

IMAGES OF IMAGINED WORLDS
*Self-image and Worldview
in Late Ottoman Wall Paintings of Damascus*

STEFAN WEBER

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Concerning the clothes of state officials, they dress in the European style: tight trousers, a *jākīt*, and upon it a coat... On their heads they wear the red *ṭarbūsh*... And when they put on perfume and walk in the *sūqs*, they have a special way to stroll. When one of them starts to talk with somebody he puffs out his chest and speaks from the corner of his mouth with a special intonation to show that he belongs among the high officials. And when you ask one of them, or one of his friends or relatives, where he works, they will answer arrogantly and full of pride: 'In the Saray'. Usually they use the word *Efendī* or *Bek*... which they add to their real names.¹

Clothes, titles, and behavior in late Ottoman Damascus, as elsewhere, were signs to distinguish oneself and to present to the public a certain self-image. This image, a reflection of fashion, a custom, a self-definition, or merely a sign of social differentiation, required a medium to bear its symbols. Symbols – like the *ṭarbūsh* (fez) were comprehensible in public life, and they were well understood by Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-ʿAllāf, who wrote the above quoted words about Ottoman officials in Damascus some two decades

I would like to thank Friederike Stolleis, Elisabeth Kendall, and Inci Kuyulu for their suggestions on material and literature. Michael Provence I have to thank for his patient help on the English text and Marianne Boqvist for her critical reading. This material is part of a survey on Ottoman architecture in Damascus, which is financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI). The project is located at the DAI in Damascus and is supported by the Syrian Service of Antiquities. I would like to express my thanks to these institutions. A photographic documentation of several hundred houses and public buildings of the survey (including the here mentioned wall-paintings) is available in the photographic archive at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut - Damascus. For a more indepth study of nineteenth-century Damascus, see Stefan Weber, *Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels: Stadt, Architektur und Gesellschaft des spätosmanischen Damaskus im Umbruch (1808-1918)*, (Berlin, Ph.D. thesis, 2001).

¹ Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq fī Maṭlaʿ al-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn*, Damascus, 1976, 30-31

after the end of Ottoman rule. His description fits an Efendī of the Qabbānī Family, who had himself painted on the back wall of the *īwān* in the courtyard of his house in the city quarter of Mi'dhanat al-Shaḥm (XIII/2-351)² (fig. 1). The object of the portrait may have been Adīb Bek al-Qabbānī (d. 1333/1915)³, who was *muftī* of the Ottoman army. Whoever it was, he placed his image in the most prominent spot in his house; where guests were received and the family sat during warm summer nights. The medium for distinguishing himself explicitly as an Ottoman official was architectural decoration.

I will argue in this article, that architecture by itself, and especially decorations are an important source for historical research. I concentrate here on wall-paintings in late Ottoman Damascus. Wall-paintings are reflections of the world their patrons were living in and thus bear several layers of information about him and his world. But one can use wall-paintings as a source for historical research only in addition to other sources. Wall-paintings do not represent all of society but, just as written material, they express aspects of society. They bear not only information about the person who commissioned the painting, but to a certain degree about its viewer as well. As we noticed with Adīb Bek al-Qabbānī and as we will notice later in several other examples, the motives behind these images were carefully chosen. As in the contribution of Bodenstein and Gonnella, an understanding of principles of shaping private worlds will illuminate some aspects of every day life of Ottoman subjects beyond theories of political thought. Houses are mirrors of the owners' worlds. As Bourdieu expresses in a different context, and with a much more structuralist approach than is applied here: "The house, a microcosm organized by the same oppositions and homologies that order the whole universe, stands in a relation of homology to the rest of the universe."⁴

² For identification of every building the exact registry-number of the site will be given between brackets.

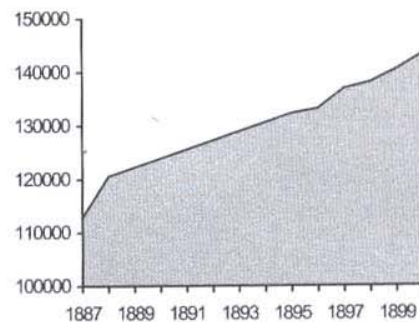
³ For Adīb al-Qabbānī see: Muḥammad Āl Taqqī al-Dīn al-Ḥuṣnī, *Kitāb Muntakhabāt al-Tawārīkh li-Dimashq*, ed. by Kamāl al-Ṣalībī, 3 vols., Beirut 1979 (First edition Damascus 1927-1934), 913; Muḥammad Jamīl al-Shaṭṭī, *A'yān Dimashq fī l-Qarn al-Thālith 'Ashar wa-Nisf al-Qarn al-Rābi' 'Ashar*, Damascus 1994, 429. A certain Adīb Bek al-Qabbānī owned 1323/1905 the well known Café al-Junayna al-Kubrā next to the Marja-square. MWT S1275/W126 (1323/1905). The Syrian National Archives (Markaz al-Wathā'iq al-Tārīkhiyya) will be abbreviated as MWT, S for *sijill* and W for *wathīqa*. The Café al-Junayna al-Kubrā is mentioned in some records of 1894, 1896 direct south-east of the Sūq 'Alī Pasha. MWT S1008/W149 (1312/1894); S1038/W128 (1314/1896).

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Appendix: "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed," Oxford 1992, 227.

Damascus: a city in transition

Wall-paintings were a popular decoration technique in Damascus at the turn of the century, but they were only a very small aspect of a changing urban landscape. During the course of the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the city of Damascus witnessed, parallel to many other Ottoman cities, far reaching changes in the urban texture. Many streets in the old town *intra* and *extra muros* were enlarged and various streets were laid out around the city. Corresponding to the enormous demographic growth (see fig. A)⁵ new urban areas were settled and whole quarters of the city founded (like Muhājirīn, ‘Afif, ‘Arnūs, Shuhadā, Hījāz, Barāmka and Qaşā’).

Fig. A: Growth of population in Damascus between 1877 and 1899.



A new public center was founded as Marja Square on a green field outside the city walls. Not far from the first Ottoman saray of the sixteenth century on Darwīshiyya Street, numerous administrative buildings, (such as the municipality building, two sarays, police-headquarters, law court etc.), hotels, and modern transport facilities (tramway and railways) were built.⁶

⁵ These numbers are taken from the yearbook of the Ottoman Province of Syria (Sūriyye Vilāyetiniñ Sāl-nāmesi), that will be abbreviated: Sāl-nāme ^{volume} (year *hijrī* / year *mīlādī*) page. See for this figure: Sāl-nāme ²⁰(1305/1887-88) 137; ²¹(1306/1888-89) 150; ²⁷(1312-13/1895-96) 250; ²⁹(1315/1897-98) 324; ³⁰(1316/1898-99) 332; ³¹(1317/1899-1900) 368; ³²(1318/1900-01) 364 f. This is not the total population (only adults?) and one has to calculate ca. 20% in addition to the official numbers.

⁶ See for the Marja Square: Stefan Weber, "Der Marja-Platz in Damaskus – Die Entstehung eines modernen Stadtzentrums unter den Osmanen als Ausdruck strukturellen Wandels (1808-1918)," *Damaszener Mitteilungen*, 10 (1998), 291-344, Taf. 77-88, and the English summary, Weber, "Ottoman Damascus of the nineteenth century, Artistic and urban development as an expression of changing times," in *Art Turc / Turkish Art, 10th International Congress of Turkish Art*, Genève 1999, 732 ff. For a summary of

Public places like parks, coffeehouses and theatres were located there and provided a space for increasingly lively public life and discussion. In addition, the bazaar (*sūq*) was totally remodelled in the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Starting east of the Marja Square, many new or remodelled *sūqs* were added to the mercantile center inside the walls. Modernized wide bazaar-streets, like the famous *Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya*, ran through the commercial heart of the city. The return of Ottoman central power through its enlarged facilities of administration, transportation (new streets, steam boats, and later on railways) and communication (telegraph) had an overwhelming impact on Damascus. Following the efforts of Maḥmūd II (1808-1839) and the celebrated ministers and viziers of the *Tanzīmāt* period (1839-1876), the urban texture of the city changed rapidly during the decades after the provincial reforms in 1864 until the end of Ottoman rule in Damascus in 1918. The municipality, a modern urban institution, consisting of elected members of the public, was responsible for urban planning, which was based on new principles. Many public buildings, for example some 70 schools, 8 hospitals and sanatoria, many bazaar streets (*sūqs*), railway stations, electric lights, central water supply, a tramway system and dozens of streets, were initiated by the Ottoman administrative councils, by private individuals and in some cases by foreigners.

The enlarged Ottoman bureaucracy provided opportunities for many of Damascenes. The return of the central state did not involve a loss of power for urban notables. Damascene notables were still powerful, but as government officials they now became an integrated part of the political system, which gave many possibilities for direct participation but made them as well much more dependent to governmental set of laws. At the same time state regulations entered private and public life in a way they never had before.⁷ Several administrative councils gave space for participation in local and state politics as the famous cases of ‘Izzat Pasha al-‘Ābid (1850-1924) from Damascus or Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī (1849-1909) from Aleppo illustrate. The potential for integration was enormous and the construction of a new sense of Ottoman citizenship must have had, judging from my work on material culture, a strong impact on the society. This does not

developments, see D. Sack, "The Historic Fabric of Damascus and its Changes in the nineteenth and at the Beginning of the twentieth Century," in *The Syrian Land, Processes of Integration and Fragmentation in Bilād al-Shām from the eighteenth to the twentieth Century*, eds. T. Philipp and B. Schaebler, Stuttgart 1998, 185-202.

⁷ For the integration of societies into a modern state see in another context: Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford 1976.

Fig. 1: Qabbānī-house (today al-Qaṣṣāṣ, XIII/2- 351), back wall of the *īwān*, detail.



Fig. 2: Mīdānī-house (XXVIII-9), lacquer paintings (‘*ajamī*) dated 1217/1802.

Fig. 3: Niẓām / Khazīna-Kātibī-house, northern *qā’a*.

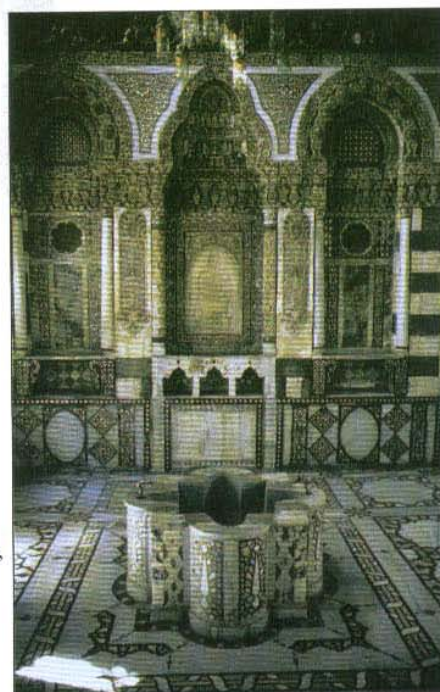




Fig. 4: Nizām / Khazāna-Kātibī-house, southern *qā'a*, detail.

