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## Returned to the People: The Transformation of Egyptian Royal Palaces into Museums

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### Abstract

The palaces of Muḥammad 'Alī's dynasty cost a fortune to build and maintain. After the 1952 Revolution, most of these palaces were confiscated and became the property of the Egyptian government. Some of them were turned into historical museums. Once opened, the palace museums attracted many visitors. This paper examines how three of these palaces - 'Abdīn Palace; Farouq Rest House and Manyal Palace - functioned as museums in post-revolutionary Egypt, and how heritage functioned in the process of building the modern Egyptian nation state in the 20th century. These three palaces were opened as historical museums because of their historical, architectural and artistic values. The important symbolic functions of the palaces are reflected in the involvement of the highest politicians in the opening ceremonies. Nowadays, even though the studied palaces are not currently common on the tourist itinerary, they are still part of the cultural program of Egyptian school classes.

### Keywords

'Abdīn Palace; Farouq Rest House; Manyal Palace; historical museums; palaces of Muḥammad 'Alī' dynasty

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EGYPTIAN ARCHITECTURE. During the Old Kingdom, the period when Egypt was ruled by the Kings of the 3rd to 6th Dynasties, artists and craftsmen were drawn to the court to work under the patronage of the king and his great nobles. These monuments celebrated the divinity of the kings of Egypt, linking the people with the great gods of earth and sky. This was a time when trade and the economy flourished. Very little architecture remains – many royal monuments were robbed for their stone in later periods – but what has survived shows great simplicity and refinement. The example is the pyramid of Sesostrius I at Lisht. The kings gave encouragement to artists and craftsmen by ordering great temples and palaces to be built throughout Egypt. Egyptian Palaces and Villas: Pashas, Khedives, and Kings by Shirley Johnston, photographs by Sherif Sonbol. Tells the stories of the families and architects behind 41 spectacular villas and palaces. Illustrated with 174 original color photographs. Europe. Dream Palaces: The Last Royal Courts of Europe by Jerome Coignard, photographs by Marc Walter. Offers a private tour through 19th century royal estates, including Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein, the Alexandra Cottage of Peterhof, and the lovely Castle of Miramare built for Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. The Winter Palace and the People: Staging and Consuming Russia's Monarchy, 1754-1917 by Susan P. McCaffrey. The story of the palace, monarchs and their capital city during the final years of Russian monarchy. Castles, palaces and cathedrals have a longer lifespan than the dwellings of ordinary people. The same applies to the furnishing and other contents of the premises. In a town like Leyden in Holland, which in the seventeenth century was occupied by approximately the same number of inhabitants as today, people lived within the walled town, an area more than five times smaller than modern Leyden. In most of the houses, several families lived together in circumstances beyond our imagination. Yet in museums, line period rooms give only an image of the lifestyle of the upper class of that era. No won The Museum Expedition format is based on the latest pedagogies and museum practices. We welcome your input! Teacher, chaperones, and students are welcome to listen to the MP3s of our audio tour on their own personal digital devices if they choose to continue to explore the museum after 2:00 p.m. The museum features interactive teaching tools including, but not limited to: Hidden Clues: On yellow paper in black frames throughout the museum, these clues can only be seen when viewed under a blue light. These blue lights are made available to each chaperone on the Museum Expedition.