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1 Genoa, Castello D'Albertis -  
Museo delle Culture del Mondo,  
aerial view

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# BRINGING THE ‘OTHER’ HOME THE ISLAMICATE RESIDENTIAL SPACES OF THE CASTELLO D’ALBERTIS IN GENOA, ITALY, 1890–1930

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When the Castello D’Albertis – Museo delle Culture del Mondo (Fig. 1) reopened after more than a decade of renovations as part of the celebration of Genoa as the European Capital of Culture in 2004, it represented a critical response to a colonial legacy. Originally known as the Castello di Montegalletto for the hill on which it stands, the building was the home of Captain Enrico Alberto d’Albertis (1846–1932) – navigator, ethnologist, writer, photographer, and philanthropist – and it already offered a display space in his lifetime, in keeping with the emerging ethnography of his

day.<sup>1</sup> D’Albertis willed the Castello to his native city, along with a large collection of artifacts and over twenty thousand negatives of the photographs that he took on his travels, and it opened to the public after the captain’s death in 1932.<sup>2</sup> Under the direction of Maria Camilla De Palma, the Castello D’Albertis – Museo delle Culture del Mondo is now an exemplary site for the decolonization of the ethnographic museum.<sup>3</sup> As De Palma summarizes, the goal is “emancipation from the obsolete dichotomy” of ‘us’ and ‘other’ inherent in the *objectification* of the non-European world.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maria Camilla De Palma, “Il capitano Enrico Alberto d’Albertis e le Cronache di Montegalletto”, in: *Castello D’Albertis: Museo delle Culture del Mondo*, ed. by *eadem*, Milan 2008, pp. 15–21: 21.

<sup>2</sup> The museum has made new acquisitions since D’Albertis’ death. On D’Albertis’ activity as a photographer, see the contribution by Anna d’Albertis, “La vita quotidiana di un viaggiatore per mare dell’Ottocento”, in: *Nuovi percorsi del Castello D’Albertis – Museo delle Culture del Mondo*, Genoa 2013, pp. 10–39; and *Uno sguardo sull’Egitto: le fotografie di Enrico Alberto D’Albertis*, Genoa 1999.

<sup>3</sup> See Maria Camilla De Palma, “Exposizion-ismo: i musei rendono davvero i loro beni accessibili?”, in: *Il design per i Beni Culturali: dal vincolo alla fruizione*, a cura di Paola Gambaro/Elena Rosa (= *Guddesign*, 8 [2007]), pp. 34–45; and *eadem*, “Il Museo delle Culture del Mondo tra polivalenza e autorità condivisa”, in: *Castello D’Albertis* (note 1), pp. 37–61.

<sup>4</sup> *Eadem*, “Alla ricerca di un tempo e di un mondo perduti: perché i musei DEA mi rendono triste”, in: *Il patrimonio museale antropologico: itinerari nelle regioni italiane. Riflessioni e proposte*, ed. by Valeria Cottini Petrucci, Rome 2004, pp. 81–90: 85.

As the current Museo delle Culture del Mondo speaks for our postcolonial times, so the original house-museum was a cultural production of its moment. In both cases, however, it is not simply typical. The present essay will not be the occasion to examine the dialogical reconceptualization of today's Castello D'Albertis, both at the most local level, as a center of community activities in the arts, and at the most global, as a space where geographically distant peoples have now participated as collaborators in dissemination of their cultures. A study of the reconstitution of the earlier ethnographic museum is certainly in order. The present essay, however, concerns the original house-museum, pursuing two fundamental directions. On the one hand, I examine the ways in which D'Albertis participated in the visualization of the 'other' that was consistent with the colonialist postures characteristic of Europe in his era. The evidence appeared patently on the ground floor of the Castello, organized as public exhibition space. On the other hand, upstairs in his living quarters, a more complex attitude may be discerned, informed by his worldwide nautical travels and his particular practices as a collector. The essay will concentrate on the architecture and architectural decoration of the residential rooms of the Castello, as a manifestation of D'Albertis' relationship to what was for him a privileged 'other', namely the historical and contemporaneous Islamic world. To understand that relationship, the discussion will take up his experiences in the Muslim world, which set him apart from Italian collectors of the period. In addition, I will consider the ways in which the styles of Orientalist architecture inaugurated elsewhere in Europe came to inform his Italian milieu and the design of the Castello. I shall be especially attentive to the place that the Alhambra holds in Euro-

pean Orientalism, because, as I shall argue, allusions to that Nasrid monument in Spain had a crucial role in D'Albertis' understanding of the Muslim 'other'.

## I.

D'Albertis was born into a family whose wealth was linked to the wool industry since the end of the eighteenth century, including the manufacture of cloth and caps in a style that was called *alla turca* at the time and exported to the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> The peculiar detail of the family fortune exemplifies the complex mediations of Orientalism: it is not only the 'West' that comes to assert itself in the antithetical projection of the 'Orient', but also the colonized 'East' that becomes the consumer – and purveyor, as we shall see – of its own orientalized image.<sup>6</sup> Having sailed extensively in the Italian Royal Navy and later in the Merchant Marine, D'Albertis retired from active service when still only twenty-three years old. Thereafter, he devoted a long life to navigation, nautical technology, and scientific exploration, upholding the traditions of Genoa as a maritime republic of a not too distant past (Fig. 2). D'Albertis belonged to the intellectual elite of Genoa and actively participated in the research undertaken by the professionally trained scientists among his friends, such as Odoardo Beccari, a botanist and the director of the Giardino dei Semplici in Florence.<sup>7</sup> Sailing often in their company to destinations throughout the Mediterranean and on longer journeys, including one circumnavigation of the coast of Africa (1900) and three trips around the world (1877/78, 1896, and 1910), D'Albertis thus extended his interests in physical geography and navigation to various fields of natural science and ethnography. He wrote about his voyages, discussing the science of the navigation and describing the

<sup>5</sup> Anna d'Albertis, *Marinaio gentiluomo: la vita avventurosa di Enrico d'Albertis, un moderno viaggiatore di altri tempi*, Genoa 2005, p. 9. On D'Albertis' biography see also Francesco Surdich, s.v. D'Albertis, Enrico Alberto, in: *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, XXXI, Rome 1985, pp. 701–703; <http://www.treccani.it/biografie/>.

<sup>6</sup> For a forerunner in the discussion of these questions, see the epoch-making study of Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Maria Camilla De Palma, "Uno sguardo sul Capitano D'Albertis", in: *Permanenze e metamorfosi dell'immaginario coloniale in Italia*, ed. by Enrico Castelli/David Laurenzi, Naples 2000, pp. 93–107.

places and peoples that he encountered, and publishing these texts in scientific journals and newspapers.<sup>8</sup>

Two items in D'Albertis' colorful career are of particular pertinence to the current study. First, he visited Egypt on at least eight trips, attesting to his special interest in and familiarity with the Ottoman world of his times. Second, he literally emulated Christopher Columbus, designing and sailing a replica of one of Columbus' caravels across the Atlantic to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of his first voyage.<sup>9</sup>

D'Albertis built the Castello (Fig. 1) on the promontory of the Montegalletto hill between 1886 and 1892 under the supervision of Alfredo D'Andrade and Marco Aurelio Crotta, prominent architects known for their restoration of medieval and Renaissance buildings in Genoa. There was a sixteenth-century bastion and the remnants of a late-medieval wall on the property that were incorporated into the new construction.<sup>10</sup> Designed in a predominantly neo-Gothic style, much in vogue in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, the large villa-castle has architectural and decorative features of both a fort and a palace. Its compact adjoining volumes include a tall tower that projects from the building's mass, secondary towers and corner turrets, loggias, porticoes, multi-lancet windows, and crenellation over the roofing. This approach to the European heritage of the site illustrates the tenet that architectural style speaks not only to contemporary taste, but also for the ideological construction of a historical narrative.

