1 Reform, Education, and Sociocultural Politics in Nineteenth-Century Egypt

I have often taken transient sojourners in Egypt to visit two institutions in Cairo which are only about fifteen minutes walk [*sic*] apart, and which are typical of the two great systems which, like Jacob and Esau, have been struggling in the womb of the Egypt that is to be. The first is the Government College in the Derb-el-Gamamiz. There, as the visitor passed from room to room, he would see classes of young Egyptians, amounting in all to about 400 youths reciting their lessons in algebra, geometry, astronomy, drawing, natural sciences – indeed, all that constitutes a liberal education in the curriculum of a college in Europe or America. The other is the great university connected with the Azhar Mosque, founded some nine hundred years ago, and to-day the greatest centre of Mohammedan learning in the world.[1]

Dr Gulian Lansing (1826–92), American Presbyterian missionary, writing in 1882

The transmission of knowledge is at the heart of all forms of education, though ideas about the best way to do it have varied significantly between times and places. In the minds of people educated in the schools and universities of Europe, the topic of knowledge is likely to conjure up images of books and visual processing of information such as old tomes on floor-to-ceiling shelves in a grand wood-panelled library, a dimly lit bookstore filled to the brim with the smell of old books, or a library full of people reading silently from a book or computer screen, possibly while making written notes.

Yet, with further thought, alternative ways to communicate may also come to mind, as written texts are far from the only way to pass on ideas, practices, and technologies – that is, knowledge – even in the most formal of scholarly circles. One might picture an intelligent-looking person speaking at a podium or writing on a board in front

[1] Wylie, *Egypt and Its Future*, pp. 111–14.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of a class. Those familiar with stereotypes of English education may visualise a distinguished-looking Oxbridge don sitting in a historic set of rooms and engaging in debate with a small group of students. Visual information may still play a role here in the form of the instructors' notes or lecture script, student notes, and lecture slides or information on the blackboard, but these forms of knowledge transmission also include significant *oral* (spoken) and *aural* (heard) components. Indeed, the dominant mode of tutorial teaching in Oxford until the 1960s, at least, involved students reading the essays they had written on the week's topic aloud to their tutors, who would deliver oral feedback on the work as they heard the text read.[2]

The gap that had opened up between Europe and Egypt by the start of the nineteenth century was not only one involving military might or administrative techniques. It also involved vastly different perspectives on the types of knowledge that were useful and how this knowledge should be transmitted. While texts played an important role within the learned communities of both Europe and Egypt in the nineteenth century, European approaches to literacy and knowledge transmission had become largely *ocularcentric*, or focused on using the eyes to read and write, a development aided significantly by the spread of Johannes Gutenberg's moveable-type printing system within Europe from 1450. In contrast, Egypt was home to a rich tradition of *audiocentric* approaches, in which written texts were used alongside oral transmission and aural reception of knowledge, and it was possible to become a scholar of the highest calibre without being able to write, or even read, a text.

This difference in approach led European observers to condemn the forms of knowledge transmission and education commonly used in Egypt, whether in the *madrasa* – a school providing secondary and higher education that is usually attached to a large urban mosque, such as Cairo's al-Azhar – or the *kuttab*, an elementary school teaching basic literacy to the Muslim or Coptic children of a particular village or neighbourhood. It was not only the content of the knowledge passed on in these schools that was inferior, in western eyes, but also the audiocentrism of the system as a whole. Much more to their liking were the subjects and pedagogies used in the civil schools centred around Darb al-Jamamiz (Lansing's Derb-el-Gamamiz) in the late nineteenth century, which were part of a system founded earlier in the

[2] Palfreyman, 'The Oxford Tutorial', pp. 7–8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

century to train officers and officials for Egypt's European-influenced military and bureaucracy.

Accounts like the one by Dr Lansing quoted at the start of the chapter are problematic for two reasons. First, they dismiss Egyptian knowledge practices as inferior without making the effort to understand them on their own terms. Any divergence from European ideals is seen as evidence of the backward nature of Islamic knowledge and the societies built upon it, even though large segments of European society also failed to live up to these ideals. Second, they reduce Egyptian education into two supposedly fixed categories instead of recognising the fluidity and dynamism of on-the-ground educational practices. This categorisation assumes that Egyptian civil and military education is a direct transplant of European practices and therefore representative of order, progress, and modernity, while religious education is seen as its unchanging, disorderly, and inevitably inferior opposite. Such descriptions are a gross misrepresentation of Egyptian practices, not least because ideas, practices, and technologies used in religious *and* civil systems of education were connected and changing. Despite their inaccuracy, however, these views have had a significant and lasting impact on the development of Egyptian national culture.

The reform programmes launched by Egypt's rulers in the early nineteenth century attempted to use European knowledge as a tool to maintain Egypt's independence. Egyptian elites witnessed the power of Europe first-hand during the French invasion of 1798 and the British-Ottoman invasion that ended French occupation in 1801. The initial aim was to augment, not replace, local bodies of knowledge – that is the ideas, practices, and technologies dominant in Egypt up to 1811 and perceived as traditional – and to leave largely intact the patterns of dress, behaviour, and socialisation prevalent in Egypt at the time. However, the idea that civil education was superior to religious education, present at the start of the nineteenth century, gained significant traction towards its end. Civil education not only increased the ranks of Egyptians receptive to European approaches to history, social science, and the natural and physical sciences,[3] but also encouraged the internalisation of European norms related to knowledge and education. That is, it spread ideas about what knowledge should be studied and

[3] Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past*; El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

why, which pedagogies should be used to transmit it, and how it should be put to use after graduation. By the end of the century, at least some of the educated Egyptians entering civil schools did so not only because of the salaried government job that awaited them upon graduation but also because they wanted the cultural and social cachet associated with the knowledge and pedagogies used in these schools.

The primary focus of this chapter and the next is to trace the relationship between civil and religious systems of education in Egypt between 1811 and 1900, and to explain the place of civil-religious hybridity in each. In exploring the cultural context in which these systems of education are situated, however, these chapters also reveal the increasing power and authority of European-influenced ocularcentrism, and cultural objects related to it, in Egypt. They show how, over the course of the nineteenth century, initiatives putting European ideas to use within the Egyptian state ended up transforming how increasing numbers of educated Egyptian saw themselves, their knowledge traditions, and the spaces surrounding them. Or, in the language of postcolonial scholarship, by accepting European knowledge and forms of knowledge expression as holding equal or greater authority than their own, many educated Egyptians were colonised in mind before the British invasion of 1882 finished the colonisation of their bodies. Orientalist knowledge not only provided a rationale for colonisation and shaped the perspectives of colonial officials but also transformed how the colonised viewed their own cultural traditions. These attitudes created sociocultural boundaries that had an impact on what Egyptians with ocularcentric or audiocentric capital were able to do within Egyptian state and society.

That said, this shift in the types of knowledge and knowledge expression that were seen to be authoritative was not universally accepted, nor were the sociocultural boundaries created by this shift as rigid as postcolonial accounts would lead one to believe. The average *shaykh* or *efendi* – graduates of religious and civil schools, respectively – likely considered each other's cultural discourses and practices controversial enough to be avoided or resisted, overtly or covertly. Therefore, while colonial power imbalances meant that European ideas, practices, and technologies represented a significant threat to political *and* cultural sovereignty within Egypt, they did not represent the final word. Instead this imbalance was the backdrop against which Egyptians advanced contrasting visions for an authentically Egyptian national culture,

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visions that often involved not only the policing, but also the crossing, straddling, and shifting, of sociocultural and physical boundaries.

This chapter introduces the sociocultural and physical landscapes created by colonial cultural politics, while chapters two, three, and four explore the many ways in which reform-minded *shaykh*s navigated these landscapes. It begins with a brief history of the projects of modernity led by the Egyptian state during the nineteenth century, a history that uses five key reformers to highlight the ways in which European knowledge was imported, translated, and put to work to serve local goals. It then explains how nineteenth-century European discourse simplified Egypt's physical and sociocultural landscapes to the point of misrepresentation. The discussion of education in this section explores the roles of aural and visual knowledge practices in the religious and civil schools of Egypt during the first sixty years of khedivial reform (1811–71). Dualities drawing unnecessarily sharp divisions between religious and civil schooling helped police a sociocultural boundary that separated foreign and local, and established Europeans as superior to Egyptians. The discussion of urban space explains how Egyptian educationalists transcended these dualities from their Darb al-Jamamiz campus, located in a hybrid 'borderlands' in between sections of Cairo labelled by many as Islamic or European. The chapter concludes by introducing the early 1870s as a turning point in the evolution of Egyptian culture that marks the start of tension between the hybridity present in everyday Egyptian life and the European hierarchies of knowledge that were laid on top of them.

Education and Egyptian Projects of Modernity, 1811–1871: A History in Five Reformers

An exploration of the projects of modernity initiated by Egyptian rulers Muhammad ʿAli (r. 1805–48) and Ismaʿil (r. 1863–75), and the contributions to these projects made by Ottoman Armenian Joseph Hekekyan (1807–75), Egyptian *shaykh* Rifaʿa Rafiʿ al-Tahtawi (1801–73), and Egyptian *efendi* ʿAli Mubarak (1824–93), highlights the main contours of the first sixty years of European-inspired reform to Egyptian state and society.

By 1811, Ottoman military officer Muhammad ʿAli had established Egypt as a quasi-independent entity within the Ottoman Empire and eliminated the last threats to his control. He then set about establishing

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a European-style military, as well as the systems of administration, taxation, and education necessary to support it. Over the course of the following sixty-five years, Muhammad ʿAli and his descendants, a dynasty that came to be known as the khedives of Egypt, established early versions of institutions that continue to play important roles today: a centrally run army, a cabinet overseeing bureaucratic institutions, and proto-parliaments in the form of consultative assemblies created to increase buy-in from important constituencies such as urban merchants or rural notables. Long-standing religious institutions, such as Cairo's al-Azhar university, were gradually brought under khedivial control through reforms that limited their financial independence and undermined their authority, while new, state-controlled military and civil educational institutions introduced non-religious, ocularcentric forms of literacy.

