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Social and economic change  
in the "long nineteenth century"\*

EHUD R. TOLEDANO



*Introduction*

Unlike political events, social and economic processes are not amenable to periodization according to precise starting and ending-points. By their very nature, such processes do not begin at a certain moment in history, but rather mature over time; nor do they end abruptly, but rather tend to peter out gradually. Since the purpose of this chapter is to chart the main processes that took place in Egyptian society, we shall try to define a time frame that can accommodate within its loose boundaries the main social and economic developments. "The long nineteenth century" as conceived here spills over in both directions – it begins with the third quarter of the eighteenth century and ends in the first quarter of the twentieth: "just as the coming of the French in 1798 should not be thought of as a beginning, so the coming of the English in 1882 should not be thought of as an end."<sup>1</sup>

It has been argued that if we focus on both "continuity and rupture" it is quite obvious that the period of Muhammad 'Ali should be discussed in conjunction with the second half of the eighteenth century. But at the same time, the 1860s and 1870s were a period of intense change, which mark a rupture with the past:

The expansion of European commerce, leading to the inflow of European capital, the great changes in communications with the coming of the telegraph in the 1870s, the opening of new schools, the beginning of newspapers and periodicals in the 1870s, and behind them all the demographic changes ... all these are very important, and in some ways they can be regarded as opening a new period, and one that continues far beyond 1882.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we shall look at a number of social and economic processes as they

\* Regarding transliteration of Turkish names, see Note on transliteration, p. xiii.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Hourani, "Conclusions," *Groupe de recherches et d'études sur le Proche-Orient, L'Égypte au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris, 1982), 333.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

developed during the "long nineteenth century" with special attention to the three decades from the 1850s to the 1880s as a period of meaningful and long-range changes. However, this continuity is not regarded as a static situation, but rather as a dynamic force and a major axis of human – here Egyptian – history. The reproduction of even the same social formations is, by itself, a process requiring a great deal of human and social energy, often incorporating relatively small and routinized change, which is distinguishable from Hourani's "ruptures." Recruitment and socialization, for example, may play an important role in reproducing a certain institution, such as the Ottoman–Egyptian elite household, but they are also the very practices through which changes were introduced into the household, that cumulatively transformed it over the century.

This chapter's approach in studying processes specifically does not trace "beginnings" nor seek "early signs" of things to come. Historical phenomena are best understood and most fruitfully investigated when they have attained a "critical mass," that is when they are clearly what they are. Therefore, we will not explore the origins of private land ownership in Egypt, for example, but look at what constituted private ownership in land at various points during the period under consideration and evaluate the significance of different stages in the development of private landholding. Similarly, we shall try to understand what the state meant and did within Egyptian society, not when aspects of the state began to emerge in Egypt.

The importance of the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 is therefore considerably reduced in this analysis. The brief and intriguing rule of the French in Egypt cannot be seen as having inaugurated the modern era in Egyptian history, because it triggered political, economic, and intellectual processes, under the impact of Europe, that had transformed the country. On the contrary, such a view belittles both the fact that Egypt continued to form part of the Ottoman empire, and the role of local traditions regarding religion, thought, culture, economics, and human relations.<sup>3</sup>

*Demographic and social trends*

We may begin by looking at some figures that stand out when we compare the early to the later parts of the period. Since there is no reliable information for the late eighteenth century, scholars have usually begun their work from the data provided by the French scientific delegation that came to Egypt with Napoleon's forces. The population of Egypt in 1800, according to Panzac, was 4.5 million, while at the end of the nineteenth century it stood at close to 10 million.<sup>4</sup> But the population growth rate was not the

<sup>3</sup> Robert Mantran, "Avant-propos," *L'Égypte au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris, 1982), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Figures and analysis in this section are based on Daniel Panzac, "The Population of

same throughout the period, reflecting the impact of other socio-economic processes and the general state of the country. A low rate was detected in the first four decades of the century, with an increase of only 0.3–0.4 percent per annum between 1800 and 1830, and no growth at all between 1830 and 1840.

With the end of Muhammad 'Ali's years of war and aggressive reforms, a return to calm in the 1840s and the success of counter-epidemic measures produced a 1 percent annual growth rate between 1840 and 1848. By the end of his reign, plague and smallpox had almost disappeared due to quarantine measures and mass vaccination. However, cholera and other diseases (such as bilharzia) surfaced and caused great loss of life and debilitation. The middle decades (1840–60) witnessed a significant rise to a sustained annual growth rate of about 1.2–1.3 percent for the remainder of the nineteenth century, reflecting profound change in living conditions. In the final analysis, despite impressive successes in fighting smallpox and the plague, the demographic structures of the Egyptian population remained virtually unchanged: high levels of birth and mortality rates (especially infant mortality), and the same rate and age of marriage.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the population continued to be rural, eking a living out of the land. Urbanization, in general, did not become a major feature of nineteenth-century Egypt, and the size of the urban population rose only from 8 percent in 1820 to less than 10 percent at the end of the century. However, that population was by then concentrated in two very large cities (Cairo with 570,000 and Alexandria with some 320,000, representing a 40 percent increase from 1850 to 1880), and some middle-size ones, as compared to the beginning of the century, when Cairo (with 260,000 inhabitants) was the only large city, while some 140,000 persons lived in small towns ranging from 6,000 to 20,000.<sup>6</sup>

There were relatively few foreign residents in Egypt at the beginning of our period, but by 1907 their number had dramatically surged to about 140,000. They flocked to the country from Europe and America in the wake of the cotton boom of the 1860s, further encouraged by the British occupation of 1882. They owned about 15 percent of the land and most of the trading and manufacturing companies.<sup>7</sup> The presence of such a large

Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," *Asian and African Studies*, 21/1 (March 1987), 11–32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16, 19–20, 31–32. On public health and the fight against epidemics, see also LaVerne Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Panzac, "Population of Egypt," 28–31.

<sup>7</sup> E. R. J. Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820–1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford, 1969), 320–21.

foreign community and its important role in the socio-economic processes that impacted on Egypt will be discussed later.

What, then, were these processes? Although there are and have been disagreements among scholars with regard to the nature of the main social, political, and economic processes, these have tended to center around the question of hierarchy more than substance. Thus, for example, some historians have privileged economic processes over others, attributing to them greater importance than to, say, socio-cultural or "merely" political ones. It is not our purpose here to rank the various types of "continuities and ruptures" that characterize Egypt's history in the "long nineteenth century," but rather to mention and describe those major processes over which there is broad agreement in the literature.

There is hardly any doubt that such an analysis must include all of the following: the emergence of a strong and centralized state; the rise and transformation of various elites; Egypt's incorporation in the world economy and concomitant European penetration into the country; and changes in the relations between individual and society. These processes were closely interrelated, and we treat them separately only for analytic purposes; it is impossible fully to understand these phenomena without realizing that they evolved in a kind of "symbiotic relationship" to each other.

A similar approach has recently been expressed in describing the processes of transformation in the non-European world as

a type of capitalist development in which, in very general terms, expanding international trade, increasing agricultural specialization, and the beginning of modern industry act to dissolve the old solidarities and to replace them with others based on the emergence of the individual citizen as peasant, or farmer or worker, and so to the possibility of the formation of new forms of association based on class.

It was in these circumstances that the modern Middle Eastern state was created, and this calls for examination of the relations of state, nation, and religious community in terms of particular types of political and administrative forms.<sup>8</sup>

In adopting the approach to the history of Egypt in the nineteenth century suggested in this chapter, we avoid such metaphors and concepts as "the impact of the west" and "the European challenge and the Egyptian response." These are too one-directional and one-dimensional; we are dealing here with an *interactive* reality rather than a *reactive* one.

<sup>8</sup> E. R. J. Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (London and New York, 1992), 5.

*Hegemonic rule, dynastic order, and the emergence of a centralized state*

A strong, centralized state in Egypt during most of the period discussed in this chapter is a very noticeable phenomenon, yet one that is not easily defined. It is difficult to conceptualize the state and its relation to society, as political theorists have pointed out. One scholar rightly contends that states are not single things, but rather “a bundle of structures, institutions, arenas, practices and claims,” adding that these bundles should be examined in concrete historical situations. This he posits in opposition to the view of the state “as autonomous, that is, as something that simply acts upon society from a position quite outside it.”<sup>9</sup>

The formalistic view that pits the state versus society, or civil society, as the case may be, is increasingly thought to misrepresent the actual relationship between the state and various groups – both powerful and powerless – in society. The main objection is to common formulations that describe the changes that occurred in nineteenth-century Egypt, for example, as “an ever greater centralization of power and government control *over* society,” with the state assuming more and more functions so that “social groups became *subordinated* to the demands of the state”; the bureaucratic elite is then seen as “a bridge between government *and* society.”<sup>10</sup> The distinction between “public” (state) and “private” (society) spheres is also criticized as artificial and resulting from the state’s power to define and restrict, by coercion, “concepts of the person, the body, the family, gender,” and to consign “all these to a voluntaristically-conceived sphere of the private.”<sup>11</sup>

Rather than delve any further into this theoretical discussion, we shall simply look at the main manifestations of state power within society, emphasizing that they are not separate, autonomous entities, but rather symbolically existing ones, with boundaries that are hard to define and constantly shifting, being negotiated and redrawn. At the center of the state stood the house of Muhammad ‘Ali, the source of its power and legitimacy. Beginning with the governor-general himself, hereditary rule in the Ottoman province of Egypt was extricated from the sultan and enshrined in a decree issued in 1841, as part of the settlement that ended a decade of bitter conflict between the governor and his sovereign. Muhammad ‘Ali’s heirs – ‘Abbas, Sa‘id, and Isma‘il – continued to resist the Ottomans’ attempt to annul the decree of hereditary rule, and their efforts resulted in increased

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805–1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy* (Pittsburgh, 1984), 230 (the italics are mine).

