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THE CRESWELL LIBRARY: A LEGACY

My only direct contact with Professor Creswell was in 1970 in the reading room adjacent to his library. I was reading a passage in his *Early Muslim Architecture* and had left my pencil at the margin while automatically turning the pages to look at a drawing. At that moment I heard a voice behind me saying, "People like you with no respect for books should not be allowed to use them." It was Creswell, of course, and my first experience with his well-known directness of speech. It also showed me to what extent he loved and cared for his books, however, and the irony of life is that I was later to take over and care for them myself.

People familiar with Creswell's works sometimes ask if he had a section, or notes, on methodology in his library. The answer is no, as there was evidently no need for him to define the philosophy that guided his work. Discipline and organization were inseparable from his character and explain not only his working methods, but also his habits, such as his regular swift walks along the Nile corniche each morning even into advanced age,¹ and his appearance, his "military swagger in impeccably tailored close-fitting suits. . . . His starched white collars, in whatever desert or climate. . . . [and] mystifying immunity from dust and sweat."² The library in itself illustrates his methodical organization, and some of the notes and interviews it contains hint of his working technique.

Though his methodology seemed inherent in Creswell's work, it was in fact largely the product of the period in which he lived. The Victorian education and the harsh British military discipline in a colonial era, coupled with the enormous success of the empirical method in science, had their impact on him. In 1904 Sir Flinders Petrie had published his *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, which defined the techniques and methods of field excavation, including the use of the camera. His system of sequence dating made possible the reconstruction of an ancient site's history from its cultural remains. This publication obviously had a tremendous influence on contemporary archaeologists, including, of course, Creswell himself.

Archaeology for Creswell consisted in fieldwork, on

the one hand, and what he called his "chamber work," on the other. By chamber, he meant his home library and adjacent well-equipped photographic studio. He labeled those respectively, and with characteristic humor, "my harem" and "my arsenal."³

In an interview for a Cairo periodical,⁴ Creswell stated that his method in fieldwork necessarily followed two distinct phases. The first was the reconstruction of the original plan of the monument, and the second the study of its architecture, decoration, and inscriptions. The first was the most difficult, as he had to take measurements, establish the actual plan, or if it had been demolished, reconstitute its primitive form, which also represented the spirit and genius of his period. Such projects would occupy him for weeks. For his archaeological examination of the medieval walls of Cairo, he said that he "traversed the whole length . . . and walked, crawled, or climbed into practically every tower."⁵ The complex of Qala'un took him twenty-four days to complete. Statistics like these are essential to Creswell, almost a hobby, and were included in his research, reports, and applications.

To complement and support the measurable facts gathered in the field, Creswell had his library, a well-furnished one, covering art and architecture of Islam from Spain to India, including the primary sources of historians, geographers, and travelers. He would scrutinize the texts exhaustively for historical information or patterns of evolution.

The building up of the library reflects the same interest and systematic methodology that characterize Creswell's works in general. It is not difficult to trace the history of the library through Creswell's systematically arranged purchase book, files with clippings of contemporary reviews and interviews, reports, and his own catalogues, including the one that represented the library's holdings at the time it passed to the American University in Cairo. The library today still retains the essential features it had in Creswell's days in spite of the changes required by its gradual transformation from a personal library into a university center of international scholarship.



Creswell's library after it was moved to the American University in Cairo.

From Creswell's purchase book, which is preserved in the archives, we know that he started collecting books in 1910, ten years before coming to Egypt, but his yearly acquisition was steady until 1920 when he arrived in Cairo and it jumped to 281 titles, some of them multi-volume works. He listed his acquisitions under (1) date of acquisition; (2) author; (3) title; (4) cost. Some items are annotated with a record of their subsequent disposition. For example (pp. 1, 3), under Jerningham, *From West to East*, we find, "Sold Hills 2/9s. 7.3.1912," under Murdoch Smith, *Persian Art*, "returned full value 24.5.1912," and under Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament* "sold Edwards £5 on a/c/ 1.12.1912." Although entries like these become rarer after 1920, it is clear from them that Creswell sold or returned books at will. Sometimes these discards are the result of the acquisition of a finer replacement (as we can see from the buy and sell dates), indicating a dedicated collector as well as a scholar.

As with any collector, a book's content was not the sole consideration; rare copies and fine bindings were also important, as can be seen from his binding list, which begins with four volumes in 1912. This list had entries that included date, author, title, number of volumes, color and quality, cost, and the name of the binder. Some of his favorite binders were Sangorski and Sutcliffe, Rivière, and Zaehnsdorf. The spines of some bound volumes and periodicals had small golden rosettes stamped on them, different for each series. Creswell's meticulousness led him to record even the books he did not buy.

