Special Article

CAIRENE TRADITIONS INSIDE PALLADIAN VILLAS

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To Arab architects and historians there is a demarcating line between "traditional" and "modern" dwellings in the Middle East that lies between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The apparent loss of the physical representation of the traditional dwelling after this time seems to have convinced many that the idea of tradition also ceased to exist at this time. But, if a culture decides to retain the modes of behavior and thought that pertain to a traditional house without retaining the house itself, can we not still term the outcome "traditional"? This paper argues that traditionalism is achieved when a reciprocal influence takes place between a society and its dwellings. This reciprocity can take into consideration the aspiration of a society towards new dwelling forms. The turn-of-the-century Cairene villa reflects this concept through the interaction of Palladian and Egyptian ideals. On the one hand, it shows how Egyptians adopted the symmetric arrangement of the central-hall plan as a way to connote social prestige. On the other, it shows how they retained traditional ideas on family privacy, structure, and guest reception. Together, the two ideals produced a middle outcome, where foreign systems were welcome, but self-identity was not lost.

MANY ARAB HISTORIANS AND ARCHITECTS AGREE THAT THE term tradition refers to the passing down of the elements, modes of thought, or behaviors of a culture from generation to generation. According to such a definition, if we describe a house as "traditional," we mean that it pertains to time-honored modes of thought followed from one generation to another. These modes of thought can either represent social manners and customs practiced inside the dwelling, or they can represent modes directly governing the dwelling's physical form. More important, between the two there is a reciprocal mode of influence that continues through generations.

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On reviewing the historic development of dwellings in the Middle East, Arab architects and historians have identified a demarcating line between what is “traditional” and what is “modern.” This line lies between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The apparent loss of the physical representation of the traditional dwelling at this time seems to have convinced Arab architects and historians that the idea of tradition also ceased to exist. Consequently, the reciprocity between the social content and physical form of dwellings was also lost. Dwelling form became foreign, therefore incompatible; colonial, therefore oppressive.

But what if we consider the question differently and allow that Arab society may have replaced the physical representation of the eighteenth-century house with that of the nineteenth-century, while retaining the modes of behavior and thought that pertained to the traditional house? Can we not term the new outcome “traditional”? This paper attempts to answer this question by taking the Cairene villa at the turn of the twentieth century as a case study.

**THE PALLADIAN IDEAL AND THE EGYPTIAN LANDOWNER**

The concept of a detached dwelling, composed of two or three stories, situated in a garden and overlooking a sunny, quiet street, only came to Cairo in the second half of the nineteenth century. This detached dwelling, or villa, was tripartite in plan. Its middle contained a central hall, accentuated by the projection of a terrace, porch, or bay window, and it was flanked by two sets of rooms.

The origins of such a dwelling could no doubt be traced to the sixteenth-century builder/theoretician Andrea Palladio who practiced in the Venetian lands. By the nineteenth century, Palladian villas were considered a prototype for upper-class dwellings all over Europe. Palladio described his plan as follows:

> The rooms ought to be distributed on each side of the entry and the hall, and it is to be observed that those on the right correspond with those on the left, so that the fabric may be the same in one place as in the other, and that the walls may equally bear the burden of the roof.

Palladio justified the arrangement of rooms not only on grounds of construction and economy, but also aesthetics. He believed that beauty resulted from a form in which the parts corresponded to the whole, leading eventually to a plan that had an entire and complete body. In his mind, mirror symmetry perfectly served this ideal in both plan and facade, so that the windows on the right corresponded to those on the left, and the ones on the upper story corresponded with those on the lower. An accentuated central part served as an axis for this overall symmetry (FIG. 1).

Palladio gave his arrangement a third layer of rationale, which was more meaningful to his clients and those of succeeding generations:

> I have made in all the villa buildings and also in some of the city ones a pediment on columns for the front facade in which there are the principal portals. The reason is that these porches announce the entrance of houses and lend much to their grandeur and magnificence. They make the forward part more eminent than the other parts and are most convenient for the insignia of arms... which one usually places at the center of the facade.

This third layer of rationale had a social meaning, for the presence of a colonnaded loggia with a pedimented top (an element borrowed from religious iconography) became a hallmark of honorary status in residential architecture. Palladio regarded this arrangement as one reserved for “great men,” so as to impress those “who shall wait to salute or ask him [the master of the house] some favour.” This elevated status of the villa had never been idealized with such intensity before Palladio. Since his time, the Palladian design has always been associated with expressions of wealth, power and prestige.