<sup>11</sup> Bernard S. Cohn and Nicholas B. Dirks, “Beyond the Fringe: The Nation State, Colonialism, and the Technologies of Power,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1/2 (June 1988), 227, quoting O’Hanlon, p.c.

autonomy.<sup>12</sup> Finally, after the demise of the Ottoman empire and under British domination, the khedivate – after a brief sultanate – became a monarchy, which lasted until 1952.

The broader context of these developments takes us back to the eighteenth century and the recent scholarly debate about the nature of the socio-political order in Egypt during the second phase of Ottoman rule. It has been common in the literature to present Egyptian society in the eighteenth century as made up of Mamluk beys, Ottoman *ojaq* (Turkish *ocak*) officers, merchants, ‘ulama’, artisans organized in guilds, and peasants. In the nineteenth century, the first two groups are supposed to have been replaced by an Ottoman–Egyptian dynasty and elite, and European resident communities; the other groups remain the same, with the changes at the top having had seemingly little impact upon them. Following recent developments in the study of Egyptian elites in both centuries, an alternative model has been suggested, which we shall adopt and explicate in the following pages.

The main processes that took place in Egypt from the seventeenth century onward were similar to those that occurred in the other Ottoman provinces of the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>13</sup> Rather briefly, these consisted in a dual adjustment process that emanated from the empire’s need to cope with the changing world around it and adopt a policy of decentralization. The Ottoman military–administrative elites became localized, while the local elites gradually became ottomanized. These processes were both socio-political and socio-cultural. As a result, Ottoman-local elites emerged in this vast region, which were Ottoman in outlook and orientation, but very much embedded in the provincial setting and social networks. The process as a whole was inclusivist in nature, and it enabled longstanding local notable families to bond themselves to the empire and develop both a sense of belonging and loyalty to the house of Osman.

The central government in Istanbul allowed those Ottoman-local elites a large measure of autonomy in exchange for revenue and acceptance of Ottoman sovereign privileges, which meant, *inter alia*, that Ottoman administrative structure and traditions were to be preserved, and that appointments had to be confirmed by Istanbul. The latter ensured that the central government could meddle in local affairs and protect its vital strategic interest, as defined at any given moment. With the symbols of Ottoman sovereignty intact, the sultan’s legitimizing power remained uncontested

<sup>12</sup> For the rise of dynastic order in Egypt, see Ehud R. Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1990), 50–67.

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller argument, see Ehud R. Toledano, “The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700–1900): A Framework for Research,” in Ilan Pappé and Moshe Ma’oz (eds.), *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas, A History from Within* (London and New York, 1997), 145–62.

virtually until the demise of the empire; it was one of the most tangible assets the Ottomans held in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Ottoman government in Egypt was made up, as elsewhere, of a central administration located in the capital, Cairo, and a rural subprovincial structure (the beylicate), which appropriated the agricultural surplus and maintained law and order in the countryside. The localized garrison regiments came to be regarded as "Ottoman," while the beylicate was seen as "mamluk." In fact, both were part of the Ottoman administrative structure in Egypt, and both recruited and employed *mamluks* as well as men recruited in other ways. Mamluks and non-Mamluks crossed over from one branch to the other, established households (*kapi* in Turkish, *bayt* in Arabic), and kept varying numbers of retainers to protect and promote their interests. In other words, after the demise of the Mamluk sultanate in 1517, the *mamluk* track became just one of the methods of recruitment and socialization into the Ottoman-Egyptian elite. Thus, what is celebrated as a "Mamluk household" was actually an Ottoman provincial household, though it quite naturally possessed local characteristics (some even borrowed from Mamluk sultanate traditions), which made it an Ottoman-Egyptian household, rather than any other Ottoman household.<sup>14</sup>

The single most important factor in the process that altered the composition of the Ottoman-Egyptian elite in the first half of the nineteenth century, and significantly changed its nature, was the hegemonic standing that the household of Muhammad 'Ali achieved within the Ottoman-Egyptian elite by the year 1811. The concomitant elimination of other households as potentially destabilizing power bases also reduced the recruitment of retainers via the *mamluk* track, restricting it to the leading households of the ruler and his immediate family. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman-Egyptian elite households did not recruit *mamluks*, who became an exclusive symbol of rule. The rest of the century saw the process of elite formation develop under stable dynastic rule toward yet another "rupture" point, the opening up of the socio-political arena in the 1860s and 1870s, to be discussed further below.

The interpretation suggested here places the history of social forces and elite formation on one continuum from the Ottoman occupation in the sixteenth century to the rise of the Egyptian nation state in the twentieth century. Accordingly, the seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of an Ottoman-Egyptian elite that was gradually organizing itself around the grandee household, but it still lacked a coherent power center and no single household or faction managed to achieve hegemony. This initial period –

<sup>14</sup> This passage represents a new interpretation of the traditional view of the beylicate as a "neo-Mamluk" phenomenon; it draws on insights provided by Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge, 1997), and on my own research.

we might wish to name it the first Ottoman period – ends with the rise of the Qazdagli household to a dominant position in the first part of the eighteenth century.

The second Ottoman period in Egyptian history is marked by the consolidation of central authority, which later is only temporarily interrupted: Qazdagli hegemony peaks under 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and Muhammad Abu al-Dhahab (1760–75); comes under domestic Ottoman (1785) and then French (1789) challenges, but manages to survive under the duumvirate of Murad and Ibrahim (1779–98); it is finally broken and replaced by the hegemony of the household of Muhammad 'Ali (from 1811 on), which becomes a dynamic rule; it is then challenged by the Ottomans and the French under Abbas (until 1852), then internally by the 'Urabists (1880–82), and externally by the British (1882), but manages to survive into the present century under British rule.

During the first six years of his rule (1805–11), Muhammad 'Ali devoted a great deal of energy to the eradication of the various militias that still controlled pockets of resistance in the countryside. Once this was accomplished with much bloodshed, no armed force other than the province's army and police would operate in the province of Egypt for the entire period under discussion. Muhammad 'Ali suppressed any attempt by rural leaders and peasants to revolt, and a strict policy of law and order, especially along sensitive trade routes, was maintained by all the viceroys. When extra-legal forces tried to engage in subversive action, as when Sait plotted against 'Abbas, the matter was treated very seriously and crushed right away. Irregular forces, mostly those under Bedouin shaykhs, were either incorporated into the army as whole units or used by the government for preventing lawlessness on the margins of the towns. A "gun-control" policy was introduced during the reign of 'Abbas, but it was never fully successful.<sup>15</sup>

The mainstay of Egypt's dynastic order was a dependent and loyal ruling elite, made up of the senior office-holders in the province. Since we shall deal with this elite as a social force in the next section, let us stress here that what is often conceived as "the state" essentially consisted of the power that emanated from and was represented by the governor-general's household government. The state was practically embodied in the dynasty and the Ottoman-Egyptian elite.<sup>16</sup> To all other parts of Egyptian society, the state was what these people did and said, and it was symbolized by how they dressed, the language they spoke (Ottoman Turkish), the carriages in which they rode, and the rest of the paraphernalia associated with their authority.

This nucleus of state apparatus gradually became what we can call a full-

<sup>15</sup> For the Sait-'Abbas affair and the gun-control policy, see Toledano, *State and Society*, 45–46, 164–66.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 77–83.

fledged state bureaucracy. During the nineteenth century, the government increasingly assumed new roles and functions in promoting economic and social development. A hierarchical structure influenced by both western and Ottoman models evolved, so that by the 1870s the "old concessionary system, in which administration was carried out by autonomous social groups," was replaced by a "centralized bureaucracy." The new administrative elite consisted of technocrats with European training and an Ottoman–Egyptian outlook, but it still offered opportunities only to elite members and those on the relatively narrow mobility-affording social boundaries, while keeping out and down the rest of society.<sup>17</sup>

One of the main factors that bonded the ruler and his dependent elite – hence also one of the foundations of state power – stemmed from agricultural land, the main resource of Ottoman Egypt. From the late 1820s, land grants to members of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite became one of the main devices in binding that group to the house of Muhammad ‘Ali. Concomitantly, land ownership became a major source of elite power, especially from the third quarter of the nineteenth century onward. Since we shall discuss further below the controversy over private land ownership and elite formation, it is only necessary here to note that land ownership played an important role in the emergence of state power, in the rise of the rural notability as a propertied class, and ultimately in the rise of Egyptian nationalism. This process is often described in the nationalist narrative as emanating from the dynastic rule of the house of Muhammad ‘Ali, whose rulers gradually extended property rights in land.<sup>18</sup>

The issue of the emergence of a strong state is inevitably linked to control. However, in order again to avoid presenting the state as standing outside society and somehow imposing upon it "its" will, we use the notion of actual control together with that of the invisible, implicit permeation of patterns of state authority. Generally speaking, the dynastic rule of the house of Muhammad ‘Ali is associated with a marked increase in central authority, which manifested itself in the two categories of control. This came at the expense of alternative foci of power, mostly on the local level, in both the urban and the rural settings. Thus, for example, Muhammad ‘Ali's "unprecedented degree of control" in the countryside is seen to have reduced "traditional village autonomy," as state officials joined village shaykhs in wielding authority, especially with regard to land redistribution.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, neighborhood, guild, and Sufi-order shaykhs – not to mention the ‘ulama’ of

<sup>17</sup> Some of the views in this paragraph are drawn from Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 230.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth M. Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants: Land, Society, and Economy in Lower Egypt, 1740–1858* (Cambridge, 1992), 206.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

al-Azhar – were subjected to increasing supervision and inspection by state officials.

