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INTERROGATING EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM: TRANSCULTURAL ARCHITECTURE AT THE RAGGED EDGE OF EMPIRE

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Marwa El-Ashmouni

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Abstract

*This paper examines the discursivity of nationalism in Egypt during the late nineteenth century; a period of vibrant political and architectural transformation that manifests the ragged edge of British empire. To explore this discursive terrain, this paper examines the transnationalism of multiethnic intellectuals and architectural themes. Progressive intellectuals, including the Armenian and Jewish Italian Adib Ishaq, and Yaqub Sanu—all disciples of the originally Persian scholar Jamal al-Din al-Afghani—coincided with the design of ambivalent architectural themes. The architecture and urban context of this period, whether patronized by the colonized or the colonizer, reflected the notion of transculturation through mutual fluctuation and ambivalence between traditional and imperial expressions. Projects such as the Egyptian Museum, Muntazah Palace, Awqaf building, the Lord residency, and the New Hotel, coincided with a context that interprets the 'contact zone'—a concept posited by the theorist Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2007). For Pratt, the contact zone is a site of creative possibility, where innovative exemplars of transculturation, resulting in the mutual transformation of subjects and histories after their trajectories intersect in a space of copresence. The aim is to fray polarized representations of nationalism and to better appreciate the progressive creative and intellectual transformation that shaped Egypt ahead of the militaristic or religious expressions of nationalism that dominated the twentieth century.*

Marwa El-Ashmouni, PhD.

M. El-Ashmouni
Beni-Suef University, Beni-Suef, Egypt

*Corresponding Author's email address: mmoustafa2020@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

British controller-general Major Evelyn Baring (from 1883-1907), known from 1841 as Lord Cromer, like his former subordinate Lord Milner, accentuated that Egypt was a "maze" of races, religions, and linguistic groups and a "land of paradox" (Cromer, 1908, p.217). This maze was also manifested in the city's landscape that it was, as Cromer aligned with Officer William Butler (1887, p.95), a "dying Mecca and a still-born Rue de Rivoli" (Cromer, 1908: p.217). Egypt's diversity, in Cromer's view, was a main reason behind its inability to have an "overarching direction" and hence its inability to rule itself (Tignor, 2010: p. 237). The "Egyptian question ... has one underlying defect—that it is never commonplace," Milner asserted (1892). However, the nineteenth-century's dynamic multiethnic and intellectual subjects provoked a didactic nationalism call via different cultural means, a call that manifests the transculturation notion at the blurred edges of the empire. This article privileges Mary Pratt's notion of transculturation in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) and extends it to the built environment.

Promoting the anthropologist Frenando Ortiz's term of transculturation, first generated in 1940s, Pratt asserted that transculturation allows marginalized subjects to become agents and transmit cultural forms to the dominants. She textually analysed travel writings and highlighted the influence of travel writing on relations between the European metropolis and the non-European periphery. Pratt's main question was "How have Europe's constructions of subordinated others been shaped by those others, by the constructions of themselves and their habitats that they presented to the Europeans?" (Pratt, 2007: p.6). She argued that, through the process of transculturation, the subordinated or the 'other' shaped the way Europe constructed the 'other'. Pratt's notion of transculturation addressed the reciprocal borrowings among cultures within the contact zones. This article takes this notion further to the nineteenth-century in Egypt, when the British Empire was ragged and its power reached its brink. The article will also highlight manifestations of such notion of transculturation as it embraced both the subjects and any new cultural formations, such as architecture.

This transculturation, as a mutual transformation of the colonizer and the colonized, highlighted T.S. Eliot's notion of tradition as a non-inherited dynamism that is gained "by great labour" and implicates both "historical sense" and "perceptions" (Eliot, 1992: p. 43). Therefore, the stands of "authentication" or "traditionalism" in the built environment are turned out to be "traditiona-liesm" (Al-Lahham, 2014). Here, the colonizer's perceptions experienced ambivalence between the assimilation of home culture and the demarcation of the traditions of the subjugated, and the accentuation on its fantasies. The subjugated also, in Egypt, was ambivalent; either to domesticate the colonizer's orientalism perceptions by reviving traditions, or to reject those perceptions and adopt the modernisation agenda. The theme of ambivalence within the transculturation notion was one of the themes discussed in the edited volume entitled: *Transculturation and Aesthetics: Ambivalence, Power, and Literature* (2015), which transculturally and aesthetically investigated the literary representations of archaeological sites and the contest over meaning (Kuortti, 2015).

Indeed, since the beginning of the century Egypt's rulers exhibited this ambivalence theme. Khedive Ismail's ambivalence (El-Ashmouni, 2016) revealed such transculturation phenomenon due to his mobility between East and West. However, at the ragged edge, transculturation was expanded to include the notion of nationalism itself, as well as the colonizer, who endeavoured to apprehend the colonized and thus was faced by inescapable interdependence. This article further highlights that while transculturation was facilitated by colonialism, it defied the power of colonialism. Whereas transculturation reached its epitome

at the end of nineteenth-century Egypt, colonialism started to fade and reached its brink. Therefore, this article refers to this period of late nineteenth-century as the ragged edge of empire. At this edge, the adoption of a different nationality or the transnationalism by different ethnicities was made familiar within a contact zone such as Egypt. This transnationalism, at this edge of empire, was heightened also in other physical cultural forms: formal and public architectural language.

