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From Picturesque Cairo to Abstract Islamic Designs: *L'Art arabe* and the Economy of Nineteenth-Century Book Publishing

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Abstract:

This article focuses on the production of *L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Caire depuis le 7ème siècle jusqu'à la fin du 18ème siècle* (1869–77), a multi-volume illustrated album on the architecture and ornament of Islamic Cairo attributed to the French Egyptologist Émile Prisse d'Avennes. By examining the working relationships between Prisse d'Avennes, the French daguerreotypist Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, the publisher Morel, the sponsor Savoy, and the printmakers involved in the preparation of Prisse d'Avennes's plates, this study points out the conflicting views underlying the conceptualization of *L'Art arabe*, which was by no means singular in its conception or execution. It also demonstrates that the material included in *L'Art arabe*, which presents the changing fashions of the time from contextualized scenes of Cairo to abstract representations of Islamic designs, largely depended on the commercial prerogatives of the book's sponsor and the publisher, rather than primarily upon Prisse d'Avennes's own objectives.

From Picturesque Cairo to Abstract Islamic Designs: *L'Art arabe* and the Economy of Nineteenth-Century Book Publishing

by Paulina Banas

Following Napoleon's short-lived 1798 campaign in Egypt, a large number of illustrated books exploring Muslim civilization in general, and Islamic Cairo in particular, appeared to cater to the growing European fascination with the Muslim world. These publications were especially popular in France and Great Britain, countries that had strong political interests in Egypt during the nineteenth century. More recently, they have attracted the attention of art historians and scholars of Orientalism and the nineteenth-century culture of travel.[\[1\]](#)

This article focuses on one of these books, namely the widely cited three-volume illustrated book on Islamic Cairo, *L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Caire depuis le VII^{ème} siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^{ème} siècle* (*Arab Art: As Seen Through the Monuments of Cairo from the Seventh to the Eighteenth Century*), by the French Egyptologist Émile Prisse d'Avennes (1807–79). *L'Art arabe* was published between 1869 and 1877 in Paris by the prestigious private press Veuve A. Morel et Cie. Well known among scholars, designers, and collectors of Islamic art, Prisse d'Avennes's book has been widely disseminated and reprinted since the nineteenth century. This multi-volume work is important on its own terms, but its historical importance can be further augmented by an exploration of various archival sources—information that is rarely available for books published during the nineteenth century—which can help us to understand the circumstances surrounding its production.

This article looks closely at these primary documents, in particular, personal letters that Prisse d'Avennes sent to his friend and collaborator on *L'Art arabe*, the French artist Charles Cournault (1815–1904), which are held in a private collection but were published in the 2013 volume on Prisse d'Avennes.[\[2\]](#) This study will also focus on documents related to the publisher August-Jean Morel: letters exchanged between Prisse d'Avennes and the French ministry sponsoring his travel to Egypt,[\[3\]](#) in addition to relevant materials stored in Prisse d'Avennes's archive at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). This latter collection encompasses manuscript notes and approximately 2,000 visual documents, including drawings, photographs, and prints authored by Prisse and other known or anonymous artists.[\[4\]](#)

Looking at these various primary sources will shed light on the decision-making process of Prisse d'Avennes and his publishers that determined their choice of images for the publication. In examining the process of conceptualization of *L'Art arabe*, this study seeks to decenter Prisse d'Avennes as the sole defining authorial voice behind the publication; rather, it establishes that the multi-volume work that bears his name was a collaborative venture. *L'Art arabe* served as a forum for multiple and sometimes discordant viewpoints on how to represent Islamic architecture. Most importantly, Prisse d'Avennes's relationships with the book's sponsor and publisher, as well as the various printmakers with whom he worked, largely impacted the final product of the volume, which instigated a shift in focus away from the contextualized representations of Cairene architecture that Prisse d'Avennes favored toward the abstract images of Islamic ornament that were fashionable at the time.

To this end, instead of examining the content of Prisse d'Avennes's imagery or engaging in a standard Orientalist critique of his project, this article will focus on the commercial apparatus that both underpinned *L'Art arabe* and determined its final appearance. The studies of scholars Dániel Margócsy and Kathryn Ferry were helpful in placing illustrated books in their larger commercial context, and therefore were influential in determining the methodological framework of this article.^[5] By conceptualizing nineteenth-century French books like *L'Art arabe* as commodities that were intended to fetch a profit on the market, one can understand the visual choices made by Prisse d'Avennes and his publishers, as well as the overall constitution of the book, with much more clarity.

L'Art arabe

Prisse d'Avennes, a civil engineer from northeastern France, twice sojourned in Egypt. During the years 1827–44, he initially worked as a hydrographer for Muhammed Ali Pasha and gave courses on fortification and topography at the military schools in Djihad-Abad and Damietta in Egypt. Later, after 1836, he pursued his own interests, including searching for Egyptian antiquities. The experience of living in the country for an extended period of time allowed the author of *L'Art arabe* to become proficient in Arabic and to read architectural inscriptions, to develop a knowledge of both antique and modern architecture, and to become well acquainted with Egypt's manners and customs.^[6] Prisse d'Avennes returned to Egypt in 1858–60 to collect new materials for his future publications, *Histoire de l'art égyptien d'après les monuments depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu'à la domination romaine* (History of Egyptian Art: As Seen Through the Monuments from the Most Remote Time up to the Roman Occupation; 1858–78) and *L'Art arabe*. Although this latter book was not his first published work about Islamic Egypt, it was his most ambitious.^[7]

As previously mentioned, *L'Art arabe* was published by Veuve A. Morel et Cie., originally founded by August-Jean Morel (1820–69), who was involved in the print trade from the late 1840s.^[8] Morel specialized in luxurious books on art, archeology, architecture, and design, such as the famous French architectural historian Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's (1814–79) multi-volume *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle* (Explanatory Dictionary of French Architecture from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century; 1868), the French architect Pascal Coste's (1787–1879) *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits par Pascal Coste* (Modern Monuments of Persia Measured, Drawn and Described by Pascal Coste; 1867), and the French decorator and ceramist Léon Parvillée's (1830–85) *Architecture et décoration turques au XVI^e siècle* (Turkish Architecture and Decoration in the Fifteenth Century; 1874). *L'Art arabe* catered to a growing European interest in Islamic Egypt (and Islamic art in general) that had developed in the second half of the century.^[9] This interest was sustained by the emerging practices of collecting and exhibiting Islamic artifacts. Along with photography and prints, these artifacts led to an increased interest in Islamic culture and its artistic production.^[10]

Prisse d'Avennes's book constitutes one of the most comprehensive publications ever produced on the architecture and ornament of Cairo. It contains three volumes of illustrations, including 200 large-size lithographic and chromolithographic plates. These plates were published in fifty installments, or *livraisons*, each composed of four plates, before

they were bound into the three volumes.[11] This illustrative part of *L'Art arabe*, called *L'Atlas*, was published in two different formats.[12] In 1877, a fourth and smaller volume of text appeared to complete the publication. Although this last volume provides useful information on the geography, history, and architecture of Cairo, as well as comments on the images included in the previous tomes, these three volumes of plates constituted the most important and costly feature of Prisse d'Avennes's book. The price of the whole publication was 1,050 francs for the large and 650 francs for the small format.[13] It was one of the most expensive books produced by Morel;[14] even the small-format edition was relatively expensive and therefore not intended for purchase by a typical reader.

The majority of the plates in the first volume of *L'Art arabe* present the most important monuments of Islamic Cairo, such as the fifteenth-century mosque of Sultan Qaitbay (fig. 1), in wide, sweeping vistas.[15] Human figures were commonly added to the compositions to convey the scale of the buildings, as well as to lend to the plates some *couleur locale* (local color). Prisse d'Avennes's depictions resemble earlier modes of representation of the Egyptian capital seen in significant large-scale Orientalist works, such as *La Description de l'Égypte: ou, Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française* (Description of Egypt: Or, the Collection of Observations and Research That Was Made in Egypt during the Expedition of the French Army; 1809–28) and Coste's *L'Architecture arabe ou les monuments du Kaire, mesurés et dessinés, de 1818 à 1826, par Pascal Coste* (Arab Architecture or the Monuments of Cairo, Measured and Drawn from 1818 to 1826 by Pascal Coste; 1837–39). In particular, *La Description de l'Égypte*, made during Napoleon's campaign in Egypt (1798–1801), featured large views of modern cities and landscapes accompanied by architectural plans and ethnographic images of Islamic Cairo, in addition to images of antique structures. These were presented in a linear, sharply defined fashion through the use of black-and-white copperplate engravings, as in the case of the plate representing the Mamluk mosque of Sultan Hassan in Cairo (fig. 2). However, by the time of the publication of *L'Art arabe*, these Islamic monuments of Cairo were no longer unknown, as they had been at the time of the publication of *La Description de l'Égypte* and Coste's book. On the contrary, they were quite familiar to European eyes through prints and photographs made by European travelers and reconstructions staged in international exhibitions held in Paris in 1867 and 1878.[16]



Fig. 1, Émile Prisse d'Avennes (artist) and Bernard Schmidt (lithographer), *Mosquée sépulcrale de Qaytbay (XVe. siècle)* (Funeral Mosque of Qaitbay [Fifteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Caire depuis le 7ème siècle jusqu'à la fin du 18ème siècle* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 19. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 2, Conte (artist) and Berthault (engraver), *Le Kaire: Vue de la Mosquée de Soultân Hasan* (Cairo: View of the Sultan Hassan Mosque), 1809–29. Engraving. Published in *La Description de l'Égypte: ou, Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française*, ed. Edme-François Jomard (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1809–28), État Moderne I: pl. 32. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. [\[larger image\]](#)

