

Istanbul – Damascus: transcultural memory and architecture of Modernity prototyping

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Stylistic affiliation

During the studied period, the Syrian architectural realizations were **stimulated by the charting reformists' discourse**, reflecting their contrasts and promoting three main tendencies: first, conserving the local and Ottoman architectural traditions and supporting the artistic autonomy; second, improving imported Western styles such as Neoclassic, Konak Style, Art-déco and International Style; third tendency, depending on the fruitful interaction between or a blend of European with local principles. It was embodied by the 1910-1950s Syrian Style. One way or another, Istanbul influences were present throughout these tendencies. Paradoxically, both Damascus and Istanbul represented each other. Whilst Istanbul reflected the image of the under-developed situation of the provinces, according to Muhammad Kurd Ali¹, Damascus reproduced the stylistic variety

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¹ Kurd Ali, Muhammad, *Ġarā'ib al-ġarb*, 1923, p. 141.

of Istanbul which shaped the main character of its architecture of Modernity. The latter was involved in Islamic, Western and other modernist inspirations in the context of a multifaceted process, combining political change², European expansion as well as a heritage making-process. The primordial place of Istanbul relatively to Damascus and most Middle-Eastern cities may be argued by two facts. Istanbul was the capital and symbolic or operative center of administration of the above mentioned regions on one side, as well as being the center of gravity of the Sunni Islamic caliphate, until the foundation of the Republic in 1923, on the other.

Accordingly, the relationship between Istanbul and the Middle Eastern cities, Damascus for example may be analyzed at two levels: the history of Islamic Art itself, and the history of Syria as province of the Ottoman Empire, an intercultural space where people have met and exchanged ideas, beliefs and practices, in the process, created specific arts and architecture. A peculiar interrogation and terminological confusion characterizes the first issue belonging to the designation of the studied arts in Damascus, during the 19th – 20th centuries, especially given that, the categorizing and the delimiting of the ‘Islamic art’ after the 1800s has become a delicate subject during the last three decades. Several scholars discussed the designation and temporal limits of the term: Oleg Grabar³, Nasser Rabbat⁴, Finbarr Barry Flood⁵ for instance. For this reason and for the defined limits of this paper, we shall emphasize only the relationship between Damascus and Istanbul as concerns the second level: the city and its capital. To be more concrete, if Istanbul presented the architectural prototype of Damascus, how was this process materialized on the field?

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- 2 Some scholars such as Nasser Rabbat have indicated that “artistic and architectural movements rarely correspond to political shifts”; Rabbat, Nasser., “Islamic Architecture as a Field of Historical Enquiry”, *AD Architectural Design*, 74(6), 2004.
- 3 Such as: Oleg Grabar, *The formation of Islamic Art*, 1987; *The Mediation of Ornament, A W Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*, 1992.
- 4 Such as: Nasser Rabbat, “Islamic Architecture as a Field of Historical Enquiry”, *AD Architectural Design*, 74(6), 2004.
- 5 Such as: F.-Barry Flood, ‘From Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the end of Islamic Art’, 2007, p. 34.

Damascus Modernity: Istanbul, Europe and Islamic traditions

In fact, Istanbul influenced the urban space of Damascus through three factors: the central administration, the architects and the leading classes of the civil society. First, during the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the central administration endeavored to build public buildings in response to the contemporary needs of the city targeting practical and symbolic objectives. Therefore, a generation of standardized neoclassic buildings found place in Istanbul and the Ottoman provinces, although the initial aim of this standardization was the establishment of a new “Ottoman national style”. This can be demonstrated through several initiatives such as the publication of “*Usuli mi‘mari ‘Osmani*” in Vienna Exposition, in 1873⁶. Thus, these buildings were similar in their stylistic references and obviously linked to the capital’s realizations. As far as that’s concerned, Damascus has many buildings which embodied the Ottoman style: the City Hall achieved in 1893-94, the Teacher Training College in 1910, the New Saray in 1901-04, the Ğoraba Hospital in 1899, the New Land Registry in 1900 (Pl. 1) among others.



Figure 1 - New Land Registry, 1900, on the West of New Saray, Marjah quarter, style neoclassic / neo-Ottoman

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6 Ahmet Ersoy, *Usul-i Mi‘mari-yi Osmani*, p. 291-295, In: *Turkish Art*, Actes-Proceedings of 10th International Congress of Turkish Art, Fondation Max Van Berchem, Geneva, 1999.

Furthermore, the Ottoman central administration sent several ready to build schemes to Damascus. For instance, the Ottoman Military Hospital on Şâlihiyyeh road, realized during the 1860s, was erected according to a detailed instructions sent from Istanbul in 1843⁷. Muhammad Neĵib Pasha, Damascus governor at that time, was appointed to supervise the realization of the project. The Center of Historic Documents in Damascus conserve the corresponding document⁸. Another example is the famous Hejaz Railway Station. According to S. Weber⁹, it is possible that the specifications for the competition of the station's design were set in detail by Istanbul and that the architect Da Aranda was familiar with the discussions related to the "First National Style" in Istanbul¹⁰. Finally, the central administration's employees in Damascus represented a kind of transmission belt of stylistic novelties: the villa of the governor Hussein Nazim Pasha (1896-1911) built in 1902-1904 were the first of their kind in the city.



Figure 2 - The commemorative monument of Marjeh Square in Damascus, 1904-1905, crowned by a model of Hamidiyyeh Yeldiz mosque in Istanbul, designed by Raymondo d'Aronco

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7 The hospital was erected during the 1860s and demolished in 1949.

8 CDDH, Center of Historic Documents in Damascus, *Awāmer sultāniyyah*, Registre 3, p.36-39, mid- *Jumāda al-āḥirah*, 1259/1843.

9 Stephan Weber, *Modernity*, II, p. 412.

10 Stephan Weber, *Modernity*, I, p.92.

Secondly, Istanbul's impact on the urban space of Damascus was also expressed by the projects of architects coming from Istanbul answering public and private commissions. Wasiliadis Affandi¹¹, director of Public Works in Damascus at the turn of the 19th century achieved several monuments referring to Istanbul architecture. The Ğoraba Hospital for example. The Italian architect Raymondo d'Aronco (1857-1932), active in Istanbul in the turn of the 19th century represents another example. Aronco designed the commemorative column of the telegraphic line linking Istanbul, Damascus, and Mecca. The monument was erected in the center of Marjeh Square, achieved in 1904-1905, made with a melted iron shaft on a granite base, crowned by a model of the Hamīdiyyeh Yeldiz mosque in Istanbul. (Pl. 2).

