

Café Riche in Cairo: A Case Study on Public Cafes as Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Public cafes play a pivotal role in enhancing local identity by serving as vibrant hubs of social interaction, cultural exchange, and community engagement. They often reflect the unique character of a neighborhood through their design, menu offerings, and the events they host, such as art exhibitions, live music, or book readings. By providing a welcoming space for residents and visitors to gather, cafes foster a sense of belonging and pride in the local area. Moreover, they frequently support local artisans, farmers, and businesses, further embedding themselves in the fabric of the community. This symbiotic relationship not only strengthens the local economy but also creates a shared sense of identity that celebrates the distinctiveness of the region.

In Egypt, cafes hold a significant place in social life, serving as dynamic spaces where people from all walks of life gather to connect, converse, and unwind. Traditionally known as "Qahwa" these establishments have long been cultural landmarks, offering a unique blend of hospitality and community spirit. Cafes in Egypt are more than just places to enjoy coffee or tea; they are hubs for storytelling, debate, and cultural expression. From the bustling street-side cafes in Cairo to the quaint establishments in smaller towns, they provide an accessible venue for discussing politics, sharing ideas, or simply enjoying leisure time with friends. Over the years, modern cafes have also emerged, blending contemporary aesthetics with traditional charm, attracting younger generations while preserving their role as social anchors. Whether for casual gatherings, intellectual discourse, or artistic endeavors, Egyptian cafes remain central to the nation's social fabric, fostering a sense of community and continuity.

In this paper the author discusses sitting in cafes, or "Qahwa" as a cherished tradition and an integral part of the country's intangible cultural heritage, that is deeply tied to enhancing local identity. These cafes are timeless spaces where generations have gathered to share stories, engage in spirited debates, and enjoy simple pleasures like sipping tea or playing backgammon. Reflecting the rhythms of daily life and local customs, they embody the essence of Egyptian hospitality and communal living. By preserving these spaces and their traditions, "Qahwa" not only connects people to their roots but also celebrates the enduring spirit and cultural richness of Egypt. Through this paper, the author chose Café Riche which is one of Egypt's most renowned cafes, modeled after the original in Paris to be a case study for this research. As it has played a significant role in Egypt's modern history, serving as a hub where numerous political actions were conceived. This iconic establishment was

a gathering place for politicians, artists, writers, and intellectuals of the era, making it a central venue for cultural and political discourse.

Keywords: Café Riche, Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Local Identity, Qahwa, Public Cafe, and café

Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as part of their cultural identity. Unlike tangible heritage, such as monuments or artifacts, it is transmitted through generations and evolves over time, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging. This type of heritage encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and traditional knowledge related to nature and the universe. According to UNESCO, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is vital for promoting cultural diversity and sustainable development (UNESCO).

Sitting in public cafés in Egypt is a deeply rooted cultural practice that reflects the country's social and historical heritage. These cafés, known locally as Qahwas, are more than just places to drink tea or coffee; they serve as communal hubs where people gather to exchange stories, discuss politics, play backgammon or dominoes, and watch football matches. The tradition dates back centuries and remains a cornerstone of Egyptian social life, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Public cafés also play a significant role in preserving oral traditions, as storytelling and informal debates often unfold within their vibrant atmosphere, making them a living example of Egypt's intangible cultural heritage (Forum Transregionale Studien, 2023).

Coffee houses date back to the nineteenth century AD, Cairo had about 1200 cafes, the Old Cairo area had 50 cafes, and Bulaq had 100 cafes (William Lane, Edward, 1999, p. 344). The Coffee houses were very simple, consisted of one floor containing seats furnished with mats.

Café or Maqaha derived its name from the coffee drink that was introduced in Egypt through Yemeni students of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, and this drink helped them stay awake and focused, later that coffee drink spread throughout Cairo and the Egyptians loved it (Ma'mūn, Ġīhān, 2009, p. 72), but the Al-Azhar sheikhs prohibited drinking coffee and they considered coffee a drug, until the Hanafi judge, Muhy El-Din Ibn Elias, issued a permission to drink coffee (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 207).

Over time, the cafes had a social, cultural and political role, where people used to meet, and it was also a place for presenting artistic performances, reciting poetry, and telling stories of the ancients and biographers such as El sira El helalya. One of the most famous cafes in Egypt is Café Riche which takes after the original one in Paris. This café is a witness to the contemporary history of Egypt and the place where many political actions were planned since it was the meeting point of politicians, artists, writers, and thinkers of the time (Ma'mūn, Ġīhān, 2009, p. 74).

The great writer Kamel Zahiri indicates the importance of cafés in the Egyptian streets, whether in foreign or popular neighborhoods. Cafés played a significant role among professionals, each having a café for the upper Egyptians, gatekeepers, architects, barbers, butchers, and others. Many of them have disappeared now and no longer exist. Zahiri also notes that cafés were not only for intellectuals; Cairo residents used to avoid receiving friends at home, a situation overcome by meeting at cafés (Ma'mūn, Ġīhān, 2009, p. 80).

Literature Review

In Modern Era, there were two types of coffee shops or “houses” the Popular Coffee houses and A frangi Coffee houses.

A- The Popular Coffee houses: It is called in the Arabic language “Al-Qahawa El-sha'bia” it is small and found in narrow streets and their drink prices are cheap, they have constituted the largest and most densely populated area attracting Egyptians because of their cheap prices and the fact that they carry the spirit of the neighborhood and the Egyptian street with its simplicity and spontaneity (Hattox, Ralph, 1985, p. 200).

