

# From Gaillon to Sanchi, from Vézelay to Angkor Wat. The *Musée Indo-Chinois* in Paris: A Transcultural Perspective on Architectural Museums

Michael Falser

## Editing and peer review managed by:

Lena Bader, Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte – Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art, Paris

## Reviewers:

Julia A. B. Hegewald, Eva Troelenberg

## Abstract

Besides the commodification of original artefacts from the Orient as museum objects of Occidental curiosity, the transfer and display of Asian monumental architecture was a powerful means to appropriate the built cultural heritage of the colonies for the European *métropole*. Addressing a scientific desideratum in architectural and museum research until today, this paper investigates the medium of plaster casts as an early colonial strategy of the transfer and substitution of Oriental architecture for newly invented museum spaces in Europe. With the focus of the largely forgotten *musée Indo-chinois* in the Paris (c. 1880-1930) and the architectural plaster casts of the Cambodian temples of Angkor, this contribution develops a transcultural perspective<sup>1</sup> on (pre-)colonial architectural museum spaces of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which covers the scene in Paris from 1800 onwards with the protagonists Alexandre Lenoir (after 1800) and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (before 1880) as well as the concurring museum projects in London with the South Kensington Museum (after 1870) in the first place.

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## Introduction

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<sup>1</sup> The disciplinary approach identified here as transculturality is at the centre of the Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context* at the Ruprecht-Karls-University of Heidelberg, Germany, where the author is currently conducting his project entitled *Heritage as a Transcultural Concept – Angkor Wat from an Object of Colonial Archaeology to a Contemporary Global Icon* under the auspices of the Chair of Global Art History: <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/d-historicities-heritage/d12.html> (accessed 14 June 2013).

## Architectural Museums in Colonial Europe: Appropriating Asian Antiquity through the Medium of the Plaster Cast<sup>2</sup>

- [1] In addition to the colonial transfer of small-scale original artefacts from the Orient to the Occident and their commodification as museum objects of Western curiosity, the display of monumental architecture was a powerful Western means of visualizing the East as a land of lost civilizations. However, this image (central to the Occidental notion of the powerless and chaotic Orient that was to be lifted out of its darkness by European colonial engagement in Asia) had a double effect. Whereas partial or full-scale reconstitutions of the once glorious architecture of the Orient were represented in ideal or restored condition at the Universal and Colonial Exhibitions in Europe (from 1851 onwards), the 'original site' in Asia was canonized as an 'eternal ruin.' This transcultural narrative presented the same architectural complex as both an Oriental ruin *and* a restored monument, and enabled its inclusion in the colonizer's own canon of cultural heritage. Following what James Clifford has called the "salvage paradigm, reflecting the desire to rescue something 'authentic' out of destructive historical changes,"<sup>3</sup> this concept mirrored the European nation's dual self-representation as the guardian of both a progressive modernity and of a European colonialism's civilizing mission towards the 'degenerated Orient.' But how was monumental architecture actually transferred from East to West? How was it 'translated' for and embedded into the colonial heritage canon? Bringing monumental architecture from the original sites to the West could not be carried out merely through the removal of original architectural fragments over long intercontinental distances (Fig. 1); it necessitated architectural substitution within a specific strategy and through a specific medium: *plaster casts*. This technique involved making negative moulds of original architectural surfaces on site, transporting these light-weight moulds over long distances, and finally re-casting them into three-dimensional plaster copies at the destination site. A number of directly moulded elements were reassembled in European museum displays to 're-present' the whole architecture as it appeared on its original Oriental site.
- [2] The second half of the nineteenth century was the heyday for this European-wide practice of material transfer and architectural translation, but by the first half of the twentieth century it was replaced by the museological display of 'authentic originals.' By the postmodern 1980s plaster casts were rehabilitated as valid "substitutes in museums"<sup>4</sup> for the purposes of public education, as well as the protection, and democratization of the original artefact through display in multiple museum settings. However, the re-evaluation

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<sup>2</sup> All English quotations from French sources are translations by the author.

<sup>3</sup> James Clifford, "The others: Beyond the 'salvage' paradigm," in: *Third Text*, 6 (1989), 73-77, here 73.

<sup>4</sup> Vinos Sofka, ed., *Originals and substitutes in museums*. ICOFOM Study Series 8 and 9, Stockholm 1985.

of the architectural plaster casts has only begun quite recently,<sup>5</sup> and the research on the colonial-political implications of plaster casting large-scale 'Oriental' architecture for 'Occidental' museums continues to be a scholarly desideratum.<sup>6</sup>



1 An undated photograph of a French mission to the temples of Angkor in the second half of the 19th century  
(Source: Archives Musée Guimet, Paris)

[3] This paper focuses on the transfer of the twelfth-century temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia to a largely forgotten nineteenth-century architectural museum in Paris – the *musée Indo-chinois* in the Parisian *palais de Trocadéro* (part 3 of this paper). Although this museum, the largest part of which was dedicated to plaster cast copies of Khmer sculpture and architecture, only existed for roughly fifty years between the 1880s and the 1930s, the display aesthetics applied to architectural antiquity from the Far East in colonial Europe were embedded in an older tradition of architectural museums. Two developmental strands will be examined in order to better contextualize our specific case-

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<sup>5</sup> Compare: Mary Beard, "Cast: Between art and science," in: *Les moulages de sculptures antiques et l'histoire de l'archéologie*, ed. Henri Lavagne and François Queyrel, Paris 1997, 157-166; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ähnlichkeit und Berührung. Archäologie, Anachronismus und Modernität des Abdrucks*, Cologne 1999 (especially the chapter 'Der Abdruck als Paradigma', 14-69); Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand, eds., *Plaster casts. Making, collecting and displaying from classical antiquity to the present*, Berlin, New York 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the colonial project," in: *Colonialism and the object*, ed. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, London and New York 1998, 11-27. Compare: Michael Falser, "Krishna and the Plaster Cast. Translating the Cambodian temple of Angkor Wat in the French colonial period," in: *Transcultural Studies*, 2 (2011), 6-50, <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/transcultural/article/view/9083> (accessed 14 June 2013). And Michael Falser, "Colonial appropriation, physical substitution and the metonymics of translation. Plaster casts of Angkor Wat for the museum collections in Paris and Berlin," in: *The Challenge of the Object. CIHA Congress Proceedings*, ed. G. Ulrich Großmann and Petra Krutisch, Nuremberg 2013 (forthcoming).

study: In part 1 of this paper, the architectural displays of Angkor in Paris will be compared with previous and parallel undertakings in France, particularly Alexandre Lenoir's *Musée des monuments français* (1793-1816) and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée* (realized from 1882 onwards). In part 2 – in light of the rivalry between Great Britain and France in the appropriation and display of the architecture of 'their' Asian colonies – the Angkor replicas will be examined within the context of the *Architectural courts* of the *South Kensington Museum* in London (from 1873 onwards), which had developed from earlier architectural museums in the British capital.

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### **The First Moulages of Angkor in Paris: From the Mekong Expedition in 1866-68 to the Universal Exhibitions in Paris of 1867 and 1878**

[4] As a useful basis for our focus on architectural large-scale reconstitutions of the Angkorian temples in the French *métropole*, the history of the first plaster casts from Angkor will be summarized briefly here. After the descriptions of Angkor by the naturalist Henri Mouhot in French and English in the early 1860s, the French Mekong Exploratory Mission was carried out between 1866 and 1868 under the direction of Doudart de Lagrée and Francis Garnier. In 1873 the latter published the results in *Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine*.<sup>7</sup> Primarily conceived to explore the navigability of the Mekong river from the French colony of Indochina to southern China (the region of Angkor was on Siamese territory until 1907), the mission's detour to Angkor – together with the slightly earlier descriptions of the first mouldings taken from the temples by de Lagrée himself – helped to propagate the image of Angkor in Europe (Fig. 2a). The first photographs, however, were executed by the Scotsman John Thomson in 1866 and published in Edinburgh in 1867 in his book *The antiquities of Cambodia: A series of photographs taken on the spot, with letterpress description* (Fig. 2b).<sup>8</sup>

[5] The first plaster casts from Angkor by the French were directly integrated into the 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition into the section on the reproductive techniques used to copy artefacts, and not, as one might think, into a section on art and architecture. One participant in the Mekong mission, Louis Delaporte, a naval captain and gifted draughtsman, executed impressive drawings from the temples and developed the idea that would become his lifelong ambition, to create a museum of Khmer art and architecture in France. He returned to Angkor in 1873 to collect original sculptural and architectural fragments (Fig. 3a) as well as mouldings of the temple's surfaces for the short-lived *musée Khmer* in Compiègne, located northeast of Paris (opened in 1874).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Francis Garnier, *Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine effectué pendant les années 1866, 1867 et 1868 par une commission française*, Paris 1873.

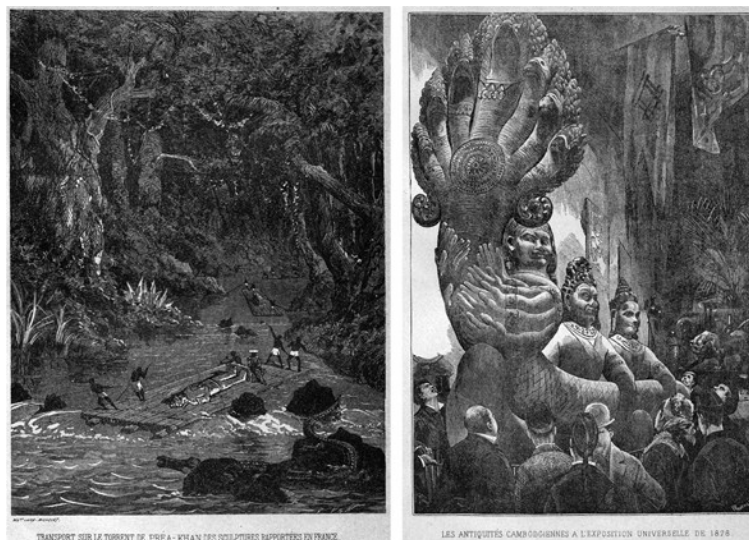
<sup>8</sup> John Thomson, *The antiquities of Cambodia: a series of photographs taken on the spot, with letterpress description*, Edinburgh 1867.

<sup>9</sup> This period will be discussed in our forthcoming article *From the Mekong Mission 1866-68 to the Universal Exhibition of 1867 and the first Musée Khmer 1874. Plaster casts of Angkor for the*

During the 1878 Universal Exhibition in Paris, Delaporte exhibited the famous original balustrade from the Angkorian temple of Preah Khan (Fig. 3b) in the ethnography section, located inside the *palais du Trocadéro* (today in the *musée Guimet*).



2 (a) An exotic depiction of the temple of Angkor Wat in Garnier's 1873 publication *Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine*; (b) The first photograph of Angkor Wat ever taken, by John Thomson 1866 (Source: (a) Francis Garnier, *Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine effectué pendant les années 1866, 1867 et 1868 par une commission française*, Paris 1873, part II, plate 3; (b) © Library of University of St. Andrews, UK)



3 (a) A depiction in Delaporte's 1880 publication *Voyage au Cambodge* on the transport of original sculptures from Angkor to France; (b) The original Naga balustrade from Angkor during the 1878 Universal Exhibition in Paris (Source: Louis Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge. L'architecture Khmer*, Paris 1880, 239, 245)

[6] However, the first three-dimensional architectural representation of Angkorian temple architecture in Europe was displayed in the Universal Exhibition's section dedicated to French scientific missions, which were located in the *palais du Champs-de-Mars*. This French métropole in the *Bulletin d'École française d'Extrême-Orient* (BEFEO).

took the form of a 1:10 scale plaster model of an entry gate to Angkor Thom, the giant temple city northwest of the single temple complex of Angkor Wat (Fig. 4). The artist and art theorist Émile Soldi executed this model in collaboration with and on the basis of sketches by Delaporte.<sup>10</sup>



4 The 1:10 scale plaster model of an entry gate of Angkor Thom as presented during the 1878 Universal Exhibition, here re-exhibited in the musée Guimet after 1900 (Source: © Bridgeman Girandon/INHA Paris)



5 (a) Cover page on Guérinet's undated publication on the *musée Indo-chinois* in the Trocadero Palace; (b) The hybrid reconstitution of a Bayon-styled pavilion inside Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* (Source: Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités cambodgiennes exposée du palais du Trocadéro*, Paris n.d., cover, plate 37)

[7] From this moment onward, the career of the plaster cast reconstitutions from Angkor took off and Delaporte moved his collection, now renamed from *musée Khmer* into *musée Indo-chinois*, into the Trocadero in the mid-1880s. There, his display modes

<sup>10</sup> Émile Soldi-Colbert de Beaulieu, *Les arts méconnus, les nouveaux musées du Trocadéro*, Paris 1881, 283. Compare the latest research: Falser, "Krishna and the Plaster Cast," and: Michael Falser, "La porte d'entrée – Angkor at the Universal Exhibition of 1878 in Paris," in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 2 (2013), 191-216.

constantly developed until the closure of the museum after his death in 1925 and varied from fragmentary installations (Fig. 5a) to whole in-scale reconstitutions and hybrid collages on the basis of 'authentic' original plaster cast elements (Fig. 5b).

- [8] However, considering that Louis Delaporte as a naval captain and French colonial explorer was a complete dilettante in the field of museum installations, his employed display modes did not come from the void: they reflected as much the French traditions of architectural museums from 1800 onwards as they were influenced by similar undertakings in the capital of France's great colonial concurrent, Great Britain. Before entering Delaporte's museum parcours through his *musée Indo-chinois* in detail, these aesthetic and conceptual forerunners and contemporaneous projects need to be explained.

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## Architectural Museum Spaces in Paris (1800-1900)

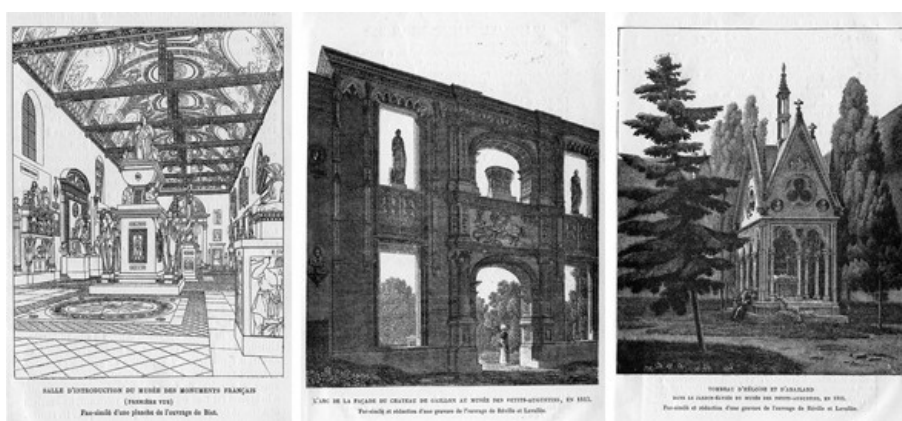
### Archétypes, Stage Prop Façades, and Architectural Fabriques in a Parisian Convent: Alexandre Lenoir and his Musée des Monuments Français in the Petits-Augustins (1793-1816)

- [9] In 1800 when the painter Alexandre Lenoir (1762-1839) published his museum guide entitled *Musée des monuments français ou description historique et chronologique des statues en marbre et en bronze, bas-reliefs et tombeaux des hommes et des femmes célèbres, pour servir à l'histoire de France et à celle de l'art*, he had already held the post of a *conservateur des monuments* for the *dépôt des Petits-Augustins* in Paris for almost ten years. During the turmoil of the French Revolution all the clergy's goods were put at the disposal of the nation and its citizens. One year later the *commission des monuments* decided to change the religious *couvent des Petits-Augustins* into a depot for salvaged statues. Originally, Lenoir was given the difficult and 're-active' task of safeguarding artworks from vandalism. In reality, he developed an ambitious pedagogic programme for his own museum. After the destructive pre-1800 movement had decelerated he – quite 'pro-actively' – initiated the partial dismantling of the 'abandoned' sculptural ensembles and monuments and oversaw their transfer into his own museum. In 1793 an exhibition space was opened to the public that was unique in the emerging field of art history. Here the politically and culturally instructed visitor followed a chronologically ordered *parcours* through the following: a) various 'themed period-rooms' of primarily French medieval to modern art and architecture; b) three open courtyards containing architectural reconstitutions; and, finally c) a garden ensemble containing picturesque collages of busts, tombs, and cenotaphs. A useful point for this discussion of the display modes that would shape the *musée Indo-chinois* a few decades later, is Lenoir's strategy of 'fabricating' and staging façade-like and/or free-standing architectural reconstitutions, a technique that he discussed in various guides to his museum and in reports on his work.