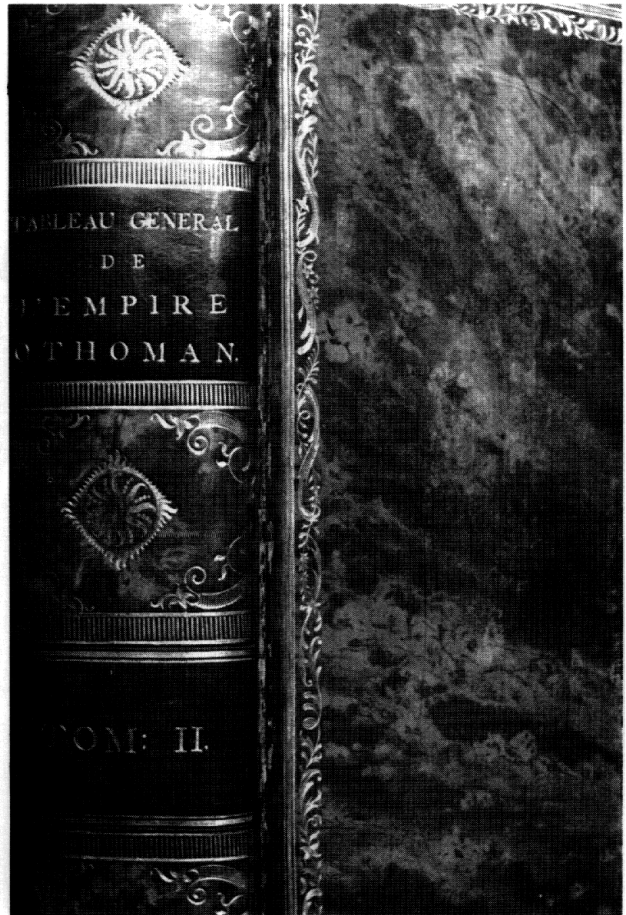
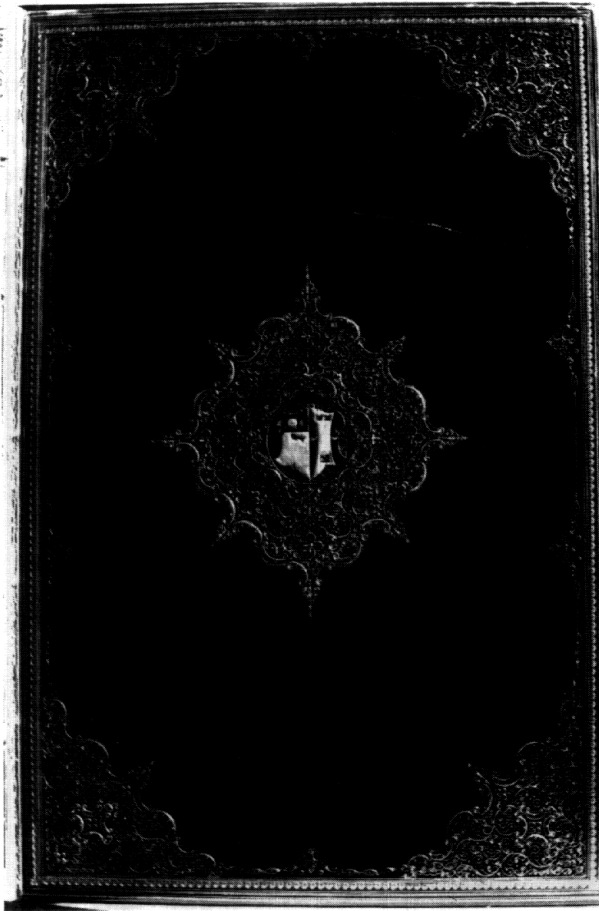
Creswell's first priority in Cairo when he arrived in 1920 was to find a home not only for himself but for his library and studio. This was managed within the next two years, for when Tawfiq Iskari⁶ in 1922 and Y. Tyan⁷ in 1925 were invited to visit him, both expressed their admiration for Creswell's vast room furnished

with wooden bookcases large enough for quarto volumes, below which were shelves for large volumes and folios, all beautifully bound and arranged with care. There was also a specially made case for his elephant folios. The books the visitors saw were collected from far and near, translations and originals of Arab memoirs side by side with Occidental travel accounts and books on pre-Islamic cultures, not counting fascicules and periodicals. Tyan believes that at that time only the Oriental Library of Beirut was richer in works related to the Orient.