The most prominent of these cafes are:

1- Al-Fishawy Café: One of the most famous historical cafés in Egypt, and one of the tourist attractions. “Al-Fishawy” is one of the most important touristic entertainment places in the Fatimid Cairo. It's well known for its special architectural character, which has made it a distinguished feature. It was established by Muhammad Fahmi al-Fishawi in 1797, more than 220 years ago, which makes it the oldest café in the Middle East, and perhaps in the whole world. The café is located near the narrow entrance of Khan Al-Khalili, opposite to Al-Hussein Mosque. It was the destination of most writers, poets, artists, intellectuals, thinkers, journalists of all generations, intellectual orientations, and cultural variations (Al-Rafi'ī, 'Abd al-Raḥman, 1987, p. 460).

2- Naguib Mahfouz Café, nestled in the heart of the historic Khan El Khalili bazaar in Cairo, is a landmark that pays homage to Egypt's most celebrated literary figure, Naguib Mahfouz, the first Arab writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988. This iconic café captures the spirit of Cairo's vibrant cultural and intellectual life, which Mahfouz vividly depicted in his novels. Opened in the 1980s, the café is a blend of traditional Egyptian aesthetics and a refined ambiance, featuring intricate mashrabiya woodwork, lanterns, and vintage décor that echo the bygone eras often described in Mahfouz's works. Located in a neighborhood that serves as the setting for many of his novels, such as the famed Cairo Trilogy, the café has become a pilgrimage site for literary enthusiasts and tourists alike (Radwan & *etal*, 2015, p. 207).

Historically, the café is part of the larger cultural tapestry of Khan El Khalili, an area that dates back to the 14th century, known for its bustling markets, artisans, and architectural marvels. While Mahfouz himself frequented many traditional coffeehouses in Cairo, including some in this area, the café bearing his name was established after he won the Nobel Prize, symbolizing his enduring legacy. It has since become a space where visitors

can not only enjoy traditional Egyptian food and beverages but also immerse themselves in the literary and cultural heritage that Mahfouz's works represent. The café often hosts cultural events and serves as a quiet retreat from the lively chaos of the bazaar, offering a glimpse into the timeless charm of Old Cairo while honoring the profound impact of one of Egypt's greatest storytellers (Mahfouz, 2008, p. 17).

3- Qashtamar Café: It's in the ancient neighborhood of Al-Zahir. It was documented by Nobel prize writer Naguib Mahfouz in his novel named after "Qashtamar," the café, in 1988, more than a quarter of a century ago. The novel was transformed into a television show. It is the café which is still standing as it is, located near Abbasiya Square, in the same place for about a century. It is located specifically in the Al-Husseiniyah neighborhood at the intersection of Farouk Street, now Elguish street, and Qashtamar Square, named after the café, near Al-Zahir Baybars Mosque and Park. It is considered one of the oldest cafes that still exist today. Nowadays, it lies in the possession of the heirs of Mohamed Abdel Wahaab, a musician who was born in Bab al-Sharia neighborhood. It has been famous for the game of chess, as the café owners are keen on sponsoring a lot of Qashtamar" café chess tournaments, held among its patrons who offer generous prizes to the winners (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 214).

4- Al-Bosta Café: This café was fortunate due to its location in the middle of a lot of popular places, and its location in the center of the city. It is unique in the history of modern Egyptian thought. The cafe is located in Attaba Square. It was given this name because of its proximity to the headquarters of the Postal Service, known among the public as "Al-Bosta." Some references state that the reason for its fame is that it was adopted by Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani. It was the place where he used to meet his disciples during his stay (Hattoxi, Ralph, 1985, p. 203).

5- Abu Shanab Fadda Café: This café is famous for its popular joke, as its name refers to its Greek owner's mustache. Its importance is due to its being the meeting place for newspaper delegates, due to its proximity to the Prime Minister's office and the Interior Ministry building in Lazoghli Square. It was like a primitive news agency, as political news and security urgent news were formulated at its tables (Mostafa, D., Said & *etal*, p. 9).

6- Nubar Café: It is located in an area that is considered a link between Garden City, a prestigious neighborhood and Sayyida Zeinab, with its popular momentum, and its proximity to the most important institutions of the government, the most prominent of which (currently) is the Council of the Representatives and a number of ministries. The café was the favorite meeting place for artists (Ibrahim, M. Abbas, p. 26).

7- Trade Café: This café rose to prominence with its location in Muhammad Ali Street in the citadel (Qalaa) area during the days of the great fame of the street. It was unique with its pioneering members of bands, musicians, songs and monologue artists. The most famous band was that of Hasballah, founded in the same street. The café was a haven for amateurs and art lovers seeking for being known. For example, in the film Love Street, whose stars were Abdelhalim Hafez and Sabah, Abdelsalam Elnabulsy represented

Hasballah 16th, an indication of the historical extension of the character and its artistic deep presence (Idrīs, Yūsuf, 2009).

8- Alkutub Khana Café: The café is located in front of the old building of Dar al-Kutub at the end of Muhammad Ali Street in Bab al-Khalq area. Its name is derived from the old name of Dar al-Kutub, and it is said that the café was the main office of Hafez Ibrahim, the Nile poet, when he was in charge of Dar Al Kutub. The stairs at Dar al-Kutub were so high that it was difficult for him to climb them. So the employees used to bring him official papers to sign in the café (Mostafa, D., Said & *etal*, p. 15).

9- Aliya Café: Al-Alia lies in “Muhammad Ali Street that was called “Al-Alia” as climbing to it was through climbing high stairs, Mohamed Al-Harawi, a poet, was one of the most famous café patrons (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 217).

10- Al-Mudhikkhanah Café: The café is located in the Sayyida Zeinab neighborhood. One of the funny things associated with it is that visitors are required to submit a message about jokes, gossip, and pranks. If accepted, its writer is added to the club council members. The expansion of the council turned it to a satirical (informal) party in the café, which was considered headquarters after the setback of the Orabi revolution and the decline of the cafés after the British Occupation, that café emerged (Lorez, Joseph P., 1990, p. 35).

