

## **The Historical and Heritage Importance of Abdeen Palace**

**Walaa Eldin Badawy Madbwly<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

### **Abstract**

This research aims to shed light on the Abdeen Palace, which is considered one of the most important and most famous palaces in Egypt; Abdeen Palace symbolizes modern Cairo, where Khedive Ismail gave, during his construction, instructions to plan the city of Cairo in the European style to be Paris of the East. Abdeen Palace witnessed many events that contributed to the establishment of Egypt as an independent state, as this palace was from the beginning of its establishment in 1863 AD until the revolution of 1952 AD viewed 90 years of social and political life between its wings and its halls; at the center of this new city Khedive Ismail constructed the new residence for the royal family, the working headquarters of the monarch, and the residence of the royal entourage. This new edifice, the royal palace at Abdeen, would be a neoclassical building in the French style that would match the luxury of European palaces in its grand and innovative architecture, as well as its ornate interiors, which witnessed the building of this palace and show its historical, heritage and artistic importance.

**Keywords:** Abdeen palace, Khedive Ismail, Abdeen palace, Establishment style, Architect.

### **Introduction**

'Abdeen Palace is one of the most important and famous palaces constructed during the reign of the family of Muhammad „Ali Pasha of Egypt. Khedive Isma'il started to build this palace immediately after his ascendance of the throne in (1279 A.H / 1863 A.D), and took it as his official residence in 1291 A.H / 1874A.D. It was mainly built to transfer the official royal residence from the citadel to the city center of Cairo. It was called 'Abdeen Palace because it was built on the ruins of a house owned by "Abdeen Bik "a Turkish prince whose position was "Amir al- liwa alSultani".<sup>1</sup> Khedive Isma'il bought the house from him and also expropriated hundreds of other buildings and routes around them to increase the whole area to 24 acres. The palace took ten years to build, and was carried out by Engineer De Corel wel Rousseou, and a huge number of Egyptian, Italian, French and Turkish painters. The palace building cost 700.000 pounds, while the furniture cost 2,000,000 Egyptian pounds.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> -'Abdeen Bik -"Amir al-liwa alSultani"- who was assuming the position of Emir of the Sharif Al-Sultan Brigade, for supervising the annual pilgrimage trips during the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha the Great

<sup>2</sup> - محمود الجوهري، قصور الرجعية، جزآن، الدار القومية للطباعة والنشر، القاهرة، ١٩٦٢ ص ٢٦.

The palace was given several names, the most important of which; the Jewel of palaces, the lost Paradise, as well as the beacon of the royal palaces. Although the Khedive lived in the palace and transferred the official royal location to it, the palace kept its old name 'Abdeen, which included also the square and the entire quarter.<sup>3</sup>

### **Khedive Ismail, founder of Abdeen Palace**

Isma'il ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad 'Ali was born at al- Musafirkhana palace in Cairo on 17 Rajab 1245 A.H / 12 January 1830 A.D. He is the second of Ibrahim Pasha's sons from a different mother of his two brothers, prince Ahmed Rifat and Mustafa Fadel, as there were three sons for his father Ibrahim Basha, the middle was Ismail, the elder was Ahmed Rifat who was born on 26 Rabi' al- akhar 1241A.H - 8 December 1825A.D and died at the end of Shawwal 1274 A.H-15 , May 1858A.D in a train accident at Kafr al Zayat , and his younger son Mustafa Fadel (born in 29 Sha'ban 1245A.H -22 February 1830A.D died in Istanbul on 12 Shawwal 1292 A .H - 11 November 1875 A.D .<sup>4</sup>

The year 1863 was important for Cairo, as it marked the accession of Isma'il Pasha (1863–1879), the first ruler to make an overall plan for the city's development (and to complete the big project " modern Egypt " which his Egyptians as the second great reformer of the nineteenth century<sup>5</sup> . Ismail's age differs from the rest of ages in Egypt's modern history. No governor or ruler, with his unique vision, ever preceded or came after him. The modern constructive growth, achieved during his era, was unequal. He had an enlightened European vision through which he tried to restore the glory of his grandfather Muhammad Ali in a more advanced and civilized style<sup>6</sup>.

Isma'il gave priority to foreign policy and related plans, while domestic issues came next. His plans included achieving political independence and progress to Egypt to promote it to the ranks of great powers. The dream of establishing an independent Egypt did not die with Muhammad 'Ali, his grandson Isma'il tried to make Egypt more independent of the Ottoman empire, and was obsessed with the same burning ambition, but he pursued his goal by diplomatic rather than military means by doubling his tribute to Istanbul. Isma'il endeavored to get full autonomy in the internal and financial affairs of Egypt<sup>7</sup>.

At the end of Khedive Isma'il's reign, due to the financial crisis, the European countries ' pressure and interference in the country's internal affairs has increased. It began with establishing a debt Fund, then imposing a bilateral

---

<sup>٢</sup>- محمود عباس معالم مصر الحديثة والمعاصرة تاريخ وحضارة ، الدار العالمية للنشر والتوزيع، ٢٠٠٦ ص ١٣٩.  
<sup>٤</sup>- عبد الرحمن الرفاعي ، عصر إسماعيل ، دار المعارف ، القاهرة ، ١٩٨٧ ص ٧٤١

<sup>5</sup> - Hunter, R., Egypt under the Khedives (1805-1879), the American university in Cairo press, 1999, P. 70

<sup>٦</sup>- الجبرتي (عبد الرحمن بن حسن، ت ١٤٢١هـ/ ٤٢ - ١٢٤١م) : عجائب الآثار في التراجم والأخبار، مطبعة دار الكتب المصرية، القاهرة، ١٩٩٨ ص ٢٧١

<sup>7</sup> - Lyster, W., the citadel of Cairo, a history and guide, the palm press, 1993.p67-1

control on the financial affairs of Egypt, and appointing two effective European ministers in the Egyptian government. When Ismail felt interference of these countries, and the restrictions imposed on him, he strived to get rid of these burdens depending on the support of the people, but the European countries, especially England, France and Germany managed to have the Sultan issue a Furman on June 26, 1879, to dethrone him. He left Egypt on Monday, June 30, 1879 to his exile in Napoli, where the king of Italy prepared a special palace for his residence with his family<sup>8</sup>. Then he started moving in the European capitals. In 1305 A.H / 1888 A.D he moved to Istanbul and resided at his palace until he died on Saturday, Ramadan 5, 1312 A.H / 23 March 1895 A.D at the age of 65 years. His body was carried to Egypt and was buried in Rifa'i mosque<sup>9</sup>.