Conceived in these terms, the country villa was usually set in the midst of large green fields (farming estates and gardens), where the family enjoyed a privileged sense of isolation and repose from the dense fabric of the city. As a second house for the family, it fulfilled their psychological need for a *dolce vita*. Through the next several centuries the sixteenth-century villa continued as a place for amusement, hospitality and escape from the urban life, although its farming aspect gradually diminished.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the prevalence of the Palladian villa as a prototype was no longer limited to the countryside. It came also to be constructed in suburban neighborhoods nearer the crowded urban fabric of the city, where it assumed a more compact format. The causes for such a development were intertwined, and included industrialization, rapid growth of central historic cities at the expense of the countryside, and faster means of transportation. Such developments gave rise to a new social elite of industrial entrepreneurs, urban bureaucrats, and commercial bourgeoisie. These groups, bent on acquiring fortunes, sought to create their own miniaturized versions of aristocratic life (FIG. 2).
The compact Palladian type became widely known to the newly rising elite through construction albums and catalogues. In the first decade of the twentieth century these publications formed a genre that depicted the past as an era to be idealized and revered. That past had once belonged to a "real" aristocracy, and although it could no longer be entirely reached or reconstructed, simplified versions could be made available.

In the process of simplification, the few were made to stand for the many and the abstract for the original. Thus, the central hall changed from being large and close to square in shape (as in eighteenth-century country houses) to being smaller and more corridor-like. The loggia, once the temple frontispiece designed to overwhelm visitors with its finished detail, size and decoration, became a humble pediment in the form of a molded pilaster on the facade. The new clientele may not have had honorary emblems to post on the loggia, as Palladio liked; but a small porch would suffice as a recollecting icon. And the vast gardens that were once indispensable to the grandeur of the country villa, shrank to a small cultivated back or front yard — just enough green area to differentiate the suburban villa from dwellings in the more densely populated streets of the urban center.

Details of past cultures could also be abridged and distilled, leaving only a "meaning-form" vocabulary. For the newly rising European elites, Baroque villas reflected prestige, power, amusement, wealth, refined education, and elegant life-style. These values of authentic aristocracy were inherently tied to large garden estates, spacious central halls, majestic loggias, symmetric arrangement of rooms, elaborate statues, and decoration. Keen to establish a link with the past, the new elites sought to acquire this vocabulary of combined meaning and form. And since the bond between form and meaning was so strong, both were instantly evoked by cheap, simple, abstract versions. Historicism reached a climax, causing the villa to shed any contemporeity for the sake of reverence to the past.

When, during the mid-nineteenth century, the villa form migrated to Egypt, its already-distilled meaning went through another round of filtration. Generic form received even more generic meaning; for example, the pediment was seen as European not specifically Classical, and garlands signified royal not specifically Renaissance-rooted nobility. In general, forms evoking specific past cultures were screened, and some were never adopted in Cairo. The pedimented loggia, for example, a temple-like image, was replaced by a horizontal slab. What filtered into Egyptian society was the essential and the striking. Eventually one plan type in villa design predominated: the central hall flanked by two sets of rooms.

As in Europe, the degree of uniformity achieved in the plans of Egyptian villas could vary according to site particularities. However, it was necessary to maintain symmetry in elevations that overlooked main streets and in entrance-porch facades, for this was essential to the formal appearance of the house and its meaning for its owner. This important form no longer referred to Palladio, but to Europe or modernism; the two terms were synonymous.
Like Europe’s new elite, the Egyptian patron, who was usually a landowner, sought out the villa form to create an image for himself. The Egyptian upper classes had flourished after passage of an 1858 law which regulated possession of any amount of agricultural land, a privilege that had previously been limited to the ruling Turks and some Egyptians. After 1858 ownership of land became the dream of every Egyptian and a main source of wealth and status. In 1866 the status and power of the new Egyptian land-owning class was officially enhanced when its members were allowed to represent various provinces in a state advisory council.

Well-educated and high-ranking government officials formed another privileged class. These people were very influential, for they either allied themselves with rural notables and invested in agriculture, or they allied themselves with the old Turkish elite. This second privileged group were the products of modern education. Some were officially sent to Europe for their education and were appointed to government positions upon their return. The first group of Egyptians to be educated abroad returned in the 1830s. But by the end of the century, they were still relative newcomers to the world of aristocracy, and they tried to enhance their position with status symbols, one of which was the villa.

