Prisse d'Avennes

ARABIC ART

L'Aventurine
Although *Arabic Art* by Prisse d’Avennes (1807-1879) is presented as an anthology of ornamentation, it was also one of the first publications in “modern” archaeology. A reference in the field, the book offers a wide vision of Arabic art in the areas of architecture, decoration, and the applied arts.

The picturesque Cairo as it was experienced by European travellers of the 1860’s comes to life through the descriptions and images of this inveterate adventurer. An irresistible melange of romanticism and history, this encyclopedia with its incredible graphic scope bears witness to the diversity and value of Islamic Art as seen through the rigorous and scientific eye of a 19th century Westerner.
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After Monuments in Cairo

Foreword
Clara Schmidt

200 plates

L’Aventurine
We would like to thank the Bibliothèque Forney in Paris for allowing us to reproduce the plates from their copy of
*L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire.*

Translation: Juanita Steichen

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PRISSÉ D’AVENNES
IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

Achille Constant Théodore Emile Prisse d’Avennes had already entered the last stages of his life when L’Art arabe d’après les monuments du Caire was published in 1877. This impassioned, impetuous and uncompromising man had spent more than seventeen years in Egypt. His publications as well as his voluminous notes, documents, drawings and watercolors bear witness to the diversity of his interests and the scope of his vision.

A pure product of the 19th century, Prisse was born in 1807 in Avennes-sur-Helpe in the north of France, received training to be an architect and engineer. These studies would serve him well sharpening his vision and aiding him in the execution of his drawings recognized for their meticulous preciseness.

In 1826, the quest of a lost Arcadia led him to Greece where he participated in the War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire. Orphan at age 7, modelled by Byron’s romanticism, Prisse viewed this first voyage to the Orient as synonymous with adventure and the point of departure of his life journey. At the same time throughout Europe, this voyage was being transformed into a veritable educational system for youth and took on the trappings of an established institution.

France and England were the first nations to realize that their future ruling classes would gain from being confronted with the reality of other civilizations. The equivalent in France of the Grand Tour undertaken by English aristocrats, a voyage around the Mediterranean was intended for the French elite, be they from literary, artistic or scientific backgrounds. Over time, the voyage to the Orient acquired validity rivaling with the traditional voyage to Rome, a venerable tradition completely given over to the study of ruins. This time, however, other values were in the balance. The study of ruins still exerted its attraction and the nostalgia of a Golden Age still motivated the “Tour” of certain men of letters but from that time forward, it was vital to go ahead and spread civilization to the ancient lands.

Indeed, Volney’s travel commentaries dating from the late 18th century were used to corroborate a new vision of the Orient. Conflicting with England’s political policies, Napoleon Bonaparte championed the theory that a country such as Egypt could regain its past glory if it were enlightened by a nation such as France. To this end, the country must be studied and then modernized. It is significant that the Campaign of Egypt was carried out not only by an army but also scientists armed with all sorts of measuring and research equipment for physics, astronomy, chemistry and surgery. These were to permit the exact observation of the world that was to be discovered. New notions emerged from this enormous project, among them the concept of truth in history. It would become a guiding principle in the later work of Prisse d’Avennes and would prevail in his observation and narrative methods.

In 1827 Prisse d’Avennes followed Governor Ibrahim Pasha to Egypt and remained there until 1844. During this first period in Egypt, he was in turn civil engineer and hydrographer for Mehmet Ali and later teacher at the fortified domain of Duminat. He learned Arabic and became to comprehend Islamic culture, noting numerous observations and executing drawings concerning architecture and local customs. He frequented the Saint-Simonians whom he received in Alexandria in 1833. Although he never actually joined their ranks, he nonetheless shared their values and ideals of creating bonds among the peoples and opening the pursuit of happiness to all.

From 1836 until his departure for France in 1844, Prisse d’Avennes devoted himself to the study of Egyptology. He concentrated his attention on a certain number of buildings in Luxor and Karnak, producing many drawings and watercolors; he learned to decode hieroglyphics. His activities brought him into rivalry with the foremost Egyptologists of his times, notably Lepsius, while others like Champollion-Figeac admired his work.

Upon his return to Paris, Prisse d’Avennes’ one concern was to return to Egypt in order to complete his studies and have them published. He set off once again in 1858 like Maxime Du Camp who he knew from Paris; both would be sent the same year on an two-year official mission sponsored by the Ministry of Public Education.