The emergence of a strong, centralized state in nineteenth-century Egypt was greatly facilitated by the availability of European technologies and models of authority. Western transport and communication technologies were introduced into Egypt earlier, faster, and on a larger scale than in most non-European countries. The first railway line, between Alexandria and Cairo, was constructed under ‘Abbas Pasha in 1852–54, while Isma‘il Pasha expanded the network from 500 to 1,100 miles. By 1914, there were over 1,700 miles of railway in Egypt, and the Egyptian State Railways was the largest single employer in the country, with 12,000 workers. Roads were paved by European methods, linking the provinces to the capital and to the coastal and Suez Canal ports. Boat transportation was dramatically expanded with the enlargement of the irrigation system, and in Isma‘il's time alone 112 canals, totaling 8,400 miles, were dug.<sup>20</sup>

With 5,000 miles of telegraph lines and a cross-country postal service, Egypt had evolved into a fairly unified territory toward the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This served to promote the expansion of the state within Egyptian society, enhancing actual, explicit control. The other side of the coin was, however, that within that dynamic and expanding network of communication, political ideas could now move with much greater ease. The expansion of literacy – from about 1 percent at the beginning of our "long nineteenth century" to about 3 percent in the middle of the period, and to about 4–5 percent in the 1880s – and the proliferation of printing and the press, served as the main vehicles for the transmission of ideas.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the expansion of the state contained within itself the seeds of resistance and opposition to its growing power.

Another manifestation of the state's "explicit control" was its extensive project of registration and documentation, which was inextricably intertwined with a vast legislative program.<sup>22</sup> The power of the state in nineteenth-century Egypt was embedded in legal projects that made it necessary to use documents to authenticate transactions, establish qualifications, and facilitate the working of the economy. Thus, for example, the land laws that were introduced from mid-century onward required documentation for transactions in land, deployed the tools with which private land ownership would later be created, and further privileged the wealthier and stronger

<sup>20</sup> Data in this paragraph is drawn from Toledano, *State and Society*, 6–15; Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's ‘Urabi Movement* (Princeton, 1993), 110–12; and Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954* (Princeton, 1987), 72.

<sup>21</sup> Cole, *Colonialism*, 111–18; Toledano, *State and Society*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> For a theoretical view on this, see Cohn and Dirks, "Beyond the Fringe," 227.

segments in the population (rural notables, merchants, and Europeans). It protected ownership from claims by contestants but not from the ruler.<sup>23</sup>

Using the enormous facilities and effective tools that the state had acquired during the period under consideration, government officials tried to maximize income by harnessing the peasantry and the urban workers to its growing and oppressive appropriation machinery. The result was a rural and urban squeeze.<sup>24</sup> That squeeze was manifested in coercive conscription to the army for long years of service and wars, mainly during the reign of Muhammad 'Ali, the forced appropriation of peasant labor under the *corvée* for public works, such as irrigation and construction projects, an increased tax burden, and exploitation of urban laborers by the government through low pay and poor working conditions.

The overwhelming power of the state made resistance to abuse and exploitation quite difficult. One of the main features of the "long nineteenth century" is a marked decline in rural and urban revolts.<sup>25</sup> Many of the peasant revolts in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century occurred in Upper Egypt against excessive taxation, conscription, and the *corvée*. They were fought by masses of armed fallahin, not by guerrilla tactics, and were almost immediately crushed by the government. Only two such revolts, in 1880 and 1882 in Lower Egypt, achieved their goal, owing mainly to the extreme weakness of the government at the time of the 'Urabi crisis.<sup>26</sup>

But not all resistance was organized and collective. Not infrequently, individuals resorted to evasion, flight, and sabotage at the workplace. Others yet wrote individual or group petitions, and entered into negotiations with their employers.<sup>27</sup> As we shall see, during the last decade of the nineteenth century, trade union activity began to be felt in the Egyptian labor market, mainly among transportation and textile workers. Another subversive form of resistance was the gradual penetration of the bureaucracy by groups alienated from the main processes of elite formation and the rise of the state, such as the 'ulama', who had been deprived of their teaching and judicial positions as a result of legal, educational, and administrative reforms.<sup>28</sup>

Only in recent years, scholars have become sensitized to the working of the other form of control, the one defined above as "invisible." Here we refer mainly to the crucial power of the state to define and categorize, mainly through the imposition of legal categories, and the deployment of a

<sup>23</sup> Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 203-04.

<sup>24</sup> See in detail, Toledano, *State and Society*, 181-220.

<sup>25</sup> See Gabriel Baer, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History* (London, 1982), 223-323.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 308-11.

<sup>27</sup> Toledano, *State and Society*, 181-95, 213-16; Cole, *Colonialism*, 174-89.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 230.

system of meaning and representation dominated by sovereign and elite symbolism. By restricting the vocabulary and concepts of the person, the body, the family, and gender, and then relegating them to the private sphere,<sup>29</sup> the state shaped public discourse and subjected it to the interests of the ruling elite. To this we might add yet another means of "invisible control," namely the introduction of an all-encompassing system of discipline designed to harness the bodies and minds of the people and instill in them "implicit obedience." This was embodied in the *nizam-i cedit* (Arabic *al-nizam al-jadid*), or New Order along European lines, which began in the new army, but was especially evident in the new schooling system introduced in Egypt in the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

These invisible means of control were inseparably attached to the explicit ones. Explicit, naked control would not have been possible without covert deployment of the defining and inculcating mechanisms of implicit control. Only through the latter could the state produce the cultural legitimization that enabled it to rule without constantly resorting to coercion by force of arms. Thus, in a way, the state secured its legitimization through the use of technologies that enabled both control and self-constitution, as some theorists have suggested.<sup>31</sup> The emergence of the strong and centralized state in nineteenth-century Egypt was made possible through effective manipulation – albeit not necessarily in a conscious way – of the two aspects of control, which fed on each other and produced social and cultural legitimacy.

### *Social forces and elite formation*

The notion of "social forces" implies some level of group action, rudimentary organization, common purpose, and leadership. Even when group, or class, consciousness is eliminated as a necessary condition, most available analyses end up with a heavy concentration on elites. At least in the case of Egypt, almost all attempts to rectify that bias by materialist class analysis – especially with regard to the eighteenth century – have been quite unsatisfactory.<sup>32</sup> As we move into the "long nineteenth century," the available interpretations of Egyptian social history become considerably more inclusive, and the role of non-elite groups is given its appropriate place. This has been done by combining socio-cultural explanations with insights from political economy.

At the beginning of our period, the overwhelming majority of Egyptians existed outside politics. (An Ottoman-Egyptian ruling elite, estimated at about 10,000 men and women, monopolized all political, economic, and

<sup>29</sup> Cohn and Dirks, "Beyond the Fringe," 227 (quoting O'Hanlon, p.c.).

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge, 1988), 175.

<sup>31</sup> Cohn and Dirks, "Beyond the Fringe," 228.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (Austin, 1978).

cultural resources of the country.) The rest of the population made occasional forays into political history when pushed to revolt against unusual exploitation or oppression. Even then, their group actions were short lived and not very effective. [At the end of our period, an Egyptian nationalist elite – made up mainly of the remnants of the old Ottoman–Egyptian elite and a strong rural notability – and rapidly growing urban middle class and proletariat were all active in a much more expanded political, economic, and cultural arena.]

With this framework in mind, we can now chart the rise of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite under dynastic order in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman–Egyptian elite continued to be essentially an office-holding elite, and its members served in the most senior positions of the governor-general's household government (and later state bureaucracy), in the governor-general's household itself, in the agencies administering the governor-general's estates, and in the top ranks of the army. The elite (known as *zevat* in Turkish, *al-dhawwat* in Arabic) included wives, children, and freed slaves. Their rank (pasha, bey, effendi) marked their elite status and gave them access to positions that enabled many of them to acquire financial means, and later in the century also landed property.

They spoke Ottoman Turkish, their outlook was formed in an Ottoman administrative and military tradition, they dressed and behaved as their counterparts in Istanbul, identified with the empire, but were totally loyal to the house of Muhammad 'Ali, and committed permanently to serving and living in Egypt, unless political circumstances made this impossible. The ruling elite was predominantly, though not exclusively, Muslim, but it was ethnically quite diverse, making the once-prevailing categories of "Turco-Circassian" and "Turkish" obsolete. The Ottoman Christians in the elite were mainly Armenian, with some Copts and later Syrians, but a sizable group of European experts also served in the upper echelons of the administration from the time of Muhammad 'Ali.<sup>33</sup>

Under the dynastic rule of the house of Muhammad 'Ali, we can detect three generations of high bureaucrats. The first was recruited by Muhammad 'Ali himself from among his family members, associates from Kavalla, his home town, and some skilled Armenian bureaucrats. That group served in his administration and in that of his eldest son, Ibrahim. The general outlook of this group was pro-reform and pro-Europe, but it also contained a small ideological opposition, which was critical of the pace and scale of reform. The latter group centered around 'Abbas Pasha, who came to power in 1848, after the death of Ibrahim.