Also important for this discussion is the fact that Lenoir not only safeguarded *original* art objects but also integrated plaster cast *copies* of inaccessible, lost, or returned art objects into his hybrid collages.

*The Interior Spaces: Exhibiting the Progress of Art and the Early Experimentation with a Metonymic Display*

[10] Lenoir created a series of interior spaces in a chronological order to "give each hall the character and the exact physiognomy of the represented century."<sup>11</sup> Using various specimens of sculpture and architectural fragments collected from all over Paris and France, Lenoir combined spatial collages, time and style capsules or "chronotopes,"<sup>12</sup> with various decorative elements that were supposedly from the same stylistic family.



6 Installations inside the Musée des monuments français of Alexandre Lenoir after 1800, (a) the introductory hall; (b) the free-standing facade of the Gaillon castle, (c) the tomb of Heloise and Abailard (Source: Louis Courajod, *Alexandre Lenoir. Son journal et le musée des monuments français*, vol. 3, Paris 1886, 31, 23, 25)

[11] To facilitate the visitor's understanding of his concept of progress in the arts, he started his *parcours* with a *salle d'introduction* (Fig. 6a) where both "the artist and the amateur" could see "at one glance" the whole display, ranging from the "infantile stage of art with the Goths" to the "progress under Louis XII," its "perfection under François I," and finally the "decadence under Louis XIV."<sup>13</sup> However, Lenoir's vision of a three-dimensional "encyclopaedia" of art, "where the young generation would find *mot à mot* all the degrees of imperfection, perfection, and decadence"<sup>14</sup> was influenced by Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, the ground-breaking periodization of

<sup>11</sup> Alexandre Lenoir, *Musée des monuments français ou description historique et chronologique des statues en marbre et en bronze, bas-reliefs et tombeaux des hommes et des femmes célèbres, pour servir à l'histoire de France et à celle de l'art*, 3 vols., Paris 1800-1802, here from the first volume Lenoir 1800a, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Dominique Poulot, "Le musée des monuments français d'Alexandre Lenoir," in: *Le musée de sculpture comparée. Naissance de l'histoire de l'art moderne*, ed. Caecilia Peri, Paris 2001, 36-43, here 40. Compare: Dominique Poulot, "Alexandre Lenoir et les musée des monuments français," in: *Les lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora, Paris 1986 (vol. 2), 497-531.

<sup>13</sup> Lenoir, *Musée des monuments français* (1800a), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Lenoir, *Musée des monuments français* (1800a), 52.



art published in Dresden in 1764. Additionally, the plaster cast collection of Winckelmann's friend Mengs was displayed in 1786 and 1794 using display strategies<sup>15</sup> that may have also influenced Lenoir's programme for the *Musée des monuments français*, which was finally given the go ahead in 1795. Comparisons between the display modes of the Dresden exhibition and Lenoir's museum reveals interesting museological and scenographic parallels: not only were free-standing sculptures inside the museum space loosely grouped to form thematic ensembles, but the architectural and decorative fragments were also combined with sculptures and busts against the neutral background of the enclosing walls as 'specimens' of a stylistic family. This can be interpreted as an early "rhetoric strategy" in a metonymic display where different parts from various sites represent the whole stylistic message without any reference to the totality of the original context.<sup>16</sup> These archaeological collage aesthetics became obvious once again in 1816 when Lenoir's *musée* was closed and parts of his collection were re-installed at the Parisian *École des beaux-arts*.

- [12] Like in the Dresden display of Roman copies of Greek original sculptures, Lenoir also used plaster casts and made constant reference to Winckelmann. He called them "archétypes" or "moulded proofs of an original or a model,"<sup>17</sup> which acted as substitutes for the original Egyptian, Greek, and Roman sculptures that belonged to museums like the Louvre. The longer Lenoir worked on his museum display, the more the use of plaster casts became a strategy for his sculptural collages.<sup>18</sup> The first non-European object on Lenoir's list was an "imitated model" of an Egyptian tomb (compare Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée* eighty years later that contained Egyptian sculptures in its entry hall, see below). More importantly, plaster casts were also used for the *mise en scène* in the collages of the French 'period-rooms' and were combined with Lenoir's direct manipulation of the fragmented objects through "modern restoration" – which meant, most often, not only repair but new additions to *create* a totally new interpretation. Here Lenoir's *Journaux* up to 1798, which were published and commented on in 1878 by Louis Courajod, conservator at the Louvre, are useful.<sup>19</sup> The three major (and often combined) strategies employed by Lenoir can be filtered from 1,140 entries in the journals. They

<sup>15</sup> Moritz Kiderlen, *Die Sammlung der Gipsabgüsse von Anton Raphael Mengs in Dresden*, München 2006, 15-32.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: a study of the representation of history in nineteenth-century Britain and France*, Cambridge 1984, 77-92.

<sup>17</sup> Lenoir, *Musée des monuments français* (1800a), 14.

<sup>18</sup> The catalogue of 1806 already listed thirty-seven "archétypes" in relation to 563 "French monuments" (almost seven per cent of all 'installations' were casts), see Alexandre Lenoir, *Description historique et chronologique des monumens de sculpture réunis au musée des monumens français*, Paris 1806<sup>8</sup>, 1-2. The last calculation called out 572 inventory numbers, in: Alexandre Lenoir, *Musée royal des monuments français ou mémorial de l'histoire de France*, Paris 1815a, 59-160.

<sup>19</sup> Louis Courajod, *Alexandre Lenoir. Son journal et le musée des monuments français*, tome 1 (1878), tome 2 (1886), tome 3 (1887), Paris.

comprise the following: a) the sale and exchange of original art objects from Lenoir's *depot*; b) the re-use (re-working) of incoming original marbles objects, which were judged to be too mutilated and therefore "useless," for new art objects and repair work; and finally, c) the use of plaster casts to complete and/or repair already installed or intended sculptural collages. Accepting these three strategies as part of Lenoir's museological approach at the *Petits-Augustins* not only reformulates his reputation as the reactive saviour of original art objects that were under direct threat of revolutionary vandalism, but also reveals object manipulation that would recur in the *musée Indo-chinois* a few decades later. The most important element was Lenoir's (and later Viollet-le-Duc's) metonymic display strategy of exhibiting architectural fragments against a neutral background to create new stylistic collages.

### *Architectural Stage Props in the Courtyards of the Petits-Augustins – "Didactic Monsters"?*

- [13] If the sculptural and architectural collages in the interior halls and on the walls of the visitor's *parcours* were primarily small-scale installations of original but newly arranged objects, plaster casts, and modern repair work, the partly free-standing architectural facades in the courtyards of the *Petits-Augustins* introduced a new museological and scenographic dimension. In fact, the main entrance to the interior of the *Musée des monuments français* was a facade from the mid-sixteenth century castle of Anet. The 66-foot high portal, bought by order of the minister of the interior, had been transferred from its original site and painstakingly 'restored' (re-assembled) at its new site in Paris.
- [14] Even more impressive was Lenoir's transfer of parts from the Gaillon castle, which was built around 1500 for Cardinal Georges d'Amboise, minister to Louis XII.<sup>20</sup> (Fig. 6b) Gaillon was sold in 1797 as *bien national* and was left to decompose by its owner, Darcy, when Lenoir visited the site twice around 1800 and bought a selection of fragments from it. The southern and southeastern galleries were transferred to Paris in 1802 and the entry portal of the *cour d'honneur* was re-assembled under the name *arc de Gaillon*. The final product was the "fruit of Alexandre Lenoir's fantastic imagination, who added, quite arbitrarily, lateral *travées* from other buildings parts to the gate of the Gaillon court."<sup>21</sup> It was later judged by the postmodern world as "no more than a montage like the other didactic monsters imagined by the *conservateur du Musée des monuments français*" and as "one of the darkest chapters of the history of vandalism"<sup>22</sup> performed under the guise of salvaging antiquity from the French Revolution. Lenoir's Gaillon project might have

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<sup>20</sup> Alexandre Lenoir, *Rapport sur la restauration et l'emploi des quatre façades du château de Gaillon dans la seconde cour du Musée des monuments français*, Paris 1803.

<sup>21</sup> Elisabeth Chirol, *Un premier foyer de la Renaissance en France. Le château de Gaillon*, Paris and Rouen 1952 (especially: "Catalogue des morceaux de sculpture," 121-227), here 131.

<sup>22</sup> Bruno Foucart, "L'arc et les fragments de Gaillon ou les infortunes de la doctrine," in: *Patrimoine, temps, espace. Patrimoine en place, patrimoine déplacé. Actes des entretiens du patrimoine*, ed. François Furet, Paris 1997, 251-260, here 252 and 260.

served as the perfect prototype for the 1880s-facade-like reconstitutions inside the *musée de Sculpture comparée* and the *musée Indo-chinois*, since this *fabrique* was still visible to Viollet-le-Duc and Delaporte at the *École des beaux-arts* where it had been partly moved once Lenoir's original museum closed around 1815/1816.

*Picturesque "fabriques" inside an Elysian Garden Setting – a Conceptual Forerunner of Exposition Pavilions?*

- [15] In 1796 (Republican Year V) Lenoir launched his idea for a museum garden as "a public promenade." Called the *jardin Élysée* it was intended as a site to commemorate – in reference to Westminster in London and Santa Croce in Florence – the glory of illustrious people. The project was probably realized in 1799 and was described by Lenoir in the *description historique* of 1800. In this peaceful Elysian garden full of well-selected and symbolic trees, he created a sublime cemetery-like landscape containing more than forty urns as well as tombs, cenotaphs, and sarcophagi of virtuous personalities (like Descartes and Molière), which he had designed himself and which were meant to evoke "sweet melancholy speaking to the sensible soul."<sup>23</sup> Although Lenoir designed most of the architectural features in the park to fall within the strictly ordered 'style-rooms' framework inside his museum, their chronological order was lost in the garden, which sought to provide a timeless and ahistorical backdrop of eternal nature.<sup>24</sup> Two Gothic-style installations in the park became famous: the tomb of the Gallic King Dagobert I (reign 632-645) and the tomb-memorial of Héloïse and Abélard. These two memorials reveal the hybrid character of Lenoir's architectural collages, whose single – original *and* newly interpreted – elements were "recomposed and re-adjusted according to their age"<sup>25</sup> to form an "aimable panthéon de *fabriques*."<sup>26</sup>
- [16] Lenoir intended that the tomb-memorial of Héloïse and Abélard would be "built with the *débris* from a chapel of Paraclet and from the abbey of St. Denis in the architectural style practiced in the twelfth century."<sup>27</sup> As a result – and this strategy can be also detected in Delaporte's museum on Indochinese antiquities, Lenoir's collage in the Elysian garden was a veritable *fabrique* made up of different original objects and plaster cast details from different places, and of his own additions and interpretive restoration work (Fig. 6c). It may be safe to say that no other architectural feature in Lenoir's museum comprised

<sup>23</sup> Lenoir, *Musée des monuments français* (1800a), 19.

<sup>24</sup> Roland Recht, "L'Élysée d'Alexandre Lenoir: nature, art et histoire," in: *Revue germanique internationale* 7 (1997), 47-57, <http://rgi.revues.org/605> (accessed 14 June 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Lenoir, *Musée des monuments français* (1800a), 17.

<sup>26</sup> Poulot, "Alexandre Lenoir," 504.

<sup>27</sup> Lenoir, *Description* (1806), 86-88, compare: Alexandre Lenoir, *Mémoire sur les sépultures d'Héloïse de d'Abélard, suivi d'un projet d'établir, dans le Musée des monuments français, une chapelle sépulcrale pour y déposer leurs cendres, présenté au général Bonaparte, premier consul de la République française, par Alexandre Lenoir, administrateur de ce musée*, Paris 1800 (An XI). (Lenoir 1800b). And: Alexandre Lenoir, *Notice historique sur les sépultures d'Héloïse de d'Abailard. Seconde restauration dans le Musée royal des monumens français*, Paris 1815. (Lenoir 1815b)

this degree of historically multi-layered, multi-form and -material versions of originals, transferred relics, re-used elements, copies, restorations, and new additions. The 1816 publication *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des salles du musée des monuments français*, containing superb engravings by Réville and Lavallée,<sup>28</sup> have kept the memory of Lenoir's "eclectic montages"<sup>29</sup> alive and have served as a perfect inspiration for the architectural museums that came into being in the Trocadero palace a few decades later. In his *Dictionnaire raisonné*, none other than Viollet-le-Duc (in the abstract on the topic of *restauration* in the 1866 volume) labelled this hybrid undertaking of Lenoir a "product of fantasy" ("compositions fantastiques"), but he also added that Lenoir had at least used "imagination to really produce the ancient forms."<sup>30</sup> Against the supposedly neutralizing and ahistorical background of nature in Lenoir's *Élysée-garden*, this architectural *fabrique* – along with the didactic stage-props of whole façades in the open courts and the metonymic collages of sculptures and decorative fragments in the 'style-rooms' of the inner *parcours* – added another aspect to Lenoir's short-lived architectural displays. When his museum was closed in 1816 his art historical period-rooms were sustained in the Cluny museum.<sup>31</sup>

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## Dissection, Comparison, and the Metonymic Display of Monumental Architecture: Viollet-le-Duc's Musée de Sculpture Comparée in the Palais de Trocadéro

*Viollet-le-Duc's Dictionnaire raisonné and the Influence of Georges Cuvier's Anatomie comparée*

- [17] The architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) finished his 10-volume *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* in 1868 (the same year that the Mekong expedition returned to France with its scientific harvest from the Angkor temples). After fourteen years of work on over 5,000 written pages and more

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Baptiste-Bonaventure de Roquefort-Flaméricourt, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des salles du Musée des monuments françois* [sic], Paris 1816.

<sup>29</sup> Bruno Foucart, "La fortune critique d'Alexandre Lenoir et du premier musée des Monuments français," in: *L'Information d'histoire de l'art* 5 (1969), 223-332, here 232.

<sup>30</sup> Barry Bergdoll, ed., *Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. The foundations of architecture. Selections from the Dictionnaire raisonné*, New York 1990, 207.

<sup>31</sup> The political Restoration closed Lenoir's museum in December 1816, "for the monarchy the museum epitomized the despoliations of the Revolution – the ravaging of churches and châteaux, the confiscations of property, sacrilege, and *lèse majesté*" (Christopher M. Greene, "Alexandre Lenoir and the musée des monuments français during the French Revolution," in: *French Historical Studies*, XII, 2 (1981), 203-222, here 217). Eloise and Abelard and others were moved to the *Père Lachaise* cemetery, and the other tombs were returned to St. Denis. The exhibits at the *Petits-Augustins* were partly incorporated into the new courtyard of the *École royale des Beaux-Arts* and moved there by architect Félix Duban in the 1840s. Lenoir was made *administrateur des monuments français* at the royal church of Saint-Denis. The ancient site of the Gallo-Roman baths and the old *Hôtel des abbés de Cluny*, which revealed a certain reliance on Lenoir's museum concept, were conceived by Alexandre du Sommerard in the 1830s and were finally realized on the basis of the work of the architect Albert Lenoir, Alexandre Lenoir's own son (Bann, *The clothing of Clío*, 77-92). Here, the display of period and style rooms was continued.

than 3,000 text-bound illustrations, he presented his version of a "universal explanation, a closed and complete system." Its reason- and rationality-based arguments had two goals: First, the "interpretation of Gothic as a scientific, highly ordered architectural system with both the logical structure and the historical complexity of other great systems of form, be they linguistic, anatomical, or geological."<sup>32</sup> And second, to encourage appreciation for the French Gothic architecture of the Middle Ages, which Viollet-le-Duc reimagined – for a contemporary audience – as a laical society containing emancipated artists. His *opus magnum* was meant to counteract the aesthetic and ideological monopoly of the *École des beaux-arts* canon of classical Greek and Roman antiquity, and was therefore, as regards his stylistic focus on an all-encompassing view of France's artistic periods, very different to Lenoir's approach seven decades earlier. Another contrast with Lenoir was the emergence of a variety of new scientific disciplines, which helped this new architectural approach to be perceived as 'more seriously' embedded. However, for the purposes of this article it is important to note how Viollet-le-Duc advanced Lenoir's display modes of monumental architecture.