### **The Reason of building Abdeen Palace**

When Isma'il built 'Abdeen Palace to make it the official royal residence, he intended to get down to live among his people, not guarded or protected by the citadel. It is well known that the city of Cairo, established by the Fatimids since 358 A.H / 969 A.D, was the capital of the Fatimid state throughout the period Egypt was submitting to it. Despite the presence of capitals prior to Cairo; Al-Fustat, Al-'Askar and Al-Qatae', The Khalifs of the Fatimid state did not leave, or go beyond the walls of Cairo. It remained the basis and capital of Egypt nearly two centuries until the Fatimid state fell in 567 A.H / 1171 A.D.

The Fatimid state was followed by the Ayyubid , but Salah Al-Din had no wish to live in the Cairo of the Fatimids, which was at that time full of their palaces and their great buildings, so he began choosing a new area in the Muqatam. He chose a hill separated from the mountain and ordered to build a Citadel for him, known afterwards as "Al-Gabal Citadel". He took it as his residence and a location of the government , and left Cairo .The citadel , built by Salah al-Din , remained a location of the government, and a residence for the governor throughout the Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottoman , and then Muhammad Ali(1) , who stayed in the citadel .<sup>10</sup>

Although the residences of the governor were numerous since the era of Muhammad „Ali, the citadel kept its symbolism as an official royal residence. The rulers, foreign visitors, and ambassadors were received in it. It was the comprehensive residence to rule Egypt until 1289 A.H / 1872 A.D. At that time Khedive Isma'il came to throne and thought that this situation does not conform with his great dreams of establishing a modern capital for rule, so he transferred the official royal residence from the citadel to 'Abdeen Palace.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> - عبد الرحمن الرفاعي عصر إسماعيل ، جزءان ، دار المعارف ، القاهرة . ١٩٧٨ ص ٢٥٣-٢٥١ .  
<sup>9</sup> - إلياس الأيوبي ، تاريخ مصر في عهد الخديوي إسماعيل باشا من سنة ١٨٦٣-١٨٧٩ ، جزءان ، مكتبة مدبولي ، القاهرة ، ص ٥٢٥ .  
<sup>10</sup> - سعاد ماهر محمد ، مساجد مصر وأولياؤها الصالحون ، ٥ أجزاء ، المجلس الاعلى للشئون الاسلامية ؛ القاهرة ١٩٧١ ص ١٩٤، ١٩٣ .  
<sup>11</sup> - عباس الطرابيلى ، شوارع لها تاريخ ، الدار المصرية اللبنانية ، الطبعة الأولى ، ١٩٩٧ ، ص ٢٤٢ .

Isma'il transferred the official royal residence from the citadel for several reasons, including the end of the Mamluk era or cavalry warriors with swords as a result of the development of artillery, guns and which became an essential weapon for the defense and attack, and thus the lack of importance of citadels as centers of fortification and protection. This was followed by a change in the composition of the ruling class from warrior soldiers relying on courage to prove their legitimacy to a civilized class depending on science, and succession of reign among them, and also the emergence of regular armies subjecting to the ruler and brought up on loyalty to him.<sup>12</sup> So, Abdeen palace was the long awaited official royal residence that symbolized the shift from Salah al-Din citadel walls to Cairo, a move that represented a break-away from the past and traditional ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Isma'il was determined to have a new Cairo in the image of Paris. First on the list was to move his seat of power from the out of the way citadel complex. He wanted a new palace for his new city with an opera house, theater and hippodrome. . He had envisioned himself as the "Emperor of Africa" gatekeeper of the main route to India and the East. Nevertheless, Europe was most often on his mind after he had been sent by his grandfather to France at the age fourteen on a "scholarly mission", a later trip in 1867 A.D to the Exposition universal in the Paris of Haussmann would trigger Isma'il self-proclaimed "mania for building".<sup>14</sup>

Abdeen palace reflected his love of urban development, his passion for splendor and royalty. It also reflected both the continued influence of his Ottoman traditions as well as his European teachings acquired during his upbringing in Paris and Vienna. The Khedive Isma'il not only rushed into massive public works and urban development to create a grand Cairo beyond the limits of the old Fatimid, Mamluk and Ottoman cities, but also initiated far reaching industrial and agricultural projects: railroads, roads, telegraph lines, postal services, barrages, canals and schools.<sup>15</sup>

The symbolic value emerges from a thorough analysis of the ruler's character and his aspirations embodied in the establishment of Cairo city, by which he wanted it to engage in a civilization race with the world's cities, and getting close to his people by transferring the royal residence palace , for the first time , from the top of the mountain to settle the city center by building Abdeen Palace in its location.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> - خالد عزب ، دار السلطنة في مصر ، المجلس الاعلى للثقافة ، ٢٠٠٧ ص ١٩٩

<sup>13</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace: the jewel of 19th century, Bibliotheca Alexandria, 2007, P.9.