The ideological narrative of the Castello, both affirming and, as I shall argue, diverging from the predominant patterns of Orientalism, was also represented by the distribution of D'Albertis' collection across the vertical space of the building. D'Albertis organized the ground floor as a display space with



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2 Captain Enrico Alberto d'Albertis  
at the helm of his ship *Corsaro*.  
Genova, Castello D'Albertis -  
Museo delle Culture del Mondo

weapons and trophies on the walls and glass vitrines containing ethnographic material, archaeological fragments, and the geological, botanical, and zoological specimens that he collected on his trips, all carefully arranged and labeled. He continued the display of this material in the Sala Colombiana on the *piano nobile* in tall wooden cabinets along the walls (Fig. 3). Consistent with contemporaneous museums of natural history, his exhibition of objects from Africa and the Americas, Oceania and Asia presented a comprehensive view of the natural world without clear categorical distinctions. Reflecting the authority of scientific observation, the displays offered a late iteration of the *cabinets de curiosités* familiar throughout Europe from the end of the sixteenth century as the epistemological adjunct of conquest and colonization. Although De Palma has maintained the vertical division of the Castello, it is with regard to the colonial authority of the

<sup>8</sup> For a list of D'Albertis' publications, see *Castello D'Albertis* (note 1), p. 78; and the article "Il capitano Enrico Alberto D'Albertis: un ligure alla scoperta del mondo", <http://www.magellano.org/public/magellano/articoli/195/195> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>9</sup> See Enrico Alberto d'Albertis, *Crociera del Corsaro a San Salvador: la prima terra scoperta da Cristoforo Colombo*, Milan 1898.

<sup>10</sup> See Maria Camilla De Palma, "Il Castello di Montegalletto", in: *Castello D'Albertis* (note 1), pp. 23–35.



3 Genoa, Castello D'Albertis - Museo delle Culture del Mondo, Sala Colombiana, display case, 1892

scientific gaze that she has thoroughly re-envisioned the new museum.<sup>11</sup>

In other regards, D'Albertis was an uncommon collector. In the first place, his peers, as a class, preferred to collect art rather than artifacts, reifying the ideological distinction that values European material culture over that of Europe's 'others'. But even amongst those collectors who embraced the vogue for the 'Orient' – and they were legion, indeed, precisely, a foreign legion – most were armchair Orientalists, making purchases at antiquities shops in Europe or through

agents abroad. D'Albertis, too, purchased some of the objects from well-known firms in Italy and elsewhere in Europe,<sup>12</sup> but he also collected first-hand, bringing back objects from places all over the world for display at the Castello. He writes of purchasing crafts directly from craftsmen and visiting ethnographic museums on his travels;<sup>13</sup> and, though the practice would be inadmissible today, some of the Egyptian antiquities in the collection came from his participation in the excavations at Aswan as well as those led by his friend, the Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparelli, in Luxor.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See *eadem*, "Un castello neogotico tra camere delle meraviglie e trofei coloniali", in: *Case museo ed allestimenti d'epoca: interventi di recupero museografico a confronto*, conference proceedings Saluzzo 1996, ed. by Gianluca Kannès, Turin 2003, pp. 115–127.

<sup>12</sup> Receipts for purchases from Genoa-based furniture manufacturer Al-

berto Issel and the Florentine ceramics and porcelain company Ginori have been preserved in the museum's archives.

<sup>13</sup> Enrico Alberto d'Albertis, *Periplo dell'Africa*, Genoa 1925 ('1910), pp. 232, 274–277, 322, 377–379, 483f., 495–498, 537.

<sup>14</sup> Guido Rossi, "L'Egitto a Genova", in: *Uno sguardo sull'Egitto* (note 2),



4 Florence, Museo Stibbert, Sala della Cavalcata Islamica

A comparative look at the house-museum of Frederick Stibbert (1838–1906) in Florence will set the particularities of D’Albertis’ practices in higher relief. Stibbert gathered his collection in two adjoining villas, completed in the late 1880s: some thirty-six thousand objects, including European painting, furniture and decorative arts, Japanese and Chinese porcelain, and European and non-European arms and armor. He conceived each room “con l’intenzione di rievocare periodi storici e ambiti culturali diversi, in una sorta di variegato viaggio attraverso il tempo e le terre più diverse”.<sup>15</sup> That journey was less diverse in execution, however, since European architecture predominates equally in

the design of the buildings and in the interiors, where the European arts were arranged in coherent, so-called period rooms, a typical feature of nineteenth-century interior decoration in the homes of the European and American elite. A room with frescoes in imitation of Renaissance or rococo style, for instance, is furnished with historical objects from the same period in order to complete the room’s ‘authentic’ appearance.<sup>16</sup>

Stibbert’s non-European objects were also distributed coherently, but to a different end. His Sala della Cavalcata Islamica is an exemplary case (Fig. 4). In addition to the arms from the Muslim world hung on the walls, the floor space is filled with life-size male man-

pp. 4–6, and Andrea De Pascale, “L’archivio della memoria: destinazione Egitto”, *ibidem*, pp. 7–16.

<sup>15</sup> Simona Di Marco, “Museo Stibbert”, in: *Museo Stibbert: guida alla visita del*

*museo*, ed. by Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti, Florence 2011, pp. 23–37: 24.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, *Museums – Crossing Boundaries*, ed. by Ivan Gaskell/Jeffrey Quilter (= *Res*, LII [2007]); and *Case museo* (note 11).

nequins on foot and horseback, all attired in historical armor and dress, leaving but a narrow area around the perimeter for viewing. The dichotomy is generally pervasive: European art formed part of residential life; the objects from the Muslim world were for display only.

Furthermore, while Stibbert frames the cavalcade within an Islamic architectural setting, the effect, in contrast to the European period rooms, is thoroughly incoherent. The mannequins are dressed to represent primarily Ottoman, Persian, and Indian soldiers of a pan-Islamic army that never existed. The architectural decoration, modeled on the Alhambra of medieval Iberia, only adds to the incongruity. Rather, for Stibbert, the diversity of Muslim lands is reduced to an ahistorical fantasy of a homogenized 'Orient'. The question as to why the Alhambra, or more precisely the orientalizing Alhambresque style, would serve Stibbert, and many others, as the encompassing architectural frame will be addressed presently, since it will touch upon D'Albertis' residential rooms, if in an unexpected way. For the moment, I note that in Stibbert's house-museum the Islamic world is located across the divide between 'us' and 'them', residential versus display space.

Stibbert's strict dichotomy admits of a more nuanced shift at the Castello, which one glimpses in the architectural transition space of the stairway leading up to the *piano nobile*. Where the ground floor includes displays of arrows from indigenous cultures, the walls of the staircase and the landing of the *piano nobile* are decorated with European arms. D'Albertis leaves no doubt about the superiority of the latter, represented by their placement on what is literally the higher level. Nevertheless, the exhibition of European arms constructs a historical continuity between the floors, rather than a separate sphere. Indigenous arrows and colonial weapons would have once shared a world, if only as opponents on an unequal battlefield. Otherwise stated, European arms

forge the relation between the 'other' of the displays on the ground floor and the residential life above.

## 2.

The account of Giuseppe Pessagno, published in *Genova: Rivista Municipale* in 1932, records the impression of visitors who first climbed those stairs to D'Albertis' residential apartments. Pessagno writes:

Il colore locale dell'Oriente ha anche tentato il Capitano d'Albertis, come tutti gli intellettuali del suo tempo, ed ecco realizzata una Sala turca dalle stoffe e suppellettili preziose, scintillante d'armi damascate, di lampade traforate, singolare contrasto con l'ambiente che la circonda.<sup>17</sup>

Public access and the use of some vitrines on this floor, then and now, confirm the sense that the residential space is a continuation of the display space. Nevertheless, Pessagno also proposes that one orientalizing room is utterly distinct from the rest of the Castello – even the other residential spaces – and that impression calls for closer scrutiny. In dwelling amidst furnishings of non-European material culture with neither vitrines nor labels, D'Albertis differs from the typical European paradigm, represented by Stibbert. Moreover, in D'Albertis' more historicized view of the 'Orient', one needs to inquire which 'local color' tempts him, and how does he respond.

Pessagno was referring to the Salotto Turco, as it has been known since D'Albertis' day (Fig. 5). The room is more eclectic than the name suggests, however, with nearly 250 objects in a great diversity of materials and techniques from Spain, India, Persia, Japan, and China, in addition to Ottoman Egypt and Turkey, including upholstered low divans, recliners, ottomans and chairs; ceramics, fans, pennons, mirrors, jewelry, lanterns, and a variety of arms decorating walls and

<sup>17</sup> Giuseppe Pessagno, in: *Genova: Rivista Municipale*, March 1932, pp. 219–225, quoted from De Palma (note II), p. 119. In English this passage reads: "The local color of the Orient tempted Captain D'Albertis too, like all the

intellectuals of his time, and here it was achieved in a Turkish Room out of fabrics and precious furnishings, shimmering with damascene weapons, perforated lamps, in a singular contrast to the environment that surrounds it."



