

## Egyptian-French Cultural Encounters at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867

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**Abstract** The subject of this article is the Egyptian exhibition at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867. At the time of the exhibition, Egypt was at the peak of its modernization reforms, and Ismail Pasha had recently received the *khedival* title and more autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Focusing on the Egyptian official exhibition catalogues and media coverage, this article argues that the Khedive used the exposition as an opportunity to fashion a powerful dynastic order with a distinct cultural identity independent from the Ottomans, a dynasty that could become the new political and cultural center of the Islamic world and a *hyphen* between the Occident and the Orient.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Organizing the Egyptian Pavilion. – 3 Egypt at the Champ de Mars. – 4 Conclusion.

**Keywords** Exposition Universelle. Khedive Ismail. Egypt. Ottoman Empire.

### 1 Introduction

In the mid-1860s, Egypt, nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire, was at the peak of its modernization reforms. When, in 1865, Ismail Pasha (r. 1863-1879) was offered the opportunity to assert his country's global stature at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867, he took advantage of it. That year he also received the *khedival* title and more autonomy.<sup>1</sup> On about 6,000 square meters at the Champ de Mars, Egypt presented an elaborate display that “spoke to the eyes as well as to the mind”, and “expressed a political idea”.<sup>2</sup> Four architectural structures comprising a temple, a *selamlık* (men's reception pavilion), an *okel* or *wikala* (caravansary), and stables encapsulated its ancient, medieval, and modern history (figs. 1-4).<sup>3</sup> The nearby Isthmus of Suez pavilion – representing the colossal engineering project under construction – added to the picture of a modern Egypt with close ties to

France (fig. 5).<sup>4</sup> The French also took the lead in designing and executing the Egyptian section. Two books were published for the exhibition. One by the writer Charles Edmond (pseudonym for Karol Edmund Chojecki, 1822-1895)<sup>5</sup> provided information about Egypt's history, geography, religion, economy, government, and described the display of a “splendid and brilliant Egypt”.<sup>6</sup> Organized chronologically by historical periods (ancient, medieval, and modern), the book included engravings of the pavilions, and a frontispiece depicting Ismail in military regalia with a *tarboosh* (headdress), flanked by sphinxes, mosque minarets, and a ship's mast (fig. 6). The second book by the Egyptologist and Director of the Bulaq Museum (now the Egyptian

1 The *firman* (decree) of June 8, 1867, gave Ismail the title of khedive – a Persian word meaning ruler or Lord – and granted him authority to conclude commercial and financial treaties with foreign powers (including customs, trade transit, and posts), and to initiate laws and regulations for the internal affairs of the country (Douin 1933-1934, 1, 442-43).

2 “Cet étalage somptueux parlait à l'esprit comme aux yeux; il exprimait une idée politique” (About 1869, 48).

3 Egypt has a multifaceted history including ancient Egyptian/Pharaonic, Greco/Roman, Arab/Islamic, Mamluk, and Ottoman. The latter themselves, who ruled Egypt from 1517 to 1798 and 1801 to 1914, comprised multiple ethnicities (Albanians, Circassians, Georgians, Bosnians, and others).

4 The Suez Canal pavilion was independently organized by the French diplomat and developer of the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894). The pavilion was designed in Neoparaonic style by the French architect Alfred Chapon (1834-1893) who previously designed structures for the Suez Canal Company and who was also the architect of the Moroccan and Tunisian pavilion at the 1867 exposition (Nickou 1997, 233).

5 Originally Polish, Edmond, in 1845, fled to Paris from Russian persecution, where he lived most of his life and became a citizen in 1875. In 1850 he joined the army in Egypt for a year, and he later fought with the Ottomans against Russia in the Crimean War. During the War he met Prince Napoleon, who appointed him as the librarian of the Ministry of Algeria, which he led (Desurvire 2011).

6 “L'Égypte, brillante, splendide” (Edmond 1867a, 15).

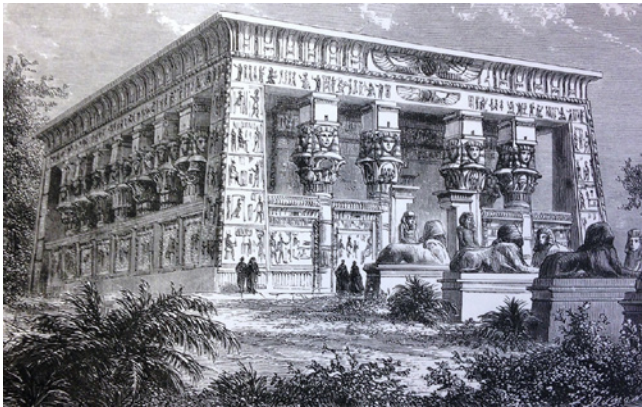


Figure 1. D. Lancelot, *Temple*. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, 20)



Figure 2. D. Lancelot, *Selamlik*. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, 128-29)



Figure 3. *Wikala*. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, 202)

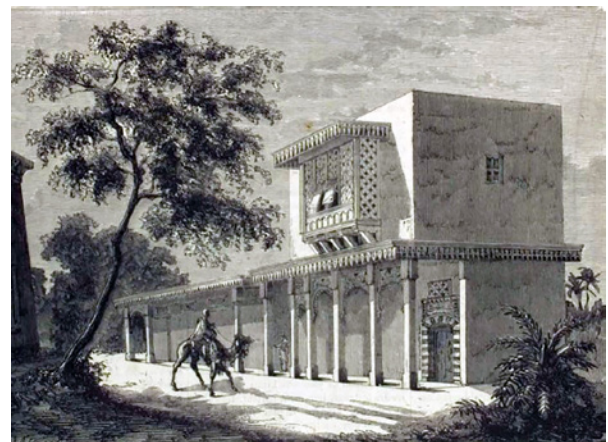


Figure 4. M. Gaildrau, *Egyptian House (stables)* Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 4, 56)

Figure 5. D. Lancelot, *Isthmus of Suez*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 8, 1)



Museum), Auguste Mariette Bey (1821-1881)<sup>7</sup> described the pavilions; the temple received fifty-one pages out of one hundred and one (Mariette 1867). This essay examines Egypt's representation at the Exposition Universelle of 1867, focusing on its official publications and media coverage.<sup>8</sup> Previous scholarship on Middle Eastern and North African displays at world fairs has tended to explore them as exotic spaces highlighting cultural otherness and Western imperial authority, while more recent cross-cultural studies have concentrated on architectural representations.<sup>9</sup> By focusing on the 1867 exposition's narrative covering the preparation, display, reviews, and cast involved, I seek to provide a deeper insight into the varied political, economic, and diplomatic implications of the Egyptian-French encounter in Paris. France and Egypt's relationship had reached its pinnacle under Napoleon III (r. 1852-70), and Ismail was convinced that "Egypt's happiness depends on its separation from Turkey".<sup>10</sup> With a striking display, Egypt hoped to attract economic investments<sup>11</sup> and forge an international image as a modern, civilized, and independent nation that could "become the center of the Islamic world",<sup>12</sup> with "a foot in both worlds [...] the Occident because of its future interests [...] also the Orient because of its ties with all its past".<sup>13</sup>

7 In 1850 the Frenchman, Mariette discovered the Serapeum (the tomb of the Apis sacred bulls) at Saqqara, and in 1858 Egypt's Viceroy Said Pasha (r. 1854-63) appointed him director of antiquities. In 1863 he opened the Bulaq Museum to house Egyptian antiquities. He lived in Egypt until he died in 1881 and is buried there (Wallon 1883; Maspero 1904; David 1994).