11- Si Abdo Café: It was located near Al Fishawy café in Al-Husseini area. Surprisingly enough, it was located in an underground place and was circular in shape, containing several compartments, with a fountain in the middle. This café no longer exists, as it was demolished and some modern buildings were erected in its place, yet it remains documented in Naguib Mahfouz's trilogy (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 218).

12- Orabi Café: One of the famous cafes in old Cairo. It still exists today in ElGuish Square at the end of Al-Husseiniyah. This café was named after Orabi, its owner, one of the bullies in the early twentieth century (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 218).

13- Al-Liwaa Café: Its original name is Al Liwaa Café Bar. It was facing the old building of Al-Ahram, Mazlum street, Bab El luk, in central Cairo. Its second floor included a billiard hall, This café has an important political and social history, as it derived its name from Al-Liwaa newspaper, published by Mustafa Kamel, who founded the National Party at the beginning of the twentieth century (Mahfouz, Naguib, 1990).

14- Printania Café: From the late 19th century until the early 20th century, the Printania Café was a club for artists who worked in theaters in Emad El Din Street and also for the unemployed. This may be due to the fact that the café was adjacent to the Printania Theater and Casino, where most of the plays that appeared in Egypt were performed in the early twentieth century, including Naguib Al-Rihani’s band (Lababidi, L., 2008, p. 15).

15- Casablanca Café: It was established in 1948 as a restaurant under the name Casablanca, then its name was changed to Laialina. It was one of the most famous artists'

cafes due to its location next to the theaters on Emad El Din Street (El Ghetany, G., 1997, p. 10).

16- Alhorreya Café: The café overlooks the famous Falaki Square. It was inaugurated in 1936 under its current name. At the beginning it was a popular destination for the English officers and soldiers. It was later visited by other groups such as: pashas, artists, and intellectuals, including: the free officers, in particular President Anwar Al Sadat. The name of the Alhorreya Café was associated with a group of culture and art symbols, such as: Sheikh Zakaria Ahmed¹ (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 220).

17- Zahrat Al Bustan Café: It's one of the most important cultural cafés. It is adjacent to the "Rish Café" eighty years ago, the café had been the favorite place for different intellectuals. Its importance increased during the temporary closure of Rish Café (Rakha, Youssef, 2000, Issue N. 502).

18- Al Nadwa el Saqaffia Café: It is located in Falaki Square in Bab El Louk, just steps away from the café Riche and Zahrat El Bostan Café. It was established in the sixties of the twentieth century. The leading intellectuals of the time gathered around its tables. It witnessed a weekly cultural symposium. Perhaps it gained its name from this symposium, attended by great intellectuals, including Naguib Mahfouz, Gamal Al-Ghitani², and Youssef Al-Qaid³, in addition to artists such as Ahmed Zaki and Yahya Al-Fakharani. Among the features that distinguished the cultural symposium café was that it didn't follow the ordinary café approach. TV, table games, dominoes, and food were not allowed. It only had a small radio that played the Holy Quran in the morning in narrow streets and its drink prices are cheap (Lababidi, L., 2008, p. 16).

B- Afrangi Coffee houses: are completely different, rich people and senior employees sit in them, and there might also be bars attached to them, which served alcoholic or spiritual drinks, that usually need a special license to sell and serve (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 209) Such as:

1- Matatia Café: Its fame among French intellectuals, religious figures, and journalists, notably "Mataia," was frequented by the Afghani⁴. It is located in AlAtaba Al Khadra

¹ Zakaria Ahmed was born 1896 in Faiyoum, he was an Egyptian musician and composer. He mainly sang religious songs as a member of several groups from 1919 to 1929, having studied recitation of the Qur'an under the well-known Egyptian Quranic reciter Mohamed Salama. he died in 1961. Goldschmidt, Arthur, 2000, p. 17.

² Gamal al-Ghitani was born 1945, he was an Egyptian author of historical and political novels and cultural and political commentaries and was the editor-in-chief of the literary periodical Akhbar Al-Adabtill 2011. He died 2015. MoHammed Ali, M., 2016, p. 6.

³ Yusuf al- Qa'id was born 1944, he was a writer, novelist, and member of parliament of Egypt. He is best known for his novel War in the Land of Egypt (Al-Ḥarb fī Barr Miṣr) Meisami, Julie Scott, 1998, p. 628.

⁴ Al-Afghani was born 1838 in As'adabad (Persia), he was Pan- Islamic agitator, philosopher, teacher, and the major instigator of early nationalism in Egypt and other Muslim countries. He later claimed to have come from a village having the same name in Afghanistan and have been educated in Kabul, probably to

Square, considered a hub for Egyptian art, frequented by a constellation of famous artists of that time, led by Naguib Al-Rihani. (MāḤfūz, ĀḤmed, 2009, p. 61-62).

The history of the café dates back to the time when Khedive Ismail decided to hold a grand ceremony to inaugurate the Suez Canal project in 1869. So he asked the Italian engineer Matatia to establish the Azbakeya Park and the royal Opera House. With the advent of the modernization, the Matatia Building was established in 1875 then the Café and the Intercontinental Hotel café was established, where several Western bands performed. (Idris, yosuef, 1996).

2- Alamerecayeen Café: In the year 1930, Ashil Giacomo opened Alamerecayeen in Suleiman Pasha Street to be a meeting place for the Afandis whose financial capabilities did not allow them to meet in Gropppi. A few years later, a new branch of Amrecayeen was opened in July 26th Street, close to the old branch (Saqr, Maysūn, 2021, p. 230).

3- Ali Baba Café: In downtown Cairo's Tahrir Square, the renowned writer Naguib Mahfouz used to frequent Ali Baba Café in the early morning. He would sit on the upper floor, contemplating the spacious square from the window, sprinkling his coffee, or reading the morning newspapers, which made more famous. Having been awarded the Nobel prize, lots of curious people were eager to see Naguib Mahfouz who used to greet them with a smile (El Ghetany, G., 1997, p. 11).