5 Genoa, Castello D'Albertis - Museo delle Culture del Mondo, Salotto Turco

other surfaces.<sup>18</sup> The ahistorical assemblage of objects is not dissimilar to Stibbert's Sala della Cavalcata Islamica, but the shift to the residential floor is more in keeping with the nineteenth-century European hierarchy of civilizations that ranked Muslim lands, as well as South and East Asia, at a level qualitatively above the indigenous cultures of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, mostly displayed on the ground floor.<sup>19</sup> One might say that the 'Orient' of the *piano nobile* is more Near Western than Near Eastern.

D'Albertis' Salotto Turco, equipped with a hoo-kah, still separates the 'Orient' from Europe along a

well-established line of the 'Turkish', 'Arab', 'Moorish' or, simply, 'Smoking' rooms, as they were called, in elite residences in Europe and the United States: e.g., the Arab Hall (1877–1879) in Sir Frederick Leighton's house in London; the Moorish Smoking Room (1883) in Cornelius Vanderbilt II's mansion in New York; and the Maurischer Saal (1891/92) in Baron von Scherer's Schloss Castell near Tägerwilen, Switzerland. Historical objects were augmented in the typical Turkish room by a hodgepodge of recent manufactures.<sup>20</sup> Inasmuch as smoking was gendered as masculine, these rooms were also separated from

<sup>18</sup> De Palma (note 7), p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> Eadem, "Il Museo delle Culture del Mondo tra polivocalità e autorità condivisa", in: *Castello D'Albertis* (note 1), pp. 37–61: 37.

<sup>20</sup> See in that era, for instance, Lulu Gunckel, "A Modern Moorish Interior", in: *The Decorator and Furnisher*, XXIV (1894), 3, pp. 94–96. See also Stefan Koppelkamm, *The Imaginary Orient: Exotic Buildings of the 18th and 19th*

their surrounding residences as an exclusive domain of male fantasy. It is the fantasy, rather than the masculinity, on which I want to focus here, though they are interrelated.<sup>21</sup> What is specifically Orientalist in the fantasy is the inversion whereby the ‘West’ – all work and no play – projects its ‘Oriental other’ as narcosis and lounging. The ‘West’ is industry, the ‘East’ indulgence. And since industry is modernity, the ‘West’ is *now* and the ‘East’ *then*.

It is a central feature of the colonial mentality that the colonizer occupies the present, whereas the colonized is relegated to a past that may range from the primitive to the pre-modern, but is never viewed as coeval.<sup>22</sup> In reality, the Ottomans were of course contemporaries of those Europeans reclining in their Turkish smoking rooms. By incorporating the Ottomans into ‘Western’ residences strictly in the mode of leisure – read both un-industrious and non-industrial – their coevalness was denied. In this sense, the Orientalist projection of D’Albertis’ Salotto Turco represents an ahistorical argument, which might be best understood against the foil of buildings – from Europe to Egypt – erected in a ‘Moorish’ style. The Orientalist vogue in architecture was typically fashioned from an anachronistic amalgamation of features drawn at once from the medieval Alhambra and from Ottoman architecture. Since the Alhambresque elements have been far less noted in the Castello than the explicit, if fantastical, ‘Turkishness’ of the Salotto Turco, it is especially important to trace the route by

which that alternative source of Islamic architectural design develops in European Orientalism and eventually reaches Captain D’Albertis in Italy. As will be seen, D’Albertis’ deployment of Alhambresque and Ottoman elements is distinctive in Italian architectural Orientalism.

The counterpart of the domestic inclusion of the ‘other’ as inherently non-contemporaneous is the imposition of modern industry in the ‘Orient’ on behalf of European political and commercial interests. That argument was writ large in D’Albertis’ lifetime as the opening of the Suez Canal on 17 November 1869. As the first to captain an Italian vessel through the Canal, D’Albertis attended the inaugural celebrations staged by Ismail Pasha, the Ottoman khedive or viceroy of Egypt from 1863 to 1879.<sup>23</sup>

Educated in Paris, Ismail Pasha was familiar with Baron Haussmann’s transformation of the city into a modern metropolis and the associated innovations in commerce and industry.<sup>24</sup> From the time of his enthronement as khedive in 1863, he pursued a campaign of modernization, bringing European architects and engineers, not only for the completion of the Suez Canal but also for projects of urban renewal in Cairo and other reforms based on European models.<sup>25</sup> His strong European affiliation is evidence of a colonized subjectivity, but one needs also to recall that European modernization offered a route to greater autonomy, if not outright independence, from Ottoman rule. Ismail Pasha, moreover, had his own hopes for imperi-

*Centuries in Europe*, Stuttgart 2015, pp. 61–82 and 111–123; Robert King/Charles O. McLean, *The Vanderbilt Homes*, New York 1989, pp. 28–37; and Henry A. La Farge, “John La Farge’s Work in the Vanderbilt Houses”, in: *The American Art Journal*, XVI (1984), 4, pp. 30–70: 65, fig. 43.

<sup>21</sup> On the gender issues, see Olga Bush, “Relocating to Hawai’i: Dwelling with Islamic Arts at Doris Duke’s Shangri La”, in: *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, III (2014), pp. 437–471.

<sup>22</sup> See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York 2002.

<sup>23</sup> D’Albertis (note 13), pp. 114–121. On the construction of the Suez Canal, its role in changing global spatial configurations with regard to politics, commerce, and the imperial ‘civilizing mission’, see, for instance, Vale-

ska Huber, *Channeling Mobilities: Migration and Globalization in the Suez Region and Beyond, 1869–1914*, Cambridge 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Nezar Alsayyad, *Cairo: Histories of a City*, Cambridge, Mass., 2011, pp. 202–206.

<sup>25</sup> For architectural projects conceived during Ismail Pasha’s reign, see *ibidem*, pp. 199–221; and Mercedes Volait, “Dans l’intimité des objets et des monuments: l’orientalisme architectural vu d’Égypte (1870–1910)”, in: *L’orientalisme architectural entre imaginaires et savoirs*, ed. by Nabila Oulebsir/Mercedes Volait, Paris 2009, pp. 233–251. On Italian architects working in Cairo, see in particular Dalu Jones, “‘Va Pensiero...’: Italian Architects in Egypt at the Time of the Khedive”, in: *Environmental Design*, 8–9 (1990), pp. 86–93.

6 Granada,  
Alhambra,  
Court of the  
Lions



al expansion into Ethiopia and Sudan through control of the Nile.<sup>26</sup>

One may trace the ambiguities of the colonial subject in the asymmetries of Ismail Pasha's role in two international exhibitions. The khedive was an honored guest of Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* in 1867, visiting Versailles and staying in a suite of rooms at the Louvre.<sup>27</sup> Yet when he received dignitaries in turn, he did so in the Egyptian pavilion at the Paris exhibition, built in the Mamluk style and furnished with appropriate splendor.<sup>28</sup> In his public role, therefore, Ismail Pasha formed part of the display of the 'Orient' as an exoticized object of the European gaze. At the same time, the khedive was sponsoring the building of a palatial complex to house his European guests at the inauguration of the Suez Canal on the Gezira Island on the Nile off Cairo. When the Canal opened in 1869, Em-

press Eugénie stayed in the new Gezira Palace, where the decoration of her quarters was modeled on the Tuileries Palace and their furnishings were imported from France.<sup>29</sup> The Empress' French quarters were not a public display space, however, but rather a temporary residence for European guests. Far from an exhibition of the exotic, then, the French rooms of the Gezira Palace were a demonstration that the new colonial powers were at home wherever their hegemony extended.

Austrian architect Julius Franz (1831–1915) was responsible for the design of the Gezira Palace, and French landscape architect Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps (1824–1873) laid out the grounds.<sup>30</sup> But the khedive also introduced a further dimension to the ideological narrative by commissioning work for the complex from two prominent European disseminators of the Alhambresque style, that is a style modeled on the architecture of the Alhambra (Fig. 6): British architect Owen

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Raymond Jonas, *The Battle of Adwa: African Victory in the Age of Empire*, Cambridge, Mass., 2011, pp. 34–36.

