NATIONAL MUSEUM NEWS Eighth Issue: Autumn 1998, p.16-28

OTTOMAN ARCHAEOLOGY, IMPERIAL DISCOURSES & THE DISCOVERY OF THE ALEXANDER SARCOPHAGUS IN SAIDA IN 1887

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"The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history"
M. Foucault [1]

The Ottoman use of archaeology in an age of imperial rivalries involved new historical interpretations of antiquity and modernity.

In Europe the incorporation of the sciences of archaeology and history into imperial discourses was conditioned on the professionalisation of history in the nineteenth century[2]. Scientific knowledge of the ancient Orient provided European political interests in the Middle East with a sense of moral justification. As such "the white man's burden" consisted of the "altruistic" task to recover the archaeological wealth of the middle east in an environment which apparently was hostile not only to the European bearers of progress but also towards their own history. The nature of this incorporation of science into power politics was instrumental both in shaping Orientalist knowledge about a "timeless, stagnant Oriental society" and in sustaining European imperialism in 19th century middle east as a service to mankind[3]. This essay holds that - contrary to conventional belief - there was also a growing historical consciousness amongst certain circles in the late Ottoman Empire.

Archaeological knowledge of the "Orient" was also translated effectively into metropolitan planning to foster imperial self-perception in metropoli like London and Paris. The way in which Haussmann used statues and monuments from colonial booty as vanishing points of the avenues in his new grand design for Paris in turn inspired imperial town planning elsewhere, not least the erection of "Cleopatra's Needle" on London's southern embankment. The central location of the Egyptian Obelisk on the Place de la Concorde is a vivid example of the use of Oriental art in metropolitan design as a constant reminder of the global power radiating from Paris. Bearing in mind Napoleon's infamous "horse theft" from Berlin's Brandenburg Gate the narrative had become one of political supremacy and of pertaining a civilatory mandate to guardianship over the colonies from where these monuments were taken.

I would like to thank the Skilleter Centre for Ottoman Studies at Newnham College, Cambridge, and the Bait Fund at Oxford University which financed a three month's stay in Istanbul during which the research for this essay was conducted. An extended and more detailed version of this article will be published in *Image and Monument: Baalbek, 1898-1998* edited by A. Neuwirth, *et al.*, Beirut, Orient Institut, 1998.

1 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics* 16 (1986), 22.

2 On the causal link between nineteenth century academic institutions and Orientalist thought, see Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin 1978.

3 Mogens Trolle Larsen, "Orientalism and Near Eastern Archaeology", in *Domination and Resistance*, ed. Christopher Tilley London: Blackwells 1989, 229-239.

French or British hegemony in the middle east was legitimised by insinuating the extension of former great high cultures whose ignorant descendants need to reorient themselves to the respective new centres of the "universe" that were *deuxième empire* Paris and Victorian London.

This essay will provide an insight into the Ottoman uses of archaeology in the context of the late nineteenth century Ottoman Empire and show how, especially under Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909), the Ottomans used archaeological finds in a dis-similar way from European imperial powers. Their use was similar in that Ottomans did use archaeology both to legitimise its power *vis à vis* its Arab subjects and to embellish their capital Istanbul. The use of archaeology was dissimilar to French and British imperialism, however, in that it coincided with the Ottoman discourse of architectural, cultural and political revival. It will be argued that archaeology was used to offer an imperial rational contributary to the administrative centralisation under Abdülhamid's reign.

One of the most tangible effects of the Ottoman *Tanzimat* - or reforms - that marked most of the nineteenth century were the proliferation of laws and regulations that were to regulate the empire's citizens every day life. The introduction of systematic land, construction and property laws, the penal codes, the compulsory and legally binding registration practices and the new systems of municipal, provincial and ministerial bureaucracies were not only intended to modernise what was perceived by Ottoman politicians themselves as a decaying empire, but these reforms also fundamentally changed the relation of the subject to his government. Yet, first and foremost these regulations effectively served to tighten the Ottoman government's control over its outlying provinces.

In the context of centralisation, the Ottoman Archaeology Law, passed in 1884, laid out the legal foundations and the practical procedures to ensure that archaeological finds throughout the empire were registered in, protected and brought to, the centre in Istanbul. The law not only signaled the growing attention the Ottomans gave to the histories of the lands under their rule, which could conveniently be presented as ancient legacies of the modern Ottoman state. Moreover, in the Ottoman case, archaeological finds in the Orient helped formulate the antiquity-referential perception of the Ottoman state's claim to modernity in a way that was common in Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century. While European biblical or pre-biblical, middle eastern archaeology tended to be based on orientalist notions of the "oriental other" or the "rise and decline paradigm"[4] , the Ottoman's relations to their history was more innately viewed in terms of historical continuity between the architectural and cultural splendour of the empire's constructed historical forerunners and the empire's late nineteenth century revival.

