Representing the West in the Writings of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm

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By

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Aisha Al-Omary, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis approaches representations of the West in the writings of three Egyptian intellectuals in the 19ᵗʰ century. The writings of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbdullah Al-Nadīm reveal the social and cultural challenges under the pressure of Westernisation. My original contribution to knowledge is to show that Occidentalism and selective rejection of Western culture functioned as a strategic tool of containing Westernisation by maintaining difference and guarding identity. This was necessary for these authors who wanted to heal society from Eastern decadence without losing cultural and religious authenticity.

The introduction explores the research question, explaining several key terms, and setting the boundaries of the research. The first chapter provides a historical context of Egypt and the influence of Westernisation on society and culture. The second chapter is a literature review on the Nahḍa and Occidentalism that highlights how conventional scholarship tends to overemphasise Westernised figures and texts and gives little attention to cultural processes other than straightforward Westernisation.

Chapter three discusses Al-Ṭahṭāwī as the first Arab Occidentalist. The chapter will focus on Al-Ṭahṭāwī's 1934 travelogue on his time in France where we find an attempt to negotiate a modern Egyptian identity in relation to Europe. Chapter four looks at representations of the West in ʿAbduh's debates with French historian Gabriel Hanotaux. Within the context of defending Islam, ʿAbduh rejects the rigid polarity between East and West and questions the universality of European modernity.

Chapter Five draws attention to Al-Nadīm's 'glowing hatred' of Europe. Al-Nadīm used representations of the West to stir anti-European feelings in his readers during the revolution and after occupation. The Conclusion stresses the importance of studying the phenomenon of Arab Occidentalism as a tool of containing Westernisation. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to stress the complexity of the legacy of the Nahḍa which is often reduced to a process of Westernisation.

Impact Statement

The work in this thesis provides further insight into the Naḥḍa movement by employing Occidentalism as the main concept for exploring the writings of three 19th century Egyptian intellectuals. The analysis of the writings of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm illuminates how Arab intellectuals sought to strategically contain the influence of the West on their society and culture. I demonstrate this through close analysis of the writings of these three authors, with a focus on their treatment of the West.

The work in chapter 5 on ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm is particularly important as it provides a detailed discussion of Nadim's journalistic writings with a focus on his treatment and utilisation of the West in his nationalist activism. Whereas Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh are well-established figure in the literature on the Naḥḍa and Arab cultural history, Al-Nadim received significantly less attention.

The thesis highlights the complexity of the legacy of the Naḥḍa which is often reduced to a process of Westernisation. The thesis also contributes to the scholarship by stressing the importance of Arab Occidentalism as a tool of containing Westernisation.

Acknowledgement

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people in London and back home in Saudi Arabia. First of all, I am grateful for the generous funding of the government of Saudi Arabia through the Ministry of Education. Special mention must go to the Department of European Languages and Literature in King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. I am particularly indebted to Professor Randa Al-Shiekh who nurtured my enthusiasm for English and Arabic literature. I will forever be grateful for her guidance and mentorship.

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Finally, I am grateful to my extended family who went far and beyond in their support of me and my little family during the time I worked on this thesis. I am grateful to my parents for their support and empowerment. My brother and sisters were always there for me. My husband was my anchor over the years; I will forever be grateful for his unceasing patience and dedication. Finally, my sons AlWaleed and Yossef who at the tender age of three and two are already passionate knowledge seekers. They gave me strength and drive I never thought I had.

To this big loving family, I dedicate this thesis.

Please note: No editor or proof-reader was involved in the composition of this thesis.

Dedication

For my parents Muḥammad and Fāṭima,

For my husband Zaid, and my sons Al-Waleed and Yossef,

I am forever grateful for the precious gifts of Love and Faith...

Aisha Al-Omary...   عَائِشَة العُمَرِي

Note on Transliteration, Translation, and Dates

Arabic names are transliterated using the romanisation conventions of the ALA-LC (American Library Association, Library of Congress). Names of Arabic-speaking persons are transliterated as they are pronounced in Modern Standard Arabic, while names of English-speaking Arab persons are written the way they spelled it in their English writings. Unless a source is noted, all translations are my own. All *Hijri* (Islamic Calendar) dates are converted to the Gregorian calendar.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> The development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity … involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'. Each age and society re-create its 'Others'.
>
> - Edward Said[1]

> The Arabs of the eighteenth century suffered from the legacy of their glorious past which had coincided with Europe's darkest age. That legacy made the isolated Arab of the eighteenth century feel a certain smugness toward all Europeans whom he judged as barbarians or, at best, somewhat dull and backward boors. His anachronistic attitude, based on an image formed earlier and transmitted from one generation to the next without the benefit of new information, was that European society had nothing of worth to offer.
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> - Ibrahim Abu-Lughod[2]

The most important transformation of the nineteenth century for the Arab world was the opening up of its society and culture to the outside world after centuries of isolation and relative marginalisation under Ottoman rule. The Arab intelligentsia of the Nahḍa were eager to adopt the sciences and knowledge of the West to their societies and emulate the modernity and civilisation they admired in Europe. Arab travellers to Europe published numerous travel accounts of their experiences and observations, and they translated countless texts in varied fields of knowledge.[3] Arabs

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[1] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; London: Penguin Books, 2003), 332.

[2] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963; London: Saqi Books, 2011), 212.

[3] For an overview of the travellers and translators in those early years of modern Arab-European cultural contact, see Abu-Lughod's *Arab Rediscovery*; particularly, 63-67 and 81-87.

made Europe and the West a subject matter that invited discussions, debates, and expositions. In this thesis, I approach the issue of Egyptian representation of the West in nineteenth century Egypt by analysing relevant writings of three Muslim Egyptian intellectuals: Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm. I examine these writings as a way of revealing the social and intellectual challenges that the Arab Muslim intellectual faced in that period. The originality of my project in this thesis is to demonstrate that an Arab Occidentalism was an integral part of the Arab turn to the West during the Nahḍa period which coincided with a rapid process of Westernisation and Modernisation. Through creating statements about the West as opposed to the East, these authors were able to identify and single out the desired elements of Western culture and contain the process of Westernisation, so it will not compromise the authenticity of Arab culture and tradition.

The Blind Spot of Arab Cultural Studies

For a long time, a historical narrative, positing the West as a tutor and the East as its apprentice, permeated the field of Middle Eastern studies. Scholarship on the cultural history of the Middle East in particular is dominated by one model steeped in Orientalist presumptions. Within the periodisation template in this model, the modern period begins with the French occupation of Egypt in 1798; the arrival of Napoleon as a European conqueror becomes the demarcation that separates the age of decadence or ʿaṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ from the modern Arab renaissance or the Nahḍa. The period between the Mongol conquest of Baghdad and the French conquest of Egypt – five whole centuries – is designated as a period of inḥiṭāṭ, decline, decadence, and degeneration; a period where no creativity, originality or innovation can be found. In this Orientalist

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model, the West forced modernity upon the hopelessly traditional backward East, and thus brought the region against its will to the present era.

Almost every book approaching the modern history of the Arab World will uncritically use this model of periodisation where modernity, rationality, and egalitarianism are Western imports. This scholarship will trace various expositions of these ideas in the Middle East to Europe or the French Revolution rather than the more likely combination of both European influence and local precursors in the region's humanist heritage.[4] These narratives of Pre-Napoleon decadence and post-Napoleon revival are steeped in Orientalist assumptions and attitudes. This way of reading the literary and cultural history of the region is identified by different terms in the revisionist scholarship seeking to rectify the situation[5]: a 'conservative historical approach', an 'Orientalist paradigm', 'the 1798 paradigm', and a 'decline or decadence discourse.'[6] This paradigm conceives of a prescriptive modernity

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[4] Chapter Two of this thesis will offer a brief overview of a number of these studies relying on the Orientalist approach in the field of Middle Eastern history.

[5] For an overview of this revisionist scholarship, see from Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (June 2004); particularly 76-80. Chapter Two of this thesis will also touch on the emergence of a new paradigm questioning the narrative of decline and modernisation.

[6] These terms come respectively from Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon?"; Abdulrazzak Patel, *Arab Naḥḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Peter Gran, *The Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979; New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Mehmet Akif Kirecci, "Decline Discourse and self-Orientalization in the Writings of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Taha Hussayn and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernization in Egypt and Turkey" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007); and David Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms: Configuring the decay of colonial modernity in French and Arabic" (PhD diss., University of California, 2006).

obviously derived from European characteristics without taking into account the larger context within which this modernity was presented to the Arab Middle East. The coercive nature of modernization and social change is ignored,[7] and therefore rejection of this modernization can only be interpreted as failure to become modern by the decadent Orientals who had to be forced to modernise by figures like Napoleon, Muḥammad ʿAlī, or Cromer.

The idea of an Oriental decadence was the assertion and proposition of European Orientalists; however, Arab intellectuals accepted this diagnosis and subverted the meaning of this decadence as they proposed ways of reversing it. Between the rapid decline of the Ottoman Empire and the growing influence of European powers, this was a chance for Arab intellectuals to reinvent their Arabhood and assert a separate identity. This process of self-negotiation started with early Arabs writing immediately during and after the French occupation. The renowned Egyptian historian ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1754-1822) wrote a history of Egypt in four volumes that included a historical narrative as well as miscellaneous items such as poems, proverbs, biographies, and obituaries that aptly reflected the period and its challenges.[8] The third volume is dedicated to a detailed description of the French

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[7] On the coercive nature of modernisation in Egypt, see Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 2002).

[8] For more on Al-Jabartī and his chronicles see Shmuel Moreh's translation *Napoleon in Egypt, al-Jabarti's chronicle of The French Occupation, 1798* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishing, 1993); David Ayalon, "The Historian al-Jabartī and his Background" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 23 (1960); and Evgeniya Prusskaya's "Arab Chronicles as a Source for Studying Bonaparte's Expedition to Egypt" in *Napoleonica. La Revue* 3 (2015).

occupation of Egypt and their capture of Cairo from the point of view of al-Jabartī who remained in Cairo throughout the occupation.

Al-Jabartī was the first eyewitness to comment on the encounter with the European Other. As an influential member of the ʿulamāʾ - the religious cultural elite of society at the time[9], Al-Jabartī's account was the first of a series of reactions from the Muslim educated intellectuals to the European encroachment on their society. According to Edward Said, "[Al-Jabartī's] experience produced a deep-seated anti-Westernism that is a persistent theme of Egyptian, Arab, Islamic, and Third World history".[10] However, as Rasheed El-Enany showed, with this anti-Westernism came an equally deep-seated and persistent pro-Westernism that recognises and appreciates the merits of Western modernity. Although Al-Jabartī was generally critical of the French occupation, even in the midst of the colonial experience, he appreciated certain aspects of the French culture and behaviour. He described The French as 'devils' when they desecrated the grounds of Al-ʾAzhar Mosque and brutally suppressed the Egyptian resistance, and yet Al-Jabartī was not able to contain his admiration of French scientific wonders, organised libraries, and effective administration. Al-Jabartī admits that: "[the French] have . . . fashions and conditions and strange compositions, which produce results beyond the comprehension of our minds".[11] It is this interplay

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[9] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "ʿulamā," in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering, Patricia Crone, Wadad Kadi, Devin J. Stewart, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, and Mahan Mirza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 574-579.

[10] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993; New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 39.

[11] Al-Jabartī quoted in Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounter in Arabic Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15-16.

between anti-Westernism and pro-Westernism that became the real 'persistent theme' for the nineteenth century Arab.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Europe and its modernity became ubiquoutus: more Europeans moved to the region for various reasons, more Arabs travelled to Europe and returned to share their experiences, and more European books were translated to Arabic. Europe became the subject matter; and there was an ever-growing body of work in Arabic on Europe and European modernity. The writers constituted an incredibly diverse group from different locations and with a wide range of attitudes and styles; what they shared was the opinion that the Arab world was in a state of ʾinḥiṭāṭ [decadence]. They were decadent not only compared with Europe but also compared with their ancestors in the past. The ways they came to describe this decadence, and identify its causes were as numerous as the number of texts dealing with the topic.[12] For the three authors discussed in the current thesis, the answer was a return to an ideal past, or a reconstructing of tradition. They yearned for the Golden Age when the Arab World was at the centre stage of history. But as we shall see, this Self-awakening was mediated through the Western Other.

There was a particular fascination at the time with the Abbasid era. The period between 750 and 1258 AD was a time when the arts, philosophy and sciences were

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[12] For an exploration of the link between the emergence of colonial modernity and notions of decadence and how the latter are internalised by the colonised society, see David Fieni's excellent study "Decadent Orientalisms: Configuring the decay of colonial modernity in French and Arabic"; particularly, his discussion of how French Orientalist discourses of decadence contributed to how Arab and Muslim intellectuals constructed their modernity within the context of European imperialism, 12-64.

flourishing in the Middle East supported by the largest empire on Earth at the time. As citizens of the dominant empire, Abbasid Muslims were in contact with many different cultures, and Baghdad with its House of Wisdom became a centre where Muslim and non-Muslim scholars accumulated, archived, translated, and developed the knowledge of different civilisations like the ancient Greeks, Romans, Chinese, and Indians. [13] Arabic was the language in which centuries' worth of sciences and arts can be accessed. In a way, the progress of Europe and its modern civilisation inspired a sense of sorrow and loss because it reminded the Arab intellectual of what once was; but also, European modernity evoked hope of what is possible if only Arabs and Muslims can return to their true tradition. By conceding that the East is in decline and internalising this Orientalist diagnosis, these authors were able to authoritatively reconstruct an ideal Arab Muslim subjectivity. Their main argument was that Western knowledge was founded on this ancient Arab Muslim civilisation; therefore, imitating the West was not a departure from but rather a return to authentic Self.

The main question at the heart of my research is how these authors constructed the West in their efforts to heal the decadence they perceived in their society and culture. Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm each had a certain way of speaking about

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[13] The House of Wisdom or *Bayt Al-ḥikma* was a translation academy and Muslim intellectual centre established by the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (786-833) who came to power after a vicious civil war that tore Baghdad apart. The centre included a number of schools in addition to a huge library and facilities where Arabic translations were prepared by Muslims and Christians of philosophical and scientific works from Greek, Persian, and Aramaic to Arabic. See Sebastian Günther, "Education," in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering, Patricia Crone, Wadad Kadi, Devin J. Stewart, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, and Mahan Mirza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 145; Also, Arthur Goldschmidt and Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), 77.

the West that served their particular iteration of the reform project. They were aware of European Orientalist evaluations of their society, culture, and religion; they agreed with them partly, but not without protesting against them with their own evaluations of European modernity. This negotiation allowed them to infuse the desirable elements of Western culture and civilisation with meanings before adopting them so that it will not threaten an Islamic authenticity. These authors are indeed a continuation of the anti-Westernism that Edward Said identified in Al-Jabartī:

> One can also find in Jabarti the seeds of Islamic reformism which, as promulgated later by the great Azhar cleric and reformer Muhammad ʿAbdu and his remarkable contemporary Jamal Al-Dīn al-ʾAfghānī, argue either that Islam had better modernize in order to compete with the West, or that it should return to its Meccan roots the better to combat the West.[14]

Unlike the following generation of secular Arab intellectuals, Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm were still deeply traditional and devout Muslims who did not conceive of modernity along secular lines. Indeed, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod argues that the early Arabs coming into contact with the West did not even recognise Europe's secularism as they lamented Europe's religious misguidance: "rather than being attracted by [Europe's] secularism they failed even to perceive it … Perhaps the concept that any society *could* be secular was too bizarre to be comprehended".[15] Writing in the late nineteenth century, Muḥammad ʿAbduh argued that the very idea of secularism is the result of a historical trajectory specific to Europe rather than a universal or self-evident model.[16] Overall, these three traditional authors were negotiating an Egyptian modernity by probing into the very Western modernity they admired.

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[14] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 39.

[15] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 164; emphasis in original source.

[16] Samira Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 69.

The current study explores the Othering discourse of these three traditional authors negotiating a modern identity. I aim to contribute to the emerging revisionist scholarship by highlighting the Occidentalism that was an important attitude of the period and its authors, an attitude that is often lost or ignored when we approach it with the Orientalist lens keen on highlighting the influence of the West through Westernisation. The concept of Other and the process of 'Othering' may have received significant attention in post-colonial scholarship.[17] However, the specific othering process of Occidentalism is still a relatively new focus. Occidentalism is a form of Othering where the discourse strives to establish boundaries and distance the Self from the Other in order to guard against the possibility of corrupting a presumed authenticity. This Occidentalist Othering process takes place regardless of whether the aim was to imitate Europe or deride and challenge its growing political as well as cultural authority.

Scholarship on both Orientalism and Occidentalism recognises this process of Othering between East and West as well as other nations and explores the ways these constructions of the Other contributed to internal discursive power through knowledge creation. Edward Said's book *Orientalism* remains arguably the most influential critique of Orientalism as a grand discourse of Othering. Said's *Orientalism* completely overhauled the way scholarship looked at the relationship between East and West. Naturally, Said's arguments were not without their weakness. For now, it

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[17] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffit, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2007), 154-158.

is necessary to recognise Said's great achievement in demonstrating how the discourse of Orientalism created an Oriental Other diametrically opposed to the Western Self; this discourse dehumanised the Orient and rationalised European domination over whole nations.[18] More importantly, Said's critique of European Orientalism exposed how deeply Orientalist knowledge have penetrated the way Western people perceived the Orient and Oriental nations.

The scholarship on Occidentalism recognises that there is a parallel discourse to that of Orientalism which creates stereotypical representations of the West and Westerners.[19] These discursive representations by Eastern nations strived to stress radical irreconcilable differences between the Other and the Self. These representations were utilised for different goals whether to assert nationalist political authority or guard nation and culture against the growing hegemony of the West. Scholarship on Occidentalism notes the different ways this discourse manifests itself in different cultures and countries depending on the different historical and social circumstances the encounter with the West took place in. In order to have a thorough understanding of any form of Occidentalism, it becomes necessary to investigate the particular historical and political context within which it came to be.

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[18] Said, *Orientalism*, 39.

[19] For example, Wang Ning, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism?" *New Literary History* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1997); Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

With few exceptions,[20] scholars in the field of Arab cultural history and Arab literature do not explicitly discuss Arab Occidentalism. The early 19th century witnessed a growing intercultural osmosis that followed the initial shock of the French occupation of Egypt. Muslim Arabs recognised the shift of power and influence from the East to the West and started a relationship of cultural apprenticeship under the West. This relationship however was complicated by the recognition also of the colonial threat that the West posed to the region. In the midst of all this, the West and Westerners became the ultimate Other in the Muslim Arab consciousness. Unfortunately, there is little attention given to Arab Occidentalism.

The Nahḍa, Decadence, and Occidentalism

Before going any further, it will be helpful to define key terms that will be used in the current thesis and how I use them like the Nahḍa, modernity, modernisation and/or westernisation and of course Occidentalism. The last term will be explored in chapter two, but for now it is enough to say that I use the term 'Occidentalism' to mean more than merely negative construction of the Western Other. I use it to refer to a discourse which aims to control and contain the process of Westernisation; in other words, a discursive filter through which these authors could

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[20] For example, Kamal Abdel-Malek and Mona El-Kahla, *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Alaa Bayoumi, "Occidentalism in late nineteenth century Egypt" (Master's thesis, Duquesne University, 2005); Lorenzo Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism: Europe and the Self in Present-day Arabic Narrative Discourse," *European University Institute's Working Papers: Mediterranean Programme Series* 1, no. 21 (2008); Robert Woltering, "Occidentalisms: Images of 'the West' in Egypt" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009); and Eid Mohamed, *Arab Occidentalism: Images of America in the Middle East* (London: I.B Tauris, 2015).

sift through Western knowledge and culture and exclude what they deemed unsuitable or threatening to their tradition.

Another two terms that need defining are 'Nahḍa' and 'modernity'. These two terms are usually linked in Arab cultural and literary history. The Nahḍa is a rather "supple construct" as Ami Ayalon puts it. What we actually mean by "Nahḍa" will vary depending on the context: from the viewpoint of cultural history, it often refers to a remarkable outburst of literary output in the fields of linguistics, literature, journalism, printing, and book publishing, accompanied by increasing rates of literacy in the late Ottoman period. From a political point of view, the Nahḍa is related to the surge in nationalist sentiments and the beginning of Arab mobilisation for political independence and freedom from the Ottoman Empire.[21] The Nahḍa is typically defined as an intellectual and cultural revival from the mid nineteenth century which coincided with the rise of nationalism, political struggle against colonialism and social reform.[22]

More importantly, the Nahḍa is the first episode of modern Arab history and signifies a break from the medievalism of the eighteenth century. Abdallah Laroui defines the Nahḍa as a cultural and political movement that aimed to incorporate Western knowledge and reinvigorate an Arabic culture perceived as 'decadent'

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[21] Ami Ayalon, "Private Publishing in the Nahḍa," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no. 4 (November 2008): 562.

[22] Peter E. Pormann, "The Arab 'Cultural Awakening (Nahḍa)', 1870–1950, and the Classical Tradition," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13, no. 1 (Summer 2006):4.

through a process of "translation and vulgarisation".[23] There is a consensus in scholarship when it comes to dating this period; generally, the parameters of the Nahḍa are placed between Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798, and the interwar period in the early twentieth century[24], or sometimes it is extended to the end of World War II.[25] However, Laroui's dates are even narrower dating the Nahḍa from the 1850s to the beginning of World War I in 1914.[26] As mentioned earlier, this link between the birth of an Arab modernity and the arrival of the West to the region is challenged in emerging scholarship.

The meaning of the Nahḍa for its contemporaries was a return to the past rather than a break from it. For nineteenth century Arabs, the goal of their cultural activity was clear: to revive the Golden Age of Islam.[27] This involved a lot of self-reflection

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[23] Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*, trans. Diarmid Cammell (Paris: Maspero, 1974; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), vii.

[24] Ayalon, "Private Publishing," 561-2.

[25] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 168.

[26] Laroui, *Crisis*, vii.

[27] This thesis is focused on Muslim Arabs and their reflections on their place in the world as Arabs. However, it is worth noting that this desire for an Arab glory was shared by Christian and Muslim Arabs alike. Moroccan historian Abdullah Laroui argues that Arabs have a certain way of relating to history regardless of their faith. Arabs' relationship with their history is different from the way other cultures surrounding them relate to their history - like Turkish, Indian, and Iranian cultures; some of them are also Muslim cultures. It is possible to find Greek, Persian and other foreign influence on medieval Arab philosophy and logic. However, it is difficult to find similar foreign elements in Arab history; Laroui notes that medieval Arabs prided themselves to be "the sole possessors of a true history, other people's possessing only an accumulation of unverifiable legends". For more on this point, see "The Arabs and History" in *The Crisis of the Arab* Intellectual, 13-15.

and cultural critique of their own 'decadence'; this yet is another term that needs defining in relation to both the Nahḍa and 'modernity'. As noted above, Arab intellectuals internalised the Orientalist diagnosis of decadence; however, their conception of decadence was different from the decadence that Orientalists saw in the East. Whereas the Orientalist had in mind an abstract essentialist decadence that is innate to the Oriental races, Arab Muslim intellectuals perceived decadence as a result of material tangible decay that can be reversed. Looking at the statements of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm, it is clear that they were attracted to the materialist accomplishment of Europe: wealth, technology, and knowledge. Part of this material aspects of European civilization was the political and social organisation as well as European educational and social systems. The question for them was how to emulate these aspects without opening their culture to the ideological components of European modernity which they interestingly deemed decadent. In other words, for these authors, the cure of decadence was to become authentically Arab rather than to break from Arab tradition. And authenticity was to be found in the classical culture.

Laroui argues that the root of modern Arab decadence is precisely this desire to revive an ancient culture; he calls this situation 'cultural retardation'. Arab societies are culturally retarded because the ultimate aim of reform was "not merely to draw inspiration from classical Arab culture, but really to revive and reactualise it - if not in the totality of its aspects, then at least in its inner logic".[28] Hypothetically, if the Ottoman Empire successfully enforced Turkish as a cultural language on its Arab populations during its six centuries of domination, there would be no cultural

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[28] Laroui, *Crisis*, 8.

retardation to speak of. The Turkish-speaking Arabs would relate to their classical past the way modern Europe relates to its Hellenistic past. It would be meaningless, in Laroui's view, to describe the ancient cultures of the West or Classical Europe as "historically retarded" as they are in fact "historically dead". In such a scenario, the Arabo-Islamic classical culture would also be historically dead like all the other classical and medieval cultures, and that would not detract from its cultural value in the least. The root of the cultural decadence of the Islamic and Arab countries, according to Laroui, is precisely that whole nations see themselves as immediate heirs to that classical culture. Therefore, rather than leading to a smooth process of Westernisation, the encounter with the European Other caused the Arab intellectual to hold even tighter to his classical tradition while he emulates European modernity.

Before we explore the link between the early Nahḍa and modernity, we need to unpack the meanings of a number of overlapping terms: modernity, modernisation, and Westernisation. Modernisation usually refers to the transformation of a society and its politics from a traditional state of being to a modern one; hence, the term modernisation to refer to a process whose final result is: modernity. It can be seen as synonyms of other words like development, industrialisation, progress, or change. As a process, modernisation is understood to be an integral part of the Arab Nahḍa.[29] The way modernisation as a process is understood is mostly based on the European historical experience. In other words, the European model is the only true model because European modernity became the universal model for proponents of

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[29] Louay M. Safi, "The Challenge of Modernity: The Quest for the Authenticity in the Arab World." (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1992), 1-2.

Modernisation Theory.[30] The process of modernisation in non-Western societies thus was subjected to the fixed framework of Modernisation Theory. In the Arab context, the Naḥḍa was the start of the modernisation process which should in the end have led to an Arab modernity that will be indistinguishable from that of Europe. However, this convenient and linear framework was challenged when it comes to the Arab Middle East.

The growing momentum of modernisation in the region was accompanied by an unmistakable turn to traditionalism; or rather than a return to an existing tradition, it was – as Laroui aptly noted – a process of traditionalization that was actually a response to a modern phenomenon.[31] To quote Louay M. Safy,

> the momentum generated in the fifties and sixties came to an abrupt halt when many of the analyses and assumptions about Middle Eastern development were shattered by what is known today as the Islamic resurgence. The resurgence of Islam in the Middle East appeared quite puzzling from the perspective of modernization theory. … the middle east became the 'anomaly' which undermined the basic premises of the paradigm outlined by modernization theorists.[32]

However, this is not exactly an 'anomaly' unless we insist on looking at the Naḥḍa period and its aftermath through a framework of Westernisation; this will result in an emphasis on Western origins and influences without recognising any previous more subtle attempts to maintain control of the process of Westernisation by Arab Muslim intellectuals.

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[30] Safi, "The Challenge of Modernity," 2.

[31] Laroui, *Crisis*, 41-42.

[32] Safi, "The Challenge of Modernity," 2-3.

The problem moreover with the Modernisation Theory framework is that it fails to distinguish between modernisation and Westernisation. Because it assumes the final outcome of any modernisation to be a modernity in the image of European modernity, it naturally takes it to be synonymous with Westernisation.[33] Thus, the indiscriminate acceptance of European values, ideas and social structures becomes the only marker of the success or failure of modernisation in any given culture. However, there is a growing argument for multiple modernities rather the one: it offers an alternative view of the contemporary world that challenges classical theories of modernization.[34] That is to say, being modern does not necessarily mean being Western as S. N. Eisenstadt observes, "One of the most important implications of the term 'multiple modernities' is that modernity and Westernization are not identical; Western patterns of modernity are not the only 'authentic' modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others."[35] Indeed, it is very possible for a culture to indigenise modernity precisely to challenge the Westernisation forced on society.[36] It is natural in this context for a culture to resist external cultural pressure by inventing and creating identities and falling back on tradition.

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[33] Michiel Leezenberg, "Aprroching Modern Muslim Though," *ISIM Review* 17, no. 2 (2006): 20.

[34] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter, 2000): 1.

[35] Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," 2-3.

[36] Safi, "The Challenge of Modernity," 221-222.

The Modernisation Theory framework fails to appreciate the pragmatism of the Arab turn to the West; this superficial acceptance of modernity was accompanied by a rejection of Western ideas or at least a repurosing of them. Indeed, by the mid-twentieth century, Egyptian society was modernised, and the technology and knowledge of Europe was integrated into society and state to a great extent. This is also the case with many non-Western societies as Western institutions and technologies were embraced; however, "below the facade of modernity lurks a great deal of discontent, resistance, and distrust."[37] In the case of Arab intellectual within a context of colonial modernity, tradition becomes the sanctuary and refuge. Laroui explored the process of 'traditionalisation' in his 1974 book *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*; and this particular form of tradition is "born in confrontation with military and commercial aggression (some might prefer the terms 'Neo-tradition' or 'retraditionalization'.) … Tradition is born in opposition to something: to ideas accompanying foreign merchandise, or to a universally decried liberalism."[38] This counter-intuitive process of traditionalization is extremely relevant to the current study of Occidentalism because Laroui's analysis acknowledges the relationship between foreign hegemony and tradition creation. This reformulation of tradition is, after all, part of a refashioning of the Self in response to the challenge of the Other.

Parameters and Structure of the Research

Due to the richness of the Nahḍa as a cultural phenomenon, some boundaries must be defined to make this project realistic and manageable. I focus exclusively on

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[37] Safi, "The Challenge of Modernity," 6.

[38] Laroui, *Crisis*, 87.

Egypt as a geographical location, so this thesis will deal only with three Egyptian Arab Muslim authors. I focus on Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, A cultural bureaucrat; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, a reluctant revolutionary turned reformer; and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, a dissident journalist because together they highlight a different aspect of the Nahḍa that complicates the usual narrative of Westernisation. These three traditional authors share a strong concern for Arab-Islamic authenticity despite the different circumstances within which they came to know and represent the West.

The writings of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm diagnose and describe an Arab Muslim decadence, but the solution was not a total embrace of European modernity. Rather, they tried to create a modern identity constructed on the basis of a distant ideal past in addition to European contemporary civilisation. Al-Ṭahṭāwī, for example, is usually depicted in the literature as a modernising pioneer of the Egyptian awakening and an early modern liberal thinker. However, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was more of a "transitional figure" who relied heavily on traditional knowledge to justify the adoption of European modernity.[39] ʿAbduh is seen as a modernising reformer who created a Muslim modernity; I look at his high-profile controversy with French historian Gabriel Hanotaux to highlight that his negotiation of Muslim modernity took place through statements about the West vis-à-vis the Arab Muslim East. Lastly, the thesis turns to al-Nadīm who was a controversial figure during his times, and his journalistic and educational career which does not readily fit the scholarship's paradigm of modernisation and Westernisation. Al-Nadīm believed that the purity of Egyptian culture was in danger, and that it was necessary to guard Egyptian citizens -

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[39] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 32.

and children in particular – from the corrupting influence of the West and its corrosion of traditional values.

The thesis consists of five chapters: two framing chapters and three case studies. The first chapter will offer a concise socio-political background of Egypt in the nineteenth century and provides a historical context for the analysis of Arab conceptions of the West that will follow. Chapter two will provide an overview of the relevant literature on nineteenth century Arab cultural history and the Naḥḍa in specific. The chapter will highlight the problematic view of the Naḥḍa as a Western achievement in the region, and the recent scholarship seeking to rectify this assumption. From there, the chapter will turn to Orientalism, and explores Occidentalism in general as another Othering discourse, and Arab Occidentalism, in specific.

Chapter three focuses on the representation of the West, France particularly, in the travelogue of Al-Ṭahṭāwī as a young Egyptian Imam in Paris. It offers an early stage of the East-West encounter, and his writings depicts an earlier manifestation of the cultural and religious anxiety over identity and authenticity that becomes more pronounced in the writings of ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm later in the century. Al-Ṭahṭāwī saw in France a modern reflection of the old glory of Arabs, and the modern French became for him an equivalent to the medieval Arab. France represents everything desirable for the Self: knowledge, science, wealth, prosperity, and that elusive trait of civilisation or *tamaddun*.

Chapter four looks at how representations of the West functioned in the writings of Muḥammad ʿAbduh. The controversy with Gabriel Hanotaux reveals the extent to which ʿAbduh made Europe something of an expertise for himself in his quest to create a modern Islam precisely because the West was the model and reference point that he had in mind. He knew and understood the West's religious, political, and intellectual history to a large degree, and in his questioning of it, it is not difficult to still glean his admiration and fascination with the European achievement.

Chapter five looks at Al-Nadīm who denounced the rapid Westernisation of Egyptian culture and life and attacked not only the West but also Westernised Egyptians as well as "foreigners" in Egypt who came from other parts of the Middle East. He was not a bureaucrat like Al-Ṭahṭāwī nor was he part of the cultural elite like ʿAbduh; moreover, his patriotic polemical journalism verged on the xenophobic at times. Instead of dismissing the legacy of Al-Nadīm, the chapter engages with Al-Nadīm's writings by looking at the motivation behind it and the socio-political context that produced it.

Finally, the conclusion will reflect on the definition of Arab Occidentalism that I have proposed in chapter two. It will also highlight the contribution of this research to our understanding of Arab Occidentalism as a tool for containing processes of Westernisation and modernisation by an anxious cultural elite. It also addresses the limitations as well as the implications of the thesis.

Concluding Remarks

Before ending this introduction, I would like to stress a number of crucial points. To begin with, it is important to note that the current study is selective and illustrative in its nature: I do not by any means claim that I am considering every political idea or every cultural phenomenon in Egypt or the Middle East. This is not an extensive or exhaustive account of the way Egyptians represented the West throughout the nineteenth century before or after. I am aware that the discourse of Occidentalism as I present it in this thesis cannot be claimed to be a comprehensive theory of how the collective non-West represented the West, or, for that matter, as a systematic mode to understand Occidentalist othering processes in all non-Western cultures.

I view this thesis as an attempt to give attention to certain aspects of the East-West encounter during the Nahḍa that were often neglected. I do not mean for my reading of the Orientalist paradigm approach to the Nahḍa to be understood as a wholesale rejection of the scholarship, but rather as an attempt to point out its limitations and blind spots especially when it comes to overemphasising the modernism and non-traditionalism of figures like Al- Ṭahṭāwī and ʿAbduh. In other words, I contend that understanding the legacy of the Nahḍa and its subsequent development in the Arab culture requires that we study and understand the social and cultural functions of the representations of West as they are reflected in Arab intellectual discourse. The advantages of such an approach are not only that it will provide an insight into non-Western othering processes, but it will also improve our understanding of the Arab Nahḍa and its legacy into the contemporary Arab world as well.

Another point to stress is that my current study is not concerned with arguing for or against the idea of an 'age of decadence'; however, in as much as the intellectuals covered in the current study believed in a Muslim Eastern decadence, I am going to engage with their belief in this decadence rather than its historical truthfulness. Finally, I do use the ideas of many thinkers throughout this thesis, and I refer to them occasionally. I am not concerned with presenting a comprehensive overview of the ideas and opinions of these thinkers; rather, I am merely using them to clarify the different sides of Occidentalism as I gleaned it from the writings of these three authors as case studies. My main aim in mentioning these thinkers is to supplement and enrich the discussion of relevant points rather than to provide an analysis of the entirety of their theoretical frameworks and systems.

Chapter 1: Egypt in the Nineteenth Century

> The Orientalist image of an unchanging Islamic society galvanized by western secular energies has lost its persuasive power, and only the staunchest Bonapartist would cling to the old orthodoxy, which may be paraphrased "without Bonaparte, modern Egypt is inconceivable".
>
> - Darrel Dykstra[1]

> Rising from obscurity to prominence in 1805, Muḥammad ʿAlī actively sought to carve for himself an empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. He might have planned to revitalize the Ottoman Empire under his leadership and may even have nursed the idea of replacing the sultan as Universal Caliph of Islam. The Pasha's stormy expansionism on both sides of the Red Sea - in Arabia and the Sudan - and in Greece, North Africa and above all in Syria, should be viewed within a grand design of independence and regional hegemony.
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> - Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim[2]

> One alien race, the English, have had to control and guide a second alien race, the Turks, by whom they are disliked, in the government of a third race, the Egyptians.
>
> - Lord Cromer, The British Consul-General in Egypt, 1883-1907[3]

The objective of this chapter is to highlight the historical context within which the authors covered in this thesis created their Occidentalist discourse of East versus West. The history of Egypt in the nineteenth century has been shaped by two foreign occupations. The French occupation was a brief but shocking experience whereas the

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[1] Darrell Dykstra, "The French Occupation of Egypt, 1798-1801," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 115.

[2] Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198.

[3] As quoted in Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *The New Mamluks: Egyptian Society and Modern Feudalism* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 217.

British occupation was years in the making and lasted for more than half a century. Between these two decisive moments of Egypt's history, the rise of the Turco-Circassian ruling house of Muḥammad ʿAlī put in place a fast-paced process of modernisation. Muḥammad ʿAlī Pāshā aspired to create a new modern Eastern empire that posed a challenge to the weakening Ottoman empire. A second surge of modernisation came in the late 19th century when his grandson Khedive ʾIsmāʿīl hoped to make Egypt on an equal footing with Europe. It is important to remember that this grand project caused great suffering for the Egyptians who found themselves under extreme pressure to modernise every facet of their life with little thought to their well-being.

This chapter will start with a brief look at pre-modern Egypt and the meteoric rise of Muḥammad ʿAlī who was driven by military imperial ambitions to seek out European knowledge. Towards this goal, Muḥammad ʿAlī opened modern schools, sent missions to Europe, and initiated an ambitious project of translation. I will then examine Egypt after the 1841 Treaty of London. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the influence of Europeans as well as Turkish elite in the country continued to grow disproportionately to their numbers. This aggressive modernisation of Egyptian life had a detrimental effect on the lives of Egyptian masses including the authors covered in this thesis. Finally, I look at the social and cultural consequences of this history. I position my discussion of the three authors within the context of a rising Egyptian middle class. In a sense, Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm were early precursors of the ʾ*Afandīyah*, an Egyptian modern middle class that was central to the liberal nationalist project in the early twentieth century.

Muḥammad ʿAlī's Imperial Egypt

Pre-modern Egypt was ruled mainly by the Mamlūks and Ottomans. From the thirteenth century, the centre of Islamic empire moved from the Arab world. The Abbasid Caliphate was the last Arab empire before it fell to the Mongols in 1258.[4] In the early thirteenth century, another Muslim empire was on the ascendant. The political marginalisation of Arabs was complete when the rising Ottoman empire chose Constantinople as the capital of the new Muslim empire. The Ottomans initially fought their way into the West invading the Balkans and ending the Byzantine Empire before they turned to the East. In the sixteenth century, the Ottomans invaded Persia, Iraq, the Levant, and finally Egypt which was under the rule of the Mamlūks dynasty.[5]

The word 'Mamlūk' in Arabic referred to 'an owned man' or a slave.[6] The Mamlūks dynasty were the descendants of the 12,000 slave youths that the Ayyūbid Sultan bought in 1230 from central Asia to create an advanced elite corps in his army.[7] Over the years, these soldiers gained immense power and influence, and they became the practical rulers of Egypt.[8] In 1250, they assassinated the last Ayyūbid Sultan and

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[4] Arthur Goldschmidt and Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), 97.

[5] Arthur Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt: The Formation of a Nation State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 11; William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 39-42.

[6] Goldschmidt and Davidson, *A Concise History*, 96; Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt*, 10.

[7] Winslow William Clifford, *State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt, 648-741 A.H./1250-1340 C.E.* (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2013), 67.

[8] Clifford, *State Formation*, 68. For more on the Mamlūks growth into power between 1250 and 1517 and their eventual decline, see Robert L. Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 162-173.

created their own dynasty which ruled Egypt for over five centuries.[9] The Mamlūks ruled Egypt unchallenged from the 13th to the 16th century; after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, they ruled it simultaneously with the Ottomans.[10]

The Mamlūks were divided into different factions, and each faction was led by a prince; each prince had his own army and collected heavy taxes from the Egyptian peasantry in his region. These princes were in a constant state of fighting that ceased temporarily as one prince managed to subjugate the other princes for a while before conflict started again.[11] The Mamlūk period is usually linked to an age of decadence in the Middle East although the period was not completely devoid of advances in civilisation.[12] The Ottoman control of Egypt was nominal for the most part, and by the late eighteenth century Egypt was once again ruled autonomously by a revived

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[9] Clifford, *State Formation*, 68.

[10] Goldschmidt and Davidson, *A Concise History*, 125-126; J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arab Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 2.

[11] Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt*, 12; J. Heyworth-Dunne, "Arabic Literature in Egypt in the Eighteenth Century with some Reference to the Poetry and Poets," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 9, no. 3 (1938), 675.

[12] Brugman, *An Introduction*, 2. Brugman notes that "due to this poor [Mamluk] government, the late flowering of literature in Egypt came to an end in the fifteenth century— although admittedly, the literary level in other parts of the Muslim world, where Mamelukes were not in authority, was not much higher." The next chapter will discuss more examples of this assertion of universal decline and its consequences for scholarship on Arabic literature and cultural history.

Mamlūk leadership.[13] By the turn of the nineteenth century, European influence and presence increased inside the Ottoman regions including Egypt.[14]

The region was becoming strategically relevant in Europe's internal political and military struggles. When Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt, his main aim was to undermine Britain's access to its colonies in the East. Although Egypt faced many conquerors in previous centuries, the French occupation was the first non-Muslim invasion in the region[15]. The French invasion lasted less than three years before the British-Ottoman alliance forced the French out of Egypt; however, the impact it left was great for decades to come despite the briefness of this encounter. In addition to bringing an Arabic press, the French also established a scientific centre where they received the Egyptian public including a number of the ʿUlamāʾ like Egyptian historian ʿAbd Al-Raḥmān Al-Jabartī and scholar Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār who later became the rector of al-Azhar. Although the idea that the French occupation single-handedly awakened a culturally decadent East is challenged by more recent scholarship[16] as we shall see in the following chapter, the occupation did indeed arouse the interest of Egyptians in Western knowledge and culture.

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[13] Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 64.

[14] For a discussion of this growing influx of Europeans and its impact on Egypt in specific, see Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt*, 29-39.

[15] For an exploration of the French invasion of Egypt, see Tignor, *Egypt*, 196-208; Dykstra, "The French Occupation," 113-138.

[16] These are studies that shift the focus from modernisation theories with their unquestioned emphasis on Westernisation to the social and cultural history of the region; for example: Peter Gran, *The Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979; New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998); the next chapter will discuss more examples of this revisionist scholarship.

There are three main consequences of this occupation according to historian Arthur Goldschmidt. The French presence in Egypt alerted the British to the strategic value of Egypt as an important junction point between Europe and the Eastern colonies. More importantly for our current focus, the French occupation shattered the illusion of cultural and social superiority that Ottoman Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere had about themselves vis a vis the Europeans. Politically, the occupation created a huge power vacuum in the heart of the Ottoman empire by weakening the Mamlūks.[17] As we shall see in the next chapter, in the literary history of the Middle East, the French occupation is seen as the instigator of the Nahḍa; however, the French invasion itself did very little beyond forcing the East and West upon each other.

The political vacuum that was created after the French occupation in Egypt was soon filled by someone that differed very little from previous Mamlūks or Ottoman governors of Egypt and had little in common with the Egyptians. Muḥammad ʿAlī – an illiterate Albanian soldier of fortune who did not speak Arabic – was born in Kavala, Northern Greece in 1769; he worked for the Ottoman government as a tax collector and served in the imperial army.[18] When Napoleon tried to expand into Syria, Muḥammad ʿAlī was one of the soldiers in the Ottoman army sent to face the French army. Muḥammad ʿAlī came to Egypt leading an Albanian

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[17] Goldschmidt and Davidson, *A Concise History*, 163.

[18] For more on Muḥammad ʿAlī and his role in the creation of modern Egypt, see Tignor, *Egypt*, 208-218; Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt*, 19-27. For a treatment of his military career, see Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 2002).

force of 300 soldiers sent to support the Ottoman army engaging the French. When the French left Egypt in 1801, there were two main parties competing for power. On the one hand, the Mamlūks wanted to re-establish themselves as sole rulers of Egypt; and on the other hand, the Ottoman Turks wanted to restore Egypt directly to their empire without the proxy rule of the Mamlūks.

The Egyptians themselves, however, wanted neither the Mamlūks nor the Ottomans. By 1805, Muḥammad ʿAlī had successfully plotted his way to the throne of Egypt overcoming both the Mamlūks and the Ottoman sultan. Muḥammad ʿAlī like Napoleon sought the support of influential figures in Egyptian society, particularly the ʿUlamāʾ of al-ʾAzhar; unlike the non-Muslim Napoleon who was seen as an outsider, the Muslim Muḥammad ʿAlī gained this support despite his questionable means.[19] He

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[19] Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 6-8; Tignor, *Egypt*, 208-210. The Ottoman Sultan appointed Muḥammad ʿAlī as ruler of Egypt after the ʿUlamāʾ of al-ʾAzhar requested his appointment. This popular support was influential initially, but it was Muḥammad ʿAlī's ruthlessness towards rivals that secured his position as the sole ruler of Egypt. After their defeat, the Mamlūks escaped to Upper Egypt to regroup before attempting to retake Cairo. Two years after his appointment, Muḥammad ʿAlī got rid of all and any potential competitors in the country, exiling some of those who actually supported his appointment and even slaughtering whatever opposition was left. In 1811, Muḥammad ʿAlī invited the remnants of the Mamlūks to negotiate a peace agreement in his castle in Cairo only to slaughter all his guests after feeding them. The infamous incident came to be known as the Castle Massacre. As for the Ottomans, Muḥammad ʿAlī's army had a strong advantage. The Sultan's Janissary Corps rejected any attempt to modernise the army by the Sultan whereas these modernisations were the very thing that made Muḥammad ʿAlī the formidable ruler that he became. The Ottomans reluctantly acknowledged him as the new Ottoman governor of Egypt and gave him the title of Pāshā and in exchange Muḥammad ʿAlī was expected to make annual payments to Istanbul.

appeared to the masses as a long-awaited saviour on whom they could count for practical support in matters of food and security.[20]

Muḥammad ʿAlī admired the efficiency of the French army that he witnessed during their occupation of Egypt; especially when compared with the Ottoman and Mamlūk armies. He envisioned a large modern army and navy in the Middle East and Mediterranean based in Egypt; practically, an Egyptian empire.[21] To build his army, he started by simply sourcing skills and expertise mainly from France, and his force of 130,000 soldiers were recruited by force from Sudan and later from the Egyptian countryside.[22] Initially, Muḥammad ʿAlī maintained appearances as a servant of the Ottomans, sending troops on behalf of the Sultan to suppress anti-Ottoman uprisings in Greece and the Arabian Peninsula.[23] However, by the end of 1839, it became clear

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[20] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 7-8.

[21] Tignor, *Egypt*, 210-211.

[22] For more on the extreme lengths that Muḥammad ʿAlī went to in populating his army, see Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire", 206; Tignor, *Egypt*, 211. After conquering the Sudan, Muḥammad ʿAlī tried to forcefully recruit Sudanese soldiers, but most of the soldiers-to-be transferred to Egypt actually died on the way to Cairo. According to Ibrahim, Muḥammad ʿAlī raided the Nuba mountains every year to secure slaves for his army: "The Sudanese blacks … stubbornly resisted the *ghazwas* [sic], some even committing suicide to avoid enslavement. Some of those captured were lost en route while others perished by the hundreds in the Egyptian climate and from diseases." The black slave soldiers that were successfully recruited to the Egyptian army proved ineffective in Muḥammad ʿAlī's military exploits in Arabia and Morea; in 1863, the remaining black soldiers were sent to Mexico to support Napoleon III's effort in suppressing rebellions against the French invasion. Realising that a slave army was not feasible, Muḥammad ʿAlī turned his attention to the Egyptian countryside where likewise the peasants went as far as maiming themselves to avoid recruitment against their will; nevertheless, they proved to be better soldiers than he anticipated. For an in-depth exploration of Muḥammad ʿAlī's army see Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*.

[23] Tignor, *Egypt*, 211.

that the new governor of Egypt was a serious threat to the Ottoman empire.[24] When the Sultan refused to let Muḥammad ʿAlī rule Syria as compensation for his help in suppressing the nationalist uprising in Greece, an indignant Muḥammad ʿAlī led two campaigns on Syria between 1831 and 1841. At this point, the Sultan was not only seeking to restore Egypt to his direct rule, but more importantly he was aware of Muḥammad ʿAlī's ambitions of expansion.[25] The Oriental Crisis - as this war came to be known - ended with the Treaty of London in 1841.

The 1841 London Treaty terminated Muḥammad ʿAlī's plans for a new empire in the Middle East; however, to assuage Muḥammad ʿAlī, he was acknowledged as the hereditary Pāshā of Egypt which became a semi-independent region of the Ottoman empire. With the exception of Sudan, Muḥammad ʿAlī was forced to evacuate all the lands he occupied including Crete, Syria, and the Hejaz region and return them to the Ottomans. Most importantly, the treaty significantly reduced the size of the Egyptian army from a quarter of a million down to merely 18,000 soldiers; Egypt was no longer a threat to Constantinople.[26] Muḥammad ʿAlī ruled Egypt for approximately forty years and set in motion an immensely ambitious process of modernisation that radically changed all aspects of Egyptian society.

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[24] Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 66-70; Goldschmidt and Davidson, *A Concise History,* 163-165; Tignor, *Egypt*, 211; Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (London: Penguin Books, 1991; London: Penguin Books, 2003), chap. 3, Apple Books.

[25] Tignor, *Egypt*, 211-216; Mohammed Mustafa Badawi, "The Background," *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7.

[26] Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books.

Modernising Egypt

Muḥammad ʿAlī's pursuit of power propelled him to seek European knowledge and expertise to facilitate the education of his army. Immediately after consolidating his power in Egypt, Muḥammad ʿAlī focused on modernising the educational system. He opened eight military schools between 1816 and 1836 that were modelled on French military schools; indeed, even the music played by students during demonstrations were French military music. Muḥammad ʿAlī also opened several non-military schools which were staffed by European teachers from France, Italy, and later on England.[27] The expertise of these European teachers was not always of high quality, and particularly so in the medical sciences; nevertheless, they were paid handsomely. The lectures were delivered in French, and schools had to pay separately for interpreters to translate the lectures to Arabic or Turkish. [28] The learning experience was fraught with difficulties and left both students and teachers frustrated.

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[27] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963; London: Saqi Books, 2011), 46- 47; Tignor, *Egypt*, 214. These included a school of engineering (1816), a school of medicine (1827) which was the first modern medical school in the Middle East under the administration of French military doctor and Muḥammad ʿAlī's chief surgeon Antoine Barthelemy Clot Pāshā, a school of pharmacy (1829), a school of agriculture (1836), and finally and most importantly a school that served all previous schools: the school of translation (1836) under the administration of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī. Although not explicitly military in their focus, it is important to note that these schools were established mainly to support Muḥammad ʿAlī's modern army and imperial plans.

[28] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 48-49.

In his efforts to acquire modern ways of organisation, Muḥammad ʿAlī started sending mission to Europe "to see for themselves what was lacking in the country and what the Westerners had to give."[29] According to Heyworth-Dunne:

> "Muḥammad ʿAlī's greatest obstacle in his efforts to introduce reforms was the lack of qualified men especially in technical matters. There were no teachers or other kinds of professional men available in Egypt who could help [him] to establish factories, arsenals and other technical departments of to open schools where Western leaning could begin."[30]

The aim was to create a cultural force of capable translators and educators to facilitate the education of Muḥammad ʿAlī's army. These missions were sent exclusively to Italy at the beginning, and later more missions were sent to France, Austria and England.[31] Between 1809 and 1826, Muḥammad ʿAlī sent twenty-eight students to Europe to study printing, naval construction and engineering. In the following two decades – between 1826 and 1848 – more than 300 students went to Europe to study more subjects like military and naval sciences, industrial techniques, medicine, agriculture, chemistry, administration and law.[32] The military focus of these missions is clear by the fact that all the educational missions sent to Europe were under the administration of *Dīwān al-Jihādīyah* [Department of War] until 1837 when *Dīwān al-Madāris* [Department of Education] was created.[33] To what extent these missions

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[29] John Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Education in Egypt* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 104- 105.

[30] Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction*, 104- 105.

[31] Tignor, *Egypt*, 212.

[32] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 49-50.

[33] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 10.

were really 'Egyptian' is debateable since the students came mostly from Muḥammad ʿAlī's family and other elite Turkish families in Cairo.[34]

The students were sent to acquire modern European knowledge and then return to serve in new capacities needed by the modern state, but also during their mission they were expected to translate large amounts of material – textbooks, lecture notes etc. – to Arabic and Turkish for educational use back home.[35] Muḥammad ʿAlī made unreasonable demands on the students, and letters of reproach were sent to those who failed to fulfil these demands. One letter ordered that "[the student] is to be reminded of the order given to him to send the geography books which he is translating … volume by volume." In an 1833 letter, Muḥammad ʿAlī ordered his French chief surgeon Antoine Clot Pāshā who was in Paris at the time to "force the medical students to translate the books which they use as they go along and send translations to Egypt".[36] The main goal of translation was practical, and the choice of texts to be translated was decided by the educational needs of Muḥammad ʿAlī 's army.

The role of translation in the transfer of knowledge and expertise from European languages to Arabic and Turkish was far from a straightforward process. The nineteenth century translation movement in Egypt went through several stages

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[34] Daniel L. Newman, "The 'Egyptian' Mission to Europe," in *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi Book, 2004), 27.

[35] Tignor, *Egypt*, 212.

[36] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 53.

according to Ibrahim Abu-Lughod.[37] The first stage consisted of oral interpretation rather than actual translations of texts; it was random and took place for the most part in official settings. The second stage starting from 1826 was a period of active but flawed and haphazard translations; these translations were mainly of educational materials and textbooks for military schools. The third stage started in the mid 1830s when the first Egyptian mission to France came back. The process became organised, systematic and the range of topics translated expanded beyond technical texts for military education.[38]

Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801-1873) - a mission graduate from France – was appointed as head of the new School of Languages; the school opened in 1835 to prepare efficient capable translators in different European languages who could produce high quality Arabic and Turkish translations to be printed in Muḥammad ʿAlī's modern printing press in Cairo's Būlāq to be available to the Egyptians in Arabic.39 It was the first time that translation activity was centralised in this manner under the administration of the school and its affiliated Qalam al-Tarjama [Bureau of Translation]. Students, teaching staff, and competent translators from other governmental bodies all were commissioned with translation work under the aegis of the school.[40] The quality of translation, the number of skilled translators, and the output were impressively high; this period ended with Muḥammad ʿAlī's death giving

[37] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 45-59.

[38] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 55-56; Tignor, *Egypt*, 213.

[39] Tignor, *Egypt*, 213; Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction*, 150.

[40] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 55.

way to a period of official disinterest in translation up to the era of Khedive ʾIsmāʿīl who started a second translation boom. By then, even those who did not travel to Europe were capable of consuming European books and culture either through translation or due to the prevalence of foreign language education in Egypt.[41]

The educational missions to Europe and the growing translation movement facilitated the establishment of a modern educational system in Egypt. The main aim of this system was to produce capable workers for Muḥammad ʿAlī's growing bureaucracy. However, the new education faced a social challenge because it was secular and heavily based on Western models. It was not easy to convince Egyptians to send their children to these modern schools instead of the traditional religious *madrasa* system they were familiar with. Regardless, Muḥammad ʿAlī actively enforced this alien education on the Egyptians beginning from 1816 to create the bureaucrats his government needed.[42] In order to overcome this social indifference, Muḥammad ʿAlī used financial incentives: students were paid monthly allowances, provided with clothes, and offered free lodgings when they progressed to higher levels.[43] The ultimate incentive, however, was the upward social mobility this modern education allowed to previously marginalised groups; Egyptians quickly recognised that this form of education offered "the potential opportunity of joining the new

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[41] For the role of educational missions in facilitating cross-cultural exchange between Egypt and Europe, see Hilary Kalmbach, "Training Teachers How to Teach: Transnational Exchange and the Introduction of Social-Scientific Pedagogy," in *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance*, ed. Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 87-116.

[42] Badawi, "The Background," 7.

[43] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 50.

Egyptian bureaucracy which was gradually emerging and which offered respectable income and status". [44] This will later give rise to a new generation of modern Westernised Egyptians who were conscious of themselves as a people, and who challenged the rule of both the British occupation as well as Turkish elite in Egypt.

Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, there was increasing intercultural interaction between Egypt and Europe. Although the missions started as an exclusively official system, by the 1880s well-off families started to send their children who were not selected by the government to Europe; this movement of Egyptians to Europe and back home also created a class of educated Egyptians who can interact with foreigners and foreign intellectual ideas in Egypt. To quote Hilary Kalmbach: "Foreign language instruction not only facilitated study abroad, but also enabled Egyptians to engage with imported books and foreigners living in Egypt."[45] Modern schools taught foreign languages while translators, educators and bureaucrat who returned from Europe translated European texts; thus, Europe was made even more accessible for the next generation of Egyptians.

Muḥammad ʿAlī's immediate concern was the military and economic success of his new modern state. He was interested in the welfare of the Egyptian population only to the extent that they were valuable contributors to his imperial project. Indeed, most of his 'reform' caused great suffering for the Egyptian masses. All three intellectuals covered in the coming chapters had first-hand experiences with the

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[44] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 51.

[45] Hilary Kalmbach, "Training Teachers," 90.

negative consequences of ʿAlī's aggressive modernisation. Al-Ṭahṭāwī's family became destitute and was reduced to travelling from village to village when Muḥammad ʿAlī abolished the ʾiltizām tax-farm system. ʿAbduh was born on the road while his family was roaming upper Egypt like many peasants who abandoned their villages to escape the heavy taxes demanded by the modern state.[46] Al-Nadīm was born in Alexandria, but his father was one of eight-thousand peasant boys that Muḥammad ʿAlī extracted from the Egyptian countryside to build his navy fleet after the completion of Alexandria's dockyard.[47] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was loyal to the ruling house of Muḥammad ʿAlī and became a valued member of the modern bureaucracy despite his Egyptian background. However, even he suffered humiliation and was exiled to Sudan with other Egyptian scholars after the death of his benefactor Muḥammad ʿAlī. ʿAbduh and al-Nadīm criticised the legacy of Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors in Egypt as the root cause of humiliation, decadence, and ultimately foreign occupation.[48] They were not completely mistaken. Egypt's pursuit of European knowledge and military technology slowed down after Muḥammad ʿAlī's death, but the cultural and political presence of Europe continued to grow as Muḥammad ʿAlī's

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[46] For more on the conditions of rural Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Kenneth Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants: Land, Society, and economy in Lower Egypt, 1740-1585*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[47] ʿAlī Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Khaṭīb Al-Waṭanīyah* (Cairo: Al-Muʾasasa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma, 1960), 13. ʾ

[48] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾAthār Muḥammad ʿAlī fī Maṣr," *Al-Manār*, June 1902; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:851-858. Adnan Hussein Rashid, "The Press and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement in the Nineteenth Century with Particular Emphasis on the Role of al-Nadim" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 1987), 147.

successors embroiled the country in disastrous debts accumulation that ended with the British occupation.

Egypt after Muḥammad ʿAlī

Muḥammad ʿAlī 's successors found themselves dealing with the legacy of their father and the challenges it brought for Egypt. According to the 1841 London Treaty, Muḥammad ʿAlī was to be succeeded by his eldest male descendent; his first successor was his son ʾIbrāhīm who in 1847 became regent Pāshā when the seventy-eight-year-old Muḥammad ʿAlī's health and intellect deteriorated. Following the death of ʾIbrāhīm, Muḥammad ʿAlī's grandson ʿAbbās became the regent Pāshā until his grandfather's death.