<sup>27</sup> Marwa M. El-Ashmouni, "Mobility and Ambivalences: Negotiating Architectural Identities During Khedive Ismail's Reign (1863–79)", in: *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, III (2014), pp. 373–396: 375.

<sup>28</sup> Alsayyad (note 24), p. 207.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 210f.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 202–212. See also Alix Wilkinson, "Gardens in Cairo Designed by Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps", in: *Garden History*, XXXVIII (2010), pp. 124–149.



7 Georges Clairin, *Entering the Harem*.  
Baltimore, Walters Art Museum

8 Manuel Gómez-Moreno González, *Salida de la familia de Boabdil de la Alhambra*. Granada, Colección Diputación de Granada

<sup>31</sup> On Jones, see Carol A. Hrvol Flores, *Owen Jones: Design, Ornament, Architecture, and Theory in an Age in Transition*, New York 2006; Kathryn Ferry, "Owen Jones and the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace", in: *Revisiting al-Andalus: Perspectives on the Material Culture of Islamic Iberia and Beyond*, ed. by Claire D. Anderson/Mariam Rosser-Owen, Leiden/Boston 2007, pp. 227–246; *Owen Jones y la Alhambra*, exh. cat., ed. by Juan Calatrava, Granada/London 2011; and Lara Eggleton, "History in the Making: The Ornament of the Alhambra and the Past-Facing Present", in: *Journal of Art Historiography*, VI (2012), pp. 1–29. On von Diebitsch, see Luis Sazatornil Ruiz, "De Diebitsch a Hénard: el 'estilo Alhambra' y la industrialización del Orientalismo", in: *Orientalismo: arte y arquitectura entre Granada y Venecia*, ed. by Juan Calatrava/Guido Zucconi, Madrid 2012, pp. 53–72; Elke Pflugrad-Abdel Aziz, "A Proposal by the Architect Carl von Diebitsch (1819–1869): Mudejar Architecture for a Global Civilization", in: *L'Orientalisme architectural* (note 25), pp. 69–88; and Koppelkamm (note 20), pp. 53–72.

<sup>32</sup> Among many studies, see John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic*

*Jones* (1809–1874), designer of the Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, England, in 1854, and author of widely circulated treatises as well; and Carl von Diebitsch (1819–1869) of Prussia, designer of the Badekabinett (1855) in Schloss Albrechtsberg, Dresden, and other examples of Orientalist architecture.<sup>31</sup> The phenomenon of architectural Orientalism that originated in the second half of the eighteenth century proliferated throughout the nineteenth century. The khedive would have already encountered its multifarious and widespread expressions in his initial stay in Paris, and thus the thousand-and-one iterations of every possible 'Orient' of the European and American imaginary.<sup>32</sup>

In contracting Jones and von Diebitsch for work on the Gezira Palace, Ismail Pasha participated in a westward redirection of the 'Orientalist gaze' from the Mughal examples of colonial India prevalent in Britain up to the 1840s toward the Ottoman Empire and the Nasrid Alhambra, which became the two focal points for European and American Orientalism in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> In this discussion, I would like to signal one important element of that general phenomenon. In the wake of Napoleon I's campaign in Egypt, Europeans, and later Americans, increasingly included what is now called the Middle East on an extended grand tour, but the most accessible site of Islamic architecture remained the Alhambra,

*Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture, 1500–1920*, Cambridge 1988; Marie-Jeanne Dumont, *Paris arabesques: architectures et décors arabes et orientalisants à Paris*, exh. cat., ed. by eadem, Paris 1988; Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*, Berkeley 1992; Mark Crinson, *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture*, London 1996; *Gli orientalisti italiani: cento anni di esotismo 1830–1940*, exh. cat. Stupinigi 1998/99, ed. by Rossana Bossaglia, Venice 1998; *L'orientalismo nell'architettura italiana tra Ottocento e Novecento*, conference proceedings Viareggio 1997, ed. by Maria Adriana Giusti/Ezio Godoli, Siena 1999; *L'Orient des architectes*, conference proceedings La Seyne-sur-Mer 2003, ed. by Nathalie Bertrand, Aix-en-Provence 2006; and works cited in notes 20, 25 and 31.

<sup>33</sup> Among others, see Lorraine Decléty, "Pratique et connaissance: les chemins divergents de l'orientalisme scientifique et de l'orientalisme artistique en France et en Allemagne", in: *L'Orientalisme architectural* (note 25), pp. 89–107: 98–100.



located within Europe itself. However, the Alhambra's many visitors, then and now, found only empty rooms, completely devoid of furnishings. Thus, the Alhambra served as a model for architectural forms and decoration, but the resulting Alhambresque rooms were in need of supplementation by furnishings drawn from the Ottoman pole of Orientalism. Von Diebitsch provides a ready example in his Maurischer Kiosk, built for the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1867. He completed the Alhambresque interior with furnishings of his own design, reproduced in an illustration from the period in which one discerns Nasrid decorative motifs, but forms modeled on Ottoman prototypes.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For a reproduction of this illustration, see Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz (note 31), p. 81, fig. 6. See also Anna McSweeney, "Versions and Visions of the Alhambra in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman World", in: *West 86th*, XXII (2015), pp. 44–69: 53, fig. 10. McSweeney states that all of the pieces are exhibited in the Staatliches Museum Schwerin; see p. 66,

The same hybrid effect is seen in numerous Orientalist paintings, depicting lounging odalisques and virile smokers in palatial Alhambra-like settings, but filled with furnishings *alla turca*.<sup>35</sup> In French painter Georges Clairin's (1843–1919) painting, *Entering the Harem* (circa 1870; Fig. 7), for example, architectural and decorative features of the Alhambra frame the scene in which a beautifully attired young man of a vaguely 'Oriental' appearance pauses in front of the entry to the harem, where several 'odalisques' are sprawled on a low divan. The composition is completed with numerous Ottoman furnishings: low wooden tables, metal and ceramic vessels, the floor strewn with carpets, and

note 35. Von Diebitsch's designs for furnishings have been preserved at the Architekturmuseum, Technische Universität Berlin; see <http://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de>, Inv. 41684, 41703 and 41693 (accessed January 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Some reproductions may be found in Caroline Juler, *Les orientalistes de*

9 Carl von Diebitsch, garden kiosk at Gezira Palace, Cairo, historical photo



a curtain hung in the entryway. A Spanish exception may be cited to prove the rule: Manuel Gómez-Moreno González (1834–1918) – painter, archeologist, art historian, and professor at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Granada, instrumental in the formation of two museums that later came to be known as the Museo de la Alhambra and the Museo Arqueológico de Granada. His monumental historical painting, *Salida de la familia de Boabdil de la Alhambra* (1880; Fig. 8), depicts a crucial moment in Spanish history: Boabdil, the last Nasrid sultan, and his family are departing the Alhambra for exile in North Africa after surrendering Granada to Ferdinand and Isabel, on 2 January 1492. The scene is set in an accurate rendering of the architecture of the Alhambra, to which Gómez-Moreno adds furnishings known to have been products of the Nasrid royal manufacture: the *Jarrón de las Gacelas* – a large luster ceramic

vase – and a large pierced brass chandelier suspended from the ceiling.<sup>36</sup> Since the objects were not *in situ* in the Alhambra during the painter's period, these and other furnishings in the painting are an imaginative reconstruction rather than historical documentation. Nevertheless, the work of a Granada painter, unusually well acquainted with the Alhambra and the arts of the Nasrid period, serves to highlight the degree of fantasy by which Alhambresque spaces were more regularly filled with Ottoman objects.

Although several of von Diebitsch's preliminary drawings have been preserved, depicting rooms designed in the Alhambresque style,<sup>37</sup> and some rooms, partially restored, have been incorporated into what is now a Marriott Hotel,<sup>38</sup> it is no longer possible to fully assess the relation between the Ottoman and Alhambresque poles of architectural Orientalism in the khedive's pal-

*l'école italienne*, Paris 1987, and Lynne Thornton, *Les orientalistes: peintres voyageurs, 1828–1908*, Paris 1983.

<sup>36</sup> The *Jarrón de las Gacelas* is housed in the Museo de la Alhambra; see *Los jarrones de la Alhambra: simbología y poder*, exh. cat., Granada 2006, pp. 134–139, no. 1. The brass lamp belongs to the collection of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid. The lower part of the lamp as depicted in the painting

is a post-Nasrid addition; see Javier Moya Morales, *ibidem*, p. 222, no. 43.