In 1909 a detailed monograph in English, 20th Century Impressions of Egypt, attempted to cover every aspect of Egypt for European readers. It described the country’s political history, economy, education, professions, monuments, urban development, journals, traditional crafts, and public services, and it gave biographical notes on almost every notable in the society. The monograph showed each social group in terms of images that set it apart from the rest of the society. For example, professional and business groups such as merchants, architects and builders were shown in terms of their offices and stores. But when it came to the Egyptian notable, his wealth was displayed through images of sitting rooms, drawing rooms, studies and libraries, lavishly decorated and well furnished. Exterior shots of houses with their gardens and front porches were also included. Another indispensable status symbol was the automobile, in which the patron in full uniform was shown sitting with a serious look on his face (FIG. 3).

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND THE EGYPTIAN ARISTOCRACY

Anchoring a place on the Cairene social map through architecture had been a practice with a history that reached back as far as the Mamluk era (1326–1515). However, it was not through residential architecture that the Mamluk aristocracy had created its public presence, but through religious edifices.

In his Prolegomenon, Ibn Khaldun shed light on this phenomenon. He writes:

A “house” means that a man counts noble and famous among men of his forbearing. The fact that he is their progeny and descendant gives him great standing among his fellows for his fellows respect the great standing and nobility that his ancestors acquired.

However in the case of people who have no group feeling to make themselves feared, and who have no rank (to bestow) for which one might hope, there can be no doubt as to why they are respected. . . . namely glory, perfection in personal qualities.
A dynasty that could not boast of a noble "house" (i.e., lineage) had to rely solely on personal qualities to gain the loyalty and support of the masses. The Mamluk dynasty, which centered its rule in Cairo and was contemporary to Ibn Khaldun, was exemplary in this regard. The dynasty erected religious foundations which served both as places of worship and centers of charity. In these foundations a passerby might be provided with water, an orphan might be educated, or the poor might be fed. In this way each member of the dynasty asserted their presence to the public consciousness.

While expressions of personal piety and power had always been made in Egypt through architecture, this practice was amplified during the Mamluk dynasty because of its lack of a respected "house." This intensity was revived during the nineteenth century by the newly rising Egyptian elite. Like the Mamluk mosque, the villa was for them a possible place for distributing food and clothing to the poor on religious occasions, or for practicing Qur'an recitations. To the public, the villa was therefore a place for the display of notions of piety and charity, not only of modernity and prestige.

The villa was also known to the public through the rank of its owner. In nineteenth-century Egypt class distinction was expressed by official titles: effendi, bey and pasha. Other titles reflected social standing and profession, like al-tuggay (merchant) and al-a'yan (notable/landowner). The two could be combined to give an accurate indication of who a person was in the society.

To understand the position of the Egyptian notable/landowner in the social hierarchy of the time, we need to understand where he sat at royal ceremonies involving a large number of distinguished people. The organizers of such official events at royal palaces had to observe strict protocols in seating guests. To insure the correct order during the ceremony, the event was announced in the official newspaper al-Waqai' al-Masriya, with the assignment of each building entrance to a certain category of guest. In some cases a schematic plan of the royal palace was provided, with the entrances marked and classified according to titles. Each category of person was sure to know where to sit in relation to the highest authority and, hence, where they stood in the overall social hierarchy. In these ceremonies Egyptian notables of a'yan rank were seated farthest from authority — after European dignitaries, religious, political and juridical leaders, European merchants, and landowners. This position not only announced that they had only recently acquired their status, but that they were the class of distinguished personages closest to the masses (FIG. 4).

The practice of ranking according to titles was also applied in the layout of residential neighborhoods. In 1934 Marcel Clerget, an urban historian, classified new neighborhoods in Cairo into three types: those that had an exclusive European character and contained major banks and hotels; those that were semi-indigenous and semi-European in character; and those that had a predominant local character and which housed the petite bourgeoisie. Egyptian landowners of distinguished caliber (those, as above, who were seated at the farthest end of the palace) lived in the second type of neighborhood. The group, thus, retained local values but looked up to a European image. Hilmiyya neighborhood was one of their seats.

A HYBRIDIZATION OF PLAN TYPES

Residents of Hilmiyya lived in villas that combined European and traditional values. A map of 1911 shows that most of the houses in this area had a separate structure raised one flight of stairs above the ground. This was the salamlek, or reception hall for male nonrelatives (FIG. 5).