[18] In order to adequately focus on Viollet-le-Duc's role in initiating the first French indoor museum of truly monumental architecture and, most important, its comparative display mode using fragmented facade elements which highly influenced Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* on the other side of the same Trocadero Palace, an analysis of his *Dictionnaire raisonné* is essential. In its style of textual argumentation and in the direct placement of illustrations (80 per cent of which were 'transcribed' from plaster casts), the *Dictionnaire* was a conceptual forerunner of the *musée de Sculpture comparée*, which materialized in 1882. In his chapter on *sculpture* (1866), Viollet-le-Duc explored the methodological approach of an art history within a "comparative sculpture museum" containing "special halls where the plaster casts of the antique statues could be compared with those of the Middle Ages" – or, more precisely, "the Greek sculptures of the Enigetic epoch with the twelfth-century French sculptures."<sup>33</sup> In his treatise on *restauration* (1868), Viollet-le-Duc cited the emerging disciplines of comparative anatomy, philology, ethnography, and archaeology as major references for his architectural work. These were the disciplines that were, to a certain extent, also contributing to the establishment of racial and cultural taxonomies of world civilisation, an approach that would be central to the nationalist and expansionist-imperialist ideology of the III. French Republic. In complete contrast to Lenoir's more artistic and picturesque approach, biological analogies in a comparative series of organic transformations formed the basis of Viollet-le-Duc's historical investigation of the development of composition, function, and (only as the *final* materialized consequence) style of medieval architecture.

<sup>32</sup> Bergdoll, *Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1854-1868, here on "sculpture" in the 1866-volume, 151-153.

In order to "better understand the diverse and complicated parts, all rigorously derived from needs, that compose our medieval monuments," (a goal that he mentioned in his 1854 introduction) he sought "to dissect them separately, in describing the functions performed, the use of each of the diverse parts and of the modifications it has experienced."<sup>34</sup> 'Dissection' was one the terms also used by Georges Cuvier, the famous anatomist at the Parisian *Muséum national de l'histoire naturelle*, to classify biological extant and extinct species through the function of their individual characteristic elements and configurations and through their relationship to each other rather than by their formal characteristics. It was not the "individual parts" per se, but the "general condition between each of them," their "modifications and combinations with other phenomena" that formed Cuvier's core interest.<sup>35</sup> "This led to Cuvier's controversial claims that it would be possible to reconstruct or 'to restore,' – to anticipate the architectural analogy – an animal skeleton, even of a lost species, from a single part of a fragment of a fossil."<sup>36</sup> For this style of fragmented depiction, Viollet-le-Duc was heavily influenced by the anatomical atlases used to standardize the observation of objects, such as the *Traité complet de l'anatomie de l'homme*, published by Jean-Marc Bourgery. This atlas contained a unique set of lithographs, which had been approved by Bourgery's teacher Cuvier (Fig. 7a).<sup>37</sup>

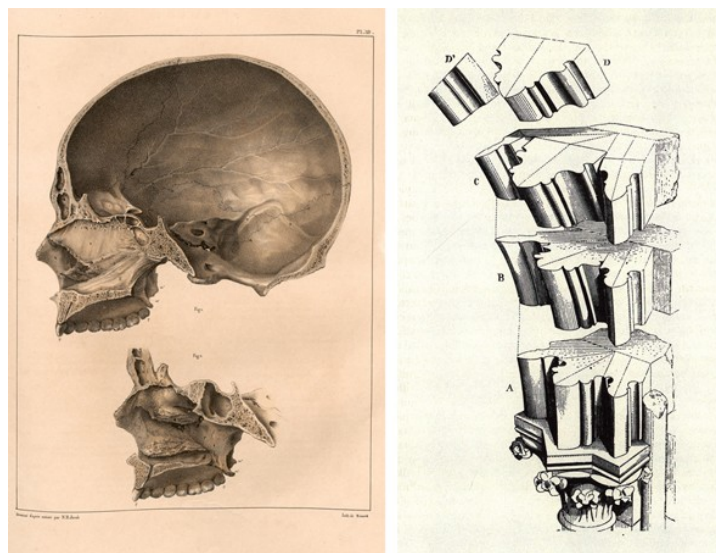
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<sup>34</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné*, here from the introduction of the first 1864-volume, x.

<sup>35</sup> As Cuvier pointed out, an anatomist "had to isolate them to take away all the accompanying and overshadowing accessories" in order to "compare them [...] in a series of facts of which until this point science only consists; he had to follow each organ in all the [different] classes," in: Georges Cuvier, *Leçons d'anatomie comparée*, Paris 1833, xiv, xvi-xviii.

<sup>36</sup> Bergdoll, *Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> Jean-Marc Bourgery, *Traité complet de l'anatomie de l'homme, comprenant la médecine opératoire*, 8 vols., Paris 1831-1854.



7 (a) Exploded anatomical study by Bourgerie in 1832; (b) Exploded architectural drawing by Viollet-le-Duc in his *Dictionnaire raisonné* around 1870 (Source: (a) Jean-Marc Bourgerie, *Traité complet de l'anatomie de l'homme, comprenant la médecine opératoire*, vol.1, Atlas, Paris 1832, plate 19; (b) Barry Bergdoll, ed., *Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. The foundations of architecture. Selections from the Dictionnaire raisonné*, New York 1990, 21)

[19] Unusual views on dissected architectural elements from below using sectional cutaway perspectives, exploded perspectives, and combinations of the traditional architectural depictions like plans, sections, and elevations, provided those elements of the whole architectural system that were to be synthesised within the mind of the *dictionnaire's* reader (Fig. 7b). This mode of dissection, decomposed display, and hypothetical re-assembling of real, re-invented, and/or idealized composites in Viollet-le-Duc's texts and the illustrations of his *dictionnaire* "operated as an imagination technology, [as a kind of] instrument for the extension of imagining or visualizing activities through the selective amplification and suppression of [architectural] material, form, and content."<sup>38</sup> This operational means of directing and even manipulating the viewer's imaginative gaze would later materialize in the *musée de Sculpture comparée*. Just as Cuvier's paleontological data was used to 'reconstruct' extinct animals through and from their skeleton and to guide – in the gallery of comparative anatomy at the *musée d'Histoire naturelle* – the visitor's gaze into their inner system, Viollet-le-Duc's museum also 'restored' – using fragmented three-dimensional displays – monumental architectures within their stylistic entities. From this point of view, the famous quote from his chapter on *restauration* not only explained his own idealistic restorations of architectural ensembles like Besançon or Pierrefonds, but also his *modus operandi* for an architectural plaster cast museum and an "archaeological reconstitution of an ideal type"<sup>39</sup>: "To restore

<sup>38</sup> Aron Vinegar, "Memory as construction in Viollet-le-Duc's architectural imagination," in: *Paroles gelées*, 16:2 (1998), 43-55, here 47. Compare: Philip Steadman, *The evolution of designs. Biological analogy in architecture and the applied arts*, London and New York 2008, 31-53.

<sup>39</sup> Laurent Baridon, *L'imaginaire scientifique de Viollet-le-Duc*, Paris 1996, 41.

an edifice means neither to maintain it, nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it; it means to re-establish it in a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time."<sup>40</sup> As we shall see later, the display of the statuary and the architecture of the extinct Khmer culture would follow a similar but extended course in Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* on the other side of the Trocadero building.

### *The Metonymic Display of Monumental Architecture: The Musée de Sculpture Comparée*

[20] In 1879 when Viollet-Le-Duc pitched his "museum of comparative sculpture of different art centres and epochs" to Jules Ferry, minister of public instruction and fine arts, and to Antonin Proust, director of fine arts, he had already been executing plaster casts for many decades as a kind of 'back-up-procedure' in his monument restoration practice. In his letter's *preamble*, he mentioned his 1855 proposal for a "free contribution of the plaster casts of statues and ornamental sculpture of the most beautiful French monuments of the twelfth to sixteenth centuries," which had been ignored up to that point by the ministry.<sup>41</sup> During this mid-nineteenth-century "querelle des moulages"<sup>42</sup> between the academic taste of classical (Greek and Roman) antiquity and an appreciation of a wider canon of art that included Renaissance and French Gothic art, the contribution of plaster-cast museums in France to create, demonstrate, propagate, and justify a proper concept of art and to classify, chronologize, hierarchize, and normatize its proper history had been a topic of dispute since the 1830s. Viollet-le-Duc's proposal for a *musée de Sculpture d'ornement comparée* (in another report he added copied wall paintings to the proposal) that would "give a complete idea of our French sculpture"<sup>43</sup> was no exception. Based on the thoughts immortalized in his *dictionnaire*, he foresaw three divisions for his chronological *parcours* whose aim was to allow visitors to "easily follow the progress of the art in each developmental centre, but to compare these centres with the examination of the objects after a methodical order." The first division involved the "relation between the sculptures of different epochs and civilizations"; the second, "for France, the divisions by schools of the different epochs"; and the third, "the application of the sculpture following the employed architectural system."<sup>44</sup> Based on Winckelmann's

<sup>40</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné*, here from the 1866-chapter on *restauration*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Musée de la sculpture comparée appartenant aux divers centres d'art et aux diverses époques, 1<sup>er</sup> rapport 1879* (unpublished, Bibliothèque nationale de France), 1.

As he had already explored in his 1866 chapter on *sculpture*, in the context of the 1851 London and 1855 Paris Universal Exhibitions and the plaster cast museum at Sydenham's Crystal Palace in 1857, the British commission had been allowed (free of charge, but with the stipulation that one copy was left in France) to carry out moulds of different French sculptures for the comparative, encyclopaedic plaster cast galleries in England. At the time Viollet-le-Duc complained that, "French artists had to cross the Channel to study their own French sculptures."

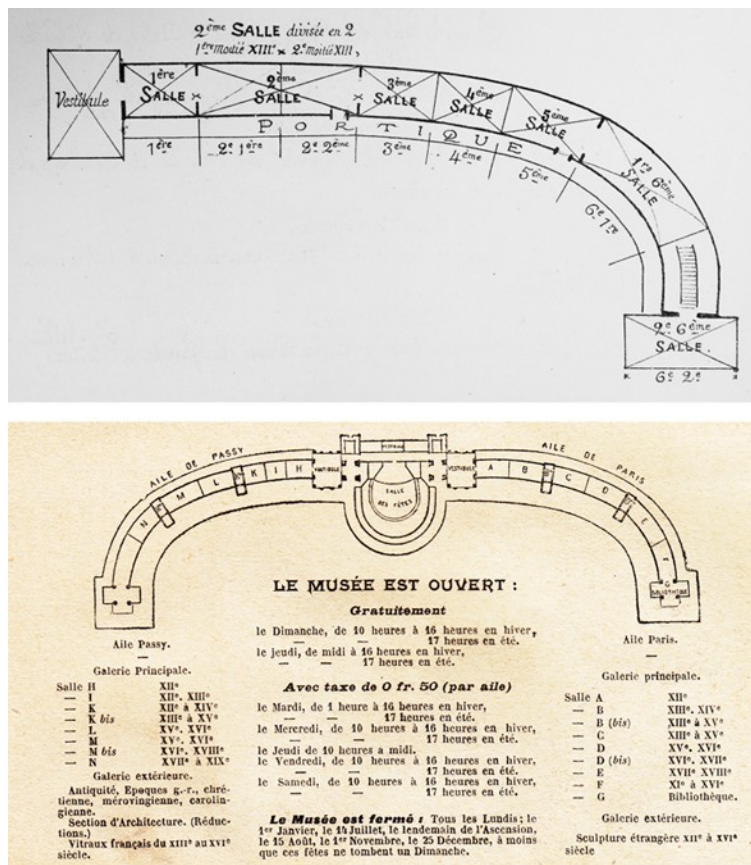
<sup>42</sup> Willibald Sauerländer, "Gypsa sunt conservanda – L'obsession de la sculpture comparée," in: Peri, *Le musée de sculpture comparée*, 72-79.

<sup>43</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, *Musée de la sculpture comparée, 1er rapport*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, *Musée de la sculpture comparée, 1er rapport*, 3.



periodization of art and clearly building on Lenoir's earlier thoughts on the subject, Viollet-le-Duc differentiated between the three civilizing periods into which the displayed sculptures had to be divided: "imitation of nature," followed by "a more or less intelligent interpretation" or an "archaic epoch," and, finally, an "epoch of emancipation" involving a "perfection of the details." Viollet-le-Duc's explanation that "not all people had gone through all these three developmental phases of art" and some had not even gone further than the first "période hiératique" was especially relevant for Delaporte's later display of the Khmer (Oriental) culture at the other end of the Trocadero palace, since this judgement applied "to most of the Oriental people" including the "Egyptians of antiquity and the Byzantines."<sup>45</sup> In his 1866 chapter on *sculpture*, Viollet-le-Duc also added "India and Minor Asia" to this list. In his second report from the same year, Viollet-le-Duc presented some concrete sketches of the *parcours* in the northern 'Paris wing' of the Trocadero palace (Figs. 8a,b).



8 (a) Viollet-le-Duc's sketch plan of 1879 for the musée de Sculpture comparée; (b) The ground plan of the Trocadero Palace in a 1925 publication with the extended museum (at the final end of the 'aile Passy' the musée Indo-chinois was installed until c.1925) (Source: Archive des Musées Nationaux AMN 5HH1-2; Camille Enlart, Jules Roussel, *Catalogue général du musée de sculpture comparée au palais du Trocadéro*, Paris 1925, plan)

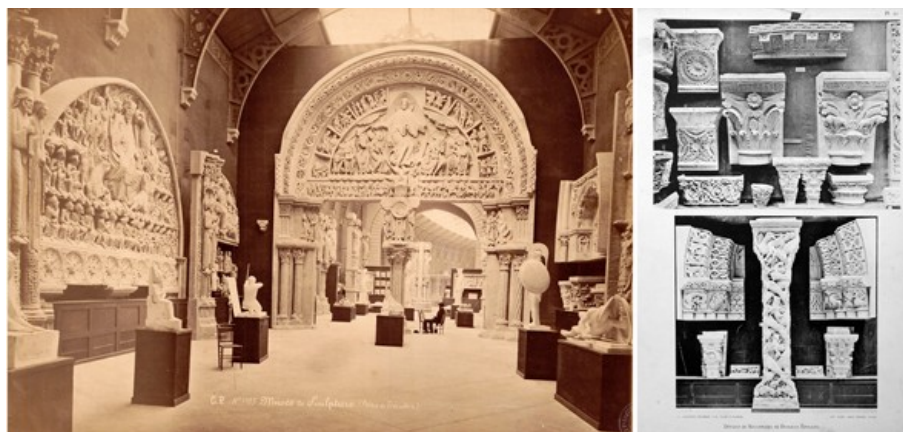
<sup>45</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, *Musée de la sculpture comparée, 1er rapport*, 3, 4.

- [21] Only the first hall, the "salle des époques hiératiques," offered a truly intercultural display comprising the Mediterranean Orient. In order to work out the relationships between the different archaic epochs, Viollet-le-Duc proposed the display of plaster cast samples ("types," compared to Lenoir's "archétypes") from the first dynasties of Egypt, from Assyria, and from the Greek "Eginetic epoch." These were intended to provide a comparison with French statuary from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which included French standing figures from the main portal of the eleventh-century *Vézelay* church and from Moissac. The second hall, called "Étude de la nature – Abandon de l'hiératisme," revealed Viollet-le-Duc's central message: the early classical Greek statues from the time of Phidias were comparable in quality with those of the French thirteenth century. After visiting these two halls the visitor continued toward the 5<sup>th</sup> hall, which was concerned with Michelangelo's Renaissance and the stylistic decline in seventeenth-century France, and entered the 6<sup>th</sup> hall containing a comparative display of "fragments of sculptured architectural ornamentations divided by schools" and "photographs of the buildings where the fragments came from."<sup>46</sup> Viollet-le-Duc died on 17 September 1879, just two months before the foundation of the museum was officially reconfirmed on 4 November 1879.
- [22] The museum was tested in a modified version during the 1878 Universal Exhibition and inaugurated shortly thereafter on 28 May 1882.<sup>47</sup> Under the head conservator and sculptor, Adolphe-Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume, and the *premier concessionnaire* of the *atelier de moulage*, Jean Pouzadoux, it contained the first four of Viollet-le-Duc's original six halls, which passed through the cultural stages of formation, maturity, and decadence, and contained almost 400 plaster casts.

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<sup>46</sup> Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Musée de la sculpture comparée appartenant aux divers centres d'art et aux diverses époques, 2<sup>e</sup> rapport 1879* (unpublished, Bibliothèque nationale de France), 2.