<sup>14</sup> - Johnston, S., Egyptian palaces and villas, 1808-1960, the American university in Cairo press, 2006, P.49.-

<sup>15</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace, Op.cit, P.8

<sup>16</sup> - سهير زكى حواس ، القاهرة الخديوية ، رصد وتوثيق عمارة وعمران منطقة وسط المدينة ، مركز التصميمات المعمارية بالمهندسين ، القاهرة ، ٢٠٠١ ص ٢٨.

## **Palace Site**

West of the glorious city of al-Qahira, emerged a second magnificent metropolis with new visual culture district communities and elaborately adorned wide thoroughfares. It was the new city Khedive Isma'il envisaged to complement the agricultural and demographic revolution within the country and to reflect Egypt's new status.<sup>17</sup> At the center of this new city Khedive Isma'il would construct the new residence of the royal family. The palace occupied one of the new undeveloped zones in Khedive Isma'il master plan to transform Cairo into a European capital which used to house several ponds, few structures and houses. The Khedive had appointed "Ali Pasha Mubarak<sup>18</sup>" as a minister of public works, to oversee the development of the peripherals and incorporate them within the master plan. This plan marked the new quarters of Isma'ilia, al-Fajjalah and Abdeen. The area around Abdeen square and palace were perceived as the new city center from where picturesque boulevards radiated to connect the modern city Abdeen area "the center of Cairo," was a collection of stagnant pools, including al-Fra'in pond, site of the current Abdeen square, Al-Saqain pond, al-Fawala pond, al-Nassria pond, and a large group of small ponds and swamps, interspersed with a series of hills and sand dunes and French citadels, stretching from the current Al-Sayeda Zeinab to the end of Al-Mobtadaian street. Khedive Isma'il flattened those plateaus and highlands and filled the ponds with their dust. After planning, the area became one of the most beautiful modern places in Cairo. The official royal residence was transferred to it after it was in the citadel during the era of Muhammad Ali Pasha and his successors.<sup>19</sup>

Khedive Isma'il established Abdeen Palace on the ruins of Abdeen bik Palace overlooking Al-Fra'in Lake, and instead of the lake he established the current Abdeen square which covers an area nearly nine acres, then he planned the entire region after filling the ponds around it like: Al-Nassria, Al-Saqain, Al-Fawala ponds, and a group of swamps. He removed the piles of dust and hills, planned several streets of which the most important: Abdeen street and Abd al-Aziz Street, named after the Turkish Sultan 'Abd al-Aziz on the occasion of his visit to Egypt in Isma'il's era. This effort made the area one of the most beautiful quarters in Cairo and the most deserving the residence of the King.<sup>20</sup> Khedive Isma'il built Abdeen palace and planned the streets around it.

---

<sup>17</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace: the jewel of 19th century, Bibliotheca Alexandria, 2007, P.8.

<sup>18</sup> - Ali Pasha Mubarak (, born 1823 or 1824- died on 14 November 1893) was an Egyptian public works and education minister during" of Khedive Isma'il the second half of the nineteenth century. He is often considered one of the most influential and talented of Egypt's 19th century reformers, is known for his contribution in the reconstruction of Cairo's landscape and for founding Egypt's modern educational system.

<sup>19</sup> - سيد كريم ، القاهرة ، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب ، ١٩٩٩ ص ٦٥ ، ٦٤ .

<sup>20</sup> - Samir Sobhi, Tales of Abdine, al-Ahram weekly 16-22 August 2012, No.1111, P.23.

Wide modern streets were created all the way from the Bab al-Hadid (Gate of Iron) to the north, al-Sheikh Rihan to the west, the citadel to the east and AlSayeda Zeinab to the south. Abdeen district was dwelled by a large number of princes and pashas. This had a great impact on the architectural richness that has characterized the quarter, as Abdeen Palace became the focus center surrounded with many palaces of princes and pashas.<sup>21</sup>

### **The most important historical events of the palace**

Abdeen Palace, the jewel of the 19th century architecture in Cairo, witnessed the events that led to the formation of an independent Egypt. Since the beginning of its construction in 1863 A.D until the 1952 A.D Revolution, the Palace encountered the major events that took place in Cairo and carved memories of those happenings within its Suites, Salons and Grand Halls. It was the site of several famous confrontations between local rulers and nationalist demonstrators, both military and civilian and British officials.<sup>22</sup>

Abdeen palace started to receive guests in December 1872 A.D. The family celebrated weddings of the Khedive's sons and daughter. All of the official celebrations took place at the palace halls and grand salons as well as its garden. In 1879 A.D, at the Khedive Isma'il Salon, the Khedive was handed the Firman decreeing his abdication, and replacement with his son Muhammad Tawfik Pasha. Subsequently, he departed from the country on his Yacht "alMahrousa" sailing to Naples. Under Khedive Tawfik (1879 -1892 A.D) the Palace became the stage for majestic festivities, as well as for political unrest. Grand celebrations and extravagant soirees became part of the royal ceremonial functions. The official conference room at Abdeen witnessed official meetings that in many instances led to the perpetual changing of cabinets. In 1881A.D, Abdeen square and palace witnessed a military demonstration led by Ahmed Orabi<sup>23</sup>, an army general. Orabi demanded the dissolution of the Cabinet of Riyad Pasha and the introduction of a nationalist minister. The Orabi revolt was a pretext for British intervention. In July 1882 A.D, British ships bombarded the city of Alexandria. The Khedive had left Abdeen Palace, to that of Ras al-Tin in Alexandria, when 12,000 British troops landed to secure his rule and set foot in the affairs of the country. Subsequently, Orabi was arrested and kept at the Palace prison before his exile to Cylon.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> - عبد المنصف سالم نجم، قصور الامراء والباشوات في مدينة القاهرة في القرن التاسع عشر) دراسة تاريخية وثائقية (، جزءان ، مكتبة زهراء الشرق ، القاهرة ، ٢٠٠١ ص ١٨٥.

<sup>22</sup> - Goldschmidt, A., & Johnston, R., Historical dictionary of Egypt, the American university in Cairo press, 2004, P.29.