8 In Egypt at the time of the exposition, there were only two journals: *al-Waqai al-Misriyya* (Egyptian Events), the government's journal comprising mainly official reports and news with little cultural content; and *Wadi al-Nil* (*The Nile Valley*), a short lived semi-weekly newspaper from 1867 until 1874, sponsored by the Khedive. At the time of my research in Egypt, however, the latter journal was not available.

9 Leprun 1986; Mitchell 1988; Çelik 1992; Ersoy 2015. See also Nickou 1997 (unpublished dissertation).

10 "Nous sommes tous convaincus que le bonheur de l'Égypte dépend dans sa séparation définitive d'avec la Turquie". Letter dated 8 April 1867, from Ismail to Nubar Pasha, in Douin 1933-34, 2, title page.

11 Egypt lost its dominance of the cotton market at the end of the American Civil War, and increased debts that Edmond attributed to Ismail's predecessor Said Pasha (r. 1854-1863), who made concessions to the Suez Canal Company. Ismail renegotiated it with Napoleon III and paid an indemnity of 84,000,000 francs (Edmond 1867a, 3-6).

12 "L'Égypte tend à devenir de nouveau le centre de l'islamisme" (Edmond 1867a, 205).

13 "Mais si l'Égypte tient à l'Occident par les intérêts de son avenir, elle tient aussi à l'Orient par ses liens de tout son

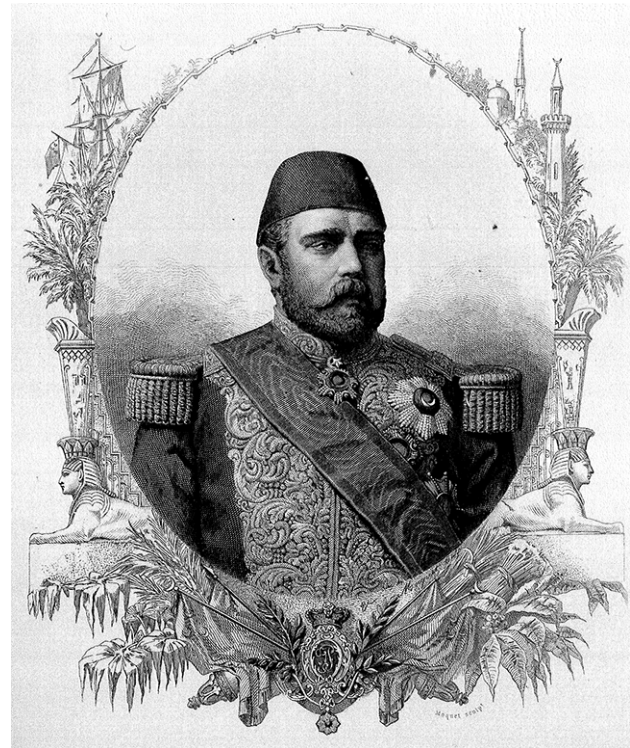


Figure 6. Ismail Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, frontispiece)

## 2 Organizing the Egyptian Pavilion

Edmond's book reported that Ismail "conceived the magnificent plan [...], directed everything, took the initiative on the artistic and the industrial sections, overseeing all the details".<sup>14</sup> To help him, he appointed a Commission, presided by his Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nubar Pasha (1825-1899),<sup>15</sup> and Edmond as the General

passé. Elle a le pied à la fois dans deux mondes" (Edmond 1867a, 3).

14 "Il en a conçu le magnifique plan d'ensemble. Il a tout dirigé, pris l'initiative de la partie artistique aussi bien qu'industrielle, veille aux moindres détails" (Edmond 1867, 14). Letters in the Egyptian archives corroborate Edmond's claim. Mariette wrote a document on June 27 to obtain Ismail's approval listing objects and manpower to travel to the exposition, such as a *dahabieh* (river boat), camels and donkeys, native artisans, and attendants in the café (Mariette Document 1866).

15 An Armenian by birth, Nubar Pasha was educated in Switzerland and France. He came to Egypt when he was seventeen years old to become secretary of his uncle—who served as Minister of Commerce and Foreign Affairs under the founder of the khedival dynasty Muhammad 'Ali (r. 1805-1848). Nubar Pasha served in the governments of consecutive viceroys (Nubar Pasha, Ghali 1983).