3. The findings of this expedition were recorded in the celebrated publication, Description de l’Égypte ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l’expédition de l’armée française, Imprimerie Impériale, Paris, 1809–1822. 9 volumes of text and 12 volumes of plates.
Realizing how little time he had and probably eager to substantiate the reality of his views, he hired a photographer, A. Jarrot. The daguerreotype was brand new; it appeared to be rapid, precise and seemed to possess documentary qualities superior to those of drawings. A total objectivity was conferred to the camera obscura which was even recommended for use by artists: "Having thus submitted their works to the test of truth, painters and sculptors will definitely abandon the excessive exaggeration and the false interpretations of Antiquity, because they will realize they are contradicted by fact and rejected by the public. Thus artists expert in perspective will no longer compose according views of monuments and renowned sites to their own tastes and will no longer render the noble Alhambra with the proportions of the Colosseum". Photography was perfectly adapted for use on archaeological expeditions; moreover, the inventors especially recommended it for Egyptology.

A certain number of plates of Arabic Art were reproduced from daguerreotypes. Photography permitted Prisse d'Avennes to satisfy a pressing desire for realistic reconstitution and to give readers views truly "after nature".

Since the 1830's, the taste for the Orient and exoticism was constantly growing in literary as well as in artistic circles. At the first Great Exhibition in London in 1851, a generalized crisis was apparent in the decorative arts. Artists seemed only capable of creating mediocre works consisting of vulgar pastiches of past styles. A reform of the esthetics within "industrial arts" appeared indispensable. Owen Jones would take on the role of the theoretician; he codified his views on style and decorative composition in the famous propositions of The Grammar of Ornament. From 1837, important publications in this context began to appear, veritable encyclopedias of ornament with colored illustrations realized in chromolithography.

The Orient became a vital source of inspiration for a world avid for novel forms – the fabrics, for example, presented by the India Company at the Great Exhibition of 1851 caused a sensation. Jones had previously published Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra with chromolithographic illustrations. In much the same manner as Arabic Art which Prisse d'Avennes would publish some thirty years later, Jones' work also revealed the beauty of Islamic art. The intentions of the two authors, however, were diametrically opposed. Through his analytical method of the study of ornamental art Jones was seeking industrial applications. Prisse d'Avennes had a more idealistic vision. While the plates in Jones' work remain descriptive without any relief and present elements out of context reflecting a purely functional esthetics, Prisse d'Avennes' works presents a dichotomy which he explained in the following terms: "In saving these treasures largely unknown to most scholars and artists from oblivion, we have allowed the public to contemplate and appreciate in their true aspects one of the most remarkable periods of the history of art long left unexplored, while at the same time providing modern decorative arts, and architecture as well, with materials which allow them to renounce banality and pedestrian inventiveness which have so justly upset those lofty souls professing the cult of the beautiful." A picturesque, romantic vision is confronted with a descriptive, scientific one, more closely related to an ethnological study than a desire to nurture Western eclecticism.

In his later years, Prisse d'Avennes published two major works: L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaïr in 1877, and Histoire de l'art égyptien depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la domination romaine, two years later in 1879. Although Arabic Art by Prisse d'Avennes was originally presented as an anthology of ornamentation, it was also one of the first publications of "modern" archeology. His desire was to attest to the splendors of Arabic art as the expression of a highly evolved civilization on the brink of extinction so that it might help westerners comprehend their own history. Like Viollet-le-Duc in France, Prisse led an impassioned fight for the protection of historical monuments, for the restoration and maintenance of these affirmations of "one of the most amazing civilizations which history has recorded".

A reference in the field, the book offers a wide vision of Arab art in the areas of architecture, decoration and the applied arts. The picturesque Cairo as it was experienced by European travellers of the 1860's comes to life through the descriptions and images of this inveterate adventurer. An irresistible mélange of romanticism and historicity, this encyclopedia with its incredible graphic scope bears witness to the diversity and value of Islamic Art as seen through the rigorous and scientific eye of a 19th century Westerner.