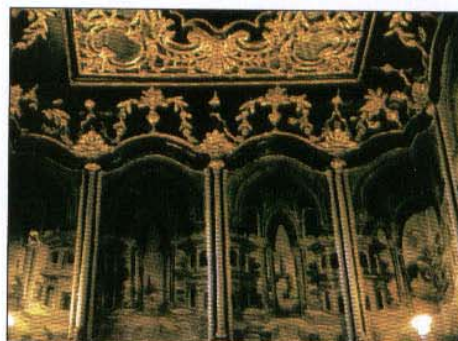


Fig. 5: Nizām / Khazāna-Kātibī-house, northern *qā'a*, detail.



Fig. 6: Atik Valide Camii Istanbul
sultan's lounge (*hünkâr mahfeli*).

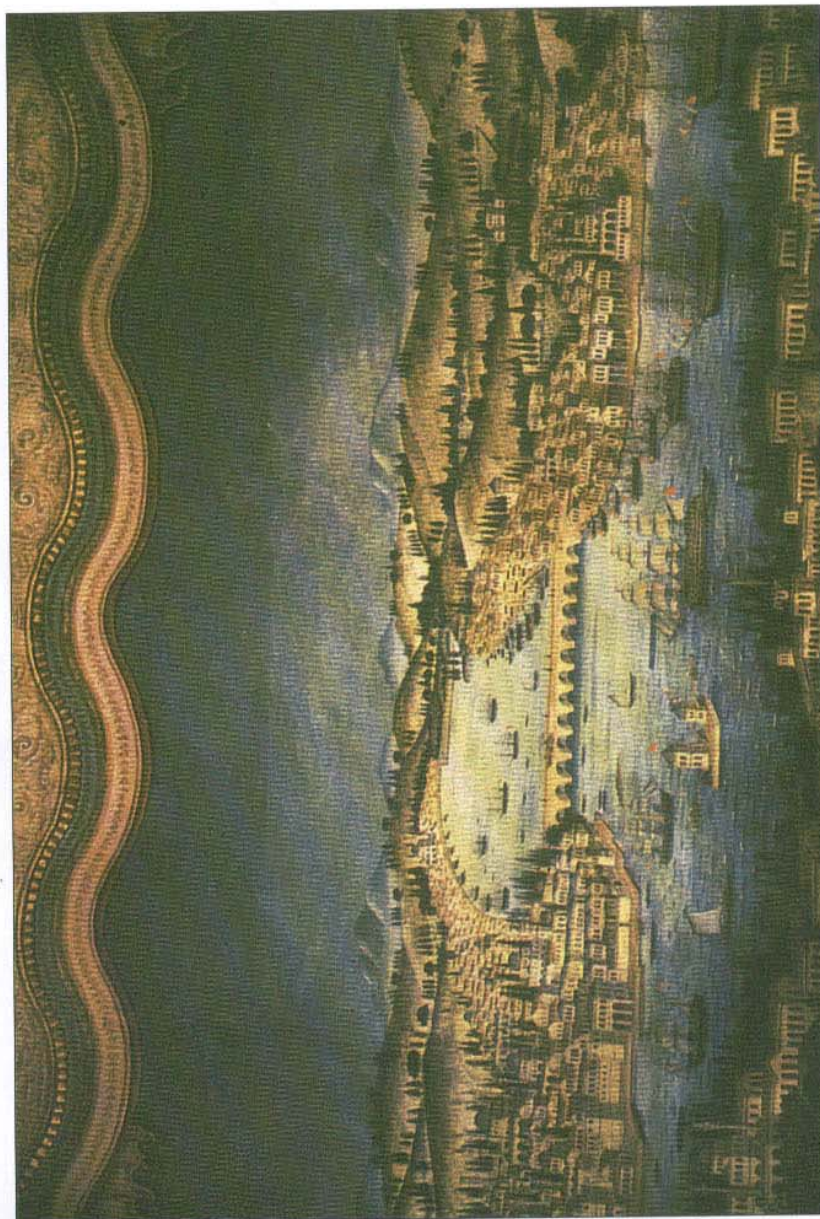


Fig. 7: Jabrī / Mujallid-house (IX-252), northern *qā'a*, view of Istanbul.

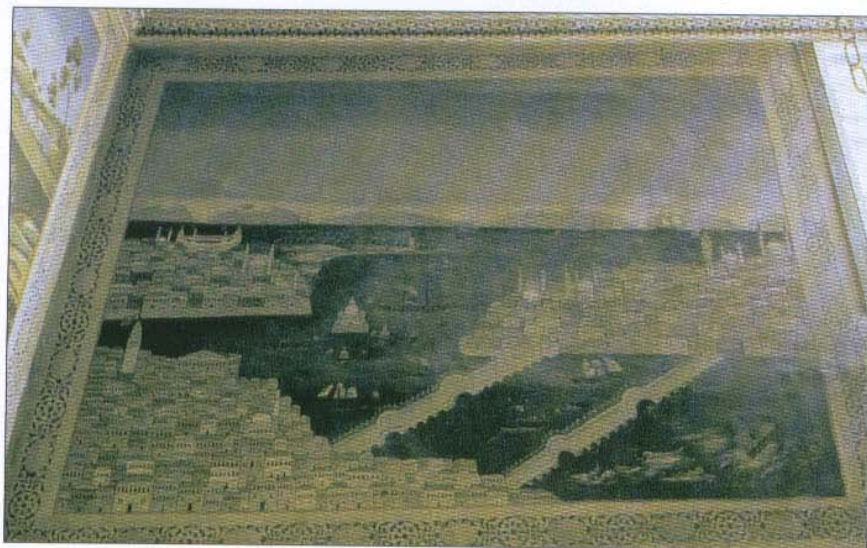


Fig. 8: Qanbāzū-house (XVIII/2-457), northern *qā'a*, view of Istanbul.

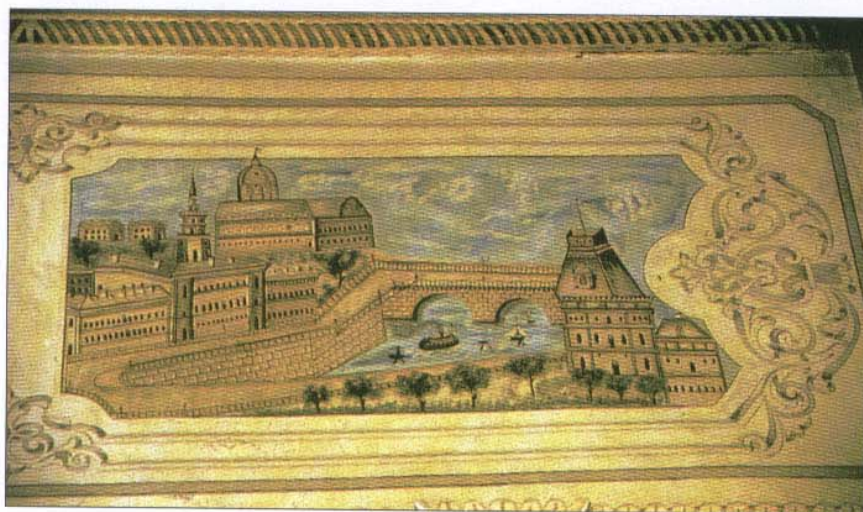


Fig. 9: Dawajī / Şafadī-house (IX-232), Maḍāfa, detail.

mean, that political criticism was excluded or loyalty to the state guaranteed. But, as I will argue in this article, it promoted identification with the Ottoman culture realm.

This reorganization of an entire Arab metropolis, its urban fabric, its architecture and a large part of its social organization, is visible in its most private aspect of urban architecture: houses. First, one has to realize just how often houses were rebuilt in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. More than three quarters of the 600 houses investigated during my survey were substantially rebuilt or entirely new in this period. This observation corresponds to official numbers. The *Sālnāme* counted 16,832 houses in Damascus in 1900. Three decades earlier, in 1871, only 14,669 dwellings were counted. This suggests an increase of 14,75 % in only 29 years.⁸ But not only new residences were built (principally because of the demographic pressure). Reconstructions (mainly because of the very unsteady wood-mud construction) were also numerous. The *Sālnāme* shows 40 new houses erected and 417 houses rebuilt in the year of 1895. One year later, in 1896, 35 houses were built and 527 houses reconstructed. This means that per year around three percent of the entirely domestic architecture in Damascus underwent reconstruction.⁹ The number of new and renewed houses at the beginning of the twentieth century have been similarly high. Unfortunately we do not have any official numbers for the last 18 years of Ottoman rule in Damascus but the new city quarters give evidence for consistently strong building activities.

The successful search for a new style

A new time calls for a new style and the continuous building projects (of new buildings or of reconstruction) allowed an integration of new ideas. During this enormous 'reshaping' of the city, it was possible to rebuild in the latest fashion and to pick up new techniques of construction and decoration.

There were – to simplify – two main lines of a 'modern Ottoman' house form in Damascus. First the traditional, local kind of courtyard-house was adjusted to recent principles of architectural design. They show

⁸ See: *Sālnāme* ³(1288/1871-72) 129; ³²(1318/1900-01) 376. Corresponding Qasāṭilī gives for 1288/1871 14696 houses, contrasting to Sāmī Bek, who mentions in 1890 only 14720 houses. See Nu'mān Qasāṭilī, *al-Rawḍa al-Ghannā fī Dimashq al-Fayḥā*, Beirut 1982 (first published 1879) 97; 'Abd ar-Rahmān Sāmī Bek, *al-Qawl al-ḥaqq fī Bayrūt wa-Dimashq*, Beirut, 1981, 90.

⁹ See: *Sālnāme* ²⁷(1312-13/1895-96) 264; ²⁸(1313-14/1896-97) 243 f.

a clear tendency towards a more regular and geometrical layout of the ground plan and of the façades that are facing the courtyard. Instead of the old-fashioned reception rooms (*qā'a*), now long halls (*ṣāliya*) were built to provide the appropriate place to receive guests. The house of a branch of the Quwatlī family in the 'Amāra quarter (XIII/2-412) from around 1870 is a good example (fig. B).

