

“Neo-Mamluk Architecture in Germany during the 19th and 20th Century”

July-August 2019

On behalf of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture Travel Grant, I was able to fund my thesis research towards investigating iterations of German orientalist architecture during the 19th and 20th centuries. My primary interests developed in virtue of reading Hans Belting’s *Florence and Baghdad* and later David Roxburgh’s response, “Two-Point Perspective.” The writings polarize the differences which are set in pre-existing understandings of Islamic art and architecture. The complexity behind both arguments are crucial as they illuminate misconceptions which Islamic art and architecture has faced within the broader field of Art History. Viewed largely as an Orientalist project, Belting’s publication provides a contemporary example of how Islamic architecture is still understood and viewed today. Therefore, the backdrop to my thesis and overall broader interests manifested from a German historiographical understanding of Islamic art and architecture.

Having illustrated my primary interests, my thesis research trajectory was pulled towards investigating models of German orientalist architecture during the 19th and 20th century context. This was also in large part motivated by having the opportunity to take Historiography of Islamic Art and Architecture and learning about Carl von Diebitsch’s Moorish Kiosk in Ludwig II’s summer palace; Schloss Linderhof. At first, I proposed to visit four cities/sites from July 1st through August 16th: Berlin, Potsdam, Darmstadt, and Hamburg, but upon arriving I limited the scope of my itinerary to a geographically sound one covering Dresden, Munich, Berlin, and Potsdam due to a one-month time restraint. Although there were examples worth visiting in both Hamburg and Darmstadt, such as the Imam Ali Mosque in Hamburg and the Waldspirale in

Darmstadt, I found the latter cities not only were close in proximity to each other, but also held a stronger loci of focused intersections of Islamic architecture which worked well towards my broader research interests and sites of investigation.

Beginning in Dresden, my first stop was the infamous tobacco factory notoriously nicknamed, the “tobacco mosque.” Built in 1909-1910, the Yenidze Tobacco and Cigarette Factory was built to allude the shape of the Mamluk mosque and tomb complex of Khair Bak with a glass dome instead of a stone one, and several Ottoman-like minaret towers. The building also includes a larger minaret, likened more towards the minaret of Khair Bak complex, which is disguised as a chimney due to certain building restraints in Dresden during the early 20th century. Upon visiting the site, I conducted a visual analysis of the factory which is now currently utilized as an office building. I was also able to make visits to both the city archive and the state archive in order to conduct archival research on the building which helped me understand the influence of the building design in this particular fashion, the history of the building, and the economic profits the factory provided to the city of Dresden. Having the opportunity to visit the Dresden City Museum further catalyst my interests of the tobacco factory with the kinds of geo-agricultural associations between tobacco and the East. The museum’s display of Yenidze’s visual materials and memorabilia hosted a number of various vignettes, posters, boxes, and other extravagant objects made in due part of the commodification and dissemination of tobacco produced on this particular site. My last site in Dresden was the Royal Palace which houses one of the largest collections of Ottoman art in Europe. This visit also added another layer to the conceptualization of Islamic art and architecture within Germany during the 19th and later 20th century.

My second site was Munich where I was further able to realize how Islamic art and architecture was understood within a specific context. Here, I visited the Museum of Five Continents which was originally an ethnology museum founded in 1868. The museum houses “cultural” objects from around the world from places like North America, South America, Africa, Islamic Orient, South Asia, East Asia, and Oceania. This particular visit helped me conceptualize an understanding of how “culture” and “heritage” works and how each are managed in order to accrue interest and disseminate knowledge within a public sphere. During my time in Bavaria, I was fortunate enough to visit Ludwig II’s summer palace, Schloss Linderhof, and see Carl von Diebitsch’s Moorish Kiosk which I mentioned I had learned about during my Islamic Historiography course. Put on display at the World’s Fair Exhibition in France during 1867, the kiosk was bought six years later by Ludwig II from previous Hungarian owners. This kiosk becomes important in the ways in which Carl von Diebitsch and other architects and designers were conceptualizing Islamic design and ornament as a program towards implementation of a modernizing form of design within the scope of the 19th century.

Berlin was the third site of investigation where I visited another example of what I considered to be German orientalist architecture; the “mini Taj Mahal” mosque in the Wilmersdorf neighborhood. Built by Karl Alfred Hermann during 1924-1927, the mosque (then and now) serves as a place of worship for the Ahmadiyya community in Berlin which grew exponentially after the first World War. The mosque’s exterior was built with inspiration drawing upon Mughal design precedents and inspiration of its interior design from the Alhambra (according to an interview with the current Imam of the mosque.) During my visit, I was able to conduct a visual analysis of the building and interview the Imam of the mosque who was versed in the history of the building. During my time in Berlin, I was also able to visit the Pergamon

museum which exhibits the largest collection of Islamic architecture in Europe. This was a groundbreaking experience as I was able to understand the relationship between archaeology and Islamic art and architecture during the 19th century on a deeper level.