The remaining plates in volume one and the other two volumes of *L'Art arabe* present the Islamic monuments of Cairo from a radically different perspective. The great majority of the plates feature chromolithographs, which render the ornamentation of the monuments as detailed abstract representations.^[17] For instance, the plate *Arabesques: Pavement de mosaïque, fragments disposée sur le plan des dorqâh (du XVIe. au XVIIIe. siècle)* (Arabesques: Mosaic Pavement, Fragments Arranged on the Plan of the Dorqâh [from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century]; fig. 3) shows multiple details of polychrome stone mosaic compositions banded in square and rectangular segments derived from various monuments dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, all of which are unnamed.^[18] Other plates depict Islamic interiors, tile work, metalwork, stained glass, carpets, manuscripts, and Qur'an pages after the fashion established earlier in Britain by the architect Owen Jones (1809–74), the

author of the famous illustrated book *The Grammar of Ornament: Illustrated by Examples from Various Styles of Ornament; 112 Plates*. Jones's publication, embellished by 100 chromolithographs, including the plate *Arabian No. 5: Mosaics from Walls and Pavements from Houses in Cairo* (fig. 4), and containing just less than forty universal "Propositions" on design, appeared in 1855 in London as "part design manual, part aesthetic treatise, part luxury art object," according to the art historian Stacey Sloboda.^[19] Notably, in contrast to Prisse d'Avennes, Jones's purview was decidedly global, including swatches of design from the Alhambra, India, and as far away as China. That this development in design and industry was not limited to Britain is clear. Similar works were also published in France by architects, such as Jules Bourgoïn (1838–1908), and in German territories, where, already in 1842, German professor of architecture and mathematics Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer (1800–60) published his illustrated corpus of abstract representations of Arab and Italian ornaments.^[20]

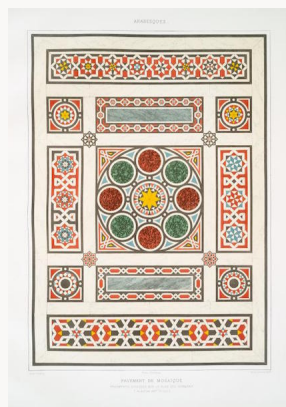


Fig. 3, Émile Prisse d'Avennes (artist) and Daniel Vierge Urrabieta (lithographer), *Arabesques: Pavement de mosaïque, fragments disposée sur le plan des dorqâah (du XVIe. au XVIIIe. siècle)* (Arabesques: Mosaic Pavement, Fragments Arranged on the Plan of the Dorqâah [from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century]), 1869–77. Chromolithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 56. [\[larger image\]](#)

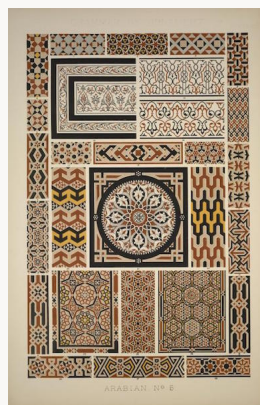


Fig. 4, Owen Jones (artist) and Francis Bedford (lithographer), *Arabian No. 5: Mosaics from Walls and Pavements from Houses in Cairo*, 1856. Chromolithograph. Published in *The Grammar of Ornament: Illustrated by Examples from Various Styles of Ornament; 112 Plates* (London: Day & Son, 1856), pl. 35. [\[larger image\]](#)

It is essential to keep in mind that Prisse d'Avennes's book was issued through a private publishing enterprise.[21] In contrast, many significant large-scale and costly Orientalist works published prior to *L'Art arabe*, such as *La Description de l'Égypte* and Coste's *L'Architecture arabe ou les monuments du Kaire*, also featured, in a fashion similar to the urban scenes of *L'Art arabe*, famous Cairene monuments; however, they were sponsored by the state and made for scholarly purposes rather than for profit. Prisse d'Avennes's book was a commercial venture, and hence its conceptualization resulted from a process of negotiations over the cost and content of the book, so as to reduce the risk of a possible commercial failure. British scholar Kathryn Ferry analyzed the production of Jones's publication *Plans, Sections, Elevations and Details of the Alhambra* (1836–45) and showed that the production of such an illustrated book on "the Orient" was a risky undertaking if deprived of state sponsorship.[22]

The era of *L'Art arabe* was also characterized by an increase in competition in the market for lavishly illustrated books, as well as significant technical advancements in photography and printing.[23] In particular, chromolithography, a method of color printing patented in France in the late 1830s by Godefroy Engelmann, became widespread in the publishing industry in the second half of the nineteenth century, as it was especially well suited for the production of small, formal decorative and advertising images, as well as large-scale posters and albums on botanical sciences, geography, travel, art, interior design, architecture, and architectural ornamentation.[24] The French printer, inventor, and entrepreneur Rose-Joseph Lemercier (1803–87) excelled in the production of both commercial and artistic lithographs and chromolithographs in Paris in the middle and second half of the nineteenth century.[25] It was his prestigious press, Lemercier & Cie., that was chosen to print *L'Art arabe*'s plates for Morel.

Prisse d'Avennes and the Original Concept of *L'Art arabe*

Many of the preparatory drawings and photographs that were used for the production of *L'Art arabe*'s plates were gathered during Prisse d'Avennes's scientific and commercial mission to Egypt in 1858–60, which was sponsored by the French state.[26] While in Egypt, the author of *L'Art arabe* relied not only upon his own knowledge of the country, but also the expertise and skills of the Dutch draftsman Willem De Famars Testas (1836–96) and the French photographer Édouard Jarrot (1835–73), whom he hired for his two-year scientific mission. Both traveled with him, and together they produced almost 400 drawings and albumen prints, which Prisse d'Avennes then used in the preparation of the illustrations for *L'Art arabe*. [27] The author of the book was not concerned with including Jarrot's and Famars Testas's names on the studies that he brought back from Egypt, which are now stored at the BNF. Nonetheless, scholars have amply demonstrated that *L'Art arabe*'s plates were often the result of a combination of various elements that could have been made by Famars Testas, Jarrot, and Prisse d'Avennes.[28]

The main purpose of the 1858–60 expedition was the study of Egyptian antiquities in anticipation of the publication of *Histoire de l'art égyptien*. A contract for this book was signed at the beginning of 1858 between Prisse d'Avennes and the publisher Arthus Bertrand through the intermediary of the ministry that financed the author's travel.[29] As letters sent by Prisse d'Avennes to the ministry from Egypt indicate, the French state was aware that he had been accumulating studies of Islamic art during the mission, which had originally

centered on the study of antiquities.[30] Apparently, they did not mind that the author would potentially benefit commercially from the use of these materials on Islamic art in his subsequent publications.

In 1860, when his scientific mission in Egypt was concluded, Prisse d'Avennes expressed his belief in the quality and the originality of the documents that he had amassed and, as he professed in a letter to his friend Louis Félicien Joseph Caignart de Saulcy (1807–80), “I collected enough to publish the most beautiful work that has ever been made about Egypt.” [31] Prisse d'Avennes wanted to challenge his predecessors and to inscribe the future *L'Art arabe* into the artistic and scientific legacy of French publications on Egypt, which included *La Description de l'Égypte*, while also envisioning it as a comprehensive study on Arab art with a large number of modern views of Cairo. He voiced strong feelings about the inaccuracies that had appeared in the previous publications on Islamic Egypt: “Besides a few plates of [Girault de Prangey, author of another illustrated book on Arab architecture discussed below], lithographed after his daguerreotypes, everything that has been published in France on Arab architecture of Egypt is wrong, including the plates of the major publication [*La Description de l'Égypte*], as well as these from Coste's *Monuments du Kaire*.” [32] With these indictments, Prisse d'Avennes clearly indicated his desire to compete with these two major French books and also, by extension, expressed his intention to follow the picturesque and figural mode of depiction of Cairo that were found in *La Description de l'Égypte* and Coste's work. Doubtlessly, one of the ways in which Prisse d'Avennes wanted to compete with some of the previous depictions of Egypt was by adding color to his images of Cairo. He was interested in documenting the polychromy of Egyptian structures.[33] He had already published colored images of contemporary Egypt, particularly in the *Oriental Album* (1848), an illustrated luxury album featuring ethnographic and picturesque lithographs of people and landscapes of the Nile Valley.

Prior to signing a contract with Morel, in 1864 Prisse d'Avennes began negotiations with the Parisian publishing house of Gide et J. Baudry. This publishing house was known for its books and illustrated albums on “the Orient,” such as the French photographer Maxime du Camp's (1822–94) *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie: Dessins photographiques recueillis pendant les années 1849, 1850 et 1851, accompagnés d'un texte explicatif et précédés d'une introduction* (Egypt, Nubia, Palestine and Syria: Photographic Drawings Collected during the Years 1849, 1850, and 1851, Accompanied by an Explanatory Text and Proceedings of an Introduction; 1852). Baudry suggested that Prisse d'Avennes divide his work into two separate parts: one devoted to Islamic ornament, the other to pictorial and contextualized representations of Cairo and its buildings. In a letter sent to Charles Cournault, in whom the Egyptologist often confided, Prisse d'Avennes wrote: “Baudry . . . would like to publish the book in two parts, first the ornaments in order to gather in this way the necessary funds to publish later the rest.” [34] This letter shows that the publisher saw a readier market for the detailed prints of Islamic ornaments than for city views and individual buildings, to the point where he felt that the ornamental plates had to financially “carry” the publication. Baudry's plan, although never executed, represents the changing fashion for Islamic designs at this time, as well as the shift toward a new mode of presenting Islamic art to the European public. In the same letter, Prisse d'Avennes showed his distaste for this approach, claiming that only a money-oriented person would agree with such an option, which follows “the needs of the Industry.” The author wanted “first to make a book that is worthwhile and not to deflower it.” [35] This statement is clear proof of Prisse d'Avennes's dissatisfaction with the maneuvers of the

publishers who, while considering the possibility of publishing *L'Art arabe*, first needed to assure the salability of the book. They intended to do so by linking Prisse d'Avennes's work to the broader public desire for industrial design patterns, which were already in demand in the 1860s. Yet, the author clearly wished to place *L'Art arabe* in the lineage of "worthwhile" French publications, such as *La Description de l'Égypte* and Coste's work. Prisse d'Avennes's perspective demonstrates that at that time the abstract representations of Arab designs in color were seen as new and largely associated with commercial profit.