Books were arranged by geographical area: bookcase A for India; B for Persia, and so on. Fascicules and off-prints were in numbered boxes: Egypt I, II. . . , Syria I, II. . . , etc. He kept an author catalogue with the location marked on each card (for example, E2 referred to

case E, shelf 2), but he had an excellent memory and could describe where each book was located without reference to it. Once, when he was away, he wrote his housekeeper to send him a book that she would find on the second shelf to the right of the entrance; she found the book where he said she would and sent it on its way.

Unpublished material and preliminary research notes were kept in his library at the American University in Cairo where he worked almost to the end of his life. The first volume of his *Early Muslim Architecture* was revised and published in two parts for the second edition. The second was annotated with additions and corrections and ready for publication, but Creswell's final illness intervened. Consequently later reprints by Hacker Art Books in 1979 had the first volume updated in two parts, published together with the second volume



Examples of fine bindings from Creswell's collection.

TABLEAU GÉNÉRAL
DE
L'EMPIRE OTHOMAN,
TOME PREMIER.



A PARIS,

De l'Imprimerie de Monsieur.

M. DCC. LXXXVII.

AVEC APPROBATION ET PRIVILEGE DU ROI.

A frontispiece from Creswell's collection.

of the first edition. Creswell was also working on the third volume of his *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, but only had time to prepare a study of six monuments. This was insufficient for a whole volume, but enough to be published as a supplement to volume two. Professor Christel Kessler has been working on these two projects.

Some of Creswell's preliminary research and notes show clearly how he worked. For the old walls of Alexandria, for example, he collected bits of information from primary sources in chronological order, starting with Ibn Battuta (1326). These sources were accompanied by translations and bibliographical references in

Creswell's own hand. Such studies were not always used for his own archaeological research. In an interview with Abu Kayf,⁸ he said that although he had never himself excavated in Syria or Jordan, he was able, by comparing descriptions of sites with aerial views, to suggest that the Syrian Antiquity Department excavate a mound locally known as Qasr Heraqla, which he believed was Qasr al-Imara or Qasr Abu Muslim. He did the same for Jordan, where he suggested the places to look for another Qasr al-Imara.

All sorts of other materials were kept in his library, including a list of his publications with their dates, personal and official correspondence, bank records, and passports from the years 1920–1969 with all their visas. Among the letters is the correspondence related to his reinstatement at Cairo University, letters expressing his opinion on political matters, and others which show that he could be harsh in his replies when he was annoyed by delays or dishonesty. For example, to someone who submitted his work for assessment, he answered, "I have now examined your book, which is the most barefaced robbery of intellectual property I have ever come across," followed by a page and a half of examples where references were not given. He ends by saying, "It is needless to continue except to say that if you find a publisher you and he will certainly have to face a case in court."

Next to Creswell's library was his studio, where one could find a complete photographic outfit with cameras of all sizes. Creswell believed that photographs must always accompany texts because a good illustration is as useful as a description.⁹ Creswell believed that material organized historically spoke for itself and that when he arranged a number of photographs of domes or minarets chronologically on his desk, they told him all about the evolution of their construction. Chronological order was the key to research in archaeology.

Dissatisfied with the performance of his assistants, he took his own photographs for his studies and developed and printed them with professional skill. He spent forty-nine days photographing the mosque of al-Azhar, for example, sometimes on scaffolding. He used the *in quarto* form for his photographs to ensure clear details in his plates of friezes, inscriptions, and decorations.¹¹ Small cameras with ordinary lenses did not give him enough precision, so he generally used telephotography to obtain images increased six hundred times the ordinary ones. According to Creswell himself, it took him forty-eight years to build up his collection of photographs which illustrate the most important Muslim monu-

ments from Baghdad to Cordova. These are documents often of excellent quality, recording the state of decorations and inscriptions often now lost or altered by restoration.

His photographs were mounted on buff Bristol sheets held in "instantaneous binders" that could be turned like the pages of a book, rearranged, or added to. By timing himself on a few occasions, he found out that to prepare each sheet took him twenty-five to thirty minutes; consequently the 2,134 sheets he had done to date represented 1,067 hours — six hours a day for six months — of labor, apart from the time required to reach the monuments, photograph them, and develop, prepare, and systematically arrange the collections. Not all the photographs were mounted and a good number still await identification and filing, although some of these may turn out to be duplicates.

