.

There are other less common cases that reflect different status of equilibrium between society and architecture.



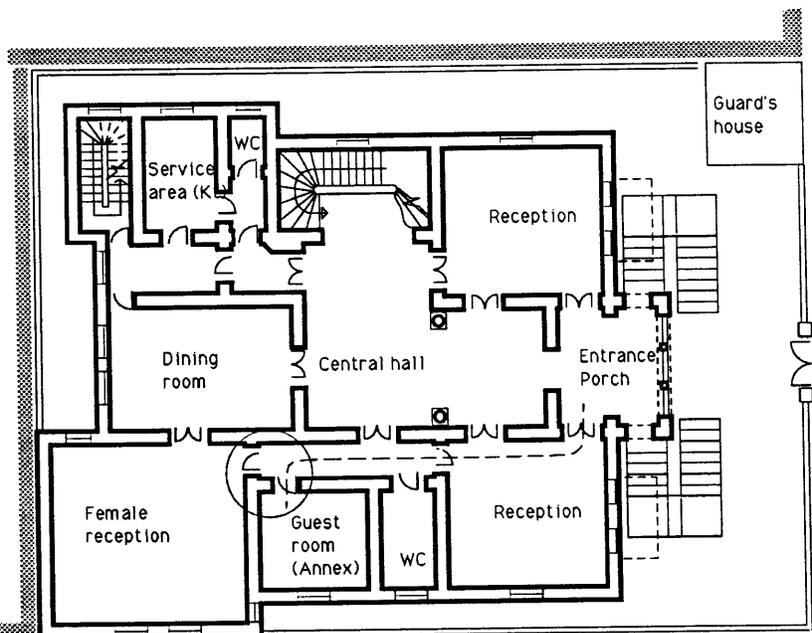
Nesim House (scale 1/200 reduced to 73 %)

The house of Nesim has only one floor for the patron who was a bachelor for most of his life. The typical arrangement of a family floor on top (*haramlek*) and a reception halls bellow was not needed. He eventually married but to an Austrian woman, so the idea of a *haramlek* was still not required.¹⁰ The house has a typical central-hall plan with no modifications, for which there was no need. An added segment provided two rooms for his lodging and later his wife's.

¹⁰ The source to this information is Mr. Ahmad Nashid, son of the doctor of Hilmiya Muhammad Nashid. Mr. Ahmad lived most of his life in a neighboring street to that of Nesim Pasha.

The house of Dalbroun Shukri is a less typical plan for it has no *salamlek*. The patron was a widow when she built the house. Since her son died young the entire house was a female domain so the family staircase was never hidden from the central hall. She was a landowner like most of Hilmiya residents. She managed her estates not from a *salamlek*, an entirely male domain, but from a female reception room on the ground floor where she could receive her male guests. Yet they sat in an annex, since to stay with her in the same room was not acceptable. The

hostess and the visitor, manager, accountant, cattle merchants, would communicate with one another through doors left slightly ajar.¹¹ Because of the female reception in the ground level, a special arrangement had to be made. The room was shut off from the central hall by a corridor. If a male non-relative came for business, he was led first to the reception hall through the entrance porch, when the lady was ready to meet him he was then led to the small annex to start business, through "strictly" verbal communication.

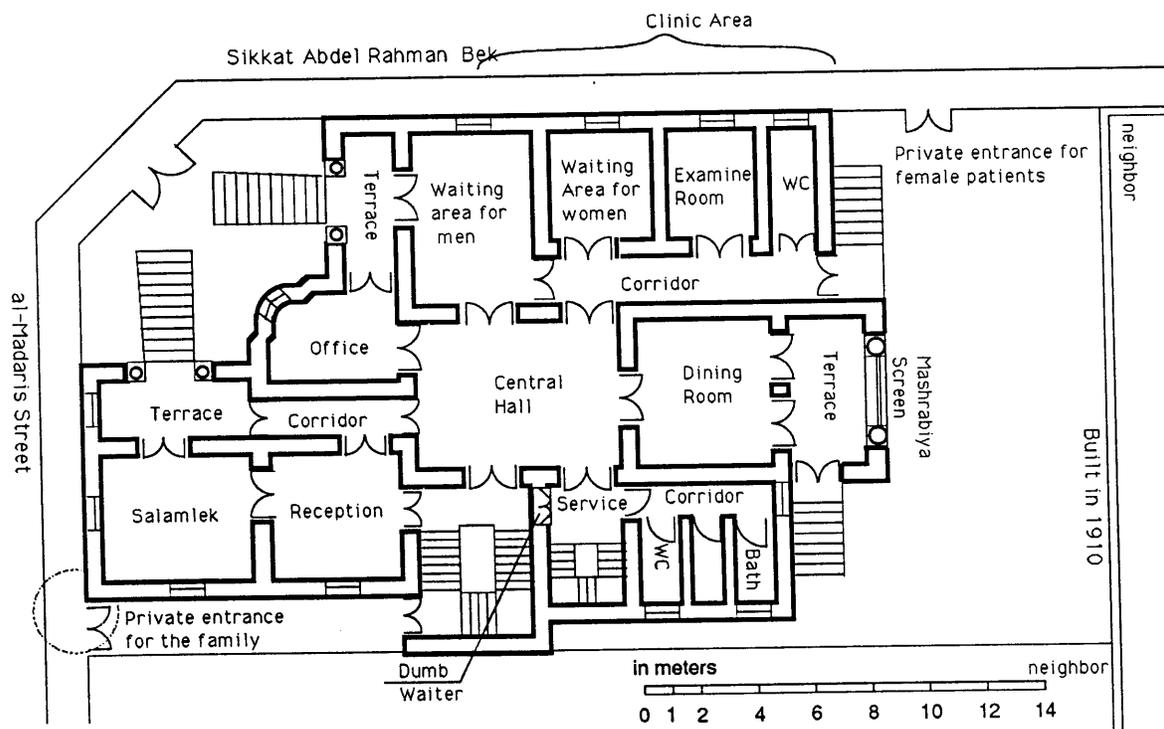


Dalbroun Hanem house (scale 1/200: 72 %)

Because of the female reception in the ground level, a special arrangement had to be made. The room was shut off from the central hall by a corridor. If a male non-relative came for business, he was led first to the reception hall through the entrance porch, when the lady was ready to meet him he was then led to the small annex to start business, through "strictly" verbal communication.

¹¹ This information is provided by Mrs. Delbar, the grand daughter of the patron and Mrs. Wadoud Fayzi.

Another less typical plan is that of villa of Dr. Muhammad Nashid. The owner was known to be the doctor of Hilmiya for he had his office in his house. One section of the house was a clinic, with entrances at opposite ends, one for women, another for men. Another portion of his house was the *salamlek*.¹² A separate entrance led to the family quarters upstairs.



Dr. Nashid's house, one of the best known in Hilmiya (scale 1/200 reduced to 75 %)

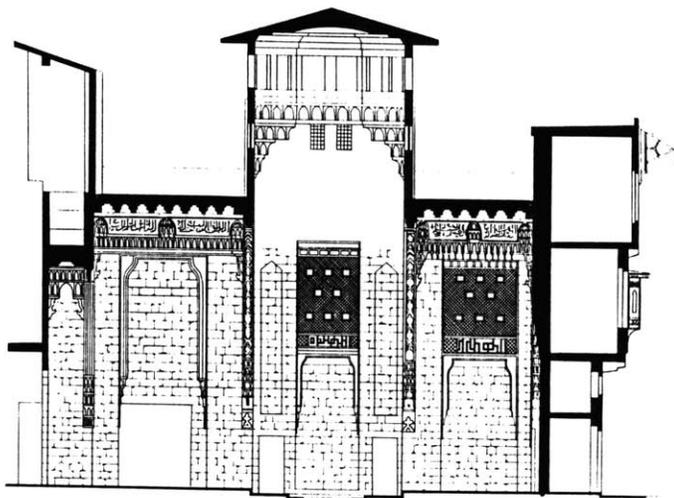
From these less typical examples we realize that architecture and culture had different points of equilibrium according to specific conditions. Thus the relation between architecture and society had evolved significantly since the villa of Sherif Pasha. The architect showed great control over the model organizing its parts according to precise requirements. The patron could choose from the

¹² The information is provided by Ahmed Nashid the son of the patron.

available options to accommodate personal needs without losing the aspired new form of dwelling.

Can we then consider Hilmiya houses traditional? This question is relevant to today's Arab practice in which the idea of traditionalism is solely tied to images of eighteenth-century houses. To answer the question we need to compare Hilmiya villas with the earlier form of dwelling.

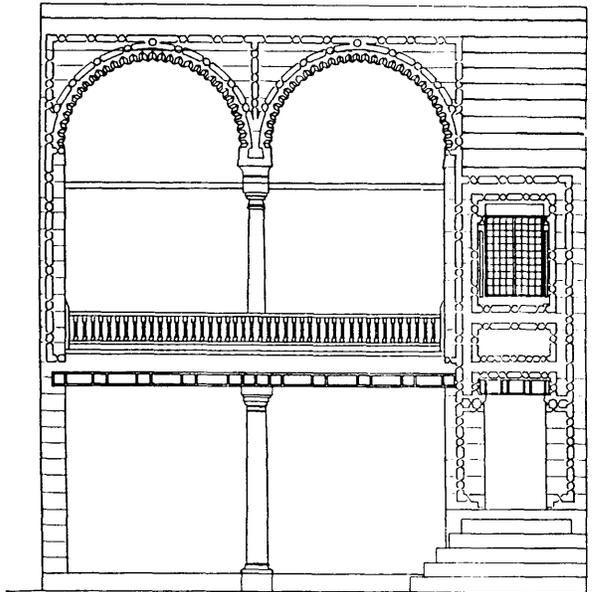
The main point of comparison lies in the treatment of the *salamlek*. As in Hilmiya villas, eighteenth-century houses have more than one place to receive guests.



Qa'a functioning as a mandara in Uthman Katkhuda house (18th century)

(From: Palais et maisons...)

The first of these is the *mandara*. This type of enclosure is a *qa'a*, that is, a tripartite rectangular hall, the center of which is sunken and has a fountain and an entrance portal. The *mandara* is always on the ground floor; the room is two stories high and may receive lighting and ventilation only from the top.



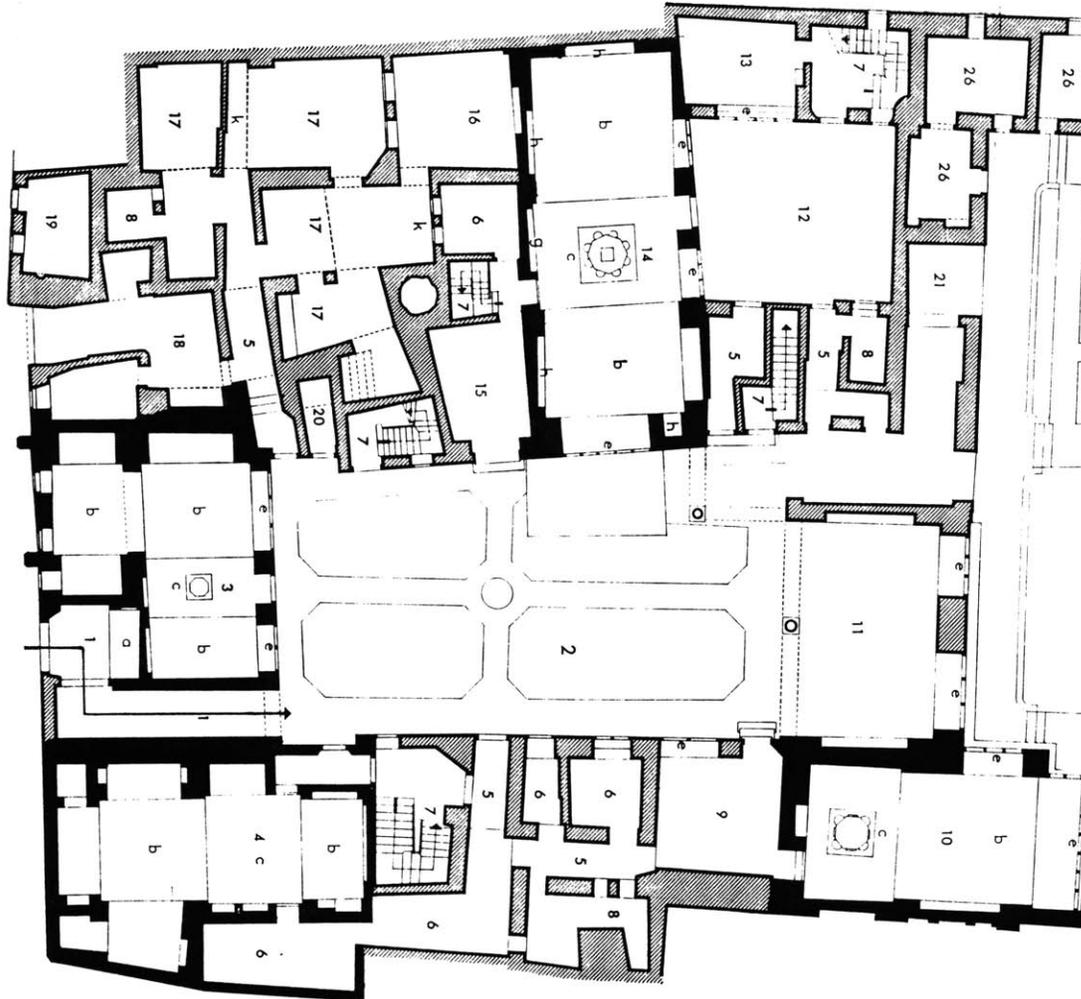
*Takhtabush and maq'ad in al-Sinnari house.
The two spaces may not be on top of one
another.*

(From: Palais et maison...)

The second is the *takhtabush* which is an internal portico also found in the ground level, overlooking the courtyard. The third is a *maq'ad* which is a loggia found in the first floor above the ground and is approached by one or two flight of stairs usually projecting in the courtyard, with an elaborate portal.

The number of reception spaces and their variety reflected the wealth of the patron (Revault 1983, vol 2; p.207). The Suhaymi house, of the eighteenth century, has four *mandara(s)*, two oriented to the north so as to receive the cool breeze of the summer through side fenestration (no. 3 & 10). The third is for use in cold weather since it receives lighting and ventilation from the top (no.4), the fourth is ideal for autumn and spring for it receives its light and air from both a top lantern and side fenestration oriented to the east (no. 14). Thus the patron could take his guest in any one of the four halls depending on the time of the year. Apart from the *mandaras* there is a *takhtabush* (no. 11) as well as a *maq'ad* in the upper level (above no. 3), which the owner used according to the

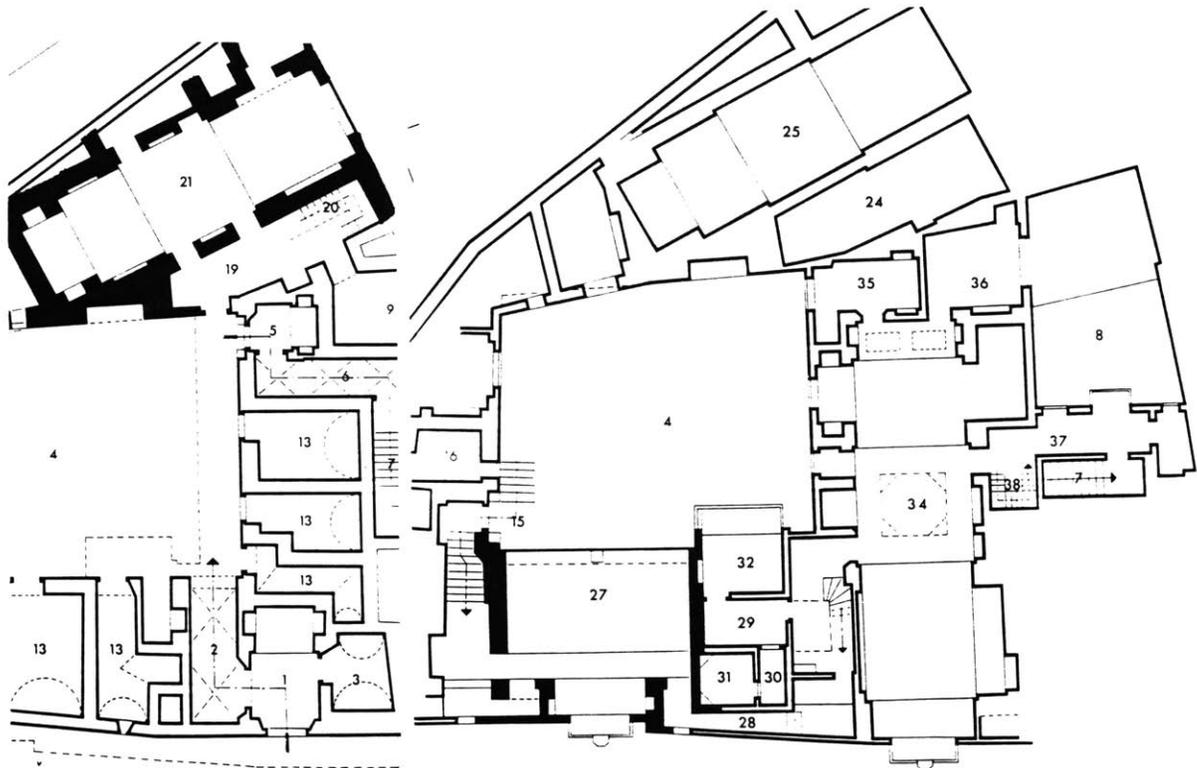
status of his guest. Persons admitted to a *maq'ad* are of higher status than those admitted to the *takhtabush* (Revault, vol 2; p. 161).



al-Suhaymi house. ground floor. 3, 4, 14 & 10 : mandara; 9 & 12 : antechambers; 11: takhtabush; on top of 3 there is the maq'ad. (From : Palais et maisons du Caire: époque ottomane) The darkened walls highlight the mandara(s).

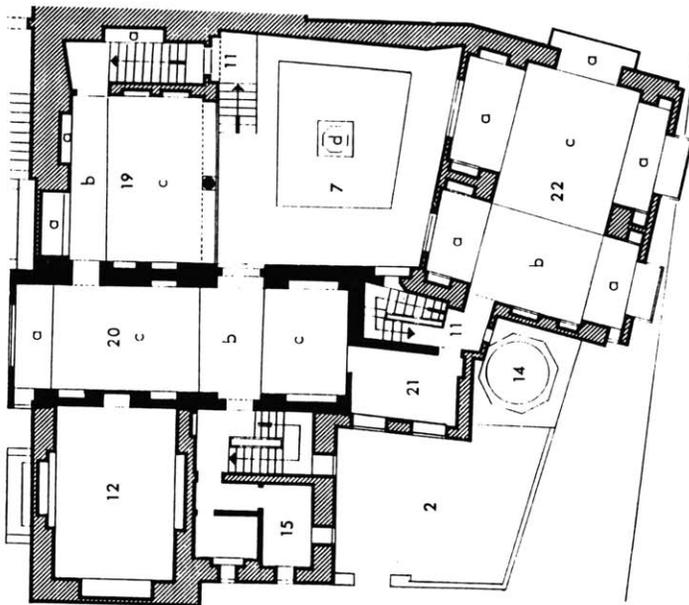
The house of Suhaymi is a large house and has many *salamlek* arrangements, but not all the houses are so big. Contemporary to Suhaymi house was the Sinnari house which lacked a formal *mandara*, the Musafirkhana house was devoid of a *maq'ad* and Gamal al-Din al-Dahabi's house lacked a *takhtabush*.

In these extant courtyard houses of wealthy merchants and sheiks, we note that there are at least two types of reception spaces available in each house.



Gamal al-Din al-Dahabi house; gr. & 1 st floor. 4 & 8: Courtyards, 25 & 24 : void, 27: maq'ad, 29-32 : bath & WC, 38: staircase leading to women quarters, 15: staircase leading to maq'ad; 34: hall for female lodging. 20: staircase used by the patron to reach the mandara from women's quarters. 21: mandara. (Source: Palais et maisons du Caire: époque ottomane).

In some cases, there is an extra reception hall on the second floor annexed to the *maq'ad*; for example, the *qa'a* (no. 30) in the Suhaymi house is annexed to *maq'ad* (no 27). In other cases the *qa'a* is located to form a transition between the public and private domain. For example, in the Keridliya house, the *qa'a* (no. 20) is so close to the *maq'ad* (no. 19) and female hall (no. 22) that it can perform the double function of admitting intimate guests at one time, the family at another (Revault, vol 2, p.177).



Partial plan of Keridliya house



Partial plan of Suhaymi house

The last arrangement is quite rare in the late Ottoman period; however what is relevant to our thesis is that when these houses are compared to Hilmiya villas, the latter can offer the same degree of flexibility in hosting guests but not in form.

If we continue to compare *salamleks* of Hilmiya with those of eighteenth-century houses we note further similarities. Male reception space in Hilmiya villas, found in the garden, is analogous to a *maq'ad*. Both spaces are elevated from the ground by one or two flights of stairs but some or all of the steps leading to those spaces are consciously displayed in the open.¹³ Apart from similarities in approach, both historic and modern *salamleks* are prominently located in the context of their settings. The *maq'ad* is a loggia with one or two large arches, in

¹³ Of course there are exceptions to the rule, especially in eighteenth-century courtyard houses, but what concerns us here is the more typical setting.

sharp contrast to the solid and screened facades of the courtyard. The modern *salamlek* of Hilmiya is in the foreground of the villa, overlooking the street, located either at the corner of two streets, or one side of a square. In the historic layout it can only be seen by the few who enter the courtyard; in the modern layout it can be seen from the street.



Maq'ad in the context of a traditional house

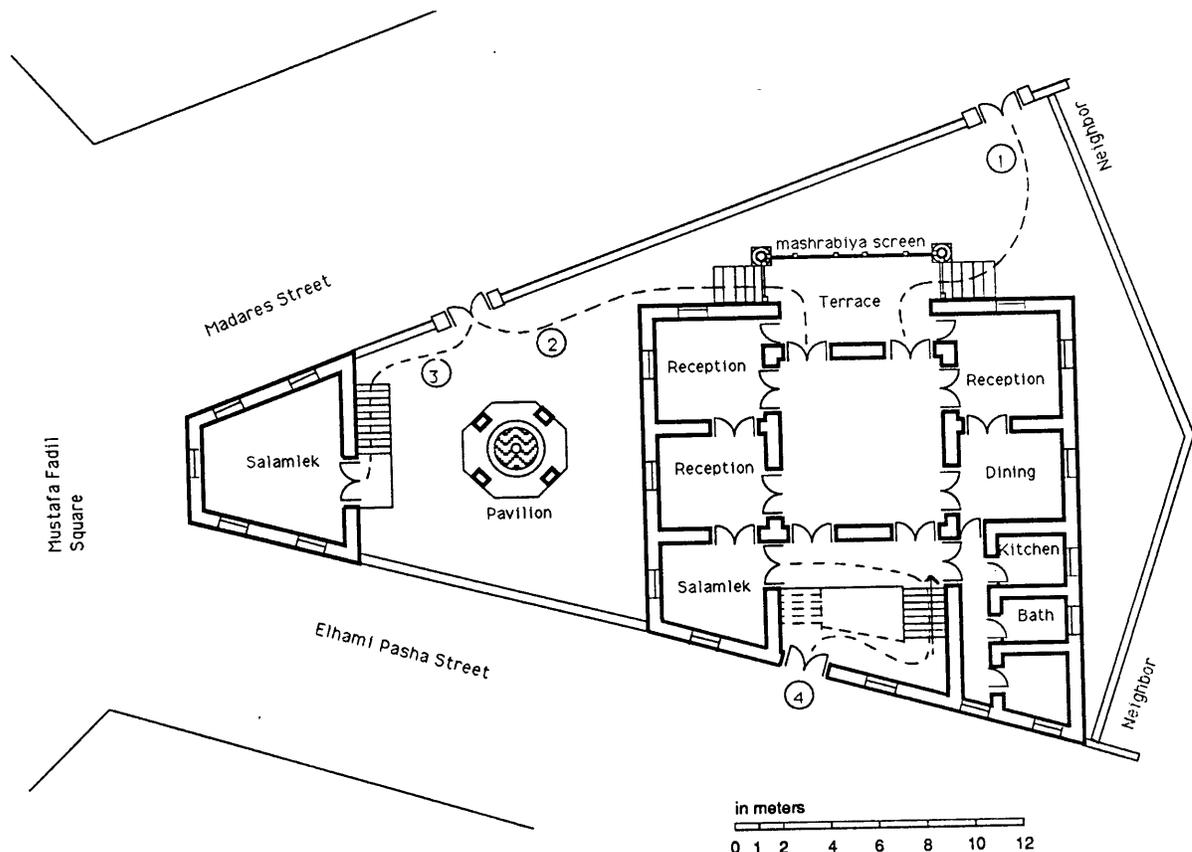


Salamlek in the context of a villa in Hilmiya

Both protect privacy and display wealth. Whereas the first patron hides his wealth from the public eye, perhaps out of modesty, the second displays it to give the image of a rich and modern yet authentic Egyptian. To further strengthen this idea of authenticity, in some Hilmiya houses the stairs leading to the *salamlek* end in a small terrace with arches resembling the facade of a *maq'ad*.

This comparison between old and modern *salamleks* answers the question of associating the notion of traditionalism to Hilmiya positively. Eighteenth-century Cairene mansions represent the last version of traditional dwellings before European intervention. They are also considered by many historians and architects today as the ideal architectural fulfillment of social needs. There, the notion of traditionalism becomes almost synonymous with authentic representation of cultural values. If we accept this synonym without tying the notion to one

particular physical representation, we can easily apply it to Hilmiya villas. Setting aside the differences in appearance between a *maq'ad*, a *takhtabush* and a *mandara*, on one hand, and a salon on the other, what is left to us is a group of circulation patterns between guest and family activities. These patterns are equally articulated in both old and new forms of dwelling and achieve the same goal.



Villa in Hilmiya offering four options for placing a guest similar to al-Suhaymi House (1/200 : 63 %)

Traditionalism in Hilmiya villas is not only manifested in the circulation patterns between the public and private domain, but also in plan compartmentalization. In the past, a major criterion defining the layout of a dwelling was the ability to continually subdivide or expand. There are many reasons for these

mechanisms. One is the changing needs and status of the owner, the other is the Muslim law of inheritance which requires the division of the property among members of the family, in fixed proportions, after its owner dies. As there were mechanisms of dividing properties, there were others that reassembled them such as selling and buying transactions. Thus over time property lines shifted a great deal.¹⁴

In eighteenth-century courtyard houses, these mechanisms for subdividing and reassembling parts are evident. Changes occur least often on the ground floor where official reception halls, loggias and entrance portals are placed. These components of the house are the most expensive and are made of durable material like stone, while spaces in the upper floors of the family are made of bricks and continuously change (Revault, 1983, vol. 2; p.122). Recurring changes can explain the compartmentalization of the upper floor plan as it appears today. Nevertheless, compartmentalization, as a method of arranging spaces cannot only be seen as a mark of history happening spontaneously over unforeseeably long periods of time, but also as a conscious decision applied in a single design process. After all, the patron may have more than one wife to please, and each nucleus had to have its own autonomous living space (Hanna, 1988; p. 110-112). Such conscious design decisions could even help in the subdivision of spaces required by future implementation of inheritance laws.

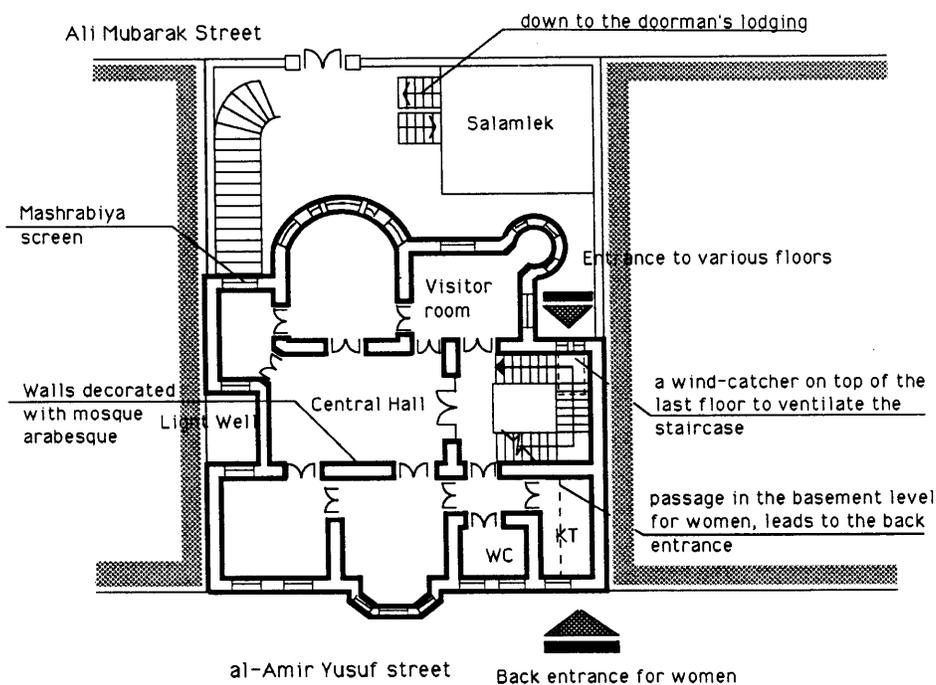
¹⁴ For detailed account on how inheritance law affects built form, consult "Responsibility and the Traditional Muslim Environment" Jameel Akbar. Ph.D. diss, M.I.T., 1984, published under the title *Crisis in the Built Environment: Case of the Muslim City*, Brill, Leiden 1988.



Partial plan of al-Razzaz house (eastern courtyard) showing two floors of separate family lodgings. The first lodging overlooking the street is composed of the following spaces: no. 21, 23 & 32 qa'a; no. 22 & 24 annex ; no. 20 antechamber; 10 (bis) staircase leading exclusively to the lodging. The 2nd lodging is composed of the following spaces: no. 25 & 34 qa'a; 10 & 26 staircase leading exclusively to the lodging. (From: Palais et maisons du Caire..)

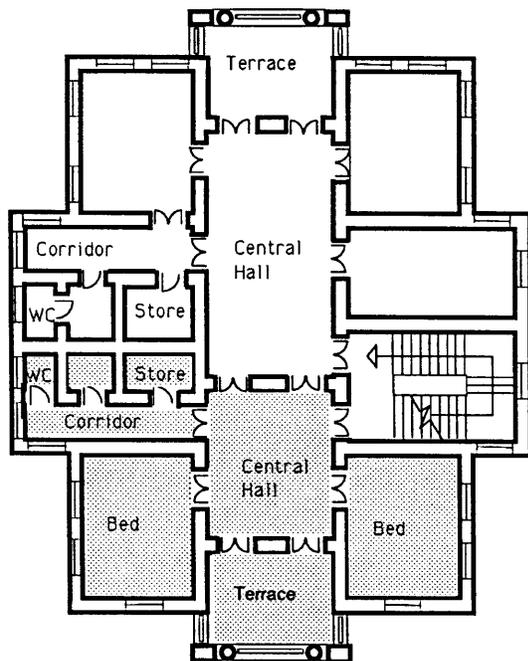
In the upper floors of the Razzaz house, the family quarters which overlook the eastern courtyard are composed of two separate apartments, each with its own entrance, staircase, number of qa'a(s), annexed rooms and service areas. The lodging overlooking Bab al-Wazir Street is more spacious and luxurious and housed a bigger family. This complete separation of lodgings is not always possible in courtyard houses; however, the notion of allocating spaces to a particular family nucleus persists.

Inheritance laws and multi-nucleus families¹⁵ continued to prevail until the beginning of the twentieth century. In Hilmiya, since we are dealing with the first generation of families, the effect of inheritance laws on the partitioning of spaces does not come into the picture. What is relevant is the modification of the central-hall plan, during initial design decisions, to include extended family conditions. The most common solution was to devote one floor to each family. Thus a patron who has two wives would build one floor for each woman and her children. This was the case with Sayyed Muhammad, a landowner and mayor of Fashn village.



Villa of Mayor Sayyed Muhammad

¹⁵ A multi-nucleus family can be either or a combination of the following: 1- a man marries more than one wife and each wife in this case represents a nucleus. 2- an extended family of sons and daughters married yet still living in the same house of the parents. 3- a patron may have sisters and brothers (and their families if present) living in his house.



