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Meeting along the borders: Reflections on Egyptian secular music and dance in travel accounts

*Sonja Antanasijević**

"The Egyptians, in general, are excessively fond of music and yet they regard the study of this fascinating art (like dancing) as unworthy to employ any portion of the time of a man of sense..." [1]

"...How strange did this dance seem to us? But is it not probable that our waltz would seem equally strange to these dusky women of Egypt?"[2]

Abstract*. This article explores the notion of Egyptian secular music and female solo improvised dance in travel accounts of the European and American travellers in the 19th century. Its goal is to reflect on the encounters of travellers with the "new" and "exotic" bodies of Egyptian musicians and female dancers. This will be done by presenting literary as well as iconographic sources from that period, mostly paintings and sketches made by the travellers themselves. Furthermore, the article will explore the dynamics of this newly established cultural relationship between two seemingly different sides, the West and the East, as we know them today.*

Riassunto*. In questo articolo si propongono alcune considerazioni sulla musica nell'Egitto del XIX secolo, in particolare per quanto riguarda la danza femminile in contesto profano, come appare attraverso le cronache e i resoconti dei viaggiatori europei e americani. L'obiettivo è una riflessione sulle loro reazioni nell'incontro con i musicisti e le danzatrici egiziane e con l'idea di "nuovo" ed "esotico" che essi incarnavano. In questa prospettiva saranno presentate fonti letterarie e iconografiche di quel periodo, per lo più dipinti e bozzetti realizzati dai viaggiatori stessi. Inoltre, l'articolo esplorerà le dinamiche del rapporto culturale di recente costituzione che coinvolge due mondi apparentemente diversi, l'Occidente e l'Oriente.*

* Radbound University, Nijmegen, *sonja_antanasijevic@yahoo.com*

[1] E. W. LANE, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London, Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1836, p. 63.

[2] F. W. PUTNAM, *Portrait types of the Midway Plaisance*, St. Louis, N. O. Thompson, 1894, p. 7.

Egypt was going through dramatic changes in the 19th century. Before Napoleon Bonaparte led his French expedition to Egypt in 1798, the country was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, which began in 1517. The real local power, however, laid in the hands of Mamluk dynasty, who was there before the Ottomans[3]. Napoleon's victory put Egypt under the French occupation which lasted until 1801, when Ottoman Turks together with the British defeated the French.

Mohammed 'Ali, an Albanian officer who entered Egypt with the Ottoman troupes formed an alliance with the religious authorities and took the newly created opportunity to be proclaimed governor of Egypt under Ottoman command in 1805. In 1811, after efficiently removing all the remaining Mamluk leaders, he took command of Egypt and finally, in 1841, freed himself completely from the Ottoman influence. He carried on, reorganizing both society and military structure, as well as all spheres of public life. He opened Egypt to Europe. Foreign scholars and travelers were encouraged to reside in Egypt and the reasons they did so varied.

Ever since the times of the Roman Empire, Egypt has been perceived as a mysterious place and has inspired significant interest among the Europeans[4]. The interest in Egypt increased especially in 18th and 19th century. Travelers have been visiting Egypt extensively after Napoleon's expedition at the dawn of 19th century. However, Europeans were interested in Egypt even before Napoleon's arrival 1743[5]. Travelers, scholars, artists and tourists came to the country for different reasons: political (Bayard Taylor 1856, August de Marmont 1837-38), leisure and travel (Gustave Flaubert 1972, George William Curtis 1856), work (Suzanne Voilquin 1878), to live and research (Edward William Lane 1836). Many accounts were left by those travelers in the form of diaries, letters, descriptions, books on Ancient Egypt, natural history, etc. Also, some travelers and especially painters left visual accounts but not nearly as numerous as the written ones. Descriptions of music and female dancers although not always detailed, started increasing. The interest in Egyptian female dancers grew into a burning issue and in 1834 Mohammed 'Ali banned public female dancing in Cairo.

In 1863 Ismā'īl Bāshā, Mohammed 'Ali's descendant, took command of Egypt. He continued Egypt's modernization and it was during his regime, in 1869, that the Suez Canal was opened. This event made Egypt more available for tourists and other

[3] Wherever possible, anglicized Arabic names and words will be used. In all other instances, the transcription system for Arabic words of *Arabic – English dictionary - The Hans Wehr dictionary of modern written Arabic* (edited by J.Milton Cowan, 4 ed., Urbana IL, 1994), will be used. In the case of citations, the transcription system of the quoted author will be used.

[4] See G. G. LEMAIRE, *Orientalismus: Das Bild des Morgenlandes in der Malerei*, Potsdam, Tandem Verlag, 2010, pp. 88-89.