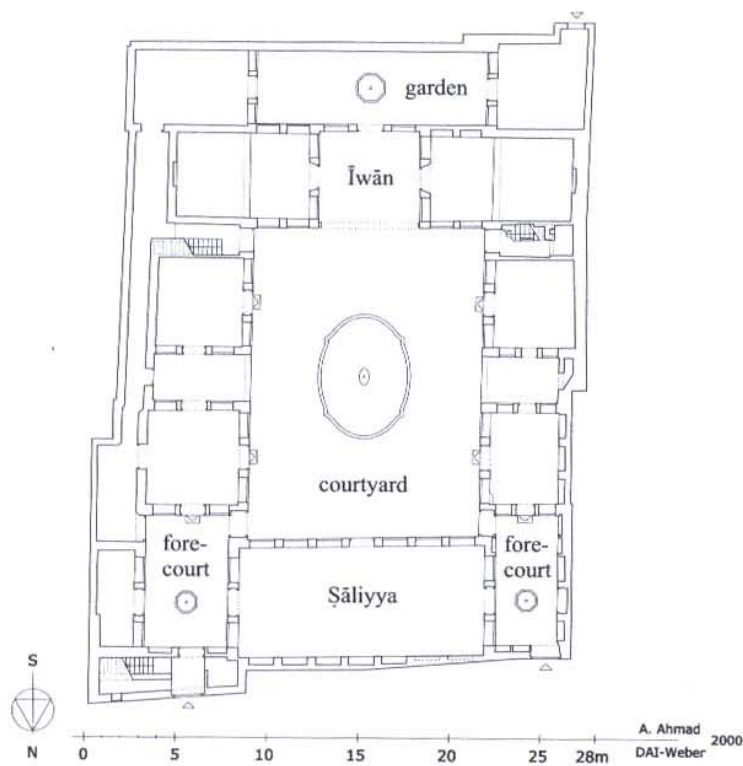


Fig. B: Quwatlī-house (XIII/2-412), ground-floor.

At the same time traditional techniques of decoration such as stone carving filled by color-pastes or wall coverings of wooden panels in lacquer relief work (*‘ajamī*) were replaced by stone and wood carving and stucco-work in the style of Ottoman baroque and wall-paintings. The new emphasis on façades with multiple windows looking over the street, gave the quarters a

totally different appearance. This is a characteristic feature for the second house form as well, which was a completely new import to Damascus. The new house organization that appears around 1860 for the first time in Damascus leans heavily on larger houses (*konak*) as we know them from Anatolia and Istanbul.¹⁰

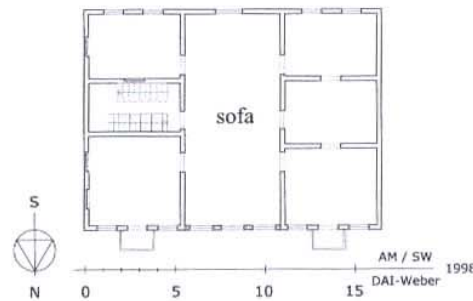


Fig. C: House Şâlih Khâlid al-Jabrî (XXIV/4-814), first floor.

The main feature of the *konak*, besides its elaborate façades, is the central-hall (*sofa*), which as main living room gives access to the other rooms around it (fig. C). One can observe in Damascus the same phenomena as all over the empire. From the 1860s onwards the *konaks* with *sofas* bestow nearly everywhere the space for a modern Ottoman way of housing.¹¹ One has to explain why this ‘global Ottoman’ change in domestic architecture took place. This phenomenon was not triggered by any law or public decree.¹² The central-hall layout was a late Ottoman design that marks a modern house to distinguish it from the old and the traditional. Perhaps some *konaks* of high officials – the saray or Ottoman public buildings – originally spread this architectural fashion. But ‘trend-setters’ cannot be the only reason for this trend. To understand late Ottoman architecture as a reflection of a changing society we have to abandon the concept of Otto-

¹⁰ Because of this I call the new model the ‘*konak-style*’, which applies as well for public buildings. For the ‘*konak-style*’ in Damascus, see Weber, “Der Marğa-Platz,” 317 ff., and Weber, *Ottoman Damascus*, 733 ff.

¹¹ See the contributions of Yenişchirlioğlu, Mollenhauer and, as ‘the exception to prove the rule’, Bodenstein.

¹² The building code (Ebniye Nizâmmameleri / Qânûn al-Abniyya wa-Qarâr al-Istimlâk) for all provinces was issued first in 1864 and was replaced by a new one in 1299/1882. It does not mention the middle-hall. See Amîn ‘Abd al-Nûr, *Tarjama wa-Sharkh Qânûn al-Abniyya wa-Qarâr al-Istimlâk*, Beirut 1896.

man society changing only due to Ottoman reform decrees, issued by high officials. Societies in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire were changing and not only being changed. The people of Damascus were searching for a new architectural expression of their experience of life and new principles of shaping private space. Changing private architecture was a clear sign of a new way of life. Throughout the empire a modern Ottoman style developed as an answer to what Çelik called "the search for a style".¹³ The *sofa* can be seen as an architectural homology to the Fez.

Wall-paintings played an important role in the search for a new modern Ottoman style starting in the capital in the eighteenth century. Istanbul became, as never before, the model and ideal of 'good taste' in the nineteenth century. Techniques and patterns of embellishment were taken from Istanbul prototypes. The first dated examples were painted in 1193/1779 in the Harem of the Topkapı Sarayı.¹⁴ Judging from the background of portraits of the Sultans, who were sketched in their palaces, or from the paintings in the Kavafyan Kiosk, which was built in the 1750's, wall-paintings in baroque style were already common in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The new style of decoration soon spread in the capital and became the most pervasive technique for interior decoration throughout the century.¹⁶ The model of the capital became very popular in the provinces

¹³ Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul. Portrait of an Ottoman City at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Seattle 1986, 126 ff.

¹⁴ See for early wall-paintings in the Topkapı Sarayı: Günsel Renda, *Batılılaşma Döneminde Türk Resim Sanatı, 1700-1850*, Ankara 1977, 80 ff., 110, 231 ff.; G. Renda, "Westernisms in Ottoman Art: Wall Paintings in the nineteenth Century Houses," in *The Ottoman House, Papers from the Amasya Symposium, 24-27 September 1996*, eds. St. Ireland, W. Bechhoefer, Ankara 1998, 103, tab. 13.1,2.; İnci Kuyulu, "Wall Paintings from Different Cultures in Anatolia", *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies*, III, No. 2, 1-27 (<http://www.let.uu.nl/oosters/EJOS/EJOS-III.2.html>). Unfortunately a lot of wall-paintings here were removed during restoration works in the name of stylistic purification.

¹⁵ For Sultan-portraits see: Renda, *Türk Resim*, 61, Fig. 30 and for the Kavafyan Kiosk: N. Atasoy, "I. Sultan Mahmud Devrinden bir Abide Ev," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, 6, (1974-75) 23-43.

¹⁶ Numerous examples of palaces and Yalis in Istanbul are given by: Renda, *Türk Resim*, 79-123, 236 f.; Renda, *Westernisms*, 105. For the wall-paintings in some late Ottoman palaces see: Şule Yum, "Son Dönem Osmanlı Saray Yapılarındaki bazı Tasvirler üzerine Gözlemler," in *9th International Congress of Turkish Art*, Istanbul 1991, 543-552; Semra Öner, "Tanzimat sonrası Osmanlı Saray Çevresinde Resim Sanatı," in *Milli Saraylar* 1992, ed. by TBMM Milli Saraylar Daire Başkanlığı, Ankara 1992, 76. Some historical photographs with wall-paintings are in the excellent photographic archive of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut – Istanbul: Yıldız, Seraskeriye reception-hall (Sébah-Joaillier 1090), Beylerbey (DAIR19628). For wall-paintings in Yalis, see

of the empire. One of the first known and dated houses with wall-paintings outside the capital dates back to 1211/1796. It is the Hadımoğlu Konağı in Bayramiç near Çanakkale in the west of the empire. In the east, in Yozgat, the first known example appeared in 1215/1800-01.¹⁷ The most famous among the provincial houses is the Çağır Ağa Konağı in Birgi with its large scale cityscapes of Istanbul and Izmir.¹⁸ As the *sofa*-style houses (central-hall houses) became popular, all over the empire from the east to the west this new style became the favored decoration. Just as the *sofa* provided a house with a certain late Ottoman character in Greece or in Syria, wall-paintings became the modern Ottoman way of interior design. In Anatolia or the Balkans, houses were more or less decorated in the same manner as in Damascus and Cairo.¹⁹ This tendency towards uniformization of Ottoman domestic architecture was a very new phenomenon in the

Hakki Sedat Eldem, *Köçeoğlu Yalısı Bebek*, Istanbul 1977, 46; Emel Esin: *Sa'dullah Paşa Yalısı – The Yalı (Sea-Side Mansion) of Sa'dullah Paşa*, Istanbul 1977. M. D'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire Othoman*, Paris 1787-1820, 2nd Vol., Table 83.

- ¹⁷ See: Rüçhan Arık, *Batılılaşma Dönemi Tasvir Sanatı*, Ankara 1976, 27 ff., 40 ff. For further examples see: Renda, *Westernisms*, 104; G. Renda, T. Erol and others, *A History of Turkish Painting*, Seattle, Washington 1988, Fig. 72.
- ¹⁸ See for the Çağır Ağa Konağı: S. E. Eldem and F. Akozan and others, *Birgi, Çağır Ağa Konağı*, Istanbul 1977, 30 f. İnci Kuyulu, "İzmir ve Çevresindeki bir Grup Duvar Resminin İncelenmesi," in *Uluslararası İzmir Sempozyumu*, İzmir 1998, 74 f., figs. 62-64. Further one can find this *konak* in Doğan Kuban, *The Turkish Hayat House*, Istanbul 1995, 59 f.; Godfrey Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, Oxford 1971, 433 f.; Reha Günay, *Türk Ev Gelenegi ve Safranbolu Evleri*, Istanbul 1998, 60.
- ¹⁹ For the Şemaki-house in Yenişehir (dated 1836) see: Rüçhan Arık, "Resimli Türk Evlerinden İki Örnek," *Sanat Dünyamız* (May 1975) 15; Johannes Cramer, "Istanbul auf Wandbildern türkischer Wohnhäuser des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, 39, (1989), 99. For Izmir, see İnci Kuyulu, *İzmir ve Çevresindeki*. For wall-paintings in Bergama: Serhat Alanyalı, "The Traditional Architecture and Structure of 19th Century Bergama," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, 44 (1994), Taf. 72/11. For Safranbolu: Reha Günay, *Geleneksel Safranbolu Evleri ve Oluşumu*, Ankara 1981, Fig. 315; and Günay, *Türk Ev Gelenegi*, 336 ff. Numerous examples in Lebanon are given by Claire Paget, *Murs et plafonds peints, Liban XIX^e Siècle*, Beirut 1998. In Cairo some wall paintings in palaces and houses remained. From a palace of Muḥammad 'Alī Renda published one example: Renda, *Westernisms*, pl. 13.9. But as well some older houses do have later added wall-paintings, like the house of 'Alī Katkhudā: B. Maury, A. Raymond, J. Revault, and M. Zakariya, *Palais et Maisons du Caire. II Epoque Ottomane (XVI^e - XVIII^e siècles)*, Paris 1983, 247 ff., fig. 121-22. For wall-paintings of the late 18th century in the Mamluk palace of Qāyt-Bāy: B. Maury, J.-C. Garcin, J. Revault, M. Zakariya, *Palais et Maisons du Caire. I Epoque Mamelouke (XIII^e - XVI^e siècles)*, Paris 1982, 207 ff., fig. 73. For examples on the Balkans see: Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı* 121 f.; Cramer, *Istanbul auf Wandbildern*, 99 f.; Renda, *Türk Resim*, 165 ff., Catalog-No. 63-71; Renda, *Westernisms*, 104.