Because 'Abbas mistrusted the personally loyal and reformist elite re-

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed explanation of the makeup and character of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite, see Toledano, *State and Society*, 16–18, 68–93.

cruited by his grandfather, his ascent to power also signaled a generational change within the Ottoman–Egyptian elite. Hence, the second generation emerged after the struggle for power between 'Abbas and Ibrahim's sons in the early 1850s, reached its peak during the reign of Isma'il, and had disappeared by the early 1890s. The third generation consisted of second-generation sons, who had received a different, much more Europeanized education; it lasted well into the twentieth century and played a role in the rise of the nationalist movement and the modern nation state of Egypt.<sup>34</sup>

The second generation of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite began to amass large landed property, as a result of land grants by the rulers. The latter were interested in regenerating income from estates that had fallen into tax arrears, but they later used land grants as a means of bonding elite members to them. However, with the dramatic intensification of European penetration during the mid-1870s, which saw the introduction of the Dual Control system, the direct links now forged between the land-owning elite and foreign economic interests enabled the Ottoman–Egyptian elite to trade its dependence upon the ruler, Isma'il, for dependence on the European powers. It has been argued that the loss of elite support since 1875 was one of the major factors that ultimately facilitated the deposition of Isma'il by Anglo-Ottoman consent in 1879.<sup>35</sup>

Before we look more closely at the changes that occurred during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, let us describe the socio-cultural process that took place within Egyptian society during that period. The main groups concerned in this context were the peasantry, the rural notability, the urban commercial, intellectual, and administrative elites, and the urban workers, artisans, small traders, and the poor. Each of these subcultures had a distinct core, but their peripheries overlapped in varying degrees. Thus, for example, core members of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite spoke Turkish and were literate, shared the values and heritage of Ottoman elite culture, were mostly, though not exclusively, Muslim, and came from various ethnic origins. As the century progressed, more elite members were born and raised in Egypt. Further from that core, lower-level bureaucrats and army officers had lower income, small or no land holdings, and a more restricted access to power. But they, too, were considered Ottoman gentlemen, and their wives were classified as Ottoman ladies, with all that these notions implied in dress and etiquette. Ottoman–Egyptian elite culture was imperial, universal, and Istanbul oriented, but Cairo–Alexandria based.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the internal differentiation between its core and periphery, the

<sup>34</sup> The last two paragraphs are based on Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 82–83, and Toledano, *State and Society*, 41–49.

<sup>35</sup> This view is elaborated in Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 179–226. Cf. Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 203–04.

<sup>36</sup> This and the following paragraphs draw mainly on Toledano, *State and Society*, 16–18.

Ottoman–Egyptian elite was fairly homogeneous. The cores of the other elites were also fairly well defined, with rich merchants and high ‘ulama’ almost exclusively Arabophone and oriented toward Egypt itself. The non-elite subcultures encompassed over 95 percent of the population, and – almost by definition – were much more diffuse, and the core’s common denominator was broad, though still quite meaningful and distinguishable. All core members of the non-elite subcultures spoke Arabic and, with the exception of the low ‘ulama’, were mostly illiterate, and their culture was immersed in the local setting, replete with themes and images of both rural and urban life in the Nile valley. Most core members of non-elite groups were born in Egypt, and were either Muslim or Copt. Within the Egyptian–Arab culture, the distinction between the various elite and non-elite groups was mainly material, though elite groups were more culturally affected by Ottoman–Egyptian elite culture as a result of frequent interaction.

The most significant and dynamic socio-cultural process in nineteenth-century Egypt occurred along the boundaries between the Ottoman–Egyptian elite and those groups most closely bordering on them. It was there that negotiation was taking place, offering a real dynamic of change and mobility. From the 1840s onward, but perhaps most dramatically in the third quarter of the century, a dual process was in motion: members of the Egyptian–Arab elites, especially the rural notability, were allowed to enter the officer ranks of the army and receive appointments in the rural, and gradually also in the central, administration. With time, they rose to be provincial governors, heads of bureaus and ministries, and army colonels, becoming full members of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite. Simultaneously, and while elite ranks were being broadened, a “dilution” of the core components occurred, with the incorporation of more elements from Egyptian–Arab culture at the expense of Ottoman ones.

This dual process – inclusivist by its very nature according to Ottoman tradition – transformed the Ottoman–Egyptian elite toward the last part of the “long nineteenth century.” At the turn of the century, the ruling elite was an Egyptian one, with a strong Ottoman–Egyptian heritage nevertheless, but now fully embroiled in the production of an Egyptian nation state. Many of its core members spoke Turkish and felt a close affinity to Istanbul, but Arabic predominated even in the administration, and certainly in intellectual and economic life. The failure, in early 1881, of core Ottoman–Egyptian officers to stage a coup against the rising power of the ‘Urabists removed the last obstacle on the way to equality in both the army and the bureaucracy between the native Egyptian notable sons and core Ottoman–Egyptians.<sup>37</sup> Interaction between the political elite and the commercial and intellectual ones, with full social mingling and exchange, became easier and

<sup>37</sup> On this, see Cole, *Colonialism*, 276.

quite common; it finally produced the monarchical elite of the interwar period.

The leading figures in the old Ottoman–Egyptian elite gradually disappeared: Sultan Pasha died in 1884, and Sharif Pasha in 1887; ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak retired in 1891, and Nubar Pasha left the government in 1894. In the administration, the British promoted and further recruited members of minorities, such as Syrians and Copts, and English advisors from British universities.<sup>38</sup> But, at the same time, non-elite groups were gradually using the new educational system deployed by Isma‘il to gain access to resources and junior positions in the army and administration. Early in the twentieth century, this would be the basis for an emerging *effendiyya* middle class.

In retrospect, there can hardly be any doubt that the 1860s and 1870s qualitatively transformed Egyptian society in a way that launched it into the twentieth century and the age of colonialism and nationalism. Historical explanations of the processes that took place during that period have led most scholars to tie them to the events of 1881–82, the ‘Urabi movement, and the British occupation. Broadly speaking, most writers on the topic have concentrated on the last phase of Isma‘il’s rule – the second half of the 1870s – as precursor to the events leading to the British occupation in 1882.<sup>39</sup> Their explanations are largely socio-economic, grounded in both class analysis and dependency theories. A recent contribution to that debate has taken a long-term approach, seeking the roots of the ‘Urabi movement in the processes that had taken place not merely in the preceding half decade, but rather in the preceding quarter of a century.<sup>40</sup>

In that approach, economic, social, and cultural processes during the period 1858–82 created within Egyptian society “challenger strata” that were ripening toward a revolution. The weakening of the state security apparatus, perceived interests, a fairly high degree of social organization, means of communication, and a uniting discourse were the conditions those strata needed in order to act. When they did, in the early 1880s, they tried to change the existing distribution of power within society. European penetration, as already mentioned, created the conditions that enabled a community of discourse to emerge through which political ideas, revolutionary in this case, were carried. Population growth and an ensuing pressure on land, and an acceleration in Egypt’s incorporation into the world economy, provided a fertile background to the development of opposition to khedival rule, even among members of the Ottoman–Egyptian elite.

<sup>38</sup> Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 229.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example: Alexander Schölch, “The Formation of a Peripheral State: Egypt 1854–1882,” *L’Egypte au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 176–85; Abd El-Azim Ramadan, “Social Significance of the ‘Urabi Revolution,” *ibid.*, 187–94; and Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 227–30.

<sup>40</sup> Cole, *Colonialism*, esp. 273–82.



These factors affected the various groups in the following manner, as some reacted against the Ottoman–Egyptians and others against the Europeans: the middle management in the bureaucracy was anti-European more for fear of losing jobs to European experts and Syrian Christians than for begrudging the Ottoman–Egyptians their hold on the highest state offices; junior army officers from a smallholding background resented the privileges of the Ottoman–Egyptians more than they did those of the Europeans; merchants and merchant guilds appear mainly to have directed their energies against their European competitors, and were anti-Ottoman–Egyptian not because of land-tax privileges, but because of the alliance between Ottoman–Egyptians and European merchants, financiers, importers, and speculators; artisans were more anti-European, because they resented low-priced foreign goods and an influx of European traders and workers more than Ottoman–Egyptian-imposed taxation; and in some instances, rural notables opposed the large Ottoman–Egyptian land owners, but village opposition to European land owners was no less intense.<sup>41</sup>

One view of the confrontation is that the Ottoman–Egyptians caved in before the challenge, while the Europeans reacted rather strongly, which ultimately resulted in the British occupation of 1882. The European community wanted the British to occupy Egypt not merely to restore order, but mainly to prevent the process of state formation that was in the making – embodied, as it was, in the ‘Urabist government in Cairo. This process was accompanied by the emergence of a new political discourse, centering around the nation, which excluded Europeans.<sup>42</sup>

An alternative view sees the same events as generated by a somewhat different socio-economic engine. Egyptian elites consisted of a ruling class,<sup>43</sup> the autochthonous section of the agrarian bourgeoisie, and the commercial and financial bourgeoisie. There was a “common economic basis of interest” among the commercial, financial, and the whole (indigenous and “foreign”) agrarian bourgeoisies. However, one of the essential factors in the events of 1881–82 was the significant difference within the agrarian bourgeoisie, as the non-autochthonous circles were much more involved in “central power functions” than autochthonous circles.