[5] R. POCOCKE, *Observations on Egypt: Description of the East and Some Other Countries, vol. 1*, London, W. Bowyer, 1743; C. NIEBUHR, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegender Ländern*, Coopenhagen-Hamburg, 1774-1778; C.N.S. SONNINI DE MANONCOURT , *Voyage dans la Haute et Basse Égypte, fait par ordere de l'ancien Gouvernement, et contenant des observations de tous genres*, 3 vols, Paris,1799.

visitors. Politically, its importance for the British was enormous because it shortened the travel to India and other parts of Asia speeding up the trade and shipping.

At the end of 19th century, due to mass tourism, many cafes, theaters, hotels and nightclubs were opened in Cairo. Ezbekiyya area in Cairo was a public space especially famous for its theaters, nightclubs and entertainment. The way the local dance has been performed also changed – performances moved from streets and public squares to cafes and nightclubs.

Also, the end of 19th century was the time when the Egyptian local dance was transported abroad as one of the wonders of the colonies. Back then, world exhibitions were places of gathering, displaying the development of the Western world, and each had a part dedicated to presenting the world of the colonized countries. The Paris Great Exposition in 1889 had an Egyptian coffee house with Egyptian dancers. The same dancers were invited to Chicago a few years later. From the beginning, oriental dance gained enormous popularity but scorn as well, as it was seen as disgraceful. Seeing for the first time the dance they had only heard about before, the exhibition's visitors shared to some extent the impressions the travelers to Egypt had written down in previous decades[6].

On encounters and Orientalism

There has been a continuous debate on the term and the idea of Orientalism since the publishing of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978. The work itself has been analyzed, praised, re-read, criticized – but its effect on the diverse range of disciplines is undeniable[7].

An Orientalist in 18th and 19th centuries could have been any scholar, traveler or artist who engaged in exploring and describing the *Orient*. However, what one meant by the *Orient* was rather hard to define and as a term covered a rather vast area stretching from the Middle East to China and even Japan. This is one of the facts that Said criticized – that the term *Orient* is somewhat an imaginary place, created by Western colonial power. Since 1978 Orientalism was largely understood as an exotic and romantic representation of the *Other* by Western colonizers. It was a power game between the progressive and civilized *West* and the ancient never changing and barbaric *East*.

Above all, Orientalism is a narrative tool used by the *West* to describe the *East* - How *we* describe *them* in order to justify the colonization and the domination over *them*. Orientalism is a tool for creating misunderstanding. It implies a lack of dialogue, a complete lack of the second narrative – it is a dangerous one-sided story,

[6] See for example Introduction in the work of A. SHAY and B. SELLERS-YOUNG, ed. by. *Belly dance: Orientalism, transnationalism and harem fantasy*, Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2005.

[7] See for example M. CASTRO VARELA, N. DHAVAN, *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung,* Bielefeld, Transkript Verlag, 2005; D. M. VARISCO, *Reading Orientalism: Said and Unsaid*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2007.

which does not give a fair chance, if any, to the *Other* to express *their* vision of *themselves* and *us.*

In the time of its conception Orientalism was not criticized as such, it was just a selective, observation method to describe the *Other*. The question is what one may encounter when dealing with the traveler's and their Westerner's narratives of the time: how to analyze the texts from the past in the light of the present? How to research past encounters, give meaning to traveler's accounts and the use of iconography in such a sensitive subject as culture of an *Other*? The traveler's accounts were very much the product of their time and they were affected by the general view of a foreign culture as somehow *less* than the Western one. However, traveler's accounts can be useful in giving detailed information about many aspects of life, culture and work in the Egypt of that time. The reasons behind collecting this information might be various, most likely political, but that does not necessary dismiss the information given by the text or by the visual sources. For example, after Edward Lane's work (1836) has been heavily criticized by Said, it is almost impossible to use Lane's work without mentioning this relation to Orientalism. Still, Lane's goal was to make a documentation of Egyptian modern life, in the time when most scholars were interested in Ancient Egypt. Also, he used *camera lucida* to help him with the illustrations, so the visual examples from his work offer so many valuable details.

Orientalism has many actors, nations and individuals, and their power lays in that they get to tell and be heard, to write and be read. The *Other* is silent and silenced – but the power of the *Other* is given to him/her by the very same colonial system that colonized them. The *Other* can be mysterious, romantic, emotional, has an incomprehensive way of being and living. The *Other* has something that a *Western* white man of reason misses or longs for. This became very obvious in the case of female dancers in Egypt and accounts left on them.