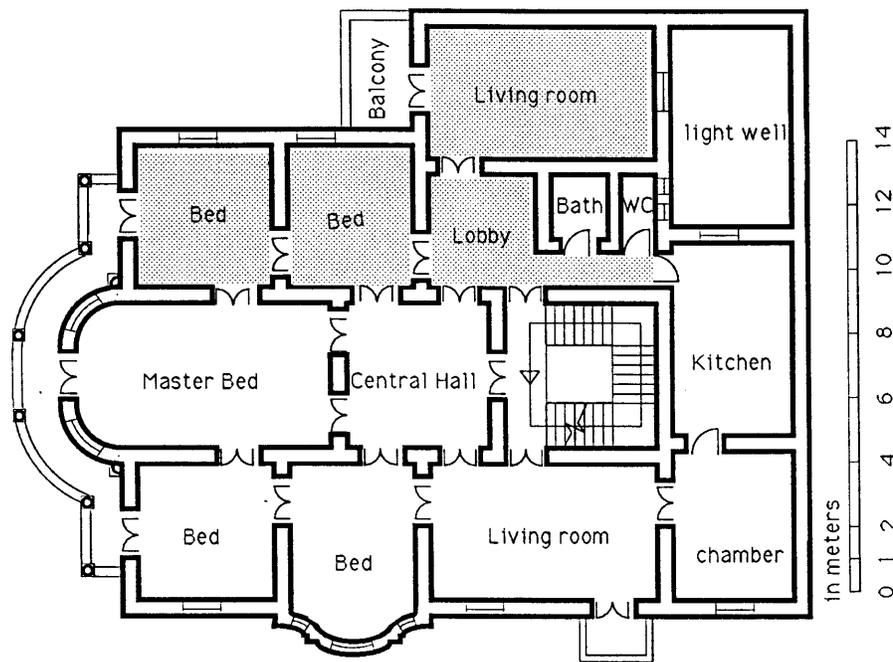
Hasan Hasib House: family floor (75 %)

In bigger houses, compartmentalization can be horizontal. Hasan Pasha Hasib had his sister and her family living with him. The plan for this house was therefore arranged to incorporate two lodgings, one for his wife and another for his sister, in a form reminiscent of Palladio's Rotunda. The family staircase had two entrances, each leading to a central hall, bedrooms and a battery of services. As in the past one lodging was more important than the other in number and size of rooms. The sister and her family were as-

sumed to be guests of her brother's wife no matter how long she stayed there.

Compartmentalization may not produce total separation among different lodgings and duplication of services as in the Haseeb Pasha house. A separate entrance with a lobby may suffice; service areas and amenities are shared. This is the case with the Shere'i residence.

The plan of this house shows the flexibility of demarcating the boundaries of each lodging, just as the Razzaz house does. The darkened lodging in the figure can be either composed of two rooms or three depending on the conditions of each family at any particular time (see next page).

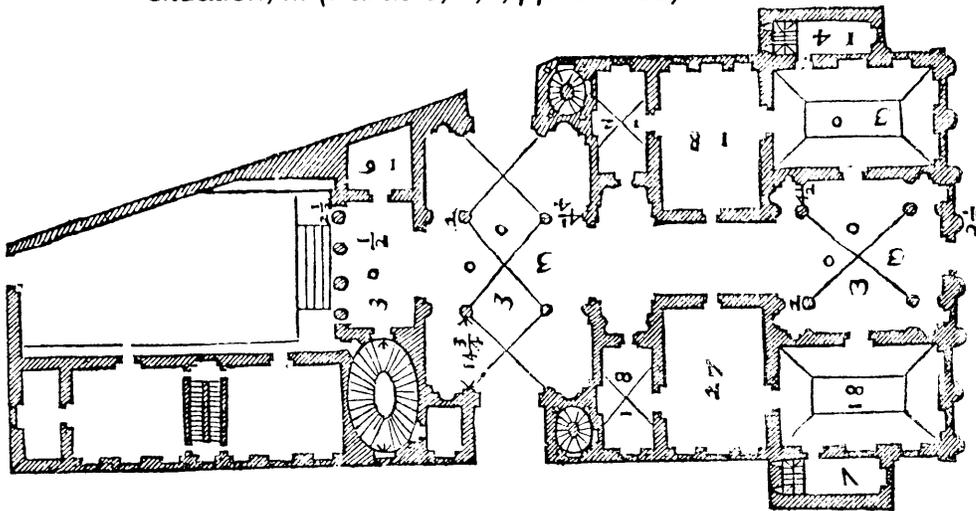


Zaki al-Shere'i residence accommodating a multi-nucleus family (Scale 1/200 :100 %)

The idea of compartmentalization anchors Hilmiya plans to the notion of traditionalism, though not in a typical manner. In eighteenth century courtyard houses, the ideals constraining the design are specific to each space rather than to the overall layout. For example the *mandara* is ideally rectangular in shape and is divided into three parts. The center of this hall is sunken and contains a fountain. The logic of organization perceives spaces as autonomous entities which are tied together irrespective of the final layout of the dwelling. This logic allows for harmonious relations between spaces emerging from the initial design stage and those that follow through an accretionary process of expansion or subdivision. Consequently, no matter what changes the plan arrangement, it never loses its logic.

In the central-hall plan, the ideals are focused on the overall scheme of organization of spaces. The more symmetrical the arrangement, the better. The final layout is what counts and should appear regular in form. Once the plan is laid down, it is complete. No spontaneous encroachments and subdivisions are encouraged; otherwise the plan would defy its inner logic. Even during the initial design, anything that offsets the axially balanced form would shift the plan from ideal standards. Palladio and later on French Polytechnic theoreticians such as Durand were very conscious of this dilemma.

But an architect is very often obliged, to conform more to the will of those who are at the expense, than to that which ought to be observed ... [Moreover,] as most commonly in cities, either the neighbours walls, the streets, or publick places, prescribe certain limits, which the architect cannot surpass, it is proper he shou'd conform himself to the circumstances of the situation; ... (Palladio, II, I, pp. 37 - 38)



A design by Palladio featuring less favorable conditions (From: The Four Books II, XVII)

Palladio, in one of his theoretical designs highlights this attitude towards a less ideal situation. The notion of "conforming" to actual conditions rather than to

what "ought to be" never suggested the discarding of ideals in response to less favorable conditions. On the contrary, the architect would proceed with his regular and symmetric arrangement of forms until they "run into" the irregular portion of the site. "Conforming" here means "colliding". In this manner, the eye would read the ideal setting even when it is partially "hidden" by the actual condition of the site. This is precisely the effect experienced by a viewer walking from the main entrance to the chamfered courtyard in Palladio's theoretical design.

Once the central-hall plan migrated to Hilmiya, there was more of "what actually is" than "what ought to be." The idea of conforming to irregular conditions became the norm. What is different about these conditions in Hilmiya, as opposed to Europe, is that they surpassed site specificities and building technicalities to merge into cultural mechanisms such as compartmentalization and double circulation. Thus for the plan to survive in its new environment, it had to constantly contain what defies its inner logic.

To minimize this inner conflict, architects sought the separation of the *salamlek* from the entire villa. However other architects merged the two together as in the case of the villa of Dr. Nashid and that of the Zahwi brothers.

Local interaction with a foreign idiom, as I have demonstrated in Hilmiya, means the establishment of a reciprocal mode of influence between architecture and culture. Because of this reciprocity we can see that a recurring theme in Hilmiya villas is the transformation of the Palladian ideals into those of the Egyptian tradition. The result is an in-between situation that converses with two sets of

ideals simultaneously. This dialogue has a friendly tone because the situation is not seen as a degeneration from the ideal, but an *aspiration* towards a promising future. The plan in this manner lasted almost a century in Egypt.¹⁶

¹⁶ Up till the 1950s villa design continued to have the central hall arrangement in the Modern movement in Egypt. The form may not be in symmetry, but the tri-partite division with a projected veranda accentuating the central part, was in practice. Two important sources contemporary to the modern period : 1- the sole architectural periodical *Al-'Emara (Architecture)* (for example, # 3/4 - 1939 is a special issue on villas & no. 5-6 1946, p. 30-31); 2- An encyclopedic work in five volumes *Dunya al-Mabani (The World of Buildings)* by Ahmad Salama, 1950 (vol 2 is primarily on villas). Also see a study by Mercédès Volait, *L'Architecture moderne en Egypte et la Revue Al-'Imara 1939-1959*, CEDEJ press, 1987.

T H E V I L L A A N D T H E S T A T E

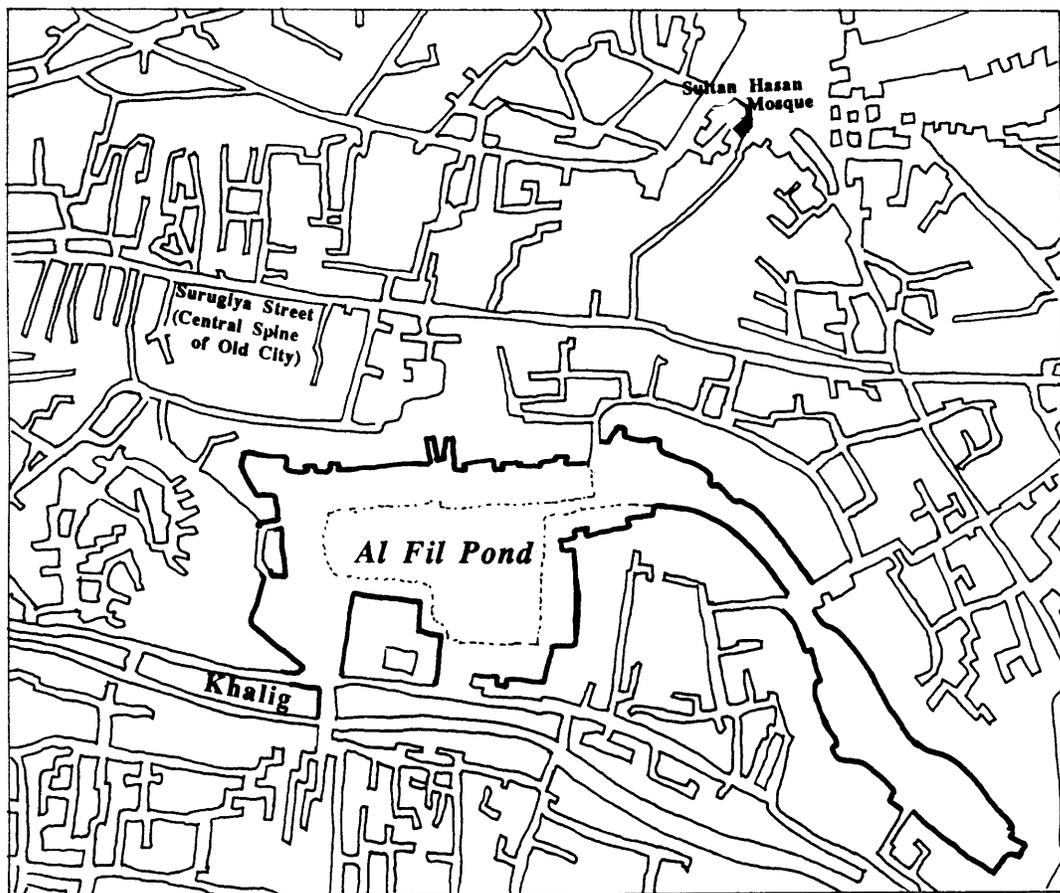
On a winter day with the ground covered by snow, a shrewd American wanted to light a cigarette but he did not have a match. So he took a lump of snow and melted it between his hands until it was like a glass lens. He then directed this lens to the sun and placed the cigarette in front of it. The sun rays focused on the cigarette causing it to light. Thus out of snow there was fire (Al-Anis al-Jalis 31 Jan. 1901; p.522) !

This type of anecdote was very popular in Egyptian magazines at the turn of the century, for it has the appeal of a joke combined with surprise and interest. It is neither a news story nor an editorial but rather a didactic story. The element of surprise here is the utilization of science, a complex phenomenon, to fill a trivial need such as lighting a cigarette. Interest is also invoked since the mean of subjugating the complex to the trivial was also simple, namely carving a convex lens out of snow. The anecdote had a message: with a bit of thinking, science can be appropriated to suit local needs, even if it means generating fire from snow.

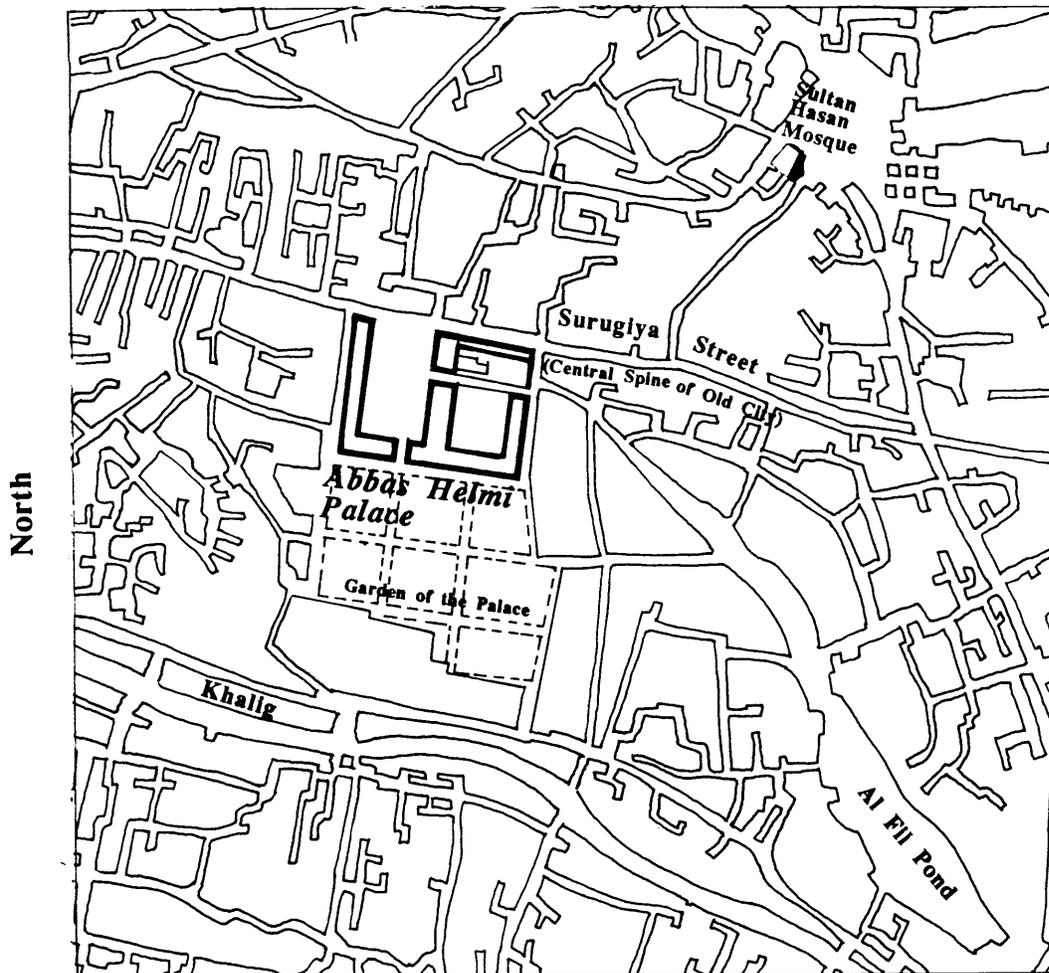
The call for utilizing Western science to the benefit of local culture was reflected not only in family periodicals such as *al-Anis al-Jalis (The Seated Companion)*, but also in the manifestos of social critics. At the level of built form, this response to Western science was manifested in the reciprocity between the patron's eccentricities and that of the architect, though it cannot be limited to an elitist taste that eventually filtered down to the rest of literate society. It was also a state's vision manifested in its ministries and schools, including the Ministry of Public Works and the Polytechnic School of Cairo, both of which were involved

in the development of the Hilmiya villas. Both were also located next to Hilmiya, in Darb al-Gamamiz. Thus it is not surprising to see Hilmiya directly reflecting the Polytechnic's ideals and the ministry's urban policies.

Originally the site of the Hilmiya neighborhood had been under water, a part of al-Fil Pond. In the nineteenth century, the ruling family of Muhammad Ali acquired the area, filled in most of the pond, and built a palace for one of its princes, Abbas Hilmi. A map of 1846 shows the palace with its garden overlooking al-Mu'iz street, Cairo's central artery.



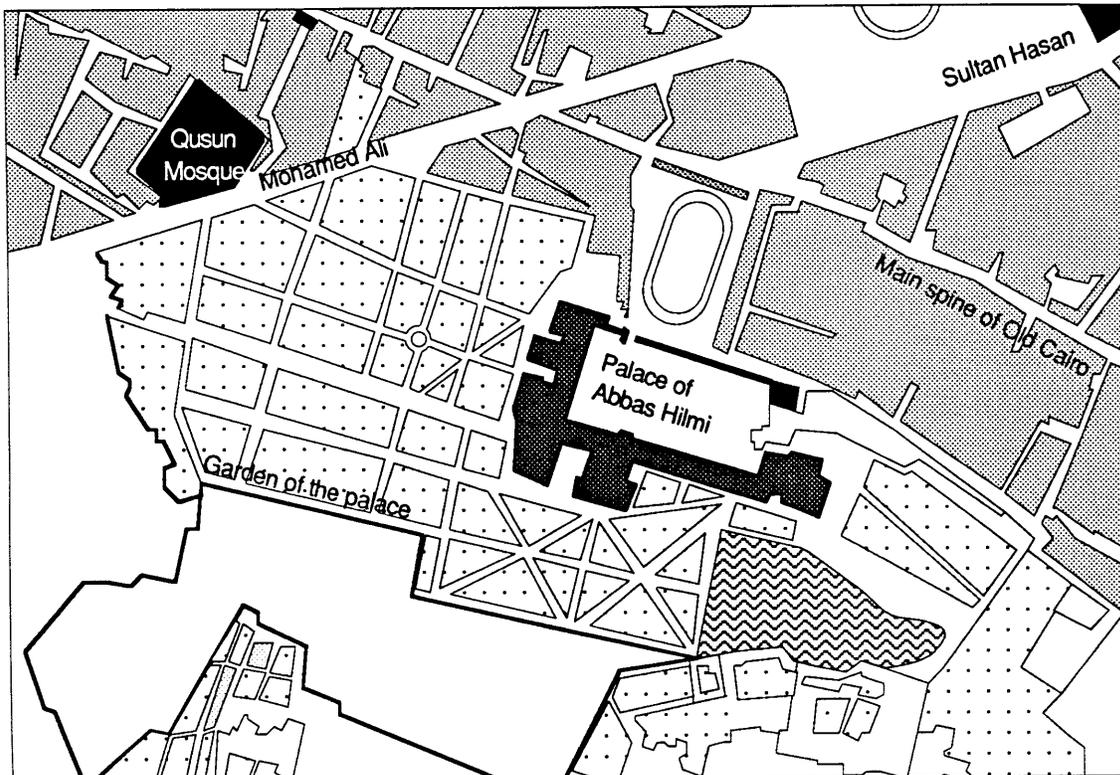
Cairo's map from Napoleon's time (1800) showing the site of the neighborhood as a pond



Map of 1846 shows the Palace of Abbas Hilmi with gardens occupying most of the pond proper

The map of Grand Bey in 1870s shows the palace and the layout of the garden in detail. The palace had diminished in size but was still oriented to the old spine of Cairo. The garden was divided by pathways into a grid which also followed the orientation of the traditional spine. Of very different orientation was the new spine, Boulevard Muhammad Ali completed in 1873 (Mubarak, vol 3, 1887; p.69).

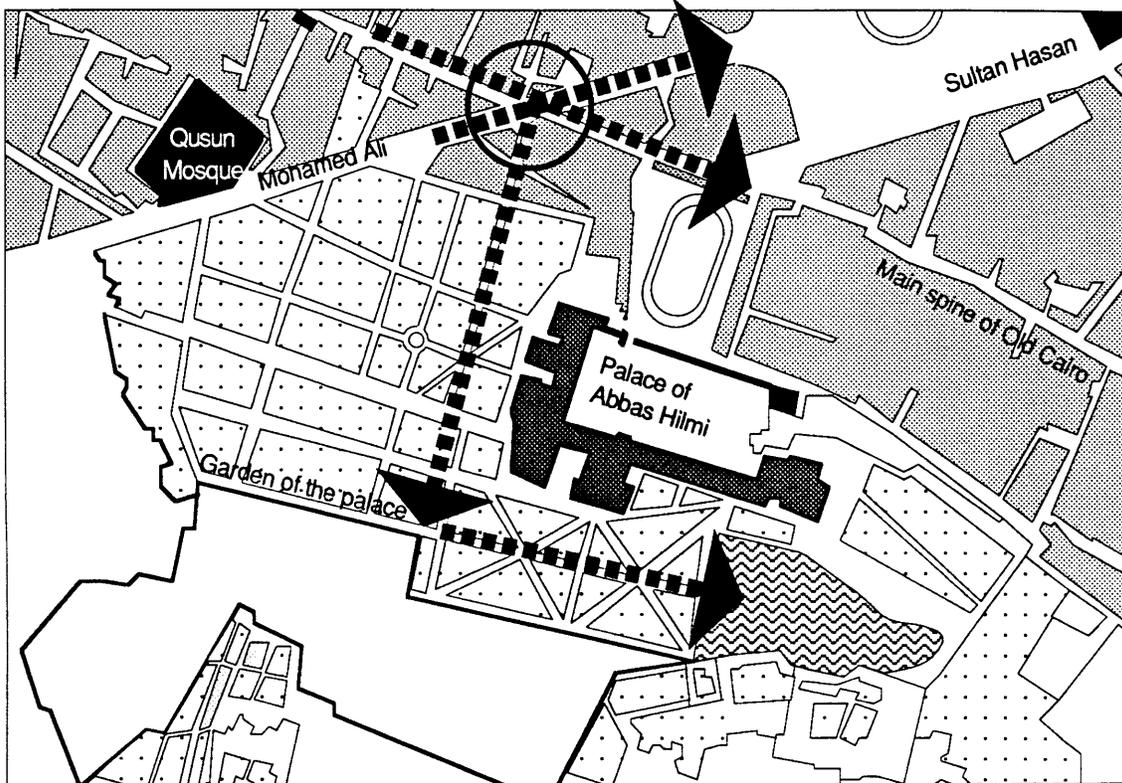
In 1893 the garden was made public land by the Ministry of Public Works and redesigned into a network of streets and plots for residential land. In 1903 the palace was torn down and underwent the same process.¹ Eventually an entire neighborhood flourished there (Sayyed, 1988; p.78).



Map of Grand Bey showing the Palace of Abbas Hilmi

By superimposing a map of 1896 produced by the Ministry of Public Works on that of Grand Bey 1876, we can see the design process that took place when the garden was converted into streets and building lots.

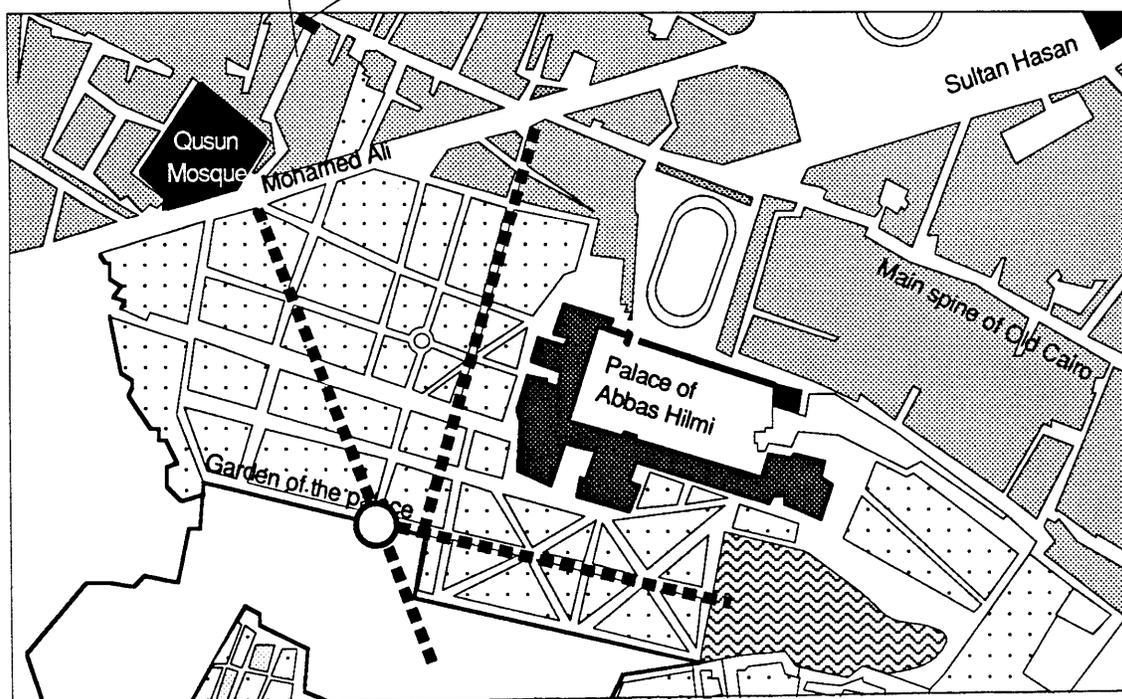
¹ The first phase of development was approved by the Ministry of Public Works on 19 December 1893. It was then approved by Council of Ministries on 11 February 1894 (Cairo Archives: Council of Ministries, Ministry of Public Works, dossier 6/3/A, 21 February 1894). On 23 October 1900 slight alterations were approved by the Ministry and later the Council in 10 June 1901 (Dossier 6/3/C, file 349). The second phase was approved in 21 June 1902 (Dossier 8/8/A, file 349). Slight modifications were made in 1903 and 1909 (Dossier 6/3/C & D).



Road axis oriented to the traditional spine

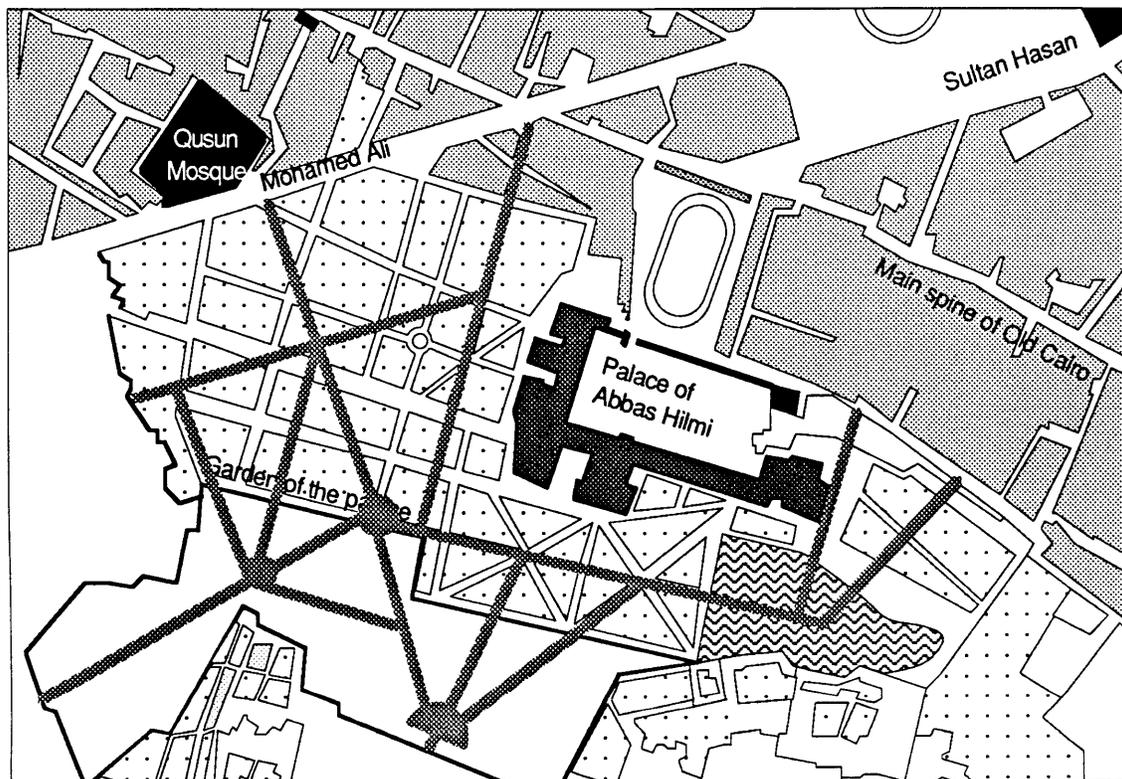
street leading to the main entrance of the original mosque

Gateway of the mosque overlooking the main spine of Old Cairo



Roads responding to the traditional and modern spines

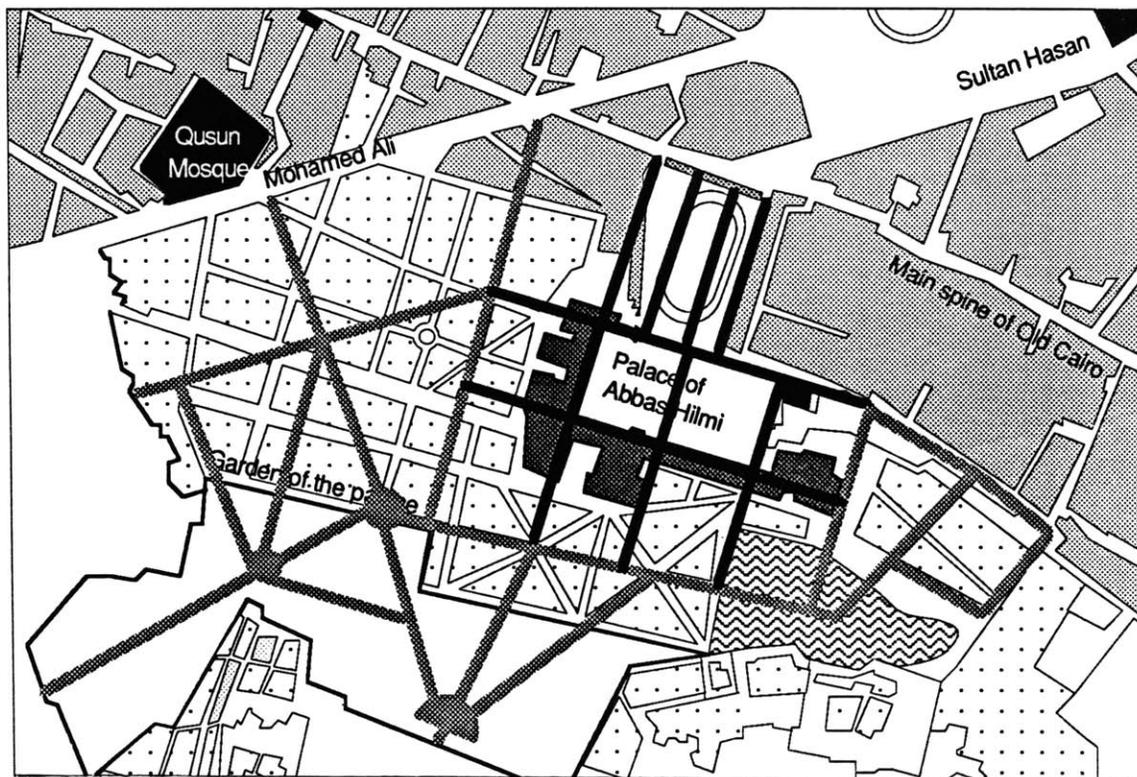
At the intersection of Boulevard Muhammad Ali, the first major spine in modern Cairo, with al-Mu'iz Street, the first central spine of old Cairo, a north-south path meets with an east-west path. Hilmiya's planning not only respected the orientation of these garden paths but actually followed their axes in some instances. But the planning of Hilmiya was oriented not only to the garden layout, i.e., to the traditional axis of al-Mu'iz street, but to the new Boulevard of Muhammad Ali as well. This was done by drawing roads perpendicular to the boulevard.