This view posits all these elites as collaborators with the European powers, as “facilitators of dependency,” and “guarantors of integration into the world market.” Thus the collapse of the political order in the late 1870s occurred as a result of European “direct financial, economic, and political

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 273–74.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 281–82.

<sup>43</sup> This includes Turco-Circassians, members of some minorities, especially Armenians, Europeans in the ruler’s service, indigenous experts and technicians, and a few provincial notables serving as provincial governors (Schölch, “Formation,” 180–81). The rest of this paragraph draws on pp. 182–83.

interference,” not because of “a quasi-mechanical breakdown,” which made interest-free direct control somehow necessary. Direct European control (first the Dual Control, then the Nubar government) deprived the ruling elite of its power bases, and deposed the ruler himself. This internal power vacuum made it possible for an anti-interventionist coalition to move in and later resist attempts by a new pro-European coalition to replace the old ruling elite of Isma‘il. The coalition, hoisting “the banners of self-determination and patriotism,” held together from the autumn of 1881 until May 1882. It disintegrated because class interests reemerged from “behind these banners,” owing to the threat of British military intervention.<sup>44</sup>

This anti-interventionist coalition – or “challenger strata” – consisted of three groups: the ‘Urabist officers (embodying “autochthonous Egypt”) and the indigenous intellectuals (who supported social reforms to improve the lot of the peasants, but never talked of “social or political revolution”); members of the former chamber of delegates (who represented the indigenous agrarian bourgeoisie and the Egyptian merchants, opposed European domination, and demanded constitutional rights and power sharing); and intellectuals of various persuasions, including Muslim reformers and fundamentalists, Syrian Christian journalists, and “indigenous technicians” (who propagated various ideas, some of them clearly conflicting, such as constitutionalism, parliamentarism, nationalism, and Islamic social and political reform of all kinds). This coalition formed the political elite of Egypt for five months (January–May 1882).

When it became clear that the Europeans would defend their interests by force, the coalition disintegrated, with only the officers and the Muslim reformers and fundamentalists remaining in open opposition to the British and the collaborating elite. That elite consisted of the former ruling class and indigenous land owners, i.e. the agrarian bourgeoisie, the commercial and financial bourgeoisies, and the indigenous technicians. The non-autochthonous and indigenous components of the agrarian bourgeoisie were no longer in real conflict among themselves, due to the discrimination practiced by the British occupation. After the First World War, these elements would merge and form the politically dominant class of modern Egypt.

Yet a third understanding of the same events and processes begins where xenophobia, patriotism, and nationalism mix together in a bewildering cocktail. In this view the events of the early 1880s are a “wider-dimensioned class revolution,” rather than a mere military revolt. The ‘Urabi revolution was the result of cooperation between two groups: the leaders of the agricultural bourgeoisie (demanding economic, constitutional, and national liberation) and the military group around ‘Urabi (a petty bourgeois movement). Thus during the late 1870s, a national liberation movement emerged

<sup>44</sup> This and the following two paragraphs refer to *ibid.*, 177, 182–85.

that dominated Egyptian history until 1952, through its struggle against the monarchy and European presence. The 'Urabi revolution failed because the Egyptian bourgeoisie was not willing to trade the khedive's despotism for that of the army.<sup>45</sup>

It thus appears that there are two lines of demarcation along which the socio-economic and political conflict evolved: one split the Ottoman-Egyptian elite internally between its Ottoman-Egyptian component and its incorporated Egyptian one; the other separated Egyptians and Europeans. A cross-section of these lines occurred in 1881-82, which made it possible for anti-European Egyptians to drive a wedge within the Ottoman-Egyptian elite, and enlist its indigenous component in the service of an anti-European, patriotic cause. The most obvious weakness of this analysis is the fact that alliances and disintegrations seem to have occurred overnight, rather than to stem from longer, sustained, and more profound social processes.

In addition, the inclusivist processes that occurred within the Ottoman-Egyptian elite in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century should not have made it so easy for an autochthonous agrarian elite to fall out with the rest of the Ottoman-Egyptian elite. That this was not a result of failed integration can be seen from the fact that the indigenous notability was quick to join the Ottoman-Egyptian elite in the face of an external threat to its socio-economic position.

In any event, what is needed to complete this rather complex socio-political picture is a reminder that the second Ottoman period is characterized by hegemonic rule, only temporarily interrupted during the last phase of Qazdagli ascendancy late in the eighteenth century and during the first decade of the nineteenth century (until 1811). What surely happened in the period 1876-82 was again the temporary loss of hegemonic (and by then also dynastic) rule, as no group or coalition could hold together for long, or take into its hands the reins of power.<sup>46</sup> In 1881-82, central authority broke down, dynastic order was challenged, and the loyal elite temporarily disintegrated. When it was restored, it was only at the mercy of the British, who had made it captive of their own imperial ambitions.

### *Egypt and the world economy*

The main economic process that took place during the "long nineteenth century" was the incorporation of Egypt into the European-dominated world economy. This process was closely intertwined with social processes and had far-reaching consequences for the whole of Egyptian society. It is by now beyond dispute that Egypt's peripheralization had profound social,

<sup>45</sup> Ramadan, "Social Significance," 187-88, 194.

<sup>46</sup> For a similar view, see Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 227-30.

political, and cultural implications that have lasted well into the twentieth century, shaping much of the history of the modern state.

The process of Egypt's integration into the world economy was gradual and long, but its intensity varied during the period reviewed here.<sup>47</sup> Having recovered from its eighteenth-century crisis, Egypt formed new links with European traders, and began to produce agricultural goods for European markets. However, meaningful trade relations flourished only in the first half of the nineteenth century. The process was dramatically accelerated in the second half of the century, creating full dependence during the last quarter, especially under British rule. In that sense, the "rupture," or break with the previous pattern, clearly occurred in the third quarter, leaving the previous period very much on the other side of the continuum.

A first landmark in the intensification of economic relations with Europe was the reluctant application, in the mid-1840s, by a weakened Muhammad 'Ali, of the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman commercial treaty of Balta Liman. The second stage occurred from the late 1850s onward, in which European penetration included investments in infrastructure, especially in the Suez Canal, in the public (viceregal) debt, in the financing of foreign trade (export of cotton and import of machinery and luxury goods), and in direct investment by land companies in agriculture. The period 1740-1858 has been viewed as one unit, which ended with the 1858 land law - the embodiment of state regulatory power.<sup>48</sup> The reorganization and reorientation of agriculture took place under a strong state, which provided security and regulated land tenure procedures. It was also accompanied by an elaborate legal project that regulated and undergirded the commoditization of land and the restructuring of the entire agricultural economy.

Changes in agriculture and the emergence of a strong state were closely related to the rise of private land ownership in nineteenth-century Egypt. One view is that a major transformation occurred in agricultural production and land ownership in Egypt from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth.<sup>49</sup> Agriculture in late eighteenth-century Egypt produced essentially for subsistence, was neither commoditized nor monetized, and involved no

<sup>47</sup> Economic processes are among the best-researched aspects of nineteenth-century Egyptian history, owing largely to the work of Charles Issawi, Roger Owen, and others. The following survey and analysis are based mainly on Issawi, *The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914* (Chicago, 1966), and his many articles on the Egyptian economy; E. R. J. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914* (London and New York, 1981); E. R. J. Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford, 1969); Schölch, "Formation," 178ff.; and Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 198-207.

<sup>48</sup> Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 207.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago and London, 1969), 62-78, and Issawi, *Economic History*, 359-74. This line was formulated earlier by Silvestre de Sacy and Yacoub Artin.

ownership rights in usufruct. The land laws of 1847, 1855, and 1858, in this view, introduced a major change by laying the ground for private land ownership. Finally, the “brutal but successful” introduction of cotton by Muhammad ‘Ali (to reach 75 percent of the total value of exports in 1880–84, 92 percent in 1910–13),<sup>50</sup> and other cash crops, firmly linked Egypt to the European-dominated world economy.

An alternative interpretation argues that there was no change in land ownership in Egypt between the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth, because the peasants’ right to inherit and alienate usufruct rights existed well before 1800. The land laws of 1847, 1855, and 1858 did not create a new situation, but only codified existing practice. The market responsiveness of nineteenth-century peasants was the same as it had been in the eighteenth century; it did not constitute a “recent transition from subsistence to cash-crop farming, but rather the persistence of a pattern of mixed subsistence- and market-oriented production, a familiarity with money exchange, and as before a willingness or else a need to borrow in order to make it from one harvest to the next.” Thus, realities in the period 1740–1858 were more complex, consisting of “a substantial development of agricultural production and exports, and proportionately an even greater growth in the European share of Egypt’s external trade.”<sup>51</sup>

What is not in much dispute is that the agricultural policies of Muhammad ‘Ali helped create a landed rural notability, as he reassigned deserted land and land over which taxes fell into considerable arrears – causing the ranks of the landless peasantry to swell further. Many others who managed to cling to their smallholdings were driven into debt and arrears by tax increases, which the governor-general imposed to resolve his revenue-generating problems. There is also agreement among scholars that formal, documented, full-fledged private land ownership was created in the early 1870s, as a result of the *muqabala* (Ottoman *mukabele*) law, introduced by Isma‘il to bring much-needed cash into his bankrupt treasury. The khedive granted full ownership in return for advance payment of six years of land taxes, to be cut in half later.