While the author did not end up publishing with Gide and J. Baudry on this model, it is clear that these ideas were not limited to this one publishing house. About three-fourths of the visual part of *L'Art arabe* issued by Morel, Prisse d'Avennes's publisher of choice, is devoted to chromolithographs of Islamic ornaments. We do not have archival documentation to evidence this transformation, and therefore we must rely only upon the impressions that the author conveyed to a close friend. However, it is clear that Prisse d'Avennes's initial idea about *L'Art arabe* underwent great modifications under the influence of publishers, whose concerns were oriented toward the market and the demands of the readership of the day.

Prisse d'Avennes and Girault de Prangey

While in Egypt, Prisse d'Avennes claimed that he had "collected enough to publish the most beautiful work that has ever been made about Egypt." When he tried to find a publisher almost a decade later, these documents apparently no longer satisfied him, and he began to think about ways to supplement them.^[36] He decided to draw directly on the work of the famous French daguerreotypist Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (1804–92), author of the first photographic record of Cairene architecture reproduced by means of lithography in his book *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure, dessinés et mesurés de 1842 à 1845* (Arab Monuments of Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor, Drawn and Measured from 1842 to 1845), published by L'Auteur in Paris in 1846. Girault de Prangey's pictorial views of Cairene buildings with their human staffage must have suited Prisse d'Avennes's vision of *L'Art arabe*.

Prisse d'Avennes contacted Girault de Prangey through an intermediary, his friend Cournault, to ask if Girault de Prangey had at his disposal some studies that could be of interest to his work on *L'Art arabe*.^[37] The two authors worked together for at least five years (1868–73) and in collaboration with Lemercier, who had printed Girault de Prangey's plates for *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure* in 1846 and had in his possession the original lithographic stones that had been used for this publication. In the absence of the correspondence between Prisse d'Avennes and Girault de Prangey, a number of letters that the author of *L'Art arabe* sent to Cournault illuminate the working relationship between the two men. They indicate that Prisse d'Avennes had several choices in terms of reusing Girault de Prangey's works. He could purchase the original drawings or daguerreotypes brought by Girault de Prangey from Egypt in the early 1840s, he could buy the lithographic plates made after these sources, or he could print from the lithographic stones in Lemercier's possession, which were made after these daguerreotypes.^[38] Some of these sources, however, presented major technical problems for Prisse d'Avennes's lithographers. The designs featured on the daguerreotypes were very hard to redraw since, according to the author of *L'Art arabe*, they "sparkle and change aspect and form every other second."^[39] This was likely due to the shiny quality of the silver-coated metal plate on which the image was recorded. On the other hand,

the lithographic stones purchased from Lemer cier were already too used and worn to serve as a good support for new impressions.[40]

Although Girault de Prangey is rarely given credit for the lithographs in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century reprints of *L'Art arabe*, he figures as the official author of ten of its plates. For example, the lithograph featuring Bâb El-A'zab, one of the gates leading to the Cairene citadel (fig. 5), includes his name inscribed in small letters under the plate (fig. 6).[41] For the most part, Girault de Prangey's plates look like exact copies of the lithographs that were reproduced in *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure*. However, occasionally some elements were reworked. The lithograph *Tombeau du sultan Tarabey* (fig. 7) was reproduced on Prisse d'Avennes's plate with the same title (fig. 8), but the details of the right foreground were changed in *L'Art arabe*. This may be because these elements were not present at this particular site when Prisse d'Avennes visited Egypt. As in other cases of borrowings of Girault de Prangey's work by Prisse d'Avennes, it remains unclear if Prisse d'Avennes copied the designs from Girault de Prangey's original drawings or daguerreotypes, if the lithograph was made after these sources and then Prisse d'Avennes applied his own changes, or if he made another artist redraw these new elements on the original lithographic stone that he had purchased from Lemer cier.



Fig. 5, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artist), Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot and Monthelie r (lithographers), *Principale porte de la citadelle: Bâb El-A'zab (XIIIe. siècle)* (Main Door of the Citadel: Bâb El-A'zab [Thirteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 6. [\[larger image\]](#)

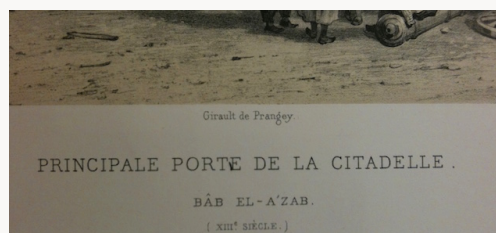


Fig. 6, Detail of Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artist), Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot and Monthelie r (lithographers), *Principale porte de la citadelle: Bâb El-A'zab (XIIIe. siècle)* (Main Door of the Citadel: Bâb El-A'zab [Thirteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 6. Photograph by the author. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 7, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artists), Charles Fichot and Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot (lithographers), *Tombeau du sultan Tarabey* (Tomb of Sultan Tarabey), 1846. Lithograph. Published in *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie, d'Asie Mineure dessinés et mesurés de 1842 à 1845* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1846), pl. 82. Stock of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 8, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artist) and Charles Fichot (lithographer), *Tombeau du sultan Tarabey (XVIe. siècle)* (Tomb of Sultan Tarabey [Sixteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 27. [\[larger image\]](#)

As the analysis of the letters sent to Cournauld indicates, Prisse d'Avennes's decision as to which of Girault de Prangey's sources would be used in *L'Art arabe* often depended on their price, rather than on their content or quality. The prices of the drawings and daguerreotypes appear to have been set by Girault de Prangey, while those of the lithographic stones were set by Lemercier (possibly in addition to Girault de Prangey). On June 3, 1868, Prisse d'Avennes wrote: "I have to examine the stones [of Girault de Prangey] these days and if the price does not exceed what my plates cost me, I will probably buy a few of them."^[42] It seems that before making the final decision concerning the reproduction of specific materials from *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure*, Prisse d'Avennes needed to consider if the overall cost of reusing these materials would not exceed the cost of reproducing his own studies through lithography. His own materials, such as those made by his photographer, Jarrot, occasionally lacked some precision; some were even blurred. This fact could complicate the process of transferring the photographic images to stones for the purpose of printmaking, which might then raise the price set by the lithographers, thereby forcing Prisse d'Avennes to buy documents made by other artists. This shows that many of the

author's choices were ultimately motivated by financial concerns, and not only by aesthetic or intellectual ones.

Prisse d'Avennes and the Printmakers

As art historian Elisabeth Fraser has pointed out, many hands were needed to work on illustrated Orientalist travel publications.^[43] The production of a large, visually enticing book on Islamic Egypt like *L'Art arabe* required the work of multiple individuals like Girault de Prangey and Prisse d'Avennes, who had traveled to the East and returned with images, as well as multiple printmakers, who all intervened, at times even on a single image. About fifty lithographers prepared the final plates of *L'Art arabe*; their names are annotated in print under the plates. Among them was the famous French artist and lithographer Adolphe Moulleron (1820–81), who had already worked with Prisse d'Avennes on the production of the *Oriental Album*, as well as some lesser-known printmakers like Daumont, who had also lithographed some of the plates of *Histoire de l'art égyptien*. These printmakers must have worked from the numerous studies that are stored today in Prisse d'Avennes's archive at the BNF, which also contains pencil and watercolor studies, and reproductions of ornamental designs of Islamic monuments on vellum, tracing, and laid paper. Many of these sources bear color annotations applied in watercolor or pencil notes that provide information about the colors of the motifs represented.^[44] These indications were probably made by Prisse himself or his draughtsman Famars Testas in Egypt and must have helped the printmakers in preparing the ornamental plates for *L'Art arabe*.

Prisse d'Avennes's letters to Cournault illuminate the working relationship that the author of *L'Art arabe* had with the printmakers. In his letters, Prisse d'Avennes complained that Girault de Prangey's lithographic stones made after his daguerreotypes were in such bad shape that they required a reworking of some details by contemporary printmakers, such as the above-mentioned lithographer Adolphe Moulleron.^[45] His negotiations with printmakers also considerably affected the production of the book. Prisse d'Avennes had a hard time finding lithographers who would accept to work on his "picturesque views."^[46] The growing specialization of lithographers and the fact that some of them—such as a certain Livié, who, according to Prisse d'Avennes "doesn't know how to draw a figure"^[47]—complicated the printmaking of *L'Art arabe*'s images, especially those that presented contextualized scenes of Cairo and often combined architectural views, human silhouettes, natural landscapes, and even Arabic inscriptions. Although a scarcity of sources has resulted in an incomplete understanding of the printmaking process used for *L'Art arabe*, the fact that Prisse d'Avennes had a difficult time working with lithographers who did not "know how to draw a figure" may have forced him to reduce the number of figural studies in the book in favor of abstract images of ornament. However, this was not what the author wanted in the first place. The lithographers' increased specialization also explains, in part, why Prisse d'Avennes worked with about fifty different printmakers during the production of *L'Art arabe*.