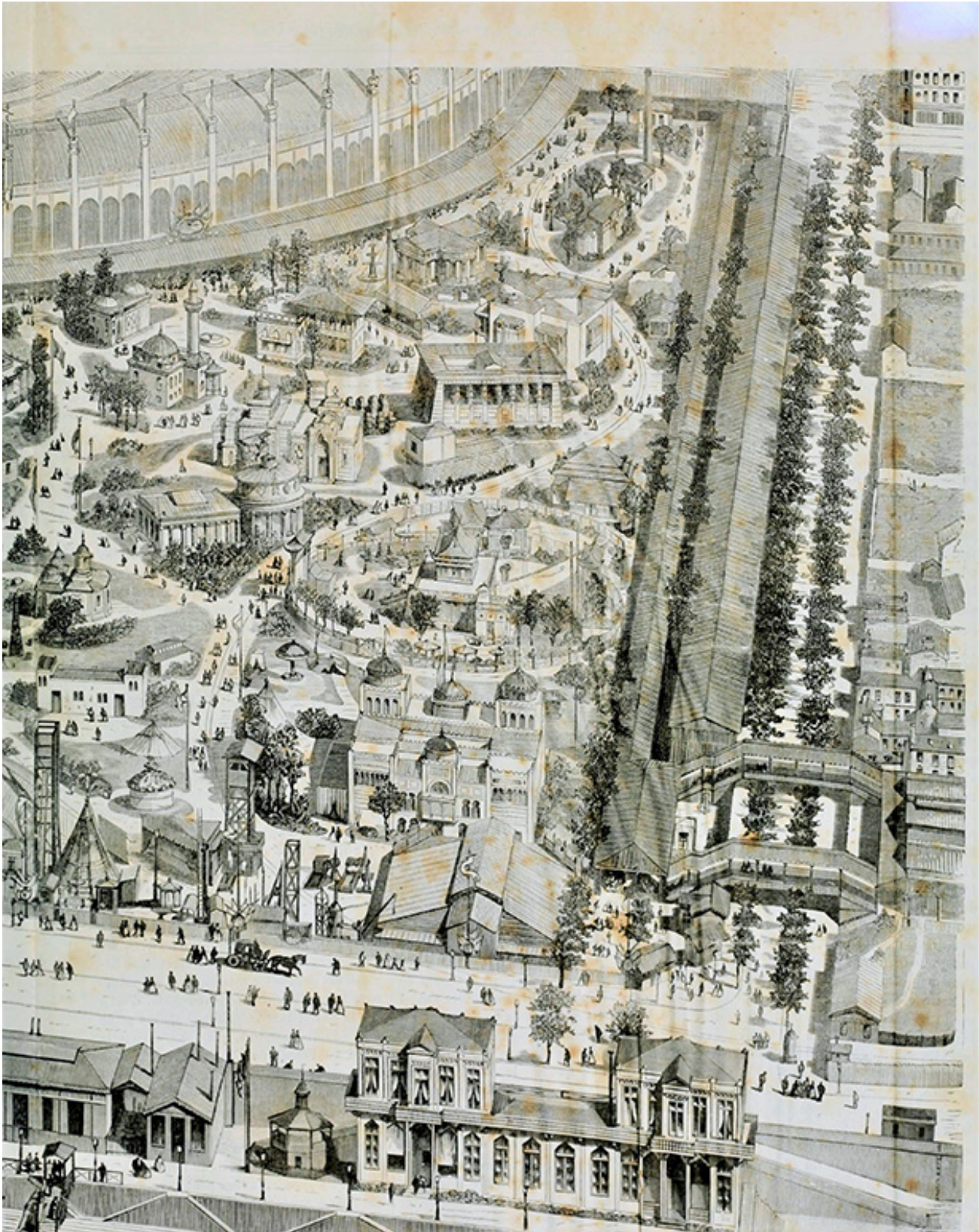


Figure 7. M. Cecéri, *Oriental Quarter*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 49, 296)

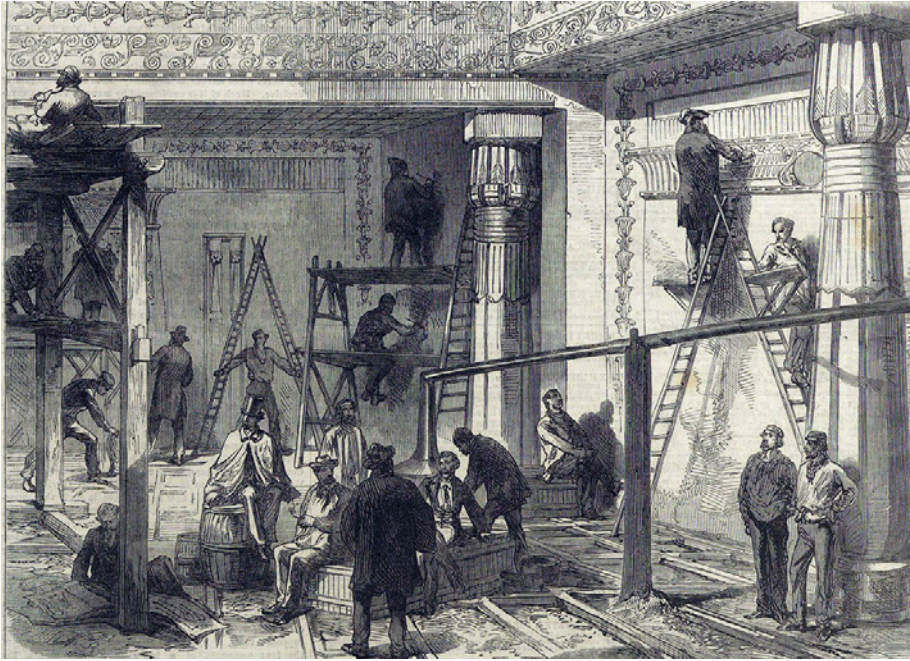


Figure 8. *Construction of the Egyptian Temple*. Engraving. *The Illustrated London News*, 1418, 23 March 1867, 273

Commissioner<sup>16</sup> – who was lauded in France as “an elevated spirit”.<sup>17</sup> At the end of the exposition, Napoleon III awarded Edmond Officer of the Legion of Honor, and Ismail gave him the title of Bey. Mariette was charged with overseeing the archaeological section of the exhibition. He diligently prepared the display, and by the end of 1866 went to Paris to supervise the work with three hundred models, scenes, colour samples, and inscriptions from temples in Upper Egypt. The French government recognized his work at the exposition and awarded him Commander of the Legion of Honor.

The other members of the Commission, mostly Frenchmen living and working in Egypt, were charged with different sections including scientific, agricultural, and commercial exhibits.<sup>18</sup>

**16** The Exposition’s official publication reported that Edmond was delegated by the Imperial Commission (Marini 1867, 1, 53). However, according to Edmond, Ismail, chose him to serve as a liaison between Cairo and Paris (1867, 14). The latter narrative is more likely, as Edmond had built networks within the Egyptian elites while serving in the Egyptian army in the 1850s.

**17** “Tout le monde connaît M. Edmond, esprit élevé” (Marini 1867, 1, 53).

**18** They were: Colonel Mircher, Chief of the French military mission in Egypt, who supervised the Commission in Cairo and oversaw the scientific and geographical sections; Figari Bey, General inspector of pharmaceutical services in Egypt, was in charge of the agricultural and natural history sections; Joseph Claude, an Alexandrian merchant, was

Jacques Drévet (1832-1900) was hired as the official architect, however, he had never visited Egypt. He relied on Mariette for technical information, and on Édouard Schmitz (?-1879),<sup>19</sup> a French architect working in Egypt, for the pavilion plans. For his work, Drévet was made Knight of the Legion of Honor, and Officer of the Order of Medjidie (Hellé 1912, 10).

Egypt focused its display in the Park surrounding the elliptical-shaped exhibition building or Palace, conceived by Saint-Simonian Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882).<sup>20</sup> That Park, designed by Adolph Alphand (1817-1891), housed entertainment venues and the national pavilions “in the taste of [each country’s] national architecture” (*Rapport*

a negotiator and oversaw the commercial section; Vidal, a civil engineer, mathematics professor at the State College was secretary of the Commission, and charged with public construction and editing the general catalogue; Gastinel, chemistry and physics professor at the Viceregal School of Medicine and director of the zoological garden, was in charge of the chemical, pharmaceutical sections as well as ground products; Aly Bey Assib, Division Chief of the Ministry of Finance, was charged with manual arts products (Douin 1933-34, 2, 1).