Especially the *She-Other* and the fixation on *her* body is extremely appealing to the Western white man[8]. Even if the *West* conquered the *East* in the sense of economy and political power, the encounters between individuals from the two sides are more dynamic and complex than that. However, the biggest trap of Orientalism nowadays, is that it became a closed system that victimizes completely the *Other* and does not leave space for dynamic play of power between individual encounters between *East* and *West*. Could the *She- Other* conquer the Western reason, could her dancing and singing body change the positions of power just for those few seconds of the performance? Or is the *Other*, in any form, just a product of colonization? The colonial gaze is ever upon *She-Other*, meticulously describing, painting, photographing *her*[9]. Maybe she performs the auto-exoticism as a method forced upon her by the overall situation in which she is. However, it should be discussed further what other kinds of relationship may be possible between the East and the West other than the division, *othering* and blame.

[8] Inspired by Marta Savigliano's (1995) use of the term *La otra.*

[9] M. SAVIGLIANO, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion,* Boulder, Westview Press, 1995.

Musicians and female dancers

In this article, the interest lies on iconography of secular music and female dancers. Even though dancing girls of Egypt were more famous than the pyramids at one point in history, the mentioning of them had to be looked for in volumes on life in Egypt, personal diaries or in some cases, they were the main topic of usually visual accounts[10].

Travelers were mostly fascinated and shocked by Egyptian dancers and dance, which will later be known as belly/oriental dance. Also, the Egyptian authorities and the general public showed mixed feelings towards the dance and the dancers, creating the atmosphere that did not change much in the decades to come[11]. Music and dance were highly welcomed during festivities like weddings, child birth, celebrations, religious feasts or private parties. For those occasions different entertainers were hired, among them female dancers, singers and musicians. Royal weddings were also accompanied by dancers and even during the opening of the Suez Canal, the foreign visitors were entertained on a boat cruse by Badawīa of Qena, a famous dancer of that time. However, being a professional musician, male or female, was not seen as a respectful occupation[12]. In particular female dancers were stigmatized – because of their occupation (dance being generally seen as a poor career choice) and gender issues connected to the social and cultural rules of behavior. Even though the dancers were heavily taxed and brought significant amounts of money to the government, the increasing interest in them by foreigners started to make trouble in Cairo. In 1834, public female dancers were banished from Cairo, a public ban forcing them to move their trade to the South of Egypt. And travelers followed them.

Female dancers were not the only professional entertainers one could hire. Both female and male professional entertainers could be hired for various gatherings and celebrations. Lane mentions male musicians as *Alateeyeh*. Even though it means "a player upon the instrument", but both musicians and singers were named like this[13]. In private parties, usually the following instruments were used: *kemengeh* (bow stringed instrument; a kind of viol)[14], *'ud* (pear-shaped string instrument, similar to a lute), *kanoon* (descendent of the old Egyptian harp, trapezoid-shaped flat board over which 81 strings are stretched) and *nā*y (reed, open-ended flute). *Riq*, sometimes also called *duff*, is a small tambourine. If the dancer accompanied the musicians, a *riq* or *darbūkah*

[10] K. NIEUWKERK, *A trade like any other: female singers and dancers in Egypt*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1995, p. 21.

[11] See ID.

[12] E. W. LANE, *An account on Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, cit.

[13] ID., p.359.

[14] In his notes, Lane writes that he was adviced by an Egyptian friend to change the name *kemenghe* (Persian name) into *rabab* – because this is more suitable for this instrument. However, Lane states that he has never heard anyone calling it *rabab* either in Egypt or in Syria. *Rabab* is an instument of a very similar look and related to *kemenghe*.

(goblet drum) would be most likely used. Also, a dancer could use *ṣāğāt* (zills or finger cymbals) to produce a rhythm for dance.

Takht ensembles were formed in the late 19th and the beginning of 20th century. They consisted of up to five male members playing the following instruments: *kaman* (the violine, introduced in the second half of 19th century), *'ud, kanoon* and *nā*y, followed by percussion instruments like a *riq* or *darbūkah*.

Musicians accompanying the dancers could have both male and female members. Most commonly used instruments were percussions and finger cymbals, that the dancers usually played while dancing. Fraser writes that older dancers, once they reached a certain age, would continue performing as singers or musicians, accompanying female dancers[15]. Clot Bey writes about the mastery of musicians accompanying dancers[16]. Curtis describes in detail the musicians accompanying dancer Kutchuk Hanim[17].

