

**Porcelain set of king Fouad I**  
**in Silverware Museum of Abdeen Palace**

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### **Introduction**

This valuable collection of dining room porcelain utensils displayed in the Silverware museum belong to King Fouad I, one of the of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha Family successors we must say that they are closer to masterpieces than just dining table set. it covers an important period in the history of modern Egypt which was a turning point in the whole history of Egypt, and has witnessed its openness to the West.

### **The importance and the objectives of the research:**

- The attribution of the collection to king Fouad I especially that the daily life tools of the royal family didn't take enough interest from the specialists of tourism in spite of its great historical importance and artistic values.
- The collection reflect the luxury and socio-political prestige of the royal family.
- The collection highlights the most important period in the history of modern Egypt. This period has witnessed a great influence from Europe, due to the openness to the West encouraged by the rulers of this period.
- To highlight the importance of the porcelain collection of Abdeen museum and try to preserve the heritage of the Egyptian civilization and keep it at its best.
- The registration of those rare objects in a scientific research that deserves their unique historical and archeological value, and to present it to the researchers in an accessible and scientifically documented form.

### **Methodology:**

The researcher has followed the descriptive analytical method by first providing a description of the porcelain set of King Fouad I located in

silverware museum of Abdeen palace museum, then giving an analysis of the most important artistic motifs used in the decoration of the collection.

### **Keywords**

Porcelain / silverware museum / Abdeen palace / King Fouad I / plate / saucer / tea cup / Arma decoration / chinaware

### **Silverware Museum**

This museum displays the Royal Family's collections of silverware, porcelain, crystal and Gallé items. Halls have been allocated for it following the Presidency Museum in the plan of visit. These halls have been provided with show cases and systems for illumination, air conditioning and security matching the exhibits, making this museum unique in both contents and display methods <sup>(1)</sup>.

The museum contains a unique collection of utensils made from porcelain with different forms, colors, sizes and in different and various designs which make them look like works of art though they are just tableware.

Porcelain collections displayed in Abdeen museum are the products of famous and specialized British, French and Austrian centers during the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. It reflects a fine taste and an outstanding level of skill characterized with an exceptional manufacturing and artistic style.

The museum displays some pieces of white Chinaware sets with a broad navy blue strip defined with fine gilded ornaments. They are also adorned with a golden royal crown inscribed either in the center of the strip or the dish. These pieces belong to **King Fouad I**, son of Khedive Ismail <sup>2</sup>.

### **Historical background about King Fouad I**

He was the youngest of the deposed Khedive Ismail's sons, born in March 26, 1868 A.D., in [Giza Palace](#), Cairo and died in April 28, 1936 A.D. He was buried in Al-Refaei mosque <sup>(3)</sup>, his mother was Fariat Kadin.

Fouad spent most of childhood with his exiled father in Naples. Following his education at the military academy in Turin, Italy, he served in a number of administrative posts, including the nominal rector (1908–13 A.D.) of the Egyptian University (now Cairo University) <sup>(4)</sup>.

He married twice; the first wife was Princess Shwikar Hanem, he had one son and one daughter from her: prince Ismail and princess Fawqeia but he

divorced her. The second wife was queen Nazly, he had one son and four daughters from her: king Farouk I, princess Fawzya, princess Faeza, princess Faeqa and princess Fathya <sup>(5)</sup>.

He was the ninth ruler of Egypt of Muhammad Ali dynasty, took over the throne in October 1917 A.D till he died in April 1936 A.D. <sup>(6)</sup> Britain selected him to succeed Sultan Hussein whose son had relinquished his right for the throne <sup>(7)</sup>.

In 1919 A.D. Britain indicated a willingness to negotiate a treaty that would give Egypt more independence. Most Egyptians welcomed this prospect, but they differed over who would formulate and present Egyptian demands to the British. The sultan had strong popular support and was determined to be the leading influence in the direction of the governmental affairs; but a strong nationalist movement had emerged – [Wafd](#) party - under the leadership of [Saad Zaghlul](#). Zaghlul saw himself as the proper person to lead the negotiations with the British <sup>(8)</sup>.

A stalemate between the supporters of Fouad and Zaghlul resulted in the collapse of Anglo-Egyptian talks. Britain responded in 1922 A.D. with a unilateral declaration of Egyptian independence, subject to strong British influence in Egyptian affairs <sup>(9)</sup>. Accordingly, Fouad assumed the title of King in 1922 A.D. <sup>(10)</sup>. Dissatisfied with the British unilateral declaration, Fouad struggled unsuccessfully throughout his reign to secure a bilateral treaty of independence that would be acceptable to the British and the Egyptians.