<sup>47</sup> A recent publication which totally undervalued the relevance of Delaporte's museum project within the Trocadero complex: Susanne Mersmann, *Die Museen des Trocadéro. Viollet-le-Duc und der Kanondiskurs im Paris des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2012.



9 (a) A photograph of the first version of the musée de Sculpture comparée around 1882; (b) A display of architectural fragments in the musée de Sculpture comparée around 1894 (Source: (a) © Paul Robert/CAPa/archives MMF; (b) Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le Musée de sculpture comparée du Palais du Trocadéro*, Paris 1894, plate 21)

[23] What the visitor to the first hall of the 1882-version encountered was a collage of 1:1-scale and painstakingly dissected architectural and sculptural fragments that included (French) single capitals and pediments, standing portal figures with their carrying columns from the churches of Chartres and Corbeil, and finally, a 1:1 replica of the famous portal of the Vézelay church (Fig. 9a). On the pedestals located to either side in front of the lateral walls, the French display of the 'hieratic epoch' was complemented by Greek and Egyptian sculptures like the statue of Chephren. The photographic aesthetics of a black-and-white display made of colour- and patina-free, age- and context-less, grey-white plaster casts (their moulding traces were most often left visible) was striking and highly influenced Delaporte's museum display. Framed by a completely monochrome background, to which they were always tightly affixed, these different architectural fragments in plaster cast functioned as perfectly dissected specimens of stylistic entities for the spectator (Fig. 9b). These neutral plaster cast fragments represented – from a metonymic point of view – the whole building or building/style family that they were intended to represent and they could be appreciated and compared to each other through their mere formal qualities and art historical relevance. The most impressive catalogues were from the *éditeur des musées nationaux*, Armand Guérinet, from around 1894,<sup>48</sup> or the five large-scale photographic series that were published in 1892 by Frantz Marcou, *inspecteur général des monuments historiques*.<sup>49</sup> In the latter publication, the three-dimensional architectures and fragments from the museum became decontextualized picture-like (iconized) objects and sequences of comparative study. At the end of each stylistic series, they were re-contextualized into their original setting using photographic evidence. Viollet-le-Duc's transcultural approach – as far as the Mediterranean Orient in the first hall was concerned – was short-lived: his museum

<sup>48</sup> Armand Guérinet, *Le musée de sculpture comparée du palais du Trocadéro*, Paris 1894.

<sup>49</sup> Paul-Frantz Marcou, *Album du Musée de sculpture comparée (Palais du Trocadéro)*, 5 vols., Paris 1897.

changed format several times between 1882 and 1937 and up to the present day, and was increasingly reduced to a purely French *parcours*.<sup>50</sup>

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## London's Architectural Museums of the Orient

[24] Louis Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* was established in the time period between the Universal Exhibitions of 1878 and 1889 and was located at the end section of the Passy-wing in the Trocadero Palace (see Fig. 13a). It closed soon after Delaporte's death in 1925. As a small-scale Far-East Asian counterpart to Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée* it was relevant for the architectural staging of Cambodia in colonial France and as a repository for the Khmer pavilions of future French exhibitions (1889-1937).<sup>51</sup> Astonishingly, its value has only just become a topic of scholarly discussion,<sup>52</sup> but the internationally embedded museological context of its time has remained unexplored terrain. One crucial way to fill this lacuna would be to compare Delaporte's concept with the obvious inspiration he drew from London. It was here – and not in Viollet-le-Duc's 1875 study of the *Histoire de l'habitation humaine* where the author judged Khmer art "decadent" and "insignificant"<sup>53</sup> – that Delaporte found concrete museographical examples and intellectually and scientifically fertile ground for his art historical and cultural-political ideas. These aspects require closer scrutiny: First, a look into Delaporte's major publication *Voyage au Cambodge* (1880) in relation to his British colleague James Fergusson will serve to explain his approach towards a comparative architectural history of the Far East that placed the Khmer temple site of Angkor at its centre. Second, the selected remarks in his 1880 publication lead us to the pioneering architectural museums of the Far East in London, which clearly formed the inspiration for Delaporte's Angkor museum. A concrete comparison of the display modes of monumental architecture used in London and Paris brings us back to the more theoretical topic of our

<sup>50</sup> For a larger overview see: Peri, *Le musée de sculpture comparée*; Léon Pressouyre, ed., *Le musée des monuments français*, Paris 2007.

<sup>51</sup> See Michael Falser, "From Archive to Pavilion, from the *musée Indo-chinois* to the *Expositions Universelles et Coloniales*. Louis Delaporte's plaster cast collection of Angkor revisited," in: *Angkor – Naissance d'un mythe. Louis Delaporte et le Cambodge*. Exhibition catalogue of the Musée Guimet, Paris 2013 (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> Thierry Zéphir, "Louis Delaporte au coeur de la forêt sacrée," in: *Âges et visages de l'Asie. Un siècle d'exploration à travers les collections du musée Guimet*, ed. Jean-Paul Desroches, Dijon 1996, 61-68. Pierre Baptiste, "Les collections de moulage du musée national des Arts asiatique – Guimet," in: *Du moulage au fac-simile, diffusion du patrimoine et conservation préventive. (Conservation-restauration des biens culturels, cahier technique No.8)*, ed. Denis Guillemard, Paris 2002, 61-64; Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir, "L'art khmer dans les collections nationales françaises," in: *L'art khmer dans les collections du musée Guimet*, ed. Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir Baptiste, Paris 2008, 11-18; Pierre Baptiste: "Virtual visions of Angkor: Plaster casts and drawings in the Indochinese Museum of the Trocadero," in: *'Archaeologizing' heritage. Between local social practice and global virtual reality*, ed. Michael Falser and Monica Juneja, Heidelberg 2013, 63-79.

<sup>53</sup> Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Histoire de l'habitations humaine depuis les temps préhistoriques jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris 1875, 356, 357.

investigation – the colonial appropriation of exotic architecture through the translation medium of plaster casts.

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## **Delaporte Quoting Fergusson Quoting Delaporte: Towards a Universally Comparative History of Angkor**

- [25] In 1880 Delaporte published his 500-page *Voyage au Cambodge. L'architecture Khmer*. What is of particular interest to us here are not the first eight chapters concerning his travels to Angkor, but the last three chapters and the second of three appendices in which he developed a comparative study on the architectural history of Angkor, cited the British forerunners for his own museum, and combined both with colonial-political messages. In the introductory section of his first chapter, Delaporte had already explained that the purpose of his missions to Cambodia was "to make these monuments of great art known to Europe and to enrich [the French] museums with a collection of Khmer antiquities which deserved to be placed next to these of Egypt and Assyria."<sup>54</sup> Using these two great civilisations as an example, Delaporte embedded Angkor within the same non-European reference points as Viollet-le-Duc had done for his own museum project. Both Viollet-le-Duc's French Gothic and Delaporte's Khmer periods dated to around the same time between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries CE and both men believed that *their* artistic periods and monuments could contribute to the convalescence of contemporary art and architectural practice. In chapter IX, Delaporte began to elaborate on the "importance of the Khmer architecture" and to conceptualize a "classification according to their usage." It was here that Delaporte, a naval captain and *amateur* of Khmer art and archaeology, cited his great scientific reference James Fergusson for the insertion of Khmer art and architecture into the canon of world art:

[...] the distinguished English archaeologist [James] Fergusson who had by 1867, shortly after Mouhot's publication, dedicated a whole remarkable chapter on the old Khmer building in his book *History of architecture in all countries*. This study starts with these words: 'Since the revelation of the buried cities of Assyria, the discovery of the ruined cities of Cambodia is the most important fact that took place for the art history of the Orient.' Subsequently, calculating the surface area of the temple of Angkor-Vaht [sic], the author judged it more considerable than the temple of Karnac [sic], the main sanctuary of Old Egypt.<sup>55</sup>

- [26] James Fergusson's first attempt to systematize world architecture was published in the 1855 *Illustrated Handbook of Architecture*. His analysis covered Buddhist and Hindu architecture (no comment on Cambodia) as well as China, America, and Western Asia; it also included Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, and Saracenic architecture in a first part and

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<sup>54</sup> Louis Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge. L'architecture Khmer*, Paris 1880 (reprint Paris 1999), 12.

<sup>55</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 261. Fergusson mentioned Cambodia in the preface where he rated Angkor only second, after Assyrian sites, on his hit list of rediscovered cities; nonetheless, he appraised it as a highly relevant one for the architectural history of India.

Christian architecture, with a strong focus on Gothic architecture all over Europe (compare with Viollet-le-Duc), in a second. The source for Delaporte's quote (above) was Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern architecture*, which came out in 1876 as the third volume of the *History of architecture in all countries* and which covered – besides the main section on "India Proper" and a concluding chapter on China – "Further India" along with Burma, Siam, Java, and finally, Cambodia (in twenty pages alone). With Fergusson and Delaporte's publications a strange constellation began to form around the architectural history of Angkor (Figs. 10a-c).



10 The famous face towers of the Angkorian temples, depicted in (a) Thomson 1875, (b) Fergusson 1876, and Delaporte 1880 (Source: (a) John Thomson, *The straits of Malacca, Indo-china and China*, London 1875, p.151; (b) James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern architecture. Vol. 3 of History of architecture in all countries*, London 1876, 680; (c) Louis Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge. L'architecture Khmer*, Paris 1880, 101)

[27] Delaporte quoted Fergusson in order to justify the relevance of classifying 'his' Angkor as being on the same cultural level as Egypt, Assyria, and European antiquity, and he largely based Angkor on Fergusson's classificatory system of world architecture. In reference to Henri Mouhot and Francis Garnier's 1873 publication, Fergusson (an India-specialist who never visited Cambodia and who relied heavily on published research for his comparative studies and the first photographic material from Angkor taken by the Scotsman John Thomson in 1866 for his publication the following year) cited the "intelligent interest and liberality of the French display in these researches."<sup>56</sup> He also praised "Captain Delaporte [for] bringing back not only detailed plans of most of the

<sup>56</sup> Referring to the Mekong expedition and the 1873 mission he reported: "As they, however, could not complete the investigation, a second expedition was fitted out, under Captain Delaporte, who had taken part in the previous expedition. They returned to France in 1874, bringing with them not only detailed plans of most of the temples, but copies of nearly all the inscriptions they could find, and a large collection of antiquities and casts. The latter are now arranged in the Château of Compiègne, and accessible to the public. The drawings and inscriptions are in course of publication, and, when available, they will supply materials from which we may reason with confidence, not only as to the arts but as to the history of this wonderful people. – Footnote: Few things are more humiliating to an Englishman than to compare the intelligent interest and liberality the French display in these researches, contrasted with the solid indifference and parsimony of the English in like matters." James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern architecture, vol. 3 (History of architecture in all countries)*, London 1876, 664.

temples, but copies of inscriptions and a large collections of antiquities and casts," and not only referenced Delaporte's museum in Compiègne but even announced the latest French research on Angkor.<sup>57</sup>

[28] Delaporte, on the other hand, explored in chapter X entitled "Special characters of Khmer art – different phases of its development," his universally valid, comparative enquiry on the architectural compositions and different stylistic and constructive elements of Angkor. What linked Delaporte's undertaking with Lenoir's and Viollet-le-Duc's treaties was the periodization of artistic development 'à la Winckelmann' into an early stage, a zenith ("apogée"), and later "phases of decadence" (a trajectory that contained hidden cultural-political messages about Cambodia's cultural status). World-wide comparison became the determining approach for Delaporte's second appendix entitled "Analogies of the Khmer architecture with the architectures of other countries"<sup>58</sup> where he not only copied Fergusson's cultural divisions, but also partly claimed Fergusson's stylistic observations on Greece, India, and Cambodia as his own. In chapter XI including "What do we know of old Cambodia" and "A glimpse on the civilization and the customs of the Khmer," Delaporte prefigured this analysis and cited Fergusson's discourse about the delicate cart-making of the Khmer.<sup>59</sup> With a well-placed mention of Dutch-colonial research on the *ruined* temple of "Boro-Boudour" in Java, Delaporte switched his discourse on comparative architectural history to a normative perspective on modern and colonial history: he used the term "civilization" as a reference point, linked it with "epoch" and "nation," and asked "how long did this power ("puissance") of the Khmer people last?" Drawing the conclusion that "Cambodia's decadence" had started "with an indeterminable series of wars and incursions which only came to an end with the arrival of the French in Indochina." If Lenoir's periodization of art and architecture had a purely French focus in the time of revolutionary vandalism, and if Viollet-le-Duc's comparative display intended to revive contemporary French art and architecture in reference to a rediscovered French Gothic period, then Delaporte brought the civilizing (colonial) aspect into the history of world architecture – just as Fergusson did with his own architectural history of British India. In this momentarily "decivilized and but still incomparably fertile land," the French – and this was the final statement in the main part of Delaporte's 1880 publication – "duty [was to] revive the marvellous past of this people, *to reconstitute these admirable*

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<sup>57</sup> Fergusson, *History*, 664, 689. If in his twenty-page study on Cambodia and the Angkor Wat and Bayon temples Fergusson finally placed Angkorian culture with its use of the wheel and of monolithic stone roofs at the top of his "index of high civilization," then Delaporte borrowed Fergusson's embedding of Angkor between the ancient antiquity of Egypt and India on the Asian side and "classical" Rome on the European side (Fergusson, *History*, 684, quoted in: Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 262).

<sup>58</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 421-438.

<sup>59</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 353.

*artworks* [italics MF...] and to enrich [this past] with a new page in art history and in the annals of humanity."<sup>60</sup>

### *Making Angkor a French-colonial patrimoine*

- [29] Delaporte's determination to "reconstitute the much admired masterpieces" of ancient Angkor was crucial at a time when the temples were still under Siamese control. Until this changed the only way to appropriate Angkor for French colonial *patrimoine* was through its 're-presentation' in France, while other European nations were also staging and propagating their 'civilising mission' with large restoration campaigns of temple sites in their colonial Orient.
- [30] In the eighth chapter of his 1880 publication *Voyage au Cambodge*, which began with the story of his return from the first two missions to Angkor and the transport of original and copied objects back to France, Delaporte added an important section on "A summarised history of the foundation of a new museum." Here, he told the story of how his Angkor plaster cast collection was refused by the Louvre, its transfer to Compiègne and partial repair at the *École des beaux-arts*, and his great wish to open it "To the public" in Paris as it had been tested during the 1878 Universal Exhibition.<sup>61</sup> The temples of Angkor were described in words, but "to make oneself an idea of the sculptures, one had to attentively study with a magnifying glass the *photographic vues* in the museum, mostly coming from the rich collection of M. Gsell in Saigon [from his Angkor visit in 1866], which had also been used on several occasions to illustrate this book."<sup>62</sup> This procedure was comparable with John Thomson's photographs, taken the same year (1866), which Fergusson used in his above-mentioned publication. Like Viollet-le-Duc, Delaporte also used – without even indicating the difference between the original and the copied – plaster casts from his *musée Khmer* in Compiègne (his museum in the Trocadero was not yet founded) as the source for his illustrations of sculptures and architectural surfaces. It was at this point that Delaporte cited – comparing the "[French] masters of Indochina" with the "British in India and the Dutch in Java" and in anticipation of his Angkor museum – the most important British references:

In London, the Hindu, Burmese, and Malayan sculptures in the British Museum are displayed next to Assyrian antiquities. Entire monuments of the architecture of India have been rebuilt in the South Kensington Museum. Finally, the India Museum with its vast rooms on archaeology contains not only original and cast sculptures, but also a considerable collection of photographs, drawings, and relief plans in an admirable arrangement for study.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 377-378.

<sup>61</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 247.

<sup>62</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 249.

<sup>63</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 251.



- [31] What could Delaporte have known before his 1880 publication about architectural plaster cast museums and the display of Oriental monuments in Britain? Which aspects of the London museums could have influenced him in combination with Fergusson's work? Where are the parallels with Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée*, which was housed in the same building as his own museum project, or with Lenoir's *Musée des monuments français*, which had reconstituted the architectural past just eighty years earlier?
- [32] Certainly, the most spectacular reconstitution of Oriental architecture at that time was housed in the *Architectural Courts* of London's South Kensington Museum (which had just opened to the public in 1873) in the form of the famous Sanchi gate. Delaporte spoke of these Oriental casts (he translated them as "reproduction moulée") several times in his second appendix entitled "Analogies de l'architecture Khmer avec les architectures des autres pays."<sup>64</sup> However, within the London display of Sanchi two important strands merged that had developed in the British capital over the last decades and had deeply influenced the French scene: First, the use of plaster casts to mount architectural fragments in hybrid stylistic groups for a museum context (compare with Lenoir) and to display life-size ensembles made up from one original monument (compare with Viollet-le-Duc). And second, the use of these display techniques for the colonial-political making and appropriation of 'Oriental heritage' to create a "three-dimensional imperial archive."<sup>65</sup> Both strands played an important role in Delaporte's museum concept and therefore need further exploration.