Professional female entertainers were generally divided in two groups: *awālim* (sg. *'ālma,* also spelled *Almeh*) and *ḡawāzi* (sg. *ḡāziya*). However, it should be mentioned that these categories are not accepted by every author, since naming this dance and the dancers it still being discussed. Even travelers and scholars who left their accounts did not use a single expression to name the dancers and dance. It also happened that one expression changed its meaning throughout time and became an umbrella term – like in the case of *awālim* which will be discussed below. Also the problems of translating expressions from Arabic to French or English occurred[18]. However, these two words for female performers appear often to describe the visual imagery of dancers and that is why they will be discussed in detail.

'*Awālim* means learned, knowledgeable women in Arabic. These women could sing, play musical instruments, write poetry and recite it. Lane describes them as professional female singers who performed for female members of wealthy families[19]. Hamilton mentions them as dancers too, but only for women in the *ḥarīm*[20]. It was possible for a man if he expressed the wish, to hear their song, but the performers had to be hidden from his view. Lane describes the song and music of *awālim* as far more charming than that of the best male musicians or any other music he had ever heard[21].

However, even during the time when Lane lived in Egypt, the word *awālim* confused travelers, who used the term for any female dancer[22]. According to Said

[15] K.W. FRASER, *Before They Were Belly Dancers: European Accounts of Female Entertainers in Egypt, 1760-1870*, McFarland, Jefferson, 2014.

[16] A.B. CLOT-BEY, *Aperçu général sur l'Égypte, 2 vols.*, Paris, Fortin, Masson, 1840, vol. 2, p. 91.

[17] G.W. CURTIS, *Nile Notes of a Howadji*, New York, Dix Edwards, 1856, pp. 138-145.

[18] For more details see K. W. FRASER, *Before They Were Belly Dancers: European Accounts of Female Entertainers in Egypt, 1760-1870*, Jefferson N. C., McFarland, 2015.

[19] E. W. LANE, *An account on Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians,* cit., p. 361.

[20] W. HAMILTON, *Remarks on Several Parts of Turkey. Part I: Aegyptica, or some accounts of the ancient and modern state of Egypt as obtained in the years 1801, 1802*, London, Richard Taylor, 1809, p. 342.

[21] E. W. LANE, *An account on Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians,* cit., p. 361

[22] ID., p. 362.

the name *awālim* lost its original meaning by the mid-19th century after which the name was applied to dancers as well as prostitutes alike[23].

The public dancers seen dancing in front of coffeehouses or on streets were known as *ḡawāzi*. At the beginning, they were just described not as prostitutes, although already in 19th century the line between these professions was growing rather vague. *ḡawāzi* dancers had a large repertoire of skills, like balancing objects on their heads and combining some acrobatic steps with dance. But the fact that they were not veiled and that they performed in front of men brought them a bad reputation. The ban of female dancers from Cairo had referred to them.

Also, according to Nieuwkerk, there was a category of dancers of the lower class, neither *awālim* or *ḡawāzi* , but somewhere in between[24]. It is likely that they had contributed to the naming confusion.

Names and personal stories of many of the dancers and musicians are largely unknown or rare[25]. Travelers sometimes mention the names of the dancers they saw, if they knew them. The best known story is that of Kutchuk Hanim, a dancer who caught the eye of both Flaubert, who travelled in Egypt 1849-1850 (1972) and Curtis (1856). Both wrote extensively about her dance and the time each had spent with her. It is not clear if she was of *awālim* or *ḡawāzi*.

The iconography of musicians and female dancers

Chosen examples from the visual sources on Egyptian music and dancers in 19th century will be presented in this part. The following sources will be used: Drawings from *Description de l'Egypte*, made by musicologists, artists and scientists during Napoleon's expedition, sketches available from the travel accounts of earlier 19th century travelers as well as the paintings from Jean Leon Gerome and David Roberts will be used as sources. The chosen material is a small but representative selection of everything there is on the subject of iconography of musicians and female dancers in Egypt.

The French occupation of Egypt (1798 – 1801) helped in the production of a huge body of written accounts on Egypt. The scholars from Napoleon's expedition, known as Savants, had the task to observe and record every aspect of life in Egypt, as well as natural and both modern and ancient art and architecture. Their work was published over the span of fifteen years in a 19 volumes encyclopedia *Description de l'Égypte*[26]. Local music and dance also had their place in this work. Savant musicologist Guillaume Villoteau (1822) wrote extensively about Egyptian music, instruments and dance. He especially focused on the use of finger cymbals.

[23] E. SAID, *Orientalism,* New York, Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 186.

[24] K. NIEUWKERK, *A trade like any other: female singers and dancers in Egypt,* cit., p. 27.

[25] See K. W. FRASER, *Before They Were Belly Dancers*, cit.

[26] M. VILLOTEAU, *De l'etat actuel de l'art musical en Égypte, In Description de l' Égypte vol.14,* Paris, Panckoucke, 1822.