This process was enhanced under the British, so that by 1907, 75 percent of the land was owned by 147,000 large and medium holders, while the remaining 25 percent was held in small, often fragmented, plots by 1,120,000 land owners. At the same time, 21 percent of rural Egyptian families were landless, 70 percent of them held some property, but less than the five faddans required for subsistence, while only 9 percent owned more than five faddans, including here very large, medium, and small holders. Among the landowning class, there was a growing number of European companies.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Owen, *The Middle East*, 68, 219.

<sup>51</sup> Cuno, *The Pasha’s Peasants*, 198–201.

<sup>52</sup> Owen, *The Middle East*, 218.

The other type of economic activity that deserves mention is the attempts to introduce industry into Egypt. Muhammad ‘Ali’s industrial experiment has received a great deal of attention that has often been blown out of proportion. Here we can only mention that in the 1830s, there were thirty state-owned and operated cotton spinning and weaving factories, and a number of wool, silk, and linen factories throughout Egypt, several plants producing military equipment (guns, cannons, swords, munitions, gunpowder, and saltpeter), and a few factories engaged in the processing of agricultural products (sugar refineries, indigo works, rice mills, and tanneries). These aimed mainly at import substitution, and to an extent managed at least partially to achieve that goal. Owing to a shrinking military market following the loss of Muhammad ‘Ali’s regional empire, and due to technical problems with production-equipment maintenance, many of these were falling into disrepair by the last phase of the Pasha’s reign (1840–48).<sup>53</sup>

Although Isma‘il tried in the early 1870s to reintroduce state industries, the project was not very successful. Save for a number of arms-producing plants, and his own network of sugar refineries, there were several privately owned industrial enterprises that processed cotton and other agricultural products or produced household equipment and food for the European communities. An important point to note, however, in this context, is that despite the abundance of European goods available in Egypt from the third quarter of the nineteenth century onward, and contrary to dependency-model expectations, local manufacturing was not destroyed, but rather adapted to the new realities and managed to survive, produce, and play an important role in the Egyptian economy.<sup>54</sup>

The last phase of the “long nineteenth century” did not witness a major change in industrial deployment in Egypt, leaving the “rupture” in this process to the post-war period. Not surprisingly, the British colonial regime was mainly concerned with developing the agricultural sector of the Egyptian economy. Industrial development was slow and unimpressive, with only twenty-three companies active in the field in 1901, twenty of which were established in the 1890s. The number of industrial companies increased only to thirty-seven by 1911. The British administration intervened in few cases, mainly cotton factories and sugar plants, to prevent collapse of the companies, because they wished not to be seen by nationalist circles as allowing a large-scale loss of jobs to occur without stepping in to help. At the same time, the British acted to prevent the development of a local textile industry that would compete with manufacturers in Britain itself.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–73.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 148–52.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–26.

In any event, in 1909 Britain was importing 50 percent of all Egyptian exports and supplying 30 percent of all Egyptian imports.<sup>56</sup> A large and growing foreign community was sustaining and further promoting this state of economic and political dependence. As already mentioned, the number of Europeans increased dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century. Owing to the need for their technical skills and their desire to profit economically, Europeans flocked to Egypt, and their number increased from 6,000 in 1840 to about 68,000 in 1870, to 90,000 in 1882, and to 111,000 in 1897. Railway construction, digging of the Suez Canal, the cotton boom, and the large projects initiated by Isma'il were the main attractions that lured Europeans to Egypt in those years. The size of the British community tripled as a result of the occupation. Some 90 percent of the Europeans lived in the cities (where they comprised about 10 percent of the population).<sup>57</sup>

Earlier models of modernization and westernization depicted the process as a positive one, in which a rather backward and stagnant Ottoman province was liberated from its shackles to join the civilized, modern world. Later models of dependency have looked at the same phenomenon differently, describing a rather negative process of aggressive, self-interested peripheralization that relegated a wealthy and fairly independent country to a pitiful state of dependency on and exploitation by the European powers.

The force of one such analysis is, *inter alia*, that it does not seek to allocate blame for what happened, but rather to understand the very complex processes that occurred. What took place in Egypt during the nineteenth century does not conform to a simplistic model of dependency, but has to be studied carefully in its historical setting.<sup>58</sup> In general, this view stresses the activities and input of local actors in the economy, without denying the role of external, European forces. Thus, the picture that emerges is much more balanced than the one of classical dependency theorists, depicting a European actor pillaging a passive, helpless Egyptian victim. Egypt's incorporation into the world economy is characterized by six elements, which also apply – *mutatis mutandis* – to the incorporation of other Middle Eastern regions. These are:

1. The value of exports clearly increased more rapidly than population, suggesting that Egyptian income grew during the period discussed here. The impact of this growth was only marginally affected by the payment of interest on European loans or by an unfavorable balance of trade.

<sup>56</sup> Robert L. Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918–1952* (Princeton, 1984), appendix, table A.11.

<sup>57</sup> Panzac, "Population of Egypt," 26–29.

<sup>58</sup> Owen, *The Middle East*, 287–93.

However, this does not mean that the rise in income was evenly distributed through society, since benefits accrued only to a small number of elite families who owned large tracts of cultivated land.

2. Much of the agricultural surplus was appropriated via taxation and rent, and only little of it was reinvested in agricultural improvement or capital works. Most of the appropriated surplus was simply spent on consumption and a European-style standard of living for the Ottoman–Egyptian and other elites, but also on exerting influence over local politics in cooperation with the European powers, and later the colonial state. It was mainly the government and foreign enterprises that invested in agriculture.
3. The dramatically increased seaborne trade with Europe induced significant changes in the structure of commerce, particularly in the ports, especially Alexandria and Port Said. Credit arrangements, improved means of transportation and irrigation, intensification of monetary relations among producers, landowners, and traders, increased agricultural specialization, and the consequent emergence of foreign commercial communities are the main features of the process. Muslim merchants also played an important role, and a purely ethnic or religious division of labor did not exist.
4. The impact of European forces on the Egyptian economy can be seen as occurring in three stages: a purely commercial phase during the early decades of the nineteenth century, in which trade expanded and political influence was used to facilitate that expansion; the financial–commercial phase from the 1840s on, in which the government of Egypt could no longer finance its reform project by taxation, while European capital was becoming available for foreign investment and earnestly seeking opportunities abroad (this increased the dependence of the Egyptian government on the European lenders, made it easier for European companies to demand further concessions, and expanded trade with Europe even more); and finally, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the political–financial–commercial phase, in which direct involvement in the Egyptian economy created full dependence, as export prices, availability of credit, and the distribution of public revenues were determined by European forces.
5. The khedival government played an important role in the economic processes that were taking place. Efforts at reform, centralization, and building military capabilities stemmed from fear of European penetration, but ultimately exposed the regime to further European pressures, because those attempts to modernize required European expertise and reliance on European finance.

6. Growing economic dependence was perceived as government weakness, giving rise to nationalist sentiments during the first decade of the twentieth century. In Egypt, these feelings were increasingly expressed by Egyptian entrepreneurs and professionals, pointing at the combined political and economic weakness of the country vis-à-vis the British colonial state and the European powers, who formed the "structure of dependence." A program of creating a national economic policy was forged, only to be frustrated after the First World War by the British.

### *Individual and society*

We have so far dealt with groups – their formation, evolution, action, disintegration – rather than with individuals. We now turn to the effects the processes described above had on individuals of all strata of Egyptian society. The major project of social and economic history, undertaken from the 1950s on, diverted attention from elites to "the masses," but the subjects of most studies remained nameless and rather faceless. Problems of suitable sources, and preferences for certain methodological approaches, have produced studies of large formations, structures, institutions, and classes, with little attention to how individuals fit into these frameworks, and what those frameworks did to their lives.

The advent of social anthropology and its fruitful interaction with history have in recent years produced studies of microhistory that seek to examine social, economic, political, and cultural processes from the individual's point of view.<sup>59</sup> This project has not yet been fully developed, but many scholars working on Muslim societies have committed themselves to it, and their joint efforts are expected to appear in the coming decade.<sup>60</sup> This means that the following survey is not a definitive statement, but rather an analysis based on recent work and work still in progress.

Individuals join groups, or are initiated into them, by processes of socialization and acculturation. The family, the household, the education system, and various other communal organs provided individuals in nineteenth-century Egypt with the code that enabled them to belong to various groups throughout life. They would then participate in the processes that initiated the next generation into the same patterns, thereby reproducing the

<sup>59</sup> In Middle Eastern history, the best example is Edmund Burke, III (ed.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> For the main effort currently in progress, see Robert Ilbert and Paul Dumont, "Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim World," submitted to the *European Science Foundation (ESF)* as framework for a five-year research program. The *ESF* Programme involves some one hundred scholars, and is expected to run until 1999. There are also various international projects dealing with civil society in the modern Middle East.

social order that prevailed in their time, and incorporating the changes that occurred in society during their lifetime. Social reproduction obviously involved the perpetuation of privileges enjoyed by certain groups in Egyptian society, and the exploitation that was the lot of the disprivileged groups.