In 1923 A.D. Fouad promulgated a constitution at a time when Zaghlul was in exile. When Zaghlul and other exiles returned, however, the king was confronted with an enormously popular [Wafd](#), which used institutions created by the constitution to strengthen its opposition. The Wafd won commanding majorities in national elections held in 1923, 1925, and 1929 A.D., but Fouad usually managed to form his governments with non-Wafdist ministers who were amenable to his influence. Socially and religiously, Fouad aligned himself with the outlook and interests of [al-Azhar](#), [Cairo](#)'s great institution of Muslim learning, which won him important popular support. In 1930 A.D. he made a determined attempt to stabilize his political position; he dissolved the parliament, revoked the old constitution, and promulgated both a new constitution and a new electoral law. The 1931 elections yielded a cooperative non-Wafdist parliament, and domestic political tranquility prevailed until 1935 A.D., when, under strong nationalist pressure, Fouad restored the original 1923 constitution. He appointed a delegation to

negotiate with Great Britain for the end of the British occupation of Egypt, but he died before the ensuing [Anglo-Egyptian Treaty](#) was concluded <sup>(11)</sup>.

### **The description of the porcelain set of king Fouad I:**

The porcelain set subject of study located in silver museum, hall 2, showcase 1 (Pl. No. 1), the records of the museum states that it dates back to the twentieth century A.D. and it was made in Austria. The set include 12 pieces differ in their shape and function according to their use, but they are identical in the decoration executed on them. The set includes:

- 1 wide flat plates, its diam. 24.5 Cm (Pl. No. 2)
- 4 medium flat plate dedicated for dessert, its diam. 20.3 Cm. (Pl. No. 3)
- 2 identical half circular plates dedicated for salad, its diam. 22 x 12 Cm. (Pl. No. 4)
- 1 deep circular plate dedicated for soup, its diam. 24 Cm. (Pl. No. 5)
- 2 circular tea cups with a gilded side hand rest on a circular plate, the cup diam. 10 Cm., the plate diam. 15.5 Cm. (Pl. No. 6)
- 2 oval saucers tapering outward and attached to an oval plate the plate's diam. 15 Cm., the saucer's diam. 11 Cm., hight 8 Cm. (Pl. No. 7)

The set is made in White color with dark blue frame as it is adorned with a classy dark blue frame which ends from the outer rim of the plate with two thick gilded straps and geometric patterns that form delicate golden arches, while the blue frame ends from the inner side with two gilded straps one is thinner than the other. The blue frame has the gilded Arma decoration (Pl. No.8). It is worthy mentioned that the decoration on the two saucers is not identical to the rest of the set belongs to king Fouad but is only very close to it as the blue frame doesn't have the gilded Arma decoration

### **An analytical study for the ornaments executed on the collection subject of study:**

The decorative elements of the collection subject of the study could be classified as geometric ornaments. These decorations represent the ones that were used in applied arts at or before the manufacturing time. Since the dawn of civilization till present, man hasn't manufactured art for religious and social purposes only, but to satisfy a need and a desire for beauty as well.

### **Bands:**

The group of bands includes all those ornamental forms which are used to give expression to the ideas of bordering, framing, and connecting. The motives are partly geometrical, partly organic, chiefly plant-forms; artificial

forms being more rarely used. The band has no "up" or "down"; but only an onward or an outward tendency. It has no limitation in regard to length; but is generally a narrow, ribbon-like ornament <sup>(12)</sup>.

### **Zigzag lines:**

The main element of these lines is a broken line in acute angles. It was sometimes called saw tooth decoration, while the new artisans call it sea waves especially when it is achieved in horizontal position <sup>(13)</sup>. However another view defines this ornamental unit as broken or curved lines repeatedly carried out horizontally or vertically. The Turks called it "Atlama", and is known to modern artisans in Egypt as Zigzag <sup>(14)</sup>. It is a creation of the Muslim manufacturer which resulted from his attempts to develop the straight lines. It was carried out in various objects of applied art mostly made from stone or marble <sup>(15)</sup>.

### **Circle:**

The circle is a regularly curving closed line forming a rounded interior shape. It could be interlaced with another shape, or be filled with a different ornamental element <sup>(16)</sup>. The circle is often used in ornamentation as a fundamental form <sup>(17)</sup>.

From early Islamic times, circles and semicircles were used to define the compositional structure of a surface decoration <sup>(18)</sup>.

As the circle had a religious and symbolic meaning of infinity to Christians, some researchers maintain that the same meaning also is held by Muslims who created the Zero in a shape of the circle to indicate its capability of generating different forms <sup>(19)</sup>. It is noted that using circular shapes help to regenerate new geometrical shapes like the triangle, the square, and the octagon <sup>(20)</sup>.

### **Radiation ornament:**

It is a type of ornament that starts from a central point. It was one of the most important elements of ornamentation, first used in the Pharaonic and Coptic eras, and then transferred to the Islamic architecture of Egypt since early times of Islam. In the Ottoman era, that element had had a symbolic concept as it indicated to the idea of divine light. It was drawn emitting from a point where the name of Allah was written. The point from which rays emitted also indicated for nihilty <sup>(21)</sup>. Others maintain that it indicted to existence and creation meeting in a central point. Direction of writing to the central point also indicated to the idea of monotheism, as the one God is the source of

everything, and to him all things return. Interlace of calligraphies circulating around one center is also an expression of the unity of the creator, the universe, and life <sup>(22)</sup>.