<sup>23</sup> - Ahmed Orabi, Orabi Pasha, was officer of the Egyptian army. The first political and military leader in Egypt to rise from the fellahin, ' Orabi, participated in an 1879 mutiny that developed into the Orabi, Revolt against the of Khedive Tewfik.

<sup>24</sup> - Cultant· Abdeen Palace, Op.cit, P.32.

During the reign of Sultan Hussein Kamel, soldiers demonstrated demanding higher wages. Early in 1919 the square in front of the palace saw a revolution when masses filled Abdeen square requesting King Fouad to release Saad Zaghloul<sup>25</sup> and his companions, and to bring them back from exile. Also, the square saw the people's revolution between 1930 and 1935. It was called afterwards the constitutions' battle where the royal palace submitted to the people's requests, the constitution of 1930 fell, and was substituted by the constitution of 1923.<sup>26</sup>

In 1942 A.D, during the reign of King Farouk, (1936 -1952 A.D) Abdeen square and palace were surrounded by British tanks and troops requesting the King to dismiss the cabinet and call upon Al-Nahhas Pasha to form a Wafdi government. On that day Ambassador Miles Lampson walked the stairs of the new Tashreefah entrance to the Official Conference room where he met the King and asked him to abdicate.<sup>27</sup>

During the reign of King Farouk, the popular celebrations took place for his wedding to Queen Farida in 1937A.D, and to the Queen Nariman in1951A.D, as well as the annual celebration of his birthday and his coronation. Then the Square saw massive demonstrations during the periods of struggle against the British for complete stability. In these demonstrations Al-Nahhas Pasha<sup>28</sup> responded to the demands of the nation and canceled the 1936 Treaty on October8 ,1951 .The same scene repeated ten years later on July 23, 1952 when the Egyptian army forces crept supported by tanks, and led by Gamal Abd Al-Nasser , to besiege 'Abdeen Palace and forced king Farouk to abdicate.<sup>29</sup>

The transfer of power to the descendants of Isma'il has an effect on the continuation of Abdeen Palace as an official royal residence, as that offered them an opportunity to be associated with the palace, and to establish a permanent official royal residence, to the contrary of what happened when power passed from the members of Muhammad 'Ali's family to the oldest, as the case with the reign of Abbas and Said. Six of Muhammad Ali's family succeeded each other on living in the palace:<sup>30</sup>

- Khedive Isma'il , ruler of Egypt during the period (1863 - 1879 A.D).
- Khedive Tawfik Pasha, Egypt (1879 – 1892 A.D).

---

<sup>25</sup> - Saad Zaghloul pasha ( July 1859– 23 August 1927) was an the leader of the 1919 revolution and statesman. He was the leader of Egypt's nationalist Wafd Party. He served as Prime Minister of Egypt from 26 January 1924 to 24 November 1924.

<sup>26</sup> - عباس الطرابيلى ، شوارع لها تاريخ ، الدار المصرية اللبنانية ، الطبعة الاولى ، ١٩٩٧ ص ٢٥١ ..

<sup>27</sup> - شوقي الجمل ، عبد الله عبد الرازق ، معالم تاريخ مصر الحديث ، دار الثقافة للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع ، ١٩٩٦ ص ١٨٤، ١٨٦ .

<sup>28</sup> - Mostafa el-Nahhas Pasha(June 15, 1879 – August 23, 1965) was an Egyptian political figure. And the leader of the Wafd Party and the Prime Minister of Egypt more than once.

<sup>29</sup> - عباس الطرابيلى ، شوارع لها تاريخ ، ١٩٩٧ ص ٢٥٢ .

<sup>30</sup> - خالد عزب ، دار السلطنة في مصر ، المجلس الاعلى للثقافة ، ٢٠٠٧ ص ٢٠٧ .

- Khedive Abbas Hilmi II (1892 – 1914 A.D).
- Sultan Hussein Kamel (1914 – 1917 A.D).
- King Fuad (1918 – 1936 A.D).
- King Farouk (1936 – 1952 A.D).

President Muhammad Najib, the first president of Egypt after the July Revolution 1952, stayed in it but not for a long time. He stayed there one year, and then left in 1954 A.D to Villa Zeinab Al-Wakil, which was owned by wife of Al-Wafd party's leader Mustafa Al-Nahas before the revolution in the area of Al-Marg , and was forced to stay in it. Gamal Abd Al-Nasser, next president after Muhammad Najib, who used to talk about social justice, equality and the principles of socialism, did not want to live in a palace and preferred to live in his home at Manshiat al-Bakri quarter. So the state opened Abdeen Palace for the people to visit. As a result the palace and its gardens were subject to many violations. Also the General Authority for Agriculture Reform occupied part of the palace, and the Ministry of National Guidance (media) got another part.<sup>31</sup>

The situation remained so throughout the reign of the late President Gamal Abd al- Nasser, but Anwar al-Sadat and Husni Mubarak have used the buildings for government offices. In the era of President Muhammad Mursi, the palace continued to be used for the management of state affairs, in addition to allocating Abdeen and Al-Quba palaces to receive citizens' complaints. President Muhammad Mursi paid his first visit to the Palace on the first of September 2012 A.D.<sup>32</sup>

### **Establishment stages of the palace**

Before his rule of Egypt, Khedive Isma'il lived in Abdeen quarter where he bought two houses, one of them owned by Khurshid Pasha and was known as Al-Sinari, the other owned by Ibrahim Bik Al-Khawaja Dar. He demolished parts of these houses to merge them in each other. It is likely that Isma'il took this step after returning from Istanbul when his uncle Said started his rule of Egypt between the years 1854 -1860 A.D.<sup>33</sup>

An important development happened that led Isma'il to change plans for this palace .He thought to transfer the palace, after becoming a ruler of Egypt to an official residence on the European style, as his predecessors have done, like Abbas in Al-Abbassia and Al-Helmia palaces, and Said in Qasr Al-Nil palace. A plan was set to expropriate many buildings in the surrounding area of the palace including homes, mosques, Zawaya and gardens in a circular area of 24

---

<sup>31</sup> - نهى محمد عفت حسين ، القصور العلوية مالها وما عليها ، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة ،كلية الهندسة،جامعة القاهرة ٢٠١١ ص١٣١،١٣٠.