<sup>37</sup> The drawings are housed at the Architekturmuseum, Technische Universität Berlin; see <http://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de>, Inv. 41624–41626 and 41628 (accessed January 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Hrvol Flores (note 31), p. 263, note 75. It has not been determined if von Diebitsch designed furnishings for the palace.

ace on Gezira Island. Nevertheless, one may question Marwa M. El-Ashmouni's proposition that the Gezira Palace speaks for Ismail Pasha's desire to impress visiting European dignitaries with "the splendour of Islamic architectural design",<sup>39</sup> and Anna McSweeney's related assertion that the Gezira Palace is part of "an emerging historicist style of indigenous architecture", where "the alhambresque could be identified as an Arab style".<sup>40</sup> A historical photograph of von Diebitsch's garden kiosk on the khedive's estate (Fig. 9) gives sure evidence of the Alhambresque in its portico, open on both sides with colonnades of tall round arches surmounted by panels of geometric grid reposing on slender columns, and its projecting portals under flat roofing.<sup>41</sup> However, if Ottoman furnishings belie the European imaginary when incorporated in Alhambresque settings, the Iberian Alhambra itself, far from indigenous to Egypt, is as historically incoherent in Cairo as it is in Stibbert's villa. The khedive set out to impress his guests with a splendid version of their own fantasy; they departed Europe only to arrive in Europe again, the Europe of their own orientalizing imagination.

The same colonial disposition may be found elsewhere in Cairo.<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, over the course of the nineteenth century, the claim to modernity in Egypt was expressed principally through the adoption of European architectural styles under the direction of European architects – from medieval to neoclassical, and characterized by eclecticism and hybridity.<sup>43</sup> On the other, von Diebitsch's work for the khedive on the Gezira Palace greatly aided him in securing other commissions in the city, where he designed villas for

both the European and Cairene elite – several of them still standing – in the 'Moorish', 'Moresque' or more specifically Alhambresque style.<sup>44</sup> Incidentally, the architectural elements of von Diebitsch's garden kiosk for the Gezira Palace, as well as for the porticos of the palace's façade, were cast according to his design at the Lauchhammer foundry in Saxony, so if the architecture was Alhambresque, the industry was European.<sup>45</sup>

Against that background, I would like to draw attention to a detail in Jones' design for a garden pavilion for the khedive's Gezira Palace. Like von Diebitsch, who exhibited his Maurischer Kiosk at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1867, Jones had shown his drawings for the garden pavilion there, and one drawing for the exterior elevation of the building has been preserved (Fig. 10).<sup>46</sup> Jones conceived the pavilion mainly in the Alhambresque style, with an open arcade composed of *muqarna* arches and the large dome of the pavilion resting on a star-shaped drum, both architectural forms akin to the Palace of the Lions in the Alhambra. Although Jones' garden pavilion was never realized, many architectural and decorative elements that he designed for fifteen interiors of the palace – such as friezes, moldings, cornices, dadoes, and wallpaper – were prefabricated in England according to his designs and assembled in Cairo, as in the case of von Diebitsch's work on the Gezira project.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, Jones departed uncharacteristically from his models in one crucial aspect. The central dome over the Alhambresque drum is flanked by two more domes over the adjacent rooms, and in all three cases, the tall outer shell of the domes echoes the form of Mamluk, rather than Nas-

<sup>39</sup> El-Ashmouni (note 27), p. 383.

<sup>40</sup> McSweeney (note 34), p. 50. See the similar conclusions in Robert Ilbert/Mercedes Volait, "Neo Arabic Renaissance in Egypt, 1870–1930", in: *Mimar*, XIII (1984), pp. 26–34.

<sup>41</sup> See Elke Pflugrad-Abdel Aziz, *Islamisierte Architektur in Kairo, Carl von Diebitsch und der Hofarchitekt Julius Franz: Preussisches Unternehmertum im Ägypten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn 2003, pls. 72 and 85; Wilkinson (note 30); and Koppelkamm (note 20), pp. 92–95.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, El-Ashmouni (note 27).

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Ghislaine Alleaume/Mercedes Volait, "The Age of Transition: The

Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", in: *The Glory of Cairo: An Illustrated History*, ed. by André Raymond, Cairo 2002, pp. 370–393; Volait (note 25).

<sup>44</sup> Pflugrad-Abdel Aziz (note 31), pp. 87f. For an overview of the terms, see McSweeney (note 34), p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> Pflugrad-Abdel Aziz (note 31), p. 76.

<sup>46</sup> Juan Calatrava, "Owen Jones: diseño islámico y arquitectura moderna", in: *Owen Jones y la Alhambra* (note 31), pp. 9–42: 24.

<sup>47</sup> McSweeney specifies the number of interiors designed by Jones; see McSweeney (note 34), p. 53. On the assemblage in Cairo, see Hrvol Flores (note 31), p. 190.

rid, models (Fig. II). The shift in reference makes for a small break, not merely in style, but in the implicit ideological narrative. To recall Mamluk models in Cairo is to recognize that the otherwise displaced and exoticized ‘Orient’ does have an indigenous architecture and, hence, a history of its own. In that light, even the amalgamation of the Alhambresque and Mamluk allusions reappears, not simply as an ahistorical hybrid but as a historically coherent reflection of the world of contemporaneous Nasrids and Mamluks. What remains absent from Jones’ drawing, however, is an architectural argument for the coevalness of the Ottoman Empire of the khedive’s day and modern Europe.

### 3.

The general tendencies of architectural Orientalism, and more specifically the deployment of the Alhambresque style, whether in the Gezira Palace or elsewhere, may be schematized in a two-part typology. One type is fairly holistic in that the Alhambresque predominates throughout the interior and in some forms on the exterior of a building. In the second type, ‘Oriental’ forms are limited to a single room, variously designated (e.g., ‘Moorish’, ‘Arab’, or ‘Turkish’), but commonly set off functionally from other interior spaces as a room for smoking. I cite two illustrations.

The Maurische Villa in the Wilhelma was built between 1842 and 1846 for King Wilhelm I of Württemberg (r. 1816–1864) in Cannstadt, by Karl Ludwig Wilhelm von Zanth (1796–1857).<sup>48</sup> The architectural and decorative forms used in the design of the interiors are almost wholly Alhambresque, as is the octagonal drum of the star-shaped glass vault over the courtyard and the flat ceiling over the ballroom and bedroom.

<sup>48</sup> Ludwig von Zanth, *Die Wilhelma: Maurische Villa Seiner Majestät des Königs Wilhelm von Württemberg*, n.p. 1855. The villa is discussed, with some illustrations, in Koppelkamm (note 20), pp. 64–75, and Calatrava (note 46), pp. 14f.

<sup>49</sup> Mariam Rosser-Owen, *Islamic Arts from Spain*, London 2010, p. 135, fig. 128.

However, the large dome over the main hall with a high drum and tall *muqarnas* squinches in the transition zone are more akin to Mamluk models. Yet if one finds an architectural precedent for Jones’ combination of Nasrid and Mamluk models in von Zanth’s work, the ideological implications are missing. Distant from both Egypt and Spain, Mamluk allusions in Germany have no more grounding in an indigenous style than do the Alhambresque elements. Von Zanth’s hybrid ‘Orient’ is a strictly European fantasy.

The Moorish Smoking Room added to the eighteenth-century royal palace of Aranjuez, Spain, in 1848–1850 under the patronage of Queen Isabel II of Spain as a gift to her husband offers an exemplary case of the second type. The room was designed by Rafael Contreras, then in charge of the preservation and rehabilitation of the Alhambra.<sup>49</sup> Contreras employed multiple rows of *muqarnas* for the dome, adhering closely to Nasrid prototypes, with no Mamluk admixture. Despite this difference in their architectonics, Contreras’ design in Aranjuez shares with the interiors in the Wilhelma the same dazzling chromatic scheme dominated by primary colors, reflecting Jones’ influential color theory. Also like Jones, Contreras produced vibrantly colored plaster models of the Alhambra decoration, which he exhibited and sold as souvenirs at the *Great Exhibition* in London in 1851 and the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1867 (Fig. 12).<sup>50</sup>

Narrowing the focus to Italy in D’Albertis’ era, one finds that Italian architects, too, were studying ‘Oriental’ monuments *in situ* and publishing their drawings.<sup>51</sup> Among them was Giuseppe Castellazzi, who traveled to Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria, exhibited his architectural drawings upon return, and published

<sup>50</sup> Calatrava (note 46), pp. 31–35; Mariam Rosser-Owen, “Coleccionar la Alhambra: Owen Jones y la España Islámica en el South Kensington Museum”, in: *Owen Jones y la Alhambra* (note 31), pp. 43–70: 43–45; see also Rosser-Owen (note 49), pp. 114–118.