4 On the former concept, see Said, *Orientalism*, on the latter, see Roger Owen, "The Middle East Economy in the period of the so-called 'decline': 1500-1800", in his *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*, London: Methuen 1981, 1-23.

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The royal necropolis at Saida, the ancient Sidon, which was unearthed in 1887 by Osman Hamdi Bey, the director of the Ottoman Imperial Museum, presented one of the most spectacular discoveries in Lebanon for Ottoman archaeology. On the regional level the discovery coincided with the dismantling of the province of Syria. Until 1887, the city and the district of Saida was still a part of the province of Syria. Yet, by the end of 1887, when after years of petitioning for a separate coastal province, Beiruti notables finally convinced the Sultan to make Beirut the capital of this province, Saida - like Haiffa, Acre, Tripoli and Lataqiyya - came to be integrated into the province of Beirut[5]. On the imperial level, the sarcophagi played a pivotal role in the construction of a new metropolitan image after their shipment to Istanbul as the main attraction of the specially built Imperial Museum of Archaeology. The display of archaeological monuments and *objets d'art* for public consumption took effect in Istanbul as in other imperial centres, albeit slightly later, as part of the global metropolitan rivalry that marked the 19th century[6] , even if in Istanbul - for reasons I shall mention below - effectful and conspicuous incorporation of historical monuments into the new urban fabric remained rudimentary.

Ancient Orient - 19th Century Discourses of Domination

As soon as the European state rivalries of the 18th century swept into the middle east in 1798, scientists discovered for themselves the ancient and biblical lands. In the wake of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt that year came not just archeologists, epigraphists and the likes many of which owed their steep career rise in France to their finds in Egypt, but also scores of orientalists and early ethnographers. These were instructed to study the Egyptian peasants so as to provide knowledge of the social order of Pharaonic times, clearly assuming immovability. Such a merging of the archaeological and orientalist disciplines was to set the precedence for scientific explorations in the middle east throughout the 19th-century. These scholars tended to see themselves as trekking in the footsteps of biblical prophets, the Crusaders or Alexander the Great. Frequently, like in the case of H. Layard in Baghdad in the 1850s and 60s, and the former director of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, Hogarth, at the Arab Bureau in Cairo during W.W. I, these "scientists" were directly involved in their home country's imperial enterprise in the middle east, either as diplomats or in military intelligence[7].

5 Muhammad Abd al-Aziz Awad, *Al-Idara al-Uthmaniyya fi Wilaya Suriyya*, 1864-1914, Cairo, 1969.
6 Mark Girouard, *Cities and People*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1985, 330-333.
7 Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, (1899-1905) as quoted in B. Anderson: "It is ...equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve". In his *Imaging Communities*, 2nd ed., New York: Verso 1993, 179.

However, the struggle for control over the "Ancient Orient" was not just a conflict between the European and the Ottoman empires. Regional rivalry between the Ottoman Sultan and the Egyptian Khedives was strongly fought over whose administration proved more modern and who dominated the geography between the two empires - that is the Arab east[8]. In the 1830s the Egyptian potentate Mehmet Ali ruled over Syria for a decade. During this time the first highly centralised administration in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria was established by the Egyptian commander-in-chief Ibrahim Pasha. When the Egyptians were ousted from the region in 1840, the Ottomans continued the drive to centralise the Arab east - that is to better control it under the banner of modernisation. Meanwhile the urban fabric of both capitals, Istanbul and Cairo, were transformed into modern political centres with the imperial trappings of nineteenth century European capitals[9].

It was in this context of regional rivalry that in late 1870 an anonymous plan, published in an Istanbul newspaper, called for a confederation of the Arab-speaking provinces under Ottoman sovereignty in order to entice Egypt to return to Ottoman rule[10]. Midhat's successful administration of the province of Baghdad between 1869 and 1871 effectively played on the nexus between archaeology and regional hegemony. The Ottoman governorship of Baghdad under Midhat Pasha was accompanied by suggestive articles in Baghdad's press by his name-sake and close friend, Ahmet Midhat Efendi, in which he reinvented the image of Assyrian and Babylonian high cultures in the ancient lands of Syria and Mesopotamia[11]. The underlying message was that the ostensible *harabezar*, or "sea of ruins", of the present could be revived given an efficient government.

