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# The antiquities between the concepts of the Middle Ages and modern international law

International law now regulates the status of the state being encroached upon and occupied, and the powers and actions of the occupying power. Among the provisions of international law in this regard is what is related to the occupying power's respect for the antiquities and heritage of the state being occupied. It must not be tampered with, seized, or moved outside its archaeological sites, in order to preserve the human heritage.

This came to my mind as I review the facts of Sultan Salim's entry into Egypt in 1517, and the Ottomans' behavior with Egyptian antiquities. This point in particular has been the subject of constant criticism by the Egyptian nationalist trend and its reaction towards the Ottoman presence in Egypt.

Hussein Fawzi's book "Sinbad Masri" is considered one of the most important books expressing the Egyptian nationalist viewpoint towards the Ottoman period in the history of Egypt. Hussein Fawzi begins his book with the chapter entitled "Sad Friday," which is the Friday on which the sermon was read in the mosques of Cairo in the name of Sultan Salim the First. This was an indication of the transformation of Cairo from the capital of a major state, the state of the Mamluk Sultans, to a capital of an Ottoman state administered from Istanbul.

Hussein Fawzi also mentions Salim's visit to the archaeological area of Al-Matareya in eastern Cairo. Salim was blessed by the water of Al-Balsan well. Fawzi stresses that Salim is not interested in the ancient obelisk there because he did not understand the meaning of its highness in the sky. He was not interested in hearing the story of the rest that Joseph, the Virgin Mary and the child Christ received there. This is how the Egyptian nationalist current views Salim I as a "Gulf" invader who does not understand the value of Egyptian civilization.

Fawzi refers to historical stories about the looting by the Ottomans of rare Egyptian antiquities and artifacts. Among the most important of these facts is the story of the seizure and sale of the tent dedicated to celebrating the Prophet's birthday, and how it was transformed into bedspreads and pieces of cloth.

Fawzi also mentions the plunder of the luxurious antique marble from the castle. Salim ordered the dismantling of the rare marble from the castle halls, placing them in boxes, and carrying them onto boats for transport to Istanbul. He also refers to the seizure of some valuable manuscripts from famous school libraries.

Fawzi focuses on the saying of the historian Ibn Iyas, who witnessed this event: He said:

**"Salim Bin Othman's boats carried iron windows, bars, doors and roofs. Salim carried loads of gold, silver, antiques, weapons and copper with him on a thousand camels - as was rumored. His ministers seized large amounts of money, and likewise his soldiers gained untold numbers".**

Fawzi lists the Ottomans' entry into Egypt, not only as an invasion and occupation, but he points to an important point, which is the occupying state's treatment of heritage.

This is an important and exciting point that illustrates the contradiction between the laws of the Middle Ages and modern international law. This exciting point also explains the difference between retrieving the historical event in light of the data of its time and the data of the modern national idea.