**19** Very little information is available about the French architect Schmitz. He studied with his father and exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1859. He worked in Egypt on several residences including the Gabary palace (Dussieux 1876, 393).

**20** In the main exhibition building or Palace, Egypt had 555 sq. m. and in the park 5560 sq. m. (*Rapport sur l’exposition universelle de 1867* 1869, 440, tab. 8).

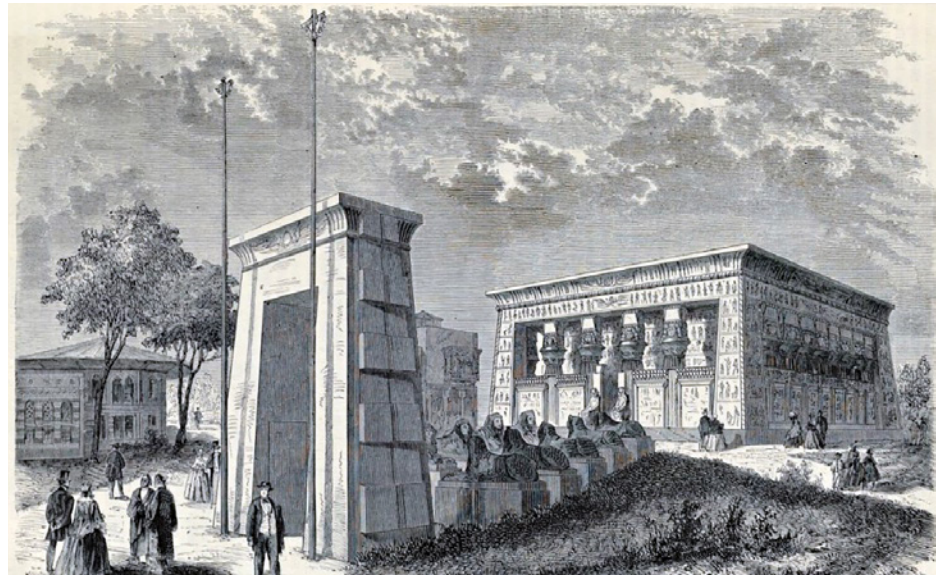


Figure 9. J. Gaildrau, *Egyptian Temple*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 4, 57)

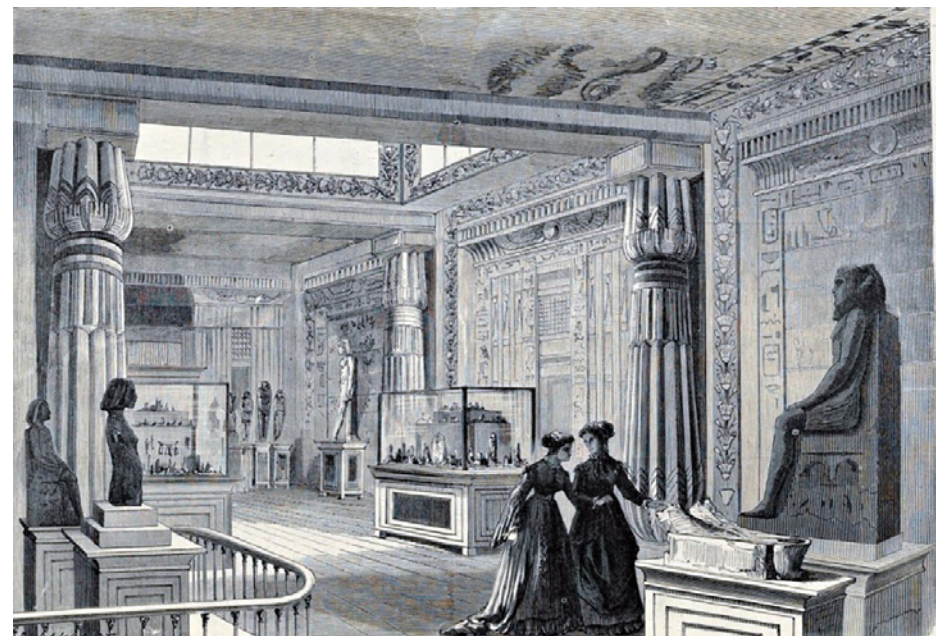


Figure 10. D. Lancelot, *Egyptian Temple Interior*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 2, no. 27, 424)

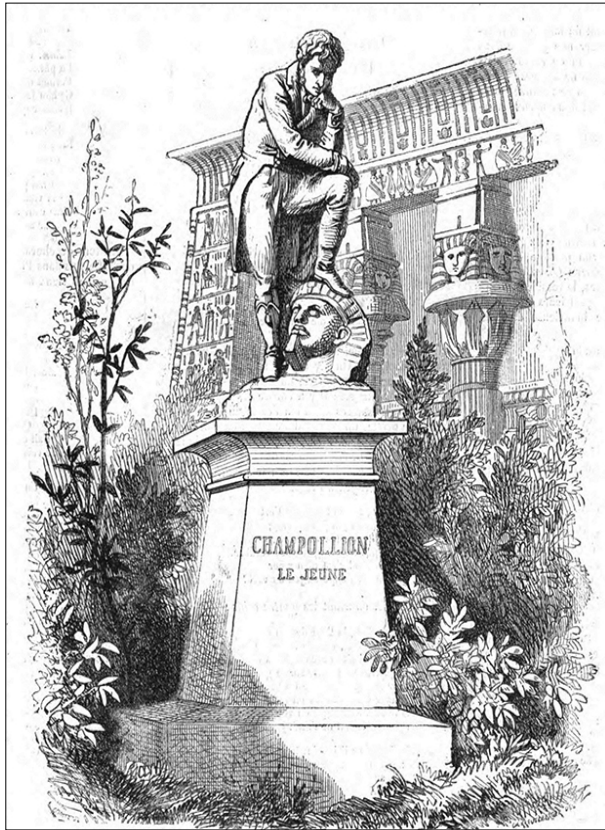


Figure 11. Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, *Champollion*. Engraving. *Le Journal illustré*, 185, 25 August-1 September, 1867, title page