Plan showing the first phase of development

Nodes were used to absorb the shift in axis between the two grids, modern and traditional, in the layout of the neighborhood. Ideally, the road perpendicular to Muhammad Ali Boulevard should intersect the other two roads oriented to the palace in a circular node, but that was not the case. Instead the perpendicular road was placed immediately opposite an alley, located on the other side of

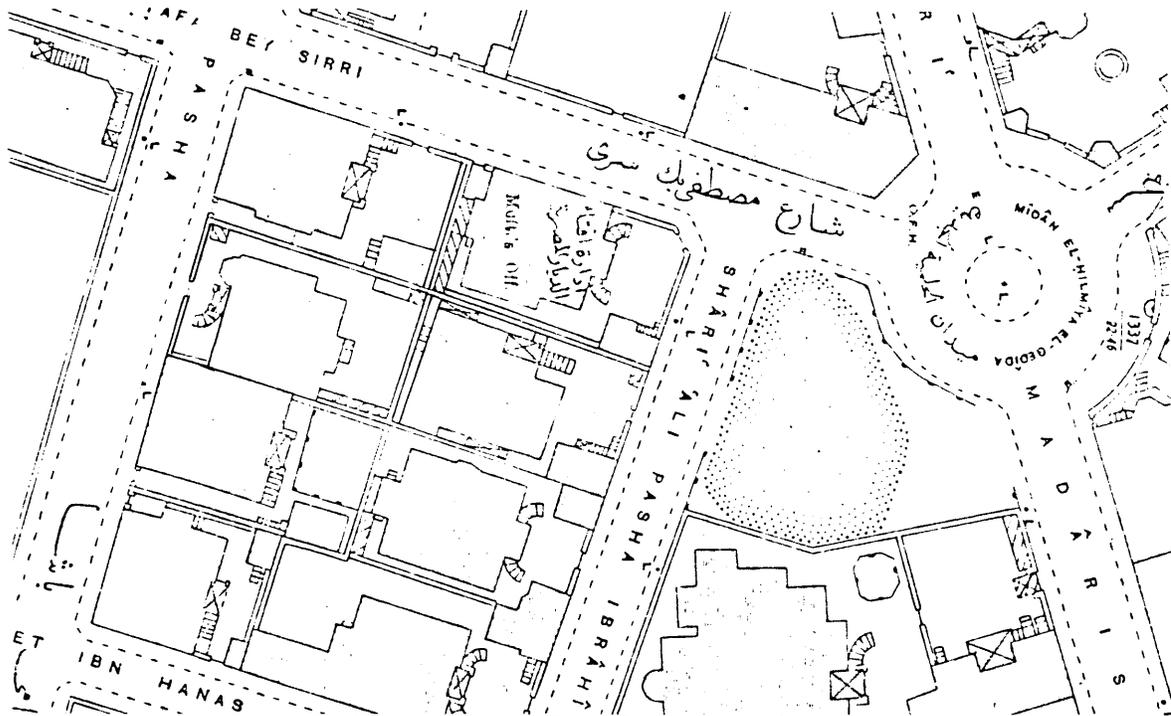
Boulevard Muhammad Ali. This alley led to the original main entrance of Qusun Mosque that punctuated the traditional spine. The result was the creation of a peculiar node which is slightly shifted from the corner of the two intersecting axes. Odd as it may seem, the planner sacrificed the ideal geometry of having the three roads radiating from a node in order to respond to the local conditions. The rest of the street layout responds to either the traditional or the modern axis.



Plan showing the final scheme of Hilmiya

In the second phase of development, after the palace was torn down, the same approach in design was used in response to the layout of the palace. The courtyard of the palace was lined with a new layout of roads, after which further subdivisions were made. The final layout of Hilmiya had a network of streets, some responded Muhammad Ali spine, which is seen more in the first phase of planning, while others responded to al-Mu'iz spine. The notion of accommodat-

ing the old and the new, the European and the native, was an indispensable criterion in the planning of Hilmiya.



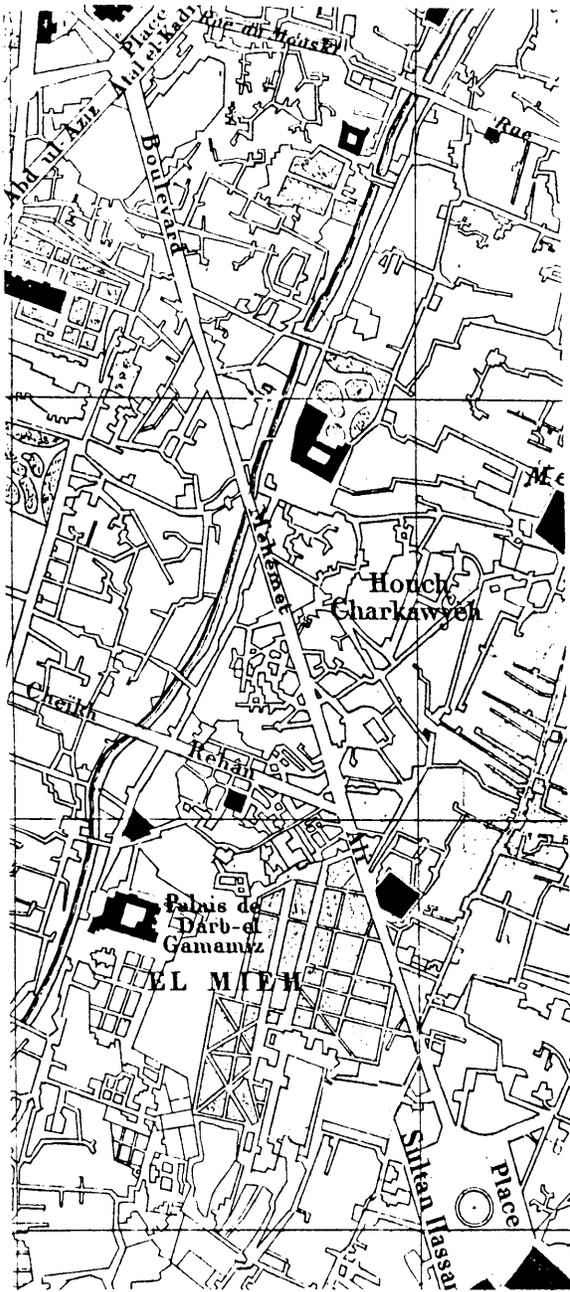
Detail of map 1911 showing Hilmiya square (From Cairo survey department)

To celebrate this design approach, the Ministry of Public Works chose the node linking the traditionally oriented grid to the Western one, to carry the name of the neighborhood, Hilmiya al-Jadida.

This design approach of the ministry in the 1890s had significantly changed from that of the 1870s. The Department of *Tanzim* (*Public Order*), a section of the ministry, was modeled after the Parisian system, where a central authority was responsible for all street alignment.² In its early years, the *Tanzim* followed the French model with great precision, it emphasized the regular geometry of

² As early as 1807, Napoleonic legislation empowered the central authority to align all streets. Lands obstructing these alignments were to be expropriated with compensation (Sutcliffe, 1981; p.128-9).

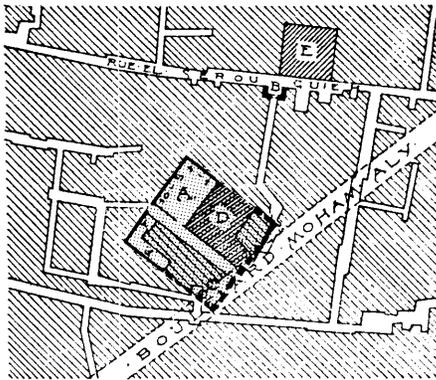
street alignments with little or no acknowledgement of existing conditions. This approach was intensified during the times of Napoleon III (1850-70) who envisioned a new Paris made of straight avenues stretching from one node to the next. Rue de Rivoli in Paris, for example, was a direct manifestation of this approach, as was Boulevard Mohammad Ali in Cairo.



Cairo in 1870 showing the new spine of M. Ali

This new spine of Cairo sliced with uncompromising straightness through the densest sections of the urban fabric for a distance of two kms. The geometry of the boulevard never considered, or even sympathized with, the existing old fabric. The old city of Cairo, like that of Paris, had irregular streets, dead ends and dark alleys, which were considered unhygienic, unsuitable for new rapid modes of transportation, and inappropriate to the grand image of a capital heading towards modernization (Mubarak, 1887, vol 1; pp. 78-9). Antagonism towards the old fabric was clear, and excitement about French Enlightenment ideas was the order of the day. The straightness of the boulevard was so cherished that a section

of the fourteenth-century mosque of Qusun had to disappear --changing its layout from a conservative rectangle to a daring pentagon-- to make way for the new intervention.³



Plan shows Qusun mosque in relation to the intervention of the new spine of Mohamed Ali. The broken line shows the sliced-off portion of the mosque as reconstructed by Shahinda Karim in 1987.

F. Remaining wall, A. Remaining portion of the original mosque, D. Modern mosque (source: Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, 1911; p. 151)

This 1870s approach changed towards the very end of the nineteenth century. The alignment policies of the Tanzim department became less extreme towards the both traditional and European ideas, and a more subtle expression was adopted, especially in piecemeal interventions. "The new sieve has its tightness, *al ghurbal al-jadid lu shadda*" (Taymur, d. 1920; p. 346) was a prevailing proverb that summed up this process of moving away from an extreme to a moderate line by the time the idea was conventionalized.

The shift from the rigorous application of ideal geometry to a situation more open to compromise is noticeable as early as 1885 when Abdel Rahman Rushdi, the Minister of Public Works, modified the definition of Article no. 10 in the Tanzim laws of 1882. The article in 1882 law read:

³ For a complete study on the reconstruction of the mosque with the part sliced by the intervention of the boulevard, see Shahinda Karim in "Masajid Umara' al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalaun (Mosques of the Princes of al-Nasir Muhammad son of Qalaun)." Ph.D dissertation, Cairo University, 1987, pp.119-126.

If it is necessary to build new roads on private property, as indicated in alignment drawings, the designated lands are expropriated from their owners by law. (Author's translation)

By 28th February 1885, it had been modified to:

If it is necessary to build new roads on private property, as indicated in alignment drawings, the designated lands should gradually be acquired from their owners (Cairo Archives: Ministry of Public Works, dossier 6/2/A).

The gradual acquisition of properties, instead of forceful confiscation by the power of law, encouraged a dialogue between the central authority and private interests. This dialogue was further promoted by a successive minister, Muhammad Zaki, who based the process of expropriation on gentle persuasion. In one urban intervention, his administration wanted to confiscate 1072 sq. m. of private property to open a route to link Muski street, a main thoroughfare, to a new produce market that was also one of the ministry's public projects (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Public Works, Dossier 6/1, 31 March 1894). The ministry evaluated its reimbursement for properties on the grounds that the remaining portions would acquire a higher real estate value once the urban upgrade was finished. Some owners refused this rationale which led Muhammed Zaki to stage his initial intervention.

It is not wise to expropriate these plots all at once in order to open the street. It is better to start opening a 'corridor' (mamar), first, based on the readily available land ... which was 419 sq. m. The rest of the land should then be bought gradually through negotiation (bel-tarika al-hibbiyya) when its owners come to realize the value added to their properties

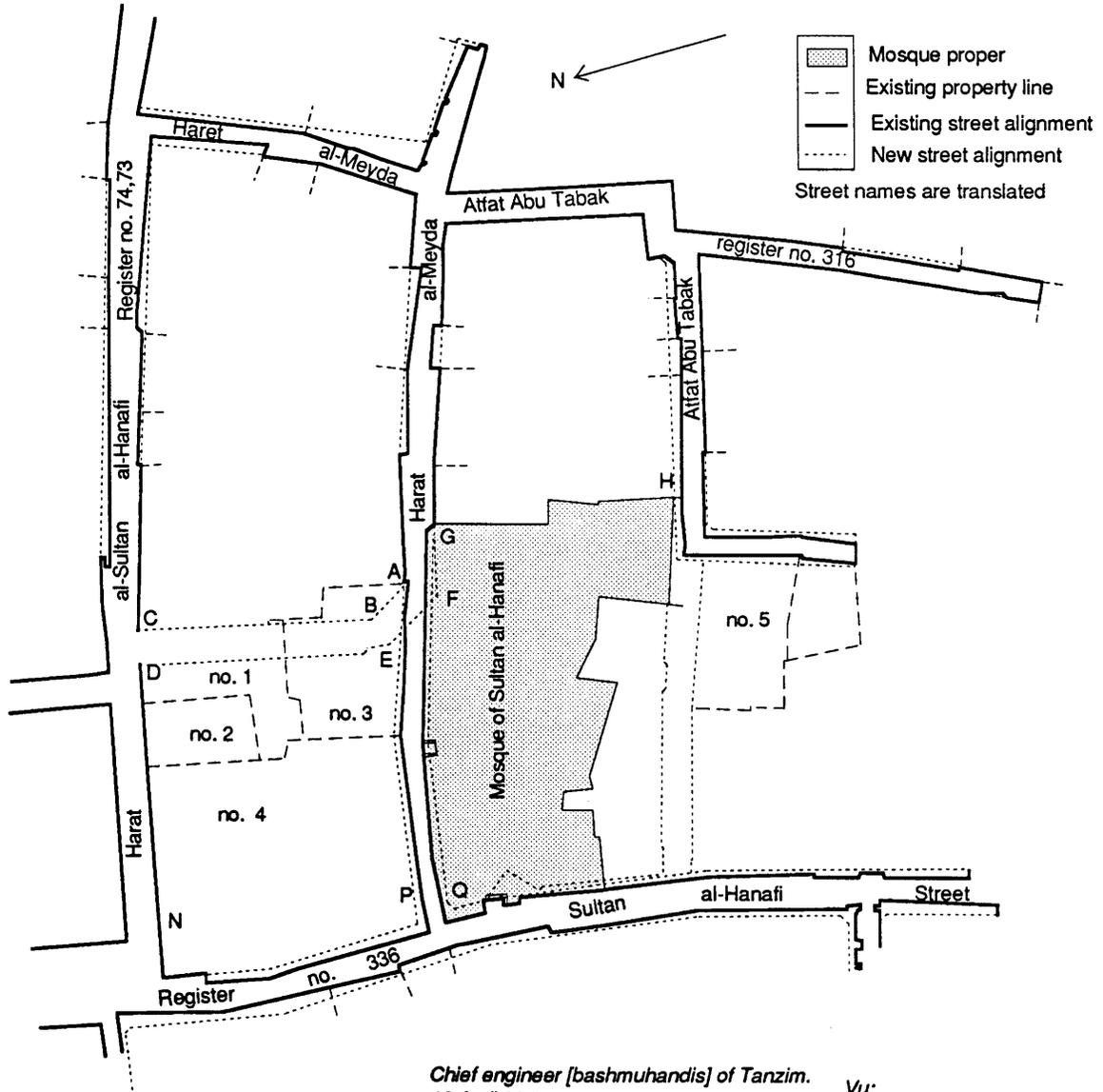
after the intervention (Dossier 8/8/A; 1 December 1890).

Negotiation and compromise became the criteria for linking the state's vision with private interests in the 1890s. It then became logical to consider preserving the actual conditions of the site as much as possible, in the initial planning stage to reduce the effort and time consumed in the process of negotiation and compromise with owners of the expropriated lands.

This move from strict geometry to a situation of compromise with the existing condition also meant changing attitudes towards the traditional fabric which was no longer regarded as unworthy of consideration because of its irregular streets and intertwined alleys.

This approach had become almost a doctrine for the Ministry of Public Works by the turn of the century. Hussayn Fakhri, the minister appointed in 1904, received from the Ministry of Pious Endowments (*Awqaf*) a request to renovate the Mosque of Sultan al-Hanafi and to upgrade the surrounding streets. When we study the plan approved by the minister, we see that improving the area involved the extension of a side street to link it with a major thoroughfare. It also included the creation of a link between the street that abutted one side of the mosque with another street. In this way the mosque became more visible to the surrounding community, a prime objective of the Ministry of *Awqaf*. The ministry in its request had also added its desire to see the surrounding streets with "ordered alignment" (*ta'dil muntazim*) in keeping with the fame of the mosque (Ministry of Public Works, dossier 8/8/C, 20th June 1904).

Plan for improving the site of al-Hanafi Mosque, approved by Ministry of Public Works
 (Cairo Archives : Council of Ministries, Ministry of Public Works, Dossier no. 8/8/C)
 This drawing is traced from the original but with slight alterations in representational techniques.



Chief engineer [bashmuhandis] of Tanzim.
 12 April 904
 Signed
 Ali Sabry [Translated from Arabic].

Vu:
 le 13. 4. 1904
 Signé
 Reboul

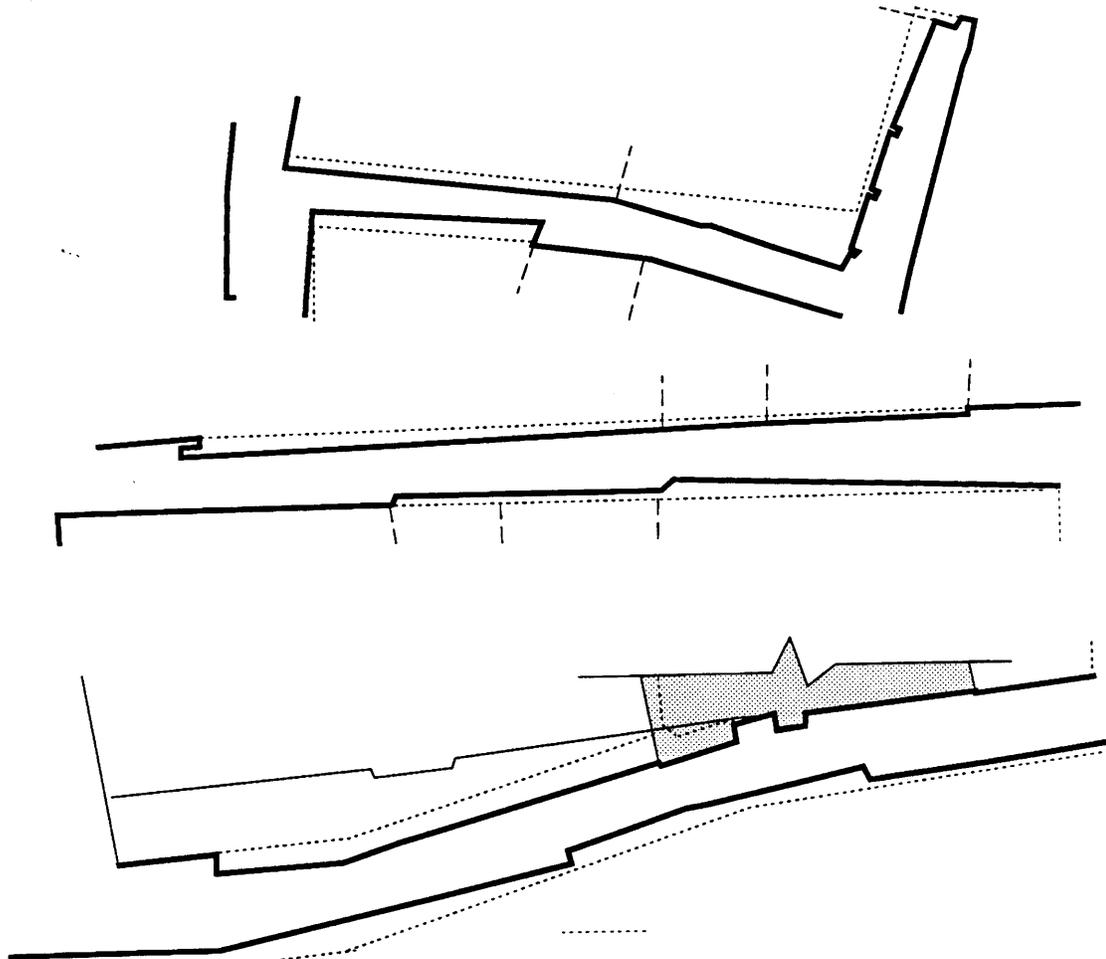
This copy was traced by me.
 Signed: Attiya Naggar.
 13 May 1904 [Translated from Arabic].

This is an exact copy of the original
 Engineer responsible for new
 alignments [muhandis ta'dilat] :
 Mohsén
 17 May 1904 [Translated from Arabic]

Approve suivant
 decision de ce jour
 13. 4. 1904
 Signé
 Perry

This copy was traced from drawings
 under register no. 316, 236, 73 & 74.
 which was issued by a royal decree in
 24 March 1886. Signed: Mahmoud
 Maher [Translated from Arabic].

In this case, regularization did not mean drawing two parallel lines indefinitely, but rather was a detailed study of the streets, section by section, side after side, to see which portion of the street facade was worth preserving. In so doing, the ministry with its intervention achieved a more meaningful regularity with minimum damage. In its plan, it expropriated five properties that could have allowed it to introduce a totally new scheme and to disregard the existing fabric. However, the final design resulted in streets that had fewer irregularities but did not wipe out the character of the streets for the sake of ideal geometry. Alleys were made wider in transverse section but were still in scale with the milieu.



Details showing the policy of intervention in the old fabric surrounding the mosque

Gradual implementation through negotiation as a policy of urban intervention was not the sole reason that persuaded the ministry to accommodate the existing fabric during alignment revisions. This design approach also proved to cost less money; particularly in small-scale interventions where the ministry was obliged to reimburse owners affected by expropriation from its own budget.⁴ Even in large scale projects, which were funded by the Ministry of Finance, funding less expensive interventions was a clear advantage to a country already in debt to foreign governments. Thus when another project was proposed similar in nature to Muhammad Ali Boulevard, the Ministry of Finance refused it on the ground that it could no longer afford to fund this type of intervention (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Public Works, Dossier 6/1, 28 April 1890). The proposed boulevard would have had a straight axis and passed through the traditional fabric, linking Atab al-Khadra square in the new section of the city with the historic gate, Bab al-Futuh. Because of its straightness and length of 1.2 km. the project would have required the expropriation of 28,000 sq. m. of private property (Dossier 6/1, 9 March 1890). With this refusal, the ministry encouraged plans that accommodated the existing fabric in alignment revisions, not only in projects that depended on its limited budget but also those that required state funding.

It was in this atmosphere that the Hilmiya neighborhood was planned, staged and realized. Careful analysis of the existing conditions was made before a

⁴ Resale of the remaining lands when an urban intervention was finished was controlled by the Ministry of Finance which credited the revenues to its own budget! Minister Abdel Rahman Rushdi complained about this to the Council of Ministers (Ministry of Public Works, dossier 6/2/A, 23 November 1887).

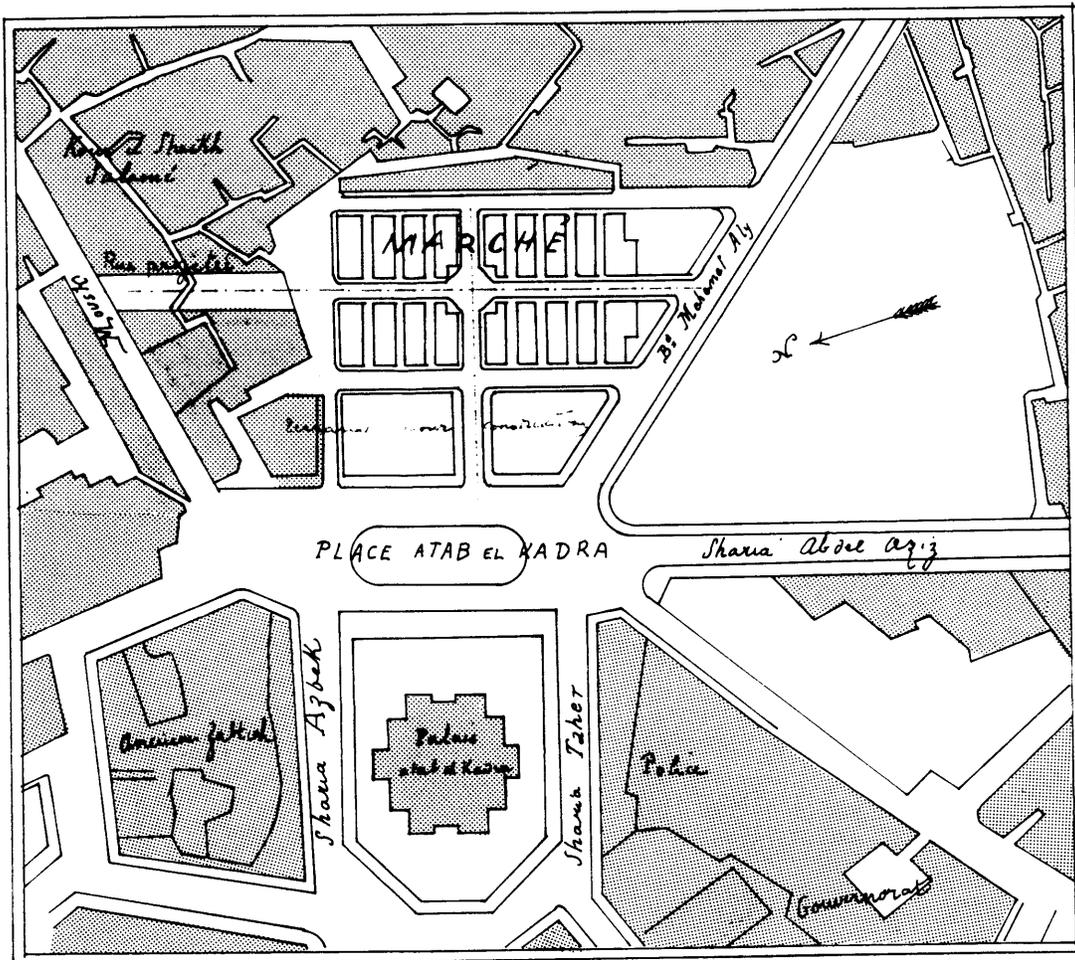
new intervention was proposed. Even decisions already taken were re-examined. Contemporary with the Hilmiya project was the project of building a road to link the Atab al-Khadra produce market to Muski street which had been going for four years by that time; yet the road that was supposed to enhance the performance of the market had still not been built. The ministry was still reconsidering whether the intervention was really necessary and if there was another solution that could avoid destruction of the existing fabric.

In 19 March 1894, a commission was formed to conduct field research on the road project. One member who opposed the project asked shop owners why the northern shops of the market were not prospering. It appeared that it lacked meat and fish sections which were the main attraction to market customers. When those two sections were evenly distributed throughout the market, the success of the entire market was assured. This was confirmed by comparison with an older market. Thus building a new road would have had no effect. The Sanitary Service had favored isolating meat and fish in the southern parts of the market for hygienic reasons (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Public works, dossier 6/1, 27 March 1894). After reviewing the case, the ministry sided with the Sanitary Service. Based on a pedestrian circulation study, they proposed constructing the road on the same horizontal axis as the market spine to encourage pedestrians to use it as a short-cut between Muski and Muhammad Ali Boulevard (Dossier 6/1, 31 March 1894). In this way, the northern side would be revitalized.

The market case shows how French Enlightenment ideals that directly tie hygiene to built form had acquired a strong voice inside the ministry. The

Sanitary Service represented these ideals and had the power to veto any project if it did not meet sufficient hygienic standards.

*Marché du Caire - Plan d'ensemble
indiquant la rue projetée au nord du marché aboutissant
au Moussky. - 1890 -*

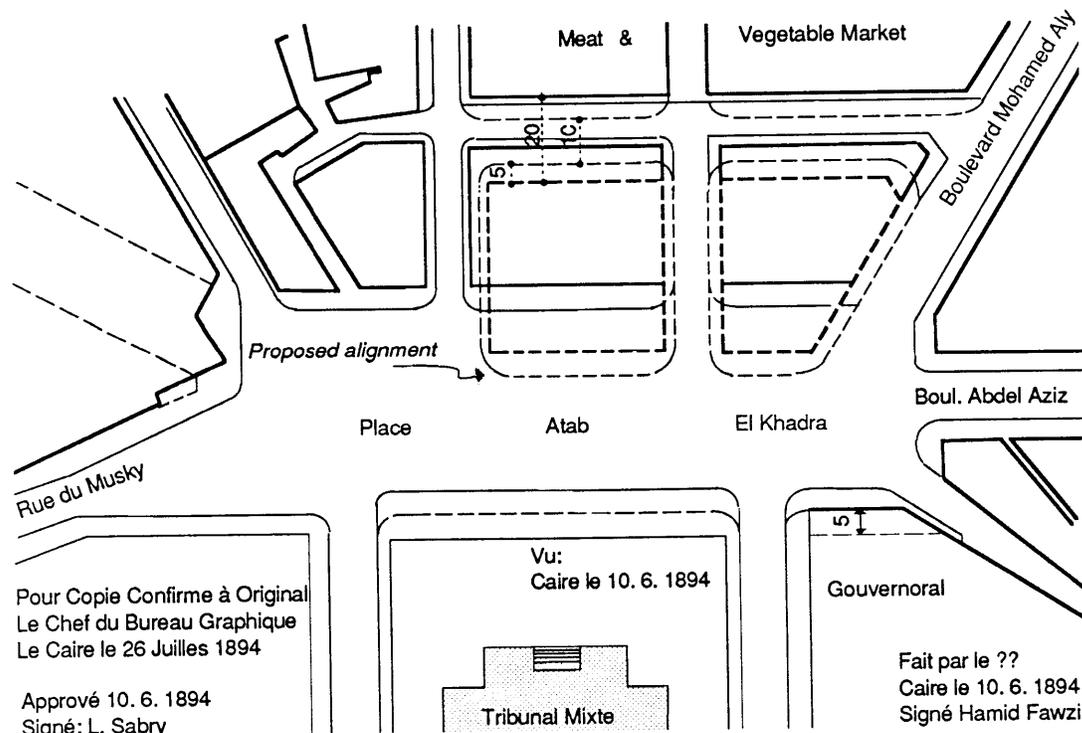


Echelle de $\frac{1}{2000}$



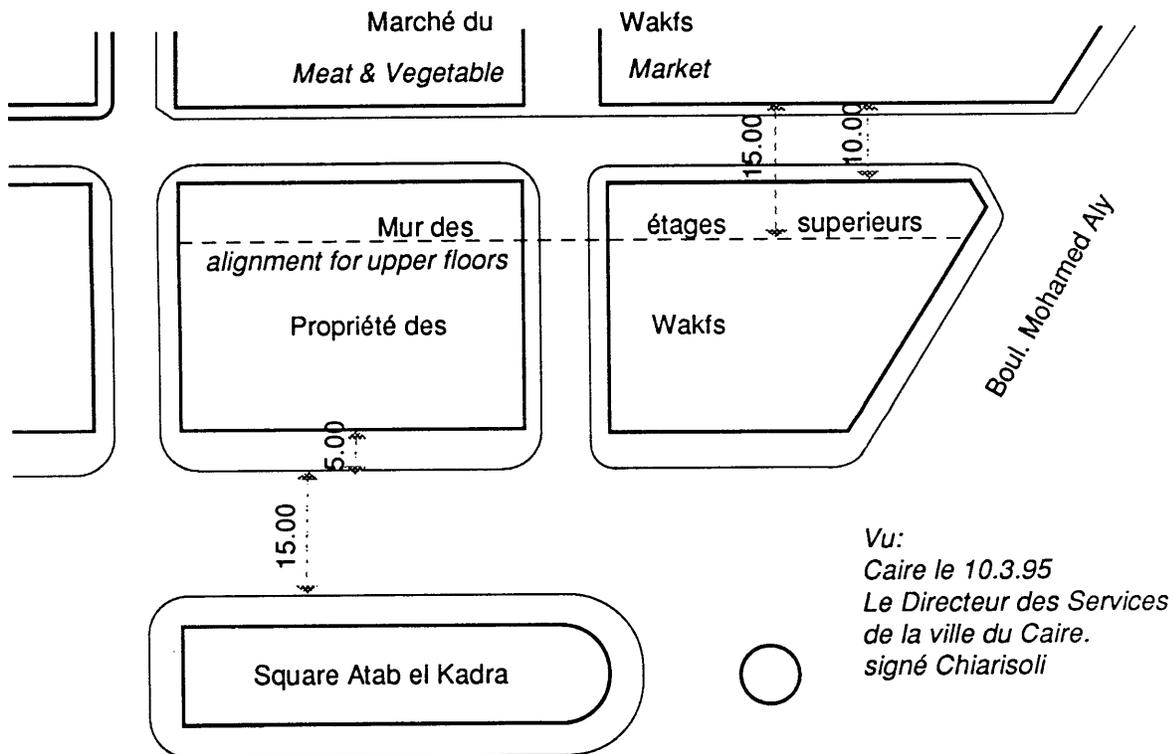
Opening the street up to the market (From: Cairo Archives, Ministry of Public Works, 1890)

The market case did not end there. The Sanitary Service further proposed to keep the two plots of land between the Atab al-Khadra square and the market vacant. Using it as a park would be the best solution for public health (Dossier 6/1, 20 July 1890). But the owners of the land, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Awqaf, rejected the application of this idea to such a prime location. They wanted to develop the land into apartments which, in the eyes of the Sanitary Service, would obstruct the flow of air to the market (29 July 1894). Caught between two ministries and an influential department, the Ministry of Public Works tried to negotiate a solution that did not burden its own budget. The Sanitary Service proposed to widen the road between the two plots and the market from 10 m to 20 m with 5 m pavement, but the Ministry of Public Works could not pay for the expropriated land necessary for the new alignment.