One of Ahmet Midhat Efendi's articles in his journal *Zevra*, which strikingly coincided with his *Vali's* (or governor's) declaration of the protection of all archaeological sites in Iraq and their transport to Istanbul, went even further. It had become intolerable that the people of Iraq carelessly neglected the ancient monuments or even willfully destroyed them as relicts of pagan times. These monuments, he continued, would give testimony of great historical transformations, and - by implication - he indicated that it would be possible - if tedious - for the Ottoman rulers to return the prosperity of the old to the modern Iraqis[12]. Midhat Pasha effectively underlined this antiquity-referential discourse of progress when he gave the vessels of the new steamship-fleet of his "little neo-Babylonian empire" names of pre-Islamic sites: "Babil", "Ninuva" or "Asur"[13]. Although Midhat Pasha's era in Baghdad was short-lived, his political ideology had perpetuated in Ottoman Iraq. Like in other Ottoman yearbooks at the time, the Baghdadi *Salname* of 1897-8, informed the reader about the ancient history of Iraq in 25 pages of general historical introduction while omitting completely the Islamic history of the province[14].

8 This notion is treated in Michael Ursinus, "Midhat Efendi und der Alte Orient", in his *Quellen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und ihre Interpretation*, Istanbul: Isis 1995, 157-164.

9 On Istanbul, see Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul, Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley: California Press 1986.

10 Ursinus, "Midhat", 158.

11 The ideas of which were probably borrowed from Rawlinson's and Layard's earlier Assyrian discoveries in Iraq,"see Ursinus, *ibid.* It is interesting to note that Midhat Pasha gathered a community of prominent *émigrés* and "expatriates" around him, one of which was the young Osman Hamdi Bey whose post as Director for Foreign Affairs in the province of Baghdad was his first assignment. Rudolf Lindau was later to romanticise Hamdi's experience as "Baghdad Nights". See his *Erzählungen eines Effendis*, Berlin: n. p. 1896.

12 Ursinus, M., "Midhat", 162.

13 Ursinus, M., *ibid.*, 163.

14 Ursinus, M., *ibid.*, 164. The impact of Ottoman archaeology on later decentralist and nationalist movements in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq was probably greater than has hitherto been understood. For Lebanon, "Phoenicianism"is formative in the works of Charles Corm, Michel Chiha and Said 'Akl.

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The new historical geography that thus emerged in the Ottoman empire effectively tied the far-flung Ottoman provinces ever closer to the centre through new modes of imaginary mapping of the empire's territorial expanse. As such the rise of Ottoman imperial archaeology was also premised on - if not a logical continuation of - the administrative centralisation and the ideological reinvention of the *raison d'état* of the Ottoman Empire during the *Tanzimat* period. The invention of Ottomanism, which proclaimed common Ottoman citizenship and religious equality under the leadership of the Sultan, was also conditioned on a system of historical knowledge that provided an evolutionary understanding of the Ottoman nation as a social organism. The contention that there emerged in the 19th century an Ottoman version of historical thought that had brought about a transformation in European intellectual conceptualisation is based on the existence of an Ottoman historiography which departed from geneological concepts of divine predetermination.

Indeed, since the middle of the 19th century, the secular educational institutions in Istanbul and other cities of the empire produced a range of Ottoman historians who concerned themselves with pre- or non-Islamic history - and pre-Christian for that matter[15]. They had in common the idea that European superiority as it presented itself in the 19th century was not some law of nature, as it was seen by most European historians of the time, but something that can be reversed under certain conditions. At the turn of the century, the historian Cevdet Pasha discerned a civilatory migration from the Orient to the Occident and Mehmet Murad dedicated seven chapters of his *Tarih Umumi* (1880-82) to ancient civilisations in Egypt and Phoenicia while Namik Kemal engaged in the well-known public controversy to contest Renan's notion of the enmity towards progress in Islam[16].

In Osman Hamdi Bey the Ottomans had the single most influential patron of arts, architecture and archaeology, and the building of the Imperial Archaeology Museum in Istanbul around the Saida monuments after 1887 was the single most important symbol of Ottoman adoption of scientific historicist ideas.