Modernisation projects slowed after European powers forced Muhammad ʿAli to withdraw from Syria and reduce the size of the Egyptian army in 1840, and remained stalled under Muhammad ʿAli's first two successors, ʿAbbas (r. 1848–54) and Saʿid (r. 1854–63). They were decisively relaunched by Muhammad ʿAli's grandson Khedive Ismaʿil (r. 1863–75). Ismaʿil's rule brought about a significant expansion in the scope of these projects: the goal was no longer merely remaining independent of Europe, but being seen on the world stage as a political and cultural equal of European countries. As a result, many of the projects of modernity advanced by Ismaʿil were culturally semicolonial; that is, they were the result of the acceptance of foreign cultural norms within Egypt.[4] The most visible of these projects was his attempt to turn Cairo into 'Paris on the Nile' by laying out a major new quarter between the existing city and Nile and introducing European-style public utilities (in the new quarter at least).

Khedivial reform programmes depended on the importation of European knowledge, that is ideas, practices, and technologies developed in Europe that were often perceived as foreign within Egypt. Their successful execution depended on individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, but who had all had some degree of exposure to European bodies of knowledge. European advisors and instructors with professional expertise relevant to the reform projects provided significant assistance, especially at the outset. Advisors involved with

[4] El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, pp. 2–3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

education during the reign of Muhammad ʿAli included Bernadino Drovetti (1776–1852), an Italian serving as French Consul-General in Egypt, and Frenchmen Captain Joseph Sève (1788–1860), known as Sulayman Pasha after his conversion to Islam, educationalist Edmé-François Jomard (1777–1862), and medical expert Bartholomew Antoine Clot Bey (1793–1868). Influential foreigners employed by Ismaʿil included French lawyer Victor Vidal (d. 1889/90) and Swiss Inspector General of Schools Édouard Dor Bey.[5] European ideas about education also arrived in Egypt via the English and American missionary groups active within the Egyptian Coptic Christian community, the former from the 1830s to the 1850s and the latter from the 1860s.[6]

Initially, Muhammad ʿAli found it challenging to find locally based personnel with the skills necessary to advance reforms. The education system in Egypt and elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire consisted of religious institutions that focused primarily on teaching Arabic and Islamic law instead of the mathematical and scientific disciplines required by the new institutions of the khedivial state. Furthermore, many Egyptian *shaykh*s were suspicious of Muhmmad ʿAli's reforms and opposed his use of charitable endowment (*waqf*, pl. *awqaf*) income normally reserved for religious institutions' funding. To overcome this challenge, Muhammad ʿAli introduced a second track of civil education that ran in parallel with religious schools and specifically focused on training the officers and bureaucrats needed by the khedivial state. A smaller number of Egyptian subjects received advanced training in European ideas, practices, and technologies through state-funded study in Europe, including two large educational missions based in Paris, l'École Franco-égyptienne (1826–36) and l'École Militaire (1844–9). Educational programmes contracted along with the rest of the state military and bureaucratic apparatus under ʿAbbas and Saʿid, but were reinstated and expanded by Ismaʿil. In 1863, Ismaʿil ordered the restoration of the Ministry of Education, which had lapsed under Saʿid. This institution oversaw the reopening of many of the closed schools and a vast expansion of primary and secondary education from 1867.

These educational opportunities enabled a wider range of people to contribute to khedivial reforms. These people included Turkish-speaking

[5] See Prakash, 'Negotiating Modernity', esp. ch. 1.
[6] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 52–62, 129–40.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

members of the Turko-Circassian Mamluk and Ottoman governing elite (*dhawat*), the latter bolstered by the British-Ottoman invasion of 1801 and the former significantly reduced in 1811 as Muhammad ʿAli consolidated his power. They also included Ottoman citizens from elsewhere in the empire: Arabs as well as Greeks, Armenians, and other minorities, many of whom spoke European languages in addition to Arabic or Turkish, and some of whom had studied previously in Europe. A notable example is Ottoman Armenian Joseph Hekekyan (1807–75), whose education in England was sponsored by Muhammad ʿAli after his father died in the Pasha's service. Hekekyan subsequently returned to Egypt to work as a translator and educational reformer under Muhammad ʿAli,[7] and ended his government service with the title *bey*, the highest imperial title available to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects.

Over time, native-born, Arabic-speaking Egyptians educated in religious or civil schools joined the cadre of reformers, though the upper ranks of both the military and bureaucracy remained Turko-Circassian. The most famous of the reform-minded *shaykh*s who were willing to put their knowledge of Arabic and Islamic disciplines to work for the khedivial state is Rifaʿa Rafiʿ al-Tahtawi (1801–73). Al-Tahtawi joined the first mission to France between 1826 and 1831 as its religious leader (*imam*), on the recommendation of his mentor, the reform-minded *shaykh* Hasan al-ʿAttar. Unlike many of his congregation, he was a keen student and observer while in France. Upon returning to Egypt, he published an account of his life in France in Arabic and was an active supporter of khedivial reforms. Al-Tahtawi was the only native-born Egyptian on the Schools Administration Council for many years and also served as the head of Egypt's School of Languages (Madrasat al-Alsun), which translated European works into Arabic.

A particularly influential Egyptian-born civil school graduate is ʿAli Mubarak (1824–93). At a young age, he met a former slave working as a civil servant and was inspired to seek out civil schooling as a result. He attended schools in Qasr al-ʿAyni and Abu Zaʿbal, as well as the Bulaq Polytechnic, before studying in France with the second large mission group (1844–9). He filled technical roles within various government departments upon his return, gaining positions of significant influence in public works and education during the rule of Ismaʿil and Ismaʿil's son Tawfiq (r. 1879–92). Mubarak was the first native-born

[7] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 64–80, 90–2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Egyptian to serve as minister of education, his final term in this office being 1888–91. He was the driving force behind the founding of Dar al-ʿUlum (the House of Knowledge) as well as the education journal *Rawdat al-Madaris (The Garden of Schools*) and what would become the Egyptian National Library (Dar al-Kutub). While his education was primarily in civil schools, his major publications – the geographical and historical encyclopaedia *New Guide to the Districts Ruled by Tawfiq* (*al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya al-jadida li-misr al-qahira*), published 1886–9, and the 1882 novel *ʿAlam al-Din* (named after the main male character) – bridged new and old genres of literature.[8] Mubarak began government service as an *efendi*, but was one of the handful of native-born Egyptians promoted to *pasha*, the highest-rank in the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, while reform-oriented khedives Muhammad ʿAli and Ismaʿil were the driving forces behind the first sixty years of Egyptian projects of modernity, the success of their projects depended on Egyptian subjects of Turko-Circassian, non-Egyptian Ottoman, and Egyptian origin. Individuals such as Efendi-cum-Bey Hekekyan, Shaykh al-Tahtawi, and Efendi-cum-Pasha Mubarak were able to make substantive contributions to these projects due to their training in schools and mission programmes established with the help of Ottoman and European advisors, many of which continued to develop under their leadership.

(Mis)representing Egyptian Education

Europeans writing about religious education in nineteenth-century Egypt regularly comment on the importance of memorisation, recitation, and embodiment; the relative lack of written texts and discipline; and the centrality of the Qurʾan and religious subjects. The subjects studied, methods used to teach, and the overall school environment were all judged by European standards, without attempting to understand what was (and was not) important in the eyes of Egyptians. Dr Lansing's account, quoted at the start of this chapter, continues by equating the schools of Darb al-Jamamiz to those of Europe and describing al-Azhar as follows:

[8] Mubārak, *ʿAlam al-Dīn*; Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

On entering the great court of the Mosque, after divesting ourselves of our boots (for the place is holy), we beheld hundreds of boys sitting upon the pavement of this court and the surrounding porches, committing to memory the Koran, *verbatim et literatim*, so that they can recite the whole book without a slip in a single accent or vowel point. This is the foundation upon which the education is to be built. After entering the portals of the mosque, the spectacle which presents itself is a very unique one – an immense room, the roof of which is supported by about twenty marble pillars . . . each pillar being said to have its professor. Scores of these may be seen at any time of the day, each sitting with his back to his pillar, upon a sheepskin, or, if his class be large, upon a small raised stool. In a circle before him sit his pupils upon the thickly matted floor, perhaps a dozen or twenty, perhaps eighty or a hundred; sometimes with their textbooks in their hands, sometimes writing from his lips, as he lectures. And the hum is increased by hundreds of others who are sitting in the vacant places between the classes, committing to memory, while their bodies are moving to and fro, or copying their textbooks . . . And naturally the curriculum of study in the Azhar . . . is all founded upon the Koran, the text of which they had memorised under the porches of the outer court, or in the primary schools of their native villages, and it has not a single point of contact with the circle of our modern science and literature. Nay, it is not only independent, but intensely antagonistic. The professors know too well, for instance, that should they teach modern astronomy, one peep through a telescope would for ever dissipate Mohammed's cosmogony, with its seven heavens and seven flat layers of earth beneath them.[9]

Lansing, a Presbyterian missionary from the United States, presents al-Azhar as an overcrowded 'spectacle', devoid of furniture but stuffed with students listening and transcribing lectures, or rocking back and forth while reciting a memorised text. He dismisses out of hand the potential for connections or synergies between the subjects studied in Europe and the 'intensely antagonistic' material covered at al-Azhar. This sense of disorder and chaos is echoed by Sir George Newnes' description of al-Azhar, as quoted in a guidebook published in 1898:

What strikes one is the utter slovenliness in dress. Although many of the students belong to rich families, there was a complete absence of any attempt to adorn themselves even neatly, and fine raiment was not to be seen. They all looked as if on getting up in the morning they simply threw around their

[9] Wylie, *Egypt and Its Future*, pp. 111–14.