Prisse d'Avennes complained in another letter to Cournault that "there are no more lithographers, they disappear every day."^[48] The difficulty of finding lithographers went along with the growing appreciation of their profession, which may have also driven up the costs for their services since, as the author of *L'Art arabe* stated, "all these gentlemen . . . would like to be paid for a bad chromo[lithograph] the price of a good painting."^[49] Negotiations over the amount of payment for prints for the book must have prolonged the production

schedule of *L'Art arabe*. Since Prisse d'Avennes relied on private investments and was deprived of the state's support for this stage of his work, he could not afford the use of more prestigious techniques, such as engraving, which had been used, for instance, in the production of *La Description de l'Égypte*.^[50] Ultimately, Prisse d'Avennes's working relationship with costly and specialized lithographers perturbed the author considerably, which, again, may have forced him to shift his original vision for the book toward one that privileged ornamental designs.

In another letter to Cournault, Prisse d'Avennes wrote in regard to the "lack of skillful lithographers": "One who does not work in publishing has a hard time believing that it is impossible today to accomplish what we did twenty years ago."^[51] Here, Prisse d'Avennes must have had in mind his earlier work on the *Oriental Album*. This illustrated luxury album, accomplished more than two decades earlier, was his biggest publishing project to date, on which he had collaborated with printmakers and the same printing company, Lemer cier & Cie. Although no details about Prisse d'Avennes's collaboration with lithographers from that time are known, various statements in his letters to Cournault suggest that the author of *L'Art arabe* realized that there had been massive changes in publishing that had occurred in the two intervening decades. These circumstances must have limited the author's possibilities, but also impacted the conceptualization of books like *L'Art arabe*, which, as the next section will attempt to prove, tended to be reoriented by the publishers toward a public that was seeking details of Islamic ornament.

The Publisher and the Sponsor

The extended time to publication impacted the publisher, Morel, as well as the sponsor of *L'Art arabe*, a Frenchman named J. Savoy, who remains largely unacknowledged in relation to the book, perhaps because the archival sources related to him are extremely scarce. In order to undertake the publication of a luxurious book like *L'Art arabe*, collaboration between publishers and sponsors was needed to reduce financial risk. Savoy was what might now be called a publishing investor: he sponsored works in which he had a personal interest and that were potentially profit-making investments.^[52] Unfortunately for Prisse d'Avennes, neither Savoy nor Morel were enthusiastic about the reuse of Girault de Prangey's plates in his book. As Prisse d'Avennes attested in his letters: "My sponsor would not give one *écu* today for the picturesque plates of Girault de Prangey, which the firm of Morel asks me to remove in order to avoid hampering its sales. It takes all my energy and disinterest to resist and to follow my path; but I'm tired of the fight."^[53] According to Prisse d'Avennes's letter, one of the reasons that Savoy and Morel were reluctant to use Girault de Prangey's materials was the fact that the lithographic stones that Morel had purchased from Girault de Prangey for the execution of *L'Art arabe*'s plates were defective.^[54] However, it is also possible that the plates of *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure* were deemed to be too "picturesque," and thus they were deemed old-fashioned by private printing houses, which preferred to release more profitable works on Islamic ornament in order to make enough profit for themselves.

In a letter to Cournault from November 4, 1872, Prisse d'Avennes mentions that he had shared his work on *L'Art arabe* with Girault de Prangey, in particular the first twenty installments in which, as he attests, "the details of ornamentation dominate."^[55] These works must have been produced by Morel with the sponsorship of Savoy. In his letter, Prisse

d'Avennes predicts that Girault de Prangey, upon seeing his work, will understand “how much I needed to sacrifice to the needs of the industry in order to find the means to publish an expensive book that without this would not be sold, so much the well-read public and artist disappears further every day.”^[56] These comments are telling, as they reveal the divergent objectives of the author and the publisher-sponsor. They also show how the fashion for Islamic architecture had now turned definitively toward an ornamental program and away from the black-and-white views with an ethnographic focus that were introduced as early as *La Description de l'Égypte* (1809–28).

Around 1874, when Prisse d'Avennes was in the last stage of collaboration with Girault de Prangey, his relations with the sponsor deteriorated considerably. As the letter that Prisse d'Avennes sent to Cournault indicates, Savoy insisted on augmenting his role in the editorial process, while dissuading the author of *L'Art arabe* from taking an active position in the preparation of the book.^[57] The sponsor took possession of Prisse d'Avennes's studies and asked him to sign over his copyright on the pretext that the condition of the author's health would not allow him to continue his work. Prisse d'Avennes's poor financial situation prevented him from contesting Savoy's decision and taking legal action against the publisher.^[58]

Additionally, a note kept in his documents at the BNF suggests that the author of *L'Art arabe* was not flexible toward the perspective of the market and did not approve of the augmentation of a number of plates featuring abstract designs, even in the later stages of the production of the book. This note, although undated, must have been written by Prisse d'Avennes around 1874, when he was forced by Savoy to abandon the publishing process: “what was only at the beginning of the undertaking an annex to l'art arabe became consequently the main part of the book, because it is the only one that responds to the speculations of a man who does not understand anything about art, but who wants his money to bring him all that it can generate” (underline in the original).^[59]

It seems that Savoy had initially allowed Prisse d'Avennes to publish the book the way the author envisioned it—with his picturesque and contextualized scenes of Cairo—which resembled the contents of many of the previous tomes on this topic, but nonetheless seemed conservative at that time. Yet, it also appears that the sponsor probably insisted on decreasing the number of such plates in *L'Art arabe* during the publication process. Consequently, the initially planned annex on Islamic ornamentation became the main feature of the book, as the number of chromolithographs featuring abstract Islamic designs became much higher than the number of plates featuring the scenes of Islamic Cairo.

The sponsor went even further with his profit-oriented initiative and, after Prisse d'Avennes passed away, undertook the publication of an additional 1885 version of the book, in which he featured only the plates on Islamic ornament, completely disregarding Prisse d'Avennes's contextualized scenes of Cairo.^[60] Although these later volumes were published under slightly different names, they circulated on their own as if they were representative of the larger project of *L'Art arabe*. However, as this article shows, this was clearly not Prisse d'Avennes's original intention. Even though the citation above attests to the fact that the author originally agreed to prepare an annex on Islamic ornament to *L'Art arabe*, his decision was probably impacted by his personal struggle to find an appropriate publisher who was

willing to issue his corpus of contextualized scenes of Cairo in the years following the rejection of Baudry's offer. Such factors would have impacted Prisse d'Avennes's expectations concerning the original vision of *L'Art arabe*, forcing him to compromise according to the demands of the publishers at the beginning of the publishing process.[61]

The above-mentioned citations confirm Prisse d'Avennes's resistance and his forced compliance with the new demands of the audience for books on modern Egypt. They also underscore the fact that the contents of *L'Art arabe*, as envisioned by the author, had been reshaped in accordance with the new interest in Islamic designs, the commercial considerations of the sponsor, and, possibly, the inclinations of the publisher.

As for Morel, who had a particular interest in works on architecture and decorative designs, the production of a book centered on Islamic patterns was also well suited to his own standard publishing guidelines. His printing house and its associated bookstore were located at 13 rue Bonaparte, in front of the entrance to the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The customers of his business, and potential buyers of *L'Art arabe* or its installments, were future artists and architects, as well as engineers, jewelers, painters, decorators, engravers, print dealers, and architectural professionals, as suggested by an analysis of the list of creditors (who were also customers) to this publishing house dating to 1869.[62] From Paris, the books were sent to public libraries in multiple French regions, and acquired by professors, scholarly societies, and ministries. They were also sent outside French borders to clients and libraries in Brussels, London, and Munich, among other large cities. An important sector of Morel's income constituted polytechnic schools and academies, such as the Parisian school of architecture, the École Centrale d'Architecture, newly founded in the 1860s. Morel supplied the school's library with his books, created special manuals for the teachers, and established awards for students.[63] Such a focus on a targeted group of readers guaranteed Morel's success. According to the sources found in Morel's folder at the National Archives of France that concern his application to receive the distinguished French title of Le Chevalier de La Legion d'Honneur from 1869, he was described as someone who "seems to have exceptional commercial skills." [64] Morel had started his business without a considerable amount of money and, at the end of his life, "arrived to make fifteen hundred thousand Francs per year." The publisher was also considered a successful capitalist for whom "nothing was impossible" in the publishing business.[65] To receive such a reputation and retain his place in the printing business for such a sustained period, Morel needed to make wise choices and work with authors who were flexible enough to adapt their books to the perspectives of the audiences that the publisher knew how to target.

Prisse d'Avennes signed the contract with the publishing house of A. Morel et Cie. one year before its founder, August-Jean Morel, passed away. After 1870, the business Veuve A. Morel et Cie. was managed in theory by Morel's widow and in practice by two authorized representatives: the little-known Jean Étienne Duverger and the previously mentioned famous French architect Viollet-le-Duc.[66] The latter was "close to the architects who published the first illustrated descriptions" of Islamic architecture; he was also known for promoting a profound and scientifically oriented study of Muslim ornament that would help to safeguard the creativity of French designers during the time of industrialization.[67] Although no particular archival records attest to Viollet-le-Duc's influence in this regard, it is entirely possible that his ideas might have impacted the politics of the company, which

preferred to release books with abstract representations of Islamic designs rather than works featuring the picturesque views of “the orient.” Most importantly, his ideas could have affected the process of conceptualization of *L’Art arabe*.