Clara Schmidt

5. Owen Jones, The Grammar of Ornament, Quaritch, London, 1869. French and English editions were both published the same year.
6. Owen Jones and Jules Goury, Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra, 1856-1859.
7. Prior to his work, few travellers had shown interest in contemporary oriental architecture. Pascal Coste, an architect from Marseilles, published a rare study on the subject: Architectures arabe et monuments du Kaïr, 1857-1859.
ANALYSIS OF THE PLATES

We have adopted a methodical classification by groups and subgroups in chronological order as the basis of analysis of the two hundred plates of our atlas.

These groups are fifteen in number, as follows:

1. Architecture: General Views and Details
2. Architecture: Ornamentation and Decoration
3. Coverings and Tilings
4. Ceilings
5. Panelling: Overall and Details
6. Doors
7. Porcelain Tiles and Imitations
8. Woodwork: Mouchcharabyeh and wooden grilles, Overall and Details
9. Interiors
10. Stained Glass and Glasswork
11. Textiles and Carpets
12. Arms and Armour
13. Civil and Religious Furniture: Copper Plate and Damascening
14. Manuscripts: Bindings and Applications of Paper Cutouts
15. Korans

This new method of classification will allow us to take in at a glance artistic procedures and their successive developments.

Our original intention had been to write a special descriptive notice for each plate, but we were soon obliged to acknowledge that this would lead to useless repetition. Most of the interesting descriptions, as may be easily seen, have been inserted in Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11 where they are perfectly illustrated by our plates. Our decision to make use of an entirely different sort of analysis is thereby clearly understandable.
Plates I to XLIII
ARCHITECTURE
General Views and Details

This group, the most important of all, assembles forty-three plates which offer an approximately complete representation of all component parts of architecture, both in regard to exteriors and interiors, and to details having a special relation with the art of construction itself. It will thus be possible, through the particularities that they reveal, to definitively compare the processes of the Arab people with those of other nations, and to determine the place occupied by the Arabic style in comparison to other styles.

We have already expressed our personal ideas on the different methods adopted by the Arabs in preceding chapters; we will content ourselves here with completing these with some general insights. We must still observe that, in the analysis of the plates in this group, we have abstained from discussing the ornamentation and decoration put forth by these specimens of the art of construction, to only address the specific object of our study on general architecture, reflected in our selection of plates. We will deal with these other aspects during the analysis of the plates in the second group.

But, all the while inviting the reader to refer to the small plates in the text as far as the plans are concerned, and to the special developments contained in the preceding chapters, we feel it important however to draw particular attention to the claim disclosed, therein, to wit that Arabic mosques were not constructed, as was believed for a long time, according to a uniform, predetermined plan, and that the plans of the temples of Mecca and of Medina never served as prototypes.

Let it not be forgotten that we have also pointed out the successive modifications and restorations of many mosques since the Turkish conquest, which have altered them; but that, as a general rule, the architect or the person in charge of directing work neglected, nearly always, to precede the execution of the work with a special plan, and that when such a plan did exist, it was almost never followed.

We will also take care to remind the reader of important points discussed in the general description of mosques, that in regard to the the sacred enclosure, a predetermined plan for all religious edifices appears to be easily recognisable, and that mosques containing tombs were the only ones to feature domes and cupolas.

Views and Details.—The plates forming this subgroup, and to which we have taken care to refer the reader in the chapters and paragraphs devoted to the art of construction, show us with what great understanding of the particular needs of Oriental civilisation, from Ahmad ibn Tulun until the Turkish conquest, were all component parts of the shell raised. We were unable, unfortunately to give, as the starting point of this nearly complete series, the marvellous façade that the luxury-loving founder of al-Qatayab had built in the 9th century of our era (3rd century of the Hegira), nor specimens from civil architecture, because the magnificent palaces are today only ruins; however, an in-depth study of Plates I and II still gives an idea of the splendid Ahmad ibn Tulun Mosque, the prototype of Islamic Art, today converted into a refuge for beggars and damaged, as we have already said, in the process of adapting it to its new purpose.

1. See Frise d'Avanzi, L'Art arabe d’après les ornements du Kaire, Volume of text, same publisher.
The view of the interior of the maqsurat (Pl. I), taken near the pulpit, or minbar, gives a clear view of those long galleries where an entire population of believers come at the hour of prayer to hear, in the calm shade, the voice of the imam who guides them.

Plate IV has allowed us to borrow from the 10th century (4th of the Hegira) a very important specimen of the main courtyard of a mosque. All praises pale, we believe, following the contemplation of a vision such as this. Let us observe again that we say nothing, for the moment, of the profusion of ornamentations covering and surmounting every part of the masonry.