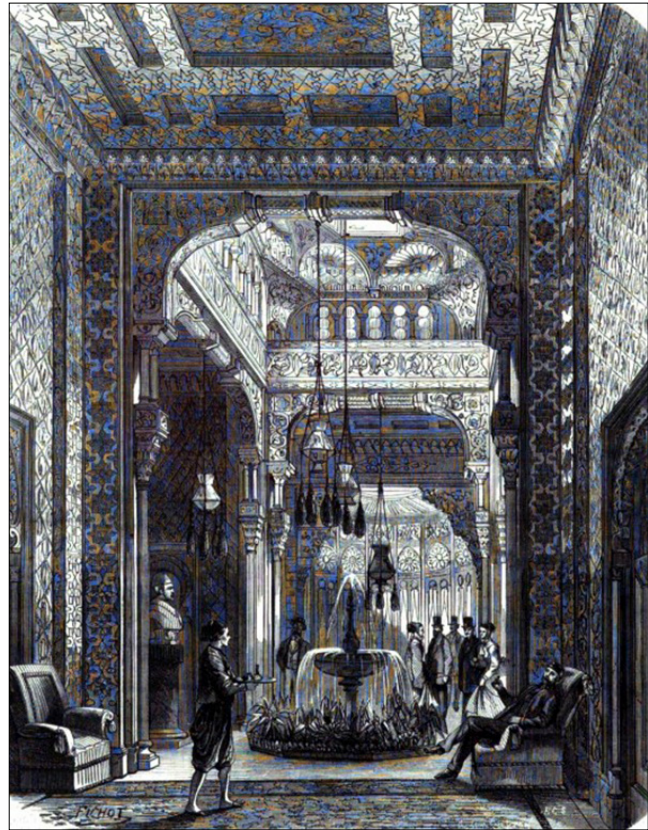


Figure 12. *Interior of the selamlık* (showing marble bust of Isma'il). Engraving. *L'illustration: journal universel*, 1293, 7 December 1867, 376

*sur l'exposition universelle de 1867* 1869, 70). On August 1, 1866, Egypt was given its allotted space in the "Oriental section" together with the Ottoman Empire, Morocco, Tunisia, China, Japan, Siam, and the principality of Romania (fig. 7). Nineteen days later, *Le Moniteur universel* reported that Ismail's constructions will be off the ground in a few days,<sup>21</sup> and in November, *al-Waqai al-Misriyya* published the final plan with the increased space allocated for the Egyptian section, which "equaled that of England, and surpassed that of America and Russia".<sup>22</sup> By February 1867, *Le Moniteur universel* reported that

21 "Encore quelques jours, et l'on verra sortir de terre les murs des trois constructions" ("L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1867". *Le Moniteur Universel* 1866, 1033).

22 The article written on 15th November 1866 in the Egyptian newspaper was the lengthiest dedicated to the Egyptian exhibition. It cited the initial plans reported in *Le Moniteur Universel* on 19th August 1866 (comprising three structures: one representing the antiquity and two its modern history) and the modified plans that replaced one of the modern structures with the *selamlık*. According to the journal, the space

the buildings were "almost complete", praising the "originality of the Egyptian constructions," and "passion of the Parisian artists and carpenters for this novel work" (fig. 8).<sup>23</sup>

was increased from 4800 sq. m, to 5328 sq. m., "Internal News". *Al-Waqai al-Misriyya*, 52(15), November 1866, 236-37.

23 "L'exposition égyptienne sera donc prête avant l'ouverture [...] L'originalité même des constructions égyptiennes [...] En effet, les artistes, les ouvriers de Paris se sont vite passionnés par ce travail si nouveaux pour eux". ("L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1867". *Le Moniteur Universel* 1867, 126). Among the French artists hired to work on site, were the history painter, M. Bin, for the decorative paintings, and M. Mallet from the Bernard and Mallet firm for the sculptural work and moldings. Other contributors included the sculptor M. Godin, and the mason M. Céleri (Edmond 1867a, 15; Mariette 1867, 8).



Figure 13. *Ottoman Quarter*. Engraving. *L'illustration*, 1253, 2 March 1867, 140



Figure 14. *Mannequins with Costumes in the Egyptian section*. Engraving. *The Illustrated London News*, 1426, 11 May 1867, 473



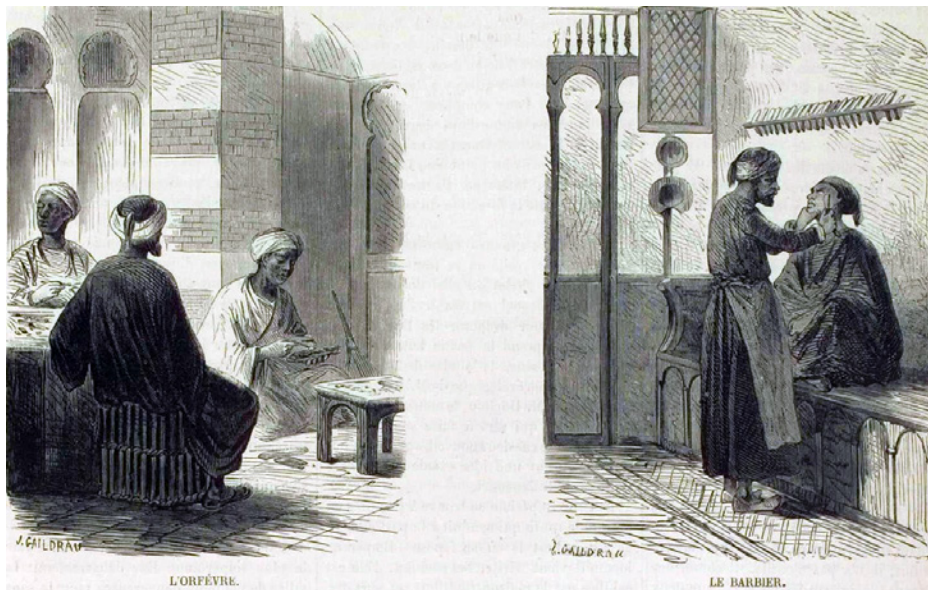


Figure 15. J. Gaildrau, *Artisans in the wikala*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 22, 341)

### 3 Egypt at the Champ de Mars

The 1867 exposition was Egypt's second official exhibit at a world fair,<sup>24</sup> and the Ottomans tried to downplay this independence until the last moment. Two days before the opening ceremony, Ottoman embassy envoys suggested to Edmond that the Egyptian Commission convene at their site, and the flags of His Highness and coat of arms be surmounted by the Sultan's, to which he respectfully answered that he "was not a diplomat", just "a humble servant of his Highness, a simple Commissioner, and that he had no orders from Cairo".<sup>25</sup> Hence, on April 1, 1867, the Egyptian Commission participated in the opening ceremony separately "like all the Commissions of powerful countries". During the following seven months,

<sup>24</sup> The first time Egypt sent an official exhibit was in 1862 to London's universal exhibition (David 1994, 144-46; *London International Exhibition 1862*).