Lastly, it should be noted that the ornamental plates from books like Jones’s and Prisse d’Avennes’s were used by nineteenth-century architects who wanted inspiration for their decoration of houses made in Moorish, Arab, Turkish, or generally Oriental styles, both in Europe and the Middle East.^[68] These decorations became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century and examples include the Moorish Billiard Room, built in 1866 in a private mansion in London by the architect Matthew Digby Wyatt, who was inspired by Jones’s studies of the Alhambra.^[69] Similar projects were also seen in France. According to the French scholar Mercedes Volait, the architects Félix Roguet and Louis-Charles Boileau built the *hôtel* Branicki in Paris in 1870 with rooms in Moorish, Persian, and Cairene styles, for which they drew inspiration from nineteenth-century books and architectural journals on Islamic countries.^[70] Considering the nature of these architectural projects and the increased interest in Islamic designs in the second half of the nineteenth century in Western Europe, it is entirely possible that Morel tried to reorient the content of *L’Art arabe* to appeal to young architecture students. Conceivably, they would have sought books that provided models for clear and vibrant designs to inspire their work in the studio.

Conclusion

As seen in the archival documents related to the production of Prisse d’Avennes’s *L’Art arabe*, the preparation of this multi-volume book was a complex process that involved the collaboration of many individuals expressing their own, often conflicting opinions about the ways

in which modern Egypt should be visualized in print. Understanding these relationships—between co-authors, printmakers, sponsors, and publishers—helps to illuminate *L’Art arabe*’s place in the nineteenth-century network of circulation of knowledge on Islamic architecture and ornament. The documents clearly show the conflicts between the author, who was interested in showing a holistic view of Islamic Cairo and its architecture, and the publisher and his sponsor, who were focused on pioneering the presentation of Islamic ornament to European audiences and thereby aiding in the improvement of European industrial designs in the second half of the century.

The personal letters and notes that Prisse d’Avennes left in regard to the publishing of *L’Art arabe* show us that the book was produced during a time of change from a Romantic mode of depiction of the Muslim world, inspired by curiosity and fascination with the exotic aspects of that world,^[71] to a utilitarian view of Muslim culture. The latter was expressed most powerfully in Western imperialism, but also on a smaller scale in the adaptation of exotic art forms and ornamentation for Western use. Prisse d’Avennes favored the Romantic vision of the Islamic world, whereas the publishers of *L’Art arabe* realized the public’s interest in the utilitarian view of Muslim cultures, which could provide more marketability to Prisse d’Avennes’s publication.

The process of replacing the picturesque and contextualized views of Cairo with abstract details of Islamic ornamentation was not smooth, nor did it simply reflect the changing interests of authors like Prisse d’Avennes. On the contrary, this particular subfield of the

publishing business was a battleground of the opinions and personal commitments of authors, publishers, and printmakers—each of whom had a different agenda. The shift in the depiction of Islamic Egypt away from the panoramic and toward the close-up, from pictorial views of Cairene buildings and toward a new emphasis on Islamic ornament, was affected by the changing economy and the unstable market in which this particular Orientalist publishing business existed and depended upon.

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Notes

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[1] See, for instance, Derek Gregory, "Performing Cairo: Orientalism and the City of the Arabian Nights," in *Making Cairo Medieval*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad et al. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 69–93; Caroline Williams, "Nineteenth-Century Images of Cairo: From the Real to the Interpretative," in *Making Cairo Medieval*, 95–124; Elisabeth A. Fraser, "Books, Prints, and Travel: Reading in the Gaps of the Orientalist Archive," *Art History* 31, no. 3 (2008): 342–67.

[2] Emmanuel Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte . . . en débarrassant ma table encombrée: Lettres d'Émile Prisse d'Avennes à Charles Cournault (1847–1875)," in *Émile Prisse d'Avennes: Un artiste-antiquaire en Égypte au XIXe siècle*, ed. Mercedes Volait (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 2013), 215–35; Emmanuel Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault* (Metz, France: S. Domini, 2004), 189–205. Hecre's articles reproduce the fragments of letters sent by Prisse d'Avennes to Charles Cournault; other letters sent by Prisse d'Avennes to his friends and colleagues, such as Louis Félicien Joseph Caignart de Saulcy (1807–80), are held at the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Ms. 2283, f. 97 and Ms. 2585, f. 288–91.

[3] Folder on "Morel (Auguste Jean)," F/18/1805, Archives Nationales de France, Paris; Minutier central XXXIV, 1291, Archives Nationales de France, Paris; "Missions. M. Prisse d'Avennes," F/21/2287, Archives Nationales de France, Paris.

[4] Collection Prisse d'Avennes, NAF 20416–20433, 20448–9, NAF 20434–20447, Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

[5] Dániel Margócsy, *Commercial Visions: Science, Trade, and Visual Culture in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014); Kathryn Ferry, "Printing the Alhambra: Owen Jones and Chromolithography," *Architectural History* 46 (2003): 175–88.

[6] For more information about Prisse d'Avennes's life and work, see "Chronologie," in *Visions d'Égypte: Emile Prisse d'Avennes (1807–1879)*, ed. Sylvie Aubenas et al. (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2011), 156; Mercedes Volait, "Avec un double empressement d'un artiste et d'un antiquaire: Les arts de l'Égypte médiévale vus par Émile Prisse d'Avennes," in *Visions d'Égypte*, 93–117.

[7] See, for instance, James Augustus St. John and Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Oriental Album* (London: Madden, 1848); "Mœurs et coutumes des Wahabys," *Le Magasin Pittoresque* (1847): 7–8; "Les classes pauvres en Égypte," *Le Magasin Pittoresque* (1847): 42–46, 83–85, 142–44, 247–48; "Costumes et usages militaires en Abyssinie," *Le Magasin Pittoresque* (1847): 297–98; "Égypte sous la domination de Méhémet Aly," *L'Univers pittoresque: Histoire et description de tous les peuples*, no. 45 (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1848).

[8] See Béatrice Bouvier, *L'Édition d'architecture à Paris au XIXe siècle: Les maisons Bance et Morel et la presse architecturale* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 43–60.

[9] Islamic Egyptian artefacts were presented for the first time at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. Later, these items were featured in major displays at the Universal Exhibitions in Paris in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. According to Stephen Vernoit, the display of Islamic objects at these exhibitions "led to the growing appreciation of antiquarian and aesthetic values in Islamic art." Vernoit, "Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview of Scholarship and Collecting, ca. 1850–1950," in *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, ed. Stephen Vernoit (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2000), 1–61.

[10] Vernoit, "Islamic Art and Architecture," 5.

[11] The method of selling books in installments allowed a publisher to predict and to secure the diffusion of their printed works, as well as to spread the cost of production over several months or even years. Isabelle Jammes, *Blanquart-Evrard et les origines de l'édition photographique française: Catalogue raisonné des albums photographiques édités, 1851–1855* (Geneva: Droz, 1981), 60–61.

[12] The two editions of the books that are seen today in libraries measure ca. 65 x 51 cm and ca. 56 x 43 cm.

[13] The volume of text in-quarto was given for free to those who subscribed to the whole book and with the last part of *Atlas*; it has the same format as both editions of the book and its dimensions are ca. 26 x 33 cm. Édouard Champion, Daniel Jordell, and Otto Lorenz, *Catalogue général de la librairie française depuis 1840* (Paris: O. Lorenz, 1877), 6:432, <https://books.google.com/books?id=BvffAAAAMAAJ&vq>.

[14] By contrast, the cost of a non-illustrated book was usually 10–50 francs. Pascal Coste's illustrated book, entitled *Monuments modernes de la Perse*, published by Morel in 1867, was worth 160 francs (one volume with 70 plates, in-folio). Marie-Claire Saint-Germier, "Émile Prisse d'Avennes et le livre: La Fabrication des atlas de l'Égypte monumentale," in *Emile Prisse d'Avennes: Un artiste-antiquaire en Égypte*, 108.

[15] This would correspond to about 40 of 67 plates in volume one.

[16] See Mercedes Volait, *Fous du Caire: Excentriques, architectes & amateurs d'art en Égypte, 1863–1914* (Montpellier, France: Archange Minotaure, 2009), 125. *L'Art arabe* remains important for the study of Islamic art and the reconstruction of the architectural layout of nineteenth-century Cairo, particularly for monuments that no longer stand, despite the fact that it presented certain errors. See, for instance, Briony Llewellyn, "Prisse d'Avennes: L'Art Arabe," *Arts and the Islamic World* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1983–84): 15–17; Caroline Williams, Review of "Arab Art as Seen through the Monuments of Cairo from the 7th Century to the 18th," Émile Prisse D'Avennes, and J. I. Erythraspis, trans., *The Middle East Journal* 39, no. 1 (1985): 180–81.

[17] A small number of the plates in this group feature Islamic decorative objects, and monochrome lithographs of ornamental architecture and Islamic objects; Héliogravure, one of the first photomechanical methods of reproduction, was also used for two plates featuring a medieval chest made of ivory with silver additions and a thirteenth-century bronze lamp (vol. III, pl. 156, 157). Saint-Germier, "Emile Prisse d'Avennes et le livre," 123.

[18] Prisse d'Avennes, *L'Art arabe*, IV:265.

[19] Stacey Sloboda, "The Grammar of Ornament: Cosmopolitanism and Reform in British Design," *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 3 (2008): 223.

[20] This fashion for the abstract representation of Islamic architecture is seen in books, such as Jules Goury, Owen Jones, and Pascual de Gayangos, *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra* (London: O. Jones, 1836–45); Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856); Adalbert de Beaumont & Eugène Collinot, *Recueil de dessins pour l'art et l'industrie* (Paris: Canson, 1859–80); Jules Bourgoïn, *Les Arts arabes: Architecture–menuiserie–bronzes–*

plafonds—revêtements—marbres—pavements—vitraux—etc. Avec une table descriptive et explicative, et le trait général de l'art arabe (Paris: Vve. A. Morel et Cie., 1873); Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer, *Arabische und alt-italienische Bau-Verzierungen, gesammelt, gezeichnet und mit erläuterndem Text begleitet von F.M. Hessemer* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1842).