Plate VI represents, under the name of Bab al-Azab, bestowed by the Janissaries in modern times, the principal gate of the citadel; times gone by, it was called Bel al-Silsileh, the Gate of the Chain. Despite the removal of the armorial bearings from above the entrance opening, its present condition gives an idea of the state in which it was left by Sultan Baybars, whose coat of arms on the other side may still be seen. This gate led to the Diwan and to the palace, residence of the prince.

Plate VII, the gate of the Palace of Baybars, is intended to give an exact idea of princely dwellings, during these times of sedition and uprisings which threatened destruction at any moment. This palace also figures in the plates of the great work about the Expedition of Egypt, but the caricatures portrayed before the door fail to render the costumes of the Mamelukes during this brilliant period.

We have succeeded in assembling various precious documents on Arabic Art of the 14th century, reproduced in Plates IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII. Among these, a single disparate item is to be noted in the gate of the Sultan Hussein Mosque (Pl. XI), built, it is believed, by a Christian architect inspired by the most remarkable Islamic monuments of India. It is thus, in Egypt, a monument apart.

We draw attention as well to the door of the house in Shirawi Street (Pl. XII); tradition has it that it was part of the house of the qady of one of the four orthodox sects of Islamism. It is the only one of this type still encountered today in Cairo, but the mosaics of the spandrels appear to us to have been removed at diverse periods.

As for the Sepulchral Mosque of Sultan Barquq (Pl. XVII), it is one of the most vast and splendid mosques of the Necropolis of Cairo. Beneath one of the cupolas are buried both the Princess Sakhrab and the son of Barquq; according to Mr Mehren, the Russian Orientalist, the son of Barquq was responsible for numerous additions which would be, in consequence, posterior to the main structure.

The 15th century (Pl. XII to XXV) in the Qaytbay Mosque, and the 16th century in the sepulchral monument of al-Ghuri (Pl. XXVI) furnish us with the last original tentatives of Arabic art per se. After the conquest, the influence of Byzantine architecture, appropriated by the Turks, made itself felt, and monuments were reduced to more or less careful copies of this architecture.

The sides of the interior of the tomb of Qansu al-Ghuri are covered in alternating panels of red and black marble, gilded and with intaglio engraving. Each slab bears different designs formed of Kufic letters and others, displaying pious phrases, simulating lamps, flower-pots and other varied designs. The 16th century also offers what is known as the tomb of Sultan Tarab (Pl. XXVII), although it is attributed to a former governor of Thebaids. This tomb is located to the north of the citadel.

The tomb attributed to Mahmud Janun (Pl. XXVIII) is already topped with the crescent moon; Janun was one of the nephews of Sultan Qaytbay, and it is to him that is owed a beautiful mosque whose openwork windows are of remarkable beauty.

Amongst the few interesting constructions of its time, the 17th century gives us the opportunity to represent the interior façade of an Iwan (Pl. XXXI). The exterior door of the harem of a house belonging to the emir shows us, in its Maq'ad or Iwan, a room fulfilling the same function as the Mandaraha; a small special staircase above a stable led to it.

Plates XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII and XXXIX allow us to recognise that the 18th century was slightly more fertile and varied in its different representations; it is the fall of the Mameluke sultans, themselves but waning members of the splendid of the Fatimid Caliphate, which caused the spring of original inspiration of Arabic Art, once so surprising and hardy, to dry up, perhaps forever.

We have reproduced a sepulchral monument of the 18th century including a Sibil, (Pl. XXXIV), quite well-preserved and enclosing all the parts considered by the Arabs as indispensable for it to be complete, that is to say, a school, and a water cistern or drinking trough. This edifice is crowned by a pyramidal dome and set in a small courtyard where the family of the deceased may withdraw from indiscreet eyes and be alone in its pain. The façade, moreover, shows a small room where travellers may rest and pray; next to it is a cistern whose latticework window allows the drawing of water, always avidly sought after in this arid plain. We were unable to decipher the inscription embedded above the grille, and which doubtless evokes the name of the pious deceased. This selection is intended to provide an example of those edifices sometimes reunited in the Arabic world around a sepulchral monument known as Waqfs, or pious foundations; entire caravans lodge and water here, while at the same time meeting with a Qibla for the direction of prayer.
Plate XXXV offers us a curious specimen of baldaquin tombs, very numerous around the tomb of the Imam Chafey; the Mamelukes bought these ready-made, and the practice continues today near cemeteries, be it by Turks or Italians.