In the specific style of visual presentation, all instruments are shown together, tightly grouped on a page with a brief explanation of their names at the bottom and top of the page. Neither the players of the instruments nor the technique of playing was included. The way that *Description of Egypt* shows the instruments is an archive-like one, as in an overview. It is interesting to note that the depiction of *'ālma* with the *riq*, being so dynamic, is rather different from how the instruments were represented. The dancer is in motion, with her veil lifting – so that part of her hair and face are visible. She, the figure, is placed on the same page as the costumes and shoes and not among the instruments[27]. The position of her feet and her playful gestures suggest that she is caught mid-dance.

Still, it was almost impossible for a foreign male traveler to encounter the '*awālim* who performed for the upper class. They did not perform in public and when in public they were, likely, to be no different from any other female citizen. According to Villoteau after Napoleon's army entered Cairo, the men wanted to see the dancers. Some '*awālim* left the city, not wanting to perform for the occupier[28]. Therefore, it

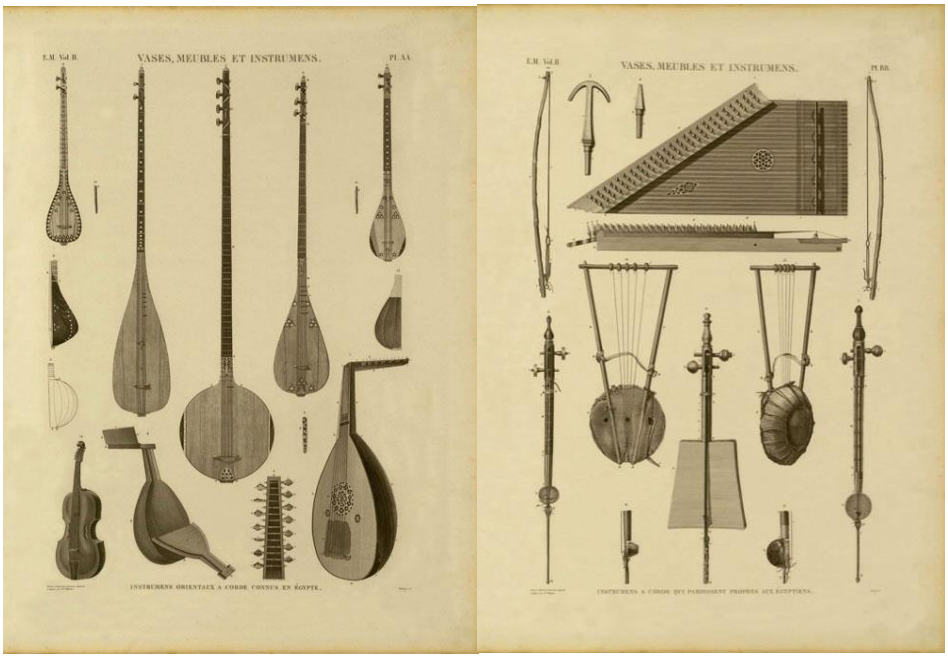

Fig. 1 – Music instruments and *'ālma* from Description de l'Egypte ETAT Moderne II, Vol. 8, http://descegy.bibalex.org/

[27] Another illustration from the same Volume of plates shows the figure of *'ālma*, also on the page with clothing. See also illustration from RICHARD POCOCKE - *Dancing Women of Egypt* from around 1738, also on the same page with costumes.

[28] M. VILLOTEAU, *De l'etat actuel de l'art musical en Égypte,* cit., p. 169.

is quite possible that the discussed image of the charming playful *ʿālma* was the product of the author's imagination [figs.1-3]

Fig. 2 - Music instruments and '*ālma* from Description de l'Egypte ETAT Moderne II, Vol. 8 http://descegy.bibalex.org/