Proposal of the Sanitary Service with the two plots moved towards Atab al-Khadra Square

Then they proposed to shift the two plots westward towards the square to allow space for widening the 10 m. road on the east side. Again the ministry refused the proposal since it could not afford the costs of reordering the square. Eventually Enlightenment ideals had to give in. The final solution kept the square intact, permitted construction on the two plots of land and retained the 10 m wide street. The only concession the Sanitary Service gained from the two ministries, while not costing the Public Works anything, was an additional 5 m setback in the upper floors of any building constructed on these two plots of land. The Public Works Minister, Husayn Fakhri confessed that this was not the ideal solution, but the only realistic one under the circumstances (Dossier 6/1, 8 April 1895).



Vu:
Caire le 10.3.95
Le Directeur des Services
de la ville du Caire.
signé Chiarisoli

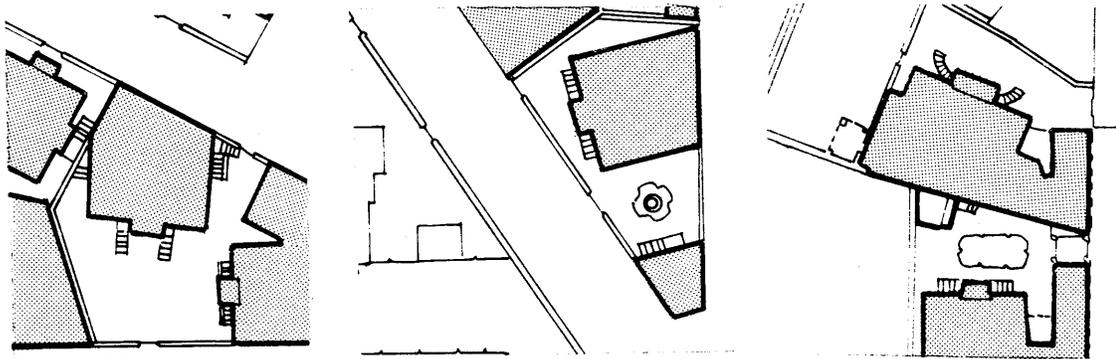
Solution proposé par
le Ministère des Travaux
Publics.

Pour copie conforme à l'original.
Le chef du Bureau Graphique
Caire le 16 / 3 / 95.

Final proposal accepted by all parties with the site left unchanged by the intervention

With this decision, the ministry had come a long way since the planning of Muhammad Ali Boulevard: from a single design act to incremental revisions, from regular shapes signifying ideal hygiene to compromised geometry, from a plan that ignores site particularities to one that allows for a dialogue. From this we can understand why the plan of Hilmiya neighborhood followed actual garden paths of the palace, why it sacrificed the regular form of the main square, and why it accommodated the traditional spine alongside the modern one.

This act of compromise in the planning of Hilmiya resulted in parceling almost half of the neighborhood into irregular lots. Thus the villa designer had at the same time to preserve the regular arrangement of the central-hall plan, accommodate local social requirements, and to deal with an additional constraint in Hilmiya, namely irregular sites. This situation further encouraged the drift from Palladian facade arrangements that became the norm in Hilmiya villas. In some instances, the designer had only the chance to retain the formal look to the front facade where the patron received his guests. This formality gradually disappeared once the viewer shifted his attention to side facades. The act of compromise started by the ministry, ended up influencing the villa.



Some villa layouts in Hilmiya, showing compromise initiated by the ministry



General plan of Hilmiya neighborhood in 1911 (redrawn from maps of Cairo survey dept.)

The ministry's response to Western ideas at the end of the century, as opposed to earlier times, shows a shift in attitude. During the first decades of modernization, in Muhammad Ali's reign, any Western scientific theory was welcomed so long as it "worked" under the Egyptian sky. But in the later period an effort was made to "localize" it.

"Localizing" in this context meant modifying the original model, so that it was just one component of a new product. The rest of the components sprang from the predicaments of the local culture, in the form of social constraints or economic limitations. In the case of Hilmiya, Western ideas were manifested in the specific width of the streets and heights of the villas. The component added to this Western model from local traditions was, for example, the dead-end alley.⁵ In the case of the Boulevard Muhammad Ali almost nothing was added to affect the original model, not even financial constraints. The statement by the champion of the boulevard, Khedive Ismail: "*My country is no longer in Africa, for we are now part of Europe,*" (al-Rafi'i [1932] 1972; p. 81) summarizes precisely what the ministry was trying to avoid in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

In the first decades of modernization, making Western ideas "work" meant only producing technical details that would allow the imported idea to perform well in the new environment. Prerogatives of new ideas at that time were not questioned. Muhammad Ali, who was determined to build Egypt into a powerful

⁵ This type of acknowledgment was codified in building laws such as those of 1889 (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Public Works, Dossier 6/2/A, 25 April-3 Dec. 1889).

state, welcomed any Western scientist who could demonstrate that his invention could be a success in Egypt. Before actually cashing in the generous reward, the scientist might be obliged to show the Egyptian ruler the validity of his science through a demonstration, using local ingredients.⁶ At the end of the nineteenth century, scientists continued to sell their products to official entities in Egypt but they no longer were guaranteed instant approval.⁷

If the practice of the ministry crystalized the second approach, modern education in Egypt fostered the first. Muhammad Ali was the first to erect schools in which Western subjects were taught. Attention was given in these schools to practical sciences for their contribution to the building of the army and the state (Heyworth-Dunne, [1939], 1968; p.223). The sole criterion for education, then, was timely cause and effect: Western theory and direct application, modern technology and domestic production. This philosophy also prevailed even after most of the army was disbanded in 1882 following the English occupation.⁸

⁶ He may even have had to teach a few Egyptians about his invention. The students would then be examined before the scientist was rewarded (Sami, 1916-36, vol 2; p. 385).

⁷ In 1892 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public Works organized an international competition that called for the planning of the first comprehensive sewer system in the capital. An international jury chose, out of thirty predominantly European entries, three projects, of which two were designed by engineers of the Ministry of Public Works (Ministry of Public Works, 8/8/B, File 168, 4 May 1892 & Alleaume, 1984; pp. 163-174). According to the jurors, the winning entries were more "localized" in their solutions than the rest. To have two out of the three winning projects from the ministry reflects its mastery of this approach.

⁸ The regulations of Cairo University in Giza stated in Article #1 that the aim of the university was to establish education similar to that of European universities as long as it was applicable in Egypt. *al-Umran* 9th June 1908, no 366, p. 573.

In this context the *Muhandiskhana* (Polytechnic School) was founded as Egypt's sole official institution of architectural education in the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁹ In the first half of the 19th century it trained students in artillery and naval engineering, road and bridge construction, mining, and related fields. For all these specializations, knowledge of mathematics and physical sciences was necessary (Heyworth-Dunne, p.198). Even after the educational reforms of the 1840s (pp.239-240) and 60s (pp.352-3), the discipline of architecture continued to be embraced in a school curriculum that was heavily oriented towards technology. The curriculum of the Polytechnic School included such subjects as geometry, algebra, statistics, machines, mechanics, physics and chemistry (p.199). Architecture was seen as merely another technical science that taught the method of construction, but not the art of design.

A graduate of the school was appointed to the Ministry of Public Works. During the early decades, when the interest was just to "plug" science into the local environment, the appointee hardly found any discrepancy between the subjects as they were taught at school and actual practice in the ministry. For the school, in addition to teaching theory in absolute terms, taught the student about the environmental conditions of Egypt, so that by graduation he knew how the imported science could "work" in his milieu.

Julius Franz, a German who taught architecture in the Polytechnic School during the 1860s and 70s (Sami, 1917; p. 24), reflected this approach in "*Cairo's Neubauten*," an article that contained an account of a villa of his design

⁹ The Beaux-Arts school was founded in Egypt in 1908, but only became official in December 1913 (al-GabaKhengi,1973; pp. 292-293).

in the then fashionable quarter of Ismailiya. After describing its internal configuration, he discussed technical problems in detail, including the kinds of soil he had to deal with, the types of foundations he used, problems of settlements due to Nile floods and how these were avoided by local masons (1871; pp.327-8). He also discussed a new foundation system and its suitability to Cairo's climate. Then he described the mortar used for walls and its local ingredients as well as construction tools. All this was accompanied by detailed technical drawings to highlight his ideas. This detailed technical account should convince the reader that the villa in this manner had become Cairene. To question the design criteria of the central hall plan at that time was a concern neither in practice nor in academic realms. The villa had a plan that made a limited attempt to accommodate the dual circulation of family and guests.

If we consider this a theoretical stance of the Egyptian Polytechnic, it was largely affected by the Paris Polytechnic system of education, which served as its model. To understand architectural theory in a polytechnic setting, it should be contrasted with the Beaux-Arts system; the latter being the "authentic" cradle for architectural learning in nineteenth-century Europe.

Architectural theory in the Beaux-Arts tradition was based on classical antiquity's notion of the "idea" that assumes absolute beauty and truth are only found in the intellect and have a universal claim (Egbert, 1980; p.99). The artist tries to express this notion in his work, partly depending on his talent and creativity and partly depending on already existing examples in Nature. Yet Nature is not perfect; thus it limits itself to the role of *inspiring* rather than modeling. Thus Zeuxis in making the famous image of Helen is said to have

chosen the most perfect parts from five beautiful maidens, rather than one, (Bellori, [1672] 1968; p. 157). In the process of injecting the notion of "idea" in the work of art, the artist is further aided with a set of universally acknowledged principles also found in Nature (Panofsky, [1924] 1968; p.26). These principles are rules of symmetry, proportion, harmony and order.

If the artist of classical antiquity had freedom in reflecting the notion of "idea" in matter while looking at nature for principles and inspiring forms, the nineteenth-century Beaux-Arts student did not. By that time, there was a considerable corpus of masterful works from Classical and Renaissance times and the student was taught to believe in their absolute authority (Egbert, 1980; pp. 103-4). For most of the nineteenth century, perceiving works of this particular past as canonical was strong; however, this did not mean total suppression of creativity, for this would defy the central thesis of "idea".

In the Beaux-Arts tradition, the student had to seek the innovative organization of spaces, *parti*, suitable to every building program, after studying the relative works of the "masters" such as Vitruvius and Palladio, as well as those of distinguished former students of the school (Levine, 1982; p. 102). Creativity was also invested in the choice of orders and decoration that would give the appropriate character to the building. The best student was the one who tied together all parts of the project, starting with the *parti*, facades, sections and ending with details of style and character, in a consistent manner (p.109, 117). This also took ingenuity.

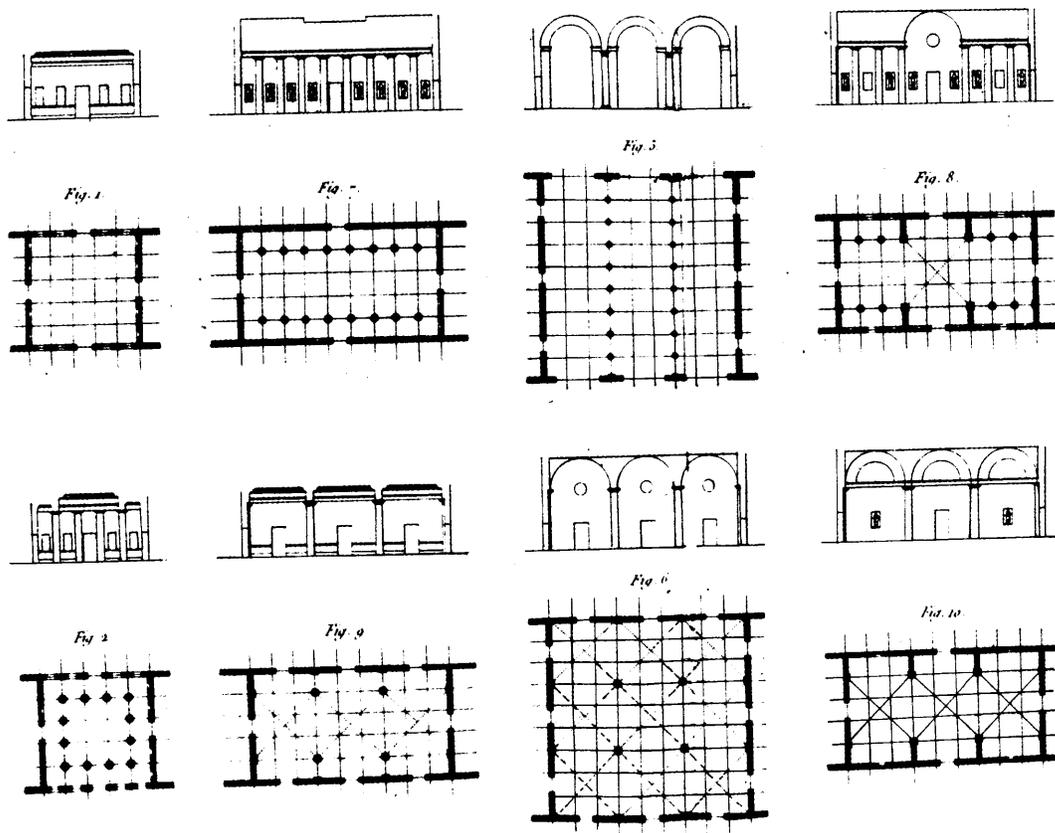
Architecture that was taught in several years in the Beaux-Arts was narrowed down to a course or two in the Polytechnic School; consequently, the discipline had to be reduced and simplified.¹⁰ J.N.L. Durand, who codified the essence of architectural education in a polytechnic setting, stripped the discipline of all the philosophical idealism so cherished in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Egbert, p. 48).

All that creativity which the students of the Beaux-Arts experienced in an attempt to achieve a sublime notion of beauty was now flattened in the Polytechnic curriculum into "quick reference" books. Durand's *Parallèle des édifices de toutes genres anciens et modernes* (1800) classified and indexed different building programs with their typical *parti*. Classical antiquity was no longer a source to stimulate student's creativity; rather it was a series of "solved examples" and standardized modular elements to be studied and copied. The student learned to assimilate those modular elements on grid paper by means of permutations and rules of symmetry.¹¹ A project is thus composed, as if assembling parts of a machine (Frampton, 1980; p. 15). Gautremère de Quincy, the staunch classicist of the Beaux-Arts until 1839 (Bergdoll, 1990; p.11), criticized this technical approach:

¹⁰ The length of the curriculum in the Polytechnic School of Paris during Durand's time was no more than two years, and the architecture course took no more than eight percent of that period (Rondelet, [1835] 1990; p. 28).

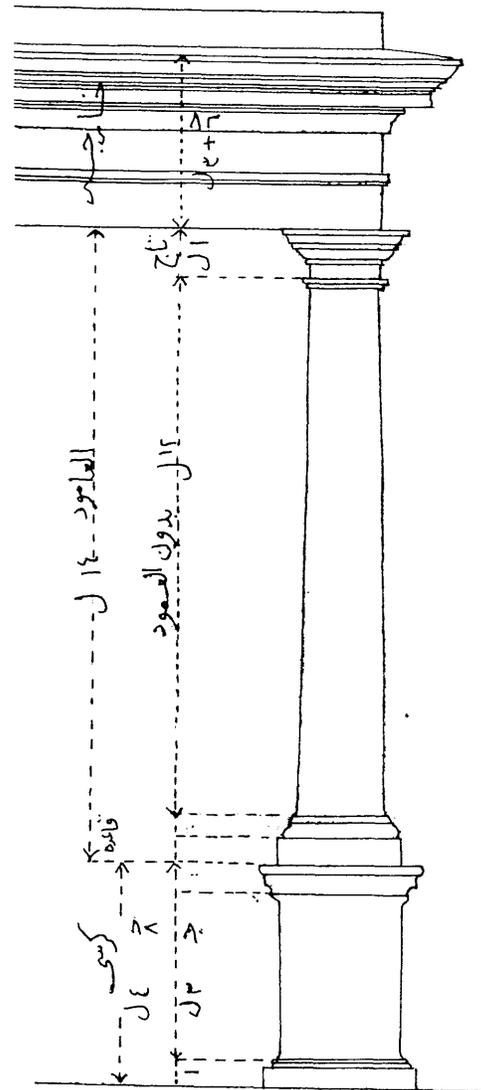
¹¹ Semper, a 19th-century architecture theoretician, sarcastically commented on this method: "With the ancients, who unfortunately did not know this grand invention [of Durand], everything lay in a disorderly mess whereas ...we moderns understood how to accommodate the most heterogeneous elements...by simply counting the squares...Symmetry and uniformity are the motto!" ([1834] 1984; p.155)

Imagining no other imitation than that which can exhibit its model to the eye, they overlook all the degrees of moral imitation, imitation by analogy, by intellectual relationships, by application of principles, by appropriation of manners (styles), combinations, reasons, systems, etc. From thence they deny, in architecture, every thing that is based on metaphorical imagination; they deny it because this imagination is not materially necessary. Because the type is not susceptible to that precision demonstrable by measure, they reject it as a chimerical speculation [1825], 1978; p.149).



A study by Durand in Précis.. [1805] showing different solutions to a modular standardized part

This technical approach is precisely the one adopted in the Cairo Polytechnic. Ali Mubarak (1882), wrote a textbook for students, giving at great length a technical accounts of building materials and construction. He presented only one architectural order, the Tuscan order, for its relative simplicity. The only information the student was required to know about the order were the equations used to obtain the correct proportions. How the order related to various programs of buildings, what the theories attached to it were, where it came from, were not dealt with (Mubarak, p.315).

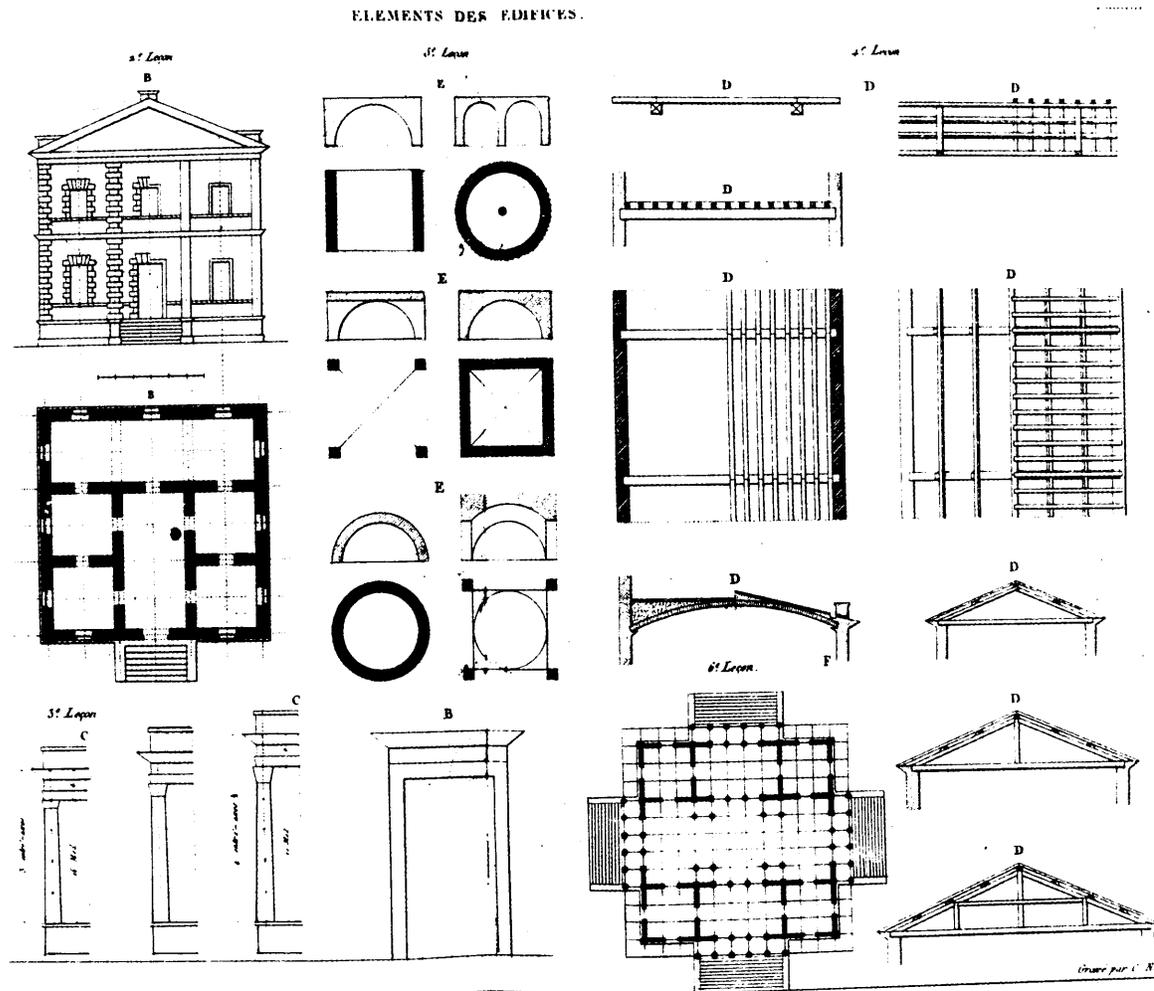


The Tuscan Order, as introduced by Ali Mubarak

Twenty-five years later another Egyptian Polytechnic teacher, Muhammad 'Aref, wrote a more detailed textbook for architecture students at the same school. Like Durand, he defined architecture in terms of utility, convenience, efficiency, solidity, comfort and economy ('Aref, 1896, vol 3; pp. 4-5 & Durand [1805] 1966; p. 203). Teaching methods were also similar.

The method that must be followed is the one adopted in all sciences, that is to start from the simple and move to the complex, or to start from the known to reach the unknown. Since every place is composed of elements such as foundations, walls, ... arches,

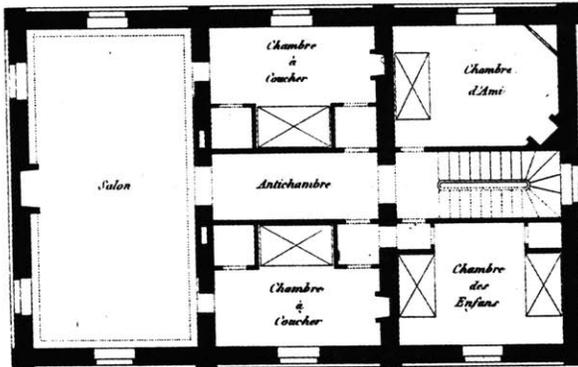
roofs and carpentry, the engineer should first study their structure ... [and] how they are fixed with one another, ... [then] how these elements combine to compose parts of buildings such as rooms, porticoes, lobbies, gateways and staircases..., [and] with few general laws, the engineer will know how to combine these parts to make a whole building (p.7).¹²



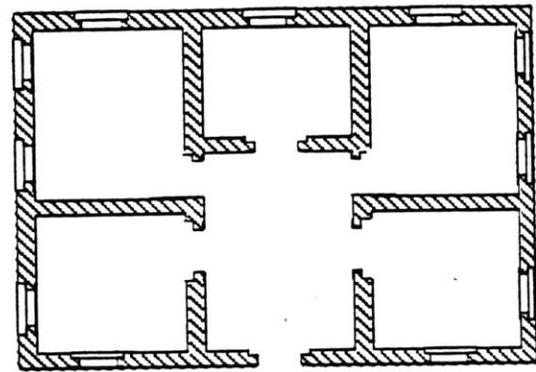
Durand's study showing different elements that compose a building, from Partie graphique

¹² There is a striking similarity between 'Aref and Durand on this issue. Durand says: [architecture] being the composition of the whole of buildings, ... is nothing other than the result of the assemblage of their parts, it is necessary to know the former before occupying oneself with the latter; as these parts are solely a compound of the basic elements of buildings, and as all particular principles must be derived after the study of general principles, it will be these basic elements that constitute the prime objective of the architect's study." (Durand [1823] 1990; p. 59)

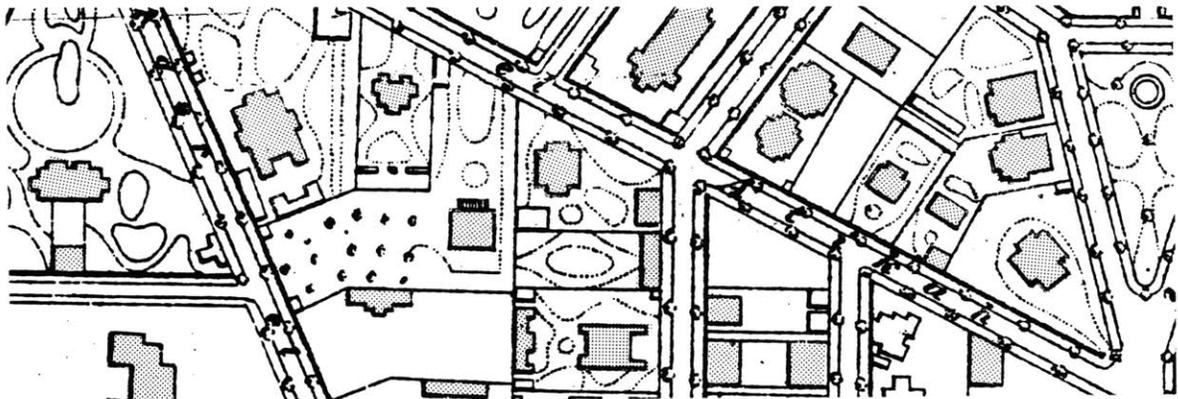
Architecture perceived in terms of parts that are held together by rules of symmetry and regularity was thus an academic ideal for every building program. The typical *parti* of a villa as portrayed in Durand's taxonomy book, *Parallèle*, was singled out as the central-hall plan of Palladio.¹³ The textbooks of Cairo Polytechnic also reflected the same preference.



Durand's Maison Larmina



Ali Mubarak's plan in Reminder for Engineers

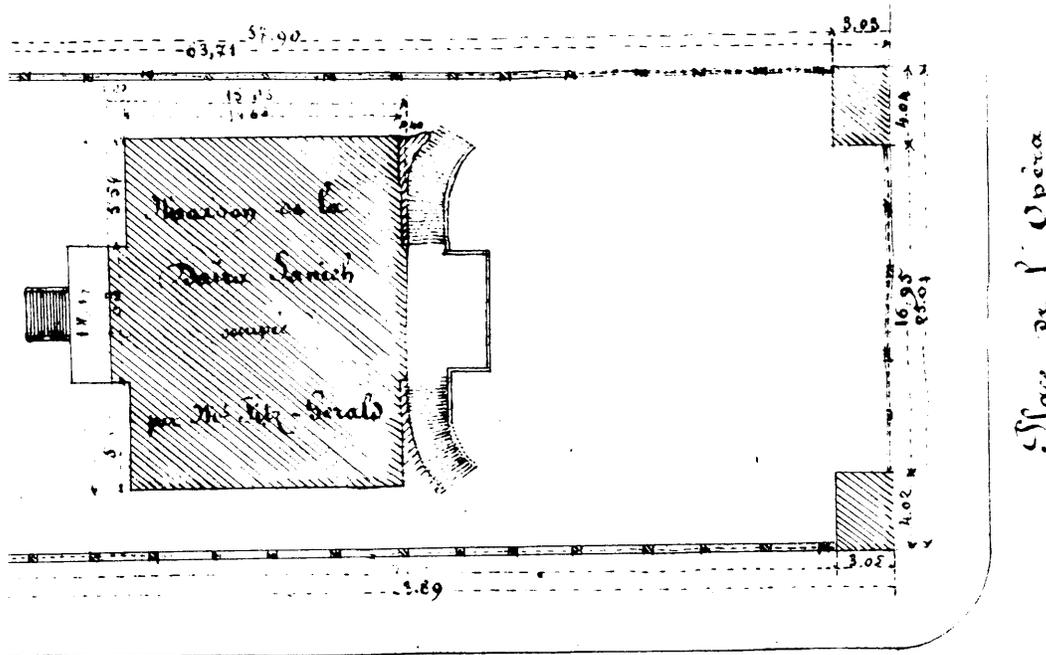


Ismailiya Neighborhood reflecting the predominant parti of villas

Ismailiya, the first neighborhood that was built as a statement of modern Cairo, had most of its villas in this typical *parti*. The general concern at that time was

¹³ In Durand's *Parallèle*, four full pages were designated to Palladian and English Palladian models. It was the only building program in the book that emphasized a single source of reference. Durand's inclination to Palladio was even reflected in his practise, such as House at Thiais and Maison Larmina (Villari, 1990; fig. 73-78).

still focused on how to plug Western science into the Egyptian environment rather than to localize it. It was a period when theory matched practice.



A house belonging to the royal family of Egypt in Ismailiya neighborhood during 1870s (Cairo Archives, Council of Ministries, Daira Sanieh, Dossier 1 / B, 4 June 1881)

At the time when Hilmiya villas were built, the textbook of Muhammad 'Aref was being used in the Polytechnic School. While social aspirations sacrificed some of the regularity in form to give room for the manifestation of traditional customs, school training continued to call for absolutely symmetrical arrangements. The situation thus showed a clear discrepancy between theory and practice, an issue that was generally felt by the Ministry of Public Works by the end of the century. There was a complaint that the graduating student could not cope with real situations on assuming position in the ministry, owing to the lack of practical concerns in the school's teaching (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Education, Dossier 12/A, 1 June 1892). This motivated the officials to modify the rules of

the school to include field work which for architecture students meant visiting sites to observe construction operations, and noting down what they observed.¹⁴ In this way the student saw how designs were compromised in actual situations, even if this was not the main purpose of the visit.

Architecture in Polytechnic education did not only mean mechanical uniformity and technical adaptability to site conditions, but also the addition of character to the building to suit the place it was in. With this theoretical position, the Polytechnic education stood in sharp contrast with the Beaux-Arts that taught the student the universal validity of classical antiquity.¹⁵ Thus the notion of character did not surpass building programs (Egbert, 1980; p. 135). For example, while the Polytechnic theoreticians called for a facade that can distinguish a cathedral in southern France from that in the north, Beaux-Arts teaching was only concerned in distinguishing a cathedral from a court building.¹⁶ This theoretical difference was reflected in the facade treatments of

¹⁴ To further encourage the student, the ministry decided to give him a stipend to cover his site visits (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Education, Dossier 12/ A, 19 January 1903). The new rule of adding practical training to the school's curriculum was further modified in the Laws of 1903 and 1908, articles 13, 14 and 15 (Ministry of Education, 1903 & 8; pp. 8-10).