Plate XXXVI represents a sibyl or fountain from the 18th century. This monument initially included a cistern which provided water to the public fountain and to a school located above.

Plate XXXVIII represents Hammam al-Talat, the only door worthy of reproduction among all the baths still in Cairo. Hammam al-Talat, which means the Bath of Tuesday, is situated at the entrance of the Jewish Quarter. This truly original stone chain, patiently chiselled out of a section of limestone, seems to hang from the top of the frieze as if waiting for the lamp, attached to a small bracket awkwardly applied to the latticework of the window, to be suspended from it.

Although from a more modern century, the house represented in Plate XXXIX, known as the House of the Page, or Young Master, Bait al-Shalabi, is almost a copy of Bait al-Amir.

Plans, Overalls and Details.—In Plates V, VIII, XVII, XXX and XXXIII, we have given the plans and elevations of five mosques, each from a different century; moreover, five other plans figure in the small plates in the text.1 Those of the atlas belong to the 12th, 14th, 16th and 17th centuries; the first is that of the Great Mosque. They will undoubtedly confirm the exactness of our appreciations regarding this capital question of architecture, especially after the diffusion of the substantiated error which claimed that the reputedly sacred plans of the temples of Mecca and of Medina had served since immemorial time as the obligatory model for the construction of all mosques; we cannot insist enough on this point, whatever little interest this may appear to hold for European nations. Until the Turkish domination, the widest diversity reigned in the construction plans of religious edifices. The five plates which represent such very remarkable specimens of mosques are irrefutable proof of this.

This is why we have felt it necessary to dwell at length upon the motive behind the reproduction of Plate XXX, representing the mosque of Sinanieh. This mosque is one of the first under Turkish domination; it was constructed, near Dumiyyat, under the care of Sinan-Pasha whose name it bears. Its plan features a vast rotunda, covered with a dome of large dimensions, like the Church of Sta. Sophia in Constantinople. The four corners are filled with niches, and a balcony runs around the cupola at the base of the vault, forming the Tekatissir for the use of women. Although this monument is not in Cairo, its place has been given to show the transformations in mosque building plans during the period of Ottoman domination. We have also deemed it necessary to restore the arcades to their original ogival form, previously transformed into cissoidal arcades in the extensive works by the Expedition of Egypt.

Details.—We have wanted to give the fewest possible plates of details, for the veritable interest of this work lies in the reproduction of our chosen motifs, especially in regard to ornamentation and the surprising transformations the Arabic genius could bring about within it. After the five plates of details proposed (Pl. III, V, XXII and XXXIII), Plates XIV and XV are of true interest. It was impossible to have executed the ensemble from which they were taken, for it has since disappeared. These two plates represent the most important part of the minaret of the Muhammad ibn Qala'un Mosque; placed end to end, they provide a nearly complete reproduction of this handsome minaret, which resembles those in Andalusia worked in plaster as is this one. Taken together, it may be said that in reality the whole is represented.

Plate XXII shows a part of the minaret of the Mosque of Qaytbay, reproduced on a remarkable scale which clearly indicates the great care we have taken to provide only the finest models.

The fragment of the Ahmad ibn Tulun Mosque in Plate III serves to demonstrate that it is only at a very late date, and only under the Turkish yoke, that it became habitual to adorn the axis of minarets with a Crescent; previously, a stone container took its place.

Finally, the two fragments which compose Plate XXXIII are large-scale reproductions of one of the most splendid fountains of the 15th century, the Sibill of Qaytbay; the difficulty in executing the details fails to fully render its beauty.

Parallels.—We had at first intended to provide numerous plates which would have allowed the comparison of all component parts of the Arabic style, within the different countries having borne the yoke of Islamism; but we have had to restrain ourselves for fear of overstepping the limits which seemed imposed upon us by our title. We have confined ourselves to comparing amongst themselves the so-varied specimens of columns, minarets and domes.

Columns and Pillars. (Pl. XLIII)—The columns of Moresque edifices constantly offer indigenous capitals full of grace and elegance; these are rarely encountered in Egypt, where architects have almost always employed the capitals and columns of the Late Empire, which they assembled as best they could.