ʿAbbās I was a reactionary Ottomanist who resented his grandfather, and what he perceived as subservience to Europeans in the late *Wālī* of Egypt.[49] ʿAbbās I worked directly in the opposite direction of his grandfather: "[he] dismantled all the industries founded by Muḥammad ʿAlī, closed down all the schools he established, disbanded the Egyptian army, disposed of the Egyptian navy, discontinued the only newspaper in the country, and opposed the digging of Suez".[50] He practically undid everything that his grandfather achieved both the good and the bad.[51] In addition to

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[49] Pierre Crabites, *Ismail: The Maligned Khedive* (New York: Routledge, 1933; New York: Routledge, 2018), chap. 1, Kindle. Crabites quoted ʿAbbās who often declared that "My grandfather thought himself an autocrat. He was one to his subjects and to his children: but to the consuls of Europe he was no more than a shoe. If I, too, must submit to someone, let me be then the servant of the Caliph, and not of the Christian whom I hate".

[50] Louis Awad, *The Literature of Ideas in Egypt, Part I* (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1986), 28.

[51] ʿAbd Al-Raḥmān Al-Rāfiʿī, *ʾAsr ʾIsmāʿīl* (Cairo: Dār Al-Maʿārif, 1932), 1: 15-16.

shutting down secular schools, ʿAbbās also rejected all the European influence that his grandfather and uncle allowed in the management of Egypt; he dismissed all the foreign advisers appointed in the Egyptian government, refused to give any concessions to Europeans or allow them to have authority in Egypt in any form.[52] This defensive stance when it comes to Egypt, however, should not be confused with an Egyptian patriotism.

ʿAbbās did not speak Arabic preferring to use Turkish instead; neither he nor his successor Muḥammad Saʿīd were interested in strengthening the Egyptian army left weakened after the Treaty of London.[53] The Treaty included a clause stating that appointments to senior positions in the Egyptian army must be approved by the Ottomans in Istanbul; under ʿAbbās , this translated to even more power for the Turco-Circassian elite over the Egyptians.[54] Whereas Muḥammad ʿAlī was willing to allow Egyptians into the army, ʿAbbās upon his coming to the throne dismissed all Arab elements and made the Egyptian army "a purely Turco-Circassian officer corps".[55] ʿAbbās I was indeed a reactionary who rejected modernisation and progress and maintained the social and cultural divide between Egyptians and Turkish elite; and yet, he was a welcome intermission for the peasant Egyptians because "he did not wage any wars, he did not build or dig canals and he did not constantly raise new

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[52] Al-Rāfiʿī, ʿAsr ʾIsmāʿīl, 1:27; Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books.

[53] Sonbol, *The New Mamluks*, 90, 216.

[54] Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books.

[55] Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians: The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt, 1878-82* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1981), 23, 65.

taxes".[56] ʿAbbās I remained the Pāshā of Egypt for five years until he was murdered in mysterious circumstances by two Albanian slaves in his palace. ʿAbbās was succeeded by his uncle Muḥammad Saʿīd, a Francophile who was nine years younger than the anti-European ʿAbbās.

The fourth son of Muḥammad ʿAlī, Saʿīd was educated in France and opened Egypt to French influence to subvert the strong Ottoman influence his predecessor ʿAbbās allowed in the governing of Egypt. Saʿīd initiated an extensive project of creating dams, railways, transportations and canals amongst other public facilities and infrastructure; however, the most pivotal event in his rule was the beginning of digging the Suez Canal, and signing the papers was one of the first things that he did upon becoming Khedive of Egypt.[57] Although he spoke of himself as an Egyptian, Saʿīd preferred to speak in French and Turkish.[58] He was apathetic to the wellbeing of Egyptians, but he wanted to civilise Egypt in order to make it a worthy partner of Europe.[59]

After the death of Saʿīd, Egypt was completely open to Europeans. The influx of European entrepreneurs to Egypt brought "the best and the worst elements of the

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[56] Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 37.

[57] Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books. The terms of the agreement were not in Egypt's favour; Egypt was to provide 20,000 unpaid corvée workers every year, pay any extra expenses when needed, and relinquish its lands on both sides of the canal. Moreover, Egypt had to buy all the remaining shares in the Suez Canal Company when half the shares were unsold.

[58] Sonbol, *The New Mamluks*, 216.

[59] Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 14.

European and Mediterranean worlds: bankers and usurers, idealists and adventurers, merchants and thieves - and the Egyptians lacked the experience to distinguish between them".[60] In addition to the Ottoman capitulations for foreigners who were not required to pay taxes, Europeans were able to claim compensation for all sorts of excuses; Saʿīd reportedly once asked a servant to close the window while having a conversation with a European businessman noting that: "If this gentleman catches cold, it will cost me 10,000 pounds".[61] Saʿīd's permissive attitude contributed to the growing size and commercial influence of European and foreign communities in general in Egypt. He set a dangerous precedent when he started borrowing from European banks in 1862 in order to pay for the expensive costs of digging the Suez Canal. Saʿīd died after a long illness in 1863 and his successor was his nephew ʾIsmāʿīl.

The Westernised ʾIsmāʿīl who preferred speaking in French over both Arabic and Turkish was concerned with aspects of modernity that did not necessarily serve the Egyptians in their day to day lives. ʾIsmāʿīl was the son of Muḥammad ʿAlī's eldest son and the military leader of the Egyptian army ʾIbrāhīm Pāshā who gave his son a well-rounded education. ʾIsmāʿīl learned Arabic and Persian at a young age in addition to his native language Turkish; later on, ʾIsmāʿīl was sent to Vienna and Paris with the Egyptian educational missions to study the modern sciences.[62] In the next fifteen years, the young and ambitious ʾIsmāʿīl continued what Saʿīd began and

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[60] Rashid, "The Press," 18.

[61] As quoted in Rashid, "The Press," 19.

[62] Al-Rāfiʿī, *ʿAsr ʾIsmāʿīl*, 1:74.

reversed much of the decline done under ʿAbbās I. ʾIsmāʿīl believed that Egypt must

adopt the knowledge and culture of Europe in order to be on an equal footing and

achieve complete independence from the Ottoman Empire.[63] He wanted to create for

himself a modern royal image similar to European royalty:

> In addition to creating a new elite with a hierarchy of titles, honors, and
> rituals, Ismail was particularly interested in building palaces like the ones
> that European monarchs lived in. He paid personal attention to the details
> involved, whether it was a staircase, a window, or the quality of marble
> to be used, and seemed to favour Italian architects and Carrara marble.
> Ismail also undertook to modernize the center of Cairo (adding a new
> opera house), to beautify Alexandria, and to build the garden city of
> Ismailia. These activities helped to bankrupt him and to force him to sell
> his shares in the Suez Canal to England in 1873.[64]

All of this came at the price of the Egyptian population in general, and the unfortunate

peasantry in particular as he led his country to financial ruin. ʾIsmāʿīl continued to

take on large loans from European bankers to finance his mega projects to modernise

Egypt's infrastructure. He also allowed foreigners unrestricted ownership of lands,

and the financial privileges Europeans enjoyed meant that they dominated all

commercial activities to the detriment of everyone else.[65]

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[63] Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books. Towards this independence from
Constantinople, ʾIsmāʿīl obtained the Sultan's agreement to change his title from *Wālī*
(governor) to *Khedive* (viceroy) in 1867; more importantly, ʾIsmāʿīl also changed the
law of succession so that it favoured his immediate descendants rather than the eldest
surviving member of Muḥammad ʿAlī's house. Six years later in 1873, ʾIsmāʿīl
received an imperial rescript granting him the right to rule Egypt as a sovereign
independent ruler without answering to the Sultan in Constantinople.

[64] Sonbol, *The New Mamluks*, 105-106.

[65] Sonbol, *The New Mamluks*, 89-121. Amira Sonbol explores this reality in a full
chapter titled "Foreign Rule and Tujjar".

The Suez Canal was completed in 1869, and ʾIsmāʿīl celebrated by arranging a lavish party for the royalties of Europe when in reality the project has put unbearable pressure on the Egyptian economy. Britain was aware that the canal once completed will be a vital route to its colonies in the East and was determined to control it. In April 1876, Egypt became officially bankrupt and the Anglo-French dual control of Egypt started to limit ʾIsmāʿīl's extravagant spending and protect the interests of its bankers and bondholders. To appease the European Powers, ʾIsmāʿīl appointed European members to his government: a French minister of works, and a British minister of finances. This arrangement did not just annoy ʾIsmāʿīl, but it also angered the Egyptians who felt the humiliation of this foreign intervention further fuelling the already rising tensions in the Egyptian army.[66] The European powers did not trust ʾIsmāʿīl to manage the situation, and persuaded Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥāmīd to dethrone ʾIsmāʿīl in 1879 and his son Muḥammad Tawfīq Pāshā became the new khedive of Egypt.

The appointment of Tawfīq did not change the situation. The Egyptian society was divided into different disparate and sometimes competing elements.[67] Tawfīq found himself dealing not only with the financial disaster his father created, but also the civil unrest that his father's unrelenting taxes caused.[68] The Egyptians were

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[66] For more on the tension of that period, Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 177-188; Juan Ricardo Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's ʿUrabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[67] For an in-depth exploration of the structure of Egyptian society and how the European intervention practically destroyed the social and political situation, see Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptian*, 43-134.

[68] Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptian*, 258-292.

alienated by ʾIsmāʿīl's open favouritism for non-Egyptians whether Turks or Europeans.[69] The situation quickly escalated when an Egyptian army officer became the face of this movement. The growing discontent of Egyptians found a leader in Colonel ʾAḥmad ʿUrābī who became the face of the nationalist movement. In 1881, ʿUrābī led a group of Egyptian army officers demanding equal treatment with their Turkish and Circassian counterparts. Colonel ʿUrābī was the son of a peasant from Lower Egypt and the commander of the Fourth Regiment in the Egyptian army.

This movement was not completely ethnically oriented. In fact, the very slogan of 'Egypt for the Egyptians' was coined by the Egyptian Jewish nationalist Yaʿqub Sanūʿ. The movement was inclusive and focused on the right of all those born in Egypt including Egyptian-born Turks who did not enjoy the same privileges of the Turkish elite. To quote Robert L. Tignor,

> 'Egypt for the Egyptians' tended to mean Egypt for the *Egyptian Arabs*, since a large portion of the ruling aristocracy were of Turkish and other non-Egyptian origins. The nationalist position implied a program of social reform, for the desire of the nationalists was to limit the economic and political power of the old aristocracy. The nationalists wanted to open the bureaucracy and army more fully to Egyptians.[70]

Rather than a complete substitution or removal of the Turkish aristocracy, the slogan reflected the desire for increased participation of the Egyptians and equal opportunities for all parts of society with the Turco-Circassian ruling elite. Indeed, despite anti-Turkish sentiment, the movement still saw the Ottoman-Islamic

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[69] Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books.

[70] Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966),149-150; emphasis added.

alliance as coming over and above all alliances.[71] This spontaneous nationalist movement escalated into a military revolution led by ʿUrābī and the Egyptian army. Britain was following the events in Egypt and was worried that ʿUrābī will eventually take over Egypt if the situation is left to Tawfīq.[72] In 1882, Britain decided to intervene militarily to protect its financial interests in Egypt.

Following the occupation of Egypt, Britain kept appearances as Tawfīq remained   the official ruler of a supposedly sovereign Egypt; however, in reality Egypt was ruled by the British Consul Lord Cromer until 1907.[73] Cromer's high-handed policy focused primarily on paying Egypt's huge debts and thus more than half the revenues was dedicated to pay interests. He cut spending on public works and education; indeed, secondary and higher schooling was considered "not only dangerous but irrelevant for the proper development of subject peoples."[74] Cromer's decision was undoubtedly informed by his colonial experience in India where "nationalist feelings had emerged among the educated class.".[75] When Tawfīq died in

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[71] Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), 11.

[72] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 133.

[73] M. W. Daly, "The British Occupation, 1882-1922" in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 240-245. Sir Evelyn Baring, later known as Lord Cromer, was the British consul-general in Egypt between 1883 and 1907. Cromer controlled Egypt's administration and financial situation strictly through his direct control of the Khedive.

[74] Daly, "The British Occupation," 243; Ehud R. Toledano, "Social and Economic Change in the 'Long Nineteenth Century,'" in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 279; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 52.

[75] Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 91.

1892, his 17-year-old son ʿAbbās II was summoned from Europe where he was studying to ascend the throne of Egypt. The teenage ruler sympathised with the nationalist sentiment and tried to undermine the British colonial authority.

After ten years of foreign occupation, Egypt and the Egyptians were seething quietly with a frustrated nationalism. They saw in ʿAbbās II a saviour that will restore their dignity and self-respect. He toured the country and assured his subjects that he did not approve of his father's acquiescence to the British. ʿAbbās II knew that the Egyptians resented his father's lack of firmness in dealing with British influence, so he promised that he was not going to become a tool in the hands of Lord Cromer.[76] Towards this end, ʿAbbās enlisted the help of the Ottoman Turks and the French to undermine the British, but he also realised that the Egyptians were his best and only allies in this goal.[77] The Egyptians themselves were starting to organise their demands into political programs; by late 1907, three parties emerged on the political scene in Egypt that played a major role well into the First World War.[78]

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[76] Rashid, "The Press," 184-185.

[77] Abbas Kelidar, "The political press in Egypt, 1882-1914" in *Contemporary Egypt through Egyptian eyes: Essays in honour of Professor P.J. Vatikotis*, ed. Charles Tripp (London: Routledge, 1992), 10.

[78] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 58-69. According to Ahmed, this sudden formation of organized political partied was the result of years of fermenting political ideas. In particular, Ahmed points to five factors that contributed to this rapid evolution of political activity: the popularity of Pan-Islamism, the Disnhawai incident, economic and security crises, the Russian - Japanese war, and the growing anti-foreign sentiments in Egypt.

The first political party to form of these three was Ḥizb Al-ʾUmmah [The Nation's Party] followed by Al-Ḥizb Al-Waṭanī [The Nationalist Party], and then Ḥizb Al-ʾIslāḥ Al-Dusturī [The Constitutional Reform Party]. The latter of these represented for the most part the interests of the khedival court.[79] *Al-Mu'ayyad* under the editorial of ʿAlī Yūsuf presented the views of "the rulers and the ruled, one to the other."[80] The program of Al-ʾIslāḥ was close to that of the *Waṭanī* as both demanded the evacuation of the British from Egypt.[81] The Waṭanī was the most popular political party under the leadership of the young nationalist Muṣṭafa Kāmil who represented "the aspirations of Egypt's professional classes."[82] The Waṭanī was popular with the masses, and in particular the students in Egypt; *Al-Liwāʾ* journal – published in English and French in addition to Arabic – enjoyed a great influence amongst the Egyptians.[83] Following the premature death of Kāmil at the age of thirty-three, the party deferred to a more aggressive form of Pan-Islamism. This shift increased the populist appeal of the party but alienated a more elite group who deemed this shift as radical and irresponsible.[84]

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[79] Tignor, *Modernization*, 305.

[80] Rashid, "The Press," 171.

[81] Tignor, *Modernization*, 287.

[82] Tignor, *Modernization*, 305.

[83] Rashid, "The Press," 211.

[84] Tignor, *Modernization*, 305. For more on the Nationalist Party, see Ahmed, *Intellectual* Origins, 76-78.

Both the Waṭanī and the ʾIslāḥ parties demanded nothing less than the immediate evacuation of the British from Egypt. Cromer was aware of the dormant revolutionary nationalism in Egypt, and he was not willing to allow the young ʿAbbās to become the face of this challenge of British authority of Egypt. [85] Cromer, moreover, was also aware of the weakness of this new resurgence of nationalist sentiment. The new nationalist leaders were Westernised Egyptians who tried to reconcile calls for an independent Egypt with a fervent Pro-Ottoman loyalty. They were part of an emerging middle class that had little in common with the needs and misery of average Egyptians; nevertheless, they created "the illusion of consensus and unity around their corporate interest and political visions through representations of other marginal groups— specifically the peasants".[86] In an attempt to challenge the problematic branch of the nationalist movement represented by the Waṭanī and ʾIslāḥ, Lord Cromer encouraged another group of nationalists. The ʾUmmah party was formed a few months after *Al-Jarīdah* journal was established by the disciples of the late Muḥammad ʿAbduh. The party and its journal represented what appeared to be a moderate position in public debates between Egyptians on various issues. The editor of *Al-Jarīdah* was ʾAḥmad Luṭfī Al-Sayyid who was accused along with his associates of being apologists for the British occupation of Egypt; an accusation that their mentor Muḥammad ʿAbduh was accused of before.[87]

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[85] Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt*, 50-51.

[86] Michael Ezekiel Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.

[87] See for example Ahmed's chapter titled "Islamic Liberalism" in *Intellectual Origins*, 35- 43.

The ʾUmmah party "was not averse to cooperating with the British and viewed them as preparing Egypt for its ultimate political independence." [88] However, in reality, this group of men were not any less patriotic than the other two parties; but they believed in the necessity of gradual change and uplifting the people of the countryside to raise to the task of independence. Their main aim was "the formation of the Egyptian personality and the creation of a distinctive character;" Moreover, they believed that "any progress attained or measure of independence achieved could not be of lasting value if it were not built on the foundation of the sense of unity, which Egypt needed above all else." [89] Naturally, the Waṭanī and ʾIslāḥ parties opposed this policy of gradualism as it was indistinguishable from co-operation with the British occupation. Compared with the ʾUmmah, the Waṭanī party led by Muṣṭafa Kāmil was deemed "too radical", while the ʾIslāḥ party and supporters of Khedive ʿAbbās II were "too confrontational with the British." [90] It was natural that the British and Cromer in particular decided to encourage the ʾUmmah who were more than willing to collaborate with the British in the preparation of Egypt for political independence.

The ʾUmmah party enjoyed some popularity, but it was far less than the popularity of the Waṭanī and ʾIslāḥ parties. After all, the ʾUmmah represented mainly the interests of the wealthy land-owning classes of Egypt who preferred a more moderate program reform and a gradual process of decolonisation to avoid

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[88] Tignor, *Egypt*, 242.

[89] Ahmed, *Intellectual* Origins, 69-70.

[90] Tignor, *Egypt*, 242.

destabilising the country.[91] Rather than demanding immediate British evacuation, they were willing to cooperate with the British in "liberalising the administration and granting Egypt a greater amount of self-government."[92] Ultimately, the party's close and friendly relations with the British authority in Egypt raised suspicions.[93] Although Cromer did not believe that Egypt is "capable of suddenly springing into a position which will enable it to exercise full rights of autonomy"; he nevertheless believed that the ʾUmmah group must be encouraged because they are "the natural allies of the European reformer."[94] Eventually, the ʾUmmah party itself became disillusioned with Cromer.[95] With the retirement of Cromer in 1907, the nationalist movement and the pro-Ottoman khedive continued to gather momentum.

ʿAbbās II was touring Europe in 1914 when Egypt was declared a protectorate of the British Empire; he was deposed as Khedive, and his elderly pro-British uncle Hussain Kamal was appointed by the British. Egypt was no longer a region of the Ottoman empire. The Turkish title *Khedive* was discarded, and Kamal was given the new title of *Sultan* to avoid using the title king which would make him an equal of his suzerain King George.[96] The nationalist demands continued throughout the first half

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[91] Tignor, *Modernization*, 305.

[92] Tignor, *Modernization*, 286.

[93] Ahmed, *Intellectual* Origins, 70.

[94] Lord Cromer Qtd. in Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 71-72.

[95] For more on the Umma Party, see Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 69-76.

[96] Mansfield, *A History*, chap. 3, Apple Books.

of the twentieth century.[97] The protectorate was eventually abolished, and Egypt gained self-governance in 1922. However, this partial victory was limited by what came to be known as the four "Reserved Points". The British government remained in charge of the security of imperial communication, the defence of Egypt against any aggression, the protection of foreign interests and minorities in Egypt, and the administration of the Sudan. This meant that British control of Egypt remained in one way or another until the 1950s; nevertheless, the 1922 declaration was an achievement worthy of celebration for the Egyptians.[98]

This political history had its effects on the socio-cultural structure of Egyptian society. During the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī, Egypt was opened to the world but Muḥammad ʿAlī maintained his financial monopoly of the Egyptian market which meant he did not need to resort to borrowing from European bankers. But successive governments – particularly under Saʿīd and ʾIsmāʿīl– went to extreme lengths to carry out its modernisation plans by taking on loans from European bankers, opening Egyptian markets to European investments that were exempt from taxes, and raising the tax on the impoverished masses. These aggressive modernisation efforts created a new cultural class of the minority of Egyptians who were privileged enough to have access to modern education; they came to be known as the *ʾAfandīyah*, and they played a central role in the struggle for political independence and social reform.

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[97] Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 193-204.

[98] Daly, "The British Occupation," 250-251.

The Press and the Rise of the ʾ*Afandīyah*

Egyptian literary historian ʿAlī Al-Ḥadīdī argues that it is erroneous to describe Muḥammad ʿAlī's achievement as a cultural renaissance, but rather it can accurately be called a military renaissance that used culture. [99] If Muḥammad ʿAlī created a cultural revolution, then it was a private cultural revolution. The majority of the country still had access only to the traditional *kuttāb* which remained the foundation of popular education. [100] Lucie Ryzova differentiates between two types of modernities: the top-down modernity of the ruling class focused on technology and techniques, and the bottom-up modernity of the ʾ*Afandīyah* – social agents focused on transforming social and cultural values and practices. [101] This Egyptian middle class emerged slowly within a particular context of social and cultural duality in Egypt. By the end of the 19th century, this class was acutely conscious of its marginalisation by both the Turco-Circassian and European elite. Journalism and the press in general were an essential vehicle for intellectual debate, public education, and the crafting of a national identity by this new cultural elite rising from the bottom.

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[99] Al-Ḥadīdī, `*Abd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 16-17.

[100] For the evolution of the Islamic *madrasa* or *kuttab*, see Jonathan P. Berkey's "Madrasa" in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering, Patricia Crone, Wadad Kadi, Devin J. Stewart, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, and Mahan Mirza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 320-322.

[101] Lucie Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity through the 'New Effendiya': Social and Cultural Constructions of the Middle Class in Egypt under the Monarchy," in *Re-envisioning Egypt: 1919–1952*, ed. Arthur Goldschmidt and Amy Johnson, 124–63 (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 126.

The cultural revolution that Muḥammad ʿAlī initiated along with his military expansion remained for the most part a privilege for a select few; students were chosen from specific families and their future trajectories were decided for them without considering the interests or abilities of individual students.[102] This was a normal aspect of the dual nature of society and culture in Egypt. Since the 16th century, Egypt was ruled by wave after wave of foreign elite starting with the Mamluks, the Ottomans, and finally the Europeans; this elite class always distanced itself culturally and socially from the Egyptians. By the 19th century, the deep chasm between the elites and the masses was further institutionalised by culture and social life.[103]

Throughout the 19th century, the Egyptians integrated slowly into the bureaucracy dominated by the Turkish ruling elite and their European administrators under Muḥammad ʿAlī. Yet, the division between the *dhāwāt* [elite] and the *Fallāḥīn* [peasant farmers] remained strongly marked.[104] The Muslim Turco-Circassian ruling class became more and more Egyptianised and Arabised through intermarriage, but they remained completely in charge of the bureaucracy, wealth, and land ownership.[105] They were separated from the masses by the foreign culture and language they adopted as a marker of their elitism: Turkish and European for the elite while both Muslim and Christian Coptic Egyptian masses maintained their Arabic

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[102] Al-Ḥadīdī, `*Abd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 16-17.

[103] Ehud R. Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 155-180; Sonbol, *The New Mamluks*, 56-88.

[104] Alexander Scholch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 41.

[105] Alexander Scholch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 26.

Egyptian culture.[106] Israel Altman notes that despite the slow change in the ethnic makeup of Egyptian government through the 1830s, the ethno-cultural structure of Egyptian life under Muḥammad ʿAlī was not radically altered:

> The high positions of the military and the bureaucracy were the exclusive domain of Turco-Circassians whom he [Muḥammad ʿAlī] brought to Egypt. Only the lower administrative positions were originally open to native Egyptians, both Arabs and Egyptian-born Turco-Circassians. There was not much in common between the members of the Turco-Circassian military and bureaucratic elite, who were Turkish speaking, and the Arabic speaking Egyptians who were considered by the Turco-Circassians as their inferiors.[107]

In reality, Egyptians were denied influential positions in military and government, and few Arab Egyptians or Egyptian-born Turks became part of higher government and bureaucracy. Alexander Schölch notes that "ethnic origin was a decisive determinant of the composition of the ruling class"; therefore, opportunities like the trade of produce and the like were almost exclusively in the hands of Levantine and European traders who completely controlled the import market.[108] Within this context of stark social disparity, educated Egyptians utilised the press to educate their fellow Egyptians of this reality and encourage social and cultural reform.

The beginning of the modern print press in Egypt can be traced back to the French occupation when Napoleon used an Arabic printing press brought from Paris to communicate his political aims to the Egyptians. [109] But the first Egyptian

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[106] Toledano, *State and Society*, 16-17, 157-158.

[107] Israel Altman, "The Political Thought of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ aṭ-Ṭahṭāwīm A Nineteenth Century Egyptian Reformer" (PhD diss., University of California, 1976), 5-6.

[108] Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptian*, 9.

[109] Ibrāhīm ʿAbdū, *Tārīkh Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyah, 1828-1942* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Al-Mutawakkil, 1942), 17-25.

newspaper was the official gazette *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya* that Muḥammad ʿAlī started in 1828. The content of this newspaper was restricted to dry government reports and statistic targeting the employees of within Muḥammad ʿAlī's growing bureaucracy; the newspaper had little cultural or social content.[110] This was the only Egyptian newspaper until the early 1860s when ʾIsmāʿīl succeeded his uncle Saʿīd. But the papers that were published under ʾIsmāʿīl could exist only because they conformed to the political direction of ʾIsmāʿīl in their choice of themes and focused on topics like civilisation, progress, and most importantly the 'European danger' in the East.[111] Indeed, until 1876, Egypt did not have "a political Arabic press with any measure of independence."[112]

As mentioned in the previous section, Egypt became officially bankrupt in 1876. An indirect result of this event and the subsequent Anglo-French control of Egypt was the unprecedented promotion of freedom of expression that "contrasted so sharply with the restrictions throughout the rest of the Ottoman Empire".[113] Journalists could report freely on the political scene: "By exposing past maladministration and praising reforms to be implemented, they [journalists] could count on the support of [the European administrators]. And if they criticised the new regime, the European intervention, and the rapidly mounting number of European officials in Egypt, Ismail

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[110] Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 30.

[111] Schölch, Egypt for the Egyptians, 110

[112] Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 108

[113] Tignor, *Modernization & British Egypt*, 256.

was certain to approve."[114] By the end of ʾIsmāʿīl's reign, Egypt had thriving printing scene with eleven Arabic and colloquial Egyptian newspapers in addition to sixteen published in European languages. The growth continued in the 1890s and well into the first two decades of the twentieth century as the published periodicals surpassed 450. More importantly, these privately-owned journals and newspapers published various materials ranging from the purely entertaining to the highly literary and cultural.[115]

The emergence of the popular press created a new space in which almost anyone can voice an opinion. However, the journalists and writers of this new space were predominantly from the educated urban middle class – ie. the *ʾAfandīyah*. Indeed, as Lucie Ryzova notes: "The articulation of efendi subjectivity was inseparable from the appearance of new cultural forms, especially the press and publishing, which served to spread this worldview and cause it to dominate what simultaneously emerged through these venues as a national public sphere."[116] The rising *ʾAfandīyah* utilised journalism and the printing press as a vehicle for intellectual debate and the ultimate tool of public education; the goal for them was to elevate their fellow Egyptians.

Within this rising reformist discourse, the peasantry became an embodiment of the stagnation crisis in Egypt, and they had to be reformed if Egypt is to ever become a

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[114] Schölch, Egypt for the Egyptians, 110

[115] It is worth noting that most of these periodicals rarely lasted more than a few issues before eventually closing for financial or political causes. Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 30-31.

[116] Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21.

civilized nation.[117] By the end of the 1890s, Egyptian journalists and columnists believed that they were speaking directly to the Egyptian public, and more importantly, they were representative for "the collective will of the umma, *milla*, watan, or bilad [sic]."[118] However, that did not mean that journalism and the print culture was an institution that completely excluded other classes; as Fahmy notes, "increasingly the growing student and working classes participated in reading, listening, and resounding to the discourses of the Arabic press and especially the more accessible colloquial journals."[119] Their influence continued to grow, so that by the 1930s-40s, A neo-ʾAfandīyah had emerged; rather than representing an economic middle-class, this group comprised of an educated urban young men who came from more modest backgrounds.[120] Thus, the evolution of the press as an essential tool of public transformation was intimately linked to the parallel evolution of the ʾAfandīyah as a social group.

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[117] Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 7-8.

[118] Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 139.

[119] Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 90

[120] Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity," 124-125.

This social class became the topic of a growing body of research in recent years.[121]
The title ʾAfandī (pl. ʾAfandīyah) was linked to social status gained through receiving
formal and/or Western education. The ʾAfandīyah included university students,
lawyers, journalists, doctors, and lower to mid-level government bureaucrats. They
dressed in Western clothing, spoke European languages, and embraced European
lifestyle, and despite their small numbers in comparison with the society at large, they
played a major role in Egypt's political and social life.[122] The rise of this class was a
by-product of Muḥammad ʿAlī's wider modernisation efforts and the social
transformations it triggered. Starting from the 1830s, relative upward social mobility
became possible for those who received modern Western education regardless of
background. This modernised urban social group emerged out of the rural and
traditional middle class and started to produce their own ideas about what an Egyptian
modernity can be.[123] Most importantly, these educated Egyptians resented the
preferential treatment of foreigners in Egypt, and particularly the employment of

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[121] An early example is Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Lonon: L. B. Tauris, 1988). More recent scholarship includes: Lucie Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity through the 'New Effendiya': Social and Cultural Constructions of the Middle Class in Egypt under the Monarchy," *Re-Envisioning Egypt, 1919-1952*, ed. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J Johnson, and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005); Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt, 1870–1940* (London: Duke University Press, 2011).

[122] Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*,10.

[123] For a discussion of the factors behind the emergence of the ʾAfandīyah in the early 20th century in relation to child rearing and class identity, see Heidi Morrison, *Childhood and Colonial Modernity in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 69-75.

Europeans in the Egyptian government which increased even more after the British occupation.

The West was always present in the ʾAfandīyah-led reformist discourse. Heidi Morrison notes that "the growth of the effendiya arose out of a reaction to European attitudes about Egyptian inferiority. Imagining oneself as comparable to a European was equated with joining the ranks of the middle class".[124] The West was the model, but it was also the adversary in colonial Egypt. Indeed, the West – or rather knowledge of European knowledge and culture – was an essential element in what distinguished the ʾAfandī from his fellow Egyptians and enabled him to appoint himself as reformer of the community: "The masculine civilized urbanite … battles to reform Egyptian society in the face of the turgid apathy born of fallah ignorance. Likewise, the civilized urbanite must struggle to overcome the wealthy's torpid indifference to societal ills that is a symptom of their singular pursuit of self-interest."[125] This impulse to reform and educate was usually expressed within a larger discourse that highlighted the conflict between East and West as we shall see in the coming chapters.

This discourse of reform centred around an East-West divide, but that did not mean that it was necessarily anti-Western. An excellent representative of pro-Westernism – or what El-Enany described as a recognition of the merits of the West[126] – is ʾAḥmad Fatḥi Zaghlūl. Zaghlūl was an Egyptian translator, political respected intellectual and the younger brother of famous Egyptian leader Saʿad Zaghlūl. In

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[124] Heidi Morrison, *Childhood and Colonial Modernity*, 69.

[125] Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 100

[126] Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 15.

1899, Zaghlūl published his translation of Edmond Demolins' *À Quoi Tient La Supériorité Des Anglo-Saxons?* under the title of *Sirr Taqaddum Al-inklīz Al-saksūniyyin*. The text generated great interest in the Ottoman Empire and was particularly popularity in British-Occupied Egypt where it was the subject of intense debate.[127] In the preface to his translation, Zaghlūl writes:

> We are weak compared to the nations of the West; weak in agriculture, in industry, commerce, and science; in will and determination. Even our personal relations lack warmth and intimacy. There is no chivalry (*nakhwa*) among us any longer. Religious solidarity has gone and so have racial bonds. Our feet are too feeble for us to stand on our rights or do our duty. We are unable to preserve our own and less able to acquire anything new. We are so weak that we do nothing ourselves; we ask the government instead.[128]

Zaghlūl goes on to contrast the Egyptians' apathy and dependency with the British's individual enterprise, self-reliance and resilience.[129] The aim of translating this book was to show the Egyptians that the solution to their plight was to develop the character of the individual.[130] According to Demolins' book, the secret to the Anglo-Saxons' progress was their unique educational system; particularly, the emphasis it had on developing the pupil morally and physically.[131] Zaghlūl's translation was part of the

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[127] Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), 77; Marwa ElSharky, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 89-90.

[128] ʾAḥmad Fatḥi Zaghlūl, "Muqaddimat Al-Mutarjim," in *Sirr taqaddum al-inklīz al-saksūniyyin* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Taraqqi, 1899), 23-24.

[129] Zaghlūl, "Muqaddimat Al-Mutarjim," 20–30; ElSharky, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, 90.

[130] Zaghlūl, "Muqaddimat Al-Mutarjim," 20-30.

[131] Jacob, *Working Out Egypt*, 77; Kalmbach, "Training Teachers How to Teach," 108.

growing affinity in some Egyptian circles for the cultural and educational practices of Britain, and it led to what Jamal Mohammed Ahmed described as "a cult of British education".[132]

The ʾAfandīyah as a class of social agents were the successors of an earlier generations: Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm were not as secular or Westernised as the latter ʾAfandīs of the early 20th century, but they were indeed forerunners of this Egyptian cultural elite. This class was driven to reform their society and culture and believed that it was their responsibility to educate their fellow Egyptians and instil pride and honour in them without compromising the integrity of their identity as Egyptians. Within this context of rising nationalist cultural awareness, these three authors belonged to the early generation of cultural mediators between East and West in the nineteenth century and wanted to use European knowledge to change the Egyptian mind. Their reform discourse was Occidentalist in the sense that it was an attempt to contain the very same processes of Westernisation that they encouraged. This early cultural elite conceived of an Egyptian nation that shared an Egyptian language, Egyptian religions, and Egyptian social values and customs; there was an essence to being Egyptian, and the aim was to become modern without sabotaging this essence.

If Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors focused on the top-down modernity of machinery and technology, Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm were early contributors to a bottom-up modernity that focused on social, cultural, and educational

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[132] Kalmbach, "Training Teachers How to Teach," 108; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 46.

practices. They saw themselves as reformers and educators of their society. The healing of their society's decadence is to be found in making moral, virtuous and industrious individuals who pursue secular sciences, embrace technological advances, and exhibit efficiency and productivity. In Egyptianizing modernity, as Ryzova puts it, figures like Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm were constructing a new world view, a new identity, and a new consciousness; this was inevitably informed by the European Other, but they tried to ground this new modern identity in the traditional past.

Conclusion

Starting from the French occupation, the West became a constant role player in the social, political, and cultural processes of Egypt. When Muḥammad ʿAlī sought power, it was through the import of military and bureaucratic expertise and technology from Europe; his grandson ʾIsmāʿīl was equally interested in military power, but he wanted also to recreate European civilisation and material modernity in Egypt. This history is usually written as a narrative of development and progress. However, Egypt was undergoing a coercive top-down modernisation. Instead of civilising and reforming the country and its people, these surface level modernisation efforts facilitated the exploitation of peasant Egyptians by the Turkish elite as well as the Europeans; ultimately, it led to political and military control of Egypt. It was from this socio-political context that a new generation of Egyptians emerged who embraced modernity while at the same time demanding social justice and national self-determination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As social reformers and cultural negotiators between East and West, figures like Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and

Al-Nadīm are the precursors of this generation, and their writings inspired a generation of Egyptians to conceive of Egypt as an Eastern nation.

This is the context within which to understand the authors' representations of the West. Arab Occidentalism reveals the cultural anxiety over what it means to be authentically Arab in a modern age where Arabs are no longer at the centre stage of history. Rather than the aggressive material modernisation that Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors sought, these early precursors of the ʾAfandīyah wanted to carry out an intellectual modernisation and reform to assert an Arab Muslim identity. They did not conceive of modernity as an opposite of tradition, and they tried to create an Egyptian or Muslim modernity that derived from the classical Arab past as much as it did from Europe's modern knowledge. The next chapter will review the literature on the Nahḍa in relation to Orientalism and Occidentalist representations of the East vs West.

Chapter 2: The Naḥḍa, Arabs and the Western Other

> I've often asked myself what we mean by the word Naḥḍa. Do we mean that we were not paying attention, but now we've woken up? Or were we flat on our back and now we've stood up? Or that we were walking at the back of the procession of life, whereas now we're in the middle or even close to the front? As we take one step at a time, how are we to know whether we're moving forwards or backwards, or just staying where we are?

> - Mīkhāʾīl Nuʿayma[1]

> For, have we not shown that the sublime idea of the 'brotherhood of man' is innate and original to the 'primordial Arab mind', while Hobbes' base idea of 'the war of all against all' is innate and original to the 'primordial European mind'?

> - Sādiq Jalāl Al-ʿAzm[2]

> If Orientalism is a style of evaluation, then the hallmark of this style is its dual function as both a descriptive and a performative discourse.

> - David Fieni[3]

The West was always present in the consciousness of Arab intellectuals during the Naḥḍa. If the Naḥḍa was indeed a process of Westernisation, then Occidentalism was the hidden component of this process. In this thesis, the main question is: to what extent did Arab Muslim authors characterise the West in specific ways, and what difference did that make to them and their cultural and social concerns? To begin with, it is necessary to touch on the problem of periodisation that was mentioned in the introduction. Dating the beginning of Arab modernity has been a contentious topic in

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[1] Mīkhāʾīl Nuʿayma Quoted in Roger Allen's edited volume *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography: 1850-1950* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 4.

[2] Sadik Jalal Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," *Extrait du Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières* (October 1980): 12.

[3] David Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms: Configuring the decay of colonial modernity in French and Arabic" (PhD diss., University of California, 2006), 6.

the last few decades between two main approaches. On the one hand, the Orientalist approach commemorates Napoleon's invasion of Egypt as the beginning of the modern period in a decadent and moribund region. On the other hand, the revisionist approach questions the uncritical acceptance of the meta-narrative of rise of the West as the main framework from which to approach the cultural history of the region arguing for local roots for modernity that preceded the arrival of Napoleon. From there, the chapter turns to the topic of Orientalism, and explores Occidentalism as a comparable discourse of creating the Western other with a focus on Arab Occidentalism. I relate this Occidentalism to a process of 'Traditionalisation' that Abdallah Laroui argued was a natural consequence of the cultural anxiety that the reality of foreign hegemony produced in the Arab Middle East. A comprehensive systematic literature review is beyond the scope of the current thesis. What I am undertaking here is an exploration of representative examples where Orientalist vantage points influenced the conceptualisation of the Naḥda and created a blind spot when it comes to authors, texts and ideas that do not fit the labels of 'modern', 'liberal' or 'Western-like'.

The Orientalist Approach to Middle Eastern History

The 'rise of the West and stagnation of the Orient' remains the main meta-narrative of any survey of the cultural history of the Middle East.[4] The issue of dating

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[4] For examples of studies that highlighted this meta-narrative, see Peter Gran, "Orientalism's Contribution to World History and Middle Eastern History 35 Years Later," in *Debating Orientalism*, ed. Ziad Elmarsafy, Anna Bernard and David Attwell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18-37; Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (June 2004), 73-94; Abdulrazzak Patel, *Arab Nahḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 12-35.

Arab modernity exposes the Orientalist underpinnings that still trouble the field of Arab cultural and literary studies; a field that is a descendant of the larger field of Area Studies.[5] This scholarship creates the type of contextualisation that will impede any possibility to see the Naḥḍa as more than mere Westernisation. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt becomes the starting date of the modern Middle East because without him, the region would have remained outside history. This is even though the 18th and 19th century witnessed several remarkable events in the Ottoman provinces in the Arab world that had more serious and long-lasting consequences for the region compared with three years of French occupation in Egypt:

> Yet in the eyes of historians from the mid-nineteenth century onward the [French] invasion [of Egypt] and its aftermath, seen as the momentous clash of two civilisations or even as the collision of two different ages, were accepted as a symbol of great change, an event heralding the arrival of the modern era. With Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and the chain of events that followed, it was suggested, centuries of decline, inertia, and neglect finally ended and the Middle East rose, albeit awkwardly, to meet the challenges of modernity.[6]

In other words, the West is given the role of saving and redeeming the whole region. As we will see later, the decline thesis that presumes an inherent and irrefutable decadence in Arab culture and society before Napoleon is an integral part of the discipline. Because of the diverse nature of scholarship on the region – ranging from culture and literature to political as well as social and economic history –, the following exploration of literature is essentially representative and illustrate the

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[5] For a discussion of the discursive similarities between 19th century Orientalism and 20th century Area Studies, see Biary Kolluoglu-Kirli, "From Orientalism to Area Studies," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2003).

[6] Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (June 2004): 77.

dominant view that the Arab Middle East was awakened by the transformative power of the West's arrival.

In *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on the Moslem Culture in the Near East* (1957), H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen offer a survey of the transformation of traditional Muslim societies to modernity after the involvement of the West in the region. The authors present a typical picture of Arab cultural and literary life before the arrival of the West as a dark age where imitation and compilation prevailed.[7] Arab literature and culture declined into blind imitation of narrow and close-minded religious knowledge from the past without revision or new contributions.[8] This view has been challenged by Roger Owen in 1976 who noted that the book takes as self-evident the Orientalist assumptions that the society at question is exclusively 'Islamic' and that it was in a state of general 'decline'.[9] Gibb's *Arabic Literature: An Introduction* (1963) is another influential work. Like the previous work, this book also offers a periodisation of Arabic literature that aligns with the view of the West as the usher of modernity to the region. Gibb

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[7] H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 164.

[8] Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, 15-64.

[9] Roger Owen, "The Middle East in the eighteenth century —an 'Islamic society in decline? A critique of Gibb and Bowen's Islamic society and the west," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (1976): 112-113; see also, C. Ernest Dawn, "Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East. Volume I, Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century, Part II. By HAR Gibb and Harold Bowen; Islam and the West: Proceedings of the Harvard Summer School Conference on the Middle East, July 25–27, 1955. Edited by Richard N. Frye," *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (April,1958): 682-683.

identifies the Abbasid period as the 'Golden age' of Arab history while the 'Dark ages' start with the rise of the Ottomans and their occupation of Egypt in 1517:

> After the Ottoman conquest in that year a period sets in of universal stagnation and decay. As always, the political conditions were mirrored in literature; the output was enormous throughout, but the qualities of originality, virility, and imagination, weak from the first, die away completely by the sixteenth century.[10]

The pre-Napoleonic period is thus characterised by cultural lethargy and intellectual inertia that becomes even more pronounced when compared with the European Renaissance.[11] Gibb's analysis is steeped in the assumption that the Muslim East is redeemed by the French aggression on Egypt and this view is echoed in other scholarship of the mid twentieth century.

Gustave E. von Grunebaum also adheres to this view of Napoleon as the instigator of modernity in his book *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* published in 1955. Within the context of an outline of Muslim civilisation, Grunebaum sees the French occupation of Egypt as a positive event that forced change on the Muslims who were at a standstill culturally, frozen in the past and incapable of change: "It was only with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (in 1798) that, through the impact of Europe and the rise of local nationalisms in its wake, Muslim civilization regained the willingness to change, to experiment, to risk – in short, to live".[12] The West did not only revive the Muslim East, but it also inspired

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[10] H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 142.

[11] Gibb, *Arabic Literature*, 155.

[12] G. E. von Grunebaum, *Islam: Essays on the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1955), 29.

local National consciousnesses as if no prior manifestation of nationalism existed before the West came to the region.[13]

Another example of this scholarship is the renowned Orientalist historian Bernard Lewis in his book *The Arabs in History*. In a chapter titled 'The Impact of the West' Lewis notes that "the French shattered the illusion of the unchallengeable superiority of the Islamic world to the infidel West, thus posing a profound problem of readjustment to a new relationship".[14] The preceding chapter tellingly entitled 'The Arabs in Eclipse' depicts a picture of political decay that impacted every other facet of life: "Changes in government and society were mirrored in intellectual life. The passive dependence on authority in public life found its parallel in literature, which suffered a loss of vitality and independence. The most striking feature of the time is the increasing stress on form for artists, on memory for scholars."[15] Although Lewis acknowledged that the period witnessed the work of exceptional scholars like al-Ghazālī, al-Ḥarīrī, Yāqūt and Ibn Khaldūn amongst many, his verdict remains unchanged: before Europe's arrival to the Muslim world, the region was plunged in decline.

Even in works that focused on modernising trends in the Arab Middle East, we find the same meta-narrative of a rising West revitalizing a decadent East with life.

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[13] For a discussion of earlier manifestations of nationalism, see Linda T Darling, "Social Cohesion (ʿAsabiyya) and Justice in the Late Medieval Middle East," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 2 (April 2007): 329-357.

[14] Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 183.

[15] Lewis, *Arabs in History*, 175.

Albert Hourani's 1962 book *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* is a classic of the modernisation framework as it follows the typical periodisation of total Arabo-Islamic decline between the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols and the French occupation of Egypt. Hourani does not explicitly present his study as one of Eastern decline and Western rise, but his writing presents a narrative that closely follows modernisation theories; moreover, the book gave rise to scholarship that mostly followed Hourani's structure and simply fleshed out his framework of modernisation.[16] Typical of other works on the region as well as the period, the book covers a wide range of authors without necessarily noting the development and evolution of each individual thinker over time in response to changing circumstances and contexts.[17] Thus, implicitly, all the achievements of the period and its intellectuals are traced back to the West, and aspects of the period and its intellectuals that can't be traced to the West are neglected.

The same can be said of Ibrahim Abu-Lughod's 1963 book *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters*. This fascinating exploration of Arab travelling in Europe and Arab translation activity is situated within a context where Arabs suddenly sprang from complete and total cultural inertia into this striking activity that characterised the 19th century. Abu-Lughod states that Arab Muslim society reached its lowest point after five centuries of "isolation, staticism, and decay" reflected in the pedantic turn in fields where Arabs once exhibited pioneering excellence such as: literature, philosophy, science, arts, theology, geography and

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[16] Donald M. Reid, "Arabic Thought in the Liberal Twenty Years After," *International Journal of Middle East* 14, no. 4 (November 1982): 550.

[17] Reid, "Arabic Thought," 548.

jurisprudence.[18] After discussing the cultural implications of the French occupation of Egypt, Abu-Lughod notes that the early years of the 19th century were a crucial moment in the social and cultural history of the region; because they marked the end of a "traditional" society that became increasingly "modern" at least in its technological, social and political institutions, and even in its problems.[19]

In his 1966 book *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914*, Robert L. Tignor maintains that "Egypt's encounter with the French in 1798 was to prove the beginning of the end of the old order".[20] Along similar lines, Arthur Goldschmidt and Lawrence Davidson in *A Concise History of the Middle East* present pre-Napoleon Egypt as a hopelessly decadent culture where everything is static and immutable; they include Arab Christians and Jews in this verdict:

> The *madrasahs*, including the ancient university of al-Azhar, declined in intellectual calibre. Most *ulama* became impotent, lazy, and corrupt. Their Christian and Jewish counterpart were no better. The Ottoman governors could do nothing. Soldiers and peasants revolt, sometimes successfully, but they could not reform the system either. Egypt was running down. It took two extraordinary foreigners to get the country moving again: Napoleon Bonaparte and Mehmet Ali.[21]

This quote makes explicit the implicit assumption in all scholarship following the Orientalist paradigm: change is something that must be done to a traditional Middle Eastern society, and the internal drive for change is eclipsed by this emphasis on

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[18] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 18.

[19] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 22.

[20] Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 31.

[21] Goldschmidt and Davidson, *Concise History*, 145.

exceptional outsiders. These studies represent a sample of the literature built on the Orientalist meta-narrative that Napoleon's occupation of Egypt brought modernity to the Middle East. With emphasis on the transformational power of the West on the region, the agency of Egyptians as well as other nations was compromised: who is really behind the change? Who gave rise to this awakening of culture and literature known as the Naḥḍa*?* For the particular study of the Naḥḍa, this scholarship will limit the way we understand the Naḥḍa.

The Consequences of the Orientalist Approach for the Naḥḍa Studies

One of the main shortcomings of the Orientalist approach to the history of the Arab Naḥḍa is that it creates a particular periodisation model that predetermines how the Naḥḍa and Modern Arab culture in general is understood. The view of West as the harbinger of modernity to the region creates a rather rigid break between the modern and pre-modern in a way that precludes any possibilities of studying natural continuities between the two periods. It is true that the Arabs were attracted to Europe's progress following, and indeed despite, European colonial presence; however, the scholarship neglects how the colonial experience broke the spell of initial enchantment with Europe. Rather than bringing modernity, the colonial presence disrupted the evolution of an organic authentic modernity. This Orientalist reading of the Naḥḍa as pure linear Westernisation overlooks the unfortunate association between modernity - or at least its European manifestation - and colonialism for the Arab World; an association that must have interfered with a smooth embracement of modernity.

In the grand narrative of the region, the typical division of Arabic literary history starts with the pre-Islamic era, and then the time of Prophet Muḥammad and his successors or Caliphs [622 - 660 AD]. This is followed by the Umayyad dynasty [660 - 750 AD], the Abbasid dynasty [750 - 1258 AD], and finally five long centuries collectively branded as an Age of Decadence.[22] This period is marked politically by the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 AD and the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 AD. In the intervening expanse of five hundred years, nothing of cultural merit or literary value can be found according to the conventional scholarship. The period is dismissed as an intellectually barren period.

After the end of the Islamic Golden Age in the 10th century, the Arabo-Islamic civilisation handed Greek knowledge to Europe before falling into a state of perpetual decline that came to an end only when the vigorous West entered the region and brought the light of modernity. It is worth noting the disproportional lengths of these periods: the first period is less than forty years whereas the so-called 'age of decadence' is five centuries long. The idea of a period has its merits when speaking of periods characterised by a collection of cultural or literary norms, but it is difficult to accept that several centuries shared the exact same cultural qualities with absolutely no change or transformation taking place. This is, then, how the Naḥḍa comes to be: it is what the West did or gave to the Arab East. The scholarly neglect of what came before the Naḥḍa reflects the strong hold of the 'rise of West/fall of East' narrative on the field.

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[22] Roger Allen, "The Post-Classical Period: Parameters and Preliminaries," *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5-6.

This model of periodisation had serious consequences for the way we understand the Naḥḍa, its intellectuals, and their texts. It is only by looking through an Orientalist lens, that the whole period of Naḥḍa - which encompasses different urban centres, different societies, and different communities - comes to be exclusively a process of Westernisation. Scholarship proceeding from Orientalist ideas creates a rigid divide between the 'pre-modern' and 'modern' that discourages explorations of any potential links between the two:

> We find ourselves dealing with a predominant set of opinions that advocate a deliberate rupture with the immediate past and a disavowal of its value as creator of aesthetic values. So prevalent is the view and, one must add, so apparently omnivalent are its organizing principles, that few indeed are the studies that attempt to look at the period under different terms of reference.[23]

Through the complete dismissal of any pre-modern and non-Western factors behind the emergence of the Naḥḍa, the Naḥḍa is skewed towards modernity and the West becomes the only true agent of change. This uncritically accepted periodisation hinders evaluations of the possibility of internal pre-modern roots for the Naḥḍa. The overemphasis on 'modernity' as a major Western contribution - and sometimes even the only factor behind the Naḥḍa - creates a rigid break between the Naḥḍa and its immediate past; making it difficult to detect continuities between the modern and its pre-modern local origins.

Since the West is seen as the main instigator of the Naḥḍa in this view, the very dating of this intellectual and cultural renaissance is associated with Western presence in the region. There are two significant years generally cited as the beginning

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[23] Allen, "Post-Classical Period," 16.

of the Naḥḍa: either 1798, when the French entered Egypt, or sometimes 1850, when American and European missionaries established their cultural and religious activities in the Levant.[24] In both dates, the arrival of the West into the Arab World is the instigator of the cultural renaissance that ensued. And because very little is known about cultural life between the 13th and 18th centuries, the local modernities appearing in the 19th century can only be attributed to the rise of Western presence further supporting the Orientalist reading of the Naḥḍa as pure Westernisation that moved Arabs from traditionalism, decadence and stagnation to modernity, progress, and revival.

This naturally led the classical scholarship to emphasise topics and themes that fit within this paradigm of Westernised modernisation. These studies will focus on themes like the emergence of the nation-state, nationalism, secularism, modernism, liberalism, and socialism. Thus, the Naḥḍa is contracted into "a progressive and irreversible process of secularisation towards a liberal modernity in both the political and economic sense" which is nothing in fact but a reproduction of modern Western history.[25] As we shall see shortly, this narrative is challenged by an emerging revisionist scholarship that exposes an Orientalist 'decline discourse' that operates as the basis of classical scholarship. Likewise, the authors and intellectuals of the period are reduced to clear-cut binaries of modernism/traditionalism, secularism/religiosity, and progress/conservatism.

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[24] Patel, *Arab Naḥḍah*, 225.

[25] Patel, *Arab Naḥḍah*, 3-4.

Moreover, only the luminaries whose activity and thought can be clearly associated with Western influence are featured in the scholarship that is averse to serious engagement with less than enthusiastic Westernisers. Any thinker or intellectual that worked outside the Western intellectual framework was not part of the story of the Naḥḍa. Albert Hourani recognised this as a major limitation of his own study:

> What really troubles me is … the thought that perhaps I should have written a book of a different kind. When I wrote it I was mainly concerned to note the breaks with the past: new ways of thought, new words or old ones used in a new way. To some extent I may have distorted the thought of the writers I studied, at least those of the first and second generations: the "modern" element in their thought may have been smaller than I implied, and it would have been possible to write about them in a way which emphasized continuity rather than a break with the past.[26]

Hourani admits he was not particularly equipped to recognise that the authors of what he designated as "the Arab liberal age" were *not* modern; therefore, he focused too narrowly on the influence of Western thought on Arabs and Muslims marginalising any local or Islamic influences: "I had not been trained as an Islamic scholar, although I had lived and worked with some who knew far more than I … I could not so easily hear the echoes of Islamic thought in the authors I was studying as those of Comte and Spencer".[27] Hourani is correct in his reconsideration of his work which remains a valuable exploration of the period if only it requires a supplementary exploration of

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[26] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, viii-ix.

[27] Hourani quoted in Reid, "Arabic Thought," 551.

the less than liberal tendencies and authors of the period; something that the revisionist scholarship has been providing in the last couple of decades.[28]

The Eurocentric Orientalist approach to the cultural and literary history of the region relies heavily on a discourse of decline and creates this problematic periodisation that we find in almost every book and study written on the modern Middle East. The Orientalist diagnosis of decadence is elevated to become the canonic interpretation of what came before the Naḥḍa. The question of whether the Arab Middle East was really in a state of decadence that was reversed with the arrival of the West has been addressed in the scholarship. What I would like to stress here is that Arab intellectuals of the 19th century internalised the Orientalist diagnosis, but for completely different reasons. The authors covered in the upcoming chapters were writing from the presumption that there was indeed a Muslim Eastern decadence that had to be mended, but their rationale for curing this decadence reflected their belief that it was a material temporal decadence as opposed to the timeless decadence inherent to Oriental nations that the Orientalists had in mind. The idea of diagnosing 'decline' within Muslim culture is not exclusively modern or Western; Mehmet Atif Kirecci and David Feini offer compelling readings of the modern manifestation of the concept of decadence: The idea of an Oriental decadence was introduced to the general historiography of the region by European commentators, but it was the region's

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[28] It is worth noting that Hourani added a 'supplement' to his 1983 updated bibliography in which he included the sources that prompted him to reconsider some of his ideas on the modern Arab intellectuals he covered in his book: Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 390-395.

intellectuals who internalised this concept and subverted it to facilitate their reform projects.[29]

This Orientalist paradigm of decline, steeped as it is in Modernisation Theory, has several drawbacks to our understanding of intellectuals and movements that do not fit within a framework designed to detect only what and who is Western-like. Any cultural processes, trends, or tendencies that do not readily fit with the preconceived process of Westernisation, liberalisation, and modernisation will be filtered out from such narrative. Therefore, any author that does not fit the mould of a liberal luminary striving to change a hopelessly traditionalist society will be dismissed as insignificant or irrelevant. There is a general tendency to focus exclusively on: "the few well-known exponents of the 'liberal age'" and ignore any trend and any author or intellectual that does not fit the view of the Naḥḍa as "inspiring *new* thought".[30] Only those who welcomed Western ideas were included in the literary history of the period while those who rejected these ideas or attempted to integrate these ideas with their own cultural system of values were dismissed; In the final analysis, the Naḥḍa becomes: "a *direct* and almost *exclusive* product of the West to the detriment of not only internal pre-modern cultural forces, but also of those other lesser known humanist intellectuals who do not conform to these frameworks".[31] This approach

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[29] See for example Mehmet Akif Kirecci, "Decline Discourse and self-Orientalization in the Writings of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Taha Hussayn and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernization in Egypt and Turkey" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007); Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms".

[30] Ayalon, "Private Publishing,"562; emphasis added.

[31] Patel, *Arab Naḥḍah*, 4; emphasis added.

often fails to acknowledge that the movement involved more than intellectual importation from Europe; more recent scholarship on the period takes historical, social, and cultural local factors into account, and actively challenges the classical paradigm.

Questioning the Orientalist Narrative

The last three decades of the 20th century saw the rise of revisionist scholarship where social history becomes the focus rather than modernisation theories as was the case in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, social history started to supersede all previously accepted approaches, and historians started to question the established intellectual history and challenge Modernisation Theory and its underlying Orientalist tradition.[32] More recent re-evaluations of the cultural and literary history of the Arab Middle East came as a response to the enduring influence of the classical Orientalist paradigm. These studies argue for a more nuanced treatment of the period and replace the Orientalist "sweep through time and space" as Donald Reid puts it with deeper explorations of specific topics and themes. This scholarship interrogates the presumptions and value judgments the field has inherited from Orientalism. Instead of uncritically accepting the hegemonic narrative of West as tutor of modernity and progress, and East as passive apprentice, the emphasis in this new scholarship is on how internal factors also contributed to change.

Several studies revise the periodisation set by the Orientalist approach which proposes that the encounter with the West created a harsh rupture between the pre-

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[32] Reid, "Arabic Thought," 541-2; 551.

modern eighteenth century and the modern nineteenth century. These studies argue for an early indigenous modernity taking shape before the year 1798 contesting the view that the West brought modernity; the encounter in fact disrupted the organic evolution of native local modernities. An early example of this position is historian Marshal G. S. Hodgson's 1974 *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilisation*. The third volume entitled *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times* depicts the 18ᵗʰ century as a time of cultural revival and an Islamic Enlightenment that predated the encounter with Europe in the following century. To quote Hodgson, "one of the greatest periods of human achievement blossomed out of the midst of the conservative spirit."[33] The origins of this vigorous activity according to Hodgson are local agents and internal elements rather than the sole influence of European presence.

