

# Displays of Islamic Art in Vienna and Paris Imperial Politics and Exoticism at the Weltausstellung and Exposition Universelle

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**Abstract** This paper examines the exhibition of Islamic art at the Weltausstellung in Vienna (1873) and the Paris Exposition Universelle (1878). In particular, it explores how European officials represented both inhabitants and their traditional decorative arts. As will be demonstrated, such displays anticipated more scholarly, specialized exhibitions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries through their strategic concentration on objects from specific societies.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Wiener Weltausstellung (1873). – 3 The Exposition Universelle of 1878. – 4 Comparisons & Conclusions.

**Keywords** Islamic Art. World's Fair. Weltausstellung. Exposition Universelle. Exhibition. Display. Vienna. Paris. Ottoman Turkey. Persia. Fin de siècle.

## 1 Introduction

World's fairs or universal expositions offered visitors a microcosm of nineteenth-century European technological advancements, colonial expansion, and global consumer culture. Concurrently, they afforded non-western countries the opportunity to exhibit and partake in commercial ventures that projected a feigned atmosphere of peace, cooperation, and equality among all nations. Such events displayed native peoples in national pavilions and exhibition halls that attempted to replicate their indigenous surroundings. Moreover, these occasions facilitated the staging of the first large public exhibitions of Islamic art held in the West.

This paper discusses the exhibition of Islamic art objects at the Weltausstellung in Vienna (1873) and the Paris Exposition Universelle (1878). In particular, this essay focuses on the sections of the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and the *Galérie Orientale* in the Trocadéro Palace. Special attention is paid to the displays of traditional decorative and fine arts. By evaluating articles, engravings, and photographs documenting these events, the aesthetic and conceptual differences between the installations are explored.

As will be demonstrated, the approaches and motivations of the Austrian and French exhibition organizers converged at times but equally dif-

fered from one another, and therefore embodied fundamental, diverging attitudes toward Islamic art and culture. While such displays were often colonialist and exotic in their conception and design, it is argued that they prefigured more specialized exhibitions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through their strategic concentration on objects from selected societies. Thus, exposition officials decisively established hierarchies that would eventually define future categorizations and perceptions of Islamic art and civilization in Europe.

## 2 The Wiener Weltausstellung (1873)

Like previous world's fairs, the Weltausstellung was laid out on vast proportions (fig. 1) in Vienna's Prater. Arranged according to racial categorizations and national hierarchies (fig. 2), the organization of these sections revealed the order of world cultures as determined by Europe, and alluded to power relations among the exhibiting countries. The European host nation occupied a superior position at the center, the independent western nations surrounded it, and non-western cultures or colonies were either allotted smaller exposition spaces or relegated to the peripheries. According to the plan of the Weltausstellung, Germany, Britain and France were assigned some of the largest, most prominent locations in the



Figure 1. Plan of the Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (Falke 1873)

main rotunda (fig. 3), which housed different industrial exhibits, while Turkey, Persia, China, Japan and other Islamic nations were condensed into several smaller exhibition halls. As visitors strolled through the Fair, they observed artisans and technicians working on their traditional crafts and trades, all of whom were displayed as curiosities or trophies acquired via colonization by western Imperial powers, most notably Britain, France, and Belgium.

Whereas France had already established a large colonial empire in North Africa and mounted several universal expositions, this was the first such occasion to be staged by a Central European power which had sometimes been viewed as peripheral in international affairs. Thus, this event afforded Austrian authorities the opportunity to claim significant influence in global politics and garner prestige and recognition from competing European nations. Originally conceived by Austrian liberal politicians, bankers, and other entrepreneurs, the Weltausstellung aimed to transform Vienna from a provincial city into a

world metropolis with sophisticated culture, bustling trade, and thriving industries. Moreover, this Fair equally permitted Austria-Hungary to form new diplomatic and economic relationships with Islamic countries and helped to expose the Austrian public to Islamic art and culture. In contrast to France or Britain, the Habsburg Empire sought to expand its influence in the Balkans, Ottoman Empire, and Persia by more peaceful and less costly commercial measures than territorial expansion or colonization. These activities included railway construction, the establishment of trade agencies and schools, and the sponsorship of cultural missions (Esroy 2015, 30-31, 42-44; Kadletz 1980, 147-73). Exhibition organizers in Vienna represented the Islamic cultures of Turkey, Persia, and Egypt at pavilions whose architecture recalled actual monuments in those lands and amalgamated different historical styles and decorative forms. Several notable buildings (figs. 4-7) were the Egyptian Khedival Palace, Persian Pavilion, a replica of Sultan Ahmed III's Fountain in Istanbul, and a Turkish Café (cf. *L'Espos-*