4- Estoryl Restaurant and Bar: It is located in Central Cairo in the short pathway that links Talaat Harb with Kasr El Nil streets. One of its most famous patrons was Morsi Saad El Deen, an author (Baligh Hamdy brother) (Al-Rabābi'ah, Yūsuf, 2010).

5- Algarion Café and garden: It is located in central Cairo near Tahrir square and Talaat Harb square before Kasr El Nil cinema. Its name in French is Le Grillon. It is famous for its garden and restaurant. It is one of the most favorite places for writers and painters. The Café is confined to hosting certain categories of intellectuals who can afford visit it regularly (El Ghetany, G., 1997, p. 13).

6- Windsor Café: It is a special bar and Café in Windsor hotel. It is located in the first floor of the hotel, a few meters from Alamerecayeen in July 26 street. The hotel is characterized by its original English pattern. Its walls feature paintings of several cinematic works filmed there. (Impressions of Egypt, 2002, p. 73).

disguise his Shi'i origins, and hence also changed his name. he died 1897. Goldschmidt, Arthur, 2000, p. 15.

Café Riche (a Case Study)

Café Riche is one of the most important coffee shop and landmarks in Egypt, specifically in city that was called Paris of the East of Khedivial Cairo, which was built by Khedive Ismail (r. 1863-1879), when he ascended the throne in 1863. Cairo was stretching from Salah al-Din Citadel and Mokattam hill in the east to Azbakeya and El Attaba and el-Mansara Square in the west. (Ḥawās, Suhair Zakī, 2002, p. 14).

Khedive Ismail saw that the capital needed to get organized design squares, broad streets and bridges across the Nile (‘Abdū ‘Alī, ‘Arafah, 1998, p. 158), hence that he asked Emperor Napoleon III of France to bring architect of Paris City George Haussmann in order to plan Cairo in the manner of planning the French capital (Maysūn Saqr, Maqha Rich, p. 44) .

Indeed, Haussmann started to plan the new city, and the project for building modern Cairo took about five years to finish, after which Cairo converted from just an old city into an architectural masterpiece called “the Paris of the East” (Al-Ṭarābīlī, ‘Abbās, 2021, p. 76).

The owner of “Al-Khitat Al-Tawfiqiya” Ali Mubarak was credited with the scientific and architectural renaissance that Cairo witnessed during the 2nd half of the 19th century, during the reign of Khedive Ismail, as he was assigned to lead his architectural and Urban project , by reorganizing Cairo in modern style: by paving wide streets, creating squares, erecting new buildings and structures, supplying Cairo with water and lighting it with gas. This planning still remains today in the center of Cairo, a witness to Ali Mubarak’s brilliance and good planning (Al-Ḥakīm, M., Durrī, 1894, p. 31).

According to the book “Biographies of Famous People of the East in the 19th Century” by Jurji Zeydan, the late man’s work related to public works Department is many, including organizing and expanding Cairo’s streets as they are now. Ali Mubarak began his planning by establishing the Ismailia and Azbakeya neighborhoods (Zydān, G, 2012, p. 53).

The area around Café Riche

One of the facades of the Café overlooking Talaat Harb Square which is one of the most important squares in Cairo, that starts from Ismailia Square (Tahrir nowadays) and intersects with Abdel Salam Aref Street, Qasr Al-Nil, and 26th of July Street (Ḥawās, Suhair Zakī, 2002, p. 54), Firstly, The square was called Qaraqul, which is a Turkish word meaning stability, and it was changed to KaraKun because it was close to Qasr al-Nil police station, and it remained with that name until 1912, when its name was changed to Suleiman Pasha Square (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 91) , the Trainer of the modern Egyptian army during the reign of Muhammed Ali and fought all the wars of Muhammad Ali with, Ibrahim Pasha Who said, "I have loved Three men in my life: my father, Napoleon, and Muhammad Ali (Al-Ṭarābīlī, ‘Abbās, 2021, p. 131).

Colonel Saif converted to Islam, Muhammad chose an Arabic name for him, which is Suleiman, and he married one of the daughters of Muhammad Ali family, and when he died, he was buried in the Old Cairo area (Ḥawās, Suhair Zakī, 2002, p. 54).

In 1964, Gamal Abdel Nasser decided to get rid of anything that symbolized the life of the monarchy and the era of the Muhammad Ali family (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 94), he ordered to replace the statue of Suleiman Pasha and put in its place the statue of the great economist Talaat Harb Pasha (Al-Ṭarābīlī, ‘Abbās, 2021, p. 135).

As for Talaat Harb Street, it was called Misr Al-Atika, then its name was changed to Sheikh Hamza, then to Suleiman Pasha Street, and finally its name became Talaat Harb Street after the revolution of 1952. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 242)

The Café Riche

It is located in Talat Harb Street, there was a palace for Prince Muhammad Ali Tawfiq, and this palace consisted of a basement, on top of which there are two upper floors, and a stable for horses. The palace was sold by an auction announcement in Al-Ahram newspaper on February 1, 1904, No. of the Advertisement 74/75 (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 271), Café Riche was built on the ruins of Prince Muhammad Ali's palace in 1908 on Talat Harb Street, At the beginning, Café Riche was just a coffee house without any names and it was called Riche in 1914 (Abdel Rahman, 2015).

Its walls echo with the voices of renowned writers, poets, and activists who once frequented the space to engage in spirited debates and creative exchanges. Café Riche was also a site of historical significance, serving as a meeting place for Egyptian revolutionaries during pivotal moments in the country's history, including the 1919 and 1952 revolutions. Moreover, it has been closely associated with the flourishing of Egyptian arts and literature, as many of the country's literary giants, such as Naguib Mahfouz, found inspiration within its walls. Today, Café Riche continues to preserve this legacy, offering a space where locals and visitors alike can immerse themselves in the intellectual and artistic traditions that define Cairo's cultural identity. By sustaining its role as a gathering place for creative and critical discourse, Café Riche contributes to a reflecting the nature of life, evolving nature of Egypt's intangible cultural heritage (Abdel Rahman, 2015).