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bodies some folds of white, blue, or black drapery, put on a turban, slided [*sic*] into slippers, and sallied forth.[10]

Lansing's dismissal of the knowledge taught in religious schools is echoed by Stanley Lane-Poole's 1892 account, which describes this knowledge as 'terribly mistaken', 'obsolete', 'of little practical use', and leading 'inevitably towards fanaticism' and violence against Christians.[11] This sentiment appears again in travel writer G. W. Steevens' 1898 condescending account, which presents al-Azhar as providing an 'unchanging' education that is 'dead and deadening' because of its 'bondage to theology'.[12] These accounts show no understanding of the range of subjects studied in the upper levels of these schools, and instead respond to the perceived threat from lack of discipline and European-style morality among the masses.[13] While Europe had its own ostensibly immoral and disorderly lower classes, the application of this critique abroad, in the presence of significant power imbalances, often led to the conclusion among foreigners that local societies and people were 'backwards' or otherwise inferior to those of Europe.[14]

More damaging than dismissing the subjects and environment of religious schools, however, was the narrow, Eurocentric manner in which European critics defined literacy. English Orientalist Stanley Lane-Poole's description of the education provided by religious elementary schools in Egypt concludes with a withering description of the qualifications of the school's instructor:

This [the alphabet, memorisation and recitation of the Qurʾan] is all that the boy generally learns at school. Indeed, the schoolmaster could not teach him much more. The worthy man knows his Korân, and can instil it, with the help of a stout cane, into his pupils' skulls; but he is thoroughly illiterate, and sometimes cannot even read, and has to get a pupil-teacher to write the alphabets and copies, on the pretence of having weak eyes. Writing is not always taught at a school, and the lower classes do not feel any urgent necessity for this accomplishment.[15]

[10] Khemeid, *Cairo and Egypt*, pp. 13–14. [11] Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, p. 188.
[12] Steevens, *Egypt in 1898*, pp. 52–6.
[13] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, p. 11; Quartararo, *Women Teachers and Popular Education*, p. 19.
[14] For instance, see Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, p. 82.
[15] Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, p. 184.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In this description Lane-Poole makes explicit what Lansing's stress on memorisation, recitation, and embodiment at al-Azhar implies: the only way to be a literate, educated member of society is to be able to read and write written texts. This approach ignores the importance of audition and person-to-person contact in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, and overlooks the synergies between mastery of the Qurʾan and the largely audiocentric set of skills necessary to rise to the top of Islamic scholarly circles. Lane-Poole (1854–1931) was not only a well-known historian and numismatist, he was also from a renowned family of Orientalists. He was the son of Arabic scholar Edward Stanley Poole (1830–67), was raised by his grandmother, travel writer Sophia Lane Poole (1804–91), and great-uncle, Arabic scholar and Egypt expert Edward William Lane (1801–76), and mentored by uncle Reginald Stuart Poole (1832–95), the keeper of coins and medals at the British Museum. Therefore, his assessment of Egyptian education would have carried significant weight amongst European readers of English.

This point of criticism appears earlier in the nineteenth century in descriptions of religious education written by European missionaries observing Coptic Christian *kuttab*s. In the 1820s, John Lieder of England's Church Missionary Society (CMS) reacted strongly against learning practices centred on listening and recitation, assuming that students learned by ear because of the blindness of their teachers as well as a lack of access to physical texts, and not because such teaching methods had intrinsic value. In 1849, missionaries visiting Egypt from Malta's Protestant College criticised Coptic schools for employing 'ignorant teachers' who focus only on the Scriptures, and stress memorisation instead of understanding.[16]

Similarly Eurocentric views of teaching and learning have continued within the academy in studies that draw a distinction between orality and literacy, in which orality is primarily used to describe societies without written texts and is often seen as inferior to text-based literacy.[17] In the Middle East, whether in the Orientalist texts of the nineteenth century or the scholarship of the twentieth, this approach ignores the importance of aural or audited transmission of texts which may or may not have been published in print form.[18]

[16] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 1–2.
[17] Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*, pp. 1–44; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 2–15.
[18] Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, pp. 2–9.

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Therefore, in Muslim and Middle Eastern contexts, it is especially important to look at the ways in which aurality and orality are combined with highly sophisticated textual practices. The transmission of Islamic texts up through the early twentieth century can be seen as a largely audiocentric process, where written versions of texts existed, and sometimes even played important roles, but did not diminish the importance of aural, embodied, and person-to-person modes of knowledge transmission. This contrasts sharply with the ocularcentric textual practices that were dominant in nineteenth-century Europe, in which visual renditions of texts took precedence over oral ones.[19] Embodied transmission of knowledge – and the accompanying processes of recitation, commentary, and memorisation – continued to form the core of Islamic pedagogy and was reflected in how knowledge was passed to students in all levels of religious schooling in late nineteenth-century Egypt.

Audiocentrism in Nineteenth-Century Egyptian Religious Institutions

In nineteenth-century Egypt, Islamic institutions were home to traditions of education that differed significantly from European practices. Many Egyptian children began their studies in elementary *kuttab*s associated with the local mosque, where they sat on the floor and learned to recite the Qurʾan. They would listen to their teacher recite a verse, record it on a small slate, repeat it themselves until they had memorised it, and then have their recitation checked by the teacher.[20] Coptic Christian *kuttab*s taught in Arabic using similar approaches to pedagogy and knowledge, though of course the text studied would have been the Bible instead of the Qurʾan. Both Muslim and Coptic Christian *kuttab*s emphasised the memorisation and recitation of core texts because internalisation of these was the bedrock on which subsequent study would be based, as well as being a virtuous act in and of itself.[21]

[19] I am grateful to Walter Armbrust for suggesting the terminology 'audiocentric' and 'ocularcentric'.
[20] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, pp. 21–2; Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 82–7.
[21] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 1–4, 107–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Talented students might continue their studies at a big-city *madrasa*, where lessons took place in the *halqa* or discussion circle. Here they would listen to an Islamic scholar recite and comment on a text, asking questions related to the points he raised along the way. Students would learn key points of grammar, rhetoric, or law by hearing, commenting on, and memorising individual texts discussing these subjects. When a student felt he was ready, as an individual, he could approach his instructor to obtain a certificate (*ijaza*) stating his ability to transmit a text or perform a type of task, such as teaching or issuing interpretations of texts.[22] This system of education was based on master-disciple relationships which were hierarchical, yet allowed for disputation and argumentation between master and student through which the student would demonstrate his skill and knowledge and build a reputation as a scholar. The end result was a chain of master-disciple links (*silsala*) stretching back through time, conveying specific texts and techniques from their original authors to their nineteenth-century masters.

Islamic education could bestow functional benefits including employment. Those who had memorised the Qurʾan could make a living through recitations delivered at important events such as weddings and funerals. Individuals with basic mastery of the core texts could work as the prayer leader (*imam*) or instructor (*muʿallim*) in a small *kuttab* or village mosque. More talented students could teach in a *madrasa* as a scholar (*ʿalim*, pl. *ʿulamaʾ*), issue legal interpretations (*fatwa*s) as a scholar qualified to rule on questions of religious law and practice (*mufti*), or serve as a judge (*qadi*). Such positions would be obtained through informal networks built as the individual in question demonstrated their mastery of core Islamic texts and disciplines. While a position as prayer leader or judge would bestow some degree of institutional power on an individual, most Islamic religious leadership positions rest primarily on authority. To exercise authority, one's claims to hold special knowledge about Islam must be recognised as legitimate by audiences such as village elders, established urban scholars, or the congregation of a particular mosque. A would-be leader would have to meet the expectations that such audiences had of religious leaders in terms of knowledge, behaviour, and aesthetics. Only once recognised as an authority would he be able to subtly reshape these expectations. Islamic leadership is therefore performative and

[22] Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, pp. 147–52.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

relational, and can be mapped by identifying the knowledge an individual claims, how it was obtained, and how it is demonstrated through embodiment and performance.[23]

It is important to note, however, that Islamic education held significant social and religious value independent of any such functional benefits, and many pursued it as a virtue in itself, often with family encouragement and support. For instance, students who attended a Moroccan *madrasa* prior to the reforms of the 1930s reported that their primary reason for pursuing this education was to obtain Islamic knowledge, even if they worked in non-religious professions after graduation.[24] A man with at least some religious learning in nineteenth-century Egypt was often referred to as a *shaykh*.

The subjects studied at al-Azhar differed significantly from what was studied in Europe, though it is challenging to ascertain exactly what was studied by the majority of students at the *madrasa* level in the nineteenth century. Students at al-Azhar, Egypt's top religious institution, and other *madrasa* schools remained free to choose their path through the institution until well into the twentieth century. Given the range of personal and professional goals and outcomes associated with religious education, there was no single course of study. There would have been an informal consensus in a given community or institution about what was expected of any given religious post. Students aspiring to such a position would seek out information about these expectations from peers and mentors, and note the paths followed by former students whose efforts had resulted in success. While programmes of study for the most successful students are occasionally available, sources shedding light on the larger collective experience are scarce.

We do know what subjects were considered important enough within an Azhar education to include on the first formal examination for those who wanted to teach there, which was instituted from 1872.[25] Islamic subjects listed were interpretation of the Qurʾan (*tafsir*), the sayings of the Prophet (*hadith*), legal interpretation (*fiqh*), sources of law (*usul al-fiqh*), the unity of God (*tawhid*), and logic (*mantiq*). Arabic subjects were often studied first as students would need strong language skills to understand their lessons. These subjects included syntax

23 Kalmbach, 'Blurring Boundaries', pp. 162–5; Kalmbach, 'Islamic Authority', pp. 3–15.
24 Eickelman, 'The Art of Memory', p. 507.
25 Eccel, *Egypt, Islam, and Social Change*, pp. 60, 150.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(*nahw*), morphology (*sarf*), and rhetoric (*balagha*), which included study of meaning (*maʿani*), figures of speech (*badiʿ*), and clarity of expression (*bayan*). Clarity of expression could include the study of metrics or prosody (*ʿarud*) and rhyme (*qafiyya*).