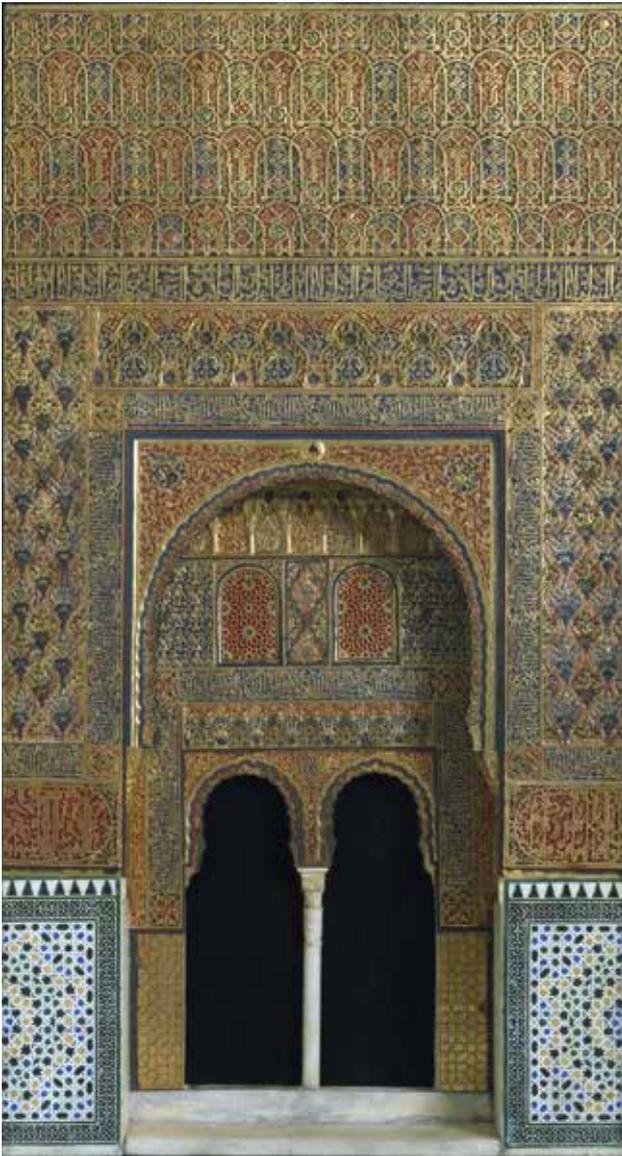
<sup>51</sup> For an overview, see Maria Flora Giubilei, “I volti dell’esotismo attraverso le scuole settentrionali”, in: *Gli orientalisti italiani* (note 32), pp. 15–27.



10 Owen Jones, project drawing for a garden kiosk at Gezira Palace, Cairo. London, Victoria and Albert Museum



11 Cairo, complex of Sultan Qa'it Bay, historical postcard



12 Rafael Contreras, Alhambra decoration, plaster cast. London, Victoria and Albert Museum

his work titled *Ricordi di architettura orientale* in 1871–1874,<sup>52</sup> eventually becoming professor of Architecture at the Regio Istituto di Belle Arti in Florence in 1876 and its director a year later.<sup>53</sup> Emphasizing the didactic value of visual material for the formation of architects, drawings and an extensive photographic archive were continuously accumulated at the institute;<sup>54</sup> and following Jones and Contreras, the students produced their own plaster models of the Alhambra’s decorative motifs sometime before 1879.<sup>55</sup> Some of these casts have been preserved in Florence at the Istituto Statale d’Arte, and they would have served the reproduction of Alhambresque decoration in the buildings erected in Italy. For instance, Giuseppe Poggi, the mastermind of the urbanistic renewal of Florence in the late nineteenth century and colleague of Castellazzi, was in charge of redesigning Stibbert’s villa,<sup>56</sup> and it is likely that he made the plaster models of the Alhambra decoration available to Michele Piovano, the sculptor overseeing the stucco decoration in the villa, including the Sala della Cavalcata Islamica.<sup>57</sup>

As elsewhere in Europe, the Alhambresque style was adapted in Italy for buildings of various types and functions. The Villino Villegas in Rome, designed by architect Ernesto Basile in 1887–1890 for painter José Villegas Cordero, and the villa-castle of Sammezzano, which Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d’Aragona, a wealthy nobleman, politician, and a man of many intellectual pursuits, designed for himself near Florence between 1853 and 1889, are prominent Italian examples of ‘Oriental’ residential architecture.<sup>58</sup> In the Villino Villegas, the Alhambresque forms are recognizable in both the façade and, especially, the in-

<sup>52</sup> Giuseppe Castellazzi, *Ricordi di architettura orientale*, Venice 1871–1874. For this issue see also the article by Stefano Anastasio above, p. 14 and Fig. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Fauzia Farneti, “L’Oriente nell’attività e nell’insegnamento di Giuseppe Castellazzi”, in: *L’orientalismo nell’architettura italiana* (note 32), pp. 41–48.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>55</sup> “Otto formelle moresche”, in: *Gli orientalisti italiani* (note 32), p. 202 and pl. 94, no. 94.

<sup>56</sup> Di Marco (note 15), p. 35.

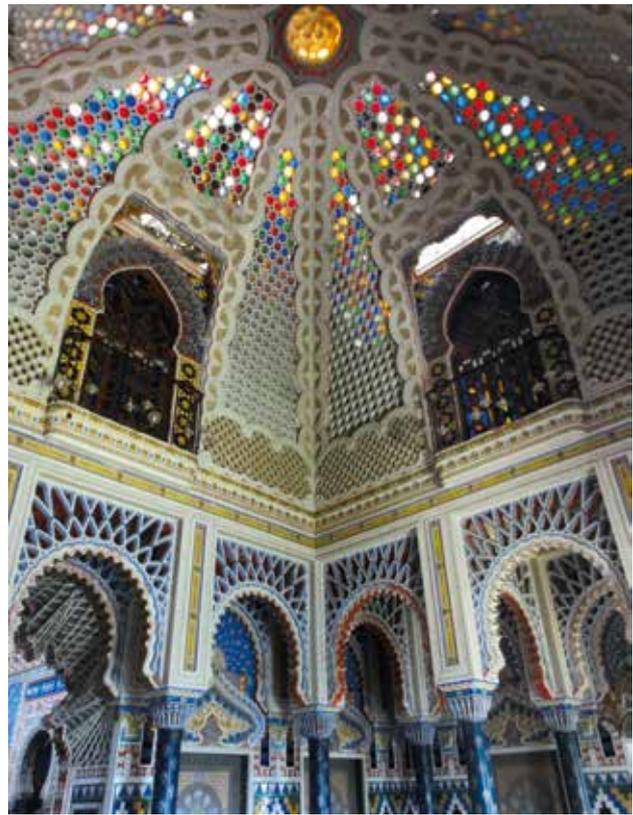
<sup>57</sup> *Museo Stibbert* (note 15), p. 54.