Moreover, Aronco designed other projects for Damascus, fountains and mosques, which were never realized¹². Fernando Da Aranda (1878-1969), had been sent to Damascus around 1902-03 in order to realize the building of al-Hejaz Railway Station. He lived on in the city until his death leaving several works whose spirit were more influenced by his training in Istanbul than his Spanish origins¹³. Finally, another significant vector of styles in Damascus was constituted by the Syrian architects and engineers who had been trained in Istanbul, for instance this was the case of Muhammad Bašīr Afandi ibn Abdallah Ğajjo, who studied and then was appointed to the engineering department of the Damascus Municipality in the 1890s. The statistics of the Orders of Engineers of Damascus indicate that until 1950, [8%] of the registered

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11 We have not sufficient information about Wasiliadis Afandi, probably Greek, but we know through the *Salnāme* that he was the director of Public Works in Damascus since the second mandate of Ušmān Nūrī Pacha 1310-1312 / 1892-1893, until the first mandate of Ğussein Nāzim Pacha 1313-1325 / 1895-1907: CDHD, *Sāl-nāme*, vol. 14, 1312/1894, p. 94 ; vol. 15, 1312/1894-1895, p. 568 ; vol. 18, 1319/1901, p. 522 ; See also : Aš-Šām, n° 93, 26, zil-ħijjah 1315, mai 1898

12 Ezio Godali, *Architetti italiani per la Siria e il Libano, nel ventesimo secolo, Italians architectes for syria and lebanon in the twentieth century*, m&m, Firenze, 2008, p. 15.

13 See on the works of Aranda : Alejandro Lagho, et Pablo Fernández., *Fernando de Aranda, Un arquitecto español en Siria*, Ministère Espagnol des Affaires Étrangères, 2005 ; Anas Soufan, *Influences occidentales et traditions régionales*, Paris, 2011, 447-48.

were trained in Turkey, for example Fawzi Kaḥḥāleh, ‘Izzat Kaḥḥādā, Maḥzar Qudsi, Waṣfi as-Sāṭi, Muhammad al-Ḥakīm, Ruṣḍi al-Ḥusayni and others¹⁴.

Thirdly, the leading Damascene classes, *al-‘ayān*, as agents of the Ottoman rule in Damascus¹⁵, adopted certain aspects of the transmission of Istanbul’s urban, architectural and decorative experiences¹⁶. The *Konak* style which characterized private residences in Damascus at the turn of the 19th century, such as Bayt al-‘Ajlāni in ‘Arnūs and Bayt Jabri in Ḥalbūni illustrates this fact. However, the landscape wall paintings may be seen as principal contribution of the leading Damascene classes where the transmission of Istanbul arts and lifestyle to Damascus is concerned.

In the light of the previous observations, Istanbul influenced Damascus through several urban, architectural and decorative aspects during not only the Ottoman Reforms, but also during the French Mandate. If the fascination for the Istanbul model found place in Damascus, this does not mean it was adopted by all Damascenes. Indeed, in the later era of Ottoman rule, for many reasons, there were also opponents to Ottoman references, as well as, evidently, to the Ottoman rule itself. How did Syrians see Istanbul, as a previously seen or imagined urban space? The following paragraph attempts to provide an answer to this question through the literature of several Syrian intellectuals and reformers.

Istanbul representation in the damascene civil-society literature

The literature of the civil Syrian society revealed the contrasted opinions of the Syrians as links with Istanbul were concerned. Several had visited the city, notably in the early 20th century, often, on returning from Europe by the famous Orient express line. They mentioned the natural site, the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, the urban organization, sociopolitical features, cultural life, the Court and other themes. We

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¹⁴ Anas Soufan, *Influences*, 2011, p. 476.

¹⁵ Philip Khoury, *Urban notables*, 1983, p. 67.

¹⁶ Faḥri Barūdi, *Awraq*, 1999, I, p. 141, 238, 239, 240, 241.

shall throw light on the writings of three reformers who represented these three different currents, namely, Ottoman moderate, anti-Ottoman rule, during the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Ḥāled al-‘Az̄m (1903-1964), descendant of a notable family in Damascus¹⁷, an important political figure, minister and prime minister for several mandates, visited Istanbul several times. His father, Muhammad Faouzi Pasha al-Azem was an Ottoman deputy for several years and minister of Waqf in 1912. In other words, Khaled al-‘Azem may represent the class of the “agents” of the Ottoman rule in Damascus. He knew Istanbul as student in Galat Serai School¹⁸, resident at OrtaKöy and Şişli district in 1912, and Syrian visitor in 1934. The memoirs he wrote in the beginning of 1960s revealed his love and admiration for the city, whose Bosphorus panorama was “the most picturesque among all Arab and European cities” he had ever visited¹⁹. After the end of the Ottoman government in 1912, he was forced to come back to Damascus with his family and to go through difficult and moving moments of his life finally leaving the city under the threats of the 1912 war²⁰. Al-‘Azem’s attitudes and feelings towards Istanbul are shown through his personal and political life. As concerns the city’s urban space, he described the city as the main reference of artistic tastes (in Damascus), highlighting the lifestyle of the Sultan’s family²¹, explaining the general urban context via the Bosphorus, the relationship with the Black Sea, the buildings on the shores of Bosphorus, the transport services, steamboats, tramway, Galat Serai School, Galata Bridge, Yörükoğlu Street, mausoleums and so on.

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17 Adul-Az̄iz al-‘Az̄mah (1856-1943) Damascene historian who lived during the studied period revealed his support to Ottomanism as a protector of Islam, and to the rule of sultan Abdul Hamid II. Although he wrote his book *Mirāt al-Šām* in 1937, twenty years after the departure of the Ottomans, he was always designating Istanbul as – al-‘āšimah – the capital. In this manuscript, he pointed to his disappointment at the use of Western styles in construction and criticizes the imitation of Western style or [*taqlīd al-ṭirāz al-ġarbi*] and the prevailing westernized tastes [*wa ġalab al-tafarnuju ‘alā al-‘azwāq*].

18 Ḥāled ‘Az̄m, *Muzakarāt*, 2003, I, p. 35.

19 Ḥāled ‘Az̄m, *Muzakarāt*, 2003, I, p. 29.

20 Ḥāled ‘Az̄m, *Muzakarāt*, 2003, I, p. 38-40.

21 Ḥāled ‘Az̄m, *Muzakarāt*, 2003, I, p. 30-33.