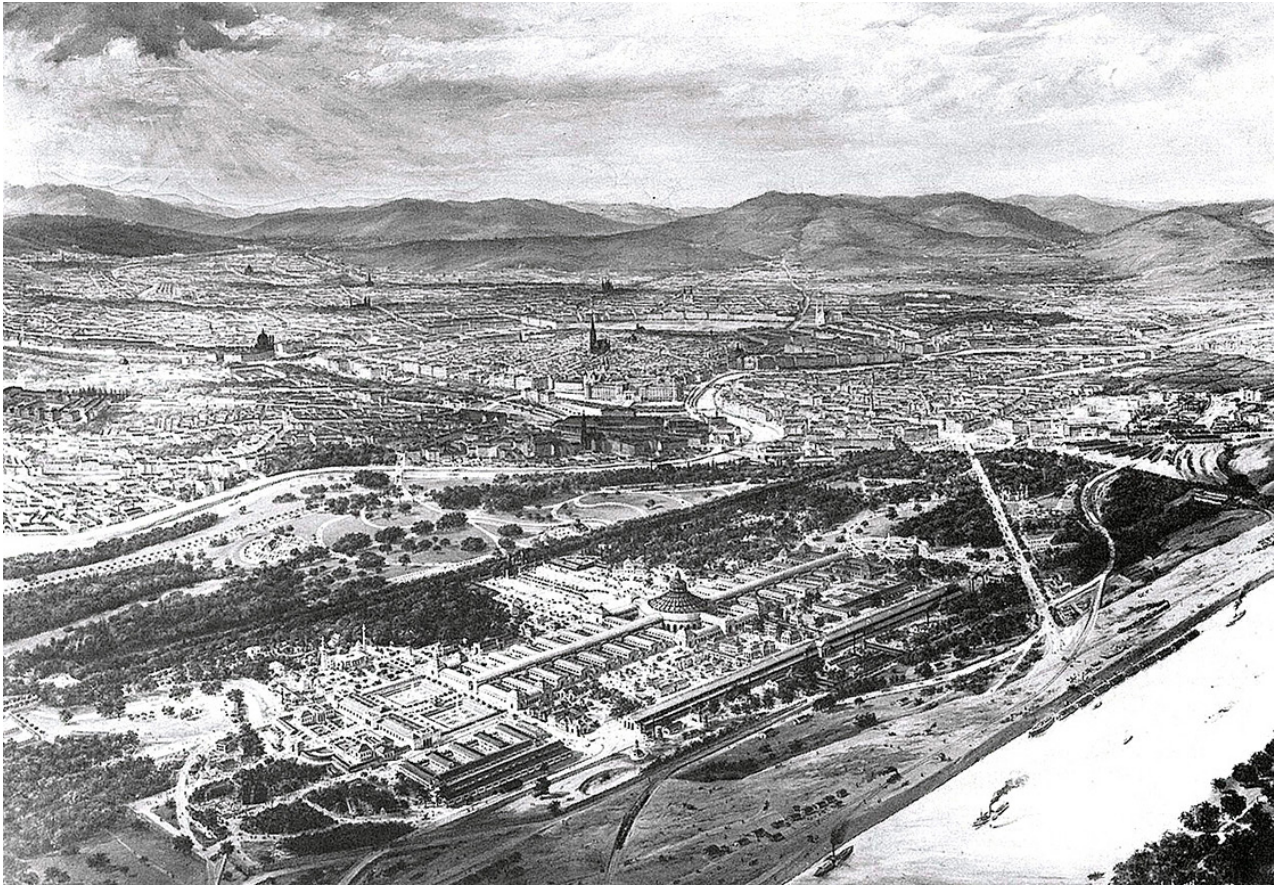


Figure 2. Bird's eye view of the Vienna Weltausstellung and Prater, 1873. Engraving (from Wikimedia Commons)

*sizione Universale 1873; Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung 1874*).<sup>1</sup> These hybrid, exoticized structures and their contents summarized Islamic societies and presented visitors with a window onto their customs and lifestyles (Çelik 1992; Leprun 1986, 104). While such attractions actually stereotyped the characteristics of each ethnicity on view, they nevertheless attempted to instruct and, at times, entertain attendees by offering them an 'authentic' experience of the different societies' ways of life, one that perpetuated a myth of the static, unchanging Orient, which was frozen in the past.

Among the Islamic countries exhibiting at the Weltausstellung, Turkey and Persia are of particular interest.<sup>2</sup> For the first time in Austria and

other German-speaking nations, visitors could view art objects from these lands that were drawn from private collections and displayed alongside various ethnographic artifacts. In the main rotunda, both the Ottoman Empire and Persia had submitted a wide range of manufactures, agricultural products, minerals, and decorative wares. In the Turkish section the organizers arranged books, furniture, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, and clothing in the same room (fig. 8).<sup>3</sup> In all like-

<sup>3</sup> Of all the exhibiting Islamic nations, the Ottoman Empire received the largest space and representation from Austrian organizers. Such arrangements coincided with the pursuit of diplomatic rapprochement by two historically rival countries, both of which aimed to achieve mutually beneficial political and economic interests. Eventually, Turkey would become Austria's most important trading partner and closest ally in the Middle East. Furthermore, several major publications related to Ottoman culture were commissioned by Turkish officials specifically for this Fair: Victor Marie de Launay's *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani (L'architecture ottomane, 1873)*, a history of Turkish architecture which advocated the creation of a Neo-Ottoman style for modern structures; and the *Elibse i-'Osmaniye (Les costumes populaires de la*

<sup>1</sup> For *L'Esposizione Universale*, 146-47, 212-13, 262-63, 281-82, 331-34, 597-98.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the 1878 Exposition Universelle, the Weltausstellung's non-western pavilions and exhibitions were very thoroughly documented through both engravings and photographs.



Figure 3. The main rotunda at the Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph from Wikimedia Commons

lihood, these objects included late nineteenth-century wares along with a selection of older objects that best represented Turkey's range of manufactured products and industrial arts.<sup>4</sup> One notes the inclusion of plaster mannequins or statuettes dressed in various costumes that represented the diverse peoples who inhabited

*Turquie*, 1873), an ethnographic study of peoples living in the Ottoman Empire authored by Launay and Osman Hamdi Bey (1842-1910). For accounts of Austro-Turkish affairs and the *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani*, consult Ersoy 2015, 1-27; 44-46; 132-240; Wharton 2015, 97-98.

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, in contrast to the Persian, Japanese, and Chinese sections, an official catalogue of the Ottoman installation and an inventory of its artifacts were not published. Thus, it is not possible to determine many of the exact periods and types of the industrial wares that appear in engravings and historic photographs of this installation. Critic and cultural historian Jacob Falke (1825-1897) lamented this omission in his book, *Die Kunstindustrie auf der Wiener Aufstellung 1873*, 174.

Ottoman lands.<sup>5</sup> Whereas in some areas objects were piled up or placed on tables, in other locations they were more neatly displayed in vitrine cases and cabinets. This somewhat haphazard, crowded installation melded seemingly disparate items in one exhibition space and encapsulated the traits of the cultures on view.