The neglect of the pre-modern period makes it difficult to recognise any early antecedent of modernity before the Western presence. Peter Gran's 1979 book *The Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* is another example of studies that give more focus to internal socio-economic factors predating Western presence in the region. Edward Said complimented the book for its anti-Orientalist historical approach despite its polemical nature; he notes that Gran exposes "what a vast invisible terrain of human effort and ingenuity lurks beneath the frozen Orientalist surface formerly carpeted by the discourse of Islamic or Oriental economic history."[34]

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[33] Marshall GS Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, volume 3: The Gunpower Empires and Modern Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 4.

[34] Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Cultural Critique* no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 10.

Gran explores the intellectual revival amongst the *'ulamāʾ* starting from the 1760s in Cairo which contributed to huge socio-economic development in the 18th century and well before the French occupation. It was mainly these internal developments in the socio-economic situation rather than Napoleon's occupation that ultimately ended the reign of the Mamluks.[35] Gran concludes that "an indigenous 'modernism' in Islamic thought stabilizing the economic situation prevailing in Egypt" predated Western arrival.[36]

Another attempt to rectify this situation is Abdulrazzak Patel's 2013 book *Arab Nahḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement*. The book challenges the divide between the modern and pre-modern in the conventional model of periodisation by highlighting the often-neglected pre-modern indigenous developments in fields of linguistics, literature, and education as the main contributor to the emergence of the Nahḍa. Here, the emphasis is shifted from the luminaries of the Nahḍa favoured by conventional scholarship to the humanist intellectuals of the 18th century: "It is on such figures, whose significance consists in being typical rather than exceptional of the age, that we need to concentrate to find continuities with the immediate past".[37] More recently, two important volumes were published that contributes to the revisionist trend within the field. Edited by Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, the companion volumes came from a conference held at Princeton University in October 2012 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the publication of Hourani's

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[35] Gran, Islamic *Roots*, 32-33, also 152.

[36] Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 178.

[37] Patel, *Arab Nahḍah*, 232.

Arabic Thought. The first volume published in 2016 *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards and Intellectual History of the Nahda* presents a fundamental revision of modern Arab intellectual and cultural history; a revision that takes into consideration the agency of Arab intellectuals and how they influenced the political, social, cultural, and economic development in their region from the 18ᵗʰ to 20ᵗʰ centuries. As the title suggests, the volume used Hourani's 1962 *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* as a starting point to re-evaluate our understanding of Arabic cultural production and expand the investigation beyond the usual parameters of French invasion of Egypt and World War II.

Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age recognises the link between liberal thought and intellectual history without necessarily endorsing it or allowing this link to de-emphasise other factors and elements; after all, "not all ideas in the modern Arab world come from Europe, neither are they all liberal ones, nor did the appropriation of liberal ideas from Europe lead to carbon copies in the Middle East."[38] Hanssen and Weiss also recognised Albert Hourani's unease with the 'liberal' label.[39] Indeed, the Naḥḍa period also witnessed the genesis of other ideas and ideologies such as

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[38] Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, "Language, Mind, Freedom, and Time: The Modern Arab Intellectual Tradition in Four Words," in *Arabic beyond the Liberal Age: Towards and Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 37.

[39] Hanssen and Weiss, "Language, Mind, Freedom, and Time," 12-14.

Islamism and Nationalism that were not as liberal as their demands. [40] In their

introduction, Hanssen and Weiss also note the important role of decline discourse:

> Historical narratives of cultural malaise have existed since the sixteenth-
> century when Ottoman scribal elites felt that the political transformations
> of the empire threatened their political future. The Nahda discourse of
> cultural revival and enlightenment, too, was premised on the chimera of
> decline and decadence, but unlike both their Ottoman predecessors and
> their European contemporaries, they staked their future on change – cast
> predominantly in a reformist mold.[41]

The second volume edited also by Hanssen and Weiss is *Arabic Thought against the*

Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present. The volume

highlights the diversity of the post-war Arab World with its energetic political,

literary, and intellectual history. The book opens with a series of important questions:

"How might practitioners of modern Arab intellectual history find new ways to

dispatch historical narratives predicated upon Eurocentric discourses, practices, and

modes of being that have been too simplistically tracked as they were transmitted in

some modular fashion to other parts of the world, including the Middle East? Is

modern Arab intellectual history consigned to only ever amount to a derivative

discourse?"[42] These are the types of questions that challenge the "unsatisfying linear

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[40] Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the making of global radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1. According to Khuri-Makdisi, the promoters of socialist and anarchist ideas in the Arab Ottoman World "often combined radical goals with seemingly more moderate, liberal demands, such as the establishment of constitutional and representative government and freedom of speech, the curbing of religious and clerical authority, and resistance to European political and economic encroachments. The concepts of social justice that constituted central themes in leftist thought were rarely discussed in isolation from larger issues, but rather went hand in hand with a broader reformist agenda."

[41] Hanssen and Weiss, "Language, Mind, Freedom, and Time," 32.

[42] Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, "Introduction: Arabic Intellectual History between the Postwar and the Postcolonial," *Arabic Thought against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1.

narrative of a singular European modernity that diffused from Europe towards its peripheries".[43] By rethinking the history of the Middle East from the viewpoint of the Arab intellectual, the volume highlights the influence of contextualisation on how we understand the intellectual history of the Middle East, and other 'periphery' regions.

Another cluster of studies revise the conventional model of periodisation by challenging the very idea of decline prevalent in the Orientalist approach. The questioning of decline is carried out through the investigation of the so-called ʾaṣr al-ʾinḥiṭāṭ or 'age of decadence'. The year 1258 AD is a conventional dividing line between an Arab classical golden age and an all-encompassing decadence that persisted until 1798 when France brought modernity by force to the region. Since the 1980s, the field of Middle Eastern history has evolved and a new model of a 'post-classical' rather than 'decadent' age emerged. This model takes into account the political disintegration of the Abbasid empire that started from the ninth century and preceded the devastating Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258.[44] These studies argue that the very idea of decadence originated in European Orientalist writings before they were internalised by the East.

Although few and far in between, these studies offer a refreshing alternative to the persistent narrative of Oriental decadence and cultural stagnation. An excellent example of this branch of the revisionist scholarship is the final volume of *The*

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[43] Hanssen and Weiss, "Introduction: Arabic Intellectual History," 2.

[44] Konrad Hirschler and Sarah Bowen Savant, "Introduction–What is in a Period? Arabic Historiography and Periodization," *Der Islam* 91, no. 1(May 2014): 14.

Cambridge History of Arabic Literature series which covers the period between the twelfth century and the nineteenth century. The volume was significantly entitled *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. In the first chapter – "The Post-Classical Period: Parameters and Preliminaries" – Roger Allen notes that:

> in the case of the Arabic and Islamic heritage, the application of this label [decadence] to a substantial segment of the cultural production of the region seems to have resulted in the creation of a vicious circle, whereby an almost complete lack of sympathy for very different aesthetic norms has been converted into a tradition of scholarly indifference that has left us with enormous gaps in our understanding of the continuities involved.[45]

The idea of an Oriental decadence was introduced to the general historiography of the region by European commentators, but it was intellectuals in the East who internalised this concept. In his study *Decline Discourse & Self-Orientalisation in the Writings of al-Ṭahṭāwī, Taha Hussayn and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernisation in Egypt and Turkey*, Kirecci examines how studies on Islamic civilisation will adopt a periodisation model that stresses Napoleon's expedition as the starting point of modern history in the Middle East while everything preceding it is a period of decadence and stagnation. He argues that this discourse of Oriental decline was internalised by native thinkers: a process that Kirecci calls 'self-Orientalisation'. For Kirecci, the internalisation of decline for these intellectuals was not a matter of playing into Orientalists' stereotypes, but rather it had tangible advantages. The concept of an Oriental decline allowed these intellectuals to justify their cultural projects as a rationale for reversing decline.

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[45] Allen, "The Post-Classical Period," 2.

The idea of diagnosing 'decline' within Muslim culture is not exclusively modern or Western. Kirecci in fact explores the different manifestations of this concept in European and Islamic intellectual history.[46] In the European tradition, there are three instances where a discourse of Oriental decline came into being: the first is the period leading up to the first Crusade in 1099, the second is the period prior to the Enlightenment and focused particularly on the Ottoman Turks, and the final stage evolved from the previous one but came into itself with the European scramble for imperial dominance in the 19th century.[47] But the Muslims also engaged in creating decline discourses about themselves. Within the Islamic intellectual history, there are four discourses of internally self-diagnosed decline; however, Kirecci points out a crucial distinction between the first three pre-modern manifestations and the last modern one.

The first discourse he identifies is the one prevalent within the Muslim canon of *Qurʾān* and *Ḥadīth* where religious and moral condition is the cause and cure for social decadence and degeneration. The second instance was the way the concept of decline was used socially and politically in the context of dynastic rivalry between the Umayyad and Abbasid; in a similar vein, the third manifestation appeared in the writings of Ottoman intellectuals in the 16th century as they attempted to diagnose the cause of decadence and prescribe cures for it: "All emerge from the dynamic of Islamic and Ottoman societies and offer inward-looking proposals. In action, each calls on religious morality as a remedy for the perceived decline in society at the

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[46] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 16-18.

[47] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 16-17.

time."[48] The final discourse, however, did not evolve organically from within; it originated in Europe and was internalised by the native intellectuals in the modern era. The first three discourses of decline differ radically from the modern discourse. For one thing, they all were rooted in the internal social and political dynamics of different Islamic cultures throughout history; moreover, the solution provided in all three instances for decadence – i.e. religious morality - is likewise internal.[49] In the final iteration of the idea of an Eastern Muslim decline, we find that the prognosis comes from outside, and solutions for this decadence are offered in reference to the European Other even when it is a rejection of it. This modern manifestation of the decline discourse is in fact a colonial accusation coming from the outside.

This aspect of decadence is recognised in another important study of decline discourse in the field. In *Decadent Orientalisms: Configuring the Decay of Colonial Modernity in French and Arabic*, Fieni explores the link between Orientalism - French Orientalism in specific - and the decadence discourse that was internalised by postcolonial Arab societies. One of the main arguments of Fieni is that Arab and Muslim intellectuals could secure their modernity only by first admitting to their 'Oriental decadence'. Moreover, Orientalism itself is a decadent discourse because it is "disintegrating internally and activating disintegration externally".[50] Just like Kirecci, Fieni also recognises that the Orientalist projections of decadence created in

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[48] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 17.

[49] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 16-18; For Kirecci's extensive discussion, see chapter three under the title of "The Concept of Decline in Historical Perspective," 68-104.

[50] Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms," 6.

the East an intense local discourse of reform and self-reflection.[51] In concluding his study, Fieni notes that classical scholarship fails "to account for the complex structure of the historical disruptions produced by colonial modernity."[52] This modern manifestation of the decline discourse is different, as Kirecci and Fieni have shown, precisely because it is a colonial accusation rather than an internal conversation that the intellectuals of the culture are making. It is only in relation to European modernity that this decadence is characterised.

Another strand of revisionist scholarship is also concerned with writing the marginalised back into the cultural and social history of the period. These studies focus on specific topics, themes, and figures; for example, the link between gender and nationalism,[53] peasants and the working class,[54] radicalism,[55] scholarship and the

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[51] Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms," 3-7.

[52] Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms," 171.

[53] Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt, 1870–1940* (London: Duke University Press, 2011); Mervat Hatem. *Literature, Gender, and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of A'isha Taymur* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Marilyn Booth *May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 2001).

[54] John T. Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012); Michael Ezekiel Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[55] Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the making of global radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

rise of scholarly institutions,[56] literature, culture and translation.[57] As noted earlier, in the 1970s and 1980s scholarship developed new ways of conceiving of history where the historical overemphasis on the political dynastic framework was abandoned for a more collective and intersectional history of real societies and real people.[58] By questioning the emphasis on political history as the main organising principle of history as a whole, this new scholarship displaces the elite culture and makes it acceptable to periodise according to alternative organising themes, such as the experiences of the peasantry, city history, or even the history of diseases such as the plague.[59]

A more radical position argues for completely doing away with the East/West framework and read the history of the Middle East in a larger framework of global history. An example of this is Dror Ze'evi in his article "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East". Here, the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries represent a significant historical moment independently from "the dichotomy of Western colonialism and the indigenous colonized". Ze'evi

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[56] Omnia El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003)

[57] Samah Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Shaden M Tageldin, *Disarming words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2011); Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[58] Hirschler and Savant, "Introduction–What is in a Period?" 13.

[59] Allen, "The Post-Classical Period," 3.

calls for a deep understanding of the internal social and historical process in the Ottoman Middle East which reveals that modernity in the region was the natural evolution of internal processes working in tandem with the increasing threat from the outside:

> Napoleon's invasion and colonialism in general could be viewed not as added momentum to an ongoing process but rather as interruption, albeit a serious one, to the internal process of change. Had there been no such interruption, the Middle East might have had a chance to develop its own successful modernity.[60]

For Ze'evi, the late 18th and early 19th century is an important period for the evolution of modernity in the region beyond of the coloniser/colonised dichotomy to challenge the influence of Eurocentric approaches to global history.[61] In the end, these revisionist studies offer an alternative vantage point to the prevailing narrative; a vantage point that highlights aspects of the period that are often neglected in the overemphasis of Westernisation. One of the Naḥḍa discourses that goes usually undetected is the use of representations of the West to contain the rapid processes of Westernisation which threatened the cultural and religious authenticity of society. It is not possible to discuss the Orientalist paradigm of understanding the Arab renaissance within an exploration of an Arab Occidentalism without touching on the legacy of Edward Said's 1978 ground-breaking book *Orientalism* which will be the focus of the next section.

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[60] Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon?" 85.

[61] Hirschler and Savant, "Introduction–What is in a Period?" 17-18.

Edward Said, Orientalism, and the Orientalist Reading of the Naḥḍa

Said's main argument is that the East was essential for Europe's culture and civilisation. Through the East, the West comes to know and identify itself. Said defines Orientalism as "a way of *coming to terms* with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience".[62] Said's analysis explained how Orientalism did not just describe the Orient but rather distorted it to serve the interests of the West. The created image was the result of the threat European scholars felt when they encountered the East: "Every European traveller or resident in the Orient had to protect himself from its *unsettling influences* … All of them wore away the European discreetness and rationality of time, space, and personal identity".[63] Said was reiterating an argument that has been made by other scholars before him.[64] A detailed discussion of Orientalism, its definition, objectives and scope is beyond this study. For the current project, however, Said's critique of Orientalism is very relevant to understanding the situation in Arab cultural studies where an Orientalist paradigm of decline (*inḥiṭāṭ*) came to dominate the way we understand the history of the Naḥḍa and Arab culture in the 19th century.

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[62] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 1; emphasis added.

[63] Said, *Orientalism*, 167.

[64] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (New Jersey, Wiley & Sons, 2016), 384; This counter discourse started as part of the anti-colonial scholarship criticising the European practices in the East. These include thinkers like Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Maxime Robinson, A. L. Tibawi, and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod to name a few.

Before Said, the word 'orientalism' referred to the study of the Orient, but his book created 'Orientalism' - with a capital O - connoting a suspicious body of knowledge based on reductionist stereotypes. By textualizing the Orient, Orientalism gradually created a moral justification that masked Europe's imperial interests. One of the main themes of *Orientalism* is the silencing of modern Arabs and Muslims and their concerns in Orientalist scholarship; Said notes that:

> To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, or as a kind of cultural and intellectual proletariat useful for the Orientalist's grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will. I mean to say that in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence: yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence.[65]

Similarly, the Orientalist paradigm of reading the Naḥḍa systematically silences any elements that cannot be clearly traced back to the Occident as we have seen in the previous discussion. Reading *Orientalism* with the Naḥḍa and its legacy in mind, it is compelling to explore not only how the Arabs represented the West, but more importantly, how they read Orientalist statements, how they eavesdropped on a discourse they were not meant to be part of, and how they sometimes retorted with statements of their own about the West. If Orientalism is often seen as the European observing the Oriental Other, rarely do scholars comment on how the Oriental observed the European Other and engaged with the grand narrative of civilised Europe and backward East.

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[65] Said, *Orientalism*, 208.

Said questioned the divide between East and West and challenged the Orientalist representations of the East as essentially and inherently different from the West. What Said recognised is that while describing the Orient, the Orientalist were also indirectly describing the Occident; thus, Said established the complementary relationship between these two elements of the binary that is East/West. The Other is a mirror through which a culture and society gets to know itself better through counter images. In that sense, the 18th century European Orientalists were in fact 'Occidentalising' their modern culture and validating it by juxtaposing it with a strange Other culture that is timelessly and inherently different. [66] What began as mere geographical divisions in the 3rd century Roman Empire came to signify social and cultural definitions in the 16th and 17th century; and by the 18th century, it was commonplace to speak about a distinct 'Western Civilisation'.[67] Thus, Europe discovered itself by differentiating itself from other cultures and nations; as Europe knew more about the Orient, this knowledge contributed to the way Europeans constructed their identity. Orientalism and Occidentalism are two sides of the same coin and bound to each other in that sense; one cannot take place without the other. Within Naḥda studies, the focus is always on the modern as we saw in the previous sections, and this has to do with the fact that the dichotomy between East and West is further skewed by the implicit binary of traditional and modern.

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[66] This is the sense of Occidentalism used by James C. Carrier in his introduction to the edited volume *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (1995) which focuses more on Occidentalism as the West's construction of itself. The following section will discuss this particular use of the term in a number of sources.

[67] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, Fontana Press, 1976), 333-334.

Orientalism put forward an essentialist view of traditional societies; indeed, the very concept of a traditional society is generated as a negative image of the European society in the modern age. Orientalist analysis of traditional societies understands tradition as the negative of attributes characteristic of a modern society; to quote Laroui, "when one defines tradition as agrarianism, ruralism, passivity, ahistoricity, etc. one is merely translating into negatives the characteristics of 'modern' society, that is, of society since the eighteenth century".[68] Laroui's main argument here is that this simplistic analysis of traditionalism overlooks the social and political context, but more seriously it implicitly justifies colonialism. The Orientalist understanding of tradition as simply non-modernity confuses two distinct types of 'tradition': an ideologically loaded tradition, and a shallow tradition – or what is merely a social structure through which everyday life takes place in rural societies.[69] By collapsing these two senses of 'tradition' into each other, the complexities of reality are not allowed to challenge the Orientalist stereotype of an inert society incapable of change without foreign intervention. This is manifested in the Orientalist reading of the Naḥḍa where a traditional society is inherently static and thus needed to be jolted into change by outside pressure. The Orientalist paradigm of the Naḥḍa depicts Arab culture and society as evolving in a process of transformation animated by the West and arrested by the traditionalism typical of Oriental passivity and inertia. The Orientalist paradigm is a twist on this sceptical view of such a society. This is precisely why Oriental 'revolution' and Oriental 'modernisation' are favourite themes of what Edward Said

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[68] Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*, trans. Diarmid Cammell (Paris: Maspero, 1974; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 33.

[69] Laroui, *Crisis*, 33-34.

calls the latest phase of Orientalism.[70] The Orientalist scholar approaches these themes with preconceived notions of what *is* Oriental and what *is* Occidental, and therefore what is achieved is an analysis of Oriental failure to become sufficiently Western-like.

Said created a real crisis in academia as he forced scholars in the field of World History and Middle Eastern History to question their unfounded commitment to this Orientalist paradigm; to quote Gran, "Said exposed the non-scientific quality of this concept and showed the ramifications of using it. Lacking, however, an alternative to put in its place, his criticism remained on an external level".[71] Said's thesis received its fair share of criticism. Many scholars felt that Said's attack on Orientalists was unjust and polemical.[72] But most importantly, some actually noted that Said appears to completely ignore that there is a flipside to Orientalism, i.e. Occidentalism.

The need for a complementary analysis of Arab representations of Self and Other is expressed by an Arab critic of Edward Said. In his 1980 article, Syrian Marxist thinker Sadiq Jalal al-Azm notes that Orientalist ideology allowed the nineteenth century Europe to claim antiquated foundations to its contemporary culture

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[70] Said, *Orientalism*, 312.

[71] Gran, "Orientalism's Contribution," 21-22.

[72] For example, see Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," *Extrait du Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières*, (October 1980): 1-18; Aijaz Ahmad, "Orientalism and After: ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Word of Edward Said," in *In theory: Classes, nations, literatures* (London: Verso, 1994), 165-166; Gyan Prakash, "Orientalism Now," *History and Theory* 34, no. 3 (October 1995): 199-212; Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).

and provided the financially driven imperial enterprise with legitimacy and credibility.[73] However, Al-Azm argues that Said failed to note that Orientals - Arabs, in this case - were also actively *orientalising* themselves using the same "metaphysical abstractions and ideological mystifications" the Orientalists used. He calls this tendency an 'Orientalism in reverse' where Arabs exhibited the same

> typical Orientalist obsession with language, texts, philology and allied subjects. It [Orientalism in reverse] simply imitates the great Orientalist masters - a poor imitation at that - when it seeks to unravel the secrets of the primordial Arab 'mind', 'psyche' or 'character' in and through words.[74]

For Al-Azm, ideals such as Arab nationalism - and its cultural successor Islamic revivalism - derive from an "Ontological Orientalism in reverse … no less reactionary, mystifying, ahistorical and anti-human than Ontological Orientalism proper."[75] Al-Azm's article captures the dialectical element implicit in any essentialism. It is quite telling that Al-Azm chose to refer to this tendency as an 'Orientalism in reverse' rather than perhaps an 'Occidentalism'. Both Edward Said and Sadiq Jalal al-Azm are primarily concerned with essentialist representations of the Orient: Said focuses on the West's representations of the Arabs while Al-Azm focuses on the Arabs' self-representations created under the influence of the West. Neither of which, of course, was possible without a parallel set of representations of the West.

In his article "Orientalism and after," Aijaz Ahmad is extremely critical of Said's lack of nuance and believes that the book "panders to the most sentimental, the most

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[73] Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," 3.

[74] Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," 12.

[75] Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," 16.

extreme forms of Third-Worldist nationalism. The book says nothing, of course, about any fault of our own … How comforting such visions of one's own primal and permanent innocence are one can well imagine, because given what actually goes on in our countries, we do need a great deal of comforting."[76] In addition to the polemical nature pointed out by both Al-Azm and Ahmad, the failure to recognise that "many scholars and several strains within the Orientalist tradition escaped its pernicious prejudices and politics" remained the most persistent criticism of Said's *Orientalism*.[77] The book, the argument goes, failed to acknowledge the subtle differences and distinction between different individuals in a human group. And Said was selective in his suppression of any elements of the Orientalist discourse that may challenge his depiction of it as a thoroughly colonial imperialist discourse.

An example of this view is Robert Irwin's 2006 book *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* which argues that Orientalism was "mostly a story of individual scholars, often lonely and eccentric men."[78] Irwin categorically refused the link between Orientalism and Western imperialism noting the marginality of most Orientalists who were removed from any power structures; indeed, some of them were accused of sympathy for Islam because of their knowledge which was their own rather than a service to colonialism.[79]

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[76] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992; London: Verso, 2000), 195.

[77] Gyan Prakash, 'Orientalism Now,' *History and Theory* 34, no. 3 (1995): 202.

[78] Robert Irwin, *For Lust Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), Introduction, Apple Books.

[79] Peter Gran, "Orientalism's Contribution," 28

For many, Said's fatal mistake is that he failed to engage with the serious issues of anti-Westernism and Islamism. In defending himself, he restates the missed point of his book: "words such as 'Orient' and 'Occident' correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact."[80] Ironically, the fact that Said avoided discussing the Orient or Islam implicates him further rather than supporting his general argument as he assumed. The fact remains, though, that if the reader comes to *Orientalism* primarily concerned with the very modern issue of militant Islamism or "Islam as a political force" as Michel Foucault puts it,[81] then the book is indeed lacking. By arguing that Orientalism represents the attitude of the *entire* West, Said appeared to reduce the West to an essence: an inherent European malicious animosity toward the Orient. In addition, if his book is meant to show that "a predatory West and Orientalism violated Islam and the Arabs", then that only goes to show that he believes in the moral superiority of Islam. To Said's dismay, this was the understanding that dominated the reception of *Orientalism* in the Arab world which was disillusioned with Nasserism after the humiliating defeat in the 1967 Arab Israeli war and looking for alternative rationales for political action.

Said's book was criticised for its failure to engage with non-European attitudes towards the West. He did not complement his analysis with a look at the dialectical relationship between Orientalism and Occidentalism; for example, how the awareness of Arab intellectuals of the West contributed to what may be called an 'Arab Occidentalism'. Said did not explore how the Orientals responded to Orientalist

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[80] Said, *Orientalism*, 330-331.

[81] As quoted in Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 132."

knowledge or how they themselves engaged in similar Othering discourses of their own. In a sense, Said also silenced the Oriental by avoiding any exploration of counter-discourses to Orientalism; this, however, was an inadvertent consequence of his fixation on the privileged position of the Orientalist observer whose statements had devastating outcomes for the region.

It is most unfortunate that the lesson of *Orientalism* is reduced to be merely a statement about an evil West and a good East or vice versa. As Ella Shohat notes,

> The critique of Said as deficient political scientist or historian, however valid from specific disciplinary perspectives, sidesteps on another level the book's concern with the problem of representation in terms of rhetoric, figures of speech, narrative structure, and discursive formation. … the critical reading of a discourse remains productive precisely because beyond the "trees" of the differences from text to text and nation to nation, the reading discerns the "forest" of the discourse, exposing recurrent leitmotifs manifest across styles, genres, and historical contexts. Whatever the pitfalls, … such reading can also illuminate dimensions that other grids might otherwise have missed.[82]

The book was not only about challenging Orientalism as an organic part of colonialism, but more importantly it was also "a challenge to the muteness imposed upon the Orient as object … the Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other."[83] In fact, however, the lesson of *Orientalism* transcends the tired binary of East and West. What Said did was an exploration of how an honest intellectual activity can easily lend itself to the service of an ideology. The type of logic internal to Orientalism can be found in any discourse about the Other regardless of cultural context. The subject of this discourse may be a race, a country, a religion,

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[82] Ella Shohat, "On the Margins of Middle Eastern Studies: Situating Said's 'Orientalism'," *Review of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 1 (Summer 2009), 22.

[83] Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," 93.

a sect, or a social class; as long as there is a discourse that takes its preconceived notions of Self and Other for granted, we are almost always dealing with some form of 'Orientalism' - i.e., a process of 'Othering'. This process of 'Othering' can range from harmless exoticisation to downright dehumanisation.

Said's *Orientalism* raises more questions than it answers since Said simply provides a framework for thinking and talking about issues of representation in a situation of uneven power relations. The moral of *Orientalism* then is not just that Western statements led to disastrous long-term consequences for the nations it claimed to merely describe, but more importantly that this process of Othering is an ideological tool that can and will be exploited in any context when needed. Peter Gran rightly notes that Said "wants to be understood, more as a philosopher of power and knowledge than as a critic of Western writing on the Middle East".[84] Said's book was an intuitive and somewhat generalised exploration of the problem inherent in the field of Orientalism and its successors - Middle Eastern History, World History, Area Studies etc. Said's *Orientalism* may have blind spots and shortcomings, but it forced the field to reflect on its dominant narratives. One of these blind spots is the opposite discourse of Occidentalism.

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[84] Gran, "Orientalism's Contribution," 26.

Arab Occidentalism: The Hidden Shadow of Westernisation

The term 'Occidentalism' appears in the literature generally within the context of exploring the emergence and evolution of the idea of the West. Sometimes, it describes Western representations of the Self with little attention to non-Western representations. James G. Carrier used the term 'Western Occidentalism' to describe the subjective biases of Western anthropologists studying non-Western cultures; Carrier viewed these biases as the "silent partner" of the works of Western anthropologist outside Europe.[85] A whole branch of research focused on this aspect of Occidentalism. Examples of this can be found in the works of Fernando Coronil in 1996 and Couze Venn in 2000 where the term is used to refer to the European project of modern self-creation.

In "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," Coronil recognised that Occidentalism starts with Orientalism and argued for "relating Western representations of 'Otherness' to the implicit constructions of 'Selfhood' that underwrite them." [86] Thus, he defines Occidentalism as "the expression of a constitutive relationship between Western representations of cultural difference and worldwide dominance."[87] Most importantly, it is impossible to carry out a serious

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[85] James G. Carrier, "Introduction," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

[86] Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (February 1996): 56.

[87] Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," 57.

critique of Orientalism without acknowledging the implicit self-serving Occidentalism of codifying the Other in this manner. According to Coronil,

> Challenging Orientalism ... requires that Occidentalism be unsettled as a style of representation that produces polarized and hierarchical conceptions of the West and its Others and makes them central figures in accounts of global and local histories. In other words, by 'Occidentalism' I refer to the nestle of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world, which (1) separate the world's components into bounded units; (2) disaggregate their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations; and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations.[88]

Although the focus here is primarily on Occidentalism as Self-creation or Self-representation, there is an acknowledgment that the Other (primarily, the East) is an essential element to this process. Couze Venn's *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* presents a more unique and distinctive use of the term Occidentalism. Here, Occidentalism "directs attention to the becoming-modern of the world and the becoming-West of Europe such that Western modernity gradually became established as the privileged, if not hegemonic, form of sociality, tied to a universalizing and totalizing ambition."[89] This definition stresses modernity as a main condition or context for this "becoming." However, as we shall see shortly, contemporary Arabic writings on Occidentalism argues for the opposite – that Occidentalism was part of the Arab Islamic discourse since the early days of Islam –in an attempt to justify their call for Occidentalism which is usually confused for Westernisation.

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[88] Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," 57.

[89] Couze Venn, *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* (London: Sage Publication, 2000), 19.

The initial neglect of non-Western Occidentalism did not last for long and was rectified in the 1990s which witnessed the emergence of several influential studies on Occidentalism, and the term gradually gained popularity in diverse fields and contexts. In 1995, two important books appeared with the title Occidentalism: Xiaomei Chen's *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post Mao China*, and James Carrier's edited volume *Introduction to Occidentalism: Images of the West*. Xiaomei Chen is a comparative literature scholar, and her book explores the essentialisation of the Western Other in Chinese culture since 1978. Within this context, Chen defines Occidentalism as "a discourse that has been evoked by various and competing groups within Chinese society for a variety of different ends, largely though not exclusively, within domestic Chinese politics. As such, it has been both a discourse of oppression and a discourse of liberation."[90] Chen further distinguishes between "two different appropriations of the same discourse for strikingly different political ends."[91] On the one hand, there is the "Official Occidentalism" deployed by the Chinese government in order to contrast itself favourably against the West. The aim is to bolster its nationalistic ideology and oppress the nation. On the other hand, there is the "anti-official Occidentalism" used by anti-government opposition "as a metaphor for a political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society."[92]

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[90] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

[91] Chen, *Occidentalism*, 5.

[92] Chen, *Occidentalism*, 8.

Anthropologist James Carrier advocated the term 'Occidentalism' after an initial exploration of the term in a 1992 essay, which he followed with an edited volume of essays covering the concept through various topics and themes ranging from Melanesian cargo cults to Japanese advertisements. According to Carrier, the primary function of 'Western Occidentalism' is to construct a "quintessential West" through creating aliens. In addition to the aliens created in anthropological fieldwork, there were also the aliens inside the West: rural peasants, working class, and other social groups deemed inadequately Western. This is not an arbitrary process because it leads to the very practical outcome of motivating and achieving a unifying social hegemony.[93] A critique of Occidentalism in this sense serves to "call into question some of the ways that Westerners represent the West to themselves."[94] However, Carrier also recognises the sense of Occidentalism that I use in the current thesis which he describes as "the ways that people outside the West imagines themselves, for their self-image often develops in contrast to their self-stylized image of the West."[95] But for the most part, Carrier stresses Occidentalism as a tool in the internal power relations within and inside the West itself where "dominant constructions of the West reflect the interests and experiences of the dominant groups in the West."[96] The essays

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[93] James G. Carrier, "Preface," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), ix.

[94] Carrier, "Preface," ix.

[95] Carrier, "Introduction," 6.

[96] Carrier, "Introduction," 12-13.

included in the volume, however, offers an understanding of Occidentalism that is more in line with that of the current study.[97]

In general, the term 'Occidentalism' refers to the process whereby non-Western societies or individuals construct the West and its people and cultures. Most often the word is used within the context of describing non-Western representations of the West with a focus on how the idea of the West was employed in the internal discourses of reform, revolution, and other political and social purposes within these non-Western societies. In studies on Chinese Occidentalism, we find that Occidentalism is recognised as a tool of political and social empowerment. Claire Conceison's *Significant Other: Staging the American in China* looks at how "assertion of Chinese self-identity emerges as a primary by-product of representations of Americans in the plays chosen for this study."[98] These representations of the Western other could be anti-Western or pro-Western and functioned as a strategic tool that was utilised differently around the world.

Like the critique of Orientalism, the critique of Occidentalism focuses on exploring how non-Western representations of the West were primarily self-serving

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[97] For example, Millie R. Creighton, "Imaging the Other in Japanese Advertising Campaigns," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 135-160; Robert Thornton, "The Colonial, the Imperial, and the Creation of the 'European' in Southern Africa," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 192-217; Jonathan Spencer, "Occidentalism in the East: The Uses of the West in the Politics and Anthropology of South Asia," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 234-257.

[98] Claire Conceison, "Occidentalism (Re)considered," in *Significant Other: Staging the American in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 51.

like most forms of Othering practices. Moreover, these representations served to differentiate the Self from the Western Other and was based on the particular historical and social context of each society and the type of interaction it produced with the West. In general, these stereotypical representations - positive or negative - empowered these societies to resist not only Western domination but also resist and challenge internal social or political oppression.

The West is usually understood as the European coloniser, Western Europe, or North America; but the 'West' can also stand for ideas and thoughts derived from Western bourgeois value system.[99] Occidentalism allowed Non-Western developing countries to assert their own legitimacy, create new regimes and ideologies, or even suppress their own nations. This process of constructing the Western Other takes place in literature, arts, academia, and bureaucratic institutions throughout the East. The evolution of Occidentalism is associated with the growing military and cultural intrusion of the West on the nations of the East in general.[100] Occidentalism is almost always discussed in relation to Orientalism and Edward Said, but it remains a vague indeterminate concept that "has not yet become an independent discipline like that of Oriental studies in the West".[101] Wang Ning notes that if Orientalism is still seen as vague and nebulous by its critics despite decades of theoretical analysis in the

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[99] Wang Ning, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism? " New Literary History 28, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 61.

[100] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

[101] Ning, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism?" 62.

scholarship, the situation is even worse for Occidentalism which – as the assumed opposite of Orientalism – remains "all the more indeterminate and problematic 'quasi-theoretical' concept". [102] The field remains underdeveloped especially when we compare it with the plethora of studies on Orientalism.

The critique of Occidentalism is to a large degree a response to Said's analysis of Orientalism. If Said explores the relationship between Orientalism and power practices, studies on Occidentalism note the empowering effect of representations of the Western Other in self-defining. In other words, when the Eastern nations engage in Occidentalism, they do so in order to differentiate and distinguish themselves from the Western Other; this process of differentiation will manifest differently according to each society's particular experience of the encounter with the West. There is not one, but multiple Occidentalist discourses depending on different historical and social contexts. Studies on Occidentalism in different contexts show how different societies respond differently to Western encroachment on their society and culture. In a sense, Eastern constructions of the West is a way to process this intrusion and make sense of it; moreover, these constructions usually are more relevant to cultural and political discourses internal to the culture or society creating these constructions than to any Western reality.

Despite the growing interest in Occidentalism and how the West is represented by non-Western societies and cultures, Arab Occidentalism in specific remains understudied. Arab constructions of the West received considerable interests in

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[102] Ning, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism?" 62.

Western media following the 9/11 tragedy, and there were attempts to explain the origins of Arab negative attitudes towards the West.[103] In fact, one of the early books on the topic of Arab representations of America – Kamal Abdel-Malek's well-received volume *America in An Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature: An Anthology 1895-1995* – was consulted and cited in the Congress Report on 9/11.[104] Some argued that antagonism towards the West is rooted in the Arab culture in general, and Islam in specific. This view argues that Arabs are resentful of Europe's progress due to their own social and economic shortcomings and failures. Arab Occidentalism, in this case, is nothing but a reflection of societal and cultural decadence. On the other hand, some argued that this antagonism was the natural legacy of the colonial and imperial past; rather than a conflict of values between East and West, this antagonism was a reaction to a long history of sabotaging interventions in the region.[105] All these discussions and counter-discussions are insightful and relevant, but they are preoccupied mostly with the political aspects of these representations of the contemporary moment with its specific conflicts and power-relations.

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[103] Alaa Bayoumi, "Occidentalism in late nineteenth century Egypt" (Master's thesis, Duquesne University, 2005), 4-7.

[104] Kamal Abdel-Malek and Mouna El Kahla, *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), xi.

[105] Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 145-166; Neil Macfarquhar, "Humiliation and Rage Stalk the Arab World," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2003; Marc Lynch, "Taking Arabs Seriously," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2003.

Arab Occidentalism is sometimes seen as a manifestation of Oriental jealousy of the progress of the West. An example of this is Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit's 2004 book *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*. The subtitle of the book stresses the view of Occidentalism as anti-westernism and blind hatred of the West; the primary enemy is of course Islamist thought. Here Occidentalism is "the dehumanizing picture of the West painted by its enemies." [106] It is a particular discourse within Arab and Muslim culture that will denounce and denigrate the West constantly for its materialism, power, and prosperity provoked by European colonialism in the past and global capitalism today.[107]

Occidentalism, for Buruma and Margalit, is always "fed by a sense of humiliation."[108] The promotion of Western ideas and values as universal solutions of every social or political malaise is perceived as an attack on the authentic or traditional cultural values of non-Western countries; When these Western values "are imposed by force, or when people feel threatened or humiliated or unable to compete with the powers that promote such solutions, that is when we see the dangerous retreat into dreams of purity."[109] This will have a particularly wounding effect in a region like the Middle East where there are desperate attempts to recreate the ideal glorious past which is believed to be lost forever although Buruma and Margalit explored how

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[106] Buruma and Margalit, *Occidentalism*, 5.

[107] Ian Buruma, "The Origins of Occidentalism," *The Chronicles of Higher Education*, February 6, 2004, https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-origins-of-occidentalism/.

[108] Buruma, "The Origins of Occidentalism."

[109] Buruma, "The Origins of Occidentalism."

this sense of humiliating defeat can be felt just as intensely in a developed Eastern culture like Japan, for example. [110] Buruma and Margalit assert that the most sophisticated expressions of Occidentalism will deliberately model themselves on the European Orientalist original, but even Syrian thinker Sadiq Jalal al-Azm – who conceived of an 'Orientalism in Revers' – challenged this assertion noting that the productions of this Occidentalism "never rise to the level of a lofty parody, a captivating satire, or a truly funny take-off."[111] The book remains a good contribution despite its problematic arguments at times.[112]

This dismissive view of Arab Occidentalism as mere anti-Westernism neglects the complexities of Arab representations of the West and their function in the internal politics of Muslim Arab society. Arab Occidentalism and its different manifestations are determined by multiple causes that coexisted and contributed to each other. Within the context of the Naḥḍa, the realisation of European superiority in technology and knowledge highlighted the decadence of Egypt and the *ummah* at large. This realisation led to an earnest process of reform through Westernisation that eventually triggered intense cultural and religious anxiety that this Westernisation if left unchecked will undermine the authenticity of Arab Muslim culture. Arabs managed to subvert the meaning of decadence to their advantage. They interpreted decadence

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[110] Buruma and Margalit, *Occidentalism*, 1-16.

[111] Sadik J. Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Conspiracy," in *Orientalism and Conspiracy: Politics and Conspiracy Theory in the Islamic World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 5.

[112] For a critique of the book, see Akeel Bilgrami, "Occidentalism, the Very Idea: An Essay on the Enlightenment, Enchantment, and the Mentality of Democracy," in *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 279-327.

in such a way that they can forward the nationalist cultural agenda. They blamed Arab decadence on non-Arab Ottoman hegemony - or *ʿujmat al-ḥukkām* (the non-Arabness of rulers) - which presumably was the beginning of an era of "intellectual retardation" that lasted for centuries. This view is still prevalent amongst Arabs well into the 20th century where Muḥammad ʿAbd Al-Ghanī Ḥasan makes the following observation:

> It is wondrous that despite three centuries of Ottoman *occupation*, Turkish could not compete with Arabic nor banish it from its rightful lands; however, Turkish did *corrupt* the natural aptitude for Arab tongue amongst Arabs. We see a deterioration of the talent for expression amongst litterateurs and authors; we see intellectual originality transformed into shallowness, as Arab genius froze and lost the fecundity that we knew in times of Arab leadership.[113]

This conception of decadence that place the blame elsewhere validates the intellectuals and their cultural project and – under the pressure of colonialism – facilitated their pursuit of inspiration for an authentically Arab cultural modernity; this inspiration came from the classical past as well as the West.

There has been a number of studies that touch on how Arab's awareness of Europe and European representations of their culture and society influenced their writings. Mohammed AlQuwaizani's 2002 study "Orientalism and Postcolonialism in Modern Arabic Thought: Imaging and Counter-Imaging" explores how Orientalism influenced the thought of Arab intellectuals. Tracking the East-West discourse through several generations of thinkers in the modern Arab World, AlQuwaizani notes 'reform' as the main context within which this process of answering back to Orientalism takes place. Although AlQuwaizani does not present his study as an

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[113] Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, *Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār* (Cairo: Dar Al-Maʿāif, 1968), 15-18, emphasis added.

investigation of Arab Occidentalism, he shows that the counter-image that Arab writers present is in fact nothing but "a reworking of the orientalist one".[114] In other words, it is indeed an inverted internalisation of Orientalism. AlQuwaizani defines this counter-imaging as

> any attempts to modify, reform, or modernise the Orient based on some ideas borrowed from the West, especially from the Orientalist discourse. The application of these Western ideas to situations that are purely 'Eastern' privileged the European epistemology and posits its universality.[115]

In this thesis, it is my project to show how Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh and al-Nadīm use the West as a central element in their reform and modernisation discourse– as a reference point in negotiations of a potential Arab Muslim modernity.

Alaa Bayoumi's 2005 study "Occidentalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Egypt" approaches the topic with the aim of arriving at "a more comprehensive policy approach toward improving Arabs' views of America and the West".[116] Whereas the media treatment of the topic focused on the phenomenon of Arab Occidentalism divorced from any context, Bayoumi goes back to the nineteenth century to explore early manifestations of Arab Occidentalism. After presenting three case studies of Muslim intellectuals and their representations of the West, Bayoumi concludes that ambivalence is the main characteristic of the way Muslim intellectuals saw the West.

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[114] Mohammed AlQuwaizani, "Orientalism and Postcolonialism in Modem Arabic Thought: Imaging and Counter-Imaging" (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 2002), 3.

[115] AlQuwaizani, "Orientalism and Postcolonialism," 1.

[116] Bayoumi, "Occidentalism," 15.

The West was simultaneously negative and positive, a model for reform as well as an obstacle to it.[117] Put in his words,

> The Occidental views of the three writers show that modern Arab Occidentalism can be best understood as part of an overarching discourse on Arab reform and awakening … [It] was not a neutral reflection of the reality or even of the information each intellectual had about the West. Instead, these Arab and Muslim intellectuals tended to manipulate the information they had about the West in order to serve higher goals, namely, their reform agendas.[118]

This manipulation was carried out through a double discourse: a discourse when addressing Westerners, and an opposite discourse when addressing their fellow Muslims. The content of the double discourse differed from one intellectual to another.

For example, the revolutionary Jamāl Al-Dīn al-ʾAfghānī presented a positive discourse when addressing European audiences, but a negative discourse disparaging the West when speaking to Egyptians. Qāsim Amīn, in contrast, who was concerned with women rights and challenging social traditions that the West hindered through colonialism used a negative discourse when addressing the West but a positive discourse that notes the virtues of Europe when speaking to his Egyptian audiences.[119] Another way these early Arab Occidentalists manipulated the knowledge they presented about the West was through selectivity in the knowledge provided, exaggerations, and the deployment of binary of East and West.[120] Bayoumi focuses on the writings of Jamāl Al-Dīn al-ʾAfghānī, Qāsim Amīn and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-

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[117] Bayoumi, "Occidentalism," 127.

[118] Bayoumi, "Occidentalism," 124-125.

[119] Bayoumi, "Occidentalism," 127.

[120] Bayoumi, "Occidentalism," 125-127.

Kawākibī; authors that reflects Bayoumi's primary concern with informing politics and foreign policies in dealing with the Arab and Muslim world. My project, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with stressing that the Westernisation process was accompanied by an Occidentalist discourse that functioned as a containment tool of this process.

Another study is Rasheed El-Enany's 2006 book *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*. It is an ambitious attempt to reverse Edward Said's *Orientalism* covering over fifty Arab authors, mostly contemporary novelists. El-Enany restricts himself to images of the West in Arab fiction. The first two chapters – "Enchanted Encounters" and "Encounters under Duress" – are particularly relevant to my project, and El-Enany expands to non-fictional texts in these chapters mainly because it was only in the late 19th century that fictional narrative forms flourished. Although somewhat deficient theoretically, El-Enany offers an excellent preliminary framework for analysing how Arab representations of Europe transformed throughout time.[121]

One more study that approached the issue of Occidentalism is Mehmet Atif Kirecci's 2007 "Decline Discourse & Self-Orientalization in the Writings of al-Ṭahṭāwī, Taha Hussayn and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernisation in Egypt and Turkey". Kirecci's definition of Self-Orientalisation intersects with the concept of Occidentalism; however, the stress here is on how this process did not

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[121] Lorenzo Casini, "Arab Representations of the Occident. East–West Encounters in Arabic Fiction, by Rasheed el-Enany," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 12, no. 2 (August 2009): 202.

challenge the Orientalist verdict of Oriental decadence and decline. His conception of 'self-Orientalisation' is very reminiscent of Syrian thinker Sādiq Jalāl al-Azm's 'Orientalism in Reverse'. Kirecci's main argument is that by admitting to the Orientalist diagnosis of decadence, Arabs were helping themselves to a particular form of power and authority in their society:

> Self-orientalization is not merely Occidentalism. It is also a mechanism by which native intellectuals and politicians perceive and reproduce themselves, in harmony with Orientalist perceptions. As native reformers (politicians, intellectuals and bureaucrats) attempt to catch up with the West, they contested colonial rule, occasionally as they function within it.[122]

In other words, Orientalising the Self allows the native intellectuals to position themselves as authoritative leaders of reforming society and culture, and allowed them to prescribe solutions for this decadence and expound on what are the correct social and cultural values that the society needs to overcome their decadence. As Kirecci puts it, "they [native intellectuals] believed that they held the keys to knowledge of European civilisation and knew how to advance their societies".[123] The urban cultural elite that were apprentices of the West, therefore become tutors for their nation on how to become modern, civilised, or enlightened without completely losing themselves in the Other. It is an attempt to create a neo-tradition that emerges only in confrontation with the West. The West was not just a geographical location but as stated above it represented the ideas, thoughts, and value system of the European coloniser.

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[122] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 26.

[123] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 4.

Robert Woltering's 2009 monograph "Occidentalisms: Images of 'the West' in Egypt" offers new insights on the interplay between ideology and the creation of images of the West in Egypt. As the plural 'Occidentalisms' in the title indicates, Woltering acknowledges that there is not one occidentalism as there are multiple representations of the West that emerged in Egypt. Woltering's book is "not concerned with the West, rather it is concerned with how the West is perceived and constructed in Egypt. It starts from the premise that images are subjective and therefore diverse, hence the plural noun in its title: Occidentalisms."[124] Woltering recognises Occidentalism in the sense presented in Carrier as primarily the West's self-representations, but Woltering suggests that this should be referred to as "auto-Occidentalism."[125] Occidentalism, like Orientalism, is essentially a process of Othering that constructs the Self through constructing images of the Other:

> My understanding of Occidentalism is straightforward and universal: Occidentalism is both the activity of constructing an image of the West, and the result of this activity (the image itself). Anyone can engage in this activity. … I do presume it to be stereotypical, in the sense that I presume it to stand in a dialectical relationship with images of the Self. … In other words, I seek out images in which the West has taken the place of the typical Other. As is well known, images of the Other will always be connected to the image of one's Self. *Although this means that the image is always a distortion from reality, I will argue that the image is never entirely detached from reality.* Real experiences of real facts are ingredients for images of Orient, Occident, British or Egyptian alike. To image, reality is an essential (though not sufficient) precondition.[126]

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[124] Robert Woltering, "Occidentalisms: Images of 'the West' in Egypt" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009), 2.

[125] Woltering, "Occidentalisms," 24. Interestingly, Carrier saw Occidentalism primarily as "the essentialistic rendering of the West by Westerners;" however, when carried out by non-Westerners, Carrier designate this practice as an "ethno-Occidentalism." See James G. Carrier, "The World Turned Upside-Down," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 2 (May 1992), 198.

[126] Woltering, "Occidentalisms," 24; emphasis added.

This last observation by Woltering is important because it highlights the performative nature of these images. In a sense, they are not different from Orientalism which is "a descriptive and performative discourse."[127] For the authors within this thesis, their writings on the West stemmed from a desire to objectively describe the West to their readers, but these writings were also meant to mobilise their readers for their reform project.

In Arab intellectual circles, there was also a parallel discussion on Occidentalism starting from the 1990s. This contemporary development of the idea of Occidentalism was directly related to Arab interest in and anxiety over Orientalism. Arab and Muslim intellectuals oscillated between being impressed with the knowledge production of Orientalists and feeling the need to counter it or at least circumvent it.[128] The main motivation behind this growing demand for an Arab or Islamic Occidentalism that speaks back to European Orientalism was primarily the perceived threat of the West and its growing subordination of the East politically, economically, and most significantly, culturally. An example of this alarmed and alarmist view of the West is ʾAḥmad ʿAbd Al-Wahāb's 1990 book *Al-Taghrīb: Ṭūfān min Al-Gharb* [Westernisation: A Flood Coming from the West]. For ʿAbd Al-Wahāb, Westernisation is "a long-term Western strategy with specific goals and tools."[129] ʿAbd Al-Wahāb also invokes the Crusades and argues that the Westernisation of the

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[127] Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms," 6.

[128] ʿAlī ʾIbrāhīm Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Manhaj Fī Fahminā li Al-Gharb* (Riyadh: Al-Majalla Al-ʿArabiyah, 2015), 15.

[129] ʾAḥmad ʿAbd Al-Wahāb, *Al-Taghrīb: Ṭūfān min Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Turāth Al-ʾIslāmī, 1990), 3.

World is in the first place a crusade war and a new form of colonialism that is more subtle as it relies on cultural invasion [*Al-Ghazw Al-Thaqāfī*].[130]

In 1992, Egyptian philosopher Ḥasan Ḥanafī published his book *Muqaddiam fī ʿIlm Al-ʾIstighrāb* [*An Introduction to the Science of Occidentalism*] in which he argued for the urgency of creating an Arab Occidentalism to neutralise the alarming influence of 'Westernisation.' According to Ḥanafī, the reach of Westernisation expanded far beyond cultural and intellectual life: Westernisation infiltrated everyday life, language, public life, and architecture amongst many other facets of life in the East. Westernisation is a form of deep alienation that is threatening the civilisational independence [*ʾistiqlālunā al-ḥaḍārī*] of Arabs and Muslims.[131] Occidentalism – as the reverse of Orientalism – is the solution, and its presence is necessary to balance out the relationship between East and West.[132] Ḥanafī's formulation of Occidentalism was part of a larger reform project of Islamic thought that he called "*Al-Tajdīd wa Al-Turāth*" [Renewal and Heritage]; the first component of this project was the attitude towards the classical heritage of Islam while "*Mawqifunā min al-Turāth al-Gharbī*" [Our Attitude Towards Western Heritage] was the second component.[133] Although the

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[130] ʿAbd Al-Wahāb, *Al-Taghrīb*, 5-14.

[131] Ḥasan Ḥanafī, *Muqaddiam fī ʿIlm Al-ʾIstighrāb* (Cairo: Al-Dār Al-Fanniyah, 1991), 22-23.

[132] Ḥanafī, *Muqaddiam*, 29.

[133] Yudia Wahyudi, "Arab Responses to Ḥasan Ḥanafī's *Muqaddiam fī ʿIlm Al-ʾIstighrāb*," *The Muslim World* 93, no. 2 (April 2003): 233-234.

response to this proposed Occidentalism was overall negative,[134] Ḥanafī was one of several Islamic Arabic intellectuals that stressed the concept of Occidentalism from an Islamic perspective.

There is great care amongst those writing on Occidentalism to distinguish between their definition of Occidentalism and terms like Westernisation or Modernisation, and this is further exacerbated by the initial distrust that the term inspired in some circles.[135] If in English writings, we see a tendency to confuse Occidentalism with anti-Westernism, in Arab writings on Occidentalism, we find that there is a tendency to confuse Occidentalism [ʾIstighrāb] with Westernisation [Taghrīb], and the two words are sometimes used to mean the same thing particularly within religious polemical writings against the West and its growing influence on society and culture.[136] Moreover, there is a need to distinguish between an Occidentalist and a Westernised Arab or Westerniser who will compromise his own cultural and religious authenticity in their role as blind imitator and mere marketeer of Western culture. The Occidentalist, in contrast, is proud of his own culture and his expertise in Western culture serves his own culture; he is a teacher and illustrator of the West for his Eastern nation rather than a promoter. This would involve the

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[134] Wahyudi, "Arab Responses," 233. See also Sadik J. Al-Azm, "Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Islamism: Keynote Address to "Orientalism and Fundamentalism in Islamic and Judaic Critique: A Conference Honoring Sadik Al-Azm," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 1 (May 2010): 6-7.

[135] Muḥammad Ḥusayn ʿAlī Al-Suwaīṭī, "Mafhūm Al-ʾIstighrāb wa Dawāfiʿuh Fī Kitābāt Al-Muʾarikhīn Al-Muslimīn," *Larq Journal* 4, no. 3 (2016): 193-194; Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 45-46.

[136] See for example, ʾAbū Al-ʿAlāʾ Mawdūdī, *Al-Ḥijāb* (Beirut: Dār Al-Maʿrifa, 1959), 119-121.

transmission of what is useful from Western knowledge and culture through translation, but only if these elements align with the tenets of Islam. [137] Any intellectuals that engage with the West in a manner that does not align with the standards placed by the advocate of this Islamic Occidentalism are dismissed as disloyal 'civilisational informants' [*ʾUmalāʾ Ḥaḍarīyūn*] or 'Arab Orientalists' [*Al-Mustashriqūn Al-ʿArab*] alienated and estranged from their culture.[138]

In this vision, Occidentalism is posited as a morally superior equivalent of Orientalism. Saudi academic ʿAlī ʾIbrāhīm Al-Namla, for example, maintains that this proposed Occidentalism will not be based on blind reactionism, sensationalism or prejudice; rather, this Islamic-informed Occidentalism will approach Western history, events, nations, and individuals with fairness and objectivity. [139] It is simply inconceivable for this proposed Arab Occidentalism to be as biased, racialist or condescending as Western Orientalism; an example of this viewpoint is Karam Khilla who argued that unlike the West,

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[137] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 17.

[138] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 80; Anouar Abdel-Malek, "ʾAnā Dāʾimān maʿ Rīḥ Al-Sharq," in *Min Naqd Al-Istishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb*, ed. ʾAḥmad Al-Shaykh (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 67.

[139] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 9.

> We have a humane point of view. We don't have this racist thinking that
> exists in the West. Racism - in my opinion - is linked to imperialism, to a
> [hierarchical] top-down view [of the world] … When a Western
> researcher studies Egypt or Saudi Arabia, he feels that he is standing
> before a primitive society, and will study this society from the top
> [looking down], and this racist outlook did not die yet … However, I
> definitely would not call for answering this racism with a counter racism,
> but rather with a humane attitude.[140]

In the so-called 'Islamic Occidentalism,' there is an attempt to find precedence for

this Occidentalism retrospectively in early Islam by designating certain events and

texts as examples of Islamic Occidentalism.[141] For Al-Namla, Occidentalism existed

since the emergence of Islam, and any form of contact between the East – which is

primarily the Islamic world in this context – and the West – again usually understood

as Christianity – is an indication of Occidentalism taking place. Even the Crusades

involved cultural, religious, and military contact that is part of the overarching legacy

of this Arab Islamic Occidentalism.[142]

In his article, Muḥammad Ḥusayn ʿAlī Al-Suwaīṭī notes that Occidentalism –

or studying the West – is not a reaction to modern European Orientalism nor is it

motivated by a desire to imitate Orientalism.[143] Occidentalism is not a modern

phenomenon or attitude, but one that has long historical roots since the early days of

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[140] Karam Khilla, "Ḥadhār min Al-Markaziyah Al-Sharqiyah," in *Min Naqd Al-Istishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb*, ed. ʾAḥmad Al-Shaykh (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 163.

[141] Muḥammad ʾIhāmī, *Naḥwa Taʾṣīl ʾIslāmī li ʿIlm Al-ʾIstighrāb* (Cairo: Dār Al-Taqwa, 2015), 73-82.

[142] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 26-27.

[143] Al-Suwaīṭī, "Mafhūm Al-ʾIstighrāb," 194.

Islam.[144] Examples of this early manifestation of Muslim Occidentalism included: the letters sent by Prophet Muhammad to neighbouring nations and particularly *al-rūm*; the translation movement that started with the Umayyad and reached its peak during the Abbasid period is also a manifestation of Occidentalism; and finally, the writings of Muslim historians between the 9th and 11th centuries.[145] This latter example was the focus for the rest of the article. Here, Ibn Khaldūn serves as a model of what a Muslim Occidentalist is and what he should achieve for culture.[146] Mohammed AbdelHalim Bichi also argues for the historical roots of Occidentalism in Islamic heritage by exploring the writings of medieval Muslim geographers, travellers, philosophers, and theologians and how they reflected on Europe and the West whether through first-hand experiences or reported facts and knowledge. The main question of the paper is whether this Occidentalism was a modern reaction to Orientalism or whether it was a type of knowledge that already existed in some form in the pre-modern medieval times.[147] According to Bichi, this early Occidentalist activity aimed to facilitate the efforts of *Daʿwah* – or "inviting" people to embrace Islam – and also as a form of intelligence gathering to maintain the security of the Islamic state against any potential threat the West and its inhabitants could pose.[148] Within the contemporary context, Bichi agrees with Ḥanafī's assessment: Occidentalism – understood as studying and

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[144] Al-Suwaiṭī, "Mafhūm Al-ʾIstighrāb," 194-195.

[145] Al-Suwaiṭī, "Mafhūm Al-ʾIstighrāb," 194.

[146] Al-Suwaiṭī, "Mafhūm Al-ʾIstighrāb," 203-204.

[147] Mohammed AbdelHalim Bichi, "The Historical Roots of Occidentalism in the Islamic Heritage," *Majalat Kulliyat Al-Sharīʿa wa Al-Dirāsāt Al-ʾIslāmiyah* 37, no. 2 (2020): 136.