My final site visit was conducted in Potsdam where I visited the Pumphouse or Steam Engine Room built in 1841-1843 by Ludwig Persius who was commissioned by Friedrich Willhelm IV to build a steam engine room. The building's main function serves as a house for a steam engine in order to pump water to the fountains of Sanssouci Park. The king expressed his interest for the design of the mosque to be likened towards "the style of Turkish mosques with a minaret for a chimney", according to written material at the Pumphouse. Although the King expressed his desire for the mosque to be in the style of a Turkish mosque, the pumphouse is likened more towards Mamluk building precedents with its *ablaq* striped masonry design, minaret/chimney shape, and dome upon a high drum. It was mentioned in one of the materials that Ludwig Persius was influenced by French architect and designer, Pascal Xavier-Coste's designs and drawings in his conceptualization of a Neo-Mamluk style of architecture. Visiting the interior of the building, the decoration is likened more towards the design of the Nasrid Alhambra Palace. Here, I began to ponder about the role of building manuals and pattern books by Owen Jones, Jules Bourgoïn, and Pascal Xavier-Coste and their influence in conceptualizing Islamic art and architecture as a design for industrialized buildings.

Therefore, with regards to the development of my thesis as it has unfolded through my research abroad, I decided to investigate Mamluk Revivalism as it occurs in building designs during the 19th and 20th centuries in Germany. In examining this stylistic program, my thesis aims to situate eclecticism and question why Neo-Mamluk architecture as a design program was being implemented onto industrial building constructions. To follow accordingly, my first

chapter is dedicated to providing a history of background texts which are associated with articulating and producing an Islamic Revival in Europe. This chapter goes through a close looking of pattern books and building manuals from previously mentioned architects and designers such as Owen Jones, Jules Bourgoïn, Pascal Coste, and Carl von Diebitsch. This section aims to shed light on the ways in which building manuals and pattern books played a key role in the dissemination and rousing of Islamic ornament onto industrial building designs in Europe. By highlighting these key contributors and disseminators of Islamic Revivalism, this chapter provides an interpretation in the ways in which texts were used to communicate ideas of Islamic ornament and which later impacted eclectic tastes and values of design during the 19th century.

The second chapter aims to limit the scope by investigating Islamic Revivalism as it occurs in Germany during the 19th and 20th centuries. Here, I mention the examples I was able to conduct visual analyses for: the Pumhouse in Potsdam, the Moorish Kiosk, and the Neue Synagogue in Berlin. This chapter serves as a means to illustrate and solidify my argument of the ways in which pattern books and manuals which produced Islamic Revivalism were also used as a means to reflect upon tastes and values of Islamic ornament as a building design within the geographic context of Germany. Here, I mention the pertinence of amalgamation in these particular examples, where the “purity” of Islamic Revivalism is becomes erased. In means of illustrating these particular examples of Neo-Mamluk architecture in Germany during the 19th and 20th centuries, this section ultimately aims to establish the framework and interconnectivity between “purity” of revivalism, modernity, amalgamation, and industrialization through building technologies and design during this specific time period and context.

The third chapter of my thesis provides a closer examination of one building in particular, the Yenidze Tobacco and Cigarette Factory, as a means to prove the ways in which Mamluk Revivalism does not in fact occur within the German context. This chapter provides an in-depth visual analysis of the building which serves as a springboard in questioning motivations surrounding topics of Islamic Revivalism and ornament as utilized building designs. Investigating this particular example as a means of entertaining the idea of Neo-Mamluk architecture occurring in Germany will allow us to focus on an in-depth analysis towards the historicity of the building itself. The dichotomy and relatedness of “synthetization” and “modernization” will serve as key concepts to understanding pursuits of this industrial building type as an example or non-example of Mamluk Revivalism.

The fourth and final chapter reflects upon German history and identity as an imperial and colonial power as it relates to other imperial powers such as Britain, France, and the US. This concluding section consolidates visions of industrialization, mechanization, modernization, and identity within the commodification and geo-agricultural associations of tobacco as an “object of the East.” Bringing in the building’s associations between the production and exportation of tobacco will serve as a model towards understanding Yenidze whose architecture not only amalgamates different set of Islamic building designs, but also further utilizes style of architecture to communicate ideas of commodification and exotification of tobacco as a curious “Easter” object. The building’s design therefore perpetuates an iteration of not only attempting to represent a Neo-Mamluk model, I argue, but also works towards representing an idea of the East.

To conclude briefly thus far, I hope this thesis will shed light on the ways in which pattern books and building manuals have established a structure and classification towards articulating an Islamic Revival. Key actors in the almost prophesizing include European

designers and architects who later influenced other schools of architecture and designers through implementing Islamic ornament onto industrial buildings in the 19th and 20th century. As Islamic Revivalism is studied in greater depth within the context of Germany, it becomes articulated through a new form of amalgamation which takes away from “purist” intentions of a revivalist traditions in general. Studying the “tobacco mosque” becomes an exemplar model and an interesting point of contact which not only amalgamates different iterations of Islamic Revivalist building traditions but also uses its architecture to mark itself within the age of industrialization through geo-agricultural and geo-political associations of tobacco through its exportation and commodification as an Eastern curiosity. Therefore, the architecture in this case, does not only become a model of synthezation, but also serves as a complex configuration towards the politics of representation and geography embedded within the of tobacco.