15 For a good analysis of Ottoman historiography, see Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*, Leipzig: Harrassowitz 1927.
16 See *i. a.* Serif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Princeton: PUP 1962.

Osman Hamdi Bey

Osman Hamdi Bey's work and career greatly contributed to the shaping of a new Ottoman imperial image. Born into a distinguished family in 1842, he quickly rose in the Ottoman administration. Having already worked for the Ottoman emporium at the world exhibition in Paris in 1867, he was appointed Commissary General of the Ottoman delegation to the World Exhibition in Vienna six years later[17]. The Turkish Pavilion, which he had built in the style of the Sultan Ahmet III fountain (ca. 1720), was one of the main attractions of the fair, rivaled only by the sumptuous Pharaonic design of the Egyptian emporium[18]. Although his career thus far, which included a brief spell as advisor to Midhat Pasha in Baghdad, destined him for a post as *Vali* or ambassador, he gladly accepted the offer to become the director of the new Imperial Museum of Archaeology. It was in this position that he made his most important contribution to the developments of the late Ottoman Empire, and this he largely owed to the archaeological discoveries in Saida in 1887.

Osman Hamdi Bey's role in shaping a new Ottoman image was ambivalent. Brought up to admire French modernism under Napoleon III, he nevertheless "maintained a considerable critical distance"[19]. While in Baghdad he also admired what to him appeared as the authentic, exotic and simple life of the "oriental". He discerned a preservable *différence* between oriental and other societies, without, maybe, at once submitting to the "otherness" central to European Orientalist thought. As such his life's work was marked by selective adaptation to, rather than outright imitation of, European ideas. As a way out of his dilemma he might have resorted to the "innocence" of antiquity, which might have to him appeared untainted by European hegemony.

The Ottoman Archaeology Law of 1884

Against massive protest from foreign archeologists and excavators, Hamdi Bey devised the "Asar-i Atika Nizamnamesi", the Archaeology Law, which was issued in 1884. This law banned the export of ancient monuments, established an empire-wide archaeological service and guaranteed that the Imperial Museum in Istanbul was the soul recipient of archaeological discoveries within the Ottoman Empire[20]. The wording of the law text was very much a reflection of Sultan Abdülhamid's centralising policies. Article three of the law categorically stated that "The Sultan has the absolute right to all known historical monuments". In actual fact this meant that "landlords may not touch ancient monuments on their land without permission, and they are responsible for maintaining them in the original". Even though these

17 The following biographical details are taken from Arif Müfid Mansel, "Osman Hamdi Bey", in *Belleten* 24 (1959), 291-301.
18 Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient; Architecture of Islam at 19th Century Worlds Fairs*, Oxford and Los Angeles: California Press 1992, 63.
19 Çelik, *ibid.*, 40.
20 "Qanun al-Athar al-tarikhiyya wa al-qadima fi-l-mumalik al-uthmaniyya, 21, 2, 1884", in *Mukhtarat min al-qawanin al-uthmaniyya*, ed. Y. Qazma Khuri, Beirut: Dar al-Hamra 1990, 135-137. At the time, this law was published in *al-Jenan* 15 (1884), 330-331, 368-369.

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rules contradicted other laws of ownership, land usage and construction, the Archaeological Law had priority. In collaboration with the ministries of Public Works and Education, the Imperial Museum was in charge of collecting archaeological data, granting digging permissions and imposing punishment. As such Ottoman archaeology not only became an additional agent of the central administration of the empire, but the museum was vested with such extraordinary powers that it became a quasi "super-ministry" in its own right. The digging proposals, the lists and maps that arrived in the museum from all corners of the empire gave a new quality - or, indeed, a new historical dimension to the territories under Ottoman rule. The new archaeological and historical knowledge thus accumulated in the museum also multiplied the geographical knowledge of the centre over the provincial peripheries. Through the public display of archaeological monuments and artifacts in the museum, these new dimensions of knowledge were no longer confined to government officials but they were accessible to the population of Istanbul at large as well as to foreign tourists who were thus given a foretaste of the historical wealth as well as the geographical expanse of the Ottoman Empire.

Hamdi Bey realised that, if his museum was to compete with other famous museums in Paris or London, he would have to make a monumental discovery and display it inside the museum. To this effect all the *Valis* in the empire were briefed to immediately inform him of any finds in their provinces[21].