[148] Bichi, "Historical Roots," 155.

analysing the West – is essential for the survivability of Islam; it is important to emulate medieval Muslim Occidentalists, and exert similar efforts in understanding the West intimately to counter its "evils" [*li raddi ghwāʾilih*].[149]

Despite these attempts to trace Arab and Muslim Occidentalism well into the medieval age and beyond, a more accepted starting date for Arab Occidentalism in its modern form is the 19th century.[150] Most of these early Occidentalist texts were travelogues, but not all travelogues qualify to be part of this Occidentalist discourse unless they include a description of life in the West or critique of a certain aspect of it.[151] The problem with these formulations of Occidentalism is that they are in fact a defensive and reactionary response to modern neo-Orientalist attitudes towards the Middle East and Islam. There is an attempt to distinguish between a political Occidentalism and a religious Occidentalism where the latter focuses on the religious Other: Christianity and Judaism.[152] In over 15 pages, Al-Namla seeks to justify and delineates the boundaries of this religious Occidentalism and what it should achieve; these included topics like the trinity, the nature of Jesus Christ, the divinity of Christ and the like.[153] It is in fact hard to distinguish between this proposed Occidentalism and active Islamic missionary activity or *Daʿwah*, and in anticipating this, Al-Namla

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[149] Bichi, "Historical Roots," 155.

[150] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 46-47.

[151] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 50.

[152] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 51-73; Bichi, "Historical Roots," 140-142.

[153] Bichi, "Historical Roots," 140-142.

actually notes the link between the early development of Orientalism and the Christian

missionary activities.[154]

In this proposed Islamic Occidentalism, the West is the ultimate Other. The

West or *Al-Gharb* in Arabic is a lexically complicated word. In Arabic, the root *gh-r-*

b can convey many meanings; the most obvious is as a reference to the direction

"west", but it can also convey the meaning of "strangeness, estrangement, exile,

mysteriousness, and excessiveness."[155] The main line of division between Self and

Other is usually religio-cultural: the West is Europe and America, but it is also

Christianity. Just like Orientalism divided the East, this Occidentalism divides the

West into a Near, Middle, and Far West.[156] Although theoretically, this division can

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[154] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 17.

[155] Bichi, "Historical Roots," 138-19.

[156] Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb*, 34-37. The Near West is interestingly the same region that Westerners sometimes refer to as the "Near East" but with the addition of East Europe. The Other here refers to religious communities rather than geographical locations; in specific, the Orthodox Eastern Christian communities. However, because of the cultural aspect, a distinction is made between Christian Arabs and non-Arabs in this region. Arab Christians are part of the Self. The Middle West refers to Western Europe, and the main Other here is the Catholic and Protestant Christian nations; the Self and Other here share the traumatic legacy of the Crusades. There is a suspicious distrust between the two sides, and the moderation exhibited by the governments is seen as an attempt to contain and conceal the strong anti-Easternism in their societies. The Far West refers to the Americas, primarily the USA and perhaps to a lesser degree Canada. Unlike the Middle Western nations of Europe, Far Western nations do not exhibit the intense anti-Easternism of Europe; rather, these are multicultural diverse societies that allegedly accepted Islam and Muslims within their model of cultural pluralism. Whereas in the Middle West or Europe, we have intolerant societies and tolerant governments; in the Far West, the society is tolerant, but the government is ruled by a succession of extremist right-wing administrations that openly invokes the Crusades in their intrusion into the affairs of the East. Again, we find here the confusing religio-cultural divide: Latin America is excluded from this 'Far West.' Even though these are predominantly Catholic nations, they are culturally non-Western, and from a human development standpoint, they can be considered amongst the developing nations of the global South.

be useful for more nuanced discussions, it is problematic due to its overemphasis on religious affiliation exclusively, and disinterest in challenging the polarisation of the East and West as well as Islam and Christianity. Therefore, we find Egyptian French political scientist Anouar Abdel-Malek express his unease with this Arab fixation with the issue of Arab-Western relations. The West is only one of many pressing cultural and relational issues and should be explored within a more expanded context that considers the cultural relations of Arabs with the larger East and prioritise these relationships.[157] Occidentalism in these writings is concerned primarily with religion and politics, and there is hardly any attempt to challenge the East/West binary. This collapsing of the West into Christianity creates some confusing definitions of Occidentalism; Al-Suwaīṭī, for example, sees the contact between early Muslims and the Christians of Najran and Arabia as an example of Occidentalism.[158]

If we move away from this Islamic Occidentalism to a more general definition of the idea of Occidentalism, the situation is not much different. There is hardly any agreement on what Occidentalism means, and it appears that each intellectual will come to a different definition or focus depending on his personal experience and context. This reality can be seen very clearly in an important volume edited by ʾAḥmad Al-Shaykh under the title *Min Naqd Al-Istishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* [From Orientalist Critique to Occidentalist Critique: Arab Intellectuals and the West]. Al-Shaykh conducted interviews with over

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[157] Abdel-Malek, "ʾAnā Dāʾimān maʿ Rīḥ Al-Sharq," 72-73.

[158] Al-Suwaīṭī, "Mafhūm Al-ʾIstighrāb," 194.

twenty Arab and Muslim intellectuals including influential figures like Ḥasan Ḥanafī,

Louis Awad, and Anouar Abdel-Malek, but as he notes in the introduction to the book:

> After a period of contemplation, I arrived at the firm conclusion that talking and writing about issues like Orientalism and Occidentalism involve by necessity a degree of misunderstanding whether one intends to or not. The issues themselves will cast a shadow on the approach, analysis, and personal opinions of each author – as well as the listeners and readers – before the dialogue actually start. Indeed, before it even begins, the dialogue is besieged by preconceived judgements and stereotypes; and it is usually preceded by zeal, anger, and hasty impulse to voice opinions on these difficult issues[159]

Therefore, we find various definitions of the term throughout the volume. Al-Shaykh

himself believes that Occidentalism could not be a science as Ḥasan Ḥanafī argues for

example, rather, it can be viewed as a civilisational movement or process.[160] Some of

the participants understood Occidentalism as a conscious and deliberate critique of

the West rather than an objective science that makes the West the object of study.[161]

Unlike the proponents of Islamic Occidentalism, many refused any attempt to

model this Occidentalism on Orientalism; Muḥammad Al-Nayrab for example

declares: "I don't want Occidentalism to be what Orientalism was. I want

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[159] ʾAḥmad Al-Shaykh, "Taqdīm Al-Kitāb," in *Min Naqd Al-Istishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb*, ed. ʾAḥmad Al-Shaykh (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 1.

[160] ʾAḥmad Al-Shaykh, ed., *Min Naqd Al-Istishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 295.

[161] Samīḥ Farsūn, "Al-ʾIstighrāb Naqd li Al-Gharb," in *Min Naqd Al-Istishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 143-153.

Occidentalism to be more sophisticated intellectually and nobler in its aims."[162]

Anwar Luqā similarly rejects Orientalism as a model, declares himself to be "an Occidentalist without Occidentalism," and refuse to use the term 'Occidentalism' because of its implicit antagonism and hostility.[163] However, in the very same volume, we do find a negative and somewhat antagonistic stance where Western hegemony is an obstacle in the way of the East and its efforts to accumulate knowledge about the West;[164] any attempt to circumvent this reality is to ignore the bad will that characterises the relationship between the East and West.[165] Occidentalism, in this context, is a cultural luxury: the Arab and Muslim world is facing an existential

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[162] Muḥammad Al-Nayrab, "Maʿa ʾIstighrāb bidūn ʾIstishraq," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 249-252.

[163] Anwar Luqā, "ʾAnā Mustaghrib bidūn ʾIstighrāb," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 211-218.

[164] Louis Awad, "Dāʾimān Al-Gharb Gharb," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 110-111; Al-Sayyid Yāsīn, "Fahmunā li Al-Tabaʿiyah Maṣdaruhu Al-Gharb," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 190; Fatḥī Riḍwān, "Karāhiyatunā li Al-Gharb Mashrūʿa," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 30-40.

[165] Riḍwān, "Karāhiyatunā li Al-Gharb Mashrūʿa," 32.

danger, and all efforts should be directed towards internal crises rather than in understanding the hostile Other.[166] In a sense, Occidentalism is already a reality.[167]

Indeed, some absolutely rejected the possibility of Occidentalism: either because East and West are mere illusions,[168] or because an East-centrism will be as dangerous as Eurocentrism,[169] or because they see the fixation on the West as nothing short of a psychological and intellectual illness peculiar to the Arab intelligentsia.[170] What is important to note is that all these Arab intellectuals reflecting on Occidentalism are working from within a modern contemporary context; therefore, their views will not necessarily align with how Occidentalism appears in the writing of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm.

In this thesis, I define Occidentalism as the discourse that created representations of the West with the aim of containing Westernisation within a context

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[166] Al-Ḥabīb Al-Janḥanī, "Qaḍāyāanā ʾAwalan thumma Al-ʾIstighrāb," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 199-210.

[167] ʿAllal Sīnāṣur, "Mustaghribūn ʾAkthar Mimmā Naẓun," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 236-237.

[168] Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd, "Khilāfunā maʿa Ak-Gharb Wahm Mutabādal," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 20-23; René Habachi, "Lā Sharq wa Lā Gharb," in *Min Naqd Al-ʾIstishraq ʾila Naqd Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Muthaqqafūn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Gharb* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-ʿArabī li Al-Dirāsāt Al-Gharbiyah, 2000), 259-262.

[169] Khilla, "Ḥadhār min Al-Markaziyah Al-Sharqiyah," 163-166.

[170] George Ṭarābīshī, *Al-Maraḍ bi Al-Gharb: Al-Taḥlīl Al-Nafsī li ʿUṣāb Jamāʾī ʿArabī* (Amman: Dār Batrā, 2005), 12-14. See also, George Ṭarābīshī, *Al-Maraḍ bi Al-Gharb 2: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyah Nafsiyah li Kitābāt Ḥasan Ḥanafī* (Amman: Dār Batrā, 2005).

of colonial modernity. Whereas contemporary Arab intellectuals writing on Occidentalism are concerned with a cultural invasion [*Al-Ghazw Al-Thaqāfī*], economic dominance and the use of soft power; the authors covered in this thesis witnessed an actual colonisation, and an explicit use of power in the administration of their country by the house of Muhammad Ali as well as the British colonial authorities. Here, Occidentalism is not anti-westernism nor pro-westernism, but a conscious and deliberate interplay between the two. The aim was not to completely stop the process of Westernisation, of course; after all, these authors genuinely believed that the solution for the malaise of society and culture can be found in the West. The problem was that this solution cannot be transplanted without the context that created, which is exactly what Muḥammad ʿAlī and ʾIsmāʿīl attempted to do. Their Occidentalism functioned as a tool to regulate the content of European knowledge and culture allowed entry and infuse it with the necessary value and meaning that will make it effective in the Egyptian context.

The West was not just a geographical location but is transformed as it becomes a construct of representations and interpretations loaded with meanings that come into focus only in comparison with the East. This construct will explain and justify their own self-constructions as they attempt to revive past identities. Arab Muslim intellectuals of the late nineteenth century

> did not seek to restore a pristine past but instead wished to reformulate [their] Islamic heritage in response to the political, scientific, and cultural challenge of the West. [They] provided an Islamic rationale for accepting modern ideas and institutions, whether scientific, technological, or political.[171]

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[171] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55.

Indeed, if Edward Said has shown that Orientalism was necessary for Europe to legitimise its colonial project and expansion, then Occidentalism was necessary for these Egyptian authors to validate their reform project. This reform project composed of a temporal turn to the contemporary Western civilisation but also a spiritual turn to the medieval Arabo-Islamic civilisation. This can be linked to a process that Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui called traditionalisation that results when foreign occupation sabotage organic processes of tradition-making.

The creation of tradition is a complex process, and it is even more so when the culture willingly concedes that it is 'decadent'. Laroui's main argument is that the precious *turāth* or tradition that Arabs are holding on is not real precisely because of the trauma of colonisation; this trauma made Arabs artificially construct an ideal tradition from an ideal past completely circumventing reality. Laroui calls on modern Arabs to let go of their *imagined* affinity to classical Arab culture and give up trying to recreate it. This futile attempt to recreate classical culture is the root of what he calls Arab and Muslim "cultural retardation". Modern Arabs, he argues, should relate to their classical heritage the way modern Europeans relate to Greek and Roman classical culture: European culture may draw inspiration from its ancient classical past, but this modern culture accepts that this classical heritage is culturally dead and there are no attempts to recreate it.[172] This is the tragedy of Arabo-Islamic modernity: in trying to avoid decadence, modern Arabs aim to recreate a lost glory. In this context, Laroui describes a process of traditionalisation carried out by the urban cultural elite who will often be depicted in scholarship as progressive liberals in a traditional

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[172] Laroui, *Crisis*, 7-10.

society. In times of intense external pressure on traditional societies, the cultural elite will start to 'traditionalise' and the goal of such a process is to create a strong group identity as part of the social and cultural anti-colonial resistance. According to Laroui, "this cohesion is in itself a goal and a value; all social life is oriented toward the interior. At all levels, therefore, we observe a process of retrospection". [173] It is precisely in relation to the source of this external pressure that tradition and identity are refashioned. Within this retrospective cultural process, the Occident become a token through which the self is negotiated and fashioned.

Conclusion

The goal of highlighting Arab Occidentalism as an important cultural phenomenon of the Arab Nahḍa in 19th century Egypt is to challenge the overemphasis on what is 'new', 'modern' 'liberal' or in any form typically 'western'. While it is undeniable that a rapid process of Westernisation took place, the popularising of Europe and European knowledge took place through representations of Europe. The next three chapters will explore the writings of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm. Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm were members of the Egyptian cultural elite of Egypt – i.e., an early precursor to the *'Afandīyah* of the 20th century– that sought to reform society and culture within a context of colonial pressure.

The West was always the reference point in this negotiation of a modern self. An Occidentalist attitude regulated the process of Westernisation as these intellectuals

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[173] Laroui, *Crisis*, 37.

analysed European cultural, social, and political products to decide what elements can be incorporated without threatening cultural fidelity. They encouraged their readers to adopt European virtues and acquire European knowledge to revive the Muslim East. These are the values, practices, and institutions upon which modern European civilisation was built. Whatever they disseminated of this knowledge to their readers was injected with specific meanings and values that linked it to the tradition extrapolated from the idealised past of medieval Islamic civilisation. But the three authors were also anxious that European vices will compromise the morality and authenticity of their society. They were not aiming to create a modernity identical to that of Europe; rather, they aimed to create an Egyptian, Arab, and Muslim modernity.

Chapter 3: The Father of Modern Egypt: The West in the Travelogues of

Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī

> [Paris] is filled with all intellectual sciences and arts, as well as astounding justice and remarkable equity that must once again find a home in the lands of Islam.
>
> - Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī[1]
>
> I implore God - praise to Him the Exalted - that this book … will arouse all Islamic nations - both Arab and non-Arab - from their sleep of indifference.
>
> - Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī[2]
>
> If Napoleon had been the conqueror who made the first impact, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was the great scholar who followed Napoleon's footsteps and convinced the Egyptian people to become enlightened modern citizens.
>
> - Mehmet Akif Kirecci[3]

In an 1899 issue of *Al-Samīr Al-Saghīr*, and more than twenty-five years after his death, Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801-1873) was featured as one of three other Egyptian reformers on the front-page of the magazine that targeted Egyptian schoolchildren.[4] Al-Ṭahṭāwī played a major role in shaping the intellectual and cultural life of the modern renaissance in Egypt throughout the 19ᵗʰ century. He

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[1] Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris: account of a stay in France by an Egyptian cleric (1826-1831)*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 130; Rifā'ah Rāfi' Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz aw al-dīwān al-nafīs bi ʾīwān bārīs" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah li Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 2:48.

[2] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 100; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:18.

[3] Mehmet Akif Kirecci, "Decline Discourse and self-Orientalization in the Writings of Al-Tahtawi, Taha Hussayn and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernization in Egypt and Turkey" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 110.

[4] Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003), 6; 8, figure 7.

travelled to France in his early twenties as part of the Egyptian educational missions to Europe. He returned four years later to Egypt for a long career in the cultural arm of Muḥammad ʿAlī 's bureaucracy writing over seventeen books in addition to prolific translations.[5] His exceptional career gave him several titles of veneration. He is called "the father of modern Egyptian thought,"[6] "the forefather of Egyptian nationalism,"[7] "the *imām* of the 19th century modern renaissance," [8] and the founder of "the intellectual movement in Egypt"[9] amongst other similar epithets.

The most important of his books is probably his travelogue to Paris which was published soon after his return to Egypt. Through this book, al-Ṭahṭāwī provided a window for the Egyptians to peek through and see the modern West. *Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz*[10] offers an early manifestation of the way the Egyptian cultural elite attempted to rationalise their relationship to the West in this modern encounter. Al-

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[5] Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 12; Muḥammad ʿImārā, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah li Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 1: 102-109.

[6] Louis Awad, *The Literature of Ideas in Egypt: Part I* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 25.

[7] Jenna Allen, "Negotiating modernity: An Imam in Paris" (Master diss., University of Colorado, 2013), 3.

[8] Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, *Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār* (Cairo: Dar Al-Maʿārif, 1968), 25.

[9] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 11.

[10] Roger Allen translates the title to "The Purification of Gold Regarding Paris in Brief" in his book *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of Its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 71. Louis Awad translates it to the simpler and more accessible "Manners and Customs of the Modern Parisians" in *The Literature of Ideas*, 40.

Ṭahṭāwī was the first to use the phrase "al-Bilād al-Gharbīyah" [Western Lands] in juxtaposition with "al-Bilād al-ʾIslāmīyah" [Islamic Lands].[11] He was arguably also the first modern Arab Occidentalist as he experienced the West first-hand and made it his mission to introduce the West to his fellow Egyptians and Arabs. Most importantly, Al-Ṭahṭāwī used this encounter with the European Other as a springboard for conceiving of a new modern Arab Muslim identity. I argue in this chapter that the book highlights the tension of a young Arab Muslim who is deeply proud of his homeland, religion and culture coming to terms with the superior achievements of Europe.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī: A Cultural Bureaucrat

Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī was born in October 1801 in his hometown of Ṭahṭā in the province of Sūhāj in Upper Egypt to a noble and wealthy family.[12] His father's family traced its lineage to Prophet Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima, and one of his ancestors was the famous mystic saint Jalāl Al-Dīn Abū Al-Qāsim (d. 1361). His mother Fāṭima was the daughter of sheikh Aḥmad Al-Farghalī Al-ʾAnṣārī, and their ancestry goes back to the *Khazraj* tribe of Medina in Hijaz with several notable ancestors that included religious scholars, judges, jurists, grammarians, poets, and *Hadīth* experts. In Islamic society, families with this pious and religious ancestry received great prestige and honour, and Al-Ṭahṭāwī was proud of his lineage

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[11] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963; London: Saqi Books, 2011), 158.

[12] J. Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifā'ah Badawī Rāfi' aṭ-Tahṭāwī: The Egyptian Revivalist," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 9, no. 4 (1939): 961; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25; Daniel L. Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," in *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)* (London: Saqi Book, 2004), 29.

throughout his life.[13] Although the family was originally well-off, by the time Rifāʿah was born the family lost its financial security, and was reduced to traveling from one town to the next to find lodging with relatives.[14] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's father was a *multazim* [a tax farmer], and the family lost its property and became destitute overnight like many wealthy rural families that suffered great financial misfortune after Muḥammad ʿAlī introduced his drastic land reforms and abolished the system of ʾiltizām [tax farming].[15] It was during the three years on the road that Al-Ṭahṭāwī memorised the whole of Qurʾān under the supervision of his father, and right after that he began to study the different major religious texts taught at Al-ʾAzhar under the supervision of his maternal uncles. Soon after returning to Ṭahṭā, Al-Ṭahṭāwī's father - Rāfiʿ - passed away when the boy was only sixteen, and soon after that young Al-Ṭahṭāwī was sent away to Cairo to attend the Al-ʾAzhar.[16]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī struggled in the first two years at Al-ʾAzhar: he did not only mourn the loss of his father, but he was also struggling financially, and took frequent breaks to visit his village. Eventually, however, he started taking his studies seriously and made impressive progress.[17] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was struggling to live on whatever his mother could send him from the village, and by the end of his first year at Al-ʾAzhar,

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[13] Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 29-30.

[14] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifā'ah Badawī," 961; Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 30-31.

[15] Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 30.

[16] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifā'ah Badawī," 961; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25; Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 31.

[17] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifā'ah Badawī," 961.

he started teaching to make ends meet. [18] At Al-ʾAzhar, he studied theology, jurisprudence, Arabic language and literature until the age of twenty-one when he started teaching there.[19] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's social background – coming as he did from an established family of *'Ulamā'*- facilitated his teaching career in addition to the support of his mentor Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār. On his regular visits to his hometown, Al-Ṭahṭāwī gave lessons on theology in his grandfather's mosque. Following the end of his four years' studies at Al-ʾAzhar, Al-Ṭahṭāwī received several *ʾijāzāt* (licences) from his sheikhs qualifying him to teach their courses. In 1821, he started lecturing at Al-ʾAzhar specialising in poetry, prosody, logic, rhetoric, and *Hadīth*.[20]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī was still struggling financially on his meagre payment as a young sheikh, so like many scholars he started offering private lessons to the children of the Turkish elite in Cairo.[21] Most importantly, it was at Al-ʾAzhar that Al-Ṭahṭāwī met his mentor Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār. Al-Ṭahṭāwī was a favourite of Al-ʿAṭṭār who took special interest in bright students opening his house for them to attend subjects that were not taught in the ʾAzhari curriculum such as geography, history, and literature, and Al-Ṭahṭāwī on his part remained a loyal student of his teacher.[22] Al-ʿAṭṭār, interacted heavily with the French during their three years occupation of Egypt; he attended lectures presented by the French on topics of modern sciences and was a regular of

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25.

[20] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 962, Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 33.

[21] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 962; Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 33.

[22] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 962; Ḥasan, *Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār*, 26.

Napoleon's Institut d'Égypte.[23] More than a mere teacher, Al-ʿAṭṭār became a dear and intimate friend of Al-Ṭahṭāwī.[24] This apprenticeship proved life-changing for the young scholar; it was with the help of Al-ʿAṭṭār that Al-Ṭahṭāwī developed his inclination towards modern science and the view that knowledge is not to be confined within religious books.[25] Such a view prepared him to lead the wave of change in Egyptian culture and education; in addition, Al-ʿAṭṭār used his influence to further the career of his student.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's real breakthrough came in 1824 when his mentor Al-ʿAṭṭār nominated him for the position of preacher for a newly formed regiment in Muḥammad ʿAlī's modern army. This marked a shift in his trajectory as a young ʾAzhari sheikh.[26] According to Daniel Newman, this was a significant event for two reasons: firstly, Al-Ṭahṭāwī for the first time could meet and interact with Europeans – mostly French – working for Muḥammad ʿAlī's army; secondly, he witnessed first-hand the results of Muḥammad ʿAlī's intense modernisation.[27] As J. Heyworth-Dunne puts it, this was Al-Ṭahṭāwī's first experience of "the new military organisation which was controlled by the Turks and where Europeans had already began to assert their influence through the demands made on them for the 'new learning'".[28] Two years

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[23] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25.

[24] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 962.

[25] Ḥasan, *Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār*, 26.

[26] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 963; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 11.

[27] Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 33-34.

[28] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 963.

later in 1826, when Muḥammad ʿAlī decided to send the first mission to France, again Al-ʿAṭṭār vouched for his student Al-Ṭahṭāwī to join as an ʾImām. Although his role was restricted to providing religious service and guidance, he proved to be the most noteworthy member of the educational missions.[29]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī was not a full mission member, and yet he did not restrict himself to his religious duties: he learned French and read widely in the humanities which was his passion – although it was not of interest or immediate benefit to his benefactor. He started learning French in Alexandria well before leaving Egypt; interestingly, he never concerned himself much with correct pronunciation or native fluency "because his object in learning the language was simply to translate the books he read into Arabic".[30] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was particularly interested in geography, history, and literature in addition to the fine arts and the customs and manners of different nations.[31] In Paris, he was exposed to French thought and read voraciously books of French science, philosophy and literature.[32] He read - and sometimes translated various passages from French intellectuals in addition to books on geography, history, philosophy, theology, political sciences, and classical literature. [33] This exceptional dedication by Al-

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[29] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25; Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 963; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 11.

[30] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 963.

[31] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25.

[32] For a list of these books, see the section titled 'On the Books I Read in the City of Paris' in Al-Ṭahṭāwī and Newman; 291-297; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Fī al-kutub wa al-Funūn allatī darastuhā wa ṭalaʿtuhā bi bārīs" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 2:219-222.

[33] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 12; Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 964; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25-26.

Ṭahṭāwī despite not being a full mission member did not go unnoticed by the French teachers, prompting the French Orientalist Edme-François Jomard – who was in charge of the Egyptian mission in Paris - to commend him to Muḥammad ʿAlī who did not only upgrade his membership but also appointed him as a general supervisor of the Egyptian students.[34]

The aim of Muḥammad ʿAlī in promoting Al-Ṭahṭāwī was mainly to use him as a translator and capitalise on his linguistic abilities.[35] As a graduate of Al-ʾAzhar, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was well trained in Arabic; and as a disciple of Al-ʿAṭṭār, he was particularly conscious of the need to use Arabic for practical purposes. This made him an excellent candidate for a long translation career in the budding Egyptian empire. And sure enough, in the four years he spent in Paris, Al-Ṭahṭāwī translated every book he read to Arabic and these translations were later printed and published in Egypt.[36]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī returned to Egypt in 1831 and embarked on a new career trajectory. His return was celebrated by his benefactor: First, in Alexandria, where he was received by ʾIbrāhīm Pāshā – Muḥammad ʿAlī's eldest son - who gave him thirty-six *fiddān* of lands outside Cairo as a reward for his achievements in Paris.[37] A similar celebration awaited him in Cairo where Muḥammad ʿAlī received the young Egyptian

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[34] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 12.

[35] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 25-26.

[36] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʻah Badawī," 963-4.

[37] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

sheikh "with great courtesy".[38] Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not return back to Al-ʾAzhar. Rather than teaching his old courses on *Ḥadīth*, Arabic prosody and logic, he was appointed at Muḥammad ʿAlī's newly opened School of Medicine where he taught French to medical students.[39] The curriculum was still given in the inconvenient double-lecture arrangement: European professors would give their lectures in French, and these lectures were then translated for the students.[40] The translators who came mostly from the Levant were well-versed in French; however, their Arabic renditions were bizarre to say the least.[41] Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not achieve anything particularly noteworthy in this school, but he was esteemed highly enough by his fellow translators to be nominated for the position of Head Translator.[42]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's second appointment in 1833 was another translation post at the Artillery School where he was in charge of translating textbooks on geometry, geography, engineering and military sciences to be used in teaching the military students.[43] Despite his illustrious efforts in this school, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was not happy working there. A humanist and littérateur at heart, Al-Ṭahṭāwī felt rather stifled with his functional responsibilities in the Artillery School.[44] This may explain his decision

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[38] Ibid

[39] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 13.

[40] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 964; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

[43] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 965; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

[44] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

to take a long unauthorised leave the following year. In 1834, Egypt was hit by an epidemic, and Al-Ṭahṭāwī retreated to his hometown without an official leave until the epidemic ended in 1836.[45] Al-Ṭahṭāwī bid his time in Ṭahṭā translating one of the textbooks on geography he studied and started translating while in Paris.[46] He later presented the completed translation to Muḥammad ʿAlī when he returned to Cairo; as reward, the Pāshā promoted Al-Ṭahṭāwī to the rank of Major in the Egyptian Army.[47]

The third appointment of Al-Ṭahṭāwī was at the short-lived Administration School where he joined two other graduates of the educational missions to Europe.[48] The main responsibility of the team was the revision of Arabic and Turkish translations of history texts carried out by the students before sending these translations to the government's printing press.[49] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was the only Arab Egyptian member in the school council which consisted mainly of French and Turks.[50] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's career really came into its own when he joined the School of Languages - *Madrasat Al-ʾAlsun*. The school was not precisely a new establishment, but rather a merger of the School of Administration which Al-Ṭahṭāwī worked at, and the School

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[45] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʾah Badawī," 965; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

[46] According to Newman, this was a book by the Danish geographer Conrad Matle-Burn (1775-1826). See footnote 2 in *An Imam in Paris*, 290-291; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Fī baʿḍ Murāsalāt baynī wa bayna baʿḍ min kibār ʿulamāʾ al-faransiyah" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 2:218.

[47] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʾah Badawī," 965; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 26.

[48] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 27.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʾah Badawī," 965.

of Geography and History adjunct to the Artillery School originally founded in 1835.[51] Although Al-Ṭahṭāwī is often cited as the founder of the school, in fact the school opened in June 1836 under the administration of an ʾIbrāhīm Effendi; Al-Ṭahṭāwī was appointed as head of the school in January 1837. He was the only Arab Egyptian member of the administrative Council overseeing the School of Administration, and later School of Languages between 1836 and 1837.[52]

In addition to Arabic and Turkish, the school's curriculum included French, Italian and Persian subjects; students also attended lectures on history, geography, literature, Islamic jurisprudence, and law with a particular focus on French law.[53] As in the School of Administration before, students were expected to start translating as soon as they held the command of any of the taught languages.[54] Initially, the school and its translators focused almost exclusively on texts pertaining to the sciences and technology that will contribute to Muḥammad ʿAlī's imperial ambitions.[55] In due course, the original intention of the school – i.e. to create teaching materials in Arabic and Turkish for the education of Muḥammad ʿAlī's army – became more open and the school started producing translated texts on more varied topics.

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[51] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 27.

[52] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 965.

[53] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 27.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

The School of Languages was the only school where students received a more rounded education on subjects not necessarily immediately relevant to military requirements.[56] In terms of recruitment, Al-Ṭahṭāwī made some interesting choices. He recruited students from Al-ʾAzhar, from villages of his native Upper Egypt, and later from other parts of the country.[57] These students studied English, Italian, French, Arabic, and Turkish in addition to mathematics and geography under a mixed teaching staff by European and native teachers.[58] Once they had the command of a language, they would collaborate with their teachers on assigned translations; the texts were then sent to the school's professor of Arabic to ensure its fluidity in Arabic before sending it for publication.[59] Overall, the School of Languages played a central role in the great translation movement of the 19th century; more importantly, however, it served as "training ground [for] scores of serious scholars in the art of translation in every branch of learning, and it supplied Egypt with a formidable translation movement reminiscent of that of the time of Al-Maʾmūn in the 8th century A.D.".[60] The school closed fifteen years later when the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī and the demise of his dream of an Egyptian empire made the school and the whole reform movement redundant.

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[56] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 27; Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 966.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Heyowrth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 966.

[59] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 27.

[60] Ibid.

After the serious reorganisations that followed the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī, Al-Ṭahṭāwī found himself going through some difficult times with the successors of the benefactor he served so loyally. Starting from 1842, he directed the new School of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence and then the School of Accountancy which were merged with the School of Languages.[61] With the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī, the political priorities of the ruling house were no longer on aggressive modernisation and military expansion. ʿAbbās I, Muḥammad ʿAlī's grandson and his first successor, worked directly in the opposite direction of his father.[62] While editing the official newspaper *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyah*, Al-Ṭahṭāwī made the mistake of turning the journal from a mere mouthpiece of the Khedive and his government to a popular newspaper that reflected the interests and concerns of the Egyptian public.[63] In 1851, Khedive ʿAbbās I appointed Al-Ṭahṭāwī as a headmaster of an obscure newly opened primary school in Khartoum,[64] and a year later closed the School of Languages.[65] While Al-Ṭahṭāwī fulfilled his duty as loyally and conscientiously as he did in his more significant posts, both Al-Ṭahṭāwī and ʿAbbās I knew that this was a dismissal and an exile. Al-Ṭahṭāwī was not alone as ʿAbbās I sent away several others and some never made it back to Egypt;[66] one of these who did not survive the humiliation was

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[61] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifā'ah Badawī," 966.

[62] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 28.

[63] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 13.

[64] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 27.

[65] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 72.

[66] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifā'ah Badawī," 967.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's colleague Muḥammad Bayūmī – a professor of mathematics – who languished in his exile and passed away shortly thereafter.[67] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, on the other hand, found release for his feelings of humiliation through translation and poetry.

The whole affair was allegedly the result of some conspiracy by more conservative *'Ulamā'* who may have had issues with Al-Ṭahṭāwī's views which they deemed heretic.[68] In 1854, Saʿīd Pāshā succeeded his brother ʿAbbās I and he immediately summoned Al-Ṭahṭāwī back to Cairo. The first position the new khedive had for Al-Ṭahṭāwī was the director of the European Department of the Governorate of Cairo, and a year later he was also appointed the director of a new military school.[69] Nevertheless, his two most important accomplishments were not revived yet; namely, the School of Languages or the official newspaper of *Al-Waqāʾiʿ*.[70] Heyworth-Dunne notes that despite the goodwill of the new Pāshā, the new school – which included several departments - was closed in 1860; Al-Ṭahṭāwī remained unemployed in any official capacity until the reign of ʿIsmāʿīl in 1863. ʿIsmāʿīl with his dreams of making Egypt a piece of Europe in the Orient revived most of his grandfather's modernisation schemes. Towards this goal, ʿIsmāʿīl revived the School of Languages and its affiliated Translation Bureau reinstating Al-Ṭahṭāwī to his prior position as director of both; in addition, he appointed Al-Ṭahṭāwī as a member of the Education Commission in

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[67] Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 54-55.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 28; Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 967.

[70] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 28.

charge of overhauling the Egyptian school system.[71] One of the central aspects of ʿIsmāʿīl's reforms was the reform of law; therefore, he placed Al-Ṭahṭāwī in charge of an important project towards achieving this goal. He established a committee headed by Al-Ṭahṭāwī to translate the Napoleonic Code to Arabic, which was completed in 1866 and became the foundation of Egypt's modern legal system.[72]

In 1870, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was appointed as the chief editor of *Rawḍat Al-Madāris* [Schools' Knowledge Garden**]**, a magazine issued by Dīwān Al-Madāris [Department of Education]. Through this periodical, he encouraged Egyptian youth coming back from their educational missions in Europe to publish their ideas and contribute to changing the cultural and social views of readers.[73] The magazine was not concerned with contemporary political news or administrative updates; rather, *Rawḍat Al-Madāris* was the first cultural, scientific, and literary magazine in Egypt. Al-Ṭahṭāwī organised the magazine into several topics and themes assigning specialised Egyptian scholars to each topic. These topics included mathematic, engineering, military sciences, chemistry, medicine, languages and literature, and astronomy. Al-Ṭahṭāwī continued to edit the magazine until he passed away at the age of seventy-two in late May 1873 in Cairo.[74] He left behind 20 original works in addition to 26 translations of French works covering various themes and topics from philosophy to general

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[71] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 28.

[72] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 28; ʿImārā, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 86; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 72.

[73] Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study on the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), 45.

[74] ʿImārā, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 86-88.

health.[75]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī and The Modern European *Riḥla*

There was a long tradition of journey writings known as *Riḥla* in Arab letters. This genre of travelogues in Arabic can be traced back to the 10th century when Yaʿqūb Al-Ṭurṭūshī - an Andalusian Jew - travelled through most of Western Europe; however, the resulting text was lost and only fragments of the original survived in later works citing the original.[76] Another medieval precedent was ʾAḥmad bin Qāsim Al-Ḥajarī, a Moroccan diplomat who travelled through the low countries up to the North of Europe as an envoy of the Saʿdī Sultanate.[77] In the long period between the 15th and 19th century, only one book was published about the outside world; ʾIlyās Yūḥannā al-Mūṣilī's book *Riḥlat ʾAwal Sharqī ilā ʾAmrīka* [The Trip of the First Oriental to America] covered the travels of the author in Europe and the New World between 1683 and 1668. The book was rather short and included miscellaneous information on the geography of South America and some commentary on the people of the area; however, the manuscript was probably not known to Arabs at the time, and therefore it is unlikely that it contributed to any significant inter-cultural transmission between Europe and the Arab World.[78]

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[75] ʿImārā, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 102-109.

[76] Daniel L. Newman, "The Book," in *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)* (London: Saqi Book, 2004), 87.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 79-80.

There was another pre-modern contact channel between East and West which was the Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christian communities. Aleppo, in particular, had a large colony of European merchants and received Jesuit delegations from Rome that cemented the religious union between these communities and the Pope and the Catholic Church.[79] In 1584, the Maronite College was established in Rome to serve as an institution to educate the Maronite clergy.[80] According to Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, these travellers were concerned exclusively with religion and their influence upon returning to their countries did not go beyond the religious sphere; moreover, these travellers did not write their impressions of Europe and "whatever image they carried back with them may have been transmitted verbally through personal contact, but it is impossible to trace this."[81] However, more recently, Abdulrazzak Patel presents a different picture:

> The Maronite graduates either returned home to serve the patriarch or stayed on in Europe. In this way, they pioneered a fruitful cultural exchange between Eastern and Western cultures. The more gifted graduates went to Western Europe and engaged in writing, teaching oriental languages and literature, and collecting manuscripts for leading European universities. They also translated works from Arabic into European languages and vice versa, which contributed to the processes of Latinisation and Arabisation [of pre-modern Christian communities]. Some of them adopted Latinised names and gained distinction as scholars who helped lay the foundations of European Orientalism. … Other alumni of the [Maronite] college returned to their homeland where they served as clerics and teachers, and devoted themselves to scholarly and cultural activities.[82]

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[79] Abdulrazzak Patel, *Arab Nahḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 38-39.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 80.

[82] Patel, *Arab Nahḍah*, 40-41.

Even though these graduates of Europe did not contribute any texts to the *Rihla* genre, their influence and the role they played in the evolution of *Nahda* at large and the East-West encounter deserves more recognition. One of these exceptional figures appeared in Al-Ṭahṭāwī's *Takhlīṣ*: Joseph-Elie Agoub was an Egyptian of Armenian and Syrian origins who settled with his family in Marseille following the French evacuation of Egypt.[83]

The French invasion of Egypt in 1798 represented a great turning point in the history of cultural contact between the Arab-speaking Middle East and Europe. This event and its long-term repercussions for Egypt and the region at large created a need for Arab chroniclers of the period to explain this enigmatic Other to the Arab reading public.[84] The traumatic experience was recorded in the chronicles of contemporary historians like Egyptian ʿAbd Al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī and Syrian Niqulā al-Turk who tried in their accounts to makes sense of this new Other. These texts did not technically offer an account of travel to Europe, and thus they do not fit within the *Riḥla* genre; however, they depict a pivotal moment of cultural contact between East and West.

Al-Jabartī's *ʿAjāʾib al-ʾAthār fī al-Tarājim wa al-ʾAkhbār* [Wondrous Remains of Biographies and Incidents] consisted of four volumes and were written in the form of daily entries narrating the political and public events of the day in a

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[83] Daniel L. Newman, "Al-Ṭahṭāwī in Europe," in *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)* (London: Saqi Book, 2004), 73-74; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 357.

[84] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 28.

detached impersonal style. [85] Al-Jabartī would later oppose the introduction of Western infidel sciences as well as Muḥammad ʿAlī's absolutist rule.[86] But in the chronicles we find that despite his "horror", al-Jabartī expressed great curiosity in the French and their form of civilisation. As Louis Awad notes:

> Although he was a conservative Muslim, he realized that Western civilization was in many respects superior to the form of civilization prevalent in the Muslim world of his time. He had no Ottoman or Mamluk loyalties, and this enabled him to approach everything with an impartial mind. He mixed freely with the French and frequented their Instiut d'Egypte to follow the latest advances in science, art, and technology, which he described at length with unique deference.[87]

Overall, al-Jabartī's response to the French was ambivalent on so many levels, and understandably so. [88] Another text dealing directly with this event was Syrian chronicler Niqulā al-Turk's diaries of the French occupation in Egypt and Syria.

Unlike al-Jabartī who showed little interest in the political and social aspects of the French Other, al-Turk exhibited slightly more interest in the background of these foreign invaders. The introduction of his diaries served as a primer for the reader on the French detailing "the circumstances surrounding the rise of the French republic (*Mashyakhah*)." Al-Turk's work was the first Arabic text to present a contemporary

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[85] Awad, *The Literature of Ideas*, 8. For a background on al-Jabarti and his historiography of the French invasion of Egypt, see David Ayalon, "The Historian al-Jabartī and his Background" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 23 (1960), 217–49.

[86] Newman, "Life of Al-Ṭahṭāwī," 39.

[87] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 10.

[88] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 37; Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 15-16.

exposition of European politics and the French revolution, and it became a reference for later historians of the 19th century.[89] Both al-Jabartī and al-Turk experienced the European Other and their culture through the colonial encounter in Egypt and Syria. Coming from different regions and different religious background – al-Turk as a Christian Syrian, and al-Jabartī a Muslim Egyptian –, they still agreed on the fact that the French offered "a more efficient and just system of government than anything they had known under the Mamluk and Ottoman rule."[90]

The early 19th century witnessed the beginning of a new stage of cultural contact between Europe and the Arab World. Within this context, Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī played a huge role in introducing the West – France, in specific – to the Egyptians through his writings. His experience differed greatly from that of al-Jabartī and al-Turk as he was the first modern Egyptian to travel to Europe and publish a book about that land recording the "strange and wonderous."[91] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's *Takhlīṣ* was the precursor of more than forty Arab travellers who attempted the European *Riḥla* in the nineteenth century.[92] Of all the Arabs who embarked on the European trip in the 19th century, few made the choice of committing their experience to paper; nevertheless, these few texts had a large influence on the Arab readership disproportionate to their number. To quote Ibrahim Abu-Lughod:

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[89] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 37-39.

[90] El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 16-17.

[91] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 104; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Al-Khuṭba," 17.

[92] The most influential of these included Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, Salīm Busṭrus, Fransīs Marrāsh, Khayr al-Dīn al-Tunisī, Luwīs ṣābunjī, and Muḥammad Bayram. For more, see Abu-Lughod's *Arab Rediscovery*, particularly, the section on Arab travelers before the 19th century, 83-86.

> The influence of that minority far outweighs its numerical weakness. These men constituted an important part of the intellectual leadership in the nineteenth-century Arab milieu. Some of them directly influenced the course of Arab history during their lifetimes, and practically all of them were widely read by the literate public of the Arab Near East. Therefore, the ideas they disseminated as well as the courses of action they followed are crucial to any inquiry into the nascent Arab awareness of the West.[93]

These books went through several prints to meet the continuous demands for these books by readers.[94]

Muḥammad ʿAlī wanted to create a new modern Eastern empire.[95] The modernisation efforts that he instigated were driven partially by this political and military ambition of expansion. But he was not in the best position to achieve his vision when it came to the social and cultural aspects of the process. Muḥammad ʿAlī had to rely on his *Dīwān* of counsellors like al-Ṭahṭāwī: "[Muḥammad ʿAlī] gave the orders, but it was [the counsellors] who had to implement them to the best of their abilities and intellectual capacities".[96] Therefore, in addition to presenting Western knowledge through his writings, al-Ṭahṭāwī also implemented many practices that he saw in France during his career as an educator and cultural bureaucrat.[97] It is worth noting here that this critical bureaucratic role was seen as a handicap to al-Ṭahṭāwī's reforming efforts by some: "Ṭahṭāwī's being a government official was no more than

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[93] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 82.

[94] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 92.

[95] Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885," *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198.

[96] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 160.

[97] ʿImārā, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 61-74.

a technical limitation on his ability to effectively disseminate his (liberal, bourgeois) ideas, rather than a positive formative factor of his thought." [98] In any case, Muḥammad ʿAlī lacked the awareness of the possible social and cultural consequences of this process. When Muḥammad ʿAlī started sending educational missions to Europe in the early 1830s, he was primarily interested in Europe's material modernity to improve the military and administrative efficiency of his government. The focus was on his imperial ambitions and did not consider how adoption of European technology could potentially influence culture and society. However, as we shall see in this chapter, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was alerted by his experience in France to this aspect of the process of Westernisation. He recognised that the knowledge and technology imported from Europe will come attached with a worldview that may clash with society and culture in Egypt.

The scholarship in the field of Arabic literature and the history of nineteenth century Egypt generally agrees that al-Ṭahṭāwī was a central figure in the evolution of the Nahḍa as a process of Westernisation; but also, in the cultural and educational reform under both Muḥammad ʿAlī and his grandson ʾIsmāʿīl. Several studies approach Al-Ṭahṭāwī from different vantage points and although they generally agree on his significance, they provide different accounts of the role he played. More conventional studies that follow the Orientalist paradigm of Oriental decadence and European progress depicts al-Ṭahṭāwī as a trail-blazing pioneer who modernised and liberalised the thought of Egypt after acquiring the knowledge and culture of France,

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[98] Israel Altman, "The Political Thought of Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ aṭ-Ṭahṭāwīm A Nineteenth Century Egyptian Reformer" (PhD diss., University of California, 1976), 12.

and disseminated the seeds of democracy, nationalism, and constitutional rule. Within this paradigm of Eastern decline and Western rise, al-Ṭahṭāwī appears as

> the one who carried Napoleon's torch of freedom and enlightenment into a new era in mid- nineteenth century Egypt and expanded the ideals of the Arab renaissance into deeper social and political realms. If Napoleon had been the conqueror who made the first impact, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was the great scholar who followed Napoleon's footsteps and convinced the Egyptian people to become enlightened modern citizens. [99]

But as we shall see in this chapter, Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not only introduce European knowledge to Egyptian mainstream culture. He also believed in the necessity of restraining the adoption of European knowledge to avoid the dangers of unchecked Westernisation on the spiritual authenticity of Egyptian Muslims.[100]

Nevertheless, the view of Al-Ṭahṭāwī as a modernising liberal persisted, and especially so in several Arabic sources. Louis Awad, for example, describes al-Ṭahṭāwī as "the father of Egyptian democracy."[101] Awad presents al-Ṭahṭāwī as a revolutionary progressive and radical thinker who was concerned with issues like the liberation of women, and the equality between the rulers and ruled.[102] Along similar lines, ʿAlī Al-Muḥāfiḍa in his 1975 study of the intellectual currents during the Nahḍa depicts al-Ṭahṭāwī as the first Arab figure to call to the idea of *al-Waṭaniyah* or patriotism. Most importantly, is that Al-Muḥāfiḍa asserts that "al-Ṭahṭāwī derived

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[99] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 110. See also Altman, "The Political Thought," 10-11.

[100] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 255; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Fī Thikr Taqaddum ʾAhl Pārīs," in *Al-ʾA ʿmāl Al-kāmilah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 2:186-187.

[101] Louis Awad, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-Miṣrī al-Hadīth: Al-Fikr al-Siyāsī wa al-Ijtimāʿī* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1969), 268.

[102] Awad, *Tarikh al-Fikr*, 243-329.

these modern ideas from Western – in particular, French – thinkers through the books he read during his stay in Paris between 1826 and 1831 after he mastered the French language."[103] Here, al-Ṭahṭāwī is also the first to recognise the dire need for social justice; and again, these social concerns are derivations of the thought of European socialist thinkers.[104]

Egyptian historian Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl designated al-Ṭahṭāwī as "the leader of intellectual renaissance during the reign of Muhammad Ali."[105] According to al-Shayyāl, al-Ṭahṭāwī recognised the excellence of the West; for al-Ṭahṭāwī, the secret of Western superiority compared with the East was the new sciences and systems that the West created. Thus, al-Ṭahṭāwī's reform efforts were directed to transferring these sciences and systems to Egypt.[106] Hussayn Fawzī al-Najjār – another Egyptian historian – also described al-Ṭahṭāwī as the "intellectual leader and the *imām* of the renaissance" which was the title of his 1987 book on the life and legacy of al-Ṭahṭāwī.[107] When it comes to how al-Ṭahṭāwī approached the challenge of the West, al-Najjār asserts that "the East and West met harmoniously in [young al-Ṭahṭāwī's] heart," who was "inclined towards modernization [al-tajdīd] more than conservatism

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[103] ʿAlī Al-Muḥāfiḍa, *Al-Itijāhāt Al-Fikriyah ʿind al-ʿArab Fī ʿAṣr Al-Nahḍa 1798-1914: Al-Itijāhāt al-Dīnīyah wa al-Siyāsīyah wa al-Ijtimāʿīyah wa al-ʿIlmiyah* (Cairo: Al-ʾAhliyah li al-Nashr wa Al-Tawzīʿ, 1987), 123.

[104] Al-Muḥāfiḍa, *Al-Itijāhāt Al-Fikriyah*, 177.

[105] Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Rifāʿah Al-Ṭahṭāwī: Zaʿīm Al-Nahḍa Al-Fikriyah Fī ʿAṣr Muḥammad ʿAlī* (Cairo: Dār ʾIḥyāʾ Al-Kutub Al-ʿArabiyah, 1945).

[106] Al-Shayyāl, *Rifāʿah Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, 81-82.

[107] Hussayn Fawzī al-Najjār, *Rifāʿah Al-Ṭahṭāwī: Raʾid Fikr wa imām Nahḍa* (Cairo: Al- Dār Al-Miṣriyah li Al-Taʾlīf wa Al-Tarjama, 1987).

[al-muḥafādha]."[108] Ultimately, "[al-Ṭahṭāwī's] faith in the West did not cause him to lose his faith in the East."[109] *Takhlīṣ* – and later on *Manāhij* – exhibit the extent to which al-Ṭahṭāwī was liberated from "the illusions of the dark age that reigned over the Arab lands for three centuries," and this is what made him the intellectual leader and imam of the renaissance.[110] These studies tend to stress the European influence of radical social philosophies he was exposed too in Europe.[111]

In contrast, a number of studies present al-Ṭahṭāwī as a traditional Islamic thinker, particularly, when it comes to his political thought.[112] Leon Zolondek, for examples, notes al-Ṭahṭāwī's "difficulty in reconciling the workings of the secular political system with his basic Islamic outlook."[113] Within the context of al-Ṭahṭāwī's political and social thought,[114] Charles Wendell notes that:

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[108] Al-Najjār, *Rifāʿah Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, 40.

[109] Al-Najjār, *Rifāʿah Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, 48.

[110] Al-Najjār, *Rifāʿah Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, 152.

[111] Altman, "The Political Thought," 10-11.

[112] See for example Leon Zolondek, "Al-Ṭahṭāwī and Political Freedom" in *The Muslim World* 54, no. 2 (April 1964), 90-97. Also, Leon Zolondek, "The French Revolution in Arabic Literature of the 19th Century" in *The Muslim World* 57, no. 3 (July 1967), 202-211.

[113] Zolondek, "Al-Ṭahṭāwī and Political Freedom," 95.

[114] Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image* (Berkley: The University of California Press, 1972), 122-131.

> It was not easier for al-Ṭahṭāwī than for any other believing Muslim to accept fully the idea of a completely secularized *umma* … That his attitude toward foreigners and nonbelievers was amazingly liberal, and owed its source as much to his personality as to his indoctrination abroad, does not negate the fact that he failed to solve the problem.[115]

Yet other studies emphasised al-Ṭahṭāwī's position as a transitional figure mediating between Islamic traditionalism and secular modernism. This is the position of Muḥammad ʿImārā, the editor of al-Ṭahṭāwī's collected works. ʿImārā appears to celebrate al-Ṭahṭāwī's modernising tendencies, but he still sees al-Ṭahṭāwī as a transitional phase in the evolution of modern Arabic and Islamic history.[116] For Albert Hourani, "The thought of the French Enlightenment left a permanent mark on him [al-Ṭahṭāwī], and through him on the Egyptian mind. Some of its leading ideas would not indeed have been strange to one brought up in the tradition of Islamic political thought."[117] However, al-Ṭahṭāwī's new views on social and political matters were "neither a mere restatement of a traditional view nor a simple reflection of the ideas he had learnt in Paris."[118] Bassam Tibi, also, notes the role of al-Ṭahṭāwī's context in this liminality: "Since contemporary Europe appeared to him merely as culturally and socio-economically superior to the Middle East, and not - as it did to later generations of Arab intellectuals - as a colonial system, his reservations are purely religious."[119]

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[115] Wendell, *Evolution*, 125.

[116] Muḥammad ʿImārā, "Ruʾya ʿAmīqa li Ḥaḍārah Ḥadītha," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah li Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 1: 150.

[117] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 69-70.

[118] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 73.

[119] Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1981; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 86.

In these studies, al-Ṭahṭāwī is deriving from two sources of knowledge to legitimise his reform efforts: the European and the Islamic.[120]

This latter position stresses the clear interplay between the traditional-Islamic elements and the modern-secular elements in his writings. Al-Ṭahṭāwī was far from symbolising the complete break with the traditional past which most of the literature on the period highlights. As Mehmet Atif Kirecci notes:

> This representation of al-Ṭahṭāwī [as moderniser of Egypt] is, at best, only a partial representation of the truth. It portrays the history of Egypt in particular and the Middle East in general from an entirely European perspective, not only disregarding and discrediting the cultural legacy of, and continuities with, the previous era, but also ignoring the explicit power/knowledge mechanisms involved in the process.[121]

Yet, there is little exploration of al-Ṭahṭāwī's thought from the point of view of Occidentalism.[122] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's *Takhlīṣ* was more than a mere travel account. Europe was a new subject matter for Arabs, and the book presented the most basic and elementary knowledge to readers. Al-Ṭahṭāwī 's main goal in writing the book was to spread the knowledge about the beneficial arts and sciences that he witnessed in France amongst the Egyptians. His target readers were neither the political elite nor his fellow Egyptian ʿUlamāʾ and intellectuals; he wanted this knowledge to be accessible to all Egyptians including the masses whose life would benefit the most from European knowledge. However, al-Ṭahṭāwī "was not an uncritical admirer."[123]

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[120] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 106.

[121] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 110.

[122] Exceptions are El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, Wendell, *Evolution*.

[123] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 71.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's lifelong career of constraining the very process that he believed was necessary for the revival of the Muslim East started with the book he wrote during his stay in Paris. In introducing Europe to the average reader, Al-Ṭahṭāwī had "the most difficult task of serving as Arab ethnographer to a 'strange land with strange customs."[124] The purpose of the book was educational as it offered Arab readers a detailed introduction to French society, dress, entertainment, science, culture, political life and customs. Al-Ṭahṭāwī wanted to awaken the East from its lethargy and "arouse all Islamic nations – both Arab and non-Arab – from their sleep of indifference".[125] While introducing the West, Al-Ṭahṭāwī also created a parallel between Europe's contemporary prosperity and civilisation and the medieval Arab past; learning from the West is not a departure from Islamic culture, but rather a way back to the glorious past.

Takhlīṣ: An Introduction to Europe

In *Takhlīṣ*, Al-Ṭahṭāwī provided an account of his five years stay in Paris from 1826 to 1831. The book became an immediate success upon its publication in Cairo; Muḥammad ʿAlī had it read to him and ordered high school teachers to read it with their students.[126] A Turkish translation appeared soon after its publication in Arabic, and it was read widely throughout the Ottoman empire.[127] Despite his relatively young

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[124] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 88.

[125] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 106; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Al-Khuṭba," 18.

[126] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 12.

[127] Allen, "Negotiating modernity", 3.

age, Al-Ṭahṭāwī enjoyed the authority that comes with being a member of the traditional *ʿUlamāʾ* class. He became a cultural agent sampling for his readers the cultural and intellectual goods that France had to offer the East, and his objective was to inspire his readers to reconsider their social and cultural choices. In a sense, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was the only mission member capable of this task. Because of his relatively minor role as *imām* and spiritual guide for the Egyptian mission, Al-Ṭahṭāwī's responsibilities did not include studying the more demanding subjects like military sciences, medicine or engineering that other students were assigned on top of mastering the French language. He had the spare time to pursue the less practical subjects that other members of the education mission did not have the time or inclination to study.[128]

In presenting Paris to his reader, Al-Ṭahṭāwī used a simple language coupled with occasional colloquial Egyptian words. He also avoided the excessive use of rhymed prose which is particularly significant when compared with the literary aesthetics of the time. According to Pierre Cachia, Arab authors that wanted mainly to write in a communicative instructional style - like Al-Ṭahṭāwī - still had to pay homage to the prevalent standards "by giving their works ornate titles and prefaces."[129] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was conscious of this choice noting that "in the writing of this book I have tried to follow the path of terseness, while pursuing simplicity of expression so as to enable all people to arrive at its water basins and visit its

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[128] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 963.

[129] Pierre Cachia, "The Prose Stylists," in *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 405.

gardens."[130] It has also been argued that since Egypt was ruled by a Turkish elite, and Muḥammad Ali himself was functionally illiterate, the choice of writing in the more accessible Arabic than Turkish indicates Al-Ṭahṭāwī's "disinterest in an elitist readership."[131] However, Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not always succeed in maintaining clarity or simplicity since the book was addressing material that has never been addressed before in Arabic. Therefore, the book was full of loanwords mostly from French that Al-Ṭahṭāwī could find no equivalent for in Arabic; he transliterated every word and explained it.[132] The unfamiliar content of the book notwithstanding, it was important for Al-Ṭahṭāwī to situate his book within his own traditional native culture.

The introductory sections, in particular, are written in a style that asserts Al-Ṭahṭāwī's identity as a Muslim and religious scholar or ʿālim to his readers.[133] The title of the book itself which translates to 'The Extraction of Pure Gold in the Abridgement of Paris' is very reminiscent of the literary aesthetics of the medieval

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[130] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 106; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Al-Khuṭba," 2:18.

[131] Allen, "Negotiating modernity", 7. This is probably true especially when we take into consideration particularly his time as editor-in-chief of the first Egyptian newspaper *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyah* in 1842. Al-Ṭahṭāwī tried to linguistically subvert the Turkish as the main editorial language: *Al-Waqāʾiʿ* was now edited in Arabic then translated into Turkish, and Egyptian news dominated the paper. The prioritisation of Arabic over Turkish is made even more explicit by switching the locations of Arabic and Turkish columns: The Arabic column was placed on the right throughout the four pages while the Turkish was on the left. These changes did not last long, and in 1843 Turkish became the original language of editing again. Yet, this attempt expresses an awareness of an Egyptian Arab identity that sought to express itself not only in relation to the West but also in relation to the Turkish ruling elite. For more, see Ibrāhīm ʿAbduh, *Tārīkh Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyah, 1828-1942* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Al-Mutawakkil), 96-108.

[132] Newman, "The Book," 96-97.

[133] Newman, "The Book," 95.

period.[134] The title is also one of the few instances of *sajʿ* or rhymed prose in the book as the writing generally discarded this literary device. The title established the argument of Al-Ṭahṭāwī within the particular linguistic and cultural history of his Arab and Muslim reader while also introducing "Bārīz" as the main Westernising element. In the preface and introduction of the book, Al-Ṭahṭāwī provided a specific context within which he placed this journey to Paris. He introduced himself to his readers and explained the context of the educational mission to France, but more importantly he presented the modern outer world with a particular focus on Europe to his Egyptian readers. Al-Ṭahṭāwī opened the travelogue with a distinctly traditional style by offering praise to God, saluting Prophet Muḥammad and praying for the ruler of Egypt and patron of the Egyptian mission to France Muḥammad ʿAlī. He gave his readers personal background information like his full name tracing his lineage back to the grandson of Prophet Muḥammad, his hometown village of Ṭahṭā, his apprenticeship at Al-ʾAzhar, and his relationship with Ḥasan al-ʾAṭṭār.[135] This is a stylistic choice that served to stress his allegiance to his culture: By presenting all these elements of his identity, Al-Ṭahṭāwī is rooting himself firmly within a traditional Egyptian Arab Muslim milieu.