The Owners of Café Riche

Café Riche was owned by many expatriates, each of whom had a story, and when they owned Café Riche, they left an imprint that remains until now.

Bernard Steinberg, an Austro-Hungarian, was the first owner of café from 1908 to 1913. Café Riche had no name until its ownership was transferred to **Henri Pierre Resnier** (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 308), a French nationality, who owned it for two years, then in 1916, he also named it “**Riche Café**”, this name, is driven from the famous Parisian Cafe, Grand Café Riche, calling it a **café** instead of maqaha or qahawa, is due to the expatriates who owned it one after the other. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 257)

During this period, the First World War broke out, and Henri was called up to serve in the French army, so he waived his café license to the third owner. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 311), **Michel Polits**, bought the café before the end of World War I from its owner, Monsieur Henri Resinier, Michel was a Greek merchant and he was working in one of the casinos in the Azbekia region, He also expanded the café and asked for the addition of Teatro to the café, It was no longer just a café, but rather a café and a bar in addition to theater until 1932 (Saqr, Maysūn, pp. 312, 313)

The fourth owner was a Greek or Turkish nationality, **Wassily Manoulakis**, who bought it, in 1942. Manoulakis offered the café for sale (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 325), so **George Avianos Wasili**, who was working at the beginning of his life as a chef at the British embassy, after his retirement, bought the café and continued to own it until 1957. Avianos asked to add a restaurant license to a Café Riche, he also trained some chefs, while at the same time he was cooking by himself. and his wife was responsible for the accounts and she used to write the menu in French. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 333)

Because of the revolution of July 23, 1952, and the nationalizations trend at that time, George left the management of the café to the Egyptian accountant **Abdul Malak Michael**, who was the first Egyptian to manage the café until 1960.

Abdul Malak was a partner in a bookstore located opposite the Café Riche, and he sold part of the bookstore to his partner to buy Café Riche, since he appreciated the value of the place and its history. Hence he preserved it, but unfortunately he passed away after a while. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 351)

The café was transferred to the ownership of his descendants of the family, who are still own and operate the café until now. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 353).

The Café Description

- The façade

The café currently features two glass wooden facades inlaid with glass, the first (on Talat Harb Street) and the second (on Saedi Street).

The first side is divided into three sections: the first section consists of a glass wall that reveals the first hall and contains the entrance door, the second section is made of wood, and the third section includes the old door that used to lead to the bar, that was closed earlier.

At the top, see a glass sign showing the name of the café in Arabic (مقهى ريش) and in French (Café Riche), Noting that the café is a restaurant and bar written in English (Restaurant and Bar) Then the date 1908 refers to the date of the establishment of the café, which is written in Arabic and English on the sign (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 246-251). (Plate 1).

- **The first Hall (External Hall)**

In front of the entrance, there is the main hall of the café, and it consists of a rectangular hall with tables surrounded by four or six wooden chairs, on the inside of which a name (Riche) is engraved in the French language, and only a few of these chairs remain in service now (Plate 2).

It is noteworthy that this part was an exposed sidewalk without a roof but later was covered with a roof instead of an umbrella as part of the restoration process (because the government wanted to remove it, but the owners of the café proved that it was part of the land of the café, so they covered it with a permanent roof).

As for the tables, they are made of iron in a geometric shape and are covered with checkered tablecloths in blue and white colors (it was part of the promotional campaign for "Stella" drinks and usually had the famous drink star in the middle (Plate 3). These tablecloths were placed in most of the cafes that offered this drink, when until the beer company stopped providing these tablecloths. The Café replaced them with red and white tablecloths).

To the right after the entrance (Plate 4), there is a door. That leads to the bar directly (Plate 5), and next to it is the door that leads to the kitchen, then the second hall or the inner hall, as well as the stairs that lead to the basement or the lower part of the café.

- **The second hall (Internal Hall) (Plate 9)**

This consists of two connected halls that are parallel to the first hall, and it represents the old place for the café, as it contains five glass windows overlooking the first hall now, which used to be the doors of the café overlooking Al-Saidi Street in the past.

The wall of this hall is decorated with a bout of 40 photographs of Egypt's prominent novelists, journalists, actors and poets—literary (Plate 10) celebrities who were once regular customers of the Cafe, including a dominant photographic portrait of Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz. (Peggy Bieber-Roberts and Elisa Pierandrei, 2002, p. 3)

On one of the walls of second hall there is a picture of the writer Naguib Mahfouz with his signature, as he gave to cafe after winning the Nobel Prize in Literature 1988 (Plate11) and wrote in his handwriting: (Greetings to Café and its people, staying and departing 3-10-1989). (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 497-498)

There are also two pianos (Plate 12), the larger one is displayed in this hall, and the smaller one is displayed in the basement.

- **The Bar**

It is no longer operating except for storing food and drinks as a preparation area for the kitchen. Next to it is a small door leading to the kitchen (between the bar and the Cashier). (Plate 6)

To the right, there is a staircase that leads to the basement, and at the top of the staircase on the wall, there is a large photographic picture (Zencograph) of Umm Kulthum, being the largest picture in the café, it is also a rare picture of her that is not found anywhere else (plate 7).

In front of the basement stairs, is the cashier section, and above it is a black and white photograph of its first Egyptian owner, Abd al-Malak Mikhail.

- The basement (Plate 8)

In front of the stairs, there is a narrow corridor that consisted of three rooms, separated by arched gates, one after the other. On both sides of each hall, there are wooden sofas covered with red cloth, and in front of them are tables of Arabic style. At the end of the corridor, there is a brown wooden bar in front of which are wooden chairs.