James Heyworth-Dunne, relying on the early nineteenth-century chronicler al-Jabarti and others, provides a list of books taught at al-Azhar that also includes works on arithmetic, algebra, inheritance law (*faraʾid*), mysticism (*tasawwuf*), calculating religious calendars and prayer times (*miqat*), astronomy (*haiʾa*), and philosophy (*hikma*).[26] While this indicates that various *shaykh*s were teaching these subjects early in the nineteenth century, it does not tell us how often they were taught or how many students attended the lectures. What is certain is that by 1872 these subjects were not deemed central enough to a religious education to be included on the teacher examination.

The most significant difference between educational practices in Europe and at al-Azhar relates to the modes of knowledge transmission that were seen as authoritative. Historical and ethnographic accounts of Arab-Islamic education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show that normative practice was for knowledge to be transmitted aurally in both Islamic and Coptic contexts. The core text, the 'authoritative original' that presented an unattainable model for all subsequent texts, was the Qurʾan or, among Copts, the Bible. This and other important texts would be passed along in aural form, with transmitters often reciting from memory and then providing commentary. Whether or not the recipient memorised the text varied between regions, but normative practice in most places involved having his or her recitation and understanding checked by the transmitter.[27]

Historically, Islamic knowledge was not exclusively aural or oral, as texts in written form played an important role in the preservation and transmission of knowledge. Gregor Schoeler's study of ninth-century Islamic literature argues for the coexistence, and increasing importance, of texts and even text-based transmission alongside orality, aurality, and audition, from the ninth century.[28] Konrad Hirschler's study of reading practices in Syria and Egypt between 900 and 1600 reveals large shifts in knowledge culture enabled by the spread of

[26] Heyworth-Dunne, *Introduction to the History of Education*, pp. 41–65.
[27] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, pp. 16, 22; Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 150–3; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, pp. 58–9.
[28] Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, pp. esp. 9, 122–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

written texts and a wider range of people able to read them. Hirschler argues that the increasing number of texts, including encyclopaedic and summary works aimed at non-specialists, signals the acceptance of the written word as a form of knowledge transmission alongside older oral and aural practices.[29]

The work of Schoeler and Hirschler highlights the wide range of ways in which Islamic knowledge was transmitted in the pre-modern period. A text could be received by an individual or a group visually, aurally, or through a combination of the two, as when one or more people listening to the recitation of a text follow along in their own written copy. The transmitter could be reading from a written text, reciting from memory, or using a written text or notes to ensure the accuracy of material delivered from memory. While it was not seen as best practice, independent reading of a written text undertaken silently or out loud could form the basis for obtaining an *ijaza* on the work in question. That oral and aural forms of transmission and recitation from memory were respected – even prestigious – ways to transmit and receive knowledge, despite the spread of written texts, is shown by the presence of scholars who could read but not write, and who could not read written texts at all, as in the case of the blind, at the highest levels of scholarship.[30]

Publicly performed and embodied versions of texts were important among Islamic scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, among Moroccan scholars of this period

> only the oral transmission of knowledge was regarded as culturally legitimate in the Moroccan context; knowledge acquired exclusively from the study of books . . . was considered unreliable. Interruption of student readings was a way of signaling important points, and verbal emphases could be used to communicate more than a written text could convey. Significantly, the introduction of printed texts after 1865 . . . had minimal impact upon the form of the lesson circles. No questions were asked during these sessions, and students rarely took notes or made annotations in the printed copies of the texts that a few possessed.[31]

[29] Hirschler, *Written Word,* pp. 18–19, 197; Endress and Filali-Ansary, *Organizing Knowledge*, pp. 1–101, esp. 1–19, 24–75.
[30] Hirschler, *Written Word*, pp. 16–17.
[31] Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 95.

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Outside of higher levels of learning, the emphasis on aurality made acts of speech valuable in and of themselves, with members of the general population seen to benefit from hearing recitation of texts in religious services even if they could not understand their meaning. This dynamic ensured a steady stream of work for professional reciters of the Qurʾan. It is also shown particularly in Coptic communities where it was not – before the nineteenth century – seen as a problem that most of the Arabic-speaking population did not understand the Coptic phrases and formulas that they recited or heard recited during church services.[32] These practices can be compared to the ritual uses of books, such as being buried with a Qurʾan or another text.[33]

Furthermore, the meaning of the language through which the Islamic knowledge inherent in memorised texts was transmitted was seen as unchanging and constant. Medieval scholars saw texts as having fixed meanings that could be transmitted and understood regardless of their age, and this approach to texts is reflected in the view of some religious scholars (*ʿulamaʾ*) that older texts are better than modern ones at explaining what the Arabic means.[34] As a result, an essential part of the transmission process of a text was receiving an – often unmemorised – commentary that would elaborate the meaning of the text in contestable, context-specific ways.[35] The importance of recitation and explanation alongside written texts, as well as the need for person-to-person certification of knowledge regardless of source made people – and not written texts – the key authoritative repositories of knowledge.

Ocularcentrism and Muhammad ʿAli's New Schools

The Egyptian state-funded school system founded by Muhammad ʿAli in the early nineteenth century and expanded by Ismaʿil between 1867 and 1876 was heavily influenced by European educational ideas and practices, and contrasted sharply with religious schooling. The goal of these schools was functional; they were to produce the military officers, administrators, and professionals needed to run new state institutions. As a result, they needed to provide graduates with sufficient mathematical and scientific literacy for the advanced study of military and

[32] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 105–9.
[33] Hirschler, *Written Word*, p. 20. [34] Zaman, 'Tradition and Authority', p. 64.
[35] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, pp. 15–16, 30–6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

administrative topics. These schools included a military academy (1821) as well as higher schools for administration (1829), medicine (1829), surveying (1816), midwifery (1832), technical training (1834), and language and translation (1835). They were supported by a secondary school from 1825 and several primary schools from 1833 that provided preliminary training for individuals who wanted to enter these schools. Many of these schools lapsed or were amalgamated under Muhammad ʿAli's successors, ʿAbbas and Saʿid, but were reopened by his grandson Khedive Ismaʿil.

Under Ismaʿil, the focus of Egyptian education remained functional and focused primarily on training state employees, though some capacity for general education was introduced from 1867. Upon assuming the throne in 1863, Ismaʿil reinstated the Ministry of Education, opened primary and preparatory schools in Alexandria and Cairo, and began reorganising the system of military schools and academies. From 1868, the civil schools training bureaucrats were separated from their military counterparts. ʿAli Mubarak, recently returned from a research trip to Paris, created a central campus at Darb al-Jamamiz for the ministries of education, religious endowments, and public works – all of which were under his directorship at the time – and many of the civil schools. He moved Cairo's Preparatory School and the School of Engineering to this campus in 1868, and opened new higher education institutions such as the School of Administration and Languages (later renamed the School of Law), a school of drawing, a school of surveying and accountancy, and a school of Egyptology alongside these older institutions.[36] This central location enabled the schools to share instructors and Mubarak and other administrators to monitor educational standards.

As the school system increased in size and scope, standardisation and central control increased in importance. An 1867 law introduced standardised curriculum, examination, administration, and dress so that individual schools would function together as a coherent whole.[37] Schools of different classes were distributed throughout the provinces in a purportedly uniform manner, by size and importance of settlement.[38] Progress of students was regularly assessed through examination. The overall goal was to produce graduates with uniform, measurable skills who could – where permitted – graduate and move

[36] Heyworth-Dunne, *Introduction to the History of Education*, pp. 352–4.
[37] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 76–7. [38] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p. 76.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

seamlessly onto the next level as a group. Inculcating discipline and good hygiene was of the utmost importance. Starting as early as the 1840s, Egyptian schools were structured to inculcate in its students a new *habitus*, that is set of habits, abilities, and perspectives that shape the bearer's view of their surroundings. Daily attendance, punctuality, and cleanliness were all required, and students' adherence to these standards was monitored in school and wider society.[39] This contrasted sharply with practice in Egyptian religious schools, which only began regulating the passage of students through the institution in 1896 and did not aspire to a comparable degree of control or standardisation for much of the twentieth century.

The methods by which these bodies of knowledge were transmitted to students were radically different than those used in Egypt previously, as they eschewed the memorisation and embodiment of audiocentric approaches in favour of disembodied and ocularcentric written texts. Reading written texts was central to the education process, and students who were blind or had poor eyesight were excluded. Those with physical disabilities were also excluded, seemingly due to the system's roots in training officers and administrators to support military operations as well as European influence. In contrast, the ocularcentric pedagogies of religious schooling made (and still make) it possible for students with visual or physical impairments to earn a living and contribute to their communities through reciting the Qurʾan or becoming an Islamic scholar.

Finally, the curriculum of Egyptian civil schools was predominantly made up of subjects most often studied in Europe, such as mathematics, science, history, and geography. While Arabic was studied, students spent far less time on it than in religious schools. Of course subjects such as mathematics, science, morality, and philosophy had been taught by religious schools in the past. The subject classifications of Islamic scholars such as al-Farabi (d. 950) and al-Ghazali (1058–1111) differentiate between religious and non-religious or philosophical subjects, with the latter including metaphysics, mathematics, political science, and natural science.[40] However, these subjects do not seem to have been a core part of education in al-Azhar for much of the nineteenth century, as they were not included in the 1872 examinations

[39] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 45–6, 69–74.
[40] Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, pp. 264–6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for the *ʿalimiyya* teaching degree, and the 1896 reform law added only arithmetic as an optional, non-examination subject.[41]

These aspects of the civil education system – functional goals, standardisation and discipline, ocularcentric pedagogies, and new subjects – have little in common with educational practice in Egyptian religious schools in the nineteenth century. They are instead similar to approaches to knowledge and education prevalent in much of Europe at the time. In Germany and France during the nineteenth century, lower and mid-level education was often defined in functional terms, as an activity that should contribute to society and progress, through activities such as training professionals or improving morality of the lowest classes. Ocularcentric pedagogies were also used to transmit knowledge held in largely disembodied texts.