The structure and organisation of the book is more thematic than chronological. The book starts with a lengthy introduction consisting of four chapters followed by six essays dealing with various aspects of the journey, the mission, and the French

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[134] Cachia, "The Prose Stylists," 405.

[135] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 101-106; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Al-Khuṭba," 2:15-18.

people. Each essay is further divide into sections of varying lengths.[136] The first essay covered the journey from Cairo to Alexandria, a section dedicated to the city of Alexandria which Al- Ṭahṭāwī visited for the first time, and the journey onward to Marseilles while the second essay reported on the mission's stay in Marseilles and the rest of the journey to Paris. The remaining essays covered in extensive details the different aspects of French life and Al-Ṭahṭāwī's experiences in Paris. The third essay consisted of twelve sections dealing with Paris' topography, climate, housing, clothing, cuisine, leisure, and education etc. The fourth essay covered the education that Al-Ṭahṭāwī and his colleagues received under the supervision of French Orientalists. In the fifth essay, Al-Ṭahṭāwī reported on the French revolution of 1830 that he witnessed during his stay. The essay consisted of six sections where he provided his Egyptian readers with the details of the political situation in France, the different factions and their positions, and the eventual overthrow of the king. The sixth and final essay provided a detailed discussion of the different fields of knowledge that the French excelled in; three of the seven sections of the essay covered topics relating to language and its sciences which Al-Ṭahṭāwī was particularly interested in. The book ends with an epilogue where Al-Ṭahṭāwī concludes that the French have more in common with Arabs than one may initially realise.

The introduction and epilogue in particular reveals the attempts to rationalise and justify learning from Europeans. On the one hand, he wanted to convince his readers that acquiring European knowledge and sciences was necessary, but on the other hand,

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[136] For example, the third essay on the city of Paris and its inhabitants included twelve sections while the second essay on the trip from Marseilles to Paris consisted of two shorter sections.

he also conceived of Egypt as already a civilised nation under the leadership of Muḥammad ʿAlī. In the introduction which consisted of four sections, Al-Ṭahṭāwī explains to his readers the rationale behind sending educational missions to Europe. He also provides information on the personnel leading the mission and an overview of the sciences and skills they are to acquire from the French and import to Egypt. Al-Ṭahṭāwī notes that he was reluctant to go to France which he describes as "land of infidelity and obstinacy."[137] But he was encouraged by his Sheikh Al-ʾAṭṭār – who was "passionately fond of listening to wondrous stories and of knowing exceptional works" – not to miss out on this unique experience:

> [Sheikh Al-ʾAṭṭār] told me to observe in great detail everything that would take place on this trip, everything I saw and encountered that was strange and wondrous, and to write it down so that it could be useful to discover the face of this region, of which it is said that it is the bride among all regions, and in order for it to remain a guide for would-be travellers wishing to go there.[138]

By claiming lack of enthusiasm to venture on this journey, Al-Ṭahṭāwī is distancing himself from the French as the subject of his book. He was very conscious of the delicate nature of his responsibility as mediator between the two cultures; therefore, he assured his readers of his objectivity: "I have kept free from faults related to indulgence and prejudice. I have also eschewed errors related to sloth and rivalry for precedence".[139] Most importantly, Al-Ṭahṭāwī asserted his fidelity to Islamic ideals as the main rationale for accepting or rejecting European customs: "Naturally, I shall approve only that which does not counter to the prescriptions of Mohammedan

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[137] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 107; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:21

[138] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 104-105; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:17.

[139] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 105; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:17

law".[140] It is here that we start to see an argument for an Oriental superiority in matters spiritual and religious that balanced the European superiority in material and worldly matters.

Within the context of introducing the outer world, and Europe in specific to his readers, Al-Ṭahṭāwī conceived of a civilisational hierarchy where nations of the world are categorised according to "the degree of [their] advancement and calculating the distance from and proximity to the primitive state". This rather nebulous standard of civilisation allows Al-Ṭahṭāwī to create his own hierarchy of progress and decline: "The first category is that of wild savages, the second of the uncivilised barbarians, whereas the third comprise people who are cultured, refined, sedentarized (*taḥaḍḍaur*), civilized (*tamaddun*) and have attained the highest degree of urbanization (*tamaṣṣur*)".[141] In Arabic, he used the word *ṭabaqāt* – literally, 'tiers' - which conveys a more hierarchical sense as opposed to mere classification.

The first category is the least civilised in which Al-Ṭahṭāwī problematically placed "the lands of the Blacks". The second category included nations where "the degree of elevation of their living standard, civilisation, human skill and rational and traditional sciences is not perfect"; here, Al-Ṭahṭāwī placed the desert tribes of Arabia. Finally, the third category is reserved for nations that "have civilization and political institutions, sciences and industries, laws and trade." Europe naturally represented the

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[140] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 105-106; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:17.

[141] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 108; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:22-23. Arabic transliterations and italicisation in the original translation.

epitome of this category with its civilisation and new sciences; however, this category also included Egypt, Syria, Persia, Yemen, in addition to several African and North African nations. [142] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's categorisation doubtlessly was informed by Muḥammad ʿAlī's military policies in the region; Muḥammad ʿAlī's army pillaged the villages of Sudan on a regular basis in search for slave soldiers. Similarly, the Bedouin tribes of Arabia posed a major challenge to Muḥammad ʿAlī's efforts to recapture the Hejaz region on behalf of the Ottoman sultan.[143] In contrast, Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt was categorised as part of the highly civilised nations of the world.

The civilisation of Europe and Egypt, however, stemmed from different sources. If European civilisation was based on materialist values and prosperity, the civilisation of the East is derived from its spiritual values and traditional religious knowledge. France have indeed excelled in fields like mathematics and natural sciences, but "[the French] have not pursued the straight path [of Islam], or entered upon the road towards salvation". The Muslim lands, on the other hand, "distinguished themselves in the legal sciences and their application, and in the rational sciences, but neglected all of the philosophical branches, and so they [the Muslim countries] needed Western countries to acquire what they did not know."[144] Al-Ṭahṭāwī is looking at the turn to the West as a way to complement the Islamic civilisation, and he is quick to follow

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[142] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 108-110; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:22-23.

[143] Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire," 198–216.

[144] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 110-111; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:23.

this explanation of deficiency with an assertion of the worth and value of Islamic civilisation:

> However, they [French scholars] do acknowledge that we were their teachers in all sciences and that we had an advance on them. Intellect and observation have established that credit goes to the precursor. Is it not so that the one who comes later delves into what has been left [by his predecessor], and is guided by his directions?[145]

By invoking the past civilisation of the medieval Arabs and Muslim, Al-Ṭahṭāwī reminds his readers that there was a time when the civilizational positions were reversed: the Muslim East was the centre of civilisation and prosperity while Europe lived in the dark ages; this allowed him to "minimize to some extent the uniqueness and independence of Western gain."[146]

Learning from the Distinguished Christians of Paris

Al-Ṭahṭāwī admired the West and encouraged Muslim readers to acquire the secular knowledge lacking in the East. However, Al-Ṭahṭāwī's experience in France highlighted for him the importance of containing the transmission of European knowledge and culture to guard identity and maintain difference from the West. *Takhlīṣ* provided the context of the scientific and technical accomplishment of France and Europe and emphasised that these achievements emerged within a particular worldview that encouraged free inquiry and did not restrict scholarship and scholars.[147]

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[145] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 111; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 2:23.

[146] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 157.

[147] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 127.

If there is one theme that dominated the book and reflected more than anything the personal interests of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, it was education and knowledge. Al-Ṭahṭāwī genuinely admired many aspects of European culture and life; particularly, he was impressed with welfare and charity,[148] individual and religious freedom, acceptance of foreigners,[149] and the taxation system.[150] But it was the French educational system, and the possibility of creating a similar system in Egypt that excited Al-Ṭahṭāwī the most. He dedicated many pages to detailed exploration of education in France, of different scholarly institutions and organisation, and introduced Egyptian readers to several French and European intellectuals. Al-Ṭahṭāwī was particularly impressed with French higher education and universities. He provided detailed description of the different universities, technical colleges, and schools.[151] He discussed all of this for the reader "to become aware of the superiority of the Franks over others".[152]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī appreciated the distinction between religious and secular or natural sciences. The Muslim East has excelled in its traditional humanities, but it was essential to complement this knowledge with the new sciences and discoveries of the West. He believed that it was necessary for Egyptians and Muslims to expand their

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[148] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 240-245; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 173-176.

[149] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 130-131; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 44.

[150] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 209-110; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 126.

[151] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 254-276; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 186-202.

[152] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 260; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz,"190.

understanding of knowledge to go beyond religious and literary subjects as it is no longer acceptable to be complacent. Muslim scholars are content with reading the old compendiums, commenting on them, and producing more of the same knowledge. However, what Muslims need is useful and practical knowledge, and it is incumbent on Muslim scholars to encourage their followers to seek the mastery of the foreign arts that are "either underdeveloped or non-existent" in their land.[153] This excellence in the sciences was a consequence of the special characteristics of the French according to Al-Ṭahṭāwī.

The French, he notes, were naturally inclined towards knowledge, and their curiosity knew no limits. This for him, distinguished them from other Christians: "You should know that the Parisians distinguish themselves from many Christians by their keen intelligence, profound perceptiveness and depth of mind when treating recondite issues."[154] The French passion for continuous inquiry into every aspect of life was just one of the many traits of the French that led to their advancement and progress. Overall, the French according to Al-Ṭahṭāwī are curious, active, charitable, honest, punctual, industrious, frivolous in "unimportant matters" but serious and faithful to their ideological and political positions, brave in exploring the world, and friendly towards strangers. The French also were willing to push the boundaries of what they know and believe about the world: "They are in no way prisoners of tradition. Rather, they always wish to know the origin of things, while seeking proof to support it, to

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[153] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 117-118; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 31-32.

[154] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 176; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 93.

the extent that the common people among them can also read and write and, like others, penetrate deeper matters".[155] The imagery of tradition as a prison is significant because it expresses Al-Ṭahṭāwī's frustration with the current state of knowledge and culture in Egypt and the Muslim East.

In the section on the "progress by the people of Paris in the sciences", Al-Ṭahṭāwī described the scholars of Paris as being different from the scholars of any other nation in their breadth and depth of knowledge: "They [the French] have a different approach to things. Besides studying several subjects to perfection, they devote their efforts to a special branch of knowledge. They discover many things and provide unparalleled advantages, which is why they are considered scholars."[156] Their education did not end with the end of formal education, but rather this was a starting point for a scholar's contribution to knowledge through his own independent investigations. For the French, the word scholars did not refer to religious preachers and priests; the title of ʿālim [plural: ʿulamāʾ] is reserved exclusively to those who possessed practical knowledge and excelled in his expertise. Priests are knowledgeable only about religious matters, and therefore they are not regarded as scholars:

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[155] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 176; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 93.

[156] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 258-259; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 188-189.

> [In France,] when one talks of learned men, this refers to people who have a knowledge of the rational sciences, since their scholars are not very conversant with the branches of Christian theology. If in France people say, 'that is a learned man', they do not mean by this that he is knowledgeable about his religion, rather that he has knowledge of one of the other sciences.[157]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī is contrasting this high standard that the French expect from their cultural elite with the complacency of scholars in the Arab world. The Muslim institutions of higher education "all radiate through the traditional sciences as well as certain rational sciences such as Arabic philology, logic and other auxiliary sciences" however, they all lack the new modern sciences that facilitated the progress of France and Europe.[158]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī conceded the material civilizational superiority of Europe; however, when it came to the religious and spiritual sphere, Al-Ṭahṭāwī disagreed with what he saw as the French excessive reliance on rationality and logic to the detriment of belief in divine revelation. Rasheed El-Enany notes that one of the main themes of *Takhlīṣ* is the "dichotomy of faith and admiration of the 'faithless'."[159] Even though Paris is "filled with a great deal of immorality, heresies, and human error," Al-Ṭahṭāwī admitted that the French with their overreliance on reason and logic surpassed the Muslim lands in social and political organization as well as science. This idea that the East is spiritual while the West is materialistic became an integral part of the defensive reaction to European civilization amongst Arab and Muslim intellectuals.[160] Al-

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[157] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 259; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 189.

[158] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 259; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 189.

[159] El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 17.

[160] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 152-154.

Ṭahṭāwī was particularly weary of the fields of philosophy possibly compromising the faith of the Muslim seeker of the new sciences:

> But while they [the French] have the most in-depth knowledge of most sciences and theoretical arts, some of their philosophical beliefs depart from the laws of reason adhered to by other nations. However, they twist and defend them in such a way that they appear to be true and credible to people. … in the philosophical sciences, there is a lot of misguided filling that runs counter to all the holy books and on which they base proofs that are hard for people to refute.[161]

The best antidote for this is for the Muslim seeking to acquire European knowledge to first become well-versed in his religion: "It is therefore necessary for anyone wishing to delve into the French language, which includes some philosophical elements, to be well versed in the Qur'ān and the *sunna*, in order to prevent him from being misled by this and his belief from weakening, and lest he should lose his footing."[162] This is perhaps why *Takhlīṣ* is usually criticised for its rather dry style. Despite his clear and open admiration of French knowledge, culture, and society, Al-Ṭahṭāwī maintained distance and was content with the role of observer.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī maintained his original intellectual and spiritual world throughout his nearly five years stay in France. He carried out his religious duties, continued reading Qur'ān and studying Islamic works.[163] Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not immerse himself in the culture and society that was the topic of his book; therefore, his book will strike

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[161] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 255; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz,"186.

[162] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 255-256; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz,"186-187.

[163] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 964.

the modern reader as a dry "external descriptive account".[164] He did not develop relations or friendships outside his intellectual circles, and socialised mainly with the leading French Orientalists of the time who were also responsible for the education of the Egyptian students in Paris.[165] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's Orientalist circle, on their part, appreciated Al-Ṭahṭāwī's exceptional knowledge of Arabic and his genuine interest in French literature. The French Orientalists recognised that as a young Egyptian religious ʾImām, Al-Ṭahṭāwī will be a more effective carrier of French culture and ideas to the Egyptians than all the French men currently serving under Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt.[166] The reason that "French life and manner hardly affected his behaviour,"[167] was precisely because Al-Ṭahṭāwī opened himself to his French surroundings only to the extent that facilitated his task as ethnographer of French life for his Egyptian readers back home. It is this reserved, self-conscious, and calculated response to European culture that facilitated Al-Ṭahṭāwī's role as the "ideal mediator between Europe and Egypt".[168]

Takhlīṣ was not only an objective account of Paris, France, and the French as they were perceived by Al-Ṭahṭāwī; the book was also a record of the subtle transformations in Arab Muslim consciousness that this encounter with the Other

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[164] El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 18.

[165] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 12; El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 18.

[166] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 964.

[167] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 964.

[168] Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 213.

triggered. Al-Ṭahṭāwī became acutely aware that while the might and civilisation of the Muslim East was declining for over three centuries, the Christian West was increasing in its "skills, organization, justice, technical know-how, versatility and inventiveness in matters of warfare." Indeed, "If Islam had not been protected by the might of God - praise be to Him the Exalted - [Islam] would have been nothing in relation to the Franks' power, multitude, wealth, proficient skills, etc."[169] In other words, Al-Ṭahṭāwī looked at the survival of Islam and Muslims as nothing less than an instance of divine intervention given their cultural and political decay. Decadence in the Muslim East was an illness that only Muḥammad ʿAlī was able to remedy by inviting the Franks to Egypt: "Those who do not know something need someone who has mastered that subject, whereas someone who does not deign to learn will surely die regretting it! May God be praised for having sent us our Benefactor [Muḥammad ʿAlī] to save us from the darkness of ignorance about the things that exist among other peoples."[170]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī was forced for the first time to examine everything he believed about the world; thus, his book "reflects the mentality of an Azharī who suddenly find himself in a new world, in a world entirely different from that in which he passed his youth".[171] There were many positive aspects of French culture and civilisation that Al-Ṭahṭāwī wanted his people to learn; his grief at the reality of civilizational disparity

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[169] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 113; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 24.

[170] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 113-114; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 24-25.

[171] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 964.

between the Muslim East and the Christian West is clear: "By God, during my stay in this country, I was grieved by the fact that it had enjoyed all those things that are lacking in Islamic kingdoms."[172] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was not just promoting the incorporation of European knowledge, but he was also promoting a new conception of the self: an Arab Muslim Egyptian identity that combined the worldly accomplishment of the West with the spiritual superiority of the East. In this new conception, both traditional Islamic culture as well as modern European knowledge contribute to this new Self.

The Westernised Easterners of France

In the writing of *Takhlīṣ*, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was negotiating to what extent was it possible for Egyptians to acquire the technological and scientific products of France without compromising their identity as Arabs and Muslims. French knowledge will contribute to the healing of decadence, but at the same time it was also necessary to maintain difference from the culture that produced this knowledge. It was a conundrum; and the Westernised Arabs that Al-Ṭahṭāwī encountered while in France only heightened in him a muted sense of cultural vigilance and angst. This is why Al-Ṭahṭāwī remained reserved and selective in approaching the civilizational achievements of Europe; Instead of blind imitation, Al-Ṭahṭāwī consciously picked the elements that would coexist with the traditions and reality of the East.[173] He was primarily concerned with containing modernity and western civilisation within a traditional Islamic context of Islamic civilisation: "the importance of his role is less

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[172] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 105; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 17.

[173] Muḥammad ʿImārā, "Dirāsa fī Fikr Al-Ṭahṭāwī," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah li Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 13-298.

as a promoter of European civilization and more because of the way in which he stifled such transformation."[174] This stifling was possibly the result of his encounter with the Arab and Oriental émigrés in France who lost touch with their original culture.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī noted the presence of an Oriental community in Marseilles that included Egyptians, Syrians, Georgians, and Circassians; some left their towns with the French when they evacuated Egypt while others were abducted as children from their villages. They were completely Gallicized and lost touch with their native culture. They spoke French and dressed like the French; they did not speak Arabic or practice their religion: "It is rare to find a Muslim among those who left with the French: some of them have died, whereas others have converted to Christianity – *may God protect us from that!*"[175] The latter prayer becomes a refrain after each example of religious conversion. Naturally, as a traditional religious scholar, Al-Ṭahṭāwī disapproved of Muslim abandoning Islam, but more importantly there was a long history of questionable or inauthentic conversions between Christianity and Islam since the French occupation.[176]

When Napoleon invaded Egypt, he argued that "the French are also faithful Muslims" who "serve God - May He be praised and exalted - and revere His Prophet

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[174] Kirecci, "Decline Discourse," 32.

[175] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 158-159; emphasis added; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 69.

[176] Allen, "Negotiating modernity", 27.

Muḥammad and the glorious Qurʾān" more than the Mamlūks.[177] In an attempt to distance himself from Christianity, Napoleon boasted of his invasion of Rome and the Vatican "which was always exhorting the Christians to make war with Islam."[178] Far from being impressed, the Egyptian chronicler of the period ʾAbd al-Raḥmān Al-Jabartī was horrified and saw this as proof of irreligiousness: "[The French] opposed to both Christians and Muslims, and do not hold fast to any religion …. they are materialists, who deny all God's attributes, the Hereafter and Resurrection, and who reject Prophethood and Messengership. They believe that the world was not created."[179] When the French evacuated Egypt, many Christian and Muslims left with the French and Al-Ṭahṭāwī gives examples of Muslims who "became Christian and died an infidel" to serve as cautionary tales for his readers. One such example is an Egyptian who served as an ʾAghā for the Janissaries under the French. He left with them and remained a Muslim for fifteen years before converting to Christianity upon marrying a Christian woman, and his Christian children returned to Egypt to serve in Muḥammad ʿAlī's bureaucracy.[180]

Another example of this type of questionable conversions was the conversion in 1799 of Jacques Menou (1750-1810) who became the French commander-in-chief after the departure of Napoleon. However, it was not particularly the conversion of

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[177] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Al-Jabartī and Shmuel Moreh, *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798* (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 25-27.

[178] Al-Jabartī and Moreh, *Napoleon in Egypt*, 188.

[179] Al-Jabartī and Moreh, *Napoleon in Egypt*, 188.

[180] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 158-159; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 69.

Menou particularly that alarmed Al-Ṭahṭāwī but that of his Egyptian wife Zubayda. After his conversion, Menou married Zubayda – the daughter of a family of ʾAshrāf – who gave birth to an only son in 1800 that Menou named al-Saʿīd Sulaymān Murād Jacques Menou. Menou's conversion convinced neither the Egyptians who saw it as another pretentious attempt to impress them, nor the French who resented their commander not only "going native" but also naming his son Sulaymān after the assassin of their previous commander general Kleber.[181] When the French left Egypt, Zubayda left Egypt with her husband who "reverted to Christianity and exchanged the turban for the European hat" while Zubayda remained a Muslim.[182] Eventually, Menou recruited the help of Silvestre de Sacy, "the Franks' most erudite Arabic scholar" who convinced her to agree to the baptism of their son and she eventually converted to Christianity.[183] Al-Ṭahṭāwī must have feared for himself and others seeking the knowledge of Europe the same loss of religious identity. These examples represented a model of indiscriminate adoption of European life that disturbed Al-Ṭahṭāwī's religious and traditional sensibilities and highlighted the potential danger of Westernisation.

The antidote to this danger of Westernisation is to be found in France itself. Al-Ṭahṭāwī was fascinated by the accomplishments of French Orientalists including his teachers. He admired the ability, competence, and dedication of these French men to

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[181] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 159-161; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 70.

[182] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 159-161; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 70.

[183] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 159-161; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 70.

learning Arabic language, literature, and culture. The way that Frenchmen like Silvestre de Sacy and Edme-François Jomard expressed great cultural empathy and rapport with an alien culture to them inspired Al-Ṭahṭāwī who wanted likewise to absorb the achievement of the foreign culture of France. Al-Ṭahṭāwī explains to his readers that just because foreigners do not speak Arabic fluently does not mean they are not well-versed on the language:

> Proof of this is my encounter in Paris with a distinguished French personality, famous among the Franks for his knowledge of Oriental languages, especially Arabic and Persian, whose name is Baron (*al-bārūn*) Silvestre de Sacy. He is one of the notables of Paris and a member of several scholarly societies of France as well as other countries. … He learned Arabic, so it is said, by his powers of understanding, his keen intelligence and wide erudition – and without the help of a teacher, except at the beginning.[184]

Not only did de Sacy absorb and appreciated the cultural production of Arabic, but Al-Ṭahṭāwī was also impressed by de Sacy's textual output on Arabic: his commentaries on the *Maqāmāt* of Al-Ḥarīrī, his volume on Arabic grammar, and his anthologies of Arabic-French translations.[185]

De Sacy and other French Orientalists showed Al-Ṭahṭāwī that it is possible to create an Egyptian that absorb French culture while maintaining his cultural authenticity. De Sacy is an exceptional Orientalist because he was an exceptional 'Occidentalist' in the first place: "all of this [his knowledge of Oriental languages and literatures] stems from the fact that he has a perfect command of *his own language*

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[184] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 189; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 103-104.

[185] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 190; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 103-104.

after which he devoted himself completely to the learning of [other] languages."[186] In other words, by knowing one's culture so intimately, it becomes possible to acquire and learn from another culture without compromising the native culture. The best way to counter this danger of Westernisation is for Egyptians to learn their own history, literature, and religion as a necessary prerequisite before acquiring European knowledge. This informed Al-Ṭahṭāwī's educational policy upon his return to Egypt. As headmaster, Al-Ṭahṭāwī wanted to make the school a place where students can learn secular subjects like French, history, and mathematics but "without losing touch with [their] own culture"; therefore, the curriculum offered the right combination of European knowledge balanced with Islamic knowledge.[187]

Without a strong cultural and religious foundation, learning French and being exposed to French knowledge and philosophy will lead to loss of faith.[188] The ideal modern Egyptian will combine both Islamic spiritual knowledge with European material achievements. While in Marseille, Al-Ṭahṭāwī also encountered Egyptians that remained Muslims; one young man in particular embodied for Al-Ṭahṭāwī this ideal blend. Muḥammad – "a man who also dressed like the Franks" – was abducted as a boy from his village by the French. Although he did not speak Arabic, Muḥammad told Al-Ṭahṭāwī that he is from a family of ʾAshrāf in Asyūṭ, that he knows that his father's name was al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥīm and his mother's name is Masʿūda or something close to that. Muḥammad remained a Muslim although he knew nothing of

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[186] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 191; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 104.

[187] Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī," 966.

[188] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 255; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 186.

the religion except the words: "There is only one God, and Muḥammad is His messenger" and "God is generous". [189] Muḥammad was not Westernised through voluntary education, but rather through the violence of occupation and abduction; nevertheless, Al-Ṭahṭāwī saw in him the possibility of arriving at merging the past nobility of Islamic tradition with the contemporary civilisation of Europe.

By the end of his French *riḥlā*, Al-Ṭahṭāwī himself was Westernised and altered by the experience. If not in his own eyes, then in the eyes of others who recognised that he was not the same Egyptian that arrived in Paris five years earlier. Al-Ṭahṭāwī's French acquaintances asked him to record his impressions immediately upon seeing Alexandria:

> All of my French acquaintances requested that upon my return I should mention everything that struck me as I had been far away from Egypt for such a long time, seen things that were totally different from these I had known, and grown accustomed to seeing other things that appeared strange to me when I saw them for the very first time upon my arrival in France. [190]

Although Al-Ṭahṭāwī believed that there was a difference between the two cultures, this did not necessary lead him to conceive of an irreconcilable clash. Rather, by the end of the book, he arrives at the conclusion that they have more in common than one may initially think: "I should like to say that after having investigated the morals of the French and their political system it appears to me that they more closely resemble the Arabs than the Turks or other races."[191] El-Enany notes that no justification is

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[189] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 161; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 70-71.

[190] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 364; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 293.

[191] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 365; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 293-294.

provided as to why or how Al-Ṭahṭāwī arrived at this conclusion,[192] But Al-Ṭahṭāwī in fact tried to justify this conclusion.

It may not be a particularly compelling justification but considering that the original aim of *Takhlīṣ* was to introduce Europe and European civilization to Egyptians as a model worth emulating, it is quite effective. The French and Arabs are similar in the great emphasis both cultures place on values like honour, manhood, pride, and freedom.[193] Amongst the French soldiers, Al-Ṭahṭāwī found it strange to find men "whose character is similar to that of the pure Arabs in terms of their great courage … and great passion."[194] What Al-Ṭahṭāwī achieves here is an Arabisation of the French that will reduce the foreignness of the French and make them more familiar to his Egyptian readers.

Conclusion

Al-Ṭahṭāwī saw France as a positive model that the Egyptians can emulate to overcome decadence and revive the glory of Arabs and Muslims. Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not only introduce the West to readers who lacked the most elementary knowledge of Europe, but he also provided a rationale for learning from Europeans. The dominant view of Al-Ṭahṭāwī in the literary history of the Nahḍa places emphasis on his role as a modernising reformer, but Al-Ṭahṭāwī also presents an early attempt to control the

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[192] El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 19.

[193] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 365 Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 293-294.

[194] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 259; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 293-294.

turn to the West and safeguard culture. If the Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere integrate from Europe only the favourable elements of civilisation and incorporate them within their own Islamic worldview, it will be possible to achieve the same level of development and civilisation that Europe achieved. Implicit in *Takhlīṣ* is an argument for an Oriental superiority in relation to religion and spirituality that balanced the material and scientific superiority of the Europeans. Moreover, rather than looking at the excellence of France as the result of inherent superiority, Al-Ṭahṭāwī sought to understand and explain to his readers the reasons for this excellence in terms of social and cultural factors that he hoped can be modelled in Egypt.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's *Takhlīṣ* depicts a largely positive and appreciative image of the West as it was an attempt to convince Egyptian readers that it was necessary to reform their society and culture. However, despite his recognition of the accomplishments of the French, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was equally conscious of the potential danger of indiscriminately taking technological and scientific knowledge from the West into the Muslim lands. This was only heightened by his encounters in France with the Eastern community that was completely Gallicised and lost touch with their native cultures. Even in that early stage of the Arab-European encounter, Al-Ṭahṭāwī realised that Westernisation can be a double-edged sword. Therefore, the best approach was not mere importation – which was all that a patron like Muḥammad ʿAlī wanted; but more importantly, it was necessary to adapt and adjust the elements allowed entry to Egyptian culture. By the late nineteenth century, colonisation became the bleak reality of many Arab and Muslim nations which exposed a vicious face of European civilisation that Al-Ṭahṭāwī did not see.

Chapter 4: The West in Muḥammad ʿAbduh's "Islam, Muslims, and Colonisation"

> He who truly seeks the welfare of the country should pursue nothing but the excellence of education [*ʾitqān al-tarbiyah*], and only then everything [else] will follow.

> - Muḥammad ʿAbduh[1]

> Working to evict the English from Egypt is a massive undertaking; and in order to reach the goal, struggle [*al-Jihād*] is necessary on the path [*minhāj*] of wisdom and persistent long-term work even if it takes several centuries.

> - Muḥammad ʿAbduh[2]

Writing in his 1908 book *Modern Egypt*, Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General in Egypt between 1883 and 1907, described the followers of Muḥammad ʿAbduh as the natural allies of the Europeans in Egypt.[3] Speaking of ʿAbduh himself, Cromer shared a favourable impression of the religious scholar:

> Sheikh Mohammed Abdu was an "Alim" of a different and, I should add, a very superior type to those of his brethren whom I have so far described … Sheikh Mohammed Abdu was a man of broad and enlightened views. He admitted the abuses which sprung up under Oriental Governments. He recognised the necessity of European assistance in the work of reform. But he did not belong to the same category as the Europeanised Egyptian, whom he regarded as a bad copy of the original.[4]

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[1] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Khaṭāʾ Al-ʿUqalāʾ," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 4 April 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:326.

[2] Quoted in Muḥammad ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:37.

[3] Evelyn Baring Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 2:180.

[4] Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2:179.

ʿAbduh on his part disliked all the British personnel in Egypt, but he had a good relationship with Cromer and admired him on a personal level.[5] This mutual admiration, between ʿAbduh and Cromer parallels the way ʿAbduh himself related to the West: he did not mind the presence of the British in Egypt so long as it was a temporary phase. Indeed, he believed that European rule may facilitate what 'Oriental Governments' will obstruct: the creation of a Muslim modernity that will heal the alienation of Muslims from their religion.

ʿAbduh: A Reluctant Revolutionary

Muḥammad ʿAbduh was born in 1849 in a village on the Egyptian Delta to a family known for its religious devoutness, traditional learning, and protection of justice. His father's family was of Turkish origins, his mother was an Egyptian Arab, and ʿAbduh himself identified strongly as an Egyptian Arab.[6] Similar to the family situation of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh's family also suffered under the financial policies of Muḥammad ʿAlī. The family lived around the town of Ṭanṭā, but by the time ʿAbduh was born, the family was roaming the countryside after they left their village to escape Muḥammad ʿAlī's heavy taxation. Eventually, the family returned to their hometown

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[5] Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. *My diaries*. (New York: AA Knopf, 1923), 350. According to Blunt, "Abdu has a good opinion of Cromer personally. But says there are a number of shady things done by his subordinates." The book is in the public domain and can be found on Google Books at https://books.google.com.

[6] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 130; Louis Awad, *The Literature of Ideas in Egypt: Part I* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 88; Muḥammad 'Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," in *Al-A'māl Al-kāmilah lil-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh*, ed. Muḥammad 'Imārah (Cairo: Dar Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:22-23.

and regained their social and religious standing.[7] ʿAbduh was known for his excessive pride in his family which was known for continuous "trouble with the local police, being arrested and imprisoned one after the other, allegedly for illegally carrying arms and for resisting authorities in protest against 'injustices'". With the exception of a grandfather and a nephew, all the men of ʿAbduh's family died in prison.[8] Doubtless, these early experiences must have contributed to ʿAbduh's sceptical attitude towards forced modernisation and made him acutely aware of the less glamorous realities of Muḥammad ʿAlī's achievements and what they actually meant for the average Egyptians.[9]

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's early experiences with traditional knowledge as a child and young adult also prepared him for the role that he played for both Egypt and the Muslim World at large. Like many of his cohort, ʿAbduh started memorising Qurʾān at the age of seven; by thirteen years old, his father sent him to the town of Ṭanṭā to continue his religious education at the ʾAḥmadī mosque— the second largest centre of religious learning in Egypt after Al-ʾAzhar in Cairo.[10] However, the young ʿAbduh ran away from the mosque because he found the assigned texts hard to understand, and the teachers only confused him. An uncle - sheikh Darwīsh - interfered and convinced ʿAbduh that there is an essence and truth worth pursuing in the rigid dictum

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[7] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 130.

[8] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 88.

[9] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʿAthār Muḥammad ʿAlī fī Maṣr," *Al-Manār*, June 1902; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:851-858.

[10] ʿImārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 1:23.

of these ancient texts. ʿAbduh returned to Ṭanṭā, and successfully continued his studies until he turned twenty and started studying at Al-ʾAzhar.[11] Later in his life, ʿAbduh would remember this intervention with immense gratitude:

> I found no divine to direct my conscience in the path it should take, except that shaykh who in a few days, let me out from the prison of ignorance into the open air of knowledge, from the bonds of literalism to the freedom of true belief in God … He was the key to my happiness, if I had any happiness in my life. He gave me back that part of myself which I had lost, and revealed to me what lay concealed in my own nature.[12]

This quest for an essence and meaning beyond the literalism and textualism of *taqlīd* drew young ʿAbduh towards logic, philosophy, and mystical theology. His fascination with Sufism - an allegedly unorthodox expression of Islam - led to a period of extreme asceticism and seclusion that required a second intervention from his uncle for ʿAbduh to regain perspective.[13]

ʿAbduh continued his studies in Al-ʾAzhar between 1866 and 1877.[14] The institution was dominated by two main parties opposing each other: the ultra-orthodox conservatives, and the less orthodox Sufi mystics. ʿAbduh attended lectures from both sides but he felt more at home with the mystic Sheikhs.[15] The most important event in this period was the beginning of a mentor-disciple relationship with Jamāl Al-Dīn Al-

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[11] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 88.

[12] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "Mabdaʾ Ṣuḥbatihi li al-Shaykh Darwīsh wa Taṣawufihi," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:23; translated in Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 131.

[13] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 88.

[14] ʿImārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 1:24-25.

[15] Ibid.

ʾAfghānī, the wandering Persian scholar who arrived in Cairo in 1871 and inspired a whole generation of Egyptians with his ideas.[16] ʿAbduh quickly developed an intimate and loyal friendship with him that lasted until Al-ʾAfghānī was expelled from Egypt by Khedive Tawfīq in 1879. A veritable heterodox,[17] Al-ʾAfghānī channelled ʿAbduh's fascination with Sufism into serious philosophical study. This almost cost him his certificate because ʿAbduh's professors intended to fail him because of what they saw as his unorthodox way of thinking and his connection with the controversial Al-ʾAfghānī. It was only due to the intervention of the tolerant and open-minded Grand Rector of Al-ʾAzhar at the time - Sheikh Muḥammad Mahdī Al-ʿAbbāsī – that ʿAbduh finally received his *ʿĀlimīyya* - the equivalent of a master's degree - in 1877 thus qualifying him as a Muslim scholar of the *ʿUlamāʾ* class.[18] During the 1870s, Al-ʾAfghānī exercised a great influence on ʿAbduh intellectually and politically. In fact, Al-ʾAfghānī's personality overshadowed ʿAbduh's own personality during that period.[19]

ʿAbduh started his intellectual and journalistic career during ʾIsmāʿīl's reign which was characterised by aggressive modernisation.[20] As explored in the first

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[16] ʿAlī Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Khaṭīb Al-Waṭanīyah* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1962), 42.

[17] For an analysis of of the subversive nature of Al-ʾAfghānī work, see Elie Kedourie, *ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, 1966 (London: Routledge, 2008).

[18] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 1:24-25; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 88.

[19] Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 36.

[20] Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 38.

chapter, ʾIsmāʿīl's mismanagement of the finances of Egypt provoked foreign intervention that culminated in the 1882 British invasion of Egypt. The debt crisis reached its peak in the late 1870s allowing European powers to exercise political and financial control of Egypt. These foreign interventions coupled with ʾIsmāʿīl's high taxes gave rise to a nationalist movement that demanded more reform and more rights for Egyptians. However, Egypt under ʾIsmāʿīl was also a cultural centre in the region attracting intellectuals from the rest of the Arab and Muslim world. The relatively free and open atmosphere of Egypt at the time was ideal for different people seeking to spread their ideas or express their thought. [21] Al-ʾAfghānī was one of these intellectuals, and the years he spent in Egypt were some of his most productive years. Al-ʾAfghānī believed in Pan-Islamism as solution to both Western imperialism and Eastern despotism. His short-term goal was to help awaken at least one Muslim country that can then lead the Muslim ʾUmmah in executing his political reform project.[22] Following a brief visit in 1870, Al-ʾAfghānī believed Egypt was the right choice for such leadership especially since he found the socio-political situation suitable for his message. He returned to Egypt in 1871 where he remained until Khedive Tawfīq ejected him in 1879.[23]

The intellectual rupture between Al-ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh was inevitable. Al-ʾAfghānī was a transnational radical revolutionary whereas ʿAbduh by his

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[21] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 174.

[22] ʿAlī Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Khaṭīb Al-Waṭanīyah* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1962), 43

[23] ʿAbd Al-Raḥmān Al-Rāfiʿī, *ʿAsr ʾIsmāʿīl* (Cairo: Dār Al-Maʿārif, 1932), 2:147.

temperament was more inclined towards gradual and more localised non-confrontational reform.[24] Al-ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh supported Prince Tawfīq's claim to rule after his father ʾIsmāʿīl was dethroned by the Ottoman Sultan. Ironically, however, when Tawfīq became Khedive, he forced Al-ʾAfghānī out of Egypt never to return.[25] Thus, ʿAbduh finally had the chance to develop his independent views on decadence and reform when he and his mentor were separated between 1879 and 1883.[26]

Following the exile of Al-ʾAfghānī, ʿAbduh was removed from all his teaching positions and placed under house arrest in his hometown village of *Naṣr*. A year later, Tawfīq's Prime Minister – Riyādh Pāshā – interceded on behalf of ʿAbduh asking for a pardon.[27] ʿAbduh returned to Cairo in July 1880 to work as a contributing editor in the government's official newspaper *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyah*; three months later, he became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper.[28] The period between 1880 and 1882 witnessed an escalation in the already tense political life of Egypt, but ʿAbduh steered clear from any direct commentary on the situation. In March 1881, ʿAbduh was elected as a member of the Higher Council of Education.[29] These couple of years

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[24] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 41-44.

[25] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 133.

[26] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 39; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 157; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 36.

[27] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 27; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 89.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 27; ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 39-41; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 133; Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 89.

witnessed the emergence of ʿAbduh's intellectual and political stance independent from that of Al-ʾAfghānī.[30] ʿAbduh maintained a moderate position despite the revolutionary mood, and his writings in *Al-Waqāʾiʿ* continued to reflect a preoccupation with social and educational reform with only indirect commentary on politics.

After the ʿĀbdīn demonstrations on the 9th of September 1881, the British and French issued a joint memorandum declaring their intention to protect the throne of Khedive Tawfīq.[31] This new development united the Egyptians despite their differences; this included ʿAbduh and other moderate ʾAzhari sheikhs who had their reservations about colonel ʾAḥmād ʿUrābī and his party.[32] ʿAbduh still did not believe that Egypt was ready for the constitutional life that the ʿUrābīsts demanded; however, the fact that Egypt was under the eminent danger of foreign occupation caused ʿAbduh and others sharing his view to exhibit a more revolutionary attitude.[33] When the danger of a British military aggression on Egypt became a possibility, ʿAbduh was

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[30] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 39; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 157; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 36.

[31] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 89; ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 52.

[32] Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt: Being a Personal Narrative of Events* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1922), chap. 8, Kindle. According to Blunt, "The Egyptians for the first time found themselves quite united. Sheykh Mohammed Abdu and the cautious Azhar reformers from that point threw in their lot wholly with the advanced party. All, even the Circassians, resented the threat of foreign intervention, and on the other hand the most anti-Turkish of the Nationalists, such as my friend Hajrasi, saw that Arabi had been right in secretly leaning upon the Sultan. Arabi thus gained immensely in popularity and respect, and for many days after this I hardly heard anything from my Egyptian friends but the language of Pan-Islamism."

[33] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 54-55.

chosen to go to London and meet the British prime minister at the time William Ewart Gladstone to make the case for the Egyptian nation's demands.[34] ʿAbduh was the logical choice precisely because of his moderation when compared with ʿUrābī who was seen as a radical that cannot be reasoned with.[35] The British government viewed the events in Egypt with suspicion. There was a fear that if ʿUrābī seized power, he will jeopardise the financial interests of European bankers in Egypt.[36] A long period of uncertainty came to an end when the British fleet bombarded Alexandria and occupied Egypt in September 1882.

In the aftermath of the occupation, ʿAbduh was detained for three months before he was sentenced to three years of exile.[37] He left Egypt in December 1882 returning six years later in 1888. The ordeal took its toll on ʿAbduh; the lawyer appointed by ʿAbduh's friend W. S. Blunt reported that ʿAbduh was

> an example of great intellectual strength over clouded for a time by moral and physical weakness. His mind and body alike seemed crushed out beyond hope of recovery by the cruel reaction born of shipwrecked hopes and the agony of despair. … At times it was almost difficult for us to realize that Sheikh Abdu was the author of the bold and picturesque expositions of the aims and objects of the Egyptian Nationalists, forwarded by him barely six months before to Mr. Blunt.[38]

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[34] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 60-61.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 133.

[37] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 89.

[38] Alexander Meyrick Broadley, *How We Defended Arabi and his Friends: A Story of Egypt and the Egyptians* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1884), 227. The book is in the public domain and can be found on The Internet Archive at https://archive.org.

There is no doubt that this traumatic experience shaped the way ʿAbduh later approached his reform project which stressed gradual social and intellectual reform through informing the Egyptian public to create a non-violent civilian opposition to injustice and tyranny.

After leaving Egypt, ʿAbduh settled in Beirut with the intention of dedicating all his efforts to teaching and organising social welfare. When Al-ʾAfghānī invited him to join him in Paris, ʿAbduh expressed his reservations about Al-ʾAfghānī's methods. Al-ʾAfghānī dismissed ʿAbduh as an idealist and urged him to continue what they started in Egypt.[39] With the help of ʿAbduh, Al-ʾAfghānī established a secret society called *Al-ʿUrwa Al-Wūthqa* [The Firmest Bond] which had chapters in Egypt, India and other colonised Muslim countries. ʿAbduh also edited eighteen issues of the society's journal which was censored by the British in India and Egypt. The society called for a transcendental unity between all Muslims regardless of sects and nationalities, and argued that "no bond … was superior to the spiritual bond of Islam."[40] The journal appeared only for seven months between March and October 1884.[41] After two years in Paris, ʿAbduh grew tired of al-ʾAfghānī's dubious activities, and returned to Beirut.[42]

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[39] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 72- 73.

[40] C. A. Bayly, "Indian and Arabic thought in the Liberal Age," in *Arabic beyond the Liberal Age: Towards and Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 344.

[41] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 90; Al-Rāfiʿī, *ʿAsr ʾIsmāʿīl*, 2:153.

[42] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 82.

When ʿAbduh wanted to return to Egypt, he sought the help of friends to intercede on his behalf.[43] His disciple Saʿad Zaghlūl approached Princess Nāzlī Fāḍil to use her influence with Lord Cromer to issue a pardon for ʿAbduh. Cromer wanted assurance that ʿAbduh had no interest in political activity, and that he will restrict his work to educational and cultural activity which suited ʿAbduh who was eager to teach again; however, Khedive Tawfīq did not allow him to teach fearing his influence on a new generation of young Egyptians.[44] When ʿAbduh returned to Egypt in 1889, Tawfīq appointed him as a Judge in Banhā to make him as far as possible from Cairo's intellectual milieu.[45] ʿAbduh knew that it was difficult for him to overcome the existing animosity between him and Khedive Tawfīq ; therefore, he chose to develop a direct relationship with the British Consul-General Lord Cromer.[46] ʿAbduh's associations with the British infuriated Al-ʾAfghānī who sent him severely-worded letters accusing him of cowardice and weakness, and ʿAbduh completely ceased his communication after this exchange. When Al-ʾAfghānī died in 1897, ʿAbduh did not even write an obituary for his teacher.[47] In 1899, ʿAbduh became the Grand Mufti of Egypt; however, towards the end of his life, ʿAbduh grew more and more despondent as he realised that his ability to reform was still limited. In March 1905, he resigned

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[43] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 83.

[44] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 90.

[45] Awad, *Literature of Ideas*, 90; Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2:179-180; Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 32.

[46] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 33.

[47] Ibid.

from his position in Al-ʾAzhar Administration Council before his death in Alexandria four months later.[48]

An Assessment of ʿAbduh's Islamic Reform Project

The life of Muḥammad ʿAbduh was dedicated to the religious reform of Islam and a constant search for an authentically Muslim modernity. The literature on the period presents a confusing depiction of ʿAbduh. Some sources will focus on a modernist liberal ʿAbduh,[49] while a few others will present a more conservative traditionalist ʿAbduh.[50] He was, in fact, uncompromising in regard to *Qurʾān* and *Sharīʿa* Law, and still he is rarely described as an extremist, a fundamentalist or fanatic. On the contrary, he is generally perceived as a tolerant pro-West Muslim intellectual.[51] As early as 1928, there was already substantial scholarship on ʿAbduh in Arabic as well as in European languages.[52] The focus of such scholarship is usually on how ʿAbduh's ideas are modern and different from his milieu, and several scholars

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[48] Imārah, "Biṭāqat ḥayāt," 36.

[49] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 130; Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1933), 1-2; Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins of Egyptian*, 35-43.

[50] Ernest C. Dawn, "From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origin of an Ideology," *The Review of Politics* 23, no. 3 (July 1961): 388-389; Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 15-16. According to Kerr, "ʿAbduh's historical role was simply to fling open the doors and expose a musty tradition to fresh currents. His intention may have been more specific, but the effect was not."

[51] Samira Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 67-68.

[52] Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "Studies in Contemporary Arabi Literature," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 4, no. 4 (1928): 754.

saw in him a modernised liberal streak of Islam. H. A. R. Gibb states that ʿAbduh's main objective was "to modernize Muslim religious thought".[53] Gibb saw ʿAbduh as a source of inspiration for a new generation of Arab intellectuals who "were Muslims, but Muslims in whom the legacy of Muḥammad ʿAbduh was working towards a new adaptation of the fundamental positions of Islam to the demands of modern life and thought".[54]

This view of ʿAbduh as a modernising figure is reflected in the title of Charles C. Adams's 1933 book *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh*. As a study of "Muḥammadan modernism",[55] the book focuses on the movement's leader ʿAbduh and stresses that his efforts "to reconcile the fundamental ideas of Islam with the scientific ideas of the West have significance for Islam the world over".[56] In a similar vein, Jamal Mohammed Ahmed in his 1960 study *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, dedicated a whole chapter to the life and career of ʿAbduh entitled "Islamic Liberalism".[57] In his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,1798-1939*, Albert Hourani also emphasises the modernising efforts of ʿAbduh. Hourani is keen to find Western inspiration for ʿAbduh's ideas even though he acknowledged that ʿAbduh

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[53] Gibb, "Studies," 757.

[54] H. A. R. Gibb, "Studies in Contemporary Arabi Literature," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 5, no. 3 (1928): 447.

[55] Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 1.

[56] Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 2.

[57] Ahmed, *Intellectual*, 35-43.

was "an Egyptian deeply rooted in the traditions of his own country".[58] For example, Hourani traces the rationalism of ʿAbduh back to the European enlightenment,[59] and argues that ʿAbduh's attempts to reconcile Islam with modernity are a reformulation of a "Comtean Positivism".[60] Still, Hourani gives ʿAbduh the rather confusing label of a "liberal *Salafi*" because he "combined a liberal sensibility and an openness to Western positivist thought with a Salafi temperament and a yearning to retrieve the purity of early Islam".[61] Similar to Hourani, Timothy Mitchell in *Colonising Egypt* notes that ʿAbduh's conception of Islam as a tool of social reform and discipline is derived from the writings of French Orientalist Gustav Le Bon and other French social scientists.[62]

From an Orientalist point of view, ʿAbduh is an anomaly amongst Muslims. Islam, for the Orientalist is unchanging and immutable, so the idea of a modern rational humanist Islam is essentially an oxymoron from the conventional Orientalist standpoint. Yet, ʿAbduh's whole life was dedicated to the reform of Islam. His reform project was precisely to change Islam – the rigid Oriental religion – by infusing it with progressive concepts. In trying to create a rational, humanist and liberal Islam, ʿAbduh was doomed to fail because these modern ideals would be subverted by the inherent

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[58] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 139-140.

[59] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 138. For a counter argument to this view, see Samira Hajj's *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 73-77.

[60] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 156.

[61] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 69.

[62] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 124-125.

anti-rationalism and rigidity of Islam. An excellent example of this reading is P. J. Vatikiotis who provides an account of ʿAbduh's inevitable failure in creating a humanist rational Islam.[63] Indeed, ʿAbduh's belief in rationality and the ideals of Enlightenment cast doubt on his own faith in the eyes of both his Orientalist contemporaries as well as some of his fellow Muslims. He was accused by his conservative compatriots of being a *Muʿtazilite*.[64] A similar suspicion emerges in the literature on ʿAbduh that he was in fact a concealed agnostic, a heterodox, or an outright atheist. This view assumes that ʿAbduh took on the appearance of a devout Muslim as a matter of pragmatism in reaching his goal of alleviating the decadence of his people. [65]

Elie Kedourie's 1966 book revises the literature's representation of Al-ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh as modernist enlightened reformers. Kedourie was extremely critical of the way ʿAbduh was presented in *Arabic Thought* and accused Hourani of white washing the Salafi sheikh turning him into a saint.[66] The book argues that these

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[63] P. J. Vatikiotis, "Muḥammad ʿAbduh and the Quest for a Muslim Humanism," *Arabica* 4, no. 1 (January 1957): 60-63. It is worth noting that Vatikiotis depends in his analysis of ʿAbduh's writings in *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* which Muḥammad ʿImārā has established are not representative of ʿAbduh's thought. More on this, later in this section.

[64] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 42. The *Muʿtazila* was a rationalist theological school that existed in Iraq between the 8th and 10th centuries. For more on this school, see "Muʿtazilis" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, 383-384.

[65] Kedourie, *ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh*, 12-14; Cromer, *Modern Egypt,* 2:180.

[66] Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, "Language, Mind, Freedom, and Time: The Modern Arab Intellectual Tradition in Four Words," in *Arabic beyond the Liberal Age: Towards and Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 12.

two Muslim scholars were closer to atheism than monotheism, and more importantly their activity and thought represented a subversive rather than a constructive element inside Islam. Kedourie questioned the picture depicted of ʿAbduh and Al-ʾAfghānī contending that

> to understand the role and significance of ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh, it is necessary to bear in mind that their reputation and influence is to a large extent posthumous, the work of disciples, or else of academic writers and publicists eager to discover trends and precursors, and hence perhaps tending, like the disciples, but from other motives, to magnify the importance of their subjects.[67]

Through historical records, Kedourie presents an interesting alternative narrative of Al-ʾAfghānī primarily, and to a lesser extent ʿAbduh. This questioning of the authenticity of ʿAbduh's faith by his European contemporaries as well as scholars studying ʿAbduh highlights how difficult it is for those adhering to the Orientalist paradigm to process a figure like ʿAbduh that challenges Orientalist presumptions about the Oriental religion of Islam. Ultimately, the idea that ʿAbduh was not the Orthodox Muslim scholar he presented himself to be is challenged by ʿAbduh's own writings and the testimony of those who knew him intimately.[68]

More recent scholarship argued that ʿAbduh's reform project was drawing on Islamic traditional discourses as much as it was drawing on Western discourses of modernity.[69] Samira Hajj looks at ʿAbduh's project of reconfiguring Islam within the

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[67] Kedourie, *ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh*, 3.

[68] Riḍā, "ʾImānuhu billah," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:1035-1043.

[69] Talal Asad, *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 248-250; Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 71; Abdallah Laroui, "Western Orientalism and Liberal Islam: Mutual Distrust?" *Review of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 1 (1997): 6-7.

context of colonial modernity arguing that ʿAbduh in fact was "neither a traditionalist nor a liberal" but rather "a Muslim reformer who was critical of both traditionalist religious authority and colonial modernity".[70] Because the literature appraises the thought of ʿAbduh by the standard and model of European liberalism, his rationalism is understood as originating from European sources; but ʿAbduh's position was in fact more in line with internal debates on rationality within the Islamic discourses. Hajj in fact argues that the polarity of liberalism and conservatism is irrelevant in ʿAbduh's thought which was steeped in Islamic discourses that did not conceive of this binary. The Western liberal framework saw an inherent incompatibility between reason and religion as well as between tradition and modernity; however, this incompatibility was not evident in ʿAbduh's thought on Islamic reform.[71]

There is another aspect of the literature worth mentioning here before moving to my discussion of ʿAbduh's controversy with Gabriel Hanotaux. This has to do with the ambiguous authorship of ʿAbduh's writings in *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* in 1883-1884 during his exile in Paris. Most of the scholarship on ʿAbduh relies heavily on his student Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's biographical book *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh* which comprised three volumes and was published in 1905. A more recent and critical source of ʿAbduh's writings is Muḥammad ʿImārā's 1993 *Al-ʿAmāl al-Kāmila lī al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*. The collection comprised of five volumes. ʿImāra highlights the great uncertainty around the authorship of a

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[70] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 71.

[71] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 73-4.

number of works between ʿAbduh and his mentor Al-ʾAfghānī as well as between ʿAbduh and his own disciples like Rashīd Riḍā, Qāsim ʾAmīn and Saʿad Zaghlūl.[72] Rashīd Riḍā edited *Tārīkh* during the reign of ʿAbbās II, and both Riḍā and Zaghlūl censored material that may potentially offend the Khedive or the British authorities in Egypt.[73] Riḍā's *Tārīkh* did not only omit some of ʿAbduh's works, but also attributed to him writings that were the work of Al-ʾAfghānī or a number of ʿAbduh's students.

In the particular case of *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, ʿImāra presents a compelling case for giving sole authorship of the eighteen issues to Jamāl Al-Dīn Al-ʾAfghānī exclusively with ʿAbduh merely serving as editor of the content of the journal in Arabic.[74] ʿImāra notes that *Al-ʿUrwa* was the mouthpiece of a secret political revolutionary society that had chapters in Egypt, India and other colonised Eastern countries. Therefore, the content of this journal expressed the position of the society rather than ʿAbduh as an individual. ʿAbduh himself clarified that in the journal "all the ideas were al-Sayyid's [al-ʾAfghānī] and not one idea was mine; and all the composition was mine and not one word was al-Sayyid's".[75] More importantly, however, is the fact that ʿAbduh was growing disillusioned with his mentor Al-ʾAfghānī. Following the tragic consequences of the ʿUrābī revolution, ʿAbduh was not convinced that direct confrontation with tyrannical governments or European

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[72] Muḥammad ʿImārah, "Taḥqiq Hathihi Al-ʾAʿmāl," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:206.

[73] ʿImārah, "Taḥqiq Hathihi Al-ʾAʿmāl," 1:206-209.

[74] ʿImārah, "Taḥqiq Hathihi Al-ʾAʿmāl," 1:239-250.

[75] ʿImārah, "Taḥqiq Hathihi Al-ʾAʿmāl," 1:240.

colonial powers was the best way to awaken the East. When ʿAbduh voiced his misgivings, Al-ʾAfghānī accused him of being a defeatist and cowardly. ʿAbduh had little options in exile so it is not certain that his work with Al-ʾAfghānī was out of genuine belief in Al-ʾAfghānī's political project.[76] In the final analysis, it is not clear that the articles published in *Al-ʿUrwa* should be accepted at face value as representative of ʿAbduh's thought in relation to the West, European modernity and the question of Eastern decadence.

Reflecting on the Decadence of the Muslims East

ʿAbduh was a contributor to an internal discussion in the Arab Middle East on the possibility of an Arab awakening in the late nineteenth century. Other central figures that were also part of this urgent discourse to heal an Eastern decadence included Jamāl al-Dīn al-ʾAfghānī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, ʾAḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, and ʾAdīb ʾIsḥāq amongst others. This discourse of reform aimed to resolve the conflict between a progressive West and a decadent East, a conflict engendered by nineteenth-century imperial Europe.[77] ʿAbduh as well as these other authors conceded an Oriental decadence. When suggesting solutions for this decadence, it was not possible to speak of reform of any type without using the West as a reference point.

ʿAbduh admired the West genuinely and encouraged the incorporation of the achievements of European modern civilisation. He taught himself French in his

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[76] ʿImārah, "Taḥqiq Hathihi Al-ʾAʿmāl," 1:241-242.

[77] David Fieni, "Decadent Orientalisms: Configuring the decay of colonial modernity in French and Arabic" (PhD diss., University of California, 2006), 171.

forties, and his library included influential European works like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education*, Herbert Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, as well as the fiction and non-fiction of Leo Tolstoy, David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* in addition to works by Ernest Renan.[78] ʿAbduh travelled to Europe frequently, and these visits were a form of rejuvenation for his soul because it gave him the hope that the Muslims can recover from their decadence just like Europeans recovered from the medieval Dark Ages.[79] However, ʿAbduh was also conscious of the suffocating effects of European domination on cultures and societies in the Muslim East.

ʿAbduh's reform project aimed to create an authentic Muslim modernity that can heal the alienation Muslims feel in their world. This project involved an investigation of the reasons for the current state of Islamic decadence that caused Egypt – as well as other Muslim countries – to be easily dominated by Europe. The project also involved an attempt to provide a new reading of Islam, and the role of faith in general, that corresponds to the modern needs of the Muslim *ʾummah*.[80] In other words, it was an attempt to revive the practice of *ijtihād* in Islam and challenge the prevalence of *taqlīd*. In his incomplete autobiography, ʿAbduh explains that he dedicated his life to freeing Muslims from the bonds of *taqlīd*; he wanted Muslims to

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[78] Hourani *Arabic Thought*, 135. See also, Riḍā, "Maʿārifuh wa ʿulūmuh," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:1031-1034.

[79] Riḍā, "Fī ʾAsfārih," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:846-47.

[80] Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, 28.

come to Islam and understand it the way their forefathers did: without any preconceived notions.[81]

There were two rival narratives of Eastern decline and two opposing solutions for it. In the typical Orientalist assessment of Eastern Muslim stagnation, backwardness, decline, and inertia reflects a timeless characteristic of the Eastern nature; the solution is a period of subjugation under the rule of the civilised Europeans. For ʿAbduh, however, Muslim decadence was the result of historical processes rather than something inherent in the East, and it can be reversed through a return to authentic Islam.[82] This decadence manifested on two levels: the despotism of Ottoman rulers in politics, and the prevalence of *taqlīd* in Islamic thought.[83] Together these two factors disrupted the tradition of *ijtihād* that the early Muslim scholars practiced. *ijtihād* allowed Muslims to interpret sacred text and make rulings without necessarily being tied to earlier precedents. Perhaps this awareness of the primacy of historical factors is what caused ʿAbduh's inevitable rift with his mentor Al-ʾAfghānī. Even though they shared the same objective – the revival of the Muslim ʾummah –, they

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[81] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Sīratī," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 2:310.

[82] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Rad ʿAla Faraḥ Anṭun" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:347-351.