Hence, the aim of this article is to criticize ideology and to deconstruct monolithic interpretations of nationalism and colonialism. Nationalism is “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner [1983], 2008: p.1), as Ernest Gellner asserted in his seminal book, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983). For Gellner, the notion of nationalism is all about the exclusive linkage between ethnicity and the state, often embedded in its symbolism and legislation. On contrary, this paper proves fallacies of such polarized definitions of nationalism and emphasizes Pratt's notion of transculturation in the Egyptian context previously unstudied. The phenomenon was studied in the context of the European communities, by Riva Kastoryano's article: “Transnational Nationalism: Redefining Nation and Territory” (2007). Through this transnationality, in Kastoryano's terms, “the rhetoric of mobilization “recentralizes,” in a non-territorial way, the multiplicity of identities – national, religious, ethnic, or linguistic” (Kastoryano, 2007: p.159). Therefore, this paper highlights that the notion of transculturation of nationalism is more consistent in an age of ragged edge of empire where the hegemony of imperialism faded and multi-national subjects fully interacted within the contact zone.

Moreover, Mark Millington's edited volume: *Transculturation: Cities, Space and Architecture in Latin America* (2005) emphasized that the notion of transculturation deconstructs the essentialist and hierarchical viewpoints that characterized Latin American architectural practices. Similarly, an article by Felipe Hernández entitled “Transculturation and Architecture in Latin America,” in the edited book: *Architecture and Identity* (2008), addressed the same notion in Latin America. Hernández affirmed that the notion of transculturation challenges “foundational, homogenizing and hierarchical methods of architectural analysis” (Hernández, 2008: p.252). The only study to consider the Middle East is the unique investigation of Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, entitled: *Transcultural Architecture: The Limits and Opportunities of Critical Regionalism* (2015). Botz-Bornstein extended his analysis of the transcultural architecture to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. He affirmed that transcultural architecture is an inclusive architectural rationality that softens resistive attitudes of regional architectural concepts. Most important, the article: “Transculturation in the Eastern Mediterranean,” by Hoffman and Redford (2017) affirmed that the historical roots of the phenomenon of transculturation and highlighted its manifestations in medieval Islamic material culture.

From a societal perspective, Mirjam Hladnik's account entitled: *From Slovenia to Egypt: Aleksandrinke's Trans-Mediterranean Domestic Workers' Migration and National Imagination* (2015), studied the process of transculturation of mass women emigration from Western Slovenian region to Egypt, between mid-nineteenth-century and 1954. Another study by Samir Boulos, entitled: *European Evangelicals in Egypt (1900-1956): Cultural Entanglements and Missionary Spaces* (2016), tackled the transculturation resulted from missionaries in Egypt during the British colonization. Focusing on a socio-cultural and political standpoint, Boulos's study was theoretically based on the term of “entangled histories” (Boulos, 2016: p.6), similar to this paper, affirmed the mutual transformation of colonized and colonizer regardless power position (Boulos, 2016: p.6). While these studies investigated the lives of certain groups, the study by Sebastian Jobs, Gesa Mackenthun, eds. entitled: *Agents of*

Transculturation: Border-Crossers, Mediators, Go-Betweens (2013) focused on the certain case of the army instructor Suleiman Pasha, commissioned by Mohamed 'Ali in 1820. He adopted the Egyptian culture and changed his original name: Joseph Antheleme Sève.

While these scholarships focused on specific groups that encountered border crossing, in Egypt, this paper aims to offer a more complex reading of transculturation and extend its impact on the development of the notion of nationalism per se. In other words, this paper emphasizes that the legitimacy of transculturation challenged the specificity of nationalism. This paper further highlights the manifestations of transculturation and its impact on the material culture of architecture. The article emphasizes the open system of culture that challenges isms of Occidentalism and Orientalism, that different ethnicities and non-citizens provoked the nationalism, on Egypt's ragged edge of empire. This pluralism of nationalism in nineteenth-century Egypt is a manifestation of its "discursive formation," in Foucault's sense (Foucault [1969], 2002: p.75).

TRANSCULTURATION WITHIN NATIONALISM

This transnational dimension of nationalism highlights the ragged edge of empire, at which contingencies of the colonial experience challenged the formal representations of colonization. This paper argues that the ragged edge of empire in Egypt reached its epitome after the British protection in 1882 until the nominal independence of Egypt in 1922. Moreover, this paper also affirms that trajectories of subjects, from distinct geographies and histories, intersected in the 'contact zone', as termed by the theorist Mary Pratt. The contact zones are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt, 2007: p.4). These zones could be a colonized country, "spaces of knowledge" (Crysler, 2003: p.6-7) and meaning-making, such as journals and theatres, or architectural manifestos where indigenous dialects, local motifs, and imperial themes are combined in a process of transculturation. Through the transculturation as "a phenomenon of the contact zone," both the colonizers and colonized, or travellers and "travelees," are "constituted in and by their relations to each other" (Pratt, 2007: p.6). While the colonizer's perceptions have agitated the colonized nationalism, it provoked the unity of dynamic cultural intellectuals, and facilitated the process of transculturation that allowed the colonizer to step outside the expansionist perspective and to interact with the colonised and transcend hegemonies.