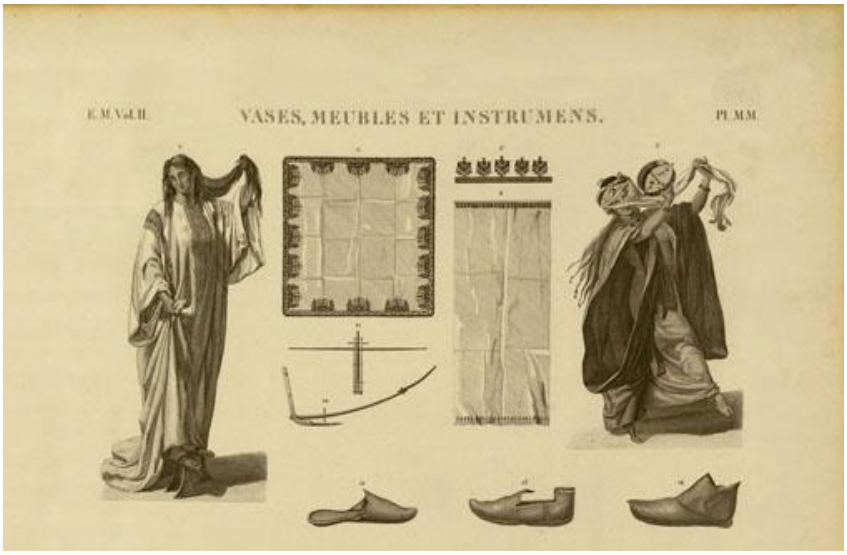

Fig. 3 - Music instruments and *ʿālma* from Description de l'Egypte ETAT Moderne II, Vol. 8 http://descegy.bibalex.org/

Edward W. Lane in his chapter on music dedicated many pages to the instruments, the technique of playing them (illustration of *Qanun* below) and how they looked when actually played. He presented each instrument individually, showing its different components. In addition he depicted different professional musicians performing on the discussed instruments. Lane was very interested in *camera lucida* which helped him to record many of the moments that later became illustrations in his book.

His illustration of *ḡawāzi* dancers features two dancers in motion and two musicians behind them, one playing a *riq* and the other a *kemengeh*. The illustration provides some details about the costumes and the musical instruments, yet it does not reveal the space in which the dance was performed or the audience that attended it. These pictures are two dimensional, concentrating exclusively on the object or person that they should present without any background information, like the illustrations of musical instruments and musicians. They are at first and foremost informative and precise in that matter and it is unlikely they could be viewed as romantic or exotic like those of the later travelers and painters (Figg. 4-7)

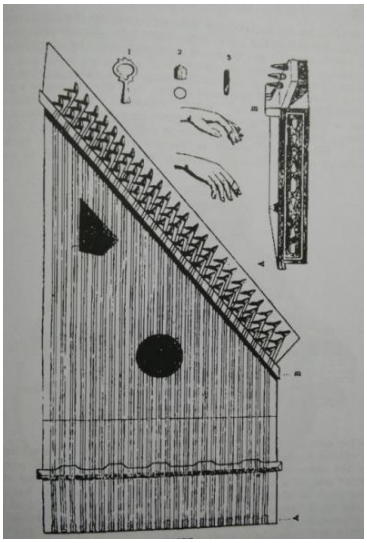

Fig. 4 - Edward Lane, *Dancing Girls, Qanuna player, Kemengeh playerand Qanun*, 1840, from An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians.

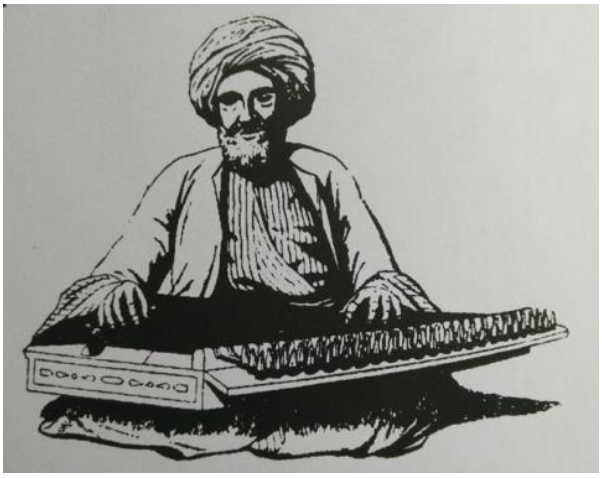

Fig. 5 - Edward Lane, *Dancing Girls, Qanuna player, Kemengeh playerand Qanun*, 1840, from An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians.

Fig. 6 - Kemengeh player 1836, from *An Account on Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*

Fig. 7 - *Edward W.Lane – ḡawāzi* 1836, *An Account on Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*

David Roberts was a Scottish Orientalist painter, who produced well-known lithograph prints of Egypt and the Middle East. These works were inspired by his one year long journey through the region. All the lithographs were made later, after he had already returned to Europe – during his travels, he only made drawings and watercolor sketches. The lithography of *Dancing girls* can be found in color (down) or black and white. Roberts does not only depict dancing girls, but their three musicians as well. The woman plays a *riq* and the male musicians a *kemengh*e.