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### **From the Sydenham Crystal Palace to the Oriental Repository and the Architectural Museum**

- [33] After the spectacular display of monumental sculpture and architecture in the *Great Exhibition of Industry of all Nations* held in London in 1851, its exhibition building – the Crystal Palace – was moved to Sydenham and re-opened in 1854 as a private enterprise. Stylistic and temporal ensembles containing various architectural and sculptural elements from different places in painted plaster cast copies and/or newly invented interpretations filled the ten architectural courts. They formed a *parcours* through "a curious and fascinating three-dimensional *musée imaginaire*" that was made up of archaeologically unearthed antiquity that ranged from Egypt and Pompeii to the Nineveh or Assyrian Court; the latter was executed by James Fergusson under Henry Layard's direction.<sup>66</sup> Although Fergusson, the appointed manager of the whole complex,

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<sup>64</sup> Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge*, 421-438.

<sup>65</sup> Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum," 11.

<sup>66</sup> Jan R. Piggott, *Palace of the people: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854-1936*, London 2004, 67-121. Compare: John Kenworthy-Browne, "Plaster casts for the Crystal Palace, Sydenham," in: *Sculpture Journal* 15.2 (2006), 173-198.

was to become an expert on Indian architecture, on the architectural side of things the whole Far East was under-represented. Despite this popular display of monumental architecture in full colour decoration (compare with Owen Jones' 1856 publication *The Grammar of the Ornament*<sup>67</sup>), it was left to Fergusson to formulate another approach. In his 1857 address to the Science and Art Department at the South Kensington Museum published with the title *On a National Collection of Architectural Art*, he advocated a public, but more serious "institution of [an] architectural museum, established on cosmopolitan and scientific principles."<sup>68</sup> In a move that has particular significance for this article, he also questioned the assumed immobility of monumental architecture by evoking the translation technique of plaster casts, and argued that their full-sized and uncoloured quality was necessary to properly display chronologically classified monuments. Although he was engaged in the English debate over a new national style that would replace the Classicistic "attempt to restore, with more or less minute exactness, the style of the Roman Empire" with a revived "pure Gothic" (compare with Viollet-le-Duc), and although he defined "architecture as ornamental and ornamented construction," Fergusson nevertheless did not want to leave the matter of style as "a plaything for the antiquary and the archaeologist." He lobbied for a "more general diffusion of knowledge."<sup>69</sup> In his conclusion, Fergusson proposed a comparative *parcours* through colour-neutral plaster cast installations using a selection of the "best and most typical styles" of chronologically ordered and "full sized" architectural monuments.<sup>70</sup> He cited the *Architectural Museum* as a reference, a site that had opened in 1852 in Cannon Row, Westminster and had been founded by the Neo-Gothic architect and restorer George Gilbert Scott and his colleague Charles Bruce Allen (along with later adherents like John Ruskin) (Fig. 11a).

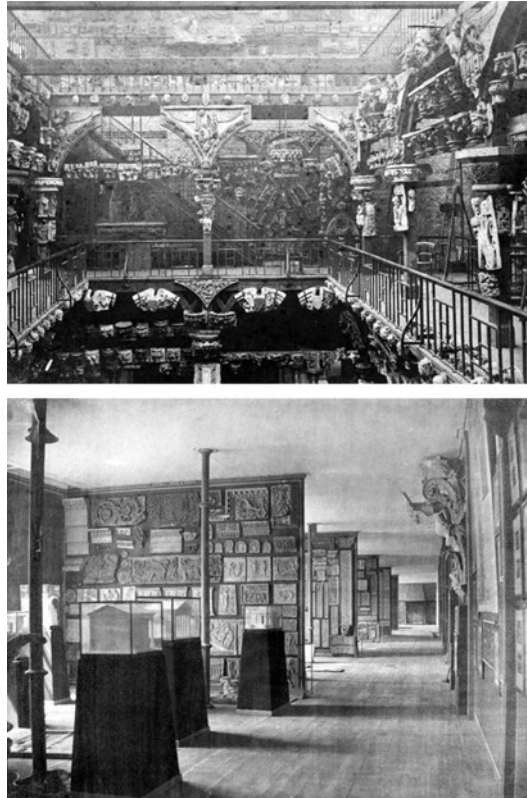
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<sup>67</sup> Here, a problematic relation between the monumental and the ornamental as categories of perception of 'Oriental' architecture needs further exploration. Whereas on the one side plaster casts as a medium contributed largely to the monumental and three-dimensional perception of 'Oriental' architecture, Jones' medium to propagate 'Oriental style' was a print publication in form of a two-dimensional pattern book. And whereas the first medium largely helped reconstituting 'Oriental' architecture in Universal Exhibitions, the second was more influential for decorative interiors of period rooms of exotic cultures and extinct civilizations around the planet.

<sup>68</sup> James Fergusson, "On a national collection of architectural art," in: *Introductory addresses on the Science and Art Department and the South Kensington Museum No. 6*, London 1857, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Fergusson, "On a national collection," 4, 6, 12. Interestingly, Fergusson underlined this anti-elitist programme for the "great regeneration of art" through an architectural museum that made reference to the 'post-Lenoir' museum in the *Hotel de Cluny* in Paris, which he described as being neither a "strictly architectural collection" nor a fully developed "speciality" (Fergusson, "On a national collection," 14).

<sup>70</sup> Fergusson, "On a national collection," 15-17.



11 (a) Interior view of the Royal Architectural Museum, Tufton Street; (b) Interior view of the Museum of Ornamental Art, Classical Galleries, at the South Kensington Museum, c. 1857 (Source: (a) © British Library Board; (b) © V&A Images, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

- [34] With its scholarly aim of offering a mainly medieval catalogue of architecture and ornament for the improvement of contemporary building practice in a Gothic Revival language (compare with Viollet-le-Duc), it was finally incorporated into the newly founded South Kensington Museum<sup>71</sup>. Now, the Gothic-oriented *Architectural Museum* was housed in one gallery next to the *Museum of Ornamental Art* (Fig. 11b) and its encyclopaedic focus was on the reform of applied arts, design, and public taste under the coordination of Henry Cole and Richard Redgrave at the Government School of Design and the Science and Art Department. Both galleries followed a more serial display mode in the development of stylistic entities; however, free-standing architectural reconstitutions were not yet a real issue. This changed in 1859 when a group of distinguished experts published a two-page article in *The Builder* in support of the foundation of a "National Museum of Architecture and Architectural Decoration" containing both existing collections. The aim was a) to arrange a representative selection of specimens that would be arranged in a comprehensible series according to the progress of artistic style and typology, as well as chronological and geographical criteria; b) to confront the spectrum of Classical and Gothic with Oriental architecture; c) to combine the architectural fragments into coherent building parts and "complete orders";

<sup>71</sup> E. Bottoms, "The Royal Architectural Museum in the light of new documentary evidence, " in: *Journal of the History of Collections*, 19 (2007) 1, 115-139.

d) to contextualize the objects with accompanying cast models, engravings, drawings, and photographs "showing the present and original condition"; and e) "to put together , in each sub-division, two or three monuments of the best character in each style, made as complete as possible, and of scale of dimension as large as the gallery will admit."<sup>72</sup> This contribution initiated a series of articles about an ideal, even universal, architectural museum with life-size representations of exquisite monuments.<sup>73</sup> Sculptors and architects like John Bell and C.B. Allen advocated the insertion of Far East monumental architecture into the universal museum *parcours*.

### *Towards an Oriental (Imperial) Museum Parcours*

[35] Henry Cole, the driving force behind the South Kensington Museum, pushed for the reproduction of various artworks.<sup>74</sup> When European plaster cast samples arrived in the museum as a result of Cole's successful initiative for the 1867 *International Convention for the Exchange of Reproductions of Works of Art*, the *Architectural Courts* for the South Kensington Museum were being planned and a special section was foreseen for Near, Middle, and Far Eastern architectural exhibits. These installations mirrored the imperial ways of appropriating architectural heritage. In other words, they were the materialization of the British-colonial process of incorporating Oriental architecture into the Occidental (colonial) canon of architectural heritage through the translation technique of plaster casts.

[36] However, the displays of Indian artefacts and architectural elements already had a seventy-year history in London. These collections stretched back to the *Honourable East India Company* that ruled Bengal. Its civil servants, geographers, and surveyors undertook Oriental studies as an intentional side-project through which to approach the newly acquired territories on the Sub-Indian continent. In 1798, along with a similar initiative in Calcutta, the *Oriental Depository* was created inside the East India House in London to house the incoming industrial-commercial products and natural history collections that were displayed for interested merchants, traders, civil servants, and members of the public.<sup>75</sup> The resultant institution, the India Museum, played an important role in the standardization of museum displays of Indian antiquity through archaeological drawings, photography, and the medium of plaster casts.<sup>76</sup> In 1869 – when the South Kensington Museum published its four volumes of various art reproductions –

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<sup>72</sup> T.L. Donaldson et al., "The architectural collections in the museum at Brompton – A national museum of architecture," in: *The Builder*, 17 September 1859, 614-15.

<sup>73</sup> Isabelle Flour, "On the formation of a national museum of architecture: The Architectural Museum versus the South Kensington Museum," in: *Architectural History*, 51 (2008), 211-238.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Copland Perry, *A descriptive catalogue of the collection of casts from the antique in the South Kensington Museum*, London 1887<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Skelton, "The Indian collections: 1798 to 1978," in: *Burlington Magazine*, 902 (1978), 297-304.

<sup>76</sup> Ray Desmond, *The India Museum 1801–1879*, London 1982, 111-128.

the India Museum's reporter Forbes Watson published his fifty-page *Report on the illustrations of the archaic architecture of India* (in the series of the Archaeological Survey of India), which easily counts as one of the most important manuals for a systematic British colonial appropriation of India's architectural antiquity. Besides his discussion of the execution of coloured drawings, plans, sections, models, and photographs for each archaeological survey or restoration campaign in colonial India, a great emphasis was also laid on "moulds and casts."<sup>77</sup> More important were the seven appendices of the booklet. *Appendix A* was called *Memorandum regarding the architectural objects in India, of which it is desirable photographs should be taken*. In *Appendix B*, entitled *Memorandum regarding objects in India of which it is desirable casts should be obtained*, he declared casts to be an adequate substitution if the originals could not be taken from museum collections in India or from the original spot, using as examples sites like the "Bodh Gaya, Kootub at Delhi, the gateways of Sanchi [or] the Elephanta cave at Bombay."<sup>78</sup> After appendices C, D, and E, comprising General Cunningham's (founder of the Archaeological Survey of India) report on the archaeological remains of India, Forbes added *Appendix F* where he listed the necessary utensils and materials that ranged from brushes and sponges to wheat flour and papers for paper piece moulds, and for the "process of making composition moulds" using the carton-pierre technique.<sup>79</sup>

- [37] This publication had a direct impact on the British scene. Henry Hardy Cole – the eldest son of Henry Cole, the director of the South Kensington Museum – served as Royal Engineer and archaeological surveyor in the Upper Provinces of India and published the results of his explorations for the Archaeological Survey of India along with the preparation of "a number of plaster casts of Indian monuments at the request of the Science and Art Department to the Government of India, no doubt at his father's instigation."<sup>80</sup> His most important project was to appropriate India's architectural antiquity for the British canon of colonial heritage. Calling it a "plaster cast facsimile,"<sup>81</sup> Cole junior executed a copy of the almost 10-metre high eastern gateway of the Buddhist stupa of Sanchi located close to Bhopal in upper central India; the gateway dated to the second century BCE. Comparable to Delaporte's descriptions of his Angkor missions since 1866, H.H. Cole described and depicted the six-week long execution of the plaster casts during January/February 1870 as having included three colleagues, nine "native

<sup>77</sup> Forbes Watson, *Report on the illustrations of the archaic architecture of India. With appendices by Mr. Fergusson, General Cunningham, and Colonel Meadows Taylor*, London 1869, 1-6.

<sup>78</sup> Watson, *Report*, 22-22.

<sup>79</sup> However, Forbes' guidebook for the British-colonial appropriation of Indian architecture concluded with an English translation of a technical manual that had been written by a Frenchman who claimed to have invented this material copying method – namely, Victor Lottin de Laval's *Manuel complet de lottinoplastique, l'art du moulage de la sculpture en bas-relief et en creux mis à la portée de tout le monde... précédé d'une histoire de cette découverte* of 1857.

<sup>80</sup> Skelton, *The Indian collections*, 301.

<sup>81</sup> Henry Cole, *Catalogue of the objects of Indian art exhibited in the South Kensington Museum*, London 1874, 13.

modellers," and twenty-eight tons of material transported on bullock carts for their execution through "elastic moulds with gelatine," the plaster casts reached London via Bombay through the newly opened Suez Canal and Liverpool in June 1870.<sup>82</sup> They arrived just in time for the first *Annual International Exhibition* that opened on 1 May 1871 near the South Kensington Museum. The reconstituted Sanchi gate (see Fig. 12c for its later version), along with a small model and photographs of the whole Sanchi site as well as a staged "Indian court"<sup>83</sup> for the exhibition, had its test run for the public gaze in the 1871 exhibition. Its depiction in the *Graphic* on 6 May using an exaggerated perspective from the visitor's point of view was (on another scale) quite comparable to the illustration of Delaporte's Naga balustrade in the Paris exhibition only seven years later in 1878 (compare with Fig. 3b).

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### The Architectural Courts of the South Kensington Museum

- [38] The *Architectural Courts* of the South Kensington Museum (also called "Casts Courts," although they also contained a few original objects) were only in the planning stage and the two strands of display for monumental architecture and Oriental culture were merged into this single project, which inspired Delaporte's own museum project. There as well, few originals stood beside plaster cast replicas. As early as 1867 Cole, the South Kensington Museum director, initiated the new court, which comprised two large halls separated by a narrow and open three-storey gallery and contained the Museum's collection of plaster casts of large-scale architectural sculpture (Fig. 12a).<sup>84</sup>
- [39] General Henry Scott constructed the courts, which opened in 1874. Most probably, Delaporte – sources prove that he had been to London several times – used the 1874 *Guide to the Art Collections of the South Kensington Museum* for his visit to the museum, which created an hybrid scenario between original and reproduced artefacts and architectures of the Orient. He certainly entered "The New Court" with its "full-size reproductions in plaster of architectural works of large dimensions."<sup>85</sup>

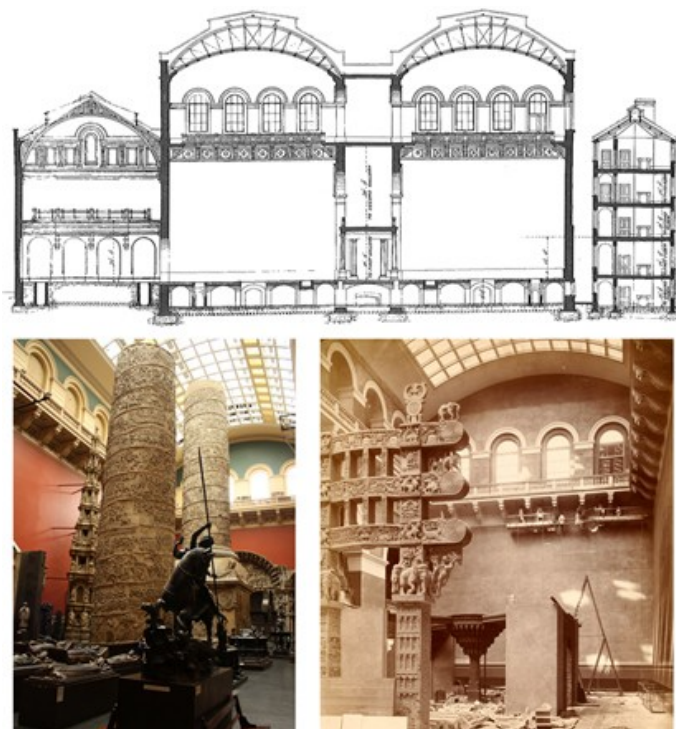
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<sup>82</sup> Cole, *Catalogue*, footnote on pages 13-14.