In the Persian section the display resembled the Ottoman exhibition in its crammed presentation of objects and through its combination of scientific, ethnographic, and artistic artifacts (figs. 9-10). Although the exact contents of the Turkish section were not recorded, a detailed inventory of the Persian exhibit does exist and it allows us to understand some of the motivations

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed study of the *Elibse i-'Osmaniye* and various ethnic groups represented in the Ottoman section, see Ersoy 2015, 29-90.

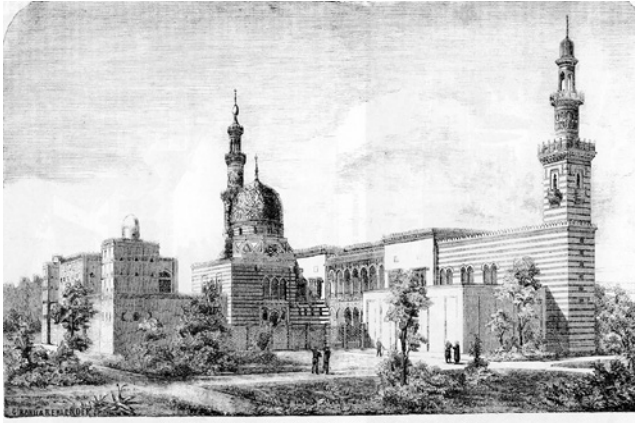


Figure 4. Egyptian Pavilion. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

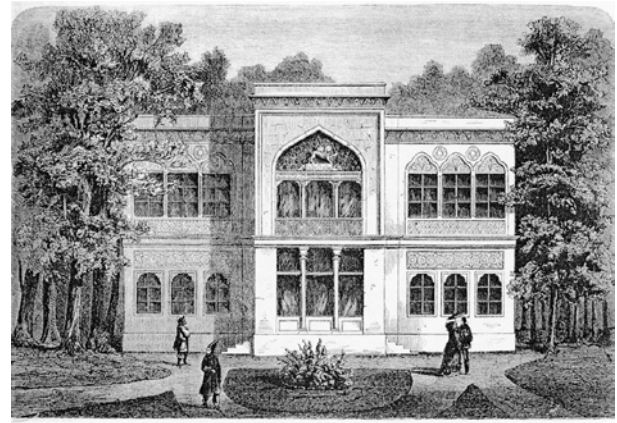


Figure 5. The Persian Shah's Pavilion. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)



Figure 6. Sultan Ahmet III's Fountain. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

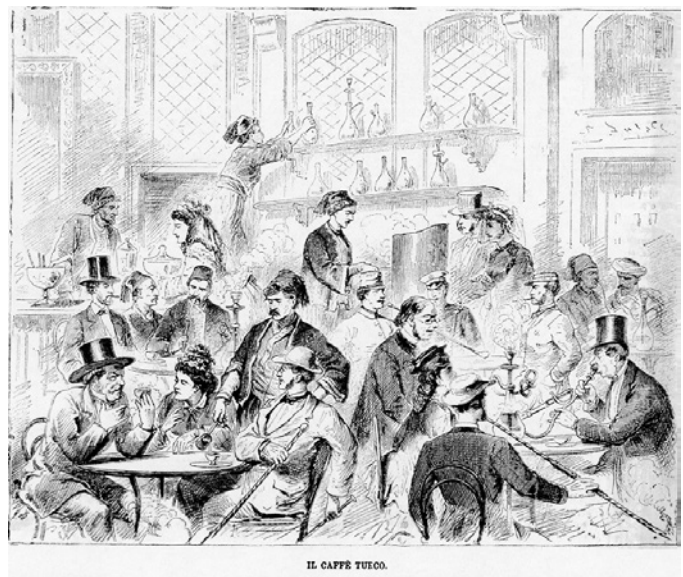


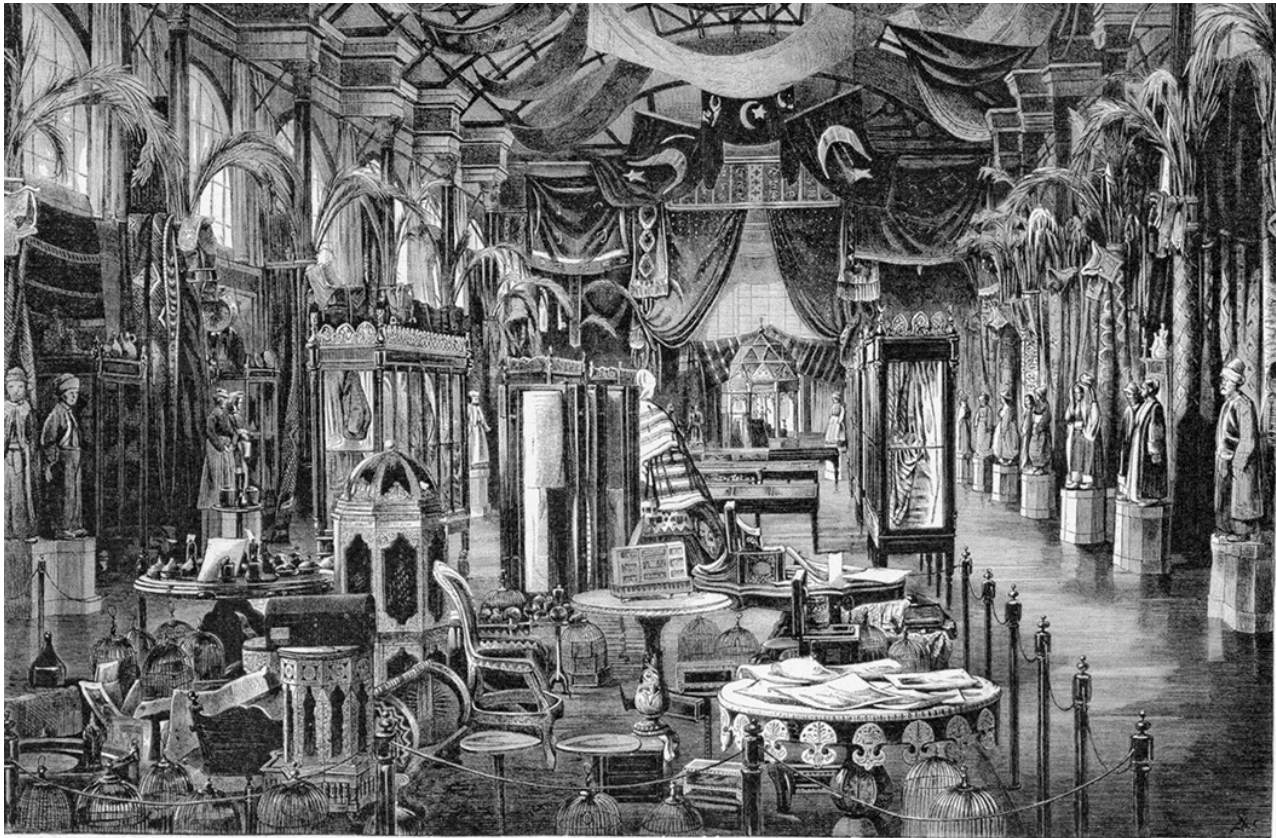
Figure 7. Interior view of the Turkish Café. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