[21] Saint-Germier, "Émile Prisse d'Avennes et le livre," 107.

[22] Ferry, "Printing the Alhambra."

[23] The growing importance of the role of the publishers and the feeling of competition between various countries that presented their books related to fine arts at the Universal Exhibitions in Paris, such as the one in 1867, are expressed in an article by Félix Favre, "Bibliographie," part of a longer article, "Etudes sur l'exposition universelle de 1867," *Gazette des architectes et du bâtiment* 3 (1868): 299–304.

[24] Jorge de Sousa, *La Mémoire lithographique: 200 ans d'images* (Paris: Art & Métiers du Livre, 1998), 57–59, 70–73, 96–98.

[25] De Sousa, *La Mémoire lithographique*, 79–80.

[26] The mission was sponsored by the French Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Trade. Volait, "Avec un double empressement d'un artiste et d'un antiquaire," 95–96.

[27] See M. Boom, "Drawing with Light: The Photographer A. Jarrot and Artist Willem de Famars Testas in Egypt," in Patricia Wardle, "Summaries," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 42, no. 3 (1994): 311–313; Marie-Laure Prévost, "Emile Prisse d'Avennes, 1807–1879: Égypte de pierre, Égypte de papier," in *Visions d'Égypte*, 14–15; Volait, "Avec un double empressement d'un artiste et d'un antiquaire," 96, 116–17; Aubenas, "Un fonds de photographies unique sur l'Égypte," in *Visions d'Égypte*, 122–33.

[28] Jan de Hond, "Ceci aura néanmoins probablement son utilité: Willem de Famars Testas au Caire, 1858–1860," in *Le Caire dessiné et photographié au XIXe siècle*, ed. Mercedes Volait (Paris: Picard, 2013), 69–94; Terry Van Druten, "La naissance d'un orientaliste nordique: L'influence de l'expédition d'Émile Prisse d'Avennes sur l'œuvre de Willem de Famars Testas," in *Emile Prisse d'Avennes: Un artiste-antiquaire en Égypte*, 141–162; Luitgard Mols, "Islamic Art and Architecture Through the Eyes of Testas: Documentary Drawings and Genre Scenes," in *O Ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in Honour of Remke Kruk*, eds. Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan Hogendijk (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 423–36.

[29] The cost of hiring a photographer, whose works would support the accuracy of the representation of ancient Egypt, was covered by the publisher of *Histoire de l'art égyptien*. "Note pour Monsieur le Directeur des Beaux-arts, Historique des négociations qui ont amené la maison Arthus Bertrand à entreprendre la publication de L'Art Égyptien et à perler un traité avec l'auteur M. Prisse D'avennes [*sic*] pour régler les conditions de cette publication," unsigned and undated, F/21/2287, "Missions. M. Prisse d'Avennes," Archives Nationales de France, Paris.

[30] "Missions. M. Prisse d'Avennes," F/21/2287, Archives Nationales de France, Paris.

[31] "J'ai recueilli de quoi faire le plus bel ouvrage qui ait encore été publié sur l'Égypte," letter dated January 16, 1860, Ms. 2283, f. 97, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Paris.

[32] "Hors quelques planches de Giraud [*sic*] de Prangey lithographiées d'après des daguerréotypes tout ce qui est publié en France sur l'architecture arabe d'Égypte est mauvais sans en excepter les planches du grand ouvrage ainsi que les Monuments du Kaire de Coste." NAF 20426, f. 49, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; also printed in Marie-Claire Saint-Germier, "Un livre rêvé: L'Égypte monumentale de Prisse d'Avennes," in *Visions d'Égypte*, 145.

[33] Élisabeth Delange, "Prisse et l'égyptologie" in *Visions d'Égypte*, 27–29.

[34] "Baudry . . . voudrait publier l'ouvrage en deux parties, d'abord les ornements afin de réunir par ce moyen les fonds nécessaires pour éditer plus tard le reste." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 225. Letter dated May 12, 1864.

[35] "Les besoins de l'Industrie," "avant tout faire un livre qui vaille et ne pas le déflorer." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 225. Letter dated May 12, 1864.

[36] Prisse d'Avennes, while signing the contract with his publisher, scheduled a new trip to Egypt in order to find additional materials necessary for the preparation of the book. It seems that this trip never took place. Prisse d'Avennes's letters to his friend and Egyptologist François Chabas (1817–82), Ms. 2585, f. 288–291 (letter dated May 19, 1869?) and f. 604–606 (letter dated October 17, 1869), Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Paris.

[37] Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232.

[38] Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232–33; Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault*, 189–203; Prisse d'Avennes's letters to Cournault also suggest that Girault de Prangey drew some motifs for *L'Art arabe*'s plates that were probably not clearly visible or lacking in Prisse

d'Avennes's studies. Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232. Letter dated from October or December 6, 1868.

[39] "Miroitent et changent d'aspect ou de forme à chaque instant." Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault*, 201. Letter dated December 20, 1872.

[40] Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault*, 201. Letter dated December 20, 1872; Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232–33. Letters dated from September 5, 1871 and June 5, 1873.

[41] Nearly every contemporary publisher who has reproduced *L'Art arabe* has disregarded the fact that Girault de Prangey was the author of some of the most famous plates of the book and often reproduced his works without the captions that were included in the original version of *L'Art arabe*. Consequently, Girault de Prangey's images are attributed to Prisse d'Avennes. Plates assigned to Girault de Prangey and reproduced in volume one of *L'Art arabe*: 1, 3, 4, 6, 15, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27; plates from Girault de Prangey's *Monuments arabes d'Égypte* used by Prisse d'Avennes in *L'Art arabe*: 12, 13, 22, 38, 41, 56, 70, 72, 80, 84, 87.

[42] "Je dois examiner les pierres ces jours-ci et si les prix ne dépassent pas ce que me coûtent mes planches j'en achèterai probablement quelques-unes." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232. Letter dated June 3, 1868.

[43] Fraser, "Books, Prints, and Travel," 342–67; Favre, "Bibliographie." The article also points out the increased number of individuals who worked on a printed volume at that time. ↵

[44] See Volait, "Avec un double empressement d'un artiste et d'un antiquaire," 102–17.

[45] Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 233. Letter dated June 5, 1873. "Les pierres lithographiques [de Girault de Prangey]. La plupart sont tellement fatiguées, estompées que je ne puis les réutiliser; cependant vous verrez comme j'ai su tirer partie des meilleures, en les faisant retoucher par Mouilleron." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232. Letter dated September 5, 1871. Mouilleron's name is inscribed under three other plates of *L'Art arabe* (vol. I, pls. 31, 32, and vol. III, pl. 134), but not under the plates attributed to Girault de Prangey.

[46] "Vues pittoresques." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 231. Letter dated August 16, 1868.

[47] "Ne sait pas dessiner la figure." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 231. Letter dated August 16, 1868 and an undated letter 1868–1870 (?).

[48] "Il n'y a plus de lithographes, ils disparaissent tous les jours." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232. Letter dated September 17, 1871.

[49] "Tous ces messieurs . . . voudraient se faire payer une mauvaise chromo le prix d'un bon tableau." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232. Undated letter, 1868–1870 (?).

[50] Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 231. Letter dated August 16, 1868.

[51] "Manque de lithographes capables," "On a peine à croire quand on ne s'occupe pas de publication qu'il est impossible aujourd'hui d'exécuter ce qu'on a fait il y a vingt ans." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 231. Letter dated June 3, 1868.

[52] The address of the publisher in Savoy's edition of *L'Art arabe* is 25 rue Abbattucci, which is now rue la Boétie. "Mairie de Paris: Recherches des rues de Paris," Mairie de Paris, last modified June 9, 2008, http://www.v2asp.paris.fr/commun/v2asp/v2/nomenclature_voies/Voieactu/5110.nom.htm. This indicates that Savoy's business was not located close to other known publishers and bookstores, but in the newly rebuilt district of the capital called "Grands Boulevards." Consequently, Savoy's publishing initiative was rather singular, and he did not inherit or take a large part in its publishing activities.

[53] "Mon bailleur de fonds ne donnerait pas un écu aujourd'hui des planches pittoresques de Girault que la maison Morel me prie de supprimer pour ne pas nuire à sa vente. Il faut mon énergie et mon désintéressement pour résister et poursuivre dans ma voie; mais je suis fatigué de la lutte." Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 232. Letter dated November 4, 1872.

[54] Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault*, 201. Letter dated December 20, 1872.

[55] "Les détails d'ornementation dominant." Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault*, 201. Letter dated November 4, 1872. These first twenty installments would correspond to the first eighty plates of the book (vol. I and part of vol. II), of which about a half present picturesque views and the other half the colorful detailed views of intricate designs.

[56] "Combien je suis obligé de sacrifier aux besoins de l'industrie afin de trouver les moyens de publier un livre dispendieux qui sans cela ne se vendrait pas, tant le public lettré et artiste disparaît chaque jour davantage." Hecre, *Les Orient de Charles Cournault*, 201. Letter dated November 4, 1872.

[57] Hecre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 233. Letter dated August 14, 1874.

[58] NAF 20416, f. 266, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; Hebre, "Je vous écris en toute hâte," 233. Letter dated January 1, 1875.

[59] "Ce qui était seulement au début de l'opération un annexe [*sic*] à l'art arabe est devenue par suite la principale partie du livre, parceque [*sic*] c'est la seule qui reponde [*sic*] aux spéculations d'un homme qui n'entend rien à [*sic*] l'art mais qui veut que son argent lui rapporte tout ce qu'il peut produire." Underline in the original. "Avant-Propos Arabesques," NAF 20416, f. 266, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Although its significance is unclear, this note makes it appear that Prisse d'Avennes tried to write a forward to a part of *L'Art arabe* on arabesques and Islamic ornament, and provide some information about the content of this part of his oeuvre that he regretted that he was unable to accomplish himself.

