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Hermann David Salomon Corrodi,
Sunset on the Nile

HERMANN DAVID SALOMON CORRODI
(Frascati 1844-1905 Rome)

SUNSET ON THE NILE

Oil on canvas.
67 x 127 cm.; 26 3/8 x 50 in.

Signed lower left: "H. Corrodi Roma"

Provenance

Private Collection, Italy.



Sunset on the Nile by Hermann Corrodi depicts a beautifully atmospheric Egyptian landscape. The painting shows the setting sun over a recess of the Nile that forms a lagoon, overlooking a small harbour built of white stone; in the immediate foreground, two veiled women rinse their wicker baskets in the water.

Seated beside a flight of steps, a group of men and women converse, while a little further on, with his torso turned towards the water, a man wearing a white turban is shown at prayer, kneeling on a carpet. In the distance, beside the characteristic cubic houses, a mounted gendarme escorts a litter carried by three servants, within which sits a mysterious figure. The background is dominated by luxuriant vegetation - holm oaks, wild olives and date palms - typical of Mediterranean scrub, from which the imposing minaret in the nearby town rises in silhouette. At left, a *felucca* glides towards the horizon, its sail cutting the pale band of evening light. The sky ignites with orange and pink tones, set against the earthy greens of the foliage and the alabaster surfaces of the harbour; the sunset is mirrored in the still surface of the river as though in glass, creating, overall, a work of exquisite poetic resonance. *Sunset on the Nile*, like other Egyptian landscapes by the artist, reflects the singular vision of a painter where daily routines unfold in an unforced sequence.

The present canvas finds particularly close parallels in Corrodi's Egyptian production. *Evening on the Banks of the Nile*, recently sold at Sotheby's reiterate the present composition with the quiet stretch of river and the carefully staged riverbank (fig. 1). A further point of comparison is offered by *The Nile at sunset*, sold in 2017 at Bonhams, which, although smaller and in a vertical format, shares the essential pictorial syntax: the low horizon line, the measured rhythm of shore and water, and the presence of local figures engaged in everyday tasks that lend scale and a sense of lived experience (fig. 2).

The subject belongs to the artist's sustained engagement with the eastern Mediterranean. Born into a distinguished artistic family, Corrodi's early formation was shaped by rigorous academic training and extensive travel. From 1860, he studied in Geneva under the celebrated Swiss landscape painter Alexandre Calame (1810-1864), whose dramatic Alpine vistas instilled in him a keen sensitivity to atmosphere and natural light. In 1866, Corrodi continued his education at the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, studying under his father, Salomon Corrodi (1810-1892), a highly respected figure within European landscape painting.¹

Corrodi's career was defined by near-constant movement across Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. He travelled widely through Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, Constantinople and Montenegro, experiences that informed his pictorial language.

¹ See S. Magnani, "Hermann Corrodi", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 29, Rome 1983.

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By the early 1870s, his reputation had grown to an international level. He studied in Paris in 1872, exhibited at the Munich International Exhibition and travelled to London, where members of the British Royal Family acquired his works. His success was further cemented when he received a Gold Medal at the Universal Exhibition in Vienna in 1873. From 1876 onwards, Corrodi adopted a seasonal rhythm, spending winters in Rome and summers in Baden-Baden, where he received numerous commissions from the German aristocracy, including Wilhelm II (1859-1941), who acquired his celebrated *Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem*. Egypt occupied a particularly important place within Corrodi's artistic intrigue. His first journey there, undertaken in the winter of 1876-77, proved profoundly influential and was followed by several return visits. These travels allowed him to study the Nile Valley firsthand, producing countless sketches that later served as the foundation for finished studio compositions in Rome. His work was consistently well received by British audiences; notably, *Storm in the Desert, Egypt* was exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1881. In recognition of his achievements, Corrodi was knighted *Accademico di Merito* by the Accademia di San Luca in 1893, where he had also served as a long-standing professor.

In January 1892, a fire in his Roman house destroyed much of his artistic property, including a collection of "oggetti orientali" and works by Arnold; this loss, together with the dispersal of his oeuvre into private hands, helps to explain the comparative rarity of paintings of this scale today.



Fig. 1. Hermann Corrodi, *Evening on the Banks of the Nile*, oil on canvas, 65 × 125 cm.
Sotheby's, *The Orientalist Sale*, London, 7 April 2020, lot 31.



Fig. 2. Hermann David Salomon Corrodi, *The Nile at Sunset*, oil on canvas, 50.2 × 78.7 cm.
Bonhams, London, 4 July 2017, lot 140.

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