and attitudes of the curators.<sup>6</sup> Like other Middle Eastern countries that exhibited their products at the Weltausstellung, the Persian government participated in order to establish economic and cultural contacts with the West and learn about

its advances in science and technology (Pemsel 1989, 46). In the decades leading up to the Fair, Austria and Persia had forged close economic ties with one another, mostly because Shah Nasir-ad-Din pursued a policy of modernization along western models that he thought would improve his society and culture (Kadletz 1980, 147-73).<sup>7</sup> He was the first Persian ruler to travel to Europe,

<sup>6</sup> See *Special-Catalog 1873*. Several instrumental figures who coordinated Persia's involvement in the Fair were the Austrian General Consul in Beirut, Mr. Zwidinek, and Dr. Jakob Eduard Polak (1818-1891), a diplomat, personal physician, and tutor of Shah Nasir-ad-Din (1831-1896). An ethnographer and orientalist scholar, Polak helped to introduce the Austrian public to Persian history and culture through his translations and publications on a wide range of subjects. For more information on him, consult Werner 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Among these reforms were the construction of a telegraph system with British assistance, attempts to restructure the Persian military, and the Austrian supervision of improvements to the country's postal and coin minting operations.



LA GALLERIA TURCA (Vedi pag. 598)

Figure 8. Turkish section, interior of the main rotunda. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

and he visited Vienna in August 1873, where he toured the Weltausstellung with Emperor Franz Joseph I (1830-1916) (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*, 202-03, 211). The Shah's involvement in the event provided an excellent occasion for his regime to showcase its mercantile and trading enterprises, particularly carpet weaving and textile manufacturing, products which European consumers admired and acquired increasingly. As the authors of the catalogue explain, the primary purpose of this exhibition was commercial. However, it also sought to educate visitors about Persian geology, cultural traditions, art, and history by assembling a broad array of items.

Part of this display included examples from Persia's long artistic heritage. For this occasion Ali Kuli Mizra (1822-1880), Minister of Education and the uncle of Shah Nasir-ad-Din, loaned a portion of his art collection. In several historic photographs of the installation, we observe these artifacts, which are placed on tables, moveable walls, and in cabinets. Like the Ottoman installation, they included minerals, ceramics, weapons,

armour, and clothing in addition to miniatures, calligraphic pages, textiles, carpets, musical instruments, and scientific devices, which ranged in date from 1570 to 1860.

As described in several contemporary sources, nineteenth-century applied art objects from Persia such as clay, gold, and silver vessels, along with embroideries, were interspersed among Indian wares to illustrate key visual parallels between them (Falke 1873; 1875, 171-72; 174-77, 191). Dividing textiles, pottery, and metalwork according to common design elements, Jacob Falke characterized Persian and Indian works (figs. 11-12) by their extensive use of abstracted flower motifs and arabesques while he emphasized the predominance of geometric forms among Turkish, Levantine, and North African artifacts. For him, Indo-Persian ceramics, carpets, and fabrics achieved coloristic appeal and excellence through a harmony of assembled tones in which no single color dominated the other and subtle contrasts emerged (Falke 1873, 1875, 171-72; 174-77, 191). Similarly, Falke's colleague, Aglaia



Figure 9. Persian section. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien, Inv. Nr. 63.704 E STEREO)



Figure 10. Persian section. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien, Inv. Nr. 63.705 E STEREO)



Figure 11. Mid- to late nineteenth-century Persian metalware vessels. Engraving from Lützwow, 1875

Figure 12. Mid- to late nineteenth-century Indian ceramic vessels. Engraving from Lützwow, 1875

Figure 13. Table containing framed pages from sixteenth-century Persian manuscripts. Persian section, detail. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph. (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien, Inv. Nr. 63.705 E STEREO)



von Enders (1836-1883), lauded Persian and Indian embroideries for their intricate designs that gracefully intertwined birds and flowers using gold and silver threads (Enders 1875, 250-54).