Fahri al-Bārūdi (1887-1966), was a Damascene figure of the first half of the 20th century. He served in the Ottoman Army; in the Syrian administration close to the king Faisal after 1918; he occupied several political posts during the colonial and post-colonial periods. He visited Europe and Istanbul in 1911, and displayed his admiration for this “Great capital”, *al-‘Asimah al-‘Azimah*; or the Pretty Lady of the East, *‘Arousat aš-Šarq*²². At the same time, he regretted the ugly, ancient and dirty shops in Edirnekapi which constituted the “great capital’s” entrance for travelers arriving from Europe²³. He mentioned his visits to Beyoğlu, Büyük ada, Kağıthane districts, the Golden Horn, as well as statistics for Istanbul without giving his sources (824 mosques, [500] in the city and the rest in its suburbs, [300] Tekkiyah and mosques such as Topkapi Mulai khané-si, Galat Mulai khané-si and others²⁴. Al-Barūdi also mentions the history of the Saint-Sophie church and mosque, the firefighter, the strained political situation between young Turkish and non-Turkish subjects in the city, the daily life of Istanbul: its oriental coffeeshops, Galata theatres, and the nightlife, the music, the members of Kalhan Bey, among other themes. The decoration of the main hall of al-Bārūdi house, described in the following paragraph, illustrates his attachment both to Istanbul and the European cities.

Other Damascene reformers had less promising vision regarding Istanbul. Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali (1876-1952) is a relevant example. Important reformer, thinker, author and politician in Damascus, he occupied several political and cultural positions and left many manuscripts and publications. He carried out several trips to Europe and Istanbul. We build our approach on his first visit to the city in 1909, which was illustrated through his book *Ġarā’ib al-ġarb* edited in 1923. In general, Kurd Ali’s impression was not favorable neither to Istanbul urban space, nor to its inhabitants. This may be justified by several reasons especially, his deep-rooted opposition to the sultan Abdul-Hamid II, then, to the regime of Committee of Union and Progress. Even, he displayed his regret when visiting Istanbul, his capital – *‘ašimat bilādi* - after Europe, in which, he had found both development and a great

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22 Fahri Barūdi, *Awrāk*, 1999, I, p. 236.

23 Fahri Barūdi, *Awrāk*, 1999, I, p. 237.

24 Fahri Barūdi, *Awrāk*, 1999, I, p. 241.

civilization. Istanbul's urban space marked the trips of Kurd Ali. As the other writers, he undertook his description displaying a great admiration for Istanbul's natural site. Nonetheless, he severely criticized the capital's organization indicating that there was neither order nor paved streets, that life was hard, that transport was difficult, the architecture was unimaginative, limited to the sultans' palaces, the great mosques, the army barracks, and high schools. In addition, Kurd Ali visited the Parliament²⁵ and other monuments of the city such as the Ottoman museum (Topkapi Museum), for which, he presented ample descriptions and underlined great admiration: " *it is the only institution in Istanbul which illustrates the renewal and has been influenced by the Europeans*"²⁶. In the same trip in 1909, Kurd Ali gave a speech in the Arab Literature Council in Istanbul highlighting in his presentation's introduction the superiority of the European urban organization to the local one²⁷.

Thus, although most of Damascene intellectuals approved the beauty of Istanbul's natural site, they had contrasted opinions apropos its urban morphology, especially, if compared with European cities. In other words, this comparison was linked to the two possible itineraries of Damascene travelers: Damascus-Europe-Istanbul-Damascus or Damascus-Istanbul-Damascus. Somehow, these itineraries symbolized the alternatives of expected modernization: through Istanbul or Europe? These choices found their place in the decoration of Damascene houses. In this respect, to what extent the landscape wall paintings materialize the previously mentioned positions of Damascene intellectuals? How did this technique makes its way to Damascene buildings? Who were its professional and social initiators? Which were its most significant illustrations?

Istanbul representation in the damascene wall-painting

Landscape wall painting in Damascus has not been the subject of a separate study until recently. Stephan Weber has adequately dealt

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25 Kurd 'Ali, M., *Ġarā'ib al-ġarb*, 1923, 143

26 Kurd 'Ali, M., *Ġarā'ib al-ġarb*, 1923, 148..

27 Kurd 'Ali, M., *Ġarā'ib al-ġarb*, 1923, 154-171.

with this question in the framework of a wider survey *Damascus, Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation 1808-1918*²⁸. Raša Yousef presented in 2010 a dissertation for Master degree entitled *A contribution Study on Baroque and Rococo Art Influence on Damascene House*, in the Faculty of Architecture in Damascus. Others have offered important contributions on Turkish wall painting, including that of the Empire's provinces, such as scholars Günsel Renda and Turan Erol. This paragraph emphasizes on the historiography, characteristics, actors and narratives of the landscape wall painting representing Istanbul in Damascene houses.

Historiography

During the Tulip Period, the spiritual and psychological barriers between the Ottoman Empire and Europe had weakened. European culture began to penetrate the social institutions even reaching the State and the circles of the Court. Furthermore, a significant milestone to apply concepts of the Western urban planning in Istanbul began in 1839, several months prior to the announcement of *Tanzimat Firman*²⁹. The "European way of living was accepted" said Abdullah Kuran, but the 19th century European influences "were still somewhat confined to form rather than to essence"³⁰. This was reflected in the Ottoman art and architecture through several elements such as the transition from the manuscript illustration to painting in the Western sense. This fascination with the exterior form, rather than the content was also identified in the provinces. The employment of the landscape wall painting in the interior decoration was one of the reactions to European arts.

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28 Stephan Weber, *Modernity*, 2009.

29 Murat Gül, *The emergence of Modern Istanbul, Transformation and Modernization of the city*, 2012, p. 27.

30 Abdullah Kuran, "A Study of the Turkish Architecture of Modern times", In: Proceedings of the *First International Congress of Turkish Art*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1961, p. 239



Figure 3 - Topkapi Palace – Bab üs-Selam, second half of the 18th century

The first known wall paintings in Istanbul appeared around the mid-18th century in the Harem of Topkapi Palace (Fig. 3)³¹. They could have been painted by Italian artists³². Later, the Gözdeler wing, built in 1770 was decorated with baroque cartouches and landscape panels³³. During the reign of Selim III (1789-1807), halls of the palace were adorned by representations of Istanbul’s landscape³⁴. In the end of the 1860s, these “non-oriental” and “detestable” murals redecorated several halls of the Palace according to European travelers³⁵. Very rapidly, the new style spread to private houses in the capital constituting a “cosmopolitan view” for the Ottoman élites³⁶. It is therefore not surprising that this form of decoration conquered all the Empire’s provinces, where the leading urban classes aimed to demonstrate an idyllic reflection of their

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31 Günsel Renda, *In, Histoire de la peinture Turque*, Palasar Genava, 1988, p.70; M.K.Shaw, Wendy., *Ottoman painting*, 2011, p. 13.