In England, providing disciplinary education to control the immoral and disorderly masses was seen as especially important by utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and James Mill (1773–1836). One British educational trend that was especially influential at home and overseas was the discipline-focused monitorial education system championed by Andrew Bell (1753–1832) and Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) as an efficient and cost-effective way of spreading literacy and discipline. The highly centralised, standardised structure of the monitorial schools, combined with the ocularcentric approach to knowledge dominant in Europe, was supposed to enable schooling to be scaled and reproduced with a higher degree of central control over the end result. This aim suited not only European governments but also the ideological aims of foreign missionaries and the reform agendas of the Egyptian state.[42]

With respect to what was taught, disciplinary schools focused not on religious texts and the language necessary to understand them, or on less-utilitarian subjects such as Greek, Latin, or the fine arts, but on training in subjects such as mathematics, geography, and the natural, physical, and chemical sciences that would be useful when pursuing further professional training.[43] Monitorial schools aimed to discipline both body and mind by creating an environment where all student actions were observable through specifically designed school

[41] Eccel, *Egypt, Islam, and Social Change*, pp. 74, 150.
[42] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 79–80.
[43] Itzkin, 'Bentham's Chrestomathia', pp. 306–7; Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 56–8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

environments and the employment of a hierarchy of student monitors who would inspect and drill students. The many parts of the system were supposed to function in a coordinated, orderly, and impersonal manner similar to a machine and, though the school was structured to prevent infractions, discipline was strict when they were committed.[44]

Pedagogy was ocularcentric and aimed at training students how to think, live, and 'be' in radically new ways. As in Europe more generally, knowledge was transmitted through disembodied texts whose meaning-as-read was taken to be constant across space and time, and understandable to any literate individual without special instruction. Monitorial schools, unlike the audiocentric *kuttab*s, did not stress memorisation; their students were supposed to be regularly drilled, but in a way that tested their understanding of texts and ability to interact with the concepts they had been taught. In fact, Lancaster explicitly opposed the memorisation of long passages of the Bible, arguing that memorisation should be limited to short passages that connect directly with an idea or practice under study at that time.[45] The monitorial system was extremely influential in the early nineteenth century and much educational innovation in this period owes a significant debt to it. Lancaster's techniques were spread within England and around the world, including to Egypt, by evangelical groups such as the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) and the Church Missionary Society.[46] Another example is its transfer from Spain to Colombia, where it dominated primary education from 1821 to 1844.[47]

Disciplinary trends also influenced teacher training. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, French teachers were not only expected to teach students to read, write, and do arithmetic, but also to imbue in them new behaviour and practices. This emphasis was present as early as 1795, but played a major role after 1851, when new school regulations put greater emphasis on memorisation, repetition, and disciplinary structures that fostered a sense of group identity among the trainee teachers.[48] Furthermore, teachers completed coursework related to the

[44] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 73–4.
[45] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 27–8.
[46] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, p. 15; Sedra, 'Exposure to the Eyes of God'.
[47] Itzkin, 'Bentham's Chrestomathia', pp. 16, 309; Caruso, 'The Persistence of Educational Semantics'.
[48] Quartararo, *Women Teachers and Popular Education*, pp. 1, 6, 31, 50.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

values they were supposed to transmit, for instance in hygiene and morality. In England, schools using disciplinary models such as monitorial schooling – taught in England's first teacher training school founded in 1809 – emphasised order, structure, and discipline of both body and mind, techniques that potential teachers and monitors would have to master before being able to transmit them on to students; these ideas and techniques were first introduced to Egypt in the 1820s.

It is important to note that scholarship has cast doubt on whether the schools in the Egyptian civil system lived up to the strict criteria and high goals set out by central education planners. They faced numerous difficulties, including a lack of qualified teachers, prepared students, and appropriate textbooks.[49] It also seems likely that the transition to European pedagogical approaches in the nineteenth century was gradual, as memorisation of texts, including the core grammar text at al-Azhar, the *Alfiyya* of Ibn Malik, was still a major part of government preparatory school curricula after the 1873 reforms.[50] That said, the number of European visitors to Egyptian civil schools in the 1880s and 1890s who equated the educational experience in the schools of Darb al-Jamamiz with European practice indicates that many European practices were successfully transferred.

(Mis)representing Egyptian Landscapes

The second problematic aspect of colonial representations is their simplification of the physical and sociocultural landscapes of Egypt to the point of misrepresentation. Colonial-era discourse stressed an absolute division between European and local ideas, practices, and spaces. Criticism of local practices served to police a sociocultural boundary that separated foreign and local, and established the colonisers as superior to the colonised. Reform and change in religious schooling were by and large ignored, as demonstrated by the texts already quoted. Civil schools were either equated entirely with European practices, as in the Lansing quotation at the start of the chapter, or assumed to be imperfect, and therefore inferior, copies. In the rare instances where Egyptian agency could not be ignored, it was

[49] Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, pp. 12, 52, 134, 175; Starret, *Putting Islam to Work*, pp. 23–61; Szyliowicz, *Education and Modernization*, pp. 103–5.
[50] Heyworth-Dunne, *Introduction to the History of Education*, pp. 380–1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

denigrated. For instance, Stanley Lane-Poole's 1892 account not only harshly criticises al-Azhar and its scholars – whom he describes as bigots and extremists – but also argues that only education reform instituted by the British will save Egypt. In the process, he completely dismisses khedivial and Egyptian input into the civil school system before and after 1882.[51]

European accounts often embed their descriptions of Egyptian education and culture in a geographic landscape that was divided sharply in two between a romanticised old and an essentially European new. For instance, the small streets of old Cairo are romanticised as inextricably 'eastern', assigning to them both negative attributes – 'confusion, idleness and squalor' – and a timeless mystery – 'narrow lanes' that 'wind away' into the 'labryinthic distance' and recall the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*.[52] Another author divides Cairo into a section 'almost entirely occupied by Europeans' and an ever-the-same 'purely native town', lamenting both the destruction of Cairo's cultural heritage and the spread of western forms of dress among Egyptians.[53] Accounts from 1892 and 1909 go so far as to identify the canal that became Bur Saʿid Street as a dividing line between the two, with the latter describing it as 'the severest boundary line between Cairo former and present'.[54]

The irony of classing Islamic Cairo as 'local' and the European-style city laid out during Ismaʿil's reign as 'colonial' was lost on these authors. While some saw Ismaʿil's Cairo as entirely European, ignoring the role played by Ismaʿil and his administrators in the development of this 'Paris on the Nile', others derided the contributions of Ismaʿil and his administrators as inauthentic *yet also* not modern enough:

Carrying the eye towards the north, a shining line is seen roughly dividing the old city from the new. This is the Khalig or Canal, which divides Cairo longitudinally from north-east to south-west into two strongly contrasted portions. West of the canal and next to the Nile [that is, Ismaʿil's new quarter], the deforming touch of the Khedivial bricklayer has ruined everything mediaeval. East of the canal the old Muslim city of the Fatimis [*sic*] still retains its picturesque character, and as we enter it we may almost forget for

[51] Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, pp. 24, 84–8, 119–20, 288–9.
[52] Wylie, *Egypt and Its Future*, pp. 104–5. [53] Kelly, *Egypt*, pp. 6–7, 11, 23.
[54] Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, p. 24; Lamplough and Francis, *Cairo and Its Environs*, p. 124.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the moment that there ever was such a person as Ismaʿil, the ex-Khedive, or such civilising agents as railways and frockcoats and the opera bouffe.[55]

In the discourse of the colonised, therefore, Egyptians were often damned regardless: local Egyptian practices were so backward that only European actors could exert effective reform, yet Egyptians who crossed sociocultural boundaries to attempt to change these practices through exercise of agency were inauthentic and unnatural because they refused to stay within the confines of traditional spaces, professions, lifestyles, and modes of dress.

This narrative of a Cairo divided neatly into new and old is well-reflected in the landmark urban histories of Cairo written by geographer Janet Abu Lughod and historian Andre Raymond. Abu Lughod argues that Ismaʿil's city expansion created a dual city: a fresh, 'modern' city for Europeans that contrasted with the old, decaying 'traditional' city for Egyptians. She represents the separation between the two as not just one of 'physical duality' but also 'cultural cleavage' with significant differences between the two areas socially and technologically. Abu Lughod describes this city as 'self-contained' and distinct, aspects that only increased as the twentieth century progressed. While Raymond's discussion initially focuses only on the physical structure of the two parts of the city in the colonial period, he also describes the two halves of the 'double' city as 'two worlds that differed in every respect', one for 'natives' and the other for the colonisers.[56] When Raymond notes that well-off Cairenes left older quarters for residences in new neighbourhoods, he observes that this decision had a larger cultural significance: those who left accepted colonial dominance and embraced 'assimilation into a way of life brought to them from outside, symbolised by the increasing dominance of Western-style buildings, whose spread coincided with the new forms of urban development'. These descriptions echo the Eurocentrism and duality of colonial-era descriptions.