<sup>83</sup> George Wallis, "Indian architecture. The eastern gate of the Sanchi Tope, Bhopal, Central India," in: *The Art-Journal*, 1 March 1871, 65-69.

<sup>84</sup> John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The history of its building*, Oxford, London 1982, 156-160; Tanya Harrod, "The cast courts at the V&A, Lonon," in: *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 127, No. 983 (February 1985), 110-111; Partha Mitter, "The Imperial collections: Indian art," in: *A grand design. The art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, ed. Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, New York 1977, 222-229; Malcolm Baker, "The Cast Courts," *Victoria & Albert Museum Webpage* 1982, revised 2007, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-cast-courts/> (accessed 14 June 2013); Julius Bryant, ed., *Art and design for all. The Victoria and Albert Museum*, London 2011, 197-207; Diane Bilbey and Marjorie Trusted, "'The question of casts' – collecting and later reassessment of the cast collection at South Kensington," in: Rune/Marchand, *Plaster casts*, 465-483.

<sup>85</sup> South Kensington Museum, *A guide to the art collections of the South Kensington Museum*, London 1874, 23-29, here 23. A few years later the Sanchi installation was gone, compare: South Kensington Museum, *A guide to the South Kensington Museum*, London 1881.



12 (a) The Architectural courts of the South Kensington Museum in a section plan; (b) the former European court with the Trajan's Column in 2012; (c) the former Oriental court with the installation of the Sanchi gate, c. 1874 (Source: (a) John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The history of its building*, Oxford, London 1982, 158; (b) photograph provided by the author (2012); (c) © V&A Images, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

[40] John Hungerford Pollen's 1874 *Description of the Architecture and Monumental Sculpture in the South-Eastern Court of the South Kensington Museum* gave a more detailed insight. It listed European objects from England to Italy in order to show "the principal changes of style in monumental and decorated architecture illustrated in historical order" in the western court and "the architecture of the Oriental nations, Arab, Moorish, and the numerous styles that have prevailed in India [...] cast by the officers employed for the Architectural Survey of India" in the eastern court.<sup>86</sup> The highlight of the European side was the free-standing, life-size cast of Trajan's Column in Rome (second century CE), which was originally built to commemorate the Roman Emperor Trajan's war of conquest against the East-European Dacians. Here the cast of Trajan's column was centrally placed in two gigantic fragments in the western court and was meant to be viewed either from the visitor's intimidatingly low perspective within the court or from the elevated passageway between the courts, which furnished a commanding view over the entire architectural universe (Fig. 12b). This plaster cast replica symbolically represented Great Britain's nineteenth-century inheritance of the colonial and civilizing mission of ancient Rome in Europe. After its successful display in the 1871 International Exhibition and its subsequent dominance in the east court section of "Indian and Arab architecture," the

<sup>86</sup> John Hungerford Pollen, *A description of the architecture and monumental sculpture in the South-East Court of the South Kensington Museum*, London 1874, 1, 2.

"Eastern gateway of the Sanchi tope" was made the Oriental symbolic and colonial-political counterpart to Trajan's Column of European antiquity in the neighbouring court (Figs. 12c); as a free-standing plaster cast of one of the richly decorated entry gates to the central Buddhist stupa, it represented the real site which, after its European discovery as a ruined and supposedly abandoned site by the British officer General Taylor in 1818, had been made one of the earliest and most prominent icons for the British cultural – in this particular case, archaeological – mission on the Indian Subcontinent. On the exotic *parcours* the Sanchi gate was placed between other exhibits from the Orient, including the famous fourth-century Iron Pillar from the Kutb mosque in ancient Delhi, a sixteenth-century gate and audience chamber of Akbar Khan from Fatehpur Sikri near Agra, and a fifteenth-century pulpit from a Cairo mosque. In his 1874 *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art exhibited in the South Kensington Museum*, Lt. Henry Hardy Cole formulated his goals to a) "familiarise the people of England with the productions of India," which was to them still "an unknown land [...] with the vague idea of a distant and barbaric splendour," b) to "create a true knowledge of these millions of people" through the existing collection, and c) "to correct the vulgarities in European art manufactures by the suggestiveness of Indian art objects."<sup>87</sup> Only one decade later, Delaporte formed exactly the same goals for the French public and artistic scene with his Angkor museum to promote Khmer architecture and design.

### *Three Modes of Display*

[41] From a museographical point of view, the architectural courts of the South Kensington Museum in their 1874 iteration developed three new modes to visualize the cultural taxonomies that would prove essential for the Trocadero palace containing both Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée* and Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois*. The first mode of cultural taxonomy was found in the architectural courts which presented a series of monumental architectures that were, by virtue of their translation into facsimile copies through plaster casts and their transfer into an encapsulated museum space, isolated and decontextualized from their original historical context, site, and past or present use value and regrouped as fetishized architectural icons. As part of a "three-dimensional imperial archive,"<sup>88</sup> the architectural courts sought to create – what had been termed by Timothy Mitchell for a critical understanding of 'Orientalism' in general as a practice of cultural imperialism – "the illusion of an adequate representation of the world,"<sup>89</sup> a "world as exhibition."<sup>90</sup> Applying what Tony Bennett had defined in relation to larger regimes of space and gaze as developed in Western modernity in the context of museums and

<sup>87</sup> Pollen, *A description*, 1, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum," 11.

<sup>89</sup> Allison Arieff, "Reading the Victoria and Albert Museum," in: *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 33, No. 3/4 (1995), 403-424, here 404.

<sup>90</sup> Timothy Mitchell, "The world as exhibition," in: *Comparative studies in society and history*, 1989/31, 217-236.



exhibition displays – the South Kensington Museum space was a perfect example of a giant "exhibitionary complex," in which the collections of the architectural courts sought – again using Bennett's words for a larger context mentioned above – "to make the whole world, past and present, metonymically available in [plaster cast] assemblages of objects [...] they brought together and, from their towers [in our case the elevated gallery between the courts, MF], to lay it before a controlling vision."<sup>91</sup> In our case, the metonymic system followed an overall taxonomy that was inscribed into a unique spatial arrangement: in each court, each object metonymically represented the larger building context and singular region it came from. The combined group of buildings in each court represented a cultural sphere across a longer, homogenized and abstract time span: Europe in the western court from the Romans to the Renaissance and 'the Oriental nations' in the eastern court from early Buddhism to the sixteenth-century Mogul era. And finally, one central and dominating icon represented the very cultural foundation of each of the two spheres of which the British Empire felt itself to be the rightful inheritor: on one side Trajan's Column represented the Roman Empire's supremacy over civilized Europe, and on the other, the Sanchi gate acted as an archaeological reminder of a past high civilization, a present degenerated situation on the Sub-Indian continent, and a "symbol of responsible British custodianship of, and authority over, Indian history and culture."<sup>92</sup> However, the established cultural taxonomy of Occidental and Oriental spheres remained isolated and could only be seen synchronically from the elevated (and indeed Janus-headed) view point on the bridging gallery. Although this scenario did not last long, it was the first *permanent* museum configuration of its kind and provided a contrast with the ephemeral displays of the Universal and Colonial Exhibitions. This division of plaster cast reconstitutions to represent the Occident and the Orient in the same exhibition complex would also become a reality in the Trocadero Palace from the late 1880s onwards: certainly on another scale, both the Gothic-style Vézelay gate in the *musée de Sculpture comparée* and the Angkorian pavilions in the *musée Indo-chinois* represented two opposing sides within one French metropolitan and colonial empire.

[42] The second mode of cultural taxonomy seen in the architectural courts could be found in the serial-encyclopaedic display of architectural details along the upper galleries. This included a metonymic display of architectural fragments and whole facade elements that were attached to the surrounding walls, and – a new highlight – the presentation of monumental, freestanding, and life-size architectural replicas. This blending of different museographical strategies came from various architectural museums and almost certainly inspired its French equivalent in the Trocadero Palace.

[43] The third mode of cultural taxonomy was seen in the architectural reconstitutions inside the Architectural Courts. These represented a crucial transition from the "didactic

<sup>91</sup> Tony Bennett, "The exhibitionary complex," in: *New formations* 4 (1988), 73-102, here 79.

<sup>92</sup> Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum," 19.

moment" embodied by the earliest architectural museums and the "academic imperialism" of the public exhibitions and museum displays (like those of the South Kensington Museum) to "a period of popular imperialist triumphalism."<sup>93</sup> This last phase was exemplified in London's Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886, where Caspar Purdon Clarke had designed the hybrid 'Indian Palace.' Clarke had also been the architect of the 1878 Indian pavilion in Paris when, on the other side of the main entry the first (in this case 1:10-scale) model of Angkor was displayed.<sup>94</sup> Within these overlapping phases of academic imperialism and popular imperialist triumphalism that developed towards the end of the nineteenth century, also Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* to a larger extent represented before 1900 a French imperial enterprise (or better imperial aspiration, longing and desire) than a neutral archaeological *parcours* through exotic temples from the east: at this time of the mid- 1880s until 1900 Angkor did not yet belong to French Indochina. Ironically, both the cast models of Sanchi in London and those of Angkor in Paris did not survive the decline and final failure of the British and French colonial projects in Asia; they are lost (or hidden in archives) today.

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### **Delaporte's Musée Indo-Chinois – the First and Last French Architectural Museum of the Far East and the Temples of Angkor**

[44] After the creation of the temporary *musée Khmer* in the castle of Compiègne in 1874,<sup>95</sup> his success in the Universal Exhibition of 1878 displaying original Khmer sculptures, and his references to the plaster cast museums in London in his 1880 publication, we can conclude that Delaporte had by that time developed a precise vision of his museum project in Paris. It was to be an instructive and picturesque *parcours* through fragmental metonymic ensembles and free-standing pavilion-like plaster cast reproductions in order to a) convince the visitor of the unequalled quality of Angkorian temple architecture, and b) of the French colonial mission in Indochina which was to include a salvage mission of the archaeological sites of Cambodia's glorious antiquity.

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### **Visual Strategies of Architectural Reconstitutions**

[45] Contrary to the newly built architectural courts in London, Delaporte was confronted with the spatial constraints of the internal exhibition space at the Trocadero Palace. Retired in 1880 from the French navy and still disappointed by the Louvre's snobbish refusal of his Angkor collection, Delaporte convinced the ministry of fine arts and public instruction to

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<sup>93</sup> Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum," 12.

<sup>94</sup> Compare: Falser, "La porte d'entrée".

<sup>95</sup> The first catalogue of the museum gave a list of originals and plaster casts of Angkorian artefacts: Le comte de Croizier, *L'art khmer. Étude historique sur les monuments de l'ancien Cambodge avec un Aperçu général sur l'architecture khmer et une liste complète des monuments explorés, suivi d'un catalogue raisonné du Musée khmer de Compiègne*, Paris 1875. Compare: Falser, "From the Mekong Mission 1866-68".

support his second and last personal mission to Angkor, which they did by decree on 8 September 1881 and in a letter to the Governor of Cochinchina, Charles Le Myre de Vilers. In the biography entitled *Louis Delaporte, explorateur (1842-1925). Ses mission aux ruines khmères* by René de Beauvais (the pseudonym of Delaporte's wife Hélène Savard), the *Société académique indo-chinoise* (of which Delaporte had been a member since its foundation in 1877) is mentioned as having subsidised the mission from "3 October 1881 to 15 February 1882." During these short months, Delaporte had, for the second time after his 1874 mission, "tried, sometimes in vain, to decipher the ensembles and details [of the Angkorian temples] with a pencil, a camera, and the medium of plaster casts."<sup>96</sup> Letters by Delaporte dated 11 to 13 January 1882 survive in which he wrote from the Saigon Hospital to Vilers. He returned to France shortly thereafter, severely ill and having left his personnel behind to finalize the mission's task. Here, he stated – significantly for this chapters' focus on plaster casts as a means of effecting the colonial appropriation of Oriental antiquity – that the moulds executed during the mission were "of the same finesse as the originals" and that their retouched plaster cast versions were "to be considered as originals themselves."<sup>97</sup> By 1889, back in Paris, Delaporte was nominated honorary "conservateur du musée Indo-chinois du Trocadéro,"<sup>98</sup> also called *musée des Antiquités cambodgiennes*. In the early 1880s, however, his museum was far from ready.

[46] A spatial and chronological reconstitution of the constantly modified *musée Indo-chinois* in the Trocadero Palace is difficult (Fig. 13a) to attain. According to Delaporte's 1886 version of the floor plans (Figs. 13b,c),<sup>99</sup> the visitor would enter the end pavilion of the Trocadero on the ground level and encounter the first monumental and original "group of the giants." After its display during the 1878 Universal Exhibition Delaporte had received more original pieces to replace the older plaster cast additions in this group (we remember Lenoir's strategies after 1800). On the second floor of the *parcours*, the visitor was confronted with a blend of different types of architectural display.

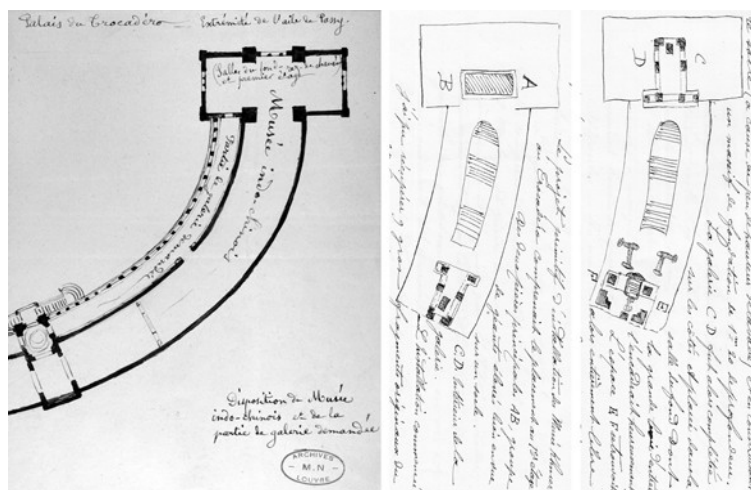
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<sup>96</sup> René de Beauvais, *Louis Delaporte, explorateur (1842-1925)*, Paris 1929, 195, 197. An undated report by the captain of Delaporte's boat *Mousqueton* gives us important insight into the enormous struggles faced by this mission (compare with Cole's efforts on his mission to Sanchi), which comprised seventy helpers and fifteen tons of material including "apparatus, bags of plaster and gelatine, 250 drafting plates"; and the central group was formed by Delaporte, draughtsmen, a medical doctor, Laederich as photographer, Ghilardi as plasterer and special appointee of the ministry of fine arts, two interpreters, one corporal with ten guardians, three servants, and a carpenter to build the wooden boxes for transport of the fragile plaster casts. See: ANOM INDO GGI 11795 (Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence).

<sup>97</sup> See: ANOM INDO GGI 11795.

<sup>98</sup> Beauvais, *Louis Delaporte*, 199.

<sup>99</sup> Falser, "Krishna and the plaster cast," 29.

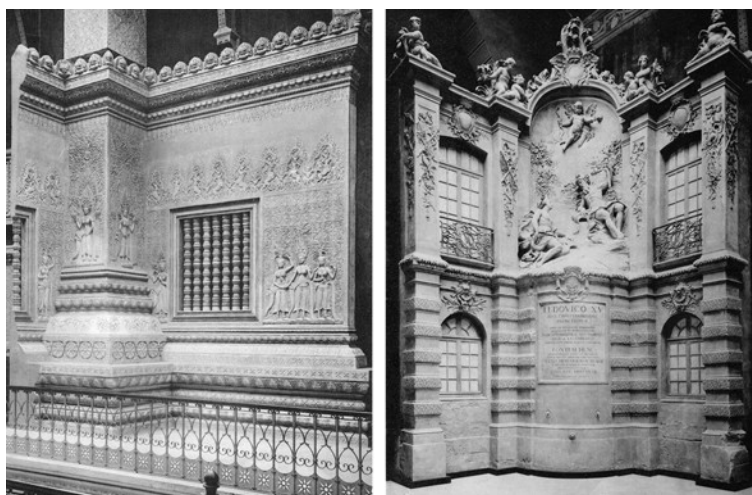


13 (a) The sketch of the ground plan of the *musée Indo-chinois*, c. 1880; (b) + (c) Delaporte's sketches of the two floor plans of the *musée Indo-chinois* in 1886 (Source: Archive des Musées Nationaux AMN 5HH2-2)



14 Two versions of architectural display in Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* before 1900 (Source: (a) Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le musée Indo-chinois*, Paris n.d., plate 49; (b) © École National Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, ENSBA Paris)

[47] Ascending the staircase, to his left and right the visitor passed ensembles of singular casts (against a neutral background of mysterious black velum) that were meant to form coherent stylistic entities in the visitor's imagination (Fig. 14a), 1:1-scaled copies of long bas-reliefs, and various single decorative elements. To a certain extent, these wall-bound montages of fragments (in-scale copies, separated from each other) served Delaporte's metonymic strategy, which had been introduced in Lenoir's *Musée des monuments français* nine decades earlier. A second type of exhibit was the display of large-scale 1:1 casts of entire original architectural elements. Delaporte had certainly seen this solution in London's architectural museums and in the neighbouring *musée de Sculpture comparée* (Fig. 15a,b).