[60] Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *La Décoration arabe: Décors muraux-plafonds-mosaïques-dallages-boiseries-vitraux-étoffes-tapis-reliures-faïences-ornements divers; Extraits du grand ouvrage L'Art arabe de Prisse d'Avennes choisis, classés et arrangés par les éditeurs* (Paris: J. Savoy and Cie., 1885). The same title was also released in 1885 in Paris by the publisher A. Daly.

[61] Around 1867, Prisse d'Avennes originally intended to published a work, entitled *Études sur l'Art arabe en Égypte* (Studies on the Arab art of Egypt). Volait, "Avec un double empressement d'un artiste et d'un antiquaire," 99. The title of this work is relatively broad and it is possible that already around 1867 Prisse planned to introduce to his publishing projects some decontextualized images of Islamic ornament alongside more picturesque studies of Egyptian architecture.

[62] "Notes of the notary Augustin Massion," September 30, 1869, minutier central XXXIV 1287, inventory after the death of Auguste-Jean Morel, Archives Nationales de France, Paris. An important source of information about the targeted readers of Morel's house among these documents comes in the form of a list of the creditors of Morel's publishing business, written on November 13, 1869. Bouvier, *L'Édition d'architecture à Paris au XIXe siècle*, 47–51.

[63] Bouvier, *L'Édition d'architecture à Paris au XIXe siècle*, 50–51; Pierre Chabat, *Fragments d'architecture* (Paris: A. Morel, 1878).

[64] "Paraît avoir une habileté commerciale hors ligne," "est arrivé à faire quinze cent mille francs d'affaires par an." Letter dated July 12, 1869, signed by "Le Commissaire, Inspecteur de l'Imprimerie et de la librairie," from "Ministère de l'Intérieur," F/18/1805, folder on "Morel (Auguste Jean)," Archives Nationales de France, Paris.

[65] "N'a rien cru impossible." Letter dated July 12, 1869, F/18/1805, folder on "Morel (Auguste Jean)," Archives Nationales de France, Paris; Favre, "Bibliographie," 302.

[66] The founding act of "Société entre Made. Veuve Morel et Mr. des Fossez et Mme Vve Bernoville" signed by notary A. Massion, March 21, 1870, minutier central XXXIV, 1291, Archives Nationales de France, Paris. This is the founding act of the company of Morel's widow, the Parisian merchant and the manager of the business Henri-Charles Des Fossez, and the little-known Caroline Chenest, Veuve Bernoville.

[67] "Proche des architectes qui ont publié les premières descriptions illustrées." Peltre, *Les Arts de l'Islam*, 41–44.

[68] See Anke Scharrahs, "Damascene Interior Decoration in Bojnice Castle: A Gem of Refined Urban Residential Décor," in *Umenie Orientu. Zborník príspevkov z medzinárodného sympózia usporiadaného pri príležitosti výstavy Umenie Orientu*, ed. K. Malečková (Bojnice, Slovakia: SNM-Múzeum Bojnice, 2015), 33–48; Anna McSweeney, "Versions and Visions of the Alhambra in the Nineteenth-century Ottoman World," *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 22, no. 1 (2015): 44–69; Volait, *Fous du Caire: Excentriques, architectes & amateurs d'art*, 117–53; John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture, 1500–1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[69] McSweeney, "Versions and Visions of the Alhambra," 45.

[70] Volait, *Fous du Caire: Excentriques, architectes & amateurs d'art*, 129–30.

[71] As Mercedes Volait argues, "For Prisse d'Avennes, as well as for Napoléon's scientists, the interest in Cairene monuments was driven by a curiosity about anything Egyptian." Volait, "History or Theory? French Antiquarianism, Cairene Architecture and Enlightenment Thinking," special issue *Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century*, *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010): 241.

Illustrations

Unless otherwise indicated, all illustrations are in the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Art & Architecture Collection, The New York Public Library. Photographs provided courtesy of the New York Public Library Digital Collections.



Fig. 1, Émile Prisse d'Avennes (artist) and Bernard Schmidt (lithographer), *Mosquée sépulchrale de Qaytbay* (XVe. siècle) (Funeral Mosque of Qaitbay [Fifteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Caire depuis le 7ème siècle jusqu'à la fin du 18ème siècle* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 19. [\[return to text\]](#)

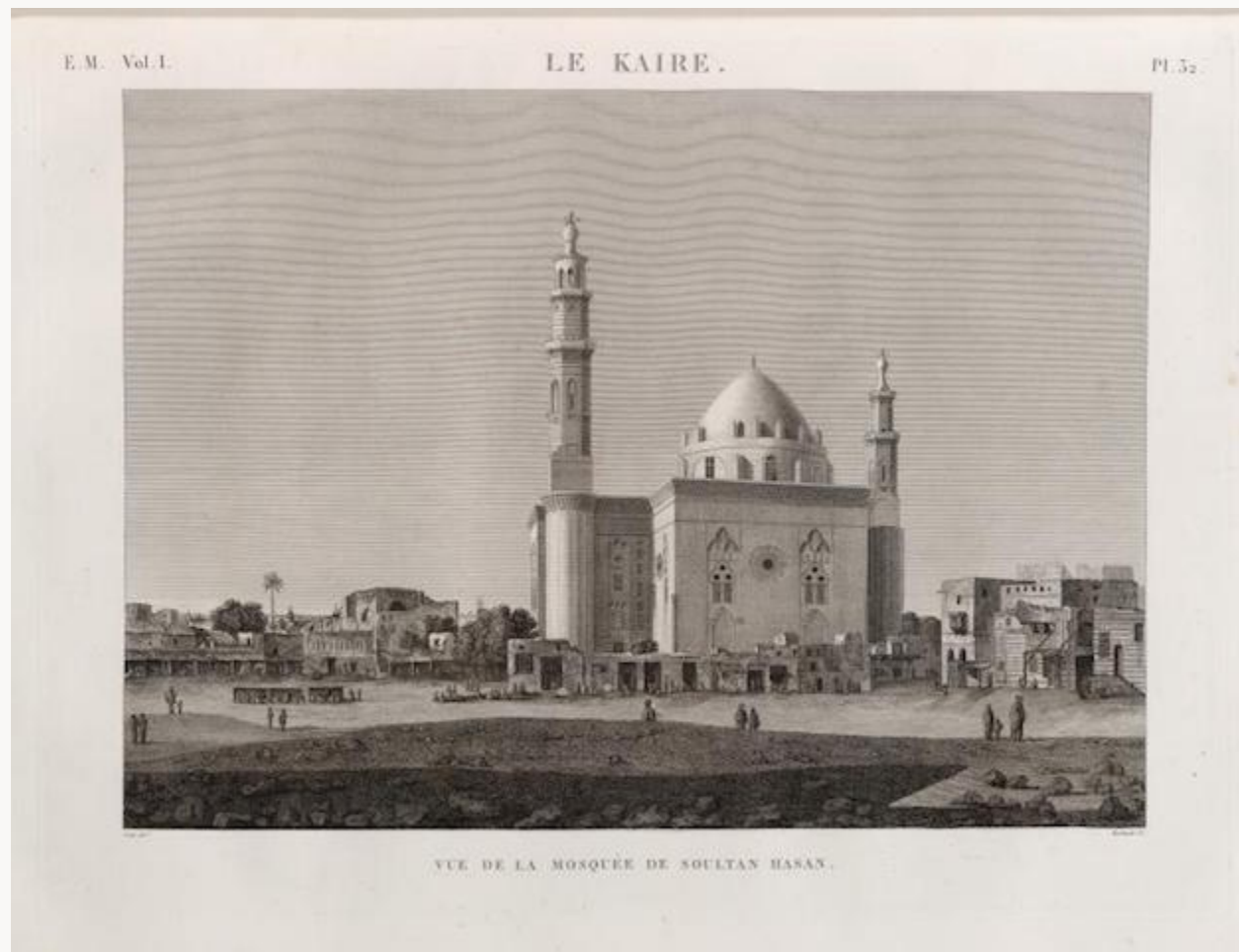


Fig. 2, Conte (artist) and Berthault (engraver), *Le Kaire: Vue de la Mosquée de Sultân Hasan* (Cairo: View of the Sultan Hassan Mosque), 1809–29. Engraving. Published in *La Description de l'Égypte: ou, Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française*, ed. Edme-François Jomard (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1809–28), État Moderne I: pl. 32. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. [\[return to text\]](#)