Until the eighteenth century the salamlek was an integral part of a Cairene mansion and served as a showpiece reflecting in its lavishly decorated interior the wealth of a family. It had a regular shape and followed a prescribed layout: a sunken area where the entrance and a finely executed marble fountain were located, flanked by two raised sitting areas. However, with the introduction of the central-hall plan, this whole setting disappeared, leaving only the idea.

The European plan was welcomed in Hilmiyya along with notions of modernity and progress, yet it was not fully accepted because it seriously violated norms of family privacy. Hilmiyya society rejected the arrangement of a central hall located be-
FIGURE 5. Detail of map of 1911 showing the salamlek in Hilmiyya house. Source: Cairo survey department.

hind the entrance porch and flanked by rooms without intermediary space. Consequently, the idea of the salamlek was retained along with the European plan. The combination allowed the visitor to be received in a room that still maintained its traditional importance yet avoided any disruption of family privacy.

This architectural modification to the European plan shows that the tradition of excluding the visitor from familial life persisted in the new form of dwelling. Yet the refusal to alter the central-hall plan was as strong as the insistence on having a salamlek. The attempt to encompass both ideals — one architectural, one social — resulted in the separation of the two domains. The plan of the Abdel Latif house is a good example (FIG. 6).

The separation of the salamlek from the house did not mean that this traditional reception space was accorded an inferior status. On the contrary, it was raised from the ground by one flight of stairs to give it honorary status. It was also located in the front yard, and its facade treatment was often similar to that of the house. Moreover, the interior was still lavishly decorated and well furnished like other reception rooms inside the house. Thus, the traditional component of the new dwelling was as well respected as the imported European component. This respect could even be amplified if the lot were large enough to allow construction of more than one salamlek (FIG. 7, house No. 2). In some cases the salamlek was so large it had its own garden (FIG. 7, house No. 1).

The separation of the salamlek from the rest of the house can be regarded as a happy marriage between tradition and modernity. It can also be interpreted as a failure of the central-hall plan to accommodate local prerequisites. Nonetheless, this treatment of the salamlek had a clear message to the guest: “We value your status, but due to the fact that you are not a direct relative of ours, we choose to entertain you in this separate structure which is as prestigious as any of our reception rooms. Conventions prevent us from admitting you to this house that has no provisions for privacy.” Indeed, a house like that of the Abdel Latif could never accommodate all kinds of male visitors in its interior rooms, for all vertical and horizontal circulation had to pass through the central hall. Visitors were thus screened into two distinct categories: relatives and strangers.

In most European villas visitors were first admitted to the central hall, then to a reception room. But the Palladian scenario of a guest being overwhelmed by the spaciousness and decoration of the central hall while waiting to be entertained by his host could not be transferred to the Hilmiyya community. Local customs allowed only for the central hall to become the inner sanctuary of the house.

In the traditional Cairene house there had been no ambiguity between the areas of visitor circulation and family activity. Each had its own service area and stairs. Each also had a distinctive architectural treatment that signaled its exact location. In the new house setting, these distinctions disappeared under the strict uniformity of the central-hall plan. Nevertheless, architects and builders still did their best to separate circulation patterns for guests and family. They even offered more than one setting in which clients might entertain their guests, thus broadening the classification of visitors. Distinctions were no longer limited to two main categories, relatives and nonrelatives, as in Abdel Latif residence, but now included intimate friends, professional peers, and business associates.

The admission of any of these groups to the house led to the invention of several design solutions for the purpose of pri-
The wife could go to the kitchen and supervise her maids without passing through the central hall. A second solution was to give the central hall side doors that allowed passage to a terrace abutting the reception room (FIG. 8B). When a bell rang, a maid or the owner would open a side door of the central hall. If the visitor was a man, the maid would enter the reception room, open its door, and admit the visitor. The presence of an extra side door to the central hall minimized the time needed to go from the central hall to the reception room. This roundabout circulation was essential to avoid the lack of privacy that would otherwise have been present in this type of plan. It is not far-fetched to say that the number of doors alone could have distinguished a Cairene central-hall plan from a European one.

**THE EVOLUTION OF TRADITIONAL RECEPTION SPACES**

With this localized version of the central-hall plan, Hilmiyya houses succeeded in preserving the time-honored practice of separating guest from family circulation. It even provided more than one place for receiving guests—a flexibility also present in historic mansions acknowledged as being traditional.