<sup>25</sup> "Deux jours avant la cérémonie, on m'a expédié des négociateurs de la part de l'ambassade ottomane avec charge de me faire entendre qu'il serait convenable que la Commission égyptienne se réunisse à la Commission turque, de même qu'il était nécessaire que les drapeaux de son Altesse fussent surmontés par celui du Sultan, et que les chiffres et armes de Son Altesse fussent dominés par celui du Padschah. J'ai répondu avec la plus respectueuse énergie, que je n'étais pas un diplomate [...] je n'étais pas qu'un humble serviteur de Son Altesse, un simple Commissaire [...] je n'avais reçu aucun ordre du Caire, et que je n'agissais que sous ma propre responsabilité [...] J'ai donc déclaré que la Commission égyptienne se présenterait à la cérémonie séparément, comme les Commissions de toutes les puissances étrangères" as Edmond wrote on 3rd April (Edmond Letter 1867).

the Egyptian section offered a journey across six thousand years of history with three major pavilions that Edmond noted began with the land of the pharaohs, then the Caliphs, and that of Ismail's.

A temple housing authentic antiquities signaled Egypt's position as the cradle of civilization, Edmond pointed out, arguing that "the modern civilization attributed to the Greeks and Romans originated from the Nile".<sup>26</sup> Thus, the temple display "reconstructed the oldest ideas of human civilization, from its religion, its arts, its industry, its customs [...]".<sup>27</sup> Preceded by a pylon and an avenue lined with ten sphinxes,<sup>28</sup> the temple was modelled after Emperor Trajan's kiosk at Philae, combining elements from the "most brilliant periods of the Pharaonic architecture",<sup>29</sup> so that it would be "a lesson of Egyptian archeology"<sup>30</sup> (fig. 9). Although Mariette considered the granite ma-

<sup>26</sup> "La civilisation moderne vient de Rome et de la Grèce; mais le germe des civilisations romaines et grecques venait du Nil" (Edmond 1867a, i).

<sup>27</sup> "Reconstituer par la pensée la plus vieille des civilisations humaines, avec sa religion, sa politique, ses arts, son industrie, ses coutumes" (Edmond 1867a, 18).

<sup>28</sup> The sphinxes were cast from a model in the Louvre Museum. Together with the two statues placed at the entrance, they were reproduced by a new method using cement plastic by Chevalier (Mariette 1867, 15).

<sup>29</sup> "Les époques les plus brillantes de l'architecture pharaonique" (Edmond 1867, 88). The decorative elements used were from the Old and New Kingdoms and Ptolemaic period.

<sup>30</sup> "Comme une étude d'archéologie égyptienne" (Mariette 1867, 11). For a description of the temple, see Edmond 1867a, 85-128; Mariette 1867, 9-60; Çelik 1992, 115-16.

Figure 16. *Isthmus of Suez Pavilion, A Conference of M. de Lesseps.* Engraving. *L'illustration, journal universel*, 1283, 28 September 1867, 200

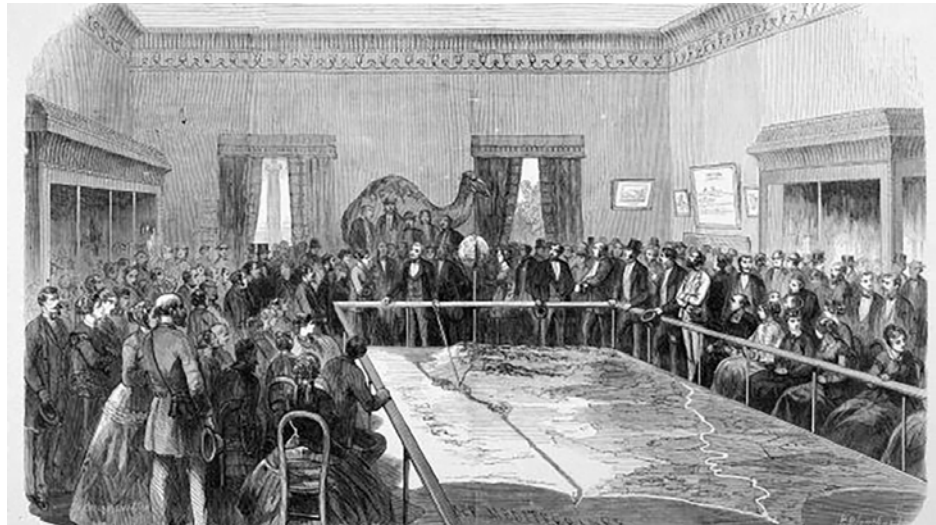


Figure 17. *Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie with Khedive Ismail at the Temple.* *Le Monde illustré*, 535, 13 July 1867, 24



terial a 'heresy', as "Egyptian temples were built in sandstone",<sup>31</sup> he was proud of the hieroglyphs adorning the structure that he recorded himself and his aide, the German Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch (1827-1894),<sup>32</sup> copied in lithographs. The interior also offered a diverse sample of Egyptian art from the Bulaq Museum, including the famous diorite statue of Chephren, the wooden *shiekh al-balad* (chief of village), the cow Hathor and jewels of Queen Ahhotep (fig. 10) which caught the eye of Empress Eugénie, who asked to have them, a request that Mariette firmly refused (Wallon 1883, 143; David 1994, 181-82).

Praised as being "the most remarkable" of all the pavilions in the Oriental section (de Launay 1867, 2, 423), the temple also evoked Europe's longstanding engagement with Egypt's antiquity.<sup>33</sup> It was the French campaign in Egypt (1798-1801), however, that marked a turning point with the publication of *Description de L'Égypte* (1809-1828), the discovery of the Rosetta stone and Jean-François Champollion's (1790-1832) subsequent decipherment of its hieroglyphs in 1822, events that were at the root of modern Egyptology and "Egyptomania".<sup>34</sup> An author of the exposition's illustrated publication commended the Egyptian Commission for placing Champollion's statue (plaster, ca. 1867, Musée de Grenoble) by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904) beside the temple, "a gesture made in good taste [...] to pay tribute to the illustrious scholar of whom France is very proud" (fig. 11).<sup>35</sup>

Egypt chose to represent its Islamic civilization with a secular building. The *selamlik*, built of wood and plaster with blue and red bands over a white background, and surmounted by a cupola, was designed by Schmitz.<sup>36</sup> The interior decorative scheme by Drévet included mosque lamps, a gold crescent at the top, a fountain in the center, and arabesque ornaments, which, on Ismail's request, reproduced those in the room he was born in at the Gamalieh palace - an explicit sign to legitimize his dynasty as the heir of this splendid Islamic civilization.<sup>37</sup> Ismail's coat of arms and a medieval illuminated Qur'an were displayed together, which Edmond read as "weapons and the Qur'an, the sword and the law".<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Ismail's marble bust (1866, Manial Palace Museum, Cairo) by the French sculptor Charles Cordier (1827-1905) greeted the visitors at the entrance (fig. 12).<sup>39</sup> Dressed in a military uniform and *tarboosh*, similar to the engraving in Edmond's book, Ismail conveyed his Oriental origin, while exemplifying his Occidental orientation by ignoring the Islamic prohibition of figural art.<sup>40</sup>

Egypt's medieval Islamic heritage, the Fatimid Caliphate presented another political message. The Fatimids had established a powerful Shiite caliphate in Egypt between 969 and 1171, in opposition to the Sunni Abbasid caliphate in Iraq, suggesting an example that modern Egypt would follow against the Ottomans. Moreover, the Fatimid revival of art and architecture had made Cairo the cultural hub of the Islamic world, a point

31 "Quelle hérésie! Tous les temples égyptiens son construits en grès!". Letter from Mariette to Charles Edmond dated 6 July 1866, in Wallon 1883, 92.