<sup>58</sup> See Rosario De Simone, “Il villino Villegas”, in: *L’orientalismo nell’architettura italiana* (note 32), pp. 117–126; and *Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d’Aragona: Sammezzano e il sogno d’Oriente 1813–2013*, conference proceedings Castello di Sammezzano 2013, ed. by Emanuele Masiello/Ethel Santacroce, Livorno 2014.

terior courtyard. In Sammezzano, a highly simplified Alhambresque style is employed in nearly all interiors (Fig. 13), manifesting the architect's phantasmagoric experimentations with forms and color, which he published from 1879 to 1885 in the *Ricordi di architettura*, one of the leading sources at that time for architectural projects undertaken in Italy.<sup>59</sup>

The second type, that is an isolated 'Oriental' room, is well illustrated in the Villa Mimbelli (now Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori) in Livorno. Built between 1865 and 1875 for Francesco Mimbelli, a wealthy Livornese merchant, one of the rooms has been called, alternatively, Salotto Moresco and Salotto Turco – evidence that the terms were understood as interchangeable (Figs. 14, 15). Similar to the interiors at Sammezzano, the architectural decoration of the room is greatly simplified and stylized, but remains wholly Alhambresque: slender columns with capitals, a *muqarnas* arch that surmounts a cusped arch, and walls painted with a diamond-shaped pattern that recalls the lozenge grid of the stucco decoration in the Alhambra. The cupola of the room presents a flattened form, reminiscent of a Mamluk dome in its decoration, if not in its profile, as seen in Jones' design for the khedive's garden pavilion or, more pointedly, in the anti-historical hybrid form in the Wilhelma. The drum of the dome in the Villa Mimbelli, however, is embellished with an Alhambresque *muqarnas* colonnade. The decoration of the Salotto Moresco, like such predecessors as the Wilhelma and the Moorish Smoking Room in Aranjuez, but far from the exaggerations at Sammezzano, reveals the striking chromatic scheme of saturated, glittering colors theorized by Jones.

Pessagno's description situates D'Albertis' Salotto Turco (Fig. 5) as the second type of architectural Orientalism, that is a single, isolated room. Moreover, as the 'Oriental' impression here was created for the



13 Reggello, Leccio, Castello di Sammezzano, Sala dei Gigli

viewer by the abundant furnishings, the room corresponded to the Ottoman, rather than Alhambresque pole. But, like Jones at Gezira, D'Albertis deploys the Orientalist topoi of his era in Italy and elsewhere and also diverges from them.

D'Albertis' ideological narrative is articulated primarily through his practices as a collector, which might first be glimpsed *ex negativo*. In 1908, he published a short brochure relating the biography of Italian Orientalist furniture designer Giuseppe Parvis (1831–1909), extolling his craftsmanship.<sup>60</sup> Trained as a cabinetmaker, Parvis moved permanently to Cairo, where he man-

<sup>59</sup> On the architecture of the castle see Emanuele Masiello, "La villacastello di Sammezzano: un capolavoro da tutelare e valorizzare", *ibidem*, pp. 65–79: 70f.

<sup>60</sup> Enrico Alberto D'Albertis, *Poche parole su Giuseppe Parvis, Cavaliere al Merito del Lavoro*, Turin 1908. I wish to thank Maria Camilla De Palma for bringing this publication to my attention.



14, 15 Livorno, Villa Mimbelli,  
Salotto Moresco, cupola and  
general view

ufactured furnishings for local and European markets, showing his work at numerous international exhibitions, including complete interiors, like the *Salotto in stile arabo* for the Italian exposition in Milan (1881).<sup>61</sup> Parvis was commissioned by Ismail Pasha to make furnishings for the Egyptian pavilion in Paris in 1867<sup>62</sup> and, two years later, to furnish his Gezira Palace.<sup>63</sup>

D'Albertis knew Parvis' showroom in Cairo, which, according to historical photographs, reflected the designer's idea of a complete interior "in stile arabo".<sup>64</sup> One may presume that he would have also seen Parvis' furnishings in the Gezira Palace. If so, D'Albertis does not mention it, but he documents his visit to the home of Giuseppe Verdi – whose *Aida* had been commissioned by the khedive on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal – in the Palazzo Doria in Genoa, where there was a Sala Turca decorated with furnishings made by Parvis and given to the composer by the khedive.<sup>65</sup> In sum, D'Albertis was amply familiar with Parvis' furnishings and expressed his appreciation of their artistry in his brochure, but he did not collect any of the craftsman's pieces for his own *Salotto Turco*. Since such objects were within D'Albertis' means, one discerns from this negative evidence that his interests laid elsewhere – in artifacts rather than facsimiles and, above all, in objects that recalled the material culture he encountered in his travels. Even when he did buy objects in 'Oriental bazaars' in Europe, the furnishings seem less an investment than a reminiscence. In a word, he was more a re-collector than a collector.

D'Albertis' use of textiles is of special interest in this regard. The ceiling is draped with a striped marquee, whose undulating panels evoke a tent. The resemblance is heightened by the use of large, richly colored textiles over doors and mirrors, and over



16 Genoa, Castello D'Albertis - Museo delle Culture del Mondo, *Salotto Turco*, tent panel

the French windows that lead out into a garden. The hangings over the windows are in fact tent panels executed in an appliqué technique typical of *khayamiya* tents of the khedival period made and sold in the Cairo's Tent Makers' Market (Fig. I6).<sup>66</sup> It would appear that D'Albertis purchased them there during one of his eight trips to Egypt, because the relationship between the tent-like interior and the adjoining exterior

<sup>61</sup> Ornella Selvafolta, "Il Signor Parvis del Cairo' all'Esposizione del 1881: la diffusione del gusto e dell'ornato orientalista", in: *Mondi a Milano: culture ed esposizioni 1874–1940*, ed. by Fulvio Irace et al., Milan 2015, pp. 68–77: 71. See also *eadem*, "Le esposizioni e l'Oriente-Bazar", in: *L'orientalismo nell'architettura italiana* (note 32), pp. 183–194: 191f.

<sup>62</sup> Jones (note 25), p. 89.

<sup>63</sup> Selvafolta 2015 (note 61), p. 71.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 72.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.

<sup>66</sup> On this matter, see Sam Bowker, "The Urban Fabric of Cairo: *Khayamiya* and the *Suradeq*", in: *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, III (2014), pp. 475–501.



17, 18 Genoa, Castello D'Albertis - Museo delle Culture del Mondo, Sala delle Meridiane, general view and detail of fireplace

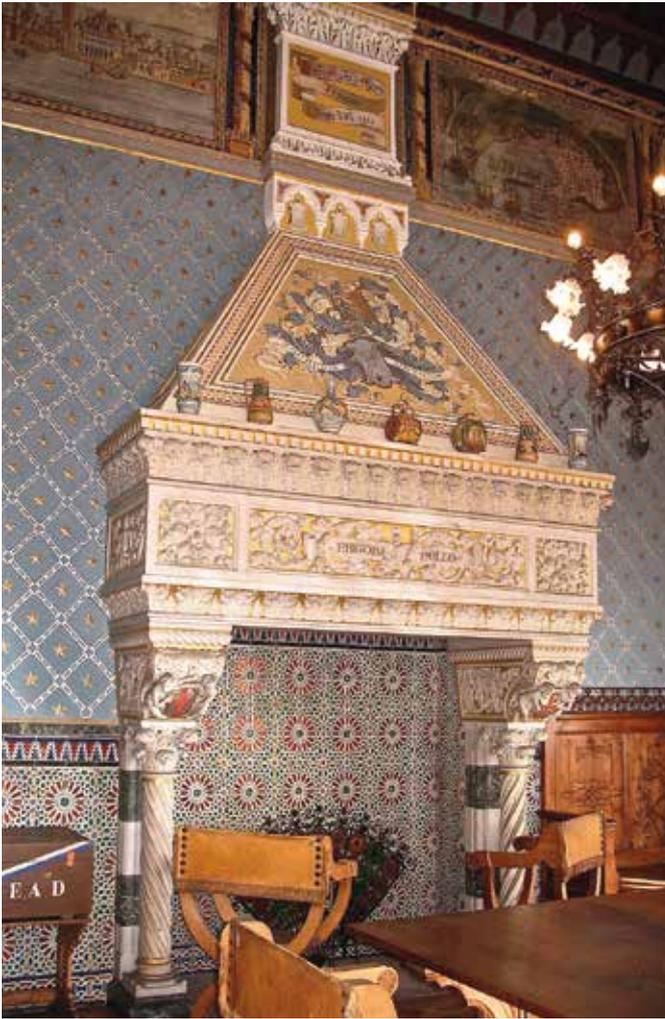
space speaks to a familiarity with and understanding of the use of tents in the Muslim world as *textile architecture* mediating between a building and landscape.<sup>67</sup> The furnishings in this room, then, are 'Turkish,' in their anti-historical accumulation of disparate objects; but the textile architecture is specifically Ottoman, stylized but still participating in the coeval reality of D'Albertis' experiences in Muslim lands.