late nineteenth century. Of course regional differences were often still very striking and houses continued to differ from place to place. However, techniques and motifs of decoration, the layout and design of rooms, and the techniques and forms of construction became more similar all over the empire than they had been before. New *konak*-style houses in Damascus (on Şâlihiyya Street, for example) are not always easy to distinguish from such examples in Bursa, Plovdiv or Melnik.²⁰

The traditional courtyard-houses in Damascus of the eighteenth century were unique in layout and decoration. Traditional techniques of stone-carvings filled by color-pastes or wooden wall coverings of lacquer-work (*‘ajamî*) were more or less specific to Syria or even Damascus where they seem to have had a greater abundance than any other city of the empire. But they disappeared totally during the course of the nineteenth century and were replaced by wall-paintings at the same time as in all other major towns of the empire.

Wall-paintings in Damascus

It is near impossible to trace the development of wall paintings in Damascus. Architectural motifs done in the traditional lacquer-paintings (*‘ajamî*) on wood, like in the Mîdânî-house (XXVIII-9) dated 1217/1802, show a strong resemblance to those paintings that appeared shortly after in cornice-moldings of ceilings or were painted on plaster (fig. 2). Small-scale pictures in cartouches of the *‘ajamî*-paneling appeared in Damascus around 1770 and had already changed the treatment of perspective and style in the course of the eighteenth century. But it is not known when exactly they were first painted on a large scale on the upper part of a wall, which had traditionally remained undecorated. Unfortunately only very few of these paintings are datable and only a small number of such paintings have been discovered. Fifty-eight houses of the 600 surveyed dwellings during this research (out of several thousand still existing houses) provide noteworthy pictures on a larger scale. Many more have paintings on ceilings. The first known dated example belongs to the Şârijî-house (IX-43) from 1235/1819-20. Regrettably we do not have any information about the owner.

²⁰ See for such houses in the Balkans: Nur Akın, *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Dönemi Konutları*, Istanbul 2001; Bagra Georgieva (and others), *The Old Bulgarian House. Interior, Architecture, Design, and Furnishings*, Sofia 1980; and G. Ryas (ed.), *Architecture traditionnelle des pays balkaniques*, Athens 1993. For similar houses in Bursa: Leman Tomsu, *Bursa Evleri*, Istanbul 1950; and Emte Madran (ed.), *Bursa Kale Sokak bir fotogrametrik belgeleme*, Ankara 1985.

This is also true for another early dated example (1238/1822-23) in the north-west room of the house that became known in the seventies of the nineteenth century as the Quwatlī-house (XVIII/2-408) in the Naqqāshīn Quarter.



Fig. D: Left: Nizām-house in 1840; (1) houses of ‘Alī Khazīna-Kātibī (XIII/2-334) and (2) Nuṣūḥ Pasha al-‘Azm (XIII/2-314, 315; western part of XIII/2-313). Right: Nizām-house, situation after 1927; houses (1) al-Ṣawwān (XIII/2-334 north), (2) Nizām (XIII/2-314, 334 south), (3) Jawwād and Sulaymān Bek al-‘Azm (XIII/2-315); (4) al-Ḥalālī (XIII/2-313 west).

The wall-paintings of the famous Nizām-house (fig. D, E, 3, 4, 5) are also datable by the history of the building. Through court records we have been able to reconstruct the original ownership of this house.²¹ The southern part of the building, which is open to the public today, brought two family-courtyards

²¹ From the private collection of court records of the Dahhān family. I would like to thank the family for letting me study this material. What is today the Nizām house was constituted in the following stages: In 1334/1916 and 1335/1917 Kāmil and Muḥammad ‘Alī Nizām rented the southern courtyard of the eastern house (of ‘Alī Āghā Khazīna-Kātibī) and bought in 1927 the southern courtyard of the western house (of Nuṣūḥ Pasha al-‘Azm) as well and connected both to the western small *iwān* of the eastern house.

For studies of this house to date, see Irène Laberyie, “Quelques réflexions à propos de la maison Nizam à Damas,” in *L’habitat traditionnel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée*, ed. Groupe de recherches et d’études sur le Proche-Orient, 3 vols., Cairo 1990, vol. 3, 831-847; Marwān Musilmānī, “al-Buyūt al-Dimashkiyya,” *al-Qarn* 18-19, Damascus 1979, 101-114. A. Rouanet and D. Piponnier, “Etude iconographique et technique d’un Ensemble décoratif: La Maison Nizām à Damas,” *Bulletin D’Etudes Orientales*, 37-38 (1985-86), 127-161; D. Sack, *Damaskus, Entwicklung und Strukturen einer orientalisches-islamischen Stadt*, Mainz 1989, 118; Kamil Sinjab, *Das arabisches Wohnhaus des 17. bis 19. Jahrhunderts in Syrien*, Aachen 1965, 48, 154, fig. 46 f.

(*dār al-juwwānī*) of different houses together. The western house was rebuilt in the 60s of the eighteenth century by Nuṣūḥ Pasha al-ʿAẓm (d. 1808), who was exiled at the end of that century to Egypt and became governor there. The house on the eastern side, which is more central to this study, belonged to ʿAlī Āghā Khazīna-Kātibī. Under Ibrāhīm Pasha he became general treasurer for Syria. But he was suspected of conspiracy with the Ottomans, who were on their way back to Syria and was executed in 1255/1839. Shortly before his death ʿAlī Āghā endowed his house as a *waqf* for the Umayyad mosque.

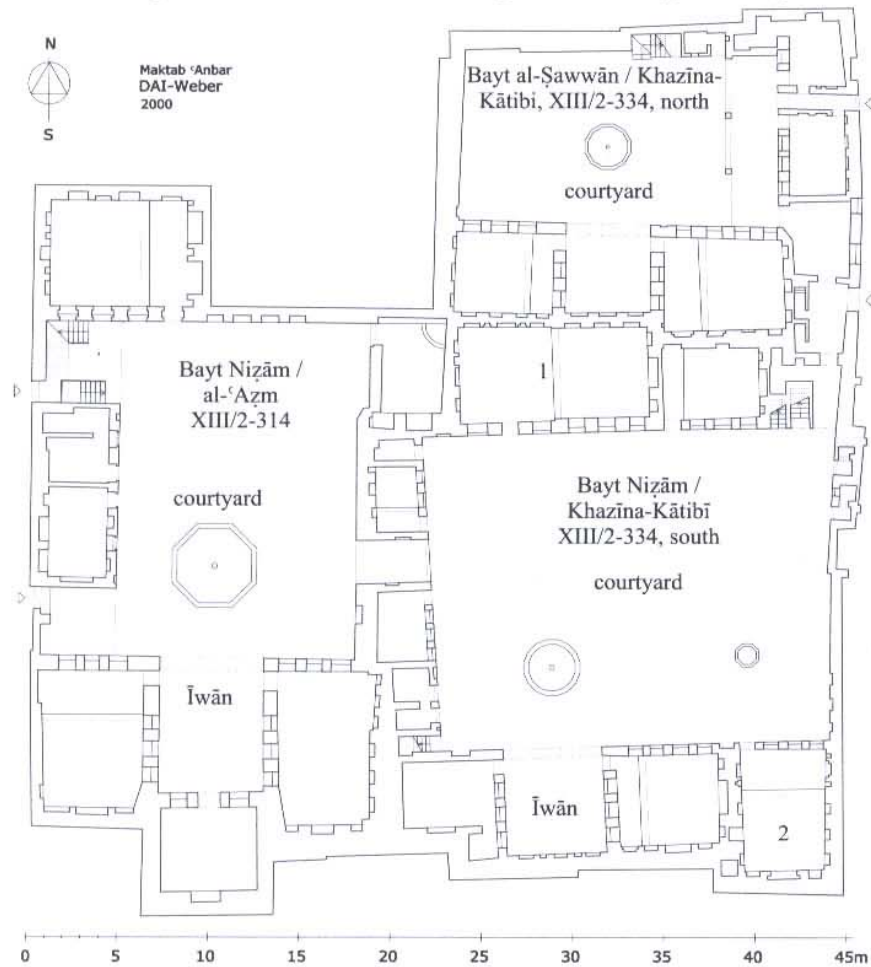


Fig. E: Nizām-house, today situation (houses al-Ṣawwān XIII/2-334 north, and al-Nizām XIII/2-314, 334 south). Wall-paintings in northern *qāʿa* (1) and the southern *qāʿat al-ʿaynab* (2).

Addisson observed reconstruction work during his visit to the house of 'Alī Āghā Khazīna-Kātībī in 1834. This was at a time when 'Alī Āghā was at the top of his career as the treasurer of Bilād al-Shām under Ibrāhīm Pasha.²² The decoration of two rooms made in those years is of great importance for our discussion (compare fig. E, northern *qā'a*, 1, and *qā'at al-'aynab*, 2). They were decorated in a new fashion that Porter described two decades later as follows (fig. 3):

The grand salon is a noble room. The floor of the first compartment is of the rarest marbles of every hue. The walls to the height of twenty feet are covered with mosaic in panels, in the centre of each of which is a slab of polished granite, porphyry, or finely veined marble. The upper part of the walls is painted in the Italian style. The style of decoration in this mansion may be called the modern Damascene, the painting of the walls and ceilings being a recent innovation.²³

Wall-paintings became one of the standard techniques of decoration for Damascene craftsmen and they had spread all over the town no later than the 1840s. We do not have many dated examples, but most of them were painted in the 60s and 70s of the nineteenth century, judging from the architectural style of the houses. In these years after the land reform of 1859, the trauma of the 1860 riots and after the provincial reforms of 1864, many large residences were built that give evidence of a pronounced economic and social upturn of many families. Warner wrote in 1875:

the walls were decorated with painting, usually landscapes and cities. Money had been freely lavished in these dwellings, and whatever the eastern chisel or brush could do to enrich and ornament them had been done.²⁴

One only has to mention the extraordinary richly decorated mansions of al-'Anbar (XII/2-297), al-Bārūdī (XXIV/2-593, XXIV/2-653), Līsbūnā (XI/1-

²² See: Charles G. Addisson, *Damascus and Palmyra. A Journey to the East*, 2 vols., London 1838, vol. 2, 165 f.