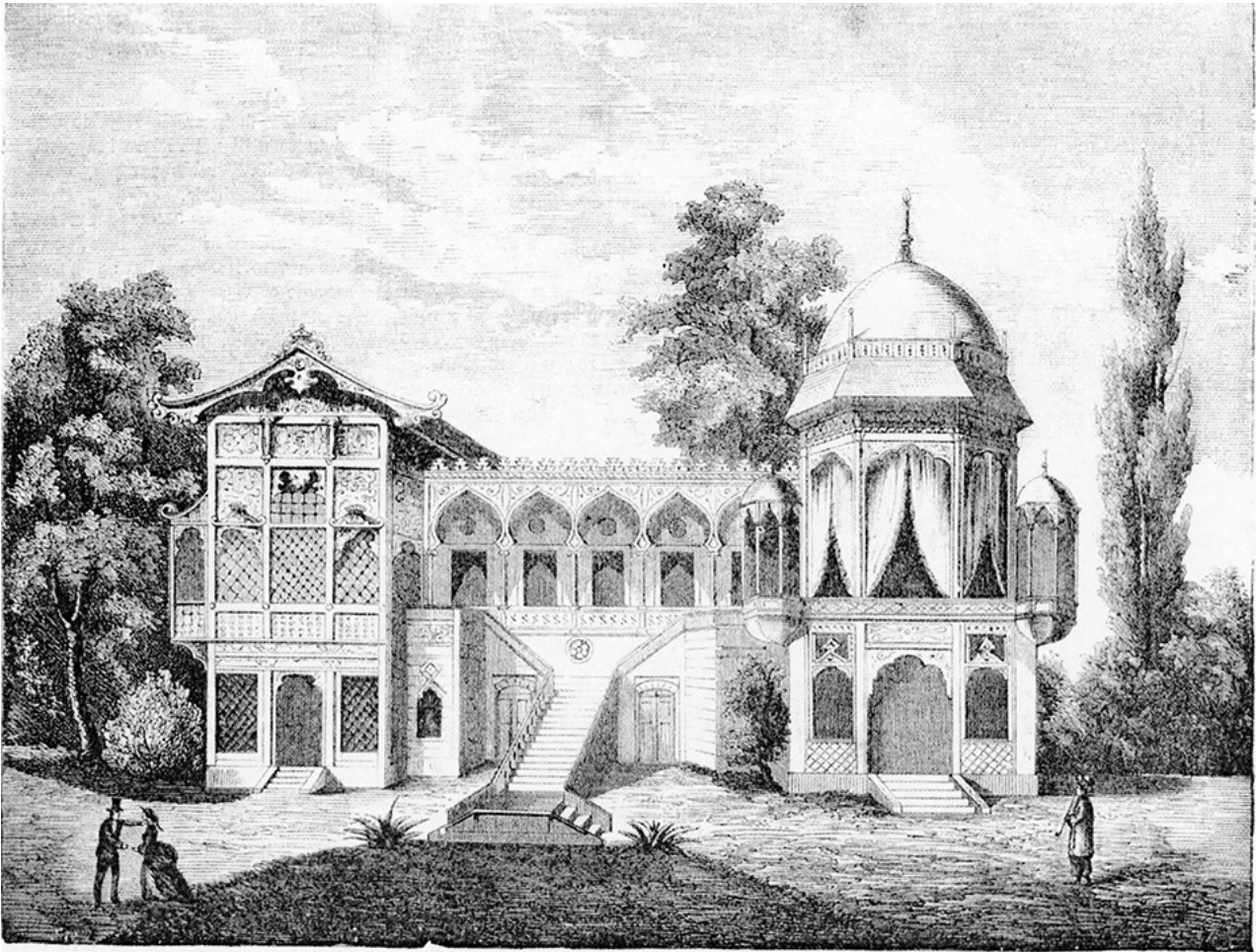
Of all the objects on view, one set of works counted among those of the finest artistic quality and received considerable commendation from critics. In the lower left of one photograph (fig. 13), two framed manuscript pages arranged on a table are noteworthy because they could have derived from the *Hamzanama* (1562-1570), the renowned Persian novel recounting the adventures of Hamza bin Azrak.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, the free-

standing wooden frames could have contained images from a copy of the *Khamsa of Nizami* (1597) since this book was one of the few of its kind (apart from the *Hamzanama*) that featured both figural paintings and text. Therefore, it is not surprising that following the closure of the Weltausstellung the newly-created Orientalisches Museum (later the Österreichisches Handelsmuseum) purchased sixty *Hamzanama* folios from Ali Kuli-Mizra for its permanent collection of Far Eastern and Central Asian decorative arts (Pokorny-Nagel 2009, 38-40).

<sup>8</sup> Due to the limited resolution of this photograph, it is difficult to determine exactly whether the visible framed pages derived from the *Hamzanama* or another Persian man-

uscript. The *Hamzanama* was commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542-1605) and completed by Persian painters and artisans.





CIRCOLO ORIENTALE. (Costruzione in stile greco-moresco, situato nel parco dell'Esposizione).

Figure 14. The Cercle Orientale Pavilion. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

Like the exoticist displays of Muslim peoples scattered throughout the pavilions at the Weltausstellung, these works were supposed to provide moral, intellectual, and practical edification to visitors about Islamic societies. Responding both to trends in the British Arts and Crafts Movement and displays of Islamic art at the Vienna Fair, critics argued that with the rise of mass-production, European manufacturers of decorative art had declined because their products lacked their former originality, quality workmanship, and had been sullied by mass-production processes. In the view of various authors, specific aspects of Islamic decorative arts exhibited a harmony of ornament and form with their stylized, non-illusionistic use of floral and geometric patterns. Thus, designers needed to

seek inspiration from such 'pure' forms so that they could reinvigorate their industrial and applied arts traditions.