[83] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 73. The word *taqlīd* literally means "imitation" but in Islam it refers to the practice of adopting the legal opinions of previous generations of Muslim scholars regardless of changing contexts. For more on *taqlīd* and its opposite *ijtihād*, see Devin J. Stewart, "ijtihād and taqlīd" in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 244-246.

differed greatly in their point of departure, rationale, priorities, and the methods implemented.

Al-ʾAfghānī's focus was on the political factors which were significant indeed, but ʿAbduh's focus was *taqlīd* – the root cause of all manifestations of decadence whether political, social, or intellectual. For Al-ʾAfghānī, the root of decadence in the Muslim East was the synergetic relationship between European colonial tyranny and local despotic rulers. To liberate the East from this double oppression, it was important to bring down both colonial and local oppressive governments throughout the East at any cost. These governments are to be replaced with democratic and constitutional governments. The other element of Al-ʾAfghānī's political project aimed at uniting all the oppressed nations of the East. Pan-Islamism as championed by Al-ʾAfghānī advocated uniting all Muslims in the world under one Islamic state ruled by a just and righteous Muslim Caliph.

Al-ʾAfghānī believed that reform through education & good upbringing of a new generation [*tarbiyah*] would take way too long, and political reform through forced change of rulers & governments would be the quickest way to reform. ʿAbduh on the other hand, believed that educational reform is the priority, and any sort of concession to the whims of the rulers or those corrupt individuals within the government was a worthwhile mean towards the greater goal of uplifting the masses morally and socially.[84] Although both Al-ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh can be described as

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[84] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Ḥadīth ʿAn al-Siyāsah bayna al-Ustadh al-Imām wa al-Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:807-809.

religious reformers, their understanding of the specific role of religion could not be more dissimilar. Whereas Al-ʾAfghānī wanted to use Islam as a political tool to mobilise the Muslim East, ʿAbduh saw Islam as a facilitator of a more gradual reform focusing on individual morality and social cohesion.

Regarding the Pan-Islamic project, ʿAbduh found the concept problematic. Al-ʾAfghānī and other proponents of Pan-Islamism as an Islamic unity between all nations of the East that transcends ethnic and linguistic differences was proposed as the only social and political solution for Eastern Muslim decadence. However, ʿAbduh recognised that the ideal of Pan-Islamism meant different things depending on who proclaimed it: for example, the concept meant something radically different for the anarchist Al-ʾAfghānī from what it meant to Sultan ʿAbdal-Ḥāmīd.[85] ʿAbduh presents a more nuanced position on the meaning of Muslim unity than Al-ʾAfghānī who was aiming for nothing less than complete political unity between all Muslims the world over. When ʿAbduh's student Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā asked for his opinion on the opening of the first issue of *al-Manār* magazine, ʿAbduh objected to one of its stated aims: "to educate the *ʾummah* on the rights of their *ʾimām* and to educate the *ʾimām* on the rights of the *ʾummah*."[86] ʿAbduh protested that the *ʾummah* has no *ʾimām* or *caliph* in the modern age. In fact, ʿAbduh rejected any discussion of *ʾimāmiyah* [Imamhood] as an irresponsible act of incitement that will cause more harm than good

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[85] Muḥammad ʿImārah, "Al-Jāmiʿa Al-Islāmiyah," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:105.

[86] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Imām Huwa Al-Qurʾān" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:865.

for the ʾummah; ʿAbduh declares that the only ʾimām for Muslims today is the Qurʾān which served as textual ʾimām or guide.

Later in his life, ʿAbduh criticised his old mentor Al-ʾAfghānī for his belief that political revolutionary activism was the path to the political maturity of the Eastern nations. ʿAbduh found it absurd that the Muslim intelligentsia were so preoccupied with politics instead of education which was the foundation upon which everything can be built. Al-ʾAfghānī was a man of exceptional abilities, and ʿAbduh lamented that his mentor did not dedicate his genius to the reform of Islamic education which would have greatly served Islam and Muslims.[87] The poor state of religious education that discourages Muslims from using their reason and intellect is what is contributing to the spread of blind imitation of past generations.

In the beginning, *taqlīd* signified the maturity of the legal system of Islam, but by the 19th century it was practised blindly. More importantly, *taqlīd* became a defensive mechanism for contemporary Muslim scholars and communities to guard their society and culture from the rapid Westernisation and colonisation threatening their identity. In other words, *taqlīd* was now a disease "infecting the hearts and minds of Muslims and making the religion immaterial and useless".[88] Islam, laments ʿAbduh, was corrupted because of *Taqlīd*.[89] He criticised the religious establishment accusing the ʿUlamāʾ of wasting the essence of religion by focusing on tangential debates while

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[87] ʿAbduh, "Ḥadīth ʿAn al-Siyāsah," 807-809.

[88] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 79-81.

[89] ʿAbduh, "Al-Rad ʿala Faraḥ Anṭun," 3:332-333, 340-344.

the community of Muslims were in a state of grave stagnation and degeneration.[90]

These *ʿUlamāʾ* will shamelessly describe themselves as "*Muqallidūn*" [Imitators].[91]

Instead of preserving the religion as they assumed they were doing, ʿAbduh believed

that religious scholars were contradicting the command of Qurʾān by demanding

nothing less than blind obedience from the Muslim masses.[92] This is extremely

problematic for ʿAbduh who believed a Muslim who is a blind imitator of the religion

is not a believer.[93]

The problem was that modern Muslims were living in unprecedented times of

rapid change in addition to the relatively new reality of colonisation by a foreign

power. The practice of *ijtihād* was absolutely essential for the survival of Islam and

Muslims in modern times because without it, it is impossible to adapt Islam to the

historical context that modern Muslims were living.[94] Islam for ʿAbduh was a religion

of reason, and the Quran elevated the intellect as it has "the final decision regarding

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[90] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Fiqh wa Al-Fuqahāʾ'" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:212-215.

[91] ʿAbduh, "Al-Fiqh wa Al-Fuqahāʾ," 3:215.

[92] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 79.

[93] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Sūrat al-Baqarah," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 4:396. In his analysis of verse 171 of the second chapter of the Qurʾān, ʿAbduh states that "This verse clearly announces that belief in authority, without reason and guidance, is a characteristic of the godless. For one becomes a believer only when he grasps his religion with reason, and comprehends it with his soul. So that he becomes fully convinced of it." The quote is translated in Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, 131.

[94] For ʿAbduh's aggressive attacks on religious scholars that adhere to blind *taqlīd* and discourage the Muslims from *ijtihād*, see "Sūrat al-Baqarah," 4:393-397.

the matter of happiness, and in the distinction between truth and falsehood, and between what is harmful and what is beneficial."[95] ʿAbduh was attacked vehemently for these belief and his calls to open the doors of *ijtihād* which has been shut for ten centuries: he and other reformers sharing his views were called: "heretics, enemies of believers, anarchists, liars, khawarij, the "Protestants" of Islam, bent on corrupting Islam like Protestants corrupted Christianity, and on reviving the jahiliyya."[96] There was a huge chasm between what Orthodox Islam preached and the social conduct of Muslims in modern life, and for ʿAbduh, this reflected a manifestation of degeneration characteristic of Islamic societies.[97]

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[95] Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, 128.

[96] Amal Ghazal, "'Illiberal' Though in the Liberal Age: Yusuf al-Nabhani (1849-1932), Dream-Stories, and Sufi Polemics against the Modern Age," in *Arabic beyond the Liberal Age: Towards and Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 226. For an analysis of the violent reaction of the traditional establishment towards ʿAbduh's attack on taqlīd, see Samira Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 78-83. Also,

[97] For examples of this analysis, see the following articles from the early 1880s: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Qūwa wa Al-Qānūn," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 7 February, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:307-312. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Muntadayātuna Al-ʿUmūmya wa ʾAḥādīthuha," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 9 February, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 2:42-46. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Takhṣīṣ Lima Yūjib al-Taʿmīm," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 28 February, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 2:47-50. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Khaṭaʾ Al-ʿUaqalāʾ," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 4 April, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:323-326. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Kalām Fī Khaṭaʾ Al-ʿUaqalāʾ," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 7 April, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:327-330. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Kalām Fī Khaṭaʾ Al-ʿUaqalāʾ," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 19 April, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:331-335. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾIkhtilāf Al-Qawānīn bi ʾIkhtilāf ʾAḥwāl Al-ʾUmam," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, June 19, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:337-342.

In early 1881, ʿAbduh penned two scathing articles comparing European public spaces with the degenerate state of public spaces and the corrupt ideas circulating amongst the Egyptians.[98] The subjugation of Muslims to European imperialism is merely a consequence of the intellectual degeneration of Muslim cultural elite for centuries, and the degeneration of the masses is only an extension of that degeneracy. Over three articles under the title of "On the Error of the Enlightened", ʿAbduh agrees that the calls to constitutional life in Egypt was reasonable; however, he argues that it is dangerous to force democratic and liberal ideas on the masses without dealing with their "decadent ideas" [ʾafkārihim al-munḥaṭṭa] through gradual reform of education and society. It is necessary to prepare the nation for the responsibility that comes with democratic representation, and it is the responsibility of the middle-class notables [nubahāʾ] to educate their compatriots if they really seek the welfare of their nation.[99] With the prevalence of taqlīd over ijtihād, Muslim scholars lost their perspective and there was no distinction between what is essential to being Muslim and what was not. Thus, the societal conditions of early Islam which were the result of a specific historical context ended up having exactly the same weight as the timeless articles of faith.[100] For ʿAbduh, the rise of taqlīd was linked to the Turk's leadership of ʾummah,

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[98] ʿAbduh, "Muntadayātuna Al-ʿUmūmya wa ʾAḥādīthuha," 2:42-46. ʿAbduh, "Takhṣīṣ Lima Yūjib al-Taʿmīm," 2:47-50.

[99] This was the first in a series of three articles published throughout April of 1881. ʿAbduh, "Khaṭaʾ Al-ʿUaqalāʾ," 1:323-326. ʿAbduh, "Kalām Fī Khaṭaʾ Al-ʿUaqalāʾ," 1:327-330. ʿAbduh, "Kalām Fī Khaṭaʾ Al-ʿUaqalāʾ," 1:331-335.

[100] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 150. See also ʿAbduh's analysis of how stagnation harmed *Sharīʿa* in "Al-Rad ʿAla Faraḥ Anṭun," 3:340-341.

and it was under the Ottomans that the ʿulamāʾ abandoned their obligation towards the community of believers.

ʿAbduh was far from sharing the loyalty of the Ottomanist Egyptian nationalists, and the anti-Turkish sentiment is hard to ignore. In ʿAbduh's analysis, the danger of Ottoman tyranny was equal to that of European colonisation. He believed that the end of the Ottoman Empire was inevitable and may well be a blessing for Arabs; he also believed in the necessity of "the transfer of leadership in the ʾummah from the Turks back to the Arabs, and [he] implies that the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire is both inevitable and to be desired".[101] He described the Ottoman Sultan as "the greatest murderer in our age."[102] However, he did his best to avoid direct confrontation with the Sultan and refrained from openly expressing his anti-Ottoman views.[103] The danger of the tyranny of the Ottoman Sultan for ʿAbduh was the fact that it went beyond the mere mismanagement of the Muslim nation; the Sultan's tyranny is corrupting the morality [ʾakhlāq] of the Muslim.[104] The Turks, claimed ʿAbduh, failed to understand the message of the Arab prophet of Islam; moreover, instead of obeying the message of Islam, they exploited it to further their political interests. Under the

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[101] Hourani, *Arabic Thought* 155. See also Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Ḥadith ʿAn Al-Dawla Al-ʿUthmāniya," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:863-864; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-ʿArab wa Al-Turk," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:869-870.

[102] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾIstibdād Al-Sulṭān ʿAbd Al-ḥamīd," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:871.

[103] ʿAbduh, "ʾIstibdād Al-Sulṭān ʿAbd Al-ḥamīd," 1:873-875.

[104] ʿAbduh, "ʾIstibdād Al-Sulṭān ʿAbd Al-ḥamīd," 1:871.

harmful influence of Ottoman tyranny, the *'Ulamā'* failed to guard the spiritual cohesion of Muslims, and new different religious schools appeared; Arabic language lost its vibrancy and purity while education became indoctrination into subservience. The rational sciences were neglected, and reason was actively suppressed. By placing the blame for the ubiquity of *taqlīd* on the Turks, ʿAbduh is strategically deflecting the blame of Muslim decline from Arabs.

The practice of blind *taqlīd*, the deterioration of Arabic, and the renouncement of reason were all the consequence of the rising power of the Turkish element within the Muslim ʾ*ummah*. ʿAbduh's assessment of the Turco-Circassian House of Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt was not much different from his view of the Ottomans. In 1902, ʿAbduh published an article titled "The Legacy of Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt" where he anonymously shares his scornful view of Muḥammad ʿAlī.[105] Muḥammad ʿAlī failed to revive but he caused the society to perish.[106] Muḥammad ʿAlī was not the benevolent dictator that created modern Egypt; on the contrary, he obstructed the real growth and maturation of Egypt when he allowed foreigners to enslave Egyptians and exploit their land.[107] As for the descendants of Muḥammad ʿAlī, they have no affinity to the land or to its people. Reflecting on the period of ʿUrābist revolution, ʿAbduh writes:

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[105] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾAthār Muḥammad ʿAlī Fī Miṣr," *Al-Manār*, June 1902; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:851-858. Also, in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 2:382-289.

[106] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾAthār Muḥammad ʿAlī Fī Miṣr," 1:853.

[107] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾAthār Muḥammad ʿAlī Fī Miṣr," 1:851-858. Also in *Tārīkh Al-ʾUstādh*, 2:382-389.

> Ismail Pāshā has corrupted the state and corrupted the morality [*'akhlāq*] of the people; so much so that when we felt the breeze of freedom and tried to rise to reform our lot, it was the corruption of morality that held us back and not the corruption of state. If it was not for that situation, this period where we had free access to [*tarbiyah*], education, writing, and oratory, and civil organisation [*ijtima'a*] would have been enough for us to progress [*nartaqi*] and become a [civilised] nation.[108]

And now twenty years later, Khedive ʿAbbās Ḥilmī – "our little man" as ʿAbduh describes him – is so absorbed in his trade business, that Lord Cromer gave him an ultimatum – either be a respectable Khedive or a professional businessman.[109]

According to ʿAbduh, the modernisation of Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors achieved only a superficial modernity. Their forced process of Westernisation undermined the Islamic morality of society without creating a viable alternative. The proof of this degeneration for ʿAbduh was the contrast in Egyptian reaction to the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 compared with their reaction to the British occupation less than a century later in 1882; this, for ʿAbduh, marked the difference between a living and a dead nation.[110]

Under the rule of the House of Muḥammad ʿAlī, Egyptian society became a lawless society because the laws derived from Europe lacked the authoritative power over Egyptians that religion and morality had.[111] Early in his career, ʿAbduh's writings

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[108] ʿAbduh, "ʾIstibdād Al-Sulṭān ʿAbd Al-ḥamīd," 1:871.

[109] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾUmarāʾ Miṣr wa Al-ʿUrūba," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:859-860.

[110] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "ʾAthār Muḥammad ʿAlī Fī Miṣr," 1:851-858. Also, in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh*, 2:382-389.

[111] ʿAbduh, "Al-Qūwa wa Al-Qānūn," 1:307-312.

reflected his concern with the health of society under the advances of Westernisation. He argued that a healthy society is governed by moral law rather than brute force.[112] Tyranny impressed weakness and resentment on the hearts of a nation and disfigured the sacred essence of humans by teaching them a vicious morality.[113] The result of this top-down forced modernisation was a superficial modernity that dismantled Egypt rather than civilise it. As mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, the modernisation efforts of Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors created the new social class of *'Afandīyah*. However, by the end of the 19th century there was a growing spiritual and cultural rupture between Egyptians who learned in the traditional religious seminary of Al-ʾAzhar and other religious institutions, and Egyptians who were the product of the modern educational system modelled on the European model and managed by the government or foreign Christian missionaries.[114]

ʿAbduh was wary of the education provided by foreign missionaries in Egypt. The main danger of the schools managed by the Christian missions in Egypt according to ʿAbduh was that they brought Egyptian youth and children to be virtually Christians. In August of 1881, ʿAbduh wrote a series of article on the dangerous consequences of foreign education on the creed of Egyptian youth.[115] These articles

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[112] ʿAbduh, "Al-Qūwa wa Al-Qānūn," 1:307-312.

[113] ʿAbduh, "Al-Qūwa wa Al-Qānūn," 1:307-309.

[114] Robin Ostle, "Literature, Art and National Identity in the Era of Social Reform," *Entre Réforme Sociale et Ouvement national: Identité et Modernisation en Egypte (1882-1962)*, (1995): N.P, Par. 3. See also Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Rad ʿAla Faraḥ Anṭun," 3:344-347.

[115] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Taʾthīr Al-Taʿlīm Fī Al-Dīn wa Al-ʿAqīda," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 9 August, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed.

were prompted by an incident where the son of an Egyptian *'Afandī* working as a bureaucrat in the Egyptian government disappeared for weeks; the son allegedly converted to Christianity and was preparing to leave for France with the help of the administration of his Christian school. In these articles, ʿAbduh implores every Egyptian serious about preserving their religion, whether Muslim, Christian, Jew, Coptic, Orthodox or Protestant or any other denomination to send their young children to schools where they are taught by teachers of their own religious background; at least not until their authentic religious creeds are rooted deeply in their minds by their own parents.[116] The fathers sent their children to these schools because they wanted them to learn the modern sciences of civilisation which they do receive indeed, but the foreign directors of these schools are not driven to find the qualified teachers to teach different religious lessons for each denomination.

Foreign missionary schools and their directors are not to be blamed according to ʿAbduh; they are trying to benefit the society at large. However, ʿAbduh warned fathers that they are putting their children on a long path of doubt and confusion by sending their children to foreign schools. Ideally, for ʿAbduh, religious education will be prohibited in all the schools so that only secular knowledge and skills are offered while religious education is provided in separate institutions managed by each denomination.[117] It is true that the traditional religious system of education was

Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:57-61. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Baqāyā Masʾalat Taʾthīr Al-Taʿlīm Fī Al-Dīn wa Al-ʿAqīda," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 24 August, 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:63-65.

[116] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Taʾthīr Al-Taʿlīm Fī Al-Dīn wa Al-ʿAqīda," 3:61.

[117] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Taʾthīr Al-Taʿlīm Fī Al-Dīn wa Al-ʿAqīda," 3:65.

afflicted by stagnation and disregard for sciences other than religious knowledge and did not prepare students for the modern world. However, the modern educational system including schools managed by the government had its problems and created masses of the Westernised Egyptians that alarmed Al-Ṭahṭāwī decades earlier.

In ʿAbduh's view, these Westernised Egyptian Muslims posed a serious threat to the community of Muslim. Even if Egyptian youths did not convert to the religion of their European teachers, the teaching of a foreign education in a foreign language created an individual who was alienated from his own nation while being intellectually and culturally reliant on a foreign nation.[118] This was simply a different manifestation of *Taqlīd*. There was no difference between the blind imitation of previous generations of Muslims or the blind imitation of contemporary Europeans. ʿAbduh aimed to assert the moral and spiritual relevance of Islam in a modern world for this generation of Westernised Muslims who were struggling to fit their religion with their modern existence.

Muslim educated youth often confessed to ʿAbduh their doubts about the Qurʾān and Islamic faith, and their letters to the grand Muftī symbolised how much modern Muslims were disheartened by the state of Muslim backwardness compared

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[118] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 137-138. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Laʾiḥat al-ʾIṣlāḥ wa al-Taʿlīm Al-ʿUthmānī," *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:75-91. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Mashrūʿ ʾIṣlāḥ al-Tarbiya Fī Miṣr," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:109-125.

with the West.[119] Part of this assertion of Islam involved answering questions that originated in the religious debates taking place in Europe but spread to the colonial territories. ʿAbduh did not conceive of this reform of Islam as a complete departure from tradition and orthodoxy or as a displacement of religious authority through secularism which would be more in line with a Western Orientalist assessment. Rather, he wanted to "restore Islamic orthodoxy by reordering Islamic knowledge for the sake of informing and regulating social practices under the new modern condition".[120] In other words, ʿAbduh's aim was to uphold an Islamic orthodoxy to challenge European visions of reform that see secularism as the only way to civilisation and modernity.[121]

Debating Islam: An Orientalist Analysis of Muslim Decadence

In the early 1900s, ʿAbduh was involved in two great debates over the compatibility of Islam with modernity. One with French Orientalist Gabriel Hanotaux, and the other with a young Westernised Arab intellectual named Faraḥ ʾAnṭūn.[122] In engaging robustly and forcefully with these critiques of Islam, ʿAbduh's main audience was not the two men themselves, but rather their Westernised Muslim

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[119] Rashīd Riḍā, "Difāʿuhu ʿan al-ʾIslām," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:790-796.

[120] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 73-4.

[121] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 90.

[122] Faraḥ ʾAnṭūn was an Atheist Orthodox Christian, and his views were shared by many Muslim Westernised Arabs. ʾAnṭūn was on friendly terms with ʿAbduh who thought highly of the bright youth; that is until the debate and its aftermath caused a fall out between the two men. ʾAnṭūn and his fellow Westernised secularised Arabs represented for ʿAbduh the danger lurking within the East. For more, see Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "Al-Rad ʿAla Faraḥ ʾAfandī Anṭun," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:805-816.

readers who were internalising the narrative of Islam as a defective Semitic religion not fit for the modernity ushered by Aryan Europe. These debates have been read within the context of the evolution of modern Islam,[123] or a globalised world where internal debates on religion moved beyond geographical and cultural boundaries.[124] Here, I would like to focus on his debates with Hanotaux as a negotiation of the dichotomy between East versus West or better still "*al-ʾIslām wa al-gharb*".

By the mid 19th century, it was an accepted belief that there was "a division of labour or specialisation between cultures - a Spiritual East and a Materialistic West".[125] ʿAbduh's debates with Hanotaux and ʾAnṭūn had a precedent in the career of Al-ʾAfghānī. In an 1883 lecture in the Sorbonne in Paris, French Orientalist Ernest Renan argued that Islam and Science are incompatible.[126] In addition, the so-called Islamic knowledge produced in Golden Age of Islam was in fact Aryan in origin

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[123] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*,

[124] Ammeke Kateman, *Muḥammad ʿAbduh and His Interlocutors: Conceptualizing Religion in a Globalizing World*. (Leiden: Brill, 2019) 163-185.

[125] For an exploration of "The Genesis of the Assumed Dichotomy between the Spiritual East and the Material West", see Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963; London: Saqi Books, 2011), 182-184.

[126] David Fieni, "French Decadence, Arab Awakenings: Figures of Decay in the Arab Nahda," *Boundary 2* 39, no. 2 (May 2012): 145.

through the influence of Persian and Greek knowledge.[127] This lecture was followed by a debate between the French and Persian scholars. Al-ʾAfghānī and Renan were not debating the universality of rationalism, but rather the question was whether Arabs and Muslims were capable of practising this rationalism. In his debates with Hanotaux and ʾAnṭūn, ʿAbduh likewise was not concerned with the truth or falsity of Islam as a religion in comparison to Christianity, but rather the debate was over whether Islam was compatible with modernity, and whether it was possible for a modern person to be genuinely Muslim.

Gabriel Hanotaux was a French historian and the minister of foreign affairs in imperial France. In 1900, he published an article entitled "Face to Face with Islam and the Muslim Question" in the *Journal de Paris*.[128] The article was a pure example of the Orientalist attitude prevalent amongst the administrators of colonial Europe in the late 19th century: The East is backward, decadent, and perverse. In the article, Hanotaux compares Semitic religions with Aryan religions, and in particular, Islam as opposed to Christianity. The purpose of this analysis for Hanotaux was to help his French readers understand how radically different the Muslim in French colonies are from the modern French Christians. Hanotaux urged the French government to carry

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[127] For more, see Muḥammad ʿImāra, ed. , *Al-ʿAmāl Al-Kāmila Li Jamāl Al-Dīn al-ʾAfghānī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabi, 1968), pp 208-210; Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-ʾAfghānī: A Political Biography* (London, University of California Press, 1972), 189-199; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 120-123. Future Arab thinkers appeared to have a similar position: Elie Kedourie, *ʾAfghānī and ʿAbduh*, 41-45; Michelangelo Guida, "Al-Afghānī and Namık Kemal's Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamist Thought," *Turkish Journal of Politics* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2011), 57-70.

[128] Gabriel Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 2: 401-414.

out consultations with specialists on the region and Islam – i.e., Orientalists – to "draw up a brief political document containing statement of the principles governing their [French] relations with the world of Islam".[129] Hanotaux argued that it was necessary for France to create a systematic approach in its dealing with Muslims; in particular, he encouraged the use of soft power through cultural assimilation.

Soon after its publication in French, an Arabic translation of Hanotaux's article appeared *Al-Mu'ayyad* which represents the traditional Islamic voice in Egyptian journalism under the editorial of ʿAlī Yūsuf.[130] The translation sparked anger amongst the Muslims and instigated a passionate internal debate about the reality of decadence and its causes in the Muslim East. When ʿAbduh read the Arabic translation on his evening train commute, he was so outraged that he penned his response on the spot. The reply was published in *Al-Mu'ayyad* the following morning.[131] ʿAbduh wanted his reply to be published anonymously under the name of "A Muslim ʾImām" rather than under his title as the Mufti of Egypt. However, the readers and particularly the intellectuals recognised ʿAbduh as the author of this reply. The sophisticated language and knowledge reflected a well-informed and rounded background on the religious and political history of both the East as well as Europe that readers immediately associated with ʿAbduh.[132]

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[129] Hanotaux quoted in Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 86.

[130] Adam, *Islam and Modernism*, 86.

[131] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 2:400.

[132] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:800.

ʿAbduh's article was translated and published in the French edition of *Al-ʾAhrām*.[133] This initial reply was the first of six articles where ʿAbduh addressed almost every issue raised by Hanotaux in his argument for the incompatibility of Semitic Eastern religions, especially Islam with modernity and civilisation. In response, Hanotaux wrote a second article entitled "Islam Again" where he stressed that his intention in writing the article was to encourage moderate views, mutual respect and peace-making; he did not mean to disrespect or attack Islam.[134] *Al-ʾAhrām* newspaper published a defence of Hanotaux arguing that the Arabic translation of his article was inaccurate and misrepresented Hanotaux's ideas.[135] The editor of *Al-ʾAhrām* travelled to Paris and conducted an interview with Hanotaux who emphasised his goodwill in writing the articles and that it was not intended to offend or disrespect Islam and Muslims. Nevertheless, he maintained that he could not deny the objective reality of European superiority to the East in civilisation, culture, freedom, and justice.[136] In the end, Hanotaux was not willing to acknowledge the role of historical processes in the current state of the Muslim East. This provoked ʿAbduh to write three more articles.

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[133] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:219-224.

[134] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:411.

[135] Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 88.

[136] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 245-247.

This debate contributed to ʿAbduh's great popularity in the East, and thousands of copies were circulated. Because of his intelligent and analytical style, ʿAbduh was established as Islam's "ablest modern apologist" in the Arab and Muslim world as well as in Europe.[137] To ʿAbduh's dismay, this serious debate did not contribute to any real reform in education, society, administration or politics; the influence was limited to a sense of thrill amongst Muslim reader to see an Eastern ʾImām sparring intellectually with the great men of Europe.[138] This inspired many to add to the conversation by responding to Hanotaux's ideas in Egyptian magazines and newspapers. However, these responses did more harm than good as they lacked the erudition and tact of ʿAbduh and descended into an attack on Christianity which offended many Eastern Christians. A Christian Egyptian lamented the situation noting that the debate should have ended with ʿAbduh's response which was respected by both Muslim and Christians in the East.[139] Nevertheless, the debate had a long-lasting influence and is a classic example of Muslim apologetics. The six articles were combined with Hanotaux's articles and interview in addition to relevant essays from his influential book *Risalāt Al-Tawḥīd*. The collection was published posthumously in 1924 under the title of *Al-ʾIslām wa al-Radd ʿAla Muntaqidīh*.

Gabriel Hanotaux's initial article started with a dire warning of the persisting danger of Islam. In its early stages, Islam spread quickly from Asia to North Africa,

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[137] Riḍā, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 1:799; Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 86; Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic tradition*, 91.

[138] Riḍā, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 1:799.

[139] Riḍā, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 1:803.

and continued its advent into Europe where "the Christian Aryan civilisation" had successfully driven Islam back to Africa where it remained as a potential threat. Despite European dominance, the danger remains; the Crescent of Islam surrounded Europe stretching from Istanbul in the East to Fez in the West with Europe in its clutch ready to crush it at any moment.[140] When Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, he was the first to successfully challenge the dominance of Islam in Africa since the 13th century. A century later, Algeria and Tunisia have been French colonies for decades; the French armies are roaming the dunes of Central Africa, and their navies are sailing the rivers of Africa. However, this European dominance over Islam brings with it a different aspect of the Islamic threat.

France is right now ruling Muslim lands and nations, so Islam is *inside* of France. Hanotaux notes that the current situation presents a new conundrum: an Aryan Christian nation that is republican in its principles is now carrying "the soul of modernity" [*rūḥ al-madaniyah*] to a Semitic Muslim nation.[141] Muslims, however, are dangerous students, and the challenge is to balance this colonial duty of modernising and civilising Muslims with neutralising the danger of Islam. The danger of Islam lies in that it attracted entire nations from Africa to China and inspired in them an intense devotion.[142] These entire nations, however, are all the same for Hanotaux. All the Muslims are the same regardless of their cultural specificities, whether they were

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[140] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:401. My discussion and analysis of Hanotaux's ideas is based on the 1900 Arabic translation by Muḥammad Masoud published in *Al-Mu'ayyad*.

[141] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:402-3.

[142] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:403.

Bedouins or urbanites, whether they dressed in robes and turbans or suits and fezzes, whether they studied in Berlin or Paris. They were perceived as an indiscernible whole without clear distinction.[143]

When discussing the spiritual unity of Muslims, Hanotaux represents this innocuous communal affinity as an irrational abnormal homogeneity. Every Muslim thinks and acts through this spiritual unity which pulls him like a magnetic field towards the holy land in the deserts of Arabia to participate in the "eternal *Hajj*". A Muslim responds to this internal calling by visiting Makkah, beholding the *kaʿbah*, touching the Black Stone, and drinking the holy water of *Zamzam*; this ritualistic journey will ignite "the flame of religious zeal" in the hearts of Muslims.[144] Hanotaux notes that the Muslim East has a strong sense of religious consciousness, but their political consciousness is myopic and ambiguous: Muslims experience no sense of unity between them based on national or civil grounds: their homeland is Islam.[145] When Muslims resist French colonial rule, it is not because this rule is exploitative or unjust; for Hanotaux, this resistance is simply a manifestation of their fanaticism against Christian government. Hanotaux refers to this allegedly fanatical manifestation of Islam as 'Outer Islam' and contrasts it with what he refers to as an 'African Islam.'

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[143] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:404.

[144] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:404-405.

[145] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:411-414.

'African Islam' is a manifestation of Islam that emerged under the French occupation. Tunisia is an example of this more tolerable form of Islam for Hanotaux which emerged gradually under French influences without clashing with the sensibilities of the native population. Civil rule coexisted with religion, and European thought have permeated society without harming the "Mohammedan faith".[146] This demonstrates the possibility for a Muslim country to loosen the influence of Makkah and the Asiatic past.[147] For Hanotaux, Tunisia is an encouraging example of what can happen in the rest of the Muslim world under the positive influence of European colonisation. Nevertheless, the French must not be deceived by the peacefulness of Muslim societies in Tunisia and Algeria towards their French rulers. Islam is a backward, anti-humanist and tyrannical religion; Muslim societies are therefore inherently fanatical, violent, and opposed to modern civilisation. Even the Westernised 'African Islam' that Hanotaux praised was not satisfactory enough for the French Orientalist.

Hanotaux's analysis was merely a reiteration of the Orientalist binary of modern, civilised humanist West and backward, barbaric, and inhumane East that Edward Said scrutinised. In Hanotaux's analysis, the binary was between "an Aryan Christian civilisation" and "a Semitic Islamic civilisation". Despite the theological similarities between Islam and Christianity, their civilizational dissimilarity highlights the difference between Semitic and Aryan natures.[148] Semitic Islam conceives of a

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[146] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:413.

[147] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:413-414.

[148] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:407-409.

transcendental God that predetermines everything and the individual has no control over his life; this view of God degrades humanity which instils a sense of helplessness, lethargy, and despair as one has no options but to continue praying to a distant God. Aryan Christianity, on the other hand, envisages a God whose presence permeates human life and does not interfere with free will. Hanotaux argues that despite its Semitic origins, modern Christianity is a direct legacy from Aryan tradition. Christianity was born Semitic, but the Aryan race freed Christianity from its Semitic roots and transformed it while the Muslim are still contaminated with Semitic elements.[149] Whereas Christianity appreciates the worth of man and stresses his likeness to the Divine, Islam favours a worldview that diminishes the autonomy and capability of man. In the final analysis, "the Christian idea of man's free will has led him to the active use of means and self-dependence, while the Muslim doctrine of predestination has caused him to submit blindly to a law that knows no change".[150] These two conceptions of the relationship between humanity and the divine produced two different culture. Islam and Christianity represent the conflict between two cultures: the submissive lethargic East and the determined self-reliant West.

Reducing Islam and Christianity to fixed essentialist categories within a hierarchy of civilizational worth was essential for the colonial project in the Muslim East. In his analysis, Hanotaux references D. Kimon as an example of those who believed that the difference between the Muslim East and the Christian West was irreconcilable. Kimon represented a most extreme manifestation of racialist Orientalism; his book *The*

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[149] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:408.

[150] Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 87.

Pathology of Islam advocated a complete eradication of Islam by exterminating five percent of the Muslim population, destroying the holy cities of Makkah and Medina, and subjugating the rest to slavery until they convert to Catholicism. This representation of Islam was an aspect of the prevalent anti-Semitism that took over France in the late nineteenth century.[151] Kimon's position was extreme for Hanotaux who conceived of the colonial project as a humanist mission to civilise the East. Hanotaux was against the use of violence and brute force arguing instead for a gentler, presumably civilised process of displacing Islam from the lives of Muslims in the East. If a racist fanatic like Kimon saw the East and its Semitic Muslim inhabitants as inherently flawed and defective, Hanotaux simply located this inferiority in Islam. For Hanotaux, it is impossible to change the timeless fixed identity of Islam. The solution therefore was to separate this "Semitic religion" from politics so that the nations of the Muslim East can be fit for modernity.

Subverting the Binary of Semitic East and Aryan West

The controversy was a chance for ʿAbduh to explicitly articulate what he always argued implicitly: *Taqlīd*, despotism, and foreign hegemony are the cause of Arab decadence and not an inherent fixed characteristic of Islam or the East. Hanotaux presented his ideas as a critique of theology and religious doctrines; however, the racialist undertones of his comparative analysis were jarringly obvious. ʿAbduh was infuriated by what he perceived as the irresponsibly inflammatory and racist nature of

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[151] For more on Kimon's book, see Fernando Bravo Lopez, "The Genocidal Islamophobia of a Late Nineteenth-Century French Anti-Semite: D. Kimon and *The Pathology of Islam*," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25, no. 1 (September 2013): 101-116.

Hanotaux's writings at a time when the Muslims are effectively living under the rule of the French. How this hateful speech is conducive to a civilised discourse is something that ʿAbduh calls the attention of Westernised Arabs to, and particularly the Francophile Muslim youth. For ʿAbduh, Hanotaux's analysis achieves nothing but inflaming the fires of hatred in the hearts of French people against the Muslims already under their control.[152] ʿAbduh was not only responding to Hanotaux, but he was also addressing the Westernised Muslim Arabs who read Hanotaux and internalised the Orientalist narrative of Islam as a decadent anti-modern religion.

ʿAbduh conceded the decadence of the Muslim East, but he rejected Hanotaux's explicitly racial analysis. ʿAbduh refused to look at the contemporary East and West divorced from history. By restoring the historicity of 19th century Europe and the Middle East, ʿAbduh subverts Hanotaux's arguments that a Semitic Eastern Islam is a perennial threat to Aryan European Christian civilisation. The contemporary state of the Muslim East, ʿAbduh argues, is not the result of an inherent Semitic inferiority of its nation; rather, it was the result of historical processes. Likewise, the admirable progress of the contemporary West is not the result of an inherent Aryan superiority, but equally the product of historical factors. Moreover, the solution for this decadence was not a bland imitation of European modernity that is bound to be inferior to the original. ʿAbduh saw "Muslim decadence" as something peculiar to the historical context of Muslims, and therefore it cannot be healed simply by applying solutions derived from another context.

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[152] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:220.

ʿAbduh dismissed Hanotaux as a 'Muqallid'[153] in his historical analysis as well as in his theological analysis of Semitic Islam and Aryan Christianity. Indeed, for ʿAbduh who spent his lifetime critiquing his fellow Muslims for their Taqlīd, Hanotaux comes across as an amateur imitator "displaying ignorance and repeating unfounded claims akin to those made by Muslim scholars whom he vilified as perilous imitators".[154] ʿAbduh's main argument is that Hanotaux's analysis is deeply flawed precisely because he is keen to create a clean and neat dichotomy between East and West, or in his theological comparisons between a Semitic Islam and an Aryan Christianity. For ʿAbduh, Hanotaux's fixation on this racial/spiritual dichotomy reflects his ignorance not only of the historical reality of Islam and the East, but also of Christianity and Europe.[155] Hanotaux's analysis is not weighed down by the reality of actual societies and their histories; therefore, he casually declares an essentialist divide between Semitic and Aryan, Islam and Christianity, civilisation, and decadence, and ultimately, East and West. The nuances of actual cultures and societies are not allowed to interfere with or challenge this divide.

ʿAbduh accepts the binary of Semitic/Aryan as a reference point for discussing the progress of Europe and the stagnation of the Muslim East, and he actually refers to Islam as a 'Semitic Creed' ["al-ʿaqīda al-Sāmiyyah"] within the context of defending it against Hanotaux's criticism.[156]But he also stresses the synergetic nature

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[153] An imitator, or someone who practices Taqlīd as opposed to Mujtahid meaning an independent thinker or someone who practices ijtihād.

[154] Hajj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition, 92

[155] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:220-221.

[156] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:227.

of civilisations that Hanotaux brushes off in his attempt to maintain the facade of racial purity. ʿAbduh discounts Hanotaux's analysis by highlighting historical instances where Semitic cultures exhibited the great vigour and activity Hanotaux associated with the contemporary West while Aryan cultures were in a state of passivity and inertia similar to the state of the contemporary East.[157] All civilisations throughout history borrowed what they needed from one another. Semitic as well as Aryan civilisations contributed to each other and neither civilisation was the sole work of one nation or race exclusively.[158]

More importantly, ʿAbduh stresses the fact that these two categories – Aryan and Semitic - converged often and influenced each other historically.[159] No culture is purely Aryan or Semitic. Nations interact and learn and borrow from each other depending on need. Indeed, the Greeks that Hanotaux proclaim as the forefathers of modern Europe themselves borrowed from earlier cultures around them in the region including the Semitic civilisations whether Hebrew or Islamic.[160] ʿAbduh, in fact, believed that the Aryans borrowed more from the Eastern Semitics in the past than the contemporary decadent East is taking from the civilised West.[161] In the final analysis, Hanotaux's ethno-religious hierarchy has little to do with the historical realities of

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[157] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:222.

[158] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:223.

[159] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3: 224-226.

[160] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:222-226.

[161] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:223-224.

civilizational rise and fall, and everything to do with unfounded unjust attack on Islam, Semites and the East.

It is in regard to Hanotaux's discussion of theological differences between Semitic Islam and Aryan Christianity that ʿAbduh becomes particularly frustrated with the reductionist and uninformed analysis of complicated issues of human self-determination and God's transcendentalism. Hanotaux claims that the less rational doctrine of the Oneness of God is a Semitic doctrine; for ʿAbduh, this preposterous claim exposes the extent of Hanotaux's ignorance.[162] In reality, monotheism started as an exclusively Hebrew belief at a time when other Semitic nations like Arabs and Phoenicians remained Pagan like the Greek nation that Hanotaux celebrated.[163] These nuances are lost in the simplistic Orientalist analysis.

Another problematic issue for ʿAbduh is that Hanotaux associated the theological and doctrinal differences between Islam and Christianity with an essentialist difference between Semites and Aryans. ʿAbduh agrees that the theological concept of predestination - or *Jabrīyah* in Islam - that Hanotaux pinpoints as the source of Muslim passivity and lack of initiative is indeed an unhealthy worldview. However, the theological tension in Islam between *Jabrīyah* [the belief in predestination] and *Qadarīyah* [the belief in freewill] has a parallel in Christianity where the Thomist doctrine of predestination opposed the Jesuit belief in man's freewill. [164] The original sources of legislation in Islam, Qurʾān and Prophetic

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[162] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:222.

[163] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:407.

[164] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:224-229.

traditions, categorically deny compulsion of destiny; indeed, this fatalistic understanding of destiny, ʿAbduh argues, came from Islamic mysticism which incidentally has Aryan origins in Persia and India.[165] ʿAbduh rejected the assumptions that there was any link between Europe's modern civilisation and Christianity. If anything, Europe's contemporary civilisation was a consequence of the rejection of Christianity by European intellectuals and scientists, and the rise of secular materialism.[166]

ʿAbduh challenged the universality of the European model of modernity, progress and civilisation posited by Hanotaux. For example, Hanotaux criticised the political authority of Islam; the merging of spiritual and political powers was inherent to Islam and a major cause of the backwardness of the East.[167] The solution for Hanotaux is the establishment of more French protectorates in the East based on the positive model of Tunisia where the Muslim majority is ruled by a French political elite. This will create a context where Islam is displaced from its position of political authority to effectively decouple this merging of political and religious powers. ʿAbduh does not deny the benefit of secularism and the separation it entails between church and state in the evolution of Europe; however, secularism evolved organically from the European historical context, and therefore it will not necessarily be the solution for the current state of the Muslim East. The factors behind Eastern Muslim backwardness for ʿAbduh as we have seen in the first section of this chapter stemmed

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[165] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:403.

[166] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:232.

[167] Hanotaux, "Maqāl Hānūtū," 2:411-414.

from a different context than that of Europe in the dark ages. Therefore, the social, political, and cultural practices that succeeded in the European context will not necessarily have the same effect in the East. It is not enough to transplant European modernity from one context to another and call that progress.

In debating Hanotaux over the necessity of secularism as a precondition for the progress of Muslims in the East, ʿAbduh was not defending the caliphate itself as a political institution.[168] For ʿAbduh, there is no inherent virtue in a break between religious and spiritual authority. In fact, the separation has been in effect in Islam for centuries, but that did not contribute to the progress of Muslims as their state shows.[169] Temporal and religious authorities are separate under the Ottoman Islamic Jurisprudence. There is the Caliph or Sultan who represent the civil authority while the *Qādī* or Grand Judge represents the religious authority.[170] Similarly, the British in Egypt have already separated religious and political authority; but this marginalisation of *Sharīʿa* and religious law did not alleviate the reality of Muslims.[171] In fact, ʿAbduh argues that Muslims may have been better off if the Ottomans did indeed combine religious power with political power because that would have restrained the ruler from carrying out "acts of oppression, excess and prodigality that brought woe to Muslims and deprived them of their dearest possession - their independence".[172]

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[168] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:249-250.

[169] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 93.

[170] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:222-226, 250.

[171] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:250.

[172] Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 89.

ʿAbduh did not only disagree with Hanotaux in his analysis and interpretation of the factors behind Muslim stagnation in the East, but he also disagreed with Hanotaux prescribed solution for this stagnation. In the colonial context, Islam is deployed to curb and contain the process of Westernisation. Islam became "a principle of restraint" that will "enable Muslims to distinguish what was good from what was bad".[173] The European project of modernity was not to be accepted in its totality without assessing its content through Islamic criteria. The colonial context offered the European model of civilisation and progress as the one and only, and Muslims were becoming Westernised in their habits and customs. Thus, whereas Hanotaux's solution is a marginalisation of Islam as irrational and insignificant, for ʿAbduh the answer is an assertion of Islam as a way of balancing the detrimental consequences of Westernisation. ʿAbduh saw Hanotaux's solution - Westernising local cultures and displacing Islam – as a form of colonial aggression on Egypt and the Egyptians. What Hanotaux proposed was not a reforming of Muslims; he is negotiating a way to turn Muslims into 'non-Muslims'.[174] ʿAbduh however believed in the contrary; Muslims should not abandon their religion, but rather return to its true authentic uncorrupted form.[175]

For Hanotaux, French civilisation is the only worthy model for the rest of humanity to emulate. In particular, the Aryan manifestation of Christianity which greatly limited the role of religion was for Hanotaux the best antidote to the passivity

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[173] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 140; Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 71.

[174] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 71.

[175] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:226, 234, 235, 237.

and fatalism of Muslims. Therefore, it is the responsibility of this leading superior civilisation to help the Muslim East abandon their Semitic fatalism that is an inherent component of the Arabo-Islamic civilisation. This attitude towards the problem of decadence of the East is precisely the cause of the precarious nature of the modernisation efforts in the region because – according to ʿAbduh – for any principles to be effective socially, they must be derived from the living circumstances of society itself.[176] True civilisation for ʿAbduh is a form of earthly paradise synonymous with happiness and bliss. He defines this state as the pursuit excellence whether it is a literary, material, concrete, or abstract excellence. It therefore encompasses industries, science, knowledge, and ethics.[177]

For the Egyptian society to reach that same maturity, it was necessary to start a long process of reform that focused on educating the masses rather than direct political reform. Reflecting on his life in 1901, ʿAbduh explained that his aim was always the reform of Muslims through religious, educational, and political reform.[178] ʿAbduh was not rejecting modernisation, but his argument was that an authentically Eastern modernity had to build on the Arabo-Islamic civilisation as opposed to uncritically adopting European civilisation as a whole. It was a priority for ʿAbduh to sustain the spirit of Islam through ensuring the survival of Muslims as a community in a world of rapid change. Thus, religious reform is the best way to motivate Muslims to change

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[176] ʿAbduh, "Al-rad ʿala Hānūtū," 3:337-342.

[177] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-tamaddun," *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Miṣriyya*, 20 January 1881; in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 2:38-41.

[178] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Sīratī," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 2:312.

and revive their nations through the correct and healthy understanding of Islam. For ʿAbduh, if Islam is indeed the root problem of the Muslim East as Hanotaux and other Orientalists argued, then it is also within Islam that the solution for these problems is to be found. Religious reform was always the priority, but a reform of the social, moral, and cultural reality of Muslims and Arabs in Egypt was equally important for ʿAbduh.

The reform of Arabic was an essential step because it was the way to educate the masses and uplift them from their ignorance and degeneration. ʿAbduh believed that the Arabic language needed a robust programme for "*al-ʾislāh al-lughawī*" (linguistic reform) that goes beyond increasing literacy to the dissemination of the arts of composition and eloquence. ʿAbduh observed that the European nations have made great strides in that direction while Arabic will need at least half a century of diligent serious work to reach the high level of composition, literacy, and rhetorical excellence of European languages.[179] This reform was not restricted to form, but also to the content of language used in Egyptian life; ʿAbduh was known for his harsh censorship policies. Writing in 1902 about "the literary renaissance of the East," his paternalistic attitude is expressed clearly. He laments the fact that Egyptian newspapers and magazines reflected the mind of the Egyptian masses rather than inspiring them with beneficial and worthwhile content.[180]

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[179] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-ʾislāh al-lughawī," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:189.

[180] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-nahḍa al-ʾadabiyyah fī al-sharq," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:128-130.

Later in his life, ʿAbduh completely abandoned the project of political reform. In his visits to colonised Muslim countries and in his correspondence, ʿAbduh advised other Muslim scholars in British and French colonies to maintain positive relations with colonial authorities and avoid confrontation. Instead of military resistance that will lead to bloodshed, they should encourage peaceful existence between different religions and races; Muslims must now focus on acquiring worldly knowledge through education, working on building their countries and improving the financial situations of the people.[181] This pacifist attitude is perhaps the reason that ʿAbduh is viewed "as if he had been the unique obstacle to a true and lasting Islamic reform, as if he had played deliberately into the hands of his faith's enemies".[182] However, this attitude was a result of ʿAbduh's disappointing experience during the Egyptian revolution which led him to the conclusion that a reformed and progressive political life was the natural result of the organic maturity of society:

> As for the issue of the ruler and the ruled, I have left it to Fate, and I leave it to the hand of God to manage it; for I have realised that it is the fruit that nations reap from what they sow and cultivate over long years. These seeds are what should be attended to now, and God is the best of helpers.*[183]*

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[181] ʿImārah, "Al-ʾIṣlāḥ fa al-Thawra fa al-ʾIṣlāḥ," 1:91-92.

[182] Laroui, "Western Orientalism," 7.

[183] ʿAbduh, "Sīratī," 2:312.

In reality, the tyranny of the rulers was matched by the equal tyranny of the ruled as the chain of oppression started from the khedive down to the downtrodden peasantry; both the rulers and the ruled in the East were corrupted.[184]

The direct political reform that Al-ʾAfghānī and other nationalists were working toward was an attempt to create shortcuts for the real and long journey of reform and transformation that Egypt and the whole East must embark on. The 'Urābīst movement failed because it was not based on a demand for freedom and order; it was merely a reactive act by a group of military officers motivated by a self-preserving fear of losing their privileges under the growing financial pressures on the state. The Egyptians that gathered around 'Urābī had nothing in common; they were demanding constitutional reform, but they had no clear conception of what this reform will look like.[185] In the end, "Egyptians were demanding freedom through tyranny".[186] Merely embracing the superficial aspects of European civilisation was not going to recreate the same success and progress of Europe. Indeed, the change in France from the monarchy to republican rule was not achieved due to the desire of the French elite, but rather it reflected the maturity of French people.[187]

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[184] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:777-780. This article was published anonymously in the London-based magazine of *Ḍiyāʾ Al-Khāfiqīn*.

[185] ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," 1:781-783.

[186] ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," 1:782.

[187] ʿAbduh, "ʾIkhtilāf Al-Qawānīn," 1:337-342.

The progress and modernity of Europe, for ʿAbduh, have nothing to do with Europeans being an Aryan race and everything to do with their maturity, industriousness, and sense of duty which made them worthy of freedom and power. In a sense, ʿAbduh's analysis of the reasons behind European progress is more flattering to Europe and Europeans than Hanotaux's racialist analysis. Writing anonymously in 1892, ʿAbduh expressed his opinion that the progress of Europe was an illustration of the Qur'ānic law of change, and that Muslims must face their own shortcomings and admit the excellence of European contemporary civilisation.[188] Europeans have battled the armies of darkness in their souls and their societies for centuries since the dark ages with science, knowledge, and culture; they fortified their national solidarity. This is the real reason that they are protected from the trifling whims of their rulers.[189] ʿAbduh argued that it is this that the Egyptians must learn from the civilised nations of Europe ["*al-umam al-Mutamddina*"]; indeed, no amount of technical knowledge or worldly sciences can replace this lack of ideals and a moral system authentic to a given society. And in the case of Egyptian society, a "*correct religious teaching*" is the only genuine way to impart a moral compass.[190] The Westernised Egyptians, however, are content with simply imitating the shallow superficial aspects of European modern civilisation.

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[188] ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," 1:775-785.

[189] ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," 1:776.

[190] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-tarbiyah fī al-madāris wa al-makātib al-ʾamīrīyah," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:29-32.

The Egyptians who studied in Europe or interacted with Europeans in the East glorified the West because they witnessed how Europeans were objectively more advanced; and they were not entirely wrong according to ʿAbduh. The problem, however, is that these Westernised Arabs and Muslims could observe only the glimmer of European civilisation without necessarily being aware of the essence behind it or the path that will actually lead towards this progress.[191] The nations of the East neglected to observe the real actual reasons behind the progress of European nations choosing instead to imitate the superficial aspects of their civilisation by dressing and speaking like them.[192]

Conclusion

For ʿAbduh, Islam is the perfect and only catalyst for change in the Muslim East. Moreover, it is gradual reform - rather than abrupt revolutionary action - that is the only solution to the problem of Oriental decadence. He was aware of the Orientalist European scepticism in regard to the possibility of reforming Islam; Cromer himself famously declared that "Islam cannot be reformed; that is to say, reformed Islam is Islam no longer; it is something else."[193] Nevertheless, ʿAbduh's whole life was dedicated to nothing less than reforming Islam and restoring it back to its original pristine condition. His life objective in his own words was "to liberate [Muslim] thought from the shackles of *taqlīd*, and understand religion as it was

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[191] ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," 1:776.

[192] ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," 1:776.

[193] Hajj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 70.

understood by the elders of the community before dissension appeared".[194] This modern reformed and purified Islam had to be negotiated in relation to the West under British occupation in Egypt and an aggressive process of Westernisation in Muslim societies in the East.

In his debate with Gabriel Hanotaux, Muḥammad ʿAbduh wanted to challenge the racialist explanations of the civilisational disparity between the East and West, and stress that the current situation is an outcome of historical processes rather than a reflection of the inherent nature of Muslims or Christians as Hanotaux argued. ʿAbduh's high-profile controversies at the turn of the 20ᵗʰ century reveal the extent to which he made Europe something of an expertise for himself in his quest to create modern Islam; precisely because the West was the model he had in mind. He knew and understood the West's religious, political, and intellectual history to a large degree, and in his questioning of it, it is not difficult to still glean his admiration and fascination with the European achievement. The West was both a model to be emulated as well as a cultural threat to be neutralised. The role of Islam in ʿAbduh's religious reform discourse was precisely to be a tool of containment. An authentic orthodox reformed modern Islam will function as a filter to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is not in European modernity.

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[194] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "Sīrat al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām," in *Tārīkh al-ʾUstādh al-ʾImām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 1925 (Cairo: Dār Al-Faḍīla, 2006), 1:11. Translated in Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 140-141.

Chapter 5: The ʾUstādh of Egypt: The West in ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm's Journalism

> There are people whose memories end with the end of their lives, but this man, on whose grave we now stand, was the wonder of his time. God bless his soul. He was *a very Egyptian person*. He was a man of principle who gave his soul to his nation … and he died as a martyr for its sake.
>
> — Jamāl Al-Dīn Al-ʾAfghānī in his eulogy to al-Nadīm[1]
>
> Nadīm was an orator and writer of the false dawn; his nine years' seclusion and silence were a symbol of what happened to the national consciousness of Egypt after the British occupation
>
> — Albert Hourani[2]

Writing in 1899, Martin Hartmann described ʿAbd Allah al-Nadīm (1845-1896) and his disciple in passionate nationalism Muṣṭafa Kāmil as being "possessed with a *glowing hatred* against the 'English Tyrant'. Their motto is: 'Egypt for the Egyptians.' Both are unquestionably clever, and their vociferous appeals had a great influence over the already much excited Moslems [sic] of Egypt".[3] This chapter takes a closer look at this 'glowing hatred' of al-Nadīm, a talented orator and journalist whose work and writing were central to the 'Egypt for the Egyptian' movement. In this chapter, I want to highlight al-Nadīm's use of the West in his nationalist discourse through negative as well as positive representations of the West. I relate this Occidentalist

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[1] Quoted in Linda Herrera, "The Soul of a Nation: Abdallah Nadim and Educational Reform in Egypt (1845-1896)," *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 7. Emphasis added.

[2] Albert Hourani, *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 197.

[3] Hartmann, *The Arabic Press of Egypt* (London: Luzac & Co, 1899), 22. emphasis added.

discourse to Al-Nadīm's deep concern for the identity of Egypt. Al-Nadīm's quest for an authentic national culture was a reaction to the reality of colonialism, and he wanted to assert Egyptian national identity, culture, values, and tradition against the overpowering culture of the colonising West.

As explored in chapter 1 of this thesis, Egypt witnessed huge social, political, and cultural transformations that were felt in every facet of life. These transformations were initially more apparent in the urban centres, but the Egyptian countryside likewise felt these transformations with the growing communications through telegraphs, post, and railroads.[4] Al-Nadīm started his career as a telegraph operator in Cairo where he met the controversial Persian scholar Jamāl Al-Dīn Al-ʾAfghānī; He became a close associate of the Egyptian officer ʾAḥmād ʿUrābī and contributed to his mobilisation efforts against the Turco-Circassian and European supremacy in Egypt. In addition to writing for several politically active newspapers of the period, Al-Nadīm established and edited three journals: *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* (1881), *Al-Ṭāʾif* (1882), and *Al-ʾUstādh (*1892-1893). These journals were part of the new national media that completely revolutionised how Egyptians consumed information and entertainment.[5] In his journalism, Al-Nadīm capitalised on his exceptional talent to stir nationalist emotions and influence his readers; he used colloquial Egyptian in comical sketches that can be accessible orally even to the largely illiterate countryside.

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[4] Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford Univerity Press, 2011), 39.

[5] For more on the role of this new national mass media, see Ziad Fahmy's *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through Popular Culture*, 61-95.

Al-Nadīm: A Dissident Journalist

Al-Nadīm was born ʿAbd Allah Miṣbāḥ ʾIbrāhīm in Alexandria to a poor peasant family in 1845.[6] Al-Nadīm's father, a humble illiterate baker, was a contemporary of Al-Ṭahṭāwī and the generation that witnessed the emergence of Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egyptian empire. Miṣbāḥ was born in 1819 in the countryside province of Al-Sharqīyya, and at the age of twelve he was one of eight thousand peasant boys taken from their villages by Muḥammad ʿAlī to work in the production of a modern Egyptian navy fleet in 1831.[7] Considering the unfortunate situation of the Egyptian peasantry at the time, Miṣbāḥ was extremely grateful for his work; working in the dockyard meant that he worked under educated superiors who paid him regularly for fixed hours of work.[8] After the 1841 Treaty of London, all military activity came to a halt and the peasant youth in Alexandria were out of work. Miṣbāḥ dreaded the prospect of going back to his difficult life in the Egyptian countryside, so he chose to remain in Alexandria and opened a bakery to provide for his family.[9]

Al-Nadīm came of age in Alexandria which was a multinational community of Egyptian working class and foreigners from the Arab world and beyond.[10] ʿAbd Allah

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[6] Later in life, Abd Allah would take on the title of Al-Nadīm which literally means an entertainer or companion over food and wine.

[7] ʿAlī Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Khaṭīb Al-Waṭanīyah* (Cairo: Al-Muʾasasa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma, 1960), 14-15.

[8] Adnan Hussein Rashid, "The Press and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement in the Nineteenth Century with Particular Emphasis on the Role of al-Nadim" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 1987), 54.

[9] Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 14-15.