32 Brugsch served as Prussia's consul in Egypt from 1864-1866. He became the first director of the school of Egyptology (School of the Ancient Language) that Isma'il founded in 1869 until it closed five years later. He was the Egyptian commissioner for the 1873 Vienna Exposition and then again to the Philadelphia world's fair in 1876 (Reid 2002, 114-116).

33 Europeans knew Egypt's ancient civilization from Greco-Roman accounts, and later from other European traveler accounts—there were over 300 accounts from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries (Piacentini 2010).

34 It is worth noting that the Italian archeologist Giovan Battista Belzoni's (1778-1823) had a significant influence on the popularity of the Egyptian style in design, art and architecture in London in the early nineteenth century. He presented the first exhibition showing Egypt's antiquities in an educational and entertaining manner. (See Mayes 2003; Fassone, Luca 2010, 53-58).

35 "La commission égyptienne, par un sentiment plein du goût, a voulu rendre hommage à l'illustre savant dont la France est si fière, Elle a placé entre le temple de Philae et l'okel la statue de Champollion" (Marini 1867, 1, 59).

36 For a description of the *selamlik*, see Edmond 1867a, 190-201; Mariette 1867, 87-93; Çelik 1992, 111-12.

37 "Mariette Bey m'a écrit que S.A. désire que le Selamlik fût exactement comme [...] la représentation [...] arabesque de la chambre du palais de Jamalieh ... D'ailleurs S.A. a imprimée l'ordre que la Selamlik reproduisait l'ornementation de chambre ou Elle a vu le jour". Letter from Nubar Pasha to Mahmoud Bey dated 3 December (Nubar Pasha 1866). According to Edmond, some of the decorative elements may have been inspired by the illuminated Qur'an displayed in the *selamlik* (Edmond 1867a, 196).

38 "Il renferme les armes du Vice-Roi et un magnifique Coran. - Les armes et le Coran, le glaive et la loi" (Edmond 1867a, 197).

39 Famous for his ethnographic types, Cordier went to Egypt in 1866 on a government grant to produce sculptures of "the various types of indigenous peoples", some of which were displayed at the exposition (De Margerie et al. 2004, 131-32).

40 There was a general Islamic prohibition towards the depiction of figural art (which was not strictly abided) until 1908, when the Egyptian theologian Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) proclaimed a religious decree legalizing figural imagery (Vernoit 2001, 19, 31-32).

Edmond emphasized.<sup>41</sup> It was in Egypt that “the true mosques in Arab [Islamic]<sup>42</sup> style were constructed,” and spread to “Syria, Persia, India, and Sicily through North Africa, Spain, and finally to Turkey”.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, he singled out the latter for being incapable of inventing its own art or even tastefully assimilating the art of the others, and concluded that “after stealing the Arab genius, they let it die”.<sup>44</sup> This negative assessment of Ottoman art and architecture was echoed by others. Hippolyte Gautier, in his account of the exposition’s Ottoman display, stated that it “has not sought to rival the splendour of its neighbours, Egypt and Tunis,” with its “three structures [mosque, residential structure, and public bath] of modest proportions, more appropriate to arouse curiosity than admiration” (fig. 13).<sup>45</sup>

Egypt’s display and accompanying publication underscored its revival and modernization, which began under Ismail’s grandfather Muhammad Ali (r. 1805-1848) following a long period of decadence (Edmond 1867, 200), and flourished in “the living Egypt [...] of Ismail Pasha”.<sup>46</sup> An exhibition hall, at the back of the *selamlik* featured relief maps of ancient and modern Alexandria, a mineralogical collection, geological maps, a group of photographs of Egypt’s ancient and medieval monuments by resident photographer, Désiré Ernié (active in Egypt 1860-1880), and books printed in the Bulaq press (Douin 1933-34, 2, 214). At the exposition’s Palace, galleries built of wood in the ‘Pharaonic style’, showcased Egypt’s industrial and agricultural products – including cotton samples, which won a gold medal.<sup>47</sup> Other

products from Nubia, Sennar, Kordofan and Sudan highlighted the territories that “had been annexed to its [Egypt’s] empire” (Douin 1933-34, 2, 17).<sup>48</sup> Cordier’s sculptures representing Egypt’s ethnographic ‘types’ (ca. 1866, location unknown) welcomed visitors (fig. 14).<sup>49</sup>

In the third building, the *wikala*, as the author of *L’Album de l’Exposition illustrée*, Gabriel Richard noted, visitors encountered Egypt’s ‘living types’ (1867, 244). The two storied structure, designed after prototypes in Aswan, featured *mashrabiya* screens (made of wood and turned in different forms to create lattice-like patterns), doors, ornamental ceilings, and arabesques.<sup>50</sup> Native artisans demonstrated their craft-making, that were sold in the shops (fig. 15),<sup>51</sup> and a café offered complimentary coffee, a *chibouk* (Turkish tobacco pipe), and *shisha* (water pipe) to visitors with passes from the Egyptian General Commissioner (Mariette 1867, 98). On the upper floor an anthropological gallery, organized by Mariette, displayed over five hundred skulls, and a number of mummies that were unwrapped at several sessions, offered by invitation to Parisians interested in the new field of anthropology.<sup>52</sup> Two donkeys and two dromedaries, which Edmond indicated were from Lower, Middle, and Upper Egypt, as well as from the Sudan, were shown at the stables behind the *wikala* (Edmond 1867, 222-23; Mariette 1867, 101-02).

233); see also Douin 1933-34, 2, 16-17, and also for Egypt’s prizes at the exposition (18-19).

**48** Muhammad Ali began expanding into Sudan in 1820. Ismail would continue his grandfather’s expansionist policy focusing on Central Africa in the 1870s. On Egypt’s expansionist policy under both Muhammad Ali and Ismail, see Ibrahim 1998, 198-216.

**49** Ten mannequins included Untitled Female (possibly Grande dame), Dancer, Abyssinian woman, Female peasant, Male peasant, Negro woman, Negro man, merchant, *Cheikh-el-Beled*, and *Says* (one who runs before the cars) (Edmond 1867a, 238-39, 341-43; Douin 1933-34, 2, 16).