<sup>32</sup> -al-Masry al-Youm, Sunday, September 2nd 2012, Issue No.3003, P.4.

<sup>33</sup> - خالد عزب ، دار السلطنة في مصر ، ٢٠٠٧ ص١٩٩.



acre. Isma'il exchanged the land of Abdin Bik, on which he built his palace, for an area of 45 acres in the provinces. Expenses for this palace have exceeded the specified financial allocations. The required increase reached to 38.000 sterling pounds in 1292 A.H - 1875 A.D. This amount was paid by debit bills Khedive Isma'il was interested in following-up work by himself, and in case of his travel outside the country, Isma'il Sedik known as Al- Mufatsh, used to do that job daily accompanied by Tawfik Pasha.<sup>34</sup>

Isma'il began to build Abdeen palace to be the official residence in 1863 A.D, when he ordered, on November 5, to buy the properties surrounding the palace, the same year he assumed power in Egypt. This stage continued five years, as Engineer "De Corel wel Rousseou" began work in the construction of the palace only in 1868 A.D. Work remained until 1875 A.D. During that period, Isma'il continued to buy the buildings around the palace. According to the Palace endowment deed, by 1873A.D the exact area of the palace was 90127, 95 square meters and the total cost of construction was estimated to 100,000 Egyptian Gold Pounds.

For Khedive Isma'il, Abdeen Palace was built on the latest European style. He considered moving from the Citadel of Salah Al-Din to Cairo, in its new fashion, a symbol of starting a new phase in the history of Egypt helping it to keep pace with the development the world was witnessing at that time. Khedive Isma'il ordered the writing down of the palace deed in his name in 1873A.D. The order made it clear that all his daughters and sons have been granted a royal edifice for their use and keep, and that Abdeen palace and its annexes and furnishings were to remain in his name<sup>35</sup>.

Yet a few days later, khedive Isma'il ordered the three royal palaces and furnishings; Abdeen palace, al-Gezira palace and al-Giza palace to be granted to his three wives. The redrafting of the deed document granting his wives the ownership of these three palaces was recorded in 1876 A.D. The Khedive justified this act by drafting a document indicating that his wives bought the land on which Abdeen palace was located for 30.000 Egyptian gold pounds. Upon Khedive Isma'il exile, the Higher Court estimated the cost of Abdeen palace premises to over 170.000 Egyptian gold pounds.

In December 29th 1881 A.D Khedive Tawfik issued an official law stating that the official palaces as Abdeen, al-Giza and al-Gezira...etc were the sole property of Egypt and were to remain the premises of the royal family but not specifically owned by them.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> - خالد عزب ، دار السلطنة في مصر ، ٢٠٠٧ ص ٢٠٠ .

<sup>35</sup> - أمين سامي ، تقويم النيل ، ٣ مجلدات ، مطبعة دار الكتب ، القاهرة ، ١٩١٦-١٩٣٦ ص ١٠٩٨ .

<sup>36</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace, Op.cit, P. ١٣.

## **Borders of the palace**

The endowment deed of Abdeen Palace issued from Al-Qesma Al-Askaria court in 7 Dhu al-Hijja 1293 A.H described borders and gates of this palace as follows:

### **The Northern border**

Length of this border was 203.70 meters and overlooking Hadrat Alkamagin Street leading to Bab al- Khalq, and had no gates.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Western border**

This border extends from north to south with a length of 66.80 meters, and then turns to the western side with a length of 3.95 meters, then to the southern side with a length of 194.4 meters, then it straightens to the eastern side with a length of 3.30 meters, and to the southern side with a length of 136 meters and then it turns to the eastern side with a length of 22 meters until it joins with the southern border. Palace's walls on this side had three gates: The first was called Al-Maia Al-Sunnia gate, the second Hosh Al-Salamlek gate, and the third Al-Agzakhana gate.

### **The southern border**

This border extends from west to east along 192.60 meters, and then it turns with an arch in a regular circle 16.5,24 meters long until it joins with the eastern border. This border was overlooking Al-Sheikh Rihan Street. The palace had five gates on this side.

### **The Eastern border**

The eastern border extends from South to North with a length of 102.30 meters , and then turns to the west as much as 3.20 meters , and then it straightens to the northern side with a length of 15.35 meters , then it turns to the western side with a length of 1.55 meters , and then it straightens to the North with a length of 9.50 meters and then turns to the eastern side length of 2 meters , then it straightens to the north with a length of 17 meters , then it turns to the east for 17.40 meters long, then it straightens to the North with a length of 232.40 meters to join with northern border. From this side, the palace overlooks Ragab Agha Street and Abdeen Bik Mosque. There were six gates on this side of the palace, the first was called Block Al-Aghawat gate, and three gates inside an arch for the public people, of these three gates the central one was the largest. The other two gates were leading to Al-Harem garden.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> - عيد المنصف سالم نجم، قصور الامراء والباشوات في مدينة القاهرة في القرن التاسع عشر) دراسة تاريخية وثائقية (جزءان، مكتبة زهراء الشرق ، القاهرة ، ٢٠٠١ ص ٢٠٨ .  
<sup>38</sup> - عيد المنصف نجم، قصور الامراء والباشوات، ٢٠٠١، ص ٢٠٩ .