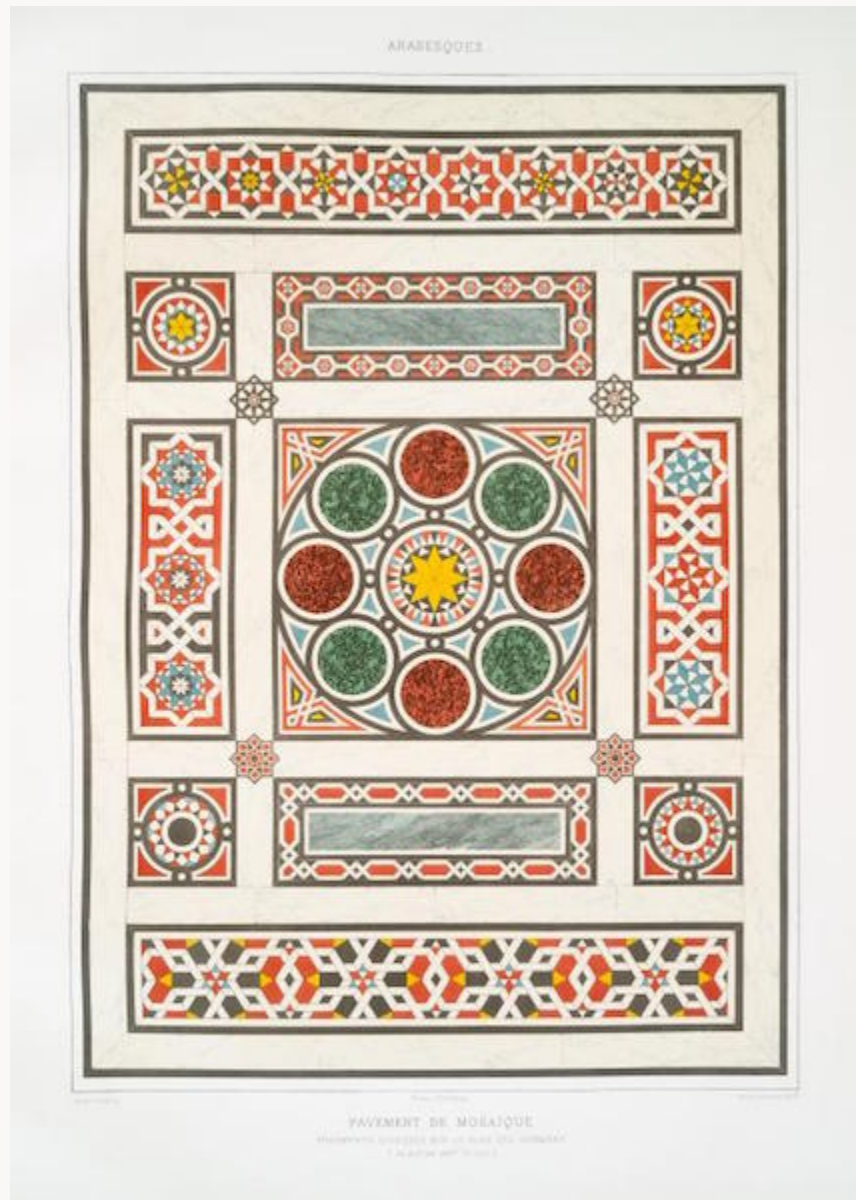


Fig. 3, Émile Prisse d'Avennes (artist) and Daniel Vierge Urrabieta (lithographer), *Arabesques: Pavement de mosaïque, fragments disposée sur le plan des dorqâah (du XVIe. au XVIIIe. siècle)* (Arabesques: Mosaic Pavement, Fragments Arranged on the Plan of the Dorqâah [from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century]), 1869–77. Chromolithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 56. [\[return to text\]](#)

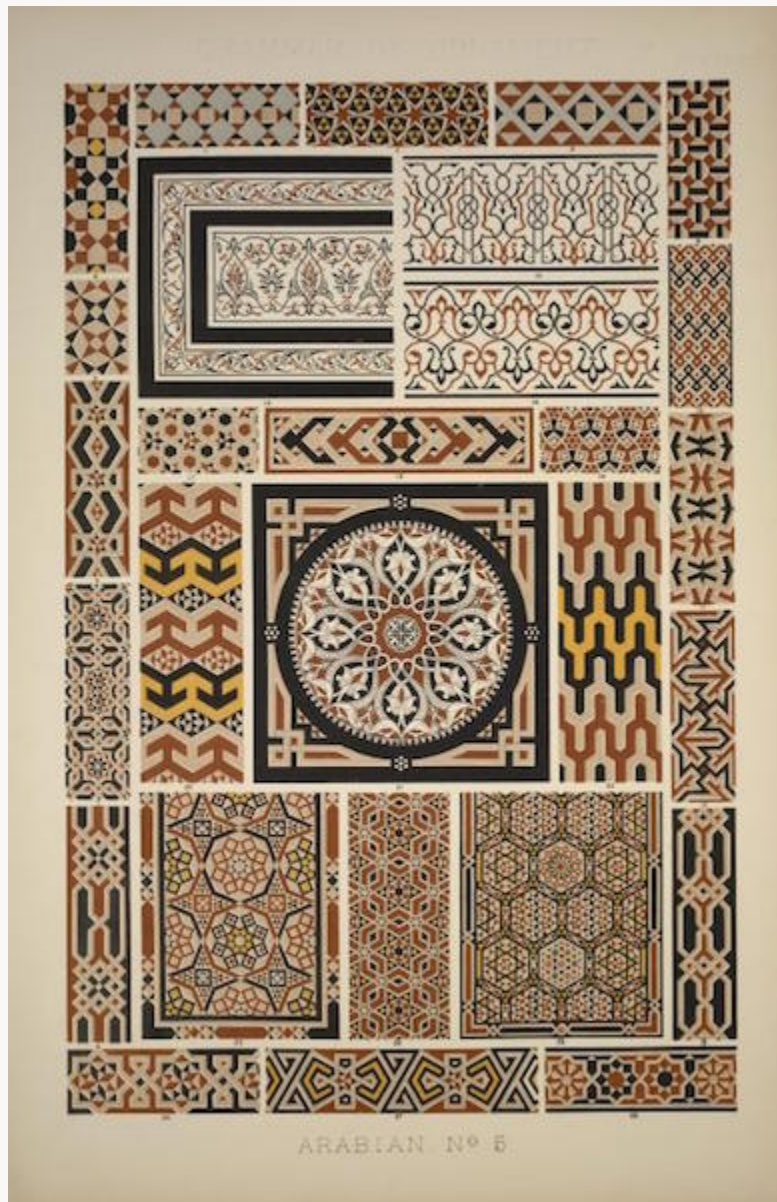


Fig. 4, Owen Jones (artist) and Francis Bedford (lithographer), *Arabian No. 5: Mosaics from Walls and Pavements from Houses in Cairo*, 1856. Chromolithograph. Published in *The Grammar of Ornament: Illustrated by Examples from Various Styles of Ornament; 112 Plates* (London: Day & Son, 1856), pl. 35.

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Fig. 5, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artist), Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot and Monthelier (lithographers), *Principale porte de la citadelle: Bâb El-A'zab (XIII^e siècle)* (Main Door of the Citadel: Bâb El-A'zab [Thirteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 6. [\[return to text\]](#)

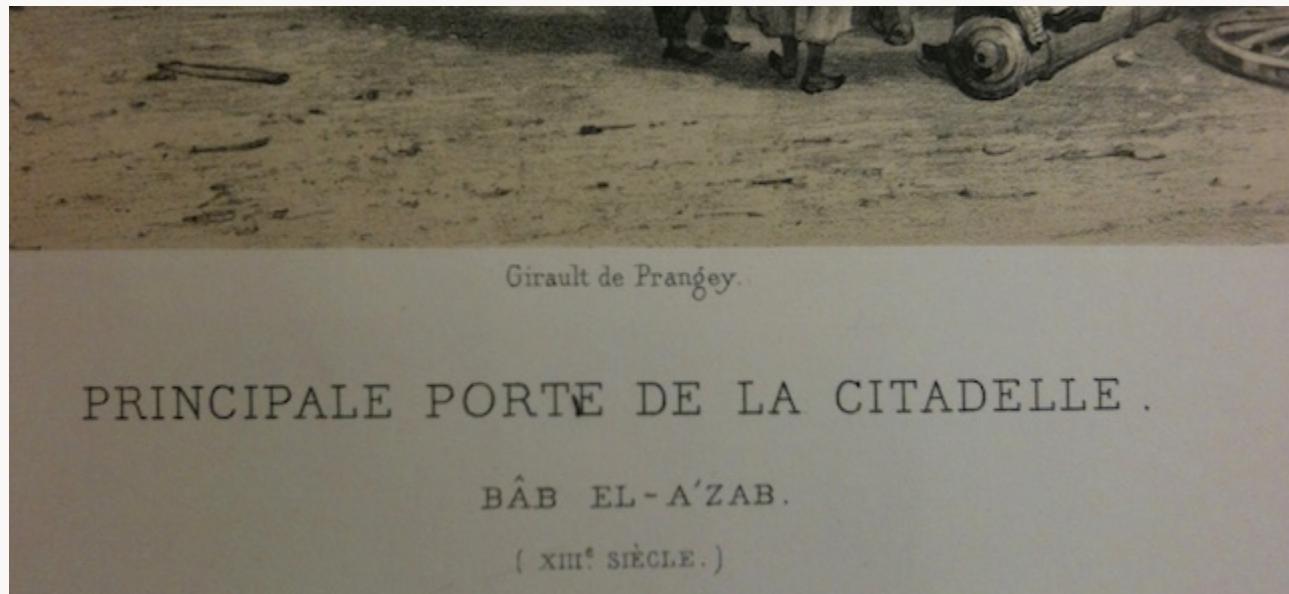


Fig. 6, Detail of Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artist), Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot and Monthelie (lithographers), *Principale porte de la citadelle: Bâb El-A'zab (XIIIe. siècle)* (Main Door of the Citadel: Bâb El-A'zab [Thirteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 6. Photograph by the author. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artists), Charles Fichot and Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot (lithographers), *Tombeau du sultan Tarabey* (Tomb of Sultan Tarabey), 1846. Lithograph. Published in *Monuments arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie, d'Asie Mineure dessinés et mesurés de 1842 à 1845* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1846), pl. 82. Stock of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (artist) and Charles Fichot (lithographer), *Tombeau du sultan Tarabey (XVIe. siècle)* (Tomb of Sultan Tarabey [Sixteenth Century]), 1869–77. Lithograph. Published in *L'Art arabe* (Paris: Vve A. Morel et Cie., 1869–77), I: pl. 27. [\[return to text\]](#)