

The French Impact on Interior Design at Abdeen Palace

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Abstract:

The Abdeen Palace is one of the most impressive palaces in the world. Built in 1863, it is part of Khedive Ismail's ambitious project to create a "modern Cairo" on the model of the modern cities of Europe. The Abdeen Palace embodies the beginnings of the emergence of modern Cairo. It records a cultural heritage summarizing the important periods of Egyptian history. The variety of interior design styles makes Abdeen Palace unique. All the rooms reflect styles of grandeur: Neo-Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Islamic, Byzantine, or Eclectic, but the taste for French style interior design prevails. The French style was introduced during the reign of Khedive Ismail and lasted in the palace interiors until the beginning of the 20th century, during the reign of Fouad I. The French-inspired neoclassical style covers the facades and the interior design of the first rooms completed in the palace was chosen in the French style. Coinciding with the neo-Islamic style of the throne room and the eclectic style of the Byzantine room designed by the architect and chief designer of the palace "Verrucci," the French style was adopted for the interior design of the wings of the "Haramlek" as well as the wide range of French furniture that was provided to King Fouad from the French designer and furniture manufacturer "François Linke. Despite the importance of the subject, most of the previous scientific studies treat the palace from a historical point of view or provide general and superficial analytical studies of its interior design that neglect the intimate link between the historical period and its impact on the choice of the styles of its interiors: each governor had his spirit, choices, and aspirations. Our research aims to identify the main factors that fostered the infatuation with French taste in Abdeen Palace during the reign of Khedive Ismail, to study the impact of French styles on interior design, and to analyze some key rooms of the palace that were decorated in the French style during the time of Khedive Ismail. The study represents a major contribution to the history of interior design by shedding light on an important historical monument of our heritage. The methodology is based on a historical approach that deals with the history and importance of the palace, the factors that contributed to its construction in the European image, the role of Khedive Ismail in the modernization of Cairo, the infiltration of the French influence in the architecture and interior design of the Abdeen Palace. Through the descriptive-analytical approach, the study will thoroughly describe and analyze the interior design of some of the Abdeen rooms designed in a typical French style during the time of Khedive Ismail. This study demonstrates the major impact of French styles on the interior design of Abdeen Palace, the interior design of French palaces (Versailles, Fontainebleau,) was a primordial source of inspiration for the rooms of the Abdîn Palace, the reign of the Khedive Ismail, a monarch influenced by the European culture, in particular French, marks a fundamental stage in the modernization of Cairo. On the other hand, the Haussmannization of Paris influenced the modernization of Cairo, also called "the Haussmannization of Cairo". In conclusion, the exterior and interior architecture of Abdîn's palace presents a dialectical relationship between politics and architecture, both in terms of architectural style and interior design, as well as architectural extravagance to confer prestige on the monarch.

Keywords:

Abdeen Palace, Haussmannization of Paris, modernization of Cairo, French styles

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