The eighteenth-century house had three generic places to receive guests. The first was the mandara, a type of enclosure that was a qa'a—that is, a tripartite rectangular hall, the
center of which was sunken and had a fountain and entrance portal. The *manda* was located on the ground floor, was two stories high, and might have received light and ventilation only from the top. The second type of reception space was the *takhtabush*, an internal portico also on ground level overlooking the courtyard. The third reception space was the *maq'ad*, a loggia on the first floor above ground level, approached by one or two flights of stairs and usually projecting into the courtyard with an elaborate portal (FIG. 9).

The number of reception spaces and their variety reflected the wealth of the patron. For example, the Suhaymi house of the eighteenth century (FIG. 10) had four *manda*. Two were oriented to the north to receive cool summer breezes through side fenestration (Nos. 3, 10). The third was for use in cold weather, since it received light and ventilation from above (No. 4). The fourth was ideal for autumn and spring, for it received its light and air from both a top lantern and side fenestration oriented to the east (No. 14). Thus, the owner of this house could take a guest to any one of four halls depending on the time of year. Apart from the *manda*, the house also included a *takhtabush* (No. 11), as well as a *maq'ad* on the upper level (above No. 3) which the owner could use when the status of his guest permitted (persons admitted to a *maq'ad* were of higher status than those admitted to a *takhtabush*).

If we continue our comparison of Hilmiyya houses and those of the eighteenth century, we note further similarities. The male reception space in Hilmiyya villas, found in the garden, was analogous to the *maq'ad*. Both spaces were elevated by one or two flights of stairs, but some or all of the steps leading to them were deliberately displayed in the open. Both historic and modern *salamleks* were also prominently located in their settings. The *maq'ad* was a loggia with one or two large arches, which appeared in sharp contrast to the solid and screened facades of the courtyard. The modern *salamlek* was set in the foreground of the Hilmiyya villa overlooking the street, where it could appear either at the corner of two streets or on one side of a square.

In the historic layout, the reception space could only be seen by those entering the courtyard; in the modern layout, it could be seen from the street. Both methods protect privacy and display wealth. Whereas the owner of the eighteenth-century house hid his wealth from the public (perhaps out of modesty), the owner of the Hilmiyya villa displayed it to give the image that he was rich and modern, yet authentically Egyptian. To further strengthen this idea of authenticity, in some Hilmiyya houses the stairs leading to the *salamlek* ended in a small terrace with arches resembling the facade of a *maq'ad*.  

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**FIGURE 10.** Bottom: *al-Suhaymi* house, ground floor. Nos. 3, 4, 14, 10 *manda*; 11 *takhtabush*; 9, 12 antechambers; on top of 3 there is the *maq'ad*. The darkened walls highlight the *manda* (s). Source: A. Raymond et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire, II, Époque Ottomane* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1983).
This comparison of older and newer versions of the salamlek helps strengthen the claim of Hilmiyya houses to traditionalism. Eighteenth-century Cairene mansions represented the last version of traditional dwellings before European intervention. As such, many Arab historians and architects today consider them to have been the ideal architectural fulfillment of social needs. But this notion of traditionalism attempts to make the authentic representation of cultural values synonymous with a particular house form. If we separate the form from the values, we can easily see the traditional qualities of the Hilmiyya villas. Setting aside the differences in appearance between maq'ad, takhtabush and mandara, on the one hand, and a salon, on the other, we are left with a group of circulation patterns between guest and family activities. These patterns are equally articulated in both old and new forms of dwelling, and achieve the same goal (FIG. 11).

NEW STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY DIVISION

The similarity between houses historically acknowledged as traditional and Hilmiyya villas does not occur only in terms of double circulation patterns and the variation in guest reception, but also in plan compartmentalization. In the past, a major criterion defining the layout of a traditional Egyptian dwelling was its ability to be continually subdivided or expanded. One reason for this was the changing needs and status of the owner. Another was the Muslim law of inheritance, which required the division of property among members of a family in fixed proportions after an owner died. And just as there were mechanisms for dividing property, there were also mechanisms for reassembling it. Thus, over time property lines shifted a great deal. In eighteenth-century courtyard houses these mechanisms for subdividing and reassembling parts were evident. Changes occurred least often on the ground floor where official reception halls, loggias, and entrance portals were located. These components were the most expensive and were made of the most durable materials (like stone), while the spaces on the upper floors were made of bricks and could more easily be changed. Recurring changes can explain the compartmentalization of upper-floor plans as they appear today, but compartmentalization should not be seen simply as a method of arranging spaces that emerged over time. An owner may from the outset have had more than one wife to please, and each family nucleus had to have its own autonomous living space. Thus, conscious decisions during design could have helped in the later subdivision of spaces according to inheritance laws.