Engaging with these attitudes in their essays, Falke and Enders established a hierarchy within the nineteenth-century Islamic decorative arts that ranked each culture's products according to qualities of superior design and craftsmanship that exhibited refinement. According to Austrian critics, Indian metalwork and textiles were of the best quality while those exhibited by Turkey (excluding some carpets from Izmir) lacked refinement and exhibited "decadence" and "crudeness" by comparison. Persia stood in the middle of this classification system, followed by Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Often employing conde-

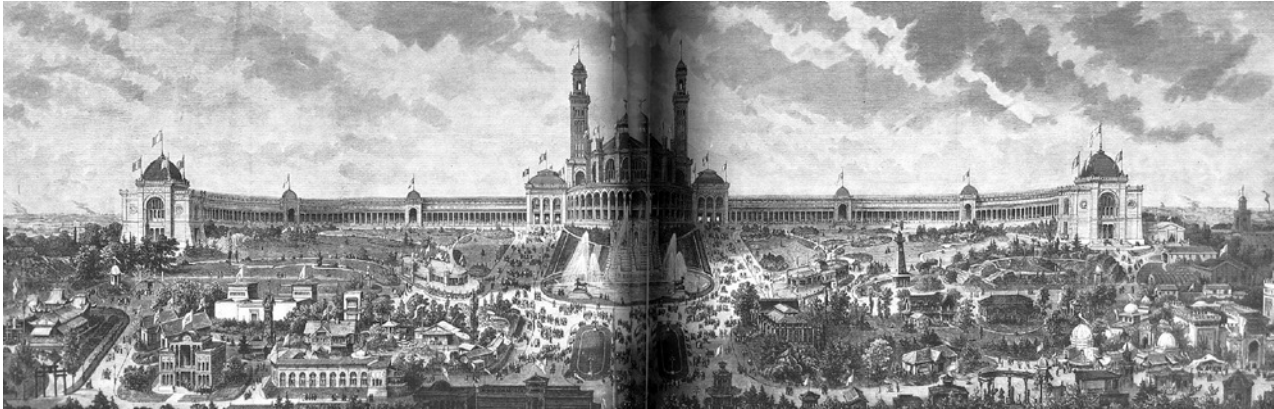


Figure 15. Trocadéro Palace. Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1878. Engraving (*L'Exposition Universelle 1878*)

scending assessments, Falke sweepingly argued that Indian craftsmen, through trade and cultural exchange, transmitted to their Persian counterparts abstracted floral motifs and arabesques, elements that they did not possess inherently, thus rendering the latter society's traditions more "perfect, diverse, and rich" (Falke 1873, 191). At the same time, however, he credited the Persians with employing the most free-thinking approach in their depictions of human figures in miniature paintings. In doing so, he attempted to elevate their aesthetic and cultural status by implying that such images more closely resembled and emulated exemplary European naturalistic representations.

Such categorizations, while often historically inaccurate and thoroughly grounded in Eurocentric attitudes toward race, civilization, and cultural sophistication, nevertheless shaped the critical reception of Islamic artistic traditions among other authors, collectors, and readers. Perhaps most significantly, these widely distributed publications and the displays themselves helped foster an emerging awareness of Islamic art and culture both in Austria and Europe at large, thus opening the door for further scholarly inquiry in subsequent decades. An immediate consequence of these activities was the establishment of the *Orientalisches Museum* during the *Weltausstellung*.<sup>9</sup> Its founders, including Arthur von Scala (1845-1909) and Joseph Ritter von Schwegel (1836-1914), convened at the *Cercle Orientale* pavilion (fig. 14), where they steadily acquired Islamic artifacts from exhibiting countries to es-

<sup>9</sup> This institution was modeled on British and French organizations such as the South Kensington Museum and the *Union Central des Arts Décoratifs*.

establish a "master collection" of industrial wares that informed visitors about the geography, inhabitants, and industries of non-western cultures (Ersoy 2015, 47-49; Pokorny-Nagel 2014, 188-93; Haslauer 2010, 276-78; Haslauer 2013).<sup>10</sup>

### 3 The Exposition Universelle of 1878

In the five years that elapsed between the end of the *Weltausstellung* and the opening of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, the European consciousness of Islamic art increased steadily, as critics continued to praise the superiority of its designs and techniques, which helped to propel its status among scholarly circles.<sup>11</sup> In response, repositories such as the *Österreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie*, *South Kensington Museum*, and *Union Central des Arts Décoratifs* gradually acquired and exhibited more objects. As France consolidated its colonies in the Maghreb and established close diplomatic and commer-

<sup>10</sup> Scala was an important engineer, economist, and museum official. He played a seminal role in shaping the *Orientalisches Museum's* collections while Schwegel served as General Consul in Istanbul and Director of the Department of Commercial Policy in the Austrian Foreign Ministry. In contrast to the sections found in the rotunda, images and precise documentation of the *Cercle's* displays do not survive. This site also served to introduce visitors to the Austrian government's policy of economic and cultural expansionism in the East (Ersoy 2015, 47).

<sup>11</sup> Key authors such as the archaeologist Emile Prisse d'Avennes (1807-1879) promoted scholarship on Islamic art and architecture by founding the *Revue orientale et algérienne* (1852-1854) and publishing his renowned study *L'art arabe* (1869-1877), one of the earliest comprehensive studies of its kind on Cairene Islamic monuments and their decoration (Marchal 1896, 46).

cial ties with various Muslim countries, many art objects from these regions flowed onto the Parisian art market. Next to Vienna and London, the French capital evolved into one of Europe's main centers for the study and collection of Islamic art and its display in large public exhibitions by the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas Austrian and German authors predominantly concentrated on how Islamic motifs could improve industrial art and design, French critics began to move away from this approach during the 1870s. In a series of pioneering articles from the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, French critic and scholar Henri Lavoix (1846-1897) responded to the growing presence of Islamic art in Paris. He surveyed the notion of representing human figures and animals in manuscripts, coins, metalwork, and ceramics from Egypt, Syria, and Persia, ranging in date from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (Lavoix 1875). While by today's standards his observations and assertions exhibit noticeable inaccuracies and biases, he demonstrated specialized knowledge of Islamic art and culture, and exhibited an understanding of its complex, often paradoxical history. Such an approach is typically absent in the writings of contemporary Austrian and German theorists. Perhaps most significantly, Lavoix treated the works in his essay as individual specimens which he analyzed and interpreted in relation to their cultural and historical contexts.