### **The most important works of restoration and renovations**

Since Abdeen palace was established by Khedive Ismail, renovations, construction and restoration didn't stop. On the 16th of March 1291 A.H-1874 A.D, a High order was issued to buy some shops located to the north and south of Abdeen palace to make some adjustments in the palace. Other restorations were carried out at the end of 1292 A.H 1875 A.D. The architecture, renovation and construction work cost an amount of thirty-eight thousand English pounds.<sup>39</sup>

The palace was subject to a number of fires starting from 1879 A.D. The first fire was in the first floor which included Al- Salamlek<sup>40</sup> and then spread to the Haramlek<sup>41</sup> which was wholly burnt with the next rooms. Khedive Tawfik destroyed the southern east side of Abdeen Palace with dynamite when he came to power in 1879 A.D and added it to the garden of the palace. This part was dedicated for the accommodation of Isma'il Pasha al-Mufatsh.<sup>42</sup>

In July 1891A.D, while the Royal Family resided in the summer residence of Ras al-Tin in Alexandria, a great fire broke in Abdeen Palace. According to the official newspaper Al-Waqa'i, the fire destroyed the Haramlek wing and the Royal Guard quarters and stopped just before it reached the family dining room. Khedive Tawfik ordered the immediate reconstruction of the Palace. He turned to the Viennese architect Carl von Hasenauer to reconstruct and enlarge the Palace. Hasenauer declined the offer but recommended Joseph Urban (1872 – 1933 A.D), a young Austrian architect, for the job. Urban spent eight months in Cairo, where he designed the new Haramlek and then left for the United States.

The reconstruction of the destroyed quarters at Abdeen palace was completed under the supervision of chief architect of the royal palaces Fabricious Bek. Khedive Tawfik inspected the work on November 1891A.D, and agreed to add to the salamlek wing at Abdeen a new ballroom, banquet hall and two hallways. In order to finish as soon as possible, 2800 workers were employed. Although the royal family had extended their stay at Ras al-Tin palace till November 1891 A.D, several wings of Abdeen palace were not yet complete when they returned to Cairo.

Under Khedive „Abbas Helmi II (1892 -1914A.D) a committee was formed to manage the affairs of the Palace. The committee consisted of Fabricious, Chief Architect of the Royal Palaces; Tigrane Pasha, the minister of finance and Shawki Pasha, the head of Royal Affairs. The committee soon recognized the

---

<sup>39</sup> - Peterson, A., Dictionary of Islamic architecture, Routledge London and New York, 1996, P. 108.

<sup>40</sup> - Salamlek : the greeting area or the men's sitting room

<sup>41</sup> - Haramlek : Turkish term for the private part of an ottoman house which is only open to members of the family ( from Arabic harem )

<sup>42</sup> - خالد عزب ، دار السلطنة في مصر ، ٢٠٠٧ ص ٢٠٤ .

need for a special budget to cover the constant repair and renovation works of the Palace; as well as insuring it and its furniture against fire, theft and neglect. The total restoration and renovation of the Palace after the fire was estimated at 172,000 Egyptian Pounds. The committee agreed that a monthly stipend of the amount of 8,480 allocated for repairs and renovations was necessary to maintain the Palace, while an insurance scheme with Al Sikurtah Insurance Company for the amount of 350,000 Egyptian Pounds was a necessary act.<sup>43</sup>

In 1893 A.D, the committee requested Mr. Boinet Bey and Mr. Manescalco<sup>44</sup> to conduct a routine inspection on the furniture store room. The inventory showed that very few pieces found in the store would fit the Khedive's palace and that the purchase of new furniture was necessary. This Furniture cost 8987 pounds. Also lighting of this palace in (1310 A.H/1893 A.D) cost seven thousand pounds. It included buying of electricity pipes and candlesticks necessary for lighting.<sup>45</sup> In 1895 A.D the committee appointed Ambroise Baudry (1838-1906 A.D) as the architect in charge of the furniture and the refurbishing of the Palace interiors. The furniture of the Palace had suffered great damage during the fire; most of the large items were thrown out of the windows of the first floor to prevent them from catching fire and accordingly were greatly damaged. Consequently, the committee allocated funds for the purchase of new furniture.

The committee also requested the appointment of Michel Foretic, an Austrian designer who resided in Cairo. He spoke Arabic, worked for Khedive Isma'il and trained under architect Ercolani the architect of Al-Gezirah palace. He also assisted Giuseppe Parvis in his furniture workshop. Khedive „Abbas Helmi II patronized the 'Arab style' furniture initiated by Giuseppe parvis in the 1860's and executed at the Royal workshops. On the other hand, the Khedive was also inclined to follow European designs to meet the new tastes and aristocratic styles in vogue.<sup>46</sup>

In 1907, Antonio Lasciac<sup>47</sup> (1856 -1946 A.D) became the Chief Architect of the Royal Palaces, succeeding Fabricious. In 1909 A.D Lasciac supervised the construction of the Police Station and the Royal Cabinet Library (Defterkhana)

---

<sup>43</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace, Op.cit, P.15

<sup>44</sup> -Alfonso Manescalco Bey : Italian architect , served the government 19 years and finished his service in the April 10, 1903 A.D. He stayed in Egypt from 1862 to 1903 A.D and had been teaching Architecture in Engineering school in 1888 A.D. His most important works in the 20th century are the Islamic Museum and Dar al-Kutub in Bab al-Khalq

<sup>45</sup> - محمد علي عبد الحفيظ ، المصطلحات المعمارية في وثائق عصر محمد علي وخلفائه ١٨٠٥-١٨٧٩ دار الجريسي للطباعة ، ٢٠٠٥ ص ٢٦، ٢٥.

<sup>46</sup> - محمود عباس، معالم مصر الحديثة والمعاصرة ٢٠٠٦ ص ١٤١ .

- Cultant, Abdeen Palace Op.cit, p.17.