Dancers themselves are in motion, dancing towards each other and playing the tiny finger cymbals. Their costumes look similar to the ones shown by Lane which might help identify them as *ḡawāzi* (public dancers). They are performing in a closed space, but the audience is not present in the lithography – when performing in a public space, the audience would usually be near the dancers or around them. However, the author himself is depicting them from a certain distance, as if watching from the first row in front of the stage. The composition and the details are more complex than the ones by Lane. (Fig. 8)

Fig. 8 - David Roberts (drawing) – *Dancing girls* ca.1848, lithography by:Louis Haghe 1849, U.S Library of Congress

The work of French painter of the Romantic period, Alexandre Bida, shows different style in illustrating dancers and musicians compared to Lane, Roberts and the work of Savantes. Bida himself traveled through Egypt and the figures of the dancer and the female drummer (under) have probably been inspired by the scenes that he encountered during his journey.

The dancing Alme has finger cymbals in her hands but she appears to be rather standing instead of dancing. A detail of her slippers behind her is an interesting one. Commonly, Egyptian local dance was performed bare foot. The scene that Bida depicted might have been a beginning of the dance or its end. The background is rather unknown and the dancer seems to be without the audience in the frame. Her gaze is towards the floor - as if she was not aware of the author drawing her.

Fig. 9 - Alexandre Bida – *Joueuse de Tarabouq* (Tarabouqa player) 1850, from *Souvenirs d'Egypte*

The *darbūkah* player looks confidently straight ahead. One leg on the small table in front and her hands in motion, she is playing on the goblet drum. The furniture behind might have been in a house or a coffee shop. As in the case of the dancer, the audience is not present. The author depicted them both as if he was the only audience present. The details of their clothes, facial expression and play of light and shadow all show that the works were not only for a documentation cause. According to Fraser, Bida might have been the one who introduced exotic and romantic elements in his works depicting Egyptian dancers. However, Roberts made his drawing at roughly the same time - and his paintings also show a certain tendency towards using the same elements. Roberts is more interested in the scene and action of dance where, as Bida depicts almost intimate moments of dance and music performance, he concentrated on the details. He is not too close to the women on the paintings, while Roberts sees the whole action of dance. These examples just confirm how the approaches to the same subject of Egyptian dance, that the authors encountered almost at the same time, were very different (Figg. 9-10)

Fig. 10 - Alexandre Bida – *Danseuse Almé* (Dancing Almé) 1851 from *Souvenirs d'Egypte*

The high peak of the Orientalist visual art, presenting dancers and musicians, can be seen in the work of the French painter Jean Leon Gerôme. His work *Dance of the Almeh* was shown at the Paris Salon in

1863 and his way of presenting "sensual East" left the mark on the following visual presentations of dancers. Gerôme had traveled extensively in Egypt and dancers were depicted in many of his drawings, which later inspired his paintings. It is interesting that his painting of *Saber dance* might have been directly inspired by the dance of the dancer Badwīa of Qena. She performed for the foreign visitors on the royal cruise at the opening of the Suez Canal. It is stated that Badawiīa did a saber dance, which is also described in the accounts of Blanc (1876), Colet (1879) and de Fromentin (1881).

In both these paintings and in the *Dance of the Almeh* the dancer takes the central position – she is in motion, in the moment of dance, not interacting with anyone around. Nevertheless, she is being watched by her male audience and followed by her musicians. Other details on the paintings, like the play of shadows and light or the streets of the city in the background, dancer's slippers next to the carpet all bring the feeling that Gerome was focusing on these two paintings at the moment of dance, on the action of dancing that is being presented in front of the audience. Still, both dancers seem somehow solitary– they are surrounded by people but also isolated from them, both on the carpet in the middle of the room. They are in motion while the rest of the painting is quiet and still, some figures even in the dark. On the other side, the male audience in *The dance of the Almeh* is a very dominant and bright element compared to the musicians who sit in shadow. In the painting of the *Saber dance*, the audience is behind the dancer, sitting in the distance, not looking at her with such an interest.

Concerning the musicians, it is interesting that there is a *nāy* player in both paintings. In the painting of a *Saber dance,* the female drummer appears to be singing as well.

Gerôme's dancers wear different costumes from the ones of Roberts or Lane. They already wear a two piece costume that shows the belly, the costume that is in wide use even nowadays. Fraser (2014) suggests that in the paintings of Gerome the elements of the exotic and sensual were introduced into the visual representations of Egyptian dance. His work and its acceptance in European circles did help establish the certain visual style, from which the later depictions of Egyptian dancers and musicians could no longer escape. (Figg. 11-12)