The Royal Necropolis in Saida

In March 1887, all Hamdi Bey's dreams came true when the news broke that a petty landowner had accidentally discovered an underground cave on a barren field near the town of Saida in Lebanon. The discovery, transportation and exhibition of the necropolis was a showpiece of the effectiveness of Hamdi Bey's empire-wide archaeological scanning scheme.

Upon his discovery on March 2, the landowner, Mehmed Sharif Effendi, went to report the case to the *Qaimaqam* of Saida, as was required by the Ottoman antiquities' regulation[22]. The next day the *Qaimaqam* went to check Sharif's

21 Mansel, "Osman Hamdi Bey", 296.
22 The details of the excavations are taken from Osman Hamdi and Théodore Reinach, *Une Nécropole Royale à Sidon*, Paris: E. Leroux 1892.

statements whereupon he hastened to inform both the *Mutasarrif* in Beirut and the *Vali* in Damascus. Without awaiting further instructions, the *Qaimaqam* started digging himself for more caves and indeed found the entrances to two further funeral chambers until Nashid Pasha, the *Vali* of the province of Syria, gave stern orders to stop all works until the arrival of the chief engineer of the province, Beshara Dib, from Beirut. On March 12, Beshara Dib arrived in Saida. He opened seven chambers which all contained sarcophagi and hastily composed a report dated March 24 which Nashid Pasha sent to the Ministry of Public Education in Istanbul[23]. Osman Hamdi Bey was later full of praise for Dib's[24] diligence and intelligence: not a single object was missing and none of the sarcophagi was damaged during his work.

Following Dib's report, the Sultan instructed Hamdi Bey to go to Saida himself and bring the sarcophagi to Istanbul. Having met E. Renan during his stay in Paris and having read eagerly how Renan himself had accidentally found an underground necropolis on which he had based his book *Mission Archéologique de Phénicie* (1864), Hamdi Bey was convinced that the area around Saida would contain ground-breaking monuments[25]. Fitted out with the technical equipment and vested with the necessary permission from the Sultan to appropriate the land surrounding the site of discovery, he set off and arrived in Saida on April 30. Upon Hamdi Bey's first descent into the caves he was struck by the mixture of Greek, Pharaonic and Phoenecian elements on the walls of the sarcophagi. All the golden decor of the tombs had been looted a long time ago, but most of the masonry had remained intact. Hamdi Bey was overwhelmed by the beauty of the sculptures and the majestic proportion of the sarcophagi, but was filled with "*une tristesse profonde en pensant que l'homme avait pu être assez barbare pour porter la main sur ces chefs- d'œuvres incomparables et les briser, afin d'en retirer quelques morceaux d'or, ou peut-être rien du tout*[26] ".

The foreign community in Beirut was anxious to catch a glimpse of these extraordinary finds and soon joined the local crowd of spectators. Cordoned off at a secure distance there evolved probably the first open-air museum in Lebanon. It enjoyed such popularity that Hamdi decided to close the "*jardin des antiquités*", as he proudly called it, during weekdays "*au grand ennui des Sidonniens, qui aurait désiré jouir quelques jours de plus de la vue de leurs [sic] trésors*"[27]. Local soldiers had to stand by to ensure public order. Indeed, Hamdi Bey had made a point to spread the news. He consulted Renan by telegraph on deciphering some of the inscriptions on the sarcophagi and had Beshara Dib's report sent to the French consul, Petiteville, in Beirut. He was, however, as circumspect not to let any foreign dignitary near the monuments themselves, let alone take photos of the inscriptions, as he had been *vis à vis* potential local poachers[28]. Hamdi Bey was selective with intent as to who to cooperate with. He categorically refused to let Löytved, the Danish consul at Beirut, make prints of some inscriptions "*ayant résolu, dès l'instant même de ma* (sic!) *découverte, d'en offrir la primeur à l'Institut de France*[29] ". To this effect he gave lecture notes to Petiteville's father who had also traveled to Saida to deliver to Renan

23 The report was published in *Revue Archéologique*, July- August, 1887, 101- 106.
24 In a report to the Quay d'Orsay, the French consul at Beirut, Petiteville, was even more adulating: "*A mon avis, Besharra Efendi a merité une distinction honorifique*". In Ministère des Affaires étrangères: Paris, *Correspondence Politique Consulaire* 30, Beirut, June 15, 1887.
25 Mustafa Cezar, *Sanatta batiya açilis ve Osman Hamdi*, 2nd ed., Istanbul: Erol Kerim Aksoy Yayini 1995, 281-325.
26 Hamdi, *Une Nécropole Royale*. 5.
27 Hamdi, *ibid.*, 59-60.
28 Only once did two marble heads disappear from the site, one of which a friend of Hamdi Bey repurchased in Beirut a day later. See Hamdi, *ibid.*, 67. Another marble head miraculously reappeared at a dinner table of the French ambassador's wife in Istanbul a year later. Hamdi, *ibid.*, 71. She must have found it for him in an antiques shop in Petra. In the shops of Beirut, too, there circulated copious counterfeit stones in the aftermath of the excavations.
29 Hamdi, *ibid.*, 102. See Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiberder Osmanen*, 5.