32 Fanny Davis, *The Palace of Topkapi in Istanbul*, New York, Charles’s Sons, 1970, p.255-256.

33 Günsel Renda, “Westernism in Ottoman art: Wall paintings in 19th century houses”, 1998, p. 103.

34 Günsel Renda, *In, Histoire de la peinture Turque*, 1988, p.72.

35 Lycklama a Nijeholt, T.-M., *Voyage*, 4th vol, p. 675.

36 Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman painting*, 2011, p. 19.

reality and their links with the Court and the capital's elites life-style³⁷. In her survey on the arts of Istanbul during the 18th century, Shirine Hamadeh wonders whether the court culture was becoming more popular or whether the urban culture was rising to the rank of an elite culture³⁸.

As the Ottomanization of the urban culture continued during the 19th century, leading to a growing uniformity of lifestyles *à la Istanbul*, landscape wall painting became the prevalent form of interior design throughout the Empire. Damascus represented a significant example of this, since the decentralization policies of the 18th century had created a large class of local notables, with inheritance rights, consequently, powerful financial authorities. Then, the mounting landowning bureaucratic class benefitted from series of Ottoman Reforms after 1839 and led a life-style similar to that of the capital. Most of these notables, accomplishing a role as agents of Ottoman rule and modernization, took up Ottomanism as an ideological reference. The newly emerging tastes and standards of this socially prominent class contributed to the adoption of the new Ottoman decorative tendencies such as the landscape wall painting.

This adoption was gradual. Moreover, there is no doubt, other kinds of polychrome wall decorations appeared before the 19th century. For instance, the mosaic panels on the Umayyad mosque's walls, 705-715³⁹, especially those of the Western portico⁴⁰, portrayed naturalistic scenes, delightful vegetation, classical constructions and other simply imaginary pictures of Damascus and neighboring villages due to the Umayyad period. Other techniques of polychrome decoration may be

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37 Günsel Renda, *In, Histoire de la peinture Turque*, 1988, p.77.

38 Shirine Hamadeh, *The city's pleasures : Istanbul in the Eighteenth century*, Seattle, 2008, p.

39 Marguerite Van Berchem, *The mosaic of the Dome of Rock at Jerusalem and of the Great Mosque at Damascus*, trad. K.A.C. Creswell, United Kingdom, 1932, 252p.

40 Part of the mosaic representations were hidden by a coating layer. They were discovered in 1922. See: Afif Bahnasi, *La Grande Mosquée Omayyad à Damas: le premier chef d'œuvre de l'art musulman*, DarTlass, Damascus, 1990, 191p; Simonis Loreline, *Les relevés des mosaïques de la grande mosquée de Damas*, Louvre éd, Paris, 2012, 63p.

mentioned: panels of tiles with underglaze painted decoration (*qišāni*) disappeared since the mid-18th century⁴¹, geometrical marble panels (*ḥašwah*) and the coloured pastes used since the Mamlouk period 13th-16th centuries⁴². During the 18th century a new decoration technique of the houses' prestigious spaces appeared. The '*ajami* or *fārisi* in Arabic⁴³, Persian⁴⁴, Saracenic⁴⁵, or Arab style⁴⁶, was realized by wooden panelings, framed and painted with vegetal, calligraphic and geometrical motifs, sometimes inlaid with little mirrors⁴⁷. This was applied on walls, ceilings, cupboards, doors and windows. On the whitewashed sections of walls, the future support of the landscape wall paintings which acted as a separation from the ceiling panelings⁴⁸.

The first decades of the 19th century witnessed the adoption of pictorial art to embellish the '*ajami* panelings. Thus, primitive landscapes were painted and introduced into small medallions or as separate elements such as the case of Bayt Ḥāled al-'Azm in Suq Sārroujah and other houses, (Fig. 4)⁴⁹. At the same time, certain Damascenes employed decorations belonging to trends of Ottoman Baroque and Rococo

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41 M. Kurd Ali indicates to the loss of this artisanship since the mid-18th century because of the disappearance of the main family specialized in it: *Dimašq, madīnat as-siḥr waš-si'r*, Dār al-Fikr, Cairo, 1944, p. 120.

42 Michel Écochard, "Le palais Azem de Damas", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April, 1935, p.11.

43 M. Kurd 'Ali, *Dimašq, madīnat as-siḥr waš-si'r*, 1944, p.115; Al-'Azmah, Abdulaziz., *Mirāt al-Šām*, 2002, p. 107.

44 Michel Écochard, "Le palais Azem de Damas", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April, 1935, p.10.

45 John Kinneer, *Cairo, Petra and Damascus in 1839*, 1841, p. 275; Josias Lesli Porter, *Five Years in Damascus*, 1855, 1st vol, p. 36-37.

46 Alphonse De Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient*, t.2, Éditions d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1935, p. 8.

47 'Afif Bahnasi, *aš-Šām, lamaḥāt aššāriyyah wa faniyyah*, Dar ar-Rašid, Bagdad, 1980, p.196-197.

48 These whitewashed parts will later be the support of landscape wall paintings.

49 This disposition is found on the decorated paneling of several damascene houses such as the house of Ḥāled al-'Azm in Suq Sārroujah and Bayt 'Arābi Bāšā, in Midān Ṣultāni (See the representations in: *Damas Extra-muros, Midān Ṣultāni*, 1994, p. 78.

styles, imported from Istanbul. Michel Écochard determined the date of 1830 for the renovation of *Seemlik* halls in al-‘Azm Palace through its new style⁵⁰. Irène Labeyrie indicated also to the 1830s when Rococo style and views of landscape town and Bosphorus were employed in the decoration of two rooms in Bayt Ḥazina-Kâtibi / Nizâm⁵¹. On the other hand, Stephan Weber demonstrated that the oldest dated ornamentation in Ottoman Baroque in Damascus is that of the south-west *iwān* in Bayt Şārji, realized in 1819-20⁵². Accounts of European travelers who visited Damascus during the first half of the 19th century further document the fact that landscape wall painting was widespread during the second half of the 19th century.



Figure 4 - Bayt Ḥāled al-‘Azm in Suq Sārroujah - Main qa'a window's cupboard, 1820s

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50 Michel Écochard, “Le palais Azem de Damas”, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April, 1935, p.7-8.

51 Labeyrie attributed the redecoration of the main hall to the 1830s without demonstrating it. Irène Labeyrie, “Quelques réflexions à propos de la maison Nizam à Damas”, IFAO, T. I/3, 1991, p. 843, 845.