On the walls of the basement, there is internal lighting, and on the left, there is an old "Rinu" manual printing machine, which is displayed in a glass box.

Michel Abdel-Malik (the eldest son of the owner of the café) said in a radio interview that: (This place was used as a storehouse for the needs of the restaurant and the café cooking utensils, and after the 1992 earthquake during the restoration process, a small corridor was revealed in the basement, that leads to a secret door).

The design of the café in the past did not differ from the current one, except for the garden that used to extend to Talaat Harb Square, and the café overlooking Qasr al-Nil police headquarters (Krakoon) And the Italian club.

The café also included a garden in which a theater for various arts were presented, and accordingly it used to present all theatrical performances, musical evenings, and others.

It is said that a wrestling hall and a place for playing backgammon were established next to the café.

Until 1942, the café had five doors opening on Al-Saeidy ally, then the administrative authorities requested that four of them be closed and made windows so as not to disturb the residents in the opposite building. The fifth door remained open for a period.

It is worth noting that there was a sixth door overlooking Suleiman Pasha Street, leading directly to the bar, which was completely closed.

Restoration of the Café Riche

The café was affected by the 1992 earthquake, as it had some cracks, and hence it was restored.

It took about nine years to restore, and Mustafa Abdel Qader (one of the archaeologists who restored the Sphinx) restored the walls and ceilings to return them to their original condition.

It has been mentioned that during the restoration operations, the committee was tasked with insisting not to use any modern synthetic materials and to use the natural materials such as wood, stone and the original building materials that were used in the buildings of that period to keep the original outlook of the café (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 254-256).

During the restoration process, several things were discovered, the most important of which was the "Renault" printing press, which dates back to 1898 and was used to print publications that were distributed during 1919 revolution (Al-Šrīf, Yūsīf, 2006, p. 59-63) (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 255).

It is believed during the restoration process a small passageway was discovered leading to a secret place in the basement. This passage had a small door inside the café. This passage had circular doors carrying shelves for camouflage. Which is likely the members of revolutionary council were getting out of it when the police raiding them. It is worth noting that the cost of restoration was about two million Egyptian pounds (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 255).

The Importance of Café Riche

The Café as an eyewitness to the history of modern Egypt

A- Politically

The café garden overlooked Talaat Harb Square, and on the other side of the square was the Savoy Hotel, which was the residence and meeting place for the Joint Command of the Allies during the First World War. Near it was the British Army Staff Command, which made it a headquarters for foreign journalists and correspondents who cover events, meet military leaders, and exchange news and information (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 413).

1- The revolution of 1919

Café Riche had an important role in the national and revolutionary movement in Egypt, especially the revolution of 1919. Over steaming pots of coffee, writers talked of and exchanged ideas that led political activists to hatch revolutions. (Peggy Bieber-Roberts and Elisa Pierandrei, 2002, p. 3)

The Basement of Café Riche was used to print publications of the 1919 revolution, that was led by Egyptian masses. this was done in complete secrecy against the British. The café was a gathering place for the owners of the middle class "Effendi", and the plan of the revolution was discussed in this place, as it was like the meeting base of the revolution, since it had many underground exits. Especially, when Cairo hit by an earthquake in 1992, the café cracked and its restoration was respected. The café owners and the restoration workers discovered a door leading to a secret room in which an old hand- printing machine dating back to 1898 was found. It was said that this room was the secret place of some cells of the revolution. This opinion suggests that this basement was discovered. It had a small secret turnover door that is difficult to see. It carries shelves to hide it. Behind it, they discovered a staircase that leads to a small corridor that connects to building's elevator shaft. It was said that this door was for the revolutionaries to exit through the building's

main door, located on Houda Shaarawy Street, without anyone noting. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 414-416)

The owner of the coffee shop at that time was the Greek Michel Michael Politis, who loved the Egyptians and hated the British, so he allowed the Egyptians to use the printing press to print the publications of the revolution. A document was found that dates back to March 31, 1919, listing the Names of 400 volunteers, who were all armed with guns and knives, and calling people to stock up on food items because a general strike would start on April 22, and this leaflet is being distributed in Egypt, and that Egypt would not be satisfied except with complete independence. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 416-417)

2- The case of Erian Youssef (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 419-428)

The case of Erian Youssef (he was a student in the Faculty of Medicine and his age at the time was about 20 years old), was one of the largest secret movements of the 1919 revolution led by Abd al-Rahman Fahmy, leader of the “Black Hand” movement. The mission of Erian Youssef was to assassinate Youssef Pasha Wahba, who was the Prime Minister of Egypt at that time.

The movement to assassinate Youssef Pasha Wahba was caused since Saad Zaghloul refused to form any ministry in the presence of British protectorate over Egypt, while the British were able to convince Youssef Pasha Wahba to form the ministry, which led the Egyptians to feel at the time that the aim was to cause sectarian strife between Muslims and Copts.

The Coptic Patriarch, Anba Kyrollos V, sent a delegation of Copts, asking him not to accept this ministry in those difficult circumstances, so as not to create sectarian strife between Muslims and Copts, but Youssef Wahba refused to meet the delegation.

Youssef Al-Arian sat in the garden of the Café Riche and hid two bombs with him until the Prime Minister's car approached, and when the car arrived, he threw the two bombs, and they did not hit him., Arian was sentenced to 10 years in prison after he confessed his attempt and that as a Copt, he wanted to assassinate the agent of colonialism as not to be killed by a Muslim, the case that may cause a sectarian strife occurred, but was released after four years (Yūsuf Sa‘d, ‘Iriyān, p. 99).