The main purpose of his essays was to disprove a common, erroneous western attitude: that Islamic peoples banned entirely the portrayal of human figures.<sup>13</sup> Lavoix was among the first Europeans to write about Islamic art broadly, taking into account its shared characteristics, styles, and geographic locations. However, like Falke, he possessed ethnocentric views that surfaced in his remarks. Despite his scholarly ambitions, Lavoix cannot be absolved of his Orientalist motivations that involved, according to Edward Said, the appreciation and study of Islamic culture as a



Figure 16. Persian miniature, fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. Engraving (Duranty 1878)

<sup>12</sup> For the pertinent literature on the collection and display of Islamic art in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, see Troelenberg 2010; Roxburgh 2000; Vernoit 2000; Labrusse 1997, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Austrian scholars such as Josef von Karabacek (1845-1918) addressed this issue subsequently. In contrast to Lavoix, he examined the phenomenon from a broad historical and theological perspective but neglected to analyze specific artworks to support his assertions. Two years later, the novelist and art critic, Louis Edmond Duranty (1833-1880), would write on this topic as well. Consult Karabacek 1876; Duranty 1878.



LAMPE DE MOSQUÉE EN VERRE ÉMAILLÉ (XIV<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE).

(Collection de M. Édouard André.)

Figure 17. Glass mosque lamp. Egypt or Syria, 1309-1310. Engraving (Lavoix 1878)

means of asserting and advancing Europe's domination of "the East" (Said 1978, 3-6). For Lavoix, Arab culture was unoriginal and simple-minded because it copied other societies' ways of life and assimilated them. In his view, Arab artists merely integrated Byzantine and Ancient Near Eastern art forms. Thus, the author expressed both respect and disdain for Islamic culture, conveying his ambivalence and bias toward it. Despite his articles' shortcomings, Lavoix did make erudite and insightful observations about the objects that he chose to examine, and he advanced the study of artistic patronage in late medieval Egypt and Syria.

Though the official pavilions of Muslim nations at the 1878 Exposition Universelle (located on the Champs de Mars) still showed industrial manufactures and raw materials, one installation assembled a comprehensive selection of works that were displayed as individual *objets d'art*. In contrast to the Ottoman and Persian sections of the Weltausstellung, the Galerie Orientale display in the Trocadéro Palace (fig. 15) eliminated ethnographic and scientific artifacts. As such, it

was the first installation of its kind exclusively devoted to the arts of the Islamic world.<sup>14</sup> According to contemporary accounts, the gallery itself was rather simple and lacked excessive pseudo-Islamic architectural ornament or accoutrements. As Rémy Labrusse has observed, this installation allowed the items to be viewed independently of the surroundings (Labrusse 2007, 66-73). Therefore, the planners of the 1878 Trocadéro Gallery innovatively removed the objects from an exotic, fantasy-like atmosphere.

Collaborating with Albert Goupil (1840-1884), an avid collector of Islamic art who initially inspired the show's inception and provided critical assistance in its realization, exhibition organizers realigned their foundational curatorial ambitions. Significantly, they shifted their chief aim away from simply seeking to revive European applied arts through the emulation of non-western forms to advocating a comprehensive survey and documentation of the history of Islamic art. Furthermore, their motivations were not primarily grounded in commercial interests but rather were driven more directly by scholarly pursuits.

In 1878, the novelist and art critic Louis Edmond Duranty (1833-1880) reported that the exhibition in the Trocadéro was subdivided into three halls: The Hall of Modern Egypt, the Hall of the Caliphs and The Great Oriental Hall on the first floor. This room, located in the right wing of the Trocadéro, was reserved for Islamic artworks, or as Duranty termed it, "arts islamites" (Duranty 1878, 1020).<sup>15</sup> It included items from Persia, the Arab countries, Turkey, Egypt, and India that were arranged geographically by medium. As the author described, the hall's contents were well balanced and included an assortment of woodwork, glass, metalwork, fabrics, ceramics, arms and paintings, many of which were drawn from private collections (Duranty 1878, 1020).<sup>16</sup> Like the Weltausstellung, most of the works were displayed in vitrine cases throughout the Galerie Orientale (Lavoix 1878, 784). One of Duranty's key goals was to discuss objects that exhibited diverse stylistic influences from both Arabic and East Asian sources. In order to identify these formal inter-

<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, no photographs or engravings of this installation are available. Therefore, my discussion of the display and its organization is based upon several contemporary sources.

<sup>15</sup> This show also featured Hindu miniatures, Cambodian sculptures, and Chinese and Japanese bronzes.

<sup>16</sup> Some other notable collectors included Charles Schéfer (1820-1898) and Jules Jacquemart (1837-1880).

relationships, he highlighted Persian miniature paintings (fig. 16), carpets, pottery, and lacquerware, pointing to their incorporation of intricate decorative motifs derived from nature such as vegetal scrollwork, trellises, phoenixes, gnarled trees, and water lilies (Duranty 1878, 1020-1027).

In a review of the Trocadéro Gallery, Lavoix boasted about the great importance of the works displayed in this space, claiming that in their variety and number they surpassed the works that might be found within aristocratic collections of contemporary Damascus (Lavoix 1878, 769-91). Sometimes prone to hyperbole, he doubted the possibility that such an "oriental museum" could be found anywhere that would match the Trocadéro's impressive exhibition of objects. His bold statement demonstrated his feelings of French national pride and superiority in relation to this installation, and he condescendingly concluded that displays of Islamic art in their countries of origin were inferior to those held in Europe and France in particular. Centering his attention on fourteenth-century Egyptian mosque lamps (fig. 17), Lavoix analyzed them formally and attempted to determine their original patrons based upon detailed examinations of their Arabic inscriptions. Specifically, he investigated whether these objects were produced for Mamluk sultans such as Nasir ad-din Muhammad and Baibars II or their emirs (Lavoix 1878, 776-80). In concluding his article, Lavoix advocated that a history of Arab art should be written by a scholar, and he implied that his friend, Charles Schéfer, might be a good candidate for the task.<sup>17</sup>

Building upon the work of his predecessors, Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), a renowned anthropologist and psychologist, wrote several articles during the 1880s that critically defined a new outlook on the arts of Islam and that came to characterize future French scholarship on this subject (Le Bon 1883-1884, 66-73; 508-20). He differed sharply from Lavoix, for he viewed Islamic craftsmen as highly skilled and original artists, who were not copyists or assimilators of different forms and traditions. Le Bon's thoughts and methods were derived from his study, *La Civilisation des Arabes* (1884), which surveyed the religious customs and social practices of the Arab peoples. It also included several sections about their architectural heritage.