15 (a) A display of the facade of the western entry gate of Angkor Wat in the *musée Indo-chinois*, c.1900; (b) a replica of the Fontaine de la grosse horloge in 18th-century Rouen in the *musée de Sculpture comparée*, 1898 (Source: (a) Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le musée Indo-chinois*, Paris n.d., plate 4; (b) Frantz Marcou, *Album du musée de Sculpture comparée, Série V (XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris 1898, plate 34)

[48] There was also a third and totally new type of display that was still wall-bound but augmented in its three-dimensional quality and composed as an architectural hybrid. Placed prominently in front of the ascending staircase and under the open and iron gabled roof structure of the Trocadero, Delaporte's creative prototype was, according to a letter from 1886,<sup>100</sup> a "complete and characteristic *monument d'architecture*," a free re-arrangement of plaster cast fragments from four different temples made of two bent balustrades with balusters and snake-headed end pieces, a sculptured staircase, two lions, a base, a pediment frame and door decorations, door frames, and columns and pilasters (Fig. 14b).

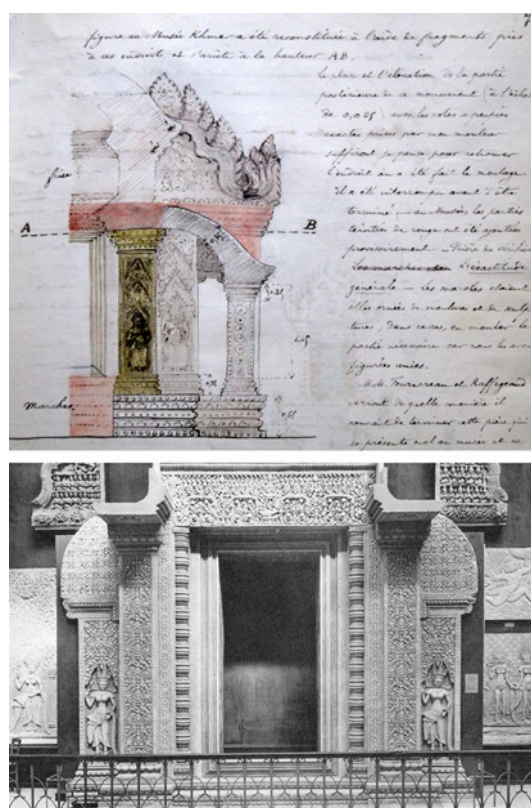
[49] These first hybrid trials of architectural reconstitutions, along with the idea of exhibiting larger life-size parts of Angkor Wat, certainly inspired Delaporte to instigate a third plaster cast campaign in Angkor. Its main leader, this time in the absence of Delaporte himself, was the Saigon-based *inspecteur des batiments civils*, Lucien Fournereau. Together with the sculptor Sylvain Raffegaud and others, a mission of eighteen people left Saigon on 12 December 1887 and journeyed by boat to Siem Reap via Phnom Penh, reaching their base camp at Angkor Wat right after Christmas 1887. According to Fournereau's lengthy report in the 1889 journal *L'Architecture* and a summary in *La construction moderne*,<sup>101</sup> his mission ended in late March 1888 and he brought home "520 plaster casts of fourteen temple structures, thirteen original sculptures in sandstone and wood, numerous drawings of floor plans, profiles, sections, colour studies and 350 photographs."<sup>102</sup> In a report dated to 4 October 1888 in the *Journal officiel de la*

<sup>100</sup> See: AMN 5HH1-11 (Archive des Musées Nationaux).

<sup>101</sup> [E.R.], "Architecture Khmère. Mission de M. Fournereau," in: *La construction moderne*, 1.12.1888 (4<sup>e</sup> année, No. 8), 85-88.

<sup>102</sup> Lucien Fournereau, "Les ruines Kmer du Cambodge," in: *L'Architecture*, no.17 (27 Aril 1889, 193-5), 19 (11 May 1889, 217-9), 21 (25 May 1889, 244-8), 22 (1 June 1889, 257-9), 23 (8 June

*République Française* Fournereau also referred to the political, propagandistic, and instructive dimension of his project. He mentioned the concurrent London project for the display of restituted colonial antiquity and anticipated outmatching – "for the honour of our [French] country" – the "generic plaster cast reconstitution [*moulages des types*] of India in the India and South Kensington Museums." Additionally, he emphasised that his "eighty-two boxes" of translation products for "a patient work of reconstitution to revive the isolated fragments" would be of "great value for the administration, the architects, the art lovers, and the industrial and artistic productions of diverse genres."<sup>103</sup> Delaporte planned these plaster cast campaigns painstakingly in France and gave very detailed instructions to his collaborators (Fig. 16a).<sup>104</sup>



16 (a) A coloured sketch by Delaporte to indicate the surfaces to be copied by mouldings, c. 1887; (b) the plaster cast replica of the outer western entry gate of Angkor Wat in the *musée Indo-chinois*, c.1900 (Source: (a) Delaporte Archives Loches/Philippe 2011; (b) Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le musée Indo-chinois*, Paris n.d., plate 3)

1889, 268-272), reprint in: *Architecture et ethnographie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Emmanuel Amougou, Paris 2008, 99-144, here 143.

<sup>103</sup> Lucien Fournereau, "Rapport d'ensemble sur la mission archéologique accomplie dans le Siam et au Cambodge adressé au ministre de l'instruction publique et des beaux-arts. Paris, le 11 Août 1888," in: *Journal officiel de la République Française*, no. 270 (4 October 1888), 4064-4068, here 4065.

<sup>104</sup> For this information I am grateful to Julie Philippe who studied the Delaporte archive at Loches, in: Julie Philippe, *À la découverte de l'art khmer. Louis Delaporte, fondateur du Musée indo-chinois et organisateur des missions scientifiques aux ruines khmères*, Thèse École des Chartes Paris 2011 (unpublished).

[50] Following Delaporte's instructions carefully, Fournereau's first cast operation covered the 12 metre high western main entry of Angkor Wat. This was completed with the help of "eight workers for eleven days" who copied a "surface of 4 metres width and 11.45 metres height in 45 elements," which was reassembled in Delaporte's museum back in Paris (Fig. 16b). The second comprised casts of the central eastern bas-relief gallery with the famous mythological scene of the 'Churning of the Milk Ocean.' Fournereau put a special emphasis on his colour studies of various decorations in the temples. He refrained from making moulds of the central Buddha statue out of religious respect, but the next operation covered the "grand ensemble of the [lower eastern section of the] central tower" with a "vertiginous scaffolding of 11 metres out of bamboo and planks" to mould "a complete pediment and two half-pediments, the tympanum, lintels, piers and pilasters of a development of 8 metres width by 11.25 metres height in 214 elements."<sup>105</sup> This time, Fournereau did not compare the restitution of Angkor Wat's central tower with the British museum projects, but instead with the exhibited "[Gothic] cathedral gates in the neighbouring *musée de Sculpture comparée*."<sup>106</sup> His next operation after the Angkor Wat temple focused on the famous face towers of the Bayon temple from which one "tourelle à masque" of 3 metres width and 4.50 metres height could be moulded. The *moulages* from Angkor would (besides incoming samples from Champa, Siam, Burma, and Java), as Fournereau put it, "reconstitute four *monuments d'architecture* in large scale, fourteen of smaller dimensions and 122 diverse objects" and would display the "characteristic traits of Khmer art."<sup>107</sup> His attached list gave a detailed "recapitulation of the 520 acquired *moulages*" with 241 from Angkor Wat and sixty-one from the Bayon alone, in addition to original objects, 400 photographs, drawings, and studies on Angkor Wat's site plan, decorative profiles, and colour analyses etc. At the end of his written report, Fournereau's emphatically patriotic undertone linked his project less with Delaporte's museum. He was much more concerned about the French gesture of colonial power created during the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris, which sought to demonstrate that the French *tricolore* flag was already planted irremovably on Indochinese territory.

[51] Most of the plaster casts reached the Trocadero museum in time to complete Delaporte's collections there, and some of them were even reused in the first outdoor reconstitution of Angkor in the picturesque and hybrid *pagode d'Angkor* realized by the Phnom Penh-based architect Fabre for the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris. Besides physical reconstitutions of Angkor within Delaporte's museum and the exhibition pavilion, Fournereau executed an impressive series of watercolours and drawings during his

<sup>105</sup> Fournereau, "Rapport," 4065, 4068. In a rare opportunity to verify this physical translation procedure, historic photos have been located in the *musée Guimet* that most probably depict the central pediment right before the moulding procedure began and can now, more than one hundred years later, be compared with the rediscovered plaster cast 're-translation' for the pavilion-like reconstitution within Delaporte's museum.

<sup>106</sup> Fournereau, "Rapport," 4065.

<sup>107</sup> Fournereau, "Rapport," 4067.

1887/8 mission to Angkor. These were presented in the *palais des Arts libéraux* at the *Champ-de-Mars* during the 1889 exhibition.<sup>108</sup>



17 A water colour by Lucien Fournereau of 1888/1889 entitled "Ruines Khmères du Cambodge" (Source: © École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, ENSBA Paris; photograph by Jean-Michel Lapellerie)

[52] The most spectacular exhibit featured an impressive watercolour called *Ruines khmères du Cambodge* in which Fournereau merged different architectural fragments and motifs, Buddhist monks as staffage figures, and picturesque landscape elements into a hybrid Piranesian collage of the eternal ruin of Angkor (Fig. 17). Although different in its message of a colonial mission to civilise, in its aesthetics it was not very far removed from Lenoir's *jardin Elysée* created during the iconoclastic age of the French Revolution.

#### *Delaporte's Musée Indo-Chinois as a 'Transfer and Translation' Site of Plaster Casts and Original Artefacts from Angkor*

[53] As various further correspondence proves, Delaporte's Khmer museum advanced to form a veritable 'transfer,' or a 'translation site or trading port' of plaster casts and original artefacts from Angkor, Indochina, and even the whole of Southeast Asia. It not only actively commissioned and acquired moulds from Angkor under Delaporte's initiative and provided the generic code for the multiform Angkor pavilions in the following exhibitions in France,<sup>109</sup> but it also received original objects and plaster casts from private donors, traders, and expired exhibitions including the Lyon exhibition of 1894, Rouen 1896, and from the Javanese plaster cast collection of the Dutch-colonial mission to the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris. Two more plaster cast missions to Angkor were carried out

<sup>108</sup> Thirteen of these – measuring from one to four metres side length each – are located in the archives of the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. The author would like to thank Emmanuel Schwartz and Monique Antilogus of ENSBA Paris for their help.

<sup>109</sup> See for more information: Falser, "Krishna and the plaster cast".



in 1890/91 and 1896/7 with Delaporte's detailed instructions to focus on plaster casts from Angkor Wat and the Bayon temples.<sup>110</sup> The *musée Indo-chinois* was opened for a short time in 1884; it was made partly accessible throughout 1888; reopened definitely during the 1889 Universal Exhibition; and functioned as a permanently open institution during the 1900 Exhibition.<sup>111</sup> The above-mentioned architectural reconstitutions were executed in Delaporte's museum and offered different types of literal quotations or free interpretations of the original source, the temples of Angkor. The western entry gate of Angkor Wat was built as a partial 1:1 replica with only a few alterations (see Fig. 16b). A similar approach was used for the giant restitution of the eastern entry to the central tower of Angkor Wat (Fig. 18a).



18 (a) A 1:1-scale replica of the lower eastern section of the central tower of Angkor Wat in the *musée Indo-chinois*, c.1900; (b) A 1:1-scale replica of the 12th-century entry gate of the Saint-Pierre church in Moissac in the *musée de Sculpture comparée*, 1898 (Source: (a) Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le musée Indo-chinois*, Paris n.d., plate 2; (b) Frantz Marcou, *Album du musée de Sculpture comparée, Série 1 (XIIe siècle)*, Paris 1898, plate 17)

[54] The presentation of this architectural reconstitution was, to a certain extent, reminiscent of Cuvier and Jean-Marc Bourgyery's analysis of comparative anatomy (compare Fig. 7a) in which the spectator could even enter the dissected 'body' of the temple on display: a

<sup>110</sup> In an extended joint mission to Angkor and other parts of Indochina the architect Henri Vildieu (*adjoint au chef du service des bâtiments civils* in Saigon and responsible for the Annam and Tonkin pavilions in the 1889 exhibition) and the Saigon-based sculptor Sylvain Raffegaud undertook, in Delaporte's name, a second *mission archéologique* which lasted from October 1890 to March 1891. The last plaster cast mission to Angkor under Delaporte's indirect supervision was carried out by the sculptor Urbain Basset in the winter of 1896/97. A short inventory by Delaporte (most probably on 13 June 1897) mentioned that Basset's task was to make plaster casts from Angkor Wat for "the completion of the ensembles of the grand entry gate of the central tower, of the grand rectangular pilaster of the western entry, and the naga sculpture from the decorative ensemble of the principle [western] entry gate" (quoted in: Agnès Combe, *Le rôle des collaborateurs de Louis Delaporte au Musée Indo-chinois du Trocadéro*, Thèse École du Louvre 2000 (unpublished), annex 6. Several boxes of casts "for the restitution of the Bayon temple" were mentioned in relation of Basset's mission and the *musée Guimet*).

<sup>111</sup> Compare also: Katia Houe, *L'oeuvre d'un conservateur. Louis Delaporte (1842-1925)*, Thèse École du Louvre, Paris 1992 (unpublished), 30-36, 51-52. In general Philippe, *À la découverte de l'art khmer*.

presentation mode which Delaporte had experienced and certainly copied from Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée* (Fig. 18b).

[55] A detailed analysis shows that Delaporte mixed and matched his architectural reconstitutions with decorative elements from other parts of the temple. However, Delaporte's representation of the Bayon temple as a free-standing structure in his museum (Fig. 5b) was a totally new approach; it would influence the aesthetics of the Angkor pavilions in future Universal and Colonial Exhibitions in France until 1937. According to a 'literal translation' of the temple from its original site to Paris in all its details, all single decorative elements were considered authentic per se, and were re-assembled into a hybrid and picturesque structure as a 'free' or creative interpretation of an original 'Khmer text' that Delaporte wanted to make 'readable' for the general French public. This large-scale reconstitution was the indisputable highlight of the museum and certainly an object of great satisfaction for the patriotic Delaporte; here, finally, was an impressive French-colonial answer to the British 1:1 reconstitutions of Indian antiquities like the Sanchi gate in the South Kensington Museum or the Indian palace in the Parisian 1878 Universal Exhibition, where France only staged a 1:10-scale gate of the Angkorian city of Angkor Thom (compare Fig. 4).<sup>112</sup>

[56] It is probable that the whole *parcours* through his museum was more or less completed around 1900. Delaporte himself considered it a logic Oriental "prolongation" of the Occidental *musée de Sculpture comparée*. In a short text published in 1900, Delaporte asked the visitors of his museum to forget all about the Orient, and to "transport themselves into Indochina," to "reconstitute in their imaginations" the ancient temple site by wandering through the "specimens and partial restitutions which gives some ideas" of the real site – an ancient splendid temple city that lay, supposedly abandoned and uncared for, in the jungle waiting to be rescued by the French.<sup>113</sup> Delaporte's invocation of Angkor's grandeur in the French *métropole* through its idealized architectural reconstitution and inclusion into a performative museum *parcours* allowed the visitor – so similar to the British case of the Architectural Courts in London's South Kensington Museum – to become familiarized with and initiated to the French-colonial mission at Angkor. Existing in parallel, the real site of Angkor was mentally converted from a living, religious site to a dead archaeological ruin and canonized as French cultural *patrimoine* – and all this before Siam's retrocession of Angkor to (French) Cambodia in 1907 and before the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (founded around 1898) started its restoration programme at Angkor in 1908.