**50** For a description of the *wikala*, see Edmond 1867, 214-25; Mariette 1867, 95-100; Çelik 1992, 112-15.

**51** They were jewelers, a saddle maker, an embroiderer, a turner, a *chibouq* (Turkish tobacco pipe) maker, a mat maker, and a barber (Edmond 1867a, 218-19, 253-55).

**52** The first session presided by Dr. Paul Broca (1824-1880), General Secretary of the Society of Anthropology of Paris was held on May 28, 1867, and was attended by Mariette, and scientists, as well as writers and artists including Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), Maxime du Camp (1822-1894), Alexandre Dumas fils (1824-1895), Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896) and Jules de Goncourt (1830-1870). See David 1994, 177-79; de Goncourt, de Goncourt 1888, 3, 129-33; Gautier 1877, 1, 98-110.

**41** On the art and architecture of the Fatimids, see Ettinghausen, Grabar, Jenkins 2001, 187-214.

**42** “Arab Art” or style was the term used to refer to “Islamic art” until the mid-twentieth century. The Museum of Arab Art in Cairo was renamed Museum of Islamic Art in 1952. For the terminology used to refer to Islamic Art (Reid 2002, 215).

**43** “Les premières mosquées vraiment arabes [...] ont été construites sur les bords du Nil [...] Importé ensuite en Syrie, en Perse, dans les Indes, en Sicile, à travers le nord de l’Afrique, en Espagne, et enfin en Turquie” (Edmond 1867a, 182).

**44** “Après avoir volé le génie arabe, ils l’ont laissé s’éteindre” (Edmond 1867a, 183).

**45** “L’Empire Ottoman n’a pas cherché à rivaliser de splendeur avec ses voisins de l’Égypte et de Tunis; il s’est borné à élever trois édifices de proportions modestes, plus propres à exciter la curiosité que l’admiration” (Gautier 1867, 51).

**46** “L’Égypte vivante [...] d’Ismael Pacha” (Edmond 1867a, 214).

**47** The galleries extended from the garden of the exposition’s Palace to the Gallery of Machines (Edmond 1867a,

Nearby, the Isthmus of Suez pavilion attracted large numbers of visitors because “the exhibition [...] also like the canal itself represented a transition between the Occident and the Orient”.<sup>53</sup> Ferdinand de Lesseps himself took part in the display, delivering lectures on the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal pavilion received the lengthiest reviews of all the exhibits, including one by Théophile Gautier, who in *Le Moniteur universel* called it a “gigantic project”. The display boasted a diorama of the isthmus by M. Rubé and M. Chaperon (decorators of the Paris Opera), relief maps of the canal towns, its natural history and geography, and even a stuffed camel (fig. 16).<sup>54</sup> For the French, the Suez Canal not only represented French engineering ingenuity, but was also financially important to those who had invested in the Suez Canal Company shares. For Egyptians, it was a colossal project that not only reflected their alliance with France, but also Egypt as the key to global trade routes.

The highlight of Egypt's presentation at the exposition however, was Khedive Ismail himself. In the *selamlık*, where he had private rooms to rest, Ismail was seen seated on a divan “smoking from his long Oriental pipe,” graciously welcoming notable Parisians with “the charm of his serious and fine spirit”.<sup>55</sup> Among his guests were the French Emperor and Empress and the Imperial Prince, who together toured the exhibit with Mariette and Edmond (fig. 17). The French press amply covered his sojourn in Paris. On June 18, *Le Figaro* wrote of his “good nature”, “good humor,” and “perfect French without the slightest accent”.<sup>56</sup> François Ducuing, the editor of the exposition's illustrated publication described Ismail's Parisian education as an “Occidental baptism,” and predicted Egypt was “destined to be the providence of Europe, sometimes for wheat, sometimes for cotton, and soon for transit”.<sup>57</sup>

53 “Cette exposition [...] formant ainsi, comme le canal lui-même, une transition entre l'occident et l'orient” (*Rapport sur l'exposition universelle de 1867* 1869, 113).

54 Gautier, “Autour de l'Exposition V. L'Isthme de Suez”. *Le Moniteur Universel*, 21, 3 August 1867, 1067, rep. in Gautier 1877, 1, 110-22.

55 “Assis sur son divan, aspirant la fumée de sa longue pipe orientale [...] sous le charme de son esprit si sérieux et si fin” (Douin 1933-34, 2, 14).

56 “On a tout d'abord remarqué son air affable, sa tenue pleine de bonhomie et l'extrême bienveillance avec laquelle il accueille tout le monde”. Isma'il parle le français le plus pur, sans le moindre accent”. *Le Figaro*, 19 June 1867, in Douin 1933-34, 2, 8.

57 “L'Égypte destinée à devenir la providence de l'Europe, tantôt pour le blé, tantôt pour le coton, et bientôt pour le transit” (Ducuing 1867, 1, 375).

## 4 Conclusion

This essay aimed to show the various political, cultural, and economic subtexts underlying the Egyptian representation at the 1867 exposition. Lauded as “the most splendid” and “the most complete”,<sup>58</sup> the Egyptian display attested to Ismail's success in positioning his country as heir to the glorious Pharaonic and medieval Islamic civilizations, and as a modern, civilized and secular state, distant from its Ottoman sovereign who, as a French commentator noted, continued to resist Occidental ideas (de Merzer 1877, 406). In contrast, he described Ismail as “willing to transform Egypt, by borrowing our [France's] laws and [...] institutions,” and that the “canal of the isthmus of Suez has established so many serious interests between France and Egypt”.<sup>59</sup> While Edmond noted Egypt was “clearly chosen to introduce modern civilization to the rest of the Orient”,<sup>60</sup> the French press proclaimed it could “become among the most civilized countries in Europe,” and a *trait d'union* (hyphen) between Europeans and lesser known countries of the Far East (Marini 1867, 154).

Post exposition, Ismail accelerated his modernization programs including massive urban development projects and preparations for the grand ceremonial opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. All this however, came at a price. Enormous debts led to the establishment of a Dual Control by Britain and France in 1876, his abdication in favor of his son Tawfik (r. 1879-92) in 1879, and the British occupation in 1882. The 1867 exposition, however, marked a watershed moment for Egyptians to begin debating their national identity, which culminated in the early twentieth century.

58 “Les Expositions, la plus splendide, la plus complète”. An excerpt from a speech by M. Donnat, the director of the exposition's foreign section; quotation in a letter from Edmond, unaddressed, undated, and unsigned, numbered 186 (Edmond s.d.).

59 “Ismail-Pacha, au contraire, se montre tout disposé à transformer l'Égypte, en empruntant nos lois et nos institutions [...] Le canal de l'isthme de Suez a noué entre la France et l'Égypte tant d'intérêts sérieux” (de Merzer 1867, 406-07).

60 “L'Égypte a été visiblement choisie pour initier le reste de l'Orient à la civilisation moderne” (Edmond 1867a, 200).

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