Translation and Transition in Cairo's Borderlands

Missing from this discourse and much of the scholarship that draws upon it is recognition that the hegemony of European knowledge in late nineteenth-century Egypt was significant but not absolute. This lack of recognition has resulted in descriptions of Egypt that diverge

[55] Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, p. 24. [56] Raymond and Wood, *Cairo*, pp. 17–18, 309.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

significantly from what was happening on the ground. First, local ideas, practices, and institutions were not backward and unchanging, but instead operated according to a locally focused logic *and* were affected in positive and negative ways by reform and change. Second, significant agency was exercised by Egyptians in bringing about such changes. Civil schooling and missionary programmes may have spread colonial norms, but graduates such as Tahtawi, Hekekyan, and Mubarak used what they learned to play an active role in shaping Egypt's path within a world that was increasingly dominated by Europe. Finally, this agency led to deliberate divergence between European models and Egyptian practices, for instance via the emphasis many placed on cultural renaissance (*nahda*) or religion.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, local actors translated European ideas, practices, and technologies to meet local needs. This process created a rich, uniquely Egyptian sociocultural landscape in which Egyptians from different social backgrounds claimed sociocultural positions. The history of change and reform under the khedives up to 1876 demonstrates significant local agency, as the ruler and his associates chose which practices to borrow and used them to maintain political sovereignty.

The tension between a colonial rhetoric of division and inferiority, on the one hand, and an Egyptian project of modernity involving change, agency, and deliberate divergence via the hybridisation of foreign and local, on the other, was played out not only in the abstract, in the sociocultural landscape surrounding educational institutions and government ministries, but also in the urban landscape in which these offices and schools were located. Representations of a colonial city inextricably divided in two in an abrupt and unchanging manner through reference to cultural differences, city walls, or topographical barriers such as the Bur Saʿid canal do not hold up to scrutiny. The Darb al-Jamamiz area, which Lansing contrasts with al-Azhar and describes as essentially European, is, first, part of marginal yet in-between borderlands in which new buildings and activities were integrated into older urban structures, and, second, an example of how these borderlands changed over time, alongside the growth and development of the city.

Re-examination of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travel maps show a marginal 'borderlands' in between the relatively straight, orderly streets of Ismaʿil's city in the west and the narrow, winding lanes and cul-de-sacs of Islamic Cairo in the east. As Figure 1.1

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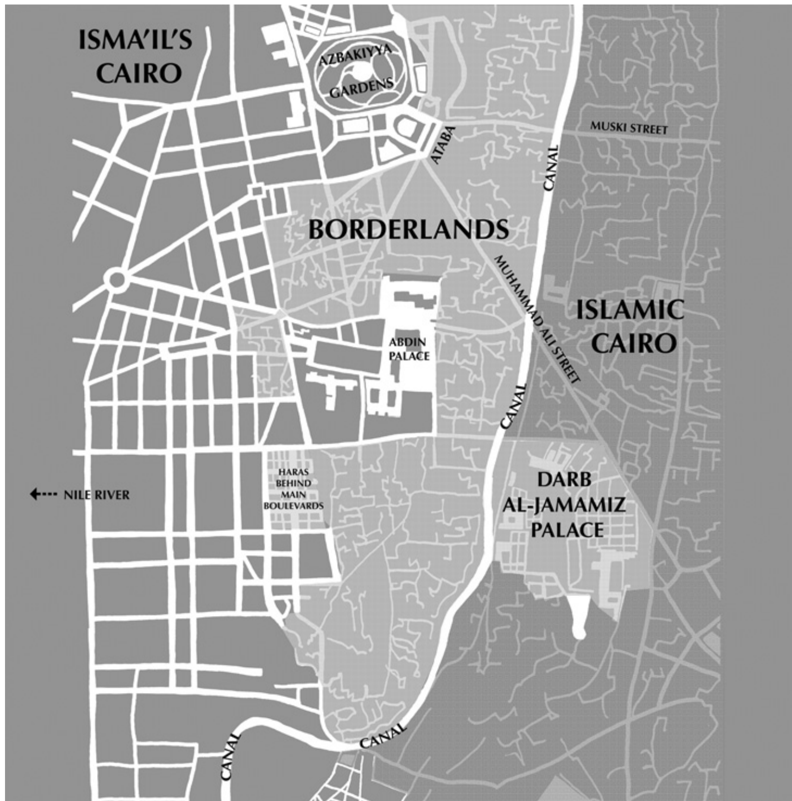

Figure 1.1 Map of Cairo in the late nineteenth century, showing the borderlands surrounding Darb al-Jamamiz.
The older fabric of the city is not limited to Islamic Cairo (in dark grey on the right of the canal), but also extends towards the regimented street grids of the newer quarters of the city in a borderlands (in light grey). This borderlands also encompasses newer, European-influenced fabric that was inserted into the older city on the right of the canal. This includes Darb al-Jamamiz Palace, which was built on land reclaimed from the Birkat al-Fil pond, remnants of which appear in white just south of the palace. Note that the popular quarters (*haras*) of the borderlands almost surround Isma'il's European-style 'Abdin Palace, including *haras* hidden behind large, European-style boulevards.
Source: based on 'Le Caire (Masr El-Kaira)' in Baedeker's *Egypt: Handbook for Travellers*; *Plan général de la ville du Caire et des environs*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

shows, these borderlands ran from pockets on the eastern side of the Bur Saʿid canal towards the landmarks of the new, self-consciously modern city in the west, such as the Egyptian Museum, Garden City, and the Azbakiyya Gardens. It stretched from the Sayyida Zaynab Mosque in the south to the extension of the walls of the Islamic city in the north. Only gradually did the street grids of Ismaʿil's ostensibly modern city move east to fill in the areas running up to and alongside the canal. This process was not uniform for either old or new neighbourhoods, with street grids expanding east in some areas, leaving areas further west riddled with small alleys and cul-de-sacs. Both sides of the canal saw new development in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with major institutions of the modernising state, such as the municipal headquarters and police station, and the indigenous courts built – similar to Darb al-Jamamiz – on the older, eastern side of the canal, while the building constructed for the khedivial library is only just on the western side. Even today, the streets of this in-between area remain only partially normalised into a grid, as shown by the persistence of winding lanes and dead-end cul-de-sacs.

These borderlands stretch further to the west than a casual visitor might realise. While many of the areas immediately west of them had main boulevards lined with impressive European-style buildings, behind these façades, were side streets with popular quarters that had much in common with the quarter-based (*hara*) neighbourhoods of the old city. These areas were populated by a mix of working- and lower middle-class people, whose neighbourhoods backed onto upper-class, European-style residences on the main streets, where wealthy Egyptians lived in relatively close proximity to neighbours from the Mediterranean or elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, including Syrians, Greeks, Armenians, and Italians. An example of this sort of mixing is shown in the 1956 film *Shabab Imraʾa* by Salah Abu Sayf. The first glimpse we see of these borderlands comes at the start of the film, as its *darʿami* hero, just arrived in Cairo, commissions a cart and driver to take him and his luggage to a place where he could rent rooms. This trip begins by showing the impressive and spacious newer quarters and ends in the older areas around the city, shown as dirty and chaotic. The borderlands appear in one shot, immediately after a shot of Opera Square, which is near ʿAtaba, an area in which the major thoroughfares of Islamic Cairo and Ismaʿil's Cairo converge. It appears as an area with reasonably wide streets lined with buildings in a mix of styles,

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including two- and three-storey European-style buildings, yet debris from shops in their lower storeys spills out onto the pavement, the streets are filled with people and a bus, and minarets of the older quarters can be seen in the background. The film gives us a different view of the borderlands later on, in its portrayal of early twentieth-century ʿAbbasiyya as a clean, spacious, quiet neighbourhood with multistorey European-style apartment buildings occupied a range of people, including Arabic- and Greek-speaking families. The relationship between the expensive buildings and the popular quarters was in many ways symbiotic, with people from the latter providing services to the former.

Darb al-Jamamiz's location in these borderlands is further reinforced by its proximity to old and new. The Ministry of Education at Darb al-Jamamiz, similar to other ministry properties, was located in a palace complex built in the nineteenth century near Ismaʿil's European-style ʿAbdin Palace. The area around ʿAbdin was laid out in a spacious manner, with wide, tree-lined boulevards, villas, and apartment buildings built in European styles, and amenities like gas lamps, street cars, and water and electricity lines.[57] Darb al-Jamamiz itself, however, was located on a street more similar to the twisting lanes characteristic of old Cairo. The word *darb* is defined by Edward William Lane as

> a minor thoroughfare from six to eight feet in width, with a gate at each end, often running transversely from the great streets, and generally consisting of private houses two or three storeys high, with occasionally a few shops or a market. The walls of the ground-floor of the private houses are faced within and without with stone; and the upper storeys, which generally project two or three feet, are of brick, and in most cases plastered and whitewashed ... The houses being thus constructed and the streets so narrow, many of the projecting windows would quite meet, face to face, were it not that few of them are placed so as to be exactly opposite one another. These streets have, of course, a dull appearance, the more so as the principal windows of the larger houses look into an inner court; but they afford a delightful shade ... [and some provide] comparative solitude, to the bustle witnessed in the greater thoroughfares.[58]

[57] McCoan, *Egypt As It Is*, pp. 56–7. On the contrast between the two, see Wylie, *Egypt and Its Future*, pp. 108–9.