Apart from the photographs he took himself, Creswell bought many more which are also recorded in a

notebook. They are labeled by the Comité, Lekekian, Sebah, Dittrich, Bonello, Schroder, Sarsem, Morris, Beato, Bechard, Bonfils for Beirut, and Carzon for Spain. There are also albums by Frith, Sebah and Joailler, Abdullah Frères, and others.

The negatives, many on glass, were kept in special boxes and indexed. These were bequeathed to the Ashmolean Museum for their conservation. His visual collection also includes a large number of lantern slides, $3\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ black and white, used for his lectures. I do not know if he started to collect colored slides, or if that was initiated by Drs. Kessler and Rogers.

Knowing how much Professor Creswell was attached to his library, it is difficult to understand why he gave it away in 1956, and why to the American University in Cairo. It seems that circumstances forced him to do so. If the situation had been different, who knows where the library would be now. Perhaps at Cairo University or at Oxford. Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal,¹² editor-in-



"The Inauguration of the Suez Canal." Photo by P. Sebah, 1869.

chief of *al-Ahrām* and a good friend of President Abd al-Nasser at that time, relates the story in his "Suez Papers." It started with the British-French-Israeli intervention in 1956. Creswell was seventy-seven years old and, as a British citizen living in Cairo, faced with the sequestration of his property. His first concern was to protect his life's work: his library and papers, especially those pertaining to the second volume of the *Muslim Architecture in Egypt* and his bibliography, both of which were in preparation.

To ensure its safety, Creswell contacted Raymond Hare, the American ambassador, and proposed to donate his library to the American University. Hare tried to convince the Minister of Finance, who was supervising the sequestration procedures, to accept the proposal, but the latter responded that in the prevailing atmosphere he could not take such a decision alone. Hare

then turned to Haykal and asked him to intervene and present Creswell's offer to President Nasser as a request for the benefit of Islamic archaeology in Egypt. When they were finally given Nasser's approval, Hare and Creswell could not believe it. They were grateful and relieved, especially in that Creswell had lost his chair at Cairo University in 1951 and consequently his membership on the *Comité de Restauration des Monuments Arabes*. After a long exchange of correspondence regarding his reinstatement, he grew angry at the attitude of the faculty and administration. When he was finally reinstated in 1955, he found the conditions so unacceptable that he had to refuse them. This was just before the 1956 crisis.

Nasser's approval was a stroke of luck for Creswell, and it began a long association with A.U.C. He was made professor emeritus, since he was long past the re-



The mosque of Ibn Tulun. Photo by A. Beato, ca. 1870–80.

tirement age, and he published the second volume of the *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, his bibliography, and its supplement with the A.U.C. Press. In the beginning the university tried to exercise its control over the library, but it seems that Creswell was able to prevent this. When he died, the library was still a closed room, and apparently the only thing the university had been able to do was arrange for a reading room next to it and appoint a librarian-custodian to supervise the restricted use of its books. A request slip in two parts had to be filled out with the large part placed at the book's location and the other kept with the librarian, who collected and reshelved the few books in use before leaving.

The reading room was not kept empty. The stacks that lined it were filled with extra copies of books from the main library, all related to Islamic studies. The university also made a new acquisition — the Debbane Collection, less well known than Creswell's, but not much less important. It is strongest on Egypt's history, particularly the Napoleonic period, and includes original correspondence, memoirs, and other papers by his scientific staff. The collection spanned the early periods up to modern times.

In its transition from personal library to research center, the Creswell collection was catalogued with records both at the main library and at the K. A. C. Creswell Library. This catalogue should eventually be published as an aid to students of Islamic art, and the collection may be microfilmed. Thanks to Egypt's dry climate, the books are well preserved and are enclosed in glass book-cases for additional protection. The collection is continuously updated. The same request slips are still used, but the number of users has increased, and it is not easy intelligently to combine the use of valuable sources of scholarship with a high degree of care. Books are still arranged by geographical area, but on the shelf according to the Library of Congress system, except for oversized volumes. Recent books are arranged by subject in the LC system. The large collection of offprints has been rearranged in subject boxes. Photographs are still being identified, interfiled, and catalogued. A complete catalogue will be prepared and should be published later. The maps and ground plans are also catalogued, as are the periodicals and master's theses. In addition there is a file of reduced ground plans for Egyptian monuments, arranged chronologically to facilitate student research. There is also a collection of photocopied or published waqfiyyas and other documents.