²³ J. L. Porter, *Five Years in Damascus*, 2 vols., London 1855, vol. 1, 36. This house, in which Ibrāhīm Pasha himself first stayed, was often visited during the nineteenth century. See also Mikhāyil Mishāqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder. The History of Lebanon in the eighteenth and nineteenth century*, translated by W. M. Thackston, Albany, 1988, 201 and Isabel Burton, *The Inner Life of Syria, Palestine and the Holy Land*, London 1884. It was used in the middle of the nineteenth century as hotel, see: John Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine*, edited by J. L. Porter, London 1858, 468.

²⁴ Charles D. Warner, *In the Levant*, Boston 1886, 200 f.

494), al-Quwatlī (XIII/2-412, XVIII/1-100), Shāmiyya (X/2-397), and al-Yūsuf (VII/2-1-654, east) to illustrate this point.

Wall-paintings from the turn of the century clearly differed from their predecessors. European style and techniques became standard. The motifs, now often painted in oil-colors (instead of colors on a base of glue and egg), show much attention detail. In the age of photographs and postcards copies were painted from them. A view of the Süleymaniye Camii in Istanbul at the house of Fawzī al-Qabbānī (XXI/2-986, ca. 1913) is certainly painted by a trained hand after a postcard.²⁵ The same is true for the European cityscapes in the northern part of the Bārūdī-house (XXIV/2-593, fig. 12), that were painted in 1911 by B. Samra, perhaps from postcards that Fakhrī al-Bārūdī, the owner of the house with whom we will deal later, brought back from his travels through Europe in the same year.

Wall-paintings were not only limited to houses. Many public buildings like shops, mosques, synagogues, and especially public baths were decorated with pictures of railways, ships and landscapes.²⁶ The question is, how did this new technique become so popular in the nineteenth century, and how did it spread so fast, replacing old decoration techniques and requiring trained artists? It is not easy to answer. One may, with a bit of imagination, envisage how this worked, but concrete information is lacking. Almost nothing is known about the painters. The enormous number of wall-paintings suggests, that not only artists from outside Damascus, but also local crafts-

²⁵ The artisan of this views must have been travelling around. He was for sure active in the north of Lebanon near Tripoli as well. Compare style and motifs of paintings in the house of Fawzī al-Qabbānī with the house of Marūn 'Abūd. See Paget, *Murs et plafonds*, 215 ff.

²⁶ For example the shop (XXI/2-227) in Sūq al-Buzūriyya with a painted ceiling of a Bosphorus-like landscape. Further examples are provided by the bathes al-Darb (XXXVI/1-172), al-Jadīd (XXIV/1-2-370), al-Khayyātīn (XXI/2-672), and al-Malik al-Zāhir (XVIII/1-100). The dome of the Turba in the Sanjaqdār Mosque (VIII/2-1121) was painted in a baroque manner in 1320/1902-03. In the Jewish quarter the Manshā Synagogue (XI/1-525) and the Raqqī Synagogue (XI/2-203) display wall-paintings. For other parts of the Ottoman Empire (mainly Anatolia) the book of Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı*, nearly exclusively deals with wall-paintings in mosques. Further see R. Bozer, "Kula-Emre Köyünde Resimli bir Cami", *Türkiyemiz*, (Ekim 1987) 15-22; İnci Kuyulu, "Geç Dönem Anadolu Tasvir Sanatından Yeni Bir Örnek: Soma Damgacı Camii", *Arkeoloji-Sanat Tarihi Dergisi*, IV, (1988), 67-78; İ. Kuyulu, "Kırkağaç Çiftelik Camii", *Arkeoloji-Sanat Tarihi Dergisi*, V, (1990), 103-115; İ. Kuyulu, "Bademli Kılıczade Mehmet Ağa Camii (Ödemiş) / İzmir", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 24, (1994), 147-158; Renda, *Türk Resim*, 126 ff., Catalog-No. 26 ff. For wall paintings on fountains and in churches, see Renda, *Türk Resim*, 116 f; On Synagogues, see Kuyulu, *Wall Paintings*, 22 f, and in Mausoleums, see Renda, *Türk Resim*, 121, 135 f., Catalog-No. 28, 52.

men learned how to paint them. Doubtlessly, they were trained by journeymen on the spot rather than in schools. A school of art and crafts in Damascus was only opened during the First World War by Jamāl Pasha.²⁷ The often mentioned craft school by Midḥat Pasha, founded in 1296/1879, functioned mainly as an orphanage (*maytam*) and reformatory (*iṣlāḥkhāna*), but arts and crafts were taught as well. Unfortunately we only find among its staff in 1881 one teacher of tailoring, blacksmithing and lithography respectively, but no teacher for painting.²⁸ Qualified artists probably came from Anatolia and Istanbul to Damascus and trained Syrian craftsmen. In Anatolia only three artisans are known by name and in Istanbul several artists were resident.²⁹ Information concerning these painters is limited. It seems that, as Hanna showed in Ottoman Cairo, painters and their guilds traveled around as they probably had done throughout history.³⁰

In Damascus Vogüé talks about a house painter and a group of Italian plasterers who traveled through the city.³¹ I identified only two artists by their signatures. The Ḥammām al-Khayyāṭīn (XXI/2-672) bears an inscription stating that the paintings in the dome were done by Aḥmad al-Sīrawān in 1327/1909. The large-scale view of the Place de la Concorde in the *mā-bayn* of the house of Fakhrī al-Bārūdī is signed by a certain B. Samra in 1911. But their names alone tell us nothing about their training. So far we cannot make any statement about the artists' background. More informa-

²⁷ The school of Jamāl Pasha was called Madrasat al-Ṣanā'īf and was lead by the German K. Ströckle in the Missionary School of the Sœurs de Charité (X/3-564, 565, 616). See for this school mainly: Hans von Kiesling, *Damaskus. Altes und Neues aus Syrien*, Leipzig 1919, 80; K. Wulzinger and C. Watzinger, *Damaskus, die islamische Stadt*, Berlin 1924, introduction and K/4-1. Further: Engin D. Akarli, "Abdülhamid II's Attempt to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System", in: *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period, Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, ed. by David Kushner, Jerusalem and Leiden 1986, 79; Sack, *Stadt intra muros*, 230, 235; Sack, *Entwicklung und Strukturen*, No. 5.35-5.37.

²⁸ See for this building with further literature: Weber, *Marğa-Platz*, No. 12. For its staff see the reports in the *Sālnāme*, here: ¹³(1298/1880-81) 128, see further for example ¹²(1297/1879-80) 355; ²⁵(1310-11/1893-94) 261; ³¹(1317/1899-1900) 120; ³²(1318/1900-01) 239. For its later usage Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amt (R14035, 21.1.1917). See on the Institution of *iṣlāḥkhāna* in general: Hans-Jürgen Kornrumpf, "Islahhaneler," in *Economie et sociétés dans l'Empire ottoman*, eds. J.-P. Bacqué-Grammont and P. DuMont, Paris 1983, 149-156.

²⁹ See summary: Kuyulu, *Wall Paintings*, 12. Further: Renda, *Westernisms*, 105 f.; Renda, *Türk Resim*, 186 ff.

³⁰ Compare: N. Hanna, *Construction Work in Ottoman Cairo*, Cairo 1984, 57-60.

³¹ Eugène M. de Vogüé, *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos. Voyage aux pays du passé*, Paris 1876, 80.

tion is available about the houses, the owners, and the subjects of the paintings. It is to these that we turn our attention now.

Themes of artistic representation

The Bosphorus

By far the most frequently painted motifs were imagined views of the Bosphorus. All over town one can find hundreds of fanciful images of the straits between Asia and Europe (fig. 4, 7, 13). The sheer number of pictures gives evidence that we are dealing with a very special motif.³² The Bosphorus was perhaps a kind of symbol of an attitude towards life that is comparable with the Golden Gate Bridge or the skyline of Manhattan today. To share or at least to understand aspects of the spirit behind the pictures of those days, one need not have lived in Istanbul. Most peoples today who put posters of New York in their homes or who relate to the skyline of Manhattan as a symbol for the 'American way of life' have never been to the USA. The Bosphorus was the symbol of Istanbul and thus became a symbol for the 'Ottoman way of life'. Of course, it would have been known all over the empire that during the nineteenth century many new palaces were built on the shores of these straits – to mention only Dolmabahçe, Çırağan, Beylerbey, Küçük Su or Yıldız. The 'sweet waters of Asia', the area around the Güzelsu and Küçüksu rivers next to the Bosphorus became quite a catchword for Ottoman high-life among European travelers. In Ottoman literature, life on the Bosphorus was often celebrated in those days.³³ The famous coffeehouses on the banks of the Barada River in Damascus might have played a similar role. But the Barada was never painted. It seems that it did not possess the same symbolic value.

The British Consul in Damascus only saw "... absurd attempts at views of the Bosphorous, forming the admiration of the Damascus housebuilder of to-day."³⁴ It was not important to give an accurate rendition of the Bosphorus. The images painted on the wall gave an idea of the place that everybody

³² Already the first known wall-paintings in the Topkapı Sarayı in Istanbul depict this strait (see the references fn. 15). See for later paintings of the Bosphorus in Istanbul for example: Öner, *Tanzimat Sonrası*.

³³ For example: Yakup Kadri, *Flamme und Falter*, München 1986. Pertinent reports from that time one can find in: Klaus Kreiser, *Istanbul. Ein historisch-literarischer Stadtführer*, München 2001, 223 ff., compare as well 168 f.