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<sup>112</sup> Compare: Falser, "La porte d'entrée".

<sup>113</sup> Louis Delaporte, "L'art khmer. Conférence-visite faite au musée des antiquités indo-chinoises du Trocadéro," in: *Conférences du groupe français de l'école internationale (Exposition universelle de 1900)*, ed. École internationale des expositions, Paris 1901, 35-46.

- [57] It is important to mention that around 1900 other nations (namely, the German Empire) had shown great interest in Angkor. In fact, the *Völkerkundemuseum* in Berlin (Ethnographic Museum) had exhibited the largest coherent plaster cast facsimile of the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat at that time.



19 The display of the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat in a photograph of the *Völkerkundemuseum* Berlin (Stresemannstraße), around 1926 (Source: © National Museums Berlin, Prussian Cultural Foundation, Asian Art Museum, Art Collection South-, Southeast- and Central Asian Art)

- [58] Since the Berlin presentation followed a more classical exhibition mode and did not aim to develop free-standing architectural collages, it will not be discussed here in detail. Suffice to say that this completely two-dimensional and clinical display took a scholarly and scientific form (Fig. 19) and could not have been more different from Delaporte's partly free and three-dimensional interpretations of the Angkorian temples within a picturesque and performative French-colonial heritage *parcours*.<sup>114</sup> However, both versions did offer valid strategies with which to substitute the monumental architecture of Angkor for a Western museum space.

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### **Visual Fragmentation and Physical Decontextualization of Angkor: Towards the Iconization of Cultural Heritage**

- [59] Apart from a few mission reports and his publication in 1880, Delaporte's interest was that of an enthusiastic *amateur* and not a classical scientific scholar of Khmer art and architecture. After 1900 it was his colleague and *attaché au museum des Antiquités cambodgiennes*, Henri La Nave, who helped to propagate Delaporte's museum in the *Revue Universelle* and in the famous *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. He repeated the well-

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<sup>114</sup> Michael Falser, "Gipsabgüsse von Angkor Wat für das Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin – eine sammlungsgeschichtliche Anekdote," in: *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift, Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Indo-Asiatische Kunst Berlin* 16 (2012), 43-58. In general, Falser, "Colonial appropriation".

known discourse of Angkor's architectural and decorative equivalence and even supremacy in its "grandeur et simplicité" to Assyrian, Egyptian, and Greek antiquity<sup>115</sup> and accentuated the museum's "exact restitutions" in relation to the "hastily executed [...] fugitive decor" of the short-lived structures in Universal Exhibitions.<sup>116</sup> At this point the Parisian editor Armand Guérinet published the undated but wonderfully illustrated book *Le musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités cambodgiennes exposée du palais du Trocadéro* (compare the figures 5, 14a, 15a, 16b, 18a). It contained sixty-two *phototypes* (most probably taken by the famous *Studio Giraudon*) and a complete set of the exhibits of original objects, single plaster casts, and full-scale reconstitutions and drawings from Angkor, Java, and the Cham sites in South Vietnam.<sup>117</sup>

[60] Thus far the most relevant publication in large format had been issued by La Nave in 1904 under the title *L'art khmer*. It contained "collected and classified documents after original sculptures, restitutions, and plaster casts from the Trocadero [...], photographs and drawings by the author" as well as fifteen pages of text called "Reflections and study about Khmer art." An attached album containing 135 incredible illustrations of the exhibits in the *musée Indo-chinois*, including photographs and drawings with a handwritten list of legends and explanations, was the most important aspect of this publication. However, the political, typically colonial, message was as clear for La Nave as it had been for Delaporte in his 1880 publication: despite the care of the monks on site ("conservation de l'édifice"), the "grand kingdom of Angkor was totally lost" (in another passage "completely extinct") and the actual "indigenes of Siamese Cambodia watched the immense ruins of their ancestors with amazement, but were incapable of understanding a single word of these grandiose conceptions" (compare with Fournereau's illustration containing the passive monks as staffage figures (compare Fig. 17)).<sup>118</sup> For La Nave the overall "goal of this study [was] to bring out the value of Khmer art ["mettre à jour la valeur de l'art Khmer"], the importance of the multiple revelations which effuse the motifs and decorations of this art, and the precious archaeological interest in which one could discover the history of this art of the Orient," and finally "to rebuild [...] this picturesque debris" for the sake of the "artistic and scientific inspiration within the creations of [French] contemporary art."<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Henri La Nave, "Monuments khmers au Trocadéro (Restitutions)," in: *Revue universelle*, 1 April 1903/83, 161-164.

<sup>116</sup> Henri La Nave, "L'art khmer et les restitutions du Trocadero," in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 32, 1904, 326-340, here 326.

<sup>117</sup> Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités cambodgiennes exposée du palais du Trocadéro*, Paris n.d.

<sup>118</sup> Henri La Nave, Henri, *L'art khmer: documents recueillis et classés d'après les sculptures originales, restitutions, moulages réunis au Trocadéro, les photographies et dessins de l'auteur, réflexions et étude sur l'art khmer*, Paris 1904, 14 (La Nave 1904b).

<sup>119</sup> La Nave, *L'art Khmer*, 14. Compare Baptiste, "Virtual visions".

[61] However, it was Delaporte had the final word. His publication entitled *Les monuments du Cambodge. Étude d'architecture Khmère* appeared in three parts between 1914, 1920, and 1923 (merged into one volume in 1924). In the written sections, Delaporte discussed the architecture of Angkor in reference to Fergusson's world art analysis, developed analogies to other Southeast-Asian sites with a series of ornamental drawings, and summarized his own success story from his missions to Angkor to his vision of the instructive function of his museum as a logical complement to the *musée de Sculpture comparée*. But his notion that his Khmer museum would be frequented by artists and art schools – similar to a discussion on Indian art that was occurring within the British Arts-and-Crafts-Movement – was never realized. In the third part of the publication called *Le musée Indo-chinois du Trocadéro*, Delaporte explained the museum collection, in particular the reconstituted "monuments d'architecture" of the Bayon and Angkor Wat temples.<sup>120</sup> The thirty-seven large-format plates in Delaporte's book merged a collection of sketches, site photographs, plaster cast illustrations, ideal restitutions in drawings, and realized museum models into a hybrid representation of the real and the substituted site of Angkor. This formed a colonial strategy for the iconization of Angkor's architectural features that would turn out to be the foundation of its commercialization for the tourist and heritage industry in the decades to follow (Figs. 20a,b).



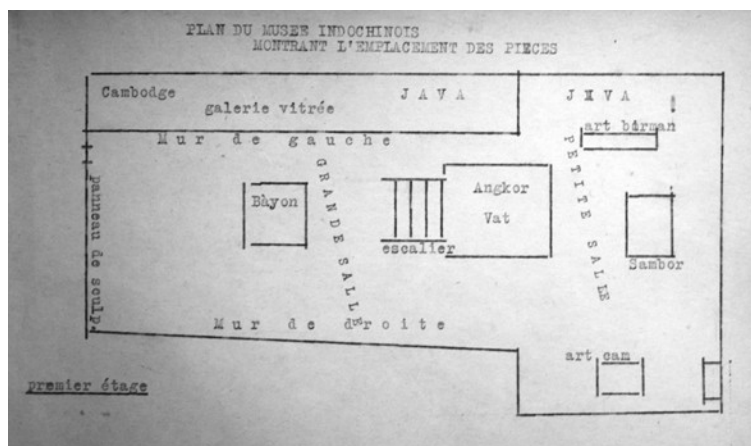
20 (a) An elevation of the lower eastern section of the central tower of Angkor Wat and (b) a collage of original sculptures, plaster casts and photographs from the real site of Angkor Wat, both plates in Delaporte's 1924 publication *Monuments du Cambodge* (Source: Louis Delaporte, *Monuments du Cambodge*, Paris 1914-24, plates 36, 37, © Bibliothèque nationale de France)

[62] By the time Delaporte's last publication came out a few months before his death in 1925 at the age of 83, his project of reconstituting Angkor in a Parisian museum space had

<sup>120</sup> Louis Delaporte, *Les monuments du Cambodge. Études d'architecture khmère publiées d'après les documents recueillis au cours des deux missions qu'il a dirigées en 1873 et 1882. 1883 et la mission complémentaire de M. Faraut en 1874-1875*, Livraison I-III, Paris 1914, 1920, 1923, reed. 1924, here 114-128.

been overtaken by the reality: since 1907, the provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap had been legally incorporated into the French-colonial enterprise of Indochina. The real temple site of Angkor, which had been translated for the French *métropole* by a whole generation of French explorers between 1850 and the 1900s through written texts, graphic analyses, photographic documentations, plaster casts, model restitutions, and whole freestanding pavilions, would be gradually restored itself into a picture-perfect site itself. This was a transcultural form of 're-translation' when all the imaginations, rhetorics, and reconstitutive test versions of the architectural heritage of Angkor exhibited in museum spaces and Universal and Colonial Exhibitions (1906 and 1922 in Marseille and 1889, 1900, 1931 and 1937 in Paris) in the French *métropole* were re-applied on the 'real site'.

- [63] The fate of the museum after Delaporte's death in 1925 was lamentable. The art historian Philippe Stern, Delaporte's collaborator since 1912, was responsible for the safe transfer of the original pieces of the collection to the *musée Guimet* where a *salle Louis Delaporte* was opened a few years later.<sup>121</sup> In a detailed but unpublished inventory including two sketch plans of the latest configuration of Delaporte's *musée Indo-chinois* (Fig. 21), Stern catalogued around 600 plaster casts by provenance, object description, dimensions, style, reproduction reference (dates of the relevant missions), ownership, state of conservation, and placement.<sup>122</sup>



21 A sketchy floor plan of the *musée Indo-chinois* by the curator of the nearby *musée Guimet*, Philippe Stern in c.1925 with the indication of the free-standing temple reconstitutions of Bayon and Angkor Wat (Source: Philippe Stern, *Inventaire des moulage du musée Indo-chinois* (untitled, undated manuscript), c.1925, Archive du musée Guimet, Paris)

- [64] The *palais du Trocadéro* was demolished in parts to make way for a newer version designed by the architects Carlu, Boileau, and Azéma that was to house a section of the

<sup>121</sup> Georges Coedes, "Catalogue des pièces originales de sculpture khmère conservées au Musée Indochinois du Trocadéro et au Musée Guimet," in: *Bulletin de la commission archéologique de l'Indochine* 1910, 19-62, 22 plates.

<sup>122</sup> Philippe Stern, [Inventory for the Musée Guimet of the plaster casts of the Musée indo-chinoise] (no name, no title, no date [probably 1925], Archive musée Guimet. Compare: Pierre Dupont, *Musée Guimet – Catalogue des collections indochinoises*, Paris 1936.

last French Universal (called International) Exhibition in 1937. By this time, the French colonial project as a whole had lost much of its popularity and political attraction. As a result, the display of a general Indochinese collection at the new Palais Chaillot was eliminated only in the last minute from the floor plans (Fig. 22), and Delaporte's plaster casts were stored in a disused factory in Clichy. In 1945 the remaining parts were transported to the storage of the *musée de l'Art moderne* and in 1973 "a load of thirty lorries"<sup>123</sup> containing casts was sent to the inadequate storage space at the Saint-Riquier Abbey located far northwest of Paris. Since the 1980s, interest in Delaporte's plaster casts as a relic of the colonial transfer, translation, and appropriation project has slowly come back to life.<sup>124</sup> The plaster casts from Angkor were again transported to new storage at the *musée Guimet* in Normandy and an exhibition on Delaporte's legacy is planned by this museum for 2013.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> In the colloquium on historic plaster casts, the acting conservator of the *musée Guimet*, Albert le Bonheur, spoke about this transfer and called the plaster casts of Angkor "authentic" sources, compare: Association pour le Colloque international sur le moulage, ed., *Le moulage. Actes du colloque international, 10-12 April 1987*, Paris 1988, 124).

<sup>124</sup> Probably the earliest call for rehabilitation of the plaster casts of Angkor, René Dumont, "Angkor-Vat à l'Exposition Coloniale Internationale de 1931," in: Association, *Le moulage*, 121-126. One of the latest and best studies from the conservation viewpoint: Agnès Legueul, *Les moulages de Musée Indochinois du Trocadéro: histoire et devenir*, Mémoire Ecole du Louvre 2005, 2 vols., Paris (unpublished), compare Philippe, *À la découverte de l'art khmer*.

<sup>125</sup> See the exhibition catalogue Angkor – Naissance d'un mythe. Louis Delaporte et le Cambodge, Paris 2013 (forthcoming).





However, this specific display mode had already been tested in earlier, pre-colonial projects. Around 1800 in Alexandre Lenoir's *Musée des monuments français* the combined display of *archétypes* (moulded proofs of original artefacts), picturesque stage prop facades, and architectural *fabriques* in period rooms or in a timeless Elysian garden setting had created a chronological parcours through the artistic epochs of French art. As the comparative, structurally dissecting, and photography-like presentation of fragmented plaster cast facade elements in Viollet-le-Duc's *musée de Sculpture comparée* (from 1878 onwards) has demonstrated, this development continued with the metonymic staging of moulded architectural parts to revive entire buildings in the imagination of the visitor. The option of free-standing 1:1-replicas, like those of Angkorian temples, was additionally influenced by similar undertakings in the architectural museums and in the 'Architectural Courts' at the South Kensington Museum in London (opened in 1874 with the famous Sanchi gate). The direct art historical and ideological reception of the latter helped Louis Delaporte to embed his own museum project within the taxonomies of 'world architectural history-civilization-nation-progress' in general and the *mission civilisatrice* claiming France's custodianship over Angkor in particular. The visitor to his *musée Indo-chinois* followed a picturesque, instructive, and performative *parcours* in order to be convinced of the French colonial project in Cambodia and of the artistic supremacy of Angkor's temples over all other colonial heritages; he walked between singular original artefacts and metonymic architectural ensembles (sometimes combining originals and substitutes) toward 1:1-scale plaster cast replicas, to stand finally in front of new and time/space compressed *reinventions* of Angkor Wat and the Bayon temples that had been re-assembled from per se authentically copied elements. These free-standing and hybrid pavilion architectures count as the birthplace of the 'Angkor pavilions' in subsequent Universal and Colonial Exhibitions in Marseille and Paris.

[66] To conclude, these installations made from the translation and transfer medium of plaster casts helped to 're-present' these immovable and static, exotic and foreign architectures from the Orient in the European centres of colonial power. Once re-materialized in museums and exhibitions in Paris or London, these temples of India or Indochina were integrated – as decontextualized and purely aesthetic objects without any social, religious and contemporary political connotations – into and therefore appropriated for the colonizer's own normative canon of cultural heritage (*patrimoine culturel*). In publications by La Nave and Delaporte after 1900, with their "reproductive continuum"<sup>126</sup> of sketches, architectural drawings, photographs of the original site, plaster casts, models, and full-scale replicas of Angkor, the gradual visual fragmentation and physical decontextualization of Angkor's architecture helped to iconize and fetishize the site in

<sup>126</sup> Malcolm Baker, "The Reproductive Continuum: plaster casts, paper mosaics and photographs as complementary modes of reproduction in the nineteenth-century museum," in: Frederiksen/Marchard, *Plaster casts*, 485-500.

preparation for what is now called the 'cultural heritage of humanity' in today's global heritage industry.



23 New copies of original plaster casts made from mouldings of the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat as executed around 1900 for the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin, photographed by the author in the archives for the Dahlem museums in Berlin, 2013 (Source: photograph provided by the author, 2013)

- [67] The recent re-evaluation of plaster casts in general – in Paris in November 2012 a whole conference called *Le moulage: pratiques historiques et regards contemporains* was dedicated to this topic<sup>127</sup> – and the plaster casts from Angkor in particular is changing their value from a secondary source for original art objects and a colonial technique to appropriate Non-European architecture, to a primary source of a transcultural architectural history between the Orient and the Occident.<sup>128</sup> As a consequence, Western architectural museums with plaster cast collections from non-Europe are desperately in need of a new conceptualization for their collections within the emerging discipline of Global Art History (Fig. 23).

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<sup>127</sup> The conference took place on 14 and 15 November 2012 in the Palais Chaillot (formerly Trocadéro) and the *Musée du quai Branly*.

<sup>128</sup> For this transcultural approach in general see: Michael Falser and Monica Juneja, eds., *Kulturerbe und Denkmalpflege transkulturell. Grenzgänge zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, Bielefeld 2013.