52 Stephan Weber, *Damascus, Ottoman Modernity*, 2009, I, p. 277.

Josias Leslie Porter's account, when describing his stay in Damascus (1851-1856) included a detailed description of Ali Agha's house ('Ali Āğa Ḥazina-Kātibi / Nizām), one of the city's famous notables during the first half of the 19th century: "The twenty-foot high walls are covered with paneled mosaics, in the center of each of which is a slab of polished granite, porphyry, or finely-veined marble, with the exception of those in the upper tier, which are inscribed with verses from the Koran, written in letters of gold. Several niches relieve the plainness of the walls; in their angles are slender columns of white marble with gilt capitals, and the arches above are richly sculptured in Saracenic style. The upper part of the wall is painted in the Italian style. The ceiling is about thirty feet high, and delicately painted. The central ornaments and cornices are elaborately carved and gilt, and inlaid with innumerable little mirrors". After this description, Porter gave his general impression: "The style of decoration in this mansion may be called the modern Damascene, the painting of the walls and ceiling being a recent innovation. In the more ancient houses the ceiling and wainscotted walls are covered with the richest arabesques, encompassing little panels of deep blue and delicate Arabic characters, whole verses of their law⁵³". Another English traveler, John Kinnear, who visited Damascus in 1839, transmitted description of the principal hall of Jurjius Maksoud's house, describing a kind of wood panel painting: "the walls are painted in separate panels, each containing a different pattern, formed by a curious and intricate combination of colours and lines. The roof is curved, and painted and gilded in the old Saracenic style, and sentences of the Koran are inscribed round the cornice"⁵⁴. M.P. Viscount Casterlereagh described the British consul's house in Damascus during a visit to the city in 1847: "the walls are painted and covered with curved ornaments of woodwork and stone. There are several rooms and each seems more beautiful than the last"⁵⁵.

This appears clearly from the three precedent accounts describing early paintings in Ottoman Baroque style without indicating landscape wall painting. Evidently, they did not describe all contemporary

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53 Josias-Leslie Porter, *Five Years in Damascus*, 1855, 1st vol, p. 36-37.

54 John Kinnear, *Cairo, Petra and Damascus in 1839*, Johan Murray, London, 1841, p. 275.

55 M.P. Viscount Casterlereagh, *Journey to Damascus*, 1847, II, p. 287.

decorative currents, but isolated cases. Yet, today, the decoration of the described halls by M.P. Viscount Casterlereagh (British Consulate / Bayt Sa'īd al-Quwwatly⁵⁶), and by Porter ('Ali Āğa Hazina-Kātibi / Nizām, for the most part) contains several landscape views. Could it be possible that Casterlereagh and Porter did not see these paintings? The answer is mostly negative and this would suggest that the actual landscape paintings are posterior to the visit of the two travelers. It is important at this point to underscore Porter's familiarity with Damascus and its well-to-do bourgeoisie, given his five-year stay. Therefore, the fact that he does not mention the landscape wall painting, simultaneously with his indication of the Ottoman Baroque as the "modern damascene" style would clearly imply that landscape wall painting was not yet common or well-known in the large damascene houses. In other words, the wide propagation of this technique is posterior to the early 1850s. The research led on the Damascene context after the 1850s confirms the aforesaid opinion.

During the 1850s onwards, especially after the accidents of 1860, Damascus witnessed a shift of patronage from traditional local notables, embodied by the high-grade employees and landowning classes, to a larger bourgeoisie class, consisting of the previously mentioned notables as well as of the new rich industrials and merchants. This change occurred as a result of the economic growth of the city which brought about a construction boom resulting in many luxurious houses. The new rich industrial and merchant class was impressed by the European lifestyle through its commercial dealings with Europe. Therefore, it endeavored to adopt Western decorative and architectural references. This was an additional reason to involve the wall painting techniques, to accelerate its diffusion and to change some of its earlier characteristics. In the first place, the artists adapted the selected themes to the tastes of the patrons especially as concerns the religious objections to figurative representation on a monumental scale. Furthermore, the representations became larger; were painted into cartouches or framed; they were placed much higher up on the walls, on the whitewashed sections⁵⁷. Other simplified

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⁵⁶ Qotaybah Šihābi, *Dimašq, tarīh wa šuwar*, 1990, p. 344.

⁵⁷ Sometimes, these panoramas were so high that it was difficult to distinguish all its details. This is the case of the Istanbul panorama situated in the hall of the

landscape views placed within the cornices as in Bayt Ḥawraniyyah. In addition, new elements were introduced such as birds, animals, trains and railways and still-life scenes. Bayt Qanbazou's murals give example.

From that time on, landscape wall paintings were to become a fashionable element of the damascene houses' decoration. Undoubtedly, the Bosphorus and Istanbul representations were the prevailing theme: featuring views of the Bosphorus, famous monuments and cityscape. Idyllic landscapes with imaginary monuments and pooled gardens were also prevalent (Bayt Istanbuli)⁵⁸. Accounts of several European travelers during the 1860s further confirm this view. The description of Damascene house by Tinco Martinus Lycklama a Nijeholt, who had visited the city in 1868 minutely described the new technique of decoration: "the ceiling is decorated by panelings, curved, gilt, silvery and is painted in many vivid colours; walls are covered by marble until a certain height; in the upper parts, they are completed by stucco or ornamented with a variety of subjects: flowers, birds, landscapes representing kiosks or mosques, without any human figure"⁵⁹. Then, Lycklama expressed his sorrow as concerns the adoption of the Istanbul and other new decorative styles in Damascus: "Today, the Arab has forgotten the knowledge of ancient times and he is submitted to the barbaric taste of the actual master craftsmen, (...) we cannot build without using the style of Istanbul, if one can use the word 'style' to describe the unskilled and exaggerated imitation of all the insolent taste which is being produced elsewhere. These words may seem harsh, but, that is what may be said about the 'modern art' of Turkey⁶⁰". In addition to this, Lycklama pointed out the combination of indigenous and Western tendencies in the decoration of another house⁶¹. Yet, he did not develop further in

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north aisle of Haremlik, in 'Azm Palace, probably realized during the mid-19th century.

58 This was the theme of the wall painting of Bayt Stambouli-Levy's iwan, achieved in 1868; about the house's history: Stambouli, J., see "La maison Stambouli, histoire d'une maison juive à Damas", *Arche*, 2007, p. 73, 75.

59 T.-M. Lycklama a Nijeholt, *Voyage*, IV, p. 543.

60 T.-M. Lycklama a Nijeholt, *Voyage*, IV, p. 544.

61 This was the house of an English noble woman, married to a Syrian Bedouin cheikh; T.-M. Lycklama a Nijeholt, *Voyage en Russie*, 1875, Arthus Bertrand, Paris, 4th vol, p. 558.

which way this decoration was inspired by Western art. In the late 19th century and until the First World War, landscape wall paintings became a principal feature in decoration in Damascus. Nevertheless, this “trend” would not survive the changes of tastes and of aesthetic values which occurred during the French Mandate. Thus it fell into decay towards the end of the 1920s. This alteration could not have taken place without the simultaneous decline of Ottomanism, the main ideological pillar of Istanbul landscape wall painting.