³⁴ After James A. Reilly, "The Modern Birth of Traditional Damascus," unpublished paper, Toronto 1990.

could recognize and connect to a certain experience in and of time. This vision of an imagined world represents a conception of life which was in some ways shared by most of those inhabitants of Damascus who had the walls in their houses painted. Otherwise it is not possible to explain that in a limited period of time (ca. 1820 to 1915), the same representation of the Ottoman capital prevailed in nearly all wall-paintings in Damascus. Moreover, the Bosphorus was always depicted crowded with ships; and – from the 1830's onwards – with steamboats. Damascus is not a port city, and ships were, of course, not an aspect of the experience of daily life. These hundreds of ships that were painted in Damascus were nearly always flagged with the Ottoman banner. The same was true for military buildings beside the water. A lot of fantasy mosques were painted, but always with distinct Ottoman features. When looking at these paintings one realizes that many people in Damascus did not have any problems with explicit Ottoman symbols. One may add the next question *ex negativo*: Why should they? Ideas of nationalism, identified as they are by researchers today as the prime means of understanding societies, were the exception at that time – limited only to a small intellectual élite in the last two decades of Ottoman rule in Syria. All other aspects of Damascene interior decoration point towards a strong artistic identification with the Ottoman political center. Ottoman baroque, including the half-moon-and-star emblem, was the style of nearly all houses of that particular period.

Istanbul

Many of the paintings depicted the imperial center. Wall-paintings representing views of Istanbul were very common all over the Ottoman Empire. Numerous examples existed in Istanbul and provincial towns. One of the best known examples in the provinces is the large view of Istanbul (next to that of Izmir) in the Çağır Ağa Konağı in Birgi.³⁵ As in all the other panoramas, the Bosphorus and Golden Horn show landmarks of Istanbul – for example, its hill top mosques and the Kız Kulesi (Leander Tower) at the entry of the Bosphorus.

³⁵ Kuyulu, *Wall Paintings*, 7 f; Renda, *Türk Resim*, 146. For views of Istanbul in the empire see: Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı*, 94 f., 120 ff.; Cramer, *Istanbul auf Wandbildern*; Kuyulu, *Çiftehanlar Camii*, fig. 13; Renda, *Türk Resim*, 146 ff., 154, 158 f., 165 f. Views of towns were known before, compare for example manuscripts from the sixteenth century: Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı*, 8 ff. Also one often sees cityscapes in miniature paintings on 'ajami-wood lacquer. Large early views of towns in interior decoration can be found in the Amîr palace near Bayt al-Dîn. Compare also wooden panels in Damascus dated 1189/1775: Dorothee Duda, *Innenarchitektur syrischer Stadthäuser des 16.-18. Jahrhunderts*, Beirut 1971, Tafel 41 ff.

In Damascus the oldest datable panorama of Istanbul is also the most stunning example. It was painted around 1840, in the northern reception room (*qā'a*) of the Jabrī-house (IX-252, today known as al-Mujallid), and is a large panorama of Istanbul of about 3.50 m² on the upper part of the wall facing the entrance (fig. 7).³⁶ Unfortunately we do not know who arranged the redecoration of the house, but certainly the same craftsmen who were involved in redecorating the house of 'Alī Āghā Khazīna-Kātibī (Nizām) in the late 1830s were also active here. The interior decoration in the northern *qā'a* shows exactly the same features as the famous Qā'at al-'Aynab in the house of 'Alī Āghā. This is true for the paintings as well. In both houses the motifs, colors, and the style of painting were the same.

The details in the painting support the contention that it dates from around 1840 since it portrays the town at the time when the painting was drafted. Only one of what were later two bridges across the Golden Horn is depicted. The bridge between Unkapanı and Azapkapı built in 1836 appears on the wall, while the Galata Bridge, which was erected a few years later in 1845, is not depicted. The panorama of Istanbul gives an impression of the city at that time. The sea is full of large ships, but already one paddle steamer is crossing the Bosphorus (the first steam-boats appeared in the harbors of the Levant shortly after 1830). Buildings that were landmarks in Istanbul from the time of Mahmut II, like his Nusretiye-Mosque (1825), or the palace of Başıkeleş, which no longer exists, are visible on the shore.

The delicate treatment of the image of the Ottoman capital in the Jabrī/Mujallid-house gives us some hints about its artist. Most probably he did not copy it from a printed model or something similar since one spots some discrepancies in his view of Istanbul. Yet, he was familiar enough with the topography of the capital that he could produce the most important landmarks of Istanbul accurately. The artist sketched the barracks in Taksim and the Selimiye barracks (rebuilt shortly after 1826) in Üsküdar, the crowded harbor of Kasımpaşa (with the arsenal of the fleet, *tershane*)

³⁶ The structure of the house originates from the late eighteenth or very early nineteenth century. It was rebuilt and redecorated around 1840. Other parts of the house (rooms in the upper part of the southern wing) were built or decorated in 1271/1854-55 and the salon to the east around 1870. According to al-Ḥuṣnī the house belonged in the beginning of the twentieth century to a certain Sāmī ibn Sa'īd Jabrī, who was a rich merchant. Oral information in the neighborhood gives Sa'īd Āghā Jabrī, a tax collector (*jābī al-dārā'ib*); as the builder of the house. In the case that he was the father of Sāmī ibn Sa'īd only the last building operations in the 1870s could have been undertaken by him. See for this house: al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-Tawārīkh*, vol. 2, 895; Musilmānī, *al-Buyūt al-Dimashkiyya*, 71 ff.; Sack, *Stadt intra muros*, 226.

behind the Unkapani Bridge leading to Sinan's Azapkapı Camii (985/1577). The artist did not give a photographic view of the cityscape. Rather he painted his personal memory of the town. His view of the capital proves that he knew Istanbul well and it seems that he was there for a long time.

Similar paintings are found in Istanbul dating from about 1800 – for example, in the Kadınefendi Odası in the Topkapı Saray, in the Sadullah Paşa Yalı and in a house in Antakiya.³⁷ More striking are corresponding views in the sultan's lounge (*hünkâr mahfeli*) of Atik Valide Camii in Üsküdar-Toptaşı from the early nineteenth century. They are very close to those in the house of 'Alī Āghā (compare fig. 5 and fig. 6). One can speculate whether this artist from Istanbul stopped in Antakiya on his way to Damascus, before he worked in the houses of 'Alī Āghā and the Jabrīs.

During the Damascene building-boom of the 1860s and 1870s many views of Istanbul were painted.³⁸ The artists of that time were not trained in Europe or in the capital and it is likely that they were local craftsmen basically adapting the techniques of painters who passed through the town. In any case, the artist of these panoramic views painted what they had to paint: an imagined picture that the viewer easily identified as Istanbul. Even though they were far from realistic and faithful copies, the images show a love for details. One example is a wall-painting in the Qanbāzū-house which was highly stylized (fig. 8). But absolute accuracy was not important and it was sufficient to reduce the view of Istanbul to its main landmarks painted in a simple way. The symbols of the city were generally known as they are today and the subjective emphasis of some landmarks was deliberate. Many Damascene pictures displayed a personal experience of the world that reduced the imagery to its main symbols – readily comprehensible for the viewer. The symbol – and with it the picture – gained their importance through the context of their creation. Meaning was assigned to these symbols (like the Bosphorus) by the same historical and cultural experience of viewer, painter, and patron.

The most basic way of presenting symbols and signs refers to the religious and political background of the builder. But only very few examples of wall-paintings had explicit religious themes. The Şārjī-house (IX-43)

³⁷ See for those in the Sadullah Paşa Yalısı: Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı*, 24 and for the Topkapı Sarayı: Renda, *Türk Resim*, 95. See for the house in Antakiya: Renda, *Türk Resim*, 198; G. Renda, "Painted Decoration in nineteenth Century Ottoman Houses: Damascene Connection," in *Corpus d'archéologie ottomane*, ed. by A. Temimi, Zaghuan 1997, 94.

³⁸ For example the houses Dayrī / Murtaḍa (IX-81), al-Bārūdī (XXIV/2-593), Sa'īd al-Quwatlı (XVIII/1-100) and Qanbāzū (XVIII/2-457) and al-Quwatlı (XIII/2-412).

from 1235/1819-20 shows Christian motifs, such as the Madonna with the child, in an overall Ottoman decoration.³⁹ Some houses, like Qanbāzū (XVIII/2-457); al-Bārūdī (XXIV/2-593); al-Yūsuf (VII/2-1-654, eastern section) contain views of the city of Mecca and Medina.⁴⁰ But these rare religious motifs were the only difference between houses of Muslims, Jews, or Christians. The frequent claim that one finds human figures depicted only in houses of Christians does not hold for Damascus.⁴¹ Only two out of the six houses where I found painted human figures were Christian.⁴²

During the second half of the nineteenth century new kinds of social associations emerged. Cultural clubs, political parties and Freemasonry began to influence Damascene society. In some houses symbols of Freemasonry and political sympathies appeared.⁴³ A new sense of social belonging and new world views and self-images left their imprint on the living-world of Damascenes. These deep-rooted changes, that became visible in urban structures and architecture and its decorations, were much more widespread than normally assumed. It was not only some people in Ottoman service who dressed themselves in a modern Ottoman way, as Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-ʿAllāf suggested, or furnished their houses in the latest style from Istanbul. The new style of decoration often connected with wall-paintings, applies to nearly all houses of that time and gives evidence of a much more fundamental change that influenced huge parts of society.

Topics of new horizons

Perhaps the most important change was that horizons of direct and indirect experience of the world expanded and the world Damascenes lived in be-

³⁹ As well in Anatolia religious topics were seldom painted, see for biblical scenes: Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı*, 64; Kuyulu, *Wall Paintings*, 13 ff.

⁴⁰ Views of Mecca and Medina are well known in Islamic architecture – for example, on a tile of the Rüstem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul (1561) dated 1660 or at the Fountain of ʿAbd al-Rahmān Katkhudā in Cairo from 1744.

⁴¹ For example Cramer, *Istanbul auf Wandbildern*, 98; Renda, *Westernisms*, 104. See for human figures as well: Arık, *Tasvir Sanatı*, 62, 64, 133 f., and G. Renda, "Wall Painting in Turkish Houses," in *Fifth International Congress of Turkish Art*, Budapest 1978, 711.

⁴² Thus the houses Šārjī (IX-43) and al-Shāwī (X/4-788). The houses of Muslim families al-Bārūdī (XXIV/2-593), Jabrī / al-Mujallid (IX-252), al-Qabbānī (XIII/2-351), al-Šafadī / al-Dawajī (IX-232) do have painted human figures as well.

⁴³ For symbols of freemasonry: al-Bārūdī (XXIV/2-593), al-Yūsuf (VII/2-1-654) and maybe as well Qanbāzū (XVIII/2-457). Several houses do have a Ṭuḡhrā: al-Shāwī (X/4-788); Fawzī al-Qabbānī (XXI/2-986) and al-Khānjī / al-ʿAẓma (IX-272).



Fig. 10: 'Ulubī-house (XXIV/1-1-149), ceiling of the *maḍāfa*, detail.



Fig. 11: Bārūdī-house, southern part (XXIV/2-653), *ṣāliya*, detail.