This resonates with Stuart Hall's view that all the "great collective social identities of class, of race, or nation, of gender, and of the West," are hegemonic narratives (Hall, 1991: p.44). Therefore, the postmodern subject does not have a "fixed essential or permanent identity" (Hall, 1992: p.277). Hall, also, asserted that identity becomes a "moveable feast: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (Hall, 1992: p.277). The interconnection between the colonized and the colonizer was first theorized by Bhabha, who asserted the mutual dependency that resulted in the hybridity of identity of the colonizer and the colonized. This hybrid nation is "neither unified nor unitary" but rather resides "beyond and outside themselves in their 'others.'..." (Leoussi, 2001: p.248). This aligns with Edward Said's notion of "worldliness" that deplored the essentialized doctrines of nativism and nationalism (Said, 1983). Hall's, Bhabha's, and Said's conceptions affirmed the deceptiveness of the notion of nation-state. However, Edward Said also affirmed that nationalism can be beneficial when it serves liberty from imperialism and authoritarianism. Therefore, as Fanon argued that in order for a "country to avoid regression...a rapid step must be taken from national



consciousness to political and social consciousness" (Fanon, 1965: p.164). This nationalism of "worldliness", one may argue, is embedded in the universal principles of liberty is manifested in subjects of the late nineteenth-century, or of the ragged edge of empire, such as Adib Ishaq, Yaqub Sanu, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Most important, it is also manifested in the oscillation and ambivalence in architectural trends of that period.

TRANSCULTURAL THEMES AT THE RAGGED EDGE

Although, in Egypt, the inception of anti-colonial nationalism can be dated back to the French expedition (1798–1801), it was not fully progressed until the nineteenth-century. The French had a strong impact on the creation of nationalism, as the eye-witness chronicler Al-Jabarti affirmed that it was a new era of knowledge, as well as war and revolution. Seeking independence from the French, there are some documents that were released by the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, affirming that a group of the Egyptian Coptic elite had secretly headed to Britain to establish agreements (Sabry, 1927: p.29-30).¹ There was a renaissance in the notion of the Arab nationalism during the reign of Muhammad 'Ali, due to the development of local education and the participation of the Egyptians in the military. This renaissance was perceived as "a false start" as it was limited to the ruler's ambitions of defining an empire (Antonius, 1938: p.33-4). The sense of patriotism, however, one may argue, flourished during the reign of Said Pasha (r.1854-1863) who permitted, for the first time, the promotion of Egyptian soldiers as officers (Sabry, 1927: p.93-4). One of those first Egyptian officers was Ahmad Urabi (b.1841-1911) who regulated an independence revolution against Khedive Tawfiq in 1879. The nationalism of 'Urabi and his followers embraced "locality" that—in return—excluded many other transnational subjects who were motivated to develop the Arab nation in its broad sense, such as Adib Ishaq (b.1856-1885), and Yaqub Sanu (1839-1912).

Ishaq was, as the political scientist Elie Kedourie confirmed, "a radical activist, glib and confident in laying down first principles and quite ready to denounce those rulers and ministers guilty of contravening them" (Kedourie [1974], 2012: p.82). Ishaq was an Armenian born in Damascus, educated at the Lazarist School where he learnt French and Arabic. He established two newspapers *Misr* [Egypt] and *al-Tijarah* [Trading]. *Al-Tijarah* was to be the mouth of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, another proactive transnational subject. After Ishaq was sentenced to prison by Khedive Tawfiq (r. 1879-1892), for his continuous denunciation of the Khedivial rule, he closed both publications and absconded to Paris in 1880. However, he remained connected to Egypt and there he founded the Arabic newspaper *Cairo of Egypt* (Hamdan, 2015). Lineage-race, for Ishaq, was trivial to the nation. Ishaq had masonic linkage that his faith in freedom made Catholic inexact of his religion in the day of his death that he received an ecclesiastical disapproval (Kedourie [1974], 2012: p.85). The nation was rather "rooted in a... certain collective agreement of belonging to one nation" (Campos, 2010: p.67). Ishaq stressed that "the nation" for any person is his "people" (Campos, 2010: p.67).

Similarly, Sanu's belonging sentiment to the country made him to propagate the injustice of the Khedivial rule and the British colonization afterwards. Sanu was born in Cairo to a Jewish

¹ This group has never reached Britain as their leader, Y'aquop al-Qipty, has died on the ship after telling the reason behind their trip to the ship captain.



Egyptian mother and a Jewish Italian father who came at the inception of the nineteenth-century to become the advisor to Prince Ahmad Pasha Yeken, the grandson of Muhammad Ali. Yeken sent Sanu on an educational mission to Italy in 1853 to study theatre and literature. Remarkably, Sanu's writings and works never highlighted his Jewish ancestries. Sanu studied Old Testament, and deserved to be called a Levite, while he also learned to read Quran in Arabic by the age of twelve (Moosa [1970] 1997: p.41). Sanu's multicultural background enabled him to master different languages such as French, Arabic, Hebrew, and Italian.