Decades after the incident, the owner of the Café Riche (Magdi Abdel-Malik), invited the grandsons of Youssef Wahba Pasha and Erian Youssef with several intellectuals, and they took a memorial photo of them in the café.

3- Police Eyes on Café Riche

After the attempt to assassinate Youssef Wahba, the eyes of the security services have been on the place, and fear dominated the pioneers and intellectuals, as the secret police carried out a campaign to arrest a large number of the “politically wanted” patrons of the café while they were inside the café. Despite all of this, Naguib Mahfouz kept his weekly cultural seminar every Friday, where he wrote the novel “Karnak”, that was turned into a movie

starring Souad Hosni, Nour Al-Sharif, and Tahia Carioca. The former director of intelligence, Salah Nasr, wanted to stop the movie, and the matter turned into a court case. Bahaa Taher mention that "When you are sitting at a table, you don't know if the person next to you hearing you is a policeman, or is a regular person from the café's customers." (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 440-441).

4- July 23 revolution

Most of the pioneers of Riche Café at the time were leftists who supported the July 23 Revolution because it raised the slogans of liberation and social justice. (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 436)

A protest demonstration against the assassination of Ghassan Kanafani

It started from the Café Riche heading to the Journalists Syndicate and it was called (The Demonstration of Writers in 1972) to protest the assassination of the Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani in Beirut at the hands of the Mossad. It was the first march that shook the street in the history of Egypt after the 1952 revolution, and they were carrying banners (They are killing writers) and (Death to America and Israel). (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 448-449)

5- Revolution of January 25, 2011

With the outbreak of January 25 revolution, the cafe regained its strength, where intellectuals gathered, due to its proximity to Tahrir square, which was considered the main meeting point of the revolution at the time (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 458-461).

During the revolutions of January 25, 2011, intellectuals held more than 5 important meetings in Café Riche to protest the rule of President Mohamed Hosni Mobaruk.

Here, it can be said that Café Riche was a witness to four revolutions in the modern history of Egypt: (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 463)

- The 1919 revolution led by Saad Zaghloul.
- The Free Officers Revolution against the monarchy in 1952
- People's Revolution on January 25, 2011

It also witnessed four wars:

1. The Arab war in Palestine against the Israeli occupation in 1948
2. The triple aggression against Egypt in 1956
3. The 1967 war for the liberation of Palestine and the restoration of the occupied land of Egypt in the Sinai
4. The war of October 6, 1973, which restored the dignity of the Arab peoples who helped Egypt with the decision to ban the export of oil.

In conclusion, the café witnessed all main political changes that took place in Egypt since 1919 till now because of its location.

B- Artistic (Teatro and Café Riche)

The story of Café Riche began with art when the Greek Michel Polites bought the café from its French owner Henri Resnier in 1916, who was satisfied with its role as a café only, but Polites was a lover of art and literature, so he decided to introduce music and expand activities to include the artistic activities of the café, and had a band that played classical and military music every day until 1919 (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 467).

Polites was not satisfied with the place being a café only, but he sought to make it a theater and a café until he succeeded in that and became like the Opera and Azbekia famous theatres of the time (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 467-484).

The advertisements for the café's artistic concerts were published in major Egyptian newspapers and magazines at the time, such as "Mokattam", "Al-Ahram", "Albasira" and "Al-Seyassah".

Of course, Umm Kulthum's advertisements were among the most important. these were published by the "Mokattam" newspaper, which stated (Umm Kulthum performed her first concerts at Teatro and Café Riche in 1923) where she sang in her Bedouin clothes, and Cairo clapped for the first time for Umm Kulthum as a star, which later became Kawkab al-Sharq (Al-Mokatoum newspaper, 20-5-1923).

1- The first musician's union

At the Café Riche, the first union of musicians was launched. In the forties of the twentieth century, a number of those working in the field of music and singing gathered inside the café in order to find a way to solve their professional problems. At the head of the gathering were Umm Kulthum and Muhammad Abdel Wahhab (the most famous female and male singers of the time (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 491).

As a result of that gathering, it was agreed to establish the first syndicate for musicians in Egypt, but rather in the Arab world.

Umm Kulthum was delegated the first leader of the Egyptian musicians in syndicated 1942, but Muhammad Abdel Wahhab objected to that and preferred to nominate a man instead of her, However Umm Kulthum strongly refused and had a conflict with him until she won the union for seven consecutive years, then Muhammad Abdel Wahhab took over for a year and a half, eventually the union was suspended for twenty years by order of President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

As for the movie "Kira Wal Jin", it was not filmed here in Café, but pictures of the café were taken and modified through montage (Interview with Samia Riche, The current owner of the café, Date, 23 Feb. 2023).

One of the most famous literary works that mention the café was what the poet Naguib Sorour wrote in his famous poem, "The Protocols of the Wise of Café Riche" in 1977 (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 577).

C- Love stories at Café Riche

I - Rose Al-Youssef and Mohamed Abdel Quddous

Rose Al-Youssef and Mohamed Abdel-Quddous were members of the Aziz Eid band, so Rosa Al-Youssef acted and Abdel-Quddous sang (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 602-604).

They used to exchange a lot of meetings in the Café, which led to their emotional rapprochement and ended up getting married. That was after their participation in one of the theatrical productions in the Café Riche in 1918, and they gave birth to Ihsan Abdel Quddous the famous writer and Journalist.

II- Safinaz Kazem and Najm

The poet Ahmed Fouad Negm met the writer Safinaz Kazem in Café and married, but their marriage did not last for long.

However, he said in one of his interviews that he loves Cafe because he met Safinaz Kazem, the mother of his daughter, Nawara.

III- Singer Sabah and Anwar Al-Mansi

One of the artistic jokes about the café is that the singer Sabah called the police for her ex-husband, Anwar Mansi, while he was at the café table gambling, and the waiter Felfel said that he was not gambling but was betting on horse racing.