Europeans, soldier-painters and indigenous artists

One fundamental issue is the identity and provenance of the artists and craftsmen producing the landscape wall paintings as well as their training and working methods. Nonetheless, this issue faces a major obstacle: many of the early works are unsigned and it is impossible to identify their creator or artist. As a result, the following approach is built not only on the available direct evidence but also on hypothesis and analyses. As opposed to the landscape wall paintings of the 19th century, several of the early 20th century were dated and signed. We give the example of the ribbed cupola of *khan al-Hayyātīn*, decorated by ‘Aḥmad as-Syrawān in 1327/1909, (Fig. 5), and the view of the Concorde Square in Paris painted in Bayt Faḥri al-Bārūdi in Qanawāt by B. Samra, in 1911⁶². Obviously, during the 19th century, there were traveling artists coming from the capital in answer to the specific demands of Damascene notables. They were trained in workshops or in specialized institutions.

Ottoman artists were, of course, inspired by local previous painting traditions such as the miniature art. Common elements with the landscape murals may be underlined. The forms of trees, soft hills and the various forms of contemporary boats, which are represented in several miniatures of the *Sur-nama* of Ahmad III, 1720, such as the miniature A.3593, folios 10b, 92b, 93a are relevant examples⁶³. However, the influence of the contemporary European art such as the idyllic scenes on

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62 The family al-Sayrawān is from the suburbs of Damascus. The Family of Samra is clearly Syrian or Lebanese.

63 Mazhar Ş. Ipşiroğlu, Masterpieces from the Topkapi Museum, 1980, planch 46-47.

porcelain imported from Europe⁶⁴ as well as that of European painters and engravers of Istanbul and the Bosphorus are obvious. We shall list several examples: Antoine Ignace-Melling (1763-1831), Antoine de Favary (1706-1798) and Jean-Baptiste Hilaire (1753-1822) illustrated by the French Ambassador August Boppe⁶⁵, or Antoine Laurent Castellan (1772-1838), Armand-Charles Caraffe (1762-1822) and Michel François Préaulx (1796-1827)⁶⁶. In this respect, Gaston Migeon shows that Jean-Baptiste Hilaire had worked with artists from Istanbul to achieve drawings for the *Tableau general de l'Empire Ottoman*, appeared in 1787⁶⁷. On the other hand, one may wonder if a relationship may be established between Antoine-Ignace Melling, who was received at the palace for years by Hadigé, the sister of sultan Selim III⁶⁸, and the first landscape wall painting in Topkapi Palace. On the other, one must also keep in mind the possible role of European Mediterranean artists depending on the presence of indications as to European methods of treatment of buildings as well as of an orientalist type of details in the early landscape wall painting⁶⁹.

A second vector of training was provided by the specialized institutions. It is essential here to underline the phenomenon of the soldier-painters who were to answer the needs of the military and civilian Ottoman administration by representing the architecture, urban space and landscape of Istanbul as well as of other cities⁷⁰. In the same way, painters of the 19th century landscape representations were trained in the Ottoman military schools, in which drawing and topography classes were given according to Western methods and procedures⁷¹. The

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64 Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman painting*, 2011, p. 15.

65 August Boppe, *Les Orientalistes, les peintres du Bosphore au XVIIIe siècle*, 1911.

66 Gaston Migeon, "Peintres-voyageurs en Turquie au XVIII^e siècle", *Syria*, 1924, vol. 5, Issue 5-3, p. 255.

67 Gaston Migeon, "Peintres-voyageurs en Turquie au XVIII^e siècle", *Syria*, 1924, vol. 5, Issue 5-3, p. 255.

68 Cornelis Boschma, Perot, Jacques., *Antoine-Ignace Melling (1763-1831), artiste voyageur*, 1991, p.3.

69 Turan Erol, "Painting in Turkey in XIXth and early XXth century", 1988, p. 91.

70 Günsel Renda, *In, Histoire de la peinture Turque*, Palasar Genava, 1988, p. 75.

71 Wijdan Ali, in: *Turkish Art, 10th International Congress of Turkish Art*, Max Van Berchem, Geneva, 1999, p. 62.

first military training institutions were the Imperial Land Engineering School (*Mühândishane-I Berri-I Hümayûn*, founded in 1793) and the Imperial School of Military Sciences (*Mekteb-I Ulumu Harbiye-I Shane*, founded in 1834). In 1879-1880, the Ottoman governor of Syria, Midhat Pacha, established military School in Damascus, based in the Mamluk mosque of Tenkiz⁷². These schools taught the art of draughtsmanship and painting to enable the enlisted men to produce topographic layouts and technical drawings of landscapes, buildings, roads and bridges in the context of military actions. Their topographical and technical training maintained an interest in the representation of nature and emphasized the outdoors scenes and perspectives. During the second half of the 19th century, public schools of art for civilians were established such as *Dariüşşafaka* School, founded in 1873⁷³. T. Erol underlined that most landscape paintings in the end of the 19th century were realized by graduates from this school.

In fact, links may be established between the Damascene leadership urban classes and the painter-soldiers phenomenon during the second half of the 19th century. Groups of landowning bureaucratic families such as al-‘Azm, al-Yüsef, al-‘Ābid, al-Quwwatli, al-Bārudi, al-Bakri, embodied the dominant Damascus political leadership. Most of them lived alongside Ottoman high-grade employees and officers in the quarter of Sūq Saroujah, which during the 19th century was called by the damascenes the ‘Little Istanbul’⁷⁴. Several members of these families had visited Europe⁷⁵. As a part of their aim to keep ahead socioculturally and politically, these families sent their young for training in Istanbul’s military and civilian schools. The same is true as concerns the emerging damascene bourgeoisie of wealthy merchants issued from the period of *Tanzimat*. Faḥri al-Bārūdi often refers to the young belonging to the

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72 Y. Ḥakīm, *Souriya wal-‘ahd al-uşmāni*, Dar al-Nahār, 2^e éd, Beyrouth, 1980, p. 54.

73 Turan Erol, “Painting in Turkey in XIXth and early XXth century”, 1988, p.93

74 Philip Khoury, *Urban notables and Arab nationalism*, 1983, p. 40; ‘Allāf, A.-Ḥ., *Dimaşq fi maṭla’ al-qarn al-‘iṣrīn*, 1983, p.399.

75 Such as Muhammad Faouzi al-Azem who visited France, Germany, Italy and Austria in 1911. Ḥāled Al-‘Azm, *Muzakarāt Ḥāled al-‘Azm*, 3^e éd, al-Dār al-muṭahidah, Beyrouth, 2003, vol.I, p. 22.