[10] Ibid.

was a bright child, and Miṣbāḥ hoped for his son to become a religious scholar and join the elite class of *ʿUlamāʾ*. At a young age, Al-Nadīm received a traditional religious education: memorising Qurʾān under the tutelage of his father before being sent to the local *kuttab* where he learned reading and writing. Al-Nadīm joined the high school attached to Al-ʾAnwar mosque at ten years old.[11] Ideally, young Al-Nadīm would have joined the prestigious Al-ʾAzhar in Cairo, but his father's limited financial means made it impossible to send his son there. At Al-ʾAnwar, Al-Nadīm studied Arabic grammar, linguistics, and philology in addition to logic, monotheistic theology and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.[12] However, Al-Nadīm was frustrated by the formalism of his studies. The only subjects that he was passionate about were Arabic and linguistics; in fact, ʿAbd Allah was more interested in the popular literary and cultural scene of Alexandria than his lessons. He regularly attended the literary salons of Alexandria and participated in poetry competitions, and he quickly achieved popularity and developed a reputation for being a ballad singer. At the age of sixteen, Al-Nadīm abandoned his studies before receiving the *ʿĀlimīyya* certificate to pursue his literary passions.[13]

Miṣbāḥ refused to support his son until he returned to his studies, but Al-Nadīm left Alexandria to roam the countryside.[14] A year later, he started working for

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[11] ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm, *Sulāfat al-Nadīm* (Cairo: Matbaʿat Hindīyah), 1:3-4.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Louis Awad, *The Literature of Ideas in Egypt: Part I* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 78; Najīb Tawfīq, *ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm: Khaṭīb Al-Thawra Al-ʿUrabiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Kullyat Al-Azhariya, 1954), 34-35.

[14] Tawfīq, *ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm*, 37-38.

the Egyptian government as a telegraph operator in Cairo. While in Cairo, he took the chance to attend classes at Al-ʾAzhar in his spare time; however, yet again, he abandoned his studies before getting the certificate to qualify him as a religious scholar.[15] Al-Nadīm's competence at his work gave him the chance to be transferred to the palace of Princess Khūshyār Hānim, the mother of Khedive ʾIsmāʿīl. Through this brief working experience, the eighteen-year-old Al-Nadīm "became familiar with the life of the palace and its secrets, and came to know its luxurious way of life, which he compared with that of the people in their misery and unhappiness."[16] In Cairo, the young and impressionable Al-Nadīm also became acquainted with a number of writers in the budding cultural scene of the capital, some of whom will later play a significant role in the nationalist movement in the late 1870s.[17] The most important acquaintance of this period, however, was the Persian scholar Jamāl Al-Dīn Al-ʾAfghānī who played a major role in Al-Nadīm's career.[18]

Al-Nadīm met Al-ʾAfghānī for the first time in 1871 and became a constant companion and loyal disciple of the Persian sheikh for the next four years. Al-ʾAfghānī on his part sensed the promise in Al-Nadīm's literary and oratory abilities. Al-Nadīm's thought in regard to social and political reform was influenced by Al-

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Rashid, "The Press," 56; Al-Nadīm, *Sulāfat*, 1: 66.

[17] Al-Nadīm, *Sulāfat*, 1: 24.

[18] For an overview of Al-Nadīm's political and revolutionary activism and the role of Al-ʾAfghānī, see Tawfīq, *ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm*, 105-109; ʿAbd Al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm wa Dawruhu fī Al-Ḥarakah Al-Siyāsīyah wa Al-Ijtimāʿīyah* (Cairo: Al-Markaz Al-Miṣri lil-Kitāb, 1980), 43-48; and Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 76-81.

ʾAfghānī who also used his connections to facilitate the young man's journalistic career..[19] Al-Nadīm left Cairo briefly and upon his return, he noticed a shift in the focus of his mentor away from intellectual and social reform to open attack on foreign colonial intervention, the tyranny of Oriental governments and the need for popular mobilisation to resist both.[20] In 1878, Al-ʾAfghānī established a Mason lodge in Alexandria; when Al-Nadīm returned to Alexandria a year later in 1879, he was placed in charge of publicity in the city and edited two allegedly masonic journals *Miṣr* and *al-Tijāra*.[21] There is no question that Al-Nadīm was an active member of the movement to depose Khedive ʾIsmāʿīl.[22] However, this secretive plotting and political intrigues did not suit the open and blunt nature of Al-Nadīm. He eventually parted ways with the mason lodges as well as the Young Egypt society.[23]

In the late 1870s, Al-Nadīm established himself as an outspoken journalist publishing articles on social and political reform in a number of Egyptian privately-owned newspapers.[24] He was also an active philanthropist. He established the Muslim Benevolent Society in 1879 and spearheaded efforts to alleviate the living conditions

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[19] Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1933), 33; ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī, "Dirāsa Taḥlīliya," in *Min Turāth ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 7.

[20] Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 65.

[21] Ibid., 68.

[22] Ibid., 79-83.

[23] Al-Jumayʿī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 53-54.

[24] Rashid, "The Press", 71. These included *Miṣr*, *Al-Tijāra*, *Al*-Maḥrusa and *Al-ʿAsr Al-Jadīd*.

of the poor in Alexandria and promote civil responsibility towards the less fortunate in Egyptian society.[25] The society opened a school, a hospital for the poor, and a hostel for students; it also provided scholarships to orphan boys and girls, and monthly allowances for widows.[26] The society opened its first school in Alexandria in June 1879 with the objective of "the promulgation of national education among deprived boys and girls."[27] As the headmaster of the school, Al-Nadīm's curriculum was based mainly on the same program offered at the government's public schools. The difference was that Al-Nadīm prioritised religious education, Arab and Egyptian history in addition to Arabic language and rhetoric.[28]

Al-Nadīm also started a weekly debate forum where every Friday students practised their oratory skills and gave speeches on themes like the golden age of Arabs, Western progress and Eastern decadence, in addition to other social, cultural and religious topics.[29] Speeches and plays performed by Al-Nadīm and his orphan students were attended by different segments of society, and later published in Alexandrian journals like *Miṣr* and *al-Tijāra*.[30] The society acquired the support of

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[25] For more on Al-Nadīm's philanthropy and the role of philanthropy in the evolution of Egyptian Nationalism, see Mohamed Amr Gamal-Eldin, "Charity and Nationalism: The Case of ʿAbd Allah al-Nadim's Islamic Philanthropic Society" (Master's thesis, The American University in Cairo, 2012).

[26] Al-Jumayʿī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 335-342.

[27] Gamal-Eldin, 43.

[28] Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 87.

[29] Tawfīq, *ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm*, 49.

[30] Herrera, "The Soul of a Nation," 5.

Khedive Tawfīq and his son the future Khedive ʿAbbās who accompanied his father to the school's speeches and debates.[31] However, Al-Nadīm's growing involvement with ʾAḥmād ʿUrābī and the Egypt for the Egyptian movement caused increasing pressure on him until he eventually resigned from managing the society and school in 1881.[32] Following his resignation, Al-Nadīm shifted all his energies to support the nationalist movement through his own journalism.[33]

Al-Nadīm's first journal - *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* - appeared on the 6th of June 1881 at a timely moment in the history of Egyptian nationalism and became the voice of the movement, much of the journal was dedicated to the vindication of Egyptians, their language and their religions. ʿUrābī's status as a champion of the Egyptian nation was established after the ʿĀbdīn demonstrations which took place in September of the same year: "The events of ʿĀbdīn, coupled with Nadīm's intensive propaganda, made ʿUrābī the most popular man in Egypt."[34] Al-Nadīm became the propagandist for the ʿUrābīsts and joined ʿUrābī himself in his travels in the Egyptian countryside meeting peasants and listening to their concerns.[35]

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[31] Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 100-101.

[32] Tawfīq, *ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm*, 50-51.

[33] Tawfīq, *ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm*, 51-52. ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm, "Mata Yastqim Al-ʿUd," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 17 July 1881 in *Min Turāth ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb), 125-128.

[34] Ali Al-Hadidi, "'Abd Allāh Nadīm, Journalist, Man of Letters, Orator, and his Contribution to the First Egyptian National Movement: A Literary and Historical Study" (PhD diss., University of London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1959), 169.

[35] Al-Jumayʿī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 79-80.

Following the defeat of the ʿUrābīsts and the British occupation of Egypt, many of ʿUrābī's supporters were arrested and tried for their involvement in the mutiny.[36] Al-Nadīm's fervent support of the revolution made him one of the most wanted escaped fugitive by the Egyptian government after the British occupation. He remained undercover and was sentenced in absentia.[37] He roamed in disguise through the Egyptian countryside on the run from Egyptian and British authorities for nine years. In 1891, he was captured and exiled briefly until Khedive ʿAbbās took control of the country.[38] The new Khedive was frustrated with the British control, and he invited al-Nadīm back to Egypt in order to subvert British authority. Al-Nadīm's new journal *Al-ʾUstādh* appeared on the 23rd of August 1892. Although al-Nadīm promised to steer clear of political commentary, the journal quickly became "the mouthpiece of anti-foreign, pro-Islamic, and nationalistic sentiments".[39] Al-Nadīm's return to Egypt proved to be short-lived, and in 1893 he was exiled again to Istanbul where he died three years later in 1896.[40]

Al-Nadīm in the Literature

The life of al-Nadīm offers an unconventional experience. From his humble origins as the son of a baker in Alexandria to a telegraph operator in a khedival palace,

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[36] Al-Jumayʿī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 125-126.

[37] Ibid., 128-130.

[38] Awad, *The Literature of Ideas*, 79.

[39] Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 153.

[40] Awad, *The Literature of Ideas*, 80.

al-Nadīm quickly evolved to become the leading writer and orator of the nationalist movement demanding equal rights for the Egyptians. Al-Nadīm's main cause in all his writings was the assertion of the Egyptian national identity, and his legacy continued to inspire the Egyptians for decades to come.[41] Al-Nadīm is often reduced to a mere demagogue or radical nationalist, and particularly so in Western scholarship with few exceptions.[42] The Orientalist reading of the Nahḍa as Westernisation excludes a figure like al-Nadīm from a leading role, but he is a relevant figure if we recognise that the Nahḍa also involved a serious attempt to contain Westernisation. In particular, Al-Nadīm is essential to the study of Arab Occidentalism as he offers a glimpse of how early Occidentalist imaging of Europeans was utilised to assert a national cultural identity under threat. Jamal Mohammed Ahmed described al-Nadīm as "the wittiest of critics of Europe in Egypt",[43] and there is no doubt that al-Nadīm's ideas contributed to popularising an Arab discourse of critiquing the West.

Al-Nadīm had the power to create and shape a public opinion through his popular journalism, public speeches and educational initiatives; the ultimate achievement of al-Nadīm was indeed his "expert manipulation of the popular press".[44]

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[41] Al-Ḥadīdī's *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 3.

[42] These exceptions include Juan Ricardo Cole's *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's ʿUrabi Movement* in 1992. More recent studies that engage with Al-Nadīm include Michael Ezekiel Gasper's *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* in 2009, and Ziad Fahmy's *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through Popular Culture* in 2011.

[43] Jamal Mohammed Ahmed's *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, 68.

[44] Charles Wendell's *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From its Origins to Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid*, 141.

If the literature on al-Ṭahṭāwī and ʿAbduh tended to stress their assumed progressiveness and turn a blind eye to their more traditionalist views, the literature on al-Nadīm presents a figure too controversial to be taken seriously. As early as 1899, Martin Hartmann refers to al-Nadīm in his book *The Arabic Press in Egypt* as an example of the "native Muslim press" which was read only by "the already much excited Moslems [sic] of Egypt".[45] Nearly three decades later in 1928, H. A. R. Gibb described al-Nadīm as one of the important figures of Egyptian journalism; however, again, he was a mere tool of the ʿUrābī movement used "to appeal and to stir up the masses, in order to enlist their support for the aims of *the agitators*".[46] This view of al-Nadīm as a mere xenophobic excited demagogue remains mostly unchallenged in traditional scholarship. There is a tendency to pass over al-Nadīm's serious role in works dealing with 19th century Egyptian nationalism, education and theatre in English.[47]

Al-Nadīm is sometimes mentioned casually as a member of the traditional camp in Egyptian political and social life without nuanced discussion.[48] When the

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[45] Martin Hartmann, *The Arabic Press of Egypt*, 17-27.

[46] H. A. R. Gibb's "Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature", 755; emphasis added.

[47] A number of sources on nineteenth century Egypt mention al-Nadīm only in passing, Examples include James Heyworth-Dunne's *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (1939); Jamal Ahmed Ahmed's *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (1960); Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt* (1988); Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1992); Margot Badran's *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (1995); and Gregory Starrett's *Putting Islam to Work* (1998).

[48] Charles C. Adams in *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh ʿAbduh ʿAbduh*(1933), 53; also, Robert L. Tignor in *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914*, 151-153.

scholarship groups al-Nadīm together with Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Jamal al-Din al-ʾAfghānī and others as figures of Islamic political activity, it fails to explore how or why al-Nadīm differed from these two more prominent figures:

> Ali Yusuf, Abdullah al-Nadīm, and Muhammad Abduh were the most outspoken of those whose programs were couched in Islamic terms. Each had acquired his education in the traditional Islamic institutions … This group of men were also characterized by their considerable political awareness. They were all concerned about the political crises confronting Islamic countries and the gradual loss of independence to the West. They were all attracted to political agitation of one kind or another. Islam was always seen in relation to the political and power considerations of East versus West.[49]

There is little mention of how al-Nadīm deviated from these men in ideas and strategies for cultural and social reform. In reality, al-Nadīm was more vehement in his journalistic and political activism than the mild-mannered ʿAbduh, and his more territorial nationalism rejected al-ʾAfghānī's transcendental religious Pan-Islamism. Indeed, al-Nadīm conceived only of a pragmatically motivated Oriental unity despite religious differences.[50] That these three men were the product of a traditional Islamic system of knowledge did not guarantee that they shared the exact same views on a number of issues.

Charles Wendell's 1972 book *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From Its Origins to Aḥmad Luṭfī Al-Sayyid* explored how European thought influenced Egyptian nationalism and how the Egyptians strived to create a distinctly modern Egyptian identity. Although for Wendell, al-Nadīm is still a "literary

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[49] Tignor, *Modernization*, 151.

[50] For more, see Rashid's "The Press and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement in the Nineteenth Century with Particular Emphasis on the Role of al-Nadīm", 223-228.

bohemian whose life reads like a collection of *maqamat*",[51] Wendell engages more robustly with al-Nadīm's journalism and writings. Wendell discusses al-Nadīm's view on Oriental decadence, recognises his preference for a pan-Arab nationalism over pan-Islamism, and critiques what he saw as al-Nadīm's problematic racialism. Most importantly for the current research, Wendell picks up al-Nadīm's ambivalence towards European modernity:

> The difference between him and other orthodox *'alim* of the centuries past, is that many of earmarks of the European civilization he both admired and feared are now projected backward in a false prescriptive to the age of the Rashidun, accompanied by the implication or assertion that these 'modern' features of 'civilized' life are merely coming back to their original homeland and source.[52]

This constant oscillation between admiration and fear is indeed prevalent in al-Nadīm's journalism as he attempted to assert an Egyptian social and cultural identity and challenge European superiority.

The contribution of al-Nadīm is recognised in Arabic literary studies. Egyptian studies idolised al-Nadīm, and this is particularly true of studies written in the 1960s in the afterglow of the 1952 revolutionary coup by the Free Officers Movement. Al-Nadīm's life became the topic of legends and myths; indeed, the Egyptian state television produced a popular dramatization of al-Nadīm's life in Ramadan 1982. This attitude was an overcompensation for the perceived distortion of al-Nadīm's image by "historians of the royal courts and colonial informers".[53] An early source on al-Nadīm

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[51] Wendell, *Evolution*, 140-141.

[52] Wendell, *Evolution*, 146-7.

[53] Al-Ḥadīdī, *ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm*, 4; also, Ali al-Hadidi's "ʿAbd Allah Nadīm, Journalist, Man of Letters, Orator, and his Contribution to the First Egyptian National Movement: A Literary and Historical Study", 510.

is Najīb Tawfīq's 1954 book where al-Nadīm is presented as an Egyptian hero; along similar lines, ʿAlī Al-Ḥadīdī's 1962 book describes al-Nadīm as a nationalist hero. There is little critique of al-Nadīm in these two books, but they remain major and valuable sources on al-Nadīm's life and activities. Al-Ḥadīdī's book appears to be based on a PhD dissertation submitted at SOAS in 1959; the monograph is over 600 pages and is a comprehensive source on al-Nadīm's career as a social, nationalist and educational reformer. Another key source is ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī's 1980 book which offers a more in-depth exploration of al-Nadīm's political activism before and during the 1882 ʿUrābī movement. Al-Jumayʿī also edited a series of volumes under the title of *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm* [From the Legacy of al-Nadīm] published between 1994 and 1995. For each volume, Al-Jumayʿī provides an excellent and informative analysis that highlights the significance of al-Nadīm's work.

The last few decades saw a new crop of revisionist scholarship on the historiography of nationalism in 19th century Egypt, and these studies tend to focus on particular themes and social groups that the conventional scholarship ignored. In these studies, al-Nadīm is given more notice than in studies written in the mid 20th century and more judiciously than in Arabic studies. Of particular interest are studies on the formative years of Egyptian nationalism. They emphasise the role of proto-nationalists like al-Nadīm as opposed to more established nationalist figures like Muṣṭafa Kāmil and Saʿad Zaghlūl.[54] An early example of these studies is Juan Ricardo Cole's study which provided an early re-examination of the 1881-1882 ʿUrābīst

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[54] Mohamed Amr Gamal-Eldin, "Charity and Nationalism: The Case of ʿAbd Allah al-Nadim's Islamic Philanthropic Society" (Master diss., The American University in Cairo, 2012), 33.

movement through a social analysis of the revolution by focusing on the role of urban populations in Egypt.[55] Cole argues that the nationalist uprising was not exclusive to the peasants or military but was in fact a movement that many segments of society could relate to and stand behind. The study provides an exceptional description of the social mosaic behind the Egypt for Egyptians movement as various groups cooperated for the larger cause of nationalist struggle. In this socio-political study of the period, al-Nadīm receives attention as a member of the Egyptian intelligentsia that supported this Egyptian proto-nationalist movement.

Here, al-Nadīm is featured as an example of the dissenting intellectual voices in late 19th century Egypt. His brand of provocative anti-establishment journalism proved to be immensely popular and always sold out upon printing. This popularity was partially due to al-Nadīm's unabashed use of colloquial Egyptian Arabic in addition to literary Arabic; the creation of colloquial discourses was inspired by al-Nadīm's awareness of the concerns of peasants and working-class Egyptians.[56] Like many of his fellow Muslim reformers, al-Nadīm joined the freemasonry movement that offered a great environment for Syrian Christian immigrants, Muslim Egyptians, and Jews to interact; unlike al-Nadīm, however, most of the Muslim Egyptian mason youth were from relatively privileged backgrounds despite their peasant origins.[57] In 1879, many Muslims masons including al-Nadīm contributed to dissident journals like

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[55] Juan Ricardo Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's ʿUrabi Movement*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[56] Cole, *Colonialism,* 123-124.

[57] Cole, *Colonialism,* 53, 148.

Mirʾat al-Sharq [Mirror of the East] which was established by one of Jamal al-Din al-ʾAfghānī's followers.[58] Al-Nadīm's Islamic Philanthropic Society, 1879-1881 was an expression of his frustration with underground political activism of the Freemasons and Young Egypt. He successfully created a hub for the Muslim elite of Alexandria, and his experience as the administrator and organizer was essential for his later journalism in the revolution.[59] In Cole's attempt at highlighting the social and cultural origins of the revolution, Al-Nadīm appears as a member of the urban intellectuals whose agitations against European imperialism contributed to the polarization of the urban population between Egyptian workers and European immigrants.

Other studies focus more on the content of al-Nadīm's journalism than on his political activity. An important study of the evolution of Arabic narrative is Sabry Hafez's 1993 book *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*. Here, Hafez attempts to challenge the assumption relating "the genealogy of modern Arabic narrative to the classical genre of the *maqāmah* or perceiving it as an import from the West."[60] Here, al-Nadīm and his pioneering narrative sketches were significant as the basis for indigenous narrative that culminated with the ʿUrābist revolution; to quote Hafez: "the emergence of indigenous narrative discourse in Arabic literature is historically connected with the growth of an awareness of a national identity, and the need to express and communicate this awareness. It is also linked to the various social and cultural changes

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[58] Cole, *Colonialism*,148.

[59] Cole, *Colonialism*, 157.

[60] Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), 10.

… which led to the disintegration of patronage and the rise of a new reading public."[61] Indeed, al-Nadīm was the most qualified of his generation to capitalise on this shift of awareness in Egypt because in addition to his talent, he possessed "the widest experience of life: experience which equipped him with a deep social and political conscience."[62] In a similar vein, Stephen Paul Sheehi acknowledges the cultural anxiety driving the Arab search for modernity; the call for reform and progress was in fact "a symptom of the repression of the threat felt by these intellectuals and their implicit fear of European supremacy".[63]

Al-Nadīm, for Sheehi, serves as an example of a rising native intelligentsia that did not just attract existing Arab readers but also gave rise to new readership by popularising high culture for social purposes.[64] Fiction in general, and the short story in particular, were the ultimate tool for educating readers, and Al-Nadīm was indeed the originator of the short story in Arabic literature.[65] Sheehi sees in al-Nadīm's social fiction a noteworthy cultural resistance against British political and cultural encroachment into Egyptian life: "al-Nadīm's writing is an internal dialogue fixated on the presence of the West, and therefore it often expresses ironic or indeterminate

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[61] Hafez, *Genesis*, 111

[62] Hafez, *Genesis*, 113-114.

[63] Stephen Paul Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 136.

[64] Sheehi, *Foundations*, 107.

[65] Sheehi, *Foundations*, 112-114; see also Hafez, *Genesis*, 120-129.

effects".[66] Al-Nadīm's predominant concern is the preserving of national identity in the face of growing European domination.

In his 2011 book *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture*, Ziad Fahmy focuses on the populist non-elite expressions of Egyptian nationalism by stressing the colloquial Egyptian sources often neglected by existing historiography of the period. Fahmy stresses the essential role of popular culture in creating a sense of Egyptian nationhood and argues for a "mass capitalism" – to complement Benedict Anderson's "print capitalism" - that was integral to the dissemination of nationalist ideas in Egypt where literacy rates were and remained relatively low. It is such media that "allows everyone, regardless of class, education, or literacy level, to aurally and visually participate in the nationalist project".[67] It is within this context of proto-nationalism and colloquial mass culture that a figure like al-Nadīm finally finds a place that was simply not available in classical Orientalist-bent scholarship. By focusing on non-elite print media, Fahmy is correcting the mistake of privileging the expressions of a small segment of society and shedding light on "agency of ordinary Egyptians in constructing and negotiating national identity".[68] Here, Al-Nadīm is an early representative of Egyptian mass colloquial media culture.

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[66] Sheehi, *Foundations*, 114.

[67] Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 15.

[68] Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, xi.

Similar to Fahmy's study, Michael Ezekiel Gasper's 2009 *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* focuses primarily on peasants as a social group in relation to the formation of the bourgeois ʾAfandīyah identity which is comparable to that of the gentleman in European culture. He notes that "Neither the consolidation of a self-conscious urban intelligentsia nor the newfound representational importance of the *Fallāḥ* can be understood in isolation from the transformations brought by capitalism and colonialism".[69] Here, Al-Nadīm – in addition to Rifaah Rafi al-Ṭahṭāwī, Yaʿqub Sanūʿ, Jamal al-Din al-ʾAfghānī, and Muḥammad ʿAbduh - are examples of a nationalist intelligentsia professing themselves representatives of the Egyptian peasantry. Gasper's emphasis on internal class power can sometimes result in a de-emphasis on the role of colonial reality. Moreover, although Gasper's thesis has been challenged by some,[70] the contextualisation of the peasant experience within the social rise of the ʾAfandīyah adds a nuance usually absent in discussions of Egyptian nationalism as a European import. In the particular case of al-Nadīm, Gasper wittingly notes that despite the idealisation of peasant life and the peasant Egyptian as the most authentic nationalist, al-Nadīm is quick to mock and deride the Egyptian peasant for his ignorance and backwardness.[71]

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[69] Michael Ezekiel Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

[70] John Chalcraft, "Review of *The Power of Representation* by Michael E. Gasper," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 3 (June, 2010): 920-921.

[71] See in particular Michael Gasper's chapter "Abdallah al-Nadīm, Islamic Reform, and 'Ignorant' Peasants: State-Building in Egypt" in *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power* edited by Armando Salvatore, (Berlin: LIT, 2001).

There are two other studies worth mentioning here although they are not concerned with nationalism exclusively. The first examines the changes in Egyptian personhood brought on by the introduction of European technological advances like the telegraph, railways and tramway.[72] In this study, On Barak acknowledges al-Nadīm as one of the first Egyptians to diagnose the problematic link between technology, modern science and colonialism.[73] The study explores how the concept of time shifted and changed in the local discourse of modernity in colonial Egypt; these internal discussions on topics like Egyptian time-wastefulness and European efficiency were a way to arrive at an Egyptian modern selfhood. Egyptians tried to embrace the spirit of modernity and used terms like 'the age of railways' or 'the age of speed' to refer to the period following the establishment of the Egyptian railways in the 1850s. Barak notes that despite the fact that "the most immediate (and probably the least disputed) connotations of "modernity" or ḥadāthah were technoscientific, historians of "modern Egypt" paid little attention to what made the country modern for its inhabitants themselves".[74] In other words, technological modernity was perhaps tinted by rosy optimism in Europe, but in colonised Egypt these technological advances were seen in a more negative light because of its association with foreign occupation and the rapid process of Westernisation.[75] In this context, Al-Nadīm was

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[72] On Barak, "Egyptian Times: Temporality, Personhood, and the Technopolitical making of Modern Egypt, 1830-1930" (PhD Diss., New York University, 2009)

[73] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 108.

[74] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 107-108.

[75] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 108.

one of the earliest Egyptian intellectuals to express concern over the problematic link

between modern technology and colonialism.

In discussing Egyptian discourses on the link between efficiency and

civilisation, Barak uses al-Nadīm as an example of a proto-nationalist anti-colonial

critique of inhumane and alienating European standards of order and productivity.[76]

Al-Nadīm's writing exposes the ambivalence towards modernity or *tamaddun* since

he is writing against it in a manner that responds to it and accommodate its reality at

the same time:

> Nadīm's critique, predicated in form, content, and modes of dissemination
> on the telegraph, the printing press, and the railway, was anchored well
> within *tamaddun*, rather than being launched from an imagined outside,
> and was consciously predicated on a contradiction. Accordingly, Nadīm
> went to great lengths in explicating the differences between Eastern and
> immoral Western *tamaddun*.[77]

These differences were essential for Al-Nadīm to highlight the distinctness of an

Eastern Egyptian identity. Barak also engages with al-Nadīm's theory of language,[78]

but most compelling is his argument for the influence of how telegraphic

communication reconfigured the Arabic language pushing it towards more

simplification and economy of words; in essence, it is this form of communication

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[76] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 161-164.

[77] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 164. For examples of Al-Nadīm's critique, see ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "al-farq bayna al-tamaddun al-sharqī wa al-ʾurubbī" [The Difference between Eastern and European Modernities], *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31st of July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 162-163. Also, "ʿāda sharqiyya" [An Eastern Custom], *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31st of July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm*, 163.

[78] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 338-341.

that encouraged a growing tendency to use colloquial Arabic in writing. Barak laments the fact that scholarship on al-Nadīm often overlooks his career as a telegrapher before he turned to writing and the new linguistic register that appeared in *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* displays the mark of telegraphy.[79] Within the unique context of how new technologies influenced Egyptian practices of timekeeping and personhood, Barak offers an excellent and intriguing reading of Al-Nadīm that looks at him as more than a conservative figure.

The second study that approaches Al-Nadīm from an equally unique vantage point is Heidi Morrison's which explores the evolution of conceptions of childhood in colonial Egypt and beyond.[80] The study explores how Egyptian intellectuals conceived of childhood and child-rearing practices under colonial rule and into the first half of the twentieth century. Al-Nadīm received some attention in this study as a contributor to an intellectual discourse on child rearing. Morrison notes the apprehension of Egyptian intellectuals about "western paradigms for child-rearing subsuming indigenous identity".[81] Al-Nadīm appears in this study as a member of the *Salafī* intellectual discourse - beside figures like al-Ṭahṭāwī, al-ʾAfghānī, ʿAbduh, and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā - who attempted to assert an authentically Egyptian way of raising children independent from European ideas and claiming that "European child-rearing practices had precedents in Islamic heritage".[82] As a social reformer, al-Nadīm

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[79] Barak, "Egyptian Times", 337 - 338.

[80] Heidi Morrison, *Childhood and Colonial Modernity in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[81] Morrison, *Childhood*, 36.

[82] Morrison, *Childhood*, 36-37.

had strong opinions on the state of education in Egyptian; Morrison highlights al-Nadīm's view of child education as an anti-colonial tool of nation-building. Al-Nadīm believed that teaching children their civil rights and creating Egyptian modern citizens who embrace diversity and respect each other was the path to reclaiming Egypt's sovereignty.[83] Al-Nadīm's traditionalist attitudes come into focus when it comes to the education of young girls as he engaged in what Morrison describes as "learning new forms of patriarchy"; Egyptian reformers in general discouraged giving girls access to a rich education fearing that overeducation will lead a young woman to social scandal, marital disobedience, and divorce.[84]

Al-Nadīm's legacy receives more attention in studies approaching the cultural history of nineteenth century Egypt from revisionist and alternative vantage points as opposed to studies that adheres to the 'rise of the West' model. To quote Linda Herrera, al-Nadīm is peripheral in such scholarship precisely because "he does not fit the teleological mood of 'reformer' as 'liberal modernizer' and 'westernizer'".[85] Al-Nadīm saw himself as a reformer first and foremost, and he saw in the West a model that is worth emulating; however, he also identified the darker aspects of the West and its modernity that the brutality of colonialism represented. Al-Nadīm's response to the growing influence of the West on Egyptian culture and society was to engage in a

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[83] Morrison, *Childhood*, 40.

[84] Morrison, *Childhood*, 91-97.

[85] Herrera, "The Soul of a Nation," 1.

process of traditionalization to use Abdallah Laroui's term. [86] Al-Nadīm's

traditionalism must be understood as a response to the cultural and social pressures of

colonialism. The legacy of Al-Nadīm reflects the tension between the West as model

for cultural, political, and social reform, and the West as a foreign hegemonic presence

threatening the religious and cultural authenticity of the Muslim Arab Egyptians. The

following pages will offer an exploration of how and why al-Nadīm represented the

West in certain ways that served his nationalist vision.

On being Eastern and Westernisation as Disease

Starting with his first journal *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*[87] , Al-Nadīm was keen

to establish himself and his journal as defenders of the Egyptian nation and the East

at large. *Al-Tankīt*'s subtitle described the journal as "a literary, satirical, national,

weekly journal."[88] The title page was decorated with the star and crescent, two

symbols of the Ottoman empire to represent Al-Nadīm's affiliation with an Eastern

Islamic nation. The weekly journal appeared every Sunday from June to October of

1881 for a total of nineteen issues. Despite its relatively short life and due to al-

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[86] Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*, trans. Diarmid Cammell (Paris: Maspero, 1974; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 37.

[87] Literally "Joking and Mocking"; the title has been translated by many scholars as "What Makes Us Laugh Makes Us Cry" by Michael Gasper, 71; "Humor and Criticism" by Ziad Fahmy, 51; "Raillery and Reproach" by Adnan Rashid, 138; and "It is to Laugh, it is to Cry" by Juan Cole, 123.

[88] "*Ṣaḥīfa Waṭaniyya ʾUsbūʿiyya, ʾAdabiyya Hazaliyya.*" See ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 6 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿ Amma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 33.

Nadīm's popularity, his newspaper was an immediate success with its first issue selling 3,000 copies.[89] Later issues were sold out immediately upon printing with a far-reaching distribution in the urban centres as well as the countryside.[90] *Al-Tankīt* was one of the early satirical newspapers in Egypt that relied heavily on the use of colloquial Egyptian Arabic and satire that appealed to the masses.[91] Writing in an intentionally provocative style, al-Nadīm did not just report on the news, but also offered entertainment to his readers through fictional sketches in colloquial Egyptian and other short narratives. From its inception, *Al- Tankīt* was addressed to the average Egyptian and the title itself - *Tankīt* and *Tabkīt* - clearly communicates social commentary as the focus of the journal. Central to this commentary is the question of what it means to be Eastern in a world of Western domination. Al-Nadīm's reflections on these issues became more vitriolic as his involvement increased with the revolutionary movement of ʾAḥmād ʿUrābī.

In November 1881, al-Nadīm moved *al-Tankīt* from Alexandria to Cairo and changed the name to *Al-Ṭāʾif* which became the semi-official mouthpiece of the 1882

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[89] Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 71; Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 51.

[90] Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 123.

[91] Another important newspaper that was as influential as Al-Nadīm's *Al-Tankīt* is Yaʿqub Sanūʿ's *Abū Naḍḍāra Zarqāʾ* [The Man with the Blue Glasses] which appeared a few years before *Al-Tankīt* in 1877; for more, see Fahmy on colloquial satirical journalism and the satire press in *Ordinary Egyptians*, 47-54. For an excellent study on Yaʿqub Sanūʿ see Irene L. Gendzier, *The Practical Vision of Yaqub Sanu* (London: Harvard University Press, 1966).

revolution.[92] In *Al-Ṭāʾif*,[93] Al-Nadīm used an even more incendiary style and used a religious tone describing the British as *kuffār* [infidels]; this vitriolic language caused Muḥammad ʿAbduh - the future Muftī of Egypt who was in charge of censorship at the time - to revoke al-Nadīm's publication permit after one month.[94] It is this inflammatory anti-European language both in journalism and speeches that resulted in Al-Nadīm being sentenced to death.[95] This aggressive anti-Westernism fuelled by intense cultural anxiety over the survival of ethnic society and culture becomes even more intense when he returns to public life in British-colonised Egypt.

After nine years on the run and one year in exile, al-Nadīm returned to a different Egypt under ʿAbbās II. Al-Nadīm's new journal the weekly *al-ʾUstādh* – literally, "The Professor" or "The Teacher" – came out on the 23rd of August 1892, and quickly became as popular and influential as its spiritual predecessor *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*. In the three months between his return and launching his newspaper, al-Nadīm was disheartened by the state of Egyptians. The British were in total control of the Egyptian government, and the same Egyptians who once rallied with a nationalist revolutionary spirit have now surrendered themselves to cynical resignation. If in *Al-*

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[92] Rashid, "The Press", 144-145; Gasper, "Power of Representation", 71.

[93] Literally, the title means "a wandering person". The title has been translated by many scholars as "The Circuit" by Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 71 and "The Wanderer" by Rashid, 144. Rashid suggests that the name refers to al-Nadīm himself who was wandering the villages of the Egyptian countryside with ʾAḥmād ʿUrābī to spread the message of nationalist struggle. Others suggest that the newspaper was renamed after a Hijazi town in present day Saudi Arabia in the hope that the newspaper's message will one day reach the whole Muslim world.

[94] Herrera, "Soul of Nation", 6.

[95] Cole, "Colonialism and Revolution", 245.

Tankīt the Westernising influence was restricted to those who travelled to Europe and came back Westernised, in *al-ʾUstādh* Egyptians in Egypt willingly embraced Western clothing style as well as Western education after ten years of occupation. *Al-ʾUstādh*'s subtitle – "A Scientific, Educational, Satirical Journal" – indicated an attempt by Al-Nadīm to distance himself from politics and nationalist sentiments.[96]

In the first issue, Al-Nadīm starts by declaring that his journal is not concerned with present-day politics – [*lā tataʿaraḍu lil-ʾumūr al-Siyāsiyyah al-ḥāḍira*] – however, he clarifies that "the art of politics" [*fan al-siyāsa*] is still part of the scientific subject-matter of the journal because "the sciences [*ʿIlm*] of history, ethics, customs, management of kingdoms [*tadbīr al-mamālik*], and unity of international societies are political branches that are independent from the administrative politics".[97] In other words, it is the direct commentary on the khedival management of Egypt that Al-Nadīm tried to avoid, but he did not change any of his political and social views. Through discussing the social history of different nations – mostly European nations, Al-Nadīm could reflect on the situation of Egyptian society and culture. However, al- Nadīm's avoidance of current-day political topics did not last long, and his content became more subversive with each issue in a manner that alarmed the colonial authorities. *Al-ʾUstādh* was closed less than ten months later with

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[96] "*Jarīda ʿIlmiyyah Tahdhībiyyah Fukāhiyyah.*" See ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, *Al-ʾUstādh*, 24 August 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 1.

[97] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Muqadima," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 24 August 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 2-3.

the last issue appearing on the 13th of June 1893 before Al-Nadīm himself was exiled to Istanbul where he died a few years later.

The overarching theme of al-Nadīm's journalism is the vindication of Egypt's Eastern identity. Al-Nadīm wanted his readers to learn their past as a nation in order for them to appreciate and reclaim their identity, culture and language. Therefore, we find in Al-Nadīm an obsession with education and pedagogy as he appointed himself the *ʾUstādh* of Egyptians – a nationalist teacher for the whole nation. National education as well as other recurrent themes like – Eastern decadence, Arabic language, and Eastern versus Western civilisation – all must be read in relation to al-Nadīm's cultural safeguarding of this threatened identity. The main objective of al-Nadīm's journalism was to assert and affirm the traditional culture of Egypt as a response to growing Westernisation and the colonial threat on the Arab Islamic Self.

As the *ʾUstādh* of Egypt, Al-Nadīm wanted to teach proper Easternness: An Eastern Egyptian identity will be the basis of a moral community. This community will consist mostly of civilised urban Egyptian subjects as opposed to the Egyptian peasants who were seen as an obstacle to achieve the ideal nationalist future. The peasants and the countryside appeared in early narrative forms, but they were always described from the outside by the urban middle-class culture.[98] To quote Lucie Ryzova,

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[98] Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, *The Arabic Novel in Egypt, 1914-1970* (Cairo: The Egyptian General Book Organization, 1973), 39.

> Constructing Egyptian society as sick and deficient and putting oneself at the centre of reform and revival (*nahda*) through various acts of claiming knowledge and representation was a strategy of a rising social formation—the efendiyya—to redistribute power in society, and to remake whole social groups, such as workers, peasants, or women.[99]

In the case of Al-Nadīm, the peasant was indeed the embodiment of Egyptian decadence and backwardness, and therefore the peasant was an essential and recurring character in Al-Nadīm's writings. Indeed, as Gasper notes, the peasantry was prevalent in the social writings of the time as "the figure of the *fallāḥ* was central to the mapping of Egypt's social cartography."[100] Interestingly, if the *fallāḥ* and the peasantry represented everything that is to be reformed in the Eastern Egyptian [*Al-Sharqī*], then the Western European [*Al-Gharbī*] became a model for reform.[101] However, this Westerner was also an active saboteur that sets "traps in the path of the Easterner [*Al-Sharqī*] so that he cannot take a step without falling into the snares [*ḥibālat*] of Europe".[102] Thus, Western achievements as well as Western danger became the main trope through which Al-Nadīm conceive of this Eastern traditional identity for the reformed Egyptian.

Al-Nadīm highlighted the necessity of civilisation – or *tamaddun* – as he contemplated solutions for the decadent reality of Egyptian society. But it was

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[99] Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21.

[100] Gasper, 109.

[101] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum mithlanā la faʿaltum fiʿlanā," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 17 January 1893; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 507-533. See in particular, 528.

[102] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 510.

necessary to achieve this virtue of civilisation without undermining the authenticity of Egyptian identity. Al-Nadīm was indeed traditional, but the tradition he espoused was one that emerged within a context of rapid Westernisation that accompanied a period of oppressing foreign intervention. As explored in chapter two of this thesis, this tradition as "a system of values" created in opposition to Western modernity differed greatly from the organic non-confrontational tradition that developed as a social fact.[103] Al-Nadīm's traditionalised attitude was indeed formed in response to "ideas accompanying foreign merchandise, or to universally decried liberalism".[104] Thus, in the case of al-Nadīm, tradition becomes an ideological weapon to counteract the rapid change in social life brought by Westernisation in Egypt. His anti-Westernism was reactionary in nature, and his assertions of Eastern superiority allowed him to argue for an Eastern modernity that rivals Western modernity.[105] The uncritical acceptance of Western modernity was dangerous because it erodes the morality of society.[106] This is why is violent in attacking any perceived agents of

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[103] Laroui, *Crisis*, 33.

[104] Laroui, *Crisis*, 87.

[105] See for example, ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "al-farq bayna al-tamaddun al-sharqī wa al-tamaddun al-gharbī," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31 July 1881; in *Min Turāth ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 162. Also, a series of articles appeared under the title "An Eastern Custom, and Its Western Counterpart": ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʿāda sharqiyah wa muqābilatuhā al-gharbiyah," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31 July 1881; in *Min Turāth ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 163; ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʿāda sharqiyah wa muqābilatuhā al-gharbiyah," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 7 Augusts 1881; in *Min Turāth ʿAbd Allāh Al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 180. A third entry appeared in issue 14 as a contribution by a reader named Mustafa Mahir.

[106] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Al-ʿadwa al-ʾūrūbiyah li al-bilād al-sharqiyyah," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 11 April 1893; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 779.

Westernisation – whether the Europeans themselves, the Syrian and Lebanese communities, or Westernised Egyptians – as they were a threat to the moral, cultural and religious purity of Egypt. Although the West was an essential element of Al-Nadīm's writings, Westernisation was not the solution to the decadence and lethargy of society; rather, it was a return to the authenticity of being Eastern, Arab, and Muslim. This, he believed, can only be achieved by creating an Egyptian Islamic education that will build an Egyptian character infused with the ideology of nationalism.

Al-Nadīm was a disciple of Jamāl Al-Dīn Al-ʾAfghānī, but he did not believe that religion – or religious unity – was the best strategy for challenging the colonial presence of Europe in the East. Whereas al-ʾAfghānī advocated a Pan-Islamic spiritual nationalism that transcended racial and linguistic differences, al-Nadīm preferred a territorial loyalty to Egypt. This was far from the mainstream attitude of the time. Indeed, although nationalist feelings in Egypt continued to grow, most Egyptians remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire and identified themselves as Ottoman subjects of the Sultan.[107] Al-Nadīm did not agree with the Pan-Islamism of Al-ʾAfghānī; he was a "pragmatic Ottomanist" to use Adnan Hussein Rashid's expression. Al-Nadīm conceded the Sultan's spiritual authority as a guardian of Muslims and attacked those who questioned this spiritual sovereignty.[108] This Ottomanism, however, was

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[107] Al- Jumayʿī, *Al-Nadīm wa Dawruhu*, 231.

[108] Rashid, "The Press," 224.

conceded on the condition that Ottoman loyalties did not interfere with the nationalist demand for 'Egypt for the Egyptians'.

Instead of a transcendental religiously based nationalism, al-Nadīm called for an Eastern league of distinct nations with their equally distinct cultural and religious identities that will heal Eastern nations of their decadence and political weakness.[109] In an article published in *Al-ʾUstādh,* Al-Nadīm warns his readers that if Egyptians, Syrians, Arabs and Turks do not unite as Eastern nations and transcend their internal strife, they are indeed decadent and deserve the inferior position that the Europe powers reduced them to. As he puts it,

> If we add to our strength through unity with each other, Eastern peoples, Egyptians, Syrians, Arabians and Turks, will be able to say to Europe: 'we have our pride and you have yours'. But if we continue to disagree among ourselves in our attitude to foreigners, we deserve to be banished by Europe to the tops of the mountains to join the wild animals.[110]

In other words, the root cause for Eastern decadence is the unwillingness of nations of the East to unite in the face of European exploitation. But rather than religion, Easternism is to be the main uniting factor rather than religion: nations of the East must focus on the goal of keeping the East Eastern and for Easterners.[111]

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[109] Rashid, "The Press," 224-226. The concept of Easternism was used differently from one intellectual to another. Al-ʾAfghānī used the term to describe any non-Western society under threat of European imperialism; Christian Lebanese intellectuals like Jurjī Zayadān used the term to refer to any Arabic-speaking society; while al-Nadīm used it to refer to societies within the Ottoman Empire. For more, see Israel Gerhosni and James Jankowski's *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 255-256.

[110] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 532-533. Translated in Rashid, 225-226.

[111] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Al-Jāmiʿa Al-Waṭaniya wa Al-ʾIkhtilāṭ Al-ʿUmrānī," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 13 September 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 80.

Within this context, Al-Nadīm's representations of the West in his writings offer an example of Occidentalism. His journalism is characterised by a clear and explicit anti-Westernism, and he is open in his dislike of any foreign presence in Egypt.[112] Despite his calls for a united Eastern front, al-Nadīm's patriotic dislike of foreigners included his fellow Arabs and Muslims. Hourani notes that "in [al-Nadīm's] writings indeed there is a streak of that 'xenophobia' which may go with strong national feelings. There is something too of the puritanism which often accompanies them as well".[113] This puritanism is more apparent in his concern with moral purity and the education of young girls which will be discussed later in the chapter. For now, I am focusing on al-Nadīm's understanding of being a patriotic Easterner. Al-Nadīm's concept of patriotism [*Waṭaniya*] united individuals based on a shared 'Egyptianness' despite religious and ethnic differences. It is this parameter of 'Egyptianness' that becomes the ground on which al-Nadīm excludes certain categories from his nationalism like Europeans and Syrians as well as Westernised Egyptians.

Al-Nadīm idealised an Eastern national unity that transcends religious affiliation. His writings promoted a romanticised image of the harmonious coexistence between the different ethnicities and religions living in Egypt; however, he also attempted to provide a logical basis for declaring someone an Egyptian.

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[112] Wendell, *Evolution*, 140-161.

[113] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 197.

> By Egyptians, I mean every patriotic citizen of Arabs, Turks and Circassians … these three parts of society are united by their religion before the nationalist unity. And the three races along with the [Christian] Copts are indeed Egyptians. And this blend was further mixed with a group of our Syrian brothers who partakes in administration and trade in a manner reminiscent of the unity between Egyptians and Phoenicians in ancient times.[114]

This inclusive nationalism was a myth. In reality, Al-Nadīm did not hesitate to exclude those who failed to exhibit Eastern loyalties in his view. He rejected Syrians and Lebanese along with Europeans from his brand of Eastern Egyptian nationalism and referred to them as intruders [*dukhalāʾ*] and 'tools' in the hand of colonialism. Al-Nadīm resented the social and financial privileges that foreigners enjoyed in Egypt at the expense of Egyptians, but the privileged position of Syrians provoked his xenophobia. In the early 1890s, al-Nadīm attacked Syrians openly for exploiting Egyptian peasants and cooperating with the British. [115] Nevertheless, neither Europeans nor Syrians were the target of al-Nadīm's greatest criticism, but his fellow Egyptian Arabs who allowed themselves to become Westernised.

Al-Nadīm reserved great derision and sarcasm for Westernised Egyptian youth who returned from their studies in Europe acting as total strangers to their own culture, language, and people. In one of his earlier comical sketches, Al-Nadīm describes the return of a peasant young man to his rural village.[116] The title " *Arabī Tafarnaj*" – 'An

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[114] Al-Nadīm, "Al-Jāmiʿa Al-Waṭaniyah," 79.

[115] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 530-532; Hourani, 196; Wendell, 157.

[116] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, " *ʿArabī Tafarnaj*," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 6 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 40-41. Translated in Awad, *The Literature of Ideas*, 84-86.

Arab Went Native', or literally 'A Westernised Arab' – reflects al-Nadīm's main concern with the loss of Arabness and the consequences of blind imitation of the West on the social relations between Egyptians. Al-Nadīm introduces his readers to *Miʿīt*, a humble *Fallāḥ*, his wife *Miʿīka*, and his son *Ziʿīt*. The boy spent his early childhood like peasant boys: sleeping on the ground and playing in the mud. When *Ziʿīt* was old enough, he helped his father in the farm, tended cattle, and handled the water wheels. Every day, the young *Ziʿīt* ate four heads of onions. On Eid day, his parents offered him *Al-yakhnaa* – a festive Egyptian stew made of meat and onions. This simple life ended when a merchant advised the father to send the boy to school: "Now *Miʿīt*, if you send your son to school, he will be educated and will *become a human being*".[117] *Ziʿīt* attended elementary school and then travelled to Europe to complete his studies. Few years later, the Westernised son would echo this merchant's view of uneducated peasants as sub-humans.

Al-Nadīm recounts the first meeting between the father and son after four years of absence. The Westernised *Ziʿīt* rejects his father's hugs and kisses proposing instead that a handshake will do:

> *Ziʿīt*: God Almighty! You Muslims have this very ugly habit of hugging and embracing.

> *Miʿīt*: But, my son, how do we greet each other?

> *Ziʿīt*: You say *bonne arrivée* and you shake hands with me once, and that is all.

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[117] Al-Nadīm, " *ʿArabī Tafarnaj*," 40.

Miʿīt: But, my son, I have never denied that I am a *fellah*.

Ziʿīt: *Fellah* or not, you Egyptians are like quadrupeds.

Miʿīt: Thank you kindly, Ziʿīt. You are full of gracious words.[118]

Ziʿīt's inability to recognise himself as a Muslim Egyptian Arab becomes even more jarring when he arrives at his village. His mother, *Miʿīka*, prepared his favourite stew with meat and onions, but he is disgusted by what was once his favourite meal. What follows is a humorous dialogue between the now hard to please son and his disappointed mother.

Ziʿīt: Why did you put in so much of that… that… *comment s'appelle?*

Miʿīka: that.. that.. what, *Ziʿīt*?

Ziʿīt: That thing… called.. *comment s'appelle*?

Miʿīka: Called what, my son? Pepper?

Ziʿīt: *Non, non*. The thing you plant.

Miʿīka: You mean garlic? I swear to you, my son, there is not a speck of garlic in it.

Ziʿīt: No. I mean that thing.. that thing that brings tears to the eyes; they call it *onions* [he uses the French word].

Miʿīka: I swear to you, my son, I put no *onions* in it. It is just meat with *basal* [Egyptian Arabic for onions].

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[118] Al-Nadīm, "*ʿArabī Tafarnaj*," 40-41; Awad, *The Literature of Ideas*, 84-86.

Ziʿīt: C'est ça. Basal. Basal. C'est ça.

Miʿīka: What has happened, *Ziʿīt,* my son? You have been brought up on *basal*. Have you forgotten?[119]

This incapacity for expressing his most basic thoughts in the mother tongue is a symptom of a serious problem for al-Nadīm. *Ziʿīt* did not only forget how to say 'onion' in Arabic, but he also forgot that only five years ago he ate nothing but onions every day; he forgot that he *is* an Arab from the Egyptian countryside. *Ziʿīt* 's broken Arabic reflects the degree to which he is now alienated from his parents and culture; in essence, he has rejected his Egyptianness.

The distraught father sought the advice of one of the discerning dignitaries [ʾaḥad al- nubahāʾ]: "My son went to Europe and came back blaspheming against his country and his people and on top of that he has forgotten his native language". The wise man represents al-Nadīm's view that language and identity are interconnected: "Your son never learned good manners when young and was not taught that it was his duty to preserve the honour of his country, his language, and his nation;" therefore, he went to Europe lacking "the virtue of patriotism [*mizyat al-waṭaniyah*]."[120] Al-Nadīm dismisses the value of any knowledge received from Europe: "Although he [*Ziʿīt*] has acquired some sciences, his learning is of no use to his country. He has no affection for his fellow Egyptian brothers [*lā yamīl ʾila ʾikhwānih*] and finds himself

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[119] Al-Nadīm, "*ʿArabī Tafarnaj*," 40-41; Awad, *The Literature of Ideas*, 84-86.

[120] Al-Nadīm, "*ʿArabī Tafarnaj*," 41.

at home only with the foreigners whose language he speaks [*lā yastaḥsin ʾillā man yaʿrif lughatahum*]."[121]

Westernised Egyptians hinder the emergence of an authentic national consciousness because they are alienated from their surroundings and feel a false sense of identification with the culture of the coloniser. In particular, the Eastern graduates of the educational missions to Europe have a subversive influence on their cultures and societies:

> They [the Europeans] send them [the Oriental students] back to us, actually assimilated to their various nationalities [*mutajannisīn bi jinsiyyatihim*], even though they resemble us outwardly. We see that the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Turk, and the Iraqi who have studies from the beginning [of their education] with the Frères or the Protestant or the Jesuits, have become a third force [*Qism thālith*] in between the Easterners and the Westerner- their speech is Eastern, but their endeavours are Western.[122]

The result is a generation of Eastern youth with Western consciousness. This active Westernisation of Eastern youth is one of the factors contributing to the weakness of the East in general, and Egypt in specific. Rather than progress, Al-Nadīm saw the growing Westernisation of culture and society in Egypt as a contamination that undermined the social and moral health of the community. European habits and customs were eroding the virtuous morality that Al-Nadīm believed as integral to authenticity of Egyptian society.

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[121] Al-Nadīm, "ʿArabī Tafarnaj," 41.

[122] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Bimā taqadamū wa taʾakharnā wa al-khuluq wāḥid," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 29 November 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 337-352; Translated in Wendell, *Evolution*, 155-156.

Al-Nadīm, as we shall see in the following sections of this chapter, believed that the West had its virtues; however, he vehemently rejected the idea that Europe offered the ideal or universal model of civilisation. Moreover, this rapid cultural assimilation of Western culture in Egypt was not a virtue within the context of colonialism because this was another form of aggression against the Egyptian culture and society. In one of his short narratives in *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, Al-Nadīm narrates the story of a patient suffering from "*al-Dāʾ Al-Ifranjī*" [The Frankish disease]. The patient was a healthy, handsome, and successful Egyptian young man.[123] When he becomes friends with Europeans, they introduce him to a disreputable lifestyle of drinking and women that resulted in his infection with "*al-Dāʾ Al-Ifranjī.*" This is an allegory for the recent history of Egypt as Al-Nadīm saw it.[124] Before the rule of ʾIsmāʿīl, Egypt – the handsome young man - was prosperous, strong, and full of promises thus attracting the admiration of many around him. The Egyptian nation – symbolised by the family of the young patient – vowed to protect their son from his envious enemies as well as his lustful admirers. The family fails to honour this vow, and the youth fell ill and was abandoned by his friends amongst the ruins.

Al-Nadīm imagines a dialogue between the father and his now ill, disfigured, and destitute son; this dialogue reflects the grief of all Egyptians at the occupation of their

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[123] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "majlis ṭibbī ʿala Muṣāb bi al-ʾafranjī," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 6 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿ Amma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 37-39.

[124] ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī, "dirāsa taḥlīliyah," in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿ Amma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 10-12.

country by the British. The young man blames his father for failing to protect him from harm and leaving him to the devices of his friend until he was struck by the European disease. The young man believes that he knows the cure for this disease, and it is a return to his own roots: "I will treat myself with the herbs of my land … If you have the strength to, please carry me [back to my land]. And if you are offended by my puss and infections, call my people to me, maybe I will find amongst them one who is willing to save this cadaver [*jīfa*] of mine."[125] The young man is examined by an Egyptian medical committee to determine the root of his illness; they recommend that the patient be treated and attended by his own family and no strangers should be involved in his care lest they sabotage his healing process.[126] It is the Egyptians, according to Al-Nadīm – presumably ʾAḥmād ʿUrābī and his supporters – that will heal Egypt from the disease that is Westernisation through a conscious return to Egyptian culture.[127] In order to convince his readers of the worth of this culture, Al-Nadīm must tackle the accusation of Eastern decadence.

Contesting Eastern Decadence

Al-Nadīm's attitude towards the concept of an Oriental decadence is conflicted. On the one hand, he accused his fellow Egyptians of social and cultural decay in his writings. On the other hand, he also rejected these very same accusations coming from

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[125] Al-Nadīm, "majlis ṭibbī," 39.

[126] Al-Nadīm, "majlis ṭibbī," 39; "They are not to let strangers serve him or allows foreigners to reach him for fear that they will corrupt [ʾifsādihim] the healing and attempt to ruin him [ʾitlāfihi] more than they already done to him."

[127] Al-Jumayʿī, "dirāsa taḥlīliyah," 9-10.

foreigners and Europeans in particular.[128] This contradiction is not difficult to solve given the situation of al-Nadīm as an intellectual confronted with the colonial undermining of his culture. Al-Nadīm's admission of an Egyptian decadence was part of a larger national discourse in urban centres on social reform that conveniently located this decadence in the countryside. Al-Nadīm's understood this decadence as ignorance, lethargy, superstitious belief, backwardness, and naiveté. Thus, the Egyptian peasant became the epitome of all the faults and shortcomings of Egyptian society. The reform of Egypt was in the hands of the civilised, sophisticated and urban *ʾAfandīs*.[129]

In his early writings in *Al-Tankīt*, al-Nadīm used peasant characters and depicted their sufferings during the economic crisis in the early 1880s. The satirical narratives of the peasantry functioned as a humorous trope in Al-Nadīm's serious political and social commentary on the challenges facing the nationalist project in the countryside. In these narratives, the *fallāḥ* is often depicted as stupid, backward, superstitious, isolated, and ignorant, and it is the *nabīh* – ie. the *Afandīs* – who presents the voice of reason and civilisation.[130] Nevertheless, Al-Nadīm was genuinely concerned with the well-being of the peasants. He saw himself as a representative of the peasant masses who neither dressed in Western clothes nor spoke foreign languages like the Westernised elite of the urban populations. The ignorance and abject poverty of this

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[128] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "al-ḥayāh al-waṭaniyah," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 30 August 30 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 41.

[129] For more, see Gasper's analysis of al-Nadīm in relation to the peasant in early *Afandī* imagination: Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 30, 40-41, and 74-77.

[130] Gasper, *Power of Representation*, 41.

marginalized population, al-Nadīm argues, was the result of exploitation by European
and land-owning classes that enjoyed privileges under colonialism. For Al-Nadīm, the
peasants of the countryside were more likely to propel the anti-colonial struggle if
only they were reformed and educated, and he called for their rehabilitation by the
civilised Egyptians.

The West was always ever present in Al-Nadīm's social commentaries;
sometimes he exposed the exploitative role of Europe in the misery of Egyptian
peasants, but he occasionally engaged in comparisons between East and West to
highlight the backwardness and decadence of Egypt. Even as he attacked Europe as a
political and military adversary of the East, Al-Nadīm was still convinced that Europe
remained the best source for the antidote to the state that he often referred to as *jahāla*
or *jāhiliyah* of the East. The cure as we saw in "majlis ṭibbī" was local, namely, a
return to the authenticity of Egyptian culture; but as Hourani notes, "[Al-Nadīm] does
not believe the Egyptian nation is sufficient for itself and can generate its revival out
of its own resources".[131] Al-Nadīm explicitly states that "comparing our present with
our past" [*muqābalatu hāḍirinā bi māḍhinā*] is an objective of his first journal *al-
Tankit*; although he does not directly refer to Europe, al-Nadīm invited his readers to
observe the superiority of those who worked on increasing their nation's capitals,
supporting their national governments, and expressing their nationalism [*yuẓhiru
waṭaniyatahum*].[132] Europeans dominated the world as a result of their serious

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[131] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 197.

[132] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʾAyuhā al-naṭiq bi al- ḍād," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 6 June
1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm
Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 36.

contemplation of life. They realised that humans are driven by necessity. Europe is building its knowledge, commercial wealth, and political power while the East is lying on its past glory: "you [the Egyptian reader] are boasting of what your forefathers did as you frolic in a barren land".[133] In discussing themes of poverty, superstition, and fatalism, al-Nadīm used the example of the West to shame his readers into change and self-reflection.

In one of his earlier colloquial sketches, Al-Nadīm laments the ignorance of the naïve peasant that made him a victim of predatory lending.[134] He was vehement in reprimanding the wealthy Westernised Egyptians for their role in the subjugation of the country and the nation to the humiliating exploitation of the British.[135] While Egypt is being run and managed by foreigners from every corner, Egyptians are preoccupied with diviners and fortune-tellers

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[133] Al-Nadīm, "ʾAyuhā al-naṭiq", 36-37.