D- Café Riche as a Restaurant

It has been known about the Riche Café that it serves the most delicious meals and dishes, and most types of beers and alcohol, while listening to the music.

There are several old and new menus for Café Riche, and we noted change in prices and content as well, except for pure Egyptian meals such as beans and falafel (Saqr, Maysūn, p. 613-615).

The writer, Abla Al-Ruwaini, talks about Amal Dunqul: “The visitors to Café Riche are mostly writers and do not have money, Amal Dunqul did not have a house at that time, so he was eating on the note and he had an account with Felfel’s uncle and then paid later when he had money, that confirms that there are loving relationships. And very special relations witnessed the walls of this Café (Interview with Samia Riche, The current owner of the café, Date, 23 Feb. 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, public cafés, particularly Café Riche in Cairo, serve as vital spaces for preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage, enriching the local identity of Egypt. These cafés, as demonstrated in the case study of Café Riche, function not only as social gathering spots but also as cultural hubs where intellectual, artistic, and political discussions shape the community’s collective consciousness. By fostering a sense of

continuity through the generations, they play an essential role in maintaining the traditional values and practices that define Egyptian culture. Café Riche, with its rich history and ongoing cultural significance, exemplifies how such establishments can contribute to the revitalization of local identity, providing a living connection to Egypt's past while allowing it to evolve within the modern context. Through this dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, public cafés help preserve and celebrate the unique cultural heritage of Cairo, ensuring that it continues to inspire future generations.

The Plates

The Plates of the Café



Plate (1) At the top of the gate, we see a glass sign showing the name of the café in Arabic (مقهى ريش) and in French (Café Riche), Then the date 1908 refers to the date of the establishment of the café, which is written in Arabic and English



Plate (2) The First (External Hall) the main hall of the café, and it consists of a rectangular hall with tables surrounded by four or six wooden chairs



Plate (3) The promotional campaign for "Stella" drinks and usually had the famous drink star in the middle.



Plate (4) On the right of the entrance, there is an office of the owner



Plate (5) The door beside the office leads to the basement and the bar



Plate (6) The Bar



Plate (7) a large photographic picture (Zencograph) of Umm Kulthum



Plate (8) The Basement

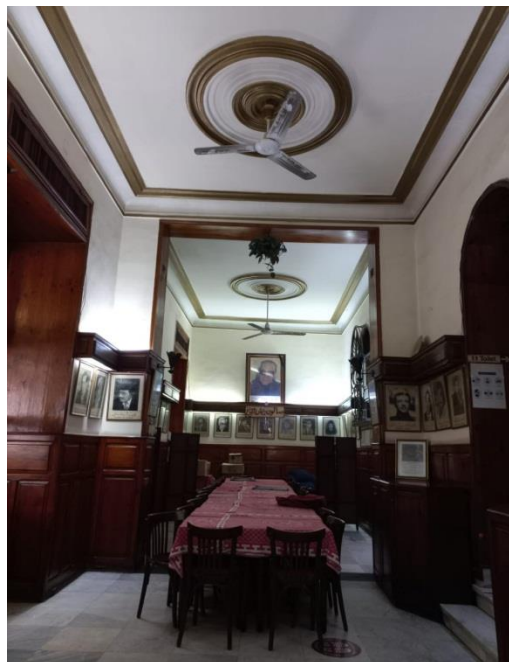


Plate (9) The Second Hall





Plate (10) photographs of Egypt's prominent novelists, journalists, actors and poets, literary



Plate (11) The picture of the writer Naguib Mahfouz has his signature



Plate (12) Two pianos



Plate (13) The Toilet of the Cafe

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مقهى ريش في القاهرة: دراسة حالة للمقاهي العامة كتراث ثقافي غير مادي

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المخلص العربي

تلعب المقاهي العامة دورا هاما في تعزيز الهوية المحلية من خلال العمل كمراكز نابضة بالحياة في التفاعل الاجتماعي والتبادل الثقافي والمشاركة المجتمعية، وغالبا ما تعكس الطابع الفريد للحي من خلال تصميمها وعروض القائمة والاحداث التي تستضيفها مثل المعارض الفنية أو الموسيقى أو قراءة الكتب وتعزز المقاهي الشعور بالانتماء لالتقاء الكثير من الفئات المختلفة التي تتردد عليها أمثال العمال والمتقنين ومن هنا تلعب المقهى دور هام في تبادل الثقافات والافكار المختلفة

في مصر، تحتل المقاهي مكانة مهمة في الحياة الاجتماعية حيث تعمل كساحات ديناميكية لاجتماع الناس فيها من جميع مناحي الحياة للتواصل والتحدث والاسترخاء والخروج عن نمط الحياة المفحم بالعمل، وتعتبر المقهى في مصر أماكن للاستمتاع وقضاء وقت الفراغ والاكثر من ذلك فهي تعتبر مراكز لرواية القصص والمناقشات.

فهناك الكثير من المقاهي في مصر وتصنف على أنها مقاهي تراثية حيث شهدت على كثير من الاحداث السياسية والاجتماعية، ومن أشهر هذه المقاهي مقهى الفيشاوى، مقهى قشتمر، ومن أكثر المقاهي شهرة والتي نال وذاع صيتها وهو مقهى ريش.

مقهى ريش هو مقهى ينتمى الى الوجود البشرى المصرى في فترة تعددت فيه الهويات والافراد، يمثله باختيارته الفنية والسياسية والثقافية في أغلب الفترات التي مرت عليه، فكان من المؤسسات غير الرسمية التي يتشكل فيه الرأى والرأى الاخر مثله مثل العديد من المقاهي في لحظات التغيير والازمات وأيضا يكمن في طيات حوائطه العديد من الحكايات التي لا تنتهى.

الكلمات الدالة: مقهى – تراث ثقافي غير مادي- مقاهي عامة – مقهى ريش.