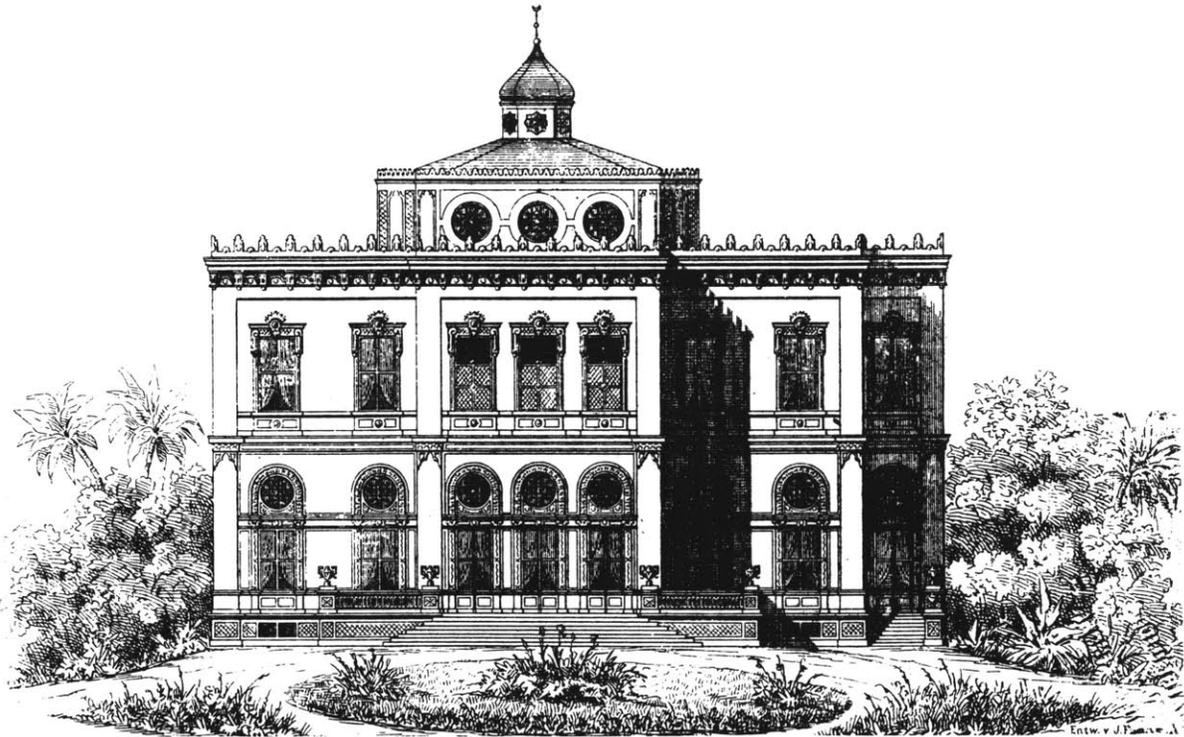
¹⁵ A classical example given by scholars of 19th-century architectural education is when the Beaux-Arts jury awarded a classical design entry for a governor's palace in Algeria (Bergdoll, 1982; p.224).

¹⁶ The indifference of the Beaux-Arts school to local character has continued to provoke opposition throughout its history, even from graduates and theoreticians of the school. Starting with its decade of foundation there was Claude Perrault, and towards the end of the nineteenth century there was Henri Labrouste. For an analysis on the kinds of works of Beaux-Arts critics that considered the local character, see for example, "Vaudoier's Marseilles Cathedral" in *Designing Paris* by David Van Zanten, M.I.T. Press, 1987 (pp. 136-175).

both schools. In the Beaux-Arts, the system of orders and details of decoration were inherently tied to various sections of the building program. The outcome of this coherent relationship led to metaphorical expressions such as "severe," "noble", "simple" to define the character of the building (Levine, 1982; p.109). Thus for every project there were ideal systems of decoration and orders that fulfilled the Beaux-Arts notion of character. By contrast, the Polytechnic notion of character separated the facade from the *parti*. Stemming from the attitude of perceiving the building in terms of "elements" and "parts" that could be assembled by means of permutation, the building could have various facade configurations (Prophyrios, 1978; p.127) and vice versa. Because of this, the architect could work with familiar plans and design rules in foreign cultures. The design changes only in terms of a facade vocabulary that is derived from the authentic architecture of the foreign culture.

In the Cairo Polytechnic School, local character meant "Arab style." Julius Franz, the architecture teacher who designed a villa for the Egyptian Prime Minister in the Ismailiya neighborhood, gave the facade an "Islamic" character.

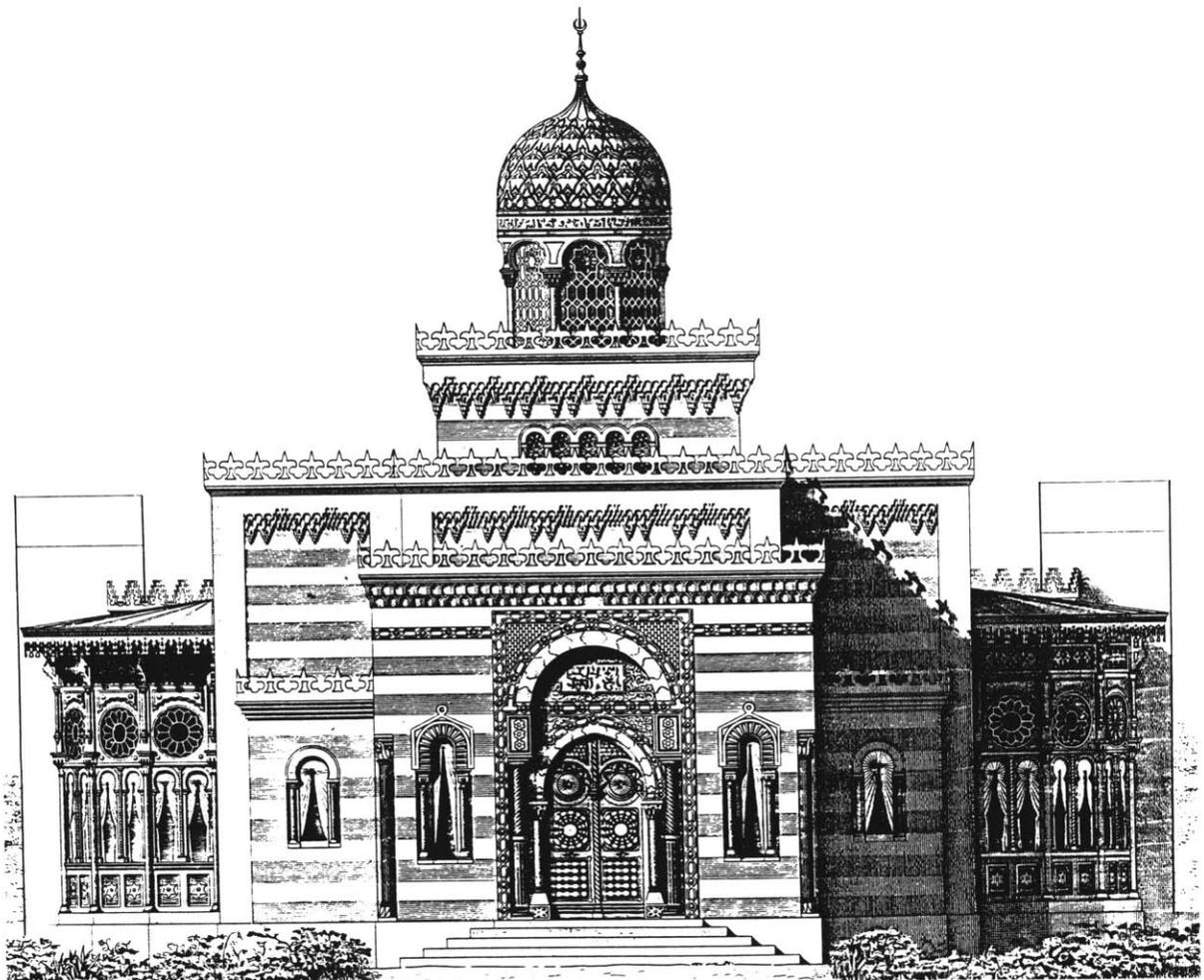
Islamic character for academicians was mainly derived from mosque architecture, even if the building under design had a secular function. Consequently, the vocabulary that was often used on facades included crenellations, stalactites, geometric patterns, entrance portals, wooden arched balconies and the horizontal striping of the facades with two alternating colors. Villa architecture clearly reflected this approach to Islamic style.



Facade of Sherif Pasha villa, by Julius Franz (1871)

Deriving the vocabulary of villa facade more from traditional mosque architecture than from historic houses was the result not of lack of information about the latter; on the contrary, they were well documented. Julius Franz showed a thorough understanding of the Mamluk-Ottoman house of Cairo when he wrote a section on Islamic domestic architecture in *Handbuch der Architektur. 2. Die Baustile* in 1887 (pp. 134-140).¹⁷ However, this type of building failed to stimulate his interest, along with other theoreticians, because of its relatively "plain" walls if compared to religious architecture (pp.17, 134-5).

¹⁷ I am indebted to Andr as Riedlmayer for translating the relevant sections of *Handbuch der Architektur* for me.



A pavilion representing "Arab Architecture of Egypt" in World Exposition of Paris in 1867

Islamic character also meant "reordering" what appeared as a chaotic arrangement, a characteristic that displeased Franz about Islamic architecture in general:

While bestowing their full need of praise on the wonderfully rich ornamentation and other details of Arabian architecture, one cannot help feeling that the style fails to give entire aesthetic satisfaction. Want of symmetry in plan, poverty of articulation... are the imperfections which strike most northern [i.e.

European] critics (Franz, [1878] 1895; pp. cxcv-cxcvi).¹⁸

Thus what seemed to be plausible in "Arab" architecture was a group of "elements" and not whole composition. These elements which were mainly derived from mosques could then be ordered in new designs according to acceptable aesthetic standards of symmetry and regularity. With this attitude towards indigenous architecture, villas with "Arab style" facades were designed. The villa of Delbroun Shukri in Hilmiya was no exception.

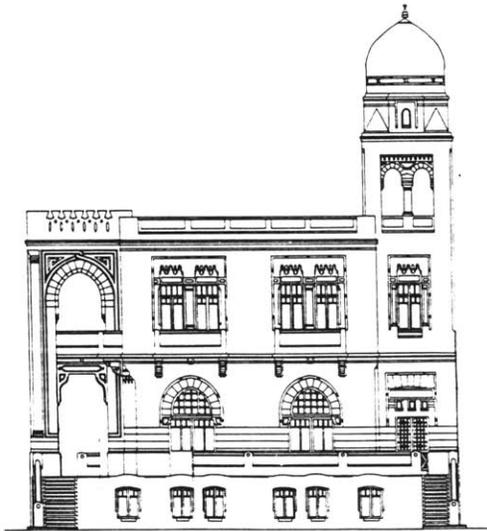


Facade of Delbroun Shukri villa in Hilmiya

¹⁸ I am indebted to Andràs Riedlmayer for drawing my attention to this quotation.

The most intense expression of Islamic mosque architecture, was manifested in Heliopolis city built at the same time as Hilmiya. The Belgian developer Baron Empain while showing the site to his architect Ernest Jaspar, said:

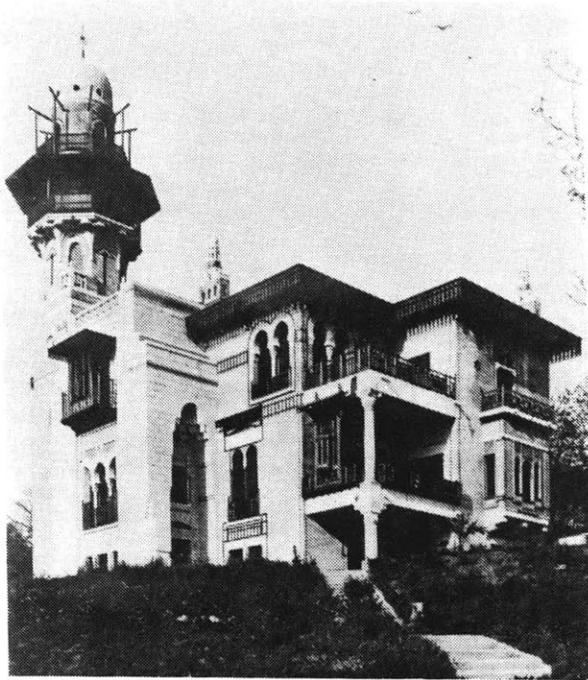
I want to build a city here. Its name will be Heliopolis, the city of the sun...I want the architecture [of the city] to conform to the traditions of this land. I want a specialist in Arab Art, but I could not find one. Do you like mosques, you are an architect, can you submit to me a design proposal? (ILbert, 1981; p.81)



A villa in Heliopolis (Volait, 1984)

The Baron's admiration for mosque architecture was best reflected in upper-class villas. The borrowing of elements from the mosque was no longer limited to arches, crenellations, portals and decoration; the large mansions had domes and minarets as well.

This treatment inspired other architects such as Antoine Lasciac, an Italian architect working in the construction department for Royal edifices, *Daira Saniyya*, under Khedive Abbas Hilmi II (Sammarco, 1937; p. 170). In 1909 he built his own house in Gorizia, Italy, in the same fashion as Heliopolis mansions.



Lasciac's villa in Gorizia (Volait 1986; p.279)

Heliopolis, large as it was, was the product of a single taste of a developer. The use of a minaret in villa architecture was the same to him as using an arch or a geometric panel. The minaret was stripped of its ideological content to function only as a mere icon for local character. Yet in a culture where real mosques still had minarets, no matter how small, it was still difficult to accept the minaret's new role on a villa facade. The exper-

ience was thus not repeated in practice, nor was it taught at the Cairo Polytechnic.

What continued to represent "Arab" architecture, with overwhelming approval by theoreticians and practitioners alike, were geometric patterns. They were taught at the Cairo Polytechnic at the end of the century, using Mohamed 'Aref's textbook. He dedicated a separate chapter in the fourth part of his *Summary of Ideas on the Art of Building* to Islamic decoration (C.C.C.S., 1965; p.392). The Egyptian teacher cited his source as Jules Bourgoïn's *Les arts arabes* (1868).¹⁹

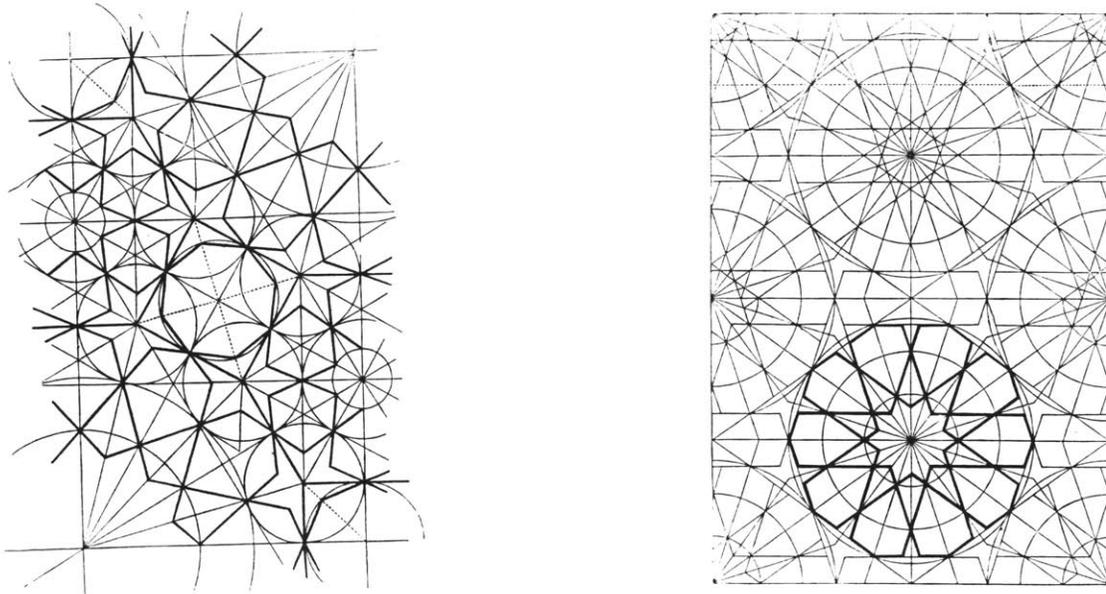
¹⁹ 'Aref, in the introduction of the first part of his book, noted that "Arab Ornament was derived from Viollet-le-Duc's book on Arab art." However, I was fortunate to see another copy in National Library of Cairo where he had crossed Viollet-le-Duc's name and replaced it with Bourgoïn. With this correction, 'Aref signed and dated his signature This confusion is understandable, for the former wrote an introduction to Bourgoïn's book.

Bourgoin's book uses geometric patterns from Cairene mosques. The plates constitute most of his book and are divided according to typical location and material used in historic monuments. There is a section on marble decoration, woodwork, window grilles, floor and ceiling patterns. Comparable sections are also found in 'Aref's book (C.C.C.S , 1965; p.392).

In Bourgoin's book there is also a section on how these patterns are formed, and this made the book plausible to contemporary architectural theoreticians, such as Viollet-le-Duc who wrote an introduction to the book. It was also appealing to the Polytechnic teacher, since Islamic geometry was demonstrated as composed of basic shapes such as squares, rectangles, rhombuses, pentagons, octagons, etc. By assembling these regular shapes, larger intricate patterns could be formed. Combinations of different shapes could also form grids on which more complex interlaced patterns were composed. This analysis made Islamic geometry closer to the "scientific" taste of Polytechnic teachers and practitioners than the overall composition of monuments on which they were placed.²⁰

The student in Cairo Polytechnic was not seriously required to learn methods of constructing patterns using geometry, contrary to what Viollet-le-Duc and Bourgoin might have expected.

²⁰ These geometric patterns were so much favored that even floreated motifs were eliminated from Bourgoin's analytical study (Bourgoin, 1868; p. 24). In the latter type of interlace, there were no apparent straight-lined-grids which could regulate their compositions. Thus, the few floreated plates which were included in his book only had brief descriptive comments rather than analytical (see comments on a "marble pattern" in plate 44).



Analytical diagrams by Bourgoïn showing how regular shapes form interlaced patterns (p.7)

For decoration in a Polytechnic setting was not essential to architecture, as Durand and later 'Aref had said (Durand [1821] 1990; p.15). It was more the concern of the artisan than that of the architect ('Aref, 1896, vol. III; p.6). This attitude was confirmed by the Ministry of Education, which required students of the Arts and Crafts School to practice methods of constructing geometric patterns but not Polytechnic students (Ministry of Education, 1899; Article 12). This study was thought to be appropriate for craftsmen and draftsmen not for architects and engineers.

This malleable attitude of the Polytechnic School towards decoration in general and Islamic style in particular had implications for practice. Because no "academic" style was enforced in construction it was left to the personal taste of the artisan and to a lesser extent the architect and the client to decide what it was to be. Influence of the school in practice focused on the notion of regularity

of the plan. As long as the villa was given a tripartite arrangement with a "formal" look on the front facades, it could wear any style it liked. This was reflected in neighborhoods that did not evolve as a single design act; Hilmiya was a typical example.

In the Hilmiya neighborhood, one is immediately struck by the array of styles that can exist in one street, or even on one facade. Style did not mean much to the Hilmiya patron or the public, apart from being "European" and well executed. Perfecting the motif on the facade would rank one villa as superior over another.²¹ In this context, the skills of the artisan is crucial. European artisans who came to Egypt to decorate the new dwelling would appear to the local eye as more "artistic" in executing a garland motif, for example, than local artisans who might have just learned the secrets of this new craft. Owners might



Villa of al-Shere'i family with Baroque motifs

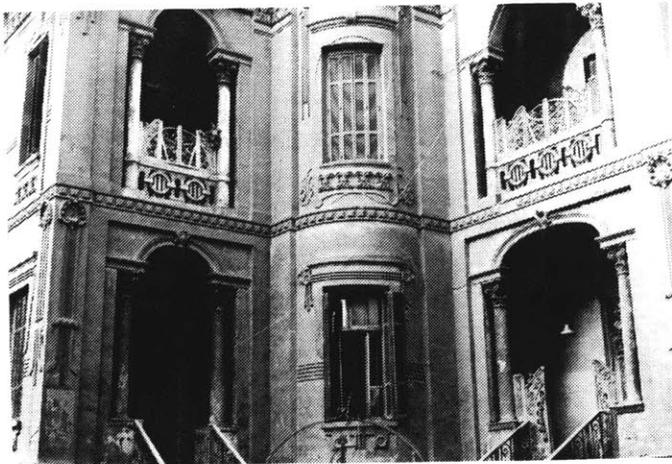
take pride in the fact that they could afford an Italian artisan rather than a local one, for it showed on the facade. Distinguishing one villa from another also depended on the novelty of the motifs applied on the facade. Yet consistency of a style was not a concern. On a single

facade, one can see a combination of Classical and Baroque motifs, or Art Nouveau and Mamluk, and so forth.

²¹ Interviews with second-generation dwellers, such as the son of Dr. Nashid, assert that it did not matter what style it was as much as how "beautifully executed" it looked.



Villa of Hasib family in a consistent classical style



Villa of Dr. Nashid with Secession motifs



Villa of Mayor Sayyed Muhammad with Art Nouveau motifs



Villa of the Sadeq family with a mixture of Classical, Secession and Pharaonic motifs

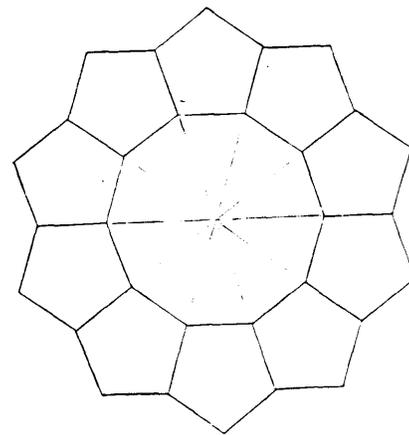
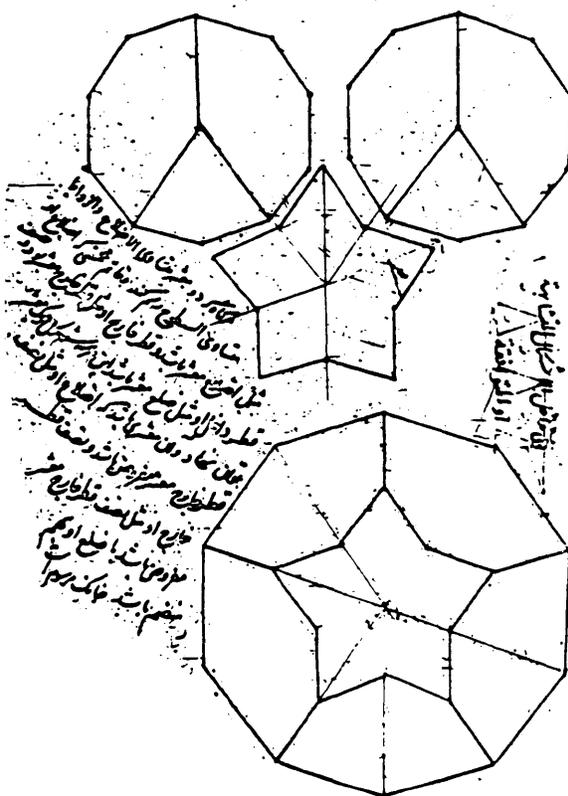


Villa with Baroque motifs

In Hilmiya along with other neighborhoods, Islamic style coexisted peacefully with European styles, but in the hands of artisans rather than architects. Bourgoïn's book was useful in this context. Its finished colored plates and etchings served as "neat" quotations from Cairene monuments that "briefed" the architect on the local character. Its analytical diagrams would give him a common understanding with the craftsman. The book in the Egyptian context can thus be seen as a liaison between theory and practice.

The Egyptian use of the book as a link between geometric theory and practice was a continuation of a tradition that could be traced as far back as the tenth

century. Abul Wafa' al-Buzjani (d. 987) was a mathematician who wrote *Sharh al-A'mal al-Handasiyya (Explaining Geometric Problems)* in which he showed how geometric patterns could be constructed in a practical way. The book was directed to artisans whose sole interest was to be able to draw the pattern on wood or stone then carve it or mould it , etc.



Bourgoin's analysis of a decagon in the center surrounded by pentagons

A medieval Arab manuscript showing a comparable analysis (Chorbachi, p.774)

The tradition of theoreticians addressing practitioners continued in the thirteenth century, for the book of Buzjani had an analytical commentary by the notable Shafi' jurisconsult, who was also a geometrician, Kamal al-Din Yunis ibn Man'a. The latter titled his work as *Risala Fi-ma Yahtaju ilayhi al-Sani' min A'mal al-Handasa (A Treatise on What the Artisan Needs of Geometric Problems)* (Chorbachi, 1989; p.753-754).

The artisan, however, might not always wait for the scientist to show him ways of constructing the patterns, he might have his own methods. In medieval times, both groups sat together comparing their methods, one backed with geometric equations and theories, the other backed with experience based on trial and error.

Abul-Wafa [al-Buzjani] recounts that in an assembly of scientist-geometricians and artisans the two groups arrived at different methodologies for the construction of one square from the sum of three squares. They .. brought .. several methods, some of which could be proved, others not, although those that could not be proved .. still appeared visually correct to the eye... [Thus in his book, Abul-Wafa] shows some of the incorrect usages... in order to make the artisans aware of both the correct and the incorrect methods... Ultimately, [he says], the clever and dextrous artisan would only depend upon the method of proof and not on that of trial and error (Chorbachi, 1989; p.766).

The outcome of this kind of meetings was no doubt useful for both parties, despite the scientist's zeal for extending his authority over practice.

This medieval reciprocity between scientists and artisans, or rather authorities of the discipline and practitioners, continued in the nineteenth century between practicing Polytechnicians and traditional masons and craftsmen.

٥١

الأصغر فحصل لنا أربع مثلثات ومنه يصغر عملنا من مثلثين
 من طيلك ونحسنا المربع إلى الجرد. ونبتغي من الآخر ما يعقل
 من طولها على طول المربع فكون كذلك أصغر المربعين وما يقع منه
 يضاف إلى السطح الآخر والمربع فيحصل لنا المربع الكبير وهذا

صورتها هـ
 النائب
 الخليلي في قيمة
 الكرة هـ فارقا
 كيف خط على الكرة

لنعلم دائرة تقع عليها فإنا نخط عليها دائرة كيف ما التقف مثل
 دائرة أ ب وعلى قطب ج ثم نسمى دائرة أ ب ج نصفين على تقاطع
 أ ب ونخط على الكرة دائرة جوز على نقط أ ب مثل دائرة
 أ ب ج فنكون تلك الدائرة نعتم دائرة تقع عليها وهذا
 صورتها ح هـ فإن قال كيف نعلم على كرة دائرة تقع على قطبين
 تقاطعان على رؤسها فإنا نخط عليها دائرة عظيمة مثل دائرة

المربع الكبير	المربع الصغير
المربع الأوسط	المربع الأصغر

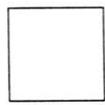
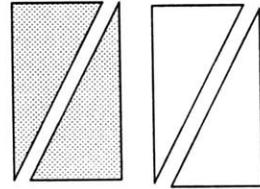
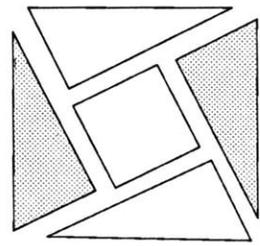


Illustration from Buzjani's book showing one way of construction a square.

(Chorbachi pp.769- 770)

In 1886, Abdel Rahman Rushdi, Minister of Public Works, held a meeting with his cabinet to decide on new rules that would codify the professional relationships between various parties involved in the building industry on the one hand and the client on the other. These parties included traditional guilds of construction. To finalize the new set of laws, another meeting was held between officials of the ministry and those traditional parties represented by chief contractors, *mukadimin*, heads of various professions *mashayekh*, and master builders, *mu'alemin*. Those traditional leaders of the building industry accepted rules that defined their relation with the client and the state but objected to the interference of the ministry in their internal relationships that had

been unchanged for centuries. The objection was accepted and codified in the new set of rules (Cairo Archives, Ministry of Public Works, Dossier 5 /1, 6th June 1888).

The acknowledgment of traditional groups in the building industry by the state was also reflected in the actual process of building villas. At every site there was interaction between the expertise of the local mason and the science of the Polytechnic School, traditional craftsman and foreign contractor or architect. Both parties were motivated to reciprocate with one another. The foreign builder wanted to understand the subtleties of the new environment, concerning material durability, climatic behavior, nature of soil, etc. The local builder wanted to understand the foreign type of dwelling and its new technologies. The right decision was continuously fluctuating between the two parties.

Dimitrius Fabricius, a graduate of the Technical University of Vienna (TU archives, 1848) and chief architect of royal edifices under Abbas Hilmi II, reflected the reciprocity between traditional and foreign academic expertise. In more than one memorandum directed to the Khedive, he asserted the authority of local master builders in technical problems (Durnham Archives, File 168 / 30, 14 July, 1905). In other instances, he repeatedly commended their excellent standard of performance (File 168 / 34, 9 August 1905). Sometimes, they could even suggest design alterations. When building a rest house for the Khedive in Maruit, a master carpenter suggested the possible erection of one service staircase leading to two flanking towers instead of two. With this arrangement, the carpenter argued that the circulation of the servants would not interfere with that of the master (File 169 / 274-5, 18 June 1903) !

Because of this reciprocity it was possible to introduce the foreign type of villa into Egypt in a very short time. It was also possible to make the necessary adaptation or, better still, innovations that led to the formation of an Egyptian villa that was unapologetic. *Thus out of snow there was fire !*

I D E O L O G I E S O F V I L L A I N H A B I T A N T S

Comparing a house of [traditional] Islamic architecture and a house of today, one can see an enormous difference in concepts and what consequences they have on behavioral patterns. The house of Islamic architecture preserves ethics, sanctity of the family and good manners, contrary to the house of today... A special place is designated to the visitor thus avoiding the disruption of the family's privacy... It is logical in this house to see the bedroom in the rear and not visible to strangers. In today's architecture, the bedroom is exposed to the public street under the pretext that it should enjoy ample sun and air (Qutb, 1965; p. 107) !

Today people have abandoned the old ways in construction in favour of the European style because of its more pleasant appearance, better standards and lower costs. In the new style, rooms are either square or rectangle in shape. In the old system, the living rooms together with their dependencies were disordered, corridors and courtyards occupied a lot of space,..., most of the spaces lacked fresh air and sun light, which are the essential criteria for health, thus humidity accumulated in these spaces causing disease. Facades never followed any geometric order thus looked like those of cemeteries (Mubarak, 1888, vol. 1; p.86).

These two statements made almost a century apart come from two influential Egyptian reformers. The first statement reflected the thoughts of Muhammad Qutb, the brother of the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. This socio-political movement of the 1940s primarily addressed the literate society. Taking a Hilmiya villa as one of its centers, the movement attempted to recapture what it perceived as lost social conventions and criticized the current state of "disintegrating" norms. Muhammad Qutb favored houses of traditional architecture over those of modern times (one of which is possibly the central-hall plan), because they preserved the privacy of the female members of the family. According to him, the planning of the house should neither encourage women to mingle with strangers, nor allow neighbors and passers-by to violate

their privacy. Thus traditional dwellings preserved morality, unlike modern European architecture.

In the context of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas, Qutb cited this example as evidence of the society's ethical degeneration. Architecture, in his view, is an expression of moral standards. He questioned the validity of the nineteenth-century argument that rejected traditional architecture because of its inability to admit plenty of light and air to the rooms. With this statement, Qutb was referring to influential reformers of the nineteenth century who caused a shift in taste from traditional to European dwellings. Ali Mubarak was one of these reformers.

The second statement reflected the mentality of Ali Mubarak who was educated in Paris, where these ideas were current and returned to hold key positions in the government. He was a Minister of Education and later Minister of Public Works ('Emara, 1988; p.91, 93).

While in Paris in 1860s, he had seen the renovation projects of Haussmann. In the same decade Khedive Ismail, ruler of Egypt, after seeing the new Paris during the times of the 1867 Exposition, asked Mubarak to undertake similar projects in Cairo. When reflecting on his work, twenty years later, Mubarak used the same rationale as Haussmann had used; both associated old cities with illness (Vidler, 1986; p.91) to justify new urban interventions. It is in this context that we should understand his statement. As early as the Enlightenment, French reformers and critics like Laugier and Voltaire had called for an abundance of air and sun in living spaces as opposed to damp, dark and stagnant air of old

quarters.¹ Applying these ideas to Egyptian traditional houses, Ali Mubarak saw the *mashrabiyya* with its intricate openings, as a hindrance to hygiene.

Had Mubarak limited his criticism to openings, it would have been easy to salvage the traditional house. Shutters could simply replace *mashrabiyya* screens. But his criticism filtered through to the internal organization of the house. The traditional house appeared to be full of levels and corridors which added unnecessarily to the cost of construction. But most important of all, neither the plan nor the facade followed any apparent geometric order. The *qa'a* (reception hall), for example, together with its dependencies, was irregular in form.