[58] Lane and Lane-Poole, *Cairo Fifty Years Ago*, pp. 57–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Accordingly, Darb al-Jamamiz appears on maps as a short street running roughly parallel to the Bur Saʿid canal, loosely connected to similar lanes at each end. It appears as a walking route in Badaeker's Egypt as early as 1898, described as 'a series of tortuous streets' leading from the square in front of the Sayyida Zaynab Mosque to Bab al-Khalq, a gate in the walls of the old city of Cairo.[59] One travel account notes that it was narrow and contained plenty of older architecture.[60] The gates of the Darb al-Jamamiz Palace were approximately a half-mile north of Sayyida Zaynab, across from a tree-lined opening looking onto the canal and immediately south of the 'Tekkîyeh Habanîyeh', an eighteenth-century Sufi Lodge used in the late nineteenth century by foreign students studying at al-Azhar.[61]

The Darb al-Jamamiz area is also a significant and early example of change, agency, and deliberate divergence through successive rounds of redevelopment within the fabric of old Cairo. The Darb al-Jamamiz Palace, running along the east side of the street, was part of a larger complex of palaces and gardens built in the nineteenth century on land reclaimed by filling in a long, snaking drainage lake, the Birkat al-Fil. (See Figure 1.2 for a representation of this lake in 1825.) This genealogy meant that buildings constructed on reclaimed land at various times in the first half of the nineteenth century were inserted into the fabric of a much older section of the city.[62] The Darb al-Jamamiz Palace occupied the north-west section of the lake, while Prince ʿAbbas Hilmi built a palace in its eastern section. Both palaces appear on the map in the Baedeker guide of 1885, with empty space appearing between their gardens. To at least 1914, the Baedeker maps mark off the area that was the south-west tail of the lake in either white or green, with the label 'Birket el-Fil', seemingly indicating that the lake had not been entirely built over.[63] The insertion of new urban material into the fabric of the old city continued in the late 1890s when the gardens of ʿAbbas Hilmi's palace were declared public in 1893, and the palace demolished

[59] Baedeker, *Egypt 1908*, p. 56; Baedeker, *Egypt 1902*, p. 56; Baedeker, *Egypt 1898*, p. 56.
[60] Lamplough and Francis, *Cairo and Its Environs*, pp. 115–23.
[61] Baedeker, *Egypt 1898*, p. 58; Baedeker, *Egypt 1902*, p. 58; Baedeker, *Egypt 1908*, p. 69.
[62] Asfour, 'The Villa', pp. 11–12.
[63] Baedeker, 'Le Caire' (1885); Baedeker, 'Le Caire' (1908); Baedeker, 'Le Caire' (1898); Baedeker, 'Le Caire' (1914).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 1.2 Map of Cairo in 1825 showing Birkat al-Fil.
Areas of Cairo settled in 1825 shown in white, with roads, canals, and the Birkat al-Fil pond in black.
Source: based on the map in Grabar, 'The Meaning of History in Cairo', p. 4, which itself is based on Coste, *L'architecture arabe*.

in 1903. Between 1893 and 1909, a street grid was extended across the area to turn it into a new suburb, named Hilmiyya.[64]

The structure of Hilmiyya reflected the translation of European ideas about urban planning and house design into an Egyptian context, a process that was significantly influenced by ʿAli Mubarak. The rigid, orderly street grid of Hilmiyya highlighted the difference between old and new more sharply than the previous palace. By the time of its

[64] Asfour, 'The Villa', p. 118; Asfour, 'The Domestication of Knowledge', p. 125.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

development at the turn of the twentieth century, however, Egyptian urban reformers were engaging in more negotiation and consensus-building with residents than they had done earlier. A major artery adjoining Hilmiyya, Muhammad ʿAli Street, had been cut through the fabric of Islamic Cairo early in the nineteenth century in a much less consensual manner, involving the destruction of scores of homes and the relocation of a fourteenth-century mosque.[65] The development of Hilmiyya reveals the influence of French urban planning in nineteenth-century Egypt, as the underlying goals were improvement of hygiene, transportation, and state control within Islamic Cairo. Khaled Asfour argues that the architecture of the large villas that initially filled the suburb was a physical realisation of debates amongst the sociocultural elite about how foreign ideas should be translated into the Egyptian context.[66] The neighbourhood has since been mythologised in a five-part television serial drama *Nights of Hilmiyya* (*Layali al-Hilmiyya*) broadcast in the 1980s and early 1990s. Director Usama Anwar Okasha (1941–2010) used the neighbourhood as a frame to explore the tumult of Egypt's twentieth-century history. While Hilmiyya was originally dominated by the villas of the rich, the series – whose action begins in the 1940s – showed it as the type of working-class area that was seen later in the twentieth century as intrinsically authentic in contrast to the more sterile environments of the elite.[67]

This brief exploration of Cairo's urban development further demonstrates how colonial-era discourse emphasising the division of space and policing of sociocultural boundaries misrepresents Egyptian sociocultural and physical landscapes. Darb al-Jamamiz and the borderlands surrounding it was a site of innovation and change between Islamic Cairo and the Ismaʿil's semicolonial city. The physical fabric of these borderlands was initially a mix of Islamic- and European-influenced building styles and street layouts, with the latter increasing slowly over time as dominant uses of the area shifted from palaces to government ministries and schools, to neighbourhoods occupied first by the elite and then the working class. Even more important to narratives of sociocultural change was the diverse range of people who moved through and occupied these borderlands. It was a place

[65] Asfour, 'The Villa', pp. 115–16; Asfour, 'The Domestication of Knowledge', pp. 125–8.
[66] Asfour, 'The Villa', esp. pp. 11–12, 69–113.
[67] Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, p. 218.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

where important progress in education reform was made by local rulers before the protectorate, and where teachers and students with religious and civil expertise convened to integrate Islamic knowledge into the Egyptian project of modernity for decades thereafter.

Colonising Minds Before Bodies? 1867–1876 as a Turning Point

The nine years between 1867 and 1876, and especially the years 1871 and 1872, represent a significant turning point in the cultural history of Egypt. Five years into Ismaʿil's rule, programmes to reform and renew Cairo's urban fabric and educational institutions were beginning to bear fruit. His vision of transforming Cairo and the Egyptian state so that they would be perceived by Europeans as a 'Paris on the Nile' represented a significant shift in the goals underlying state-led projects of modernity in Egypt. Buoyed by the high price of cotton and driven by his quest for the respect of European rulers, Ismaʿil presided over a series of reforms that made the days when Egyptians abroad were excoriated by Muhammad ʿAli for wearing European dress a distant memory.

Timothy Mitchell points to the 1890s as a period by which semicolonial and colonial systems had not only asserted control over Egyptian bodies but also transformed how Egyptians saw the world around them by colonising their minds. By the 1890s, a decade into the British occupation and seven decades into extensive engagement with European misrepresentations of the Orient,

> the absolute opposition between the order of the modern West and the backwardness and disorder of the East was not only found in Europe, but began to repeat itself in Egyptian scholarship and popular literature, just as it was replicated in colonial cities. Through its textbooks, school teachers, universities, newspapers, novels and magazines, the colonial order was able to penetrate and colonise local discourse . . . It was able at the most local level to reproduce theatres of its order and truth.[68]

The travel accounts quoted above illustrate the first step, whereby Egyptians – both their bodies and their 'character' or 'culture' – were conceived as concrete objects that were distinct from and inferior to

[68] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p. 171.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

European bodies and minds. Once this was established, semicolonial and colonial institutions worked to transform these Egyptians, body and mind, by establishing disciplinary institutions such as the military and schools that would produce Egyptians who accepted *and* reproduced this dichotomy in their teaching and writing.[69]

Mitchell's focus on the 1890s appears to reinforce the importance of the major political turning point of late nineteenth-century Egypt: the 1882 British invasion following the 1881 ʿUrabi revolt, which was sparked by events following the seizure of control of Egyptian finances by European creditors in 1876. These events are crucial to shifts in Egyptian political sovereignty, as they mark the point from which khedivial control over Egyptian domestic affairs began to be limited by European powers and a nationalist movement that emerged out of the social groups who had facilitated khedivial reforms. These dynamics generated a rebellion under the leadership of Egyptian-born colonel Ahmed ʿUrabi (1841–1911) in 1881, whose success triggered the British invasion the following year.

However, we must not let the political significance of events between 1876 and 1882 eclipse the impact of Ismaʿil's reign on sociocultural dynamics in Egypt. The invasion of 1882 finished the colonisation of Egyptian bodies, but the key turning point in the colonisation of Egyptian minds came earlier, between 1867 and 1876, as Ismaʿil's reforms began to take effect. A string of events during this period started to shift the types of knowledge, education, and cultural capital seen as authoritative, which would eventually establish European-style ocularcentrism and approaches to space as paramount.

With respect to space, Ismaʿil's efforts to remake Cairo in the image of Paris launched in earnest after Egypt's participation in the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris, an exhibition that redefined how a city should be laid out. These efforts, spearheaded by ʿAli Mubarak in his role as head of public works, culminated in the November 1869 celebrations surrounding the opening of the Suez Canal. They included building a new palace on a large island in the Nile to house visiting European dignitaries as well as the khedivial Opera House, for whose opening Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) was commissioned to write the opera Aida.

[69] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 95–105.

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Less visible, but even more important to the emergence of Egyptian national culture, were reforms related to civil and religious education. One of the biggest initiatives was the attempt, described in a law passed in November 1867, to improve and even out experiences in entry-level schools across Egypt. The goal was not only to run flagship civil schools at the primary and secondary levels to train government employees, but also to oversee the religious elementary *kuttab* schools that educated the population as a whole. All *kuttab*s with sufficient charitable (*waqf*) funding to run themselves were be taken over by the Ministry of Education, under whose supervision they would teach a much wider range of subjects: 'writing, arithmetic, commercial knowledge, grammar, ancient history, geography, a modern language, and the principles of politeness'. The remaining elementary schools were to raise sufficient funds to provide students with buildings and furniture in good repair, and use textbooks to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.[70]

These regulations asked for significant changes in *kuttab*s in which instruction had been entirely audiocentric or whose facilities were in poor condition. Instructors not only needed to be morally upstanding and know their Qurʾan, but also needed to be able to write by hand and teach arithmetic. New instructors would need state certification, while existing instructors could keep their posts by providing documentation as to their suitability and, if blind, engaging an assistant who could read and write.