In his essays, Le Bon rebuked the assessments

of such previous reviewers as Lavoix (Le Bon 1883, 509-19). For him, Islamic peoples inherited and expanded upon the lessons and achievements of other cultures that preceded them. Consequently, Arab cultures were able to improve and advance over time. For the author, the "industrial arts" were just as important to understanding a society as the fine or high arts. Studying decorative, functional objects, many of which were displayed in the Trocadéro, revealed the intimate lives of cultures that produced them, allowed scholars to appreciate their artistic knowledge and techniques, and permitted specialists to comprehend how societies used the items in daily life. In Le Bon's opinion, Arab craftsmanship deserved praise notwithstanding the fact that it was not as refined as it had been in previous centuries. Thus, he believed that traditional and nineteenth-century Islamic workmanship still surpassed the methods and techniques of European manufacturers (Le Bon 1884, 70)

Furthermore, Le Bon critiqued over-simplified, often inaccurate studies of Islamic monuments from previous decades. He advocated studying the architectural diversity of the buildings that were produced by different peoples, spanning many lands but that were bound together by their use of common designs, concepts, and practices. Rather clairvoyantly, the critic anticipated the modern-day notion of broadly-defined forms of Islamic art and architecture, many of which are characterized by a shared system of beliefs and traditions spread across multiple continents (Le Bon 1883-1884, 70). By arriving at these conclusions Le Bon, like the curators of the 1878 installation, helped foster a new attitude toward Islamic artworks in which they would be viewed and exhibited as examples of fine art rather than as purely decorative wares.

By 1889 viewpoints similar to those expressed by Le Bon were interestingly echoed in an article by the Austrian architect and urban planner Camillo Sitte (1832-1903). In his discussion of Islamic ornament's impact on western applied arts, Sitte criticized Emile Prisse d'Avennes' book *L'art arabe* (1869-1877), in which the French author (much like Lavoix) had argued that Arabic peoples lacked their own original artistic abilities (Sitte 1889, 39). In contrast, Sitte maintained that Islamic decorative schemes, with their rich, harmonious variation of complex geometric and floral patterns, influenced Renaissance ornament considerably and laid the basis for its further development in subsequent periods. Specifically, he observed that the German engraver and sculptor

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Henri-Jules Saladin (1826-1906) and Gaston Migeon (1861-1930) would later realize his suggestion and publish such a survey, viz., the *Manuel d'art musulman* (1905).

Peter Flötner (ca. 1490-1546) drew direct inspiration from Moorish botanical designs by incorporating vines, scrolls, and arabesques into some of his prints (Sitte 1889, 41). Sitte's remarks signalled a new trend among some Austrian critics whose traditionally Eurocentric assessments of Islamic art and civilization began to shift toward more balanced attitudes that would ultimately prevail as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

#### 4 Comparisons & Conclusions

As this study has demonstrated, the 1870s and 1880s were a period of great transition in the analysis and display of these objects. In contrast to many of their Austrian and German colleagues, French reviewers and curators attempted to move beyond solely employing Islamic art to revive the applied arts and industrial design. Instead, they directed their attention toward scholarship, antiquarian values, and the aesthetic appreciation of individual works. Eventually, these concerns would displace previous preoccupations with the decorative arts among critics and academics alike. In addition, articles in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, devoted to Islamic art, illustrated a level of scholarly expertise and sophistication that remained unparalleled through the 1890s. By the end of this decade, Austrian, German, British and other scholars also began to specialize in specific periods, publish on them more extensively and establish departments in universities and museums devoted to their study.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, it is argued that the French organizers of the 1878 Trocadéro galleries ultimately surpassed their more conservative Austrian colleagues' undertakings. Decisively, they broke with previous, eclectic installations found in the Turkish and Persian sections of the Weltausstellung. Concurrently, French curators and writers became more cognizant of the diversity of Islamic artistic traditions, and they advocated their serious consideration as an academic field within the disciplines of

<sup>18</sup> Some of these individuals included Henri Saladin, Robert Murdoch Smith (1835-1900), Gaston Migeon, Josef Stryzowski (1862-1941), Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945), Alois Musil (1868-1944) and Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948). From approximately 1895 through much of the early twentieth century, books and articles on Islamic art and architecture increased significantly in number as archaeologists, art historians and other scholars published their research prolifically. For several studies on the growth of such scholarship, consult Marchand 2010; Wokocek 2009 and the essays in Vernoit 2000.

art history and archaeology, effectively laying the basis for a common scholarly method of studying Islamic art that would emerge in twentieth-century Europe. These changes equally exerted a considerable impact on the practical methods of publicly displaying Islamic art at world's fairs and in future exhibitions, most notably at the Exposition d'art Musulman (Paris, 1903) and Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst (Munich, 1910). In these installations, Islamic objects were classified and displayed by region, chronology, technique and medium, and the cultures featured most prominently at the Fairs were emphasized: the Ottoman Empire, the Levant, Egypt, Persia, and India. In conclusion, the Weltausstellung and 1878 Exposition provided a critical impetus for exhibiting Islamic artworks in a manner that sensitively and thoughtfully attempted to consider their thematic, historical, and cultural relationships.

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