The upper floors of the eighteenth-century house of Razzaz, contained family quarters which overlooked the eastern courtyard and were composed of two separate apartments, each with its own entrance, staircase, number of qa'a(s), annexed rooms, and service areas (FIG. 12). The lodging overlooking Bab al-Wazir Street was more spacious and luxurious, and housed a bigger family. This complete separation of lodgings was not always possible in courtyard houses. However, the notion of allocating spaces to a particular family nucleus persisted.

Inheritance laws and multinuclear families continued to prevail until the beginning of the twentieth century. In Hilmiyya, since we are dealing with a first generation of
families, the partitioning effect of inheritance did not come into the picture. What was relevant was the modification of the central-hall plan during initial design to include extended family conditions. The most common solution was to devote one floor to each family. Thus, an owner who had two wives would build one floor for each woman and her children.

In bigger houses compartmentalization could be horizontal. Hasan Pasha Hasib had his sister and her family living with him. The plan for this house was therefore arranged to incorporate two lodgings—one for his wife, another for his sister—in a form reminiscent of Palladio's Villa Rotunda (FIG. 13). The family staircase had two entrances, each leading to a central hall, bedrooms, and a battery of services. As in the past, one lodging was more important than the other in terms of the number and size of rooms. The sister and her family were assumed to be the guests of her brother's wife no matter how long she stayed there.

The idea of subdividing the plan anchors Hilmiyya houses to the notion of traditionalism, though not in a typical manner. In eighteenth-century courtyard houses the ideals constraining the designs were specific to each space rather than to the overall layout. For example, the *mandara* was thought to be ideally rectangular and divided into three parts, and its center was sunken and contained a fountain. As autonomous entities, such spaces could be tied together in ways irrespective of the final layout of the dwelling. This logic allowed for harmonious relations between spaces emerging both from initial design and any accretionary process of expansion or subdivision that might follow. Consequently, no matter what changes were made in the plan, it never lost its logic.

In the central-hall plan the ideals were focused on the overall scheme of organization. The more symmetrical the arrangement, the better. It was the final layout that counted, and this should appear regular in form. Once the plan was laid down, it was complete. Spontaneous encroachments and subdivisions were discouraged—otherwise, the plan would come to defy its inner logic. Even during the initial design anything that offset the axially balanced form would shift the plan away from ideal standards. Palladio—and later on, French Polytechnic theoreticians (who had influence on the Egyptian architectural curriculum)—were very conscious of this dilemma.

But an architect is very often obliged, to conform more to the will of those who are at the expense, than to that which ought to be observed...[Moreover,] as most commonly in cities, either the neighbours walls, the streets, or publick places, prescribe certain limits, which the architect cannot surpass, it is proper he should conform himself to the circumstances of the situation...15

Palladio, in one of his theoretical designs, highlighted this attitude toward a less ideal situation. The notion of "conforming" to actual conditions rather than to what "ought to be" never suggested the discarding of ideals in response to less favorable conditions. On the contrary, the architect would proceed with his regular and symmetric arrangement of forms until they "ran into" the irregular portion of the site. "Conforming" here meant "colliding." In this manner, the eye would read the ideal setting even when it was partially hidden by the actual condition of the site. This was precisely the effect experienced by a viewer walking from the main entrance to the chamfered courtyard in Palladio's theoretical design (FIG. 14).

Once the central-hall plan migrated to Hilmiyya, there was more of "what actually is" than "what ought to be." The idea of conforming to irregular conditions became the norm. What was different about these conditions in Hilmiyya, as opposed to Europe, was that they surpassed site specificities and building technicalities to merge into cultural mechanisms such as plan subdivision and double circulation. Thus, for the plan to survive in its new environment, it had to constantly contain elements that defied its inner logic.

The plan of Zaki al-Shere'i accommodated the living quarters of two nuclear families at the expense of tipping off the
symmetric arrangement of spaces (FIG. 15). This was even more apparent in the villa of Dr. Nashid, where a clinic was included in the villa proper. Not only did the circulation between guests and family have to be separate, but so did that for female and male patients (FIG. 16). The final plan only contained a symmetric arrangement in one corner of the house, leaving the rest to reflect local predicaments.