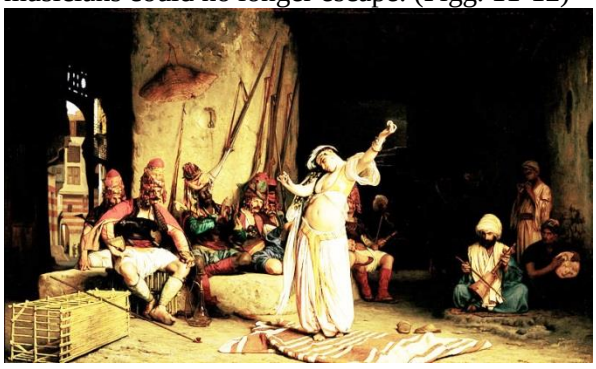

Fig. 11 - Jean-Leon Gerome – The *Dance of the* Fig. 2 - Jean-Leon Gerome – The *Dance of the Almeh* 1863, The Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio

Fig. 12 - Jean-Leon Gerome – *Danse du Sabre* (Saber dance), 1875 Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

The last example is different from the others because it is set in another context – the dancers and musicians are performing at the Exhibition in Philadelphia in the late 19th century. When the newly named *belly* dance reached World exhibitions, it was introduced to a broader audience, who could access the world of colonies only in this way. This drawing has few curious details. Firstly of all, the performers are on the stage, a new detail considering the other examples that were presented. Secondly, there is a violin among the instruments accompanying the dancer, the instrument which slowly found its place in the *Oriental* music around this period of time. The other musicians are playing *darbūkah* and *'ud.* And finally, the audience and the space of performance are new and *other*. The dancer is looking at the audience that does not seem very engaged in the performance. It is hard to say who is the *Other* in this drawing of a new encounter. However, from those very beginnings in the USA and Europe, belly dance would become one of the symbols of the *sensual East* in popular culture. (Fig. 13)

Fig. 13 - *Frank Leslie - Scene in a Tunisian Cafe – The Scarf Dance* 1876, A Facsimile of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition

Conclusion

From the traveler's accounts discussed above, one can conclude that Egyptian dancers and musicians were one of the most visited attractions of Egypt. In approximately 100 years what was known as local dance went through drastic changes in performance aesthetics, costuming, choice of performing space and occasions in which people encountered dance. Many of these changes were recorded by the traveler's written or visual accounts and these continue being exclusive accounts on Egyptian dance and music of that time. No Egyptian accounts of similar value, written or visual, have been discovered. Also, changes were highly influenced and speeded up by the travelers themselves, by their presence and observations as well as their engagement in all spheres of life in Egypt.

However, questions of reliability to those sources occur – how far are these accounts representative of the *Other* in an exotic and romantic way, especially in the art and literature of traveler's? Could a beginning of such a trend be defined? I do believe, similar to Fraser (2014), that not all Orientalists in Egypt started romanticizing it from the very beginning of the occupation. Many authors tried to do documentations of various aspects of Egyptian life, simply because the purpose of their observation might have had some other cause behind it, which could be criticized on another level. If one concentrates on depictions of female dancers and musicians, the tendency is that the romantic elements became stronger around mid-19th century. With the opening of the Suez Canal mass tourism might have affected this development but only in combination with other aspects of colonial narratives and personal interpretations of the individuals that left their accounts. At the beginning of the 19th century, a limited number of people had direct access to Egypt and its "rediscovery" by Europeans. Part of the orientalist narrative started slowly there. However, when Egypt became the interesting tourist destination, other factors became important as well – tourism, rapid changes in every day life, capital being invested, auto-exoticism to please the colonial audience. All these just amplified the hype and the exotic narrative was already very well established

Undoubtedly, meeting along the borders was trans-formative for both sides. This transformation was not smooth or simple – it changed many aspects of local practice of music and local dance. One might say that the change was destructive. Travelers have already crossed the material borders in order to encounter the dance. However, there were those immaterial borders that each individual has to cross when encountering something new, like a different culture. Later, the Egyptian dance will cross those same material borders and go to the World trade fairs in Europe and the USA. Immaterial borders of each traveler who left the account on dance and music are interesting and important for understanding his/her own line of narrative. It should not be forgotten that travelers were part of the colonizing power which had command over Egypt and the role of Orientalism has already been discussed. These facts definitely affected the narrative or visual presentation of the *Other* to the certain extent. However, especially in the case of analyzing the paintings of painters who

visited Egypt – the preferences, individual style and interests have to be considered, even though not always easy to distinguish from the norms of the time.

The future research might go deeper in the hidden threads of Orientalist's narrative and iconography in an attempt to unwind them. Even more interesting would be to analyze the development of local Egyptian dance - belly dance as a *hybrid*[29] form. However, the most valuable would be a discovery of any Egyptian source from that time. It might shred the light on how *the Others* encountered the foreigners – *the other Others*.

[29] In the sense Homi Bhabha understands it.