<sup>47</sup> - Antonio Lasciac is an Italian architect arrived in Egypt in 1882 and worked in Alexandria until 1888. He built the palace of Prince Sa'id Halim ( at present al-Nasiriyah school at Champollion St., ), the Palace of Princess Ni'mat Allah Kamal al-Din Hussein ( ministry of foreign affairs at Tahrir square) , Bank Misr in 1927 ( at Muhammad Farid St., ) and the Khedivial buildings in 1911 ( at „Imad al-Din St., ) . He stayed in Egypt till 1936 A.D and came back to Roma till his death in 1941 A.D.

located next to the Palace. Furthermore, he worked on the facades and roofs of the Palace, reducing the use of wood and reinforcing these elements with cut stone and concrete. Lasciac changed the façade of Abdeen. palace added a side entrance to the Tashreefah wing, and enriched the gardens with new soil and imported plants. Abdin palace became the stage for royal official visits as well as for majestic festivities and grand celebrations.<sup>48</sup>

Under King Fouad I, Ernesto Verrucci<sup>49</sup> became the Chief Architect of the Royal Palaces. Verrucci who served at the Palace from 1919 -1936 A.D, continued to supervise the construction of the Palace museums designed by Carlo Prampolini (1918 -1921 A.D). He also completed the total refurbishment of the palace in order to match the elegance and splendor of European palaces; particularly that of Versailles. Verrucci, moreover; enlarged the Salamlek wing, refurbished the Theater and Grand Dining Room, and added a new magnificent Throne Room. Furthermore, Verrucci added a new quarter to the Haramlek wing; consisting of two suites, one for the King and another for the Queen. These additions and enlargements were taken from the garden's territory, yet it made the beautiful garden attractions visible from the Queen's and King's bedrooms, as well as from the Theater hall and the gallery.

Perhaps one of the most extravagant features that Verrucci designed was an outstanding Haramlek salon in the Byzantine Style. Verrucci also relied heavily on the furniture of the Parisian cabinet maker Francois Linke, who supplied the palace with over 1200 items; ranging from large wooden cabinets to fittings, lightings and accessories.<sup>50</sup> Verrucci continued in his plan even when he became an independent contractor working for King Fouad I, with whose constant support, he transformed Abdeen Palace into a world class edifice that captured the admiration of all the Royal courts of Europe.

King Farouk inherited this well furnished modern palace to which he added more luxurious collectibles. In 1938 A.D the refurbished palace welcomed the newly wed Royal Couple, King Farouk and Queen Farida. In the Throne Hall their wedding photos were taken and along the grand marble staircase they marched to their wedding banquet. It was festivity time and numerous balls and parties were held in honor of the King and his Queen.<sup>51</sup>

The palace Suites and Salons appeared dazzling during the Official royal wedding of Princess Fawzia, sister of King Farouk, to the Crown Prince of Iran Muhammad Reza The palace exterior was lined with colored light bulbs and Abdeen square revamped to suit the occasion. In 1930 A.D Verrucci Bik was,

---

<sup>48</sup> - سهير زكى حواس ، القاهرة الخديوية، ٢٠٠١ ص ٢٩.

<sup>49</sup> - Ernesto Verrucci was an Italian architect, worked at the first in ministry of public works and sharing in building of Greco Roman museum in Alexandria in 1897 A.D.

<sup>50</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace, Op.cit, P.25.

<sup>51</sup> - Cultant, Abdeen Palace· Op.cit, P.28.

for political reasons, replaced from office by Mustafa Pasha Fahmy, an Egyptian national. Fahmy supervised the enlargement and refurbishment of Abdeen Palace, supervised the works of architect Parcq; who designed the enlargement of the main entrance to the Salamlek wing, the veranda at the Suez Canal Room as well as the transformation of the pond into a swimming pool.<sup>52</sup>

According to Major Mahmoud Al-Gwhary, who produced an extensive survey of the royal palaces and their contents immediately after the revolution, improvements, changes and additions ordered by the several sovereigns who occupied the palace in turn were valued in 1952 A.D at a total of L.E 40 million.<sup>53</sup>

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

- Reusing the palace should be viewed and studied in light of the historical documentation, the current state of the palace, the urban and social milieu of the palace, and the cultural and historical awareness of the users. Reuse must be done under supervision of the competent authorities, and with a permanent control.
- Reusing the palace also must meet the requirements and recommendations of the international conferences and conventions so that the new occupancy is based on a scientific basis, and the palace is used without harming or infringing upon its value. This attitude helps to contribute in solving the problems of palaces in Egypt.
- Determining the reuse of the palace must depend on decisions taken by experienced staff with specialized expertise, instead of the planning made by the local authorities which are interested in specific types of projects and uses that could be inadequate to the preservation of the palace.
- To reuse these palaces, it is necessary to benefit from the similar scientific foreign experiences, and the international expertise in this field.
- The government should support the concept of reusing the historical palaces taking into consideration applying the international rules and criteria, and the most proper reuse that guarantees an adequate revenue to meet the costs of maintenance works of the palace.
- A comprehensive survey and documentation of the historical palaces by specialized staff should be made and kept in lists and tables to be used as a reference in the case of reusing the palace, or dealing with it in any level of preservation.

---

<sup>52</sup>- Cultant, Abdeen Palace., P.29.

<sup>53</sup> - Fayza Hassan, al-Ahram weekly 3-9 December 1998, Issue No. 406.

- It is essential to monitor and document all works done on the palace, whether in the implementation phase, the preservation works, or the reuse stages, and not only before implementation. A concerned authority should be responsible for monitoring, and assessing the impact of the new occupancy of the palace and the surrounding area. Reusing Abdeen Palace has been confined in the following:

1- A high class hotel with a special status to V.I.P people that presents distinguished services. In its new usage, this establishment will have a tourist advantage different from its original function as a palace.