The family is certainly one of the most important agents of socialization and social reproduction. It is both noteworthy and indicative that the family, the roles of individual family members, and role relations among them changed very little during the "long nineteenth century." The central position of the father, the dependent position of women, gender segregation, the extended family's standing as both the unit of dwelling and property owning (whose property, labor, and income were controlled by the father), the role of age in determining status, and the practice of arranged marriages (with preference to clan endogamy and cousin marriage) all continued to predominate at the beginning of the twentieth century in both rural and urban Egypt.<sup>61</sup>

This may create the impression that the social and economic processes discussed above were rather superficial if they failed to affect the basic socio-economic unit of Egyptian society. However, this was certainly not the case, as the study of non-elite women clearly shows.<sup>62</sup> This demonstrates how the rise of the state and Egypt's incorporation into the world economy impacted on the family and the status of women. These economic processes changed the power relations within the family, usually to the disadvantage of women. In the family, the women's position vis-à-vis that of the men was determined by their ability to generate income and hold property; these, in turn, were affected by changes in the Egyptian economy.

Thus the demand put on rural families by the state, and the commercialization of agriculture, weakened prevailing cooperative arrangements within which women could negotiate a better deal from a position of greater strength. In the urban setting, Muhammad 'Ali's attempt to industrialize, and the difficulties experienced by local crafts because of European competition, impaired women's ability to earn a living, thereby weakening their position within the family. Consequently, village women saw their property rights eroded, and townswomen were pushed from production to services; this only reinforced women's traditional reproductive and caring roles. In the tougher economic realities of late nineteenth-century Egypt under the colonial state, women were assigned the weaker and less attractive share of the labor market, and were further barred from education and career opportunities.

According to this line of reasoning, market forces, rather than the state or

<sup>61</sup> Baer, *Studies*, 210–12.

<sup>62</sup> Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1985), chaps. 1–4, summarized in the conclusion. For a critique of some of Tucker's views, see my review in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25/1 (January 1989), 113–19.

the value system, determined the status of women in nineteenth-century Egypt. While this might be more true for the second half of the century, the actions of the Ottoman–Egyptian state had played an important role in the first half. Conscription and the *corvée* gave women a greater role in managing family resources while men were away, and higher taxation forced women to take on an additional workload in the fields. One should also look at how the belief system – in which Islamic and local traditions intermingled – accommodated new economic realities brought about by Egypt's incorporation into the European-dominated world economy.

The impact of social and economic processes on the individual is perhaps most noticeable in the realm of state-initiated reforms. Until recently, both Egyptian and western narratives hailed the reforms of Muhammad 'Ali and Isma'il almost as manna from heaven. A more critical approach has now entered the literature, which brings up the other side of the balance sheet, namely the enormous cost in human lives, dislocation, and suffering.<sup>63</sup> The rural and urban squeeze ravaged the lives of many Egyptians in the huge mass of non-elite groups. At that level, individuals seem to have stood almost alone vis-à-vis the ruthless determination of rulers and their loyal officials, as the communal organs deployed to protect them caved in, collapsed, and miserably failed them.

A major component of elite formation under the house of Muhammad 'Ali was the deployment of a school system that trained future officers and bureaucrats for government service. The system was built from the top down, beginning with professional schools for army officers, engineers, doctors, veterinarians, and translators, and only during the reign of Isma'il were reforms introduced that addressed the primary and secondary systems. But even then, there were elite "primary" schools and old-style "elementary" ones, i.e. *kuttabs*. The latter led either to the old Azharite curriculum, a few mediocre trade schools, or back to the village, where students would revert to illiteracy and hard work in the cotton fields.<sup>64</sup>

Although there was no intention to open up the Ottoman–Egyptian elite for the entire population, from the moment the schools were established pressure mounted to allow access to members of the groups closest to the boundaries of the ruling elite, mainly the rural notability. The precedent was, of course, inclusion of such young men in student missions sent by

<sup>63</sup> This view is reflected in the following evaluations of the reforms of Muhammad 'Ali: Khaled M. Fahmy, "All the Pasa's Men: The Performance of the Egyptian Army during the Reign of Mehmed Ali Pasha," D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993, 350–51; Ehud R. Toledano, "Muhammad 'Ali Basha or Mehmet Ali Pasa?" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21/4 (1985), 141–59; Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., s.v. "Muhammad 'Ali Pasha," by Ehud R. Toledano. For a similar approach to Isma'il's policies, see Cole, *Colonialism*, 85.

<sup>64</sup> Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1990), 14–15.

Muhammad 'Ali to study in Europe. Once those channels of mobility were in place, the only questions remaining were when they would be used first by non-Ottoman–Egyptians, and how wide the channel would be. It was during the formative and dynamic 1860s and 1870s that access became routinized, and by the 1880s employment prospects were far better for state-school graduates. Certification, in general, tended to restrict access to employment and increased the importance of accreditation by the new schools.<sup>65</sup>

In other words, in education, as in public health, a spill-over occurred to benefit broader segments of the population, mostly affecting other elites and those closest to the Ottoman–Egyptian one. But if in 1882 it seemed, for a moment, that access to the ruling elite would become easier for certain other elite groups, the colonial state acted quickly to close some avenues. Cromer's policy discouraged development of a solid education system in Egypt, and before he left there were only three state secondary schools, graduating in 1902 fewer than a hundred students altogether. Cromer never rescinded his avowed opposition to the establishment of an Egyptian university, which had to wait for his successors. Some twenty years into the occupation, education received less than 1 percent of the Egyptian state budget, rising to 3.4 percent before the First World War. A change would occur only when Egyptians assumed control of the ministry in 1922.<sup>66</sup>

In any event, at the close of our "long nineteenth century," education was becoming a major asset in Egyptian society, a much-coveted commodity for socially mobile groups. On December 21, 1908 the Egyptian University was opened in Cairo, with the future king, Ahmad Fu'ad, serving as its first rector. But despite the inroads that education made in Egyptian society, the rate of illiteracy in Egypt stood at 93 percent.<sup>67</sup>

The main "losers" from the spread of state-sponsored modern education, it seems, were the 'ulama'. Reforms in education and the legal system restricted the access of religiously trained men to jobs they had previously virtually monopolized. Lawyers, judges, codes, documents, and scribes replaced the old Shari'a system, and the introduction to the new schools of teachers who were not 'ulama' threatened the previous order.<sup>68</sup> Gradually, as the century wore on, 'ulama' were confined to the old-style school system, which was less attractive to ambitious young men. At the same time, ever-growing areas of law and social activity were being removed from the

<sup>65</sup> A. Chris Eccel, *Egypt, Islam and Social Change: Al-Azhar in Conflict and Accommodation* (Berlin, 1984), 114. It was in the 1880s that a friend told Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid's family, when he was ten, that state professional schools should be preferred to an al-Azhar education, which the family intended him to have (Reid, *Cairo University*, 15). For 'Ali Mubarak's decision to become a bureaucrat rather than a Shari'i jurist, see Baer, *Studies*, 24.

<sup>66</sup> Reid, *Cairo University*, 18.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Eccel, *Social Change*, 114.

jurisdiction of the Shari'a court system, which reduced the number of judiciary positions available to 'ulama'.

If the public space of 'ulama' activity and influence was gradually restricted, there were other groups whose ability to act was enhanced by the social and economic processes described in this chapter. Such groups also afforded individuals greater freedom of action, gradually empowering them within the groups to which they belonged, and vis-à-vis the state. Without getting into the question of state versus civil society, we can still observe that the emergence of the individual as peasant, worker, student, bureaucrat, merchant, artisan, reader, consumer, performer, and the like gave rise to new solidarities, replacing those that had dissolved as a result of these processes.

Migration from villages to towns, but mainly to the large cities of Cairo and Alexandria, and also to the Canal towns, affected the absorbing communities no less than it did individual migrants and their families. Residential neighborhoods and guilds, for example, had traditionally favored "the known faces" in their milieu, while treating with great suspicion the unfamiliar outsider (the *gharib*).<sup>69</sup> As long as rural migration was fairly limited, there was no change in that urban attitude toward migrants. But in Alexandria and Cairo from the middle of the century, and elsewhere from the late 1870s onward, as each year brought in thousands of migrants needing food, shelter, and employment, greater openness and flexibility became the norm. Hence, most rural migrants were absorbed into urban society rather smoothly, via existing neighborhood, guild, and other networks.

Until the middle of the "long nineteenth century," such networks formed part of the state's urban control mechanism, intended to keep individuals at bay and manage their labor, income, and dwelling-space. However, even then, and especially with regard to guilds, headmen were also attentive to the needs of the membership, and their loyalty was often divided between the state and their guild members. The general trend in the second half of the period was toward an increase in the commitment between guild headmen and members, with guilds emerging less as tools in the service of the state, more as supporters of members' interests. Conflict over the right of members to choose their guild leadership also indicates a rise in individual input and a movement to greater representation.<sup>70</sup>

However, actual union activity had to wait for the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. A proper Egyptian "working class" was formed only at the turn of the century, with the consolidation of a new group of urban wage workers, who were employed in relatively large,

<sup>69</sup> On this, see Toledano, *State and Society*, 196–205.