In spite of Ismail's enthusiasm for Sanu that he declared him "the Molière of Egypt" (Levy, 2007: p.148), Sanu's criticism of the Khedive's government grew, that he later "found his theatre shutdown" (Russell, 2013: p.326). The theatre's closure never stopped Sanu's criticism, he established a satirical journal, named *Abu Naddara Zarqa* [*The Man with Blue Glasses*], to publicize the corruption during the Ismail's reign. Exploiting the rivalries between the French and the British, Sanu used to translate articles of his journal to French in order to defend the Egyptian's right of self-governance, and introduce the Egyptian question to the world. Sanu emphasized to one of the reporters of the *Daily Telegraph* that: "The English call me French, the French call me English, the Turks call me infidel; I am simply an Egyptian" (Moosa [1970] 1997: p.41). According to one of *Abu Naddara* issues, one of the readers wrote to Sanu: "My sir Abu Nadarah, the lover of Muslims, Jewish, and Christian, with your blue glasses you are revealing the deceitful British policy as [flakyeen] astronauts who can see planets with their white glasses" (Sanu, 1885: p.10).²



Figure 1. Heading of Abu Naddara's journal with the slogan "Egypt for the Egyptians." (Source: Abu Naddara: Sanu, 1885).

² Sanu's role in representing the Egyptian cause was highlighted in Ziad Fahmy, "Francophone Egyptian Nationalists, Anti-British Discourse, and European Public Opinion, 1885 – 1910: The Case of Mustafa Kamil and Ya'qub Sannu'," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. Vol. 28, No. 1, 2008. Also, see: Jacob Landau, "Şanū' (Sanua), Ya' qūb (James)." In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Norman A. Stillman, ed. Brill Online, 2014.



Figure 2. Cartoon of the Egyptian Question Burdening England.
(Source: Abu Naddara 2: Feb. 7, 1885).

Ishaq and Sanu, one may argue, revealed the fallacy of the locality of nationalism discourse which meant to obstinately produce the idea of the nation as a constant tale that is "enframed" (Mitchell, 1988: p.33) with arrogance and pride. The locality of national culture, as Bhabha argued, is "more around temporality than about historicity" (Bhabha, 2003: p.292). Therefore, this locality is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself" (Bhabha, 2003: p.292). In the same way, these transcultural subjects engraved new spaces of identity, and manifested "how the meaning of 'home' [...] stretched over time and space" (Phizacklea and Westwood, 2013: p.2). These new spaces of identity engraved through the notion of transculturation of nationalism, this paper highlights, are more consistent in an age of ragged edge of empire where the hegemony of imperialism faded and architectural vocabulary became discernible.

TRANSCULTURAL ARCHITECTURE AT THE RAGGED EDGE

Physical culture and architectural schemes materialised this notion of transculturation. In Mark Crinson's significant account: *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture*, he asserted that the informal presence of Britain in Egypt resulted in unfamiliar architecture that resists any imperial categorization, unlike British architecture in India or French architecture in Algeria (Crinson, 1990: p.3). The architecture then "exemplified and epitomized a range of notions about integration and alliance, religious and national identity" (Crinson, 1990: p.3). Architecture projects in this period were "socially transformative endeavour that is localized, [and] politicized" (Crinson, 1990: p.6). This paper seeks to emphasize that this localization and politicization of projects, or the transculturation, resulted from ambivalences of both the colonizer and the colonized at the ragged edge of empire at this period of the end of the nineteenth-century.

In this period, Egypt's viceroys in order to alleviate "their power in the short run," became "the intermediaries between Egypt and Europe" (Hunter, 1999: p.4). Khedive Ismail, one may

argue, is a notable example of the “go between” agencies (Mackenthun, Jobs, 2013: p.15), and a manifestation of the transculturation phenomenon and its consequent ambivalence. Adopting Haussmann’s model, which was of imperial aspirations,³ the new district of Al-Ismailiya was built to the west of Cairo, to be integrated with the medieval part (Mubarak, 1886:p.118). To achieve a *belle époque*, ‘Ali Mubarak (1823-93), the minister of public works, planned Al-Ismailiya based on his encounter with France during an educational mission.⁴ Within the old part of Cairo, a new twenty meters wide boulevard, named after Ismail's grandfather, Muhammad 'Ali Street, was completed between 1872 and 1874 to resemble Rue de Rivoli in Paris (Nasr and Volait, 2003: p.27). One of the buildings that manifested the Europeanization eagerness was the Opera building. The building [Figure 3]—designed by Pietro Avoscani (1869) to accommodate celebrations for the opening of the Suez Canal. The building, with its tripartite volume composition and central loggia with arched doorways framed by terracotta decorations, central portico, and Ionic columns, was modelled on La Scala in Milan.



Figure 3. Khedivial Opera House. Postcard B. Livadas & Coutsicos 1900 (Source: courtesy of: Travellers in the Middle East Archive, TIMEA).