Damascene bourgeoisie in Istanbul⁷⁶. These young damascenes embodied the ties with Istanbul and they may well have been the principal private initiator of the artistic and architectural change in Damascus. After their training in Istanbul, they returned to be appointed in the Fifth Ottoman Army based in Damascus, or to other public functions. For their majority they at least had seen the landscape paintings in Istanbul. Others might have realized landscape wall paintings for themselves. Evidently, this possibility was parallel to the presence of artists of non-military background who catered to the demand of the local damascene commissions. In addition, several were based in the city. Finally, the demographic changes which took place in Damascus at the turn of the 19th century⁷⁷, testifies to the presence of foreign artists. Thousands arrived from Roumelia and Crete in the 1890s, as well as the Armenians who arrived during the 1910s-1920s⁷⁸.

Thus, both Damascene and non-Damascene artists, of military or civilian background, painted the landscape wall paintings in Damascus. Both the study of the city's general context and that of the chronological evolution of the techniques should help determine their identities.

Characteristics

The research led on damascene wall painting illustrating Istanbul landscapes, cityscape and architecture brings to light certain significant facts. The most important one is that, these panoramas did not intend to illustrate life and people but only to draw the urban setting, then, they faithfully followed the same techniques of realization as in Istanbul and in the other Ottoman cities. These representations showed great similarities because they had been drawn from the same angles, usually from Üsküdar or the heights of Çamlıca or the heights of Pera. In addition,

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76 Fahri Barüdi, *Awraq*, 1999, I, p. 45, 70.

77 About the immigrants and the demographic composition of Damascus during the 19th – 20th century, see: Richard Thoumin, « Damas, notes sur la répartition de la population par origine et par religion », *RGA*, tome 25, n° 4, 1937, p. 663-697.

78 Richard Thoumin, « Damas, notes sur la répartition de la population par origine et par religion », *RGA*, tome 25, n° 4, 1937, p. 676.

they depicted the same elements such as the bay of Kalamiş, Leonard Tower, the Göksu plain, the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, Marmara Sea and the surrounding hills. Moreover, collections of rowing boats, sailing boats, steamers and those belonging to the sultan's family appear in each representation. Finally, most Istanbul panoramas, such as those of the Qanbāzū, Saïd al-Quwwatly, Ḥasan al-Quwwatly, Bayt Faḥri al-Bārūdi, and al-Murtaḍā / Dayri houses, show the two bridges across the Golden Horn: the first bridge, which was built in 1836 between Unkapani and Azapkapi⁷⁹; the second one, Galata Bridge, built in 1846 near the mouth of the Golden Horn, between Karaköy and Eminönü, as a strikingly well-known landmark. On the other hand, Bayt al-Mujallid's panorama contains only the Unkapani Bridge, built in 1836⁸⁰.

Landscape wall paintings existed not only in private houses but also in public monuments, particularly in the public bathes or *hammāms* such as al-Ḥayyātīn in Bzouriyah, (Fig. 5); al-Malik az-Zāhir at Qaymariyyeh quarter, al-Darb at Midān Şultāni quarter and others⁸¹. Yet they are more frequently found in domestic architecture than in public constructions. These murals decorated the *qā'a* (prestigious hall of the house), rooms such as *şalya* and *iwāns*. This technique was also used to decorate houses in the suburbs of the city. In his travel account to Damascus in 1875, Eugène Melchior De Vogüé described mansions in al-Rabweh, at the Western entry of Damascus: describing landscape wall paintings which adorned even the exterior of these houses.: “The summer residences of wealthy Damascenes bring to life the gorge of Rabweh, joyful, cheerful, all adorned by terraces, balconies, painted in contrast with the exterior, creating an extremely pleasant atmosphere: steamboats, railways, apocalyptic monsters, unknown birds, fraternally intermingle on the whitewashed walls”⁸². Of course, the quality of these mural ornaments depended

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79 Murat Gül, *The emergence of Modern Istanbul, Transformation and Modernization of the city*, 2012, p. 38.

80 Murat Gül, *The emergence of Modern Istanbul, Transformation and Modernization of the city*, 2012, p. 38.

81 This hammām contained a representation of the Tekiyyeh Sleimaniyyeh and Barada, demolished in 1993-94, see: M. Ecochard, *Bains*, p. 118-119, and: *Damas Extra-muros, Midān Şultānī*, 1994, p. 52.

82 Eugène Melchior De Vogüé, *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos, voyage aux pays du Passé*, E. Plon, Paris, 1876, p.69.

on the artist's skills. Indeed, the artist was struggling to accommodate these models to the aesthetic canons of the Damascene client, his tastes, sociocultural convictions, as well as to the context of projects, the type of space, not to omit the financial conditions. Obviously, the paintings were not realistic representations, but representations of the most important natural and urban symbols of the city.



Figure 5 - Ḥammām al-Hayyātīn, Bzouriyeh, Damascus. Left: wall painting of the nerved cupola. Right: Inscription indicating to the painter ‘Aḥmad as-Sayrawān, 1327/1909, Right: view on a triangular spandrel.

However, the early Istanbul representations in Damascene houses consisted in two main parts: the frame and the central painting. While the central painting displayed a perspectival view of the city, the frame often took one of the three following forms. In the first of these, the representation figures an opened window, with curtains on each side, often with heading tape. This is the case of the Istanbul representations for example in Bayt al-Mujallid / Jabri and Bayt Saīd al-Quwwatly. In a second type of frame, the view of Istanbul is placed into successive rectangular frames, often with rounded corners. The whole frame is given a specific texture, stony or marble. The representation of the mosque, probably al-Suliemaniyyeh, in the house of Fawzi al-Qabbāni provide one with such an instance. As for the third type of frame, it concerns the medallions or cartouches, often in Baroque style. This case is illustrated by the representations in the *iwan* of Bayt Hasan al-Quwwatly, as well as some in Bayt al-Mujallid. A fourth type: the representations painted

into niches or recesses in the hall walls. Most often, the artist made use of several types of frames or cartouches in the same space, such as the decoration of the main hall of Bayt Faḥri al-Bārūdi, Northern house, is a relevant example (Fig. 7)⁸³.

A look at the transmission of Istanbul representations reveals that the artist portrayed the urban setting and the topographic context of the capital in different ways. The first depended on the artist's memory and personal interpretation without any graphical supports. Consequently, the resulted representation was abstract, symbolic and primitive. That in Bayt al-Murtaḍā gives one an example of this. The second employed a graphical support such as an engraving⁸⁴, but after the advent of photography in the 1840s, imported photos⁸⁵ and postcards⁸⁶ of Istanbul or other cities were used as the basis of inspiration of the artists. Turan Erol has highlighted that, during the second half of 19th century, the new students of the military schools, and those of *Darişşafaka* had to reproduce landscape representations from photographic supports. Erol gives the examples of *Darişşafaka's* painters illustrating the gardens of Yeldiz Palace⁸⁷. Just as the first landscape representations in Istanbul did not use perspectival construction⁸⁸, those in Damascus did not adjust to the spectator's viewing position and thus did not produce a real perspectival illusion. As concerns Damascus, the hypothesis of photographic supports is evidenced in several cases, for example, as concerns the representation of European cities realized in Bayt Faḥri al-Bārudi, in 1911. These representations illustrate several specificities of the landscape wall painting in the early 20th century.