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on his return to Paris[30].

When all of the 18 sarcophagi were recovered, Hamdi Bey and his confidants started opening them up on the spot. Each time they unearthed a new sensation the local onlookers clamorously appealed to their gods and saints in amazement. Their behaviour had Hamdi Bey speculate, true to European Orientalist notions of the backwardness of contemporary Arabs, whether "*ne pourrait-on pas reconnaître là comme un reste inconscient des cultes primitifs, un souvenir confus de la religion des dieux Lares* [31] ". In these lines, the Ottoman sense of scientific and technological superiority *vis à vis* their subjects clearly shows. To Hamdi Bey, the very act of excavating the past catapulted the Arabs into modernity.

The incredible collection in one single site of the sarcophagi of "Tabnit" (6th. cent. BC), the "Female Andropoide" (mid-5th. cent. BC), the "Lykians" (late-5th. cent. BC), the "Satraps" (late-5th. cent. BC), "Alexander" (late-4th. cent. BC) and the "Wailing Women" (mid-4th. cent. BC), to name but the most important, turned out to be a who-is-who of ancient high cultures in the middle east and must have given Hamdi Bey there and then a graphic demonstration of the historical wealth of the region as well as an idea about the rise and fall of ancient empires. The most ornate sarcophagus depicted a battle scene between Alexander the Great and the Persians on one of its longitudinal sides - probably the battle of Issos (333 BC) near Alexandretta - which had opened up Assyria and Phoenicia to Alexander. On one flank of the tomb joint, and deliberately harmonious, Greco-Persian hunting scenes was chiseled while the other flank described another battle - possibly in Gaza in 312 BC. Under one of the gables a scene of a skirmish may symbolise the internecine fighting following Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 AD. While the structure of this sarcophagus is clearly Greek, the ornaments on the roof had Persian elements. All these artistic and structural elements on the Alexander Sarcophagus fed into the Ottoman imperial self-perception . The merging of east and west through Alexander the Great and the internecine scenes projected on the monument were historical images that were easily identified as representing the Ottoman situation in the late nineteenth century. The modern gateway between the middle east and Europe was a common theme in early town planning of Istanbul while the apparent proclivity to violence as manifested on the monument would implicitly justify the centralised control over the middle east as necessary measures to return order to a society that was "historically" in disorder.

30 His notes were read at the *Académie des Insciptions et Belles-lettres* on July 8, 1887 and published in the September and October editions of the *Revue Archéologique*. Later he was to receive an honorary doctoral degree from Oxford University for his service to Archaeology.

31 Hamdi, *Une Nécropole Royale*, 63.

The "Lykian Sarcophagus" was so called because of its striking similarity to Anatolian tombs of that time and combined middle eastern motifs with Peleponesian design. The "Tabnit Sarcophagus" is made of diorite, an unusual material for the Sidon area, and depicts a Pharaonic mummy complete with hieroglyphic and Sidonese inscriptions[32]. The "Female Andropoide Sarcophagus" is the most striking example of ancient eclecticism. It appears a hybrid consisting of an Egyptian mummy and a Greek sculpture, combining to the 19th and 20th centuries spectators the oriental-exotic with the orderly, rectilinear Greek art. The "Wailing Women Sarcophagus" appears more like a mausoleum, a miniature necropolis in itself, with its Corinthian columns framing each one of the 18 grieving women, insinuating, maybe, a *haremlik*. The concentration of Anatolian, Greek, Persian and Egyptian vestiges on Ottoman soil carried a clear message of Ottoman imperial heritage that could be exploited to the full once exhibited in Istanbul.