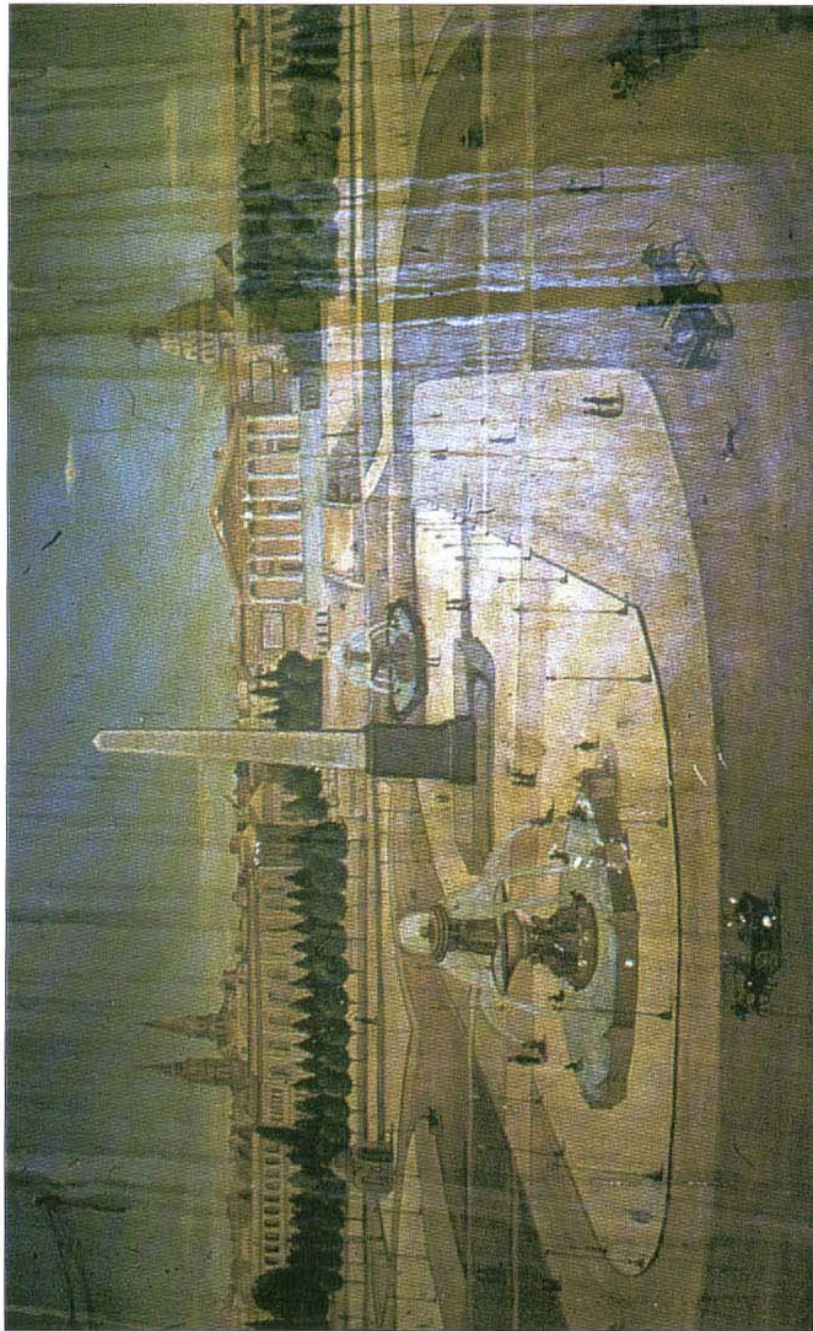


Fig. 12: Bārūdī-house, northern part (XXIV/2-593), painting in the *mā-hayn* of the first floor.



Fig. 13: Qabbānī-house (XXI/2-986), Ottoman flagged steamboats.

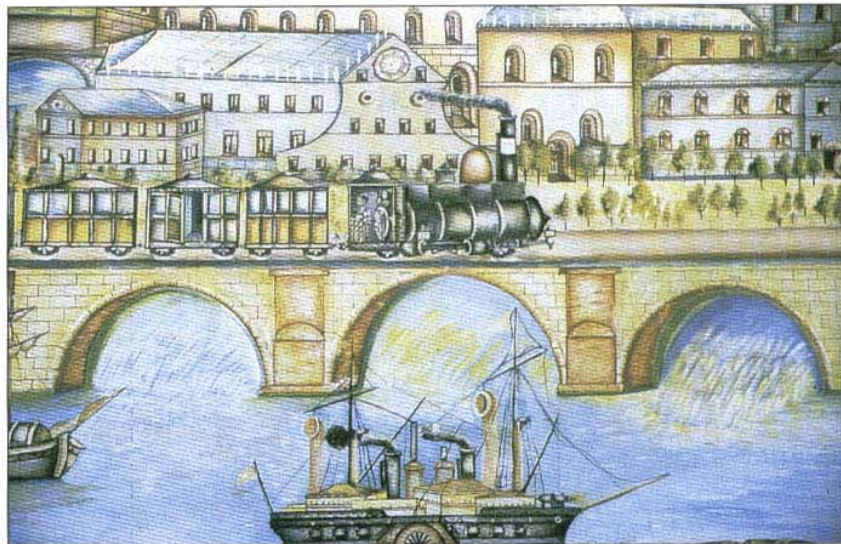


Fig. 14: Bārūdī-house, southern part (XXIV/2-653), *şāliya*, detail.



Fig. 15: House of Fawzī al-Qabbānī (XXI/2-986), back wall of the *īwān*, detail.



Fig. 16: Qandalfat-house (X/3-399), *qā'a*, detail.



Fig. 17: Ḥammām al-Khayyātīn (XXI/2- 672), dome of the *mashlah*, detail.

came larger. Newspapers, school books, and telegraphed news gave an idea of the world outside peoples' daily sphere of activities.

Although printing brought a new literary form, its chief significance lay in conveying the ideas of authors from distant cultural, historical, and geographical settings. Egyptian newspapers carried articles about Europe and Arabic translations of works in European languages, thus giving Syrians access to ideas from culturally distant societies.⁴⁴

This is true for political affairs as well. Information spread quickly and the overall scheme of events was well known and a topic of daily talk. Things that occupied peoples' minds were often painted on the walls of Damascene houses. The events of the Commune of Paris in 1871 after the collapse of Napoleon III's Second Empire, for example, were certainly discussed in Damascus. During the bloody ending of the Commune some public buildings in Paris were burned, among them the Hôtel de Ville. One of the protagonists of the time was Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877). He crushed the Commune of Paris before becoming president of the French Republic between 1871 and 1873. Apparently, these events had their effects in Damascus as Vogüé reported after he visited a house in 1874:

[N]ous prenant à témoin de ses sentiments français, il nous montre sur le mur, entre un railway et un steamboat... la maison de M. Thiers! Le bon Damasquin était à Paris pour son négoce à l'époque de la Commune; justement indigné de la destruction de l'hôtel du président, il l'a fait reproduire dans sa galerie.⁴⁵

I was unable to identify the house Vogüé visited, but in the Dawajī-house (today al-Şafadī, IX-232) a wall-painting looks very similar to his description (fig. 9): a Parisian cityscape with buildings resembling the Hôtel de Ville topped by a French flag.

People chose the motifs they wanted to have painted and most of the wall-paintings dealt with issues prominent at the time. News of events were available in newspapers and then passed through the town by word of mouth. For example, volcanoes appear as painted motifs on Damascene walls and cornices. News of volcanic eruptions reached Damascus as well – for example, the great eruptions of Mt. Vesuvius in 1872 and 1906 or the

⁴⁴ David Dean Commins, *Islamic reform, Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*, New York / Oxford 1990, 18.

⁴⁵ Vogüé, *Syrie, Palestine*, 80.

catastrophe of Krakatoa in 1883.⁴⁶ The most devastating eruption happened in Martinique. In 1902 the eruption of Mont Pelée destroyed the entire port town of Saint-Pierre and killed 30,000 people. Arabic newspapers of the time reported extensively on the disaster and printed pictures of the island.⁴⁷ Intense momentary social concerns for the inhabitants of Martinique were eternalised in the 'Ulabī-house in Qanawāt / Ta'dīl (XXIV/1-1-149) where an island volcano is painted with dramatic effect which shows a town on the shore during an enormous eruption (fig. 10).

Venice was another topic in the artistic imagination of Damascus. In the 60s or 70s of the nineteenth century, Muḥammad Ḥasan Āghā al-Bārūdī (d. 1307/1889-90) – member of the municipal council in 1871 and the head (*ra'is*) of this council between 1877 and 1879 – rebuilt his house in the city quarter of Qanawāt and decorated it with large wall-paintings.⁴⁸ Next to pictures of Istanbul, which he visited twice, and of Mecca and Medina, he had depicted a landscape of Venice (fig. 11). The form of a typical Venetian clocktower (or campanile) is clearly visible. The main part of the picture shows the Miramare castle in Trieste, which was built for the Archduke Maximilian between 1856 and 1860.⁴⁹ Ferdinand Maximilian (1832 – 1867) rose to political prominence in the 1860s. As the younger brother of Emperor Franz Joseph, he served as governor-general of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. In 1863 he accepted the offer of the Mexican throne but lost the war against the Mexican liberal government in 1867. Even though Victor Hugo, Giuseppe Garibaldi, and many monarchs

⁴⁶ An eruption of the Mt. Vesuvius one can also find in the Selamlık of the Dolmabahçe Sarayı (1842-1856). See: Yum, *Osmanlı Saray Yapılarında*, 543 f., 549, fig. 2. In the Ṭawīl-house, Damascus, Mt. Vesuvius is painted with Naples (X/3-577). Volcano eruptions were also represented in Lebanese houses; compare Paget, *Murs et plafonds*, 67, 294 (with Naples) or in a house in Izmir; compare Kuyulu, *Izmir'de*.

⁴⁷ See the newspaper *al-Diyā'* (31. May 1902) 556-560; (30. June 1902) 620-623; (1. November 1902) 78-79.

⁴⁸ See on Muḥammad Ḥasan Āghā al-Bārūdī: al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-Tawārīkh*, 2. vol., 863; Sālnāme ³(1287-88/1870-72) 57; ⁹(1293/1877) 68 f.; ¹⁰(1295/1878) 60; ¹¹(1296/1878-79) 62; Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics, Damascene Factions and Estates of the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries*, Stuttgart 1985, 147; al-Shattī, *A'yān Dimashq*, 343; J. Zwiedinek von Südenhorst, *Syrien und seine Bedeutung für den Welthandel*, Wien 1873, 25. Today the house of Muḥammad Ḥasan Āghā al-Bārūdī is divided into a northern (XXIV/2-593) and southern part (XXIV/2-653). The northern part, which is known today as the house of his famous grandson, Fakhrī al-Bārūdī (1887-1966), and which I will deal with a further on, was redecorated in the early twentieth century when its original decoration was over-painted; compare fn. 54.