The impact of this initiative was limited by the relatively few schools (apparently only thirty-three) that had enough funding to qualify for full state supervision, as well as by the inability of many of the existing instructors to learn new techniques, especially how to teach arithmetic.[71] Regardless, the religious elementary schools that were fully or partially reformed as the result of this law spread European-influenced educational norms beyond the ranks of Egyptians entering government service. Yet this expansion and increasing regulation of Egyptian schooling also hardened the boundaries between civil and religious education systems, making it more difficult for talented students from religious schools to pass into the higher levels of the civil system. It also introduced a division within the schools overseen by the

[70] Heyworth-Dunne, *Introduction to the History of Education*, pp. 352–74.
[71] Heyworth-Dunne, *Introduction to the History of Education*, pp. 362–74

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Ministry of Education, as only some of these – the primary schools of provincial towns as well as Alexandria and Cairo – taught all of the subjects and skills necessary for progression to preparatory or higher civil schools, the only schools that provided access to government employment at this time. Even the three-tier scheme proposed by an 1880 report on Egyptian education, which would have introduced the ability to progress from *waqf*-funded elementary schools into civil preparatory schools, only suggested adding the full range of primary school subjects to the highest tier of schools, to be established only in towns with at least 100,000 inhabitants.[72]

The Darb al-Jamamiz educational campus continued to develop into the early 1870s. In March 1870, Isma'il tasked Mubarak with building a library similar to the depository institutions common in European capitals on the Darb al-Jamamiz campus, an institution that would eventually grow into the Egyptian national library, Dar al-Kutub (the House of Books). The first issue of *Rawdat al-Madaris*, a pioneering education journal edited by Mubarak, also appeared in 1870, shortly after the opening of the library. In July 1871, Mubarak launched a lecture series in an amphitheatre on the campus named Dar al-'Ulum that aimed to expose top students from al-Azhar to the subjects taught in Egyptian civil schools, with the goal of improving the quality of teaching in Egyptian primary schools. In autumn 1872, this initiative was expanded into the Dar al-'Ulum school, which trained *shaykh*s to teach in civil schools and *kuttab*s, helping to fill the demand created by the 1867 expansion of European-influenced schooling. Its impact went beyond this, however, as it expanded the ranks of reform-minded *shaykh*s who spread, instead of condemned, European subjects and pedagogies.

Finally, the early 1870s were also a time of change in and around al-Azhar. In 1872, the first law reforming education at al-Azhar was passed. This introduced an exam of eleven subjects leading to a diploma called the *'alimiyya* that enabled its holders to teach at al-Azhar and similar institutions. It quickly narrowed the subjects most students were interested in studying down to these eleven and formalised the bodies of knowledge one had to master to be considered an *'alim*. Even more important for the spread of reformist ideas was the arrival in Cairo in 1871 of intellectual Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–

[72] Heyworth-Dunne, *Introduction to the History of Education*, pp. 429–31.

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79), seen by many as the father of Islamic modernism. He taught a group of young reform-minded students from al-Azhar in private. This group included a number of future Egyptian leaders, including Saʿd Zaghlul (1857–1927), founder of the Wafd, the premier Egyptian nationalist political party of the twentieth century.

Afghani's lectures inspired a generation of thinkers, known now as Islamic modernists though they referred to themselves as reformers (*muslihun*) or modernisers (*muhaddithun*).[73] These thinkers cast aside interpretive traditions stretching back centuries to rejuvenate Islamic thought and practice through new readings of the Qurʾan and the traditions of the early Muslim community. They aimed to make Islamic thought and practice relevant in the new sociocultural and intellectual environments emerging in Egypt. Chief among them was Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), who held a range of illustrious positions including high court judge and lead legal interpreter (*mufti*) of Egypt, despite having been exiled between 1882 and 1888 for political activities. Printed journals were key to the spread of Islamic modernist thought around the Middle East and North Africa, especially *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* (*The Firmest Bond*), which was published by Afghani and ʿAbduh in Paris in 1884, and *al-Manar* (*The Lighthouse*), which ʿAbduh's student Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935) edited from 1898 until his death.

This expansion of European-influenced education within Egypt, combined with an expansion of reform-minded thinking within religious circles, laid the groundwork for the emergence and development of a broader set of modernisation projects: those associated with the cultural and intellectual renaissance known as the *nahda*. This movement's call for renewal simultaneously internalised *and* rejected colonial norms. It accepted European diagnoses of Egyptian religion and culture as stagnant and backward, but focused on placing revived and renewed forms of Arabic and Islam at the heart of renewed religious, cultural, and literary forms. The civil schooling and missions abroad that trained military officers and bureaucrats also swelled the ranks of Egyptian subjects who were able *and* eager to contribute significantly to the *nahda*, many of whom had the language and intercultural skills necessary to engage with and translate European publications. The printing press technology used to produce the Egyptian government's gazette from 1813 was used from the mid-nineteenth century to print

[73] Gesink, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 5–6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108526142.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the journals, newspapers, and books that spread the ideas of the *nahda* renaissance beyond the intellectual salons of Cairo to modernising social groups across the region.

The way in which the *nahda* combined acceptance and rejection of colonial norms hints at a much larger phenomenon in *fin-de-siècle* Egypt. While developments in the 1870s accelerated internalisation of European approaches to knowledge, education, and culture, the hegemony of these approaches was far from absolute. The Egyptian projects of modernity that developed out of cross-cultural exchange with Europe did not match European models or replicate colonial conceptions of division and inferiority. Instead, through locally initiated reform, Egyptians created modes of practice that deliberately diverged from European ideas, practices, and techniques and developed in ways that met the needs of Egyptians.

As a result, the histories of Egyptian education, and Egypt more generally, do not make sense in a context that shows education creating an unassailable division between civil and religious knowledge, or what was seen as modern and unmodern. The possibility for colonial subjects to cross and straddle boundaries in meaningful and productive ways is underemphasised in much of the Foucault-inspired postcolonial literature on modernisation in the Middle East and North Africa. Timothy Mitchell's work on Egyptian modernisation, while prescient in its discussion of the colonisation of minds as well as bodies, focuses almost exclusively on boundaries as entities that are created and assiduously policed by the disciplinary power of the colonial state, instead of divisions that, once recognised by some sort of social consensus, can be productively crossed. He quotes Frantz Fanon's depiction of colonial society as 'a world divided into compartments ... a world cut in two', where the two halves are grossly unequal and the inferior half is seen only in terms of what it lacks.[74] Mitchell's later work notes that reality can be more complex, but the overarching emphasis of his discussion of modernity remains on value-laden dualisms that dominate 'representations' of this reality and – in his assessment – play an essential role in the hegemony of colonial power. This later work dismisses the possibility of local agency in so far as it describes Middle Eastern modernity as a copy that diverges only accidentally from the European original.[75] By focusing on how sociocultural

[74] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 6, 14, 71, 82, 163–4.
[75] Mitchell, 'Introduction', pp. viii, xi, xii–xiv; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, pp. 5, 11, 52–3; Mitchell, 'The Stage of Modernity', pp. 6–7, 18, 23–4.

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boundaries can be crossed as well as policed, this book demonstrates how modernisation – not to mention change more broadly – can occur without rupture between modern and unmodern, or past and present.

Conclusion: Egyptian Education and Shifting Sociocultural Landscapes

This chapter is the first of two tracing the relationship between civil and religious systems of education in Egypt between 1811 and 1900. It introduces the cultural politics surrounding knowledge and its transmission during the nineteenth century, focusing in particular on educational reform during the first sixty years of the khedivial projects of modernity (1811–71). These projects depended on selective processes of cross-cultural borrowing in which knowledge was imported, translated, and applied in ways that created Egyptian modernities that deliberately diverged from European models. These efforts led to the founding of a new system of civil schools to run in parallel with Egypt's religious schools, which consisted of primary-level *kuttab*s and higher-level *madrasa*s. The pedagogical differences between these school systems in the nineteenth century is best explained by contrasting the listening-focused literacy, or audiocentrism, of the older religious schools with the reading-focused literacy, or ocularcentrism, of the new civil schools.

Colonial accounts misunderstood and misrepresented Egyptian education, in part because of their strong preference for ocularcentrism, but also due to their tendency to divide Egyptian society, culture, and space into two halves: a modern foreign and a traditional local. This dichotomy is behind not only misrepresentations of education but also the flattening of descriptions of the geographical and sociocultural spaces through which Egyptians moved and claimed social status. These misrepresentations obscure the hybrid borderlands that surrounded the schools and institutions associated with state-led projects of modernity, including ʿAli Mubarak's Darb al-Jamamiz campus.

Despite their biases, however, these accounts became influential enough to transform how Egyptians saw themselves, their knowledge traditions, and the spaces surrounding them. The turning point behind this colonisation of Egyptian minds was not the 1882 British invasion that concluded the colonisation of Egyptian bodies, but instead the intellectual and institutional shifts between 1867 and 1876. This

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period also laid the groundwork for resistance to and subversion of European cultural forms by Egyptian nationalists decades later. The hegemony of European misrepresentations – alongside attempts to resist and subvert them – reshaped the physical and sociocultural landscapes in which Egyptian national culture was formed.

The increasing power and authority of European-influenced ocularcentrism and related cultural objects in the late nineteenth century led to significant shifts in the educational choices of Egyptians, as it raised the sociocultural standing of the *efendiyya* and increased bias against the *shaykh*s graduating from religious schools. The capital held by the *efendiyya* as a result of their education, especially their ability to function in ocularcentric environments, meant that they not only had greater access to employment opportunities but also were privileged among Egyptians as they navigated physical and sociocultural landscapes shaped by colonial politics.

This climate encouraged top students at religious schools who wanted to contribute to the making of Egypt's future to seek out the hybrid education offered by Dar al-ʿUlum, and to use the capital they gained from it to cross, straddle, and shift the sociocultural boundaries that placed them at a disadvantage. Their histories demonstrate that Egypt's new education system could help establish *and* break down the sociocultural barriers present in colonial-era discourse, giving graduates the capital to act authoritatively in a wide range of situations and to play an active role in shaping the national culture of a self-consciously modern Egypt. It is to Dar al-ʿUlum and its hybridity that we turn next.

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