After 50 days of intensive work the best preserved sarcophagi were embarked aboard the specially commissioned man-of-war "Asur" (of Midhat-Pasha's neo-Babylonian fleet ?). The embalming was the work of a local physician, Murad Azuri who also accompanied the sarcophagi to Istanbul. Before leaving to Istanbul, Hamdi Bey visited the Ottoman officials in Saida, Beirut, Mount Lebanon and Damascus to express his gratitude for their collaboration. He also visited Baalbek and on seeing the level of defacement by visitors having their names engraved onto the monument, he closed the business of the two stone masons who had provided such services for the charge of a *Mecdiye*, an Ottoman gold piaster, and took conclusive administrative measures for the conservation of the temple. At the end of his trip through Syria, Hamdi Bey befell a deep romantic sense which lamented not only the disappearance of the "authentic" lifestyle of the "Oriental" but also the commodification of the valuable Islamic art.

"*Bientôt, on n'en peut douter, toutes ces maisons et ces boutiques d'architecture arabe, si originales et si bien appropriées aux exigences locales, décorées avec tant de goût et de grâce, vont disparaître pour faire place à de hautes maisons-casernes, à plusiers étages bien uniformes [...] Alors, tous ces décors merveilleux où l'art islamique savait mettre en œuvre et fondre harmonieusement tant d'éléments divers, faïences et briques émaillées, écritures koufiques, incrustations d'or, d'ivoire, de nacre et d'ébène, seront remplacés par des peintures murales semblables à celles que des décorateurs de cafés-concerts ont déjà exécutées avec succès dans les meilleures maisons de maintes villes d'Orient, à la joie de leurs propriétaires, fiers d'être logés et décorés à la Franka. J'assiste le cœur navré à ce triste spectacle de la dégénérescence du goût chez les peuples d'Orient*[33]".

Yet Hamdi Bey must have realised all the tragedy, for he who had learnt to appreciate the "authentic" Arab culture while in Baghdad with Midhat Pasha was himself an agent of the same progress and modernity that he just lamented. The same simplicity he had admired earlier, he labeled as barbarian and primitive in the context of the people's lack of his-

32 It instantly reminded Hamdi Bey of Eshmunazar, king of Sidon. His guess was confirmed by Renan in a telegram sent to him in Saida on June 20, 1887. Mansel, "Osman Hamdi Bey". Hamdi Bey entrusted the Tabnit corpse to the municipal doctor of Saida to prepare it for transport to Istanbul.

33 Hamdi, *ibid.*, 111-112.

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torical consciousness. His own, eclectic, historical consciousness was translated into the construction of the museum. After all, the architecture of the Imperial Museum was not to be "*à la Damascène*", nor was it to be "*à la Franka*", but a mixture of neo-baroque and neo-classical elements. Modeled on the structures of the ancient monuments inside the museum, the classicalised architecture of the museum's facade apparently transcended the paralyzing east-west, modern-traditional dichotomies, since it was, to Hamdi Bey, in antiquity that east and west had been integrated. With a return to antiquity, so his argument ran, all was not yet lost for the Ottoman Empire: "*Toutefois, et si profondément regrettable qu'elle soit, une telle perte n'est pas absolument irréparable. [...] le Sultan, qui s'est mis avec tant de sollicitude et de ferme volonté à la tête de cette œuvre civilisatrice, crée sans cesse des institutions telles que musées, écoles spéciales, bibliothèques, etc., propres à régénérer l'art national [sic] tout en introduisant dans son pays les sciences modernes européennes*[34] ".

Museum and Metropolitan *Zeitgeist* in Istanbul

The Sultan was very pleased with the result of this first dig at Saida and issued an *Irade*, or imperial decree, to the effect that Hamdi Bey was to return to Saida for more work on the monuments the following year. At the same time, the Sultan declared that a special building was to be constructed to accommodate the sarcophagi, and that Mehmed Sharif was to be rewarded 1.500 Turkish pounds in accordance to the stipulations of the Archaeology Law. The French architect and professor at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, Valaury, was appointed in charge of the construction of the new buildings of the Imperial Museum. On June 13, 1891 it was opened to the public and subsequently attracted tourists and scholars from around the world, just like Hamdi Bey had envisaged. Ten years after Osman Hamdi Bey had taken over the Çinili Köshk, the old museum, his arts academy was already producing capable disciples - archeologists, architects, conservators and sculptors - who continued Hamdi Bey's work in his absence. One of them, Makridi Bey, was to supervise the 1900-1902 German excavations in Baalbek. In a final Ottoman digging project around Saida in 1913, Makridi discovered two more Phoenician sarcophagi from Roman times which similarly found their way to the Imperial Museum in Istanbul. Hamdi Bey himself seemed to have lost interest in Saida. He never returned after he had got his monumental advertisement for the museum.