So it is with great difficulty that we have been able to put together the attractive specimens of Arabic Art from different periods represented in this plate:

1. See Prasse d'Avenues, L'Art arabe d'apres les monuments du Caire, volume of text, same publisher.
No. 1.—Column from the large windows of Sidi Hussein al-Sadaka, one of the handsomest, richest and most ancient specimens of columns: nothing analogous is to be found any longer in Cairo (10th century).

No. 2.—Pillar of the mihrab in the tomb of Yusuf al-Maz. This pillar is 2.5 metres in height, the base and the capital each 0.25 metres around. This octagonal pillar is of white marble, covered in gilded arabesques. The chevrons of the shaft are gilded on an azure background and the intervals, red on the capitals and bases; the sides parallel to the structure are blue, and the diagonals red. The whole, in rather poor taste, moreover, was selected solely to show coloured motifs rather rare today.

No. 3.—Pillar of the mihrab of the Mosque of Qaytbay (cf. No. 15).

No. 4.—Pillar of the niche of the gate of Gama Sultan Hussein.

No. 5.—Mosque at the entrance of Darb al-Barabras; column manufactured in Carrara.

No. 6 and 7.—Capital and base of columns of the mihrab of Gama Saleh Ayoub, across from the Moristan. Circle of pewter below the capital. Capital 0.41 metres in height; shaft 1.9 metres.

No. 8 and 9.—Capitals of columns engaged in the pier of the arcades of the Ahmad Ibn Tulun Mosque. The details of these capitals vary slightly from one end to the other of this vast and beautiful mosque (10th century).

No. 10.—Capital of the small pillar of the minbar of the Mosque of Daoud-Pasha (15th century).

No. 11.—Another capital of the same type.

No. 12.—Capital of a column in white marble, behind the Mosque of al-Moyed.

No. 13.—Capital of the column or pillar of the mihrab of the Mosque of Sultan Barquq.

No. 14.—Capital of a pillar of the mihrab near the Mosque of Qaytbay.

No. 15.—Detail of the pillar of the mihrab of the Mosque of Qaytbay. The shaft is covered in arabesques of a rather pure style yielding a charming diagram.

Domes and Minarets.—Minarets and domes were the parts of mosques which offered the most variety. Unfortunately, few minarets and domes of the Golden Age remain; however after careful searching, we have been able to compose Plates XXIV, XXV and XXIX which offer assuredly precious subjects for study.

The elegant cupola which forms the principal motif in Plate XXIV was still seen, several years ago, toward that part of the cemetery of Karafih designated by the name of Turab al-Imam. Upon our last journey to Egypt, we were unable to find it again. In 1843, it was already damaged, and it is probable that it disappeared beneath Arab pick axes. A fairly frequent defect in the construction of walls, where stones are used in facing without being bound to the fill of rubble, has brought about the ruin of this edifice; but the ravages of man have contributed more to its destruction than the ravages of time. This view was lithographed by Mr. Girault de Pratoge, after his daguerreotypes.

The minaret on the left (No. 2) which in days of yore was part of a sepulchral monument in ruins today, can be seen in in the large avenue of Turab al-Imam.

The minaret on the right (No. 3) belongs to a small mosque located south-west of the city, between Bab Tulun and the interior Qaytbay Mosque: it is called, we believe, mosque of al-Qaluni. Today, the two minarets still remain, but the charming cupola forming the middle of the plate no longer exists; however, there are still photographs which allow us to confirm the exactitude of this plate.

The dome and minarets of the Mosque of Kair-Bekle were built under the orders of one of the Mamelukes who betrayed the last sultan of Egypt, al-Ghuri, at the battle delivering Cairo to the Ottomans. Although covered in honour by Selim, he was not any happier; held in contempt by all, he died scorned and in shame. The monument he caused to be built may be seen as the last breath of Islamic Art.

The comparison of two such opposed periods of Arabic Art as drawn on Plate XXV between the 15th and the 17th century make it obvious to us that the brain that conceived this marvellous jewel, the Mosque of al-Bordayn, heard protests and perhaps even violent reactions against this decadence and decrepitude known under the name of Turkish Art.

The motifs composing Plates XL, XLI and XLII which offer such a numerous and remarkable diversity of domes, were taken from various tombs in the cemetery of Karafih, to the south and the north of Cairo.