³ Between 1853 and 1869 Haussmann spent “extraordinary expenses,” some two and one-half billions of francs on streets’ construction, which were mainly for surveillance, as fear of riots increased. According to E.Bouillat, Georges-Eugene Haussmann (Paris, 1901), pp. 8-9, as cited in S.Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 5th ed. 2008),p.762.

⁴ Mubarak wrote the twenty-volume description of Cairo, *Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiya al-Jadida*, in which he stressed that the split in the city’s fabric was a necessity of progress. See: N.AISayyad, “Ali Mubarak’s Cairo: Between the Testimony of ‘Allamudin and the Imaginary of the Khatat,” in *Making Cairo Medieval*, ed. N.AISayyad, I.Bierman, and N.Rabbat (New York: Lexington Books, 2005).

On the other hand, the colonizer, before the ragged edge of empire, used to assimilate its home culture. This assimilation was exhibited in buildings designed by British architects, according to Crinson, including the Oriental Hotel (1865) (1996: p.174). The Oriental Hotel, or the New Hotel, was built by stone and terracotta enrichments, which came from London. The Oriental Hotel was one of the very few works of British architects at this time, and its design certainly closer to an exhibition building, as Crinson asserted (1996: p. 174). Commanding a good view of the Pyramids, and facing the Ezbekiyeh gardens (*American Scientific* 1871: p.147), The New Hotel with its one hundred and forty feet long and seventy feet high façade was a clear emphasis on the European power. In addition to its grand scale, the neoclassical style with its combination of the portico and the colonnade of Ionic columns at the center of the main façade was a surplus embodiment of power. There were other examples of colonial architecture before the ragged edge, such as the Palace Hotel (1869) by Christopher Wray (Volait, 2004: p.201). The Palace Hotel was "inspired by La Scala in Milan, apartment buildings with commercial arcades, and townhouses surrounded by gardens in the Second Empire's manner" (Volait, 2004: p.201). Also, other notable projects include a post office by T.L. Donaldson at Suez (1862), and a hospital built by Colonel Collyer also at Suez (1867). This approach of the colonizer assimilating home could not have been continued on the ragged edge of empire in Egypt.



Figure 4. The New Hotel (Source: The Scientific American magazine 25 (10), September 1871).

At the ragged edge of empire, at the culmination of nineteenth-century of Egypt, both the colonizer and the colonized were engaged in the transculturation process that caused a mutual ambivalence. The ambivalence was between domesticating Europeanization and domesticating orientalism. The colonizer's domestication of Europeanism, on the one hand, was exhibited in the robust example of "Bayt Al-Lurd", [house of the Lord] (1892-1894) (Johnston, 2006: p.78). Lord Cromer who arrived in 1883 to rescue Egypt's finances asked the Foreign Office in London to design a new place to accommodate his offices and living habits. Beside Kasr el-Doubara, the palace of the Queen Mother, the building was "built like Whitehall and other government buildings of the day" (Johnston, 2006: p.78). The design

with its accentuated front entrance, central pediment, and balustrades manifested colonial architecture that synthesizes home culture.



Figure 5: The main façade of "Bayt Al-Lurd". (Shirley Johnston, Sherif Sonbol, *Egyptian Palaces and Villas: Pashas, Khedives, and Kings*. Taken by Sherif Sonbol).

On the other hand, the European exhilaration with Pharaonism and the Orient challenged the norm of colonial architecture that used to assimilate home culture. Although the fascination with Pharaonism started back in 1787 with Napoleon's campaign, it was culminated in 1881, when the first Committee for the Conservation of Monuments of Arab Art. The Committee was dominated by European officials to "secure [cultural authority] for the next fifty years" (Isenstadt and Rizvi, 2008: p.9). In this period, many Europeans peculiarly turned into activists of heritage conservation. Auguste Mariette (b.1821-1881), known as "the father of Egyptian Archaeology" (Mallgrave, 2004: p.21), restricted unauthorized excavation in order to preserve antiquities for the Egyptian nation (Reid, 2002: p.103). Mariette, as a transcultural subject, wanted to be buried near the ancient Egyptian artefacts (Haikal, 2009: p.124). Mariette, also, convinced the Khedive to establish a museum at Bulaq in 1859, near Cairo, to become the world's foremost repository of Egyptian antiquities at that time.

Khedive Tawfiq (r.1879-1892) announced an international architectural competition for the design of a new Egyptian museum, for which there were seventy-three projects submitted.⁵ The winning project was the French architect and the Ecole des Beaux-arts graduate, Marcel Dourgnon (1858–1911). Dourgnon's usage of Greek inscriptions at the top of its entrance, and the celebration of the European fathers of Egyptology and famous pharaohs, was perceived by the archaeologist Donald Reid, as a conveyance of "European imperial dominance" (2015: p.6). However, this paper argues that the design, in a transcultural way, truly succeeded in conjuring "the right moods in the museum space...without necessarily

⁵ The inauguration of the museum was celebrated in "Love your Monuments," in *al-Ahram* 15th of Nov, (1902).

applying the formal language of Ancient Egyptian architecture" (Asfour, 2014: p.107). Although the façade is a clear Imperial Roman style, it still has some relevance to ancient Egypt—not least the t-shaped plans that resembles the Temple of Hathor. The approval of such transcultural vocabulary by Khedive Abbas Hilmi, known with his national predispositions, emphasizes the ambivalence between domination and subordination at the ragged edge of empire. Moreover, this approval, this paper argues, involved a situatedness that is associated with the domestication of imperialism.