34 Hamdi, *ibid.*, 113.

However, the Saida monuments were going to impose their own architecture on the Imperial Museum in Istanbul. The exterior design and structure of the new buildings were modeled on the "Alexander" and the "Wailing Women" Sarcophagi to give a foretaste of the inside. Decorative Corinthian columns, stucco design, and massive stone shells and miniature busts on the roof ornated the museum whose roof had a similar angle to the Alexander Sarcophagus. The whole museum must have appeared as a giant necropolis[35]. At present it accommodates 20 rooms on the first floor; the total amount of sarcophagi Hamdi Bey and Makridi had found in Saida.

In the larger picture, the inclusion of ancient relicts into the urban planning of Istanbul was far less complete than in London or Paris. Compared to Napoleon III's almost unlimited executive power over centralised Paris in the 1860s, the Sultan had far less authority in the far more heterogeneous municipal area of Istanbul. Moreover, Ottoman financial resources were far more limited - in fact depending heavily on French capital. Consequently, Istanbul's imperial face-lifting fell short of the comprehensiveness of Haussmann's urban revolution. The few remaining pre-Ottoman relics in Istanbul, like the *At Maydan* (or Hypodrome) and Constantine's column, remained awkwardly off centre in the new regulation plans[36]. Even the construction of the Imperial Museum remained visually outside the schemes of urban homogenisation in Istanbul. Instead it was located in the imperial leisure park of Gülhane next to the Topkapi palace, the former political centre of the Ottoman Empire.

The content, form and location of the museum allowed different imperial interpretations. It probably allowed conservative Ottomans to rember the Islamic glory of the Ottoman Empire as the museum bore the remnants of ancient civilisations which were superseded by the Islamic civilisation which in turn was governed, for almost half a millennium, by the Ottoman Caliphate from the Topkapi palace "next door" to the new museum[37]. However, Osman Hamdi's and the French architect's choosing this location, maybe unwittingly, left interpretative ambiguity. The vicinity of a "temple of the past" so close to a palace which had until only a generation ago been at the centre of the universe for many millions of Ottoman subjects, might also have reflected the feeling of those progressive modernists among the Ottoman elite who wanted to draw a line between the present and a now "museumified" regime of the past which they blamed for recent "regressions" and which to them was epitomised by the opulence in the Topkapi Palace[38].

35 However, when two new wings were added between 1902-1908, the museum received a Louvre-like U-shape.
36 Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul; Portrait of an Ottoman City in the 19th Century*, Berkeley, 1986.
37 Sultan Abdülaziz and Abdülhamid had moved the centre of Ottoman state power away from old Istanbul across the Golden Horn, to the Dolmabaçe and Yildiz.
38 It is important to note here that the Topkapi palace had for centuries accommodated vestiges of Islamic history, such as weapons, clothes and various parts of the bodies of the prophet Muhammad and the early caliphs. At the time of the building of the new museum, the palace had already turned into somewhat of a "storage" of out-of-function relatives of former Sultans. Today the Topkapi Palace itself has turned into a museum and has surpassed the museum as a major tourist attraction of Istanbul.

Ottoman Archaeology, Imperial Discourses & the Discovery of the Alexander Sarcophagus in Saida in 1887

Jens Hanssen

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Inferences

The sarcophagi found in Saida in 1887 are not only some of the most impressive archaeological discoveries in Lebanon they are also still the biggest attraction in the Museum of Archaeology in Istanbul today. But moreover - and more importantly for this essay - their discovery stood at the heart of modern Ottoman self-presentation both *vis à vis* European powers and their respective metropolitan culture of colonial representation and ostentation, and *vis à vis* the Ottoman subjects in the Arab provinces. Through archaeological finds in the provinces, Ottoman imperial rule discovered historical legacies that supported the new administrative centralisation of the empire as the unifier. It brought about a new Ottoman historio-geographical mapping at the centre in Istanbul. The exposition of archaeological monuments and their integration into the metropolitan fabric "allowed the [Ottoman] state to appear as the guardian of a generalised, but also local, tradition[39] ". As constituent parts of the physical and optical attractions of the Ottoman capital, monuments from the provinces became cultural tokens to represent not just the current political rule over these cities and provinces but also the historio-geographical continuity between the distant past and the present.

39 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 181.