Given AUC's extensive academic offerings in Egyptian culture, its outstanding book collection, and the ad-

vantage of its proximity to the monuments themselves, the administration decided to gather together all its special collections under a single roof. After 1956, when Creswell gave his library to AUC, scholars in related fields such as Egyptology had been encouraged to donate or sell their collections to the university also. This in turn encouraged the establishing of an undergraduate major in Egyptology. In addition AUC was acquiring rare books for the library every year. The most recent important acquisition was the Sab' collection of 13,000 volumes, mostly on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Egypt. The present rare-book holdings number approximately 25,000 volumes. To house them, in 1987 AUC purchased a turn-of-the-century villa two blocks from the campus. When it is remodeled the building will provide ample space and excellent facilities for researchers. This remodeling was started in 1989, and it is hoped will be completed by 1991.

The villa has a floor area of 1,300 m² with twenty-seven rooms on three floors. Most of the rare books will be kept on the main floor until, as the collection grows, these special collections will take over the whole building; a fourth floor can be added if needed.

The Creswell Library will be kept together in two rooms with the original furniture; although it will be part of the rare-book library, it will be retained as a separate entity. The Egyptology collection will also have an allocated space; the balance of the rare books will form a single integrated collection. A small museum will exhibit the 15,000 artifacts, mostly Egyptian antiquities, belonging to the university. The rare books and the museum collection require climate control, and that requirement will not be easy for the architects to meet; they will have to preserve the beautiful frescoes on the main floor during the remodeling. The university has included into the library seminar rooms and a small workshop-laboratory for the binding, preservation, and conservation of rare books and photographs. Extra rooms will be used as classrooms until the collection expands sufficiently to fill them.

Creswell was also, of course, influential quite apart from his library, studies, and published works on Islamic archaeology. In one of his reinstatement letters, he mentions that "the Institute of Muslim art I started over 20 years ago built up and developed into a machine which, under my direction, trained and turned out the entire staff of the Museum of Muslim Art and most of the staff of the Comité de Restauration des Monuments Arabes, and many other useful officials." Abd al-Rahman Zaki, in a speech in honor of Creswell in 1941, said

that five years before the opening of the institute the university had realized that this young Egyptian whom the Comité de Restauration was preparing for service in the Museum of Arab Art could not earn a degree in the field, and could not even pursue studies in it at any Egyptian or foreign university. He had had to teach himself or find help from various specialists in museums and archaeological centers. It was left to Creswell to convince the authorities to establish the first Institute of Muslim Archaeology at Fouad I University (now Cairo University) in 1932. Creswell's last service to Egypt was through the Comité's council, a body composed mainly of his former students, through which he carried out the clearance and repair of the medieval walls, gates, and other monuments of Cairo.

Though he was honored at the end of his life, especially in his own country, Creswell was never publicly commended by the city of Cairo for any of his achievements.¹³ His legacies — the Creswell Library and his monumental published works — are his best memorial.

Creswell Library
American University in Cairo
Cairo, Egypt

NOTES

1. G. B., "Carte d'Identité, un Anglais oriental: le capitaine K. A. C. Creswell." A clipping from an interview found in Creswell's archives, probably from *Images*; it is undated and unpaginated; the identity of the interviewer who signed himself "G.B." is not known.
2. R. W. Hamilton, "Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell, 1879–1974," obituary in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* 60 (1974): 15; reprinted in this volume, below p. 136.
3. G. B., "Carte d'Identité."
4. An interview by Joseph Tyan, "K. A. C. Creswell," *La Liberté* (Cairo), December 1928.
5. Hamilton, obituary, p. 12; reprint, see below p. 134.
6. Tawfiq Iskariyus, "Ḥaḍarīt al-ʿArab Majmūʿa Qayyima fi Fann al-Binā al-Islāmī," *Majallat Raʿamsis* 11, 8 (October 1, 1922): 630–34 (interview).
7. Tyan, interview.
8. Aḥmad Abū Kayf, "al-Ingilīzī al-ʿAshīq al-Āthār al-Islāmiyya al-Ladhī Takhaṭṭa al-Tisʿīn," *al-Muṣṣawar* 2, 6 (1970): 32–35 (interview).
9. G. B., "Carte d'Identité."
10. Aḥmad Abū Kayf, interview.
11. Tyan, interview.
12. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, "Mallafāt al-Suwīs," *al-Ahrām*, November 26, 1986, p. 6.
13. Meritt Boutros Ghali, "Necrologie. K. A. C. Creswell, 1879–1974," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 21 (1975): 218.