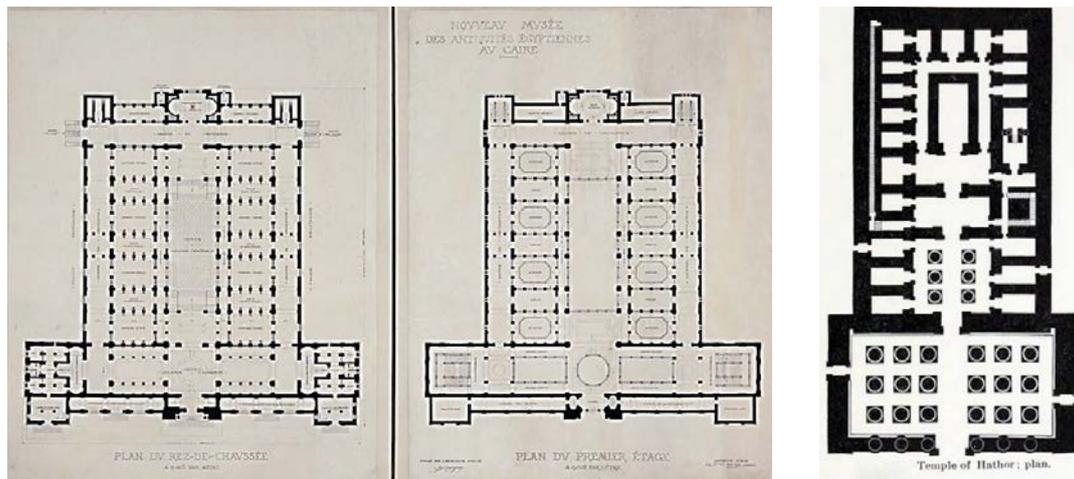


Figure 5. (Left) Plans of the Egyptian Museum (Source: Leconte, Marie-Laure C. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/inha/7007>, Bibliothèque Nationale de France); (Right) plan of temple of Hathor (Source: [Nizil Shah, Wikimedia Commons](#)).

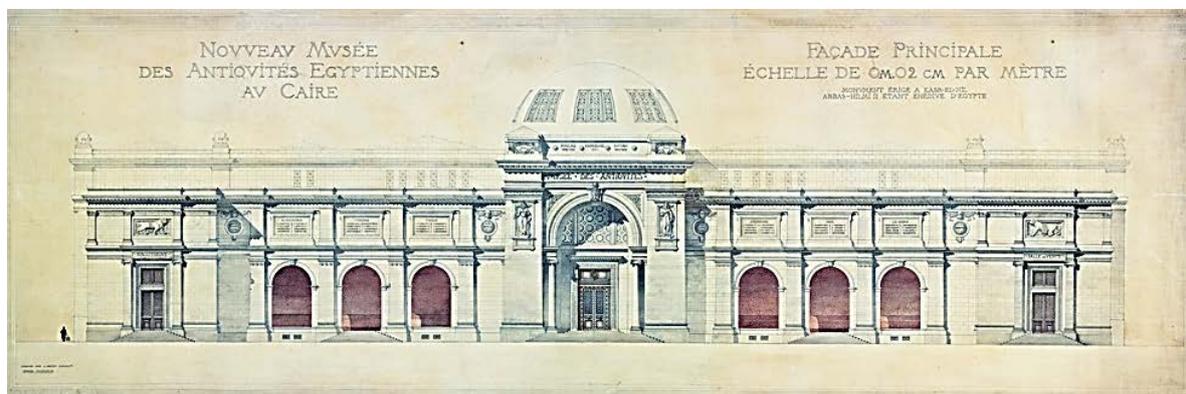


Figure 6. The main Façade of the Egyptian museum. (Leconte, Marie-Laure C. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/inha/7007>, Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

Domesticating orientalism resulted from the adoption of the colonizer's perceptions while reviving and modernizing traditions. Early nineteenth-century, in general, is a period of revivalism in architecture and resurgence of neo-classicism. Several architects adopted earlier styles in their designs. In Egypt, in particular, most of the buildings between 1892 and

1906 can be categorized as "Mamluk revivals" (Volait, 2006: p.134). Mamluk style⁶ was recognized as the purest form of expression of the Egyptian identity, that minimizes Ottoman influences, and later in the twentieth-century was regarded as the national Egyptian style (Rabbat, 2010: p.174).