What ties those two reformers, Qutb and Mubarak, with today's critics is the reduction of the architecture of a particular period to a single notion. Traditional architecture to Qutb is an instant kit that generated ethical behavior while to Ali Mubarak it caused disease and chaos. Similarly, to Arab architects today it recalls heritage and religion, while in the sixties it meant regression. Such ebb and flow of ideas associated with traditional architecture is a tradition that started in the nineteenth century. In each period Arab critics tend to blur the difference between the cause of a problem and its symptoms. In most cases, architectural form and meaning become synonyms that have origins in the Western world. In the case of Ali Mubarak, such an association was borrowed

¹ The rebuilding of Paris was a triumph of Enlightenment ideals. Haussmann, when defending his demolition of old quarters of Paris, related his ideals directly to Voltaire. (Vidler, A 1986; p.87). These Enlightenment ideals first traveled to Cairo during Napoleon's invasion. Plague invaded Cairo causing French doctors to explain these ideals to the locals (Keshk, 1978; p. 494).

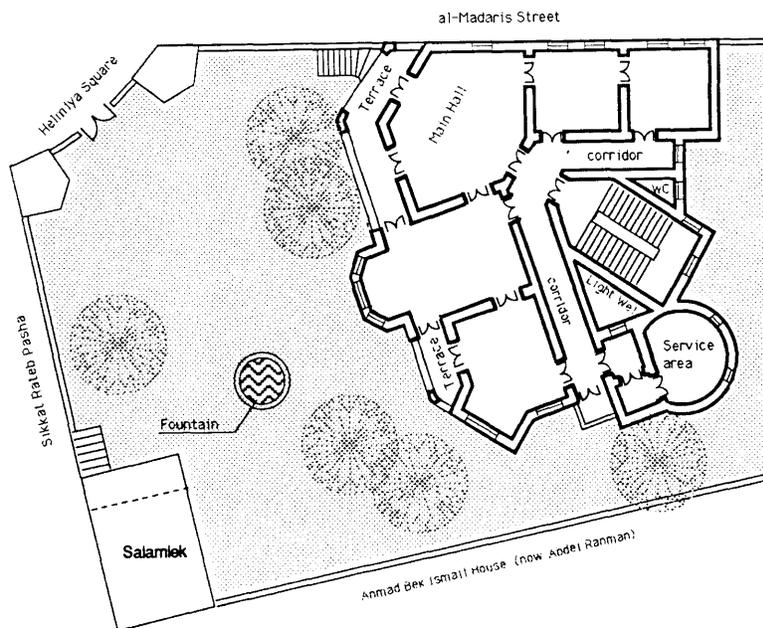
from a long tradition of French discourse that perceived the city in terms of medical metaphors. The traditional city was a sick organism that needed radical surgical incisions to be cured (Vidler, 1986; p.39 & 68).

But there is also a fundamental difference between these two reformers and today's critics. In the first case, fusing form with meaning never meant an attempt to present native and foreign architecture in terms of binary opposition, wishing one to prevail at the expense of the other. Their arguments were more of a theoretical construct, in which they dramatized the difference between local and foreign architecture. In so doing, they wanted to highlight the dangers of totally adopting a type of architecture they disliked most. Neither would Qutb have liked to see traditional architecture resurrected ² (contrary to *al-Benaa* 's position), nor did Mubarak promote complete copying of foreign architecture³ (as today's Egyptian Modernism has).

The Hilmiya villa was evidence of their approach. It was, at one time, the residence of Ali Mubarak who assessed local traditions, and the center of the Muslim Brotherhood movement that criticized Europeanization, at a later time. Thus the Hilmiya villa with its design was capable of satisfying both reformers who advocated the same cause, critical conventionalism, but from opposite ends.

² Qutb in *Wake'na al-Mu'aser (Our Contemporary Reality)* shows his critical conventionalism (Third edition, 1990; p.302).

³ Mubarak called for continuous scrutiny of Western standards in many of his writings, the most important of which is his novel *'Alam al-Din*.



The villa originally belonged to Sayyid Metwalli, an architect worked in the Ministry of Public Works (Wright 1909; p. 394). In 1943 al-Banna, who was the leader of the Moslem Brotherhood movement, bought the house. (Source: Abdel Rahman, who owned the neighbouring villa). The villa facade is in Art Nouveau style and is considered to be the best example in Cairo of its kind.

Second floor plan (Scale 1 /200 reduced to 50 %)

In the process of evaluating one architecture in terms of another, reformers never gave a complete account of either. Qutb, for example, never mentioned that it was possible to add a *salamlek* to a European villa if one wished to retain privacy. On the other hand, Mubarak ignored the possibility of reintroducing an Islamic character to buildings, although it was being done at his time. Each generalized, selected and obscured to suit his arguments and clarified his concerns. This is the nature of reformer's writings that the chapter will analyse (Duby, 1985; pp. 152-153).

Comparing local and foreign cultures to prove a point was of course not limited to these two reformers. It was a common practice among reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. European cultural critics depicted a

typical scenario: the native culture is the problematic while the foreign is superior and provides the solution.⁴

The difference between the nineteenth-century Egyptian reformers and their European counterparts lies in the aims of their criticism. In Europe there is competitiveness among neighboring cultures. By stating how the rival culture is better, reformers expected a prompt response from the locals to curb their deficiency.⁵ In the Egyptian case, critical writings did not urge the locals to compete with others but rather with themselves --with their own traditions. Western ideas were never doubted as the source of progress for Egypt, yet they never had an upper hand. The competition between the local and foreign components was there to spell out what is beneficial in both, then fuse them together in a third component. The design of the Hilmiya villa showed one facet of this fusion, namely, local abstract pattern with a foreign physical form, traditional social behavior within a central-hall plan. This fusion required compromise: the foreign type had to make more concessions to local values. However this did not ensure an instant harmonious relation between the two. The central-hall

⁴ An example of this, is Herrmann Mathesius, a German critic who travelled to England at the turn of the century to study the English house under the conviction that it offered a better quality of living. In 1904 he published his book *The English House*. Although he made a detailed and large study on the English house, Mathesius presented his findings in a manner that selectively pointed out to what was lacking in the German house.

⁵ An example is the debates on artistic versus mechanized production in Germany at the turn of the century. In 1907 Mathesius criticized the Art and Craft movement in Germany and held it responsible for the failure of the German products to compete with the English. This criticism led to the founding of the German Werkbund. Three years later, he acknowledged German superiority. In 1915, Lethaby in England acknowledged that the Germans, who initially were learning from them, now surpassed them (Mathesius, 1975; pp. 38-40 & 48-52, Lethaby, 1975; pp. 55-56).

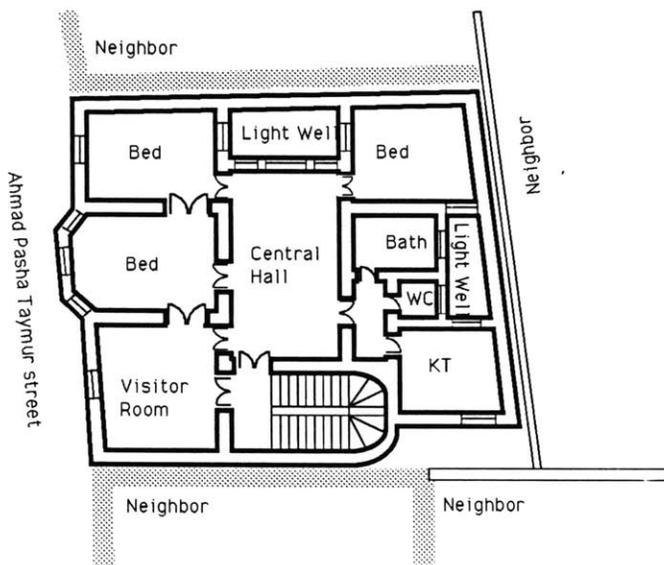
plan still assumed certain modes of living which did not exist in the traditional Egyptian lifestyle. These were necessary details that deal with arranging and using the spaces of the house. For example, in traditional houses, the *qa'a* in a family quarter is a space used for daily living as well as eating and sleeping. Beds and tables are packed away when not in use.⁶ In a European house those functions take place in separate rooms: a living room, a bedroom and a dining room, each with its own permanent set of furniture that is not ordinarily shifted about.

Living in a villa required a new lifestyle and this was welcomed with few modifications by the new Egyptian elite who sought it as part of their status. The new lifestyle required, however, redefining a familiar art, housekeeping. Traditionally it was passed from mothers to daughters by word-of-mouth, now it was through the printed word.

In 1915 *Rabbat al-Dar (Mistress of the House)* was introduced to the Egyptian market of women's literature. The book came after almost two decades of writings dedicated to woman issues.⁷ It also came at a time when the central-hall plan was widely accepted, not only as a villa but as an apartment flat for middle classes.

⁶ Using spaces in more than one fashion was a custom in the Mamluk era and continued into the nineteenth century. For details see Laila Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo" in *Muqarnas* 2, 1984; and Edward Lane *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians 1833-38*, 1871.

⁷ Women's literature was mostly presented in women's magazines that started as a cult in 1892 in Egypt. The popularity of this type of literature can be reflected in the following statistics: From 1892 to 1919 twenty-five Arabic women's magazines appeared in Egypt (Baron, B 1988; p. 115).



This is a plan of a Cairene apartment house showing the central-hall plan arrangement. Note that the concept of the salamlek is still maintained. In every landing, there are two entrance-doors for the flat. One is always for the reception of the guest. This feature dominated the design of apartment houses of middle and upper middle class neighborhoods, such as al-Daher, which flourished in the second decade of the 20th century.

This book did not introduce something new, but rather it reiterated what was becoming an accepted norm. There was no need to defend the 'European' house design, nor its new modes of living. The book was a manual that instructed the housewife (or the potential one) on how to perform domestic tasks such as furnishing, cleaning, sewing, managing a house lived budget, dealing with servants and cooking.

Malaka Sa'd, the author of the book and the editor of a notable women's magazine *al-Jins al-Latif (The Fair Sex)* from 1908 to 1925, never brought up the question of whether Western housekeeping should be pursued, but only how it should be done. The first question was ignored because it was no longer an issue by that time.

The author's approach is evident in her brief introduction to *Rabbat al-Dar*. Malaka gives a history of the dwelling, from tent, to hut, to single or multi- *qa'a* house, and ending with central hall plan. In the case of the *qa'a* house, she paused to describe it as a room which housed all domestic functions --eating,

sleeping and entertaining-- whose fire gave off "plenty" of smoke, "great" heat and "fitful" light (p.18-19). This environment led her to the place the *qa'a* after the hut in the developmental sequence. The conclusion of this quick survey was to assert that the central-hall plan was the most developed and that the reader need not concern herself with earlier models. After this survey, the reader should accept anything that pertained to the last type of dwelling.

Malaka, then introduced the canons of each space by taking a medium-size house as a case study. It consisted of a central hall, a bedroom, a study, a sitting-room, a reception room, a dining room, a bath, a WC, a kitchen, and cellar (p.20). In practice, this arrangement could hardly exist since one of the six rooms was a bedroom. With those constituents, Malaka really meant a generic plan that had in theory all kinds of rooms.

The central hall, according to her, represented the image of the house. On either sides of the hall, Indian *khaysaran* chairs should be placed, in the center there should be a table. In the corner was a vase of flowers, near the doorway, a mirror, and a coat-rack (p.20-21).

The reception room should have a wooden floor or be covered with a carpet. At the corners there are vases of flowers, on the wall pictures of the husband and wife, on another pictures painted by the wife herself. In the center is a table covered with an embroidered cloth with lace. Family or historical pictures can be displayed on the table. The room must contain a mirror and another three tables with ashtrays (p. 28). The windows should be covered with curtains. For the glass panes, the curtains are of lace, for the shutters they are of jute (p.29).

The living room is where the wife sits with her children and her intimate female friends and relatives. It should have a lounge and six chairs, a sewing machine close to a window, and a glass cupboard containing a first-aid kit (p.27).

The dining room should overlook the garden if possible. The furniture in this room is composed of a round or square table, chairs of American wood, a breakfront with display window, and curtains. In the cupboard, cutlery and china are displayed, and linen is kept in the bottom drawers (p. 30).

The bedroom has one or two beds, a wardrobe with a mirror that contains formal clothes, washbasin (*lavomano*), drawers for underwear and linen, hangers for daily clothes, curtains of lace. It is possible to keep some of those items in the dressing room (p.21-22).

The study should be in a quiet corner of the house. It should contain a desk with drawers, an American revolving chair, some chairs made of leather or *Khaysaran*, a grand clock facing the desk, a calendar, stationary, a cupboard for books, shelves for daily newspapers and frequently used books, lace curtains on glass windows, a thermometer, a waste basket and maps decorating the walls. The desk should be placed in such a way as to admit day light from the left side of its occupant. At night, light can be either from the top, if it is electric, or from the left side of the reader if it is gas. In the latter case the gas lamp must be covered with *abat-jour* (lampshade) for diffusing the light (p. 23-24).

This is a sample of how Malaka described the interior. She also discussed the *etiquette* that was associated with some rooms. In the dining room, for example,

table manners ranged from how to fold a napkin (p.33-37) to where the father should sit in relation to his son (p.31) to how to make the guest feel at ease during the meal (p.38).

Most of these rules became the norm in the Egyptian house, even after the central-hall plan disappeared. In this respect the book can narrowly be seen as as a triumph of Western lifestyle over local traditions, but this is only true as long as it did not infringe on cherished social values, such as family privacy.⁸

The book represents two facets of the European lifestyle: one of which quickly became part of the social conventions such as table manners, furniture and interior layout. The other facet which deals with social ethics was the more difficult to accept. In the first case, the book was helpful for the housewife who wanted to live correctly in her modern dwelling. In the second case, the book was useless among those who wanted to retain traditional values.

The adoption of one facet of European lifestyle and the discarding of another was noticed by an American traveler, Elizabeth Cooper, who visited Egypt at the turn of the century and wrote *The Women of Egypt* in 1914.⁹ On the adopted facet of the European lifestyle she wrote:

⁸ Many women who subscribed to women magazines wrote to the editors asking them about etiquette that is proper to a modern woman. See, for example, letters to Rosa Antun, editor of *Sayyidat wal-Banat (Ladies and Girls)*. May 1906 (Baron, B 1988; p. 130).

⁹ Cooper's host was a prominent Egyptian woman writer Malak Hifni Nasif (Cooper, p.7 &31). Because of this connection, Cooper had close contact with Egyptian female society of the period (Baron,1989; p.219).

The Egyptian woman of the higher class is becoming Europeanized as evidenced not only by the motor-cars and carriages with coachmen and chauffeurs in foreign liveries and her dresses direct from Paris, but also by the furnishings of her home. Instead of the rich Eastern homes of the Arabian Nights with their lamps and rugs and elaborate hangings, we now see the drawing-room filled with French furniture , gilt chairs, instead of divans, rich Louis XV tables in place of the low taborets, electric chandeliers glittering with cut glass have replaced the old elaborates lamps that are now rarely seen except in mosques, museums, and curio shops. The lady also serves afternoon tea instead of Turkish coffee and the scented drinks...It would be hard to tell her nationality..(p.130)

On the discarded facet of the European lifestyle she wrote:

Yet the modern Egyptian woman does not want to be a Westerner. She wishes still to keep her customs, endeared to her by tradition, habit, and religion. She does not care to unveil her face nor exchange her harborah [veil] for a hat; she wishes to see the world and learn its ways, but she always remembers that she is an Oriental and a follower of El Islam and for many years this world must come to her; she will not go to the world (p.30)

Malaka's book did not differentiate sufficiently between the discarded and adopted facets of European lifestyle which Cooper saw so clearly. For example, she recommended that the reception room should be as close as possible to the hall so the guest could be led inside passing through the hall. She also advised the housewife to keep some newspapers and magazines on the table in the hall for the visitor to browse while he was waiting for the master. Even if

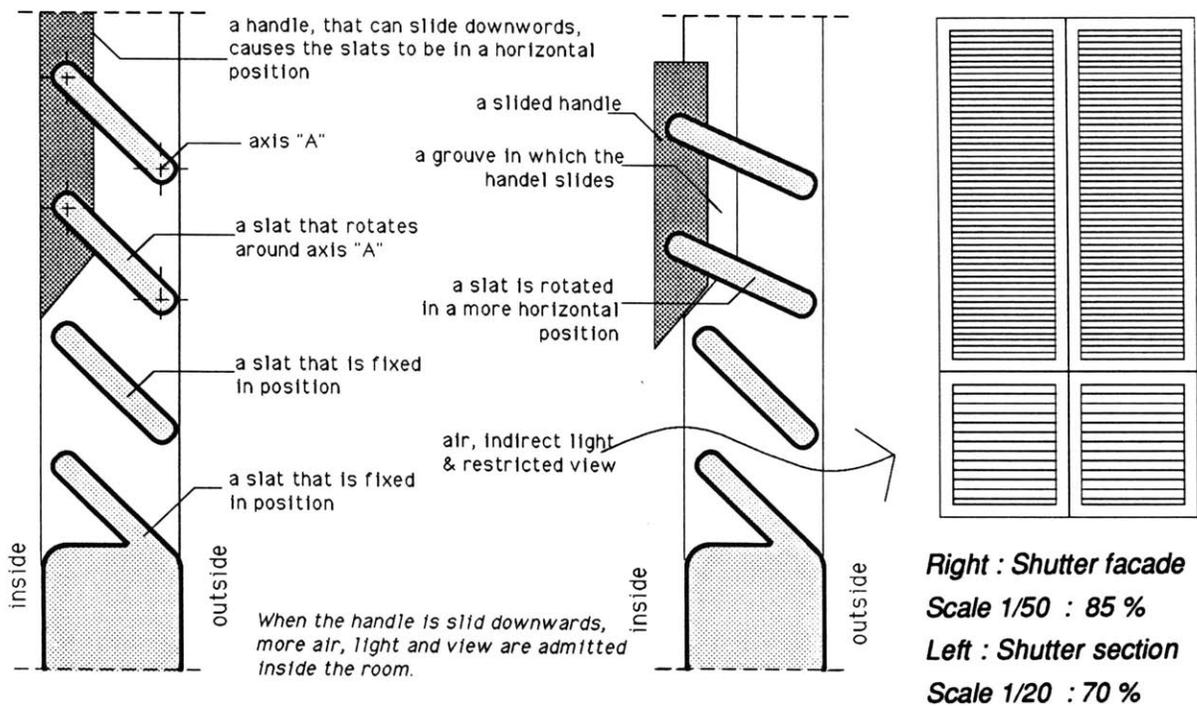
Malaka meant the visitor to be an intimate guest, the last advice, which only suggested his temporary presence in the central hall; could not have been the norm. Visitors had different relationships with the family, and this required more than one way of admitting them to the villa. In Hilmiya as well as other neighbourhoods at the turn of the century, the reception room had to have an another doorway which opened directly onto the entrance terrace or the staircase to accommodate extreme cases such as strangers. Cooper gave this account:

..my hostess and I went out a great deal visiting her husband's [female] relatives, but always accompanied by a servant, who went ahead to see that no masculinity was abroad.¹⁰ While we were in the house the owner never came near the women's apartments. One day we were crossing the courtyard in front of the salamlek, thinking all the men had gone for a ride; as we were in front of the door it opened and my husband came out. Of course he immediately turned and pretended he had not seen his Egyptian hostess. She flushed and looked around in a very embarrassed manner to see if any one had noted the dreadful breach of modesty (p. 193).

Malaka's book shows another discrepancy between theory and practice. She suggested that the bedrooms should be aired on a daily basis. The shutters would be wide open from morning till ten o'clock, then closed to reduce heat infiltration during the day, then reopened at sunset (p.22). The actual scenario

¹⁰ This habit of sending a servant slightly ahead of time to clear the way for women while entering the house is a traditional custom especially in small houses where the women's circulation was liable to be intersected by male's (Hanna, 1988; p.365-366).

entailed the opening of the shutters only during cleaning and ordering the room, while keeping it closed for the rest of the day and night. Second-generation inhabitants of Hilmiya and similar neighborhoods, however, remember that even ajar shutters were regarded as scandalous.¹¹ Because of this strict measures, shutters accounted not only for climatic considerations, but also as a screen to allow women to view the outside world without being seen.

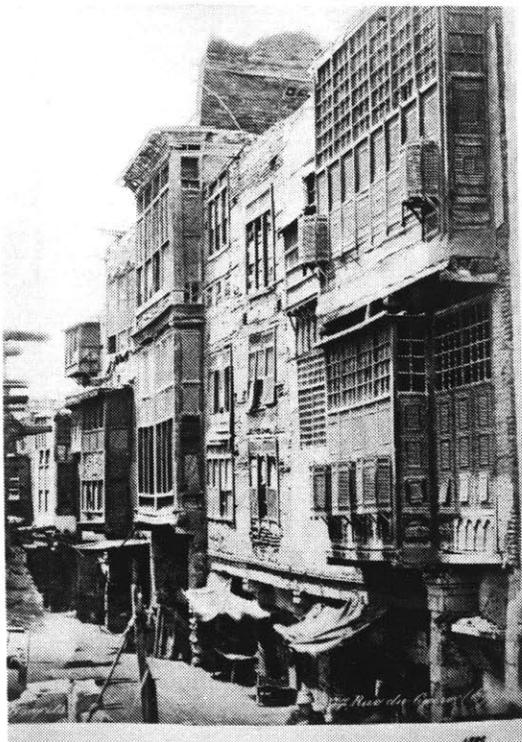


Once again, *influencing* architecture had to accommodate an uncompromising social value in order to reach a satisfactory relationship with the local culture. The shutter type that was widely acknowledged as a satisfactory solution allowed women to view the outside world by moving a handle up and down

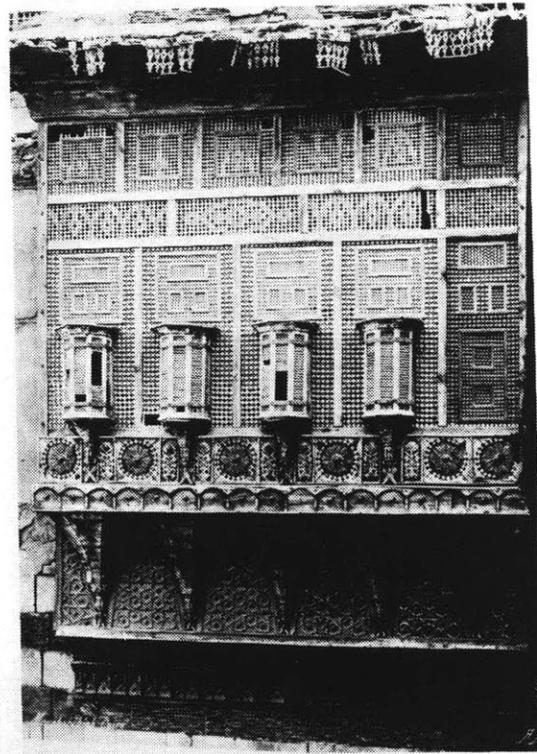
¹¹ Interview with Mrs. Delbar and Laila Ibrahim reveals the strict rules concerning the shutters. Mrs. Delbar recalled that, together with her niece, she would watch handsome officers patrolling the neighborhood on their horses, only from behind the slats of the shutters.

which in turn caused the slats of the shutter to swing on a horizontal axes. With this construction detail, the woman saw a renewed segment of the outside world every time she turned the handle to a particular angle.

The shutter is divided into at least two sections: The smaller portion is at the eye level and contains the rotating slats, while the larger portion is permanently positioned.¹²



Street facade in traditional Cairo



Mashrabiyya facade

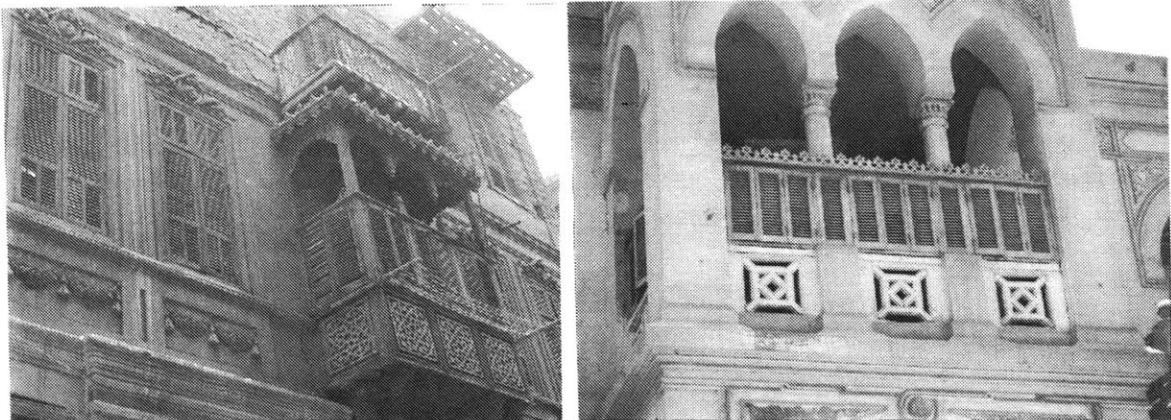
photos by H. Bonfils (Active 1885; From: Creswell at A.U.C.)

This construction detail suggests that screens were more often closed than opened, contrary to what Malaka advocated in her book. The shutter remained

¹² This shutter type may not be an Egyptian invention, yet one should note that it was not commonly found in Europe either. A typical European shutter was in one piece and had its slats fixed rather than rotating on a horizontal axes. However, in Northern Greek cities such as Anopoli in Thessaloniki, shutter with moving slats are found and dated since 1900 and before. [Source of information: Irene Fatsea]

similar to a *mashrabiyya* which is also divided into two basic sections. In the lower section, smaller openings act as a veil, permitting the woman to see the world without being seen.

The *mashrabiyya* and the shutter still maintain a fundamental difference: the first reflects conventionalism, the second *critical* conventionalism. The *mashrabiyya* had fixed spaced interstices thus resonating with centuries of unquestionable social traditions. It was a permanent architectural solution for a permanent cultural value. The shutter is a different case. It had the potential of being left wide open or firmly closed. Until the first two decades of this century, the society *chose* the last solution, disregarding advocates of the first option such as Malaka. With this choice they consciously decided on the demarcation line between traditional ideals that should continue and those that can change.



A parapet of shutters applied to terraces in Hilmiya houses

Ideals of constancy were further enhanced by the introduction of the shutter to embrace terraces and balconies located in the upper stories where the family lived. The woman in this way still enjoyed the concept of an open air space, that usually projected from the central-hall plan to highlight its tripartite

arrangement, while shutting herself from the public eye. This was done by placing a parapet of shutters over the terrace balustrade. Not all of the shutter was mounted, but only the lower portion which served to veil the woman. The final arrangement is quite stunning: a free standing portion of a shutter on top of a terrace balustrade. No attempt to suppress one at the expense of another, the screen and the terrace are equally needed; one satisfies a progressive image, the other local social values. The combination had no precedents, but was an overwhelmingly positive solution for a society that gently folded authenticity with novelty.

Malaka demanded opened shutters for strictly "hygienic" reasons, nevertheless, social implications could not have been avoided. Her "unveiling" of the facades also meant the unveiling of the woman, and to link this act with the notion of progress -- a tent, a hut, a *qa'a* house, a central-hall plan -- meant a package-deal offer: new product with new ideals. This attitude was over-emphasized by writers such as Muhammad Qutb who saw the local response to foreign idiom in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as a period of confusion.

They [social reformers] attacked traditions that were unjust and had nothing to do with Islamic jurisdictions [such as those regarding the woman as inferior to man and denying her access to literacy]. These traditions were due to the retardation in and ignorance of right beliefs which had accumulated [during the pre-modern era]. Along with those rotten traditions, the critics included in their attacks true Islamic values [such as the veiling of the woman]. They grouped the two under the banner "old

customs" that needed to be discarded in favor of progress and modernity (pp. 285-6).

Blurring the line between true and false values in reform programs, according to Qutb, led to further regression in society's welfare.

Although Qutb's criticism can be applied to Malaka's book, like most ideologies, it tends to reduce the Egyptian culture at the turn of the century to a single scenario. However, social conventions, *as reflected* in Hilmiya villas, conformed neither to Malaka's wholesale embrace of Western ways nor to Qutb's generalized depiction.

Though unveiling women was regarded as a necessity of progress it was not only ignored in practice but was counter-criticized in writing. Malak Hifni, the first Egyptian woman to graduate from a government school and the first professional Egyptian woman teacher, realized the danger of linking backwardness with the veil:

Those who read articles by advocates of complete Europeanization see that they relegate every physical and metaphysical backwardness in Egypt to the veil. One wonders if we [the women] were unveiled at the day when Alexandria was bombarded by aggressors, would that have convinced them to retreat? Or could our enticing faces have helped in clearing the innocents who were convicted in the Denshway incident?...If unveiling is the criterion for progress, why then do we find one Western nation far more advanced than another given that women in both cases are unveiled? (original text circa 1910-1914; 1920: p. 277)

Malak Hifni was known to maintain a moderate line. She neither advocated public life for women nor total seclusion (Jid'an, 1988; p.490). Upgrading the condition of the woman meant formal education but that should not preclude her from wearing her veil in public (Hifni; p.271). This was considered a common moderate line in women's writings until World War I. This moderation was further strengthened by defining the purpose of woman's education as a means to improve her performance in household activities and raising children (Khalifa 1973; p. 115). Education, was a prime tool for modernization, but it was not intended to eradicate the ideal image of the traditional woman as a housewife, but rather to improve conditions within accepted norms (Baron, B 1988; p.193 /202). The idea of working outside the house after being educated was explicitly mentioned as culturally unacceptable for women.¹³ Veiling, housewife, education combined to form the image of the modern Egyptian woman and explained the presence of a parapet of shutters on top of a terrace balustrade.

This three faceted image of a ideal Egyptian woman had taken almost eight decades to materialize. It started with a story that took place in the Egyptian royal court in 1830. Clot Bey was a French doctor and an adviser to the Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali. One day the doctor convinced the ruler to build a school for midwifery with the aim of increasing the number of healthy children. The idea was convincing for it promised the monarch a future resource for sturdy soldiers. In 1832 the school was built but it remained empty. Not one

¹³ The idea of working outside the house was seen as valid in a European woman's environment but not the Egyptian (Baron, B 1988; pp. 218 / 224 & Avierino, Alexandra 1901 Sept. 30; p. 789). Comparing East and West in this matter was a common theme in woman's magazines until the 1930s. See for example *al-Nahda al-Nisa'iyya (The Renaissance of the Woman)* that advocated the woman as a housewife and not a working person.

single family agreed to send a daughter to be educated, despite the fact that fees were waived and stipends were offered. This forced the ruler to demand his army personnel to send their daughters to school and even threatened penalties if they did not obey. They refused and offered to accept his penalty rather than face social disgrace. The officials even thought of collecting eunuchs and unsold slave girls for the school. This too failed because of the odd social position of the eunuchs and of the slave girls, who all came from black Africa. The officials then realized that they had to use Egyptian girls. Muhammad Ali tried once more to press his state employees to send their daughters, but again failed. Clot Bey then thought of getting students from the hospital associated with the school of medicine, all of whom were either illegitimate or ill. This solution succeeded and the girls managed to pass the curriculum,¹⁴ but then they faced the problem of not being able to get married. They were rejected by society because of their new status. Concerned with this problem, Mohamed Ali compelled the medical school graduates to meet the girls at an official state party where they were to choose their future wives from them. Later, a mass marriage was celebrated. Each couple was eventually offered a state job (one for each), a house, and two donkeys for transportation (Khalifa 1973; p.101-105).

The story sounds almost like a fairy tale. Since then, the call for educating women has caused tremendous disturbances in Egyptian culture. Editors of women's magazines as well as reformers, who went to France to learn modern

¹⁴ The curriculum primarily dealt with hygienic and medical education that centered around the child and its mother.

science and in the process came into contact with educated Western women continued to criticize the traditional status of the woman in the Egyptian society.

By the turn of the century, the debate had shifted from the education of women, to the kind of education women should receive. The second question was raised when critics realized that the prevailing education, particularly in French, English and American missionary schools, focused more on etiquette, music, art, and languages¹⁵ rather than housekeeping, raising a healthy child and budget planning (Hag, 1901 May; p.663 / June; p.694). A published joke during this period derived its material from the concern with appropriate education to women.

A man was hesitant in proposing to a woman, so he asked her one time: Would you like to walk with me under moonlight. She answered: Yes. He then asked: And what do you like in this? She said : It saves the light of the gas [lamp]. He said: You are my wife no doubt. (al-Anis al-Jalis [The Seated Companion] July 1901; p.750).