TRADITIONALISM: AN INTERACTIVE PROCESS

Traditionalism, as I have demonstrated by means of the Hilmiyya villas, does not mean the persistent recycling of a group of images reflecting a past culture. Neither does it mean the reduction of architecture to mere icons of a "golden" age. It is, most importantly, the establishment of a reciprocal influence between a living society and its dwellings. This reciprocity can take into consideration the aspiration of a society towards new forms, as well as its traditional mode of thinking.

I have shown how a recurring theme in the Hilmiyya villas was the transformation of the Palladian ideals into forms compatible with Egyptian dwelling tradition. Consequently, traditionalism can be understood as an in-between situation that converses with two sets of ideals simultaneously, one foreign, another local. There is neither antagonism towards the former, nor frantic idealism towards the later, because the situation is not seen as a degeneration from the ideal, but as confidence in a promising future. It was in this way that the Hilmiyya plan itself became a tradition that lasted almost a century in Egypt.16
REFERENCE NOTES

2. Ibid., p.41.
3. Ibid., p.38.
4. Ibid., p.53.
6. Ibid., p.40.
8. Ibid., p.90.
10. Ibid., p.90.
11. Ackerman, The Villa Form, p.17.
12. In Italy, for example, an active publishing house was that of Società Italiana di Edizioni Artistiche. C. Crudo & Co. Albums by this publisher are Soffiti e fregi moderni. – Le villa moderna in Italia – Ville del Lago di Como e della Lombardia, – Ville di Torino, – Ville di Roma, – Ville del Lido a Venezia, Ville e villete moderne, Le Moderne in Italia – Milano, – Genova, – Torino, Mosivi ornamentali moderni. The company was also in charge of publishing architectural periodicals like L'Architettura Italiana. In Austria there was Anton Schroll & Co. Albums by them are: Neue Landhäuser und Villen in Österreich (Vienna 1910), Wiener Neubauten im Stil der Secession and anderen modernen Stilen, Fürden, Details: Hausthore, Vestibühl (Vienna 1905). Wiener Neubauten im Stile der Secession, Fürden, Details: Hausthore, Vestibühl. The last title is a yearly catalogue that appeared from 1902 up through the 1910s.
14. Such aspirations and attitudes towards “real” aristocracy were depicted in literary works of the time in various European cultures. For example, in Italy: D’Annunzio, The Child of Pleasure; in Austria: Musil, The Man without Qualities; in France: Zola, Peu-Basile.
15. Ackerman, The Villa Form, p.18.
16. Ibid., p.18.
17. Ahmad Sfahiq Pasha, a sociopolitical chronicler, recalls that when the poet Subhi Bey was made head of a municipality, he rushed to borrow a carriage so as to have an image compatible with his new status. See A. Sfahiq, Mauzabahirat fi Nisf Qarn (My Memoirs in half a Century) (Cairo: Misr Press, 1934), Vol.1, p.47.
23. Ibid., section 19, p.594.
25. Various interviews with members of second-generation families who lived in the Hilmiyya neighborhood showed these activities as part of a continuous tradition that linked the villa’s owner to the public’s cognition.
26. Examples of such announcements are in issues of 1892 between April and June.
29. Ibid., p.161.
30. Of course there are exceptions to the rule, especially in eighteenth-century courtyard houses, but what concerns us here is the more typical setting.
34. A multinuclear family can be either one of the following or a combination of them: 1) a man marries more than one wife, and each wife represents a nucleus; 2) an extended family of married sons and daughters living in the same house as their parents; 3) an owner may have sisters and brothers (and their families, if present) living in his house.
36. Up until the 1910s villa design continued to have the central-hall arrangement in the Modern Movement in Egypt. The form may not be in symmetry, but the tripartite division with a projected veranda accentuating the central part, was in practice. There are two important sources contemporary to the modern period: 1) the sole architectural periodical Al-‘Imara (Architecture) (for example, #14–15 1933 has special material on villas, and so does #6/7–1966); 2) an encyclopedic work in five volumes is Dumya al-Mahani (The World of Buildings) by A. Salama, 1950 (Vol.2 is primarily on villas). Also see a study by M. Velait, L’Architecture moderne en Egypte et la République Arabic, 1933–1955 (Cairo: CEDJP press, 1987).