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83 The Qa'a walls in the house n° 479b in Midān were decorated with representations of monuments and gardens (probably of Istanbul) cartouches of vegetal motives, frames showing opened windows curtains, see: *Damas Extra-muros, Midān Şulṭānī*, 1994, p. 69.

84 Such as Melling's famous engraving showing the Mahmud I wooden kiosk.

85 Günsel Renda, "Westernism in Ottoman art: Wall paintings in 19th century houses", 1998, p. 105.

86 Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman painting*, 2011, p. 33.

87 Turan Erol, "Painting in Turkey in XIXth and early XXth century", 1988, p.104.

88 Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman painting*, 2011, p. 16.

Main hall of Bayt Faḥri al-Bārūdi – Northern house

The studied *qa'a* is located in the Northern part of al-Bārūdi house, in al-Qanawāt quarter⁸⁹. It is rectangular, opened on the courtyard through a central door, in its long Northern wall. It has an exceptional value regarding the richness of its ornamentation as well as five painted panoramas. The panorama on the back eastern wall represent the Mosque of Mecca. The second on the back Western wall represents the mosque of Medina. As for the long Southern wall, in front of the door, it is adorned by three panoramas. Those located on the lower part illustrate two European cities, probably, Florence and Paris. They are placed into rectangular frames. The upper panorama represents Istanbul: in a bird-eye perspectival picture; placed into a classical oval cartouche. The whole is set against a background of soft blue sky and five whitewashed hills. The pictorial composition reveals that the artist has portrayed the city from the heights of Galata looking towards the South, where the Bosphorus and Marmara Sea can be seen. The beholder can easily distinguish many of Istanbul's buildings and landmarks.



Figure 6 - Bayt Faḥri al-Bārūdi – Northern house, Qanawāt, Damascus: Istanbul Panorama in the main hall

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89 Since the end of the 1990s, the al-Bārūdi house is currently the seat of a laboratory of research collaborating with the Faculty of Architecture of Damascus University, specialized in the studies of the Old City of Damascus.

On the right, the Golden Horn, Fatih area, Beyazide Tower, group of mosques (Hagia Sofia, Sultan Ahmet, Yeni Cami, Suleymaniye, and Fatih) and forest of high minarets; abstractions of other buildings; the bridge between Azapkapi and Unkapani built in 1836⁹⁰, and Galata Bridge built in 1846⁹¹. On the left, appear Pera and Galata quarters linked to Fatih by the two aforesaid bridges; only the Galata Tower and a mosque (maybe Bereketzade or Arab mosque) may be distinguished. The Bosphorus separates them from the district of Üsküdar where the Selimiye Barrack and Mosque, Haydarpaşa port, an elongated light-house and Leonard Tower were also portrayed. Last but not least, an abundance of sailing ships, schooners, steamers and rowing boats fill the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus and Marmara Sea.



Figure 7 - Bayt Faḥri al-Bārūdi – Northern house, Qanawāt, Damascus, left: main hall, ground floor, right: Concorde Square, Paris, 1st floor realized by B.Samra, 1911

Some incorrectly positioned monuments strike one's attention, especially, as concerns the location of Selimiyeh mosque relatively to the Selimiyeh barracks, or the place of the mosques on Fatih relatively each to other or to the two bridges. The inaccuracy of transmission also concerns the impression of others anomalies such as the amplified dimensions of all famous buildings of the city, the mosques in the first place, as if the artist was endeavoring at all costs to display them and thus establish the representation of Istanbul. Yet that the artist was familiar

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⁹⁰ Murat Gül, *The emergence of Modern Istanbul, Transformation and Modernization of the city*, 2012, p. 38.

⁹¹ Murat Gül, *The emergence of Modern Istanbul, Transformation and Modernization of the city*, 2012, p. 39.

with the capital's topography is made clear by the fact that many of the city's landmarks appear in their location.

Conclusion

During the Ottoman period, Istanbul represented the resource of the urban and architectural novelties in Damascus. As a result of the Ottoman Reforms, technical evolution, and the Western penetration in all fields, the 19th century intensified Damascus' stylistic affiliations, not only to the capital, Istanbul, but also to European cities. The 19th century landscape wall painting embodied an outcome of both, this context and a regional artistic and technical movement. It demonstrated the extent of political and cultural ties between the capital and this significant provincial town. The Damascene leading classes were the main initiator of this art, in several ways, notably, through their training in Istanbul military and civilian institutions. An attempt to express an attachment to the capital's lifestyle and to Ottomanism as a fundamental sociopolitical reference up to the beginning of the colonial period in 1920 were the main reasons of this appropriation.

Landscape murals were the first element of Western art to enter the Ottoman visual culture. Although, Istanbul views in Damascus were approached in the framework of the Ottoman Baroque style, they did not engage the viewer in all features of the Western Baroque, especially, as concerns the extending and perspectival illusions. On the other hand, it is true, other traditions of landscape representation had appeared in Damascus since the pre-Islamic era, especially, during the Omayyad period. After centuries of rupture, the 19th century offered a stimulating context to appropriate the Damascene space through new forms of 'Islamic art', including the landscape wall painting. Labelling this art "Islamic", in spite of its displayed Western origins, leads to complex issues. However, several historians have dealt with the related questions and presented potential responses. One of the aforesaid issues is the abstract character of these paintings. Here too, the discussion of the term 'Islamic' finds resonances through the indication of the non-figurative as a major characteristic of Islamic art, faith and theology, from the emergence of Islam until today. In this respect, the numerous painting

copied from photographs reflect the Ottoman interpretation of Islamic representational practice as a prohibition against copying from nature.

As concerns the technical issues, the landscape wall painting revealed an aspect of the dominant artistic spirit of the 19th century and the early 20th century. Undoubtedly, this period was fundamental in the establishment of the subsequent arts in Syria. Moreover, the employed landmarks or details enabled the beholder to find the metaphors of a way of life *à la Istanbul* at that period. Finally, this art could illustrate aspects of the history of the Istanbul urban and architectural space during over a century. When Faḥri al-Bārūdi replaced Istanbul representations by others of European cities, he explained cultural and sociopolitical messages more than artistic and aesthetic practices. This action was no less than the declaration of the triumph of Western over Ottoman references, a reality whose consequences are today.