For Nasser Rabbat, the revival of the Mamluk style can go back to two main points in the history of architectural documentation (Rabbat, 2010: p.174). The first was the documentation of "Egyptian" artifacts launched by the Napoleon expedition. Following the paths of the French expedition, in 1837, Pascale-Xavier Coste (1825-1829),⁷ a transcultural French architect brought by Muhammad 'Ali to work on several projects, published *L'Architecture arabe ou monuments du Kaire mesures et dessinés de 1818 à 1826* that documented Mamluk architecture. These two phases highlighted 'Ali Mubarak's emphasis that Orient was reintroduced "to its own architectural heritage...through Western mediation" (Al-Asad, 1993: p.116-17). However, Volait wondered whether such Mamluk revivalism in the nineteenth-century should be considered as "a late resurgence or continuity of traditional practices, or should rather be analysed as an expression of a local domestication of Western orientalism" (Volait, 2006: p.141). This "indigenous 'orientalism' in late-nineteenth-century Cairo" (Volait, 2006: p.141), is one of the sides of transculturation, this article argues, that highlighted the adoption of the colonized to the colonizer's perceptions.

Between these Mamluk revivals was the building of the *Awqāf* [endowment] administration (Fig.3) which was, according to Volait, designed in 1896 by an unknown European architect F. Ségèz or [Légèz] (2006: p.138). The *Awqāf* administration was formed in 1835 to manage religious foundations and in 1879 it became a ministry (Volait, 2006: p.133). Most importantly, in 1884 it claimed liberation—seized in 1913 from the British authority based on the fact that it belongs to the sharia and became totally under the Khedive's direction. The activities of the *Awqāf* during the period of its liberation manifested the domestication of orientalism by the colonized.

The *Awqāf* building itself is a manifestation of such domestication. The construction went through three different phases of construction. The first phase dated to (1898-1912), during the period of liberation from the British domination, included the main portal along with the façade that has the secondary portal. Typical to Mamluk architecture, the building included many portals projecting its façades. The central portal is a pointed horseshoe arch that is topped with a pediment capped with three layers of stalactites. The secondary portal is bordered with recesses, each with two rectangular windows ornamented with three tiers of stalactites. In between the first and second floors the area is decorated with a rectangular

⁶ The Mamluk architectural features included carved stonework in the entrances, the domes, as well as the two-tone stonework banding (usually red-and-white) of the typical horseshoe and trefoil arches. Moreover, different dome patterns (zigzag, floral, geometric) identified a mosque's patron. N.Rabbat, "The Medieval Link: Maqrizi's *Khitat* and Modern Narratives of Cairo," in *Making Cairo Medieval*, eds. N.AISayyad, I.Bierman and N.Rabbat (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005),p.35. Also, see: Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks: A History of the Architecture and Its Culture* (Cairo, 2007).

⁷ Muhammad 'Ali rejected Coste's Mamluk inspired proposal for the design of his mosque. See: M. El-Ashmouni and K.Bartsch, "Egypt's Age of Transition: Unintentional Cosmopolitanism during the Reign of Muhammad 'Ali (1805-1848)," in *Arab Quarterly Studies* (2014). Vol.36, no.1, pp. 43-74. Coste documented his proposal in his memoirs, which were compiled in *Toutes les Égypte* (1998). Coste's views about Mamluk architecture were highlighted in Gaston Weit, *Mohammed 'Ali et les Beaux-arts* (Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 1949).



band adorned with a cartouche decorated with vegetal motif. Moreover, along the top of the building there are trefoil crenellations. In 1929 an extension was made and the portal was designed by Mario Rossi using neo-Mamluk style (Sidky, 1998).



Figure 7. Main façade of the Awqaf administration (Source: Archnet archives, photo by: Nasser Rabbat).

The fascination with the Orient was also manifested in private projects such as the villa of Count Zogheb, the consul of Denmark. The villa was built in 1898 in Qasr al-Nil Street, and was demolished in 1960 (Moretti, 1903: p.1). The palace was designed by Max Herz, (b.1856-1919) the Hungarian chief architect of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe (established by Khedive Tawfiq in 1881). Zogheb villa was designed in neo Mamluk style with *mashrabiyyas* in its facades (Ormos, 2009). Its interiors were also fashioned in Mamluk style with coffered ceilings, openwork balusters, and niches with stalactites. Another example is the still standing villa⁸ of the tobacco manufacturer Nestor Gianacis, which was remodelled in the neo-Mamluk style by Herz in 1898. Herz was considered as the leading expert on this style, as stated in the Arabic witness journal *Al-Hilal*, although the Mamluk style was not a new invention of the nineteenth-century (Iskarus, 1919: p. 924). Herz's fascination with the Mamluk style is evidenced in his publication: *La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire* (1899), therefore he played a significant role in the history and historiography of Islamic monuments. Herz had an exceptional proficiency in investigating and supervising the restoration works from Alexandria to Aswan (Ormos, 2002). Herz, the director of the Museum of Islamic Art, himself can be considered as a manifestation of the transculturation of nationalism.

⁸ The villa has been acquired by the American University since 1919.