Malaka Sa'd's *Rabbat al-Dar (Mistress of the House)* answers such criticism. It was distributed in girls' schools by orders of Ministry of Education (Baron 1988; p.107-8), one of these schools was in Hilmiya (Khalifa ; p.107).

¹⁵ Many critics saw the concentrating on those topics had a negative impact on students. It led to an obsession with European fashion and the incorporation of European terminology in the Arabic language as a sign of distinction. See Roza Antun (editor) "Awa'iduna al-Zamima (Reprehensible Customs) " in *al-Sayyidat wa al-Banat (Ladies and Girls)* Nov. 1903; p.258. Also see Abdallah Nadim (editor) "al-Lugha wa al-Insha' (Language and Composition)" in *al-Ustadh (The Master)* 11 October 1892; p.178).

The discrepancy between theory and practice in Malaka's book made no attempt to repress local character. Malaka clearly stated that the book was a direct translation with little alteration from Western sources (p.280). She may have assumed that necessary adaptations would be automatically carried out by every housewife. Whatever her intentions, the book then is not that of a social reformer (in which a process of screening is fundamental to the act of presenting new ideas), though books of reformers were to be part of the library collection in her ideal house. Thus there was a conscious attempt to associate the villa with certain ideologies. The reader ought to understand, as a modern woman, that she should not only familiarize herself with the science of managing the new dwelling but also be aware of debates and theories of local reformers. In other words, the link between ideologies and reality was consciously promoted.

In the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, ideologies of social reformers assessed local and foreign cultures together. Reformers of this period might vary in their final conclusion but what they almost had in common was the tendency to avoid favoring completely one culture over the other. They neither wanted to appear as foreigners to their local culture nor as antiquarians. The question then becomes what to keep from the local cultural systems and what to introduce from the foreign ones. The answer to this became a typical exercise for the intellectual of every theoretical discipline.

To pursue this exercise the intellectual had to pass through a cycle that started in the homeland, went to Europe and returned home again. In the first phase, the intellectual is young and inexperienced, and completed some education in

his homeland. In the second phase, he is in Europe for a different education and in contact with the host culture primarily through Ideologies found in books;¹⁶ yet he never fails to notice its tangible representations in built-form, social behavior and customs. In this phase, his intellect is in the making, his ideas and concepts are being formed according to current idiosyncrasies. By the end of this phase his mind is stocked with new ideas. He is now an intellectual ready to deliver manifestoes. In the third phase, he returns home full of hopes for reform. He deluges his society with his thoughts in the form of books, articles, and even legislation, depending on his position.

In this cycle it was the middle portion that made him not only an intellectual but a reformer. The trip to Europe did not always end with an academic degree but it still gave him the opportunity to be critical, which is the prime tool of a reformer. In this final phase, reformers felt obliged to come out with solutions that promise improvement to the usually unsatisfactory conditions of home. In doing this, they end up dealing with the notion of duality that can be summarized as "us and them". This duality is to this day the basic concern of Arab intellectuals. Until recently, reformers accepted the components of this duality as complementary to one another; since World War II they have been grouped as irreconcilable opposites.

As there were differences in handling the notion of duality, there were differences in responses as well. In the early case, society responded by producing genuine solutions that included "us" and "them" in one tradition. In the second

¹⁶ Abdullah Laroui calls them "book-learned intelligentsia" ([1974] 1976; p. 117).

case, the intellectuals lost their audience altogether, thus accentuating the cleavage between authentic and foreign idioms. What is it in the first group that was lost in the second group? Faith in *both* local and foreign idioms.

The intellectual who set the tone of the first group was named Rifa'a al-Tahtawi. He was a prefect for a group of students who were officially sent to France between 1826 and 1831, during Muhammad Ali's rule. Members of those state missions were seen as agents of modernization. The ruler expected them to learn Western science then return home to use it. Al-Tahtawi's task was to master the French language and to become a translator.

After five years in Paris al-Tahtawi returned with a theory that became a doctrine for successive thinkers. Any civilized progress of a nation, al-Tahtawi tells us, has to occur simultaneously on the material and the metaphysical spheres. The first includes progress in public benefits (*manafi' 'ama*) such as agriculture, commerce, industry and communications. The second includes progress in the morality, manners and customs governed by religion and jurisprudence ([1870], 1912; pp. 9-10).

Al-Tahtawi's concern with progress must have come from his contact with authors of the French Enlightenment such as Montesquieu.¹⁷ However, this particular combination of the metaphysical and the material could not have come

¹⁷ One book al-Tahtawi mentioned as part of his reading list was Montesquieu's *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (al-Tahtawi, [1834]1849; p.159 & Hourani,1983; p.70-71).

from his Paris experience. Al-Tahtawi, who was primarily in contact with the host culture through the press, saw Paris as an intellectual city ravaged by the positivist movement of reformers like Saint-Simon and Comte. They advocated reevaluating religions based on metaphysical premises, which consequently cannot be approached by a scientific methodology. Apostles for them were the bankers and industrialists, rather than those of the Holy Books (al-Tahtawi [1834], 1849; p. 57). They saw science as the sole generator of progress.¹⁸

In order to understand al-Tahtawi's progress equation we need then to analyze the first phase of his intellectual cycle. Before leaving for Paris he studied eight years at al-Azhar (Higazi, 1974; p. 12) and became a *faqih*, jurisconsult. He even taught in this institution of learning for two years (Mubarak [1888], 1912; p.4).

One of the Islamic sciences that al-Tahtawi had studied at al-Azhar was legal theory and methodology (*usul al-fiqh*), which allows the scholar to research the sources of Islamic Law (*ijtihad*) and issue legal opinions and prescriptions (*fatwa*) in religious and civil matters (Makdisi 1981; p. 276-77). These sources are arranged according to their importance: the Scripture, the sayings and precedents of the Prophet (*sunna*), then consensus (*al-ijma'*). He should use

¹⁸ Saint Simonians' criticism of historical religions was not well received in the French culture; in fact they were prosecuted and some members were imprisoned. However their philosophy of progress that enhanced the performance of industry and commerce of the country was very well taken especially during Napoleon III's era. For best reference on this subject consult A. G. Charlton, *Secular Religions in France 1815-1870*. Oxford Univ. 1968 & F. Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris*. NY. 1962. Their criticism, of metaphysical enterprises, however, still remained vibrant in their magazines which al-Tahtawi read (al-Tahtawi, [1834]1849; pp. 160-1).

the strongest source possible and only moves to the next one in hierarchy if he does not find enough evidence. If the jurisconsult does not find direct answers from these sources, he can apply analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) to measure an unknown case against another one whose verdict is known.¹⁹

The idea is to allow a continuous interaction between jurisprudence and every new situation. To ensure custom-made prescriptions and to avoid stagnant interpretations, the jurisconsult is not allowed to follow precedent. He is obliged to conduct his own research based on his own interpretation of the sources. If he dissents from another opinion, of past or present times, both are equally valid and the layman can follow either or none of them. Even if he is wrong his research effort is regarded as good (Maqdisi 1990; p. 31). The jurisconsult has nothing to fear then, even if the problem at hand has no precedent.²⁰

With this in mind, al-Tahtawi went to Paris, to the unknown. Every thing he saw was measured according to *usul al-fiqh*. All of French culture he filed and indexed accordingly. Some facets clearly contradicted Islamic Law, others coincided. There were also facets that fell in the grey area and which

¹⁹ If analogical reasoning does not lead to a satisfactory solution, the jurisconsult applies other methods and sources whose hierarchical order, internal structure or even validity are a matter of controversy. Examples of these sources are: preference by assessment (*istihsan*), common interest that is untraceable in primary sources (*al-Maslaha al-mursala*), established customs in societies (*al-'urf*), law of pre-existing religions: Christianity and Judaism (*shar' man qablina*). (Khallaf, [1942] 1978; pp. 20-22).

²⁰ In the Middle Ages, 'legal theory and methodology' was not only acknowledged as an interpretive tool for issuing legal opinions but also applied to other sciences such as grammar and medicine (Maqdisi, G 1982; p.126).

demanded *ijtihad* of the first degree. In the last case, al-Tahtawi did not find direct answers from any of the first three sources, the Quran, Prophetic Traditions, or consensus. He had to use analogical reasoning or even less direct sources, such as preference by assessment (*istihsan*)²¹ that require greater logical deduction (al-Tahtawi, [1870] 1912; p.441).

Azhar education had already faced the unknown West in modern times when Napoleon invaded Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century. Hasan al-Attar, an Azhar professor of al-Tahtawi, together with his peer Abdel Rahman al-Jabarti, practiced the rational techniques of *usul al-fiqh* on Napoleon's proclamation that asked the local communities to revolt against the Ottoman government.

Napoleon's proclamation read as follows:

²¹ According to Muhammad al-Shawkani (d. 1839), who was a contemporary of al-Tahtawi and was one of two leading innovative scholars in Islamic jurisprudence in the nineteenth century, the science of legal theory and methodology is derived from three disciplines : 1-Philosophical Theology or rational thinking (*'Elm al-Kalam*), 2-Arabic Language, 3-Juridical laws (*Ahkam al-Shari'ya*) (1928; p.5). Thus rational thinking is a major constituency in this science. This structure was the outcome of two historical factors: 1-During the Prophet's time and that of his companions there were occasional demands for innovative interpretations of the Scripture to suit particular incidents. This demand increased with the territorial expansion of Islam. Rulers faced continuously new situations which prompted scholars to theorize methods that could handle the notion of contemporaneity and culture specificity (al-Khin, [1972]1982; p.110 & Khallaf, 1978; pp. 14-20, 90). 2-A classical controversy broke out between rationalists schools, *Ahl al-Ra'y* or *al-Kalam*, that adopted to a large extent logic and more particularly, dialectic, *jadal*, thinking (influenced by Greek philosophy), and traditionalist schools, *Ahl al-Hadith*, who were on the other extreme. Eventually by the 10th century, a moderate line emerged that accepted the authority of Koran and Prophetic Traditions as well as the dialectic. The latter was an indispensable tool for the art of disputation and legal theory (Maqdisi, 1981; p.1-9, 77, 108-9 & 1990; pp.6, 39-43 & Fakhry, 1970; 207-208).

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no God but God. He has no son, nor has He an associate in His Dominion. ...O ye Qadis, Shaykhs and Imams [leaders] .. tell your nation that the French are also faithful Muslims, and in confirmation of this they invaded Rome and destroyed there the Papal See, which was always exhorting the Christians to make war with Islam ([1798] 1975; p.41).

The two Azhar professors analysed the proclamation as follows:

His sentences ... are consistent with the Muslims in stating the formula 'In the name of God', in denying that He has a son or an associate. They disagree with the Muslims ... in rejecting the mission of Muhammad, and the legal words and deeds which are necessary recognized by religion. He agrees with the Christians in most of their words and deeds, but disagrees with them by not mentioning the Trinity, and ... in destroying the Papal See ... So [he is] opposed to both Christians and Muslims, and does not hold fast to any religion (p.42-47).

Usul al-Fiqh led the Azhar professors of al-Tahtawi to methodologically analyse the arguments of Napoleon according to both Islam and Christianity. This degree of objectivity and step-by-step deduction in the midst of chaos were also reflected in their explicit admiration to their colonizers' scientific advancements on visiting their laboratories and libraries.

They possess extraordinary astronomical instruments of perfect construction and instruments for measuring altitudes,.. And they have telescopes for

looking at the stars and measuring their scopes, sizes, heights, conjunctions and oppositions...[They have] well-designed stoves and ovens, and instruments for distilling, vaporizing, and extracting liquids and ointments ... (p.117)

The ability to scrutinize under pressure in a foreign environment was passed to their student who had to cope with the center of modern civilization, Paris, while retaining his cultural identity.

One of the distinctive topics al-Tahtawi discussed in his writings, upon his return from Paris was the relationship of Western science to Islamic jurisprudence. In *Manahig al-Albab (Doctrine of Intellectuals)*, 1870, he based his study on the Quran and Prophetic Traditions. Of the second he quoted:

When a person dies, his deeds stop save three: a continuing charity, a beneficial science and a virtuous son praying for him.

From this he argued that acquisition of science is favored in Islam as long as it benefits people in terms of enhancing their quality of living and strengthening their beliefs. Thus beneficial science is not only religious but also theoretical, e.g., mathematics, and practical, e.g., medicine (p.49). Similarly, sciences can be harmful not only physically but intellectually, such as unrestrained dialectic for it can lead to atheism (p.52-53).

With this analysis Al-Tahtawi repeated a medieval concept of science that had been coined by al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (Revival of Religious Sciences)* (Qura'a, 1968; p.305). A well rounded education included all branches of knowledge, secular and religious (al-Tahtawi, [1870] 1912; p.373). It was a

concept that had a limited audience among Azhar academics over the preceding three centuries.²² If jurisprudence approves of secular sciences that enhances the quality of life, he argues, then Western progress can be achieved under the umbrella of Islamic beliefs.

The implication of al-Tahtawi's equation of progress was that knowledge can be neutralized, or rather stripped of its original ideological content. If the Comtians and Saint-Simonians of Paris had revolutionary ideas on technological progress associated with the eradication of metaphysical phenomena, by taking the first portion and leaving aside the second, progress could be introduced to Egypt. Since the name "Saint-Simon" was always associated with positivism, al-Tahtawi never mentioned it in his writings despite his detailed presentation of his ideas on industry and communications.²³

Al-Tahtawi's equation had another implication. Because he was a jurisconsult and studied legal theories and methodology, he knew that the compatibility of Islamic jurisprudence to current prerogatives can be continuously updated. His Azhar education gave him the self-confidence and the critical mind to observe

²² Despite the general deterioration in the country during the Ottoman rule, before Mohammad Ali, there were still some Azhar professors who were studied non-religious sciences such as medicine, chemistry, mathematics, geometry and astronomy. However their research and writings in these sciences were remote from the society and the rulers; the latter group was only concerned with acquiring wealth and power (Keshk, 1978; pp. 88-97).

²³ This position of al-Tahtawi continues to cause ambivalence among French scholars who research the effect of the Saint-Simonians on Egypt and would like to perceive all students who studied in Paris as "baptized" Saint-Simonians. The position of al-Tahtawi was posed as a question without an answer by Amin Abdelnour in P. Régnier, *Les Saint-Simoniens en Egypte 1833-1851*, 1989; pp. xiii, xiv.

and classify the French culture according to Islamic measures. There was no antagonism in the process of screening rather tolerance; no polarization in thought but moderation. The West is not the negation of Islam.

In light of this, al-Tahtawi rewrote the history of Egypt by taking a series of short accounts ²⁴ that were derived from the Quran as well as French Egyptologists and history books (Hourani, A 1962; p.70), and then merged them together with the aim of sending the message: We Egyptians have done it once; we can do it again.

One of the themes al-Tahtawi used was the story of Joseph, who was so favored by his father Jacob that his jealous brothers conspired to kill him. The story ends with the king of Memphis in Lower Egypt appointing Joseph to be in charge of the kingdom's treasures. The family is then reunited (al-Tahtawi, p.181-84). The moral of the story, he says, as depicted in the Quran, is that God supports his Prophets and virtuous people even if the whole world has conspired against them (p.185). The other lesson he derives from the story is the unrivaled prosperity of the city of Memphis was based on materialistic and spiritual goods; that is his progress equation (p.178). Al-Tahtawi supported his depiction of the metaphysical part from Joseph's request to the King in the Quranic verse (Joseph: 55) "Set me over the treasures of the land, I am a skilled custodian." He also depicted Memphis' greatness from archaeological findings of the city itself (p.179). As for the materialistic part, he showed how justice was

²⁴ He dedicated one of four chapters in the *Manahig al-Albab* to these historical accounts under the title: The application of different facets of public benefits [industry, agriculture & Commerce] in the early times of Egypt causing progress and civilized standards", Chapter 3, (pp. 170-322).

a prime virtue in the kingdom. From the Quranic account, the king in three instances asked for an investigation to be made before issuing a verdict on cases presented to him (p.187). Al-Tahtawi proved his progress equation not only through the evidence he drew from sources but also methodologically. Throughout the story, he shifts from Quranic verses to accounts of Western historians to archaeological remains, all integrated in a single text that aims at inspiring confidence in the mind of the Egyptian.

The rewriting of the Egyptian history reflected the well-rounded education of al-Tahtawi who derived his sources from both Azhar and Paris. Although this may not be the case with successive reformers, his equation of progress was adopted by almost all of them in different forms. Al-Tahtawi presented the equation in the form of a direct manifesto with historical and contemporary examples or through an account of his six-year stay in Paris. Later reformers were more tempted to present it in the form of a novel. Ali Mubarak, for example, who visited Paris two decades later, wrote of his experience in a series of anecdotes that involve a dialogue between an Azhar sheikh and an English gentleman. The progress equation of al-Tahtawi that enfolded the materialistic, primarily derived from the West, and the metaphysical from the East, is personified in the gentleman and the sheikh. Both companions introduce their culture to one another while touring Paris. The sheikh makes the effort of sifting the host culture through his own cultural standards and allows the metaphysical side to win over the materialistic, despite the fact that the latter transforms the notion of progress into a reality.

In this story, the Azhar sheikh represents authenticity, tradition, custom, history, identity, religion, etc. The author summarizes all these notions, representing the metaphysical side of progress, by giving the sheikh the name 'Alam al-Din which means "icon of religion." His character is that of a typical reformer of the period who constantly seeks reciprocity between the two sides of progress (al-Shadhli, A 1988; p.25). He is open minded towards useful innovation, full of confidence in reviving the mechanism of progress, friendly with the West and above all a rationalist accepting the authority of religion.

Choosing al-Azhar as the cradle of cultural authenticity was not accidental. It was more to the society than just a legal institution. From Mamluk times (thirteenth century) till Muhammad Ali's reign (nineteenth century), al-Azhar remained an independent authority, much respected and feared by both the ruling party and the masses and acted as a mediator between the two. With a word from al-Azhar professors (sheikhs) the nation could turn to revolt and with a sign it could stop.²⁵

Al-Azhar had another significance to Ali Mubarak. It represented tradition through its space configuration. The map of 1912, surveyed by Ministry of Public Works contained the names of the mosque arcades, *riwaqs*, beside those of public streets. This suggests the notion of permanence was also associated

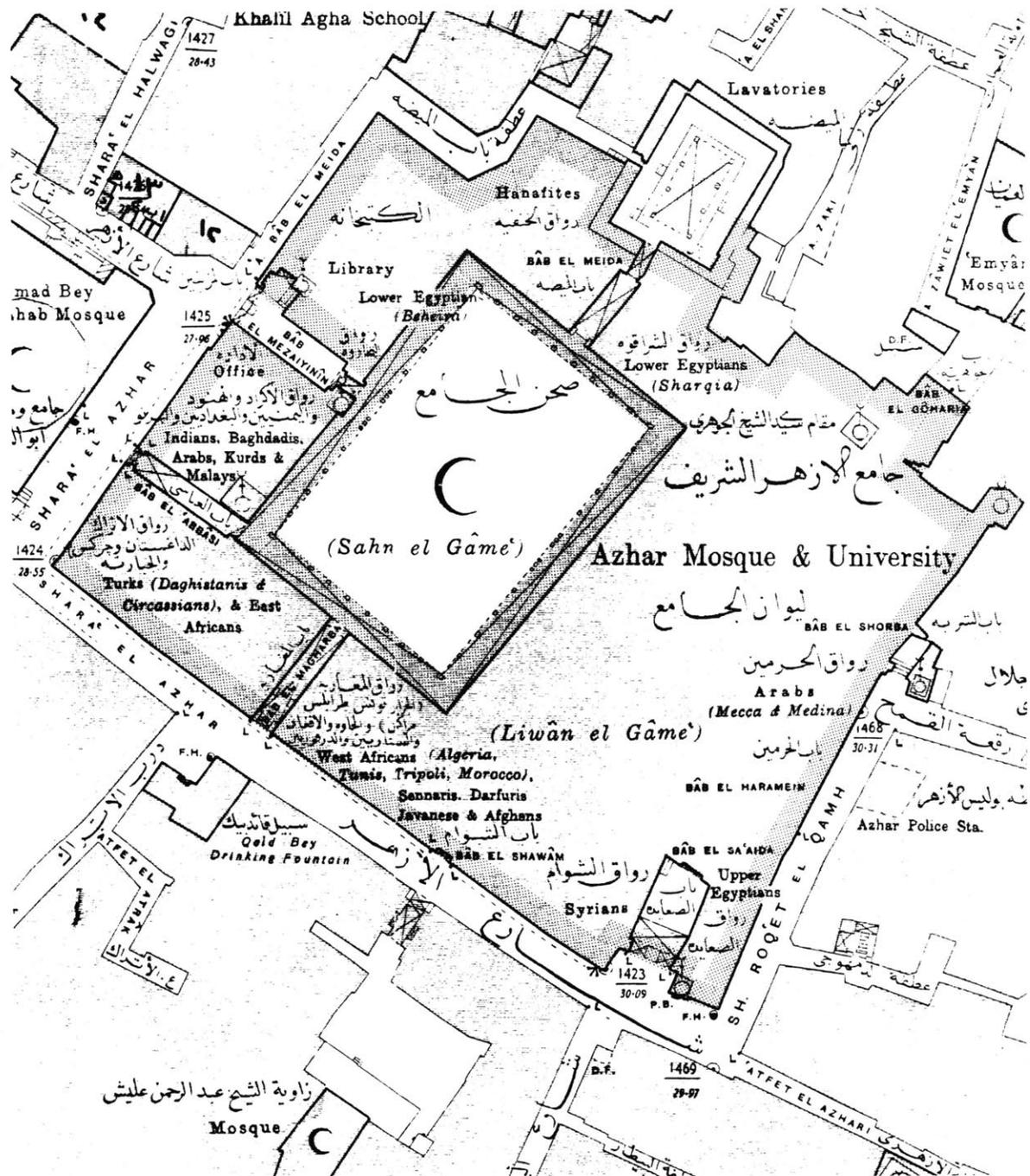
²⁵ During the Ottoman period, the ruling class in many instances adopted ruthless policies towards the citizens, ranging from confiscation of properties to imposition of heavy taxation. The only outlet for the masses was provided by the Azhar professors who had considerable influence over the ruling authority. This influence stemmed from their authority over jurisprudence that governed Muslim states. Their leadership was very strong among the citizens also because it originated from the population, unlike the ruling class which hardly even spoke their native language (al-Shayyal, 1968; p.122).

with these *riwaqs* and not only to the streets surrounding the mosque. Indeed, these arcades defined the Azhar system of education throughout nine centuries. A group of them would permanently host a number of students and teachers of a particular origin and / or school of jurisprudence ('Anan, [1942] 1958; pp. 300-305).

Recording on the map the names of *riwaqs* beside those of streets showed a dual system of authority. Before modern times, al-Azhar's system of education matched the urban structure of the city. As the city was divided into quarters, each having its autonomous entity, the mosque was perceived as different clusters of arcades, each carrying the name of its users.



View of common arcades of the Azhar (Photo by G. Sarolidis -active 1870s)



A 1912 map of al-Azhar in the traditional urban fabric. Different nationalities are allocated to a specific arcades of the mosque. Nationalities belonging to the same geographical region have their arcades grouped together around one entrance from the street which bears their name.

As the quarters were sealed from the rest of the fabric as a defensive mechanism against aggressors, students closed the doors of their arcades when they were in friction with colleagues of another arcade. For every quarter there was a leader, for every *riwaq* there was a professor in charge. In the city there were common places where inhabitants of different quarters could meet. In al-Azhar there were common *riwaqs* that hosted students of different backgrounds for the acquisition of knowledge from renown sheikhs (Khafagi, 1954; p.115). Al-Azhar was a miniaturized city inside the city of Cairo.

Permanence in *riwaq* nomenclature and its autonomous character matched the traditional urban structure of the city. This harmony between the two disappeared when the centralized authority abolished the individual authority of quarters in the nineteenth century. The Azhar was the only place left intact practicing the traditional system of administration during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Ministry of Public Works reflected the existing duality between localized and centralized systems of authority by equally acknowledging the individual names of the *riwaqs* beside those of the streets. This duality reinforced the notion of cultural authenticity and tradition associated with this institution of learning.

This was understood by Ali Mubarak, who was a Minister of Public Works and an urban historian who published a monumental study on the history of Cairo. To represent Egyptian tradition was socially and urbanistically a realistic choice.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of progress was not only in the form of novels and personal accounts, but also in heated debates. In the latter

case intellectuals advocating al-Tahtawi's equation were often compelled to defend their thoughts in the form of a strongly knit rational argument, as if in a court of law.

In novels such as that of Mubarak, the author imagined both roles of the foreigner and the local. Usually, the argument between the two reflects the perception of the author towards his culture. The dialogue ends with the message that we have to scrutinize the West and only take what is good for us. In these writings, the West representative appears to be very understanding and sympathetic to the cultural prerogatives of the locals. He presents his Western culture in a documentary style with no value judgment or criticism of the native culture of the reformer. When he decides to criticize his comrade's culture he is showered with a lengthy reply, after which silence prevails. The West representative in these didactic novels did not have full autonomy over what he could say. He was just a foil for his companion.

In reality, the West's representative was not always just a foil; sometimes he was a devil. At the turn of the century, reformers were faced by Western intellectuals who openly criticized their notion of progress. These Western intellectuals were positivists who disregarded religion as a possible ingredient in scientific progress, that is, they were the antithesis of Egyptian and other non-Western reformers.

These polemics over positivism personified in French intellectuals were manifested in various instances. For example, there was the debate between

Ernest Renan ²⁶ and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani²⁷, Gabriel Hanotaux²⁸ and Mohammad Abdu,²⁹ Charles François le duc d'Harcourt³⁰ and Qasem Amin.³¹ Of the three debates, Hanotaux-Abdu had more than one round. It was started by Hanotaux writing "Face to Face with Islam and the Muslim Question" in *Journal de Paris*, in early 1900. The article was translated into Arabic in *al-Mu'ayyad*, which also published a reply from Abdu. *Al-Ahram* (another local newspaper, opposing *al-Mu'ayyad*) wrote an article defending Hanotaux and published a reply by him as well as an interview. Abdu then replied in *al-Mu'ayyad* by three articles. This oscillating international debate, in local and

²⁶ *L'Islamisme et la science* was a lecture by E. Renan which he gave at the Sorbonne in 1883. (Hourani, 1983; p.120).

²⁷ Al-Afghani listened to the lecture of Renan in Paris and replied to him in *Journal des Débats*, 18 May, 1883. He eventually wrote a book responding to positivism in general entitled, *al-Rad 'alal -Dahriyyin (The Refutation of the Materialists)* (Hourani, 1983; pp. 120-123). Al-Afaghani, who came from Afghanistan, was the chief agent of pan-Islamist modernization at the end of nineteenth century in India, Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey and Egypt (Stoddard, L1921; p.63-5). In Egypt his doctrine was promulgated through his closest disciple Mohammad Abdu.

²⁸ Hanotaux was the French Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1900 (Adams, C; 1933; p.87). He was also a historian (Hourani, A 1983; p.144).

²⁹ He was an Azhar professor and the most prominent Egyptian reformer of the end of the 19th century who called for the progress equation and emphasized the rational thinking within a religious premise.

³⁰ Harcourt wrote *L'Egypte et les Egyptiens*, (1893) discussing the reasons for the deterioration of the Egyptians (Jid'an, 1988; p.472).

³¹ He was a judge by profession (completed his education in Paris) and an intimate friend of Muhammad Abdu. He adopted the question of women's emancipation as a topic of reform. He replied to Harcourt in *Les Egyptiens. Reponse à M. le duc d'Harcourt* (1894) ('Emara, M 1989; 220).

foreign journals, clearly reflects the seriousness with which this topic was regarded.³²

In all of these debates, representatives of Western progress stressed the incompatibility of religion with science by attributing to it the deterioration of Egypt, and the Muslim world in general, compared to Europe.³³ Hanotaux, for example, concluded that only through emancipation from religious authority could the East equal the West. Abdu replied that reason and religion were mutually dependent and not binary opposites. Religion places checks upon reason while reason sits in judgment upon religion.

Reason alone is not able to ascertain the causes which secure the happiness of nations, without a Divine director... But it is reason which has the final authority in the recognition of [religion], .. and in the acceptance of the beliefs, .. [and in examining] the proofs of these beliefs in order to be assured that they emanate of a certainty from God (trans. by Adams, p.127-8).

In essence, Abdu revived the arguments of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, a theologian, philosopher, jurisconsult and mystic of the eleventh century. Dedicated to rebutting Neo-Platonism as represented in the writings of Muslim philosophers

³² For a full account on the encounter between the intellectuals, Abdu and Hanotaux , see *al-Islam bayn al-'Elm wal-Madaniyya (Islam Between Science and Civilization)* Cairo: Hilal Publications, 1983.

³³ Lord Cromer, who represented English domination over Egypt and was the actual ruler, perpetuated the idea: "Islam cannot be reformed; that is to say, reformed Islam is Islam no longer; it is something else." (Cromer, 1908; vol 2, p.229). Thus the positivist view was not only coming from outside the country but also adopted by the highest occupying authority within it.

al-Farabi (d. 950) and Ibn Sina (d. 1037), al-Ghazali in *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (*The Rescuer from Straying*) criticized the unconditional authority of reason by comparing it with knowledge derived by senses. If we look at a planet, al-Ghazali tells us, we could conclude, based on our naked eye that it had the size of a coin, but through astronomical logic we are compelled to believe that it is many times larger than the earth.

If sense experience is not to be trusted, then by analogy the knowledge of necessary propositions is not to be trusted either. What right had the philosopher to think that his confidence in the necessary propositions of reason differed from his confidence in sensible knowledge ? The latter had been shown by reason to be doubtful; might it not be that there exists beyond reason a higher authority, which would, upon manifestation, show the judgment of reason to be invalid ? (Trans. by Fakhry , M 1983; p. 219).

In *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (*Collapse of the Philosophers*) he further elucidates this question by discussing the relationship between cause and effect, a relation which some Muslim Neoplatonists (and later nineteenth-century French positivists) took for granted. He gives the example of fire and cotton. The materialist philosophers claim that fire caused the burning of the cotton. The only proof that they have was that they observed burning upon contact with fire, but observation alone cannot assert that burning is due to fire, nor that fire is the only possible cause of burning. All observation proves is that burning *follows* contact with fire (Fakhry, p.230). They further deduced that as long as the nature of cotton and that of fire remained constant, it is impossible not to see fire

burning cotton upon contact (p.231). Scientists confirm this occurrence based on past habitual course (i.e. repetition).³⁴ However, it is not logically excluded that God can interfere in the laws of causality at any moment and stop the act of burning by abridging the process of events. Such an intervention is known as a miracle (p.232).

In this fashion reason is checked by religion because the scientist is constantly aware of this power which is higher than the authority of reason. Nevertheless it is reason that makes this awareness possible. With this mutual dependence, Abdu explained that the human being, through his inquisitive nature, was required to seek knowledge of his Creator's attributes which in turn would strengthen the belief in His presence. According to Abdu, the number of verses in the Quran that calls for such inquisition is half the total (Adam; p.134).

Advocaters of al-Tahtawi's equation of progress, manifested in their personal accounts, novels or debates, continued to believe in the possibility of reciprocity between the metaphysical and the materialistic. This meant that the adoption of physical representations of Western progress was of special interest to them. To adopt this representation while maintaining the local cultural values meant the utmost success for their ideologies. Consequently, in the intellectual cycle of every reformer, which included travel to Europe, Western architecture never

³⁴ Up to this point there is a striking similarity between al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and the philosopher David Hume (d.1776) on the notion of causality. But while the latter concluded at this point, al-Ghazali introduced the concept of miracle (Mahmud, 1975; pp.338-342).

failed to be an attraction. As early as al-Tahtawi, modern Parisian architecture was included in his process of scrutinizing French culture.

As for their houses, they are always pleasant because of the abundance of windows which are well placed geometrically to introduce light and air to the interiors. The windows have panels of glass to continue admitting light while closed. (al-Tahtawi, 1849; p.90).

From then onward, Western architecture continued to be depicted in reformers' writings as pleasant because of its order and hygiene. In other words it falls in al-Tahtawi's classification of the "beneficial sciences," which, in turn, are part of the material side of the progress equation. Thus if you just lived in a villa with a central hall arrangement, this meant that you were already satisfying half this equation. If you added a *salamlek* to the house you satisfied it fully.