⁴⁹ See for the castle among others: Richard Zürcher, *Friaula, Istrien*, München 1982, 212-216.

of Europe petitioned to save Maximilian's life, he was executed one month later. The story of his life and his famous Miramare castle in Trieste, which he left only to lose his life trying to become Kaiser of Mexico, was the talk of his time. Even if Muḥammad Ḥasan Āghā al-Bārūdī had never been in Trieste, he must have known the famous story of the Miramare castle and its owner.

European towns were one of the main focal points of nineteenth century Damascene life as reflected in wall-paintings. Urban centers, like Paris and London, were the very model of modern towns and societies. "In nineteenth-century Syria, European ideas about society and politics possessed an intrinsic authority because of Europe's military and economic superiority, which Syrians wanted to understand by discovering the causes of Europe's progress through reading European history."⁵⁰ Events in Europe were very well known in Damascus and became topics of conversation as well as wall-paintings. Not only newspapers played an important role. Increasing international travel in terms of tourism, trade and intellectual exchange, established more than ever before direct contacts between people from Europe and Damascus. The Thomas Cook & Son travel agency started organizing group travels to Palestine and Egypt in 1867 and many tourists came to Damascus in the process.⁵¹ The British consul estimated that around 1100 visitors left a total of 5000 Pounds Sterling in the town in 1905 alone.⁵² Much more important were accounts of Syrians who traveled to Europe. One lively account is given by Fakhrī al-Bārūdī, who traveled to Paris in spring 1911 via Alexandria, Naples, and Marseille and visited Munich, Vienna, Budapest and Istanbul on his way back to Damascus.⁵³ Shortly after he returned, he had several European cityscapes painted in the most prominent rooms in his house and replaced older panoramas of the Bosphorus from the time of his grandfather (but he left the paintings of Mecca and Medina and a view of Istanbul).⁵⁴ The view of the Place de la

⁵⁰ Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 18.

⁵¹ See Thomas Cook and Son, *Programmes and Itineraries of Cook's Arrangements*, London 1896, 4 f.

⁵² Compare: Public Record Office, Foreign Office 618-3 / 1.7.1905.

⁵³ An account on his travel can be found in: Da'd al-Ḥakīm (ed.), *Awrāk wa-Mudhakkarāt Fakhrī al-Bārūdī, 1887-1966*, 2 vols., Damascus 1999, vol. 1, 141-246. His autobiography was first published as: Fakhrī al-Bārūdī, *Mudhakkarāt al-Bārūdī, Sittūn Sana tatakallum*, 1. vol. Beirut - Damascus 1951, 2. vol. Damascus 1952; and Fakhrī al-Bārūdī, *Tārīkh yatakallam*, Damascus 1960.

⁵⁴ This house has a long history. It is first mentioned in the *waqfiyya* of the governor Muḥammad Pasha Kurd Bayram (reg. 1114/1702-03 and 1117/1705-06). The Bārūdīs rented it since the middle of the 19th century from the *waqf* (in a court-record of

Concorde in Paris, signed by B. Samra in 1911, is the most detailed example (fig. 12). Views of Rome (the Vatican and St. Peter's) in the house of the Jewish family Saysūn (XII/2-293), or Naples in the house of the Christian Ṭawīl family (X/3-577), from around 1870 and 1860, might have a similar origin.

Symbols of modern times

Direct contacts and travels, oral news, books, postcards, newspapers, new curricula in schools all gave an idea of the world in which Damascus and the Ottoman Empire existed. Wall-paintings show that people from Damascus saw themselves as an integral part of the modern world. This world had its symbols: steam boats, factories, railways, and later on, airplanes. These symbols dominated all houses that were decorated by wall-paintings. Imagined views of the Bosphorus are shown with one or several Ottoman flagged steamboats (fig. 13). Modernization and the experience of modernity came to Damascus mainly via Istanbul and the 'modern Damascene mind' was oriented towards that direction. The Ottoman capital was the center of inspiration and all symbols of modernization, like the steamboats, became ottoman flagged i.e. imbued with a sense of Ottoman agency. In order to connect the modern world to one's own city, in the 1870s an artist painted onto the walls of the southern part of the Bārūdī-house (XXIV/2-653) a train running through a fanciful European cityscape (possibly Paris). To convey its destination (literally and metaphorically), the artist wrote "*Shām-i Sherīf*", on the front of the locomotive (fig. 14).

The people depicted what occupied their minds. Symbols of modernization and manifestations of the experience of modernity were manifold.

1303/1886 it is still mentioned as a *waqf*). The most important steps in rebuilding the house were undertaken in the 1860s or more likely in the 1870s by Muḥammad Ḥasan Āghā al-Bārūdī (d. 1307/1889-90). In this period the house was first decorated with wall-paintings. The governor Ḥusayn Nāẓim Pasha occupied the house in 1895 (until 1902) and expected here the visit of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898. Photographs sent to 'Abdülḥamīd to show him the preparations for the visit, shows the *qā'a* in the northern part of the house before it was painted over. For court-records of the house, see MWT S815/W16 (1303/1886); S1293/W97 (1322/1904). Further: al-Ḥakīm, *Mudhakkarāt Fakhrī al-Bārūdī*, 33, Philip S. Khoury, *Urban notables and Arab nationalism, The politics of Damascus 1860-1920*, Cambridge 1983, 43; Khalīl Sarkīs, *al-Shām qabla Mi'at 'Ām, Riḥlat al-Imbirātūr Ghiliyūm al-Thānī, Imbirātūr Almāniya wa-Qarīnatihi ilā Filisṭīn wa-Sūriya, 'Ām 1316 h. / 1898 m*, Damascus 1997, 138, 178 (first published in 1898); Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 146 f., Qutayba al-Shihābī, *Dimashq, Tārīkh wa-Ṣuwar*, Damascus 1990, 163 f. For photos, see IRCICA 90483/36-39; compare fn. 48. In the last years the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Damascus started to renovate the house.

Some of the pictures contain telegraph lines or factories with high smoke stacks like in the Qanbāzū-house (XVIII/2-457). It comes as no surprise that in the early twentieth century representations of airplanes appear on the walls of Damascene houses. In 1330/1912 the first airplane landed in Damascus in the meadows next to the Takiyya al-Sulaymāniyya. A wall painting of this period in the house of Fawzī al-Qabbānī (XXI/2-986) recalls this event explicitly (fig. 15). Later the First World War was illustrated in the Qabbānī-house (XIII/2-351) – replete with a warship and a biplane.

Times were changing and so was the perception of time. First of all, time became measurable matter in Europe and in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire alike. The erection of clocktowers in the center of nearly all large towns of the empire was the most conspicuous sign of this – again, it was also reflected in wall paintings in Damascus. For instance, in the Qandalfat-house several clocks were painted on the walls (X/3-399, dated 1863 and 1281/1864-65, fig. 16).

Second, wall-paintings evinced an awareness of the global simultaneity of time. Time was not only experienced differently from previous epochs, temporal perception also changed the relation to one's own history. The more or less conscious identification with a new age required (and generated) a perception of the past through the definition of tradition. This concept of the past as a monolithic period of a bygone time and as contrasted to a modern present, brought about the phenomena of historicism in architecture, which blossomed in *fin de siècle* Damascus. For example, a wall painting in the Ḥammām al-Khayyāṭīn, composed by Aḥmad al-Sirawān in 1327/1909, depicted roman ruins – a motif that had never been chosen before (fig. 17). Historicity became a value judgement of the epoch in literature and art alike. Another example of this phenomenon of defining and thus fixing tradition was the Encyclopedia of Damascene Arts and Crafts (*Qāmūs al-Ṣinā'āt al-Shāmiyya*).⁵⁵ Here further research on the link between literature and art will yield a more nuanced understanding of the emerging role of historical expression in the construction of social identities along essentialist and/or epochalist lines.

⁵⁵ The encyclopedia was started by Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qāsimī around 1890, who finished the first part before his death in 1900. The second part was written by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (1283/1866 – 1332/1914) and Khalīl al-ʿAẓm (1286/1870 – 1926).

Conclusion

The discussion of a single aspect of private architecture as a material expression of self-image and worldview provides a phenomenological insight into a 'provincial' society in the age of Ottoman reform and global simultaneity. Ottoman reform was not limited to a small elite of state officials, and did touch those in the periphery. The dynamics of transition of urban societies captured vast parts of the public. Shaping of private worlds in late Ottoman Damascus gives evidence of a deep-rooted cultural change, which was – as always in history when we are dealing with social actions – a process of reciprocal communication and effect.

If we look at the relationship between the periphery and the center, the different cities – first Istanbul, then European metropoli – were the point of reference in this period of cultural change to which wall-paintings referred almost exclusively. The production of images of the Bosphorus in Damascene houses was an attempt to connect the center to the province. These pictures as 'world views' expressed the realm people of Damascus felt themselves to be living in. The Ottomanization of urban and social organization, clothing and architecture as well as the Ottoman symbols in decoration, evinced an internalization of the center by provincial societies on a cultural but not necessarily political level. Here it comes to the discussion as to whether the Ottoman Empire was "*an imperial power like all the others*".⁵⁶ It is a tricky undertaking to render precisely the point from which on the relation between Istanbul and Bursa, Izmir, Damascus, Baghdad or Sana'a could be characterized by imperialist power relations. One way to analyze the qualities of this relationship is to investigate shifting cultural identities. Wall paintings can help us in this undertaking.

Regarding material culture, it seems that many Damascenes considered themselves an integral part of the Ottoman Culture and as members of the modern world. Noticeable renderings of exotic places like Martinique were signs of perceiving oneself as unmitigated citizens of the world. That distant events stirred the local emotions, expressed a sense of 'we are part of this world.' But modernity and Ottomanism were closely connected, as we can see in wall-paintings. Damascene inhabitants were not only building modern public spaces through new parks, coffeehouses, and theaters. They also adapted their homes, the most private element of architecture, to correspond to their self-image and world view. Architecture then became, like

⁵⁶ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Late Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*, London 1998, 148. See also contributions of Kühn and Makdisi to this volume.

clothes, a medium of self-representation, which was comprehensible in public. Maybe the young al-^ʿAllāf met a certain Adīb Efendi al-Qabbānī strolling in the new *sūqs* of Damascus, noticed him stalking around from shop to shop and got his impression of Ottoman bureaucrats from watching him. Maybe he was once a guest in the house where Adīb Efendi al-Qabbānī had had himself painted on the back wall of the *īwān*, representing himself as a modern Ottoman citizen.