2- A distinct cultural facility as an international museum whether historical, archaeological, artistic, or cultural one. This option, in addition to the first one, will have another tourist and cultural advantage greater than the present usage as a museum

3- Turning the library of the palace into a documentary one to serve researchers and students, in addition to its present usage as a public library for visitors.

4- Using the gardens and some exterior annexes of the palace in recreational purposes that serve the above usages after making the proper preparations needed, and providing them with the necessary facilities. Care must be taken to avoid encroachment on the greenery, and to limit as much as possible any construction works, taking into consideration that such new services will be offered to few number of visitors, so that the numerous usages may not lead to undesirable results.

## **References**

Al-Masry al-Youm, Sunday, September 2nd 2012, Issue No.3003, P.4.

Cultant, Abdeen Palace: the jewel of 19th century, Bibliotheca Alexandria, 2007.

Fayza Hassan, al-Ahram weekly 3-9 December 1998.

Goldschmidt, A., & Johnston, R., Historical dictionary of Egypt, the American university in Cairo press, 2004.

Hunter, R., Egypt under the Khedives (1805-1879), the American university in Cairo press, 1999.

Johnston, S., Egyptian palaces and villas, 1808-1960, the American university in Cairo press, 2006.

Lyster, W., the citadel of Cairo, a history and guide, the palm press, 1993.

Peterson, A., Dictionary of Islamic architecture, Routledge London and New York, 1996.

Samir Sobhi, Tales of Abdine, al-Ahram weekly 16-22 August 2012.

- إلياس الايوبي ، تاريخ مصر في عهد الخديوي إسماعيل باشا من سنة ١٨٦٣-١٨٧٩ ، جزءان ، مكتبة  
مدبولي ، القاهرة ، ١٩٩٠ .
- أمين سامي ، تقويم النيل ، ٣ مجلدات ، مطبعة دار الكتب ، القاهرة ، ١٩١٦-١٩٣٦ .
- الجبرتي (عبد الرحمن بن حسن، ت ١٤٢١هـ / ٤٢ - ١٢٤١م) : عجائب الآثار في التراجم والاخبار،  
مطبعة دار الكتب المصرية ، القاهرة ، ١٩٩٨ .
- خالد عزب ، دار السلطنة في مصر ، المجلس الاعلى للثقافة ، ٢٠٠٧ .
- سعاد ماهر محمد ، مساجد مصر وأولياؤها الصالحون ، ٥ أجزاء ، المجلس الاعلى للشئون الاسلامية ؛  
القاهرة ١٩٧١ .
- سهير زكى حواس ، القاهرة الخديوية ، رصد وتوثيق عمارة وعمران منطقة وسط المدينة ، مركز  
التصميمات المعمارية بالمهندسين ، القاهرة ، ٢٠٠١ .
- سيد كريم ، القاهرة ، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب ، ١٩٩٩ .
- شوقي الجمل ، عبد الله عبد الرازق ، معالم تاريخ مصر الحديث، دار الثقافة للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع  
١٩٩٦ .
- عباس الطرابيلى ، شوارع لها تاريخ ، الدار المصرية اللبنانية ، الطبعة الاولى ، ١٩٩٧ .
- عبد الرحمن الرفاعي عصر إسماعيل ، جزءان ، دار المعارف ، القاهرة . ١٩٧٨ .
- عبد الرحمن الرفاعي ، عصر إسماعيل ، دار المعارف ، القاهرة ، ١٩٨٧ .
- عبد المنصف نجم ، قصور الامراء والباشوات في مدينة القاهرة في القرن التاسع عشر) دراسة تاريخية  
وثائقية (، جزءان ، مكتبة زهراء الشرق ، القاهرة ، ٢٠٠١ .
- محمود الجوهري ، قصور الرجعية ، جزءان ، الدار القومية للطباعة والنشر ، القاهرة ، ١٩٦٢ .
- محمود عباس معالم مصر الحديثة والمعاصرة تاريخ وحضارة ، الدار العالمية للنشر والتوزيع ، ٢٠٠٦ .
- نهي محمد عفت حسين ، القصور العلوية مالها وما عليها ، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة ، كلية  
الهندسة، جامعة القاهرة ٢٠١١ .



## الأهمية التاريخية والتراثية لقصر عابدين

ولاء الدين بدوي مدبولي<sup>١</sup>

<sup>١</sup>وزارة السياحة والآثار

### الملخص العربي

يهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على قصر عابدين الذي يعتبر من أهم وأشهر القصور في مصر ويرمز قصر عابدين إلى القاهرة الحديثة، حيث أعطى الخديوي إسماعيل أثناء تشييده تعليمات بتخطيط مدينة القاهرة على النمط الأوروبي لتكون باريس الشرق. وقد شهد قصر عابدين الكثير من الأحداث التي ساهمت في قيام مصر كدولة مستقلة حيث كان هذا القصر منذ بداية إنشائه عام ١٨٦٣م وحتى قيام ثورة ١٩٥٢م شاهداً على ٩٠ عاماً من الحياة الإجتماعية والسياسية بين أجنحته وقاعاته؛ ونظراً لما يتمتع به قصر عابدين من أهمية وفخامة نادرة كانت أهم أسباب دراسته التاريخية والتراثية لإلقاء الضوء على هذا العصر الهام، وقد قام الخديوي إسماعيل ببناءه لإقامة العائلة المالكة بحيث يصبح مركزاً رئيسياً للأعمال الملكية ومقراً لإقامة الحاشية الملكية وهكذا أصبح قصر عابدين صرحاً مبنياً على الطراز الكلاسيكي الفرنسي الحديث يضاهاى القصور الأوربية بمعمارها الجديد الفخم وزخارفه الداخلية. لذلك يساهم هذا البحث في إظهار أهمية القصر التاريخية والتراثية والفنية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** قصر عابدين، الخديوي إسماعيل، إنشاء قصر عابدين، الطراز، مهندس معمارى.