[134] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Muḥtāj jāhil fī yad muḥtāl ṭammāʿ," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 6 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 44-45.

[135] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Al-najm dhū al-dhanab," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 10 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 104-107.

> How many Egyptian legal deeds carry the signature of a Paris's judge? How many banks in London owned by *Haj* so and so? How many buildings in Italy are rented by *al-muʿallim* so and so? How many administrative offices in Berlin are managed by *Pāshā* so and so? What was it that made us fall into these claws? What was is it that brought upon us these disasters? Is it not disgusting ignorance [*al-Jahl al-qabīh*], and our carelessness about the outcomes of our actions, and transgressing flippancy and corrupt gatherings? Is that not [shameful] enough for you [Egyptians] to now believe in the stars and ascribe to them what is of the characteristics of God.[136]

Al-Nadīm sees the fatalism and cowardice of Egyptians as the root of their decadence.[137]

In one of his sketches, a civilised *nabīh*[138] travels to the countryside and spends the night in the house of a peasant. The *nabīh* wakes up hearing the noise of a thief attempting to break into the house; he wakes up the house owner to get ready and defend his house. The peasant tells his guest not to worry and go back to sleep: "Sleep! What is written on the forehead shall be seen by the eye". The host argues that since God oversees everything in the world and its events, there is no point in trying to fight destiny: what will be will be, and they better go back to sleep. From there ensues a

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[136] Al-Nadīm, "Al-najm dhū al-dhanab," 106. Superstition was a recurrent theme in Al-Tankit. For more examples, see ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Takhrīfa: khudh min ʿAbd Allah wa ʾittakil ʿala Allah," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 11 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 61-63; ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʾAmātaka man ʾaslamaka ʾla al-jahāla," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 21 Auguts 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 207-209.

[137] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Nihāyat al-balāda," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 3 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 90-92.

[138] According to Gasper, the term '*Nabīh*' in the late 1870s and early 1880s referred to educated civilized urban intellectuals. By the late 19th century, the term was replaced by '*mutamaddin*'; for more see Gasper, *The Power of Representation*, 72-73.

comical dialogue between the civilised urbanite *nabīh* and his host as the thief roams

the house. Al-Nadīm's *tabkīt* or commentary on the story extends the lesson of the

anecdote from the defence of a house to the defence and guarding of the wealth of the

country:

> If [this fatalistic peasant] was taught young and brought up well in his childhood, he would have recognised his worth and the honour of his home; he would have lived on free thoughts and received his religious education on the hand of an honest ʾUstādh, the blood of zeal would run in his veins, and he would have been aware of the schemes of his enemies and the conspiracies of the cunning.[139]

In a society dominated by ignorance, Al-Nadīm presents himself as a selfless *Ustādh*:

a national educator that has the well-being of the nation at heart rather than his own

prestige or influence.[140]

One of the major oppositions to his work came through the detrimental influence

of religious scholars. In an article titled "*Shaykh zifta aw jāhiluhā*" [The Ignorant

Shaykh of Zefta], Al-Nadīm attacks a religious scholar that rallied the uneducated

masses to oppose the opening of schools in their villages.[141] Instead of supporting the

building of schools in a country plagued with ignorance and poverty, these ignorant

sheikhs will hinder any real progress because they prefer for their fellow Egyptians to

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[139] Al-Nadīm, "Nihāyat al-balāda," 92.

[140] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Mata yastaqīm al-ẓil wa al-ʿūd ʾaʿwaj," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 17 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 125-128.

[141] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Shaykh zifta wa jāhiluhā," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 11 September 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 242-243.

remain ignorant and under their control.[142] Not all readers appreciated this transparent reflections on the state of Egyptian society.

Al-Nadīm's account of this decadence was not appreciated by all his readers. Some readers believed that the censure or *tabkīt* of Al-Nadīm on his society was doing more harm than good. In a note sent to Al-Nadīm, a reader protest that "spreading our shortcomings is inappropriate lest the Europeans [*al-ʾafranj*] become aware of our circumstances."[143] Al-Nadīm's concise answer reflects his impatience with this complacency and lack of awareness of the reality of the situation of Egypt:

> The Europeans [*al-ʾafranj*] know about you what you yourself do not know yet; they have volumes on our ways of life [*sayrīna*] containing the hidden knowledge that you think no one knows but you. The point [of this journal] is to condemn the state of ignorance, to counteract the claims of quacks, and to shake lazy natures in order to purify the minds from the dirt of ignorance.[144]

Nevertheless, Al-Nadīm appears to have been aware of the necessity of balancing his social critiques of decadence and ignorance with similar critiques of European modernity to highlight Eastern virtues. His critique of Egyptian decadence and ineffectiveness were paralleled with a similar critique of what he perceived as

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[142] Al-Nadīm, "Shaykh zifta wa jāhiluhā,"243.

[143] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Iʿtirāḍ ʿala al-Tabkīt," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 3 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 97. See also another note from an upset reader and Al-Nadīm's reply: ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Iʿtirāḍāt ʿala al-Tankīt," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 26 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 69.

[144] Al-Nadīm, "Iʿtirāḍ ʿala al-Tabkīt," 97.

European inhumane efficiency.[145] Al-Nadīm is anxious to assure his readers that nations of the East have their own version of civilisation: *al-tamaddun al-sharqī*. Under the title "Proof of the Progress of Eastern Nations", Al-Nadīm cites a report from a Tunisian journal on a Chinese encyclopaedia consisting of ten thousand parts founds in a palace in Beijing, China.[146] The existence of this encyclopaedia for Al-Nadīm is worth reporting to his readers because it refutes the constant dismissal of Eastern knowledge and culture. More importantly, by arguing for an Eastern *tamaddun*, Al-Nadīm distinguishes between what is to be embraced safely from Europe and what is to be discarded and considered as a 'disease' [*dāʾ*] that threatens Egyptian identity.[147]

In his critique of Western modernity or what he refers to as *al-Tamaddun Al-Gharbī*,[148] Al-Nadīm is particularly interested in exploring the foundations upon which this modernity was established. This serves to highlight aspects of European history that can serve as lessons for the Eastern nations in general, and the Egyptian nation in particular. His analysis of an Oriental decadence is supplemented by this critique of Western modernity as he draws the attention of his readers to the decadence of this modernity. The overall message of Al-Nadīm's critique of Western modernity

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[145] Barak, "Egyptian Times," 161. For more on this, see chapter 3 of Barak's thesis titled "Effendi Times," 155-220.

[146] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Burhān taqaddum al-ʾumam al-sharqiyyah," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 168.

[147] Al-Nadīm, "majlis ṭibbī," 37-39.

[148] See for example, Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 507-533.

is an invitation to imitate the admirable aspects of European modernity but it is also a warning against adding European decadence to the already existing Eastern decadence.[149] Al-Nadīm called upon his readers to be conscious as they reform their ways; rather than accepting any change just for the sake of changing.[150]

In one of his longer essays in *al-ʾUstādh*, Al-Nadīm provides his analysis of the rise of European dominance in the East in relation to the question of Oriental decadence.[151] He dismisses climate or religion as explanations for Eastern laziness and Western industriousness; indeed, he reminds his readers that history bear witness to the fact that the positions of East and West were reversed a few centuries ago, and Europe was in an even worse position than the East in the late nineteenth century. The source of Eastern stagnation is the disintegration of the people. Likewise, the source of Western rise is the alertness and awareness of European people who possess self-worth. Europeans, according to Al-Nadīm, are motivated to contribute to "the honour of their nations" because they understand their political leaders and kings. They formed religious, scientific, industrial, agricultural, and political societies; in essence, every group and every class in society are competing for excellence and elevation of their nation.[152]

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[149] Al-Nadīm, "Al-ʿadwa al-ʾūrūbiyah," 779-786.

[150] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Faṣl fī al-ʿadāt wa al-ʾakhlāq," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 24 August 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 11-15.

[151] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 507-533.

[152] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 507-508.

Europeans are protective of their languages, religions, and customs, and they strive to maintain their independence in managing the affairs of their lands, and rightly so for Al-Nadīm.[153] To quote Hourani,

> [For Al-Nadīm,] Egypt is not backward because of climate or religion. She is backward because she does not possess the sources of European strength yet, although she could possess them all: unity of language and religion, the ultimate unity of all Europe in face of the outside world, the economic enterprise of Europeans, their universal education, constitutional government, and freedom of expression.[154]

It is these admirable characteristics of the west that are worth imitating in the East. Al-Nadīm acknowledges that the East can learn from the West, but he rejects the claim that Western presence in the region is aimed to offer the altruistic service of tutoring the nations of the East.[155] The accusation of savagery and barbarism usually levelled at the East is merely an excuse for Western intrusion into the lands of other nations; rather than reforming the East with their civilisation, argues Al-Nadīm, Europeans monopolised industries and reduced Easterners to be mere workers and their labour contributes to the increasing of European wealth rather than the elevation and progress of their own lands and nations.[156]

As the ʾ*Ustādh* of Egypt, Al-Nadīm's concedes an Eastern decadence and accepts Europe as a source of inspiration; however, he is quick to establish and maintain a separation between an Eastern civilisation and a Western civilisation. This

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[153] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 523-524.

[154] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 197.

[155] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 511-515.

[156] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 511-515.

was one of themes that persisted in Arabic writings well into the 20th century;
according to Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud,

> The comparison between the civilisations of the East and West was one
> of the preoccupations o the first generation of novelists, as it was certainly
> a subject much discussed by social reformers and political leaders. The
> two worlds seemed to be poles apart: one commonly presented as
> traditional, spiritual and technically backward, the other materially
> advanced and rich but spiritually barren.[157]

Within the context of comparing Western and Eastern cultural and social practices,
Al-Nadīm was equally forthright in his critique of what he saw as the shortcomings
of European civilisation. Al-Nadīm desired a state of *tamaddun*[158] for Egypt;
however, he was anxious that Western expressions of this desired and worthy goal
will undermine an Eastern authenticity.

In one of his articles in *al-Tankīt*, al-Nadīm reports what is most likely a fictitious
dialogue between an Egyptian and his British neighbour. The Arab question his
British neighbour: "What is this *tamaddun* that you [Europeans] want to introduce to
our countries?"; the British neighbour reply is that this *tamaddun* is what will rid the
East from barbarism and savagery [*tawaḥḥush*].[159] Al-Nadīm is conscious of the
civilising mission that is at the core of the European colonial project in the East;
however, he goes to great lengths in developing his view on the differences between

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[157] Moussa-Mahmoud, *The Arabic Novel in Egypt, 1914-1970*, 32.

[158] The word can be translated as urbanism, culture, and civilisation; coming from the
verb *tamaddana* meaning to become a city dweller.

[159] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Al-farq bayna al-tamaddun al-sharqī wa al-tamaddun al-
gharbī," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa
Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-
ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 162.

the moral virtuous *tamadddun* of the East compare with the immoral and selfish Western *tamaddun*. *Tamaddun* in its European expression is socially irresponsible and alienating particularly to the British poor working-classes of London who are reduced to living with their families in crammed spaces lacking the minimum privacy.

In a series of short articles titled "An Eastern Custom and its Western Equivalent",[160] Al-Nadīm argues that just as the East must learn from Western *tamaddun*, the West also needs to learn from the East. Amongst many ills of European civilisation, he criticises the practice of duelling in Victorian England and America contrasting it with how Eastern societies value harmony: "Yet, [Europeans declare] we are barbaric, and they are civilised; we cannot deny their accusations as long as we [uncritically] approve everything they do even if it is abominable in reality".[161]

In another article under the same title, Al-Nadīm described the misfortunes of the poor British working class. If a poor British worker loses his job, Al-Nadīm informs his readers, he will be consumed with despair and have no choice but to jump off a high building. The fate of his body serves to stress the inhumane nature of European efficiency. The deceased worker's body will be collected by the garbage truck and used as bait for fish in the British Canal.[162] This demonisation of the West

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[160] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʿAda sharqiyyah," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 31 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 163.

[161] Al-Nadīm, "ʿAda sharqiyyah," 163.

[162] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʿAda sharqiyyah wa muqābilatuhā al-gharbiyyah," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 7 August 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 180-181.

serve mainly to heighten his reader's sense of pride in what he considered to be the humane, moral and civilised aspects of Eastern *tamaddun*; he openly invites his readers to reflect on them: "These are some of their [Europeans'] customs, so contemplate them to distinguish between Eastern virtuous customs and Western abominable customs [*al-maḥāsin al-sharqiyah wa al-qabāʾih al-gharbiyah*]".[163] In other words, Al-Nadīm is balancing his exploration of Eastern decadence and social degeneracy with his exploration of Western decadence and social degeneracy; however, the West remains for al-Nadīm the locus of *tamaddun* and civilisation.

When Al-Nadīm looks for validation for the past glory of the Arab East, he creates a fictional Orientalist and put in his mouth the words that vindicate Al-Nadīm's culture and society. In "Lā tuṣaddiqnī wa law ḥalaftu lak" This imagined European scholar is fascinated by the ancient civilisation of the Arabs; he travels the East to enjoy the company of Eastern people; impressed by the kindness, honesty, intelligence and courage of Eastern Arabs, this European scholar writes a book on the virtues of the Arabs "in a style free from the biases of race and religion".[164] This is the recognition and validation that Al-Nadīm would like to see from Europe for the debt of civilisation that it received from the East; a sense of disappointment and unfairness is expressed clearly through the mouth of the European character: "It is a wonder that this nation spread civilisation [*tamaddun*] in the world when they ruled over the lands,

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[163] Al-Nadīm, "ʿAda sharqiyyah wa muqābilatuhā al-gharbiyyah," 181.

[164] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Lā tuṣaddiqnī wa law ḥalaftu lak," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 6 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 45-46.

and then they became the most despised by every civilised person. They [Arabs] were indeed right when they said, 'Beware the evil of those who received charity from you'".[165]

Teaching Easternism: Al-Nadīm as the Nationalist Educator of the Nation

Given the social and political context of Egypt under British occupation, Al-Nadīm's journalism – which he often described as his "advice for Eastern people"[166] – was aimed to protect Egyptian identity from being subsumed by European cultural and social norms. Al-Nadīm believed that creating a national education that taught men and women to hold on to their culture was in the interest of Egypt and the East at large. This education will ideally focus on uniting all Egyptians through language, religion, and morality – three elements of Egyptian culture that Al-Nadīm believed were most threatened by Westernisation. It was necessary to socialise Egyptian students – both boys and girls – with the right linguistic and religious education to take pride in their identity as Egyptians and Easterners. This goal of socialising the next generation into the proper identity becomes particularly urgent when it comes to norms dealing with the position of women in Egyptian society. However, even as he seeks to contain the rampant Westernisation of society and culture in Egypt, Al-Nadīm is still studying the West to arrive at a model for this unifying national education.[167] As Charles Wendell noted, for Al-Nadīm, "the East must adopt European methods in

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[165] Al-Nadīm, "Lā tuṣaddiqnī," 45-46.

[166] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʾInnamā yaqbalu al-naṣīḥa man wufiq," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 6 December 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 361-364.

[167] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Mamlakat Prussia," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 9 May 1893; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 875-883.

order to survive not merely politically, but culturally". Rather than become Westernised, the East should aim to "import the fundamental moulds created by Europe, but must fill them with Eastern content".[168]

As an experienced educator, Al-Nadīm was well aware of the role of foreign language and foreign education in what he perceived as the erosion of the traditional character of Egypt. He placed high emphasis on language as part of a national education primarily because he was alarmed at the growing linguistic Westernisation [*farnaja lughawyyah*] in Egypt. He was worried that European languages were slowly replacing Arabic in Egypt following the British occupation of Egypt as more European words became part of everyday conversational language. Al-Nadīm argued that foreign education in general and foreign languages in particular, was a colonial tool to corrupt the nations of the East and sow seeds of division. The Egyptians who acquired European culture through education either in Europe or in missionary schools and through interactions with Europeans inside Egypt start to perceive themselves to be superior to their fellow Egyptians. This created a generation of Westernised individuals like the confused *Ziʿīt* of his 1881 piece "*ʿArabī Tafarnaj.*" Regardless of religious denominations, these individuals were alienated from their communities and could not partake in religious rituals, nor did they have respect for their customs and traditions. For Al-Nadīm, the growing use of foreign language in Egypt is not a marker of modernity or civilisation, but quite the opposite it is a marker of decadence and national degeneration. The real reason for preferring foreign

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[168] Wendell, *Evolution*, 155.

languages over Arabic is the ignorance of Egyptians of their true national identity; an ignorance that national education fails to address.

Within Al-Nadīm's nationalist project, Arabic was more than a mere tool of communication; rather, Arabic is the carrier through which identity and culture of the nation is transmitted and shared within the community. Al-Nadīm, as the self-proclaimed ʾUstādh of Egyptians, tried to arrive at his own linguistic theory that related language to social and cultural identity. Thus, using the language of the coloniser signifies a conceding of defeat and submission, and maintaining language difference is the only guard against complete loss of independence. Loss of language is also both loss of religion and religious harmony as well as Egyptian nationhood. Writing in the early 1880s, Al-Nadīm challenges the assertion that Arabic is irreconcilable with modernity:

> Was there a thing for which you did not find a name [in Arabic]? Or do you think that being in an age of modernity [*tamaddun*] requires you to use the most delicate of languages … I ask you by God, was there a thing you admire in the languages preserved by the civilised nations which you did not find in your native language [*lughatika al-fiṭriyyah*] that the ignorant [amongst you] claim was collected in the age of ignorance? … Or are you the ignorant one who does not recognise the value of your language, unaware of your own status in the ancient and modern history of the world. I think you need to understand the secret of language and learn the consequences of losing it.[169]

This "secret of language" for Al-Nadīm is that it is an essential tool of socialisation in a nation. Within the context of nationalism, language is synonymous with the homeland because a homeland can only be built through cooperation between individuals who make it habitable. It is impossible to achieve this level of national unity that facilitates this cooperation without unity of language.

Al-Nadīm asserts that acquiring foreign languages from a young age by necessity involves the loss of national feelings as well as religious beliefs which are socialised into an individual through the mother tongue.[170] Al-Nadīm describes the influence of foreign languages on the Egyptian speaker of these languages in

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[169] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "ʾIḍāʿat al-lugha taslīm li al-dhāt," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 19 June 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 53-55. Also, Al-Nadīm, *Sulāfat Al-Nadīm*, 1:92-94. This article created intense debate amongst writers in Egypt. In order to respond to this backlash, al-Nadīm wrote a follow-up article ten issues later where he balanced the different opinions on the issue of language and its relation to nationalism. See ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Sādatī al-ʾudabāʾ," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 11 September 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿ Amma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 237-241; Al-Nadīm, *Sulāfat Al-Nadīm*, 1:94-99. Although Al-Nadīm at the end of this second article promised to publish a continuation of his discussion, no such article can be found in the following issues of *Al-Tankīt*.

[170] Al-Nadīm, "ʾIḍāʿat al-lugha," 53-55.

paranormal terms that invoke the idea of demonic possession in Arab folklore. Foreign languages can alter the way its speaker perceives the world, how he behaves, and interferes with his autonomy:

> Don't you know that a language can force its speaker to imitate that which her statements dictate? … she makes you admire a thing when it is named by other than your language even if it is shunned [*mustaqbaḥ*] in the tradition of your country and the religion of your people. No doubt that this will lead you to shun your language and the traditions of your country; one day you are a free nationalist [*waṭanī ḥur*], and the next you are a tool of the foreigner.[171]

The assertion that foreign language can create traitors out of honourable Egyptians is alarmist to say the least; however, Al-Nadīm concludes his ominous piece by assuring his readers that there is a cure for this threat. The solution is to open Egyptian schools and create a national education that focuses on Arabic language in a way that appeals to the young. Al-Nadīm prescribes that at least a third of an Egyptian child's time is to be dedicated to learning his national language [*lughatuhu al-waṭaniyah*] and character discipline [*tahthīb al-ʾakhlāq*].[172] An Egyptian child can master his language only if he learns it from a very early age; more importantly, for Al-Nadīm, this child must not be allowed to learn, speak or even be exposed to another language until the skills of his mother language becomes ingrained in his spirit.

This prioritisation of Arabic is important because Al-Nadīm saw language as not innate or hereditary, but rather it is "the manifestation of physiological and spiritual interaction" [*maẓhar al-ʾinfiʿāl al-jismānī aw alrawḥānī*].[173] The linguistic

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[171] Al-Nadīm, "ʾIḍāʿat al-lugha," 54.

[172] Al-Nadīm, "ʾIḍāʿat al-lugha,", 55.

[173] Al-Nadīm, "Sādatī al-ʾudabāʾ," 239.

genius of the ancient Arabs [*al-ʿArab al-ʾūla*] is primarily due to the lack of exposure to foreign languages that could would have corrupted their linguistic purity.[174] This argument serves to further alarm the readers of Al-Nadīm who may feel a false security in the stability of their identity as Arabs; the fluidity of identity means that the Egyptians need to be vigilant in guarding their identity. Changing the language that one speaks in everyday life is a slow and gradual change of national affiliation or what he refers to as '*jinsiyyat*':

> Changing the language of fathers will change the innate [linguistic] interaction [*fiṭrat al-ʾinfiʿāl*] in their children; so, if a foreigner [*ʾaʿjamī*] learned Arabic and taught it to his child, he has shed the nationality of foreigners [*ʾinsalakha min jinsiyyat al-ʾaʿājjim*]. This is what happened to many of the foreigners who replaced their language with Arabic and to Arabs who converted to Christianity and joined the Romans [*al-rūm*].[175]

In other words, the danger of using European languages is not merely that it is unpatriotic, but there is a serious threat to the survival of identity and nation. When a nation goes through a period of weakness and decadence like Egypt under British occupation, preserving language becomes a matter of survival because it is the only way to maintain distinction between the Self and the foreign ruler.

It is not the reality of political and military defeat by foreign domination that will necessarily lead to a complete loss of identity, but rather it is the social and cultural assimilation into the culture of the coloniser that will completely destroy identity. Al-Nadīm reminds his readers that Arabs maintained their cultural difference under Ottoman rule only through the preservation of their language; similarly, the

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[174] Al-Nadīm, "Sādatī al-ʾudabāʾ," 237-238.

[175] Al-Nadīm, "Sādatī al-ʾudabāʾ," 239.

Albanians, Romanians, and Greeks all preserved their languages under foreign rule and made it a symbol for their newly found nationalism:

> Surrendering the self [*taslīm al-dhāt*] did not lead to change of ethnicity [*jinsiyyah*] in the Arabs who were ruled by the Persians and the Turks. That is because they preserved their language and they were not negligent in using another language; therefore, their nationalism [*ʿaṣabiyyah*] stayed strong, and their ethnic blood [*damuhā al-jinsī*] is still flowing in their veins, so that it manifested itself at times of strength and was concealed at times of weakness … Thus, you see that surrendering the self does not necessarily lead to losing the language, but if a language is lost there will be no self to behold … and this is what I alluded to when I said, 'losing language is surrendering the self'.[176]

Al-Nadīm sees language as a carrier of culture as well as social and religious values; therefore, using a language other than Arabic is not simply a matter of personal preference because it endangers national consciousness on a deep level. Al-Nadīm wrote many articles warning against foreign education which displaces the mother tongue, and thus threatens social cohesion in Egypt. In these articles, religion, social unity, and morality are the three aspects of national culture that are particularly threatened by foreign education.

Al-Nadīm was critical of European religious presence in the region and the activities of the missionary.[177] In a series of dialogues under the title of "the Boys' School" published in *Al-ʾUstādh*, Al-Nadīm highlights the serious consequences of

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[176] Al-Nadīm, "Sādatī al-ʾudabāʾ," 239.

[177] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Al-Debā wa al-ʿArab," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 23 October 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 348; Rashid, "The Press", 142-143. In this vitriolic article published in response to a French newspaper on 'the Egyptian question', Al-Nadīm writes "Have you ever heard of Arab missionaries who went to Europe to *corrupt* European ideas or principles in the way in which your missionaries tour all the countries of the East, spreading their religion, and spending millions to corrupt Muslim and other opinions?"

foreign education. In the fourth instalment in particular, Ḥāfiẓ – a nationalist [*waṭanī*]

young man – explains to Kamil – a boy who attends a Christian missionary school -

the dangers of foreign education.[178] Ḥāfiẓ declares that he now prays five times a day

regularly after learning from reading *Al-ʾUstādh*; Kamil wants to learn from Ḥāfiẓ the

proper Islamic way of ablution because his school does not teach Islam.

Ḥāfiẓ: What school do you go to?

Kamil: A foreign school. They teach Muslims, Christians and Jews the Christian faith. They make us pray like them before lessons.

Ḥāfiẓ: Why don't you tell your father about this?

Kamil: I told him and he asked me what I say in this prayer and I told him I'm talking about our father in heaven. But he didn't do anything. A lot of my classmates are Muslim and all their parents are unaware of this religion issue. Many Muslims are brought up in these schools and do not perform any of the Islamic rites. They don't pray, fast, or wash correctly. They do not even distinguish between *Halal* (acceptable things and behaviour in Islam) and *Haram* (those things which Islam forbids).

Ḥāfiẓ: Oh God forbid! People only see these foreign schools as nice buildings and furniture, expensive equipment, low tuition fees and free food and drink for their children. I wonder if [Egyptians] know the reasons behind these schools. They have nothing in common with our language or religious faith. These [European] countries have many people in need of schooling, [worse off] even then us. Don't [Egyptians] see through this trick to convert our students from our faith to theirs? Your father's and other parents' lack of awareness is so strange. I think the main reason your parents send you to this school is to learn foreign languages. Why don't our rich people open schools that teach the Arabic language and Islam in

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[178] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banīn: Kāmil wa Ḥāfiẓ," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 13 December 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 391-395.

addition to foreign languages? This would prevent [Egyptian] students from converting.[179]

After answering his friend's question about the right way to perform ablution before prayer, Ḥāfiẓ continues his enquiry about Kamil's school. Although he argued earlier that foreign education is a colonial tool to undermine the unity of Muslims, Ḥāfiẓ wonders if perhaps missionary schools are doing some good after all by providing Christian Egyptians the religious education they need:

> Ḥāfiẓ: You told me you learned a Christian prayer at your school. I'll bet your [Christian] friend, Shenouda, is happy with this religious education because at last he found someone to teach him his religion.

> Kamil: Shenouda is Orthodox, but the teachers have taken him to the Protestant faith. Nakhla was Protestant but was taken by the Jesuits.[180]

Foreign education threatens the religious cohesion of Egyptian society for both Muslims and Christians. Ḥāfiẓ directs Kamil to make sure that he and Shenouda inform their fathers of the religious education they receive in the missionary school, or they will convert to the religion of the colonisers. When Kamil wonders how he as Muslim will be affected by threats to the religious unity of his Christian friends, Ḥāfiẓ stress that it is his duty as a nationalist Egyptian [*waṭanī*] to maintain the social solidarity and harmony between the different religions and sects as well as within each religion:

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[179] Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banīn," 391-392; translated in Herrera, "The Soul of a Nation," 15-16.

[180] Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banīn," 394.

> Ḥāfiẓ: The Copts are Christians, but they are also your fellow compatriots (*watanak*) and you'll be happy if they are united because this will protect you from failure ...Their unity is necessary for you; it maintains good relations and [national] harmony. If [divisions] appear among them, Shenouda might be upset if you visit Nakhla (a Protestant), and vice versa. If you abandon both friends, you will cause further separation between the two sects… Foreigners will be happy with their separation because they aim at causing disunity in Eastern societies. You have to maintain national unity and bring Muslims, Christians and Jews together. You should all behave rationally and not cause discord in the country.

Al-Nadīm's anxiety over the linguistic and religious fidelity of Egypt becomes more intense when it comes to the education and socialisation of Egyptian young women. If foreign education of boys has serious consequence for the public sphere, then foreign education of girls will mean the infiltration of the private sphere. As early as 1881, Al-Nadīm argued for the importance of educating young girls in a series of articles where he lamented the gross ignorance of women and the negative influence of old women on younger women.[181] When it comes to the spread of superstitions in Egyptian society, Al-Nadīm stresses that the solution lies in educating women.[182] Nevertheless, For Al-Nadīm, like many of his contemporaries, this education had to be limited because it was not wise to expose girls to education that went beyond what was needed for their role in the domestic sphere.

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[181] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Tahthīb al-Banāt min al-Wājibāt," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 24 July 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 147-150. Two further articles were published in later issues with the same title; see Al-Nadīm, "Tahthīb al-Banāt," 157-160; 176-178.

[182] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Ḥadīth Khurāfa," *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, 4 September 1881; in *Mīn Turāth al-Nadīm: Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt*, ed. ʿAbdal-Munʿim Ibrāhīm Al-Jumayʿī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa Al-Miṣriyah Al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 1994), 231-233.

Al-Nadīm wrote a series of dialogues entitled "Girls' School" where he shared his views on the best education for Egyptian young women. He believed that there is no value in travelling and language learning for a girl destined to domestic service for her husband.[183] Learning foreign languages clash with the proper maintenance of the domestic realm of society where young women belong. The dialogues were written in colloquial Egyptian as opposed to the standard Arabic of the series on boys' education; this probably reflects Al-Nadīm's desire for his ideas to reach women including those semi-educated as well as the illiterate women who will hear it read to them.

In one of these dialogues, an upper middle-class girl - Nafīsa - tells the rural conservative woman Zakīya about the subjects she's learning at her foreign school. Zakīya is alarmed when she hears that the girls are taught English and French in addition to Arabic: "As for [Arabic] writing and reading, these are certainly useful subjects; you can sit and read from the holy book of the Qurʾān or learn about your religion from other books. But English and French, why do you learn those languages? Are you planning to marry a French or English man?"[184] Nafīsa explains that all the notables in society are teaching European languages to their children, so girls must learn these languages so they can converse in them when they marry boys who speak these foreign languages. This does not change Zakīya's view:

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[183] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt: Zakīya wa Nafīsa," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 1 November 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 246-251. Four more articles appeared in later issue with same titles; see Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt," 298-302; 356-360; 369-374; 395-399.

[184] Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt," 246.

> Why don't you learn Arabic or Turkish, the languages we speak with the families of our country? As for the man who foregoes his own language to speak with his wife in French or English while he's the son of an Arab or Turk, he has little taste. Why would one of our men speak with us, *girls of the East*, in the languages of the French or English?[185]

Here, Al-Nadīm's traditionalism becomes very clear as he establishes a stark distinction between 'girls of the East' and 'girls of the West'. The young girl protests to the older woman that Syrian girls – who are indeed also 'girls of the East' – attend foreign schools and marry young boys of the East who also attended these schools; however, for Al-Nadīm these were no longer authentic Eastern girls and therefore they are no role model for Egyptian young women: "Those are the girls who *dress like foreigners* and walk on the streets with clothes meant for the house, *just like the foreign women*."[186] In as much as Syrian young women became Westernised and stepped outside the private sphere into the public one, they were no longer "Eastern".

For Al-Nadīm, then, the education of girls should not go beyond what is needed for their duties as housewives and mothers. A girl must be taught in preparation for her ultimate role as a wife obeying her husband and cleaning the house. In a fictional dialogue between a mother and her daughter, Al-Nadīm provides a list of skills that an Egyptian young girl is to acquire through her education.[187] Thus, for Al-Nadīm, the Egyptian woman must be kept safe from the reach of Westernisation; knowledge of

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[185] Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt," 246.

[186] Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt," 246.

[187] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt: Ḥafṣa wa bintahā Salma," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 29 November 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 298-302; ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt: Bahāna wa sitt al-balad," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 6 December 1892; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 369-374.

foreign language will make it possible for Egyptian women to interact with a foreign

man in a shared language. As Linda Herrera notes, for Al-Nadīm:

> Foreign languages might not only distract women from their primary domestic responsibilities, but acclimatize them to the habits and tastes of Europeans … Whereas the knowledge of foreign languages enables men to effectively carry out their public responsibilities, women's knowledge of foreign languages constitutes a form of cultural pollution and potential licentiousness.[188]

Young boys and men can learn foreign languages to defend the East from

Westernisation in the public sphere; however, young girls and women are kept in the

private sphere protected from the reach of Westernisation and acculturation. Within

Al-Nadīm's anti-colonial project, their role is passive in that they conserve Egyptian

culture, identity, and language.

Al-Nadīm was open in his condemnation of the role Europe played in

aggravating the social and moral decadence of the East in general, and Egypt in

particular. He was an active campaigner for the abolishment of prostitution in

Egypt.[189] He argued that Europe introduced immoral forms of entertainment that

shattered the morality, spirituality, honour and intellect of Eastern nations in the name

of civilisation and modernity.[190] Those who engage in these European habits of

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[188] Herrera, "Soul of a Nation," 13.

[189] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Al-ʿadwa al-ʾurubiyyah li al-bilād al-sharqiyyah," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 11 April 1893; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 779-786. For more on this topic, see Hanan Hammad's "Regulating Sexuality: The Colonial-National Struggle over Prostitution after the British Invasion of Egypt," in *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance*, ed. By Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 195-221.

[190] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 509-510; Also, in *Sulāfat al-Nadīm*, 2:66-67.

drinking and gambling become "neither Easterners nor Westerners" – [*lā sharqiyyin wa lā gharbiyyin*]; rather than being lifted from so-called Eastern savagery to Western refinement, they were reduced to pure animalism [*Ḥaywāniyyah maḥḍa*].[191] This paternalistic anxiety over the morality of society becomes more pronounced when it comes to the education and socialisation of young girls. If the reach of the "European disease" can be felt and observed in the public sphere, then the private sphere must be diligently protected and guarded from it. It was not just the blending of the sexes that alarmed the puritanical Al-Nadīm, but also and more importantly the blending of sexes from different nationalities. In this context, the correct religious schooling of young Egyptian girls is necessary because for Al-Nadīm religion is the only foundation of morality for women: "If a woman doesn't learn her religion she will not have a conscience and she will not have a mind to prevent her from bad things".[192]

Conclusion

In *Al-Tankīt wa Al-Tabkīt* and *al-ʾUstādh,* ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm depicts a West that presents a serious threat to the very essence of being Arabs, Muslims, and Egyptians. In his exposé of Eastern malaise, Al-Nadīm wanted to propel his readers to seriously contemplate their situation and take the West as a model in its unity, prosperity, industriousness, and serious nature. However, he also presented his readers with an exposé on the West and the negative aspects of European modernity. His critique of the West and Westernisation in Egypt highlighted the serious threat to local

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[191] Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum," 510; Also, in *Sulāfat al-Nadīm*, 66.

[192] Al-Nadīm, "Madrasat al-banāt," 249; translated in Herrera, "The Soul of a Nation,'15.

identity not in Egypt alone but in the whole East. Unlike Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Al-Nadīm was not an elitist in the least; neither his background nor his life experiences made it possible for him to distance himself from the Egyptian masses. Al-Nadīm knew no language other than Arabic which he mastered and used in affecting his readers and listeners. He had no direct experience of Europe. However, whatever he conceived of Europe and the European was related to his intimate knowledge of the experiences of the average Egyptians. He called his readers to reflect on the role of the West in their misery in Egypt while at the same time encouraging them to learn from the virtues of the West.

Conclusion

> To arrive at a tradition, you have to travel through modernity first, and when you do arrive, you discover that tradition has been modified forever by your journey; you discover that the self's tradition you are reviving is as much steeped in the other's modernity as it is in its own ancient roots.

> - Rasheed El-Enany[1]

This thesis looked at how three Egyptian intellectuals of the nineteenth century looked at the West, and how their representations contributed to their assessment of an Eastern decadence and their suggested solutions for it. Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm contributed to the evolution of a modern Egyptian identity centred on Easterness, Arabness, and Islam. Each author invoked the West in his assessment of Eastern stagnation; they admired many aspects of the West and saw in it a model for change, but at the same time they tried to maintain separation from the West. In this conclusion, I would like to return to my working definition of Occidentalism and reflect on how the writings and ideas examined in the last three chapters support that definition. I will also consider whether Occidentalism – as it appears in the writing of Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm – differ from Orientalism as it was examined by Edward Said; are these processes just inverse mirrors of each other? From there, I will discuss how the thesis can contribute to the way we understand the Nahḍa as more than Westernisation and reflect on the limitations of this study and future possibilities for further research.

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[1] Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounter in Arabic Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

As explored in chapter one of this thesis, the history of modern Arab representations of the West goes back to the French invasion of Egypt. When the French left Egypt, Muḥammad ʿAlī initiated a rapid process of Westernisation on a state level that slowed down in the middle of the century but accelerated under the rule of his grandson ʾIsmāʿīl. It was then that the West became a constant reference point in the continuous attempts to create a modern Arab identity. The French occupation forced the West upon the consciousness of Egyptians and the Arab world in general. Throughout the nineteenth century, the West was progressively playing a more active role in the political life of the region whether through subtle political intervention or outright military occupation. The century also coincided with the great cultural and social renaissance known as the Nahḍa.

The Nahḍa is usually characterised as a process of Westernisation or modernisation; moreover, these two processes are understood as one and the same in the sense that Modernity was understood as a mere rehashing of European modernity. Little attention is given to local expressions of modernity.[2] According to the accepted Eurocentric historiography of the Arab Middle East, modernity came to the region with the French occupation of Egypt in 1798. The arrival of Napoleon and his army allegedly ended an age of decadence – ʾaṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ – which refers to a long period of social, cultural, and political period of decline that lasted for five centuries between the mid 13th century to the early 19th century. This narrative of total degeneration that was reversed through the colonial encounter became the lens through which the

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[2] Abdulrazzak Patel, *The Arab Nahḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (2006), 19-20.

Orientalist paradigm looks at the cultural history of Egypt and the Arab Middle East in general. It is a problematic appraisal of the period that obscures the complexity of the Nahḍa, its authors, texts and thought.

Most studies on the modern Middle East proceed from this paradigm as the main narrative, and many Nahḍa studies focus extensively on themes such as nationalism, revolution, secularisation, and modernisation. However, the Nahḍa was a complex cultural movement that cannot be reduced to these themes. While the literature typically presents this cultural and social phenomenon as a Western product, a more accurate view of the Nahḍa is that it was "instigated internally, but later became a *reaction* to and [thus] a product of external influences".[3] The story of modernity in the Middle East and the Muslim World at large is still dominated by Modernisation Theory. There is an assumption that the trajectory of Middle Eastern history will end up similar to the West. Michiel Leezenberg noted that Modernisation Theory will approach the intellectual and cultural history of the region with a theoretical presupposition that the Nahḍa was a linear and progressive march towards a liberal and secular modernity identical to that of Europe. That is why most of the classical studies of the second half of the twentieth century are outdated today because "to some extent, all proceed from modernization-theoretical assumptions of a progressive and irreversible process of secularization towards a liberal modernity in both the political and the economic sense".[4] This approach is problematic for understanding the pre-modern origins of the Nahḍa, but it is even more problematic when looking at the

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[3] Patel, *Arab Nahḍah*, 16.

[4] Michiel Leezenberg, "Aprroching Modern Muslim Though." *ISIM Review* 17, no. 2 (2006): 20.

process of Westernisation because it fails to see the shadow component of Westernisation that is Occidentalism.

As mentioned in chapter two, the theme of Occidentalism has been explored in studies in different cultural contexts.[5] Occidentalism in the Arab world is receiving more attention lately, but the topic remains largely understudied.[6] In the Arab Middle East, the process of incorporating European knowledge and culture evolved throughout the 19th century. The initial phase started from 1800 with the French occupation of Egypt up to the 1870s. By that time, the process of Westernisation was led mainly by native traditional agents who encouraged their readers to learn from the West and emulate its success. There was of course external factors and agents, but the process was predominantly internally driven, and the image created of Europe was overall positive.[7]

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[5] In particular, Indian and Chinese expressions of Occidentalism appear to have received more attention than Arab Occidentalism. See for example, Umeeta Sadarangani, "Occidentalism: Indian writers construct the West" (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1998); Jonathan Spencer, "Occidentalism in the East: The uses of the West in the politics and anthropology of South Asia," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, ed. James Carrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 234-57; and Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[6] Some of this scholarship have been touched upon in chapter two of these thesis: Kamal Abdel-Malek and Mona El-Kahla, *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Alaa Bayoumi, "Occidentalism in late nineteenth century Egypt" (Master's thesis, Duquesne University, 2005); Lorenzo Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism: Europe and the Self in Present-day Arabic Narrative Discourse," *European University Institute's Working Papers: Mediterranean Programme Series* 1, no. 21 (2008); Robert Woltering, "Occidentalisms: Images of 'the West' in Egypt" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009); and Eid Mohamed, *Arab Occidentalism: Images of America in the Middle East* (London: I.B Tauris, 2015).

[7] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (London: Saqi Books, 2011), 160-161.

Dror Ze'evi notes that new approaches to the cultural history of the region rightly conceives of modernity as "a mental construct forged in tandem with colonialism rather than as a ready-made new culture brought from the West and implanted in the non-West".[8] That is to say, both Arabs and European were still formulating the very notion of being modern during the colonial encounter. One of the striking aspects of Al-Ṭahṭāwī's reflection on European culture and society is the lack of any visceral reactions that we find in Al-Nadīm's writings, for example. Likewise, the French savants of Napoleon believed that they would learn from the Egyptians as much as they could teach them; this sense of equality essentially came from "an absence of a sense of being 'modern' in both East and West".[9]

However, as we advance through the 19th century, European imperialism was becoming an open and problematic aspect of this much-admired European modernity. From the 1870s onward, the second phase of Westernisation witnessed a change of tone as "members of the Arab intelligentsia began to castigate the younger generation for their excessive 'westernisation'".[10] Arabs in this period started to revise their image of the West as Colonialism shattered the idealistic image of a democratic and socially just Europe. Previously, Europe offered the way out of medievalism and into modernity, but now Europe was "a power of oppression and exploitation, a hindrance

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[8] Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East." In the *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2004): 86.

[9] Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon?" 77.

[10] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, 160-161.

to freedom, [and] a cause for despair".[11] From there, the educated Arabs started to exhibit "a decidedly hostile reaction to Western phenomenon" which increased with the grown momentum of the process of westernisation as well as the growing involvement of European powers in the region.[12] The new antagonistic stance was the result of recognising that this process of assimilation of western culture was beginning to jeopardise a perceived Arab essence. This situation triggered a process of introspection and self-reflection on the situation of Arabs and Muslims in comparison with the material and cultural progress in the West. Naturally, the West was the model and example for the growing calls to reform.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I defined Occidentalism as a discourse that aimed to control rather than completely counter the rapid process of Westernisation under colonial rule. It was a strategic cultural tool to contain and regulate the speed and volume of Westernisation. In this context, Occidentalism allows cultures and societies to place protective boundaries while they negotiate their identity in relation to the cultural as well as material over-powering presence of the West. More importantly, I noted that Occidentalism is not synonymous with the anti-Westernism that Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit explored,[13] nor the blind pro-Westernism that

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[11] El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 34.

[12] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, 168.

[13] Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

proponents of Islamic Occidentalism feared.[14] Rather, it is the conscious deliberate interaction between anti-Westernism and pro-Westernism. Although the West is central to this Occidentalist discourse, it was merely a trope through which to negotiate the Self; it is this negotiation of the Self that is the primary focus, and not the actual West.

In the case of the Arab intellectuals, and in particular the reformers covered in this thesis, Occidentalism contributed to guarding an assumed Arab Muslim authenticity from being contaminated by the European modernity that they wanted to emulate. For Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm, the West was always part of the answer to healing the decadence of their society and culture. But they were also conscious that Egyptian identity was in danger of complete loss of Self. Sometimes what is achieved is an authentic representation of the West, but it can also be a distorted image; to quote Robert Woltering: "As is well known, images of the Other will always be connected to the image of one's Self. Although this means that the image is always a distortion from reality, … the image is never entirely detached from reality."[15] Regardless, the outcome of this image is not power over the European Other who is the subject of these images, but rather it is internal power within culture and society. In exploring the Chinese context, Xiaomei Chen noted how the East – China in her analysis – creates images of the West "not for the purpose of dominating the

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[14] Ḥasan Ḥanafī, *Muqaddiam fī ʿIlm Al-ʾIstighrāb* (Cairo: Al-Dār Al-Fanniyah, 1991); ʿAlī ʾIbrāhīm Al-Namla, *Al-ʾIstighrāb: Al-Manhaj Fī Fahminā li Al-Gharb* (Riyadh: Al-Majalla Al-ʿArabiyah, 2015); Muḥammad ʾIhāmī, *Naḥwa Taʾṣīl ʾIslāmī li ʿIlm Al-ʾIstighrāb* (Cairo: Dār Al-Taqwa, 2015).

[15] Robert Woltering, "Occidentalisms: Images of 'the West' in Egypt" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009), 24.

West, but in order to discipline, and ultimately to dominate, the Chinese self at home." [16] The West was an essential element in attempts of constructing the quintessential Egyptian, and this process will by necessity create Others inside Egypt. We find this clearly in the way the ʾAfandīyah singled out the peasants as the source of decadence.[17] This is not a random process, but rather it is deliberate as it will lead to the essential result of uniting society; this is the social unity that is the aim of any process of traditionalisation to use Abdallah Laroui's terminology.[18]

The interplay of pro-Westernism and anti-Westernism is observable in the writings of the three conservative authors and their attitude towards the West. Al-Ṭahṭāwī and ʿAbduh were graduates of Al-ʾAzhar – the bastion of traditional religious values and culture; they were established members of the ʿUlama' class trained in theology and literature. Even Al-Nadīm who abandoned his religious studies in pursuit of a literary journalist career received a rigorous religious training that manifested in his zealous nationalism even though he was not officially an ʿAlim. Their evaluations of the West were taken to heart by their readers particularly those who knew the West only through these textual constructions. There are three main attitudes that characterise the Occidentalism of the three authors: anxiety, ambivalence, and selectivity. When it comes to anxiety, we find a cluster of themes that triggered the

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[16] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

[17] Michael Ezekiel Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.

[18] Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*, trans. Diarmid Cammell (Paris: Maspero, 1974; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 33-43.

most anxiety over the survival of the Self precisely because they undermined the unity of society; these included: religion, language, morality, and education or foreign education more specifically. The circumstances of each author and his position played a huge role in how he conceived of the West and how Arabs and Muslims should relate to it. Al-Ṭahṭāwī created a significantly positive image of Europe as an enlightened society and culture worthy of modelling, but in ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm, we find a more anxious attitude towards Westernisation.

The anxiety over the religious fidelity to Islam was intense in the writings of all three authors who happen to be traditionally conservative. Al-Ṭahṭāwī portrayed Europe – and France, in particular – as a land rich with knowledge and practical wisdom, and he embraced the culture of France except for the religious and social aspects that alarmed his sensibilities as a traditional and deeply religious scholar. In *Takhlīṣ*, Al-Ṭahṭāwī criticised the French for their excessive reliance on rationality and logic and the challenge this posed to divine sources of knowledge; he was particularly unnerved by the loss of religious and cultural identity in the Eastern communities he encountered while in France. However, Al-Ṭahṭāwī was inspired and comforted by another group he encountered while in France: Silvestre de Sacy and Joseph-Elie Agoub as well as the nameless "old woman who had remained with her religion,"[19] and Muhammad "the man who also dressed like the Franks."[20] This group

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[19] Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris: account of a stay in France by an Egyptian cleric (1826-1831)*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 158; Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz aw al-dīwān al-nafīs bi ʾīwān bārīs" in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah li Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārā (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 2010), 2:69.

[20] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 161; Al-Ṭahṭāwī, "Kitāb Takhlīṣ al-ʾIbrīz," 70-71.

achieved a desirable linguistic and cultural Westernization, but they did not transgress the religious or spiritual divide. The solution for Al-Ṭahṭāwī was in a robust education that equipped the Egyptian students with the necessary knowledge about their religion and culture before they were exposed to the knowledge adopted from the West.[21] This religious anxiety will reach a new level in the late 19th century, and this is reflected clearly in the writings of ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm.

If Al-Ṭahṭāwī was vaguely aware that further cross-cultural contact with Europe can be a double-edged sword, ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm saw this as a reality. Religion and Islam was the only effective ideological tool of reform. ʿAbduh believed that religious reform and religious education was the best and possibly only way to reform Egyptians socially and morally.[22] ʿAbduh did not completely embrace western civilisation nor completely reject it; rather, he used Islam as a logic of filtering what is worth imitating and leaving out what was inappropriate. However, the educational missions, prevalence of foreign languages, and foreign education created a new generation of Egyptians that were neither Easterners nor Westerners as Al-Nadīm describes them.[23] As Laroui notes, "Westernization indeed signifies an alienation, a way of becoming other, an avenue to self-division."[24] This generation of Arab and

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[21] J. Heyworth-Dunne, "Rifāʿah Badawī Rāfiʿ aṭ-Tahṭāwī: The Egyptian Revivalist," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 9, no. 4 (1939): 966.

[22] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-tarbiyah fī al-madāris wa al-makātib al-ʾamīrīyah," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:29-32.

[23] ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadīm, "Law kuntum mithlanā la faʿaltum fiʿlanā," *Al-ʾUstādh*, 17 January 1893; in *Al-ʾAʿdād Al-Kāmila li Majalat Al-ʾUstādh* (Cairo: Dār Kutubkhana, 1985), 510.

[24] Laroui, *Crisis*, 156.

Muslim youth were as serious a threat to their culture as the West. They were starting to completely abandon their native culture and religion in preference of the superior European culture, but they were satisfied with imitating the shallow exterior of European civilisation without comprehending its deeper essence. [25] Unlike Al-Nadīm who severely chastised Westernised Egyptians, ʿAbduh wanted to win this new generation back because he firmly believed that the next effective leaders of the ʾummah will emerge from this group of young men who internalised European knowledge and all but severed their ties with tradition.

The result of this anxiety over the survival of the Muslim selfhood was that ambivalence became the main response to European modernity and civilisation: it was both the model for the reform they wanted as well as the obstacle towards it. Despite their admiration for the achievement of Europe, Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh and Al-Nadīm were aware that this modern commendable West was nonetheless a serious threat to the social and cultural authenticity of their identity. This ambivalence meant that rather than outright anti-Westernism, we find a selective rejection of Western culture; there were elements and attitudes within European modernity that must not be adopted lest they undermine the spirit of Islam. This created the spirit-matter opposition that juxtaposed a spiritual East with a materialist West to rationalise the superiority of the West.[26] In addition to the East/West divide, the West itself was divided into elements that should be emulated, and other elements that must be shunned and rejected; the

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[25] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-ḥaq al-murr," in *Al-ʾAʿmāl Al-kāmilah lil-ʾImām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImārah (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1993), 1:776.

[26] Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 164.

aim was of course to avoid corrupting the spirituality and morality of the East that the West lacked. Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm acted as self-appointed guards of Arab and Muslim culture because they were prominent figures in their society. They enjoyed great respect and admiration from their readers not only for their writings but also for their activities that aimed to help their community.

Within this Occidentalism discourse, pro-westernism manifests in the acceptance of European civilisation and the open praise of European virtues that contributed to their superiority. This superiority, they argued, was not inherent or exclusive to Europeans; rather, it was the natural outcome of their merit. They also conceded accepted the diagnosis of an Eastern decadence, but they attributed this decadence to temporal social, cultural, and political ills as opposed to an inherent Oriental inferiority. Whereas figures like Cromer or Hanotaux located this inferiority in Islam or Semitism, the three authors linked it to the prevalence of tyranny, blind *taqlīd*, or deficient education. Acquiring the technology and knowledge of Europe while building on the classical heritage is how the modern Arab Muslim can have faith again in his ability to rise above the decadence. In a defensive stance, they took consolation in the lost glory of the classical past and reminded their readers that there was a time when Arabs and Muslims were the mentors of Europe. Now it was time for the East to learn from the West, and readers were encouraged to emulate the European Other in their 'virtues' but warned against uncritically adopting their 'vices.'

The Europeans were particularly praised for excellence in education, social unity, political organisation, industrial achievement, and freedom from the shackles of tradition or *taqlīd*. Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm wanted their readers to imitate

European in their openness to learning from different cultures even those who differed from them in faith, and in their vigorous spirit of enterprise. They wanted to take from the West only the scientific, technological, industrial, and material aspect of Western modernity only on the condition that this adoption will not corrupt what they saw as the superior morality and spirituality of their culture and society. This selectivity and desire to contain the adoption of European modernity is usually portrayed negatively as a reactionary cultural defensiveness. This represented a "schizophrenic attitude" towards the West "which divided it falsely into a set of practical values which were permissible and another of intellectual ones which were not. Thus it was fine to take from the West science, technology, industry and material comforts but not the thought systems, not the value systems, not the political and social structures that lay behind them."[27] However, the schizophrenic nature of Arab Muslim relating to Europe was an attempt to challenge the universality of European modernity. What they wanted to emphasise was that modernity must be negotiated locally in accordance with their social and cultural reality.

The representations of the West in the writings of the three authors show how the West was an essential element of these local negotiations of Arab modernity. Their representations of the West were not always impartial or neutral because they mostly served their own self-representations. They wanted to effect a change in the awareness of their readers and create a modern Arab identity. Representations of Europe and European modernity were central to their negotiations of possible solutions for

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[27] El-Enany, *Arab Representations*, 8.

decadence, and ultimately for their construction of a modern Arab Muslim Eastern

identity. To quote Patel:

> By assimilating Western achievements, while making their compatriots
> aware of their own language, culture and accomplishments such a formula
> allowed them, in their own terms, to borrow what was useful from the
> West in order to improve their situation and maintain stability, identity
> and success of their communities. According to this view, if Arabs
> borrowed what was useful from the West and appreciated the merits of
> their own language and cultural history, they would rediscover their own
> worth. This would be the means by which Arabs could ascend to a better
> position in the world. *Nahḍah* intellectuals thus drew on their own
> classical heritage, European sources, and contemporary discourses and
> ideas. Their movements was back in the distant past; towards the West, as
> well as inward towards ideas formulated during the *Nahḍah*. In so doing,
> they sought to achieve reform and progress while preserving cultural
> identity and authenticity in a world destined for radical change.[28]

The reform that Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm sought was not an exact

reproduction of European modernity; therefore, they were simultaneously

encouraging their readers to learn from the West and at the same time to resist

Westernisation and hold on to their authenticity as Arabs and Muslims of the East.

The way each author conceived of this reform influenced how the West was

depicted: "intellectuals who saw reform as a gradual and educational process held

more pro-Western views than those who saw reform as a political and radical

process".[29] This observation is reflected in the difference between Al-Ṭahṭāwī and

ʿAbduh on the one hand, and Al-Nadīm on the other. Although all three authors

reflected on the negative traits of Europe and its civilisation, Al-Nadīm represents the

most vociferous rejection of Westernisation as a cure for decadence. The West for Al-

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[28] Patel, *Arab Nahḍah*, 230.

[29] Alaa Bayoumi, "Occidentalism in late nineteenth century Egypt" (Master's
thesis, Duquesne University, 2005), 13.

Nadīm was an aggressive force of exploitation: mechanical, inhumane, materialistic, and soulless; this was contrasted with the East, which was spiritual, organic, compassionate, and harmonious. Nevertheless, even in Al-Nadīm, this explicit anti-Westernism was counterbalanced by his enthusiastic approval of Europe's unity in language, religion, and politics.

In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, Edward Said argued that the 'Orient' existed only as a construction of images created by the dominant 'Occident' and therefore it was not allowed to represent itself. However, as the writings examined in this thesis show, this silenced 'Orient' can represent itself as well as the 'Occident.' Said concluded his book with the warning that "the answer to Orientalism is not Occidentalism."[30] But, the work of James Carrier, Couze Venn, and Fernando Coronil demonstrated how Occidentalism – understood as the way the West represents itself – is intimately linked to Orientalism.[31] Earlier in this thesis, I argued that Orientalism and Occidentalism are two sides of the same coin, or inverse mirrors of each other; one cannot take place without the other. The link between them is not oppositional, but rather complementary. In fact, it is possible to argue that they are the one and the same process – a functional process of Othering related to constructions of the Self. Calling this process Orientalism, Occidentalism, Orientalism-in-reverse, self-Orientalisation, auto-Occidentalism, Western-Occidentalism or ethnic-Occidentalism is simply an

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[30] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; London: Penguin Books, 2003), 328.

[31] James G. Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (February 1996): 51-87; Couze Venn, *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* (London: Sage Publication, 2000), 19.
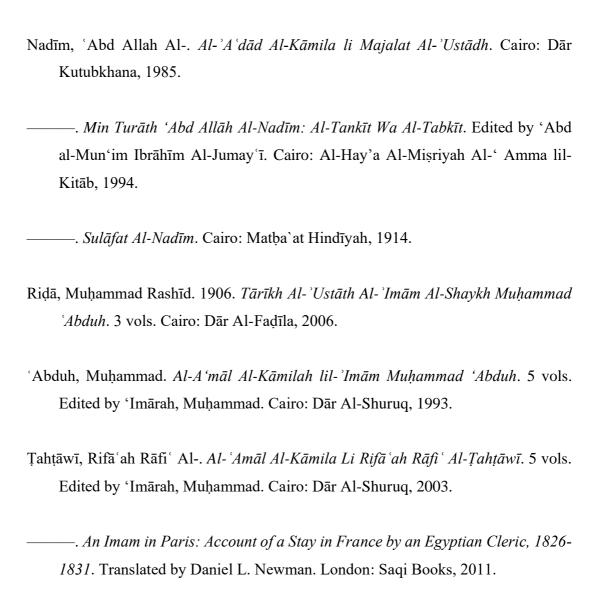
indication of which elements of the East/West is designated as Self and which is Other in these analyses. In this thesis, I defined Occidentalism as the interplay between pro-westernism and anti-Westernism that the authors engaged in to control the rapid Westernisation of their culture and society. And I concluded that the image created of the West had more to do with internal discourses of reform and decline than with any Western reality.

The boundaries of this research project have been explored in the introduction, but it is necessary at this point to discuss the limitations of the current study. Perhaps the clearest limitation is that of the sample. A thorough exploration of Arab Occidentalism in the modern era would start from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt to the 20th century covering the various locations of European-Arab encounter whether colonial or simply cultural like for example through the Christian missionaries in Egypt and the Levant or Arab educational missions to Europe. I originally conceived of this study as a journey from the early statements of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, Niqulā al-Turk, and Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī to the complex responses to the West by figures like ʿAbbās Maḥmūd Al-ʿAqqād and Ṭaha Hussayn in early to mid-twentieth century. However, due to shortage of time and difficulty in travelling to consult archives, this study lacks this expansive scope. Therefore, this thesis presents what can be seen as three micro snapshots of Arab representations of the West within a discourse of decadence and reform in the nineteenth century. Moreover, Al-Ṭahṭāwī, ʿAbduh, and Al-Nadīm are all Muslim Arab Egyptians that are affiliated with a traditionalist religious inclination; their representations of the West definitely do not reflect the same view of other Egyptians much less the way the whole Arab speaking world represented the West.

337

Instead of a comprehensive exploration of Arab Occidentalism through space and time, I see my thesis as a starting point. The value of this research lies in that it suggests new possibilities for understanding the role of representations of the West in internal Arab discourses. Further research can complement this thesis. It is possible to focus on representations of the West in different communities within the Arab speaking Middle East. Another possibility is to look at how ideology affected the way different Arab authors represented the West, and how these representations evolved alongside political circumstances and generational shifts.

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