If D'Albertis' practices as a collector in this room distinguish him from the more typical profile of Stibbert's Sala della Cavalcata Islamica, his departure from the ideological underpinnings of European Ori-

entalism is more telling in the Sala delle Meridiane (Hall of the Sundials) on the same residential floor of the Castello (Fig. 17). A bright room with large windows, a fireplace and furniture in dark wood, at first glance the Sala delle Meridiane may well appear – as it did to Pessagno – to conform to the neo-Gothic architectural style of the Castello, and hence to bear no relationship to the Salotto Turco. Furthermore, while the large table in the room served for dining at times, the Sala delle Meridiane was chiefly a workspace, named for the 103 sundials that D'Albertis constructed there, carefully calibrated for specific

<sup>67</sup> I base these remarks on the similarity between the form and use of the textiles in the Salotto Turco and a set of Egyptian tent panels decorating

the dining room in Doris Duke's home in Honolulu. See Bush (note 21), pp. 458–463.



19 Granada, Alhambra,  
Torre de la Cautiva, stucco  
decoration and revetments  
of ceramic tile mosaic

geographical locations. As a place of labor, then, the room contrasts sharply with visions of the ‘Orient’ as the site of leisure. Yet history, generally excluded from Orientalist rooms, as I have argued, reasserts itself in the Sala delle Meridiane. For that historical narrative, one must turn back from the Ottoman pole of the furnishings of the Salotto Turco to discover the less evident Alhambresque elements in the architectural decoration.

The more patent historical argument visualized in the room is made explicit in the decoration of the fireplace, whose hood is embellished with the family coat of arms (Fig. 18). The fluttering ribbon threaded

through it is inscribed with the D’Albertis family motto *TENACIOR CATENIS* (“more tenacious than chains”), and the putti on the imposts on which the mantel rests hold two symbols painted in red: Saint George’s cross, the emblem of Genoa, and the fleur-de-lis of Florence, referring to D’Albertis’ familial and intellectual forebear, the Genoa-born Florentine humanist Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472). The genealogical narrative extends, by a visual pun, to the surrounding parietal decoration, divided vertically into three areas. In the middle and broadest section, the family motto reappears as the figure of the painted, silver-color chain motif. The genealogical story is incorporated into a

more ample history in the uppermost area of the elevation, where a series of paintings depicts Columbus' exploits. Thus, in combination with the references on the fireplace to his biological descent, the paintings represent D'Albertis' claim to be a faithful son of Genoa who has literally followed in Columbus' wake.

As one's eye continues down the wall, however, the open allusions to the European background of both familial and civic history give way to orientalizing motifs. In the lowest of the three areas, as well as in the backsplash of the fireplace, the decoration consists of dados of ceramic luster tiles surmounted by a narrow band of crenellation. The motif of a central radiating star enclosed in geometric interlace on the tiles is unequivocally reminiscent of the Alhambra's revetments (Fig. 19). D'Albertis chose tiles made by Cantagalli, a Florentine firm well-known for its reproductions of Persian, 'Hispano-Moresque', and Italian Renaissance tiles – the same firm that produced tiles for Stibbert's Sala della Cavalcata Islamica and Ismail Pasha's Gezira Palace.<sup>68</sup> But whereas the tile work serves the purposes of an isolated, exoticizing display in the one, and the colonial exportation of the European gaze in the other, D'Albertis' use of the Alhambresque tiles in the Sala delle Meridiane is not simply an Orientalist break with history. Rather, D'Albertis' Alhambresque tile revetments enable him to articulate a historical narrative that links Columbus' European world with coeval Islamic polities and trading partners. Polychromed glazed ceramic tiles from Seville, Malaga, and Valencia imported by Genoese merchants from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century served to decorate churches and noblemen's palaces in Genoa and, more generally, in Liguria. The imported tiles were also used as prototypes for the local production of ceramic tiles, known in the region as *laggioni*.<sup>69</sup> European production

of the ceramic tiles, whether in the early modern period or in D'Albertis' day, forms part of a continuous history connecting Europe to al-Andalus.

In keeping with the conventions of architectural Orientalism, one expects a decisive Alhambresque element in the topmost area of the wall, as one finds, for instance, in the frieze-like colonnade surmounted by *muqarnas* in the Moorish Smoking Room in Cornelius Vanderbilt II's mansion. Instead, D'Albertis substitutes the paintings of Columbus, transforming an ahistorical decorative element into a coherent historical narrative, for Columbus himself, by his own account, was present in Granada in January of 1492, just prior to his first transatlantic voyage, where, he wrote, “por fuerça de armas vide poner las vanderas reales de Vuestras Altezas en las torres de la Alfambra”.<sup>70</sup>

Attuned to the historical narrative connecting the Alhambresque tile work in the lowest register to the story of a European modernity that begins with the conquest of the Alhambra at the top, one re-reads the middle expanse of the wall. The chain motif of the European family history is simultaneously the trace of the diamond pattern characteristic of the lozenge grid of the carved stucco decoration in the Alhambra, an allusion reinforced by the stars within the diamonds that recall the radiating stars of the Alhambra's tile revetments.

D'Albertis does not simply overturn the European hierarchy of civilizations – he is a man of his own late colonial time. Nevertheless, his persona as a maritime traveler and his practices as a collector of local artifacts, rather than more universalizing art, destabilize the stereotype of the late nineteenth-century ethnographer and armchair explorer. Thus, D'Albertis' Castello stands in contrast to other house-muse-

<sup>68</sup> On this topic, see the contribution by Loredana Pessa, “Il revival tra XIX e XX secolo”, in: *Azulejos e laggioni: atlante delle piastrelle in Liguria dal Medioevo al XVI secolo*, ed. by eadem/Paolo Ramagli, Genoa 2013, pp. 91–102: 95. For reference to Cantagalli's tiles in Stibbert's Sala della Cavalcata Islamica and the Gezira Palace, see *Museo Stibbert* (note 15), p. 54. D'Albertis'

receipts for tiles ordered from Cantagalli are preserved in the archives of the Castello.

<sup>69</sup> See *Azulejos e laggioni* (note 68).

<sup>70</sup> *Cristóbal Colón: textos y documentos completos*, ed. by Consuelo Varela, Madrid 1982, p. 15.

ums of this era, altering the common narrative of the construction and projection of the 'other' in modern Italy. His is an Orientalism with a difference. He did continue to exoticize many of Europe's 'others' in the public exhibition spaces, and yet, in the re-collections of his travels gathered in the Salotto Turco and the overlapping narratives of the Sala delle Meridiane, he not only co-habited with the contemporary Islamic world in his living quarters, but also created a subtle and sophisticated argument for a historical relationship between the Islamic world and Italy, or more specifically Genoa, as a maritime power.

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#### *Abstract*

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Enrico Alberto d'Albertis (1846–1932), an explorer and amateur ethnographer, built a castle in Genoa, where he housed the objects that he brought from his voyages around the world. D'Albertis visualized 'others' from the Americas, Oceania, and Africa in consonance with the political narrative of Italian nationalism and European colonialism of his day through display cases of material culture on the ground floor. But his castle was his home, and in contrast to the prevailing penchant for European art in the residential areas of other Italian house-museums, the next floor of the Castello D'Albertis is characterized by the inclusion of non-European artifacts in his residential space, especially objects that he collected in the Muslim world. The personal connection that D'Albertis drew between himself and fellow Genovese Christopher Columbus will also prove pertinent to an understanding of the Castello as an intersection of local history, science, and an orientalizing aesthetic. This paper concentrates on two rooms: the Salotto Turco, a leisure space based on Ottoman models, and the Sala delle Meridiane, a workspace with visual references to the Alhambra. Studying their architectural decoration and the deployment of D'Albertis' collection as part of a living environment, the rooms enable a distinction between two poles in the representation of the Muslim world by Europeans of D'Albertis' era, their import for the conception of multiple and varied 'others', and the construction of plural and complex Orientalisms.

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*Castello D'Albertis – Museo delle Culture del Mondo, Genoa: Figs. 1–3, 5, 17. – Museo Stibbert, Florence: Fig. 4. – Olga Bush: Figs. 6, 16, 18, 19. – Walters Art Museum, Baltimore: Fig. 7. – Granada, Colección Diputación de Granada: Fig. 8. – Harvard University, Fine Arts Library, Special Collections: Figs. 9, 11. – Victoria and Albert Museum, London: Figs. 10, 12. – Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, Florence, archive of the editorial office: Fig. 13. – Villa Mimbelli, Livorno: Figs. 14, 15.*