<sup>70</sup> On this, see Cole, *Colonialism*, 164–89.

modern industrial and transport enterprises, owned no means of production, and earned their livelihood solely from the sale of their labor. These were not the only people who belonged to the working class, but they were relatively more self-aware and better organized for action.<sup>71</sup>

The actual emergence of labor activism occurred between 1899 and 1914. Although there had been strikes as early as 1882, organized union action did not take place before that period. As wages lagged behind prices, causing a decline in standard of living, workers felt a need to organize and seek some protection in united action and mutual aid. Those years saw the "first sustained, large-scale collective action" by industry and transport workers, including major crises, such as the strike and clashes at the 'Anabir railway in Cairo in 1910. However, the "real birth" of the labor movement in Egypt coincided with the nationalist uprising of 1919.<sup>72</sup>

Cooperation between the unions and nationalist groups predated the events of 1919, and joint activity with the National Party served both sides, as it combined a political nationalist campaign with a social one. The nationalist lawyers acted as spokesmen for the workers and helped them to improve their negotiations with employers, but at the end of the day the two agendas only partially overlapped: the nationalists sought an independent Egypt ruled by its elite, though cracks in the alliance appeared only after the First World War. At the time, union membership was still small, about 4,600 in Cairo in 1911. Soon after 1910, it dwindled and lost much of its force, owing to the repressive measures against both the nationalist and the labor movements taken by the government. In late 1914, a general clamp-down on nationalist activities brought the whole movement to a halt.<sup>73</sup>

As we have seen thus far, dissent began to manifest itself in the 1870s–1880s in guild and later union activity, as well as among the intelligentsia and the Ottoman–Egyptian elite. The ranks of the educated and socio-culturally aware and active people – officers, bureaucrats, teachers, and educated merchants – grew considerably during that period, and newspapers and journals began to appear and attracted large audiences. At the same time, social clubs and cultural societies proliferated, the best known being the Free Masons, Young Egypt, the Young Officers, the Islamic Philanthropic Society, the Helwan Society, and the various cultural salons of Ya'qub Sanu'.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 5–7. The authors define another group as the "urban petty bourgeoisie," which differed from the "working class" in their possession of "some means of production, capital, or education." There was, however, a "low level of social differentiation between the lowest of the urban middle strata and the working class."

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–49, 72–76, 80, 82.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 76–80.

<sup>74</sup> For details, see Cole, *Colonialism*, 118–26, 133–63.

These were funded mostly by the members themselves, in order to avoid the political strings that came with large donations from wealthy patrons. Much of their activity was in opposition to the ruler, who usually had no great difficulty in suppressing it. But the very process served as important experience in political activity and alliance forming. Another experiment in the working of consultative politics took place in the chamber of delegates, established by Isma'il in 1866. One view is that the chamber was not a focus of opposition to Isma'il and his ruinous financial policies, since the indigenous part of the agrarian bourgeoisie, too, collaborated with the ruling class and the khedive, whose policies enabled them to increase their privileges and wealth. Thus the chamber was actually a dependent, consultative body, and – contrary to the nationalist narrative – never really demanded more constitutional rights, nor did it oppose the policy of Europeanization.<sup>75</sup>

While this is probably true, things had changed during the crisis of 1879–80, following the deposition of Isma'il. The chamber had actually turned into one of the most relevant arenas for the political confrontation between the various contending forces. None of the attempts to achieve control during that chaotic period was more significant than “the stunning but short-lived triumph” of the Ottoman–Egyptians in the chamber, who carried out an interesting experiment in constitutionalism, backed by the majority of the Egyptian people.<sup>76</sup>

Another group that gradually emerged toward the latter part of our period as benefiting from and contributing to the process of individual advancement was urban elite women. Education and socialization for elite women was restricted to the harems, where women were taught to read and supervise home activities. It was there, too, that they socialized and became aware of the developments in the male world outside. During the middle years of the century, state primary-school education became available to girls in restricted numbers, and by the late 1870s these schools had some 400 female students. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, and more intensely during the early twentieth century, women became active in publishing periodicals and books and forming societies and clubs of their own. Women's position in Egyptian society and other political and social issues of the day were discussed, and demands for reform voiced. But like the trade union movement, the women's movement came of age only with the intensification of the nationalist struggle after the First World War.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Schölch, “Formation,” 182.

<sup>76</sup> Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 227–30.

<sup>77</sup> For a recent study on the women's press and readership, see Beth Baron, “Readers and the Women's Press in Egypt,” in Israel Gershoni and Ehud R. Toledano (eds.), *Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies*, special issue of *Poetics Today*: 15/2 (Summer 1994), 217–40. There was a midwifery school, established by Muhammad 'Ali and Dr.

Under the British-dominated colonial state, dissent became open opposition, though about a decade had to elapse before it was channeled into political parties. For the elites, such dissent and opposition were expressed mainly in the various clubs and societies, the rapidly growing newspapers and journals, the newly printed books, the chamber of delegates, and the parties; the other strata had the guilds, the budding trade union movement, and the nationalist parties. These prospered owing to individual drive and a sense that individual action could be effective. In this, they differed from earlier formations, which essentially submerged individuals and disempowered them.

Some segments of the population did not benefit from these processes. These fall into two categories, quite different from each other: peasants and urban marginals. Peasants bore the brunt of the commoditization of land and the incorporation of Egypt into the world economy. Not so much during the first half of our period, but certainly from the 1860s onward, landlessness and destitution in Egypt's agricultural estates increased, while protective mechanisms, such as cooperative arrangements and even the village community under a strong *'umda*, failed to stop the tide.

The urban marginals are a different case, since they had, in a way, acted as individuals all along, and certainly well before the processes that enabled individual active participation in the political, economic, and cultural life of Egypt. These processes had little or no impact on the many street performers and entertainers who inhabited the city centers of Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said. Female and male dancers, snake charmers, fortune-tellers, singers, musicians, fast trickers, jokers, magicians, acrobats, monkey-trainers, actors, and shadow-puppet-show performers were all a familiar sight in the urban setting of the Ottoman Middle East. And there were others who set rules of behavior for themselves, existing on the margins of a society that was undergoing profound change: prostitutes, the mad, the criminal.<sup>78</sup>

### Conclusion

The social and economic processes described here have only been separated for analytic purposes. In nineteenth-century Egypt they were inseparable. The three most significant processes in that period were the emergence of hegemonic and dynastic rule, Egypt's incorporation into the world economy, and the rise of groups that enabled individual action and expression. The undergirding process was the emergence of hegemonic rule under the

Clot Bey, but its students were recruited from the lower strata, not the elite. For female health officers, see Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk*, 122–33. For a survey of the women's movement, see Soha Abdel Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society, 1899–1987* (Boulder, 1987).

<sup>78</sup> Toledano, *State and Society*, 231–40, 243–48.



Qazdagli household in the eighteenth century and the creation of dynastic order under the house of Muhammad 'Ali in the nineteenth century. Centralized state power clearly affected the market, as the leading household tried to mobilize all resources to entrench its rule and support the ambitions of its leading figures, which now were directed toward regional expansion, with the home front fairly pacified and secure.

While change throughout the period was incremental and sustained, the third quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of more concentrated, intensive change that produced a real turning point within the "long nineteenth century." After that point, Egypt was placed under direct foreign domination, which was *exclusivist* in its approach to the local elites and exploitative economically, in contrast to the *inclusivist* rule of the Ottomans, which also allowed a greater share of the surplus to be spent in Egypt itself. After that point, too, Egypt was more closely integrated into the world economy in a dependent status. During the last phase of our period, clubs, societies, newspapers, books, parties, and unions began to create a public sphere, in which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, individuals formulated an anti-colonial, nationalist discourse that led to the post-war intelligentsia- and elite-led nationalist movement.

## The liberal age, 1923–1952

SELMA BOTMAN



During Egypt's liberal age, between 1923 and 1952, European-style constitutionalism and political pluralism were incorporated into the country's political landscape. The period witnessed genuine, though irregular, electoral competition among individuals and groups, cross-class participation in the process, and an operative, if imperfect, system of political and civil liberties. While elites controlled democratic practice, people from humble social classes also engaged in political activity.

Eager for independence from British control and for social and economic reform, the population considered competing ideologies for Egypt's political and economic development including western-style liberalism, monarchy, Islamic fundamentalism, Marxism, feminism, and secular nationalism. Nonetheless, the excessive powers of the monarchy, the lack of an indigenous bourgeoisie with political strength, and the absence of a developed proletariat able to defend the liberal experiment combined to impede pluralistic democratic development.

### *Political parties during the liberal age*

In 1922, Britain granted Egypt formal independence, limited by four British-imposed conditions: the security of imperial communications, defense of Egypt against aggression, protection of foreign interests and minorities, and continued British administration of the Sudan. The colonial authorities changed the title of Egypt's head of state from sultan to king, and within a year sanctioned promulgation of a democratic constitution. With Egyptians assuming increasing control over their state, the age of liberal politics began.<sup>1</sup>

The liberal era, which spanned the years between 1923 and 1952, featured

<sup>1</sup> The classic account of the liberal era is Marcel Colombe, *L'évolution de l'Égypte, 1924–1950* (Paris, 1951).