### **The Baroque and Rococo decoration:**

The word Baroque originally means the rough-shaped pearl or, in other words, the pearl with a strange unfamiliar shape, possibly it comes from the Portuguese "barroco" meaning an irregularly shaped pearl <sup>(23)</sup>. That meaning then changed to indicate -in the seventeenth century A.D.- to that new artistic style which emerged in Europe and deviated in its ornamental elements from the familiar trends of the European Renaissance arts. As the elements of that style were in a deformed shape, compared with ornamental elements which prevailed in Europe at that time, hence it was called Baroque due to its similarity to the deformed irregular pearl <sup>(24)</sup>. The most clear feature of this new art is that it declines using straight lines in ornamentation and tends to use curvilinear and spiral ones, including curved surfaces and various bands. The main ornamental elements of the Baroque style include shells, snails, and folded leaves <sup>(25)</sup>. Italians were fond of using this art during the seventeenth century A.D. and have created various forms from it. From Italy, that style spread everywhere in Europe, as it moved first to France and the Netherlands in the palaces of princes, then the style entered Germany and England in the second half of this century influenced by the Netherlands arts <sup>(26)</sup> then infiltrated into the Ottoman Turkey.

This style has transferred into Egypt during the era of Mohamed Aly and his sons due to their aspiration for the European civilization and their attempt to push Egypt to follow it. The style has clearly emerged in the palaces of the nineteenth and the early twenties centuries A.D. including their various artifacts <sup>(27)</sup>.

As for the term Rococo, it is derived from the English word "Rock" which means rock or the word "Tocaille" or "Rocaille" meaning an irregularly-shaped shell <sup>(28)</sup>. It is a trend that prevailed in Europe during the period from 1730 A.D to about 1780 A.D. The Rococo is a developed stage of the Baroque art which tends to use curvilinear and cylindrical lines instead of straight ones; nevertheless it excels the Baroque in its tendency for gracefulness and tenderness <sup>(29)</sup>. Such decoration style "Rococo" is an improvement of the abovementioned one "Baroque". It conforms and doesn't contradict that style <sup>(30)</sup>.

### **Arma ornament:**

The Egyptian Arma ornament on the pieces , subject of study , are some of the most important decorative shapes which provide a clear example of the Ottoman influence on the art of glass industry at that time (the era of Muhammad Aly dynasty).

The Arma is a decorative formation of thick curtains with folds on both sides, connected at the top with a royal crown, and in the middle a circle with an inside drawing of three crescents and three five-pointed stars. This formation is also intersected with forms of spears, swords and small flags.

The abovementioned ornament was used by the Ottomans in the late period, and was then taken from them by the family of Muhammed Ali in Egypt where a lot of buildings and applied arts have been marked with <sup>(31)</sup>.

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### الملخص العربي

يعرض متحف الفضيات بقصر عابدين مجموعة متميزة من الأواني المصنوعة من الخزف مختلفة الأشكال والألوان والأحجام في تصاميم عديدة ومتنوعة مما يجعلها تبدو أقرب إلى قطع من التحف رغم كونها أدوات للمائدة، وما يزيد من أهمية هذه المجموعات ارتباطها بأسرة محمد علي والتي تمثل الطبقة الحاكمة في الدولة المصرية في القرنين التاسع عشر والعشرين الميلاديين وهي حقبة زمنية هامة في تاريخ مصر الحديثة، هذه الحقبة تعتبر نقطة تحول في تاريخ مصر لما شهدته من انفتاح على الغرب. ومن بين هذه القطع طقم مميز خاص بالملك فؤاد الأول ابن الخديوي إسماعيل تم صناعته في النمسا، يتكون الطقم من اثني عشر قطعة بيضاء اللون يحلى إطارها الخارجي شريط كحلي عريض محدد بزخارف دقيقة مذهبة. كما يتوسط الشريط زخرفة الأروما التي اشتهرت بها التحف التطبيقية الخاصة بأسرة محمد علي باشا.





**(Pl. No. 1)**

**Porcelain set of**



**king Fouad I**

**(Pl. No. 2)**  
**Wide flat plate**



**Medium  
plates**

**(Pl. No. 3)**

**flat**



**(Pl. No. 4)**  
**Half circular plate dedicated for salad**



**(Pl. No. 5)**  
**Deep circular plate dedicated for soup**



**(Pl. No. 6)**  
**Tea cup with a gilded side hand rest on a circular plate**



**(Pl. No. 7)**  
**Oval saucer tapering outward and attached to an oval**



(Pl. No. 8)  
Arma decoration

## End notes

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