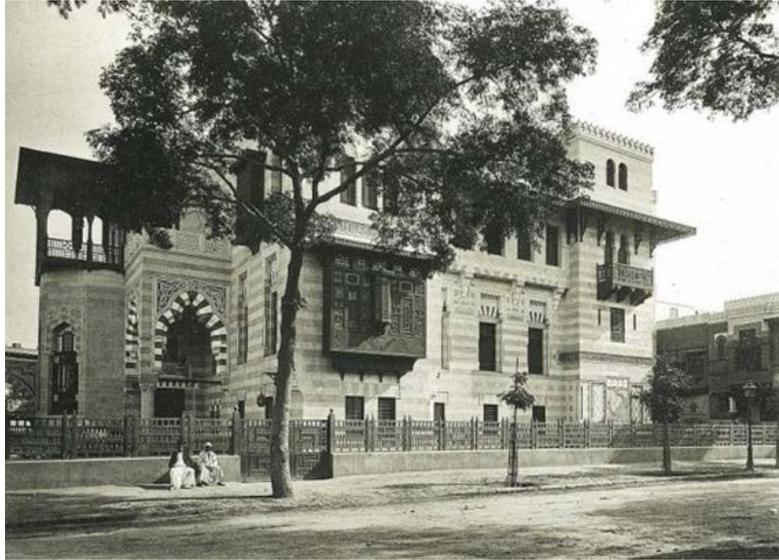


Figure 8. Zoghreb Villa neo Mamluk façade (Source: Wikipedia commons).

Moreover, Heliopolis is another example of the fascination with the orient, which was one of the most important foreign developmental projects at that time. Until this time the foreign communities in Egypt, the Syrians, Italians, Greek, Armenians, had greater territorial rights, even more than the majority of natives (Starr, 2009). Heliopolis, the city of the sun, was meant to be an oasis in the desert, a residential complex expansion of Cairo founded by Belgian businessman Baron Édouard Empain (Dobrowolska and Dobrowolski, 2006). The buildings of the city were oriental style and neo-Moorish, with domes, columns, and arcades, as Empain dreamed of when he first visited the desert plateau in 1905 with the Belgian architect Ernest Jaspar. The dream came true and the city, far from the congested Cairo, housed by the elites of foreign communities. The palace of the Empain himself in Heliopolis, which was built in 1907-1910 with Indo style and mixed tastes, intermingled in the Egyptian context.



Figure 9. From left: One of the earliest buildings in Heliopolis; and Villa of Nubar Pasha. (Dobrowolska, A. and Dobrowolski, J. (2006). *Heliopolis: The Rebirth of the City of the Sun*, p.136).



At that ragged edge, the colonizer, while fascinated with the tradition of the country and strived to preserve his oriental perceptions of corporeal visages, the subordinated was inclined to adopt certain European styles both to display modernism and change such oriental perceptions. Architecture at that period was beyond limitations of the resistive attitudes of the twentieth-century such as regionalism and critical regionalism. Al-Muntazah Palace (1892) as an important example of this tendency, the paper argues, is a manifestation of transculturation with its Italian Renaissance and Venetian styles. It was designed by the court engineer Fabricius Bey with a few changes by the khedive's favourite architect, the Austrian Antonio Lašiac (Rafaat, 2003). In each floor there are long open arcades featuring trabeated architecture, one that was commonly used in classical styles, ancient Egyptian or Greek. The horizontality of the façade symbolizes continuity and nobility. The use of towers, low pitched roof and the gable elaborate distinctive features of Renaissance details. Since the Khedive had "personally masterminded its development" (Rafaat, 2003), this article argues that his choice for Venetian style conveyed both domestication of Europeanism and political independence from the British.



Figure 9. Salamlek Palace, Muntazah. (Juan Freudenthal 1981, Source: Aga Khan Visual Archive).

CONCLUSION

Considered together the period of late nineteenth-century, or the ragged edge of empire, was an exigency of a historical mediation between local and international. During that period, Egypt was bounded in a dilemma between the nation-state and the global image. This dilemma resulted in the ambivalence of Egypt's rulers between accentuating unique traditions as a nation-state, and establishing a new evolved image within the larger global systems. The colonizer, also, was ambivalent between accentuating his fascination about the orient and the assimilation of his home architecture. This ambivalence challenged the contingencies of the colonial experience and its formal representations of the colonized. Therefore, the transculturation notion, that does not necessarily generate congruence between asymmetric boundaries of colonial powers, proves the fallacy and temporality of any

call for the locality of nationalism. Therefore, categories of Arabism, Islamism, or Pharaonism in architecture annuls dynamism of traditions and culture that was 'in great labour' over centuries of integration, alliance, and transculturation.

The architectural context of Egypt as a contact zone at the ragged edge of empire, is surely an anecdote of experiments of *cultural mediation*, and attitudes of people towards suppressed aspects of history. Therefore, architecture worked as a vehicle that derived as much of its potency from the divergence of such boundaries. The transcultural architecture of that period extended the vicinity of that potency into the globe by acting as a mediator that attempted to soften differences between the dominant and the subjugated in a materialistic vocabulary. Architecture then is significant for its ability to cross lines of hierarchy and setting a systematic approach to the crucial concept of transculturation. Architecture, therefore, can carve out "a space of agency," or a "site of change," (Jobs and Mackenthun, 2013: p.14) that increases cultural homogenization, that is urgently needed in light of the recent years' terrorists conflicts in the world. Therefore, further studies needed to understand the ability of architecture in establishing dialogues with the public.

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