Opponents of the progress equation refused the relaxed connection between the physical attributes of the Western progress and local metaphysical values. But it is this relaxed connection that allowed the culture to adopt all Western representations of progress, including architecture, without the guilty feeling (experienced in the Gulf today) that they have discarded representations of their tradition. Yet this did not mean adopting Western architectural vocabulary totally; that of traditional architecture was also welcomed so long as it followed the new concept of order and hygiene. This is the spirit of "conditional acceptance" with which we should understand Ali Mubarak and Muhammad Qutb quoted in the beginning of the chapter. It is the same spirit that encouraged the central-hall plan to resonate with the metaphysical side of progress. Because the latter, according to the equation, had the upper hand, the outcome

succeeded in dominating whole new neighbourhoods in Cairo for a century. Hilmiya villas testify to that.³⁵

Reformers advocating al-Tahtawi's equation of progress were thus successful in conveying their message to society. Their success lay not only in their ideologies which preserved the society's core values while allowing for innovation, but also in the fact that the lapse in time between introducing their ideologies and actually practicing them was short. In the case of al-Tahtawi, his book *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* (1834) (generally referred to as *Journey to Paris*) was published shortly after his return and was distributed to all the state officials by order of Muhammad Ali (Heyworth-Dunne, [1939] 1968; p.265-6). He then founded and headed a translation school in 1836 which was later called the School of Languages. In the early 1840s the school also included, under his supervision a School of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence and School of Accountancy, and was named al-*Alsun*. Its curriculum combined Islamic and Western learning. Subjects taught were languages (Arabic, French, English, Turkish, Italian), history, geography and mathematics, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic and French law. In this way, the school contributed to the establishing of a cultural elite that valued both sides of his equation of progress (p.267-8).

Ali Mubarak held several ministries, one of them the Ministry of Education. He organized a college to train men as teachers of geometry, physics, geography, history, calligraphy and Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence and Quranic exegesis. The college also offered public lectures on a weekly basis in 1871.

³⁵ Many authors, such as Fahmi Jid'an, overlooked this architectural phenomenon and concluded that al-Tahtawi's equation was more theoretical than practical (1988 ; p.553).

Lectures were conducted in a big lecture hall, located next to Hilmiya, in which both European and Egyptian teachers taught. The idea was new and attracted audiences of officials, teachers and students. Talks that were delivered to the public were on literature, astronomy, jurisprudence, physics, chemistry, railways, architecture, mechanics, botany and history. Either as teachers or students, turbaned sheikhs of al-Azhar sat side by side with Western-educated individuals and exchanging thoughts and ideas (pp. 376-8). In doing this, Mubarak satisfied his character " 'Alam al-Din" the Azhar sheikh who was open to the West and exchanged ideas with his respectable English gentleman about East and West civilizations.

Mohammad Abdu who taught the *Prolegomena* of Ibn Khaldun in the teachers' college of Ali Mubarak also had the chance to put his ideas into practice (Adams, 1933; p.45). He was the first reformer who in 1896 upgraded the structure of the Azhar curriculum. When he was appointed as a member of the steering committee, he codified the sciences such as mathematics, algebra, history and geometry as part of the curriculum . He even allocated prizes for students who excelled in those sciences (al-Fiqi, 1965; p.275).

All three reformers, among others, had the chance to practice their ideologies from an official position and found a positive response from the Egyptian society.

If we compare the nineteenth and early twentieth century intellectuals with those of today, we notice that the same theme of perceiving the culture in dual terms continues but with a difference. The former succeeded in establishing a

dialogue with the culture, the latter have failed. More often than not, the gap is so wide that ideas never find their way outside the printed page. Today the intellectual is isolated (Yasin, 1985; p.19), and more seriously, distrusted.

To continue regarding the Arab cultures in terms of bilateral notions remains a fact so long as there is a unidirectional flow of knowledge from the West to the Middle East. This situation was present during the times of the early intellectual group. They realized the inevitable interaction between their traditions and those of the incoming cultures. In this interaction, they had to define what was constant and what could change in *both* so as not to be washed with the tidal wave of influence. They reached the conclusion that any materialistic representation of their tradition, manifested in clothes, table manners, dwelling, technologies, etc, was liable to change. Anything that dealt with social values and religion could be preserved and updated.

The effort of intellectuals to convince their society of this has not been easy but it is insignificant if compared to their fierce battle with Western Positivism, a battle which was also displayed to the public. Thus intellectuals had a dual role: on one hand they had to innovate, on the other, they defended tradition. This dual role of defense and progress continued to reflect on their bilateral ideological stance (al-Jabiri, 1985; p.40). It also added to the difficulty of persuading their societies that the West is good and bad at the same time. It was a message that called for critical conventionalism. Every incoming novelty was measured, balanced then assessed and labeled as harmful or beneficial, acceptable or not acceptable despite apparent benefits. Thanks to this process of critical

conventionalism, Arab tradition has survived till today, at least as one facet of their cultural predicament.

This way of responding to a tidal wave of Western influence was not unprecedented. In the ninth and tenth century, Arab intellectuals discovered Greek philosophy. This discovery also involved a period of adjustments through a process of scrutiny. Partisans of *Hadith* had to stand up against those who were totally seduced by the art of rational thinking. The fierce battle between reformers at the end of the nineteenth century and French positivism, which led to bilateralism in thought, was also present in the tenth century. In the earlier era, this bilateralism was resolved by internalizing rational thinking, manifested in the dialectic, to the Islamic sciences, such as legal theory and methodology. In fact the art of the dialectic became the favored tool for testing every new idea.

This tenth-century experience was in the consciousness of nineteenth century reformers. The later group capitalized on this earlier experience to solve analogous controversy. We find them using the arguments of al-Kindi (d. 866), al-Ghazali (d.1111) and Ibn Rushd (d.1198) who had worked on the question of the compatibility between religion and philosophy. The success of the nineteenth-century group stems from that of the earlier period.

Intellectuals of today reject the notion of bilateralism (al-Jabiri, 1985; p.34) and this is the source of their isolation. One group of these intellectuals rejects the elements of constancy which nineteenth century reformers and societies had cherished. A second opposing group, primarily in reaction to the first group,

want to preserve not only traditional values but also its authentic physical representations. Traditional architecture becomes an agent for their ideologies. Of course, within this reactionary group are sub-groups that vary in their degree of copying traditional icons. One sub-group may maintain a position in architecture similar to that of religion. Thus, to take an extreme example, the current Wahhabis, who are known to be the least susceptible to innovative interpretations in Islamic jurisprudence, are also the least open to change in architecture. Their arguments claim that if one disappears, the other follows. From this we understand the position of the Abul-Khail brothers, editors of *al-Benaa*. To them, privacy is *solely* represented by a bent entrance, because that is the traditional solution. The disappearance of the bent entrance means to them the unsuitable living condition for a Muslim (Abul-Khail, Oct. 1988; p.5). However, there are other sub-groups that do not equate religion with architecture, but perhaps identity, character and authenticity, abstract notions that do not surpass the visual aspects of architecture. Abdel Baqi Ibrahim, editor of *Alam al-Benaa*, exemplifies this group. In all those sub-groups, they see traditional meaning and form as inseparable.

Those two groups have in common antagonism and polarization in thought, something that was considered to be the exception among nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Egyptian reformers (al-Dajani, A 1985; p. 318). What is also common between the two unilateralist groups is their lack of dialogue with one another, a dialogue that might allow them to create a moderate position in their polemics, such as that of the ninth and tenth century, and the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Contemporary Arab positivists, when reflecting on those two earlier periods of Arab intellectual history, would have preferred the rationalists to prevail over the moderates, thus abolishing the notion of bilateralism in its cradle. Zaki Nagib Mahmud, a contemporary Egyptian intellectual, who is well versed in scientific rationalism (particularly Bacon, Descartes and Hume), blames al-Ghazali (d.1111) for introducing the concept of divine intervention to the notion of causality, thus closing the door for future generations of Muslims to conduct any further philosophical investigations. More seriously, Mahmud sees al-Ghazali to be the cause of today's intellectual stagnation of Muslims, who are submerged in this bilateral notion of tradition and modernity (1975; pp. 345-6)! Arab unilateralists also see that nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reformers did not really introduce anything new so long as they did not adopt a Western *mentality*. To borrow Western applied sciences without Western philosophy led to superficiality (Wahba, 1985; pp. 331-2).

Other Arab positivist intellectuals who do not choose to blame past figures for their effect on successive generations blame their contemporary societies for being "captivated" with metaphysical propositions from the past. One of the most explicit of these writers is Abdalla Laroui who advocates Marxism as the paradigm that will save the Arab world. In the *Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (1976) Laroui offers "historicism" as the alternative to "traditionalism". Traditionalism to him refers to the *salafi* or fundamentalist. Like many intellectuals of his category, he depicts a Muslim intellectual who has not yet dispensed with his system of beliefs in a single overriding scenario: unrealistic, refusing any form of innovation, antagonistic towards the West, unsophisticated and unscientific in thought (Arkoun, 1986; p.

17-18). This same person perceives history as a shield that will protect him from the unworthy present (Mahmoud, 1984; p.322-4 & Laroui, pp. 8-9, 154).

The Muslim community may not share this grim depiction of the *salafi* doctrine. At the turn of the century, the *salafi* approach came to question the historical accretion of jurisprudence and the authority of its four schools, and calls for innovative interpretations of the original sources, the Quran and Prophetic Traditions. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu were *salafi(s)*. While this approach was progressive in tone, today it is commonly attached to the notion of rigidity. Thanks to extreme movements that have attributed the name to themselves since they, too, call for the return to original sources and disregard centuries of Islamic scholarship; but unlike a true *salafi* they have adopted a literalist approach. They refuse any form of analogical reasoning and do not acknowledge dissent in opinions. It is this kind of group that has distorted the notion of the *salafi*. Nonetheless they are a minority. To group all the practicing Muslims under this distorted version of a *salafi* is a mistake. Nevertheless, positivist intellectuals of today favor such a classification, since the *salafi* appears to be an easy target to criticize and contrast with their own extreme position. Equally true in approach, but the reverse in meaning, is the view of the opposing group, the antiquarians, when criticizing the positivists.

When intellectuals who refuse bilateralism add a middle group to their rigid classification they call it "eclectic," by which they mean schizophrenic in its acts, unauthentic in its appearance and confused about what it stands for. It ends up being shadowed by either of the two dominant extremes (Laroui, 1976; p.155). Because of the malleable stance of this middle group, they rank it as

insignificant and unworthy of their attention. Members of this middle group are seen as naive in the eyes of the positivists, and hypocrits in the eyes of the opposition. This depiction is usually applied to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Egyptian reformers who advocated the bilateral approach.

"Historicism" and not "traditionalism" is advocated by Laroui and Arkoun as well as other unilateralists. This means the acknowledgment of religion *only* in its historical context without operative values in today's cultural mechanism. The science of legal theory and methodology is absent from their propositions as the tool for updating jurisprudence.

There is a semantic manipulation made of the Quran by those who select verses or fragments of verses, cutting it from their linguistic, cultural historical context. This is to introduce it in the present ideological context ... It is just the same procedure used by architects who cut classical buildings and their semiotic environment and introduce it in a totally different urban fabric and with different semiotic functions (Arkoun, 1986; p. 19).

With this statement Arkoun not only rejects the anachronistic use of Scripture but also of architecture. He shares with the other extreme camp of antiquarians, the perception of associating architecture of a particular moment to a specific set of meanings that cannot be recycled over time and place. As classical architecture should not be allowed to transcend its periods or cultures, according to Arkoun, so traditional Muslim architecture should follow. Modern architecture of the West that stands for universal progress is the solution for the

Arab world together with modern ideologies that believe in the superiority of science over revelation. The second group rejects Modern Architecture on the same epistemological premise. This should account for the deteriorating state of architecture today, compared with that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Intellectuals who persist in rejecting bilateral ideology will continue to be isolated from their societies until they move from this extreme position to a more moderate line. This move is usually associated with the intellectual cycle that starts and ends in the homeland with Europe in between. The refusal of some intellectuals to adopt bilateral ideology is usually at its height shortly after they return from their educational trip to Europe. They are young and excited about what they have learned from the West and would like to apply it literally. During this period they are less attached to their cultural reality and more submerged in theory. The rapport between them and society at large is poor. With time they become more aware of their cultural predicament and less anxious to apply of their ideas.³⁶

The shift from isolation to responsiveness is a recurring theme in the recent decades of modern Egypt (al-Dajani, 1985; p.319). A classical example showing this type of shift is Taha Husayn, a famous Egyptian humanist (p.321).

³⁶ The idea of the collision between the intellectual's thoughts and his native culture upon returning from Europe, followed by an eventual harmonization is a common theme in Egyptian novels, for example, *Qandil Um Hashem (The Lantern of Um Hashem)* (1944) by Yehya Haqqi.

In his four years of study in France, Taha Husayn tells us, he was influenced by Emile Durkheim who was in turn influenced by Saint-Simonian ideology. He believed that progress and prosperity can only be attained by the apostles of industry (Umlil, 1985; p.124). Unlike al-Tahtawi, who refused the unilateral approach of the Saint-Simonians, Husayn excluded any local potentials from his culture that could help to generate progress.

Influenced by Max Weber, Husayn believed that what the Greeks invented in the arts and sciences formed the sole source of modern civilization. It is now the universal model that should be followed, all other efforts are useless (p.131).

Taha Husayn returned to Egypt convinced that his role was to teach the origins of Western civilization. Once they know about these origins, Egyptians were bound to follow in Western footsteps. Only then could the renaissance of the West be repeated in Egypt. He thus wrote on Greek philosophy, mythology and polity.³⁷ In this process, he saw Arab civilization as offering nothing to its contemporary predicaments.³⁸ Using a Cartesian rigor, he even questioned the authority of Scripture in narrating the history of the holy prophets.³⁹

³⁷ Examples of his work are : *Alihat al-Yunan (The Greek Gods)* (1919); *Nidham al-Athiniyyin* (a translation of Aristo's *The Athenian Order*) (1921); *Qadat al-Fiqr (Leaders of Thought)* (1925).

³⁸ For example, in *Ibn Khaldun wal-Falsafa al-Igtima'iya (Ibn-Khaldun and Social Philosophy)*, Husayn asserts that the concept of democracy was not known to the Arabs but only to the Greeks and the West. Ibn Khaldun, in this matrix, offers a useless science (Umlil, p. 134).

³⁹ With this skepticism he criticized Classical Arabic humanism in *Naqd al-She'r al-Jahili (Criticism of Classical Poetry)* (1926) (Umlil; p.137-8).

The Bible can tell us about Ibrahim and Ismail , and the Quran can also tell us about them, but this is not enough to prove their historical existence ([1926], 1985; p. 138).

Taha Husayn became a controversial figure not only among the public but also among intellectuals.⁴⁰ The responses of critics ranged from calling him a Western "brain-washed" intellectual to denouncing him as a blasphemer.

With this cultural opposition, Husayn retreated and modified his extreme position in the 1930s. He accepted that rationalism was not the sole determinant in cultural progress and that unscientific propositions such as traditional ethics can have a temporary place in this process because they motivate virtuous deeds.⁴¹ Eventually, he accepted fully the validity of tradition as one source that inspires progress. He even studied the history of Islamic philosophy and criticized partisans of the medieval Mu'tazila who dogmatically believed in rationalism.⁴² By this attitude, Taha Husayn shifted to a more moderate line more acceptable to his culture.

⁴⁰ Among the intellectuals who criticized him in writings are: Muhammad Farid Wagdi in *Naqd al-She'r al-Jahili (Criticism of Classical Poetry)* (1926), Muhammad Lutfi Gum'a in *al-Shihab al-Rasid (The Punishing Star)* (1926) and Muhammad Sadik Rafi'i in *Taht Rayet al-Quran (Under the Banner of the Quran)* (1926) (Umlil; p. 141).

⁴¹ This shift is noted in *'Ala Hamish al-Sira (On the Margin of Tradition)* (1933) (Umlil; p.142).

⁴² This is reflected in his book *Mir'at al-Islam (The Reflection of Islam)* (1959), (Umlil; p.144). Other writings reflecting his final approach is *Ali wal-Nubuwwa (Ali and Prophethood)* 1953, and *al-Shaykhan (The two Sheikhs)* (1960).

Taha Husayn's story shows that there is a cultural lever that corrects polarized ideologies. The same cultural lever was present in the ninth and tenth century and accounted for the disappearance of extreme ideological positions such as the Zahiri school of jurisprudence that refused any form of interpreting Quranic text except its literal linguistic meaning (Makdisi, 1981; pp. 8-9). This cultural lever is usually manifested in the form of counter criticisms, or indifference but it eventually takes the form of isolation if the intellectual chooses to continue in his extreme position. In Husayn's case, it took him almost thirty years to realize this. Others may take lesser time.⁴³ But if we compare this group of intellectuals with that of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, we note that the latter group realized from the start the possibilities of this cultural lever in moderating programs of reforms.

Programs of moderate reforms that adopt the bilateral notion are still present in Egypt. There is a continuation of the nineteenth-century tradition, but it is no longer a dominant one.

A key figure of this group today is Mutwalli al-Sha'rawi, an Azhar professor who has captured the attention of the Egyptian nation with his charismatic lectures on Quranic exegesis on television. His sweeping popularity is not only due to his performance but to his intriguing way of explaining Scripture in a simple yet intelligent way which resonates well with current state of Egyptian culture.

⁴³ Hussein's phenomenon continues to the present time. The Zaki Nagib Mahmud of today is not the same as in the fifties (Dajani, 1985; p.321). Even Abdula Laroui made concessions in his later writings (Laroui,1983; pp. 191-196). I am indebted to Yasir Sakr for drawing my attention to the latter source.

Smiling and clucking his tongue, or winking, nodding and wagging a finger to punctuate a point, the 80-year-old cleric sits crosslegged inside his Cairo mosque each day, bathed in television lights and gently tutoring his unseen audience... Sheikh Sha'raoui ... [is] an avuncular but insistent advocate of Islamic piety who is willing to accept coexistence with the West (NY Times 3-24-1991).

Architectural form to him bears no particular meaning. So long as the building satisfies social customs and local environmental conditions, it is acceptable. The facade of the building is important inasmuch as it pleases the eye with its details. This position is devoid of any antagonism towards one particular image and is reminiscent of that of late-nineteenth-century reformers. Hilmiya villas that varied in style from neo-Classical to neo-Baroque to neo-Islamic were all acceptable so long as they satisfied the quasi-autonomy between the public and private domains. The architect's greatest effort in Hilmiya was focused on this criterion rather than on preoccupying himself with the "visual abstraction" of traditional architecture. The outcome was far more sensitive to the local customs and innovative in solution than is today's architecture. It is this "maturity" that al-Sha'rawi is calling for. On this basis he cites buildings from the historicist era in Cairo as being good quality architecture and admires nothing from today's production (al-Waziri, 1990; p.19-21).

Muhammad al-Ghazali is another leading Egyptian reformer maintaining a moderate approach. Like Mohamed Abdu, this jurisconsult criticizes the antiquarians who confuse their local traditional customs with jurisprudence (al-

Ghazali, 1989; pp.22-24). In a dialogue addressing one of his students who thought music was not permitted in Islam. He says:

Islam is not a religion tailored for you only, you have a narrow vision of Bedouin jurisprudence (fiqh badawi) ! And when you equate it with Islam and say they are inseparable, Islam will be deformed all together causing people to discard it (p.75).

"Bedouin jurisprudence" in al-Ghazali's argument means an "arid" and "simplistic" approach towards understanding the original sources (p. 11). Antiquarians who think that Islamic values can never survive in any other form than those acknowledged in history adopt this "nomadic jurisprudence". In contrast to them, al-Ghazali thinks architectural form can have any meaning. It is the conduct of people and not the form that gives a particular meaning to a building. He quotes the Quranic verse:

... Ye choose to build castles in the plains and carve the mountains into houses. So remember the bounties of God and do not evil, making mischief in the earth (A'raf: 74)

Then he says that if we build a skyscraper and use its rooms for virtual deeds this will be accepted by God (p.87). Al-Ghazali implies that architecture has its own autonomy from culture and is not inherently tied to a particular meaning. This understanding gives the architect the freedom of being inspired by forms of other cultures even if it means a skyscraper.

Another Egyptian intellectual who calls for this type of moderation is Mustafa Mahmud, a physician by profession. Like Sha'rawi, he appears on television

regularly and he comments on imported documentary films that reveal various scientific aspects of the natural environment, ranging from animals and plant life to cosmology. He does this in a manner that invites the audience to perceive these "natural" phenomena as attributes of the Creator. He convinces the viewer to direct his sense of wonder on hearing the amazing scientific facts to a sense of piety. The program's name "Science and Piety" clearly reflects this approach.

Mustafa Mahmud is also popular because in the seventies he founded an institution that includes a mosque, an observatory, a day-care clinic, a kindergarten and a preparatory school. This complex sits in Muhandisin a fashionable quarter of Giza, thus imparting the message that contemporary Islam is neither an exclusive *salafi* movement nor limited to the middle and lower classes. Like the teachers' college of Ali Mubarak, Mahmud is attempting to reach out to society by offering lectures on various subjects that encourage reciprocity between systems of beliefs and today's predicaments.

The success of these three intellectuals reflect the thirst in the culture to see a moderate nineteenth-century reformer once more. However, popular they are, these reformers are members of a small intellectual group operating in the midst of a sea of polarization.

CONCLUSION: TWO DIMENSIONAL *versus* THREE DIMENSIONAL
ARCHITECTURE

In this dissertation I began by analyzing a problem in today's Arab architectural practice. The symptom of the problem is clear: antagonism towards either the present or the past. Antagonists of the first kind assume that the present is alien to them, while the past had all the right answers and produced a harmony between architecture and society. By contrast, antagonists to the past think that every foreign idea must be superior to local traditions. These mutually exclusive views coerce architects today into designing two-dimensional architecture. It is two dimensional because architects perceive the traditional past or the foreign present as a photograph from which they seek inspiration for new design. In *On Photography* (1973), Susan Sontag described the interplay between a photograph and the psychology of its beholder.

*There is the surface. Now think--or rather feel, intuit--
what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it
looks this way. (p.23)*

Caught in this nostalgia, architects then copy what the image "looks" like hoping that what it "must be" will make something better out of the present. What is produced is an architecture that is loaded with icons. Images of past architecture are thought to evoke morality and identity. While images of foreign architecture evoke notions of civility and modernity. This situation is problematic, for meaning becomes an intrinsic value of the form that does not change with time or place. One instantly and exclusively recalls the other. With this premise, one group disqualifies the recycling of the regressive past, just as the other group disqualifies the alien present. While one believes in contextualism --that is to say, their tradition is alive and only relevant to themselves-- the other believes in universality --that is to say, conventions produced in cultures dominating the world economy belong also to them.

In these two types of two-dimensional architecture, a third dimension is always missing, namely, realism, innovation, compatibility with the local milieu, and courage of the architect to reciprocate with ideas different from his own.

Ideologically, partisans of the two approaches define themselves only in terms of one another, that is to say, one is the negation of the other. One group calls the other a *salafi* ; the other a positivist. No dialogue is established between the two, for this would eventually mean a compromise that would weaken their position as binary opposites. With this position, they miss a mature intellectual discourse that would invoke the third dimension in architecture.

In the dissertation I have tried to show how this third dimension was achieved one century ago in the architecture and planning of a neighborhood called Hilmiya, located in the heart of the eastern part of Cairo. Residents of this neighborhood believed in dual notions simultaneously: contextualism and universality, constancy and change, familiarity and alienation. Their architecture reflected a bilateral ideology or rather say the third dimension that is missing today. They regarded foreign culture as both good and bad, and realized that a process of scrutiny of its conventions was necessary before allowing it to interact with the local environment. In the process, local conventions that had established authority through the accretion of centuries were also questioned and assessed.

In Hilmiya choosing conventions was a conscious decision, though not necessarily fully rationalized. There was an element of arbitrariness that was also part of the decision. Why was the central-hall plan of a dwelling chosen to

reflect modernity in the eyes of the Egyptian notable, and not some other European plan? Why did French Enlightenment represent universal progress to the Egyptian intelligentsia and not the German? There are no satisfactory explanations, except perhaps, taste, historical coincidence, and a first-come-first-served situation, that is to say interpretations that reflect arbitrariness in choice. But the point is not why one used one particular architecture or ideology and not another, but *what* was made out of the one that was used. The first question occupies today's polemics and suggests stagnation. The second was the concern of Hilmiya society and encourages development. The first is born of hostility and mistrust; the second reflects an attitude of optimism and relaxation towards others. It satisfies society's aspiration for innovation, while maintaining confidence in their traditions.

Criticizing conventions to produce three-dimensional architecture requires a continuous process of deletion, addition and modification of the established rules, through thought that is partly rational and partly arbitrary. This was understood by the intelligentsia of Ministry of Public Works at the turn of the century who continued to change laws controlling urban interventions as new situations arose. French Enlightenment ideals so cherished by them were susceptible to compromise with local conditions of topography, politics, economies and social values. Their laws encouraged the architect representing Western ideals in building crafts to reciprocate with the master mason who represented traditional ideals. The villas in Hilmiya, being the dwellings of the Egyptian intelligentsia, ended up combining Palladian Polytechnic ideals with the traditions of local courtyard houses. The new

architecture that resulted was the outcome of purely Egyptian circumstances and was not reduced to a rigid relation between form and meaning.

It is relevant at this juncture to recall the words of Muhammad al-Ghazali, the recent Azhar intellectual who attacks unilateral thought. If you build a skyscraper, he tells us, the only value attached to it is based on the conduct of its users. In Hilmiya, the conduct of the Egyptian notable was reflected in the inclusion of the *salamlek* as part of his villa proper. According to al-Ghazali's rationale, this villa would resonate with Islamic sensibility. Neither arches nor *mashrabiyyas* instantly evoke this sensibility, nor do ignoring them. That is why in Hilmiya, Islamic style co-existed peacefully side by side with Art Nouveau and Secession. The discipline had enough freedom to develop itself from within; it had enough freedom to express the potentials of its third dimension.

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Part Three

A r c h i v e s

N a t i o n a l A r c h i v e s i n C a i r o

Archives of Council of Ministries

This section on archives is classified according to ministries. Each ministry has a number of dossiers (*mahfaza*, plural *mahafiz*), which in turn contain a number of files; in each file are various documents. The documents inside each file are in no particular order and can only be referred to by date. Files are distinguished by topic and date. The file has a serial number which is shared by other files, and for that reason I did not list it. The dossier also has a serial number but it is not shared. Sometimes the date of the file is also the date of the document; sometimes it covers a group of documents.

To refer to a particular document used in the dissertation, I will give its particular date, the date and the topic of the file in which it is placed and the number of the dossier under which the file is classified.

M i n i s t r y o f P u b l i c W o r k s

Dossier 6/1

General topic: *Maslahat al-Tanzim / Shawari' wa Manazil* (Department of Public Order / Streets and Houses)

1 -- DOCUMENT DATE: 20 July 1890.

FILE TOPIC: The Ministry requests a decision regarding whether or not it can build on the two plots of land lying between the food market and Atab al-Khadra Square. FILE DATE: 20 July 1890
-10 Aug 1890.

2 -- DOCUMENT DATES: 1 Dec. 1890, 27 March 1894 & 31 March 1894.

FILE TOPIC: Construction of a street between the new food market and al-Muski Street and expropriating the necessary land. FILE DATE: 1 Dec. 1890- 10 April 1894.

3 -- DOCUMENT & FILE DATE: 29 July 1894.

FILE TOPIC: Looking into the issue of the two plots of land lying between the food market and Atab al-Khadra Square.

4 -- DOCUMENT & FILE DATE : 8 April 1895.

FILE TOPIC: Modifying the decision of Council of Ministers concerning the two plots adjacent to the produce market and owned by the Ministry of Education and Awqaf. (A map included)

5 -- DOCUMENT DATES: 9 March 1890 & 24 April 1890.

FILE TOPIC: Postponing the construction of a street that links Atab al- Khadra and Bab al-Futuh.
FILE DATE: 28th April 1890.

Dossier 6/2/A

GENERAL TOPIC: *Maslahat al-Tanzim / Lawa'h* (Department of Public Order / Legislations).

1 -- DOCUMENT DATE: 28th Feb. 1885.

FILE TOPIC: Modifying a clause in law on Public Order (*la'ihat al-Tanzim*). FILE DATE: 25 Dec. 1882 - Feb. 1885.

2-- DOCUMENT DATE: 23th Nov. 1887.

FILE TOPIC: Opinion of the finance commission on the buying or selling of lands necessary for alignments. FILE DATE: 23 Nov. 1887- March. 1888.

3 -- DOCUMENT DATE: 20 Aug. 1889.

FILE TOPIC: Law of Public Order. FILE DATE: 25 April 1889 - 3 Dec. 1889.

Dossier 6/3/A

GENERAL TOPIC: *Maslahat al-Tanzim / Manafi' 'Amma* (Department of Public Order / Public utility).

1 -- DOCUMENT DATE: 11 Feb. 1894.

FILE TOPIC: Khedival decree for issuing street alignments in Cairo and Alexandria and considering them as part of public utility. FILE DATE: 21 Feb. 1894.

2 -- DOCUMENT DATE: December 1893.

FILE TOPIC: Khedival decree for modifying or canceling street alignments. FILE DATE: 15 Nov. 1894.

Dossier 6/3/C

GENERAL TOPIC: *Maslahat al-Tanzim / Manafi' 'Amma* (Department of Public Order / Public utility).

1 -- DOCUMENT DATE : March 1901.

FILE TOPIC: Khedival decree for issuing and modifying street alignments. FILE DATE: 10 June 1901.

2 -- DOCUMENT DATE: 29 June 1903.

FILE TOPIC: Khedival decree for issuing and modifying street alignments. FILE DATE 13 Oct. 1903.

3 -- DOCUMENT DATE: June 1909.

FILE TOPIC: Khedival decree for issuing and modifying street alignments. FILE DATE: 30 Aug. 1909.

Dossier 8/8/A

GENERAL TOPIC: *Manafi' 'Amma -- al-Qahira (Public Utility Cairo)*

1 -- DOCUMENT "D".

FILE TOPIC: Khedival decree for issuing and modifying street alignments. FILE DATE: 21 June 1902.

2 -- DOCUMENT DATE: 1 Dec. 1890.

FILE TOPIC: Construction of a street for the new produce market from the northern and eastern side. FILE DATE: 18 May 1890. (2 maps included).

Dossier 8/8/B

GENERAL TOPIC: *Manafi' 'Amma -- al-Qahira (Public Utility --Cairo)*

1 -- FILE & DOCUMENT DATE: 4 May 1892.

FILE TOPIC: Result of the committee appointed to choose the best comprehensive sewer system for Cairo.

Dossier 8/8/C

GENERAL TOPIC: *Manafi' 'Amma -- al-Qahira (Public Utility --Cairo)*

1 -- FILE & DOCUMENT DATE: 20 June 1904 (a map included).

FILE TOPIC: Urban renewal of Sultan al-Hanafi Mosque and confiscating five adjacent properties.

M i n i s t r y o f E d u c a t i o n

Dossier 12 / A

GENERAL TOPIC: *lawā'ih* (Legislations of Polytechnic School)

1 -- FILE & DOCUMENT DATE: 1 June 1892.

FILE TOPIC: Modifications on law of Cairo Polytechnic School to apply theory to practice.

2 -- FILE & DOCUMENT DATE: 19 Jan. 1903.

FILE TOPIC: Training third -and fourth -year students on practical issues.

Dayra Saniyya (Royal Property)

Dossier 1 / B

1 -- FILE & DOCUMENT DATE: 4 June 1881.

FILE TOPIC: Selling two houses of the royal property (plan included).

Khedive Abbas Hilmi II Papers in Durham Univ. Archives

These papers are classified under topics. Each topic is contained in several files. Each file is identified by a number, followed by the number of pages of documents. The documents of each file are numbered in one sequence.

Topic B: Estates, Business Interests, Financial & Property

File 168 / 34-36. Date: 9 Aug. 1905

Letter from Dimitrius Fabricius (architect of the khedival palace) to Khedive Abbas Hilmi II, reporting on progress of work.

File 168 / 29-31 Date: 14 July 1905

Letter from Dimitrius Fabricius (architect of the khedival palace) to Khedive Abbas Hilmi II, reporting on progress of work.

File 168 / 274-5 Date: 18 June 1903

A site manager reporting on progress of work in Maruit royal resthouse.